

**Response to Submissions  
Received on Application  
ABP Ref. 320938**

Woodquay Park  
Enhancement





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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This document seeks to respond to the submissions received on the Part XAB Application made by Galway City Council for the renewal of Woodquay Park, adjacent to R866 Road in Galway City (ABP Ref 320938). The application was lodged on the 27 September 2024 and was open for submissions for a period of 6 weeks (until the 11 November 2024). During this period, 36 no. observations were made on the application, including 3 no. by statutory consultees (An Taisce, the National Transport Authority, and the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage's Development Application Unit), and 3 no. by local organisations (Woodquay Residents Association, Mercy Primary School and St. Nicholas' Parochial School).

On the 16 January 2025, An Bord Pleanála requested that the Applicant respond in writing to the submissions received by the 29 January 2025. This deadline was later extended by agreement to the 12 February 2025. This document seeks to fulfil this request and continue the strong precedent of public consultation which has defined this project. Copies of the response document will be provided at the offices of the local authority with the rest of the application documentation, as well as in the online version.

As is noted in the Planning Report contained within the original application documentation, the proposed development is being funded by Failte Ireland's Urban Animation Capital Investment Scheme. This fund seeks to support regeneration projects in Ireland's urban environment.

## 1.1 Structure of the Document

This document has sought to address the concerns and points raised by consultees in their submissions as efficiently and clearly as possible, while still providing individual feedback where relevant. As such the structure of the rest of this document is as follows:

- **Section 2** – Provides responses to the queries and issues raised throughout the third-party submissions, with the responses grouped into topics. These are ordered by number of submissions received on a given topic.
- **Section 3** – Provides dedicated responses to the submissions received by prescribed bodies.
- **Section 4** – Provides dedicated responses to organisations which made submissions, but who are not prescribed bodies.
- **Appendix 1** – Comparison of soft landscaping areas on each design proposal.
- **Appendix 2** – Minutes of consultation meeting held with the Woodquay Residents Association Nov 2020.
- **Appendix 3** – Correspondence with the NTA regarding the proposed scheme Sept 2024.
- **Appendix 4** - Minutes of consultation meeting held with local schools June 2023.

1.2

## Full List of Observers

The full list of people and organisations who made an observation on the application is provided below:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Alan Phelan  | 19. Frank Walsh                    |
| 2. An Taisce  | 20. Grace O'Connell                |
| 3. Angela Gallagher                                   | 21. Les Burke                      |
| 4. Anne Fox   | 22. Marjanne Bryan                 |
| 5. Anne Marshall                                      | 23. Mark Green                     |
| 6. Bernadette Divilly                                 | 24. Mary Morgan                    |
| 7. Caimin Garry                                       | 25. Mercy Primary School           |
| 8. Caitriona Flanagan                                 | 26. Mrs. Nichola Dalrymple         |
| 9. Catherine Egan                                     | 27. National Transport Authority   |
| 10. Catherine Howley                                  | 28. Neasa MacErlean                |
| 11. Clare Nally                                       | 29. P. Farrell Garage              |
| 12. Development Application Unit                      | 30. Paul Burke                     |
| 13. Diarmuid Croghan                                  | 31. Robert Cantwell                |
| 14. Diarmuid Croghan – Woodquay Residents Association | 32. Robert Grealish                |
| 15. Donal and Mary MacErlean                          | 33. Sheila Gallagher               |
| 16. Eileen Naughten                                   | 34. St. Nicholas' Parochial School |
| 17. Finbar McHugh                                     | 35. The Nora Barnacle House Museum |
| 18. Frank Costello                                    | 36. Victoria McCormack             |

2.

## SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED IN THE SUBMISSIONS

2.1

### Railings

It is noted that many of the submissions received raised issues with the removal and replacement of the existing railings in Woodquay Park. The concerns raised about this broadly fall into two categories: impact on anti-social behaviour, and impact on the park as a child-friendly space.

2.1.1

### Anti-social behaviour

Of the submissions which raised concerns with the removal of railings, the majority specifically were concerned about the potential for new anti-social behaviour in the park, as well as the potential for noise and disruption to the residential environment. Consultees who raised this concern are identified in **Table 2-1**.

*Table 2-1: Consultees who raised concerns relating to the removal of railings and anti-social behaviour*

Frank Costello	The Nora Barnacle House Museum	Anne Marshall
An Taisce	Angela Gallagher	Bernadette Divilly
Caitriona Flanagan	Caimin Garry	Catherine Howley
Clare Nally	Diarmuid Croghan	Donal and Mary MacErlean
Eileen Naughten	Finbar McHugh	Frank Walsh
Grace O'Connell	Les Burke	Mary Morgan
Mark Green	Mrs Nichola Dalrymple	Paul Burke
P. Farrell Garage	Sheila Gallagher	Diarmuid Croghan – Woodquay Residents Association

2.1.1.1

### Response from Galway City Council

Currently, the park boundary is defined by railings, with the pedestrian access to the site via gated entrances halfway down each side of the park, between aisles of parking. This current layout is visually and physically obstructive, detracting from the natural beauty of the park. It also contributes to creating an unwelcoming and utilitarian atmosphere that discourages community engagement and enjoyment of the space. It also creates a visual blind spot within the streetscape. This design, combined with the limited and poor-quality access points, makes accessing the park more challenging than is necessary. As a result, natural oversight of the space is extremely poor, resulting in an increase in the potential for anti-social behaviour at all times of the day. As a result, a key goal of the project was to open the park up, allowing greater overlooking of the space and creating a more welcoming environment. It should also be noted that the Woodquay Residents have taken it upon themselves to reduce the height of the existing hedge where it faces the Corrib to open up views out to the river, and into the park.

As part of the proposed development, the boundary of the park will instead be defined by native hedgerow planting, requiring the removal of the existing railings which are in poor condition. It is

submitted that this provides a defined boundary that is more welcoming and less visually obtrusive than the existing metal railings.

The native hedgerow will also provide an ecologically diverse and aesthetically pleasing boundary that blends seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, contributing to a more pleasant environment. At the same time, they will provide a firm boundary for the park and limit access to the designated entrance points. It is submitted this will help preserve the sense of tranquillity the residents indicated was an important feature of the park. Additionally, the proposed native hedgerow boundary will soften the surrounding hard and built-up landscape and will be able to contribute to the reduction of air and noise pollution, by absorbing sound and filtering pollutants from the nearby road. This will further contribute to a quieter, more peaceful and natural atmosphere within the park.

Finally, it is highlighted that the proposed enhanced lighting will help to ensure that any potential antisocial behaviour will not be 'locked into' the park, but rather it will be accessible and therefore easily identified, exposed and consequently addressed.

## 2.1.2 Child-Friendly Space

Submissions that raised concerns about the removal of the existing railings often did so with concerns in relation to the useability and safety of Woodquay Park for schools and children. In particular, the ability to corral children for teachers and the important role of the park as a green space for children was raised. Consultees who discussed these items in their observations are listed in **Table 2-2**.

Table 2-2: Consultees who raised concerns relating to space for schools and kids

Alan Phelan	Frank Costello	Anne Marshall
An Taisce	Bernadette Divilly	Caimin Garry
Catherine Howley	Finbar McHugh	Frank Walsh
Grace O'Connell	Marjanne Bryan	Mark Green
Mrs Nichola Dalrymple	Neasa MacErlean	Paul Burke
P. Farrell Garage	Sheila Gallagher	Victoria McCormack
Diarmuid Croghan – Woodquay Residents Association		

### 2.1.2.1 Response from Galway City Council

It is submitted that removing the existing railings of a park aligns with one of the fundamental goals of good urban planning, which is to create a city that is safe, accessible, and welcoming for all people – including children. However, it is acknowledged that a duty of care exists for smaller children who are still learning to exist within the wider world. This is particularly relevant for schools and classes, where carers may be trying to watch a large group at one time. **The proposed design has sought to create limited entrances and exits to the park, with benches in key locations where instructors can monitor pupils and ensure their safety.** In the south of the proposal, there is a single entrance which narrows where several seating features are provided. This enables oversight of this single entrance/exit. In the north, seating by the rain garden allows teachers to maintain oversight of the two entrance and exit paths, while still maintaining a view of the wider park area to supervise their students. **We also wish to note that the provision of closing and locking gates has been excluded on health and safety grounds, due to the potential of these to cause injuries when closing, caught in the wind, or otherwise moving.**



Finally, we would draw attention to the Road Safety Audit prepared with the original application documentation. Based on the feedback given in this document, the hedge has been set back from the roadway, islands have been created at the pedestrian crossings, and road markings and dropped kerbs have been provided. This has been done to improve safety at crossing points into the park and accessibility, and was not possible without removing the existing railings. In short, the exclusion of gates for the proposed design has been done with safety at the core, including for children.

We would also note that railings often impose a sense of restriction and separation, reinforcing the idea that children need to be contained rather than integrated into the broader urban environment and society. By re-defining these harsh barriers with hedging, the park becomes a more open and inclusive space that encourages free movement, exploration, and interaction with the surrounding community, while still enabling oversight of students.

We wish to highlight the inclusion of a play mound has also been made to provide an unstructured play element and a more interactive landscape for children, while acknowledging the spatial limits of the park's ability to host further play equipment. Great care has been taken to balance the creation of a more accessible and open park, as discussed above, with the ability to maintain a safe environment for children.

We also submit that positive planning prioritises the creation of child-friendly cities where safety is achieved through thoughtful design rather than purely through confinement. This includes traffic-calmed streets, pedestrian-friendly pathways, and well-maintained public spaces that allow children to navigate their environment safely and independently. Removing the railings also promotes inclusivity, ensuring that parks are easily accessible to all, including parents with prams, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly. **The current layout of the park and railings creates serious challenges for accessibility and navigability and restricts access to this valuable amenity to anyone with a mobility limitation. They also contribute to poor sightlines as identified by the RSA. The gates contribute significantly to these mobility challenges.** The proposed design, including revised entrances and boundary treatments, resolves this issue.

Finally, a more open park fosters a greater sense of shared responsibility within the community, encouraging mutual awareness and care rather than solely relying on physical barriers for security. It allows children to engage more naturally with their surroundings, fostering confidence, independence, and a sense of belonging within the city. Ultimately, removing railings in favour of the hedging reflects a commitment to designing urban spaces that prioritise children's well-being by making the entire city a safe and accessible place for them, rather than confining them to designated areas. It also shows a commitment to enhancing the quality of play environments for children in the city by boosting green infrastructure and natural features.

It is submitted that in conjunction with Bus Connects Cross City Link, the proposal has successfully brought forward a design which will enable a safer urban environment for children in Galway, enabling them to interact safely with the wider urban environment and Woodquay Park. We believe that the proposed development balances the requirements of the space as best as possible, and still provides a safe and welcoming environment for school children which is capable of being managed and monitored by teachers.

## 2.2 Landscaping, Nature and Design

Several observers raised concerns in relation to a perceived reduction in soft/green landscaping and with the proposed removal of two trees. These submissions highlighted the important role of the park as a green amenity for residents and the city, its role in supporting local biodiversity including via the existing hedge and sometimes expressed a preference for the Mary Reynold's design and green space provided therein. Overall, consultees were very clear in their desire to reduce concrete and hard surfaces across all stages of the consultation process. Consultees who raised these issues are listed in **Table 2-3**.

Table 2-3: Consultees who raised concerns relating to nature, planting, trees, and the use of hardscaping

Alan Phelan	Frank Costello	The Nora Barnacle House Museum
The Nora Barnacle House Museum	Anne Marshall	An Taisce
Angela Gallagher	Bernadette Divilly	Caitriona Flanagan
Caimin Garry	Catherine Egan	Catherine Howley
Clare Nally	Eileen Naughten	Eileen Naughten
Finbar McHugh	Marjanne Bryan	Mark Green
Mrs Nichola Dalrymple	Sheila Gallagher	Victoria McCormack
Diarmuid Croghan – Woodquay Residents Association		

## 2.2.1

# Response from Galway City Council

## Trees

The topic of trees and greenery were raised at both the February and June consultation events, with several consultees noting the benefits of its landscaping, existing trees, and green open space, particularly within a city-centre context. A number of submissions received reference disappointment in the removal of two trees within the park. An Arboreal Report and Assessment was conducted by Tom Bradford Landscape Architects (TBLA) (submitted as part of the planning application) to assess the health and nature of the existing trees on the site. Four trees within the subject site were identified as being in poor health, with about 10 years of remaining contribution. As a result, **it is proposed to remove two of these four trees within the park – the rest of the trees are to be retained**. Of the two being removed, one is because it is growing within the existing hedgerow and will be unavoidably impacted by any works to improve the boundary. Both the tree and the hedgerows health are also being compromised by the current inter-growth. The second tree has a lean which could pose a potential health and safety risk to park users and property, as well as obstructing the sightlines within the park. It is acknowledged that one of the key wishes of the residents was the retention of as many trees as possible in the new park, and it is submitted that the proposed design has achieved this to the highest degree possible. The two trees which have been identified for removal would likely need to be removed under standard maintenance in the near future, regardless of the outcome of this application for the reasons identified above. The remaining 16 trees within Woodquay park will be retained and protected via protective fencing, in accordance with the British Standard BS5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction (2012) guidelines.

