



Roscommon County Development Plan 2021-2027

Submission on the Draft Roscommon County Development Plan 2021-2027

Submission Date: June 8, 2021 9:48 PM

Name

St Coman's Handball Club

What is the topic of the submission?

Built Heritage, Social, Community and Cultural Development

Submission

Or

Attached Submission

St Coman's Handball Club Submission.pdf, 0.21MB



**St Coman's
Handball Club**
Cumann Liathróid Láimhe Naomh Comáin



8th June 2021.

A Chara

Faigh faoi iamh, cuir isteach chuig Plean Forbartha an Chontae ó Cumann Liathróid Láimhe Naomh Comáin.

Le Meas

Coiste Cumann Liathróid Láimhe Naomh Comáin

Cumann Liathroid Laimhe Naomh Comain (St Coman's Handball Club)

Submission on Roscommon County Development Plan 2021-2027

The archaeological landscape in County Roscommon hints at the historical importance of the game of handball in the county over many generations. The game was most likely played as far back as the fifteenth century and the game provided an important social outlet in many villages and towns across the county. The more 'modern' outdoor courts were built throughout the 19th Century and it is these which can be seen dotted throughout the landscape, most in ruins. These courts were erected right in the middle of the village, at amenity points, highlighting their cultural and social importance.

The game of handball remains relatively strong in County Roscommon, with players often competing at national and international level. Ironically, the game going in-doors may not have helped with the profile of the game, but nevertheless, the competitive and all-year round nature of the sport demands such facilities. It is possible that many of our emigrants through the famine years and later brought the game to other continents like America, where there is a strong Irish emigrant involvement in the game. Ironically too, the game spread to other parts of the United States and is played by many ethnic groups in outdoor courts throughout the Country, at weekend social gatherings, reminiscent perhaps of 19th and early 20th century Ireland.

This archaeological and culturally important Irish game needs to be preserved and promoted through the Roscommon County Development Plan. This could be achieved in two main ways

- 1) Identifying, preserving and cataloguing historical courts/sites
- 2) Creating outdoor one-wall courts in public parks and populated areas

In terms of the historically important sites, important initiatives would include:

- Cataloguing old outdoor courts from the 17th, 18th and 19th Century
- Preserving what remains (sites, building) of these old courts
- Rebuilding (where appropriate) courts to provide recreational/amenity areas in villages
- Collating information on the history of the courts and erected appropriate signage

There is a great opportunity and increased demand for outdoor recreation activities, post Covid-19. Why not revitalise a traditional game, one that is known to have positive health benefits, is non contact, played by young and old, played by all ethnic groups and with strong ladies links in the county. Public parks and playgrounds are ideal for these courts. They are no more than 10m long by 4m wide and 5m high. The outdoor one-wall courts are open at the sides and back and can be viewed quite easily for entertainment value. Outdoor courts are incorporated into populated areas throughout the USA, London, Holland, as well as many other countries, and are focal points for recreational and sporting events, every other weekend. Specifications are easily available from local clubs and GAA Handball. Galway City Council are currently incorporating these facilities into their Urban Regeneration plans. As current Uachtarán Cumann Liathróid Láimhe, Dessie Keegan, alluded to in a recent Roscommon Herald interview, who knows, with some forward thinking, courts can be provided in easily accessible public places like Loughnanane Park. Poignantly, this would be very close to the old outdoor court at the Post Office (pre 1930's) and the court previously at the grounds

of the current Civic Offices in Roscommon Town (utilised up until the 1970's!). This initiative covers a number of important thematic areas within the County Development Plan:

- Provides outdoor social and physical exercise outlets in public spaces
- Promotes an historically important sporting game within the county, one that was potentially played from the 15th century, which was incorporated into the GAA charter in 1884, and is an important part of our heritage
- Highlights and preserves a culturally important activity within the county

