



**Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil:** CRK-C155-DEV21-358

**Údar:** Andrew Smith

**Stádas:** Submitted

**Aighneacht:** Sustainable future Cork: it's time to move

**Comhairliúchán:**

Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028

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## Litir Chumhdaigh

I'm an urbanist, a transport planner and sustainability researcher with 30 years experience in decarbonisation and transport planning. I worked in policy and scheme development on the London Congestion Charging Scheme, London's cycling policy, London local town centres' planning, and the Netherlands' transport policy.

I have developed and implemented successful urban transport schemes across the UK and the Netherlands.

I am currently the EPA Fellow for Carbon Budgets, and a researcher at UCC's Environmental Research Institute.

## Tuairimí:

### Cork city needs therapeutic gardens

**Caibidil:** Volume 1 - Written Statement» 6. Green and Blue Infrastructure, Open Space and

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**Ábhair:** Active recreation and open  
space

The addition of therapeutic gardens is a key intervention that supports many health and green objectives for Cork City and its people. Allocating and funding therapy gardens around deprived suburbs of Cork would be a step forward to improving the well-being of those in the city who most have need of it. We strongly recommend that a place be found for therapeutic gardens, in the Development Plan and in the city.

Research has shown that gardening addresses many symptoms of mental ill-health and the broader associated difficulties. Benefits come from physical activity, practical skills development, inter-relational and personal integration, and the innate effects of being in contact with nature.

Gardening promotes a faster recovery from mental fatigue [1], improves sleep [2], improves concentration and memory [3], decreases anger [4] and stress levels [5], increases the ability to cope with stress [6], increases positive mood [7], decreases the reliance on anti-depressants [8] and the severity of depression and anxiety [9], and refocuses away from pain [10].

Working as a gardening community extends the gardeners' social network [11] which increases the capacity to recover from disease [12], improves a sense of personal control in social settings [13], increases motivation [14], de-stigmatises by providing a new aspect to self-identity [15], increases a sense of belonging [16] and correlates to an increased positive relationships with others [17].

Growing plants and produce provides enjoyment for the tangible benefits of gardening [18], creates a sense of

accomplishment and improves self-esteem [19], increases self-confidence [20], improves personal productivity [21], widens learning of a range of transferable life skills and correspondingly increases gardeners' employability [22].

Caring for plants encourages creativity and self-expression [23], taking responsibility for oneself [24], reinforces a sense of personal agency [25], and powerfully reverses the dependency role sustained during illness [26].

Gardening offers many metaphors that can assist processing painful thoughts with positive framing [27], bring about hope from nature's life cycles [28] and a sense of transition and change [29], create coherence in personal life-stories [30] and promote goal-oriented behaviour where needed [31]. Being in contact with nature grounds the gardener to be able to take manageable risks for change [32].

For all references above, see <https://naturestudio.ie/mental-health/the-benefits>

**Eochairfhocail:** therapeutic gardens, mental well-being, health

*Main opinion:*

The addition of therapeutic gardens is a key intervention that supports many health and green objectives for Cork City and its people.

*Main requests:*

A place should be found for therapeutic gardens, in the Development Plan and in the city. The council's support should include the provision of land and ongoing financial support for the scheme.

*Main reasons:*

A growing body of research shows that therapeutic gardening improves well-being, and addresses many symptoms of mental ill-health and the broader associated difficulties.

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## **The future of cork city centre is almost free of motor traffic. Let's get on with it now.**

**Caibidil:** Volume 1 - Written Statement» 6. Green and Blue Infrastructure, Open Space and

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Green blue infrastructure study page LUC I 204 states: "the medieval street pattern in the City Centre is not conducive to high volumes of peak time vehicular traffic.". This really is the same thing as saying that it is not suitable for significant volumes of vehicles that are the size of a car or larger. Which leads us to our primary recommendation: that Cork immediately starts on the trajectory to making the City Centre a zone that is free of private cars.

