

Lauren Griffin

From: Lauren Griffin
Sent: Monday 11 November 2024 11:56
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Woodquay No: ABP - 320938 - 24

A Chara,

The Board acknowledges receipt of your email, official correspondence will issue in due course.

Kind regards,

Lauren

From: Sheila Gallagher [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday 10 November 2024 14:04
To: LAPS <laps@pleanala.ie>
Subject: Woodquay No: ABP - 320938 - 24

Caution: This is an **External Email** and may have malicious content. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments. When in doubt, contact the ICT Helpdesk.

Woodquay Ref. No: ABP - 320938 - 24

To Whom in Concerns,

Please find attached submission for Woodquay No: ABP - 320938 - 24

Kind regards

--

Sheila Gallagher



*Establishing Wild Acres across Ireland to create safe habitats, vital for biodiversity.
Delivering ecological education to encourage the proactive preservation of Nature.*

Re: Ref. No: ABP - 320938 - 24
Woodquay Park Enhancement by Galway City Council (GCC)
7/11/24

17, Corrib Terrace
Woodquay
Galway
H91FT85

To An Bord Pleanála
Dear Sir/Madam

I ask An Bord Pleanála (ABP) to please refuse planning permission for the redevelopment of the Woodquay Park on the following grounds.

I am a senior citizen living in one of the terraced houses that faces this small park. Five generations of my family have lived in this house, which was built by my great grandfather. 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. This communal garden has long served as a safe space for the children of Woodquay to play. This is a residential community in the heart of Galway City. Many residents, some in their 70s, 80s, and 90s, have lived here their entire lives, as did previous generations. If this small oasis is destroyed, the heart of Woodquay will be lost. Inner city communities are the beating heart of cities. While all we hear is about 'Rebuilding Communities' yet this project will help to destroy our Community.

Background to this application

The park has always been used as a playground and picnic area for the local community. It has always been used by our 2 local schools. There was a gardener there when I was young. The hedge that is over 100 years old was kept well. Things change, yet it was always a safe place. The Galway City Council always locked the park at night from 9pm to 8am. They stopped doing that in the last few years. The Residents Association and members of the community asked them to resume this but they refused and they stopped the community from doing it. This has caused some anti-social behaviour here, this couldn't happen if it was locked at night. The GCC neglected the park, some years ago they took out the concrete plinth around the park. And as the park is higher than the road, it started to cause soil run-off. Then the ivy took over the hawthorn hedge. It was just neglected! The Woodquay Residents Association (WRA) of which I am a member, saw a vision for the park to make it more Biodiverse with places to sit and take time out. We as a community worked so hard on this. The reason we sought out Ms Mary Reynolds was because of the incredible work she has done creating Biodiverse spaces and encouraging wildlife/insects to return to places. She talked with our community, she spent time in the park, she took in the knowledge we gave her. When she drew up her design, she knew the place, she had walked here, she knew its surroundings. Mary Reynolds' design was the design that Galway City Council took to Fáilte Ireland. Mary Reynolds' design was the design that Fáilte Ireland gave Galway City Council €1.2 million for. Not the plaza design from LUC. This plaza design would never get passed Fáilte Ireland. In the 'Instruction to Tenderers' document from GCC it states on pg14 4.2 (H) heading: 'The Project'

'All services shall be in line with the Galway City Council application to Fáilte Ireland, the letter of offer from Fáilte Ireland and the original proposal developed by the resident association of Woodquay for the redevelopment of the park.' The LUC design that is before you and the Mary Reynolds' design are completely different.

Reasons to refuse Planning Permission.

First, two City based Primary Schools will lose a vital core element to their schools. The environment of their schools will suffer a dramatic change if they lost their green space. They will no longer be able to use this park for Health & Safety reasons ie. **No Railings No Gates.** Mercy Primary School, and St. Nicholas Parochial School as well as the pre school, use the park on a regular bases. Questions need to be asked as to who did GCC/MKO speak too? As a member of the WRA, I personally spoke to both principles, Ms. Wendy Lynch, Principle, St. Nicholas Parochial School. Ms. Evelyn O'Toole, Principle, Mercy Primary School. Neither had been contacted by GCC/MKO or attended any meeting online or otherwise. If there was to be true meaningful consultation, for something that has such implications for the schools, why didn't someone call to the two schools, the principles are always there. FYI. A third primary school - Educate Together Primary School - has now just moved into the Woodquay area and no doubt will also want to use the park.

In the MKO report, there are 4 paragraphs under the heading 'Local Schools'. In this section there is no mention of the fact that there are to be no railings/gates in the new plan. This piece of information is imperative for the schools to know, in order for them to make an adequate judgement of the plan. Is GCC to deny these children a beautiful green protected space when their schools have no green space? Under the heading "the proposed design has ensured that sharp corners, and other hazards for children are eliminated."

You take away the railings and the gates in a small park surrounded by traffic on all sides and an open, fast flowing river a few steps away and they say "the proposed design has ensured that sharp corners, and other hazards for children are eliminated." Will Galway City Council stand by this statement? There are serious questions to be asked here.

