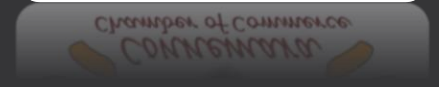


3 Major blocks to Connemara's future economic development



Presentation & Solutions Discussion

Monday, 3rd July 2023 – 2.00pm – Galmont Hotel, Galway

Hosted by: Connemara Chamber of Commerce

Format

- **1.45pm** – Tea / Coffee
- **2.00pm** – Official Photo
- **2.05pm** – Presentation by Connemara Chamber
 - *Blocks to Connemara's future economic development*
 - Lack of a large Remote Working Hub for Clifden & Connemara
 - Residential Planning Permission issues for Connemara
 - Traffic Congestion in Galway City
- **2.25pm** – Solutions Discussion
- **3.45pm** – Wrap-up

About Us

Connemara Chamber of Commerce



About us

- *Ann De Courcey*
 - Office Administrator - Connemara Chamber of Commerce
 - Manager – Connemara Pony Sales / Clifden Mart
- *John Sweeney*
 - Chairperson & Director - Connemara Chamber of Commerce
 - Clifden Station House Hotel / Sweeney Oil Company
- *Damien Joyce*
 - Director & Company Secretary - Connemara Chamber of Commerce
 - Lowry's Bar / Clifden Boutique Apartments / DMJE Ventures Ltd.
- *Terence O'Toole*
 - Director & Tourism Officer - Connemara Chamber of Commerce
 - Love Connemara Cottages / Co-Chair Connemara & The Islands Tourism Network

About The Chamber

- Works on a membership basis
- 106 paid members in the Clifden and Connemara area
- 30 years old – has a long history of working for the area
- Run on a voluntary basis
- Physical office in Clifden since early 2019



What the Chamber Does

- Has an overriding concern for the future of Connemara's economy and all the aspects that affect it in the short term to the long term.
 - Within the area
 - Outside the area
- Involves itself in any activities and projects that aims to make Clifden and Connemara a year-round place of business.
- Looking 10/20/30+ years ahead.



Current Organisational Plans ...

- **Goal:**

- To move from a 100% voluntary setup to one where there are paid staff in place to work on projects that support the economic development of Clifden town and Connemara region.

- **How we will achieve this :**

1. Create a permanent structure with a paid full time CEO with the relevant support staff
2. Continue with our voluntary board of directors which will then meet on a monthly basis setting the direction for the Chamber.
3. Create a permanent office in the heart of Clifden for the Chamber within the proposed Clifden remote working hub.

“ We wish to turn Clifden into
a 12 month a year town”

- Connemara Chamber of Commerce



Some Past & Current Projects/Causes

- Irish Language Planning Town
- Marconi Station / Derrigimlagh (Phase 1) + The Marconi Way (Phase 2)
- Alcock and Brown 100 Year Centenary
- The Clifden Regeneration Project
- Clifden Remote Working Hub
- Annual Christmas Marketing & Lighting Campaigns
- Outdoor Dining Project – Clifden
- Clifden Summerfest / Clifden Trad Fest / Clifden Arts Week / St. Patrick's Day
- Clifden Tidy Towns
- Regional Tourism Strategy
- Local Lotto / Win A House Draw

A Proactive Chamber ...



Change in sentiment towards Clifden Regeneration Plans 2023 vs 2022

Clifden Town Survey of Clifden Regeneration Plans

Survey Questions

I am happy with the proposed plans for the Clifden Town Centre

The proper balance between car, pedestrian and bike usage has been struck

I am concerned with the proposed changes for car parking in Clifden

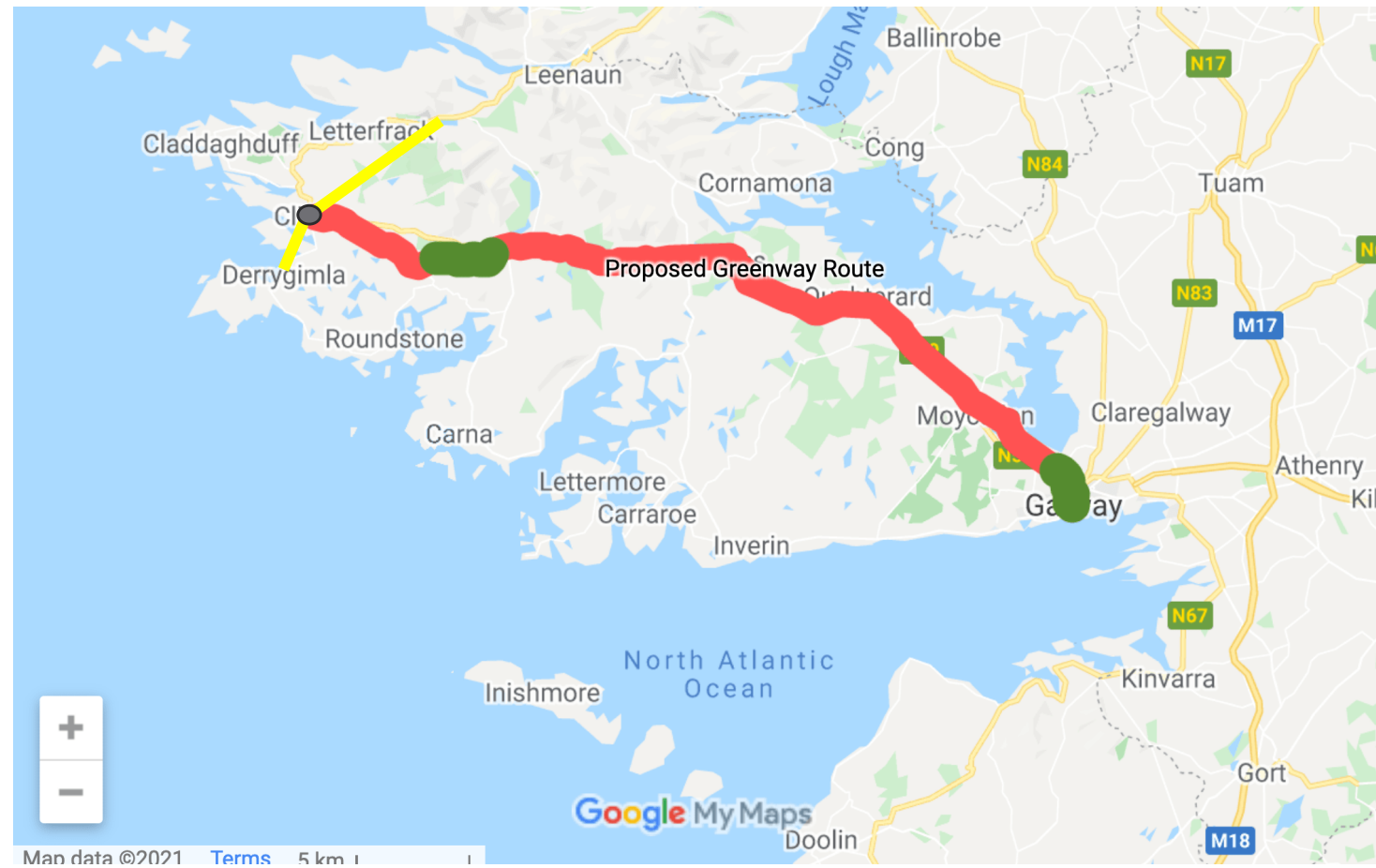
I am happy with the proposed plans for the Beach Road Quay area

