

**BusConnects Galway
Cross City Link
(University Road to
Dublin Road)**

August 2022

**Planning
Report**

**BUS
CONNECTS
GALWAY**

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FOR A BETTER CITY.

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Acronym	Meaning
AA	Appropriate Assessment
ACA	Architectural Conservation Areas
AWB	Artificial Water Bodies
CCL	Cross-City Link
CIE	Córas Iompair Éireann
DCCAIE	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
DCENR	Department of communications, Energy and Natural Resources
DCHG	Department of Cultural, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
EE	Enterprise and Employment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EU	European Union
FRA	Flood Risk Assessment
GTS	Galway Transport Strategy
GCC	Galway City Council
GCoC	Galway County Council
GCCDP	Galway City Council Development Plan
GEP	Good Ecological Potential
GES	Good Ecological Status
HMWB	Heavily Modified Water Bodies
HSE	Health Service Executive
IFI	Inland Fisheries Ireland
IW	Irish Water
KDC	Key District Centre
LAP	Local Area Plan
LEV's	Low Emission Vehicles
MRC	Major Retail Centre
NAF	National Adaptation Framework
NSMF	National Sustainable Mobility Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
NIS	Natura Impact Assessment
NPF	National Planning Framework
NPO	National Policy Objective
NPWS	National Park and Wildlife Service
NSO	National Strategic Outcome
NTA	National Transport Authority
NWRA	Northern & Western Regional Assembly
OPW	Office of Public Work
OS	Open Space
PR	Planning Report
REGEN	Regeneration
RES	Existing Residential
RPO	Regional Policy Objective

Acronym	Meaning
RSA	Road Safety Authority
RSES	Regional Spatial Economic Strategy
RSO	Regional Strategic Outcome
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDRA	Strategic Development Regeneration Area
SDRZ	Strategic Development Regeneration Zone
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SILFT	Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport
TEN-T	Trans European Transport Network
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
UN	United Nations
WFD	Water Framework Directive

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

This Planning Report (PR) has been prepared to set out the planning context for the development of the BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link (University Road to Dublin Road) Scheme (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Scheme). It identifies and considers the existing policy framework for the Proposed Scheme in the context of relevant legislative, International, National, Regional and Local planning strategy, plans and policy documents. The PR also assesses the planning aspects of the Proposed Scheme, in light of the predicted impacts identified in the EIAR for the scheme and the planning history of the route and the surrounding area.

The PR is separate to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) but forms part of the suite of planning application documents for the Proposed Scheme.

1.2 Outline Description of the Proposed Scheme

The Proposed Scheme begins on R863 University Road at the intersection of R864 Newcastle Road. It proceeds along R863 University Road, across the Salmon Weir Bridge before continuing on R863 St Francis Street/Eglinton Street, from the intersection with the R866 St Vincent’s Avenue. The Proposed Scheme continues around the north and east perimeter of Eyre Square (R863/R336) and on to R336/R339 Forster Street, R339 College Road and the junction with Lough Atalia Road. The Scheme continues on R339 College Road to Moneenageisha junction and terminates on R338 Dublin Road immediately prior to the entrance to the Woodlands Campus for Brothers of Charity. This scheme provides continuous cycle and bus priority facilities from University Road to the Dublin Road, including pedestrian facility and public realm improvements.

To facilitate the primary public transport route, upgrades are required on nearby streets. The two-way Inner-City Access Route comprises of Bóthar Na mBan, Bóthar Bhreandáin Uí hEithir and Fairgreen Road and provides an additional inner link from Headford Road to Lough Atalia Road. In effect, private motorised traffic will be able to access the city centre from all directions, and to exit on the same side. In order to circulate within the city however, cars will have to use the orbital River Corrib crossings on the City Centre Access Network. A Summary of the changes along the scheme are included in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Summary of Changes as a result of the Proposed Scheme

Total Length of Proposed Scheme	6.7km	
Bus Priority	Existing (km)	Proposed Scheme (km)
Bus Lanes		
Eastbound	0.3	1.6
Westbound	0.3	0.9

Total Length of Proposed Scheme	6.7km	
Bus Priority	Existing (km)	Proposed Scheme (km)
Bus Priority through Traffic Management		
Eastbound	0	1.5
Westbound	0	2.2
Total Bus Priority (both directions)	0.6	6.2
Bus Measures		
Proportion of Route with Bus Measures	10%	100%
Cycle Facilities - Segregated		
Inbound	0	0.7
Outbound	0	0.5
Cyclist Facilities – Non-segregated		
Inbound	0	2.3
Outbound	0	2.3
Total Cyclist Facilities (both directions)	0	5.8
Proportion Segregated	0%	95%
Other Features		
Number of Traffic Signal Controlled Junctions	5	10
Number of Signal Crossings	10	21

The Proposed Scheme will support integrated sustainable transport usage through infrastructure improvements for active travel (both walking and cycling), and the provision of enhanced bus priority measures for existing (both public and private) and all future bus services who will use the Cross-City Link (CCL).

A full description of the Proposed Scheme is provided in Chapter 4 (Proposed Scheme Description) in Volume 2 of the EIAR and the associated scheme drawings are provided in Volume 3 Figures of the EIAR. In addition, Chapter 2 (Need for the Proposed Scheme) and Chapter 3 (Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives) in Volume 2 of the EIAR, outline the need for the Proposed Scheme and the alternatives considered, respectively. The extent of the Proposed Scheme is shown in Figure 1-1.

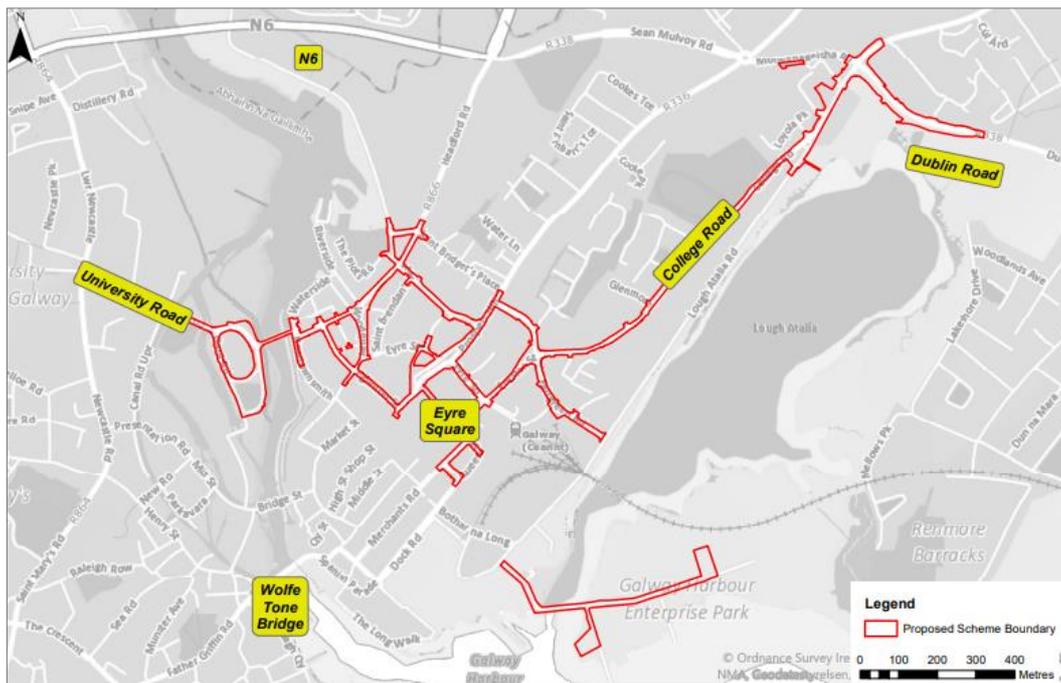


Figure 1-1 The full extent of the Proposed Scheme

1.3 Strategic Overview

The BusConnects Galway Programme is part of a wider suite of transport projects identified in the Galway Transport Strategy and informed by the National Transport Authority’s (NTA’s) role to greatly improve bus services in the regional cities, including Galway. It is a key part of the Government’s policies to improve public transport, encourage active travel and address climate change in Galway.

The Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) was published by Galway City Council (GCC) and Galway County Council in 2016. The GTS has informed the policies and objectives of both the Galway City Development Plan and the Galway County Development Plan. The strategy provides a framework for the development of the transport network over the next 20 to 30 years and was prepared in partnership with the NTA.

The GTS identified the CCL, along with a number of other transport improvement projects, with the aim of addressing the transportation issues experienced in the city and its environs.

The CCL is to form a central route for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians along a corridor from west to east, through the city centre. It will complement the proposed new city bus network routes approaching from the east and west of the city centre, which coalesce along this high-quality corridor, providing high-frequency services with journey time reliability and opportunities for interchange.

In March 2018, BusConnects Galway was launched as part of a major investment programme to help alleviate transportation issues in Galway, as part of Project Ireland - National Development Plan 2018 – 2027 (hereafter referred to as the NDP) (Government of Ireland 2018a).

It is envisaged that the Proposed Scheme, once completed, will deliver part of the radial Core Bus Corridors identified in the GTS. The GTS sets out a series of actions and measures, covering infrastructural, operational and policy elements to be implemented in Galway over the next 20 years and sets out a framework to deliver the projects in a phased manner so an update will not be adopted until 2036.

The GTS has been adopted by both GCC and Galway County Council and is implemented through the policies of their Development Plans.

1.4 Need for the Proposed Scheme

Chapter 2 (Need for the Proposed Scheme) in Volume 2 of the EIAR sets out in detail the need for the Proposed Scheme. The following Section provides an overview.

Our sustainable future relies on a built environment consisting of spaces and places that connects people and creates inclusive societies that are characterised by social cohesion. Sustainable transport infrastructure assists in creating more sustainable communities and healthier places while also stimulating our economic development. It contributes to enhanced health and well-being when delivered effectively.

The Proposed Scheme has been designed to facilitate improved efficiency of the transport network through the improvement of the infrastructure for active (walking and cycling) and public transport modes making them attractive alternatives to car-based journeys.

The Proposed Scheme will address sustainable mode transport infrastructure deficits while contributing to an overall integrated sustainable transport system as proposed in the GTS. It will increase the effectiveness and attractiveness of bus services operating along the corridor and will result in more people availing of public transport due to the faster journey times and reliability improvements which the Proposed Scheme provides. This in turn will support the potential to increase the bus network capacity of services operating along the corridor and thereby further increasing the attractiveness of public transport. In addition to this, the significant segregation and safety improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure that is a key feature of the Proposed Scheme will further maximise the movement of people travelling sustainably along the corridor and will therefore cater for higher levels of future population and employment growth.

In the absence of the Proposed Scheme bus services will be operating in a more congested environment, leading to higher journey times for bus and lower reliability which will lead to reduced levels of public transport use, making the bus system far less attractive and less resilient to higher levels of growth. The absence of walking and cycling measures that the Proposed Scheme provides will significantly limit the potential to grow those modes into the future. In addition to the public transport benefits the Proposed Scheme will also improve the existing streetscape / urban realm setting along the corridor. This will include the introduction of new and improved landscaping provisions along the corridor, and a complimentary planting regime and streetscape improvements at key locations will also enhance the character of the surrounding built environment along the corridor.

1.5 Roads Act & Planning Process

The Proposed Scheme is a ‘proposed road development’ under the definitions provided by Part 1, Section 2 of the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended) (hereafter referred to as the Roads Act).

The application for approval of the Proposed Scheme is being made under Section 51 of the Roads Act.

The following planning processes were considered as the Proposed Scheme was developed:

- **Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.**
- **Part 8, Article 80(1)(b)(i) of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001, as amended.**
- **Section 38 of the Road Traffic Act 1994, as amended.**
- **Section 95 of the Road Traffic Act 1961, as amended.**
- **Section 177AE of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.**
- **Section 175 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.**
- **Section 50 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).**

It was determined that an application for approval from An Bord Pleanála following the procedures set out under Section 51 of the Roads Act was the appropriate planning process to follow, based on the following:

- Considering the type of scheme involved;
- The assessments required to accompany the application (EIAR & NIS);
- The fact that Galway City Council (the applicant) are designated as a Roads Authority under the Roads Act.

This was outlined to the Board in pre-application discussions, and the Board generally agreed with this approach.

1.6 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Section 50 of the Roads Act refers to road developments consisting of the following:

- (i) the construction of a motorway;*
- (ii) the construction of a busway;*
- (iii) the construction of a service area;*
- (iv) any prescribed type of road development consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road’.*

It states that any road developments consisting of the aforementioned shall be subject to EIA¹. This, however, must be informed by an EIA Screening determination. The EIA Screening for the Proposed Scheme has determined that the proposed development comes under the description of a road development under (iv) above. The EIA Screening concludes that there are likely significant effects on the environment. Section 51 of the Roads Act states that ‘A proposed road development shall not be carried out unless An Bord Pleanála has approved it or approved it with modifications’, and a proposed road development is defined as any road development requiring an EIAR, as described in Section 2(1) of the Roads Act.

1.7 Appropriate Assessment

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the requirement for an assessment of proposed plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6(3) establishes the requirement to screen all plans and projects and to carry out an appropriate assessment if required (Appropriate Assessment (AA)). On this basis, an AA Screening was carried out which determined that a Stage 2 AA (Natura Impact Assessment) was required.

1.8 List of Documents Accompanying the Application

A number of supporting documents are being submitted to An Bord Pleanála as part of the planning application process. These documents include the standard documents which normally accompany planning applications which are subject to environmental impact assessment, including:

¹ The prescribed types of road development referred to in s50i(a)(iv) are given in section 8 of S.I. 119/1994 as: (a) The construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or the realignment or widening of an existing road so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new, realigned or widened road would be eight kilometres or more in length in a rural area, or 500 metres or more in length in an urban area.

(b) the construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length. Additionally, P&D regs (Schedule 5) contain EIA thresholds some of which have been found to be applicable to roads projects.

