

Offaly County Council

**Urban Regeneration and Development Fund
Tullamore Urban Regeneration and Development Call 2
URDFOff002**

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

**Public Consultation
Report on Submissions**

October 2024

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1. Introduction

The Tullamore Urban Regeneration and Development Fund 2020 (URDF 2) Project incorporates six individual projects building on the successful completion of the Tullamore Street Enhancement project funded under URDF 1.

The URDF 2 Project will continue to build on the success of URDF 1. Each of the six projects, as listed below, are straightforward and deliverable in the short to medium term however will bring advantages to the town beyond their individual scope and represent value for money and a good return on the investment.

A: O'Connor Square to Church Street, Urban Garden, Civil Building / RW Hub

B: High Street to Tanyard New Street Link

C: Meath Lane Civic Space

D: Tullamore Regeneration Framework

E: Tullamore Harbour Development Options and Viability Appraisal

F: Acres' Folly Enhancements

Project E, Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan (TGCHMP) jointly commissioned by Waterways Ireland and Offaly County Council, has provided the prism through which future transformation and regeneration of the harbour area can be envisioned. Grafton Architects as the appointed consultancy team, have culminated their assessment of the study area in a Masterplan that reimagines the harbour area through a catalogue of scaled development opportunities.

The Masterplan study area also includes the Grand Canal Harbour and adjacent lands, the Canal Spur Line enabling access into the harbour basin, and Young's Store - a three-storey former warehouse with an approximate floor area of 275 square metres fronting the canal along Convent Road.

Grafton Architects were appointed as the Consultancy Design team for the TGCHMP following open competition advertised on etenders, in November 2022.

2. Public Consultation

The public consultation for the draft TGCHMP commenced on 13th of June 2024 for 4 weeks to 11th July 2024 with two weeks for submissions closing on 25th July 2024. The PC was advertised with a press release in the local newspaper and on social media.

The TGCHMP was available for inspection in the offices of Offaly County Council, Áras an Chontae, Tullamore Municipal District, Tullamore Library during normal office hours.

A presentation was given to the elected members of OCC and Stakeholders on 13th June 2024. An open day was held in Tullamore Library on 20th June from 12pm to 7pm.

The TGCHMP was available on www.Offaly.ie and links to the website were accessible from the Council's social media on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn.

The public were invited to make submissions on the TGCHMP in writing to Tullamore Municipal District, Town Hall, Cormac Street, Tullamore or submitted via email to tullamoremd@offalycoco.ie by 26th July 2024.

3. Submissions

The public were invited to make submissions on the TGCHMP in writing to Tullamore Municipal District, Town Hall, Cormac Street, Tullamore or submitted via email to tullamoremd@offalycoco.ie by 26th July 2024.

Each of the submissions were acknowledged by return email on 31st July 2024. The List of Persons and Bodies who made Submissions or Observations are shown in Table 1 below.

Name	Date Received	Content
Individual	18/6/2024	Hydrobikes
Individual	24/6/2024	Support for the Masterplan
Individual	14/7/2024	Supporting the Masterplan
Individual	16/7/2024	Facilities in the short term
Individual	20/7/2024	Flooding at property
BDP	22/7/2024	Consultants for Opportunity Site 2, Town Densities, development ambition
Individual	23/7/2024	Facilities in the short term
Individual	24/7/2024	Support for the Masterplan
Individual	24/7/2024	Name, maintain dry dock, moorings
Individual	24/7/2024	Facilities in the short term
Tullamore Chamber of Commerce	25/7/2024	Extend the site for further opportunity
IWAI	24/7/2024	Essential services for Greenway and Waterways users, residential & visiting berths, preserving the heritage of the dry docks and tourism potential
IWAI	25/7/2024	
IWAI	25/7/2024	
IWAI	25/7/2024	
Individual	26/7/2024	Potential of Young's Store

Table 1 List of Persons and Bodies who made Submissions or Observations

4. Review and Response to Submissions

Each of the submissions received have been reviewed by the project team in Offaly County Council, Waterways Ireland and Grafton Architect and summarised below. The response to each submission has been included in the sections below. A copy of each submission is included in Appendix A.

Individual 18/6/2024

Enquiring if there would be units to rent in the proposed development for water based activity in the canal harbour and if permission from Waterways Ireland is required.

Response: Commercial use of WI's property including navigations and harbours is subject to obtaining a Waterways Ireland Commercial Operating License.

Details of the application process is available from Waterways Ireland's website. <https://www.waterwaysireland.org/contact-us/license-a-business>

For new experience opportunities along the waterways network, and related requirements to rent out any form of commercial units from WI for such businesses, WI may publicly advertise the experience opportunity prior to accepting applications for related Commercial Operating Licenses. The availability of Waterways Ireland units for storage of Hydrobikes or for other purposes in the Tullamore Harbour area cannot be confirmed at this early stage.

Individual 24/6/2024

As the project may take many years to be fully realised, a small and confined area which gives access to the dockside should be provided at a very early date in order to allow the people of Tullamore to enjoy, even in a very limited way, this extraordinary amenity which has for over two centuries lain hidden in the middle of their town

Response: The submission is noted.

Individual 14/7/2024

Support for the masterplan

Response: The submission is noted.

Individual 16/7/2024

Suggestion for the following at the Harbour site:

- Laundry/Showers/WC's/ Pump out/electricity facilities
- Dry Dock which can be used by those wishing to carry out repairs / maintenance / painting etc.
- Lighting /security measures / CCTV cameras
- Extra moorings opposite the existing harbour moorings
- Footpath kerbing to differentiate between road and pathways

Response: The provision of a service block to include showers, WC, water taps and pump-out facility along the Canal Spur Line at Tullamore is a priority for Waterways Ireland in the short to medium term.

The provision of serviced moorings and a Service Block will enable Tullamore to attract boating from the Shannon Navigation. Tullamore can then become a destination harbour off the Shannon, particularly, during the Spring and Autumn periods.

The drydock will be considered in the context of the longer term use of the drydock facility in Tullamore.

Individual 20/7/2024

Issue of persistent flooding, drainage issues and tree roots may be the cause. Concerned over increase of people with the proposed facilities which will be creating further water run-off in this location will add to the issue of flooding.

Response: The issues with drainage are not within the scope of the Masterplan. Offaly County Council will review this separately.

BDP 22/7/2024

BDP have been working in Tullamore on the Texas lands opportunity site over the past numbers of years. The harbour site has indicated a very modest quantum of development along with a very significant quantum of public realm space that will have a significant cost that would require funding. Has an economic appraisal been produced for the Harbour Masterplan and is it viable?

How will this small quantum of development on the Harbour Site bring intensification, regeneration, or vitality to the site? From our experience this would appear to be vastly underestimated. It is all too easy to present new high quality public spaces to the public, but it must be achievable and deliverable.

Response: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan has provided a catalogue of development opportunities through which future transformation and regeneration of the harbour area can be envisioned. The Masterplan reimagines the harbour area, the Canal Spur Line enabling access into the harbour basin, and Young's Store - a three-storey former warehouse. Proposals presented will undergo shortlisting and prioritisation, with the emergent preferred redevelopment option(s) then subjected to required Business Case / Economic Appraisal and statutory approval processes.

Individual 23/7/2024

Suggestion for the following at the Harbour site:

- Laundry/Showers/WC's/ Pump out/electricity facilities
- Dry Dock which can be used by those wishing to carry out repairs / maintenance / painting etc.
- Lighting /security measures / CCTV cameras
- Extra moorings opposite the existing harbour moorings
- Footpath kerbing to differentiate between road and pathways

Response: The provision of a service block to include showers, WC, water taps and pump-out facility along the Canal Spur Line at Tullamore is a priority for Waterways Ireland in the short to medium term.

The provision of serviced moorings and a Service Block will enable Tullamore to attract boating from the Shannon Navigation. Tullamore can then become a destination harbour off the Shannon, particularly, during the Spring and Autumn periods.

The drydock will be considered in the context of the longer term use of the drydock facility in Tullamore.

Individual 24/7/2024

Young's store on Bury Quay would be good to restore and a restoration and perhaps leasing to a community group such as Tidy Towns or Offaly History when the works are done should be looked at. Waterways own this and OCC the old cattle market strip. So why not start here and adopt plans for access. It works well in Portobello. Integration with Market Square would 'build' on the original of why the Market Square is where it is since the 1820s. The new plan to link this square with O'Connor Square would mean a three-way link up as suggested.

Response: The submission is noted and will be taken into consideration during planning and detailed design as funding is available.

Individual 24/7/2024

Recommendations for the TGCHMP as below:

- The name Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour be changed to something that identifies Tullamore Harbour, its unique heritage, and its future as a thriving boating and recreational centre
 - The retention of Tullamore Harbour as a Working Harbour with a covered Drydock is essential to ensure barges and boats are safe and can be maintained in line with Legislation
 - The concept of a Working Harbour is stated and the current Drydock facility is shown under a canopy, there are no moorings or barges depicted outside of the docks
 - There are distinct health and safety issues with 50-ton Barges operating in the same area as canoes and kayaks
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- Access to the Inner Harbour is shown as a Lifting Bridge with Pedestrians using it to cross to the north side of the harbour
 - The new Buildings as depicted, cast shadows along the Tullamore Spur.
 - The description and the images of the Spur do not show where the different types of moorings are to be located. The Inner Harbour does not show any barge moorings along the Drydock or against the other Harbour Walls
 - A Canal Centre with displays and information on the 250-year history of the canal would stimulate interest in the skills necessary to maintain heritage boats and the canal infrastructure
 - Vehicular access required for the Drydock, for deliveries to Businesses and for the Emergency Services
 - The Spur needs a turning area, wide enough to turn an 18.6 m Barge

Response: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan has provided a catalogue of development opportunities through which future transformation and regeneration of the harbour area can be envisioned. The Masterplan reimagines the harbour area, the Canal Spur Line enabling access into the harbour basin, and Young's Store. Proposals presented will undergo shortlisting and prioritisation, with the emergent preferred redevelopment option(s) then subjected to required Business Case / Economic Appraisal and statutory approval processes.

