

## 2. Planning and Policy Context

### 2.1 Introduction

As set out in Chapter 1 of this updated EIAR, this is an update to Chapter 2 of the EIAR submitted to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) in October 2018 as part of the application for approval of the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road (the “N6 GCRR”) pursuant to Section 51 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended). It forms part of the response to the request by ABP for further information in December 2023 where it requested GCC to “*Update the Environmental Impact Assessment Report*”.

The proposed N6 GCRR, the subject of this application for approval under Section 51 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), comprises the construction of approximately 5.6km of a single carriageway from the western side of Bearna as far as the Ballymoneen Road and approximately 11.9km of dual carriageway from Ballymoneen Road to the eastern tie in with the existing N6 at Coolagh, Briarhill, and associated link roads, side roads, junctions, structures and localised works to the existing electricity transmission and distribution networks (specifically comprising of the diversion of the 110kV and 38kV services). The section of the proposed N6 GCRR from the tie-in with the R336 Coast Road to the N59 Letteragh Junction is a protected road<sup>1</sup> and the section from this junction to the tie-in with the existing N6 at Coolagh, Briarhill is a motorway. This overview of the proposed N6 GCRR remains as per the application for approval in 2018.

In its decision on the application for approval, made in respect of the proposed N6 GCRR on 6 December 2021 (ref. no. ABP-302848-18) and while noting that this decision was quashed with the consent of ABP, ABP had in that decision imposed a condition which required the omission of the permanent stables at Galway Racecourse. Arising from that position, in order to ensure the functionality of Galway Racecourse during the construction and operation of the proposed N6 GCRR, Galway Race Committee Trust applied for planning permission for temporary and permanent stables and associated development and that application by the racecourse was granted permission by Galway City Council on 2 December 2024 (Reference 24/60279). This represents a change from the application for approval in 2018 whereby both the temporary and permanent stables formed part of the application for approval of the proposed N6 GCRR pursuant to Section 51 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).

Therefore, whilst the applications for development consent in relation to the proposed N6 GCRR (the “Section 51 approval application”) and in respect of the proposed development at Galway Racecourse (“the Galway Racecourse planning application”), are being progressed separately, those developments form part of the Project which is examined and assessed in this updated EIAR.

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the relevant strategic and statutory land use planning policy context and strategic transport policy context for the proposed N6 GCRR. Where there have been developments in planning policy since the 2018 EIAR due to new policies, evolving policies and policy updates, these have been set out in this updated chapter.

Please refer to Chapter 5, Description of the Project for description and overview of the proposed N6 GCRR route.

This chapter sets out the current strategic transport policy and objectives, and the planning policy and objectives pertinent to the proposed N6 GCRR.

It is set out as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> A protected road means a public road or proposed public road specified to be a protected road in a protected road scheme approved by the An Bord Pleanála. A protected road scheme approved by An Bord Pleanála may provide for the prohibition, closure, stopping up, removal, alteration, diversion or restriction of any specified or all means of direct access to the protected road from specified land or from specified land used for a specified purpose or to such land from the protected road.

- European Context (Section 2.2)
- National Objectives (Section 2.3)
- Regional Policies, Guidance and Objectives (Section 2.4)
- Local Policies, Guidance and Objectives (Section 2.5)

An overall conclusion demonstrating the manner in which the European, national, regional and local policies support the proposed N6 GCRR is included in Section 2.6 and references in Section 2.7.

The proposed N6 GCRR is consistent with current transport policy and planning policy as set out in the various policy documents over the past number of years including all updates and new policies of relevance which have evolved in the interim since 2018. Specific details for each of the policies and the manner in which the proposed N6 GCRR complies with these, and more local and regional policies, are outlined below.

At European level, the proposed N6 GCRR is part of the comprehensive network under the trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) which sets out the transport infrastructure required to serve long-distance freight and passenger traffic, integrate the main urban and economic centres in the European Union and interconnect with other transport modes. Following a realignment of the TEN-T network in response to Brexit, Ireland is on two European Transport Corridors under TEN-T, namely the Atlantic Corridor and the North Sea - Rhine Mediterranean Corridor.

At national level, in addition to the publication of the National Planning Framework in February 2018, prior to the submission of the application for approval to ABP, the following updates have occurred to national policy after the submission of the application for approval under Section 51:

- Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 has been superseded by the new ten-year National Development Plan 2021 to 2030 which accompanies the National Planning Framework (the “NPF”)
- Smarter Travel, A sustainable Transport Future, 2009 and Irelands National Cycle Policy Framework, 2009 to 2020 has been superseded by National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 and National Sustainability Mobility Policy Action Plan (2022-2025)
- Forfás Regional Competitive Agendas has been replaced by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and are addressed under regional policy
- The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 was amended in 2021 by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. Since its amendment in 2021, a number of Climate Action Plans have been introduced under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended), the most recent being the Climate Action Plan 2024
- National Mitigation Plan 2017 was the first step in identifying the challenge facing Ireland to meet the challenges for climate by 2050. It is now addressed under Climate Action Plan 2024
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016) and Update 2015-2017 has been superseded by the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025

At regional level, the most significant change is that the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region (2010-2022) have been replaced and updated with the publication of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region (2020-2032). The RSES gives effect to the National Policy Objectives (NPO) in the National Planning Framework. Galway is one of five cities targeted for growth in population and employment in the NPF. In accordance with NPO 67, it is a requirement to prepare a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan for Galway to address the wider city region through the RSES process. The Galway MASP is set out in Volume 2 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.

At local level, the cycle of updates to the City and County Development Plans and associated local area plans have been updated as follows:

- Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 replaces Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 replaces Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021

- The objectives of the Gaeltacht Local Area Plan, 2008-2018 has been incorporated into Chapter 13 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Volume 3 of the Galway County Development Plan comprises the Galway County Transport and Planning Study
- Údarás na Gaeltacht Strategic Plan, 2021-2025 replaces Údarás na Gaeltacht Strategic Plan, 2014-2017

## 2.2 European Context

### 2.2.1 Background European Policy

The first EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) in 2001 was a framework for a long-term vision of sustainability in which economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection go hand in hand and are mutually supporting. It focussed on climate change, public health, poverty and social inclusion, the ageing population, mobility and transport as well as management of natural resources, all of which are as much of relevance today as they were in 2001.

This was reviewed in 2009 and the subsequent Europe 2020<sup>2</sup> strategy of 2010 set out two flagship initiatives under the sustainable growth priority to tackle the issue of sustainable transport, again all of which is relevant in 2025:

‘Resource efficient Europe’ supports the shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy. This flagship initiative provides a framework for actions in many policy areas including transport. One of the key components is a roadmap presenting a vision for a transport system by 2050 that promotes clean technologies

‘An industrial policy for the globalisation era’ highlights ten key actions for European industrial competitiveness, including a more efficient European transport infrastructure and services.

This Europe 2020 Strategy set out where the EU wanted to be by 2020, and this included an increase to 30% of emissions reduction.

This was also reflected globally whereby the world’s heads of state and government adopted 17 Global Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the UN Summit on 25 September 2015. The countries of the world committed to leading the world towards a sustainable and equitable future, beginning on 1 January 2016 and continuing until 2030.

The Global Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development seek to end poverty and hunger, realise the human rights of all, achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. The Global Goals are integrated and indivisible, and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>



**Plate 2.1 UN Global Goals**

Of particular relevance to the proposed N6 GCRR are Goals 9 and 11.

**Goal 9** seeks to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation. Investments in infrastructure such as transport is crucial to achieving sustainable development and empowering communities. To achieve Goal 9 by 2030, it is essential to lower carbon emissions.

**Goal 11** is about making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. By 2030, the aim is to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety.

Since the COVID pandemic in 2020 and political uncertainties in Europe, Europe has prepared a recovery plan with a budget for seven years which continues to focus on building a greener and a more resilient Europe.

It is within this broader EU policy context that the Project is set. The Project meets these objectives by providing the necessary infrastructure to support the economic growth of Galway and the Northern and Western Region and will enable other public projects be realised and facilitates the effective implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy which includes improved public transport, walking and cycling measures for Galway City and its environs. The objectives of each of the policies are examined to demonstrate the role of the Project in delivering on these two goals.

### 2.2.2 TEN-T Connecting Europe

Since January 2014, the European Union (EU) transport infrastructure policy, based on Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013, entitled *Infrastructure - TEN-T - Connecting Europe* that connects the continent between East and West, North and South has been evolving. This policy ‘fosters efficient transportation for people and goods, ensures access to jobs and services, and enables trade and economic growth. It strengthens the EU’s economic, social and territorial cohesion and creates seamless transport systems across borders, without gaps, bottlenecks or missing links. In particular since its revision in 2024, it also aims to reduce the environmental and climate impact of transport and to increase the safety and the resilience of the network.’.

In June 2024, Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of the European Parliament repealed Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013 and amended Regulations (EU) 2021/1153 and (EU) No. 913/2010 to give effect to a modified trans-European transport network in a post-Brexit European Union.

The EU’s trans-European transport network policy, the TEN-T policy, is a key instrument for planning and developing a coherent, efficient, multimodal, and high-quality transport infrastructure across the EU. The network comprises railways, inland waterways, short sea shipping routes and roads linking urban nodes, maritime and inland ports, airports and terminals. It fosters efficient transportation for people and goods, ensures access to jobs and services, and enables trade and economic growth. It strengthens the EU’s economic, social and territorial cohesion and creates seamless transport systems across borders, without

gaps, bottlenecks or missing links. In particular since its revision in 2024, the policy also aims to reduce the environmental and climate impact of transport and to increase the safety and the resilience of the network<sup>3</sup>.

The trans-European transport network consists of three layers, the core network, the extended core network and the comprehensive network. Article 6 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 set out the deadlines for the gradual development of the TEN-T network in three stages with the overall aim to realise a multi-modal EU-wide network of high quality while respecting the overall Union climate neutrality and environmental objectives. The core network includes the most important connections between major cities and nodes to be completed by 2030. The extended core network needs to be completed ten years later in 2040. The comprehensive network connects all regions of the EU to the core network and needs to be completed by 2050.

Comprehensive Network	Extended Core Network	Core Network
All European regions and is to be completed by 2050.	Subset of comprehensive network to be completed as a matter of priority by 2040.	Subset of comprehensive network to be completed as a matter of priority by 2030.

*The comprehensive network shall consist of all existing and planned transport infrastructures of the trans-European transport network as well as measures promoting the efficient, and socially and environmentally sustainable, use of such infrastructure. [Article 6(2) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1679].*

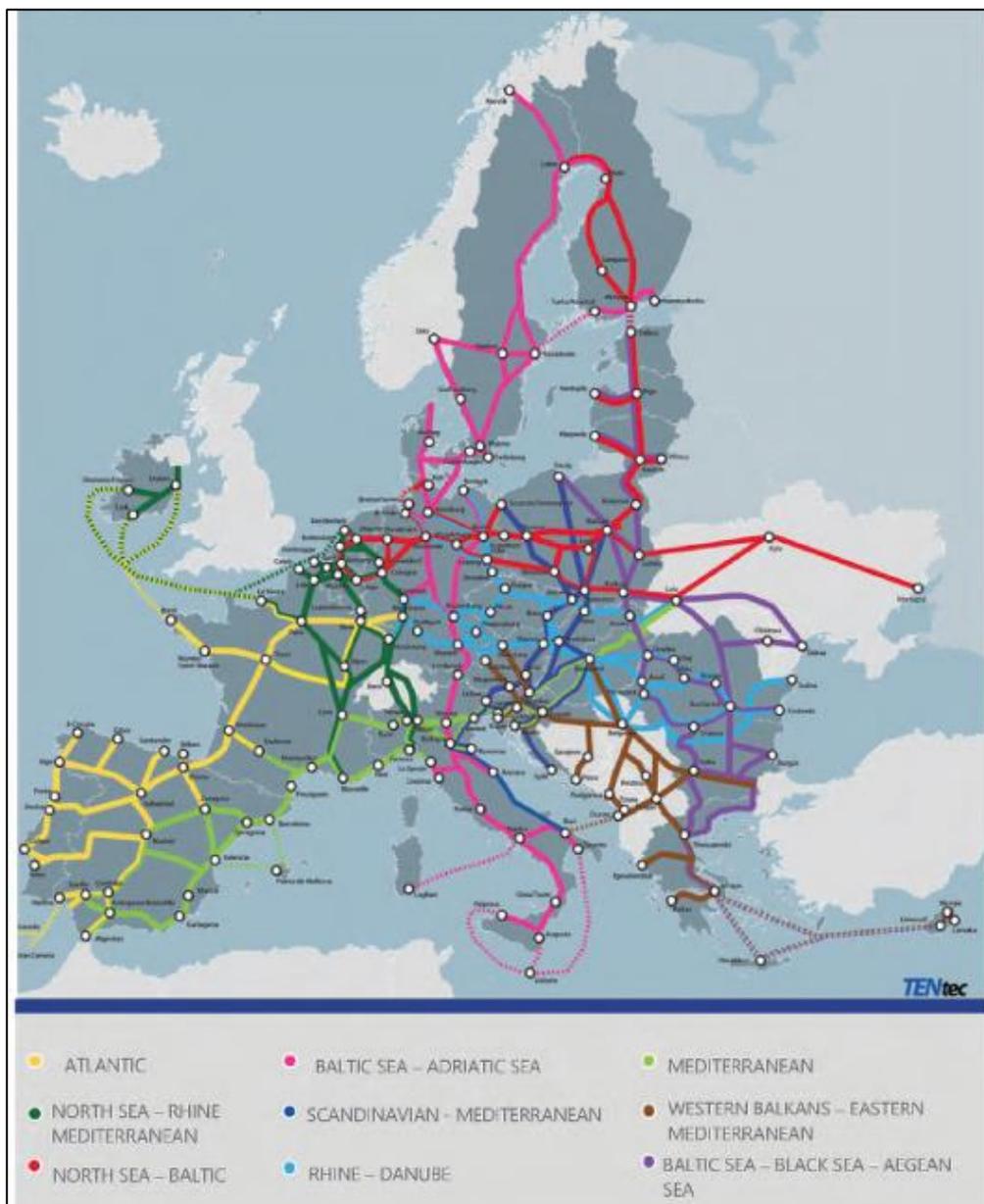


**Plate 2.2 TEN-T Network Ireland (Source Transport Infrastructure Ireland)**

<sup>3</sup> [https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t\\_en#:~:text=TEN%2DT%20Regulation,coherent%20quality%20throughout%20the%20EU.](https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t_en#:~:text=TEN%2DT%20Regulation,coherent%20quality%20throughout%20the%20EU.)