- A Planning Report (this document)
- Copy of the newspaper notice
- An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), including Non-Technical Summary
- An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report
- A Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
- Preliminary Design Report
- Public Consultation Report
- Preferred Route Options Report
- Compulsory Purchase Order
- EIA Portal Confirmation Notice (EIA Portal ID number 2022166)

Ten copies (2 hard copies of the entire application and 8 soft copies of the entire application) of the documents and drawings are submitted as well as an electronic copy of the EIAR, NIS and the AA Screening Report. An application is being submitted to the Board, in relation to a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of lands required to implement the Proposed Scheme, in tandem with this application.

1.9 Structure of the Report

This report is structured as follows:

1. Introductory section providing a general overview of the Proposed Scheme and detailing pre-application developments.
2. Planning & Development policy background to the Proposed Scheme, and an indicative level of compliance with international, national, regional, local and sectoral policy.
3. A brief description of the relevant planning history of the route of the Proposed Scheme and the surrounding area.
4. A detailed section by section description of the Proposed Scheme supplemented by Chapter 4 of the EIAR.
5. A brief outline of the environmental impacts as identified in the AA Screening, NIS and EIAR.
6. An Assessment of the main planning issues pertaining to the Proposed Scheme.
7. A concluding piece summing up the Planning Report and promoting the permissibility of the Proposed Scheme.

1.10 Planning Fee

The Planning Fee is calculated in accordance with An Bord Pleanála’s list of fees for Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) cases².

The fee accompanying this Application is the standard fee of €60,000 for applications by a road authority under Section 51 of the Roads Act.

1.11 Consultation to Date

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in place throughout 2020 and 2021, Galway City Council engaged in virtual and on-line non-statutory public consultation on the Cross-City Link project. In response to guidelines from the Irish Government and the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET), no information events were held in person. As a consequence, a virtual consultation was undertaken. The purpose of the non-statutory consultation was to encourage stakeholders to identify questions or issues they want the Design Teams to consider, as the project progresses through design and statutory processes. The consultation commenced on October 22nd 2020 and the initial duration of the consultation period was 6 weeks.

In addition to the extensive non-statutory public consultation on the Proposed Scheme, the Galway BusConnects team undertook consultation on the EIAR with certain prescribed bodies and relevant non-statutory consultees in October 2021.

Consultations were also conducted with organisations such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and relevant local authorities, and these are considered in the development of the relevant impact assessments within the EIAR.

Further to the above, consultations were also undertaken with GCC. Consultation was also undertaken with the prescribed bodies and interested parties outlined in Table 1.2 with regard to the approach to the EIAR.

Table 1.2: Prescribed Bodies & Interested Parties

Prescribed Bodies and Interested Parties	
An Chomhairle Ealaíon	Galway Chamber
An Taisce	Galway City Council
An Garda Síochána	Galway County Council
Bus Éireann	Galway Fire Service
Corrib Navigation Trust	Galway Harbour Company
DCC	Gas Networks Ireland
DCCAIE	Geological Survey of Ireland
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Health Service Executive (HSE)
Department of Defence	The Heritage Council
Department of Education	Inland Fisheries Ireland
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	Irish Rail
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Irish Water

² Fees: Strategic Infrastructure Developments (SID) | An Bord Pleanála (pleanala.ie)

Prescribed Bodies and Interested Parties	
Development Applications Unit (DAU) - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	National Ambulance Service Ireland
The National Monuments Service, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage	National Transport Authority
The National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage	National University of Ireland (Galway)
Department of Transport	Northern & Western Regional Assembly
Eirgrid	OPW
Environmental Protection Agency	TII
ESB Networks Ireland	Waterways Ireland
Fáilte Ireland	

Where possible, the information and advice received from the consultation process was subsequently incorporated into the design of the Proposed Scheme and addressed in the relevant chapters of the EIAR. Issues raised during the consultation process included the following:

- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Comments provided related to the assessment of the impacts of the Proposed Scheme on archaeology, the AA Screening process, hydrological links between the project area and the nearby designated sites and impacts on biodiversity and protected species;
- Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) commented on geological sites, groundwater, geohazards, the general geological assessment and significant bedrock cuttings.
- The Health & Safety Authority (HSA) queried the use of the HSA Guidance on Technical Land Use Planning 2020, and the proximity of the Proposed Scheme to any COMAH sites.

Since the initiation of the non-statutory public consultation process in October 2020 there has been ongoing engagement with owners, and / or anyone with an interest in potentially impacted properties or lands along the corridor of the Proposed Scheme, as the design development has progressed.

Letters, outlining the scheme, were sent to identified landowners on 16 October 2021. Where landowners were not readily identifiable, letters were issued to the property. Over the course of the engagements, affected property owners have had the opportunity to discuss different aspects of the Proposed Scheme with the design team.

The majority of potentially directly-affected landowners have now been met. These meetings took place on-line, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Engagement by phone also took place with a number of landowners.

This report does not summarise engagement or feedback of landowners, as these discussions are confidential with respect to potential land acquisition processes being undertaken as part of the statutory CPO consent process.

Landowner meetings commenced in January 2021 and have occurred across all of 2021 to date. As of June 2021, contact has been made with representatives of the majority of potentially impacted folios.

In addition to the general public consultation event, further targeted consultation took place through a series of stakeholder meetings in December 2020 and January/February/March 2021, with a range of organisations, key stakeholders and interested persons.

2 Planning & Development Policy

2.1 International

2.1.1 United Nations 2030 Agenda

In September 2015, Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all 193 Members States of the United Nations (UN, 2015) (hereafter ‘UN’s 2030 Agenda’). The UN’s 2030 Agenda aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the entire world, and sets out a framework for how to achieve this by 2030. This framework is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Diagram 2.1) which cover the social, economic, and environmental requirements for a sustainable future.



Diagram 2.1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are integrated, recognising that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

SDGs 3, 8, 9, 11 and 13 and the associated targets are relevant to the Proposed Scheme as presented in Table 2.1

Table 2.1: Sustainable Development Goals and Targets Relevant to Proposed Scheme

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG Target
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.	Target 3.9: By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.
Goal 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.	Target 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.	Target 9.1: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human wellbeing, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.	Target 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

In Ireland, the SDGs are being implemented through the National Implementation Plan 2018-2020³ (DCCA, 2018), which is in direct response to the UN’s 2030 Agenda. Ireland’s Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022 – 2024 Draft was issued for Public Consultation 13 May 2022.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme supports the SDG goals and targets set out in the relevant SDGs. It will provide for enhanced walking, cycling and bus infrastructure, which will subsequently enable more efficient, safe and integrated sustainable transport movement in Galway City.

2.1.2 European Commission Smart & Sustainable Mobility Strategy 2020

The Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy (European Commission, 2020) sets out a number of goals as to how people will move within and between cities in the future. It has identified 82 initiatives which have been categorized into 10 ‘flagships.’

The flagship of most relevance to the Proposed Scheme is ‘Flagship 3 – Making interurban and urban mobility more sustainable and healthy’. It states that:

- *‘increasing the modal shares of collective transport, walking and cycling, as well as automated, connected and multimodal mobility will significantly lower pollution and congestion from transport, especially in cities and improve the health and well-being of people. Cities are and should therefore remain at the forefront of the transition towards greater sustainability.’*

³ A revised National Implementation Plan is due to be published in 2021.

A target of the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy relevant to the Proposed Scheme is to double safe cycle lanes in cities within the European Union to 5,000km in the next decade.

The Proposed Scheme supports the objectives of the EU's Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy through significant investment in bus priority, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the route of the Proposed Scheme, thereby supporting and encouraging growth in active travel and public transport usage.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme supports the objectives of the EU's Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy through significant investment in bus priority, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the route of the Proposed Scheme, thereby supporting and encouraging growth in active travel and public transport usage.

2.1.3 European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019

The EU Green Deal (European Commission, 2019) sets out one of the most ambitious road maps for an entire continent to transition to a low carbon economy, as committed to in The Paris Agreement 2015⁴. It sets out key policies aimed at cutting emissions and preserving the natural environment. It commits the EU to become climate neutral by 2050, with a reduction of between 50 to 55% by 2030 when compared to 1990 emission levels. By focusing on transport, buildings, and energy, the EU Green Deal is setting out a process to help everybody work together and try and move in the same direction.

A key component of the EU Green Deal roadmap to transforming the EU's economy for a sustainable future is '*accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility*'. It seeks to reduce the transport sectors greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050. '*The EU transport system and infrastructure will be made fit to support new sustainable mobility services that can reduce congestion and pollution, especially in urban areas*'. *It is noted that pollution is concentrated in cities and that a combination of measures are required such as 'improving public transport and promoting active modes of transport such as walking and cycling.'*

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme supports the objectives of the EU Green Deal through investment in cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, in addition to bus priority, along the route of the Proposed Scheme, thereby supporting and encouraging growth in active travel and sustainable public transport usage.

4 <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

2.2 National

2.2.1 Project Ireland 2040 – National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP)

The Project Ireland 2040 is the government’s long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people.

The National Planning Framework (hereafter referred to as the NPF) (Government of Ireland, 2018) and the National Development Plan (hereafter referred to as the NDP) (Government of Ireland, 2021) combine to form Project Ireland 2040. The NDP and the NPF, were adopted in May 2018 and an update to the NDP was published on 04 October 2021.

The NDP is the national capital investment strategy plan. It sets out the framework of expenditure commitments to secure the Strategic Investment Priorities to the year 2030 and support the delivery of the 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSO’s) identified in the NPF. The NSOs directly related to the Proposed Scheme are described in Section 2.2.3.3, Table 2.2.

The NDP sets out a programme of investment that includes indicative capital expenditure allocations. Although the NDP does not specifically allocate funding to the Proposed Scheme, there are a number of funding avenues within the NDP that are relevant to the Proposed Scheme, including:

- €360 million per annum national active travel budget up to 2025; and
- €35 billion allocated to transport-related requirements detailed in the NDP.

This is supplemented by the October 2021 budget announcement allocating approximately €1.8 billion in 2022 for sustainable mobility, including active travel. In addition, almost €50 million of provisional funding under the Urban Regeneration & Development Fund has been specifically allocated to a Galway City Council Transport Connectivity Project and a Public Space and Street project in Galway City.

Under the heading ‘Major investments in this NDP’ the NDP sets out a selection of national infrastructure projects and ‘BusConnects for Ireland’s Cities’ is highlighted under the heading ‘NSO 4 - Sustainable Mobility’.

The NDP states under:

NSO4 ‘Sustainable Mobility’ that:

‘This NDP provides for significant investment in active travel, bus and rail infrastructure over the next ten years in terms of expanding sustainable mobility options in our cities, towns and villages, supporting our ambition for compact growth and seeking to develop our regional cities as centres of scale in line with the NPF targets. In the previous NDP, the Transport sector had an allocation of approximately €21 billion for the period 2018-2027. The revised NDP sets out further ambitious plans to enhance public transport, active travel options and the connectivity of communities throughout Ireland. Transport projects by their

nature are delivered over a multi-year horizon. The scale of the Transport-related requirements under the revised NDP amounts to c. €35 billion in total over 2021-2030.'

'The Climate Action Plan (CAP) recognises that Ireland must achieve a significant modal shift from car to active travel and public transport if we are to achieve our target of a 51% reduction in Green House Gas emissions by 2030 and ultimately net zero by 2050.

CAP sets a target for 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030 and investment planned under this NDP will be directed toward achieving that challenging target.'

It also highlights, with specific regard to BusConnects:

'Transformed active travel and bus infrastructure and services in all five of Ireland's major cities (including Galway City) is fundamental to achieving the overarching target of 500,000 additional active travel and public transport journeys by 2030.'

It continues:

'BusConnects will overhaul the current bus system in all five cities by implementing a network of 'next generation' bus corridors (including segregated cycling facilities) on the busiest routes to make journeys faster, predictable and reliable. BusConnects will enhance the capacity and potential of the public transport system by increasing and replacing the bus fleets with low emission vehicles.'

It further states that:

'Increasing the attractiveness of the bus systems in the cities will encourage modal shift away from private car use, leading to a reduction in congestion and associated costs in the major urban areas'.

NSO8 'Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society' identifies BusConnects under the Strategic Investment Priorities (Transport) and the need to shift away from carbon intensive transport systems. The NDP identifies specific measures including:

- *'Delivering priority public transport programmes including BusConnects, DART+ Expansion Programme and MetroLink so that increased transport demand is met by greener public transport;*
- *Replacing existing diesel public buses with lower emitting alternatives under the BusConnects programme, while promoting commercial bus services and small public service vehicle industry to use low-emission fleet;*
- *Encouraging a significant modal shift through greater levels of investment and further development of meaningful alternatives to private car uses under the following three major environmentally sustainable mobility schemes:*
- *additional cycling and walking infrastructure which will provide additional sustainable mobility options to complement increased capacity and faster, higher quality public transport in our main cities;*

- *travel demand management measures in the five cities; and*
- *pilot initiatives for low emitting technologies in the transport sector.’*

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme forming part of the overall BusConnects Programme is therefore identified as a ‘Strategic Investment Priority’ project, with an associated investment commitment, which has been determined as central to the delivery of the NPF vision. The Proposed Scheme is an integral part of Ireland’s efforts to reduce carbon by providing the infrastructure necessary to deliver a sustainable transport network.

The Proposed Scheme will facilitate targeted population growth in Galway City by meeting existing and future travel demand through investment in a sustainable transport network and services. As required in the NDP, the Proposed Scheme will provide the infrastructure needed to help facilitate a modal shift from private car to public transport, cycling and walking. It will also bring to fruition a key investment priority of the NDP to help deliver the full ‘BusConnects programme’.

2.2.2 Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023

The Statement of Strategy (Department of Transport, 2021) sets out objectives goals and an actions based strategic approach which are designed to support continuing economic recovery, fiscal consolidation, job creation and social development. It notes that:

‘Aligned with the National Planning Framework and the National Economic Plan we will maintain and develop high quality sustainable road, public transport and active travel networks to enable economic activity, essential services and social connections between and within our cities, regions and communities.’

‘Ireland’s land transport system – comprising our road and rail networks, together with bus, rail and taxi services – is of fundamental importance to both societal and economic wellbeing.’

The Statement of Strategy includes an action commitment to ‘support any necessary adaptation of our critical transport infrastructure and services in response to Ireland’s changing climate appropriate public spending and investment in efficient, sustainable, integrated and accessible land transport networks and services.’

