



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

GORT PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

AN COIMISIUN PLEANALA CASE NO. 323066-25

**GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO
OBSERVATION BY:**

NATIONAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY



Existing condition at R458 to R460 junction at Gort Market Square



Artist's impression of modified junction at Gort Market Square

Preamble

Galway County Council submit the following response to the National Transport Authorities observation in respect of the Gort Public Realm Enhancement Project Part 10 Planning Application.

Galway County Council wishes to thank the National Transport Authority for its detailed observations regarding the Gort Public Realm Enhancement Project (Part 10 Planning Application). We note and appreciate the points raised in the submission and recognise the importance of ensuring that any proposed changes serve the best interests of the entire community.

We acknowledge the NTA's concerns regarding the relocation of bus bays and the need for safe, accessible public transport for all, including elderly persons, children, and those with limited mobility. Galway County Council shares these priorities and highlights that the current arrangement at Gort Market Square presents safety and accessibility challenges, as evidenced by our analysis and community feedback.

Current Issues:

The location of the Bus Stops, at the centre of the junction of the R458 and R460, at the Gort Market Square (Photo 1), causes significant traffic management and pedestrian safety issues (Photo 2, 3 & 4) in combination with universal accessibility issues (Photo 5 & 6).

Location:

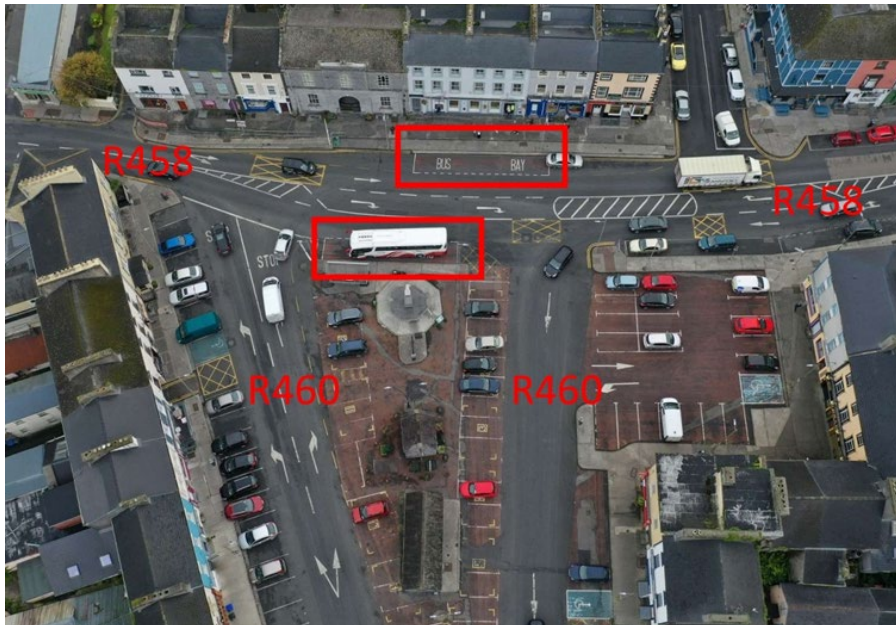


Photo 1: The current location of the North bound and South bound bus bays (highlighted by red boxes) at the junction of the R460 and R458 – the most heavily congested junction in the town.

These locations present a significant obstacle to pedestrians attempting to access the bus services.

Traffic management and pedestrian safety issues:



Photo 2: North bound service:

The parked bus obscures visibility for vehicles exiting the R458 forcing them to edge out into oncoming traffic creating a hazard.



Photo 3: North bound service:

The parked bus obscures visibility for vehicles exiting the R458 forcing them to edge out into oncoming traffic. The departing bus then has to manoeuvre around the vehicle crossing the centre line.



Photo 4: South bound service:

Passengers alighting and attempting to cross 3 lanes of traffic and two bus bay widths.

Universal access issues:



Photo 5: South bound service:

The existing topography at the south bound bus bay presents a significant hazard and obstacle to all passengers. There are currently 3 irregular steps up from road level constituting a 500mm rise. Passengers step down onto the carriageway surface and then climb the steps. Given the site levels and crossfalls it would not be possible to introduce safe universal access here. Please refer to the site sections submitted with the Planning documents



Photo 6: South bound service:

There are currently 3 irregular steps up from road level constituting a 500mm rise. Passengers step down onto the carriageway surface and then climb the steps.

In light of the above, Galway County Council proposes to work collaboratively with the NTA and other relevant stakeholders to identify bus stop locations and junction designs that address both the NTA's concerns, and the safety issues identified by Galway County Council. We are committed to ensuring that any solution provides safe, convenient, and universally accessible public transport, while also enabling improvements to the junction for active travel and pedestrian safety.