The provision of a service block to include showers, WC, water taps and pump-out facility along the Canal Spur Line at Tullamore is a priority for Waterways Ireland in the short to medium term.

The provision of serviced moorings and a Service Block will enable Tullamore to attract boating from the Shannon Navigation. Tullamore can then become a destination harbour off the Shannon, particularly, during the Spring and Autumn periods.

The drydock will be considered in the context of the longer term use of the drydock facility in Tullamore.

Individual 24/7/2024

Suggestion for the following at the Harbour site:

- Laundry/Showers/WC's/ Pump out/electricity facilities
- Dry Dock which can be used by those wishing to carry out repairs / maintenance / painting etc.
- Lighting /security measures / CCTV cameras
- Extra moorings opposite the existing harbour moorings
- Footpath kerbing to differentiate between road and pathways

Response: The provision of a service block to include showers, WC, water taps and pump-out facility along the Canal Spur Line at Tullamore is a priority for Waterways Ireland in the short to medium term.

The provision of serviced moorings and a Service Block will enable Tullamore to attract boating from the Shannon Navigation. Tullamore can then become a destination harbour off the Shannon, particularly, during the Spring and Autumn periods.

The drydock will be considered in the context of the longer term use of the drydock facility in Tullamore.

Tullamore Chamber of Commerce 25/7/2024

Tullamore Chamber of Commerce submitted a details submission on the Tullamore Regeneration Framework and include points on the Harbour Masterplan. The key points made are summarised below.

- The Strategic Policy committee of Tullamore and District Chamber of Commerce have campaigned for more than 10 years for the redevelopment of Tullamore Harbour recognising its unique characteristics as a large body of water in an urban setting that presents endless possibilities to create amenities and more importantly attractions that would benefit the region once the site is opened up to the public.
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- Opportunity site 1 should include the entire block up to the Grand canal to include the parish car park, parochial house and other adjoining sites. If this entire block is explored as part of the Harbour Plan it would present a more cohesive approach to this exciting site.
 - Opportunity site 1 has been restricted by limiting its potential to the waterways Ireland land ownership, thus in effect 3 of the 4 side of the Harbour have a vision for the future but no indication of a compatible fourth side to the waterfront.

Response: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan has provided a catalogue of development opportunities through which future transformation and regeneration of the harbour area can be envisioned. The Masterplan reimagines the harbour area, the Canal Spur Line enabling access into the harbour basin, and Young's Store.

Proposals presented are preliminary design and illustrative subject to shortlisting and prioritisation, with the emergent preferred redevelopment option(s) then subjected to required Business Case / Economic Appraisal and statutory approval processes.

The entire Canal Quarter as described in the submission is beyond the remit of the Masterplan.

IWAI 24/7/2024

Representatives of IWAI made a detailed and relevant submission on the masterplan with useful suggestions. The key points made are summarised below:

- The high-rise structure to the south east of the site and immediately south of the spur line will cast long cold shadows on the harbour in the mornings and right down the spur line for most of the day.
 - The warehouses form part of the original extent of the harbour property and should be rejoined and redeveloped within the complex, thereby alleviating some congestion on the site.
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- Tullamore with its unique harbour, having originally been the western terminus of the Grand Canal, is the perfect location to house Ireland's National Waterways Museum. Having a working dry dock on site and the possibility of a further exhibition/entertainment space in the second dry dock would add enormously to the potential of this facility.
 - In support of the idea of a National Waterways Museum for Tullamore, a centre of excellence focusing on our surviving heritage fleet could offer skills which might otherwise be lost. Rivetting, welding woodworking are all skills which can be preserved and passed on to future generations. This development could become a flagship or central destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.
 - Developing, while preserving living heritage - the greatest challenge here is to design and integrate the modern with the significant heritage of the site, without detracting from that heritage and while adding further function and facility.
 - Greenway/Waterway Services which should be included are: Service Block; Dry Docks; Dedicated Liveaboard berths; Drinking Water; Short Stay Serviced Berths; Pumpout Service; Bicycle Racks
 - Year round boat tourism potential on our canals. Boat tourism on the Shannon is basically restricted to a seven month season, April to October. The canals offer the opportunity for year round boat tourism, cruising the canals is possible all year round.
 - Everywhere in Europe that there are canals traversing cities and towns, there are thriving communities and vibrant tourism attractions built upon the back of that draw to water except in Ireland where it has been neglected.
 - To fail to plan for the future life of the canals is to begin the process of decline and ultimately closure. IWAI's Nav-Watch was established to document problems and focus essential maintenance on critical issues by bringing them to the attention of WI.
 - The potential here for developing a thriving boat tourism business is as great as it is in any other European country with a canal network.
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Response: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan has provided a catalogue of development opportunities through which future transformation and regeneration of the harbour area can be envisioned. The Masterplan reimagines the harbour area, the Canal Spur Line enabling access into the harbour basin, and Young's Store.

Proposals presented will undergo shortlisting and prioritisation, with the emergent preferred redevelopment option(s) then subjected to required Business Case / Economic Appraisal and statutory approval processes.

The provision of a service block to include showers, WC, water taps and pump-out facility along the Canal Spur Line at Tullamore is a priority for Waterways Ireland in the short to medium term.

The provision of serviced moorings and a Service Block will enable Tullamore to attract boating from the Shannon Navigation. Tullamore can then become a destination harbour off the Shannon, particularly, during the Spring and Autumn periods.

The drydock will be considered in the context of the longer term use of the drydock facility in Tullamore.

Individual 26/7/2024

Young's Stores on Convent Road along the Grand Canal is unique piece of canal infrastructure. The restoration of Young's Store to house a museum offers the opportunity to create a unique industrial heritage experience for tourists and schools.

This unique canal warehouse can be transformed into a world class visitor experience highlighting the development of the Grand Canal and its significant role in providing economic and social opportunities – especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Response: The submission is noted.

5. Environmental Assessment

Brady Shipman Martin (BSM) were appointed to carry out screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of the Draft Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan.

The SEA Screening Report and AA Screening Report documents the screening exercise for SEA/AA in respect of the Masterplan for the purposes of consultation, in accordance with Article 9(7) of S.I. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011. Both reports are included in Appendix B.

5.1 Environmental Impact Assessment

The Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan is a non-statutory land use plan and has been screened for the requirement for SEA under the requirements of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 and the findings are set out in Section 6 of the SEA Screening Report. It is considered, on the basis of this exercise, that the implementation of the Masterplan has no real likelihood of having likely significant negative effects on the environment. The Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan is not likely to have significant negative effects on the environment and, therefore, SEA is not required.

5.2 Habitats Directive Assessment

A screening exercise for an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out and the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concludes that the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan, individually or in combination with another plan or project, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in light of their conservation objectives. The Masterplan does not require an Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report.

6. Conclusion & Recommendation

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan has provided a catalogue of development opportunities through which future transformation and regeneration of the harbour area can be envisioned. The Masterplan reimagines the harbour area, the Canal Spur Line enabling access into the harbour basin, and Young's Store.

Proposals presented will undergo shortlisting and prioritisation, with the emergent preferred redevelopment option(s) then subjected to required Business Case / Economic Appraisal and statutory approval processes.

Each of the submissions received have been reviewed by the project team in Offaly County Council, Waterways Ireland and Grafton Architects and summarised in Section 4. The response to each submission has been included in this report.

The SEA Screening Report and AA Screening Report conclude that the implementation of the TGCHMP has no real likelihood of having likely significant negative effects on the environment. The TGCHMP does not require SEA, Appropriate Assessment nor the preparation of a Natura Impact Report.

It is recommended to publish the final Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan.

Appendix A

Submissions

Appendix B

Environmental Assessments

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Harbour plan
Date: Tuesday 18 June 2024 16:04:51
Attachments: [17187220982703901826661543818483.jpg](#)

To whom it concerns,

The new plans for Tullamore harbour are exciting and hopefully come to fruition soon along with the other town redevelopment plans.

I am just enquiring if there would be units to rent in the proposed development for water based activity in the canal harbour. I have just had my expression of interest in a scheme under the just transition fund grants composing of hydrobikes for hire to tourists and locals and I think if it's possible a base in the new harbour would suit this activity perfectly.

I see in the drawings there is pleasure boats such as kayaks so these bikes could work perfectly as they are pedal powered, family friendly and already in use in kilkenney and Belfast.

Would permission from irish waterways be required?



From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan (PUBLIC CONSULTATION)
Date: Monday 24 June 2024 09:57:15

A chara

I have examined the above proposals and attended the public information day on the 20th June.

I congratulate the Council and Waterways Ireland on their visionary appointment of Grafton Architects to generate ideas which will eventually lead to the incorporation of this strategic site into the urban fabric of Tullamore.

Grafton's analysis and range of options are imaginative but realisable and provide a firm basis for the debate which now commences. Their scheme sets out the high standards which will, in the fullness of time, deliver a scheme of international class and which will be a showpiece for Tullamore.

I particularly note Grafton's suggestion that, as the project may take many years to be fully realised, a small and confined area which gives access to the dockside should be provided at a very early date in order to allow the people of Tullamore to enjoy, even in a very limited way, this extraordinary amenity which has for over two centuries lain hidden in the middle of their town.

This is the first but firm step on a long and exciting journey and I for one, am thrilled to see it.

From:

Sent: Sunday, July 14, 2024 6:08 PM

To: Tullamore Municipal District <tullamoremd@offalycoco.ie>

Subject: Tullamore Masterplan Framework and Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan framework

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is and I am delighted to find out that the projects of the Tullamore Regeneration Framework and Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan Framework are available for the public discussions, submissions or observations.

I graduated from Ukrainian Lviv Polytechnic University, course Architecture. And I am planning to continue my education at LOETB FETCH courses in Construction Technology - Renewable Energy Systems (QQI 5M5010) in September.

I study with an interest offaly history blog News and updates on current Offaly History projects.

That is why I am very interested in such initiatives as Tullamore Regeneration Framework and Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan Framework projects.