The Statement of Strategy mission is the implementation of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022) and the Road Safety Strategy 2013 – 2020:

‘To deliver an accessible, efficient, safe and sustainable transport system that supports communities, households and businesses’.

Project Response:

The need for the Proposed Scheme is supported by the Statement of Strategy mission to deliver an accessible and efficient transport system. The Proposed Scheme will contribute towards the Statement of Strategy mission by improving both bus and cycle infrastructure allowing for greater modal choices in Galway City.

2.2.3 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF is a 20-year planning framework which combines with the NDP to form Project Ireland 2040 which is the government’s long-term overarching national planning strategy.

It aims to guide population and jobs growth over the next 20 years across all parts of Ireland, supported by a flexible and sustainable planning framework. The NPF informs all other planning policy documents including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the Galway County Council Development Plan and Galway City Development Plan.

The NPF’s ambition is to create a single vision and a shared set of goals for each community to shape the growth and development of Ireland by providing a framework up to the year 2040. These goals are expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO), shared benefits which the NPF will deliver if implemented according to the objectives of the NPF. Some of the NPF NSOs relevant for the Proposed Scheme are set out in Table 2.2 with a corresponding statement on how the Proposed Scheme meets each respective NSO objective.

Table 2.2: Strategic Outcomes of the NPF

National Strategic Outcome (NSO)	How the Proposed Scheme meets the NSO objective?
<p><i>NSO1 Compact Growth:</i></p> <p><i>‘Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. All our urban settlements contain many potential development areas, centrally located and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services, but which need a streamlined and co-ordinated approach to their development, with investment in enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. Activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development, is a top priority.’</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Scheme will bring greater accessibility to the city centre and improve connectivity between communities and locations along its route facilitating access to housing, jobs, amenities and services.</p> <p>The Proposed Scheme will enhance the capacity of the sustainable transport network, and as a consequence will help to achieve greater land use densities that will encourage compact growth in compliance with the objectives of NSO1.</p>
<p><i>NSO4 Sustainable Mobility:</i></p> <p><i>‘In line with Ireland’s Climate Change mitigation plan, we need to progressively electrify our mobility systems moving away</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Scheme will provide infrastructure to support a sustainable transport network that will facilitate a modal shift from private car usage to sustainable transport. It will reduce journey times and</p>

National Strategic Outcome (NSO)	How the Proposed Scheme meets the NSO objective?
<p><i>from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets, such that by 2040 our cities and towns will enjoy a cleaner, quieter environment free of combustion engine driven transport systems.’</i></p>	<p>increase journey time reliability and increase the attractiveness of active travel and public transport for travel, which will in turn reduce fossil fuel usage in private travel.</p> <p>The Proposed Scheme will support integrated sustainable transport usage through infrastructure improvements for active travel (both walking and cycling), and the provision of enhanced bus priority measures for existing (both public and private) and all future services who will use the Proposed Scheme.</p>
<p><i>NSO5 A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills:</i></p> <p><i>‘This will depend on creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. It can be achieved by building regional economic drivers and by supporting opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy, to leverage the potential of places. Delivering this outcome will require the coordination of growth and place making with investment in world class infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.’</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Scheme is a high-quality development that will provide the infrastructure required to facilitate sustainable transport options which will service the current and future transport needs of Galway City and surrounding areas.</p> <p>The Proposed Scheme represents a significant investment in transport infrastructure that will improve accessibility to Galway City, a city of regional significance, and land uses associated with the city, including economic, educational, amenity and social uses, for example.</p>

Specifically, in regard to the Galway City and Metropolitan Area, the NPF states that:

‘The Galway Metropolitan area shares many of the challenges arising from growth and economic success with much larger cities. In common with Dublin, Galway needs to accommodate a greater proportion of the growth it generates within its metropolitan boundaries. Challenges to be addressed include housing choice and affordability, transport/ mobility and urban quality, especially outside the core-city centre area.’

Under the heading ‘Key future growth enablers for Galway include’ it highlights that:

‘Provision of a Citywide public transport network, with enhanced accessibility between existing and proposed residential areas and the City Centre, third level institutions and the employment areas to the east of the city.’

‘Public realm and urban amenity projects, focused on streets and public spaces, particularly in support of an extended city centre area and where residential and employment areas can be linked to pedestrian routes’.

NSO 4 notes that:

‘major urban areas are too heavily dependent on road and private, mainly car based, transport with the result that our roads are becoming more and more congested. The National Development Plan makes provision for investment in public transport and sustainable mobility solutions to progressively put in place a more sustainable alternative’.

At the core of the NPF is sustainability and more environmentally friendly development, which is implemented through the National Strategic Objectives (NSOs), Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) and accompanying National Policy Objectives (NPOs). In addition to the NSOs referenced above, there are a number of NPOs pertaining to the Proposed Scheme such as:

- *NPO 27 – “Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments”*
- *NPO 52 – “The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital”*
- *NPO 64 – “Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car”*
- *NPO 75 – “Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the National Planning Framework are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate”*

The NPF also highlights the importance of the public realm and improving access to public transport in order to improve the ‘liveability’ of urban areas.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme helps to address one of the key challenges identified in the NPF for a growing city such as Galway – transport and mobility; enhancing accessibility to the City Centre, residential, employment and educational areas. BusConnects is referenced as a sustainable mobility solution, and the Proposed Scheme involves the implementation of this sustainable mobility solution through facilitating greater bus, cycle and pedestrian accessibility into, within and across Galway City.

The Proposed Scheme includes public realm improvements, in order to allow for greater access to public transport and to improve the liveability of the city.

2.2.4 National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help

Ireland meet its climate obligations. It is accompanied by an action plan to 2025 which contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys. It also includes demand management and behavioural change measures to manage daily travel demand more efficiently and to reduce the journeys taken by private car.

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy is *“centred upon three overarching principles – Safe and Green Mobility, People Focused Mobility and Better Integrated Mobility”*. The policy aligns with various National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in the NPF, and *“will also support the actions in the Climate Action Plan to reduce transport emissions in line with necessary EU and Irish targets in respect of active travel and public transport”*.

Goal 2 aims to reduce emissions by transitioning the bus, rail and small public service vehicle (SPSV) fleet across the country to low/zero emission vehicles in line with available technology. The actions under this goal are aligned with the actions in the Climate Action Plan 2021 to reduce emissions in the sustainable mobility sector. It is recognised that the *“Implementation of public transport projects such as BusConnects... will significantly increase the capacity and range of our public transport network and ensure that future increases in travel demand can be facilitated by greener, high-capacity public transport.”*

Goal 3 - Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas- recognises that the *“bus system carries by far the greatest number of passengers across the public transport system and improvements to it are vital in the context of improving people’s accessibility and increasing modal shift.”*

Goal 3 also underlines that *“BusConnects will enhance the capacity and potential of the public transport system by increasing and replacing the bus fleets with low emission vehicles and introducing a new system of Next Generation Ticketing and cashless payments.”*

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022) supersedes the National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009 – 2020, and in regard to the issue of cycling as sustainable transport the National Sustainable Mobility Policy Goal 4 aims to expand the capacity and availability of sustainable mobility in a regional and rural context. This will be done through the delivery of improved active travel infrastructure, expansion of regional bus and rail services and local bus networks, and improved connectivity between different transport modes.

Goal 4 states that *“Cycle network plans will be developed for all counties to guide investment in cycling infrastructure, including both new infrastructure and retrofitting of existing infrastructure, in order to develop a network of cycle routes for each county. In tandem with this, a strategic national cycle network will be identified, providing key inter-urban links and enabling the continued development and delivery of that network.”*

Goal 6 aims to support a ‘whole of journey’ approach from planning a journey to arriving at the final destination and make sustainable mobility accessible and affordable to everyone.

Goal 6 recognises that *“other elements are also important to support a whole of journey approach such as decluttering footpaths; dished crossing for wheelchair users; provision of continuous footpaths and cycle tracks across side road junctions and property entrances; wider cycle facilities to accommodate cyclists with disabilities...”*

Goal 7 aims to support enhanced permeability and ensure that the universal design principle and Hierarchy of Road Users model is used to inform future investment decisions to reduce inequalities, support a whole of journey approach, and prioritise sustainable mobility

Goal 7 notes that *“The Hierarchy of Road Users model prioritises cyclists after pedestrians. DMURS notes that trips by bicycle have the potential to replace motor vehicles as an alternative means of transport for short to medium range trips, and in some cases longer range trips.”*

The Proposed Scheme will enhance the effectiveness / efficiency of future bus services and cycling infrastructure as well as active travel required by Smarter Travel. The Proposed Scheme will maximise the efficiency of the transport network through the integration of cycling and public transport modes and support the provision of sustainable transport alternatives to reliance on car-based journeys.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme aligns with the goals of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy to improve bus network capacity, implement a ‘whole of journey’ approach by upgrading the public realm and providing the requisite infrastructure to support this approach.

The Proposed Scheme will enhance the effectiveness / efficiency of future bus services and cycling infrastructure as well as active travel required by Smarter Travel. The Proposed Scheme will maximise the efficiency of the transport network through the integration of cycling and public transport modes and support the provision of sustainable transport alternatives to reliance on car-based journeys.

2.2.5 Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

The Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 and the Phase 1 Action Plan: 2021-2024 aim “to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on Irish roads by 50% over the next 10 years. This means reducing deaths on Ireland’s roads annually from 144 to 72 or lower and reducing serious injuries from 1,259 to 630 or lower by 2030.”

The Strategy recognises that “The promotion and increased uptake of public transport can greatly contribute to fatality and serious injury reductions over the course of the 2021–2030 strategy.”

Actions under safe and healthy modes of travel within the 2021–2024 action plan will include a core focus on provision of safe infrastructure (e.g., segregated walkways and cycle lanes) and speed management.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme will contribute to improved road safety through improvement works at key junctions and upgrades to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along the route of the Proposed Scheme. The Proposed Scheme provides for significant additional segregation between active travel users and the public road to help enhance safety.

2.2.6 Climate Action Plan 2021

The Climate Action Plan 2021 (Government of Ireland 2021b) sets out at a National level how Ireland is to halve its emissions by 2030 (51% reduction) and reach net zero no later than 2050. The Climate Action Plan is a road map to delivering Ireland's climate ambition. There are 475 actions identified that extend to all sectors of the economy aiming to transform Ireland into a low carbon nation over the next three decades.

In regard to modal shift the Climate Action Plan 2021 sets out that:

'The proposed pathway in transport is focused on accelerating the electrification of road transport, the use of biofuels, and a modal shift to transport modes with lower energy consumption (e.g. public and active transport)' (emphasis added).

Promoting more sustainable travel modes is seen as critical for climate policy. It offers an opportunity to *'improve our health, boost the quality of our lives, meet the need of our growing urban centres and connects our rural, urban and suburban communities'*.

The key targets to meet the emissions reduction include:

- *'Provide for an additional 500,000 daily public transport and active travel journeys'*;
- *'Develop the required infrastructural, regulatory, engagement, planning, innovation and financial supports for improved system, travel, vehicle and demand efficiencies'*; and
- *'Reduce ICE [Internal Combustion Engine] kilometres by c. 10% compared to present day levels'*.

ICE reduction measures include:

- *'Reallocating road space from the private car to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport'*;
- *'Enhancing permeability for active travel'*; and
- *'Delivering safer walking and cycling routes to encourage greater uptake of active transport.'*

BusConnects is referenced as a major transport project that will help to deliver the 500,000 additional sustainable journeys. A key goal of the plan is to provide citizens with reliable and realistic sustainable transport options. The Climate Action Plan further states:

‘The new approach to public transport will be based on a vision of an integrated public transport network, enabling short, medium and long distance trips for people in every part of Ireland. This will mean increasing the frequency of existing rail and bus services, and expanding the bus network through the Connecting Ireland approach.’

BusConnects will support the delivery of an efficient low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, contributing to emission reduction target achievement. BusConnects will contribute to Ireland’s journey to a low carbon / carbon neutral, energy efficient and reliable transport system which aligns with Government net zero policy commitments and enable customers to make sustainable choices.

Acknowledging that various policy initiatives are required to deliver national targets that are aligned to the Paris Agreement, BusConnects can facilitate services that are beneficial to communities. While mandated reductions are not required at an individual scheme level, carbon must be invested wisely.

Project Response:

The implementation of the Proposed Scheme will deliver the transport infrastructure required to support sustainable transport options that will in turn support the key actions set out in the Climate Action Plan 2021. The Proposed Scheme will expand, enhance and connect to pedestrian and cycle networks and will assist in facilitating the delivery of modal shift.

2.2.7 Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020

The Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020 (hereafter referred to as the ‘Programme for Government’) (Government of Ireland, 2020) sets out the Government’s plan for the next five years. It states that the Government will ‘Develop and implement existing strategies for our cities such as ‘the Galway Transport Strategy’. The key objectives of the programme include the need to:

- *‘Address pinch points for buses and expand priority signalling for buses and real time information; and*
- *Give greater priority to bus services by expanding quality bus corridors and consider the introduction of Bus Rapid Transport services.’*

Specifically, in regard to BusConnects, the Programme for Government states it will also ‘prioritise plans for the delivery of...BusConnects in Galway’.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme constitutes an element of Galway BusConnects, and as such, helps to implement a project identified in the Programme for Government.

2.2.8 Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 – 2021

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) published the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan in September 2015 (hereafter referred to as the Capital Plan) (DPER, 2015). It presented the findings of a Government-wide review of infrastructure and capital investment policy and outlined the Government's commitment to ensuring that the country's stock of infrastructure is capable of facilitating economic growth.

This report identifies the need to improve public transport facilities noting:

'It is therefore essential that road, rail and public transport networks are developed and maintained to the standard required to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and freight.'

In addition, getting people out of cars and onto public transport has a key role to play in reducing Ireland's carbon emissions, by providing a viable, less polluting alternative to car and road transport for many journeys.'