The proposed N6 GCRR is part of the comprehensive road network<sup>4</sup> shown in Plate 2.2 above and is a strategic link in the road network in the West Region and will fulfil its strategic function in accordance with European Union TEN-T transport policy. Clearly, the comprehensive road network, as identified in TEN-T, comprises a strategic link to Galway City and onwards connections to the national and regional road network beyond Galway City. The N83, N84 and N59 are key national road linkages serving the north and west of County Galway and the R336 is a key regional road serving Rossaveel Port and the Connemara coastline.

Brexit saw a realignment of the EU TEN-T Network. Ireland is part of the North Sea - Rhine Mediterranean Corridor, which runs from Ireland to the south coast of France via Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Prior to Brexit, the UK was also on this corridor. Following a 2021 realignment, Ireland has joined the Atlantic Corridor and is part of two TEN-T European Transport Corridors for the first time (Plate 2.3 below).



**Plate 2.3 European Transport Corridors (Annex III – Regulation (EU) 2024/1679)**

<sup>4</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/map/maps.html>

The delivery of the core network and extended core network, which are those parts of the major transport corridors connecting Europe to be developed as a priority for achieving the objectives for the development of the TEN-T network, as per Article 6(3) of the EU Regulation, is supported by the comprehensive network.

Article 12 sets out the **General priorities for the core network, the extended core network and the comprehensive network** including the following under Article 12(1) and 12(2):

*1. In the development of the core network, the extended core network and the comprehensive network, general priority shall be given to measures that are necessary for:*

*(a) increasing the share and, where relevant, the capacity of more sustainable transport for freight and passengers, in particular with a view to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution and increasing the social and economic benefits derived from transport;*

*(b) ensuring enhanced accessibility and connectivity for all regions of the Union while taking into consideration territorial and social cohesion, and including the specific case of the outermost regions and other remote, insular, peripheral and mountainous regions, as well as sparsely populated areas;*

*(c) ensuring optimal integration of the transport modes and interoperability between transport modes, including active modes of mobility in urban areas;*

*(d) bridging missing links and removing bottlenecks, particularly in cross-border sections;*

*(e) deploying the necessary infrastructure which ensures a seamless circulation of zero and low emission vehicles, and of vessels and aircrafts using fuels which contribute to transport emission reduction and increased energy security;*

*(f) promoting the efficient, seamless and sustainable use of the infrastructure and, where necessary, increasing capacity;*

*(g) keeping existing infrastructure operational and improving or maintaining its quality in terms of safety, security, efficiency of the transport system and transport operations, climate and disaster resilience, environmental performance, and the continuity of traffic flows;*

*(h) improving the quality of services and social conditions for transport workers, accessibility for all users, including persons with disabilities or reduced mobility and other people in situations of vulnerability, preventing and mitigating transport poverty;*

*(i) improving digitalisation, enabling digital enforcement in accordance with Union law and developing automation, in particular through the implementation and deployment of ICT systems for transport; or*

*(j) adapting, where necessary and taking into account the constitutional requirements of certain Member States, the infrastructure to a dual use in order to address both civilian and defence needs, paying particular attention to the itineraries needed for short-notice and large-scale movements of military forces.*

The proposed N6 GCRR accords with the above priorities, in particular, Article 12(1)(a), (b), (c), (d), (f), (g) and (h). Article 12(2) sets out the following priorities:

*2. In order to complement the measures set out in paragraph 1, particular consideration shall be given to measures that are necessary for:*

*(a) contributing to mitigating exposure of urban areas, and, where relevant, densely- populated sensitive areas, to the negative effects of transiting rail and road transport;*

*(b) optimising the use of infrastructure, in particular through efficient capacity management, traffic management and increased operational performance;*

*(c) contributing to positive health and environmental effects by promoting the use of active modes of mobility through the development of corresponding infrastructure for cycling and walking;*

*(d) ensuring non-discriminatory access to all market participants on the trans-European transport network infrastructure; or*

*(e) ensuring efficient border crossing for freight transport taking into account waiting times.*

The proposed N6 GCRR accords with the priorities at Article 12(2)(a), (b) and (c) above.

Road transport infrastructure is described at Article 29 of the Regulation. Article 29(2) states as follows:

*2. The roads referred to in paragraph 1, point (a), of this Article and specified in the maps set out in Annex I are those which play an important role in long-distance freight and passenger traffic, integrate the main urban and economic centres and interconnect with other transport modes.*

The maps in Annex I set out the core, extended core and comprehensive networks under the trans-European transport policy. Plate 2.2 confirms that the proposed N6 GCRR is part of the comprehensive network.

Transport infrastructure requirements for the comprehensive network are specified at Article 30 of the EU Regulation. The design of the proposed N6 GCRR satisfies the requirements at Article 30(1) (a) to (h) inclusive, where applicable, and this is set out in Chapter 5 of this updated EIAR.

**Additional priorities for road infrastructure development** are set out at Article 32(a) to (e). The most relevant additional priorities in relation to the proposed N6 GCRR are as follows:

*In the promotion of projects of common interest related to road infrastructure, and in addition to the general priorities set out in Articles 12 and 13, attention shall be given to the following:*

*(a) improvement and promotion of road safety, taking into account the needs of vulnerable users and road users in all their diversity, in particular persons with reduced mobility;*

*(b) mitigation of congestion on existing roads, in particular through intelligent traffic management, including dynamic congestion charges or tolls varied based on the time of day, week or season;*

*(d) when building or upgrading road infrastructure, ensuring the continuity and accessibility of pedestrian and cycling paths in order to promote the active modes of transport and improving, where relevant, the infrastructure for active mobility; and*

Paragraph 36 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 states, inter alia, as follows.

*(36) In order to establish the trans-European transport network in a coordinated and timely manner, thereby making it possible to maximise network effects, Member States concerned should ensure that appropriate measures are taken to finalise the projects of common interest of the core network, the extended core network and the comprehensive network by the set deadlines 2030, 2040 and 2050 respectively, unless otherwise specified in this Regulation. To this end, Member States should ensure that there is coherence of the national transport and investment plans with the priorities set out in this Regulation...*

As is demonstrated herein below, the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road is a key future growth enabler for the Galway Metropolitan Area in the National Planning Framework and is a strategic investment priority in the National Roads Programme set out in the National Development Plan 2021-2030.

Section 7 of Chapter III of Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 defines urban nodes at Article 40(1) as follows.

*1. An urban node shall comprise, in particular:*

*(a) transport infrastructure in the urban node that is part of the trans-European transport network, including bypasses; and*

*(b) access points to the trans-European transport network, which are open to all operators and users in a non-discriminatory way, notably ports, airports as well as railway stations, bus terminals and multimodal freight terminals.*

Galway is an urban node at Annex II of the Regulation. Paragraph 63 of the Regulation states as follows with respect to the key role of urban nodes in the smooth functioning of the EU transport network.

(63) *Urban nodes play an important role on the trans-European transport network as starting point or final destination ('last mile') for passengers and freight moving on the trans-European transport network and are points of transfer within or between different transport modes. It should be ensured that capacity bottlenecks and an insufficient network connectivity within urban nodes no longer hamper multimodality along the trans-European transport network. The trans-European transport network policy should focus on promoting seamless traffic flows from, to and across urban nodes on the network. The local connectivity within urban nodes should be addressed by the competent local, regional or national authorities, in particular through relevant measures of their sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP).*

The aim of EU Transport Policy is to strengthen the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contribute to the creation of a single multi-modal European transport area based upon mobility that is efficient, safe, resilient and environmentally friendly and which increases the benefits for its users and supports inclusive growth in accordance with Articles 4 and 5 of the EU Regulation. Congestion is not just a nuisance for road users; it also results in an enormous waste of fuel and productivity. Many manufacturing processes depend on just-in-time deliveries and free flow transport for efficient production. Congestion costs the EU economy more than 1% of GDP – in other words, more than the EU budget. To reduce this, the EU needs more efficient transport and logistics, better infrastructure and the ability to optimise capacity use.

The EU Commission also recognises that Europe needs transport which is cleaner and less dependent on oil. Moving towards low-carbon and more energy efficient transport, as well as developing more efficient urban and intermodal transport solutions as alternatives are essential to developing a more environmentally friendly transport policy.

The objectives of the proposed N6 GCRR align with the European Union's land transport policies given that the following targets are among the objectives of the Project:

- Segregation of the interface of strategic traffic from urban traffic
- Increase journey time certainty
- Reduce journey times
- Implement sustainable transport policies for shorter commutes
- Improve accessibility to Galway City and the connectivity of key strategic services within Galway, such as UoG and University Hospital Galway
- Improve accessibility of the Galway urban area to its main markets
- Ensure connectivity and accessibility of this region to the single European market, including the port of Rossaveel, Connemara Airport and the Gaeltacht areas which lie west of the city along the R336
- Improve linkages between the west and east sides of the city and the county
- Improve accessibility of the Gaeltacht areas to the remainder of the county and country
- Recognition of the role of Galway City as a gateway to the west and Connemara, and the consequent socio-economic benefits of enhanced connectivity of Galway City to national markets, enhanced tourism accessibility, and the national transport system
- Improvement to the TEN-T network to ensure connectivity of the west of Ireland to the single European market

In circumstances where the proposed N6 GCRR forms part of the EU TEN-T comprehensive road network in Ireland, it is, therefore, of strategic importance in a European context, as it will perform a key role in delivering congestion relief, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening economic cohesion.

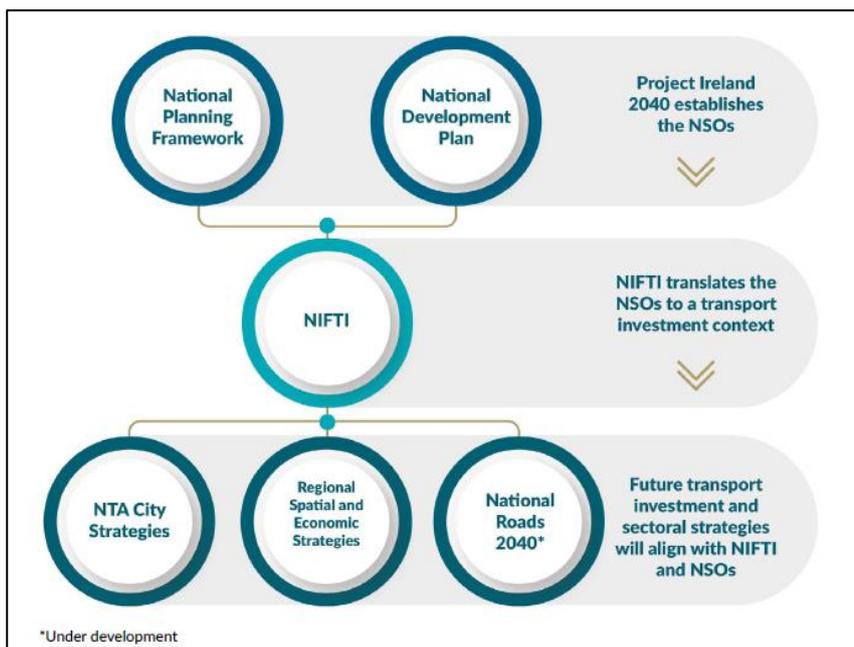
## 2.3 National Objectives

### 2.3.1 Overview of Change to National Policy

Since 2018, planning policy at a national level has coalesced into a fully integrated suite of policy documents with an associated funding mechanism. The hierarchy of policy is clearly set out, with new policy prepared by the various government bodies or stakeholders assigned with responsibility for same. As a result, some older policy documents are now subsumed into new documents and these are set out in this update of this chapter. New policy documents are referenced where relevant.

### 2.3.2 Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is described by the Irish Government as “the government’s long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more resilient and sustainable future”. The *National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)*<sup>5</sup> provides a useful graphic shown in Plate 2.4 to demonstrate the hierarchy of Project Ireland 2040 strategies and plans.



Extract from NIFTI and \* refers to the fact that NR 2040 was under development when NIFTI was published

**Plate 2.4 NIFTI Hierarchy of Project Ireland 2040 Strategies and Plans**

### 2.3.3 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework<sup>6</sup> (NPF) is a statutory plan which constitutes the overarching national planning policy document. From the date of its publication (16 February 2018), the NPF replaces the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). It establishes a high-level framework for the co-ordination of a range of national, regional and local authority policies and activities, planning and investment, both public and private.

The National Planning Framework (NPF), together with the new ten-year National Development Plan jointly comprise *Project Ireland 2040: Building Ireland’s Future* and will provide the strategic framework for future development and investment in Ireland. It is the overall Plan from which other, more detailed plans will take their lead, hence the title, National Planning ‘Framework’, including city and county development plans and regional strategies. The National Planning Framework is a statutory plan, which is focussed upon ten shared goals, National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).

<sup>5</sup> Department of Transport, 2021. National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland, December 2021. Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cfae6-national-investment-framework-for-transport-in-ireland-nifti/>

<sup>6</sup> [Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf](#)



**Plate 2.5 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) – National Planning Framework 2018**

The proposed N6 GCRR will contribute to the achievement of all ten of the NSO’s as follows:

- **National Strategic Outcome 1: Compact Growth** will be promoted through by removing a significant volume of motorised traffic from Galway city centre, reducing congestion and freeing up road space for bus priority, public transport and active modes thus creating more opportunities for growth and living within the city.
- **National Strategic Outcome 2: Enhanced Regional Accessibility** will be provided through improving accessibility to Galway City and the wider Northern and Western region.
- **National Strategic Outcome 3: Strengthening Rural Economies and Communities** through improved connectivity of and accessibility to areas of County Galway to the west and north of Galway City (and other areas of the wider Northern and Western region including, importantly, rural areas of the region).
- **National Strategic Outcome 4: Sustainable Mobility** will be supported by providing opportunities for all travel modes, including public transport, walking and cycling. In the absence of the proposed N6 GCRR, some of these alternative travel modes, particularly in Galway City, will not be optimally delivered.
- **National Strategic Outcome 5: A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills** is possible with improved accessibility to centres of population in the city and environs and in the wider region and providing regional access to third level education facilities as well as significant high tech employment centres.
- **National Strategic Outcome 6: High Quality International Connectivity** is supported by providing a strategic link between Shannon Foynes Port, Galway Port, Rossaveel Port, as well as links to Shannon Airport, Ireland West Airport and Dublin Airport. Enhancement of the North Sea – Rhine Mediterranean

Corridor and the addition of Ireland to the Atlantic Corridor will strengthen the link between Ireland and mainland Europe.