I appreciate the policy of controlling the floors and visual silhouette of the city.

I think it's very important for the mental health and for the mood of the inhabitants.

The level of the project's presentation is very high and in a form accessible to non-specialists.

Plans worked out in details.

All historical natural landscape and ecosystem nuances have been taken into account.

Plans are simple, even graphically.

I am sure, all will have been done in the most qualitative way.

So, thanks a million for the opportunity to get acquainted with the future plans about Tullamore and for the opportunity to express my opinion about these plans.

Here's hoping your hard work and dedication pay off. You've worked tirelessly to get to where you are today, and I have no doubt that your efforts will be rewarded.

Best of luck to you all!

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan Framework Submission
Date: Tuesday 16 July 2024 19:58:40

Hi to all who are involved in taking in the submissions for the above project.

I attended the open day in the library and wish to thank all those involved in the open day for the welcome I received and for explaining their proposals/ideas in depth.

As I have family members living on a barge in Sallins (they have used the harbour a number of times to visit us on their journey onwards to Shannon Harbour) I am of course very interested in the future development and enhancement of the harbour. With this in mind I would like to ensure that the facilities outlined to me on the open day such as Laundry/Showers/WC's/ Pump out/electricity will definitely be available upon completion of the project. Currently there are no facilities available and perhaps in the interim Waterways Ireland could provide some badly needed facilities rather than having to wait for a number of years until the project is completed. I know it was mentioned that some aspects of the plan need not wait until work commences on the final plan so perhaps these urgent services should be considered a priority. It is a lovely feeling for those who walk or drive pass a canal or river to come upon colourful barges/boats in transit or moored up. It adds to the overall attractiveness of the waterways and with the proper facilities in place we can attract many visitors, including tourists from abroad, to the town via our waterways and thereby increasing the awareness of Tullamore as a tourist area and adding to the economy of the town.

Extra moorings along the bank at the side of the Sacred Heart school would probably be required to facilitate visiting vessels especially as there is a proposal in the plan regarding an educational vessel which would perhaps require its own permanent mooring.

It is essential to ensure that the dry dock is kept in the final plan and that it will be a used dry dock and not just a showpiece. It is vital for carrying out maintenance etc. of vessels. Would there be protection from the elements for those working on their vessels? In the drawings it looks quite open, perhaps it does have Perspex walls that I can't see in the drawing. When people are power washing and painting and carrying out essential work in the dry dock then it should be protected from wind, rain etc. and also have adequate lighting and security so it can be locked up for e.g. in the evening/at night when not occupied by those working on the vessels. Also passers-by would not welcome a shower of debris from an active power washer! Security wise in the whole area the provision of cctv cameras and night lighting would be a deterrent to anti-social behaviour. The lighting would also help with safety around the water's edge at night-time.

Regarding the pavements and roads nearby I would like to see footpath kerbing so that children etc. won't drift out onto the roadway thinking it is a pedestrian area. I have seen some areas where the pavement and the roadway are not separated in a way that is obvious to the pedestrians (they merge into each other) and I feel this is very dangerous for users.

In summary the following are my main submission points:

- 1.Laundry/Showers/WC's/ Pump out/electricity facilities
- 2.Dry Dock which can be used by those wishing to carry out repairs/maintenance/painting etc.
- 3.Lighting/security measures/cctv cameras
- 4.Extra moorings opposite the existing harbour moorings.
- 5.Footpath kerbing to differentiate between road and pathways.

I look forward to the above submission being included in the final plans for the area.

I would be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this submission.

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Cc:
Subject: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan Framework
Date: Saturday 20 July 2024 20:48:45
Attachments: [Submission for the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan.docx](#)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I wish to make a submission, which is attached to this email below, to the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan Framework.

I would like to be notified that you have received this submission.

Submission / Observation to Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Dear Sir / Madam,

I would like to make a Submission to the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan. I live in Harbour House, St. Bridget's Place, Tullamore with my three children. While this long term project will be welcomed by many, the problems we are experiencing are of much more immediate concern and have been for several years. We refer to the issue of persistent flooding in our home, caused by a seriously defective drainage system. This matter has been repeatedly brought to the attention of local authority engineers, and members of the Council, and despite repeated inspections of the drainage system, a resolution to the problem has yet to be found. As an ad hoc measure the Council fitted a pump in one of the manholes in order to redirect the storm water away from the defective pipeline servicing the immediate area at St. Bridget's Place. A sludge tanker is called out regularly to deal with very heavy flooding and pump breakdowns. Various causes for this flooding have been suggested - a culvert under the harbour area has collapsed and/ or a drainage pipe laid in recent years by the local authority is not actually connected to an outfall pipe.... apparently a problem with errors in the connecting levels. It is further speculated that roots from nearby trees have penetrated and blocked a pipeline. The result of this flooding which constantly impacts on our house is a matter of grave concern and anxiety to our family. These concerns have been repeatedly relayed to Council officials and members of the Council. We wish to stress that these flood problems have been the subject of correspondence and conversations with the local management of Waterways Ireland.

While the disposal of rain/storm water in this area continue to be dependent on a makeshift pumping system and sludge tankers, might we suggest the Masterplan for the harbour area is premature until such time as this flood problem is resolved. The addition of further hard surfaces in the vicinity can only worsen our already awful plight. In the circumstances, it is our intention to object to any furtherance of this plan until the flooding issue is dealt with.

It is highly probable in our view, that the solution to this problem is long established, and the Council's hesitancy in dealing with this matter reflects badly on all concerned, in the context of the suffering being endured by my family.

1 Clarification.

The Masterplan for the Canal indicates that the trees are to be removed, as indicated in Figure 1.1 below. Further indication that these trees will be removed can be identified in Figure 1.2. In Figure 1.3, the overall layout indicates the existing trees will not be removed. It is not clear if the trees will or will not be removed. It should be noted that if the trees are to be removed, new piping needs to be provided to replace the existing piping which have been damaged by the roots over the years. Removing or replacing the trees at this point in time will not prevent flooding to occur due to the damage these trees have caused on the drainage system.

Figure 1.1: Map C – Location of trees

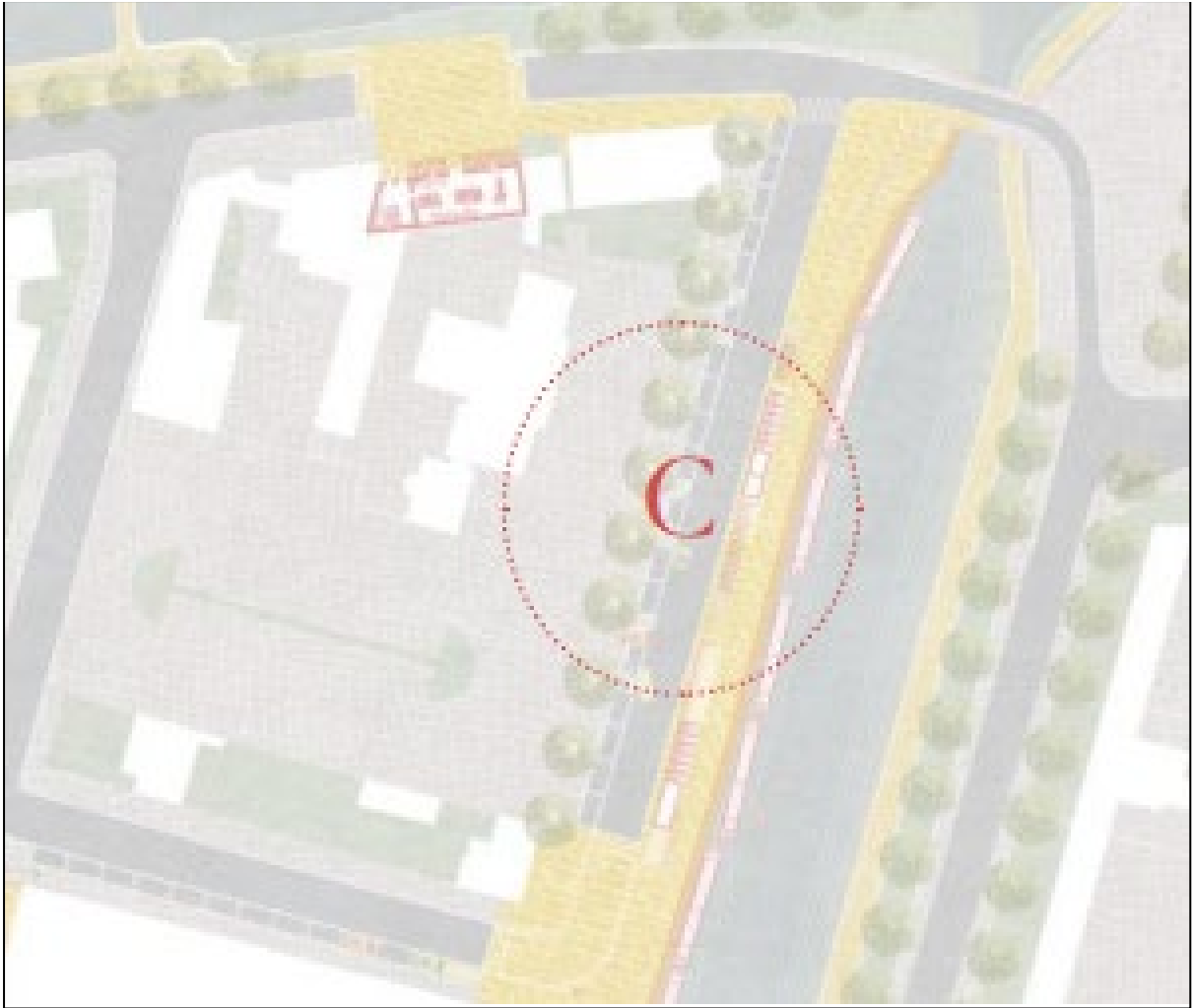
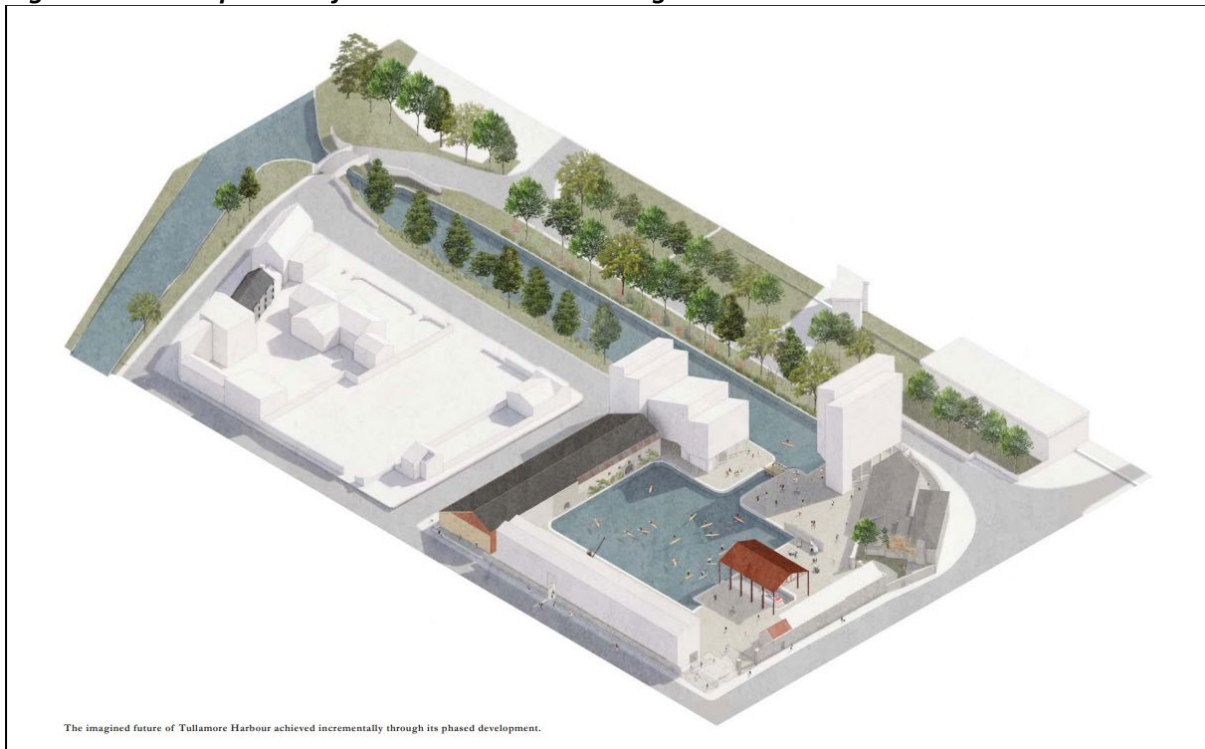