I am happy with the proposed plans for the Harbour Park area

Survey 1 2022		Survey 2 2023		Changes 2023 vs 2022
% Agree	% Disagree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Change
20%	80%	82%	18%	62%
3%	97%	61%	39%	58%
73%	27%	64%	36%	-9%
76%	24%	86%	14%	10%
68%	32%	93%	7%	25%

A Proactive Chamber ...

- **The Marconi Way**
- An 11km extension to Connemara Greenway



A Remote Working Hub for Clifden

Progress to date & where to next

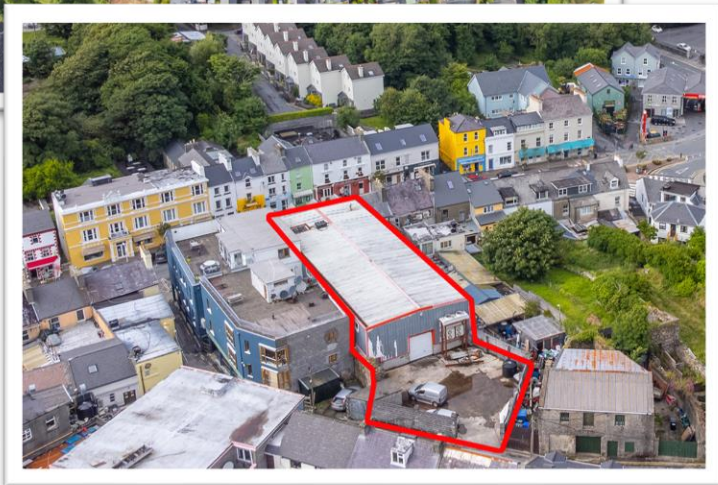
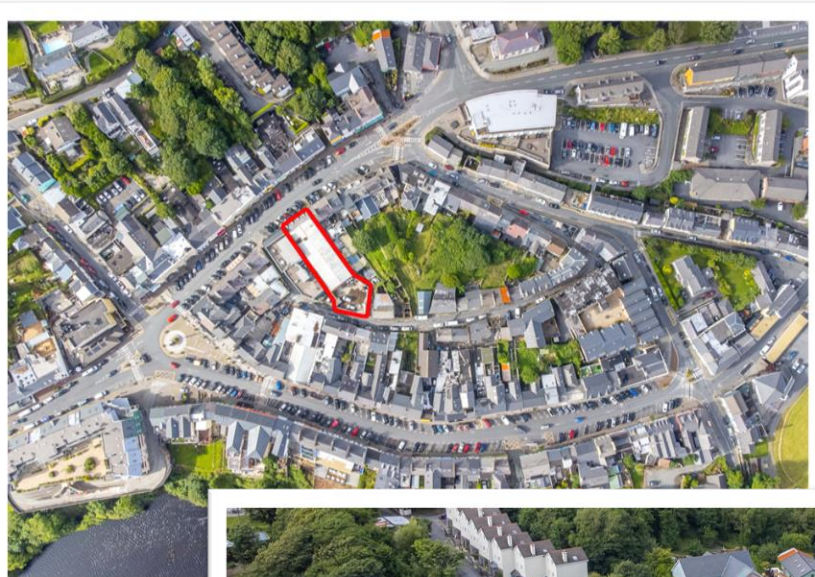


Major Remote Working Hub

- Major opportunity to convert a **large-scale building** (5,000 sq. ft/427sq m) from a long term vacant Clifden town centre building into an exciting mixed-use enterprise, co-working and community hub.
- The **target market** segments for the hub are remote workers, businesses (including start-ups), community groups and visitors needing hot desk facilities.
- Capacity for circa **70 people**, all on one level, in the heart of the town offering dual street access via Main Street and Market Hill and incorporating an outdoor multi-purpose space and double height entrance.
- **Repurposing** this empty, town centre space into a hub is an imaginative, ambitious and sensible proposal.
- This project will position Clifden at the leading edge of remote working, enterprise, creativity and community ambition.