In her submission, we note that Angela Gallagher has raised concerns regarding the protection of the existing mature trees within the park. In response to the concerns, we would first refer to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which was prepared and submitted as part of the planning application. It sets out key mitigation measures that will ensure minimal adverse impacts on the existing environment throughout the construction phase of the project. To ensure adherence with the CEMP, it explicitly states that “*As construction proceeds, the CEMP may be updated through successive iterations, but it must always comply with or surpass the standards and requirements stipulated in this document.*” (our emphasis added). This explicitly highlights the requirement for the conditions, standards and requirements set out in the CEMP to be met as a minimum, ensuring that

environmental protection and minimal disruption to the local community is prioritised. Specifically in relation to the trees and their root systems, the CEMP states that:

*“Prior to the commencement of any works, tree protection fencing shall be installed to the locations shown on plan 12357-LUC-XX-00- DR-L-0108 P02 to create a Construction Exclusion Zone, in accordance with the recommendations of BS5837:2012. Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction– Recommendations. This fencing is to remain in place for the duration of the works and should only be moved towards the end of the construction works to allow planting works in close proximity to the trees”.*

Furthermore, the design proposals have carefully considered how to ensure the longevity of the existing tree stock on site, also how to enhance the setting of Woodquay through the extension of this significant green infrastructure up to the edge of Headford Road.

A detailed tree survey to BS5837 was completed prior to any design work being undertaken, to ascertain the extent of tree root zones below ground. The layout of the path network has been designed to avoid disruption to this rootzone with a ‘no dig’ technique proposed to path surfaces. Paths will be constructed from a permeable surface (to let air and water reach the rootzone), with path levels raised above existing ground levels to prevent excavation within the root zone. Tree protection fencing will be put in place throughout the construction period to prevent any damage to retained trees. Minor pruning works are identified for a number of trees in order to raise the clearance under their canopies to facilitate pedestrian access and enhance sightlines through the park for surveillance.

Four new trees are proposed which will be located within the former hard landscaped area adjacent to the Headford Road. These are specified as *Alnus incana* ‘Aurea’, a golden-leafed version of a Grey Alder. A Grey Alder is identified for removal to facilitate the path layout and therefore a similar replacement species has been chosen. Alder is also extremely well-suited to the damp conditions within the park and is recognised as a suitable species for planting within Rain Gardens, as it can withstand both periods of inundation and drought. Planting beds for the trees have been specifically sized to accommodate the likely size of the rootball at maturity, giving it the best chance of reaching its potential. All trees will be suitably staked to withstand damage from vandalism during establishment and planted with an irrigation/aeration pipe to ensure that adequate water, air and nutrients can reach the rootzone.

Following planting, the trees will be inspected to ensure that plant failures during initial establishment are replaced. Subsequently the trees will be maintained by GCC’s parks team.

### Provision of Green Space

During the consultation events, it was discussed that while the proposed development does provide marginally less soft/green landscape areas than exists currently, the proposed green areas are of a higher quality, providing enhanced amenity and additional habitats for local flora and fauna, along with sustainable urban drainage. The enhancements will include pollinator friendly bulb planting, rain garden planting, *Molinia* meadow planting, ground cover planting, and amenity grass planting which will increase ecological diversity within the site. Stemming from this enhancement, the design has proposed an accessible footpath route that encourages exploration of the park, and the nature contained within it, rather than a straight ‘A to B’ route. It is highlighted to the consultees that the designing of the footpaths to be universally accessible and providing enhanced connectivity to spaces the park (including for the mobility impaired), has resulted in the overall reduction in soft/green landscaping.

While it is understood that there is some disappointment that the Mary Reynolds’ proposal was not used in its entirety or more extensively, it should be acknowledged that this proposal set out considerably less soft landscape than this proposed development (see **Figure 1**, also included in full resolution in **Appendix 1**). It should also be noted that the path widths shown in the Mary Reynolds layout often do not meet universal accessibility criteria and therefore are not practically implementable. Should the

Mary Reynold's design have been used, enhancements to bring the footpaths into line with universal accessibility standards would have further reduced the provision of green space while also significantly impacting the design quality of the space. We also wish to highlight that universal accessibility was one of the strongest requests of the residents at the previous consultation events and is something that has strongly impacted the design of the park. Overall, it is submitted that the proposed development achieves a high quantum of soft landscaping whilst providing high quality accessibility.

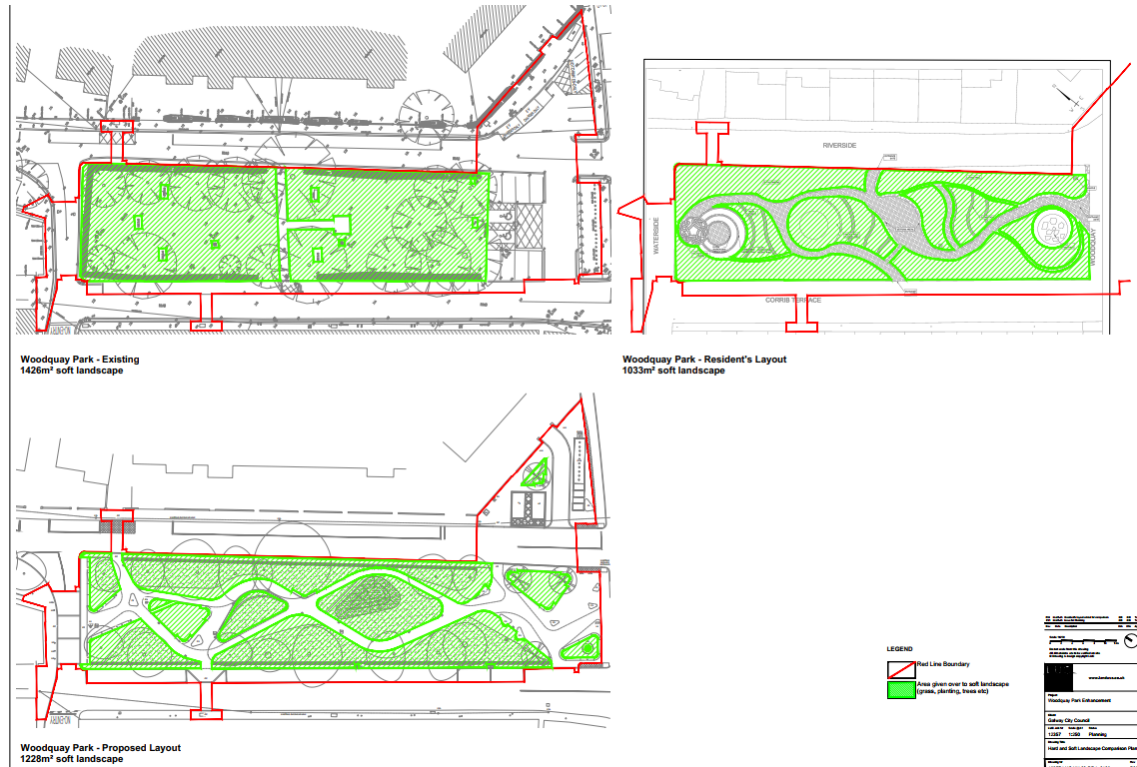


Figure 1: Comparison of soft landscaping areas on each design proposal.

## Quality of Green Space

With regard to the green design features included, the proposed development has sought to make extensive use of the most innovative and up to date design standards, in particular SuDS measures. Multiple rain gardens are provided in the proposed development, alongside permeable paving, extensive planting, and retention of existing healthy trees.

The landscape plan proposes the additional planting of approx. 4x Golden Alder (*Alnus incana* 'Aurea') trees to the northeast and southeast of Woodquay Park. Further, it is proposed to plant approx. 148m of mixed native hedgerow to the eastern and western margins of Woodquay Park, as a double staggered row, supported by a timber post and wire fence until established. Additional soft landscaping in the form of pollinator friendly bulb planting, rain garden planting, *Molinia* meadow planting, ground cover planting, and amenity grass planting is proposed throughout Woodquay Park. These landscape proposals will improve species diversity within the site and create additional habitats and opportunities for a range of local fauna, in keeping with the park's location adjacent to the SAC.

Further, a significant proportion of the existing trees (approx. 16x) on the site are to be retained and protected via protective fencing, in accordance with the British Standard BS5837: *Trees in relation to Design, Demolition, and Construction Guidelines (2012)*. The retention of these linear treeline features, ensure important commuting and foraging habitats for local wildlife are preserved, and ecological connectivity is maintained.

A comprehensive assessment of the potential significant effects on biodiversity has been undertaken within the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment Report (EcIA). Mitigation has been prescribed

where necessary and the residual effects have been assessed. Following the implementation of best practice and mitigation, there will be no significant impacts on biodiversity.

### Hedgerow

Several consultees also raised concerns about the replacement of the existing hedgerow along the border of the park. The value of this hedging to the character of park is acknowledged. However, over time this hedgerow has become poorly maintained, species-poor, and gappy. As is noted in the meeting minutes in **Appendix 2**, the Resident's Association acknowledged in 2020 that the hedgerow heavily is contaminated with briars and ivy. This is a conclusion shared by the EcIA submitted with the application.

As part of the proposed development, a double staggered row of mixed native hedgerow would be planted. It is submitted that this keeps intact the character of the park which the hedgerow contributes to. Further, as is stated in the EcIA submitted with the application *"There will be no significant residual effect on Treeline (WL2) or Hedgerow (WL1) habitat at any geographic scale as a result of the Proposed Works at Woodquay Park."* As such, we submit that any concerns regarding the removal of the existing poor-quality, existing hedgerow have been suitably addressed as part of the proposed design and landscape plan.

## 2.3

## Tourism Versus Residential Use

Several submissions raised concerns in relation to the perceived prioritisation of tourism over residential amenity in the proposed development. This included concerns over impacts to residential amenity resulting from use of the park, and the impact of the proposed design on character of the area. Many consultees also used the word 'plaza' to describe the proposed works. Consultees who raised these issues are listed in **Table 24**.

Table 24: Consultees who raised concerns in relation to tourism and residential amenity

Alan Phelan	Frank Costello	An Taisce
Anne Fox	Angela Gallagher	Grace O'Connell
Mary Morgan	Victoria McCormack	Eileen Naughton

### 2.3.1

## Response from Galway City Council

Several submissions raise concerns that the proposed design of Woodquay Park will prioritise tourism rather than local residents. The Design Team would strongly refute this perception and reiterate the various consultations and engagement that was undertaken with the local community. Further to this, it is critical to emphasise that the design was an iterative process that took on board and implemented many suggestions from consultees. The funding for the project is being provided by Failte Ireland's Urban Animation Fund, which seeks to support projects with the *"potential to transform and re-imagine urban centres for visitors and communities."*<sup>1</sup>

Overall, the proposed design of the park has sought to balance the needs of a range of stakeholders for the area including the residents of Woodquay, local schools, residents of the wider city, and tourists. The space has been designed to create an engaging and accessible area which enhances the vitality and vibrancy of the wider Woodquay area, with a priority on serving the needs of residents first. The role of Woodquay Park as the main green space for many residents is strongly acknowledged by the Design Team.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.failteireland.ie/Identify-Available-Funding/local-authority-schemes/Urban-Animation-Scheme.aspx>



The proposed enhanced park has been designed with the local community in mind, which has been underpinned by the several consultation stages undertaken as part of the design process. This is detailed in the Consultation Report prepared by MKO and submitted with the original application documentation. We submit that the proposed development focuses on creating a space that meets the everyday needs of the local community, emphasising an approach to functionality and accessibility. Features such as ample seating, shaded areas, and paths are carefully planned to support relaxation, exercise, and social interaction among residents while discouraging anti-social behaviour. As has been discussed in **Section 2.1: Railings**, the more open vision for the park has been progressed to create both a safer and more usable space. This will have a positive impact on the use of the space by residents and encourage the active use of the park.