The transport capital allocation in this Capital Plan is largely framed by the recommendations and priorities set out in the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (DoT 2015), which centre on:

- *Maintaining and renewing the strategically important elements of the existing land transport system;*
- *Addressing urban congestion; and*
- *Maximise the contribution of land transport networks to our national development.*

The Capital Plan incorporates the following key objectives relevant to this Proposed Scheme:

- *€3.6 billion of Public Transport Investment including further upgrading of Quality Bus Corridors.*

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme is consistent with these recommendations, priorities and objectives as set out in the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (DoT 2015), and the Capital Plan. The Proposed Scheme represents a significant investment in the improvement of public transport facilities including bus, cycle and pedestrian network enhancements and extensions.

2.2.9 The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 – 2020 & the Draft Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022 – 2024

The National Implementation Plan 2021-2023 set out arrangements for interdepartmental coordination, stakeholder engagement and actions needed for

further SDG Implementation from 2021 to 2023. While the new [Draft] Implementation Plan aims to build on the structures and mechanisms from the first Plan and to develop and integrate additional approaches in areas identified through review and consultation as requiring further action. It sets out Ireland's SDG implementation strategy for 2022-2024 and forms part of a series of consecutive Implementation Plans, each building on the previous iteration, to work towards achieving the SDGs. Of particular relevance to proposed development is SDG 11, *to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable was included in Agenda 2030 in response to the growing recognition of the importance of subnational approaches to sustainable development*

The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 - 2020 (DCCAIE 2018) as well as the second plan, set out roadmaps to implement the 17 SDGs. SDGs 3, 8, 9, 11 and 13 and the associated targets are relevant to the Proposed Scheme as presented. The current National Implementation Plan sets out 19 specific actions to implement the SDGs.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme supports the goals and targets set out in the National Implementation Plan as it provides infrastructure that will support sustainable transport and will improve the safety of road users through the further segregation of road vehicles and active travel modes.

2.2.10 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland

The Department of Transport (DoT) has finalised the transport framework, the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (hereafter referred to as NIFTI) (DoT 2021) to ensure alignment with the policies of the NPF.

The NIFTI sets out the DoT's strategy for the development and management of Ireland's land transport network (roads, public transport, walking and cycling) over the next two decades. The NPF and its projections around population and settlement patterns are central to the development of NIFTI. The purpose of NIFTI is to enable the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 and the ten National Strategic Objectives (NSOs) by guiding the appropriate investment in Ireland's roads, active travel and public transport infrastructure.

The NIFTI sets out the types of positive outcomes transport investment can deliver, including:

- Delivering clean, low carbon and environmentally sustainable mobility;
- Supporting Successful Places and Vibrant Communities;
- Facilitating Safe, Accessible, Reliable and Efficient Travel on the Network;
- and
- Promoting a Strong and Balanced Economy.

To invest sustainably, the NIFTI establishes hierarchies which prioritise environmentally sustainable and proportional solutions to a given transport need or opportunity. In combination, it is intended that these hierarchies will ensure that we tackle the right problems with the right solutions. The investment priorities are based on two hierarchies:

1. Modal Hierarchy; and
2. Intervention Hierarchy.

Modal Hierarchy

The NIFTI Modal Hierarchy is:

- Active Travel;
- Public Transport; and
- Private Vehicles.

NIFTI Modal Hierarchy identifies travel modes to be accommodated and encouraged when investments and other interventions are made. Sustainable modes, starting with active travel and then public transport, will be encouraged over less sustainable modes such as the private car.

Active travel is the most sustainable mode of travel. Increasing the share of active travel can reduce the carbon footprint of the transport sector, improve air quality, reduce urban congestion, and bring about positive health impacts as a result of increased physical activity. The attractiveness of this mode is dependent on infrastructure for example, dedicated footpaths, segregated cycle lanes and the quality and priority of road crossing points all impact upon the number of people engaging in active travel.

Intervention Hierarchy

The NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy is:

- Maintain;
- Optimise;
- Improve; and
- New.

‘To support the delivery of the NPF, and to make best use of our existing assets, a hierarchy of these intervention types will be applied. Maintaining the existing transport network will be given first priority, followed by maximising the value of the network through optimising its use. Infrastructural investments will only be considered after these two categories have been assessed as inappropriate for the identified problem, with upgrades to existing infrastructure to be considered before new infrastructure.’

Decarbonising the transport sector is a key priority for reaching Ireland’s climate change targets. The NIFTI supports sustainable mobility and encourages active travel and public transport. It supports projects that will reduce urban congestion,

particularly those that include new sustainable mobility infrastructure and optimises the existing infrastructure to prioritise sustainable transport modes.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme is compliant with the NIFTI as it will facilitate accessible and reliable public transport. It supports sustainable transport modes including active travel modes. The NIFTI recognises that active travel is the most sustainable mode of travel and acknowledges that the attractiveness of this mode is dependent on infrastructure for example, dedicated footpaths, segregated cycle lanes and the quality and priority of road crossing points all impact upon the number of people engaging in active travel.

The Proposed Scheme provides improved infrastructure for active travel modes, while optimising, improving and, where necessary, providing new infrastructure to improve bus network services for Galway.

2.2.11 Healthy Ireland – The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland 2016

This plan was launched in 2016 and aims to *‘to increase population levels of physical activity which would lead to health, economic and social benefits’*. The plan includes a number of ‘Action Areas’ which provide building blocks for greater participation in physical activity.

Action Area 4 (Environment) specifically promotes active transport as a sustainable way to increase physical activity.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme facilitates active transport modes such as walking and cycling through provision of improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

2.2.12 Five Cities Demand Management Study 2021 (as amended)

This study focusses on the five main cities across Ireland, namely Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. The study was undertaken by Systra on behalf of the Department of Transport *‘to identify and review the drivers for, and potential management measures of, vehicle movements’* in the five cities.

These measures are known as Transport Demand Management (TDM) measures and *‘aim to influence and change travel demand patterns, and encourage more efficient and sustainable use of transport resources’*. One of the mission areas includes the prioritisation of the BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link plans. Relevant TDM measures include:

- FM11: Congestion Charging
- PTM04: Public Parking Controls
- PP04: Enhance Delivery of the National Planning Framework

- PTM17: Car Free Zones & Streets
- TC07: Urban Traffic Management Centres

Project Response

The Proposed Scheme delivers a reduction of on-street parking and a bus gate while supplementing implementation of the ‘City Centre Access Network’ and Galway’s Urban Traffic Management Centre and also directly or indirectly facilitating the relevant TDM measures of sustainable mobility infrastructure such as congestion charging and car free zones.

2.3 Regional

2.3.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly 2020-2032

The principal purpose of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) Regional Spatial Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (hereafter referred to as RSES) (NWRA, 2020) is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region. A SEA and NIS were produced as part of the RSES.

The RSES represents the regional tier for planning policy and provides a vision; a spatial plan and investment framework to shape future development of the Northern and Western Region to the year 2032. The RSES was formally adopted in January 2020 by NWRA and replaces the previous Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010 – 2022 (Regional Planning Guidelines Office 2010).

The RSES is centred on five key growth ambitions:

3. Economy and Employment – A Vibrant Region;
4. Environment – Natural Region;
5. Connectivity – Connected Region;
6. Quality of Life – Inclusive Region; and
7. Infrastructure – Enabling our Region.

Under Key Growth Ambition – 3. Connectivity – the benefits of sustainable travel are recognised and highlighted ‘*Sustainable travel can have significant benefits for individuals, workplaces and educational facilities in terms of health and wellbeing, costs and time associated with travel. It has the potential to reduce congestion and emissions and to exploit investment in sustainable transport*’.

In this respect, the GTS is referenced as a best practice example of ‘*where the integration of transport, spatial and economic planning is to be delivered*’, as it is incorporated and adopted into both the Galway County Council Development Plan and the Galway City Council Development Plan.

The RSES includes a number of high-level transport principles to support the delivery of integrated transport, spatial and economic planning:

- *‘Support improved strategic and local connectivity’;*
- *‘Expand attractive public transport and other alternatives to car transport;*
- *‘Recognise the role of the car and cater appropriately for it’; and*
- *‘Reduce congestion; and cater to the demands associated with longer-term population and employment growth, in a sustainable manner’.*

On the basis of these principles, a number of core priority outcomes are identified, including:

- *‘Supporting the achievement of ‘compact, smart growth’ through the achievement of ‘mutual consistency’ between land use and transport planning/investment/service provision’;*
- *‘Strengthening public transport, walking and cycling accessibility/connectivity within Galway City and environs’;*

With regard to investment in the bus network in Galway City, it is recognised in the RSES that ‘investment in bus infrastructure and services will be delivered through Bus Connects and the relevant parts of the GTS’.

Included within the Proposed Scheme is provision for walking and cycling. The RSES recognises the importance of walking and cycling in facilitating modal shift - ‘Facilitating modal shift to more sustainable transport options, including walking and cycling is a key element in promoting healthier lifestyles, better traffic management and assisting in mitigating climate change’.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme supports a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling in a densely populated regionally significant area, therefore, facilitating improved strategic and local connectivity across the city.

The RSES develops Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) that are aligned to the key growth ambitions above. These are aligned to the UN’s 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), EU thematic objectives⁵ and the NPF (Government of Ireland 2018).

Those RPOs that relate to the Proposed Scheme are as follows:

RPO6.26: *‘The walking and cycling offer within the region shall be improved to encourage more people to walk and cycle, through:*

b) Safe walking and cycle infrastructure shall be provided in urban and rural areas, the design shall be informed by published design manuals, included the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and the NTA Cycle Manual’.

⁵ European Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

RPO6.29: *‘The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life’.*

RPO 6.30: *‘Planning at the local level should promote walking, cycling and public transport by maximising the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of their neighbourhood or district centres, public transport services and other services at the local level such as schools’.*

RPO 6.32: *‘Invest in transport networks and services in the region that are socially inclusive and provide a quality of service, connectivity and facilities to meet all societal needs, disabilities (including mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments) and meet the needs and opportunities of an ageing population’.*

RPO 6.50: *‘Continue to encourage Active Travel initiatives and where possible leverage technology and digital platforms to enhance the delivery of cycleway and walking infrastructure, particularly in our urban centres’.*

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme improves the walking and cycling infrastructure of Galway City and aligns with the relevant infrastructural standards. A number of junctions will be reconfigured, as part of the Proposed Scheme, to prioritise sustainable transport modes to enhance the accessibility of Galway City.

As the only city in the Northern and Western Region, Galway is recognised as the principal driver of the region, with a commensurate challenge to accommodate an increased proportion of its’ envisaged growth within the existing metropolitan area. A specific Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) (hereafter referred to as the Galway MASP) (NWRA 2020) is contained within the RSES for Galway City, with the following vision:

‘The Vision of this MASP is that Galway will be a leading global city, renowned as a successful, sustainable, competitive, compact and accessible city of scale that supports a high quality of life, maintains its distinctive identity and supports its rich heritage, language and cultural experience. A Metropolitan area that is environmentally responsible, resilient to change and that attracts and retains talent and skills and fosters innovation and creativity. An Area that offers sustainable choices in housing, work, transport and lifestyle opportunities for its communities, while supporting the health and wellbeing of its people.’

The Galway MASP affirms the support for the implementation of the GTS and its’ constituent interventions. The Galway MASP is contained within the RSES and identifies the strategic planning and investment framework to enable growth. The Galway MASP is aligned with the RPOs in the RSES to allow integrated transport and land use. The vision for the MASP is as follows:

‘The MASP provides a strategic focus on the City and environs and sets out how it is envisaged the NPF will be implemented in the regional context of the RSES. The vision for Galway is that it will be a leading European city renowned for its quality of life, its history, its culture and its people.’

It is and will be a place that embraces modern technologies, high standards of education, competitive and sustainable enterprises.

The challenges to the city's development will be met by the integrated and timely provision of infrastructure much of which is included in this strategy'.

To achieve the vision, the Galway MASP sets out RPOs. Those most relevant to the Proposed Scheme are set out below.

RPO 3.6.7: 'The Assembly supports the delivery of the infrastructure projects outlined below to develop the MASP:

- *Galway City Ring Road; and*
- *Galway Transport Strategy.'*

In addition to the above RPOs, the Galway MASP also identifies 'Key Transportation Components', of which the following are of most relevance to the Proposed Scheme:

- *'Development of a cross-city network of bus services which can serve the major trip attractors with five core bus routes to provide a minimum 15-minute frequency service during the peak periods and sustain a high-frequency service throughout the day'.*
- *'Provision of a core, secondary and feeder cycle network which includes segregated cycle routes, on-road cycle lanes and /or wide bus lanes to cater for both buses and cyclists along the same route'*
- *'Provision of measures to reduce traffic volumes in the city centre core, additional pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority, improvement of pedestrian facilities, in particular safe crossings, improvements to the public realm and use of universal design'.*

Project Response:

The above Key Transportation Components represent key characteristics of the Proposed Scheme, in that, they promote improved pedestrian, cycle and bus transport infrastructure. The Proposed Scheme is therefore supported by, and specifically identified as a key enabler of the RSES.

BusConnects is identified as a key infrastructure project to deliver on the principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity, which will support the regional growth strategy for the Northern and Western Region including the Galway MASP.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme will support continued improved integration of transport with land use planning. The delivery of improved high-capacity Core Bus Corridors will enable and support the delivery of both residential and economic development opportunities, facilitating the sustainable growth of Galway MASP. The dedicated bus lanes proposed will improve bus journey time and reliability while the cycle lane and pedestrian infrastructure will promote modal shift from private car to active travel. The RSES not only seeks an improved and enhanced

bus network but also places sustainable travel at the core of its transport objectives.

2.3.2 Galway Transport Strategy

The Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) (Galway City Council (GCC), 2016) is a comprehensive transport strategy for Galway City and its environs (including areas within the jurisdiction of Galway County Council), intended to establish a framework for the development of the transport network over the next 20 to 30 years. The GTS sets out proposals for the road network, public transport network, walking network and cycling network, and contains a number of significant proposals which will allow the city to continue to grow in a sustainable manner. The GTS has been adopted by both GCC and Galway County Council and is implemented through the policies of their Development Plans.