What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

1. Identified a Suitable Building

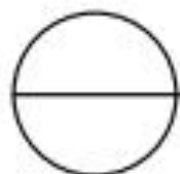


- The Chamber identified an **under-utilised**, 20-year-old building on Main Street Clifden
- One of the **largest** buildings in Clifden
- Street level access with outdoor courtyard
- The building backs onto Market Hill – an area long overdue for redevelopment







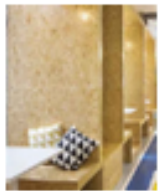


MAIN ENTRANCE & LOCATION OF THE SIGNAGE

3D VISUAL

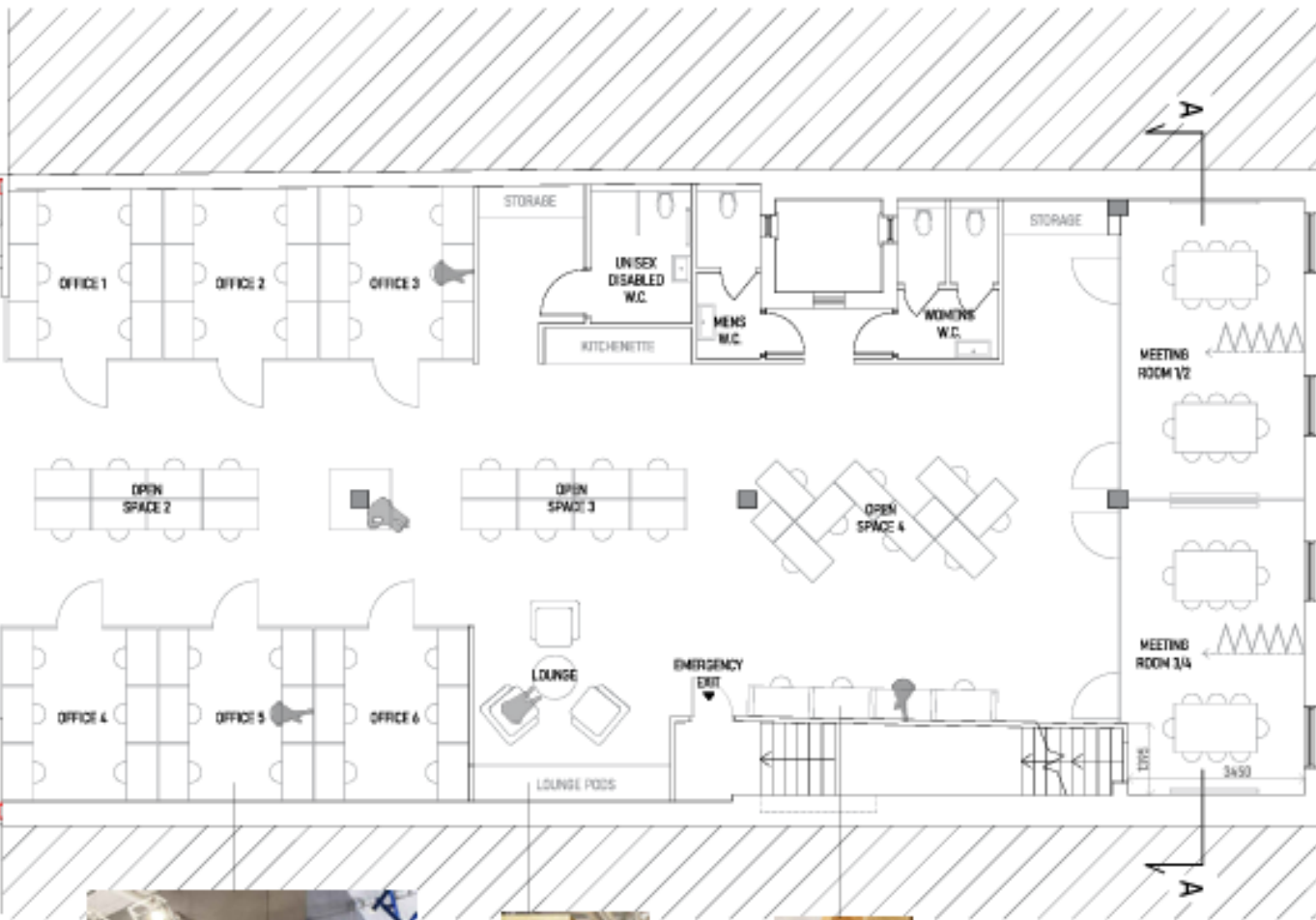
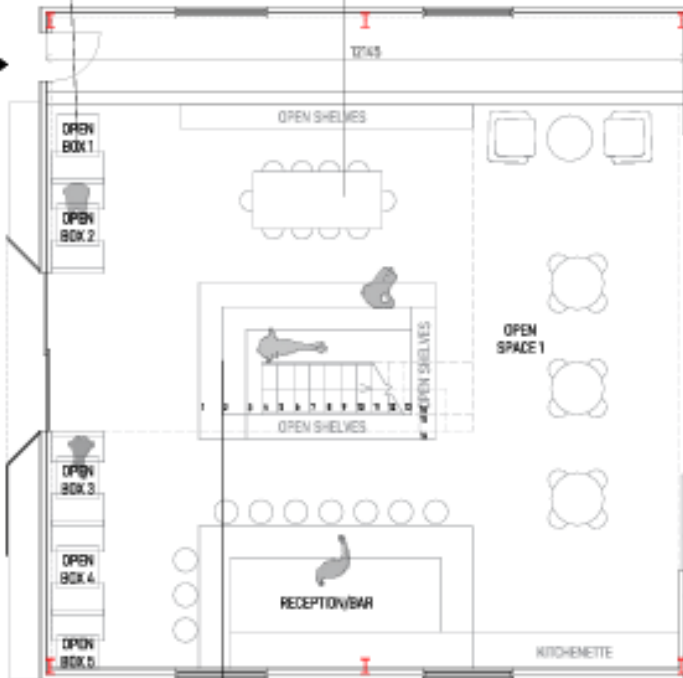