By focusing on sustainable landscaping with specific planting and vegetation, the park can support local biodiversity, ensuring it remains a long-term resource for the community through both good and bad times. Safety features, including good lighting, accessible pathways, and clear sightlines, are designed with local families, elderly residents, and children in mind, making the park a welcoming and secure place for all.

### Definition and Character of the Park

A description of the space as a 'plaza' is used by a number of submissions which have been received on the application. It is not clear where the definition of the space as a plaza is derived from, and the Design Team would like to emphasise that the proposal seeks to retain the character and use of the area as a park, as emphasised by the extension of the greenspace through the area of existing parking at Headford Road. As is detailed in **Appendix 1**, the proposal makes extensive provision for green space which is of a higher quality than what is currently present. It is noted that Bus Connects Cross City Links makes provision for a new 'plaza' in Woodquay to the south of Woodquay Park and the Headford Road. This will replace the current parking lot in this area. As is discussed in the planning report, the design team and Applicant have taken great care to integrate the proposed enhancements to Woodquay Park with those proposed under Bus Connects for the wider Woodquay area.

We note the submission of Eileen Naughton which asserts that car and bike parking is being extended into the park, impacting the greenery of the area, and claims that the proposed design aims to facilitate traffic and parking, rather than prioritising the local neighbourhood. This statement is incorrect. It is possible there is some confusion regarding the assertion by consultees that the space is to be a 'plaza' (as discussed above). We would strongly reject this assertion, noting that a loss of 11 no. car parking spaces is required to facilitate the proposed design, largely in the area where the park is to be extended. The reduction in parking spaces therefore highlights that the focus of the design is to accommodate *less* traffic and parking than the current design, and instead further promote ease of movement and enhanced permeability of the area for pedestrians.

With further regard to the character of the proposed enhancements to the park, the Design Team has been guided by the Galway Public Realm Strategy. It has been sought to provide a design which integrates neatly with the existing city scape, as well as the proposed changes being brought forward by numerous other projects within the area.

Naturally, there will be opportunities for tourists and visitors to make use of the park, however this is also considered to bring about further benefits in terms of enhanced vibrancy and vitality around the area, as well as increased surveillance. The community consultations have played a crucial role in shaping the park's design, ensuring that it reflects the desires and needs of those who use it most frequently. Whilst the consideration of tourism was included throughout the design process, it is crucial to reiterate that the proposed design has prioritised the local community and their requirements and desires surrounding the proposed development.

Several submissions raised concerns in relation to the local significance and heritage aspects of the park, particularly with regard to its importance to residents over the years and the character of the Woodquay area. Consultees who raised these topics in their submission are listed in **Table 2-5**.

Table 2-5: Consultees who raised concerns relating to the local significance of the park and heritage aspects

Alan Phelan	An Taisce	Caimin Garry
Catherine Egan	Catherine Howley	Finbar McHugh
Frank Walsh	Mary Morgan	Neasa MacErlean
Sheila Gallagher		

#### 2.4.1

### Response from Galway City Council

Objections to the perceived dismissal of the architectural, cultural, historical significance of the area by the proposed development are strongly rejected by the Design Team. An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) has been prepared by ACP Conservation Architects and submitted as part of the planning application. The assessment was undertaken in recognition of the historic nature of the area. However, we wish to highlight that the subject site does not include or lie within the curtilage of any protected structures or National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) recorded buildings. The assessment included a site visit and inspection by a Building Conversation Accredited Surveyor and Chartered Building Engineer, desktop study of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), meetings with the Design Team, and assessment of the development proposal. The report concludes that:

*“...the proposals, as set out in this report, will ensure that Woodquay Park will be more functional and user friendly. The proposed development will have no impact on any protected structures or historic buildings. No mitigation measures are proposed.”*

Further to this, an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) Report (September 2024) has been prepared by TOBAR Archaeological Services and was included with the planning application. No recorded monuments are located within the proposed development site. However, the redline boundary does partially fall within the Zone of Notification (ZoN) for the historic town of Galway (GA094-100—) and its associated town defences (GA094-100001-). This triggered the need for the assessment in line with the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 (GCDP). The assessment utilised a desktop assessment, GIS based assessment, and site inspection to determine the potential for impacts on archaeological heritage resources within and adjacent to the proposed development site. The site inspection involved the excavation of two trial pits to establish ground conditions and the presence of groundwater. Excavations works were monitored, and no finds, features, or deposits were noted. The conclusion of the assessment is as follows:

*“No direct impacts to any recorded monuments as a result of the Proposed Development have been identified. A potential direct impact to any previously unrecorded sub-surface archaeological finds, features or deposits which may exist within the Proposed Development site has been identified. Appropriate mitigation in the form of archaeological monitoring of Site Investigations and construction stage ground works has been recommended. A change to the wider setting of the nearby recorded monument Quay GA094- 100059- is acknowledged and is regarded as Imperceptible.”*

These two separate assessments are both aligned in concluding that the proposed development is not at risk of impacting the cultural, architectural, or archaeological heritage of the area.

We note the submission from Alan Phelan states that the:

*“...heritage report is very thin on detail and does not seem to have any understanding of the history of the area or much detail on it. The report arrogantly assumes the Park has no local significance and the 'do-nothing' options are hypocritical, lazy, and greatly disappointing.”*

We would like to emphasise the extensive work that the Design Team has done liaising with the community to understand their requirements, desires, and the history of the space. We also would like to note the AHIA Report was prepared by specialised Conservation Architects (ACP Conservation Architects) who are exceptionally well regarded within their field. Furthermore, the subject site does not include or lie within the curtilage of any protected structures or NIAH recorded buildings, highlighting the anecdotal nature of heritage of the area. The Design Team fully acknowledges the local significance of the park to the area, its importance to everyday lives of residents, and the wealth of stories that have built up within and around it. However, as has been identified in the AHIA, that local significance is not tied to the given structure of the park but rather its existence and the use of the area as a green space. The proposed development seeks to preserve and enhance these characteristics, allowing the space to continue to be an important part of community life well into the future – instead of a preservation of the past.

The design team have been mindful of the need to create a strong sense of place within the Park. The initial design themes identified within the Mary Reynolds scheme, such as the Corrib, have been retained within the proposed design. The design language responds to the natural heritage found within its setting, using 'island' forms to echo the islands within the Corrib, planting that echoes the Molinia Meadows qualifying habitats of the SAC and installing the Galway Orb as a focal point at the entrance to the park, providing cultural references back to the City.

We also reject the description of the ‘do nothing’ approach as “lazy”. This scenario is used as a comparative method, as it provides a baseline for the existing park, helping GCC and the Design Team to understand the consequences of taking no action versus implementing changes. Considering a "do nothing" option helps to highlight the potential risks, such as deteriorating conditions, missed opportunities, or escalating costs over time. It also ensures that any proposed interventions are justified, cost-effective, and necessary. This approach serves as a critical reference point that aids in making informed, evidence-based decisions. We also wish to note that there is no assumption of a lack of local significance to the park itself.

The observation from Sheila Gallagher notes that:

*“The oral tradition passed down through my great-grandmother, grandmother, mother, tells us that when the river was filled in, this park was built as a communal garden for the row of small houses known as Corrib Terrace. These houses have no gardens themselves and only very little backyards”.*

The Design Team agrees with the importance of Woodquay Park is a much-valued amenity for residents, and a key green space given the housing typology of the area. It is also important to recognise that it is a public space in the centre of Galway City, managed by GCC for the benefit of the public, and should be available and accessible to all members of the public to enjoy. Residents’ thoughts and concerns were thoroughly considered throughout the several consultations and the iterative design process, in order to ensure that the proposed development catered firstly to the local community and residents. However, it must also be a space that is usable for the wider public. We submit that the proposed design ensures that the park fulfils this purpose of being an open and accessible space for all, which respects the heritage of the area, while meeting the needs of residents.



## 2.5

## Consultation Process

Several observations raised concerns in relation to the consultation process which was conducted before the lodgement of the Part XAB Application with the Board. Consultees who raised this issue are listed in **Table 2-6**.

*Table 2-6: Consultees who raised concerns relating to the consultation process*

Alan Phelan	Anne Fox	Caitriona Flanagan
Clare Nally	Diarmuid Croghan	Finbar McHugh
Frank Walsh	Les Burke	Mark Green
Neasa MacErlean	P. Farrell Garage	Sheila Gallagher
Diarmuid Croghan – Woodquay Residents Association		

## 2.5.1

### Response from Galway City Council

GCC progressed with the redesign of Woodquay Park following the hard work of the local residents to bring awareness to the need for upgrade works to the park and to imagine what a revitalised public space would look like for the community, through the concept redesign of the park created by renowned garden designer Mary Reynolds. It should be noted that it was essential to modify the Mary Reynolds design to ensure the deliverability of the project, as has been discussed in the sections above. Changes to her design were necessary to support future maintenance regimes, ensure alignment with the relevant planning policy and standards, provide universal accessibility, avoid damaging the existing trees, accommodate the All-Ireland Pollinators Plan, incorporate further SuDS measures, and to assess and manage the impact on existing trees and habitats. The active effort of residents to improve their community has been fundamental to the project from inception. As such it was determined from an early point that consultation would be required to ensure that community buy-in and engagement with the project remained strong, particularly as it entered the planning process. This is reinforced by the minutes of a meeting held between GCC and the Woodquay Residents Association in November 2020 and contained in **Appendix 2** of this response. This document indicates how many of the design changes which have been brought forward were agreed with residents early on in the process.

Requirements of funding meant that the appointment of the Design Team had to comply with EU and national public procurement procedures. The tender process for this happened in late 2022 and a team led by LUC were appointed in early 2023. During 2023 technical surveys and additional analysis was undertaken to provide a detailed understanding of the site and its constraints. The impact of other proposals and policy for the area (e.g. Cross-City Link, Public Realm Strategy) were also considered and fed into the design process. This informed the development of three design options, which were reviewed by the client and wider GCC team and also costed. Initially, the public consultation was scheduled for summer 2023 however this was delayed for various reasons. The February consultation was advertised in the Galway Advertiser on Thursday 25th Jan 2024, with the Woodquay Residents Association being informed of this in advance of it being published. A workshop with the Elected Members and a separate meeting with members of the Woodquay Residents Association were both held on Friday 2nd February 2024 to present the initial design proposal. Further consultation events followed with both dedicated groups and the wider public. The details of these can be found in the Public Consultation Report prepared by MKO.

First, we acknowledge some consultees did, and have continued to advise, they prefer the original Mary Reynolds design, and do not like the proposed design for a number of reasons. The current design aligns with many of the concepts from the original scheme, albeit in a different layout, which reflects the technical constraints and practical considerations missing from the Mary Reynolds scheme.

We wish to note that after the February and June consultation events and the feedback received from Woodquay residents, numerous changes to the design were progressed to action and account for the requests of the local community.

Feedback at the consultation events was generally varied, with positive feedback from members of the public in respect of the need for upgrades to the existing park and welcomed the design of the park as illustrated at the event, while a number of members of the community expressed desire for the existing park design created by Mary Reynolds to be reused.

It is acknowledged that some changes that were sought by consultees were not made, due to requirements imposed by policy and design standards, cost, or other considerations. These were not excluded out of ignorance at the request of residents, but due to the need for the design to meet the requirements of its brief, the need to balance competing spatial interests, and comply with the relevant standards and policies.

For example, request of the residents to retain as many trees as possible resulted in the need to redesign this area and ultimately the removal of the amphitheatre (originally proposed in the Mary Reynolds design). Most importantly, the retention of the trees requested by the residents resulted in their root protection areas extending into the amphitheatre area. As a result, it became spatially infeasible to accommodate an amphitheatre, suitable universally accessible walking space, and the trees. Further, the amphitheatre would need to be sunk into the ground to respect the protected views of the Corrib from the park, further resulting in impacts to the root protection areas and constraining design options. As a result, it was determined that the area would be redesigned with seating, which focused on the view of the Corrib.