The following principles are set out in the GTS:

1. To promote and encourage sustainable transport, and in particular to make it convenient and attractive to walk, cycle or use public transport.
2. To improve accessibility and permeability to, and within the city centre for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. While also maintaining an appropriate level of access for vehicular traffic for commercial and retail purposes.
3. To maximise the safety and security of pedestrians, cyclists and other transport users, particularly within the core city centre.
4. To manage and increase transport capacity (where necessary), for the efficient movement of people and goods into and within the city.
5. To provide opportunities to enhance the city centre public realm through traffic management and transport interventions.
6. To maintain and develop transport infrastructure and services to a high degree of quality and resilience.
7. To adopt a 'smarter technology' approach to all transport interventions, whereby transport infrastructure and services are future-proofed.

The GTS contains a number of comprehensive proposals across a number of transport modes, including the following significant measures:

- Establishment of a new cross-city bus network to serve Galway City;
- Establishment of primary, secondary and feeder cycle networks;
- Provision of a safe and efficient plan for general traffic to access key destinations in Galway City Centre, while discouraging through traffic;
- Creation of a high-quality public transport corridor through the city from east to west, which will be utilised to some extent by all proposed bus services (the Cross-City Link);

- Transformation of Galway City Centre into a new space where walking, cycling and public transport are all prioritised over private car traffic;
- Establishment of an orbital two-way traffic route around Galway City Centre;
- Establishment of an inner-city two-way traffic route in the environs of Galway City Centre;
- Implementation of the N6 Galway City Ring Road (N6GCRR) scheme to provide an additional crossing of River Corrib to the north of Quincentenary Bridge; and
- Localised route and junction improvement works at a number of locations to improve junction efficiency, to improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities and to incorporate priority for public transport services.

The GTS is underpinned by an extensive volume of supporting material, including Environmental Assessments, Technical Feasibility Reports and Scheme Appraisal Reports using the Western Regional Multi-Modal Model, to ensure that a robust, evidence-based strategy can be put in place. The GTS was completed in September 2016 and has subsequently been incorporated and adopted into the Galway County Council Development Plan and GCC Development Plan.

The GTS examined a number of options for each project identified and undertook a Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) of each option utilising the Common Appraisal Framework (CAF) for Transport Projects and Programmes appraisal categories.

Utilising the assessment criteria above, the GTS identified proposed improvements to the city transport network including the ‘Cross-City Link’ (i.e. the Proposed Scheme), ‘City Centre Access Network’, and ‘Inner City Access Route’.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme is to form a central route for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians along a corridor from west to east, through the city centre. It will complement the proposed new city bus network routes approaching from the east and west of the city centre, which coalesce along this high-quality corridor, providing high-frequency services with journey time reliability and opportunities for interchange.

The Proposed Scheme will ensure that public transport services can access key areas such as the retail & recreational centre of the city, public transport hubs at the rail & bus stations, City & County Halls along with the city centre hotels and bed & breakfasts on College Road, key areas such as University Hospital Galway, NUI Galway, the Sportsgrounds and the car parking and coach facilities at Galway Cathedral.

Within the GTS proposals for Galway City Centre, this central priority corridor is to be complemented by a two-way inner-city vehicle access route linking Lough Atalia Road to the N6 via Fairgreen Road, Bóthar Uí hEithir, Prospect Hill, Bóthar na mBan and Headford Road.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme also includes the reconfiguration of traffic flow along the Inner-City Access Route between the junction of Bóthar Uí hEithir/College Road and Bóthar na mBan/Headford Road, and improvements to ancillary adjacent streets.

2.4 Local

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme satisfies the transportation infrastructure requirements above by providing improvements to the public transport, cycling and walking networks in Galway City. This will help to alleviate congestion, improve the reliability of journey times and the safety of all road users.

2.4.1 Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028)

This plan which was adopted in May 2022 makes provision for the following objectives of relevance to the Proposed Scheme

GCTPS 1 Galway County Transport & Planning Study and Galway Transportation Strategy It is a policy objective of Galway County Council to support and facilitate the implementation of the Galway County Transport & Planning Study and Galway Transport & Planning Study across all modes of transport.

GCTPS 2 Integrated approach to land use and transportation Galway County Council will pursue a fully integrated approach to land use and transportation, actively supporting measures which facilitate and attract developments to locations with high levels of sustainable transport provision (or which can achieve such provision as a result of the development in question).

GCTPS 3 Sustainable Transport: The County will seek to support a variety of measures which will reduce car dependency for residents, and will specifically seek to improve access to sustainable transport choices (including responsive and “flexible” modes) for those residents in rural areas of the County.

GCTPS 4 Walking and Cycling Support for, and enhancement of, existing and new walking and cycling networks as the “first choice” for shorter local journeys and to link settlements within the County and to Galway City.

GCTPS 5 Upgrade to Public Transport Networks Support any proposed major upgrades to the public transport networks, including the Western Rail Corridor and the dual tracking between Galway City and Athlone.

GCTPS 6 Road Based Public Transport: The County will seek to maintain and enhance infrastructure for road-based public transport, and to increase access to existing services (through provision of new stops and improved access via the pedestrian and cycle networks).

GCTPS 9 Collaboration with Galway City: Galway County Council will collaborate with Galway City Council as appropriate to bring forward transport proposals and measures which will enhance travel to and from Galway City in a manner which is compatible with the GTS and GCTPS, and where possible maximises the benefits to both areas from this approach.

PT 1 Sustainable Modes of Transport To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes of transport.

PT 2 Development of Public Transport Infrastructure: To engage and work closely with the National Transport Authority and other relevant transport authorities and both public and private operators, in facilitating and securing improvements to footpaths, pedestrian crossing points and permeability to facilitate access and encourage use of public transport and to secure the implementation of recommendations of the GTS bus network and the expansion of public transport infrastructure in areas such as spaces for parking of local link buses and services in the County.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme is directly in keeping with each of the strategic and specific objectives of the existing Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028)

2.4.2 Galway City Development Plan (2017-2023)

GCC have recently commenced a review of the Galway City Development Plan, undertaking early stage public consultation. A revised Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 is not expected to be finalised until February 2023.

This Development Plan review is at Stage 2 which is the Draft Development Plan Stage. A Draft Development Plan has been prepared and is on public display from Friday 28th of January 2022 to Wednesday the 13th of April 2022 (inclusive)

The existing Galway City Development Plan (2017 - 2023) (GCC, 2017) sets out a strategic transport aim as follows:

‘To integrate sustainable land use and transportation, facilitating access and choice to a range of transport modes, accessible to all sections of the community that ensures safety and ease of movement to and within the city and onward connectivity to the wider area of County Galway and the West Region.’

The implementation of the GTS is also a strategic aim of GCC, as set out within the City Development Plan; in particular the implementation of the Proposed Scheme and a reduction in car movements through the city centre and the implementation of the proposed cross-city radial bus network as identified in the GTS.

The Galway City Development Plan also lists the following specific objectives in relation to Transportation and specifically in relation to Public Transport and Pedestrians:

- *Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the provision of the ‘Cross – City Link’ as part of the GTS;*

- *Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the development of a public bus network in accordance with the GTS;*
- *Support the improvement of access for public transport, pedestrian and cyclists to and within major employment areas and institutions;*
- *Prioritise improvements to pedestrian movements and safety within the city centre including extension of pedestrianisation, provision of wider footpaths and shared streets; and*
- *Prioritise improvements to pedestrian movements and safety between the City Centre, Woodquay and Bóthar na mBan to the Headford Road LAP area.*

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme is directly in keeping with each of the strategic and specific objectives of the existing Galway City Development Plan.

In addition to the above, Policy 3.3 of the Plan supports “*the implementation of measures included in the GTS and required supporting projects*”, and Policy 3.4 of the plan specifically supports the implementation of the Proposed Scheme – “*Support the GTS proposals to prioritize public transport movements in the city centre through the implementation of a designated public transport route, the Cross-City Link*”.

Policy 3.5 of the Plan recognises the importance of the Proposed Scheme in increasing the frequency of the city bus service – “*Support the GTS proposals for implementation of a local city bus network which will include for a high frequency cross-city network of services and all associated infrastructural requirements, traffic management and priority arrangements*”.

Policy 3.6 of the Plan aims to support cycling and walking in Galway City, and specifically supports cycling along the bus network, highlighting the Proposed Scheme as an opportunity to achieve this aim – “*Facilitate cycling on the proposed bus network where appropriate and on the proposed Cross-City Link in the city centre*”.

Section 10.2 of the Plan speaks to the City Centre Core area, and specifically references the Proposed Scheme as project that will help to implement measures to prioritize sustainable transport modes – “*The measures proposed in the GTS for the city centre focus on improving and prioritising walking, cycling and public transport with the introduction of a Cross-City Link which gives priority to sustainable transport modes. This is part of a clearly defined city centre access network which will increase the quality and experience of the city centre and afford opportunities for improvements in the public realm and reinforcing the concept of Galway as a “walking city”*”.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme constitutes the full implementation of the Cross-City Link, as proposed in the GTS. The Proposed Scheme will coalesce with the Inner-City Access Network in parts, providing for a symbiotic enhancement of access to and within Galway City, as envisaged in the GTS and as outlined above.

2.4.3 Draft Galway City Development Plan (2023-2029)

As stated in Section 2.4.2, this plan is currently at Stage 2 in the CDP review process and is expected to be adopted in early 2023. In the event that a determination is made post-adoption of the Draft Plan, it is considered prudent to evaluate the policy context in light of the Proposed Scheme.

The Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) features in the Strategic Policy Framework which sets out the policy support for the Draft CDP. The Strategic Policy Framework states that the GTS “*aims to address current and future transport requirements in the city and county catchment area. Investment projects over the lifetime of the plan are in line with good planning principles and aligned with the settlement and development strategy for the city*”.

The Strategic vision for Galway City is set out in Chapter 1, and it is supported by a number of Strategic Goals, the following of which are relevant to the Proposed Scheme:

- *Apply the principle of sustainability and alignment with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development particularly where they relate to the uses of land, buildings, water, energy, waste and through the encouragement of sustainable modes of transport and the integration of transportation with land use.*
- *Integrate land use and transport planning to maximise opportunities for active travel and public transport usage and enable key transport projects included in the Galway Transport Strategy which will deliver multi modal usage, smart mobility and accessibility for all.*

In addition to this, the Core Strategy commits to “*facilitate development within the strategic framework of the Galway Transport Strategy and to align employment and housing growth along existing and planned transport corridors. This will increase active travel, that is walking and cycling and usage of public transport*”promoting “*sustainable mobility as provided for in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS)*”.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme constitutes the Cross-City Link project, as identified in the GTS. The primary aim of the Proposed Scheme is to improve accessibility to and across the city centre, to enhance the cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure, and to encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable transport modes. The route of the Proposed Scheme will allow for under-utilised city centre locations, such as the lands to the rear of Ceannt Station, to be fully realised. Increased accessibility to and across the city centre will also facilitate greater footfall and employment growth.

Chapter 4 of the draft CDP specifically mentions the delivery of the Cross-City Link in the context of implementing projects set out in the GTC, and “*endorses the implementation of the measures contained in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) with the key transportation components for the MASP considered central to addressing the traffic congestion and Green House Gas (GHG) emissions to achieve change*”.

With specific reference to the Proposed Scheme, the draft CDP states that *“the core of the (GTS) strategy is built around a ‘Cross-City Link,’ which provides a safe, coherent and attractive route through the city centre restricted to public transport, pedestrians, cyclists, and some local access”*. In support of this, Policy 4.1 outlines the policy support for the Proposed Scheme and other such measures identified in the GTS.

Section 4.3 of the Draft CDP states that *“The BusConnects Programme is a key part of Government policy to improve public transport and address climate change. Within the Galway City area, investment in bus infrastructure and services will be delivered through BusConnects and the relevant parts of the GTS. Bus Connects Galway will deliver the rationalised network of five high performing cross-city public transport routes and will form the ‘fixed spine’ of future public transport in Galway. BusConnects Galway is advancing the development of this network plan and associated infrastructure. It will comprise of next generation bus lanes, a bus shelter program, enhanced services, cashless fares and account-based ticketing. Under the BusConnects programme, the NTA intend to upgrade the existing bus fleet to transition to a fleet of low emission vehicles which will reduce both noise and air pollution” “The proposed Cross-City Link efficiencies will also enable a much better regional service. This includes for traffic restrictions along College Road as proposed in the GTS, which will significantly benefit connectivity for these regional services in conjunction with the priority measures proposed for the local bus network coming from the west, including the restrictions proposed on Salmon Weir Bridge. This regional service offers a valuable service for tourists, particularly for trips to and from Dublin and Shannon airport and to other tourist destination cities and towns. Coach parking for tourists will continue to be provided at Merchant’s Road and adjacent to Galway Cathedral”*.

Policy 4.6 of the draft CDP also supports *“the proposals in the Galway Transport Strategy for design interventions, revised traffic management arrangements and priority arrangements for walking, cycling and public transport on the road network”, which are characterized by the Proposed Scheme. Indeed, Specific Policy Objective 4.8 provides for particular priority to be given to the Proposed Scheme, even over land use zoning objectives – “Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the provision of the ‘Cross-City Link’ as part of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and support any additional land requirements where deemed necessary through design along the associated routes and acknowledge that the objective to deliver the Cross-City Link and associated traffic management and infrastructural changes has priority over other objectives including land use zoning objectives along identified routes, where they are in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area”*.

Policy 10.1 of the draft CDP focusses on the City Centre and highlights the need to improve the public realm and accessibility through implementation of measures identified in the GTS.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme, as highlighted above, is a key part of both national and regional policy frameworks and is clearly supported by the Draft CDP. In this

respect, the Draft CDP prioritises the implementation of the Proposed Scheme over other land use zoning objectives, which may prohibit certain elements of the Proposed Scheme but which may be required in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development.

The Proposed Scheme includes a number of public realm elements which will help to soften the visual impact of the Proposed Scheme and encourage active travel such as walking and cycling.

2.4.4 Galway City Public Realm Strategy

The Galway Public Realm Strategy (GCC 2019) explores the current condition of Galway City's townscape and network of public and green spaces, and sets out a vision and strategy for improvements to guide investment and development in the future. The strategy recognises the ambition of the GTS to provide more space within the public realm for pedestrians and cyclists, and seeks to utilise this ambition advantageously within the public realm.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme includes public realm enhancements which were developed in line with the Public Realm Strategy and with pedestrian and cyclist prioritisation in mind.

