



Chapter 02

Need for the Proposed Development

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2 NEED FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) outlines the need for the Galway BusConnects: Dublin Road scheme (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development).

Sustainable transport infrastructure assists in creating more sustainable communities and healthier places to live and work while also stimulating economic development and contributing to enhanced health and well-being when delivered effectively.

Traffic congestion in Galway has been an issue for decades. Congestion impacts on quality of life, the urban environment, safety of all road users and the economic performance of Galway City as the Gateway and economic driver of the West of Ireland Region. Its impact extends far beyond the city into the wider county and region, due to the large commuter population reliant on the city for employment, education and tourism.

Private car dependence has resulted in significant congestion that has impacted on quality of life, the urban environment and road safety. The population of the Galway City is projected to rise by 50-60% (40,000-45,000 more people) by 2040 (as outlined in the (National Planning Framework adopted 2018)) (Government of Ireland, 2018). This growth in population will increase demand for travel necessitating improved sustainable transport options to facilitate this growth.

Without intervention, traffic congestion will lead to longer and less reliable bus journeys throughout the city and will affect the quality of people's lives. The Proposed Development is needed because it will provide enhanced walking, cycling and bus infrastructure on this key access corridor into Galway City, which will enable and deliver efficient, safe, and integrated sustainable transport movement along the corridor.

Responding to these challenges is supported by an extensive policy framework of International, European, National, Regional and Local policy, planning strategies and plans. The key policy and planning documents are described in Section 2.2, along with a summary of how the Proposed Development responds to the relevant objectives. Section 2.3 identifies the need to respond to current deficiencies in our transport system and how those deficiencies have shaped the development of the Proposed Development. The benefits from the provision of the Proposed Development are presented in Section 2.4.

2.2 Policy Context

The Proposed Development is supported by an extensive framework of International, European, National, Regional and Local policy, planning strategies and plans. This framework has strongly informed and influenced the aims and objectives for the Proposed Development as set out in EIAR Chapter 1 (Introduction). The Proposed Development is a key measure that delivers on commitments within the National Development Plan (2021-2030), Galway Transport Strategy (2016), Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, the Climate Action Plan 2024, RSES for Northern and Western Region 2020-2032 (including the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)), and Galway City Development Plan 2023 – 2029. In the table below are listed relevant policy documents taken into consideration while designing the Proposed Development.

Table 2-1 List of Policy documents

Policy document	International/European/ National/Local
United Nations 2030 Agenda	International
Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020	European
European Green Deal	European

Policy document	International/European/ National/Local
Project Ireland 2040 – National Development Plan 2021- 2030 (NDP)	National
Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)	National
National Investment Framework for Transport of Ireland	National
Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2023 – 2025	National
National Sustainability Mobility Policy	National
The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009 - 2020	National
Road Safety Strategy 2021 – 2030	National
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021	National
Climate Action Plan 2021	National
Climate Action Plan 2023	National
Climate Action Plan 2024	National
Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020	National
Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 – 2021	National
National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024	National
Five Cities Demand Management Study 2021	National
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly 2020-2032	Regional
Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029	Local
Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028	Local
Galway Transport Strategy 2016	Local
Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS)	Local
CycleConnects – Galway Cycle Network	Local
BusConnects Galway - New Network Report 2023	Local
Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024	Local
Galway City Climate Action Plan	Local
Galway Public Realm Strategy	Local
Local Area Plans within the Galway City Council Area Relevant to the Proposed Development	Local

For each policy, the following sections outline the key policy documents which the Proposed Development supports and how the Proposed Development responds to the relevant policy objectives. Further information

on the planning and policy context for the Proposed Development is provided in the Planning Compliance Report which is provided in the Planning Report (Appendix A2.1 in Volume 4 of this EIAR).

2.2.1 International Policy

2.2.1.1 United Nations 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which cover the social, economic, and environmental requirements for a sustainable future which are shown in Figure 2-1.



Figure 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 their associated targets are relevant to the Proposed Development as presented in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Sustainable Development Goals and Targets relevant to the Proposed Development

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.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG Target
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 implemented through the National Implementation Plan 2022-2024 (DECC, 2022), which is in direct response to the UN's 2030 Agenda. It provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 SDGs – see brief description later in the National Policy section (Section 2.3.3).

The Proposed Development is supported by the 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.

2.2.2 European Policy

2.2.2.1 Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020

The Sustainable and Smart 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 categorised into 10 'flagships.'

The flagship relevant to the Proposed Development is 'Flagship 3 – *Making interurban and urban mobility more sustainable and healthier*'. 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.'

A target of the strategy relevant to the Proposed Development is to double cycling infrastructure in cities within the European Union to 5,000km in the next decade.

The need for the Proposed Development is supported by the objectives of the EU's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy through significant investment in cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and bus priority, along the route of the Proposed Development, thereby supporting and encouraging growth in active travel and sustainable public transport use.

2.2.2.2 European Green Deal

The European 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 2015¹. It sets out key policies aimed at cutting emissions and preserving the natural environment. It commits the EU to becoming 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 European Green Deal is setting out a process to help everybody work together and try and move in the same direction.

As indicated in the European Green Deal, on 9 December 2020, the European Commission adopted a communication entitled 'Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future'. The strategy sets out a roadmap for a sustainable and smart future for European transport, with

¹ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

an action plan towards an objective to deliver a 90% reduction in emissions from the transport sector by 2050.

This Strategy has the objective of *‘accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility’* and requires that

‘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 the most in cities and that a combination of measures is required such as *‘improving public transport and promoting active modes of transport such as walking and cycling.’*

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

2.2.3 National Policy

2.2.3.1 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 in 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 (NSOs) identified in the NPF, see Figure 2-2 below. The NSOs directly related to the Proposed Development are described in Section 2.2.3.3 and Table 2-3.



Figure 2-2 National Strategic Outcomes

The NDP sets out a programme of investment that includes indicative capital expenditure allocations to the year 2030. Although the NDP does not specifically allocate funding to the Proposed Development, there are a number of funding avenues within the NDP that are relevant to the Proposed Development, 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 2025 budget announcement allocating €360m to walking and cycling infrastructure for 2025. 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 outlines under the heading 'Sustainable Mobility' that;

'The National Planning Framework (NPF) recognises the importance of significant investment in sustainable mobility (active travel and public transport) networks if the NPF population growth targets are to be achieved. Investing in high quality sustainable mobility will improve citizens' quality of life, support our transition to a low-carbon society and enhance our economic competitiveness.'

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.'

Under the heading 'Sectoral Strategies' it makes reference to the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and 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.'

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.’*

The Proposed Development 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 Development is an integral part of Ireland’s policy to reduce carbon by providing the infrastructure necessary to deliver a sustainable transport network. The Proposed Development will facilitate continued planned and forecasted population growth in Galway City and along the route of the Proposed Development by meeting existing and future travel demand through investment in a sustainable transport network and services. As required in the NDP, the Proposed Development 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 ‘Strategic Investment Priority’ of the NDP to help deliver the full ‘BusConnects Programme’.

2.2.3.2 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 (see Section 2.2.4.1) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), the Galway County Council Development Plan (see Section 2.2.5.2) and Galway City Development Plan (see Section 2.2.5.1).

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 NSO’s relevant for the Proposed Development are set out in Table 2-3 with a corresponding statement on how the Proposed Development meets each respective NSO objective.

Table 2-3 Strategic Outcomes of the NPF

National Strategic Outcome (NSO)	How the Proposed Development meets the NSO Objective
NSO1 Compact Growth: <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</i>	The Proposed Development will facilitate the sustainable growth of Galway City through delivering transport infrastructure necessary to provide a bus network that works for a growing city. The Proposed

National Strategic Outcome (NSO)	How the Proposed Development meets the NSO Objective
<p><i>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>Development is designed to provide a better, more reliable and more efficient bus service for everyone.</p> <p>The Proposed Development 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 Development 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>NSO4 Sustainable Mobility:</p> <p><i>'In line with Ireland's Climate Change mitigation plan, we need to progressively electrify our mobility systems moving away 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>The Proposed Development 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 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 Development 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 Development.</p>
<p>NSO5 A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills:</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 Development 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 Development 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>
<p>NSO8 Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society:</p> <p><i>'The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.'</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development comprises transport infrastructure that supports the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service. The primary objective of the Proposed Development therefore, through the provision of necessary bus, cycle, and walking infrastructure enhancements, is the facilitation of modal shift from car dependency, and thereby contributing to an efficient, integrated transport system and a low carbon and climate resilient City in compliance with NSO8.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will provide the advantage of segregated cycling facilities. These high-quality cycle tracks will be typically 2m in width offering a high level of service and help to reduce dependency on private car use for short journeys in compliance with the objectives of NSO8.</p>