- **National Strategic Outcome 7: Enhanced Amenity Facilities** The proposed N6 GCRR will facilitate trips by more sustainable modes, reduce local trips by cars, thus facilitating the provision of enhanced facilities for active travel and improved amenity facilities. Again, as noted above, in the absence of the proposed N6 GCRR, some of these alternative travel modes, particularly in Galway City, will not be optimally delivered.
- **National Strategic Outcome 8: Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society** Reducing trips by motor vehicles in Galway City will open up road space to facilitate active travel modes which will reduce transportation impacts on localised air quality, reduce carbon emissions, and align with climate targets. In the absence of the proposed N6 GCRR, some of these alternative travel modes, particularly in Galway City, may not be delivered at all or will not be optimally delivered.
- **National Strategic Outcome 9: Sustainable management of water, waste, and other environmental resources** will be supported by embedding circular economy principles from the outset.
- **National Strategic Outcome 10: Access to quality childcare, education and health services** is achievable with the provision of an appropriate transport solution which enables improved connectivity for sustainable modes for all.

The National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF will be applied on a regional basis through statutory Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs), see Section 2.4.2 below. The RSEs must accord with the NPF and in turn, local planning authority development plans which address further detailed matters at a granular level, must be in accordance with the RSEs.

Section 2 of the NPF sets out the strategy to plan for significant population and economic growth to 2040. The NPF supports as a key element of the strategy:

*“ambitious growth targets to enable the four cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to each grow by at least 50% to 2040 and to enhance their significant potential to become cities of scale” and “enabling the four cities to be regional drivers” (NPF Section 2.2).*

The NPF also sets national policy objectives around population and employment growth. The remaining 50% of the planned growth will occur in regional centres, towns, villages and rural areas in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

Section 3.3 of the NPF focuses on the Northern and Western Region. It focuses on Galway as one of the country’s five main cities and to become a city of greater scale and a key driver for the west of Ireland. The NPF states that Galway needs to:

*“address recent growth legacy issues and build on key strengths including a world class med-tech cluster, third level institutions embedded within the City, a vibrant arts and cultural scene, year round tourism and an attractive natural setting”. It states that “challenges to be addressed include housing choice and affordability, transport / mobility and urban quality, especially outside the core-city centre area”.*

The NPF targets a population growth to 2040 of 40,000 - 45,000 people for Galway City and Suburbs, to achieve a total population of at least 120,000 total population (Table 2.1 NPF).

“Key future growth enablers” set out for Galway include:

- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing and the development of supporting public transport and infrastructure, such as at Ardaun
- Improving sustainable transport links to, and integration with, the existing employment areas to the east of the City at Parkmore, Ballybrit and Mervue
- Provision of a Citywide public transport network (The National Development Plan 2018-2027 states that the Bus Connects network of five high performing cross-city routes will be delivered in Galway)

- Development of a strategic cycleway network
- Delivery of the Galway City Ring Road (being the proposed N6 GCRR)

Thus, not only is the proposed N6 GCRR a “key future growth enabler” of itself, as set out in the NPF, to a greater or lesser degree, the proposed N6 GCRR is required in order to deliver a number of other “key future growth enablers” in Galway by transferring traffic out of the urban areas, thus allowing reallocation of existing road space to enable other infrastructure improvements in public transport, cycling and walking to be optimally delivered.

As noted above, “*Enhanced Regional Accessibility*” is one of the ten National Strategic Outcomes in the NPF. This NSO seeks enhanced connectivity between centres of population and improved accessibility to the Northern and Western Region, ensuring the region has a high degree of accessibility to Dublin and other regions and seeks to advance orbital traffic management solutions including the proposed N6 GCRR to achieve these objectives.

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 seeks the delivery of major national infrastructure projects in the interest of regional connectivity and expressly identifies the Galway Ring Road as one such major project (Section 1.7 and 5.2).

Accordingly, the proposed N6 GCRR is identified within this national planning framework as a key growth enabler for Galway City and the Northern and Western Region.

#### 2.3.4 National Development Plan (2021-2030)

The NPF is underpinned by a region-focused capital investment plan, the National Development Plan (NDP). The first NDP covering the period 2018-2027 was reviewed and updated through the National Development Plan 2021-2030, which will drive Ireland’s long term economic, environmental, and social progress across all parts of the country over the next decade. As a constituent part of Project Ireland 2040, the NDP is fully aligned with the delivery of the National Strategic Outcome and National Policy Objectives of the NPF (outlined in Section 2.2.2). It sets out under corresponding Strategic Investment Priorities, investment priorities over the next ten years that will underpin the implementation of each NSO in the NPF. The revised NDP sets out a major public capital investment programme of €165 billion between 2021 and 2030 with €13bn to be invested in transport in the first five years of the National Development Plan.

Prioritising investment in the National Road Network and in environmentally sustainable public transport through the NDP will help to deliver compact growth in Galway in accordance with NSO 1.

Through National Strategic Outcome 2 (i.e., Enhanced Regional Accessibility), the NDP seeks to:

*“...enhance intra-regional accessibility through improving transport links between key urban centres of population and their respective regions, as well as improving transport links between the regions.”*

The focus of many National Road projects is:

*“to ensure a high degree of accessibility for all regions and urban areas, to other regional centres and to our cities, developing and supporting regional connectivity...”*

In this context, the NDP expressly references the N6 Galway City Ring Road as one of the schemes identified in the previous NDP that will continue to be supported:

*“Under the revised NDP, the National Roads programme will continue to provide for improved connectivity across the years 2021-2030. The Department and Transport Infrastructure Ireland are working to continue to provide continued protection and renewal of the existing National Roads network as well as progressing new National Road projects which will improve compact growth and regional connectivity across the country. Accordingly, there will be significant investment in the national road network across the next 10 years.”*

Accordingly, the proposed N6 GCRR will contribute to the NDP’s National Strategic Objectives of Enhanced Regional Accessibility and Compact Growth, connecting communities and encouraging economic activity. It will also lead to the improvement of transport links by providing better journey times and reliability and as safer routes for road users.

The National Development Plan 2021-2030 seeks the delivery of major national infrastructure projects including national roads in the interest of Enhanced Regional Connectivity (NSO 2) and the N6 Galway City Ring Road is identified as one such major road infrastructure project (Chapter 7, page 64 of the NDP).

Investment in the proposed N6 GCRR as envisaged under the NDP will deliver transport infrastructure and promote sustainable development in accordance with UN Global Goal 9. The proposed N6 GCRR will provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety thereby helping to achieve UN Global Goal 11.

### 2.3.5 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland 2021

National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)<sup>7</sup> is the Department of Transport's high-level, strategic framework for future investment in the land transport network. The purpose of the NIFTI is to support the delivery of the NPF. This new framework replaces the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (SIFLT), which was published by the Department of Transport in 2015.

The NIFTI states that *"future transport investment will have to demonstrate alignment with NIFTI and, by extension, support the delivery of the NPF and the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs)."*

The NIFTI commits to investing in the delivery of *"... a safe and sustainable land transport network which supports prosperous communities, promotes balanced development and helps to realise our climate change goals."*

To cater for rising travel demand while decarbonising the transport sector, the NIFTI commits to investing in sustainable mobility which will include *"... improved access to sustainable mobility in our towns and rural areas, and major investment in cycling and walking throughout the country."*

To deliver future investment in a sustainable manner, NIFTI promotes the most appropriate solution to a given problem or opportunity whether it is support for compact growth in the urban area or beyond the urban areas by enhancing regional and rural connectivity across the network by addressing priority bottlenecks and constraints. The four NIFTI Investment Priorities (all of which carry equal weighting) on Plate 2.6 which identify the areas for Government investment in transport infrastructure are:

- Mobility of People & Goods in Urban Areas
- Protection and Renewal
- Decarbonisation
- Enhanced Regional & Rural Connectivity

The proposed N6 GCRR aligns with all of the investment priorities, particularly those of enhancing regional and rural connectivity. In addition, the Project's objectives align with measures to promote and facilitate sustainable mobility change with the inclusion of active travel infrastructure, enabling improvements to public transport through addressing urban congestion and the implementation of demand management measures<sup>8</sup>, all of which support a modal shift to sustainable modes thus contributing to decarbonisation.

The proposed N6 GCRR seeks to reduce congestion in Galway City and its suburbs particularly at peak times thereby enabling the reprioritisation of the urban space for optimal delivery of walking, cycling and active modes.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cfae6-national-investment-framework-for-transport-in-ireland-nifti/>

<sup>8</sup> Measures aimed to influence and change travel patterns and encourage more efficient and sustainable use of transport resources



**Plate 2.6 NIFTI Investment Priorities**

These priorities are supplemented by Modal and Intervention Hierarchies which set out how we approach our projects. The initial focus is on the Modal Hierarchy, as shown on Plate 2.7 which seeks to ensure that travel is undertaken in the most sustainable manner favouring alternative modes such as ‘Active Travel’<sup>9</sup> and ‘Public Transport’ before provision for private vehicles.



**Plate 2.7 NIFTI Modal Intervention Hierarchy**

NIFTI includes an Intervention Hierarchy which is designed to inform decisions and to ensure that the investment is proportionate to the problem to be addressed. Plate 2.8 shows the four tiers in this hierarchy, which seek to ensure that the maximum use is achieved with the existing asset before building new transport infrastructure.

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<sup>9</sup> Travelling with a purpose, using your own energy.” Walking, cycling, wheeling and using a non-motorised scooter to make journeys are considered to be forms of Active Travel.



**Plate 2.8 NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy**

In summary, the NIFTI Investment Priorities identify the types of investments to be undertaken and the principles-based Modal and Intervention Hierarchies will determine the appropriate solution to a given problem or opportunity.

### 2.3.6 National Roads 2040

National Roads 2040 (NR2040)<sup>10</sup> is an additional policy instrument adopted since the publication of the 2018 EIAR. NR2040 is Transport Infrastructure Ireland’s (“TII”) strategy to enable Project Ireland 2040 respond to evolving national policy and to align with the Department of Transport’s National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI), which is discussed above.

NR2040 sets out a vision for the “*National Roads network to be an evolving sustainable transport system focused on safety, innovation, accessibility and mobility of people, goods, and services*”. The strategy acknowledges the long-term strategic issues for national roads, including contributing to the transport sector reaching the country’s climate goal of a 51% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 (relative to 2018 levels).

In order to achieve this goal NR2040 stresses the importance of facilitating active travel measures alongside new road infrastructure:

*“While TII has a limited role in behavioural change, the provision of high quality multi modal infrastructure has an important role in enabling and encouraging a modal shift to support a reduction in carbon emissions”.*

In urban areas it is vital to combat congestion, especially by giving road users a viable alternative to the private vehicle in the context of shorter trips, typically those less than 15 minutes.

The strategy establishes mitigation measures that address the issues identified which are elaborated through TII’s investment priorities and associated intervention types for TII over the coming decades in line with NIFTI as presented in Plate 2.9.

<sup>10</sup> Transport Infrastructure Ireland, 2023. National Roads 2040. Available from: [https://www.tii.ie/news/press-releases/nr2040-final\\_report/](https://www.tii.ie/news/press-releases/nr2040-final_report/)

Intervention	Description	Example
Priority of public transport, walking, cycling and goods	Enable a sustainable transport system through coordination with partner organisations. Reduce the reliance on private vehicles by coordinating access and priority on National Roads for public transport, goods vehicles, walking and cycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» National Cycling Network active mode collaboration and interchange</li> <li>» Building pedestrian and cycle bridges to reduce severance</li> </ul>
New transport and road technologies	Integrate new road technologies and provide for vehicle innovation. Incentivise and promote quicker, easier and lower-carbon travel alternatives to fossil-fuelled vehicles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Smart motorways</li> <li>» C-ITS</li> <li>» Modern asset management systems</li> </ul>
Demand management	Prioritise and incentivise use of the network. Restrict use of the network by time, location, trip purpose, vehicle type or other criteria necessary to balance the needs of the community, environment and economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» HOV, bus and cycle lanes</li> <li>» Ramp metering</li> <li>» Tolling</li> </ul>
Resilience and capacity via local reconstruction	Improve resilience or capacity through localised reconstruction, notably on National Secondary Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Junction improvements</li> <li>» Short road segment improvements</li> </ul>
Road construction	Where no feasible alternative exists to serve the required function, deliver new road infrastructure with sustainable procurement and circular economy practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Town Bypasses</li> <li>» Build new to reduce net carbon</li> <li>» Build better (new multi-modal links)</li> </ul>

**Plate 2.9 NR2040 National Roads Intervention Types and Examples**

In terms of the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road, improvements to all modes of travel, walking, cycling, and public transport are enabled, which aligns with the objectives of NR2040 by seeking to reduce congestion across the proposed N6 corridor, creating greater modal choice for people. The following extract at para. 10.3.27 of ABP’s Inspectors’ Report (ABP-302885-18 and ABP-302848-18, page 88) acknowledges the strategic importance of the proposed N6 GCRR to the delivery of the sustainable transport measures and infrastructure in the Galway Transport Strategy.

*10.3.27 I am satisfied that there is policy support for a ring road around Galway at a European and national, as well as at regional level. The road is considered to be necessary to enable the success of the GTS and that without the road, the aims and objectives of the GTS will not be achievable. A new ring road is identified as an infrastructural project to be carried out in the short to medium term. In conclusion, it is stated as being a requisite for the implementation of the full suite of projects identified as part of the GTS at a county and city level, addressed further below.*

Road safety is another priority of NR2040 as it emphasises road safety and the need for new and existing roads to be designed and upgraded to the highest degree of safety to deliver on actions in the Road Safety Authority’s Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 towards the long-term goal of Vision Zero by 2050.

*‘An upturn in active travel modes and specifically in cycling, both for commuting and leisure, emphasises the need for a greater focus on prioritising the safety of vulnerable road users. Better cycling and walking provision are an important consideration for investment in the National Roads network and prioritisation of vulnerable road users aligns with the modal hierarchy set out in NIFTI. TII’s statutory remit includes the provision of a safe and efficient National Roads network. The Vision Zero long-term goal and the Safe Systems approach must inform TII investment decisions.’*

The proposed N6 GCRR realises the above road safety goals by seeking to upgrade and improve the existing road which has significant safety issues. The proposed N6 GCRR addresses safety issues on the existing national, regional and local road network as follows:

- Provides high quality new infrastructure with segregation of the travel directions thereby improving safety via the transfer of high volumes of traffic to the safer roads and secondly via a reduction in distances travelled on less safe existing roads
- Enables segregation of modes as prohibits usage by pedestrians and cyclists over the motorway section where traffic volumes are highest on the new infrastructure, whilst reallocating road space to bus priority and active modes in the urban centre
- Connects to the national roads via junctions to maximise the transfer of cross-city movements to the new road infrastructure, thus releasing and freeing the existing city centre zone from congestion
- Reduces congestion at existing junctions on the proposed N6 which will lead to lower collision rates and improve conditions for vulnerable road users

The delivery of the proposed transport infrastructure with road safety improvements described above will help provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems in Galway City and in the wider Metropolitan Area in keeping with UN Global Goal 11.