PRIVATE ACCESS

MAIN ENTRANCE



MAIN STREET



FEATURE STAIRS WITH SEATING & STORAGE OPTIONS



OFFICE 1-6 WITH GLASS PARTITIONS



LOUNGE POD

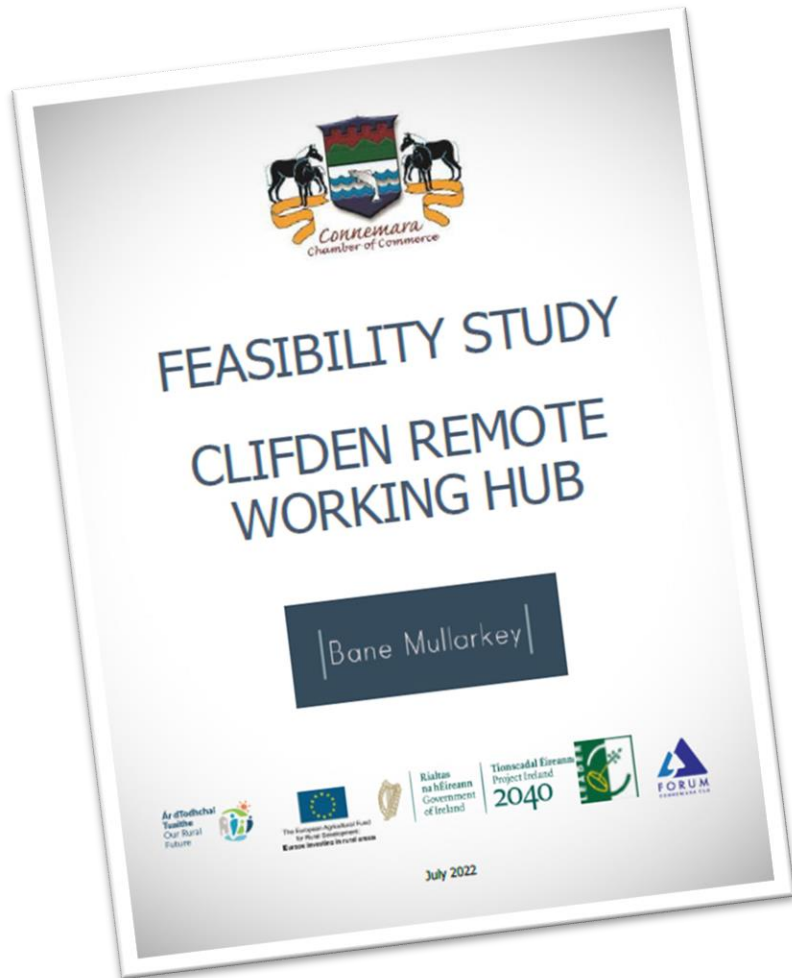


DESK PARTITION IDEA

PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN LAYOUT
SCALE 1:100 TOTAL = 427.18 sqm

What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

2. An External Feasibility Study



- In 2022, we commissioned an **external feasibility study** was carried out via financial assistance from Forum Connemara
- **Bane Mullarkey Consultants** conducted a 80-page study on the viability of a remote working hub for Clifden.

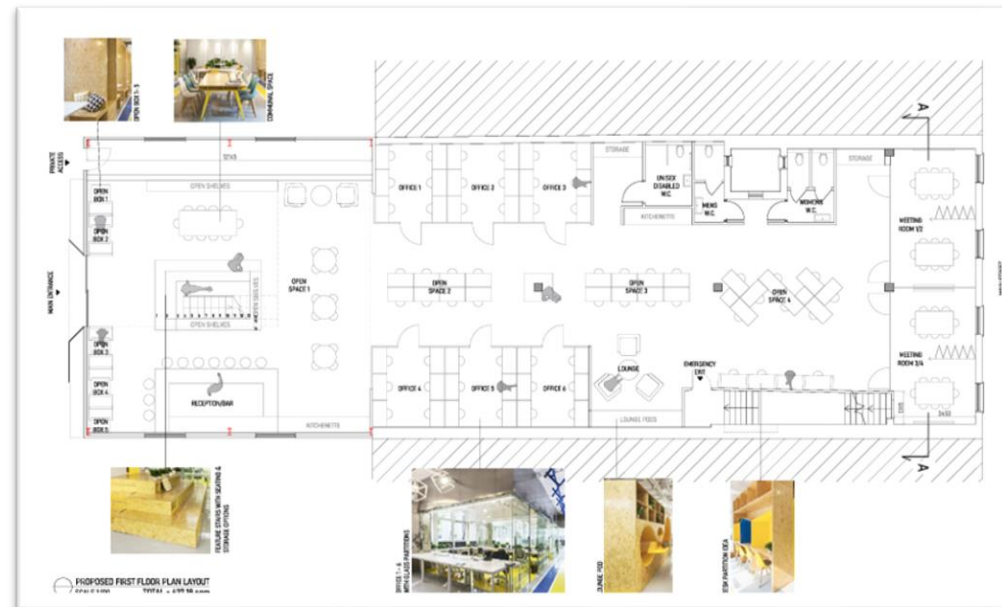


What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

3. Designed the Hub



- Clifden based **Enda O'Malley & Associates** designed a layout to incorporate the Clifden Hub and enhance this unsightly part of Clifden.



What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

4. Planning Permission Secured



- June 2022 - The proposed remote working hub received **full planning approval** from Galway County Council for the hub and its design and location.

What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

5. Commercial Terms Agreed



- Commercial terms have been agreed for a **25-year lease** on the building from the building's owner.