National Strategic Outcome (NSO)	How the Proposed Development meets the NSO Objective
	Furthermore, all drainage structures are designed with a minimum return period of no flooding in 1:30 years with a 20% climate change allowance.
<p>NSO9 Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources:</p> <p><i>'Ireland has abundant natural and environmental resources such as our water sources that are critical to our environmental and economic wellbeing into the future. Conserving and enhancing the quality of these resources will also become more important in a crowded and competitive world as well as our capacity to create beneficial uses from products previously considered as waste, creating circular economic benefits.'</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development has been designed to minimise the amount and extent of major construction works required, and therefore minimise the quantities of construction materials required. The Proposed Development has taken into consideration the objectives of a circular economy and aims to re-use materials, where possible. Consideration has been given to the sustainability of material being sourced for the construction of the Proposed Development. Insofar as is reasonably practicable, materials required for the construction of the Proposed Development will be sourced locally in order to reduce the amount of travelling required to transfer the material to the site. Construction materials will be managed on-site in such a way as to prevent over-ordering and waste. A Construction and Demolition Resource and Waste Management Plan (CDRWMP) has been developed and will be implemented (and updated as necessary) by the appointed contractor. In regard to water during the Construction Phase, the EIAR includes details on guidance documents and control measures for site clearance, construction compound, silty water runoff, storage of materials, working in-stream or in close proximity to watercourses, fuel storage, use of concrete and monitoring. Mitigation for the Operational Phase has been built into the design of the Proposed Development.</p>
<p>NSO10 Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services:</p> <p><i>'Good access to a range of quality education and health services, relative to the scale of a region, city, town, neighbourhood or community is a defining characteristic of attractive, successful and competitive places. Compact, smart growth in urban areas and strong and stable rural communities will enable the enhanced and effective provision of a range of accessible services.'</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development provides infrastructure to support the delivery of sustainable transport that will benefit the entire community in terms of greater accessibility, capacity and speed of service improvements. The infrastructure improvements is along a key route which include many of Galway City's educational and health care services in compliance with the objectives of NSO10.</p>

Specifically, with 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’.

BusConnects is referenced as a sustainable mobility solution, and the Proposed Development involves the implementation of this sustainable mobility solution through facilitating greater bus, cycle and pedestrian accessibility into, within and across Galway City.

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 Development 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 need for the Proposed Development is supported by the goals of the NPF by delivering infrastructure that will facilitate high quality sustainable active travel and public transport networks. In doing so, the Proposed Development will facilitate an accelerated shift and the urgent transition needed towards a low carbon and climate resilient society. The Proposed Development also includes localised urban realm improvements that will allow for greater access to public transport and ensure a more attractive, liveable urban place for the local community living adjacent to the Proposed Development. Further information on compliance with local policy on public realm is provided in Section 2.2.5.4.

2.2.3.3 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 2021c) to ensure alignment with the policies of the NPF. 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.

To invest sustainably, 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. 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.

NIFTI was published by the DoT on 21 December 2021 and includes investment hierarchies that ensure strategic alignment of future transport investment and to support the NPF. The investment priorities are based on two hierarchies, Modal and Intervention which are set out below:

Modal Hierarchy

The NIFTI Modal Hierarchy is:

1. Active Travel;
2. Public Transport; and
3. Private Vehicles.

The plan states that future transport planning will prioritise sustainable modes and

‘.....sets out a hierarchy of 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:

1. Maintain;
2. Optimise;
3. Improve; and
4. New.

NIFTI states that:

‘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.’

De-carbonising the transport sector is a key priority for reaching Ireland’s climate change targets. 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.

The need for the Proposed Development is supported by NIFTI (DoT 2021c) 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 Development provides improved infrastructure for active travel modes, while optimising, improving and, where necessary, providing new infrastructure to improve bus network services for Galway.

2.2.3.4 Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2023 – 2025

The Statement of Strategy (Department of Transport 2023) sets out goals and a strategic approach which are designed to support continuing economic recovery, fiscal consolidation, job creation and social development.

The first Strategic Goal of this strategy states *'We will build our economy by enhancing our international connectivity, supporting freight, supply chains and logistics, and our key industries, in keeping with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Economic Plan, as well as the Climate Action Plan.'*

The Statement of Strategy includes a commitment to *'Plan for transport sector climate adaptation to support the implementation of climate adaptation and resilience measures in transport.'*

The Statement of Strategy mission is - *"To deliver an accessible, efficient, safe and sustainable transport system that supports communities, households and businesses"*.

The Proposed Development will provide the infrastructure necessary to support a high quality and sustainable road, public transport and active travel network along the route. It will contribute towards economic recovery through enhanced connectivity by improving both bus and cycle infrastructure allowing for greater modal choices in Galway City. This supports the need for the Proposed Development.

2.2.3.5 National Sustainability Mobility Policy

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy (Department of Transport 2022) sets a framework for active travel and public transport to support the 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The vision for the policy is: *'To connect people and places with sustainable mobility that is safe, green, accessible and efficient.'*

The Policy includes three key principles, as follows:

1. Safe and Green Mobility;
2. People Focused Mobility; and
3. Better Integrated Mobility.

The principles are supported by 10 'high level goals' and those considered relevant to the Proposed Development are set out further below.

The foreword of the policy document comments, as follows:

'Increased funding under the National Development Plan will allow us to improve and expand walking, cycling and public transport options across the country to enable access to education, health care, work, cultural and public life by sustainable modes of travel. This will include commencing delivery of BusConnects programmes in our five cities, DART+ and Metrolink in Dublin along with increased investment in the inter-urban and regional rail network.'

In regard to walking and cycling infrastructure the Introduction section states:

'The design of walking and cycling infrastructure, as well as areas in the vicinity of public transport services, are important safety factors. Well-designed, well-maintained, appropriately-lit, continuous and better

integrated infrastructure can help people feel safe and encourage them to choose these options over the private car...Expanding walking and cycling options to promote greater use of active travel can support our climate targets to reduce emissions as well as improving fitness levels and public health, and reducing congestion and private car use. Diverting short car trips to active modes will have a particular benefit in reducing air pollution'

It further comments:

'There is a need to rebalance transport movement in metropolitan areas and other urban centres away from the private car and towards active travel and public transport. This will require a greater allocation of available road/street space to be given to sustainable mobility. In addition, a rebalancing of traffic light signalling at junctions to better facilitate walking, cycling and public transport is required. The overarching objective in urban centres should be to focus more on the movement of people rather than the movement of the private car.'

Under the heading 'Implementation, monitoring and review' it sets out that:

'The Leadership Group will report to the Minister for Transport on a quarterly basis and progress on implementation of the Policy will be overseen in order to measure progress'.

It further outlines that part of the reporting will include (inter alia):

- 'Kilometres of active travel infrastructure developed annually; and
- Kilometres of bus lanes/bus priority developed annually.'

The Policy supports 'Safe and Green Mobility' by (inter alia):

'Expanding bus capacity and services through the BusConnects Programmes in the five cities of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford; improved town bus services; and the Connecting Ireland programme in rural areas.'

Under the heading 'Expand availability of sustainable mobility' it comments, as follows:

'Improving active travel infrastructure in both urban and rural areas together with improved and expanded public transport services across the country is needed to reduce car dependency. Increased investment in walking and cycling infrastructure will provide a safe and connected network to those who wish to travel by active means. Implementation of public transport projects such as (inter alia): BusConnects.'

Projects such as BusConnects are identified as key priorities to deliver an improved and expanded bus service. It sets out under Goal 3 'Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas' the following:

'BusConnects programmes comprise a number of different elements including the network redesign of bus services and the development of core bus corridors infrastructure, including segregated cycling facilities, on the busiest routes to make journeys.'

It also outlines that:

'Our 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. Improved and expanded bus services and infrastructure are a key priority, and in the five metropolitan areas, these improvements and expansions will be delivered through BusConnects programmes in each.'

It further comments 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.'

Table 2-4 sets out how the Proposed Development meets the Principles and Goals of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy.

Table 2-4 National Sustainability Mobility Policy Principles and Goal

Principle	Goal	Goal	Proposed Development Response
Safe and Green Mobility	<i>'Improve mobility safety.'</i>	<i>'Goal 1 aims to improve the safety of all mobility options including active travel, road and rail to prioritise the safety and security of those working on / travelling by sustainable mobility.'</i>	Signage and road markings will be provided along the extents of the Proposed Development to clearly communicate information, regulatory and safety messages to the road users. The Proposed Development will also generally include segregated cycling and enhanced at grade junctions improving overall safety along the corridor.
	<i>'Decarbonise public Transport.'</i>	<i>'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 2023 to reduce emissions in the sustainable mobility sector.'</i>	The Proposed Development aligns with the goal as it will make public transport and active travel a key component to the solution. The Proposed Development will comprise transport infrastructure that supports the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service.
	<i>'Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas.'</i>	<i>'Goal 3 aims to expand the capacity and availability of sustainable mobility in our five cities (Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford). This will be done through improved walking, cycling, bus and rail infrastructure, improved transport interchange and expanded public transport services. Transformed active travel and bus infrastructure and services in all five cities is fundamental to achieving the targets of 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys and a 10% reduction in kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars by 2030.'</i>	The Proposed Development aligns with the goal as BusConnects Galway – Dublin Road Infrastructure works is the GCC's programme to greatly improve bus services in the Galway, of which the Proposed Development is part. The Proposed Development will provide the advantage of segregated cycling facilities along the preferred route in both directions. These high-quality cycle lanes will help to reduce dependency on private car use for short journeys. The design of each junction has given priority to pedestrian, cycle and bus movements, where possible. Junctions have been designed to ensure a high level of comfort and priority for sustainable modes of travel (e.g., walking, cycling and public transport) by prioritising the space and time allocated to these modes within the operation of a