### 2.3.7 Programme for Government 2020

The Programme for Government 2020<sup>11</sup> was published on 29 October and is relevant to the proposed N6 GCRR because it sets out a series of commitments relating to the maintenance and improvement of transport infrastructure to improve regional connectivity and accessibility, to improve public transport and to fund safety improvements. The proposed N6 GCRR also aligns with the Programme insofar as it is a critical element of the transport infrastructure required to deliver sustainable compact urban development in one of the five cities targeted for growth.

### 2.3.8 Draft Programme for Government 2025

A Draft Programme for Government 2025 was published in January 2025, which sets out the Government's commitment to deliver a strong stable economy, provide high quality homes, accessible public services and the infrastructure required to sustain a growing society. The Programme reiterates a key strategic aim in Project Ireland 2040, which is to grow the regions through 50:50 balanced population growth between the Eastern and Midland region and the combined Southern and Northern and Western regions.

The Programme recognises that the delivery of essential infrastructure is a driver in attracting and retaining investment in Ireland, growing the economy, fostering regional development, delivering on housing targets and achieving ambitious climate goals. Stable long-term delivery of essential infrastructure is a priority for this Government and the Programme affirms that the Government will invest in all road projects in the current National Development Plan and will consider additional important road projects in the review of the NDP to be completed in July 2025.

The proposed N6 GCRR aligns with the draft Programme because it is a vital part of the infrastructure required to grow the region, improve regional connectivity and accessibility for the region, and to deliver sustainable compact urban growth in the Galway Metropolitan Area in accordance with the National Planning Framework.

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<sup>11</sup> Department of the Taoiseach, 2020. Programme for Government: Our Shared Future. Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>

### 2.3.9 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 supports Project Ireland 2040, setting out the investments to be made to encourage population growth in a compact, connected and sustainable way. The draft Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) was agreed by Government on 20 December 2023 and, following the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, and a six week public consultation, the finalised version of CAP24 was approved by Government on 21 May 2024.

CAP24 is the third annual update to the Climate Action Plan 2019 and it is the second statutory update to the Climate Action Plan since the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was passed. CAP24 aligns with legally binding carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings approved and agreed respectively by Government in 2022.

CAP24 aims to close the emissions gap and to provide the roadmap for delivering on Ireland's climate action ambitions. However, to do this, as well as accelerating the full implementation of existing measures under previous Climate Action Plans, Ireland must now rapidly and fully implement the actions and policies set out in CAP24 across the following sectors.

- Electricity
- Industry
- Buildings
- Transport
- Agriculture
- Land Use
- Circular Economy
- Public Sector

The challenge presented by the transport sector is reflected in that 2022 saw a 6% increase in emissions over 2021 levels, as the economy and transport demand continued to rebound following the lifting of public health restrictions and return to typical levels of transport activity.

Without significant changes in travel patterns, modal share, and technology, a growth in current transport activity and demand will further diminish our national competitiveness, quality of life, and the likelihood of achieving decarbonisation goals.

CAP24 continues the 2030 key performance indicators in CAP23 and calls for a significant cut in transport emissions by 2030 through a series of actions including the following:

- Change how road space is used (i.e. reallocate road space to sustainable modes)
- 20% reduction in total vehicle kilometres travelled by car
- Walking, cycling and public transport to account for 50% of our journeys
- 130% increase in daily public transport journeys
- 25% reduction in daily car journeys
- Support for 30% Electric Vehicle share of new car registration
- Increase the walking and cycling networks

Transport is targeted in CAP24 as a sector required to reduce emissions by 50 percent by 2030. CAP24 supports policies to transform how society travels and it identifies specific measures and actions to support the **Avoid-Shift-Improve** model. This approach involves avoiding or reducing the need to travel through compact growth, densification and enhanced spatial and transport planning and shifting to sustainable travel including active modes and public transport where travel is still necessary. The third element of the model is

to improve the energy efficiency of vehicles by accelerating the electrification of road transport through the use of electric and low-emission vehicles and the increasing biofuel blend rates.

The recommendations of the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) for the transport sector are considered in CAP24 and are addressed in the measures set out at Section 15.2 of CAP24. Recommendations No.'s 1, 2, 4 and 7 are relevant.

CAP24 is accompanied by an Annex of Actions including Action No. TR/24/9(TF) to carry out an on-going programme of review, update, appraisal and planning of services in accordance with a Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (MATS) for each city on a six year cycle.

The proposed N6 GCRR supports the principles of the Climate Action Plan insofar as it is a critical part of the necessary strategic transport infrastructure required with capacity to cater for the traffic needs of Galway City and its environs thereby reducing bottle necks and congestion within the city even allowing for any increase in traffic generated by the development. As is acknowledged at paragraph 10.6.17 of the ABP's Inspector's Report [ABP-302885-18 & ABP-302848-18], the proposed N6 GCRR with the GTS measures in place will support the delivery of a more efficient public transport service in Galway City and suburbs:

*In conclusion, I am of the view that the applicant has fully addressed alternatives to a road satisfactorily and I concur with the applicant that a road solution is required and that other alternative modes are not precluded and indeed will be supported by the provision of a road on the northern half of the city and environs. I concur with the applicant that the transport solution must address the existing road network capacity in support of an efficient public transport option.*

Every modal shift, however small, from private vehicles to public transport or walking or cycling is a positive change and is a gain in terms of the emissions targets. Therefore, the proposed N6 GCRR facilitates the implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy and supports the principles of the Climate Action Plan.

### 2.3.10 National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 and National Sustainability Mobility Policy Action Plan (2022-2025)

*Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020* and the *National Cycle Policy Framework*, which promoted sustainable travel and active modes were succeeded by the Department of Transport's National Sustainable Mobility Policy published in April 2022.

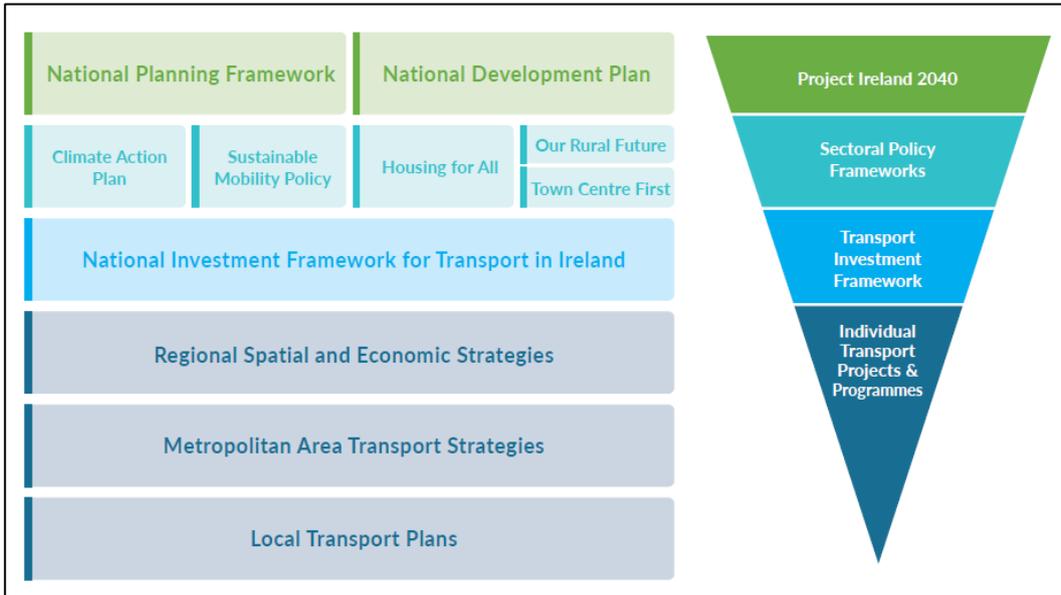
The aim of National Sustainable Mobility Policy is to develop a policy framework, which better supports climate action and sustainable mobility and adopts a more people centric approach in all aspects of Active Travel and Public Transport Policy to achieve the following vision:



To connect people and places with sustainable mobility that is safe, green, accessible and efficient.

#### Plate 2.10 Vision of National Sustainable Mobility Policy

Plate 2.11 shows the policy hierarchy for Sustainable Mobility Policy. Alongside the Climate Action Plan, this policy framework aligns with the NPF, which is shifting the momentum of transport policy to support sustainable mobility and supports the National Strategic Objectives (NSOs) particularly the NSOs in relation to decarbonisation, compact growth and balanced regional development. This policy context is intended to ensure better integrated land use and transport planning at all levels.



**Plate 2.11 Policy Hierarchy and Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSM Policy p.60)**

The National Sustainable Mobility policy sets out a strategic framework for active travel and public transport to 2030 to support Ireland’s commitment to achieve a 51 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030. The proposed N6 GCRR together with the roll-out of the transport infrastructure measures in the GTS aligns with national sustainable mobility policy and the following actions under the Climate Action Plan:

- Reallocates road space within the city centre to provide for sustainable modes
- Facilitates increased daily active travel journeys (walking, cycling and public transport)
- Facilitates an increase in the walking and cycling networks

These aspects of the proposed N6 GCRR will help deliver the inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable transport in line with UN Global Goals 9 and 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The National Sustainability Mobility Policy is based upon three core principles as follows:

- (1) **Safe and Green Mobility**, which sets out an ambitious and comprehensive set of actions for the decarbonisation of public transport
- (2) **People Focused Mobility**, which seeks ways to make sustainable mobility options accessible to everyone, particularly people with reduced mobility
- (3) **Better Integrated Mobility**, which examines improved integrated sustainable transport and land-use planning as well as examining smart transport solutions

These principles are supported by the ten goals as set out in Plate 2.12.

Principles and Goals	
PRINCIPLES	GOALS
Safe and Green Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve mobility safety.</li> <li>2. Decarbonise public transport.</li> <li>3. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas.</li> <li>4. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas.</li> <li>5. Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car.</li> </ol>
People Focused Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all.</li> <li>7. Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model.</li> <li>8. Promote sustainable mobility through research and citizen engagement.</li> </ol>
Better Integrated Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels.</li> <li>10. Promote smart and integrated mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.</li> </ol>

**Plate 2.12 National Sustainable Mobility Policy Goals**

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy framework is underpinned by the actions set out in the National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan 2022-2025, which identifies specific core and complementary actions framed around the ten policy goals. The proposed N6 GCRR aligns with, and facilitates the implementation of the following specific actions under Goals 1, 3, 5 and 9 in the Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan as follows:

**Goal 1: Improve mobility safety**

**Action 4.** Continue to protect and renew road infrastructure for all road users including sustainable mobility users.

The proposed N6 GCRR facilitates the re-allocation of existing road space in Galway City for the provision of sustainable mobility measures, active travel and public transport.

**Goal 3: Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas**

**Action 17.** Develop pedestrian enhancement plans for the five metropolitan areas.

**Action 18.** Expand the operation of bike share schemes (including electric bikes) in cities.

The proposed N6 GCRR helps remove congestion from the city centre and supports the provision of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure projects in accordance with the GTS thereby enhancing these modes within the Galway Metropolitan Area.

**Action 22.** Commence delivery of BusConnects network redesign in the five cities.

In December 2023, the NTA completed the design of a new bus network for Galway (in line with the GTS) and the new network will be rolled out in 2025/2026. The proposed N6 GCRR enables improved journey times along these bus routes through reducing congestion.

**Action 23.** Commence delivery of BusConnects Core Bus Corridor Infrastructure works in the five cities.

The Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge opened in May 2023. An Bord Pleanála is currently assessing the ‘Cross-City Link’, which is the cornerstone of the Galway Transport Strategy. Consultations with ABP commenced on the BusConnects Dublin Road Scheme in January 2024. Thus, key GTS projects are being progressed and the proposed N6 GCRR enables the optimal delivery of those other GTS projects as part of an integrated package of measures to deliver sustainable mobility in Galway in accordance with the transport strategy.

**Goal 5: Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car**

**Action 42.** Expand Walking and Cycling Index to Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford to assess infrastructure; travel behaviour; the impact of walking and cycling and new initiatives in each city.

This is achieved by improving safety for all road users with improved walking and cycling facilities, and developing proposals for cycle network and public transport improvements.

The table in Section 2.5.1 lists some of the key improvements in pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the city under the GTS, and further planned improvements in the walking and cycling networks. The proposed N6 GCRR will help remove traffic from the city centre and it therefore enables the optimal delivery of GTS projects to enhance the active modes in Galway.

**Goal 9: Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels**

**Action 78.** Deliver metropolitan area transport strategies in the cities.

The review of the Galway Transport Strategy is underway. The proposed N6 GCRR is a critical component of the current Galway Transport Strategy providing key transport infrastructure for the Galway Metropolitan Area, including the optimal delivery of other key GTS projects.

It is necessary to resolve traffic congestion issues in Galway in order to achieve the sustainable mobility goals. The proposed N6 GCRR will significantly assist with the removal of congestion in Galway City and environs. Journey times will reduce and journey time certainty will increase for both public transport and private vehicle users.

The reduction in congestion enabled by the proposed N6 GCRR will also help to optimally realise other key elements of the Galway Transport Strategy including the reallocation of road space for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

Improvements to the Galway bus network and bus services are identified in the GTS as necessary to cater for existing and future travel patterns in Galway City. The reallocation of road space for an expanded bus network and service will assist with the delivery of improved public transport in the city. This will reduce the number of short commuter trips by car facilitating more journeys by bicycle or other active modes which are faster, cheaper, more sustainable and provide health benefits. In addition, a rebalancing of traffic light signalling at junctions to better facilitate walking, cycling and public transport is required.

The proposed N6 GCRR forms an integral component of the overall GTS, which has been developed to achieve sustainable travel and transport services in Galway City and environs. The GTS will help deliver a modal shift from private cars to more sustainable forms of transport through the provision of bus lanes and dedicated safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists to access employment zones, education centres and residential areas, whilst also alleviating congestion in Galway City Centre.

Achieving goals 1, 3, 5 & 9 through the full implementation of the GTS and the National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan will help create a more attractive, vibrant and economically successful Galway Metropolitan Area with health and environmental benefits, all of which are necessary for sustainable travel into the future. The GTS and the proposed N6 GCRR align with the principles set out in the National Sustainable Mobility Policy and the goal to better integrate land use and transportation policy with the use of

sophisticated transport modelling techniques to capture all potential modes together with the latest analytical data on person movements for work, schools, colleges and childcare to deliver viable and attractive alternatives to the private car in Galway.