Further examples include the standing stones proposed as part of the Mary Reynold design were not included in the final design for a number of reasons due to practical concerns. Whilst these types of features work well in a garden situation, there are concerns that standing stones may encourage anti-social behaviour or safety concerns from young children climbing on the stones. On the south side of the park, the visual focus is intended to be on the Galway Orb. Additionally, adequate space for the movement of people, seating, and biodiversity elements were prioritised.

With several consultation events being held, GCC and the Design Team made every effort to ensure that the local community were actively engaged throughout the design process, and were committed to incorporating as many of the preferred proposed design elements as was practical. As noted above, some suggestions put forward by local residents could not be incorporated into the final design due to various constraints, such as planning policy, funding, and spatial limitations. In response to the submissions that queried deviations from previous proposals, we reiterate that where a desire for changes to the design were expressed by the public, these were sought to be accommodated as far as was safely, technically, and spatially possible while complying with the requirements of the project funding and all other standards and guidance.

We note the observations submitted by Les Burke and Mark Green which asserted that the public notices are misleading. The notices clearly state that the proposed development includes hard and soft landscaping, native hedgerow, and associated / ancillary works. The Planning Report submitted with the application explicitly states that “*The boundary of the park will be defined by hedge planting, requiring the removal of the existing railing which is in poor condition*”. Further to this, the removal of railings was discussed throughout the several public consultation events held and is explicitly referenced throughout the public consultation report that was also submitted as part of the planning application. Additionally, the landscape drawings submitted with the application clearly illustrate this change visually.

The intention of the public notices is to *briefly* describe the proposed development and provide detail on where further detailed information can be accessed, which we submit was successfully achieved. The specific changes and design proposals as part of this planning application were detailed comprehensively throughout the full suite of planning application documents that were lodged to An Bord Pleanála. These are available for inspection at the offices of An Bord Pleanála, the offices of Galway City Council, and online at the Galway City Council website.

In summary, the Design Team is content that the proposed design represents the best balance between stakeholder feedback, the design brief, relevant policy and guidance, budget, and space constraints. The design presented within the planning application represents the end result of a detailed iterative design process, which was strongly influenced by the public consultation process. Where a desire for changes to the design were expressed by the public, these were sought to be accommodated as far as was safely, technically, and spatially possible while complying with the requirements of the project funding and all other standards and guidance. The space has been designed to create an engaging, ecologically diverse, and accessible area that provides enhanced green space for residents and visitors and creates a better natural environment within the City Centre. It is submitted that the proposed design represents the best and most fair balance of these competing interests, is the result of a long and robust consultation process and is in line with the proper planning and sustainable development of the Woodquay neighbourhood and Galway City.

## 2.6 Maintenance and Aftercare

During the consultations conducted by the Design Team, the historically poor maintenance of the park was consistently raised as an issue. Some consultees have re-emphasised this issue within their observations. The consultees who raised these issues are listed in **Table 2-7** below.

*Table 2-7: Consultees who raised concerns relating to the maintenance of the park.*

An Taisce	Clare Nally	
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### 2.6.1 Response from Galway City Council

A key driver for the proposed design, and its evolution from the proposed Mary Reynolds design, is the ability to maintain and care for the space. It has been a key priority from the beginning of the design process that the enhanced park is easily and affordably manageable and maintainable in order to ensure that the park remains a safe, positive and well-looked after green space. We emphasise the fact that the Galway City Council [Public Realm Strategy](#) has informed the design of the proposed development at all stages, and a focus on the creating a space is durable and long lasting is central to the design. This is following **Policy 5.9 of the Galway City Development Plan (2022-2029)** which aims to

*“Implement the Public Realm Strategy for the public domain which contributes to the creation and maintenance of high quality and successful open spaces”.*

Woodquay’s maintenance was therefore a key consideration throughout the iterative design process, and this was consequently translated into a design that promotes green-blue infrastructure that will remain a high-quality space.

We request that any concerns in reference to the rill from Clare Nally’s observation are dismissed, as this was proposed as part of an earlier design but was subsequently removed following the February public consultation and feedback. The final design and proposed development therefore do not include the rill. This example explicitly illustrates how the design process considered and implemented feedback from the local community, in order to ensure that the design process was collaborative and met the needs of local residents and users.

2.7

## Design Around 8 Walsh's Terrace

The observation submitted by Mr. Robert Grealish focused on details relating to vehicular access to his property at 8 Walsh's Terrace, and the parking layout for motorcycle and TFI bicycle spaces.

2.7.1

### Response from Galway City Council

We first wish to note that a Quality Audit and Stage 1&2 Road Safety Audit of the proposed development was prepared by PCME Engineers on behalf of PUNCH Consulting Engineers to assess the design of the proposed scheme. The Quality Audit contains several reports within it, each with the goal of assessing the proposed designs suitability from a transportation and mobility perspective. These include an Access Audit, Cycle Audit, Walking Audit, and Non-Motorised Adult Audit. The Quality Audit identified a number of potential issues, which were successfully addressed and resolved as part of the iterative design process for the development. These assessments therefore ensure that the proposed development meets and aligns with the required standards in order to ensure proper and sustainable planning.

The respondent raises concerns regarding vehicular access to their property, stating that *"the proposed access road should, at the very least, exceed this fixed opening of 3.2 metres and should be constructed to the industry standard of 3.6 metres (12 feet)"*. He also raises that the planning permission for his property sets out required the width of the access point. First, we wish to note that the width of the access to 8 Walsh's Terrace is 3.15m under the proposed development. The planning permission for the property prescribes that the access road should have a maximum width of 3.2m in Condition 2 of the grant of planning permission (GCC Ref. 11/154), as shown in **Figure 2** below. Therefore, there is no conflict between the proposed design of Woodquay Park, and the permitted width of the respondent's driveway.

Further to this, there is no requirement for a standard of 3.6m width for site accesses within DMURS, which is the appropriate road design guidance document for the subject site. We wish to note that **Section 4.4.1: Carriageway Widths of DMURS** states *"Research from the UK has found that narrow carriageways are one of the most effective design measures that calm traffic."* Therefore, it is not considered appropriate to widen a site access which has functioned well for over 10 years, in an area where calmed traffic is desired. As a result, we request that this request is dismissed by the Board.

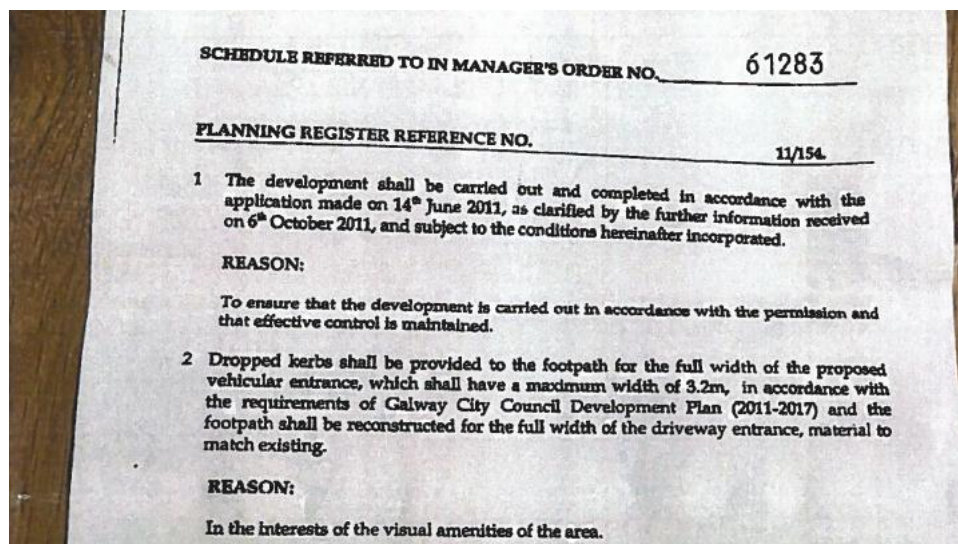


Figure 2: Grant of Permission for GCC Pln. Ref. 11/154, extracted from Mr. Robert Grealish's observation.

The proposed development allows for adequate space for the inclusion of the 10-cycle hire stands and 4 no. motorcycle spaces. Again, the Quality Assessment in including the Road Safety Audit has assessed the area and proposed location, concluding that ensures that the proposed location is appropriate, and that there is sufficient space for its use. We refute the claim that the proposed location of the cycle hire

stands is restricted or hindered due to Bus Connects Cross-City Link. The layout of the Cross City Link and the proposed development has been provided as part of the original application documentation. We would also like to note that the existing EV charging spaces will be relocated within the site, creating space for planting which enhances the streetscape at this location, and the road safety within this area as a whole.

As has been stated, the Design Team acknowledge the location of the proposed development in direct proximity to the Bus Connects – Cross City Link scheme. It has been a key consideration of the Design Team throughout the process. As a result, an initial meeting was held on the 24 September 2023 with the Cross City Link team (consisting of Galway City Council, the National Transport Authority’s Capital Projects Team, and Arup). The options that were under consideration were discussed, and the Design Team took onboard these proposals in order to reduce conflict as the design for both progressed. Once the design of Woodquay Park was finalised, an online meeting was held on the 6 September 2024 to discuss the design with the Cross City Link Team prior to lodgement of a planning application. This engagement ensured that the proposed development did not conflict with or interfere with the proposed Bus Connects scheme, in order to ensure that both projects were deliverable, and in the designed in the interest of proper and sustainable planning. Stemming from this engagement, the Cross City Link team expressed no issues with the proposed design for Woodquay Park during this meeting. We therefore express that the cycle stands, and motorcycle spaces are in a suitable and appropriate location that allows for high quality and integrated design with the wider plans for the Woodquay area.

## 2.8

## Link to the Plotts

We acknowledge the submission made by Mr. Diarmuid Croghan regarding the proposed linkage between Woodquay Park and the pathway to the Plotts. His observation covered a number of concerns relating to this linkage including:

- **Residential amenity:** Concern for a reduction in amenity and loss of privacy at dwelling house opposite the front entrance.
- **Safety:** The road safety of the proposed pedestrian crossing.
- **Disturbance and antisocial behaviour:** Concern that the new park will encourage anti-social behaviour in the evenings resulting in noise disturbance to nearby residents. Resident also cited that there are current issues with loitering and anti-social behaviour in the area.

### 2.8.1

## Response from Galway City Council

### Privacy and Residential Amenity

Mr. Croghan has raised concerns that the proposed new entrance to Woodquay Park could reduce the residential amenity of his home and represents a reduction in privacy. We firmly reject this assertion and raise that the proposed entrance does not materially alter the existing privacy of the site. First, we highlight that the proposed new entrance to the park and pedestrian crossing of Riverside aligns with the overall upgrade plan and enhances public accessibility. This linkage is already functioning as an active travel route, and is therefore expected to be used by cyclists, and pedestrians. **The crossing serves a critical active travel desire line from the Plotts into Woodquay Park, providing a safer crossing and overall road layout.**

While concerns regarding privacy are acknowledged, the entrance is situated within a public space where pedestrian activity is expected, and existing. While the entrance may result in some re-routed foot traffic within the extremely localised vicinity, it does not introduce an unreasonable or atypical level of public presence. The goal of the crossing is to meet an existing pedestrian desire line safely. As it currently stands, pedestrians coming from the Plotts and looking to cross Riverside often wander onto the carriageway. This is a significant safety risk. It should also be noted, that given this existing use



pattern, the claim that the pedestrian crossing would encourage more people to look into the consultee's home is unsubstantiated. Therefore, the claim of a "significant reduction in privacy" is subjective given the existing use and character of the area, and does not constitute grounds for rejecting or modifying the proposal.

We wish to note that concerns regarding residential privacy have been carefully considered throughout the iterative design process. It is important to highlight that buildings which face public spaces (e.g. roads, parks, or pathways) inherently experience some level of visibility from passersby – and the public spaces experience positive overlooking from these properties. The concerns regarding residential amenity were noted throughout the public consultations, however, precedent of providing similar crossings elsewhere in Galway and Ireland has not been shown to increase loitering at the crossing point.