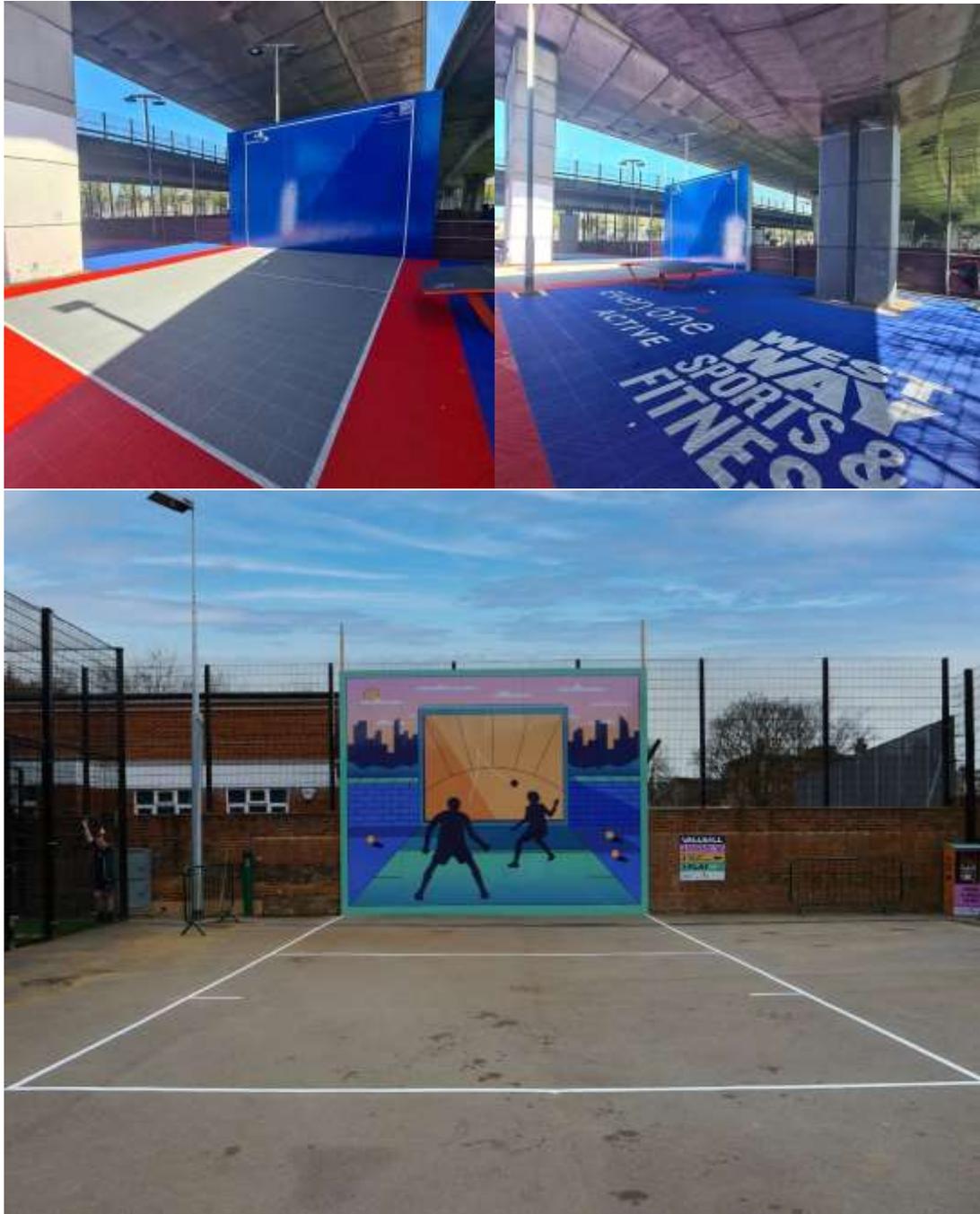
Some reference material relevant to this submission is highlighted below.

- 1) Links to design for outdoor courts on GAA Handball:
<https://www.gaahandball.ie/news/outdoor-court-ideas>
- 2) From the GAA Charter in 1884: “The primary purpose of the G.A.A. is the organisation of native pastimes and the promotion of athletic fitness as a means to create a disciplined, self-reliant, national minded manhood. The overall result is the expression of a people’s preference for native ways as opposed to imported ones”
- 3) From www.experienceGaelicGames.com: “The G.A.A. wrote the first rules for the modern game of handball. Handball was included in the G.A.A. Charter of 1884 as one of the sports to be promoted by the new Association. In 1924 Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann (the Irish Handball Council) was established to promote, develop and organise the sport. By 1974 Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na mBan was founded to administer the sport for female competitions
- 4) Reference to the regeneration programme in London City and information resource from the UK Wallball Association: <https://ukwallball.co.uk/>
- 5) From Aine Ryan’s (architect and spatial planner) research culminating in an information portal at www.irishhandballalley.ie

“Although celebrated as one of few vernacular building typologies indigenous to Ireland, this celebration is arguably casual, as little is actually known about the handball alley: for example, that the striking typology of the alley evolved over at least 200 years with many regional variations and sub-typologies; that it formalised social practices - of everyday exchange, of political resistance, of collective expression – passed on through generations; and in doing so, that it ‘marked’ sites of enormous local significance otherwise not included on any map or depiction of the rural settlement structure in Ireland”

“Although the alleys are cherished by older generations of the handball community who played and socialised in them, and appreciated by the architecture and artist community for their striking form and aesthetic quality, many people tend to regard the alleys as eyesores and unsafe places. In the context of their increasing demolition and decay, Áine Ryan's research on the handball alleys tries to tell the collective story of the alleys in an objective and unbiased manner, in order to enable more informed decision-making as to their fate, by local communities and government bodies alike”.

- 6) "History of Gaelic Games in Roscommon 1990 to 2014 and "History of Gaelic Games in Roscommon pre 1990".
- 7) Examples of outdoor one wall courts in other countries/cities



London



St Louis, USA



Brooklyn, USA



Holland