### 2.3.11 Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025; Ambitions, Goals, Commitments

The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 was published in January 2020 and is the successor to the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 which concluded at the end of 2017.

The Roadmap builds upon the earlier work and identifies a wide range of targeted actions and interventions to achieve the overall objective of reducing the number of people in consistent poverty and increasing social inclusion for those who are most disadvantaged. This is reflected in its ambition to *“Reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less and to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the EU”*.

The Roadmap presents seven high-level goals, 22 targets and 66 unique commitments. The focus of the Roadmap is on building social inclusion with a whole-of-Government approach, identifying the inter-linkages and dependencies across the various stakeholders as opposed to each Government Department tackling poverty in its individual strategy. An independent mid-term review was undertaken on it which included public consultation in September and October 2022 to facilitate an evaluation of the impact of the Roadmap commitments.

It is relevant to the proposed N6 GCRR in that access to public transport to connect to quality services at affordable prices for all persons is an objective of the transport solution for Galway. The proposed N6 GCRR will provide the necessary infrastructure for strategic traffic accessing Galway and the Northern and Western Region. It will also enable other public projects be realised and facilitates the effective implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy which includes improved public transport, walking and cycling measures for Galway City and its environs. This is further detailed in Chapter 3, Need for the Project.

### 2.3.12 Road Safety Authority-Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

The Road Safety Authority (RSA) strategy entitled Our Journey towards Vision Zero: Ireland’s Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 was published in 2021 and post-dates the 2018 EIAR.

The Road Safety Strategy sets targets to be achieved in terms of road safety in Ireland as well as policies to achieve these targets. The primary target of this strategy is:

*“To reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on Irish roads by 50% over the next 10 years. This means reducing deaths on Ireland’s roads annually from 144 to 72 or lower and reducing serious injuries from 1,259 to 630 or lower by 2030. “*

The Vision Zero Strategy sets out seven ‘Safe System’ priority areas which will be the focal points over the ten years period of the Strategy. These priority areas include safe roads & roadsides, safe speeds and healthy modes of travel, which are supported directly and indirectly by the proposed N6 GCRR, which;

- Provides high quality new infrastructure with segregation of the travel directions thereby improving safety via the transfer of high volumes of traffic to the safer roads and secondly via a reduction in distances travelled on less safe existing roads
- Enables segregation of modes as prohibits usage by pedestrians and cyclists over the motorway section where traffic volumes are highest on the new infrastructure with road space reallocated to bus priority and active modes in the urban centre
- Connects to the national roads via junctions to maximise the transfer of cross-city movements to the new road infrastructure, thus releasing and freeing the existing city centre zone from congestion
- Reduces congestion at existing junctions on the existing N6 which will lead to lower collision rates and improve conditions for vulnerable road users

The objectives of the proposed N6 GCRR are consistent with and fundamentally align with the priority areas in the RSA Vision Zero Strategy.

## 2.4 Regional Policies, Guidance and Objectives

### 2.4.1 New Regional Assemblies

Three new Regional Assemblies came into being on 1 January 2015, namely the Northern & Western (relevant to Galway), the Midland & Eastern and the Southern Regional Assemblies, following on from the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and Putting People first – Action Programme for Effective Local Government. Galway and the West Region has been subsumed into the Northern & Western Regional Assembly. The Regional Assemblies are responsible for the preparation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region covers the area of interest for this Project.

### 2.4.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region (2020-2032)

National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in the NPF are translated into regional plans through the preparation of the spatial and economic strategies for each region. These regional strategies, or RSES, inform the preparation of the development plans for the local planning authorities within the region and ensure these plans are co-ordinated to align with the regional policy objectives and deliver the strategic outcomes in the NPF.

The Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy<sup>12</sup> (NWRSES) 2020-2032 was adopted on 24 January 2020. The Strategic Vision of the NWRSES is *to play a leading role in the transformation of this region into a vibrant, connected, natural, inclusive and smart place to work and live.*

The Strategy highlights the potential of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) to create an economic corridor along the western seaboard to grow the region, improve connectivity to and within the region and to strengthen the economy of the region. The Vision in the RSES is founded upon five key growth ambitions, which are consolidated by a strong settlement strategy focused on people and places (Figure 16 in the RSES):

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

Key Growth Ambition 3 is addressed in Chapter 6 of the RSES entitled “Connectivity – Connected Region.” This chapter recognises that 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’.*

Section 6.2 of the RSES notes the challenges to the provision of sustainable transportation in the Region and endorses the Galway Transport Strategy in the following extract.

*“A best practice example of where the integration of transport, spatial and economic planning is to be delivered, is the Galway Transportation Strategy (GTS). The GTS should be used as a template elsewhere and initially, a similar approach should be adopted as a priority in Sligo, Athlone and Letterkenny (incorporating an overall cross-border Transport Assessment (multi-modal) with Derry).”*

*The GTS provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the greater Galway City area. It also provided a transport planning policy framework within which other agencies involved in spatial and economic planning, environmental protection and delivery of other infrastructure such as housing, water and power can align their investment priorities. The GTS is incorporated into the current suite of Development Plans for both Galway*

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<sup>12</sup> [REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2020-2032 \(nwra.ie\)](https://www.nwra.ie)

*City and Galway County and includes significant investment in both physical infrastructure and public transport. It is a unified plan.*

The GTS is incorporated into the current statutory development plans of Galway County Council and Galway City Council Development Plan. The GTS is considered further at Section 2.5.1 below.

Section 6.3 of the RSES sets out the Transport Investment Priorities for the Region and notes as follows in the strapline.

*Major transport infrastructure investments, identified in the National Development Plan, have an important role in enabling the sustainable and balanced development of the region over the period of the RSES.*

This section lists transport investment priorities under several headings including the heading “road network” which is considered at pages 219 to 221 inclusive of the RSES. The following extract is especially relevant and supports the Regional Policy Objectives in respect of National Roads below.

*The national road network is a critical enabler in facilitating an island-wide sustainable national transport system. A number of the more strategic routes also form part of the EU TEN-T comprehensive network, providing essential connectivity to regions in the EU. Such high-value assets and amenities need to be protected and their use enhanced for the region and also the country as a whole.*

*This is necessary to support economic and community interaction in the region and beyond, including providing regional connectivity, addressing peripherality, empowering rural communities and facilitating lifeline links to critical services such as education, healthcare, employment and enterprise.*

*Improving and maintaining the assets of all national roads is critical and the efficiency, capacity and safety of the existing national road network within the region must be maintained, including the requirement to safeguard the strategic links into urban centres identified as key economic drivers in the region.*

The strategic function of sections of the national road network, which includes the proposed N6 GCRR, as part of the TEN-T comprehensive network is acknowledged in the RSES. The national road network is critical in facilitating a sustainable transport system and the RSES includes Regional Policy Objectives 6.5 and 6.6 in respect of National Roads as follows:

**RPO 6.5**

The capacity and safety of the region’s land transport networks will be managed and enhanced to ensure their optimal use, thus giving effect to National Strategic Outcome No.2 and maintaining the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network including planning for future capacity enhancements.

**RPO 6.6**

In accordance with National Development Plan investment commitments to bring the following schemes through planning/design/construction, the following projects shall be delivered to an appropriate level of service in the short term and in any case by 2027 having regard to the standard in the NPF of an average inter-urban speed of 90KPH:

- A5 Road Development
- N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin
- N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramogue and Turlough to Westport
- N6 Galway City Ring Road
- N56 Dungloe to Glenties and Mountcharles to Inver
- N59 Moycullen Bypass.

**Plate 2.13 Extract from RSES (Regional Policy Objectives RPO 6.5 and RPO 6.6)**

The proposed N6 GCRR is a “transport investment priority” and will enhance regional connectivity in accordance with RPO 6.5. The proposed N6 GCRR is a key transport infrastructure project in the National Development Plan, which is necessary to accommodate the future planned population and employment growth in the Galway Metropolitan Area.

Section 3.3 ‘Placemaking’ in the RSES highlights the need to significantly improve the integration of land use and transport planning across the Northern & Western Region to deliver compact growth served by sustainable transport. Local transport plans will be prepared for the 12 urban places of regional scale identified in the RSES. It is noted that the Galway Transport Strategy has already been prepared and will be implemented as an objective in the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP).

Three core tenets of the growth strategy set out in Project Ireland 2040 may be summarised as follows.

- (1) grow the regions
- (2) build stronger regions with accessible centres of scale
- (3) densify and compact growth within existing built up areas

These tenets are captured at Table 1 of Section 3.4 of the RSES, which sets target populations for the Regional Growth Centres including the Galway City Metropolitan Area and the Key Towns in the Northern & Western Region and the planning approach to facilitate the projected growth in population and jobs as per the National Planning Framework.

National Policy Objective	Northern and Western Region
1. Growing Our Regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ +160,000–180,000 people (1m total)</li> <li>➤ +115,000 in employment (450,000 total)</li> </ul>
2. Building Stronger Regions: Accessible Centres of Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Galway City and Suburbs: +40,000–45,000 people (at least 120,000 total)</li> <li>➤ RSES to set out a strategic development framework for the region, leading with the key role of Sligo in the North-West, Athlone in the Midlands and the Letterkenny-Derry cross-border network</li> </ul>
3. Compact, Smart, Sustainable Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 50% of new city housing within existing Galway City and suburbs footprint</li> <li>➤ 30% all new housing elsewhere, within existing urban footprints</li> </ul>

**Plate 2.14 Extract from RSES, Section 3.4**

#### 2.4.2.1 Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Galway City and Metropolitan Area

Galway City is the primary growth centre in the Northern and Western Region through its designation as a Metropolitan Area in the NPF. The NWRSES includes a high-level *Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)* for Galway City and Metropolitan Area. This sets out the direction for the Metropolitan Area to achieve compact growth which is the first NSP of the NPF. Plate 2.15 below shows the boundaries of the MASP and Galway City together with the main residential, industrial and regenerations areas within the MASP.



*The strategy includes traffic management, giving priority to walking, cycling and bus movements, modifications to the traffic network, management of parking activities and heavy goods vehicles, improvements to the public realm and use of ‘smarter mobility’.*

The key transportation components for the successful implementation of the MASP are described under six headings, namely, (1) N6 GCRR; (2) Public Bus Transport; (3) Cycle Network; (4) Walking; (5) Park and Ride; and (6) Rail. The role of the proposed N6 GCRR in the MASP is highlighted in the extract below.

**Key Transportation Components for MASP**

**1. N6 GCRR**

- > The provision of a new N6 Galway City Ring Road (N6 GCRR) represents a key priority for the metropolitan area. This road is classified as part of the TEN-T road network in Ireland functioning in accordance with the European Unions (EU) TEN-T transport policy, which aims to create connectivity between regions, remove bottlenecks that hamper access to markets and promotes a sustainable multimodal network.
- > The N6 GCRR will support the economic and social development of the region and improve connectivity and accessibility to the city and areas west of the city. It also will focus on supporting trips that cannot be facilitated by measures such as city-bound, cross-city and cross county movements. This will relieve congestion in the city and, in turn, improve the quality of the city environment and increase opportunities for reallocation of existing road space for sustainable transportation.

**Plate 2.16 Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (NWRSES 2020-2032)**

Regional Policy Objective 3.6.7 expressly supports the delivery of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and the Galway City Ring Road as key transport infrastructure projects necessary to meet the transport demands associated with the projected growth in the Galway Metropolitan Area.

**RPO 3.6.7**

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

- > Galway City Ring Road (S)
- > Galway Transport Strategy (S/M/L)

**Plate 2.17 Extract from RSES, Regional Policy Objective 3.6.7**

The proposed N6 GCRR is a critical component of the overall transport strategy for the Metropolitan Area by removing non-essential motorised traffic from the city centre, reducing congestion and freeing up road space for bus priority, improved public transport services and the delivery of other active modes.

The Galway MASP is contained in Volume 2 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and is considered further at Section 2.5.4 below.

The RSES recognises the strategic importance of Galway City being a connected city and a strategic link for the entire region. It emphasises that the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Galway City and the Northern and Western Region is dependent upon transport and infrastructure investment in order to improve accessibility and connectivity to the county and areas beyond.

The RSES identifies transport investment priorities in accordance with the capital investment commitments in the NDP to bring a number of key enabling schemes to delivery in the Region by 2030 including the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road.

The proposed N6 GCRR remains an integral component of the transport strategy to cater for the ambitious growth targets for Galway through compact urban development based upon sustainable mobility.

## **2.5 Local Policies, Guidance and Objectives**

The proposed N6 GCRR is proposed to be developed in part of the functional areas of two local authorities, i.e., Galway City Council and Galway County Council. The Development Plans for both planning authorities have been reviewed and updated since the completion of the 2018 EIAR for the proposed N6 GCRR.

It is clear that Galway City and County Councils are committed to intensifying public transport delivery and usage to achieve compact growth and to improve the quality of life in Galway through their statutory plans i.e., the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 and the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. Both recently adopted Development Plans support the proposed N6 GCRR as part of the GTS overall transport strategy for Galway and environs.

### **2.5.1 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) 2016-2036**

Galway City and its environs will continue to develop as the principal economic centre serving the West of Ireland, so there is a critical need to address the transportation issues facing the city region, and to underpin future growth by establishing a long-term strategy for transport to, across, within and around the city.

While Galway has a compact walkable core, outside of the city centre, the suburbs have developed as a succession of low density residential and employment areas, which has led to a predominance of private car usage as a means of travel. Consequently, the transport difficulties currently experienced across the city, particularly at peak travel times, are having a significant effect on the quality of life of residents, and upon the economic functionality of the city.

Galway City Council and Galway County Council, in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), prepared a Galway Transport Strategy which aims to address the existing and future transport requirements of Galway City and its environs including Bearna, Oranmore, Moycullen and Claregalway. The NTA is the national body responsible for public transport and is fully committed to the delivery of a sustainable transport solution for Galway City and its environs.

The approach in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) is to deliver significant improvements in active travel and develop a high quality public transport network to support the city's planned growth by encouraging the use of other sustainable transport modes and to facilitate the efficient movement of private vehicles and freight. The GTS consists of a number of proposed measures combined under an overall vision "*to create a connected city region driven by smarter mobility*".

The GTS addresses existing current and future transport requirements and sets out an overview of the proposed actions and measures for implementation, covering infrastructural, operational and policy elements to address the current transport inefficiencies. The GTS is recognised within the National Planning Framework as key to achieving the 50% population growth targeted for the Galway Metropolitan Area by 2040 in the form of compact urban growth supported by sustainable transport.