Principle	Goal	Goal	Proposed Development Response
			junction. Along the Proposed Development route, improvements and enhancements will be made to footpaths, walkways and pedestrian crossings.
	<i>'Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas.'</i>	<i>'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.'</i>	The Proposed Development aligns with the goal as it will expand the capacity of the public transport network within Galway. The Proposed Development will also enhance interchanges between the various modes of public transport operating in Galway City and its wider metropolitan area. The design has been developed with this in mind and, in so far as possible, is seeking to provide for improved existing or new interchange opportunities with other transport services.
	<i>'Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car.'</i>	<i>'Goal 5 aims to encourage modal shift to more sustainable options across all ages through behavioural change and demand management measures.'</i>	The Proposed Development will promote a modal shift from private car use to more sustainable forms of transport. It will enhance active travel networks and thus will encourage the use of these modes, reducing reliance on the private car.
People Focused Mobility	<i>'Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all.'</i>	<i>'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. A whole of journey approach is also supported under Goals 7 and 10 through implementing a universal design approach to the design of new and retrofitted infrastructure; adherence to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets; and promoting integrated mobility through innovative technologies.'</i>	The Proposed Development aligns with the goal as it has considered the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (Department of Transport, 2019) and the Cycle Design Manual (NTA 2023). In addition, a road user audit has been undertaken for the Proposed Development and has informed the design thereby promoting access for all including those with disabilities.
	<i>'Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model.'</i>	<i>'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.'</i>	The Proposed Development aligns with goal 7 as the design is based on the hierarchy of Road users model with Pedestrians improvements prioritised.
	<i>'Promote sustainable mobility through</i>	<i>'Goal 8 aims to improve research and citizen engagement around sustainable</i>	A consultation exercise has been undertaken and has helped to inform the design and layout of the

Principle	Goal	Goal	Proposed Development Response
	<i>research and citizen engagement.'</i>	mobility and collaboration with other government departments, agencies and stakeholders in delivering the Policy.'	Proposed Development. The GCC is also working in partnership with various government departments and third parties to deliver a high-quality sustainable transport scheme for Galway.
Better Integrated Mobility	<i>'Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels.'</i>	<i>'Goal 9 aims to support compact growth and transport – oriented development through better integrated land use and transport planning.'</i>	The Proposed Development will enhance the capacity of sustainable transport infrastructure as well as the efficiency of Galway's road network. The enhanced sustainable transport provision along the scheme corridor can help to achieve greater land use densities that will promote compact sustainable growth.
	<i>'Promote smart and integrated mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.'</i>	<i>'Goal 10 aims to make the use of sustainable mobility and the interchange between different modes easier through investment in smart digital solutions. Alongside better integrated land use and transport planning, technological advances in transport can enable people to move seamlessly from one mode to another and support a whole of journey approach.'</i>	The Proposed Development aligns with the goal as it will enhance interchanges between the various modes of public transport operating in Galway City and its wider metropolitan area, both now and in the future.

The Proposed Development is supported by the National Sustainable Mobility Policy. The Proposed Development as part of the BusConnects Programme is identified as a key project to help deliver Ireland's climate commitments and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector. The implementation of the Proposed Development will contribute to modal shift towards sustainable transport options, it will expand, enhance and connect to pedestrian and cycle networks.

2.2.3.6 The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009 - 2020

The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 (hereafter referred to as the NCPF) (DTTAS 2009b) is Ireland's cycling policy framework. The vision is to create a strong cycling culture in Ireland, stating that 'Cycling will be a normal way to get about, especially for short trips'. The NCPF outlines 19 specific objectives, so that by the year 2020 10% of all journeys made were intended to be by bicycle. This policy framework outlines a number of interventions to make cycling easier and safer. The interventions specific to the Proposed Development are:

- 'We will pay special attention to integrating cycling and public transport. As commuting distances are lengthening, the importance of combining the bicycle with the bus, tram or train grows. We will provide state-of-the-art cycling parking at all appropriate PT interchanges and stops.'
- Objective 2: 'Ensure that the urban road infrastructure is designed/retrofitted so as to be cyclist-friendly and that traffic management measures are also cyclist friendly.'; and
- Objective 8: 'Ensure proper integration between cycling and public transport will assist in increasing the uptake in cycling across the region'.

The Proposed Development will facilitate sustainable modes of transport and therefore supports the objectives set in the NCPF through the provision of safe cycling infrastructure network segregated from general traffic, wherever practicable.

2.2.3.7 Road Safety Strategy 2021 – 2030.

The Road Safety Strategy 2021 – 2030 (RSA 2021) works towards achieving ‘Vision Zero’ which is to achieve the long-term goal of eliminating deaths and serious injuries in road traffic collisions by 2050. The strategy *‘involves the promotion of the safer modes (e.g., public transport, such as bus and rail travel), and the promotion and provision of safe road environments for otherwise healthy, active modes. This includes walking and cycling, where the risks of death and serious injury in the event of a collision are higher than for protected in-vehicle road users.’*

The Strategy acknowledges that *‘The promotion and increased uptake of public transport can greatly contribute to fatality and serious injury reductions over the course of the 2021-2023 strategy’*. It continues *‘The substantial societal benefits of increased active travel (i.e. walking or cycling) must also be acknowledged in light of Ireland’s climate objectives, including reduced emissions, traffic congestion and noise pollution, and increased physical activity and its related health benefits.’*

A key action of Phase 1 of the strategy, during the 2021 – 2025 period is to ‘construct 1,000km of segregated walking and cycling facilities to provide safe cycling and walking arrangements for users of all ages’.

The Proposed Development will provide the infrastructure necessary to facilitate a public transport network which the Strategy acknowledges is a ‘safer mode’ of travel. The Proposed Development will contribute to improved road safety through improvement works at junctions and upgrades to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along the route. The Proposed Development provides for significant additional segregation between active travel users and the public road to help enhance safety.

2.2.3.8 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 sets out the central objective relating to emission reductions. It legally binds Ireland to have net-zero emissions no later than 2050 and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of the decade (2030), against a base of 2018 emissions. The Act sets out the following:

‘The first two carbon budgets proposed by the Advisory Council shall provide for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions such that the total amount of annual greenhouse gas emissions in the year ending on 31 December 2030 is 51 per cent less than the annual greenhouse gas emissions reported for the year ending on 31 December 2018, as set out in the national greenhouse gas emissions inventory prepared by the Agency.’

The implementation of the Proposed Development will deliver transport infrastructure required to support a significant shift towards sustainable transport options that will in turn support the targets set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. This supports the need for the Proposed Development.

2.2.3.9 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.

Regarding 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.’

The delivery of the Proposed Development will provide 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 Development will expand, enhance and connect to pedestrian and cycle networks and will assist in facilitating the delivery of modal shift.

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. Chapter 8 (Climate) of this EIAR contains an assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the Proposed Development.

2.2.3.10 Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2023 (Government of Ireland 2023) is the second update to Ireland’s CAP 2019 and was launched on the 21 December 2022. The 2023 CAP sets out the sectoral emissions ceilings and the implementation of carbon budgets. The CAP 2023 is a roadmap to deliver a halving of Ireland’s emissions by 2030.

The transport sector has an aim of a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030. The ‘Avoid’ (reduce or avoid the need for travel – land use planning), ‘Shift’ (Shift to more environmentally friendly modes – public transport, active travel), ‘Improve’ (Improve the energy efficiency of vehicle technology- vehicle efficiency, clean fuels) approach has been adopted to help achieve these targets. CAP 2021 targets have been updated to include

‘a 20% reduction in total vehicle kilometres, a reduction in fuel usage, and significant increases to sustainable transport trips and modal share’.

Section 15.2.2 ‘Recalibration of the Decarbonisation Pathway for Transport’ states that the NTA Modelling team revalidated and recalibrated the decarbonisation pathway for CAP21. It goes on to say that this exercise *‘identified additional measures to delivering 50% emissions abatement by 2030.’* It further outlines that: *‘The range of measures modelled includes known public transport schemes as set out in the National Development Plan (NDP); (inter alia) further acceleration of road space reallocation towards public and active travel modes; car-free urban centres’.*

Section 15.3.3 ‘Avoid and Shift’ sets out the following:

‘Greater prioritisation and reallocation of existing road space towards public transport and active travel will be a key supporting element for the new DMS. This already forms a crucial element of the BusConnects programme in each of our five cities. It is also a key recommendation from the OECD’s Redesigning Ireland’s Transport for Net Zero report.’

Section 15.3.3 ‘Shift’ outlines the following in regard to *‘Major Public Transport Infrastructure Programme’*:

‘Key milestones have already been achieved on major infrastructural projects, including BusConnects in each of our 5 cities and the Greater Dublin Area’s DART+ Programme and Metrolink, which will continue to be progressed through public consultations and the planning systems.’