2.4.5 Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

As part of the Climate Change Action Plan 2019, GCC produced and adopted its own Climate Adaptation Strategy in 2019 (GCC, 2019). The GCC Climate Adaptation Strategy considers actions to be implemented by GCC, in order to tackle the significant issues of climate change within Galway City.

The strategy identifies transport infrastructure as critical infrastructure and highlights smarter travel as a way of reducing the demand on the infrastructure and subsequently reducing transport emissions. To achieve effective climate adaptation, the strategy includes several actions which the Proposed Scheme supports.

Climate Adaptation Strategy Action 8-2 is of particular relevance to the Proposed Scheme:

'Develop policies to reduce air pollution from road vehicles, which promote a modal shift to cycling, public transport and support the decarbonisation of road vehicles.'

Project Response:

The climate impact of the Proposed Scheme is predicted to be long term and neutral, when redistributed traffic is taken into account. The public realm improvements, as part of the Proposed Scheme, are predicted to be slight, positive and long-term, due to the increased permeable area and tree planting.

2.4.6 Galway City Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021

This plan aims to *'promote and support economic development and to promote and support local and community development in Galway City'*. Goal 4 states *'Galway. A sustainable, resilient urban environment and the regional capital of the West'*, and the plan aims to support the improvement of transport infrastructure, in line with the Integrated Transport Management Programme for Galway City (Galway Transport Strategy) in order to help realise this goal.

Project Response:

The Proposed Scheme is aligned with the above approach in providing synergistic economic gains as a result of increased accessibility to Galway City Centre and permeability across the Cross-City Link.

3 Planning History of the Proposed Route & Surrounding Area

The Proposed Scheme itself, as described in Section 4, is largely located within the general boundaries of the roadway with the exception of some road widening at certain points along the route of the Proposed Scheme. Taking into account road widening, no relevant planning history exists for the route of the Proposed Scheme.

There are a number of permissions within the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme that are of strategic importance. The most recent of which is the Galway City Ring Road project which was granted by the Board in December 2021 and is currently the subject of Judicial Review. This project will provide critical alleviation of traffic within Galway City and its environs, which is widely recognised as a hinderance to the sustainable development of Galway City. The Galway Harbour extension is another strategic project within the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme, involving extensive land reclamation, which has yet to be permitted and is currently being considered by the Ministers for Housing and for Culture with regard to the suitability of implementing the Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) process. If permitted, this project would allow for the development of Galway Harbour to an extent that it would be reflective of Galway City's strategic importance in the wider regional area. Another strategic project in the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme that is yet to be determined is the Ceannt Station Masterplan development. This development totals approximately 128,000sq.m and seeks to provide a mix of residential and retail uses in a centrally located area within the city on lands that have historically been linked with the functioning of Ceannt Train station.

Other projects of significance located within the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme include the Bonham Dock mixed use office development currently under construction, a large uncommenced residential development along St. Brendan's Avenue, a mixed use retail, gym and student accommodation development on Headford Road, a new special school adjacent to the Brothers of Charity on Dublin Road and the recently granted Salmon Weir Bridge scheme which will complement the functioning of the Proposed Scheme.

4 Detailed Description of the Proposed Scheme by Section

4.1 Site Location & Context

The Proposed Galway BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link covers an area of central Galway city and will commence from R863 University Road at the intersection of R864 Newcastle Road. It proceeds along R863 University Road, across the Salmon Weir Bridge and staying on the R863, before turning onto R866 St Francis Street / Eglinton Street, at the Galway Courthouse junction. The Proposed Scheme continues along the R866 on St. Francis Street and Eglinton Street and around the northern (R866) and eastern (R336) perimeter of Eyre Square and on to R339 Forster Street. It then continues through the Fairgreen Road Junction and along R339 College Road as far as the junction with Lough Atalia Road. From here, the Proposed Scheme continues on R339 College Road to Moneenageisha junction and terminates on R338 Dublin Road immediately prior to the entrance to the Woodlands Campus for Brothers of Charity. Table 1.1 provides a summary of changes as result of the Proposed Scheme. The overall extent of the scheme can be seen in Figure 4-1 below which demarcates the scheme boundary.

As can be seen in Figure 4-1 below, the Proposed Scheme traverses through the heart of the city of Galway, a city of regional significance, and the wider extents of the city to the east and west. Given the regional importance of Galway City, the context of the Proposed Scheme can be considered to be of strategic importance in facilitating improved access to an economically important area.



Figure 4-1 The full extent of the Proposed Scheme

4.2 Site Description

The Proposed Scheme will begin from R863 University Road at the intersection of R864 Newcastle Road. It proceeds along R863 University Road, across the Salmon Weir Bridge and staying on the R863, before turning onto R866 St Francis Street / Eglinton Street, at the Galway Courthouse junction. The Proposed Scheme continues along the R866 on St. Francis Street and Eglinton Street and around the northern (R866) and eastern (R336) perimeter of Eyre Square and on to R339 Forster Street. It then continues through the Fairgreen Road Junction and along R339 College Road as far as the junction with Lough Atalia Road. From here, the Proposed Scheme continues on R339 College Road to Moneenageisha junction and terminates on R338 Dublin Road immediately prior to the entrance to the Woodlands Campus for Brothers of Charity. The location of the proposed road development is illustrated in Figure 4-1 and Table 1.1 provides a summary of changes as a result of the proposed scheme

The Proposed Scheme is described in the following eleven route sub-sections, moving from east to west of the city centre, as follows:

- R863 University Road to R866 St. Francis Street;
- R866 St. Francis Street and R866 Eglinton Street;
- R866/R336 Eyre Square to R339 Forster Street;
- R339 College Road (R339 Forster Street to Lough Atalia Road);
- R339 College Road (Lough Atalia Road to Moneenageisha Junction);
- R338 Dublin Road.

For the Inner City Access Route:

- Fairgreen Road;
- Bóthar Uí hEithir and R336 Prospect Hill;
- Bóthar na mBan / St. Brendan's Avenue / R866 Headford Road / Dyke Road;
- Woodquay / Walsh's Terrace / Daly's Place / Mary Street; and
- Forthill Street / R336 Merchants Road / Queen Street.

For each of these sections the physical context and the zoning status of the adjacent lands are described below. It should be noted that the road network itself, where the majority of the BusConnects works are proposed do not have a zoning objective in the Galway City development Plan 2017-2023.

The following legend applies to the preceding figures in this section:



Figure 4-2 Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map Legend

4.3 R863 University Road to R866 St. Francis Street

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Footpaths widened along University Road;
- New drainage network along University Road and outfall to canal;
- Salmon Weir Bridge to be restricted to a Bus Gate;
- Public Realm Space to be created in front of Galway Cathedral with Gaol Road to the back of the Cathedral to be made 2-way;
- Re-configured bus and car parking within existing Cathedral car park;
- Newtownsmith and Waterside to be closed off onto St. Vincent’s Avenue;
- Raised tables, entry treatments and signalised crossings;
- Reconfiguration of footpaths on Salmon Weir Bridge; and
- Temporary land acquisition necessary.

The route commences at the junction of University Road and Lower Newcastle Road and follows University Road in a south-easterly direction. University Road is characterised by the landscaped campus of NUI Galway to the north of University Road and two-storey late-Victorian residential development to the south of University Road with a retail outlet at the junction with Lower Newcastle Road. This physical context is reflected in the zoning of the lands to the north of University Road as Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF) and the lands to the south of University Road are zoned for residential use (R).

The route then crosses the River Corrib Canal, Nun’s Island and the Eglinton Canal and passes to the north of Galway Cathedral. On Nun’s Island, two-storey residential development fronts University Road to the north (zoned Residential (R)) and the Millennium Children’s Park and Playground (zoned Recreation and Amenity (RA)) is located to the south.

As the route turns around the apse of the Cathedral it passes Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF) lands in the form of and the Cathedral itself and lands to the

north of University Road fall into this zoning category as does a thin strip of land fronting the west bank of the River Corrib. Aside from these zonings, there is a small section to the north of University Road that is zoned Residential (R) while to the west and east of the Cathedral lands are zoned Recreation and Amenity (RA). The route crosses the River Corrib via the Salmon Weir Bridge where it connects with St. Francis Street. The lands to north (Courthouse) and south (Diocesan Education Centre) of the route between the river and St. Francis Street are zoned Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF).

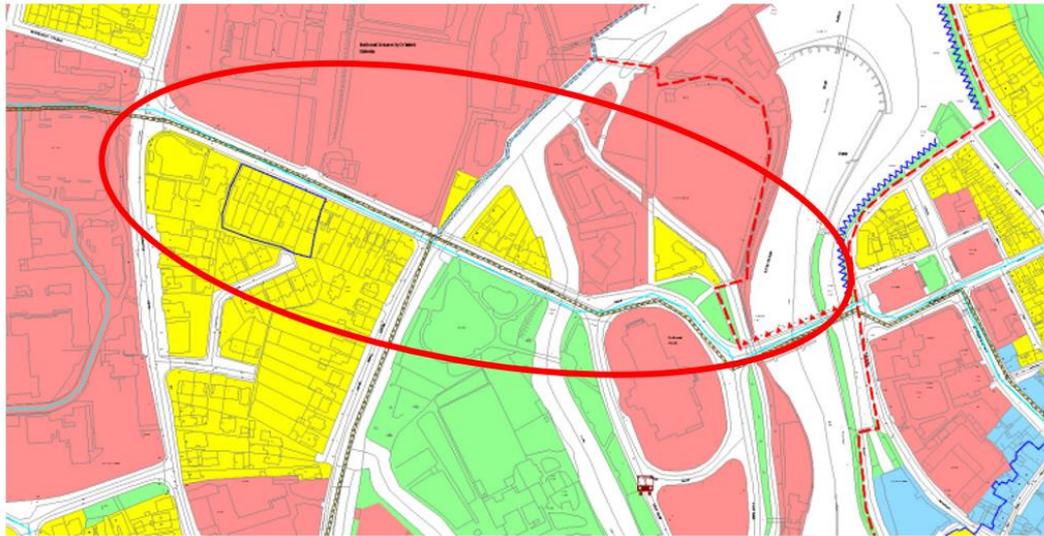


Figure 4-3: R863 University Road to R863 St. Francis Street Section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

This section of the Proposed Scheme is also designated as a Bus Route (GTS) and a Primary Cycle Route in the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023.

4.4 R866 St. Francis Street and R866 Eglinton Street

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- St. Francis Street to be bus lane only inbound;
- Eglinton Street to be bus only inbound;
- Footpath widening on Eglinton Street;
- Signal controlled pedestrian crossing on Francis Street;
- Signalisation of the junction of St. Francis Street / Eglinton Street / Mary Street / Daly Place; and
- New bicycle parking on St. Francis Street and Eglinton Street.

The route continues in a south-easterly direction down St. Francis Street which merges into Eglinton Street. This part of the route is characterised by two, three and four storey buildings of mixed-use institutional, residential, office, commercial, retail uses. These uses are reflected in the Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF) zoning mainly along Francis Street on the northern section of

the route and City Centre (CC) zoning at along Eglinton Street at the southern end of the route.

The route then executes a 90° turn to the east along William Street and then runs along the north and east sides of Eyre Square.

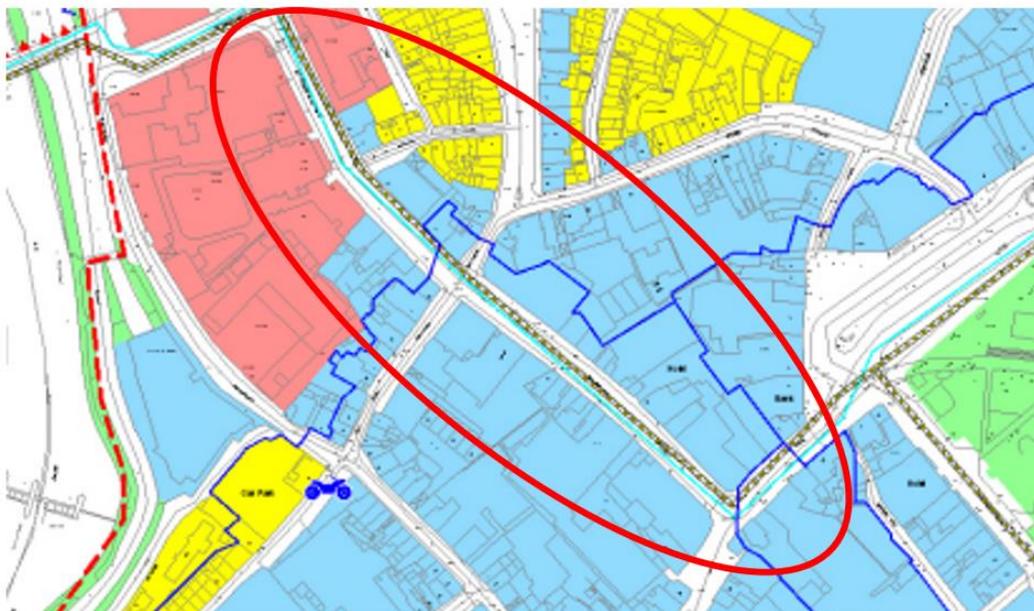


Figure 4-4: R866 St. Francis Street and R866 Eglinton Street section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.5 R866/R336 Eyre Square to R339 Forster Street

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Williamsgate Street and Eyre Square North to be eastbound bus only;
- Eyre Square East to be two-way bus only between St. Patricks Avenue and Eyre Square North;
- Forster Street to be two-way bus only;
- Junction of Eyre Square East and Forster Street to be signalised for all movements;
- Raised table on Eyre Square North connecting Rosemary Avenue and Eyre Square West;
- Eyre Square North to be upgraded to a landscaped pedestrianised plaza area;
- Vehicular access to Rosemary Avenue, and Eyre Street to be restricted to permitted hours only;
- Prospect Hill between Bóthar na mBan and Eyre Square North to be made a cul-de-sac with restricted access to Eyre Square North to permitted hours only;
- New bicycle parking on Forster Street.