The core of the strategy is a 'Cross-City Link,' which will provide a safe and attractive central route through the city centre restricted to public transport, pedestrians, cyclists, and some local access. The Cross City Link (currently subject to challenge by Judicial Review) is being progressed as part of BusConnects and it will complement the proposed city bus network connecting from the east and west of the city centre providing high frequency services and opportunities for inter-change within the city. The optimal delivery of the Cross-City Link is enabled by the development of the proposed N6 GCRR.

The GTS supports a defined 'City Centre Access Network' for private car journeys and HGVs that need access to the city centre to reduce congestion. The proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road will remove non-essential motorised traffic from the city centre. The proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road is a strategic infrastructure project identified in the NPF, NDP, RSES and MASP and is, of itself, a critical project in the transport strategy. However, in addition and significantly, the implementation of other transport projects

within the GTS will be enabled by the proposed N6 GCRR, so as to deliver an efficient and reliable public transport service to provide access into and through the city centre creating an enhanced environment for walking and cycling.

The GTS builds on previous transport studies carried out for the Galway Region and sets out an overview of the proposed actions and measures for implementation, covering infrastructural, operational and policy elements (as an ‘Integrated Transport Management Programme’). These consolidated proposals will provide Galway City and its environs with a clear implementation framework over the next 20 years and will be used to secure funding to deliver projects in a phased manner based on priority needs. Ultimately, the GTS will underpin the objectives of the current and future Galway City and Galway County Development Plans.

The major components proposed under the GTS comprise:

- changes to the traffic network, including provision of a new Cross-City Link public transport corridor, and the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road, and reallocation of road space to prioritise walking, cycling, public transport
- an enhanced local public transport network and regional public transport service focused on an enhanced, integrated high quality bus service
- provision of the Bearna Greenway, the Galway City to Oranmore Cycleway (part of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway) and the Galway to Oughterard Greenway
- a range of other additional cycling, pedestrian and public realm improvements including increased options for cycling in and across the city centre, improved pedestrian facilities, pedestrian prioritisation and way finding and legibility, thus transforming Galway City Centre into a new space where walking, cycling and public transport are all prioritised over private car traffic
- complementary measures including education and behavioural change measures and continued investment in Intelligent Transport Solutions (ITS) to increase efficiency, safety and co-ordination across transport networks (Smarter Mobility), and further emphasis on land use and transport integration

The delivery of the proposed N6 GCRR is a critical to the implementation of the GTS to meet the future transport requirements of an expanding Galway City and its metropolitan environs. The implementation of the proposed N6 GCRR relieves congestion, thus enabling reallocation of road space on city streets and the delivery of enhanced public transport options, including specifically BusConnects in the short to medium term and the potential in the future for light rail linked to development growth on specific corridor(s). Furthermore, the updated assessments demonstrate that the proposed N6 GCRR as part of the GTS is consistent with the most recent Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24).

#### *2.5.1.1 Galway Transport Strategy – Progress to Date*

The delivery of the GTS is underway with a focus on providing infrastructure to support walking, cycling and public transport to meet the current needs of the city. Galway City Council has undertaken important projects under the GTS since the adoption of the strategy in 2016 including the following projects.

**Table 2.1 Galway Transport Strategy (2016 to 2036) Project Status**

GTS Project / Brief Description of the Works	Project Status
<p><b>BusConnects Galway – Cross City Link</b></p> <p>This €80,000,000 BusConnects project has been submitted to An Bord Pleanála for Approval and for confirmation of a compulsory purchase acquisition of the lands necessary for the scheme.</p> <p>The project has proceeded through oral hearing and was approved by ABP.</p> <p>Progress is continuing in preparing detailed design and contract documents for the next stage of the project.</p>	<p>ABP, EIAR &amp; CPO</p> <p>Oral Hearing March 2024</p> <p>ABP approval granted, subject to judicial review challenge</p> <p>Application ABP-HA61.314597</p> <p>CPO ABP-KA61.314614</p> <p>Approved September 2024</p>
<p><b>BusConnects Galway – Dublin Road Scheme</b></p> <p>Non Statutory Consultation complete.</p> <p>This BusConnects project has progressed through the planning design stage and the applications for statutory approval and the CPO were lodged in February 2025.</p>	<p>Application for Approval and for the CPO lodged to the ABP on 14 February 2025</p>
<p><b>Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge</b></p> <p>New pedestrian and cycle bridge over the river Corrib with upgrade of footpaths and new pedestrian crossings</p>	<p>Open May 2023</p>
<p><b>Miller’s Lane</b></p> <p>1.1 km pedestrian/cycle link in the western suburbs connecting residential areas and amenities. Links into Galway City Cycle Network and supports access to the bus network.</p>	<p>Open June 2023</p>
<p><b>Martin Junction Upgrade</b></p> <p>Pedestrian footways/ cycle lanes and safe crossings incorporated into a new signal-controlled junction</p> <p>This project was completed in September 2023 and it provides enhanced pedestrian cycling and public transport connectivity to the Ardaun LAP lands.</p>	<p>Open 2023</p>
<p><b>Eglinton Canal Active Travel Scheme</b></p> <p>Resurface 900m shared pedestrian/cycle way, new Zebra crossings, and public cycle parking stands</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p><b>Doughiska Road South Cycle Scheme</b></p> <p>Upgrade 1.3km footpaths, install 1.1km cycle paths and crossings with junction radii tightened to improve safety.</p>	<p>Open 2023</p>
<p><b>N6/N84 Kirwan Junction Upgrade</b></p> <p>Upgrade of a significant junction on National Primary N6 and National Secondary N84 in a city centre location. The project has delivered substantially improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, improved road safety and will facilitate sustainable travel in Galway City.</p>	<p>July 2021</p>
<p><b>School Street – Scoil Iognáid, Raleigh Row</b></p> <p>Narrowing carriageway, widening pedestrian paths, school gateway treatment, bollards, road markings and signage and safety measures including new crossings</p>	<p>Open 2020/21</p> <p>Improvements works 2023</p>

GTS Project / Brief Description of the Works	Project Status
<b>Wolfe Tone Bridge II</b> Cantilevered pedestrian footway alongside the existing bridge	Completed August 2024
<b>Parkmore Road Bus Priority Scheme</b>	Expected completion Q1 2025
<b>Cycle Parking Provision/Bus Stop Improvements (general)</b>	various
<b>Bóthar Stiofán Cycle Network Scheme</b>	Part 8 Approved CPO made by GCiCo and submitted to ABP.
<b>Ballybane Road and Castlepark Road Cycle Network Scheme</b>	Construction started Q3 2024 and is progressing on site.
<b>New Bus Network for Galway (NTA December 2023)</b>	Roll-out 2025/2026
<b>Park &amp; Ride (NTA):</b> NTA through its Park and Ride project office has identified a number of sites in Galway and progressed in negotiations with landowners for the acquisition of lands for the provision of Park and Ride with dedicated public transport connectivity from these sites and the city and major employment centres.	Pre-planning phase

Table 2.1 lists the status of a wider range of transport infrastructure projects in the GTS. A number of these projects have been completed and are operational since the preparation of the 2018 EIAR for the N6 GCRR in 2018. The local authorities remain committed to the implementation of the GTS and substantial progress has been made in advancing major elements of the strategy with an emphasis upon the delivery of sustainable measures such as cycling, walking and public transport funded by the National Transport Authority and the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund under the NDP.

Key parts of the Cycle Network have been rolled out and other sections are on site or at an advanced stage of the statutory approval process. BusConnects Galway (i.e., the Cross City Link and Dublin Road Scheme) are also currently progressing through the approval processes. The former has just been approved by An Bord Pleanála. The status report confirms that significant progress in the delivery of GTS projects has been achieved in recent years with further working their way to completion. The implementation of these transport projects including the proposed N6 GCRR will achieve the overall aim of delivering a safe, cohesive city cycle network and pedestrian facilities as prescribed in the GTS, noting that these other GTS transport projects can only be optimally delivered with the proposed N6 GCRR in place.

In terms of delivering the overall Transport Strategy, the inter-dependence of various elements of the Strategy and in particular, the critical role of the proposed N6 GCRR in realising the objectives of the GTS is examined in the extract below from Section 3.6 of the GTS Executive Report (2016-2036):

*A key aspect of addressing current traffic issues is to support and facilitate a shift to more sustainable transport modes, where practical to do so. increasing the rates of travel by sustainable modes in Galway City will require a significant improvement in the quality of the public transport, pedestrian and cycling networks. This will benefit from targeted reallocation of road space from general traffic to sustainable modes.*

*For example, to deliver cross-city journeys by public transport, major priority measures, such as bus lanes and traffic restrictions are required through the city centre. Whilst this will support travel mode shift, it will also reduce the capacity of the overall transport network. Therefore, without accompanying road network and traffic management interventions, traffic congestion issues will persist.*

*Overall therefore, whilst a range of public transport, walking and cycling measures are intended to bring about a shift away from car travel, a significant level of congestion will remain in the*

city. It is relevant that the provision of a high frequency bus network in Galway (with improved priority through the city centre) in the future would result in both increased public transport usage in the city, but also increased congestion on the major river crossings due to trip displacement.

The diagram in Figure 3.6 illustrates the modified comparison of overall travel times (for all modes) for the present day networks, and for two scenarios with improved public transport and walking and cycling improvements; that is, with and without a new orbital traffic route. The comparison shows that reducing travel congestion requires both improvements to public transport, walking and cycling networks and the provision of a new orbital route.

Given the strong negative impact of congestion on achieving the objectives of this strategy, unless additional capacity is provided for traffic, the overall objectives for the Transport Strategy will not be met. Furthermore, this additional road capacity should not be in conflict with the enhanced sustainable transport network, rather it should focus on supporting trips that cannot be facilitated by the proposed measures (i.e. outer-city movements and external-to-external trips). A new road link to the north of the city is therefore proposed as part of this Transport Strategy to deliver the necessary capacity and support the delivery of sustainable transport measures.

Figure 3.6 (page 38 GTS) referred to in the extract above demonstrates the importance of the N6 Galway City Ring Road in reducing travel time on the transport networks for all modes.

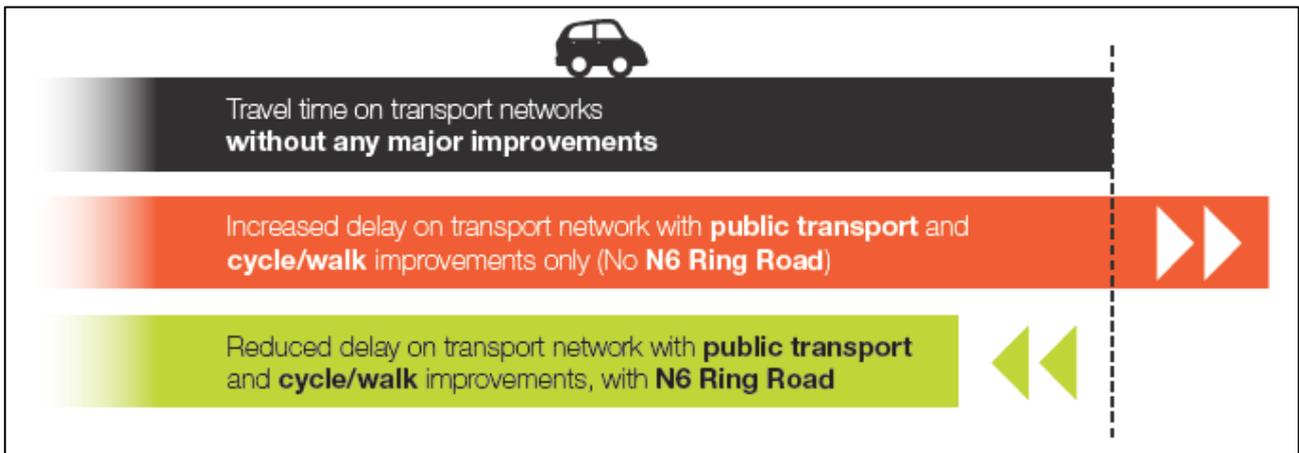


Plate 2.18 Extract from Galway Transport Strategy, Figure 3.6

The proposed N6 GCRR provides an additional crossing of the River Corrib, thus facilitating the reduction of congestion on city centre roads and allows the reallocation of road space in the city network to non-private car modes of transport, thereby improving the attractiveness of non-car modes of transport in the city for short and medium distances. This is further detailed in Chapter 3, Need for the Project.

It is necessary to consider the role of the proposed N6 GCRR within the wider context of the GTS. It is demonstrated at Chapter 6 of this updated EIAR that the proposed N6 GCRR is a necessary component of the GTS to solve the traffic and transportation problems in Galway City. The road will divert traffic away from the city, thereby reducing congestion and making the city a more attractive and safer place to walk or cycle. By removing through traffic, the proposed ring road will reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability for public transport thereby enabling a reduction in congestion all of which are key aims of the Galway Transport Strategy/National Sustainable Mobility Policy.

The proposed N6 GCRR is a major transport infrastructure project identified amongst other projects within the GTS and it forms part of an overall suite of measures necessary to address the transport issues in Galway. Table 2.1 above lists the current status of various projects in the GTS which will support the overall strategy. The analysis above demonstrates that the project is identified in policy documents at every tier of the planning hierarchy and is of importance within the NPF and the Project Ireland framework, which promotes compact growth based upon sustainable transport infrastructure.

The strategic significance of the proposed N6 GCRR within the context of the transport infrastructure requirements to serve a growing Galway is recognised at paragraphs 10.3.21 to 10.3.23 inclusive of the planning assessment in the Inspectors' Report (ABP-302885-18 and ABP-302848-18, page 87).

Action TR/24/9(TF) in the Climate Action Plan 2024 Annex<sup>13</sup> of Actions, relates to the Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies. It outlines an action for a programme of review, update, and appraisal of Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies, including the publication of a finalised Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS) with a timeline of Q4 2024.

As part of this action, the National Transport Authority (NTA) published a Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study Report<sup>14</sup> in October 2024. This report explored key issues and the potential feasibility of introducing a Light Rail line to the city of Galway. The findings from this report will be used to inform the development of the new GMATS, alongside recommendations for active travel, bus, rail, roads and demand management measures.

Chapter 4 of this updated EIAR looks at the demand and impact of the proposed N6 GCRR, when added to a city transport network which already contains a Light Rail line. The analysis shows that the LRT and the proposed N6 GCRR, when delivered in tandem with the Climate Action Plan demand management measures, serve complimentary functions. The LRT services the travel requirements for residents and workers across the city within the city boundary, whereas the proposed N6 GCRR services the travel requirements for longer distance strategic passenger and freight requirements of the wider city and region. (Refer to Chapter 4, Alternatives considered for the proposed N6 GCRR).

