

Our Case Number: ACP-323066-25



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

James Ricks
Bridge Street
Gort
Galway
D01 V902

Date: 26 August 2025

Re: Gort Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement Project, Gort, Co. Galway
In the townlands of Gort, Co. Galway

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Coimisiún Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

Please note that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it with or without modifications.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Commission at laps@pleanala.ie

Please quote the above mentioned An Coimisiún Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Commission.

Yours faithfully,

Lauren Griffin
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737244

AA02

Tell
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Láithreán Gréasáin
Ríomhphost

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64 Sráid Maoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

To: The Secretary,
An Bord Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1 D01 V902

From: James Ricks
Bridge St., Gort
Co. Galway, H91VH21

Date: 21 August 2025

Subject: **Gort Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement Project Planning Application**

To An Bord Pleanála,

This submission is made in relation to the Gort Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement Project Planning Application. I have reviewed the proposed plans, specifically the drawing 3160-BDP-00-XX-DR-L-0106 P05, and the drawing 3160-BDP-00-XX-SE-L-0007. As both a resident, restorer, property owner, artist, and the owner of businesses in the Barry's building on Bridge Street (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage reference number 30341038) I have a vested interest in the long-term success of this project. I would like to raise two distinct points for your consideration.

1. Proposed Changes in front of our Building

Our businesses, the respected 3rd-wave coffee shop, Tal Vez Coffee and The Cash Shop contemporary art gallery, are an integral part of the South Galway community. While we are generally supportive of the project's goal to revitalize the town centre, we have specific concerns and proposals regarding the public space directly in front of our property, as shown on the referenced drawing. Our dual role as residents and business operators gives us a unique perspective on the practical and long-term implications of the proposed changes, particularly concerning safety and functionality. We believe these modifications would greatly enhance the public space, improve the functionality of our businesses, create a more vibrant neighbourhood for everyone and contribute positively to the area's proper planning and sustainable development.

We propose the following:

- **Removal of Benches:** We request that the proposed benches in front of our building be removed from the plan. For a coffee shop, our own tables and chairs are far more preferable and functional for our patrons and service provided. More importantly, we are concerned that benches would encourage loitering and become a late-night hang-out spot, particularly given the proximity of take-away restaurants. We already experience issues with loitering and litter on our front steps, and the placement of benches would only exacerbate this. As residents, with a young daughter, living upstairs, the potential for public drinking and anti-social behaviour is a serious concern for our family's safety and quality of life.
- **Relocation of Tree:** We have noted the proposed location for a new tree almost directly in front of our award winning coffee shop, Tal Vez Coffee. Based on our lived experience at this location, we must point out that in its planned position, the tree would block all precious afternoon sunlight. In Ireland, access to natural light is highly valued, and this placement would negatively impact both our business and the amenity of the public space. We request the tree be relocated to the other side of the building, where it would only cast a shadow on the corner and laneway, thus preserving afternoon sunlight for our shop and the streetscape.
- **Increased Paved Area:** We request an expansion of the paved area to create a larger, more functional space for outdoor seating for our coffee shop. This would allow us to place chairs and tables, increasing footfall and contributing to the social and economic vibrancy of the town.
- **Dedicated Space for Bicycles and a Sculpture:** Given the nature of our businesses, and with increased paved area, we propose the allocation of a dedicated space for bicycle parking and room for a small sculpture in front of our art gallery, The Cash Shop (www.thecashshop.ie). This would promote sustainable transport and reinforce Gort's cultural vibrancy.

AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA	
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Time: 9:15	By: Reg Post

- We request the inclusion of 15-minute parking bays to continue directly in front of our building. This would greatly benefit our businesses and neighbours by facilitating quicker collections and short shopping trips, encouraging local commerce and improving traffic flow.

A drawing detailing these proposed changes is attached to this submission.

2. Concerns Regarding the Christ the King Statue Plinth

We wish to raise a formal objection to the proposal to lower the plinth of the Christ the King statue, as detailed in the plans, specifically the drawing, reference number 3160-BDP-00-XX-SE-L-0007. This specific aspect of the plan is not in line with proper planning and sustainable development, and we believe it poses unacceptable risks.

Our reasons are as follows:

- **Heritage and Artistic Merit:** The monument is a protected structure with a Regional rating on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (reference number 30341016). The sculpture was created in 1932 by the renowned Irish artist Albert Power, and its base was designed by Thomas Cullen. It was commissioned by local woman, Ann Coen, in memory of the tragic loss of her son. Lowering the plinth would alter the original artistic and architectural vision and diminish the monument's significant heritage and artistic merit.
- **Risk of Irreversible Damage:** The process of lowering the plinth poses a substantial and unacceptable risk of damaging the protected statue. Such an action could lead to the irreversible harm of a valuable piece of public art. The potential for damage far outweighs any minimal benefit from this alteration.
- **Riskier access:** It would make the fragile marble sculpture much lower and possible to climb on and touch, thus greatly increasing the possibility of unintentional damage or vandalism.
- **Public and Sentimental Value:** This change is not only risky but is also likely to offend older citizens and the family that commissioned the statue. The statue and its original plinth are a part of the community's history and memory.

In conclusion, we request that the proposal to lower the plinth be reconsidered and that the original plinth be preserved to protect this important cultural asset.

We trust that you will consider these points in your assessment of the planning application.

Sincerely,



James Ricks
0873437027
jimricks@gmail.com