In the interests of air quality and contributing to national climate targets (Climate Amendment Act 2021), we also recommend that Cork sets itself a target for the City Centre to be free of combustion by 2035. This should cover all traffic, as well as stationary applications such as heating appliances.

*Main opinion:*

The city centre was not built for motor traffic. Removing private cars from it should be a core objective of the development plan, and should be implemented before the end of the plan's lifetime.

*Main requests:*

Start planning for the end of private cars in the city centre now.

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*Main reasons:*

Cork city centre deserves better than to be used as driveway and car park.

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## **The road network IS the primary cycle network**

**Caibidil:** Volume 1 - Written Statement» 4. Transport and  
Mobility

**Ábhair:** Cycle  
network

While we welcome the GBI study's recommendation for new cycle routes (LUC I206-207), we would like to emphasise that the road network **is** the primary cycle network, and that the best way to improve cycle routes, is to make all roads where one can legally cycle, welcome for cyclists: and in particular main roads. When, in 2000, Transport for London looked at how its backstreet cycle network (the London Cycle Network) was performing, which routes cyclists were actually using, and asked which they'd prefer to use, the evidence was clear: the main roads were the best potential routes for cyclists, and that investment in parallel back-street routes had been unwise and unsuccessful.

On the issue of cycle parking, it is important to bear in mind that if cycle parking is not secure, it is worse than useless. People use the facilities, find their bikes are stolen, and many give up cycling. Enforcement action against cycle theft has to be a fundamental part of the provision of cycle parking. This means ensuring suitable evidence-gathering at parking sites, such as cctv that is of sufficient quality to ensure successful prosecutions; and also the co-operation of An Garda Síochána to devote suitable resources to enforcing against cycle theft.

In particular, the very recent surge in awareness of, interest in, and use of, electric bicycles should be nurtured and nourished. As these cycles typically cost around €3000, secure parking is of the essence. They offer the opportunity to push Cork City's cycling mode share far far above the proposed weak 4% target, given their ability to make the hillier areas much more accessible.

On enforcement, it is important to bear in mind that there is a hysteresis curve of enforcement and compliance, where very high enforcement at the start of a new provision is crucial to obtain high compliance from the beginning. Once this compliance is achieved, resources dedicated to enforcement can be reduced, without threatening compliance rates. Conversely, weak enforcement at the start leads to entrenched poor compliance, and it is then much more expensive to bring compliance rates up. A stitch in time saves nine. Enforce hard and early from the beginning.

**Eochairfhocail:** Cycling  
infrastructure

*Main opinion:*

Electric cycles open the whole city up for cycling, to almost all its citizens. The council can either support a massive new wave of cycling, or suppress it. The support and target within the current plan is insufficiently ambitious, and will not support a radical expansion of cycling.

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*Main requests:*

Secure cycle parking. High enforcement against cycle theft. Good provision for cyclists on main roads.

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*Main reasons:*

Good cycling provision is absolutely at the heart of the 15-minute city. It makes the potential boundary of such a city much larger than walking can.

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## Use the city's experts!

**Caibidil:** Volume 1 - Written Statement» 2. Core Strategy

**Ábhair:** Long term planning

There are several professionally-trained urbanists, including myself, within Cork who would be delighted to contribute to the ongoing strategic planning for Cork.

That's an amazing resource for the City to have: people who choose to live in Cork, invest their future here, and are willing to share their expertise to make Cork a more liveable city.

We strongly encourage Cork City Council to work with us, and bring in expertise for difficult challenges as well as for general development.

**Eochairfhocail:** expertise

### *Main opinion:*

Cork's expert urbanists are a resource that the Council can tap into to make the implementation of the Development Plan a bigger success.

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### *Main requests:*

The city council should convene an expert panel of urbanists to help develop its strategy and its schemes.

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### *Main reasons:*

There's a lot of professional expertise in Cork, outside the City Council's transport and planning departments. Those departments' effectiveness and value for money can be enhanced by tapping into the expertise outside the council.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl

**Teorainneacha Gafa ar an léarscáil:** Níl