At present the 2016 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) is the current adopted transport strategy for Galway and its recommendations are incorporated into the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029, therefore the assessment of the N6 GCRR has been undertaken with regard to the infrastructure contained in the 2016 GTS.

However, this updated EIAR provides an assessment of the proposed N6 GCRR in the context of the potential measures that arise to fulfil the obligations of CAP24. The demand management measures adopted for the assessment were the same measures used during a modelling exercise which helped to inform the 2023 version of the Climate Action Plan (CAP23)<sup>15</sup> and the subsequent Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24). They are not yet committed but are the most appropriate set of measures available for use in the assessment of CAP24. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 of this updated EIAR.

### 2.5.2 Galway City Council – Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

The Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 (the “City Development Plan”) sets out Galway City Council’s policies and objectives for the sustainable development of Galway City to 2029 to achieve the following vision:

*The vision for Galway City is to be a successful, sustainable, competitive, regional city that creates prosperity, supports a high quality of life and maintains its distinctive identity and supports a rich cultural experience. A city that is environmentally responsible, mobilised to combat climate change and resilient to challenge. A city that can develop, attract and retain talent and skills and fosters innovation and creativity. An inclusive, diverse city where civic engagement is valued and a shared vision is pursued through good governance and leadership. A city that offers sustainable and quality choices in housing, work, transport and lifestyle opportunities.*

**Plate 2.19 Extract from Section 1.2 of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029**

<sup>13</sup> <https://assets.gov.ie/279556/9f07b7d3-c934-416a-9c4f-177c396f07e9.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GMATS-LRT-Feasibility-Study-report-v0.4\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GMATS-LRT-Feasibility-Study-report-v0.4_Final.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Climate-Action-Plan-Phase-3-Modelling-Exec-Summary-v5.6.pdf>

Section 1.2 of the City Development Plan lists ten strategic goals the City Council considers necessary to deliver its Strategic Vision for the development of Galway City during the plan period, including the following:

- *Enable Galway to become a city of scale as envisaged in the NPF and a regional driver of development that can contribute to economic growth through the provision of balanced and sustainable economic opportunities for development, innovation and investment across all employment sectors and allow the role of the City and Metropolitan Area harness the strengths and maximise the economic development for the whole Northern and Western Region.*
- *Apply the principle of sustainability and integrate the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development particularly where they relate to the uses of land, buildings, water, energy, waste and through the encouragement of sustainable modes of transport and the integration of transportation with land use.*
- *Integrate land use and transport planning to maximise opportunities for active travel and public transport usage and enable key transport projects included in the Galway Transport Strategy which will deliver multi modal usage, smart mobility and accessibility for all.*
- *Ensure efficient and sustainable use of all water services, environmental resources and infrastructure.*
- *Develop a more urban compact form in the city that provides for attractive, integrated, and easily assessable neighbourhoods that are supported by appropriate levels of services and amenities.*

A comparison between the strategic aims in the current City Development Plan and the previous Development Plan demonstrates the manner in which the current City Development Plan seeks to achieve the National Strategic Outcomes (the “NSOs”) in Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (the “National Planning Framework” or “NPF”). Galway is targeted for significant growth in population and employment to become a regional centre of scale and to deliver balanced regional development under the NPF.

Densification and compact growth within the built-up footprint of existing urban areas based on sustainable mobility are the key tenets of the planning strategy. The strategic aims adopt these principles and recognise that the integration of land use and transport including, importantly, the transport projects in the Galway Transport Strategy (including the proposed N6 GCRR) is necessary to deliver smart and sustainable mobility.

Galway City is identified as one of the four designated cities outside Dublin in the NPF and has been allocated ambitious population growth targets with at least half of the new homes to be delivered in the existing built up footprint. This focus on scale and settlement pattern is reflected in the objectives in Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032 (i.e., the NWRSES) and the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (the “MASP”) which require this planned growth to be compact, smart and sustainable.

The Core Strategy acknowledges the broader spatial context of the MASP which identifies Strategic Growth Areas and the infrastructure, services and facilities required for sustainable city growth. Plate 2.20 is the Core Strategy Map (Figure 1.6 in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029). It is significant that the alignment of the proposed N6 GCRR, extending from Ardaun to the east to the suburbs on the west side of Galway City, is clearly marked on the Core Strategy Map Plate 2.20, illustrating the strategic function of the proposed N6 GCRR.

Section 1.8.3 of the City Development Plan confirms that the Core Strategy is informed by the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) which aims to address the current and future transport requirements of Galway City and environs. The GTS therefore underpins future growth in the city and aligns growth in employment and housing along existing and planned transport corridors with a strong objective to reduce car dependency in favour of public transport and active modes.



Figure 1.6: Core Strategy Map Table

Plate 2.20 Core Strategy Map from Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

The Core Strategy Map above gives visual representation of the main settlement areas and transport focus. Chapter 4 of the Galway City Development Plan deals with Sustainable Mobility and Transportation and sets out the Council’s general transport policies at Policy 4.1 including the following policies in relation to the GTS and the proposed N6 GCRR as a required supporting project as shown on Plate 2.21.

## Policy 4.1 General

1. Develop a compact city, where sustainable land use and transportation are integrated and where there is choice and accessibility to a range of transport modes, with increasing support for a shift to more sustainable modes in line with national aims on climate action and where safety and ease of movement is provided to and within the City and onward to the wider area of the MASP, County Galway and the Northern and Western Region.
2. Align with the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and the regional policy objectives of the RSES in the promotion of sustainable patterns of transport and in the support for the delivery of key transport infrastructure that will enable development to take place in accordance with the Core Strategy.
3. Support the implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) which will advance the delivery and modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport and also enable planned integration of land use and transport within the city and the greater MASP area in consultation with Galway County Council, NTA and TII and service providers.
4. Support the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and the associated implementation programme which will deliver a high quality public transport network, provide and encourage the use of other sustainable modes of transport, and facilitate the efficient movement of private vehicles and freight.
5. Support the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and the outcomes of the planned evidenced based review to be carried out in collaboration with Galway County Council, the NTA 'and other stakeholders'. This review will consider all transport modes including the feasibility of a very light rail/light rail option and will not preclude the advancement of the Cross City Link route or the planning of other projects already commenced within the Galway Transportation Strategy to planning consent stage with Galway County Council and the NTA. This review will consider all transport modes including the feasibility of a light rail option and will not preclude the advancement of the Cross City Link route to planning consent stage.
6. Continue to progress a sustainable transport solution for the city through the implementation of measures included in the GTS and required supporting projects in particular the N6 GCRR project.

Plate 2.21 Policy 4.1 General from Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

Section 4.2 of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 emphasises the importance of aligning land use and transportation to create sustainable cities and the critical role of the GTS in helping achieve the growth ambitions in the Core Strategy:

*“Implementation of the GTS measures will support the integration of housing with transportation, fostering sustainable transportation patterns. The Core Strategy has been informed by the GTS and provides for a co-ordinated approach with investment and the delivery of essential infrastructure, services and community facilities.”*

Chapter 4 sets out the City Council’s policies in relation public transport (policy 4.3), sustainable mobility (policy 4.4) and transport demand management measures (policy 4.5). The extract below from Section 4.6 of the Galway City Development Plan highlights the transport infrastructure challenge associated with enhancing regional connectivity and meeting NPF growth targets. The City Development Plan explicitly recognises the need for the proposed N6 GCRR to successfully deliver the integrated transport solution in the GTS and the wider strategic function of the proposed N6 GCRR.

*“The national road and motorway network in particular provides vital inter-urban and interregional connectivity, critical to realise the NPF growth ambitions for Galway to become a city of scale and to maintain its economic resilience and competitiveness. The M6 motorway significantly reduced travel times from Dublin to Galway and has made the city more accessible nationally and enhanced movement in general, including that relating to bus transport and goods vehicles. This route is a highly important national road and is identified as part of the EU TEN-T Comprehensive Network which is critical in maintaining, improving and protecting the strategic function of the key transport corridors in line with national and regional policy and investment*

commitments. The completion of the M17/M18 Gort to Tuam motorway has added to the accessibility of the city and improved strategic linkage within the region and with other NPF regional cities. The N59 and N84 national roads are important regional links to and from the city also. At local level the near completion of the entire N6 Multi Modal Corridor Improvement Scheme has made improvements to the road network and traffic management.

However, there remains significant traffic congestion with most main junctions operating over capacity. The existing road network needs to cater for a range of users and a variety of journeys within the city and even with investment in sustainable modes the problems cannot be entirely addressed. The NPF and the RSES recognise that the growth and economic success of the city requires investment in a range of infrastructure, including roads and if not delivered the current congestion will worsen and inevitably impact on the overall function, success and ambition for Galway to grow to regional status. The NPF specifically sees improved accessibility and connectivity between centres of scale, separate from Dublin, as key to harnessing the peripheral regions potential and to achieving increased regional parity.

Some journeys across the city, in particular through journeys on national and regional roads are not always capable of being accommodated by non-car modes. Strong demands for such journeys remain at present and will increase in the future. While there will be a shift to sustainable modes on implementation of the GTS through a number of measures, the efficiencies of these modes are jeopardised by the significant level of congestion that will still remain on the network and on the main river crossings.

The GTS recognises this need for an integrated transport solution which includes for the provision for sustainable and reliable alternatives to travel by private car and also to deliver the strategic orbital route – the N6 GCRR incorporating a new river crossing. Although some elements of the GTS can be implemented independently from the delivery of such a road, the full extent of measures and the success of the GTS needs the provision of this new orbital route which is also an identified strategic addition to the EU TEN-T Comprehensive Network. In addition, to support efficient movement within the city the GTS also outlines additional traffic management measures which are needed, which include new improved roads and links and the management of car parking.

The NPF, in acknowledgement of the rationale for a strategic orbital route, has identified the delivery of the N6 GCRR as a key growth enabler for the city. This route is further supported in the RSES which identifies the road network in general as an investment priority. It recognises that the accessibility from the Northern and Western regions of Ireland and between centres of scale separate from Dublin needs to be significantly improved with a focus on cities and larger regionally distributed centres and key east to west and north to south routes. The MASP also sees the need to continue to improve the road network around the city and in particular to support the delivery of all measures in the GTS including the N6 GCRR.” [Emphasis added]

This extract highlights the significance of the proposed N6 GCRR in the achievement of strategic aims in the current City Development Plan, which envisage that Galway will grow to become a larger accessible city of scale and a regional driver of development in the Northern and Western Region.

Section 2.5.1 above notes that significant progress in the delivery of GTS projects has been achieved in recent years with further projects working their way towards completion. The implementation of these transport projects including the proposed N6 GCRR will achieve the overall aim of delivering a safe, cohesive city cycle network and pedestrian facilities as prescribed in the GTS, noting that these other GTS transport projects and the overall objectives of the Transport Strategy can only be optimally delivered with the proposed N6 GCRR in place.

Moreover, Policy 4.6 in the Galway City Development Plan at Plate 2.22 below expressly supports the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road project and the GTS in terms of the road and street network.

## Policy 4.6 Road and Street Network and Accessibility

1. Support the N6 Galway City Ring Road project in conjunction with Galway County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in order to develop a transportation solution to address the existing congestion on the national and regional road network.
2. Enhance the delivery of an overall integrated transport solution for the city and environs by supporting the reservation of the designated strategic road corridor to accommodate the N6 GCRR project.
3. 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.

Plate 2.22 Extract from Policy 4.6 Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

Section 4.8 of the Development Plan lists specific development objectives pertaining to sustainable mobility and transport including objectives that relate to various elements of the GTS. The following road and street network & accessibility objectives nos. 23 & 24 directly relate to the proposed N6 GCRR as shown on Plate 2.23. Both objectives emphasise the strategic function of the proposed N6 GCRR bridge crossing which are critical transport infrastructure works in the City Development Plan.

## Road and Street Network & Accessibility

23. Reserve the route corridor of the N6 Galway City Ring Road (N6 GCRR) project as approved with conditions and modifications by An Bord Pleanála which accommodates the designated strategic road and the associated bridge crossing of the River Corrib.
24. Give priority to the reservation the N6 GCRR designed strategic road corridor and any associated land requirements over other land uses and objectives in the City Development Plan and prohibit developments within the designed strategic road corridor which could potentially prejudice the development of this strategic road and river crossing.

Plate 2.23 Extract from Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

The analysis above is focused upon the strategic aims, core strategy and transport chapters in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029. Other provisions, which highlight the role of transport infrastructure in the GTS including the proposed N6 GCRR in facilitating development in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 include the following.

Transport plays a critical role in terms of achieving sustainable planning outcomes and the importance of the GTS in this regard is recognised in the following extract from Section 2.3 of the City Development Plan.

*For the Development Plan this includes for adopting compact growth polices and regeneration of brownfield sites which is one of the main tenets of the Core Strategy in conjunction with a strategy for transport which promotes sustainable mobility as provided for in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS). This will encourage sustainable densities, expansion of walking, cycling and public transport networks, encouragement of the neighbourhood concept and supporting infrastructure for the transition to electric vehicles and the use of biofuels.*

Addressing climate change requires a strategic integrated approach to be embedded in the Development Plan (Section 2.4). Table 2.1 lists the key cross-cutting policies that contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation in each chapter of the City Development Plan. The extract below emphasises how the integration of land use and transportation supported by the GTS is necessary to achieve compact growth, a shift towards sustainable modes of transport and reduced GHG emissions.

<p><b>4. Sustainable Mobility and Transportation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the integration of land use and transportation to encourage compact growth, shift to sustainable mobility and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.</li> <li>• Supports the '15-Minute City' concept to reduce dependence on car use and encourage sustainable mobility.</li> <li>• Supports the delivery of public transport and sustainable mobility projects in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) such as Cross City Link, Bus Connects and the National Greenway Network in the city.</li> <li>• Supports the expansion of the EV charging network</li> </ul>
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**Plate 2.24 Extract from Section 2.4 Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029**

Section 3.5 ‘Sustainable Neighbourhoods: Outer Suburbs’ notes as follows.

*Additional strategic facilities such as the proposed N6 GCRR will provide additional accessibility and connectivity in the area in addition to identified investment in other GTS measures to support public and sustainable transport.*

Policy 6.1 sets out Galway City Council’s general policies in respect of the economy, enterprise and retail sectors and includes the following policy.