What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

6. A Strong Anchor Tenant



- A **potential anchor tenant** has expressed a strong interest to take a sizeable section of the building.
- The potential tenant has also expressed an interest in bringing **capital expenditure** to the project.

What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

7. Capital Funding Application



- **June 2022** – Connemara Chamber of Commerce / Galway County Council applied for capital funding for a remote working hub under the ‘Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2022’
- This application was not successful.
- Applications will be made to future funds.

What's Done to Date on The Clifden Hub

8. Win A House Draw



- In anticipation of the project being a success, Connemara Chamber of Commerce realises it must contribute **financially** to the project.
- In December 2022, the Chamber secured a licence to run a 'Win A House' competition from the District Court.
- **Agency selected** to professionally run this draw.
- A suitable property is being sought for a potential **September to December 2023** campaign.
- **:: But ... We Can't Find A House!!! ::**

What Now for The Clifden Remote Working Hub?

- We've done all we can.
- It's now up to our Political Representatives to **deliver this** for Clifden & Connemara.

Residential Planning

Residential Planning Permission in Connemara



“ Renting, Buying or Building a Home in
Connemara is now virtually impossible ”

- *Connemara Chamber of Commerce*



Can't Rent ...

- The long-term rental market is under pressure from:
 - Tourist Accommodation (Short term rentals)
 - Employers renting properties for staff needs
 - Not commercially viable to build to rent at present
 - Can't get planning to build long term rental accommodation
 - Galway County Council renting from the private market
 - Properties in use for refugee needs
 - Gross lack of housing stock generally

A Sample Search 'To Rent' – Daft.ie ...

- Searched: 30th June 2023 for a long-term property to rent to rent in Connemara - **Results: 2 properties - Oughterard & Spiddal**

The screenshot displays the Daft.ie website interface. At the top, the navigation menu includes 'Buy', 'Rent' (highlighted), 'Share', 'New Homes', 'Sell', 'Commercial', and 'Mortgages'. A 'NEW' badge is visible above the 'Sell' option. On the right, there are links for 'Place Ad' and 'Sign in'.

The search filters section includes a search bar with 'Map Area...', '+ Add locations', '+0km', 'Price', 'Beds', 'Filters', and a 'Save' button.

The main content area features a large image of a property exterior and three smaller interior photos. Below the images, the text reads: 'Oughterard , Oughterard, Co. Galway' and '€1,600 per month'. A 'FEATURED' badge is present on the right side of the text.

To the right of the property images is a map titled 'YOU MAP IT. Find your new home with Allianz'. The map shows a large blue-shaded area covering the Connemara region, with labels for various towns including Tully, Cleggan, Clifden, Roundstone, Casla, GARMNA, Ballinrobe, Cong, Headford, Tuam, and Galway. Price markers on the map indicate '€1,600' and '€2,000'. The map also shows major roads like the M6 and M17.

At the bottom of the map area, it says '2 of 2 Properties available'.

Can't Buy ...

- Finding a detached 3-bedroom home in Connemara to purchase is very difficult for the following reasons:
 - Houses too expensive and being snapped up by those who can afford them – very similar to the recent Dingle examples
 - Obvious lack of supply
 - Not commercially viable to build estates at present
 - The second home market has exploded since Covid (appetite for coastal, rural, Connemara properties)
 - Locals are finding it increasingly difficult to compete in the existing home market as prices have been substantially inflated by those looking to purchase a second home.
- **A recent sample search for the following criteria:**
 - Buy a 3-bedroom house in Connemara
 - Value maximum €300,000
 - Results: 4 houses to purchase in Connemara

A Sample Search 'To Buy' – Daft.ie ...

- Searched: 30th June 2023 for a 3-bedroom detached house in Connemara value max €300,000 - **Results:** 4 viable properties -

The screenshot shows the Daft.ie website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'daft.ie' logo and links for 'Buy', 'Rent', 'Share', 'New Homes', 'Sell', 'Commercial', and 'Mortgages'. Below this is a search bar with filters: 'Map Area...', '+ Add locations', '+0km', '€300k Max', 'Beds', '2 Filters', and 'Save'. The main content area is split into two parts. On the left, there's a detailed view of a property in Aughrus More, Claddaghduff, Co. Galway, priced at €95,000. It's a 3-bedroom, 1-bathroom detached house. On the right, there's a map titled 'YOU MAP IT. Find your new home with Allianz' showing 9 properties available in the area. The map displays various locations like Ballinrobe, Cong Cross, Headford, Tuam, Oughterard, Roundstone, Casla, and Galway. Property prices are shown as callouts on the map: €95k, €280k, €280k, €275k, €295k, €295k, and €295k.

4 x doer uppers

1 x log cabin

2 x housing estate

2 x houses/cottages

A Sample Search 'To Buy' – Daft.ie ...

The image is a screenshot of a real estate listing on the Daft.ie website. The main focus is a large photograph of a two-story stone house with a grey plastered section, situated in a rural, grassy area under a blue sky with scattered clouds. To the left of the main image is a vertical strip of smaller thumbnail images showing different views of the property, including the exterior, interior rooms, and surrounding landscape. Navigation arrows are visible on either side of the main image. On the right side of the screenshot, there is a large, vertical advertisement for Bulmers Irish Cider. The ad features a crowd of people at a concert with their hands raised in the air, illuminated by stage lights. The text on the ad reads: "WIN TICKETS", "BULMERS IRISH CIDER", "SECRET ORCHARD CLONMEL", and a "LEARN MORE" button. At the bottom of the ad, there is a small disclaimer: "SEE THE FACTS BEFORE YOU BUY Visit drinkaware.ie Terms and conditions apply. Over 18's only." In the bottom right corner of the screenshot, there is a page indicator "7 / 35".