Figure 1.2 – Further detail of Location of Trees



Figure 1.3 – Completion of Master Plan and existing trees have not been removed



2 Drainage Issue

There are a number of concerns that I do have with the proposal and it should be noted that there is a significant drainage issue in this particular area of Tullamore. There are 3 drains around my house at the moment and 2 which are closest to the Canal are not functioning. The drain closest to the bridge going towards the Convent Road is not functioning at all. I have yet to receive information if this blockage is due to the existing trees or other types of material, but none the less, I have been informed that this drain is not working at all. The second drain along St. Bridget's Place is functioning at times but in winter, this drain is not functioning at all. The third drain which is nearest to my house, does function, but once the second drain from my house is full, this drain is unable to handle the remaining flowing water. My house is constantly being flooded, specifically during the winter months. In relation to the new proposal along the canal, I am very concerned that the increase of people with the proposed facilities which will be creating further water run-off in this location will add to the issue of

flooding. It is vitally important that these drains are fixed and are able to function at 100% all year around to allow the proposed development to occur in this location. I have made my complaints to Offaly County Council, who have informed me that the drainage issue lies with Waterways Ireland. Waterways Ireland have informed me that there is no issue from the existing trees having any impact on the drainage system and that this blockage is due to the Council not maintaining them.

3 – Impacts on My Home

I feel that I have been completely neglected by the Council and this Masterplan confirms this, as the Council and Waterways would rather have a plan to allow visitors to come to Tullamore instead of trying to look after the residents and workers living in Tullamore. This flooding does not just impact me and my family, but a lot of other people living in this location. I am very disappointed by this. It would be best to fix existing issues rather than make new plans to put even more pressure on these issues which are impacting the health and wellbeing of the community of Tullamore.

As previously mentioned, it is our intention to object to any furtherance of this plan until the flooding issue is dealt with.

Date: 22/07/2024

Address:

Planning Department
Offaly County Council
Áras an Chontae,
Charleville Road,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly,
R35 F893

BDP.

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBMISSION:

Tullamore Draft Regeneration Framework and Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

BDP have been working in Tullamore on the Texas lands opportunity site over the past numbers of years. We have brought our expertise in developing and delivering successful regeneration to towns and cities in Ireland, including Galway, Sligo, Shannon & Dundalk. We have gained local knowledge through extensive public engagement carried out with the public and local business owners. This informs our knowledge of the needs of the community and the economics required to create successful town regeneration.

We were encouraged by the Draft Working Document released by Offaly County Council (OCC) in June 2018 titled 'Texas Site Tullamore – New Urban Quarter' that identified higher densities with diversity of use. This draft report also referenced two of our successful urban regeneration master planning projects, Victoria Square in Belfast and Liverpool One. Since then, we have seen significantly diluted ambition for the towns development in terms of achieving sustainable growth in line with national policy. It appears that OCC are seeking to attain the status quo in the town as a whole, with little real ambition shown in our mind. This is in stark contrast to the guidance of national policy.

Comparison with National and Regional Policies – Town Densities

The National Framework Plan advocates for compact urban growth to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services. Similarly, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) emphasizes the need for higher density development in key towns to stimulate economic growth and enhance liveability. The RSES outlines that higher densities are required in towns to promote sustainable travel patterns, increase economic viability, and provide a critical mass to support public services. Tullamore, as a significant town in Offaly, should adhere to these principles to ensure its regeneration plan aligns with broader regional goals.

The recently released Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024) sets out policy and objectives on Settlement Density on pg.24 Table 3.3 that a Metropolitan town with a population greater than 1,500 should have a residential density in the range of 50dph to 150dph in town centres. With Tullamore exceeding this population significantly and with good public transport links it would be assumed that the upper range of this target should be achieved on prime opportunity sites.

The proposed density of 27 units per hectare is significantly lower than the guidelines set forth in the National Planning Framework (NPF). According to the NPF, urban areas should aim for higher density to support sustainable development and efficient land use. The NPF advises that delivering compact growth in cities, towns, and villages will be a key mechanism to ensure that our urban places become more attractive and liveable. The current proposal fails to align with these objectives, proposing a density that is not conducive to the vibrant, economically viable town centre that Tullamore deserves. We would expect in line with the national policy mentioned above that the DPH for the only two identified sites in the whole of Offaly should be aspiring to achieve a target of 150dph, which is over x5 higher.

Historical Context and Potential

These two identified opportunity sites within Tullamore have existing and now part demolished warehouses and industrial buildings/ heritage of a substantial scale and height, rising to five and six stories. The current development plan has suggested height of 6 stories on these sites but this appears to be reduced in draft proposals referring to heights of 2-5 stories. Successful regional towns like Athlone, Mullingar and Drogheda have made significant strides in their development by adopting higher-density, mixed-use developments.

Vision for Growth and Success

We would be encouraged by a stronger vision for the town, that aligns with national policy and the principles of sustainable development and urban intensification that is economically viable and beneficial to the towns businesses and residents. To date historic poor local planning has led to business and retail being sprawled outside of the town centre, this should be discouraged. The vision needs to identify how these opportunity sites can identify and drive economic success for Tullamore.

Viability and Economic Realities

The question of viability is crucial, given the scale and location of the proposed regeneration development. The current plan, while having some attractive qualities, does little to address the town's real needs. There is an urgent need for a step change to rejuvenate Tullamore's town center. The limited number of available sites must be leveraged to their full potential, ensuring they serve as catalysts for comprehensive regeneration. SSP-07 of the Development plan states that *"It is Council policy to require sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in Tullamore by consolidating the built-up footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of town centre infill and brownfield sites, and encouraging regeneration of underutilised, vacant and derelict lands for residential development and mixed use to facilitate population growth"*. (Offaly County Development Plan, p. 53)

These draft proposals are significantly limiting the potential for these sites in terms of placing constraints on density, height and quantum of public space. This may substantially restrict the viability of developing and delivering these opportunity sites. The harbour site has indicated a very modest quantum of development along with a very significant quantum of public realm space that will have a significant cost that would require funding. Typically, in development led regeneration the public space would be provided in line with providing a larger quantum commercial or residential development. Has an economic appraisal been produced for the Harbour Masterplan and is it viable? How will this small quantum of development on the Harbour Site bring intensification, regeneration, or vitality to the site? From our experience this would appear to be vastly underestimated. It is all too easy to present new high quality public spaces to the public, but it must be achievable and deliverable.

Responding to Changing Retail Landscape

Retail is evolving rapidly, and Tullamore's regeneration plan must reflect this shift. The traditional retail model is giving way to more integrated, leisure and experience-driven environments. The plan should incorporate elements that create a pull factor for both visitors and future inhabitants, such as mixed-use developments that combine retail, residential, and recreational spaces. There is increased demand for a larger retail space which the existing town does not allocate for. These contemporary retail spaces need to be provided for within the two remaining opportunity sites and shouldn't lead to further retail sprawl to out of town locations.

Historical and Cultural Significance

Tullamore is a historical market and industry town, once a cultural nodal point. The Offaly County Council has previously set out a brilliant vision and ambition for the townland and its opportunity sites. However, the current proposal dilutes this vision. To deliver real change, the town center must become an attractive, vibrant hub that supports economic and social activities.