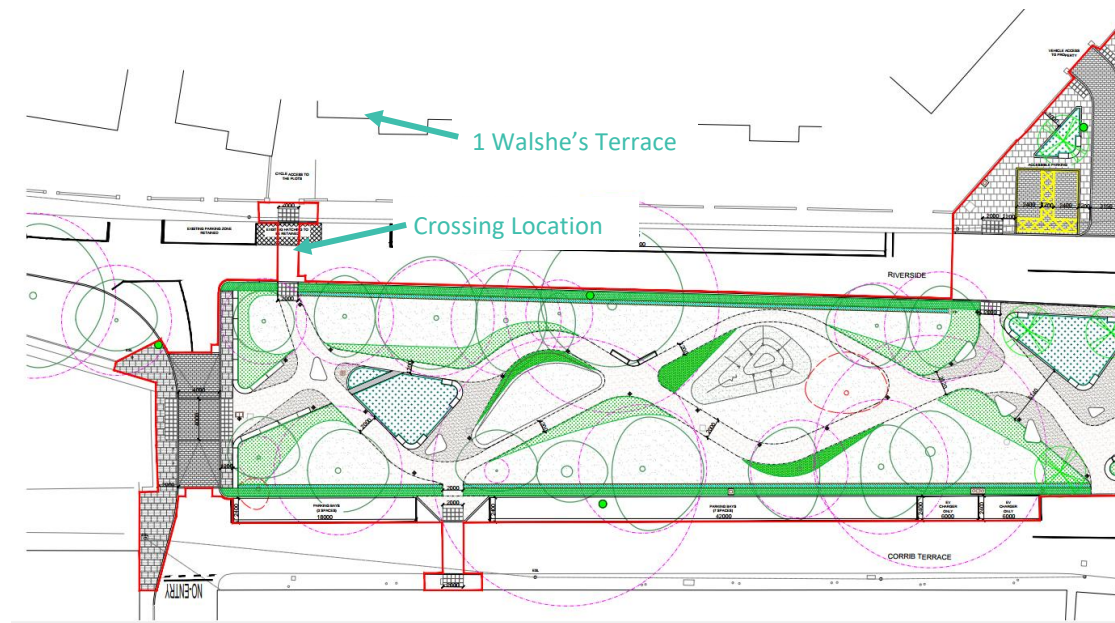


Figure 3: Proposed layout of Woodquay Park with markings indicating the location of Mr. Croghan's residence and the new crossing he has expressed concerns with.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

The concerns of the Consultee regarding the potential for anti-social behaviour at the crossing are noted. His experiences regarding anti-social behaviour in the existing linkage to the Plotts were considered by the Design Team and have factored into the proposal. This has been one of the key reasons that the current design has sought to increase positive overlooking of the park and open it to public view. The current prevalence of anti-social behaviour is enabled by the fact the park is closed off and is perceived as being shielded from the overlooking of residents.

The Consultee's statements regarding loitering at the existing entrances of the park are noted. As it currently stands, the entrances to the park often form a kind of spontaneous meeting point for the community. This is partially as a result of the fact the existing park is unwelcoming, with the gates preventing the smooth or comfortable flow of people into and out of the space, and partially as a result of poor permeability and connections within the park. This encourages loitering around the entrances, which often takes the form of people standing by the gates chatting as it is the last place before they must split to go different directions.

The proposed design has sought to draw social activity into the park via enhanced permeability, where it can be suitably accommodated, and away from more transient or dangerous points such as the crossings. Part of this involves providing enhanced connectivity, such as via the Plotts, so the park serves as its own key meeting point, instead of as a place where people must split to finish their

journeys. It is also noted that regardless of the provision of the crossing from the Plotts to the Park, pedestrians can and will continue to use the existing linkage besides Walshe's Terrace. Should the crossing not be provided, the apparent dead-end in the desire path may simply encourage people to loiter directly in front of the consultee's house while they reorient, instead of continuing on their journey.

## Road Safety

As the Consultee has identified, the provision of the crossing has been assessed as part of the Stage 1&2 Road Safety Audit, which confirmed the design was of an acceptable standard. Moreover, the upgraded park aims to enhance universal accessibility and community enjoyment, ensuring that all people are able to access the amenity it provides. We submit that the Consultee's proposal to exclude the proposed crossing would further institutionalise the current unsafe layout, which encourages crossing the carriageway at Riverside in an uncontrolled manner.

The Consultee also suggests providing a "staggered junction" for pedestrians. First, we would note the characterisation of Riverside as a 'major route' is not in keeping with its character as a neighbourhood street. While traffic can flow two directions, it is frequently only possible for one car to pass at a time due to the width of the carriageway. Secondly, the use of a staggered junction is not in line with the standards contained in DMURS or the Cycle Design Manual, and would be considered out of date by modern road design and engineering standards. As is noted in **Section 4.3.2: Pedestrian Crossings in DMURS**, crossings should:

*"Allow pedestrians to cross the street in a single, direct movement (see Figure 4.39). Staggered/staged crossings should not be used where pedestrians are active, such as in Centres, Neighbourhoods and Suburbs (except where stated below).*

*Where staggered/staged crossings currently exist they should be removed as part of any major upgrade works. This should include realignment works to slow vehicle movements, such as reduced corner radii and/or carriageway narrowing (see Figure 4.40 and Section 4.3.3 Corner Radii)"*

DMURS further notes that where there are concerns regarding the omissions of staggered crossings, safety concerns can be overcome by *"Providing build-outs, where possible, to reduce the crossing distance."* It is submitted that the retention of the existing hatching in front of the crossing provides a build out which enables pedestrians and drivers to more clearly see each other and satisfies this item. It should also be noted that the provision of a raised crossing, which would have assisted in calming traffic and further meeting the above requirements of DMURS was removed at the request of the residents who were concerned about its impact on the character of the area, and its impact on the ability of residents to reverse from their driveway.

In short, either of the Consultee's proposed amendments to the crossing would be emblematic of previous endemic failures of road design in Galway, which have neglected to meet the needs of pedestrians or account for their desire lines. The Applicant is wholly determined to provide a modern and complete streetscape, which complies with modern design standards, and rectifies previous design shortfalls. As such, we submit that the planning and design of the park improvements have more than suitably considered factors such as accessibility, safety, and urban design principles, ensuring that the new entrance serves a meaningful function in improving connectivity and usability of the space.

### 3. PRESCRIBED BODIES

#### 3.1 The National Transport Authority

The National Transport Authority (NTA) submission (dated 8 October 2024) explicitly states its support for the proposed development noting that *“the NTA would support the development in principle as it would improve public realm at this location to the benefit of sustainable modes”*.

Key items raised in the submission include:

- **Bus Operations:** The NTA have requested that engagement between GCC and the Cross-City Link Team continues throughout detailed design and construction to ensure that the proposed development can integrate fully with the Cross-City Link Scheme.
- **Bicycle parking:** It is the view of the NTA that the Transport for Ireland (TFI) bike rental station should be maintained in this area with an appropriate level of docking stations provided relative to demand. It is the view of the NTA that well located and secure bicycle parking should be provided as part of the scheme to encourage and support travel to and from the park by private bicycle.

##### 3.1.1 Response from Galway City Council

GCC welcome the NTA’s support for the development in principle.

GCC and the Design Team are keen to ensure the seamless integration of both proposals, and therefore, will endeavour to ensure that the Cross-City Link Team are engaged throughout the detailed design and construction process to facilitate the most effective delivery of both projects.

Due to the retention of TFI bike rental docking stations provided site, additional bicycle parking was not initially considered by GCC as an essential addition to the design upgrade. This was also due to the provision of 19 no. new cycle parking spaces in the vicinity of the park to be delivered under Bus Connects Cross City Link. However, should the Board find it appropriate to apply a condition requiring further cycle parking, the Applicant would be pleased to work the NTA and Cross City Link team to deliver this.

We do wish to note that consultation was undertaken with the NTA as part of the liaison with the Bus Connects team prior to the lodgement of the application. At this time the NTA expressed no concerns regarding the provision of cycle parking and gave approval in principle for the provision. We note that the submission by the NTA was received from the strategic planning department, whereas previous liaison has been with a project manager for public urban realm at the NTA. Please refer to **Appendix 3** of this response for the correspondence conducted with the NTA prior to lodgement, and the Consultation Report prepared by MKO for further detail.



3.2

## The Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage – Development Applications Unit

Key items raised in the submission from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) (dated 11 November 2024) include:

- **Archaeology:** The DHLGH reviewed the findings of the desk-based Archaeological Impact Assessment Report (AIA) (September 2024) submitted as part of the planning application and broadly concurs with the impact statement and recommended mitigation strategies.
- The DHLGH recommends the following conditions be included as part of any grant of planning permission:
  - All mitigation measures included in the AIA Report shall be implemented in full.
  - Retain / engage a suitably qualified archaeologist to carry out Archaeological Monitoring.
  - Should archaeological remains be identified during the course of archaeological monitoring, all works shall be suspended in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of GCC.
  - The developer shall facilitate the archaeologist in recording any remains identified.
  - Following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation specialist analysis, GCC and the DHLGH shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of the monitoring and any subsequent required archaeological investigative work/excavation required.
  - The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall include the location of any and all archaeological or cultural heritage constraints relevant to the proposed development (as set out in the AIA Report).

3.2.1

### Response from Galway City Council

In the interest of proper and sustainable planning, GCC would accept and deliver on these proposed conditions, should they be prescribed in a planning grant, in order to ensure continued archaeological preservation of the subject site.

3.3

## An Taisce

Key items raised in An Taisce's submission (dated 6 November 2024) include:

- **Enclosed and lockable garden park:** An Taisce expressed concern in relation to the proposal to develop the area as an open plaza and expressed a preference for it to remain an enclosed, lockable park to deter anti-social behaviour and to avoid large crowds gathering particularly during the festival months disturbing residential amenity.
- **Consultation:** Criticism of the consultation process and knowledge of the Design Team.
- **Landscaping:** An Taisce expressed concern that the proposal includes too much hard landscaping in comparison to existing park, and that Mary Reynolds designs of the park have been disregarded.
- **Cost:** Concerns that the project will overrun in time or in budget.
- **Local schools use of park:** An Taisce was satisfied to see that the local schools who regularly use the park were engaged in the consultation process. An Taisce expressed a preference for the use of railings and gates to make it a safe area for children.

## 3.3.1

## Response from Galway City Council

In response to a preference for an enclosed park with lockable gates and concerns regarding anti-social behaviour, we would refer to **Section 2.1: Railings** of this response, where An Taisce's concerns have been addressed in detail.

In response to ensuring that schoolchildren can make use of the park under the proposed design, we would direct the Board's attention to **Section 2.1.2: Child-Friendly Space**. We wish to note that the proposed development embraces best practices in urban planning by fostering a secure, accessible, and welcoming environment for the entire community, with a particular emphasis on children. There is a strong focus on safety and inclusivity, the proposed design creates an ideal setting for schoolchildren, supporting outdoor learning, play, and social development. This includes enhanced opportunities for learning about biodiversity and nature within the park. The proposed development follows best urban planning practices, creating a secure, accessible, and welcoming space for the community, especially children.

With regards to the robustness of the public consultation process undertaken as part of the proposed project, we would direct the Board's attention to **Section 2.5: Consultation Process**.

Regarding the reduction of soft landscaping, we would direct the Board's attention to **Section 2.2: Landscaping, Nature and Design** of this response. We emphasise that the existing park has 1426m<sup>2</sup> of soft landscaping, the proposed design includes 1228m<sup>2</sup> of soft landscaping, whilst the Mary Reynolds design includes only 1033m<sup>2</sup> of soft landscaping. This is detailed in **Appendix 1** of this document. Further to this, at the resident's requests 2 no. additional trees have been maintained as part of the final proposed development than what was originally proposed. We submit this highlights the efforts to ensure that Woodquay Park remains a rich green space that promotes biodiversity, walkability, and enjoyment of such space, and to consult with residents to achieve this.

Finally, we request An Bord Pleanála to dismiss An Taisce's concerns that the project will run over in time and budget, as this is not materially relevant to the planning or environmental impact of the proposed development.

4.

## ORGANISATIONAL OBSERVATIONS

Three non-statutory organisation made observations on the application. We have responded to their concerns below in acknowledgement of their representation of a cross section of stakeholders for the project.