Can't Build ... (Today's Focus)

- Outside of inheriting a house in Connemara, **building is the only way** to own your own home – either on your own land or other land.
- Key reason why one can't build in Connemara: **High rate of refusals**
 - Most cannot get planning permission in the first place –
 - Those wishing to finance and build their own family home are coming up against a very onerous (and unfair?) planning system – for both local and national reasons
 - It is generally expected now that one needs to apply at least **2-3 times** before they are in the running for a positive planning outcome.
 - External objections carry a lot of weight against a planning application
- Is there an **epidemic** of residential planning permission refusals in Galway County Council?

An Epidemic of Planning Refusals?

Our understanding is that:

3000** residential planning applications have been **refused** by Galway County Council Planning Department in the past **3 years!

This is by far much higher than comparable local authorities in Ireland.

Is this fair?

“ The town that doesn't provide for & look after it's Youth is a dying town ”

- *Connemara Chamber of Commerce*



Residential Planning Stories – Connemara

1. The Business Manager



A 42-year-old local woman applying for planning permission beside her parents for a modest home outside of Roundstone village

- Proposed site is on family lands and with clear housing need demonstrated
- Business manager in Clifden running a large and busy agricultural and equine business
- Would be sharing an existing entrance with parents
- **Refused:** Car access onto a regional road + lack of housing need + absentee objectors

The irony is that now there will be more vehicle traffic on the entrance in question as the woman has to make trips to her visit her parents for their welfare

Residential Planning Stories – Connemara

2. The Teacher & the Guard



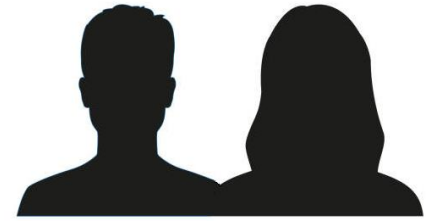
A local primary school teacher and a Guard - two 30-year-old working professionals (one from the area) seeking to build a family home within a residential zone in Clifden

- Location was across the road from women's father and mother
- Not family lands but as close to as possible
- *1st application* – Dec 21 – **Refused**: Agricultural land
- Land subsequently rezoned to residential
- *2nd application* – July 22 – **Refused**: (i) Now the land is zoned but not on family lands + (ii) traffic hazard + would need to be Residential Phase 2

For years, the people of Clifden & surrounds bemoaned that guards and teachers in the area just commuted to Clifden and were not putting down roots – these two corner stone professions are the building blocks of a community but here is an example of how such people are denied the ability to settle.

Residential Planning Stories – Connemara

3. The Hotelier



33-year-old hotel owner, lifelong Connemara resident and his wife seeking planning permission for a family home in Clifden

- Proposed to build a home on his great grandfather's land
- An employer of over 70 staff year-round in Clifden
- There are houses present on 3 sides (within 100 metres) all around the planning permission site
- **Refused:** No housing need / connection to locality not strong enough / close to a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Grounds of refusal: “an absence of sufficient details to fully substantiate the applicant's rural linkage to this area”

Residential Planning Stories – Connemara

4. The Local Property Developer



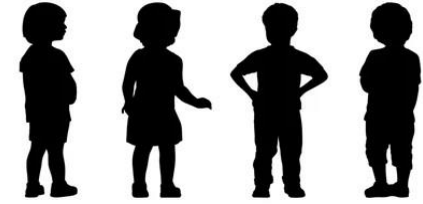
A 40-year-old local businessman looking to develop four residential apartments in Clifden town centre.

- The proposed site is within Town Centre Zoning for residential buildings
- A site that previously had commercial planning permission approved
- Residential properties all around the site including a full housing estate
- **Refused:** On traffic grounds - driving out on to road

A simple further information request or raising this during pre-planning could have easily dealt with this. There was no adequate consultation given here.

Further delay and cost for four badly needed homes.





5. The Creche

A planning application submitted by a local woman, a childcare professional (recently relocated from Dublin) for the establishment of a professional childcare facility 100 metres from Clifden town centre.

- A 25-year-old derelict building was to be converted into a much-needed valuable family resource
- The property aimed to alleviate some of the chronic lack of creche spaces for Clifden town and surrounds
- **Refused:** Not in accordance with sustainable development of the area.

Many families continue to be without necessary childcare or access it far away.

Negative Impacts of Refusals

- **Financial Cost**
 - Wasted time and effort and money by thousands of families
- **Negative demographics**
 - Local population remain stagnant or drops – see Clifden town example (next slide)
 - Uneven demographics – lots of young / lots of old – few in-between
- **Human & Economic Cost**
 - **Lives on hold** – marriage postponed – living with in-laws.
 - The **breaking** of social and family connections
 - People make **alternate plans** to the detriment of local community and business life in the region
 - Palpable sense of **frustration and anger** building in community & resentment of the State
 - The cost of **time spent by our political reps** on residential planning to the detriment of other worthy causes
 - **Staffing** becoming very difficult for businesses of all sorts
- **People Seeking Alternatives**
 - Settling elsewhere in Ireland
 - Emigration

Settlement	Population CSO 2011	Population CSO 2016	Growth Rate 2011-2016 (%)
Baile Chláir	1,217	1,248	2.55
Bearna	1,878	1,998	6.39
Oranmore	4,799	4,990	3.98
Ballinasloe	6,659	6,662	0.05
Tuam	8,242	8,767	6.37
Athenry	3,950	4,445	12.53
Gort	2,644	2,994	13.24
Loughrea	5,062	5,556	9.76
Clifden	2,056	1,597	-22.32
Maigh Cuilinn	1,559	1,704	9.3
Oughterard	1,333	1,318	-1.13
Portumna	1,530	1,450	-5.23
Headford	889	973	9.45
An Cheathrú Rua	814	786	-3.44
An Spidéal	250	237	-5.2
Ballygar	660	687	4.09
Dunmore	577	600	3.99
Glenamaddy	500	480	-4
Kinvara	620	730	17.74
Moylough	503	518	2.98