Table 2-5 ‘Key Actions to Deliver Abatement in Transport for the Period 2023-2025’ includes under the measure ‘Major Public Transport Infrastructure Programme’ and the heading ‘Shift’ (inter alia) ‘Advance BusConnects programme in 5 cities’ under the actions for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Table 2-5 Climate Action Plan 2023 Transport Actions

Action Number	Action	How the Proposed Development Meets the Action
TR/23/27	Pedestrian enhancement plans developed for five metropolitan areas	The Proposed Development aligns with the objective as it has ensured that the public realm is carefully considered in the design and development of the transport infrastructure. The Proposed Development seeks to enhance key urban focal points where appropriate and feasible.
TR/23/29	Advance roll-out of 1,000 km walking/cycling infrastructure	The Proposed Development aligns with the objective as it will support sustainable transport modes 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 corridor. The Proposed Development will be an attractive alternative to private car travel, encouraging more passenger travel by sustainable modes while providing a better quality of life for citizens.
TR/23/35	Advance BusConnects programme in 5 cities	BusConnects Galway Programme is the National Transport Authority’s programme to greatly improve bus services in the Galway city and environs of which the Proposed Development is part.

The delivery of the Proposed Development will provide the transport infrastructure required to deliver sustainable transport options that will support the key actions set out in the Climate Action Plan 2023. The Proposed Development will expand, enhance and connect to pedestrian and cycle networks and will assist in facilitating modal shift. It is clear that the targets set out within CAP 2023 are closely linked to the delivery of key transport infrastructure projects, such as the BusConnects Programme and therefore the Proposed Development.

2.2.3.11 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2024 is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan. The purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to lay out a roadmap of actions which will ultimately lead the country to meeting the national climate objective of pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022.

A draft of the Plan was agreed by Government in December 2023 and, following the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, and a six-week public consultation, the finalised version of the CAP24 was approved by Government on 21 May 2024.

The Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon the 2023 plan by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The Plan provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Regarding transport the expected outcomes of CAP24, as stated in the plan, is: *'CAP24 adheres to the framework set out in CAP23 but makes some necessary refinements to that approach while taking into account the progress made so far in 2023. The expected outcome is that CAP24 will build on CAP23 in enabling us to meet the first and second carbon budgets.'*

2.2.3.12 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:

- *'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'*. The BusConnects Programme, with the Proposed Development forming an important part, continues to be identified as a key project to help deliver Ireland's long-term growth aspirations and climate commitments. The need for the Proposed Development supports the delivery as part of the Programme for Government (Government of Ireland 2020) and fully complies with the key objectives of same.

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

The Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2015) (hereafter referred to as the Capital Plan) was published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in September 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 Capital Plan 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 2015 DTTAS Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (DTTAS 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 Development:

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

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

2.2.3.14 National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024

As set out in Section 2.3.1.1, the UN's 2030 Agenda aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the entire world. The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2022 – 2024 (DCCAE 2022) is in direct response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ireland's Second National SDG National Implementation Plan also sets out five strategic objectives to further develop SDG implementation over the duration of the second SDG National Implementation Plan. Goals 9 and 11 are particularly relevant to the Proposed Development. These are set out in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6 Sustainable Development Goals and Targets aligned with the Proposed Development

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.

2.2.3.15 Five Cities Demand Management Study 2021

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 plans.

The following TDM measures of relevance to the Proposed Development and to Galway City are proposed as part of the study:

- FM11: Congestion Charging – it is considered that this may be delivered in Galway City subject to the delivery of improved public transport facilities.
- PTM04: Public Parking Controls – reduction of on street parking is included in the Proposed Development in line with the delivery of sustainable mobility infrastructure.
- PP04: Enhance Delivery of the National Planning Framework – the Proposed Development represents enhanced delivery of the NPF (see section 2.2.3.3).
- PTM17: Car Free Zones & Streets – it is noted that this is already in place in Galway through implementation of the 'City Centre Access Network', which will be supplemented by the Proposed Development.
- TC07: Urban Traffic Management Centres – the Proposed Development includes a bus gate, and it is stated in the study that Galway has been operating an Urban Traffic Management Centre since 2011.

2.2.4 Regional Policy

2.2.4.1 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, NIS and AA 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:

1. Economy and Employment – A Vibrant Region;
2. Environment – Natural Region;
3. Connectivity – Connected Region;
4. Quality of Life – Inclusive Region; and
5. 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 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 Development 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'*.

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 objectives² and the NPF (Government of Ireland 2018b).

Those RPOs that relate to the Proposed Development 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'.

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'.*

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:

² European Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

‘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 Development 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 Development:

- *‘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’.*

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

The Proposed Development 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 times 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.

2.2.5 Local Policy

2.2.5.1 Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

The Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out Galway City Council's policies and objectives to guide the sustainable development of the City over the lifetime of the Plan to 2029. It provides an integrated, coherent spatial framework which has been prepared following extensive consultation with members of the public, statutory bodies and relevant stakeholders.

This plan includes a Core Strategy which identifies the quantum, location and phasing of development in County Galway for the plan period which reflects the nationally and regionally defined population targets, settlement hierarchy while being cognisant of the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements.

The Core Strategy has been prepared based on analysis of spatial pattern and quantity of housing delivery in the plan and also, taken in consideration of the key policy areas.

The quantitative analysis in preparing the Core Strategy has been guided by a number of national policy documents. These include the population and household targets that are set out in the NPF, the NPF Implementation Roadmap (2018), the RSES, the Section 28 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning' (2020) and the follow up document 'Guidance on the Preparation of a Housing Need and Demand Assessment' (2020) and the DHLGH methodology known as the HNDA Tool (2021).

This approach required a sequence of considerations which included the following:

- Population Projections 2016 – 2029;
- Household Projections 2023 – 2029;
- Planning & Construction Activity; and
- Housing Target for the Core Strategy.

The Plan includes also specific transport objectives for cycling, public transport, and traffic and road network. These objectives are:

Policy 4.3 - Public Transport

- Support the implementation of BusConnects Galway and the overall bus transport network which will include for a high frequency cross-city network of services and all associated infrastructural requirements, traffic management and priority arrangements;
- Promote the availability of the city bus network including the priority measures for use by the national, regional and tour bus services;
- Promote access to public transport services for those attending primary and post primary schools in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills; and
- Support the modal change to public transport under the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) through modal change targets for walking, cycling, and public transport within the lifetime of the City Development Plan.

Policy 4.4 - Sustainable Mobility

- Facilitate cycling on the proposed BusConnects Routes where appropriate including on the proposed Cross-City Link;
- Introduce segregated cycle lanes across the city, where possible;
- Prioritise improvements to pedestrian movements and safety within the city centre including extension of pedestrianisation, provision of wider footpaths and shared streets; and

- Promote, facilitate and maintain maximum connectivity and permeability for pedestrians and cyclists in the design and management of new public and private projects and in upgrading and retrofitting existing developments.

Policy 4.6 Road and Street Network and Accessibility

- Support 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;
- Implement improvements on the general road network, including new links and junction revisions where needed in the interest of safety and convenience; and
- Implement best practice in road and street design as set out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) as updated (2019).

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

2.2.5.2 The Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028)

The Galway County Development Plan adopted in May 2022, makes provision for the following objectives of relevance to the Proposed Development

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 3 Sustainable Transport

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 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 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.

2.2.5.3 Galway Transport Strategy 2016

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;
- 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 Screening 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 (Section 2.2.5.2) and GCC Development Plan (Section 2.2.5.3).

The GTS examined several 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 Proposed Development, ‘Cross City Link’, ‘City Centre Access Network’, and ‘Inner City Access Route’.

The BusConnects Dublin Road (i.e. the Proposed Development) is to form a central route for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians along the Dublin Road and tying with the Cross City Link project. 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 BusConnects Dublin Road (i.e. the Proposed Development) 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 along the route, key

facilities such as Bon Secours Hospital and Merlin Park Hospital, Atlantic Technology University (ATU), and Sportsgrounds.

2.2.5.4 GMATS

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has commenced the development of a transport strategy (Transport Strategy) for the Galway Metropolitan Area (GMA) covering a twenty-year period and addressing all land transport modes. The Transport Strategy will provide a long-term strategic planning framework for the delivery of transport and the integrated development of transport infrastructure and services in the GMA and will replace the existing 'Galway Transport Strategy' 2016.

The Bus Connects Galway - Dublin Road scheme is a key transport infrastructure element of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) which was completed in 2016 and facilitated the design of the Galway BusConnects Network Redesign Project. The Galway BusConnects Network was adopted in December 2023 and will be included in the draft GMATS. In this regard, the Bus Connects Galway: Dublin Road scheme will be incorporated into the GMATS as an essential transport infrastructure project, required to deliver the Galway Bus Connects Network.

2.2.5.5 CycleConnects – Galway Cycle Network

Ireland's Cycle Network aims to improve sustainable travel by providing the potential for more trips on a safe, accessible and convenient cycling network, connecting more people to more places. Proposals for cycling links in key cities, towns and villages in each county are included in the plan, in addition to connections between the larger towns, villages and settlements. The plan also incorporates existing and planned cycle routes such as greenways and blueways. The Cycle connects draft proposals have gone through a round of public consultation. It is anticipated that the EIAR screening will be complete in Q4 2024 for this Network.

2.2.5.6 BusConnects Galway New Network Report 2023

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has published its final new bus network for Galway. The redesign of the bus network is one of the nine key elements of BusConnects Galway that aims to fundamentally transform the city's bus system, making public transport more useful to more people. Last year, the NTA carried out an extensive review of the bus network in Galway, in collaboration with Galway City Council, Galway County Council, local bus operators, and with the specialised expertise of transport designers Jarrett Walker and Associates. In April 2023, a draft new network was published, and the feedback and submissions received have informed the final new bus network.