Conclusion

We feel that both the Tullamore Draft Regeneration Framework and Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan need to account for the current national policies on density and should not limit the potential of the sites for increased height and varied building uses. We would like to see greater vision in ensuring the principle of good sustainable design and compact growth are set out in both of these important town centre sites. We are apprehensive that these non-statutory frameworks studies which have been produced may be used as a basis for the development of a Local Area Plan for Tullamore which we understand is underway. We would be worried that the low level of aspiration identified in these studies would set poor principles for Tullamore urban regeneration of these opportunity sites.

We urge the council to reconsider the proposed density and scale and adopt a more visionary approach that will truly regenerate Tullamore and make it a vibrant, liveable town once again.

BDP

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www.bdp.com

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan Framework Submission
Date: Tuesday 23 July 2024 10:47:14

To those taking in the above submissions,
I am very interested in the above proposed plan and recently attended the open day held in the library and I would like to thank all those involved in the presentation of the plans on the day.

I would like to submit my views as follows:

As I have family members living on a barge I am of course very interested in the future development and enhancement of the harbour. With this in mind I would like to ensure that the facilities outlined to me on the open day such as Laundry>Showers/WC's/ Pump out/electricity will definitely be included in the final project. Perhaps these urgent services should be considered a priority. It is a lovely feeling for those who walk or drive past a canal or river to come upon colourful barges/boats in transit or moored up. It adds to the overall attractiveness of the waterways and with the proper facilities in place we can attract many visitors, including tourists from abroad, to the town via our waterways and thereby increasing the awareness of Tullamore as a tourist area and adding to the economy of the town. The more colourful boats and barges that come to town the more exciting and interesting the appeal of the new harbour would be.

Perhaps moorings along the bank on the opposite side of the present mooring area would be advantageous to facilitate the numbers of visiting vessels.

I am happy to see that a working dry dock is included in the plan and maybe consideration could be given to reopening the existing second dry dock. It is vital for carrying out maintenance etc. of vessels. It would be important to provide adequate lighting and security in the dry docks so they can be locked up in the evening/at night when not occupied by those working on the vessels. Security wise in the whole area the provision of cctv cameras and night lighting would be a deterrent to anti-social behaviour. The lighting would also help with safety around the water's edge at night-time.

In summary the following are my main submission points:

- 1.Laundry>Showers/WC's/ Pump out/electricity facilities, waste and recycling facilities
- 2.Dry Docks which can be used by those wishing to carry out repairs/maintenance/painting etc.
- 3.Lighting/security measures/cctv cameras
4. Extra moorings opposite the existing harbour moorings.

I look forward to the above submission being included in the final plans for the area.
I would be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this submission.

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Submission re Tullamore Harbour Master Plan/ Michael Byrne
Date: Wednesday 24 July 2024 15:42:10

24 July 2024

Hi all,

I would like to congratulate all on this plan. The emphasis is so different to 22 years ago when tax reliefs were available for 'development'.

The harbour made Tullamore initially in the six-year period 1798-1804 and thereafter up to 1960, and since in terms of employment.

The idea of opportunities and of opening up as a public benefit now needs to be viewed in terms of implementation with emphasis on public space and not more buildings at this time.

Certainly, a building perhaps but until use can be made of it - such as a 'Bull Ring' type market as in Wexford would mean visitors and low-key intervention.

Having the two large schools close by may also present opportunities for uses that will mean circulation and space.

Young's store on Bury Quay would be good to restore and a restoration and perhaps leasing to a community group such as Tidy Towns or Offaly History when the works are done should be looked at. The costings for restoration here were done about twenty years ago in an earlier report on the canal network. This is the earliest of the surviving buildings in the town now associated with the canal. The interventions at Boland's 26th lockhouse in 2000 made it an icon for Tullamore. The Harbour and Young's could equally be so.

Waterways own this and OCC the old cattle market strip. So why not start here and adopt plans for access. It works well in Portobello.

Integration with Market Square would 'build' on the original of why the Market Square is where it is since the 1820s. The new plan to link this square with O'Connor Square would mean a three-way link up as suggested.

The main thing is to work on what can be achieved now, and all the more so as we have the guidance of this document.

Taking down the Store Street wall would be a good first step.

To: tullamoremd@offalycoco.ie

I read with interest Offaly County Council's *Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan* dated June 10 2024. As a frequent visitor to Tullamore, by car and boat, I have enjoyed all that the town has to offer from a boating and tourist perspective. I am commenting on this Masterplan from a boating perspective.

Might I suggest that the name *Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour* be changed to something that identifies Tullamore Harbour, its unique heritage, and its future as a thriving boating and recreational centre. Not to be confused with Grand Canal Harbour, a large apartment complex in Dublin 8.

Background

Tullamore Harbour has the potential, to be a flourishing recreational centre for local and visiting boaters, cyclists, and walkers. All the underlying infrastructure is there, it just needs to be presented in a way that inspires people to make it one of their preferred places to explore.

Unfortunately, since austerity times, the funding to update and add amenities to the Harbour area has not been forthcoming. This initiative financed by EU, Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and Offaly County Council (OCC) is an opportunity to develop and open the Harbour as an area of interest to local and visiting people of all ages and abilities.

Working Harbour

The retention of Tullamore Harbour as a Working Harbour with a covered Drydock is essential to ensure barges and boats are safe, and can be maintained in line with Primary Irish Legislation, from the Department of the Marine, the DHLGH and the WI Canal Bye Laws, and Boat Insurers. It's good to see the Drydocks can once again be accessed for maintenance and are included in this Masterplan.

Concerns

In some cases, the descriptions do not match the depictions. I do understand that this is a master and not a detailed plan, but essential services still need to be included as part of the design and from a safety viewpoint.

1. While the concept of a Working Harbour is stated and the current Drydock facility is shown under a canopy, there are **no moorings** or barges depicted outside of the docks.
2. The Inner Harbour is shown full of Kayaks or Canoes. This needs to be reconsidered. There are distinct **health and safety issues** with 50-ton Barges operating in the same area as canoes and kayaks. The Tullamore Canoe Club can advise.
3. Access to the Inner Harbour is shown as a Lifting Bridge with Pedestrians using it to cross to the north side of the harbour. This solution needs to be reconsidered. [In recent years, craft have not been able to access the Inner Harbour and the Drydocks because of safety issues with the current

bridge - I last used the Drydock in 2011]. Unless there is another route that pedestrians can take to access the north side of the harbour, or a mechanism accessible from a Barge to lift the bridge efficiently, this will result in a **conflict between pedestrians and boats** as to the right of way.

4. The new Buildings as depicted, cast **shadows along the Tullamore Spur**. This solution needs to be reconsidered. One of the aims of this endeavour is to bring light into the area. Why construct a building that faces south and north, and casts the most shadow possible over the water and the moored boats?
5. The description and the images of the Spur do not show where the different types of moorings are to be located – **Residential, Touring, Recreational Moorings**. The Inner Harbour does not show any barge moorings along the Drydock or against the other Harbour Walls.
6. What type of **Services** will be available to local and visiting boaters, cyclists and walkers? At a minimum the requirement is for a Service Block (Lowtown or Portumna are good examples), and a Pumpout facility, Taps for Boats and Water Filling Points for cyclists and walkers. These need to be included in the document.
7. There are several ways that the current buildings might be used to celebrate Tullamore Harbour's unique history and attract visitors. A **Canal Centre** with displays and information on the 250-year history of the canal would stimulate interest in the skills necessary to maintain heritage boats and the canal infrastructure. Those interested in Genealogy might find Information and Photos of the people who built and worked on the canals in Offaly, useful.
8. **Vehicular Access**: Access required for the Drydock, for deliveries to Businesses and for the Emergency Services.
9. Where is the **Car Park** for residents/business owners? Where are the **Bike Racks**.
10. Depictions of boats mooring on the Spur show English Narrowboats. While there some of these on the Eastern Canals and Barrow, Irish boaters in the main own Widebeam Barges, traditional **Irish Barges** and Dutch Barges – 18.6 m (61ft) x 4.1 m (13ft). Moorings need to accommodate boats of this size.
11. The Spur needs a **turning area**, wide enough to turn an 18.6 m Barge.

Conclusion

Other countries appreciate the individuality of their Canals, Harbours and Boating facilities as a core for Tourism. Tullamore Harbour merits being at the centre of a thriving **Boating Community, and a Recreational destination** for cyclists and walkers. Copying what is 'In' today at other places means not appreciating what makes Tullamore Harbour and the Spur unique.

It is possible to create a centre that is both a Working Harbour and a place of interest to visit without destroying its daylight and ambience. Visiting Tullamore and spending time moored in the Spur and the Inner Harbour with the town centre, coffee shops, restaurants, shops, pubs just a few metres away, is fabulous.

A Plan is required that improves the facilities on offer and opens the area to all, but also **accentuates the uniqueness, heritage and importance of Tullamore Harbour** for locals and visitors.

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Submission - Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan
Date: Wednesday 24 July 2024 17:24:03

Hi there,

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to make a submission to the team involved in the Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan. I'm from Tullamore and am excited to see how the plan comes to life over the next few years!

I'm lucky to have both family and friends happily living on barges in Dublin and Kildare. I would love to see them have a safe, pleasant, and functional journey through Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour.

As part of my submission, I think it's really important that facilities such as moorings, laundry, showers, bathroom facilities, electricity, pump out, and dry dock are put in place first, ahead of cafes, etc.

While cafes are lovely and will help enhance the area as well as boost tourism, it's essential for basic facilities to be put in place initially for barges coming through the harbour. This would also further boost tourism as touring barges lined up along the canal will really enhance the profile of the area and travelling boaters will add a great boost to the town economically.

The dry dock facility will be especially helpful for boaters, as Tullamore harbour has the scale and size available to accommodate such a feature. It would need to be enclosed, well-lit with CCTV, and protected from the elements so that people carrying out work on their boats have the much-needed facilities to do so.

I also believe that footpaths and kerbs will really enhance the overall area—and the cycle paths included in the plan, too! Segregating these from the main traffic area would provide a safe and amenable family-friendly area for walkers, tourists, and cyclists.