Likely Causes of So Many Refusals

- **National Policy on rural housing**
 - National policy in regard to one off rural housing is not helpful to the case of the one-off house planning application
 - *Why is there such resistance to one off housing developments?*
- **Unfair interpretation of the County Development Plan**
 - The spirit of the County Development Plan is not being honoured
- **An under-staffing of Galway County Council Planning department?**
 - Is there a major understaffing issue within the Planning Department?
 - Are too many decisions being left to junior personal?
 - Are decisions being rushed due to workload?
 - *Example: Just one enforcement officer for the entire county?*

Likely Causes of So Many Refusals

- **Lack of engagement**

- A lack of engagement with those going for planning permission at the following stages:
 1. Pre-planning stage
 2. The Further Information stage
 - Our understanding is that there is a relatively recent policy introduced within the planning department where 'Further Information Requests' are no longer asked from applicants – is this the case?

- **Little regard for genuine Housing Need**

- Anecdotally, we have heard that even where a genuine and obvious housing need has been established, the planning decision is not weighted towards it.

Likely Causes of So Many Refusals

- **Is there a Lack of Accountability?**
 - What accountability does Galway County Council Planning Department have for its decisions in regard to Residential Planning Decisions?
 - To the people of the county
 - To the local political representatives
 - To the County Council
 - To the County Council Executive

Solutions to these Refusals

- **A Change to National Policy on Rural Housing**
 - A major change to national policy on rural housing
 - We believe there are some changes pending ?
- **A Fairer Interpretation and Implementation of the Galway County Development Plan**
 - **Genuine Housing Need** needs to be fairly assessed
 - The **Director of Planning** should have the final say on determining genuine Housing needs.
 - **More Internal Reviews** – perhaps an increased level of internal reviews are required before decisions are signed off on
 - The rigorous and **over application** of the national rural housing policy appears to out of step with other local authorities
 - **Residential Phase 1 and Phase 2** – a **reform** of the application of these zones so that lands unlikely to be developed in the short to medium term and quickly disregarded allowing R2's to become viable.
 - Apply the County Development Plan **as its written**

Solutions to these Refusals

- **Appropriate engagement with applicants**
 - Increase the amount of engagement in the following two areas
 1. Pre-planning stage
 2. The Further Information stage
- **Adequate Resourcing of the Planning Department**
 - If Galway County Council Planning Department is under-resourced / under skilled – this needs to be urgently addressed as we are in the midst of a housing crisis.
- **Changes to the Planning Department itself**
 - There appears to be a large amount of **subjective assessments and determinations** being carried out in making planning decisions – the spirit of the County Development plan is arguably not being upheld at present.
 - Perhaps a **cultural change** is needed within the Planning Department – one that takes into consideration the Housing Crisis and desire for people to live in their own communities via the only way possible at this point.
 - **Increased accountability** to the many stakeholders for decisions that are being made

Solutions to these Refusals

- **Hyper local solutions** – example
- Clifden Town Centre - Encourage people to live in the town via giving Special designation for Market Hill area – e.g., Section 23 tax relief developments / area of disrepair / opportunity to provide housing



“ Galway County Council wishes to implement a multi-million euro Clifden Regeneration Scheme – but, Where are the people to live? ”

- *Connemara Chamber of Commerce*



N6 Galway City Ring Road

Effects on Connemara & Galway West and What's Next?



“ The Galway City Ring Road is potentially decades away from being delivered so what can be done now to reduce the negative impact that Galway’s traffic congestion has on the economic development of Connemara and Galway West?

- *Connemara Chamber of Commerce*



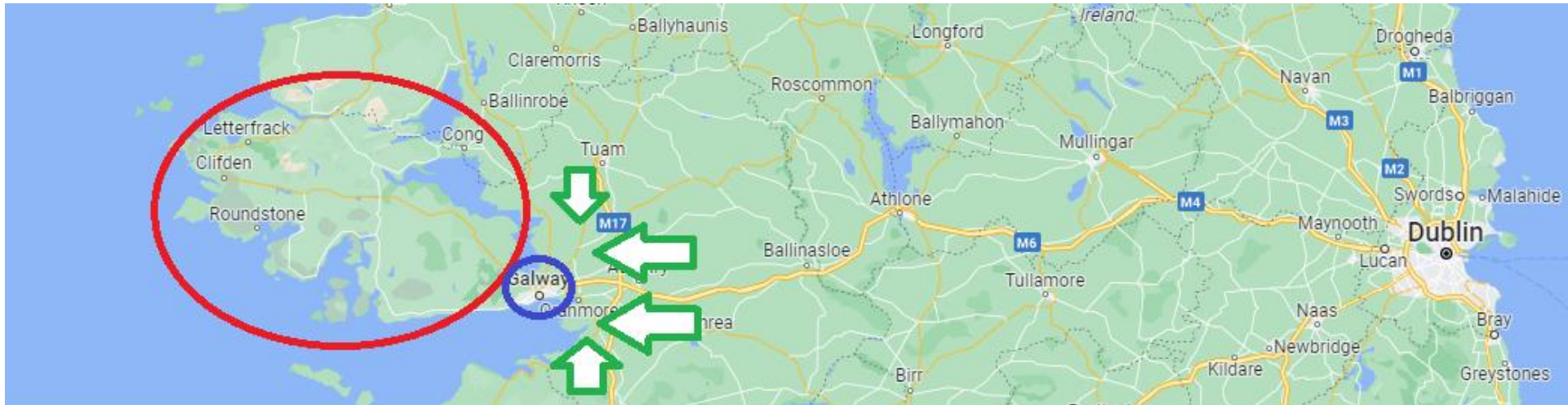
Ring Road decades away ...