The new bus network will enable more people to avail of public transport resulting in increased access to a greater number of schools and workplaces across Galway City, Bearna and Oranmore. Overall, 67% of residents will live within 400 metres of a high frequency bus route (running every 15 minutes or better).

Chapter 2 of this report 'Route and Network Design Principles' is to be updated.

2.2.5.7 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 Galway City Council 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 Development supports.

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

‘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.’

The Proposed Development through the provision of enhanced public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure along the route corridor will help to achieve GCC’s targets as set out in the Climate Adaptation Strategy.

2.2.5.8 Galway City Climate Action Plan

GCC has prepared this Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) 2024-2029, to create a low carbon and climate resilient City, by delivering and promoting best practice in climate action, at the local level. This is aligned to the Government’s overall National Climate Objective set out in the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development National Policy Position Ireland, which seeks to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

To ensure the vision of this plan is fulfilled the following strategic goals have been identified:

- Reduce climate impacts within the decarbonisation zone by lowering greenhouse gas emissions in line with policy targets without delay;
- Empower the local community to engage with climate action through education, support, and ongoing collaboration;
- Maximise climate and environmental co-benefits using targeted and complementary interventions; and
- Enable socio-economic growth, placemaking and community development aligned to decarbonisation and a just transition.

2.2.5.9 Galway Public Realm Strategy

Galway’s Transport Strategy seeks to redress the balance in favour of pedestrians and cyclists over vehicular traffic and the Public Realm Strategy seeks to capitalise on this by creating a high-quality public realm, made possible by reducing the dominance and upgrading the quality of the physical fabric, hard and soft.

The Strategy aims to *‘promote universal design to help open up the city centre to all and make getting into and moving around the centre much easier’*.

Key measures set out in the plan include:

- Enabling easy access into the city centre by sustainable modes;
- Easing pedestrian movement through dropped kerbs and pedestrian crossings;
- Giving more priority and space to pedestrians; and
- Giving more priority to cyclists through strengthened routes, cycle lanes, cycle-friendly junctions and cycle parking.

The Proposed Development is aligned with this strategy.

2.2.5.10 Local Area Plans within the Galway City Council Area Relevant to the Proposed Development

The Ardaun Local Area Plan (LAP) was adopted by GCC and came into effect in 2018. The relevant objectives to the Proposed Development are outlined below. The LAP sets out a framework to guide the proper planning and sustainable development of the lands at Ardaun from 2018-2024, a central tenet of the City Development Plan. The LAP seeks to create a people and business friendly urban village well connected with the greater city and environs, where a sustainable framework for private and public investment is available.

The Plan includes specific transport objectives for cycling, public transport, and traffic and road network. These key objectives are set out in Strategic Goal 4:

- Facilitate the development of an urban village that is well connected, walkable and accessible and that is so designed to encourage the use of sustainable transport mode;
- Support and facilitate the provision of an integrated public transport network to service Ardaun through the implementation of the GTS and in conjunction with relevant transport providers, NTA and other stakeholders;
- Prioritise the servicing of Ardaun by public transport in the implementation programme of the GTS; and
- Prioritise walking and cycling in Ardaun, that will be supported by a network of walking and cycling routes to promote sustainable transport and permeability to and within Ardaun.

The Proposed Development will deliver the infrastructure necessary to enhance public transport, walking and cycling networks along the route corridor adjoining the LAP area. It will facilitate a modal shift towards public transport and active travel modes which is are key objectives of the Ardaun LAP (2018).

2.2.5.11 Other Plans and Policies

It is noted that several draft plans, policies, and strategies are currently being developed by Galway City Council, the majority of which are still in the early stages and subject to significant change. The majority of these draft documents were unavailable to the project team and its consultants at the time of preparation of this EIAR, and therefore have not been considered in the assessment. Table 2-7 below provides a list of the draft plans and policies and the status of their consideration in this EIAR.

Table 2-7 List of Draft GCC Plans and Policies

Draft Plan/Policy	Drafts Available (Y/N)	Considered in this EIAR
Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS) (NTA)	N	Y
Galway Green Spaces Strategy	N	N
Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030	N	N
GCC Climate Action Plan 2024-2029	Y	Y
GCC Emergency Management Plan	N	N
GCC Noise Action Plan 2024-2028	Y	Y
Galway City Council Heritage Plan	Y	Y
Local & Economic Community Plan 2024 – 2029	N	N
Galway City Retail Strategy	N	N
Galway City Tourism Destination and Experience Plan (Faillte Ireland)	N	N

2.3 Transport Need

In preparing the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) a number of studies were undertaken by GCC and the National Transport Authority (NTA) to assess the need and demand for transport improvements in Galway City and the surrounding areas. In these studies, transport demand and supply issues were examined, and the transport interventions required to meet future demand were derived. The recommendations from these studies have been taken on board in the formulation of the GTS.

The following sections provide a summary of the need for transport solutions to help Galway City and the surrounding areas achieve sustainable growth and the vision of the GTS for Galway: *‘a connected city region driven by smarter mobility.’*

2.3.1 Current Issues Affecting the Transport Network

2.3.1.1 Current Issues Affecting the Transport Network

A number of specific characteristics of Galway City and environs result in significant problems and inefficiencies with respect to the movement of people and goods, including:

- An over-reliance on private cars;
- Peak hour congestion and journey time unreliability for all motorised transport;
- Safety concerns as a result of traffic congestion;
- Many key junctions within the city and environs operating at or over capacity;
- Connectivity issues on the National and Regional Road networks resulting in significant volumes of cross-county and strategic travel demand between east and west Galway being concentrated and funnelled through the city area in order to cross the River Corrib;
- The pattern of residential development in the area, along with the location of employment destinations, generating a large amount of cross-city as well as city-bound travel demand;
- Large amounts of residential development located proximate to major employment and educational destinations city-wide, but not readily accessible by walking, cycling or public transport, thereby encouraging travel by private car;
- The short distance between Lough Corrib and Galway Bay, two significant natural physical constraints impacting upon the city;
- A natural barrier to cross-city and cross-county travel formed by Lough Corrib, the River Corrib and Galway Bay, with the three principal river crossings experiencing heavy traffic flows, leading to congestion and delay;
- The position of Galway City as a major regional centre for employment and education for a large geographical area, leading to large numbers of long-distance commuters for whom public transport is not currently a viable option, which leads to greater numbers of cars entering the city;
- The impact of traffic congestion on the City's reputation, particularly with regard to inward development;
- The suburban nature of much of the residential areas, and the wide distribution of jobs across a number of central and non-central locations, which lead to a situation where travel by public transport is not a viable option for many journeys;
- Long journey times and delays on the current bus network, due in part to the limited available road space in the city centre for introducing bus priority which both reduces its attractiveness to passengers and increases costs of operating; and
- Limited road space on most of the principal roads, which reduces opportunities for safe and comfortable cycling.

2.3.2 The Pedestrian Network

The GTS identified areas of Galway City where the quality of the pedestrian facilities is deficient and where private and public vehicular traffic impacts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

There are streets throughout Galway City and environs with substandard or missing footpaths, limited or no crossing facilities, and permeability issues resulting from the manner in which residential areas have been developed. Some suburban residential areas are accessible by direct routes, but these are substandard and not suitable for use by mobility impaired pedestrians. Other residential areas have no footpaths provided for pedestrian access to main thoroughfares. The absence of permeability within housing areas often leads to excessively circuitous trips for pedestrians to walk relatively short distances. Within a ‘walkable city’, all of these factors discourage walking as an active travel mode for short trips. In order to address this, the GTS aims:

- To provide improvements for pedestrians along city centre public transport corridors;
- To increase priority given to pedestrians over road traffic;

- To increase legibility and wayfinding; and
- To increase the quality, comfort and safety of the pedestrian facilities.

The GTS identifies measures to ensure that the needs of pedestrians, including the mobility impaired and disabled, are fully considered in the design of all new facilities and upgrades of existing facilities. Measures include:

- Revision of road junction layouts, where appropriate, to provide dedicated pedestrian crossings, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, provide more direct pedestrian routes and reduce the speed of turning traffic;
- Creation of permeable pedestrian environments in residential areas, amenable to walking, and maximising accessibility to the proposed bus network;
- In conjunction with An Garda Síochána, evaluate, and where appropriate seek the introduction of, lower speed limits in the core city centre area and on residential streets;
- Cooperation with other agencies in the enforcement of laws in relation to parking on footpaths; and
- Removal of unnecessary street clutter to facilitate ease of movement along streets and through 'places'.

The Proposed Development affords the opportunity to implement the measures identified in the GTS and improve the pedestrian environment along the route of the Proposed Development, while taking cognisance of, and supporting pedestrian and public realm planning objectives locally. Refer to Chapter 6 (Traffic & Transport) of this EIAR for an assessment of the Proposed Development for an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on the pedestrian network.

2.3.3 The Cycle Network

Although Galway City's generally flat topography is conducive to cycling, the GTS reports that the modal share of all journeys by bicycle was 5% in 2016, which is relatively low. Similar to the bus network (see Section 2.3.4), the existing network of cycle infrastructure is limited and discontinuous. Furthermore, the volume of vehicular traffic on the narrow city centre streets also contributes to an environment that is neither appealing nor perceived as safe for cycling.