We further recognise the importance of accommodating unscheduled services such as Local Link, school buses, and tourist coaches. Our proposed design includes a dedicated lay-by for these unscheduled bus services, located away from the main junction to enhance safety and accessibility. Galway County Council worked in close collaboration with the community of Gort who assisted in identifying both the need and the location of the lay bye for the unscheduled bus services. We invite the NTA and service providers to participate in the design process to ensure the needs of all users are met.

Galway County Council notes the NTA's emphasis on future capacity and flexibility. Our proposal for double bus bays and consideration of intermodal transfer zones is informed by Bus Éireann's recommendations and anticipated growth in demand. We propose ongoing engagement with the NTA and Bus Éireann to ensure that the final design is robust, adaptable, and future-proofed for the evolving needs of Gort. Unfortunately, the current bus stop locations cannot be enlarged to accommodate double bus bays and therefore the location shown in Galway County Councils Planning application was selected in close collaboration with the business community.

Support for the relocation of the bus stops: The Galway County Council appointed Design Team relocated and designed the proposed bus stops in collaboration with Bus Éireann.

The following written correspondence from Bus Éireann's Peter Melia underscores the requirement to relocate the bus stops in support of **future proofing** the public transport capacity for the growing town:

'I would be in favour of having a bus stop close to the railway station to facilitate inter modal transfer between bus and train.

*We have 2 types of services serving Gort. Route 434 is a commuter service that departs Gort at 07.30 and operates a multi stop services to Galway, serving city centre, NUIG and UCHG. During college term, **due to capacity issues on this service we supplement this service with a second bus. There should be space for a minimum of 2 buses at any one time.** Any new infrastructure should **be future proof** for future growth. Also, could we look at having a bus stop and shelter erected close to the roundabout on the North side of the town. There are residential estates in this area.*

Our route 51 expressway service also serves Gort with 15 services in each direction daily. Again, Gort is a busy stop on this route.

Future proofing:

In order to meet Bus Éireann's need Galway County Council proposes to relocate the bus stops to a position where enlarged, double bus bays which can accommodate two busses simultaneously can be developed.

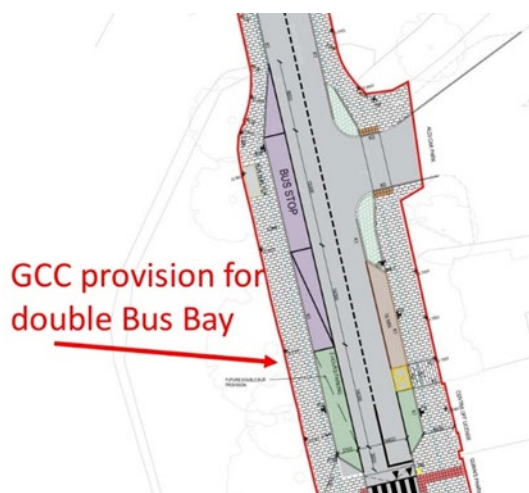


Image 1: The GCC Planning Application drawing DR-L-0107 which illustrates the provision of a double bus bay on the north bound service which allows for future growth of bus services.