William Street is characterised by city centre mixed uses in a mix of two and three storey buildings, some historic and some modern. William Street and the areas around Eyre Square are zoned City Centre (CC) while the park in Eyre Square is zoned for Recreational and Amenity (RA) use. The buildings around the square are a mixture of historic buildings and modern infill structures ranging from two storey to four storey plus attic structures. At the south-east corner of Eyre Square, the route splits and runs north-east along Forster Street and south-west along Eyre Square and terminates at Galway Harbour.

Forster Street then merges with College Road running in a north-east direction parallel to but set back a block from Lough Atalia. The Forster Street section of the route has residential development to the south and institutional uses to the north, including the offices of Galway City Council, and this is reflected in the zoning designations of Residential (R) and Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF) zoning respectively.

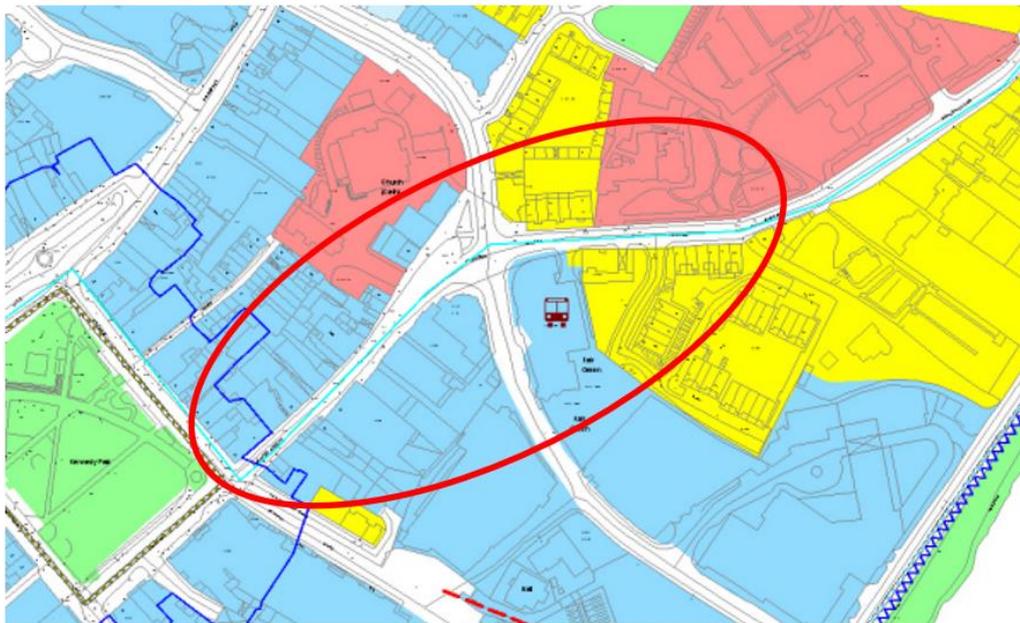


Figure 4-5: R866/R336 Eyre Square to R339 Forster Street section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.6 R339 College Road (R339 Forster Street to Lough Atalia Road)

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Bus Gate to be provided on College Road (between City Hall and Forster Street);
- Footpaths to be widened;
- On-Street Parking to be rationalised;
- Entry Treatment at junctions;

- New Pedestrian crossings;
- New storm drainage network;
- Temporary land acquisition necessary.

College Road to the junction with Lough Atalia Road is predominantly residential in nature and it accordingly zoned Residential (R), aside from the Greyhound Track and Connacht Rugby Grounds to the north of College Road which are zoned Recreational and Amenity (RA).



Figure 4-6: R339 College Road (R339 Forster Street to Lough Atalia Road) Section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.7 R339 College Road (Lough Atalia Road to Moneenageisha Junction)

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Realignment of the College Road / Lough Atalia Road junction;
- College Road, between Lough Atalia Road and Moneenageisha Road to be widened to provide an additional inbound segregated cycle track and an outbound bus lane;
- Major amendments to Moneenageisha and Lough Atalia junctions;
- Landscaping design at new green space at College Road / Lough Atalia Road junction;
- Removal of two underground fuel tanks;
- Construction of a retaining wall;

- Tree removal;
- New drainage network;
- Permanent and temporary land acquisition necessary.

The bus route on College Road then merges with Lough Atalia Road which runs to the west of Lough Atalia. The character of Lough Atalia Road to the junction with Moneenageisha Road is defined by a mixture of houses and apartments (zoned Residential (R)) and a petrol station (zoned Enterprise, Light Industry and Commercial (CI)) to the north of the route.

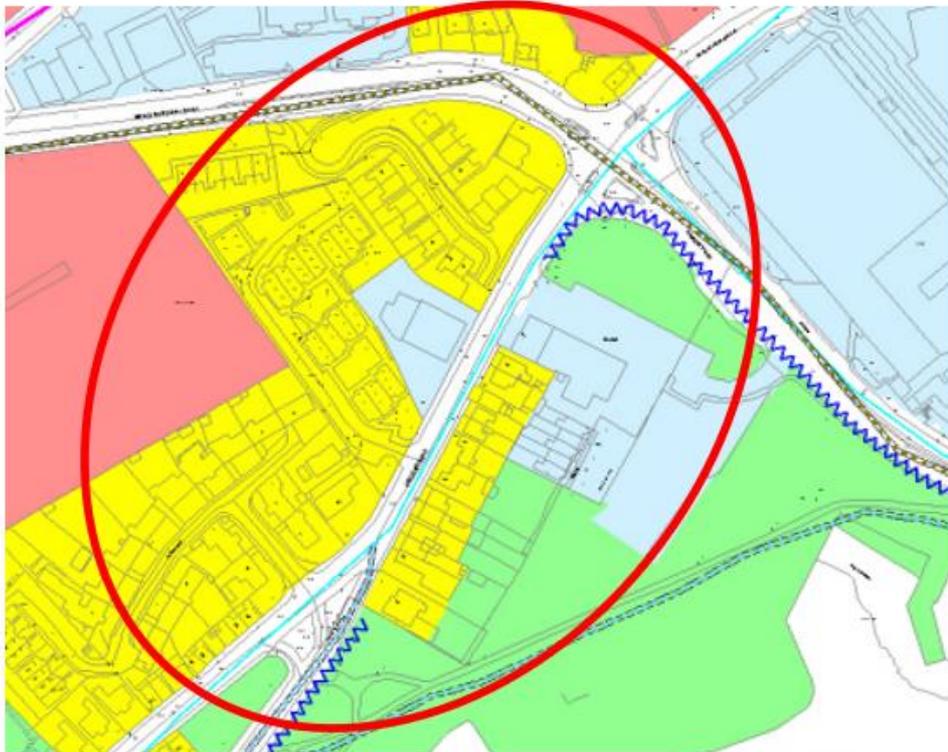


Figure 4-7: R339 College Road (Lough Atalia Road to Moneenageisha Junction) of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.8 R338 Dublin Road

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Dublin Road, to be widened between Brothers of Charity and The Hunstman Inn entrance;
- A bus lane to be provided in both directions;
- A segregated cycle track to be provided in both directions;
- New footpaths to be provided on both sides of the road;
- 1 no. outbound general traffic lane to be provided. 1 no. inbound traffic lane, widening to two lanes on approach to the Moneenageisa Junction to be provided;

- New pedestrian crossing at Wellpark Retail Park;
- Widening of existing pedestrian and cycle track adjacent to Lough Atalia;
- Removal of half of an existing advertising billboard.

Turning east onto the Dublin Road, the route passes the G Hotel and the Wellpark retail and leisure complex on the north side of the road and Lough Atalia on the south as well as mixed commercial and education uses. There is considerable landscaping on this road in the form of trees and shrubs which define the boundaries behind stone walls for a significant section of this road.

Zonings along College Road are Recreational and Amenity (RA) and Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF) to the south of College Road and Residential (R), Recreational and Amenity (RA) and Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF) to the north.



Figure 4-8: R338 Dublin Road Hill Section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.9 Fairgreen Road

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Footpath replacement;
- New controlled pedestrian crossing;
- Entry Treatments at entrances.

One of the offshoots of the route from Forsters Street is a section leading south from Forsters Street, past the coach station and a multi-storey car park and terminating at Lough Atalia Road adjacent to the Galmont Hotel and Spa. This road is characterised by the transport hub for coaches, car parking, hotel and office uses. The main rail line lies to the south of this road.

The properties on either side of Fairgreen Road are zoned City Centre (CC).

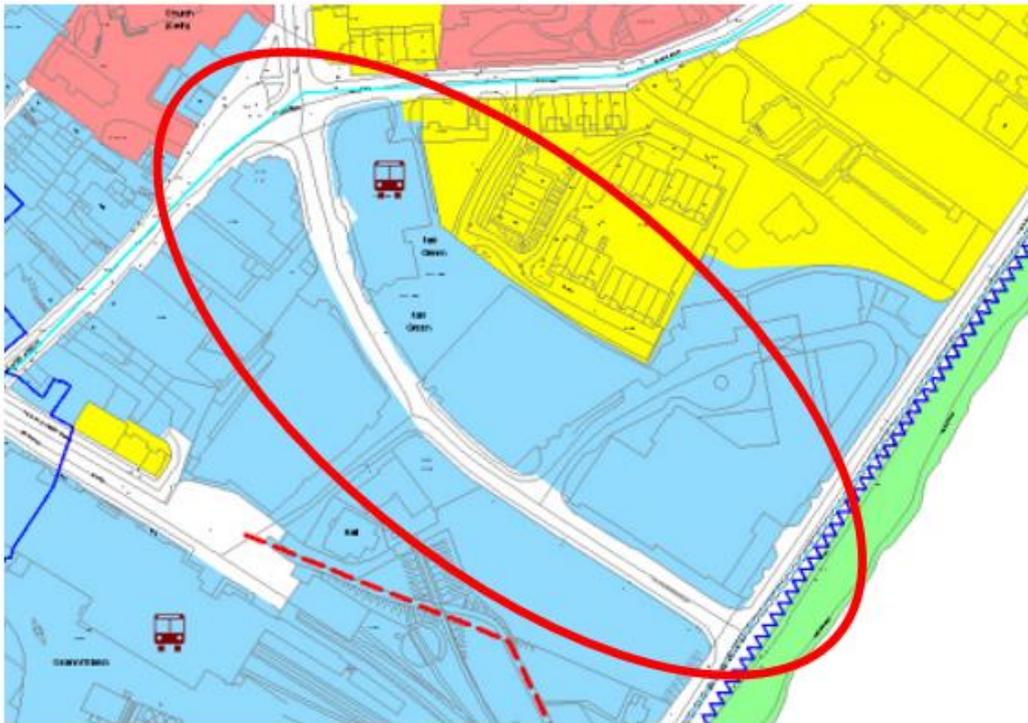


Figure 4-9: Fairgreen Road Section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.10 Bóthar Uí hEithir and R336 Prospect Hill

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Bóthar Uí Eithir and Prospect Hill to be converted to two-way;
- Junction of Bóthar Uí Eithir and Prospect Hill to be signalised;
- Footpath to be widened.

The route here runs in a south-easterly direction from the Headford Road/Walshé’s Terrace junction and down Bóthar na mBan until at the T-junction it divides with the south-western branch running along Prospect Hill to form a loop that is close to the northern edge of Eyre Square. The other branch runs in a north-east direction along Bóthar Uí hEithir and Forster Place and then links up with Forster Street.

There are large areas of parking to the east of Bóthar na mBan primarily to serve the offices of Galway County Council which is located at the corner of Bóthar na mBan and Prospect Hill. Elsewhere along this section of the route are apartment blocks, commercial, office and retail uses.

The zoning along this route is predominantly City Centre (CC) with some Residential (R) and Cultural, Community and Institutional (CF) uses also.



Figure 4-10: Bóthar Uí hEithir and R336 Prospect Hill Section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.11 Bóthar na mBan / St. Brendan's Avenue / R866 Headford Road / Dyke Road

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Installation of new footpath;
- Widening of existing footpath;
- Acquisition and demolition of 2 no. residential properties and adjoining laneway;
- New controlled pedestrian crossing;
- Entry treatments;
- Creation of a one-way circulatory around Dyke Road and Headford Road;
- Installation of a new two-way cycle track along Dyke Road.

This section of the route is mainly residential in nature and hence the Residential (R) zoning of buildings adjacent to the route. However, a block at the northern end of this section of the route bounded by the Headford Road and Dyke Road is zoned for Enterprise, Light Industry and Commercial use (CI).

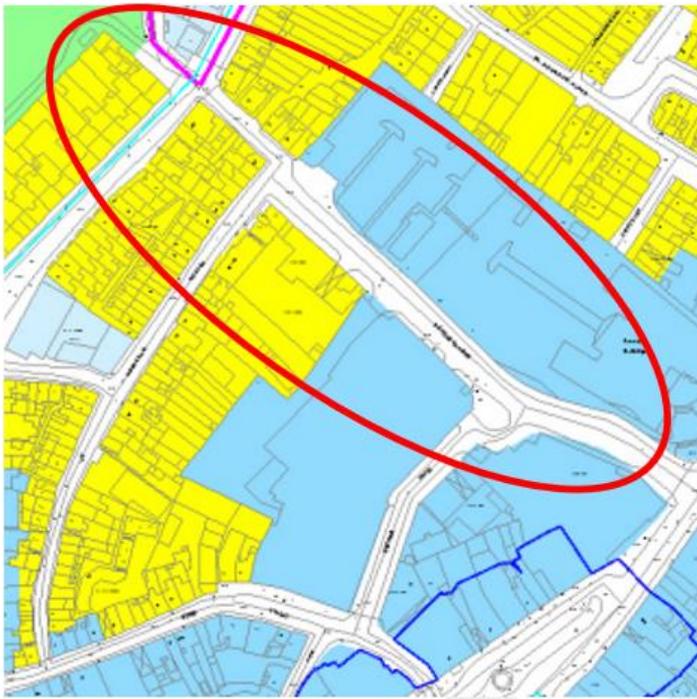


Figure 4-11: Bóthar na mBan / St. Brendan's Avenue / R866 Headford Road / Dyke Road section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.12 Woodquay / Walsh's Terrace / Daly's Place / Mary Street

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Woodquay to become one-way only southbound;
- Daly's Place to become one-way only westbound;
- St. Anthony's Place to become one-way only westbound;
- No entry from St. Anthony's Place to Court Lane;
- Removal of on-street parking and creation of public space;
- Relocated bus stops and shelters;
- Raised tables and entry treatment;
- Contra-flow cycle track along Woodquay northbound;
- Toucan crossing on R866;
- New drainage network.