- We believe the Galway City Ring Road is decades away from becoming reality for the following reasons:
 - The project has now rumbled on for **more than 20 years**
 - The recent ruling does not bode well for the project in its current form
 - There is likely to be **another 10 years** of legal morass before it is even started
 - No longer a project of **strategic high importance**? – Has Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) dropped it from their list of priorities?



Impact of no/delayed solutions

- Connemara (North and South) are affected daily in the following ways:
 - A loss of tourism revenue for a region at the heart of the Wild Atlantic Way
 - Lost employment opportunities
 - Poor county wide access to city-based services (public and private)
 - Major lost regional productivity and economic development



What's the plan now?

In the meantime, what action is being taken to stop the now legendary traffic situation?

- What is the **here and now** plan without the ring road?
- **20% Growth by 2034** - The *2034 Transport Demand Study for Galway City* predicts an overall growth in car trips (compared to the 2012 base year) to/from/through Galway city is 20% - based on population and employment forecasts
- The trip patterns are challenging to service by public transport and a significant volume is of a length that is **not conducive to walking or cycling**.
- What **tactical traffic reliefs** can be put in place to increase the flow of car traffic through the city onto Connemara north and south?
 - Specifically, actions in Galway City that can facilitate cross county and east-west travel on the National and Regional road network

Origin/Destination

As part of the 2011 Census, travel information was processed for work, school and college trips (POWSCAR) in small zones nationwide. This was used to identify the major origins and destinations of journeys. Just over 45,000 total trips were recorded within POWSCAR for Galway City and its immediate environs. The origin and destination zones with the highest trip volumes, including internal trips within that zone, are as follows:

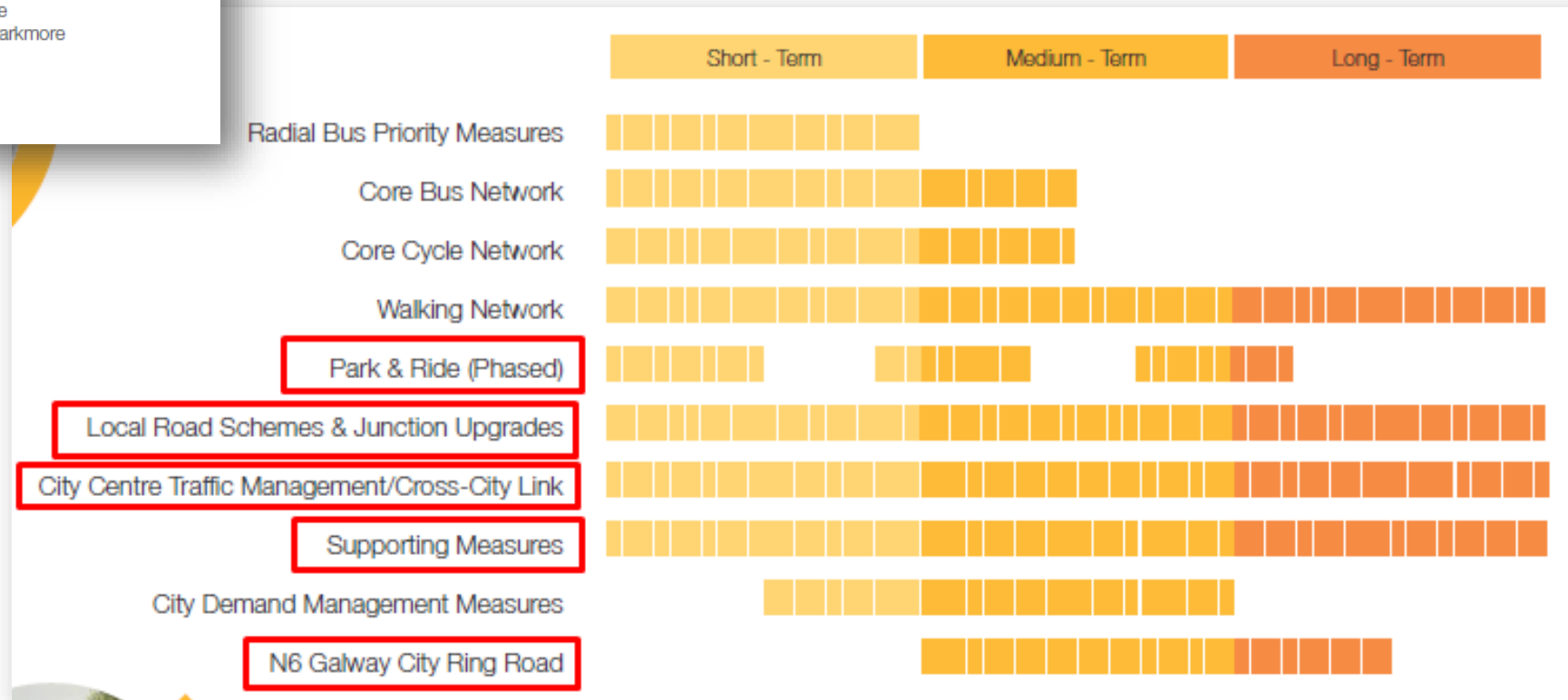
Origins:

- Knocknacarra South
- Terryland
- Doughiska
- Knocknacarra North
- Ballybane
- Oranmore

Destinations:

- NUIG
- City Centre
- Ballybrit/Parkmore
- Salthill
- Mervue
- GMIT

Plenty to do ...



Solutions Discussion

1. Clifden Remote Working Hub



Solutions Discussion

2. Residential Planning in Connemara



Solutions Discussion

3. Galway City Ring Road & Congestion Alleviation



Thank You