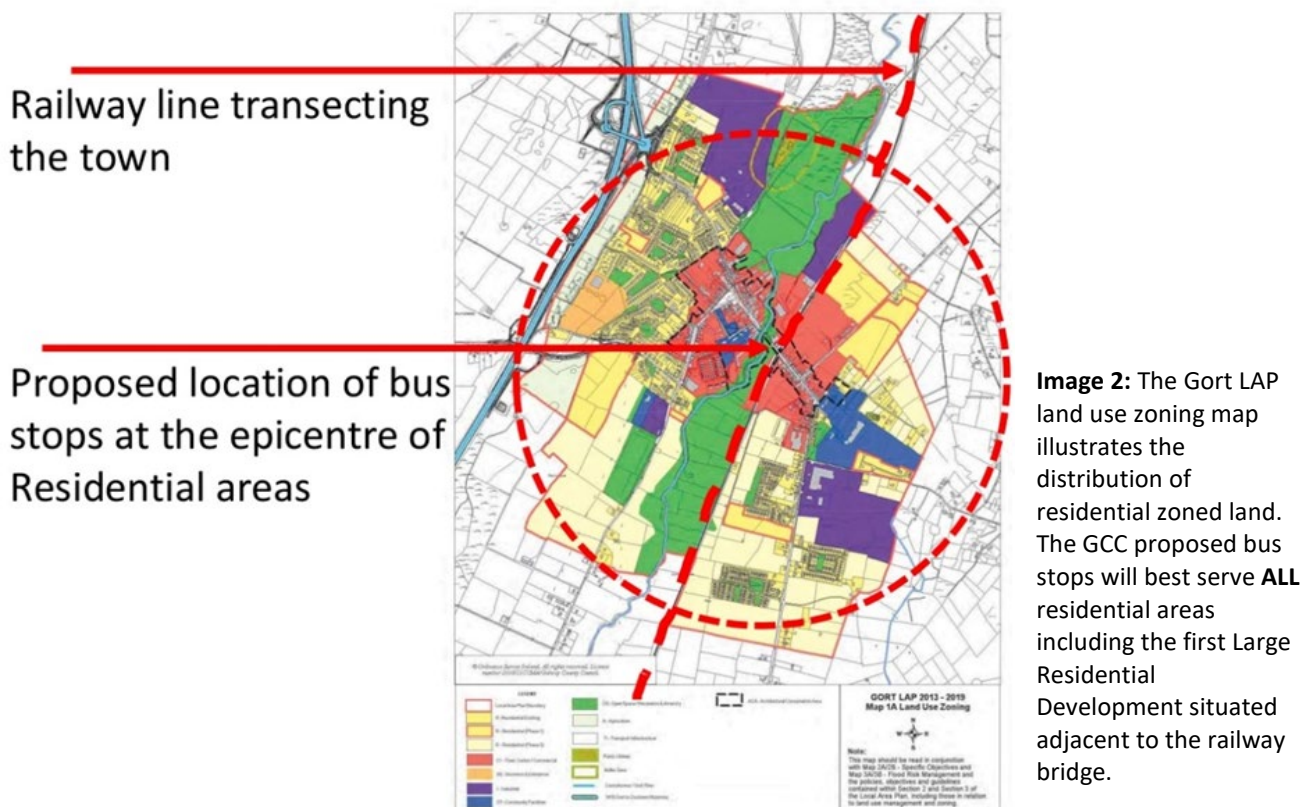
Following Bus Éireann's recommendation initial studies are underway for the provision of an additional bus stop to the north of the town closer to the motorway (as referred to in **the Gort Local Transport Plan**). This will serve the northern end of the town to meet the growing need for bus services. This additional bus stop falls outside of the boundary for this Planning Application and is therefore not included.

Central Location:

We also acknowledge the NTA's points regarding the location of bus stops relative to residential areas and the railway line. Our proposed location is intended to maximise accessibility for all residents, including those in new developments west of the railway which constitutes a physical barrier which transects the town.

Galway County Council has recently granted planning permission to the first Large Residential Development Project in the County (Planning ref 24/60115) which is located to the west of the railway line. This new town centre development of over 230 Residential Units, will be connected to both the Train station and the main street of Gort (immediately adjacent to the proposed new south bound bus stop) at the Railway Bridge end of the town. This will be the closest residential development to the Town Centre to have been built in over 40 years while two other developments to the west of the railway ground have already broken ground.

We welcome further discussion with the NTA to refine bus stop locations, ensuring optimal access for the entire community on both sides of the railway line.



Parking Provision:

Regarding parking provision, Galway County Council provides the below figures which demonstrate a net gain in parking spaces of **13** number bays which includes **4** number RV bays (to meet a need identified through community consultation). We are open to reviewing parking provision in partnership with the NTA to ensure alignment with local needs and policy objectives.

Please note that the parking numbers quoted in the NTA observation are incorrect. The correct car parking numbers are as follows:

Within the project area there currently exists: **252** on-street car parking spaces.

The Planning Application proposes a reduction to **165** on-street car parking spaces.

This represents a **loss of 87** on-street spaces.

The proposed new Barrack Street off-street car park and new Lowry's Lane off-street car parks will accommodate a total of **100** spaces.

This represents a **net gain of 13** spaces overall (including 4 RV bays), or a **5% increase** on the current parking allocation. The proposed increase of parking bays includes the provision for 4 number RV bays in the Lowrys Lane off-street car park.

Galway County Council and the NTA share a commitment to people-oriented public realm solutions, supported by effective public transport. We propose to work with the NTA and other stakeholders to deliver a public realm enhancement that reflects national policy, local priorities, and the best interests of Gort's community.

Conclusion:

Galway County Council values the input of the National Transport Authority and all stakeholders. We propose a collaborative approach to address the concerns raised, while also resolving the issues identified by Galway County Council and the community. By working together, we can deliver a solution that is safe, accessible, future-proof, and truly beneficial for all who live, work, and travel in Gort.

Signed on behalf of Galway County Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liam Hanrahan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Liam Hanrahan

Director of Services.