I'm delighted to see the new plans and that so much thought, artistic illustration, and consideration went into them (especially looking at other harbours around the globe and the type of offering they provide!). It's going to be a fantastic boost to Tullamore.

I look forward to having my submission above included for consideration in your final plans

TULLAMORE & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

TULLAMORE HARBOUR MASTERPLAN

JULY 2024

Introduction:

This Strategic Policy committee of Tullamore and District Chamber of Commerce have campaigned for more than 10 years for the redevelopment of Tullamore Harbour recognising its unique characteristics as a large body of water in an urban setting that presents endless possibilities to create amenities and more importantly attractions that would benefit the region once the site is opened up to the public.

Its is also recognised the potential presented when engaging award winning Architects with origins in the Town to prepare this masterplan.

Opportunity Sites:

Site 1- Grand Canal Harbour

The proposals put forward for the Harbour are exciting for the development of Tullamore and will be a major attraction for the town. The proposals put forward for phasing of the redevelopment are particularly welcomed with the first phase a mere opening of the harbour site to be enjoyed by the community. The various further phases of development including the refurbishment of the dry dock, the creation of a feature building at the end of the approach canal and the creation of a new building on the site of the lock workshop are all attractive and exciting proposals.

However it is our opinion that Opportunity site 1 has been restricted by limiting its potential to the waterways Ireland land ownership, thus in effect 3 of the 4 side of the Harbour have a vision for the future but no indication of a compatible fourth side to the waterfront.

The proposal also includes arbitrary proposals for the waterways Ireland warehouse on Convent Road as part of the plan. Surely it would have been more logical to either exclude this building from the proposals, or more sensible to include the entire block as part of the masterplan. The "Opportunity" is not limited to the waterways site, it extends along the canal approach, store street and st brigids place and includes underutilised sites such as the Parish Car park.

Would it not be better for Tullamore to have a vision for the entire canal "quarter" and not just the waterways Ireland ownership.

We believe that OCC and Waterways Ireland should include the entire block up to the Grand canal to include the parish car park, parochial house and other adjoining sites, so that the design team could present a coherent overall vision for this strategic block of Tullamore Town.

Conclusion:

This submission in summary welcomes the long awaited proposals presented by the design team, but requests that the entire opportunity be explored in full to inform future decision making on the Canal Quarter.

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Tullamore Harbour Masterplan – Submission
Date: Wednesday 24 July 2024 11:00:56
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[DMB Submission – Tullamore Master Plan.pdf](#)

Good morning,

Please find attached my submission to the Tullamore Harbour Masterplan.

Though I represent the Royal Canal, I live in Edenderry so am equally familiar with the Grand Canal's environs and Tullamore. I am excited by the potential of this plan but can also see opportunities which have been missed thus far. I do hope the design team take serious consideration of observations in these submissions.

Can you please acknowledge receipt of my submission, can you also tell me why an online portal which allows public scrutiny of submissions was not used in this process?



From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: Tullamore Harbour Master Plan Submission
Date: Thursday 25 July 2024 13:08:05
Attachments: [IWAI Submission Tullamore Master Plan July 2024.pdf](#)

To Whom It May Concern,

Please find attached the Inland Waterways
Association of Irelands submission with regards to the Tullamore Harbour
Master Plan.

If you have any questions please feel free to let us know.



IWAI Executive
honsecretary@iwai.ie

To: Offaly Co Co.

Title: Tullamore Harbour Masterplan – Submission

Offaly Co Co
Tullamore Municipal District,
Town Hall, Cormac Street,
Tullamore

tullamoremd@offalycoco.ie
(please acknowledge receipt)

Date: 23.7.24

Below please find the IWAI's submission regarding the Tullamore Harbour Masterplan. IWAI welcomes the opportunity to submit to Offaly County Council's Draft Development Plan for the Tullamore Harbour complex. We feel there is considerable potential and opportunity to breathe new life into the Harbour Complex and open it to the public. But, given that funding streams may derive from the Urban Regeneration Fund, opportunities to develop and improve services for both Greenway and waterways users are vague and somewhat overlooked.

1. Introduction & IWAI History

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) was established in 1954. It has 24 branches across the 32 counties of Ireland, with some two thousand members. It represents the navigable waterways with its vast heritage, a wide range of members interests regarding inland waterways use and

activities, community interests, navigation issues, waterways tourism development, all in relation to the socio and economic benefits of the waterways. Our national membership spans both boat owning and non-boat owning members of the general public.

IWAI has a long history of working with statutory agencies, funding groups, and community interests with regards to promoting access to the waterways. In recent years this has taken the form of working with Waterways Ireland – the navigation authority and government Departments in relation to legislative reform regarding byelaws on the inland waterways and working with Fáilte Ireland to develop tourism experiences on the waterways. IWAI also undertakes large infrastructural refurbishment projects such as the regeneration of the Boyne Canal in Co. Meath and the Newry Canal. IWAI also supports Special Interest Groups such as the CSIG which has undertaken a digital national mapping and charting project of much of the Shannon, Erne, Royal Canal, Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation. In late 2018, as a response to the severe difficulties encountered by boating users of the Grand Canal and Royal Canal, which collectively along with a partial route on the River Shannon form the **Green and Silver Route**, a special interest Nav-Watch¹ group was established within the Canal branches of IWAI. The purpose of this group is to constructively contribute to the knowledge base regarding access to waterways, their navigational maintenance, development and use from a boating perspective. Sharing this information with the relevant agencies for the betterment of these navigations.

2. Tullamore Harbour Master Plan – Overview

From an architectural perspective the plan, though bold, falls short of it's potential. Offaly Co Co has long aspired to add high-rise buildings to Tullamore's skyline and this has been imagined here, but at what cost. The high-rise structure to the south east of the site and immediately south of the spur line (positioned where Waterways Ireland's offices currently are) will cast long cold shadows on the harbour in the mornings and right down the spur line for most of the day. If water borne activities are to be encouraged, as the plan suggests, then it is imperative that sunlight hours on the water be maximised.

The site is small, too small for the inclusion of these two tall buildings, this is a considerable design issue. Where is the parking for residents of these buildings? We note that it is intended to CPO the private dwelling in the south west corner and use that space as an entrance to the site. This is an excellent idea and an obvious thoroughfare from the main street. Why though, is there no plan to CPO the warehouses in the north west corner. These warehouses form part of the original extent of the harbour property and should be rejoined and redeveloped within the complex, alleviating some

¹ Nav-Watch – comprising expert members of Canals & Barrow branches of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland from the Royal Canal, Kildare, Dublin, North Barrow, Barrow, Offaly, and Shannon Harbour IWAI areas.

congestion on the site. The northern location of these warehouses would be a much better location for the high-rise building currently proposed to replace the Offices/Sheds on the south eastern corner of the site and immediately south of the spur line. Alternatively, this proposed building could be positioned to the west of the harbour where it's shadow would not negatively impact sunlight reaching the water, it would then only shade an area of Store St. and the car park to the side of the church.

3. Creating a National Tourist Attraction in the Heart of Tullamore

Currently the only tourist attraction of National significance in Tullamore is the Tullamore Dew Distillery. Unfortunately much of the tourist traffic to this attraction bypasses the town of Tullamore as buses take visitors directly to the facility and then away onward toward Dublin or Galway.

Ireland does not have a museum dedicated to our inland waterways, we are alone in that respect among European nations. **Tullamore with it's unique harbour**, having originally been the western terminus of the Grand Canal, **is the perfect location to house Ireland's National Waterways Museum.** Having a working dry dock on site and the possibility of a further exhibition/entertainment space in the second dry dock would add enormously to the potential of this facility.

P.67 of the Masterplan highlights the potential for boatbuilding workshops (though it is illustrated with scenes of costal currachs being built), the suggestion is still applicable to the inland waterways. In support of the idea of a National Waterways Museum for Tullamore, a centre of excellence focusing on our surviving heritage fleet could offer skills which might otherwise be lost. Rivetting, welding woodworking are all skills which can be preserved and passed on to future generations. This development could become a flagship or centrepiece to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

4. Developing, While Preserving Living Heritage

The greatest challenge here is to design and integrate the modern with the significant heritage of the site, without detracting from that heritage and while adding further function and facility. The dry docks and the harbour basin are listed structures which both deserve and enjoy a level of protection and consideration as working heritage structures. This respect for heritage should be accompanied by an understanding that the canal(s) cannot survive and flourish in waves over the centuries unless they are complete and are served by their full compliment of essential facilities. This includes their dry docks, which, in the midst of another flourishing wave, are increasingly in urgent demand.

It is comforting to see that on P.52 of the Masterplan a lifting bridge is shown at the entrance to the harbour, in other instances throughout the document this water level bridge is shown as a fixed structure. Anything less than a lifting bridge would render the harbour useless and undermine the heritage.

Access to the harbour for use of the dry docks needs to be simplified rather than discouraged. Both the Marine Act and the proposed Byelaws for the Inland Waterways require boats to be maintained to a given standard. With considerably more vessels on the canal(s) now than at any time during their trading days, it is imperative that the network of canal facilities originally installed for safe, regular maintenance of vessels be operable.

5. Include Essential Services now, to Secure the Future

The long term success or failure of this Masterplan will be measured by it's attention to detail and the quality of facilities built into the plan. Currently it falls down on the provision of services associated with the Greenways/Waterways. Given that both agencies responsible for these facilities are overlapping to some degree on this project, there needs to be greater communication and shared understanding of the current demands for these services.

Waterways Ireland is a key stakeholder in the delivery of the Government's *'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors' the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023 – 2027* and as such, has a vested interest in driving the development of Greenway/Waterway services. It is also in keeping with WI's published 10 Year Plan *'Reimagining Our Waterways'*, which states *"The launch of Waterways Ireland's 10-year plan in November 2023 ignites a vision to create **inspirational inland navigations and waterway experiences**, making them more **sustainable and accessible through conservation and sustainable development.**"*

Offaly Co Co may aspire to erect much needed high-rise accommodation in the harbour complex which will serve those fortunate enough to live there. The general public will want more than an opportunity to access and view the site, they also want much needed services for Tullamore which they can use daily.