While there have been numerous cycle network improvements in recent years, not least the roll-out of the Bike Share Scheme, and several schemes in development aimed at enhancing the network, the cycling environment remains limited. Figure 2-3 indicates the extent of the cycle network as reported in the GTS in 2016.



- To provide a primary 'trunk' cycle network which will provide a convenient and safe route for medium-distance radial commuter/leisure journeys;
- To provide a secondary cycle network which will provide a recognisable grid network for local journeys and will be connected to the primary network for longer journeys;
- To provide feeder cycle links on streets and roads which are highly constrained or more suited to other modes but need to cater for cyclists also. These are generally cycle-friendly advisory routes where traffic calming, and management measures allow cyclists and motorists to mix safely; and
- To increase options for cycling in and across the city centre which will remove through traffic from the city centre. This will create a shared environment where cyclists can safely use the street network.

- **Green Route and Primary Routes:** are generally either segregated, off-road cycle only paths, or dedicated cycle lanes along new or existing roads. Wherever possible, these routes are separated from traffic by kerbs or edge markings;
- **Secondary Routes:** are a combination of off-road cycle paths, cycle lanes along existing roads, shared bus and cycle lanes, and traffic-calmed roads. They often run parallel to primary routes, providing an alternative link; and
- **Feeder Routes:** links that are generally cycle-friendly advisory routes where traffic calming and management measures allow cyclists and motorists to mix safely.

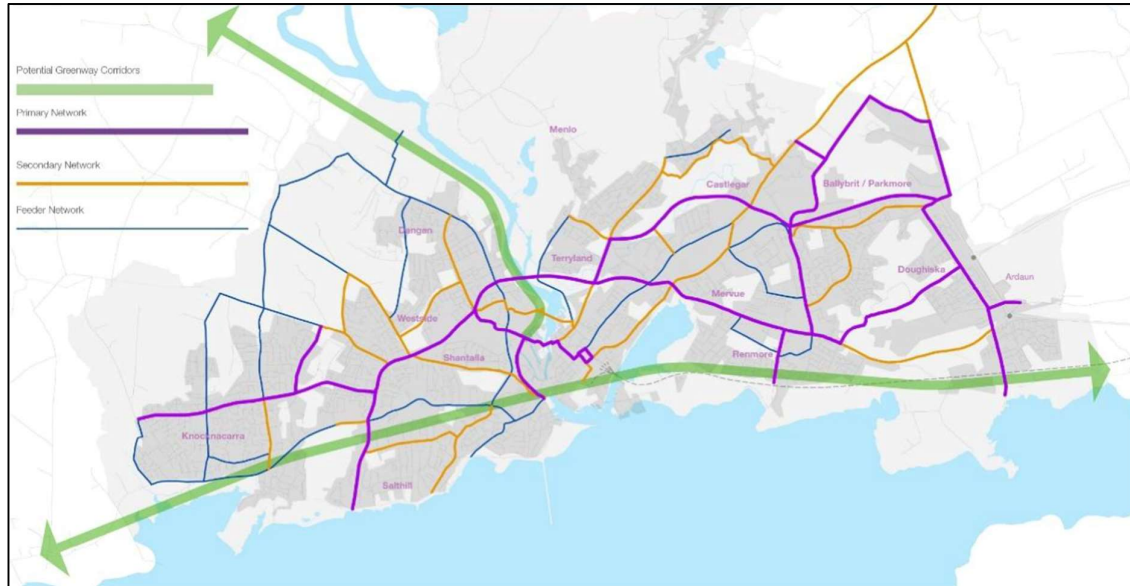


Figure 2-4 Cycle Network Proposed in the GTS (GTS, 2016)

The physical infrastructure measures identified in the GTS and proposed as part of the Proposed Development include the measures identified in Figure 2-5 and Table 2-8.

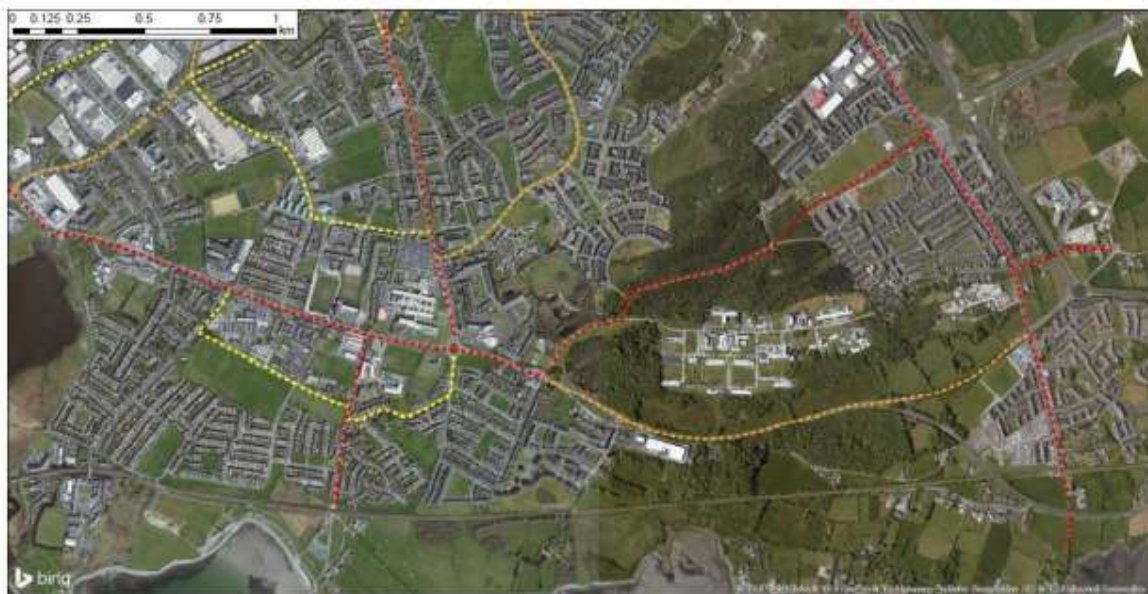


Figure 2-5 Cycling Infrastructure Measures – Renmore and Dublin Road (GTS, 2016)

Table 2-8 Cycling Infrastructure Measures (GTS, 2016) Relevant to the Proposed Development

Location	Cycling Infrastructure Measures proposed by GTS	Category
Dublin Road	Two-way segregated cycleway on southern side of the road in the vicinity of Moneenageisha, crossing the Dublin Road and continuing along the northern side of the road as far as the current entrance to Merlin Park Hospital.	Primary

Location	Cycling Infrastructure Measures proposed by GTS	Category
Dublin Road	From Doughiska Road to Merlin Park Gate extend bus lanes along full length of Dublin Road which may be used by cyclists.	Secondary
Merlin Park	New entrance to be provided for Merlin Park. Existing entrance to be maintained for cyclist and pedestrian use only.	Primary
Renmore Road/ Renmore Avenue / Rowan Avenue	Provide traffic calming measures, reduce motorised traffic.	Feeder

In addition to the physical cycle infrastructure measures identified in Table 2-8 above, the GTS proposed cycle network will require traffic management measures to provide an environment that welcomes cyclists. The Proposed Development is an important element in achieving the aims of the GTS, providing priority for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport vehicles.

Refer to Chapter 6 (Traffic and Transport) of this EIAR for an assessment of the Proposed Development for an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on the cycle network.

2.3.4 The Bus Network

The existing bus network within Galway City and suburbs is shown in Figure 2-6. It can be clearly seen that Dublin Road is one of the busiest routes with the highest AM peak frequency.