4.1

### Evelyn O'Toole of Mercy Primary and Wendy Lynch of St. Nicholas' Parochial School

Key items raised in these submissions include:

- **Consultation process:** Lack of notification of public consultation events.
- **Child-friendly space:** Useability of the space for schoolchildren.
- **Landscaping:** Lack of inclusion of Mary Reynolds design concepts.

4.1.1

#### Response from Galway City Council

Consultation with the schools surrounding the Woodquay area was an important part of the design process for the proposed development. Representatives of the school were welcome to the public consultations advertised for February of 2024. In addition, a dedicated consultation with schools occurred in June of 2023, as was discussed in the Consultation Report submitted with the application. Please note the meeting minutes attached to **Appendix 4** of this document regarding the dedicated meeting conducted with the local schools. We would highlight that Wendy Lynch of St. Nicholas' Parochial School was invited but did not attend this meeting. However, numerous calls and emails were sent requesting both her and the school's input.

The proposed development embraces the principles of good urban planning by fostering a safe, accessible, and welcoming environment for the community—particularly for children. The design incorporates natural hedgerow as a soft, secure boundary. This native hedgerow not only provide a safe enclosure but also blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, enhancing the park's aesthetic appeal. We would emphasize the nature of the existing hedgerow as having briars, which poses a safety concern for children. The new native hedgerow will resolve this issue. The existing railings currently visually close the park off from the wider community in Galway City and make the space uninviting and drawing in anti-social behaviour. It is submitted that the provision of a native hedgerow boundary with revised entrances, which provide improved sightlines at road crossing points (as is discussed in the Road Safety Audit), still enables the successful management of school children, while **providing a more welcoming and safe space for everyone.**

The design prioritises child-friendly accessibility, with pathways that meander through the park, encouraging movement and discovery rather than simply serving as a direct thoroughfare. This layout not only promotes physical activity but also supports social interaction, group play, and outdoor learning experiences. It also makes the park accessible to persons (including children) with a disability, unlike the current layout or Mary Reynolds design. Furthermore, the park's enhanced biodiversity will provide valuable educational opportunities for schoolchildren. Native planting, wildflower meadows, and pollinator-friendly habitats will introduce children to the importance of ecology, sustainability, and urban wildlife. The inclusion of rain gardens and sustainable drainage features also offers a hands-on way for children to learn about environmental responsibility and water management in cities. By integrating nature into everyday play and learning, the development supports the physical, social, and cognitive development of young people in a safe, well-designed, and engaging outdoor space. It also makes the park an ideal outdoor classroom, complementing the *Green Schools* ethos of hands-on environmental education. For further detail on the landscaping proposed as part of the park, and the

design process and reasoning please refer to **Sections 2.2: Landscaping, Nature and Design** and **Section 2.5: Consultation Process**.

Considering this, we emphasise that the proposed design has been carefully developed to create a safe, engaging, and enriching environment for school children, encouraging outdoor learning, play, and social interaction. By replacing railings with natural hedging, the park remains a secure space where children can explore freely while remaining safely enclosed within a clearly defined boundary. We submit that this approach has succeeded in balancing the needs of children with that of creating a more welcoming space that interacts with the wider city.

4.2

## Woodquay Residents Association (c/o Diarmuid Croghan)

The submissions received from Diarmuid Croghan on behalf of the Woodquay Resident's Association raised several key issues including:

- **Railing:** Concerns over the removal of the railings from the perspective of anti-social behaviour and creating a child friendly city.
- **Effects on the environment:** including concern for the existing hedge and tranquillity of the park.
- **Consultation:** Concerns regarding the consultation conducted on the project, and deviations from the Mary Reynolds design.

4.2.1

### Response from Galway City Council

Regarding the removal of the railings, and their replacement with hedging, we would direct the Board's attention to **Sections 2.1.1: Anti-social behaviour** and **2.1.2: Child-Friendly Space**. In summary, however, we acknowledge the concerns have been raised in relation to disturbance, antisocial behaviour, and the removal of railings. Similar to the existing railings, the native hedgerow will offer a sense of privacy and security acting as a natural barrier that offers security and therefore minimising the risk of antisocial behaviour. The layout of the park and the native hedgerow boundary has also been carefully considered to ensure that the safety of children has been considered and catered for. The native hedgerow boundary will contribute to improving natural surveillance, meaning that antisocial behaviours will be more easily exposed and discouraged. We emphasise that although the existing design does have railings and gates that can be locked, GCC does not lock Woodquay Park or Millenium Children's Park or any other park in the city and there are no plans to change this. We would suggest that, in conjunction with proposed enhanced lighting, the open and well-lit space will ensure that any potential antisocial behaviour will not be 'locked into' the park, but rather it will be accessible and therefore easily identified, exposed and consequently addressed.

The concerns relating to the environment and nature within the park are noted by the Design Team. We would direct the Board's attention to **Section 2.2: Landscaping, Nature and Design** of this report where they have been comprehensively addressed.

Regarding concerns relating to the consultation process, we would direct the Board's attention to **Section 2.5: Consultation Process**. We would reemphasise that throughout the design process, every effort was made to incorporate as many of the key elements and principles valued by residents as possible. However, due to a range of practical considerations—including maintenance requirements, usability, and overall feasibility—it was not possible to implement the Mary Reynold's design in its entirety.

**The proposed design retains core aspects of the original Mary Reynolds concept while introducing modifications which further enhance the long-term sustainability, accessibility, maintainability, and functionality of the green space for the benefit of the local community.** We would also highlight that many of the design features in the proposed design stem from the requests of residents. Finally, we

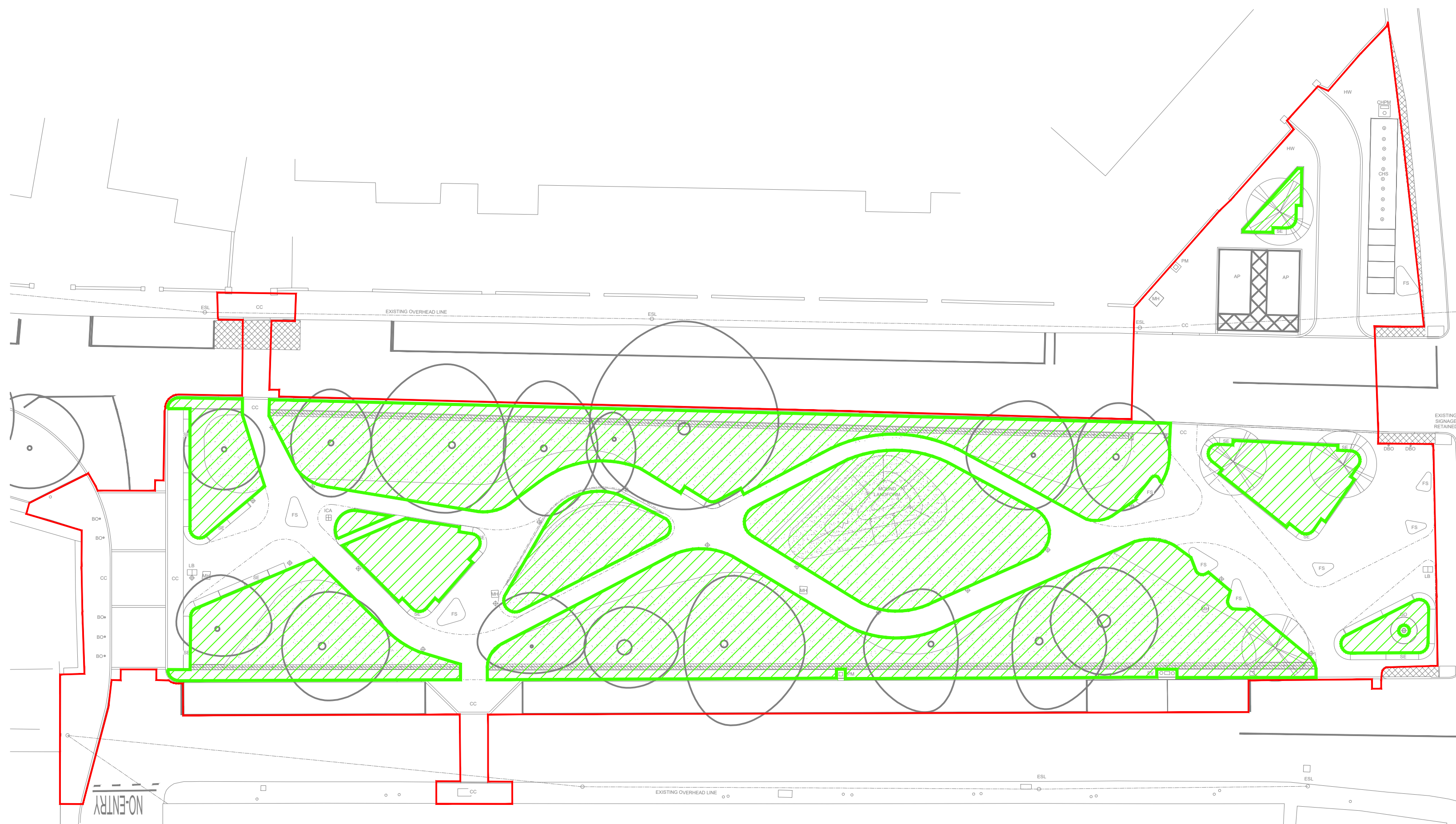
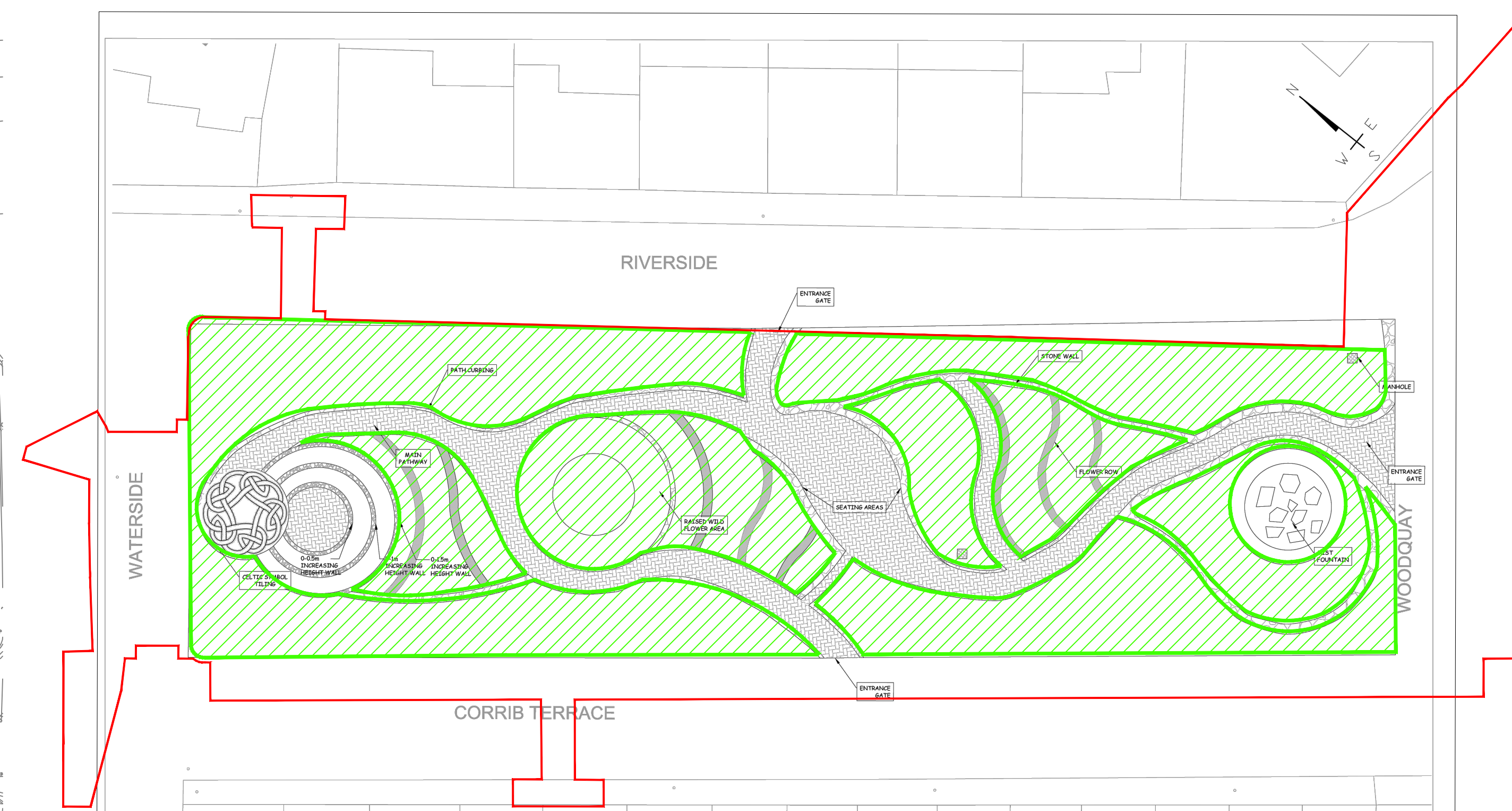
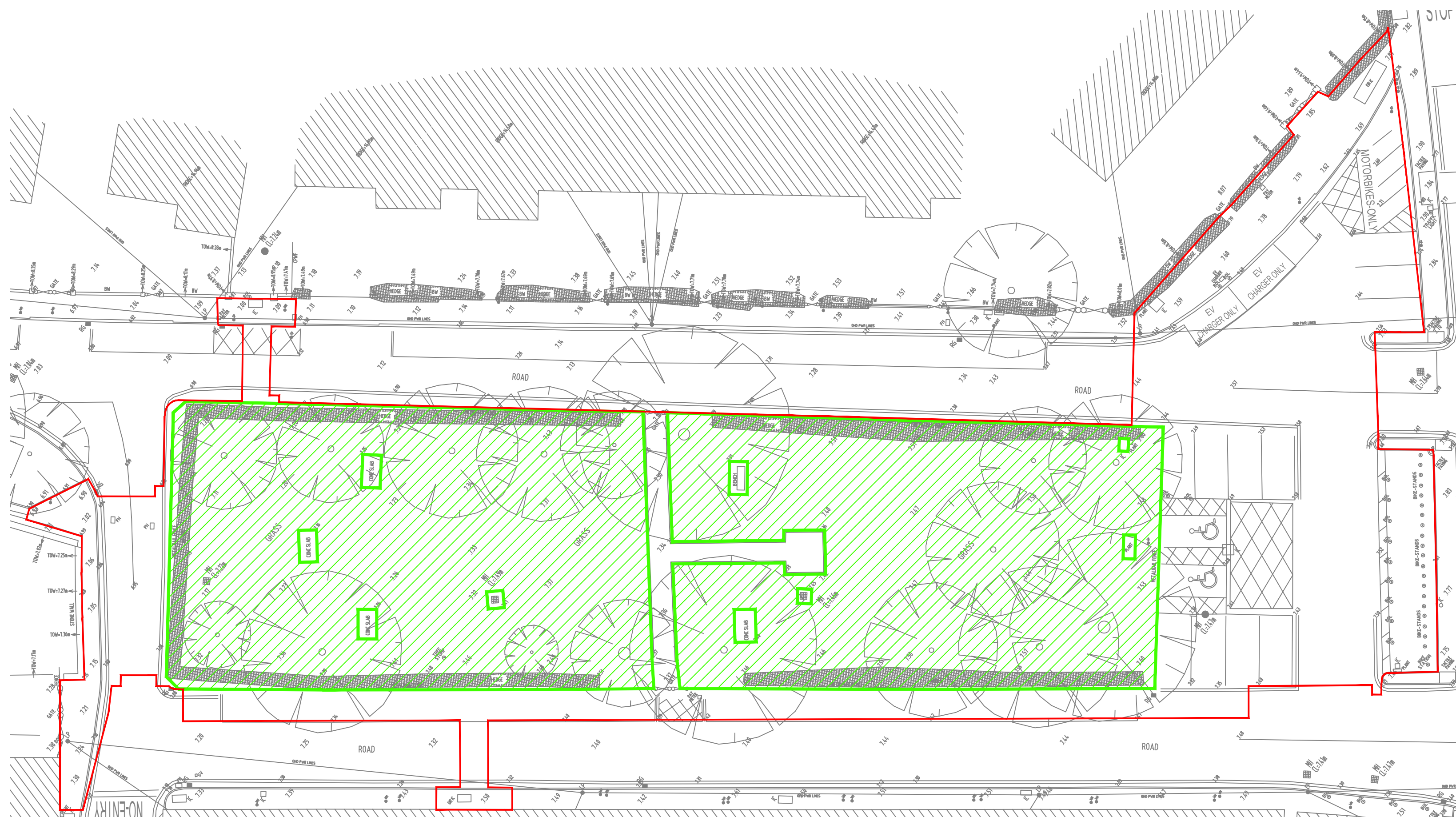
would direct the Board's attention to the Consultation Report submitted with the original application documentation. We would highlight the number of design changes and modifications made by the Design Team, at the request of the Woodquay Residents Association, in order to achieve the closest possible design to their vision that remained deliverable and maintainable. It submitted that the design responses for both of the topics raised by the Woodquay Residents Association have been thoroughly explained in the section above, and the underlying concerns which these requests are based on have been addressed. As a result, it is submitted that the Design Team have fully fulfilled the design requests of the Residents Association, as a result of a long and detailed public consultation process.