Greenway/Waterway Services which should be included are:

- A. **Service Block** – The plan makes reference to the possibility of toilets outside the Harbour area on the spur line of the canal, this is too vague and uncertain. The Greenways have been a massive success and have attracted so many people to enjoy the banks of the canals. Services for these people are sadly lacking and toilets are the most basic of services. What is specifically needed here is a complete service block similar to those operated by WI on the Shannon. These

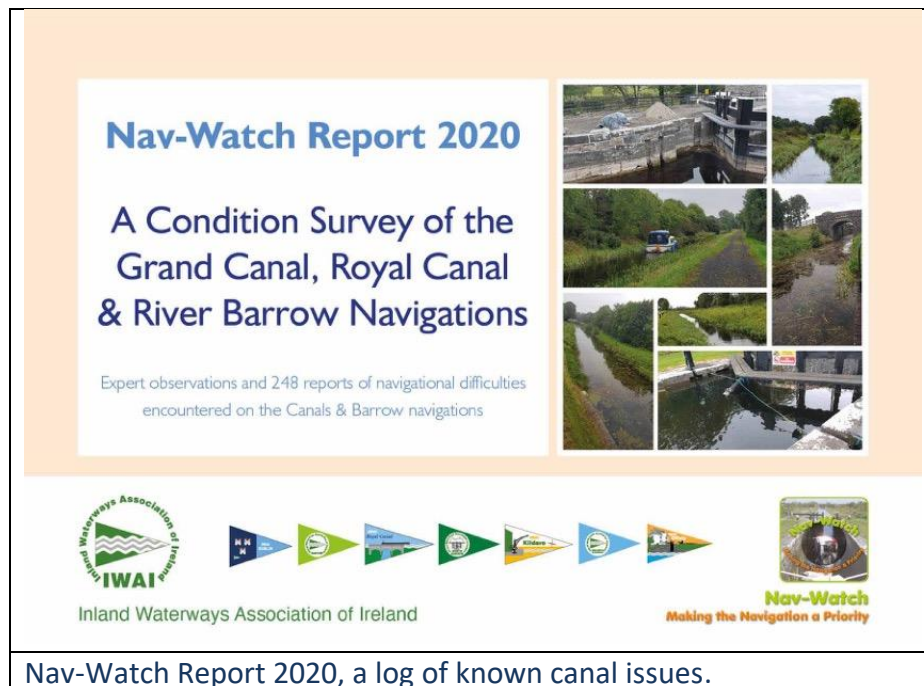
include drinking water, toilets and showers and should include refuse stations. These facilities will be used by walkers, runners, cyclists, kayakers, boaters and many more. Alternatively, this service block could occupy space on the ground floor of either of the proposed buildings and so serve visitors to the harbour as well as greenway and waterway users.

- B. **Dry Docks** – Much greater detail is required here outlining how the living heritage of the working dry dock will be incorporated into this plan. Vehicular access to the dry dock needs to be included. The spectacle of functioning heritage dry docks is a fascinating sight which should be a feature of the complex and could be accompanied by exhibition panels on Ireland's (Industrial) Hidden Heartlands. After excavation, the 'filled' dry dock could double as a performance/exhibition space.
- C. **Dedicated Liveaboard berths** – With the explosion of interest in living aboard barges on our waterways it is surprising that neither agency is advocating the inclusion of serviced berths on one side of the spur line or just outside it on the main line. This is probably the most affordable housing solution available in Ireland today; people invest in their own small home i.e. barge and rent a serviced berth from WI or the local authority.
- D. **Drinking Water** – There should be operable drinking water tap(s) on the spur line to allow boats to refill water tanks. Drinking water-bottle refilling stations should also be located on the spur and within the Harbour Complex.
- E. **Short Stay Serviced Berths** – Encouraging boat tourism and domestic boat movements on the canals relies on good maintenance and provision of services. The spur line should include short stay serviced berths to be used by rental and touring boats, all of whom can be defined as boat tourists and bring their 'spend value' to local businesses.
- F. **Pumpout Service** – A working pumpout facility will shortly be an essential service for all boats, the pending WI Draft Byelaws will require all boats to operate some type of holding tank for their effluent waste. This is then pumped out of the tank at a WI Pumpout. The existing pumpout has been out of service for many years and needs to be replaced with a fully functioning unit.
- G. **Bicycle Racks** – Cyclists need a place to secure bikes. At the end of a long cycle they should be in a position to lock a bike, use a toilet, shower and change clothes. Leave their bikes safely secured while they visit local restaurants or the harbour facilities.

6. Year Round Boat Tourism Potential on Our Canals

Since the downturn in 2008 a cash strapped Waterways Ireland has focused it's attention on areas where funding was available, i.e. the development of Greenways. These have been very well received by the general public. Now, there is considerable scope to develop boat tourism on both Canals culminating with a boat tourism hub in the city centre linking the canals. George's Dock, next-door to the wonderful EPIC Museum, has huge potential both as a liveaboard community and as a canal's quarter tourism hub.

Boat tourism on the Shannon is basically restricted to a seven month season, April to October. The canals offer the opportunity for year round boat tourism, cruising the canals is possible all year round (the winter months are termed Maintenance Season when works can result in localised closures, but generally the canals are open). Our warmer climate in recent years makes winter cruising on the canals all the more viable. The days are gone when the canal could be expected to freeze over for a period each winter. The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland's Nav-Watch group have recently surveyed the canals and documented areas where dredging or maintenance needs are greater (see/download Nav-Watch Report 2020: www.iwai.ie/nav-watch/surveyreport). It is hoped that this focus on critical maintenance will improve the navigation and leave it better able to cope with a variety of vessels travelling between Dublin and the Shannon.



We take our canals very much for granted, they are just there, people are very surprised and always attracted and intrigued when they see a boat or barge pass by. The built heritage of these tremendous assets is largely overlooked. **Much of this 200+ year old system still functions well today, it is working living history.** The longest hand-made structure in this country is the 146km length of the Royal Canal, yet few people are aware of this. We find original bridges, locks and some buildings are added to each counties' List of Protected Structures. Yet none have taken the obvious step and list the structure of the canal cut which is arguably the greater achievement of our early 19th century canal builders.

Neglect

Looking at other capital cities around Europe we can see how much tourism has developed around their canals and waterway facilities. Water draws people to it, boats moving on that water have an even greater draw. **Everywhere in Europe that there are canals traversing cities and towns, there are thriving communities and vibrant tourism attractions built upon the back of that draw to water... except in Ireland where it has been neglected.**

Future-proofing the canals network

To fail to plan for the future life of the canals is to begin the process of decline and ultimately closure. IWAI's Nav-Watch was established to document problems and focus essential maintenance on critical issues by bringing them to the attention of WI. It is also a means to lobby Government for increased funding to allow WI to reinstate necessary programmes of maintenance and bring the state of the navigation back to where it should be, reversing the state of gradual neglect which had set in during years of budgetary reduction. Specific project funding and pressure from Councils will help to drive this appreciation and development of our heritage waterways network.

7. The Importance of Through Traffic

The potential here for developing a thriving boat tourism business is as great as it is in any other European country with a canal network. We have a canals network which is still operational in its original state, nothing has been automated, simplified, or plasticised. One has to travel to other countries to gain a true understanding of the value of this living history heritage. There are only a couple of barge hire companies operating on the canals and Barrow Line at present. Poor maintenance of the navigation hampers their clients and businesses struggle accordingly. There is great demand for these hire services and tourists who do come will frequently take a boat for a week, spending heavily on food and drink in the towns they pass through. The Nav-Watch group through their Report 2020 are lobbying government for an increased maintenance budget for Waterways Ireland so they may better maintain the canals

navigation in the future. (see Nav-Watch Report 2020, https://branch.iwai.ie/nav-watch/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2024/06/Nav-Watch_Report_2020_WEB.pdf)

The Spectacular *Green & Silver* Route

The '*Green and Silver*' route is based on the route taken on a documented triangular journey undertaken by L.T.C. Rolt in 1946. His subsequent publication of '*The Green & Silver*' book in 1949, is now its 7th edition and as a boating 'classic' has become a bible for canals navigation enthusiasts in Ireland and many visitors from overseas. Rolt was one of the founders of the Inland Waterways Association (UK) in 1946.

This Green & Silver waterways route between Dublin and the midlands², which is of huge potential for economic benefit and social activity for the regions it passes through. It comprises a waterways triangular route of the Royal Canal, a section of the River Shannon, Grand Canal and into Dublin (crossing the Liffey to get back to the Royal to complete the journey). This navigation route is of international significance, ignored by our tourism organisations, **it is the only circular boating route in Ireland and needs to be elevated to national planning status level to flourish**. This route runs right through Offaly and this harbour redevelopment provides an ideal opportunity to make Tullamore a significant stop-off point on the Grand Canal leg of the journey. **This is a spectacularly beautiful route and a bucket-list goal for many boaters. It's potential for development as a tourist route has yet to be realised**. To-date it has been the goal of the private boat tourist to complete this special route but the potential for commercial boat rental tourism remains untapped.

² Green & Silver Route - Dublin, Royal Canal, River Shannon, Grand Canal triangular navigation route.



Green & Silver route – the Royal Canal, The Grand Canal (crossing the Liffey in Dublin) and the Mid Shannon region. As yet this is an unexplored route for major heritage value/boating tourism.



Green and Silver book cover – comprised of the Royal Canal, the Grand Canal and the mid-Shannon. The route is approx. 320 km and can be completed in 10-12 days of continuous travel by boat, however it is preferable to take as long as you can.

Boaters who currently do this route in Ireland can register to take part in the Green & Silver logbook challenge, by which they get various passport style stamps on an old fashioned log book format; a certificate; and a polished metal plaque to mark their achievement. The Dublin branch of the IWAI have been the main drivers behind the promotion of this route and administer the registration, log book and plaque allocations. However it is also the users of the Green & Silver route who have contributed to it becoming known in the boating community over the last decade (only possible since the reopening of the Royal Canal) and it is an excellent example of ‘ground up’ grassroots user based perspective being able to contribute to regional development, once the relevant support and resources to push it on further are considered and applied. It is 70 years since the publication of the original book so it is timely that in 2024 it gains more exposure.