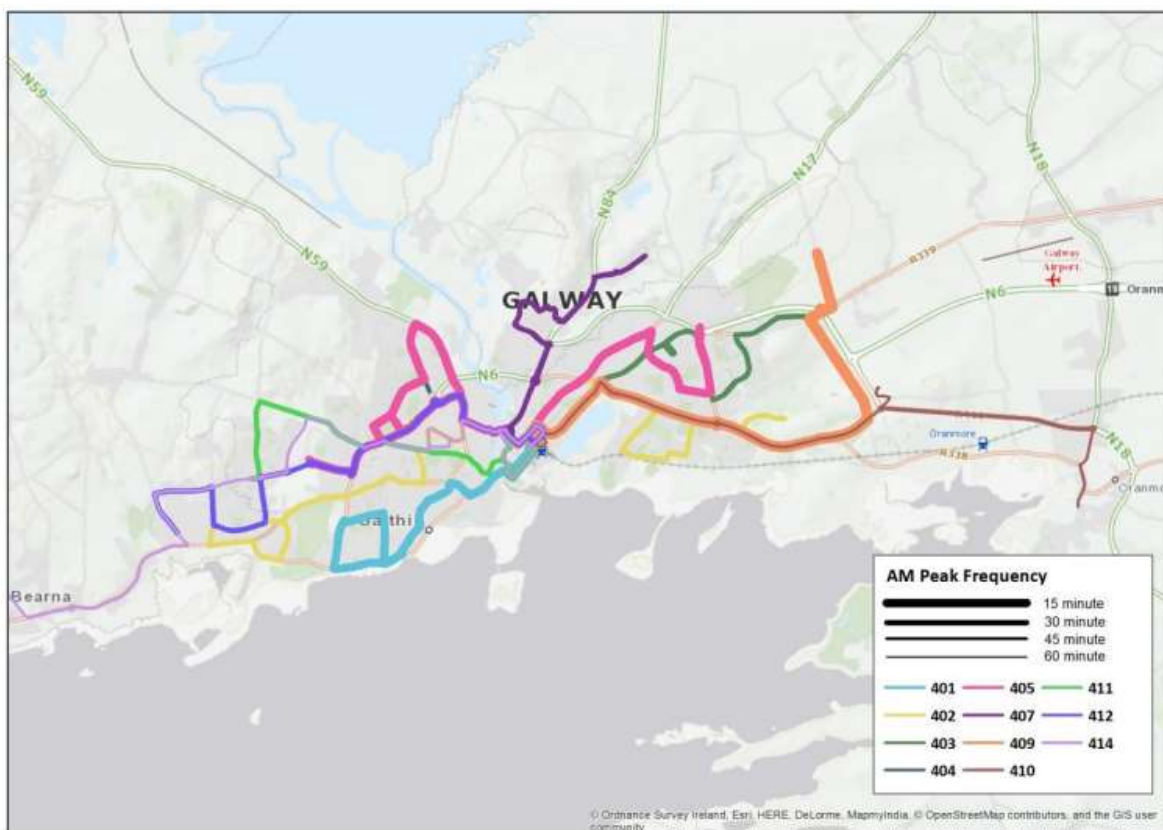


Figure 2-6 Existing Bus Network (GTS, 2016)

The existing extend of bus priority within Galway City and the corresponding existing bus network within the city and suburbs are shown in Figure 2-7. There is a total of approximately 10.4km of dedicated bus lanes in Galway City (GTS, 2016) and suburbs of which, almost 30% are outside the city, near Baile Chláir. Sections of the existing network where there is no designated priority are therefore completely dependent on prevailing traffic conditions, with reliability of public transport services impacted by traffic congestion. Refer to Chapter 6 (Traffic and Transport) of this EiAR for an assessment of the Proposed Development on the bus network.



Figure 2-7 Existing Bus Priority Infrastructure (GTS, 2016)

The absence of dedicated bus priority (both physical, e.g., bus lanes and / or supporting traffic management measures) compromises the reliability of the existing public transport service offering, and therefore reduces the appeal of the bus services available (local, regional and inter-city). In addition, congestion and delay on the road and street network quickly propagates and impacts on the bus service where there is no priority and the bus must merge with general traffic, undermining the public transport service further.

GTS Appendix C 'GTS Public Transport Network Development', presents the Galway City Bus Network (envisaged in 2016), which proposes several bus network routes (Figure 2-8):

- Green Route: Knocknacarra – City Centre – Parkmore Industrial Estate (via Seamus Quirke Road and Dublin Road);
- Red Route: Knocknacarra – City Centre – Parkmore Industrial Estate (via Salthill and Ballybrit Industrial Estate);
- Blue Route: Clybaun Road – City Centre – Castlegar (via Dr Mannix Road and Tirellan);
- Yellow Route: Dangan – City Centre – Parkmore Industrial Estate (via Westside Shopping Centre and Castlepark); and
- Brown Route: Bearna – City Centre – Oranmore (via Seamus Quirke Road and Deerpark Industrial Estate).

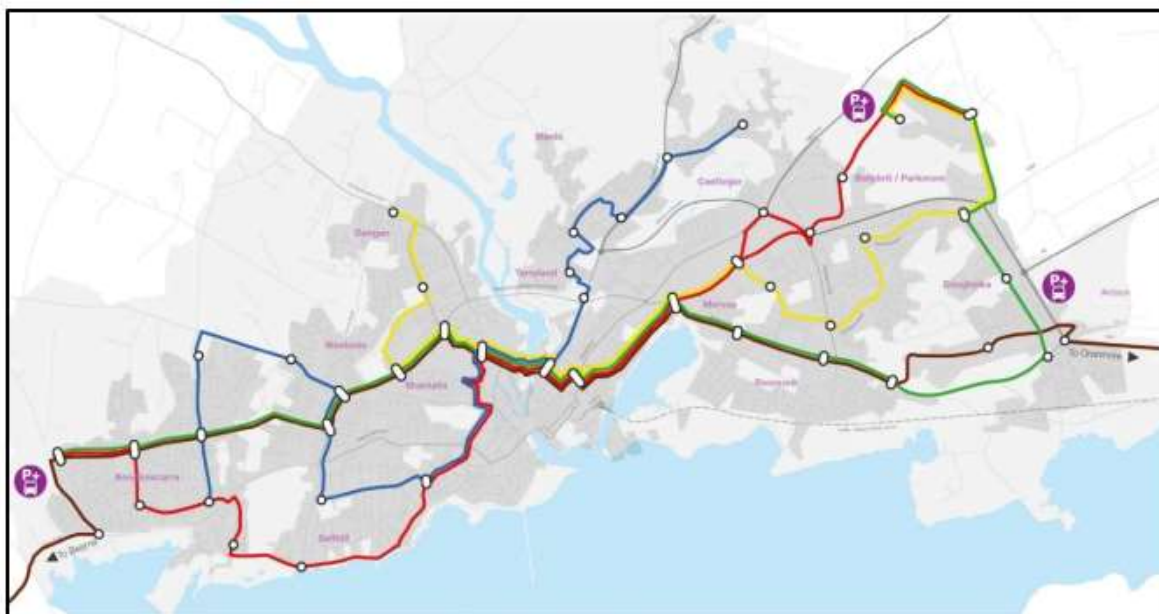


Figure 2-8 Galway City Bus Network Proposed Routes (GTS, 2016)

While the future bus network will continuously be required to adapt to changing travel demands, as is the case with the majority of existing bus services, all the bus services routes identified in the GTS, are supported in terms of the infrastructure and traffic management measures provided by the Proposed Development.

The Galway City Bus Network (Figure 2-8) has been developed on the basis of service frequency and catchment areas. The aspiration of GTS is that all routes will operate at a 15-minute frequency (or better) during the peak period. Within the GTS study area there are circa 35,000 properties, 90% of which are residential. It is the intention of the GTS to ensure that as many of these properties as possible are within 10 minutes walking distance of a bus service.

According to Bus Connects Galway Network 2023, the new bus network shown in Figure 2-9 will enable more people to avail of public transport resulting in increased access to a greater number of schools and workplaces across Galway City, Banna and Oranmore. Overall, 67% of residents will live within 400 metres of a high frequency bus route (running every 15 minutes or better).



Figure 2-9 Galway New Bus Network Proposed Routes (BCGN, 2023)

The physical infrastructure and traffic management measures identified in the GTS and proposed as part of the Proposed Development include the measures presented in Figure 2-10 and Table 2-9.

Table 2-9 Galway City Bus Network Bus Priority Infrastructure Measures proposed by the GTS (GTS, 2016)

Location	Infrastructure
R338 Dublin Road	Bus lane inbound on approach to Moneenageisha Cross
R338 Dublin Road	Extension of existing bus lane outbound as far as Skerrit Roundabout.
Merlin Park Hospital	Bus priority at new entrance to hospital from the Old Dublin Road



Figure 2-10 Galway City Bus Priority Infrastructure (GTS, 2016)

The GTS states that it is intended that dedicated bus infrastructure will be developed to the greatest extent possible along the core routes in order to deliver continuous bus priority on the approaches to the city and through the core city centre area.

Refer to Chapter 6: (Traffic and Transport) of this EIAR for an assessment of the Proposed Development for an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on the bus network.

2.4 Benefits of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development 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. Central to the design is the optimisation of roadway space with a focus on the movement of people rather than vehicles along the route and through the junctions. A typical double-deck bus takes up the same road space as three standard cars but typically carries 50-100 times the number of passengers per vehicle.

On average, a typical double-deck bus carries approximately 60-70 passengers making the bus typically 20 times more efficient in providing people movement capacity within the equivalent spatial area of three cars. These efficiency gains can provide a significant reduction in road network congestion where the equivalent car capacity would require 50 or more vehicles based on average occupancy levels. Consequently, by prioritising the movement of bus over cars, significantly more people can be transported along the limited road space available. Similarly, cyclists and pedestrians require significantly less roadway space than general traffic users to move safely and efficiently along the route. Making space for improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure can significantly benefit these sustainable modes and encourage greater use of these modes.

The Proposed Development design involves the prioritisation of people movement, focusing on maximising the throughput of sustainable modes (i.e. walking, cycling and bus modes). A quantitative people-movement assessment, as part of the transport impact assessment, facilitates a comparison of the Do Minimum and Do Something peak-hour scenarios for the forecast years (2028 and 2043). For public transport, we see the

biggest increases in the eastbound direction along the corridor, particularly in the PM (23%), given the volume of flows which use the corridor to exit the city and given there is no existing bus lane in this direction. As such, we see a bigger impact for public transport numbers in this direction, compared with the westbound, which already has a good coverage of bus lane.

Despite the general growth in traffic levels between 2028 and 2043, traffic along the corridor is generally either reducing or increasing at marginal levels and any increases in general traffic are related to minor levels of traffic redistribution. Sustainable modes on the other hand see an increase between 2028 and 2043 (23%). This shows that car trips – unlike public transport, walking and cycling - do not grow in line with population. Therefore, the Proposed Development is providing a substantial opportunity for growth of sustainable modes whilst it discourages car usage along the corridor.