## APPENDIX 1


**COMPARISON OF SOFT  
LANDSCAPING AREAS ON EACH  
DESIGN PROPOSAL PREPARED  
BY LUC**






### LEGEND

 Red Line Boundary

 Area given over to soft landscape (grass, planting, trees etc)


P02	24.01.25	Resident's layout added for comparison	CO	CO	TJO
P01	22.01.25	Issue for Planning	CO	CO	TJO
Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App

Scale 1:250



0 2 4 6 8 10 12m

Do not scale from this drawing  
All dimensions are to be verified on site  
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Project  
Woodquay Park Enhancement

Client	Galway City Council
--------	---------------------

LUC Job Nr	Scale @A1	Status
12357	1:250	Planning

Drawing Title  
Hard and Soft Landscape Comparison Plan

Drawing Nr	Rev
12357-LUC-XX-00-DR-L-0109	P02





## APPENDIX 2

**MINUTES OF CONSULTATION  
MEETING HELD THE WOODQUAY  
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION NOV  
2020**



Notes of Meeting  
on Wood quay Park  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Attendance:**

Jonathon Hannon – Woodquay Residents Association

Stephen Walsh - GCC

Carmel Kilcoyne – GCC

**Short Term Fixes**

- **Hedge**

The hedge has already been pruned back and assessed in terms of its future. It was concluded that the hedge at the front (Woodquay) and the rear (River) ends of the park is extremely contaminated with briars and Ivy with very little original hedge remaining.

It is recommended removing the vegetation in its entirety along the two short edges of the Park (shown in orange) and replanting a mixed flowering hedge consisting of Choisya and Philadelphus, which will be managed at an eventual height of 600mm. See map and images overleaf:

**Action:** Jonathon to bring this proposal back to the residents for approval and advise GCC if this is acceptable or not as soon as possible.

**Action:** Subject to approval this hedge will be removed and replanted before the end of Q1 2021.

- **Drainage**

The drainage has been assessed and the most likely cause of the drainage issues on Corrib Terrace is the camber of the road causing the water to flow towards the park which is getting trapped by the height of the park where they meet. There does not appear to be an issue of water draining from the park onto the road. There is also a drainage issue at the wood quay end of the Park. This issue will be assessed with our colleagues in Roads to see if an aco drain or similar can be installed along the park edge of Corrib terrace.

**Action:** GCC to revert

- **Trees**

Jonathon requested that any works on the trees could be undertaken now in advance of development works for the park. He was advised that the dead tree would be removed and subject to further assessment, management works will be undertaken on the rest of the trees in 2021 as appropriate to ensure their conservation.

**Action:** GCC to remove the dead tree and to confirm if the second tree requires removal and to advise of a time scale on this.

**Action:** GCC to advise on any required works and the time scales for the rest of the trees in 2021.

## Long Term Plan for the Park

- **Design**

Jonathon stressed the importance of maintaining the three circles design as planned consisting of a seating area, the raised ring fort area, and the shaded planted/water area. The issues discussed in overview with the current design were:

- Safety for Public areas
- Opening up the park rather than narrowing it up by planting hedges around the trees
- Planting for pollinators and colour
- Drainage from all the new paved areas
- Ensuring the new paved areas do not encroach and potentially damage the tree root system during construction

**Action:** Jonathon to get an autocad version of the plan to scale to be sent to Stephen as soon as possible

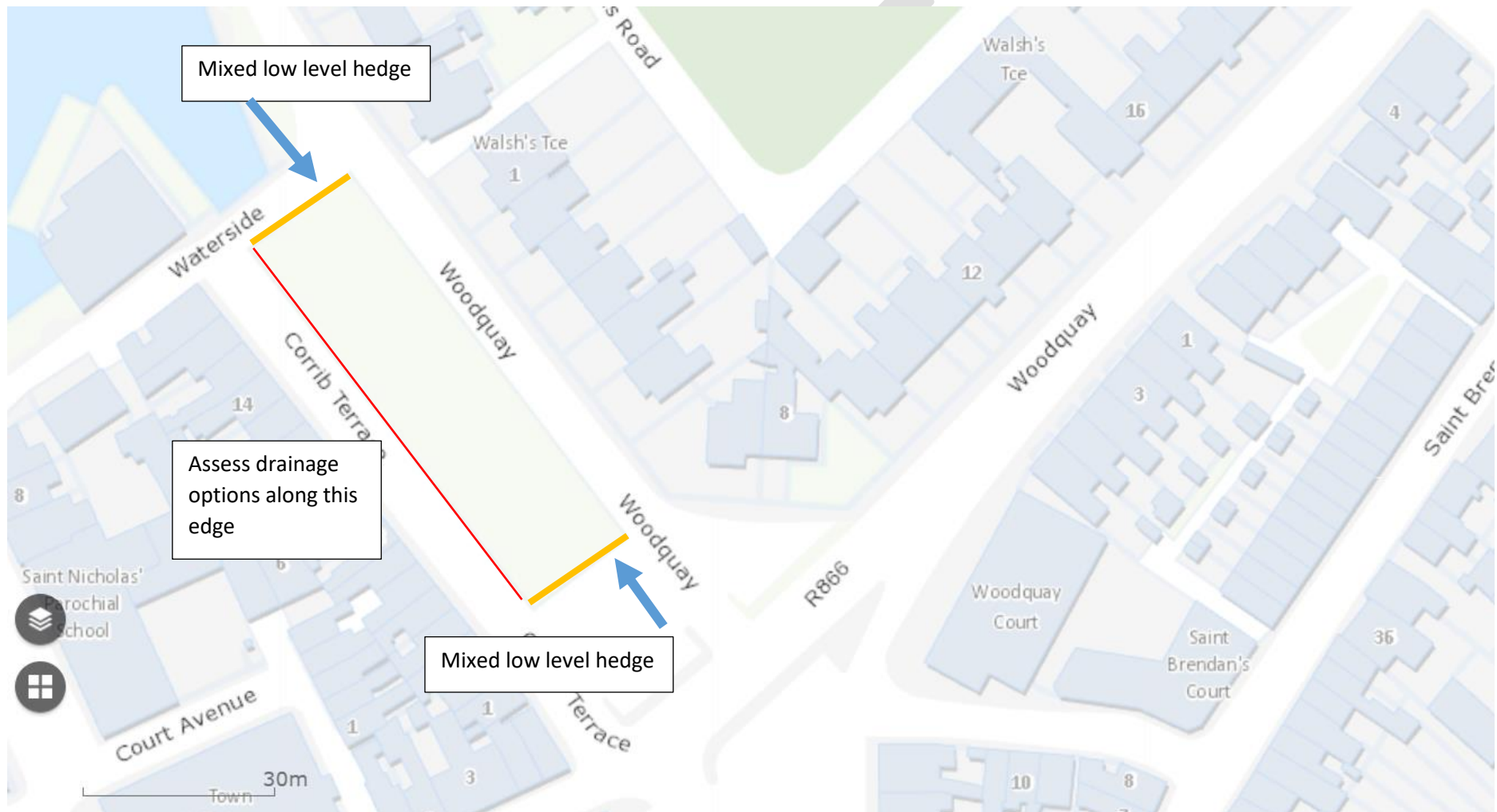
**Action:** On receipt of this drawing, GCC to assess the following:

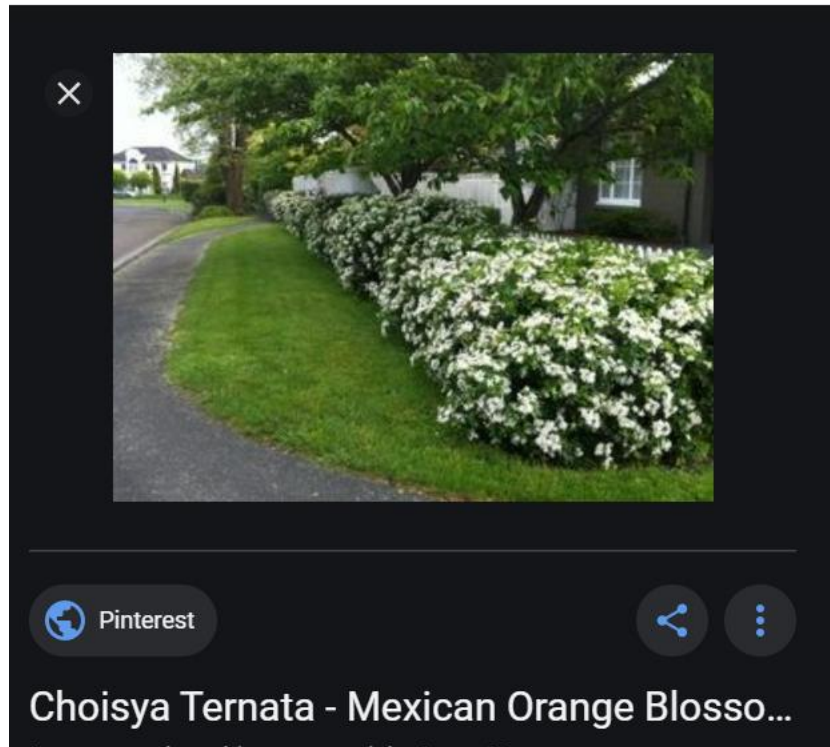
- What can be delivered taking note of the issues above and the point that Woodquay residents want it as close to this design as possible:
- What cannot be delivered for safety or other reasons.
- What can be delivered with some adjustments

Jonathon confirmed that the planting proposals were completely open and noted the requirement to comply with the Pollinator Plan. It is the layout as designed that they are most concerned about maintaining.

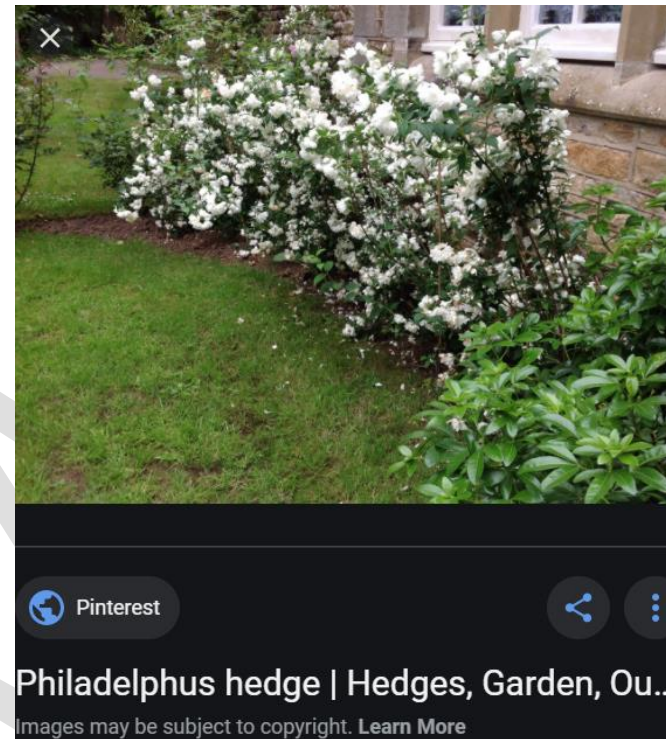
### **AOB:**

- It was agreed the ICA sign could be removed temporarily if agreement is reached regarding the hedge. The ICA sign should also be incorporated into the ultimate design for the park.
- It was noted that Water Services have recently replaced the covers on the surface water Culvert running through the Park
- It was noted that until we get the design aspects agreed we are not in a position to proceed to Part 8. This will also require further development to establish costs etc. to ensure it is less than the thresholds for Part 8 and to carry out environmental screening in regard to the proximity to the River and associated SAC. Therefore the sooner we get agreement the sooner it can progress.
- It was agreed to meet in mid-December to progress this. Provisional date 16<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30 via Teams





choisya





## APPENDIX 3

**CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE  
NTA REGARDING THE  
PROPOSED SCHEME SEPT 2024**

## Ian Rathmell

---

**From:** Andreas Saul-Rotne <Andreas.Saul-Rotne@nationaltransport.ie>  
**Sent:** Wednesday 25 September 2024 12:26  
**To:** Caroline Osbourn  
**Cc:** Tom Jonson; Aiden O'Donoghue | PUNCH; Jack Houlihan; Padraig Troy | PUNCH  
**Subject:** Re: 12357 - Woodquay Park Development

Hi Caroline,

Apologies for late reply. We can accept in principle, as discussed.

Kind regards,  
Andreas Saul- Rotne

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

---

**From:** Caroline Osbourn <Caroline.Osbourn@landuse.co.uk>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 23, 2024 12:52:05 PM  
**To:** Andreas Saul-Rotne <Andreas.Saul-Rotne@nationaltransport.ie>  
**Cc:** Tom Jonson <Tom.Jonson@landuse.co.uk>; Aiden O'Donoghue | PUNCH <aodonoghue@punchconsulting.com>; Jack Houlihan <Jack.Houlihan@galwaycity.ie>; Padraig Troy | PUNCH <ptroy@punchconsulting.com>  
**Subject:** RE: 12357 - Woodquay Park Development

You don't often get email from caroline.osbourn@landuse.co.uk. [Learn why this is important](#)

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning Andreas

Following our meeting, please could you confirm your acceptance in principle, as requested below?

Kind Regards  
Caroline



**Caroline Osbourn**  
**Principal Landscape Architect**  
BA (Hons) DipLA TechArbor A

T 0161 802 2800 | D 0161 802 2807 | M 07442 394 563

I work Mon - Thurs 8.00 - 16.30



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Registered Office: 250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD.

---

**From:** Caroline Osbourn

**Sent:** 05 September 2024 16:03

**To:** andreas.saul-rotne@nationaltransport.ie

**Cc:** Tom Jonson <Tom.Jonson@landuse.co.uk>; Aiden O'Donoghue | PUNCH <aodonoghue@punchconsulting.com>; Jack Houlihan <Jack.Houlihan@galwaycity.ie>; Padraig Troy | PUNCH <ptroy@punchconsulting.com>

**Subject:** 12357 - Woodquay Park Development

Dear Andreas

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

I have attached the latest drawings for the scheme. The scheme design is identical on both, drawing 0101 includes details of the Cross City Bus Link to highlight how our scheme would align with this project when brought forward for implementation.

I would be grateful if you could review and confirm your acceptance of the proposals in principle.

Kind Regards  
Caroline

---

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Tá eolas sa teachtaireacht leictreonach seo a d'fhéadfadh bheith príobháideach nó faoi rún agus b'fhéidir go mbeadh ábhar rúnda nó pribhléideach ann. Is le h-aghaidh an duine/na ndaoine nó le h-aghaidh an aonáin atá ainmnithe thuas agus le haghaidh an duine/na ndaoine sin amháin atá an t-eolas. Tá cosc ar rochtain don teachtaireacht leictreonach

seo do aon duine eile. Murab ionann tusa agus an té a bhfuil an teachtaireacht ceaptha dó bíodh a fhios agat nach gceadaítear nochtadh, cóipeáil, scaipeadh nó úsáid an eolais agus/nó an chomhaid seo agus b'fhéidir d'fhéadfadh bheith mídhleathach.

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## APPENDIX 4

**MINUTES OF CONSULTATION  
MEETING HELD WITH LOCAL  
SCHOOLS JUNE 2023**

## Minutes

# Woodquay Park

### Purpose

To introduce the project and understand user requirements

### Date/Time

13 June 2023

### Project Number

12357

### Location

Online via Zoom

Name	Organisation / Email	Att.	Dist.
Sinead Chapman	SALI Childcare	*	*
David _	Assistant Principal, Mercy Primary School	*	*
Wendy Lynch	Principal, St Nicholas' Parochial School	-	*
Jack Houlihan	Senior Executive Engineer, Galway City Council	*	*
Caroline Osbourn	Associate Landscape Architect, LUC	*	*
Áine Bourke	Project Planner, MKO	*	*
Meabh Cleary	Project Planner, MKO	*	*
Item			Action

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Landscape Planning & Assessment  
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Ecology  
Historic Environment  
GIS & Visualisation



1. CO ran through the project background and brief for the redevelopment of the park (see presentation attached). Attendees from Mercy Primary School and SALI childcare were invited to share their experience of using the park.
2. David, Mercy Primary School:
  - a. The school are delighted to have the opportunity to input to the design of the park.
  - b. The school use the park frequently during September/October and then from Easter to the end of the summer term, weather dependent. Provision of some form of shelter would be useful. However, the reason usage outside these periods is less frequent is primarily because the grass is longer and wetter, meaning a change in footwear is required. This can be beyond the means of some pupil's families. JH noted that the mowing regime in winter would be less frequent.
  - c. The school itself is surrounded by concrete and the park is a green haven for the school.
  - d. All ages use the space, on a class-by-class basis.
  - e. The railings around the park are fantastic as they provide a strong sense of enclosure.
  - f. The school use the space for the following activities:
    - outdoor adventure trails for PE in summer
    - trail walking
    - picnics
    - orienteering
    - brain breaks
    - mindfulness breaks
    - sensory breaks
    - evidence of the seasons and nature
  - g. The school currently use the school rooftop for gardening. They are strong on green school and active travel. They also use a trail within The Plots. They are keen on outdoor classrooms and have participated in recent events along the Corrib.
  - h. The school would be keen to see the park enhanced for sport use, if possible. For formal play there is the Millenium Park, therefore they do not see the need to include this within the Park. JH noted that provision of formal sports within the Park is not something that would be considered due to limited space, proximity of residents and funding criteria, which have more of a focus on arts and lighting.
  - i. The school access the park via the traffic lights on Headford Road and the side gate from Corrib Terrace.
  - j. David believes the route of the cycle bus from The Plots may be via the northern end of the park and along Waterside (against one way traffic), then Waterside (past St. Nicholas' School), the courthouse and to the new bridge.
  - k. The school don't use the cycle bus route as they have no space within their grounds to store bikes. It would be great if the park had cycle parking. JH queried whether the pupils use cycle parking at the courthouse, David advised they do not.
  - l. The school don't have a dedicated drop off outside the building, this can be problematic for pupils with disabilities (cerebral palsy). A dedicated drop off point in the vicinity of the park with supervised crossing would be great.

3. Sinead, SALI childcare:

- 
- a. SAL childcare are also delighted to be involved
  - b. The nursery use the park every day in good weather. There are 3 pre-school rooms and 3 after school groups, so 50 pupils in the morning and 80 in afternoon. They love going when the grass is long as the pre-schoolers have wellies to wear and love getting messy. It is different for after schoolers.
  - c. The nursery use the park for the following activities:
    - Nature walks
    - End of year teddy bears picnic
  - d. The nursery would hate to lose a lot of the nature, because they are in a city lots of pupils live in apartments and don't have access to open space. They feel that the space should be more useable but keep as good as it is, with less concrete.
  - e. SC noted that when the hedges were trimmed views were opened to the waterside, and the children could see the ducks from within the gate. Seeing out is important, it makes a huge difference.
  - f. The new bridge at Salmon Weir has helped the children as it means they can get to the millennium park quicker. It is so much easier to get to than crossing Woodquay. JH also noted the plans for additional bridge from corrib princess over old Clifden railway line.
- 4. CO noted that there would be opportunities for further involvement, for example pupil survey, an in-person event close to the site in late June/early July, as well as the statutory planning consultation process.
  - 5. AB noted that the schools finish on June 28<sup>th</sup> and asked whether they would be happy to circulate surveys to the pupils in advance of this. Survey to be issued w/c 19<sup>th</sup> June.