The Green & Silver route runs through nine of the twelve local authority areas – from Dublin City Council out the Royal Canal through Fingal, Meath, Kildare, Westmeath and Longford to the River Shannon (with access from the Shannon to the Camlin River – a particularly tranquil and secret spot on the overall navigation), back in the Grand Canal through Offaly, Kildare and South Dublin, with a spur line off in into Laois to access the River Barrow system. This route has the potential to be a major international level boating destination servicing both the city and the wider region and should be viewed as a collective resource with regard to its navigable future.

The canals network in Ireland is some 200 years old, and still functioning in much the same way as it is in the early 1800’s. Manually operated lock are still operated the same way, the canal banks ensure the immediate natural environment is available and local history and heritage is on its doorstep in the

many towns and villages through which the Green & Silver route passes. We are very good at presenting our nation's history through documentaries, drama, theatre and so on, but there is nothing that can evoke the actual real experience of canal boating except to undertake it. We constantly hear said by German and British tourists on our waterways ***"You have the best waterways in Europe, why don't you use them more!"*** In the case of the canals, this could not be more true. We have failed to invest in their tourist potential so far.

The Green & Silver route runs through large and small towns such as Longford, Mullingar, Enfield, Kilcock, Leixlip, Maynooth, Naas, Edenderry, Tullamore and Athlone. These can offer local boating route points e.g. weekend hire boats, to use the local areas of the Green & Silver from those locations. Small businesses in this area are starting up and indeed somewhat established - notably Royal Canal Boat Trips operating trips between Clonsilla and Kilcock on the Royal Canal; on the Grand Canal bargetrip.ie based in Sallins and more recently boattrips.ie on the Barrow adding to the long established Barrowline cruisers in Vicarstown. Also, as mentioned earlier, there are several hire companies on the Shannon that would be willing to send their tourist hire boaters into the midlands if they could be confident of access and reliability of use.

8. Conclusion

IWAI recognises Offaly County Council's need to create residential accommodation and open the Harbour site to the public. However, the opportunity to include much needed essential services to Greenway and Waterway users, including residential and visiting serviced berths, has been missed. This is short sighted.

Preserving the working heritage state of the dry docks is of equal importance and the potential for the development of a tourism destination of national importance in Tullamore should be explored fully.

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Cc: info@offalycoco.ie
Subject: Harbour Master Plan Submission
Date: Thursday 25 July 2024 16:24:59
Attachments: [Harbour master Plan Submission.pdf](#)

To Whom it may concern

Please see attached our submission RE: The Harbour Master PAn.



Inland Waterways Association of Ireland Offaly Branch

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24/07/2024

Re-Tullamore Harbour Masterplan

The following is the submission by Offaly Branch of IWAI on the published Harbour Masterplan. We welcome the opportunity to present our views on what is possible a once in a lifetime opportunity to realise the enormous potential of this unique site.

The Inland Waterways association of Ireland is a national organisation which for the past 70 years promotes the development, restoration and use of Ireland's waterways. It is our view that the development of Tullamore Harbour must be Tourist and Recreational base, rather than a high rise residential development.

Overview.

We welcome the plans and vision to open up the harbour area to pedestrian traffic, the retention of the dry dock, the development of the harbour area and the retention of much of the existing high stone wall which we believe were part of the original military barracks which predated the construction of the harbour in the 1800s,

The inclusion of the high-rise development while being presented in as least intrusive manner does create many issues which we feel negatively impacts on the overall proposal.

Issues that have not been addressed.

One of the main issues not addressed is the extra parking spaces required to service the residential part of the proposal and the shadow effect of high rise developments on the recreational potential of both the harbour area and the harbour arm. The potential conflict between residential developments which will include young children and what could be described as an unprotected deep water inter-face.

Essential Inclusions

There are several parts of this vision which we consider crucial to the success of this concept.

The retention of the existing dry dock as a working facility

The second dry dock which has been filled in for the past number of years should be exposed and restored.

Service Block

A Service Block like the ones built by waterways Ireland must be included. This combined with a functioning pump out and water taps with some electrical hook ups for the short term stay will encourage boat tourism.

Residential Berths

The provision of some residential berths should be considered along the soft bank area on the harbour arm.

Camper Van parking and facilities.

The provision of some camper van parking should be considered along St Bridget's place as the provision of these when coupled with the service block will help to bring additional tourism to the town.

Conclusion

This is a golden opportunity to create a tourist magnet which will draw, walkers' cyclists, campers and all kinds of water-based tourists to what has the potential to be an oasis of tranquillity in the centre of our town, rather than a square of water in a high rise residential development.

Offaly Branch of IWAI,

From:
To: [Tullamore Municipal District](#)
Subject: IWAI Dublin Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour submission
Date: Thursday 25 July 2024 16:15:03

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) was established in 1954. It has 23 branches across the island of Ireland and some 3500 members. It represents a wide range of interests regarding inland waterways use and activities, community interests, navigation issues, tourism development, all in relation to the socio and economic benefits of Irish waterways.

The organisation is operated entirely on a voluntary basis and is a registered charity.

Many members are not boat owners and IWAI has a long history of working with statutory agencies, funding groups, and community interests with regards to promoting wider access and usage of our waterway network .

This response to the Tullamore Masterplan 2024 is submitted on behalf of IWAI Dublin branch.

We would like to take this opportunity to express appreciation for the range and depth of vision and analysis encompassed by the masterplan.

And while we would be supportive of the overall trust of the plan in terms of its potential regenerative impact for Tullamore, we at the same time must express reservations with regard to key proposals relating to the grand canal and the old harbour area in particular.

We acknowledge that in setting the context for waterways development, the plan recognises the historic role of the canal and it's positive impact on Tullamore as an economic and transport hub throughout the 19th century.

However from examination of physical canal-related infrastructure and facilities we would submit that there are oversights and deficiencies.

These relate in particular to a failure to fully embrace the potential of the former harbour as a barge and boat hub with great scope for development on a similar basis to for example Connaught harbour Portumna.

In our view an approach to harbour development which prioritises its role as a kayaking/watersports facility amounts to a flawed vision as it fails to recognise or celebrate the historic functioning of the canal as a unique transport hub and warehousing facility.

An additional consideration is the reality of a long term decline in boat traffic on both the royal and grand canals and we would query the extent is this recognised by the masterplan team and particularly by WI as partners in the process.

Unlike comparator canals in Britain and across Europe our Irish canals, in terms of boat traffic, have entered into a period of long term decline and there is no evidence that the navigation authority has the ambition or interest in reversing this decline.

For clear evidence of neglect with respect to canal navigation one need look no further than the Heart of Ireland strategy promulgated jointly by WI and Failte Ireland. While the

strategy correctly identifies scope for tourism and recreational development on Midland waterways, almost the entire thrust of the strategy is focussed on the Shannon with the canals as value proposition in terms of heritage and tourism is largely ignored.

On this basis, Dublin IWA I would encourage the master planning team to review and revise its entire approach to redevelopment of the harbour and adjacent facilities.

In this regard we recall Tullamore's status in earlier decades when Celtic Canal Cruisers operated a barge hire business in the town and undertaking which for many years enjoyed great success, drawing visitors to the town and contributing greatly to growth in traffic across the entire waterways network.

There's no question in our mind but that Tullamore Harbour could be redeveloped as a base for a sustainable cruiser and barge hire business operating on a similar basis to Celtic Cruisers. We would submit further that this should be adopted as a top priority in the masterplan with support from government and the many statutory agencies with responsibility for its rollout.

We would also acknowledge that in order to achieve this a more dynamic approach would be required, entailing in the first instance a focus on Tullamore facilities. But considered in isolation, this approach would be insufficient in the absence of a parallel focus on options in terms of destinations around the waterway network.

In other words, a crew embarking on a 5 day trip might consider places to the East as destinations such as Sallins, Robertstown or Naas with its attractive historic harbour.

The question that arises is the extent to which these locations fulfill criteria as desirable destinations. Similar considerations apply to destinations that might be considered for longer trips, particularly Dublin's Grand Canal Dock, potentially a very attractive boat tourism destination in the heart of the city.

These are clearly issues that fall within the ambit of WI as navigation authority. On this basis it would be highly desirable if the masterplanning process now underway could provide impetus and direction in terms of a wider strategic focus on the overall network's amenity and recreational potential.

July 2024

From:
To:
Subject:
Date:
Attachments:

Please find my attached submission on the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan - 2024
Please acknowledge receipt of my submission and call me on if you require any clarification.

Submission - Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan - 2024

Young's Stores on Convent Road along the Grand Canal is unique piece of canal infrastructure. The restoration of Young's Store to house a museum offers the opportunity to create a unique industrial heritage experience for tourists and schools.

The Grand Canal was a major factor in Tullamore developing extensive distilling, brewing and malting businesses.

P & H Egan was established in 1852, acquired a brewery in 1866 and they operated over 20 shops throughout Offaly and 4 Leinster counties.

Daniel E. Williams purchased his first shop in 1885 and developed the Tullamore Dew brand in 1893 – using his initials D.E.W. The Williams firm traded in 23 branches extending across Offaly and 4 neighbouring counties. In 1897, D. E. Williams constructed a Bonded Warehouse on Bury Quay – alongside the Grand Canal.

The two Tullamore based merchant families of P & H Egan and D. E. Williams operated boats on the Grand Canal. P & H Egan traded on 42B - the Snark and D.E. Williams moved their goods on 31B.

Young's Stores is a significant part of the industrial history of Tullamore. This unique canal warehouse can be transformed into a world class visitor experience highlighting the development of the Grand Canal and its significant role in providing economic and social opportunities – especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The objectives of the Offaly Tourism Strategy 2023-2027 can be satisfied by creating a major tourist and education attraction utilising an original Grand Canal protected structure and breathing new life into this 225-year-old important heritage building.