The transport modelling also presents demand outputs for people movement by bus in terms of passenger loadings along the corridor. The results indicate that the improvements in bus priority infrastructure with the Proposed Development in place show a substantial increase in bus patronage during the peak hours.

Figure 2-11 presents the passenger loading profile comparing the Do Minimum and Do Something scenarios in the AM Peak Hour in the eastbound direction in 2028. The figure above shows higher levels of bus passenger loadings along the Proposed Development. The volume of passengers is at its peak at Renmore Park, with an approx. volume of 680 passengers in the AM Peak hour, compared to approximately 650 in the Do Minimum scenario.

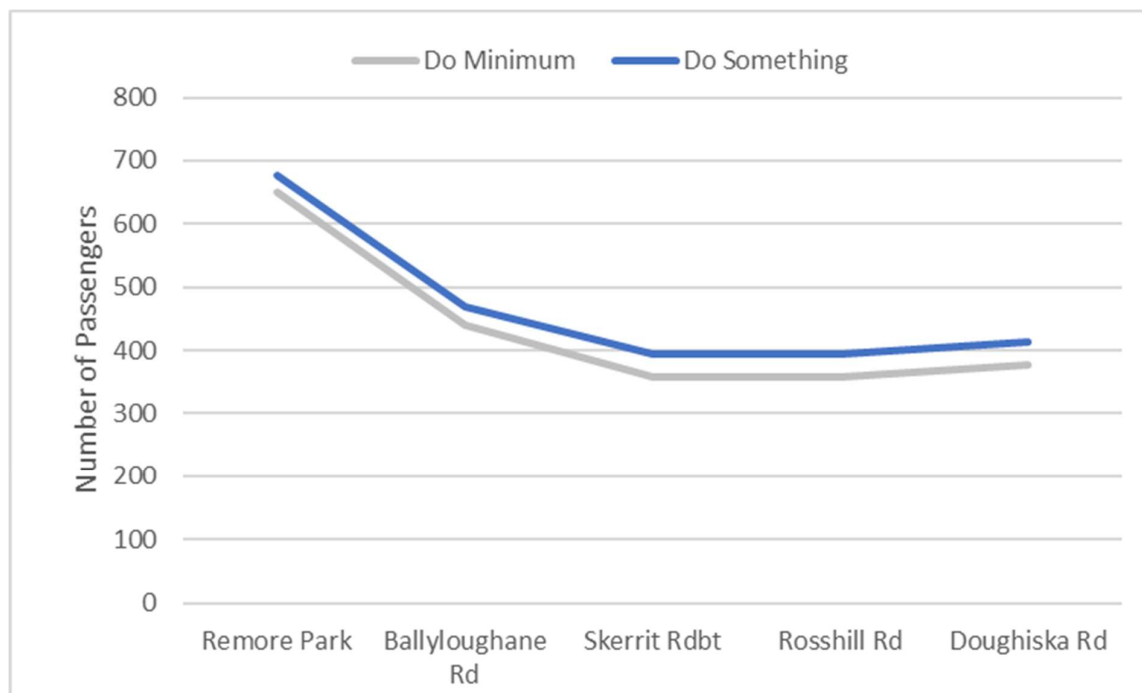


Figure 2-11 2028 AM Peak Hour Passenger Volume along Proposed Development (eastbound direction)

Figure 2-11 presents the passenger loading profile comparing the Do Minimum and Do Something scenarios in the PM Peak Hour in the eastbound direction in 2028. shows higher levels of bus passenger loadings along the Proposed Development. The volume of passengers is at its peak at Renmore Park, with an approx. volume of 980 passengers in the PM Peak hour, compared to approximately 800 in the Do Minimum scenario.

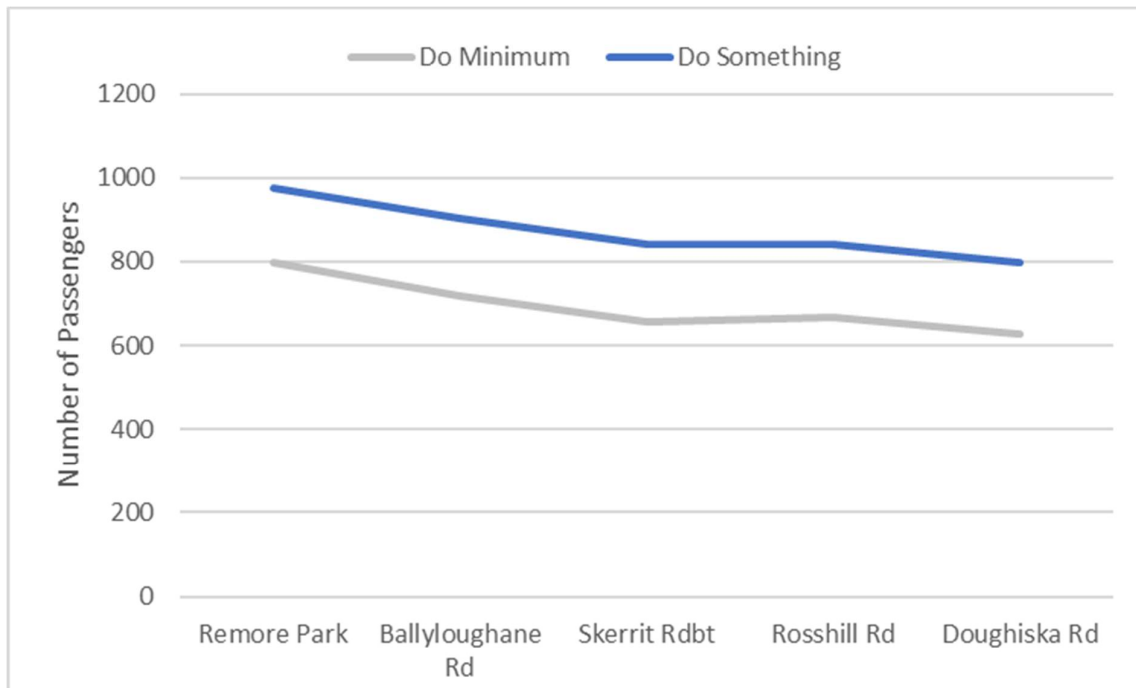


Figure 2-12 2028 PM Peak Hour Passenger Volume along Proposed Development (eastbound direction)

The Proposed Development will also deliver average journey time savings in the 2028 Opening Year for eastbound bus passengers of up to 9 minutes (37%) during the AM peak hour and 12 minutes (40%) in the PM peak hour.

A key objective of the Proposed Development is to enhance the potential for cycling along the route. Without the provision of safe cycling infrastructure, intended as part of the Proposed Development the quality of service along the route would be insufficient to attract new cyclists. Currently within the existing extents of the Proposed Development there are no segregated cycle tracks on the route outbound or inbound. This will increase to 100% of the route all of which will be fully segregated. The Proposed Development is implementing safe, segregated infrastructure throughout and as such is greatly enhancing the potential for cycling along the route in line with the objectives set out in Section 2.1.

The Proposed Development will make significant improvements to pedestrian infrastructure through the provision of increased signal crossings, introduction of traffic calming measures, improved accessibility, increased pedestrian directness and wider footpath and crossing. The Proposed Development design has been developed with cognisance to the relevant accessibility guidance. It is anticipated that the overall quality of pedestrian infrastructure will improve as a result of the Proposed Development. This aligns with the overarching aim to provide enhanced walking infrastructure on the corridor. The improved walking and cycling measures that the Proposed Development will provide will enhance the potential to grow these modes into the future.

An assessment of transport impact arising from the delivery of the Proposed Development is presented in Chapter 6 (Traffic & Transport) of this EIA. The Proposed Development will address sustainable mode transport infrastructure constraints while contributing to an overall integrated sustainable transport system as proposed in the Galway Transport Strategy. It will increase the effectiveness and attractiveness of bus services operating along the corridor and will result in more people benefiting from faster journey times and improved journey time reliability.

This in turn will facilitate the increase in the bus network capacity of services operating along the corridor and thereby further increase the attractiveness of public transport. In addition, the significant segregation and safety improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure that are a key feature of the Proposed

Development will further maximise the movement of people travelling sustainably along the corridor and will therefore cater for higher levels of future sustainable population and employment growth.

In the absence of the delivery of the Proposed Development, growth along this key corridor would continue to contribute to increased congestion and operational issues on the road network. The Proposed Development delivers a reliable alternative to car-based travel that can support future sustainable growth and provide a positive contribution towards reducing carbon emissions. The absence of walking and cycling measures that the Proposed Development will provide would significantly limit the potential to grow those modes into the future. In addition to the public transport benefits, the Proposed Development will also locally 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 complementary planting regime and streetscape improvements at key locations will also enhance the character of the surrounding built environment along the corridor.

The Proposed Development and its objectives fit within the current planning frameworks that are described in Section 2.2. The Proposed Development will help deliver many of the objectives on an international, national, regional and local level.

Overall, the Proposed Development will make a significant contribution to the overall aims and objectives of BusConnects, the Galway Transport Strategy and allow the city and its environs to grow sustainably into the future, which would not be possible in the absence of the Proposed Development.

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