Second, For the Residents on either side of the park, particularly the houses on Corrib Terrace with no gardens, their environment will change forever. If this proposed development goes ahead, it will be an open invitation for the late night revellers that is now so prevalent in Galway. Our community has been very hard hit in the last few years, so many of our Woodquay older neighbours from Eyre Street, -the street that links Woodquay and Eyre Square- have sold up their homes that they have lived in all their lives because the noise was no longer tolerable. The community of St. Patricks Avenue, Eyre Square is gone, are we to be the next. Is Galway to become a soulless city. When the children can't use this beautiful park.

Third, The wild life will be affected, Their environment will be lost. The designers don't know that two foxes visit this park every night. That in early morning Kestrel flies down over the park during breeding season and often catches a pigeon, scattering the park with feathers. That in Winter, myriad birds, - sparrow, goldfinch, great tit, blue tit, robin, long-tailed tit, starlings, jackdaw - are attracted to the feeders put out by myself and a neighbour. These support the school children who can use it as nature studies. Tourists take photos of them and our older community enjoy them. The feeders hang on a small tree, and are protected by the railings and thorn hedge. This small tree growing close to the hedge to be knocked down. This environment will be lost if the proposed development goes ahead.

Fourth, Mary Reynolds is an renowned landscape designer, known for being the youngest contestant and 1st Irish person ever to win a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show. The British government commissioned her to design a garden at Kew Gardens, London and she also designed Foundation Stone garden at Farmleigh House, (the Irish government state guest house), to name but a few. This shows the level of the quality of her designs and work and the esteem in which she is regarded. It is undoubtedly the reason **Fáilte Ireland** granted GCC €1.2 million for the project. I am concerned that this situation may seriously damaging her reputation. The Woodquay Residents Association, wished to get a top environmental designer for this park and we did, it is not us that are damaging her reputation.

1. Lack of Meaningful Community Consultation

The MKO report inaccurately implies that there was meaningful consultation with the Woodquay Residents Association (WRA) and the Woodquay community.

In 2021 after GCC received the grant of €1.2 million, everything changed. We made numerous attempts to find out what was happening from GCC. Despite being told we would be kept informed, we were not. The project was moved from Mr. Stephen Walsh, Parks Department to Mr. Jack Houlihan Recreation & Amenity. We heard nothing for over a year. In late February 2024 A notice informed us of a public consultation on Tuesday 6th of February. We were shocked. In panic we secured a meeting for February 2nd three days in advance of the public meeting arranged for the 6th of February. It was with great dismay that we became aware that LUC plan had been substituted for our design. **The 2 designs have nothing in common.** Clearly we had been misled and deceived. These dates are each side of a Bank Holiday Weekend. People take holidays during a long weekend. This meant that we had no time to arrange a committee meeting, no time to prepare.

Only 33 people attended as many of our community are elderly and some living alone and didn't even know this event was happening. It was also a working day, many of those working were unable to attend between 12 and 4pm.

(By contrast when we put Mary Reynolds' design and the model of it that we commissioned, on display in the Town Hall Theatre we had well over a hundred people viewing it. With 80 filling out feedback forms. That is Community Consultation)

The LUC designer Caroline Osborne, had never been in Woodquay before she drew her design. Such an approach might be acceptable for designing a plaza for a new shopping centre, but it is wholly inappropriate for one of the oldest communities in Galway City. The effects on the Woodquay environment regarding the increase in Anti-Social behaviour will be substantial.

2. Confusing Planning Process

This whole planning and consultation process has been one of utter confusion.

The planning notice posted on the park's railings did not include the ABP reference number or ABP's email address. The description on the notice mentions new 'litter bins' but not that the railings were to be taken out, thus making it impossible for concerned citizens to know what was really happening to the park. The notice creates a false impression that only minor changes are being proposed. There is no mention of turning this enclosed residential park into an open plaza.

When visiting the GCC website to review the proposed plans, it is very challenging to find clear information on the proposed changes to the park. There are 8 folders, hundreds of documents. The proposed plan is on the last page in the last document in the last folder. How can ordinary people navigate this and find out what is happening in a clear and concise way?

3. Heritage and Community Concerns

The hedge in the park is a heritage hedge. It was planted shortly after the river was reclaimed. It is a hawthorn hedge over 100 years old. It has been neglected and the ivy has taken over in parts. The residents wish to keep as much of this hedge as possible. This is our heritage.

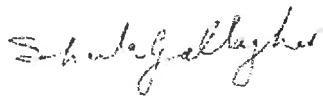
I do not think the LUC design is suitable for such a situation, which is a small garden park in one of the oldest communities in Galway City, depriving two schools of their only green space, and create another mini Eyre Square in a quite residential area.

Climate Change.

Since the redevelopment of Eyre Square in the mid 2000s three of the major trees well over 100 years old have fallen. This has been caused by the damage done during the redevelopment. But no one is held to accountability. This is a serious problem in Ireland I have no doubt that this will happen in the park as well. Many of the trees will not withstand the upheaval of taking out the railings. This small park with so many trees is the oxygen in Woodquay soaking up the carbon from all the cars. In Mary Reynolds design, it was her vision to see the gardeners from Galway City Council and a good stonemason creating this park slowly carefully to protect all that is there.

I ask An Bord Pleanála, to please refuse permission for this planning.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sheila Gallagher'.

Sheila Gallagher,