One section of the route commences where another section of the route turns south along St. Francis Street. From the point of this split in the route, the route travels east along St. Vincent's Avenue and encompasses Woodquay / Walsh's Terrace / Daly's Place / Mary Street. The areas flanking the route are predominantly residential in character and this is reflected in the Residential (R) zoning and some City Centre (CC) zoning in the Potato Market area.

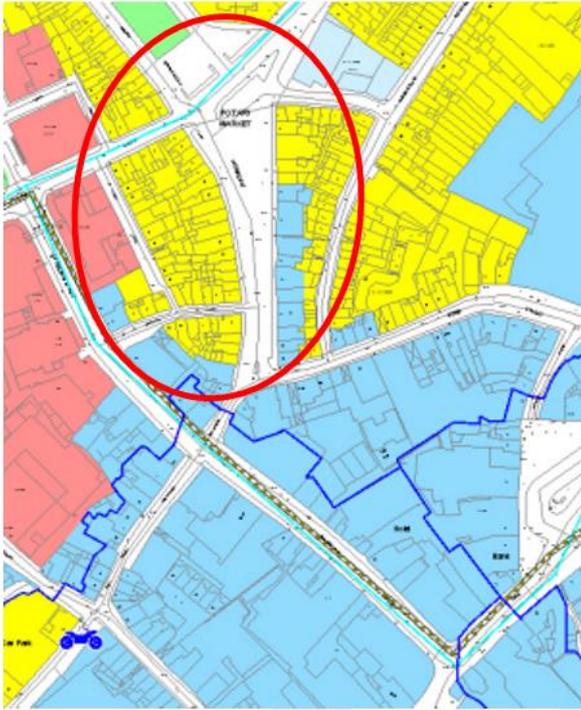


Figure 4-12: Woodquay / Walsh’s Terrace / Daly’s Place / Mary Street section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

4.13 Forthill Street / R336 Merchants Road / Queen Street

The interventions proposed for this section of the route are summarised as follows:

- Realignment of road priority from Merchants Road onto Forthill Street;
- Realignment of road priority from Forthill Street onto Dock Road;
- Footpath widening;
- Controlled pedestrian crossings;
- Entry treatment;
- Car parking amendments.

Where the route turns south-west at the south-east corner of Eyre Square, it travels along the southern edge of Eyre Square which is defined by the old railway hotel now called the Hotel Meyrick. Thereafter the route goes through a dog-leg along Victoria Place, Merchants Road and Forthill Street and onto Dock Road where the route terminates. The route is characterised by mixed use development in predominantly modern build three and four storey structures. The zoning of the lands/structures adjacent to the route is City Centre (CC).



Figure 4-13: Forthill Street / R336 Merchants Road / Queen Street section of the Proposed Scheme – Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Map.

5 Environmental Impacts

5.1 EIA Screening

Arup has prepared an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report on behalf of Galway City Council given the requirement to do so under the provisions of Directive 2011/92/EU3 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU4 (the “EIA Directive”).

Section 6 of the EIA Screening Report found that:

“The proposed road improvement works do not meet the criteria for mandatory EIA outlined in Section 50(1)(a) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, nor in Article 8 of the Roads Regulations 1994 (S.I. No. 119 of 1994), as amended. Consideration does need to be given however, to whether the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, as provided under Section 50(1)(c).“

The EIA Screening Report concludes that the proposed road development has the potential to have a significant effect on the environment and that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) should be prepared for the proposed road development.

The actual EIA Screening has been carried out by the Competent Authority which in this case is Galway City Council.

5.2 EIAR

The EIAR reports the findings of an assessment of the environmental impacts of the Proposed Scheme. The purpose of the EIAR is to:

- Describe the baseline conditions before any work on the Proposed Scheme has commenced;
- Describe the Proposed Scheme;
- Describe the assessment methodologies used to assess the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Scheme;
- Describe environmental issues and any likely significant effects which may rise during the Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Scheme;
- Propose mitigation measures to reduce or avoid these impacts; and
- Identify the significant residual impacts which occur after the proposed mitigation measures have been implemented.

All assessments have been carried out in accordance with best practice and applicable guidelines. Some chapters of the EIAR use specific guidelines related purely to that particular discipline.

The EIAR documents have been divided into the following Volumes for ease of use:

- Volume 1 – Non-Technical Summary (NTS);
- Volume 2 – Main Report;
- Volume 3 – Figures; and
- Volume 4 – Appendices.

The EIAR contains an assessment for each environmental topic listed below and sets out the likely significant residual effects as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme. The following environmental topics are assessed and a summary of the assessment is included for each topic:

- **Traffic and Transport** - The Proposed Scheme will provide a higher level of protection to bus journey time consistency and reliability and will allow the service pattern and frequency of bus services to be increased into the future to accommodate additional demand without having a significant negative impact on bus journey time reliability or the operation of cycle and pedestrian facilities.
- **Air Quality** - In accordance with the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022) the impacts associated with the operational phase traffic emissions are overall neutral and long-term.
- **Climate** - No significant residual negative effects on climate are predicted during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Scheme.
- **Noise & Vibration** – Once the various mitigation measures are put in place, noise impacts associated with the Construction Phase will be negative and are predicted to range from not significant to significant, and temporary. These will occur within 10 to 15 m from the works during daytime construction periods of all construction phases. Once operational, there will be a positive to neutral direct impact along the Proposed Scheme due to a reduction in traffic volumes during both the year of opening and the design year. The redistributed traffic has the potential to result in short to medium term significant adverse impacts at a number of routes.
- **Population** - The improved connection provided across the city will have a positive impact on the potential for economic development and continued growth in tourism numbers. There will be temporary local impacts during construction due to noise and vibration.
- **Human Health** - The Proposed Scheme is likely to have very significant positive long-term effects on numbers of people using sustainable transport and on bus journey times. It is also likely to have significant positive long-term effects on levels of physical activity due to improved opportunities and convenience for walking and cycling, combined with increased safety and perception of safety.
- **Biodiversity** – Following implementation of the mitigation measures – especially for air and water pathways which will form part of Contractor’s Construction and Environmental Management Plan and those embedded in the design, no significant impacts are anticipated on biodiversity.
- **Water** - Following implementation of the mitigation measures, which will form part of Contractor’s Construction and Environmental Management Plan and those embedded in the design, no significant residual impacts are

- anticipated on any of the receptors in this study area during construction or operation of the Proposed Scheme.
- Land, Soils, Geology & Hydrogeology - Mitigation measures are proposed which include standard construction practices. No residual effects of significance on land and soils have been identified.
 - Archaeological Cultural Heritage & Architectural Heritage - Overall, the majority of the Proposed Scheme will be relatively low to moderate impact in terms of the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage resource and this is due to the primary fact that the majority of works will be within existing carriageways associated works being carried out in areas that have already been disturbed or subject to development. There is, however, always the potential for previously unknown features of archaeological significance to survive beneath ground level. A suite of mitigation measures will be carried out prior to the commencement of construction, as well as during groundworks.
 - Landscape (Townscape) & Visual - In terms of Landscape (townscape) and Visual, the Proposed Scheme construction will give rise a localised moderate, negative, temporary to short-term effect is predicted on townscape.
 - Waste and Resources - With the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, it is expected that there will be no residual significant impacts on waste and resources.
 - Material Assets - The Proposed Scheme has been designed to minimise the impact on utility infrastructure. This includes avoiding interactions with major utility infrastructure, wherever possible. Where there will be an overlap with existing utility infrastructure, these will be protected in place or diverted as necessary to prevent long-term disruption to services. Diversions and changes to the location or layout of any utility infrastructure has been included in the overall design of the Proposed Scheme.
 - Risk of Major Accidents and / or Disasters - Appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented during the Construction Phase including the implementation of a Construction Environmental Response Plan and an Environmental Incident Response Plan. With the application of these mitigation measures, there are no remaining identified incidents or major accidents and / or disasters risk events that present a level of risk that would lead to significant impacts or environmental effects. No significant risks were identified as likely to occur during the Operational Phase.
 - Cumulative Impacts and Environmental Interactions – No significant adverse impacts have been identified during construction or operation that could arise due to cumulative and interacting effects.

5.3 Appropriate Assessment Screening

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening has been prepared by Moore Group Environmental Services to support a Planning Application for the Proposed Scheme and to inform the Appropriate Assessment of the Proposed Scheme by the Competent Authority. AA Screening examines the likely effects of a project either alone or in combination with other projects upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be

significant. In order to screen out a project, it must be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the Proposed Development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

The conclusion (Section 6) of the AA Screening Report notes the following:

Overall there will be no significant impacts on local habitats including artificial surfaces and amenity grassland and no impacts on any Annexed habitats. There will be no loss of habitat or habitat fragmentation as a result of the proposed works. There will be no disturbance of aquatic species such as Otters, Lamprey or Salmonids which are known to occur in the River Corrib and Lough Atalia.

There is connectivity to the River Corrib at proposed works areas adjacent to the Eglinton Canal at University Road and there is planned discharge of treated surface water to Lough Atalia at Lough Atalia playground and proposed roadworks at a proximal section of the Scheme at Lough Atalia on the Dublin Road.

In the absence of mitigation measures to control the potential contamination of surface water from chemical pollution such as a hydrocarbon spill or from riparian habitat disturbance, potential effects on Otters and the priority habitat Coastal Lagoon in Lough Atalia and on Sea Lamprey and Salmon in the River Corrib cannot be ruled out.

The potential for significant adverse effects on the Lough Corrib SAC and/or Galway Bay Complex SAC European sites is uncertain in the absence of control of potential pollution of surface water during construction.

The view that potential impacts on the Qualifying Interests of nearby designated European Sites, and the requirement that mitigation measures cannot be taken into account during the screening process, mean that having regard to Departmental Guidance and having regard to ECJ case law and the ‘Precautionary Principle’, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required, i.e. that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) must be prepared in respect of the Proposed Scheme.

5.4 Natura Impact Statement

A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was prepared by Moore Group Environmental Services on foot of the findings of the AA Screening process. This stage 2 of the AA process considers whether the proposed project, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a European site, and includes any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. The NIS report contains information to assist the Competent Authority in carrying out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, (the “Planning Acts”) in respect of the construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme.

The NIS describes the designated European Sites that could potentially be affected by the Proposed Scheme, describes the existing receiving environment, considers the potential impacts associated with the Proposed Scheme on the Qualifying Interests of the European Sites and sets down mitigation measures to address potential adverse impacts. An assessment of in-combination effects is also considered by the NIS.

The NIS concludes in Section 4 that:

This NIS has reviewed the predicted impacts arising from the proposed project and found that with the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures specifically with regard to surface water, significant effects on the Lough Corrib or Galway Bay European Sites can be ruled out.

It is the conclusion of this NIS, on the basis of the best scientific knowledge available, and subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures set out under Section 3.6, that the possibility of any adverse effects on the integrity of the European Sites considered in this NIS, or on the integrity of any other European Site (having regard to their conservation objectives), arising from the proposed project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, can be excluded beyond a reasonable scientific doubt.

A final determination will be made by the competent authority in this regard.

6 Assessment of Planning Issues

6.1 Traffic

The primary benefit of the Proposed Scheme is the reduction in traffic achieved through the implementation of sustainable transport and traffic management measures. This will allow Galway City to ‘breathe’, in effect prioritizing active travel over unsustainable modes of transport that have consistently led to traffic congestion in the city.

Although the recently permitted Galway City Ring Road will help to divert traffic away from the city centre, it is widely recognized that the Cross-City Link is key to releasing the congested streets of Galway City as it provides for a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling.

6.2 Climate Impact

Although the Proposed Scheme will lead to a minor increase in emissions as a result of displaced traffic during the operational stage, it will unquestionably support the implementation of active travel measures in Galway City and the need to encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport which is a key measure required to tackle climate impacts.

6.3 Land Take (CPO)

Considering the length of the Proposed Scheme (circa 6.7km), the land take required for the implementation of the Proposed Scheme is demonstrably minor. The majority of the Proposed Scheme involves the reconfiguration of the existing roadway and minor road widening. The most significant road widening will occur along College Road, impacting residences and businesses. The impact of this has been assessed as part of the Population section within the EIAR, which determined that no significant residual impacts will occur. In addition to this, landowners affected by land take have been closely engaged throughout the development of the Proposed Scheme, as evidenced in the Public Consultation Report accompanying this application.

7 Overall Conclusion

The Proposed Scheme conforms with all relevant provisions of plans at all relevant levels. The resultant effects on the environment, including habitats and flooding, have need identified, assessed and mitigated where required. In all instances the resultant effects have been found to be proportionate to the overall benefits resulting from the implementation of the proposed scheme, namely the reduction in traffic achieved through the implementation of sustainable transport and traffic management measures.

Taking into account the conformity with all relevant planning considerations and the avoidance of disproportionate effects, the Proposed Scheme can be considered to be consistent with orderly development as well as the proper planning and development of the area.

Having regard to these considerations it can be concluded that permission should be granted for the implementation of this scheme.

8 References

Roads Act, 1993 (as amended)

Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

Section 177AE of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

Section 175 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

Section 50 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

European Commission Smart & Sustainable Mobility Strategy 2020

European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019

Project Ireland 2040 – National Development Plan 2021-2030

Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023

National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)

Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

Climate Action Plan 2021

Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020

Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 – 2021

Ireland's Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022 - 2024 Draft for Public Consultation 13 May 2022

The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 – 2020

National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland

Healthy Ireland – The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland 2016

Five Cities Demand Management Study 2021 (as amended)

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly 2020-2032

Galway Transport Strategy (2016)

Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028)

Galway City Development Plan (2017-2023)

Draft Galway City Development Plan (2023-2029)

Galway City Public Realm Strategy

Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

Galway City Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021



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Project Ireland 2040
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