15. Support the economic performance of the city and the wider MASP through the implementation of the phased plan of transport measures as provided in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) including those relating to public transport, walking, cycling, and the N6 GCRR strategic road project.

**Plate 2.25 Extract from Policy 6.1 Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029**

Section 11.2 Land Use Zoning General of Chapter 11 ‘Land Use Zoning Objectives and Development Standards and Guidelines’ of the City Development Plan (page 280) states as follows:

*“Priority will be given to the reservation of the N6 GCRR designated strategic road corridor and any associated land requirements over other land use zonings and specific objectives.”*

### 2.5.2.1 Public Realm Strategy 2019

Galway City’s Public Realm Strategy explores the present condition of the city townscape and its network of public and green spaces and sets out a vision and strategy for improvements to guide investment and development.

The Galway Transport Strategy is identified as a catalyst for change in the 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.

The Public Realm Strategy notes the main components of the GTS including the proposed N6 GCRR, the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge opened since May 2023 and the Cross-City Link where an application was approved by An Bord Pleanála, currently subject to judicial review, and their implications for the city’s public realm.

The Cross City Link, which is the cornerstone of the transport strategy is identified as a key public realm scheme on Figure 8.14 in the City Development Plan. Other GTS project in the table at Section 2.5.1 above include the Miller’s Lane pedestrian/cycle link, Eglinton Canal Active Travel Scheme, Martin and Kirwan Junctions Upgrades and the Doughiska Road South Cycle Scheme and various pedestrian and cycling schemes within the city, all of which are steadily improving the public realm.

As set out above, the proposed N6 GCRR is an integral part of the objectives, and delivery of those objectives, in the Galway Transport Strategy. In this sense, the proposed N6 GCRR facilitates the delivery of other key elements of the GTS in relation to the prioritisation of public transport on the city streets and safe

pedestrian and cyclist movements which in turn enable public realm enhancements in line with the Public Realm Strategy.

Policy 8.8 in the City Development Plan supports the implementation of the Public Realm Strategy and the recognises the public realm implications of the GTS projects states as follows.

## Policy 8.8 Public Realm

1. Progress implementation of the Public Realm Strategy (2019) and accompanying manuals including the delivery of enhancement projects and a typology of streets and public spaces that positively contributes to the city's environment and heritage.
7. Support measures in the GTS to ensure that qualitative public realm considerations are integrated into GTS projects promoting sustainable transport use and the pedestrianisation of specific city centre streets.

### Plate 2.26 Galway City Development Plan Policy 8.8

Section 8.10 of the City Development Plan lists the specific objectives in the Public Realm including the following in relation to urban design and placemaking.

## Specific Objectives

### Urban Design and Placemaking

8. Support public realm enhancement projects contained in the Public Realm Strategy and accompanying manuals and their integration with GTS projects, environmental improvements and initiatives relating to climate adaption, biodiversity, public art and activities in the public realm.

### Plate 2.27 Galway City Development Plan

#### 2.5.2.2 Strategic Objectives of the City Development Plan

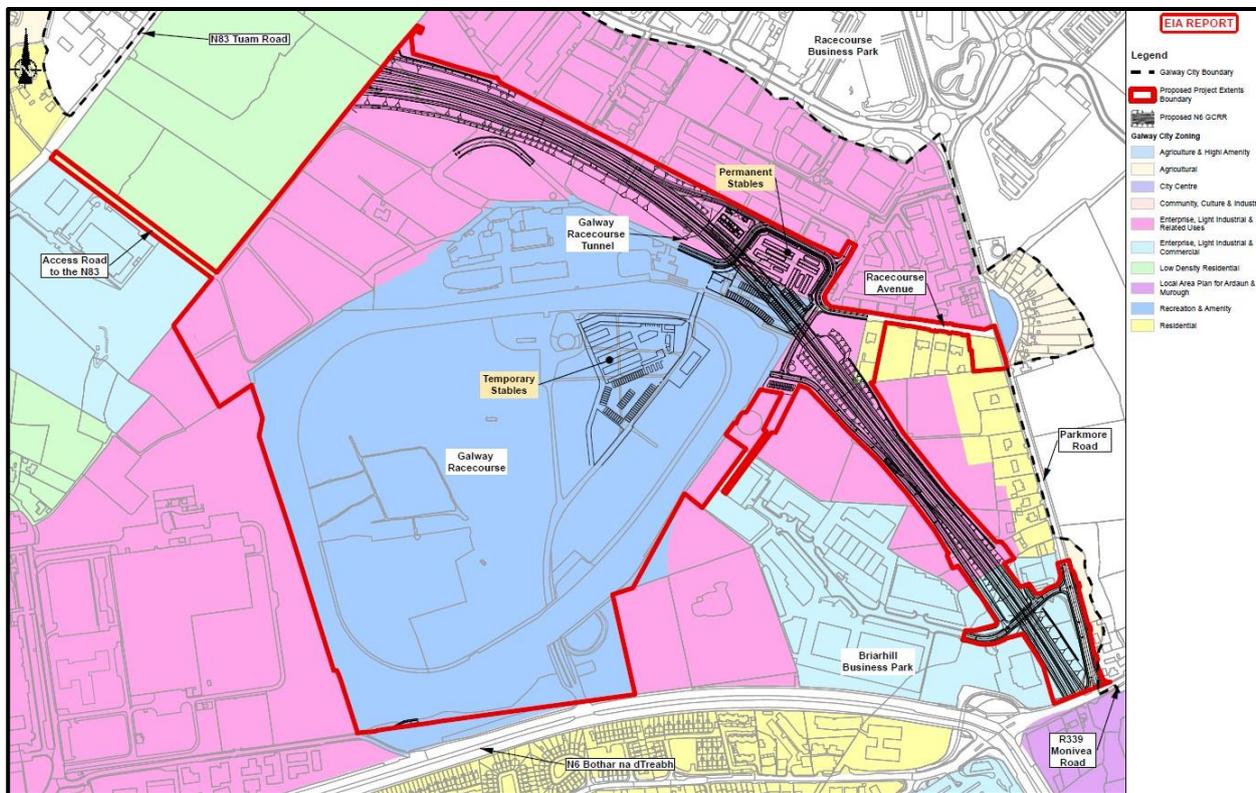
The overall Transport Strategy of the City Development Plan has the objective to:

- Support and facilitate the integration of land use and transportation
- Support the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and the associated implementation programme which will deliver a high quality public transport network and encourage the use of sustainable transport modes
- Support the proposed N6 GCRR in conjunction with Galway County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland in order to develop a transportation solution to address the congestion on the road network and reduce the negative impact of vehicular traffic on the functioning and experience of the city centre and to facilitate city bound, cross-city, cross-county and strategic east-west movements
- Support the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through the promotion of sustainable land use and transportation

The Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 fully integrates the aims, objectives, and strategies of the GTS, which includes the proposed N6 GCRR into its core policies and development objectives.

### 2.5.2.3 City Development Plan Zoning

In the interest of a complete assessment of the implications of the proposed N6 GCRR with respect to the land use zonings in the City Development Plan, Plate 2.28 below shows the proposed N6 GCRR in the vicinity of Galway Racecourse overlain on an extract from Zoning Map A. This issue is particularly relevant to the proposed development at Galway Racecourse (“the Galway Racecourse planning application”), which is the subject matter of a separate planning application, but which forms part of the Project which is examined and assessed in this updated EIAR.



**Plate 2.28 City Development Plan Zoning in vicinity of Galway Racecourse and proposed N6 GCRR overlain**

The proposed N6 GCRR passes through lands with various zoning objectives on Plate 2.28. If the proposed N6 GCRR is approved by ABP, and the construction of the road proceeds, it will be necessary for Galway Racecourse to implement mitigation measures to ensure racing at Ballybrit continues without interruption during the construction phase. Accordingly, Galway Racecourse Committee Trust has applied for permission (Reg. Ref. 24/60279) for the following works as described on the public notices:

*The construction and demolition of the temporary stables and the construction of permanent stables, pavilion, machinery and maintenance sheds, pre-parade rind as well as ancillary site works*

Galway City Council granted permission for this application on 23 October 2024.

As regards zoning, the stables application site is subject to two different land use zoning objectives i.e. ‘RA’ and ‘I’. Most of the site is zoned RA shaded ‘green’ on Zoning Map A where the zoning objective is “to provide for and protect recreational uses, open spaces, amenity uses, natural heritage and biodiversity.” Section 11.2.2 of the City Development Plan also includes the following development objective in respect of the RA zoned land at the application site:

- *RA lands located at Ballybrit Racecourse. The Council will consider the use of existing hospitality facilities and racecourse grounds for suitable commercial purposes including conferences, exhibitions, markets, agricultural or similar shows and park and ride facilities.*

The proposed development comprises improvements to the facilities at Galway Racecourse of a temporary and a permanent nature, which are necessary for the uninterrupted safe operation of horse racing during and after the construction of the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road. The proposed development on the RA zoned lands therefore accords with the RA zoning objective.

The balance of the application site is occupied by the Brooks Timber and Building Supplies Ltd which is zoned 'I' where the zoning objective is "to provide for enterprise, industrial and related uses." Section 11.2.5 of the City Development Plan lists development objectives in relation to specific I zones throughout the city including the following objective in respect of the lands zoned I at the Galway Racecourse application site:

- *Lands zoned I located north of Ballybrit Racecourse. The Council will consider the provision of essential supporting racecourse infrastructure on a portion of these lands and where it is demonstrated that it cannot reasonably be accommodated on the adjoining RA lands, without jeopardising the function of Galway Racecourse.*

The above development objective is included in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029, but was not included in the previous City Development Plan. The construction of permanent stables on the lands zoned 'I' to the north of the Racecourse is essential for supporting racecourse infrastructure that cannot be provided within the adjoining zoned RA lands without jeopardising the function of the Racecourse. The rationale for the development of permanent stables on lands zoned 'I' located north of Ballybrit Racecourse is elaborated in Chapter 4 Alternatives Considered of this updated EIAR lodged with application Reg. Ref. 24/60279. The proposed development of permanent stables on lands zoned 'I' located north of Ballybrit Racecourse therefore accords with the specific objective.

In conclusion, the implications of the proposed N6 GCRR include the requirement to obtain permission to develop temporary stables, permanent stables and associated infrastructure at Galway Racecourse to ensure that horse racing will continue during the construction and operational phases of the proposed N6 GCRR. The inclusion of a specific objective in respect of the lands zoned 'I' to the north of the racecourse ensures that the proposed stables development, the need for which is a direct consequence of the proposed N6 GCRR, can be accommodated on those 'I' zoned lands. Thus, the potential zoning implications in the vicinity of Galway Racecourse in respect of the proposed N6 GCRR are addressed in the new City Development Plan.

#### **2.5.2.4 Ardaun Local Area Plan 2018-2024**

Galway City Council made a Local Area Plan (LAP) for lands situated at the area known as Ardaun on the east side of the city (164ha), approximately 5km from the city centre, which was adopted on 9 April 2018.

The Core Strategy of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 includes an action to 'Review Ardaun Local Area Plan to ensure consistency with the Core Strategy and policies and objectives of the 2023-29 Development Plan'. The Galway City Development Plan supports the development at Ardaun as follows:

*The development of Ardaun is a key urban extension on the east side of the city. It is part of the settlement strategy of the city with the capacity to accommodate significant growth and a new city neighbourhood. The Ardaun Local Area Plan 2018-2024 sets out a range of policies and objectives to guide the future development of this area..*

Table 1.7 notes that Ardaun is identified as a Strategic Growth Area in the RSES for the Northern and Western Region.

Policy 10.5 in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 states that it is the City Council's policy to:

*Develop Ardaun, in accordance with the Local Area Plan taking a co-ordinated and phased approach that will contribute to the integration of land use, urban form and structure, transportation and natural heritage to create a new urban village and a sustainable living and working environment.*

The LAP seeks to deliver the concept of an urban village with the principal village centre in the southern section of Ardaun i.e. south of the N6/M6 corridor, with two urban nodes / local centres north of this corridor linking to surrounding areas including Coolagh Village. It is anticipated that the LAP area can support a population of up to 12,621 people through the delivery of 4,640 homes and that Ardaun will function as a mixed-use business and retail district (LAP Section 1.2).

Strategic Goal 4 of the LAP (Section 3) supports the development of sustainable transport modes as per the Galway City Development Plan and the Galway Transport Strategy. This Strategic Goal is supported by the policy to:

*“Promote interconnectivity between all modes of transport, in particular sustainable and public transport modes in order to efficiently link Ardaun with the main hubs for activity including the city centre in accordance with the GTS”.*

This is supported at Section 4.5 of the LAP through a key objective to:

*“Support and facilitate the provision of an integrated public transport network to service Ardaun through the implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy and in conjunction with relevant transport providers, NTA and other stakeholders.”*

This LAP reserves the preferred route corridor of the proposed N6 GCRR as it traverses the LAP area as per Policies 4.1, 4.6, and the proposed N6 GCRR road corridor reservation at Section 11.2 of the Galway City Development Plan. In this regard, specific objectives 23 and 24 at Section 4.8 of the City Development Plan are also relevant.

The development strategy of the LAP acknowledges and aligns with the Galway City Development Plan, the Galway Transport Strategy and the proposed N6 GCRR.

The proposed N6 GCRR therefore aligns with the strategic aims of the City Development Plan and is necessary to achieve the Council’s vision for Galway City to become a successful, sustainable, competitive regional city of scale as per the NPF and the RSES.

### 2.5.3 Galway County Council – Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 (hereafter referred to as “the County Development Plan”) was adopted in May 2022 and sets out a range of policy objectives for development in the plan period to 2028.

The new County Development Plan was made subsequent to the preparation of the 2018 EIAR and has been updated to fully accord with current national and regional planning policy. In this regard, Volume 2 of the Plan is a new 12-year strategic framework plan for the future development of the Galway Metropolitan Area as per the NPF and RSES (Section 2.5.5).

The Galway County Development Plan seeks to develop in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner, it promotes the climate change agenda and sets the housing and economic priorities to deliver the following vision for the County.

***Promote the creation of an attractive county to live, work, visit and enable businesses to flourish in an environment that offers a range of housing options, robust and diverse range of employment opportunities, access to quality infrastructure and community facilities with a high-quality sustainable environment for all.***

#### Plate 2.29 Extract from Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

Section 1.5 states that the County Development Plan will strive to contribute, as practicable, towards achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016) and that the policy objectives in the Development Plan have been prepared to comply with these goals and the NSOs in the National Planning Framework.

The Council’s strategic aims in relation to transport infrastructure are set out at Section 6.2 of the County Development Plan and include the following:

- *To support the Galway County Transport & Planning Study (GCTPS) and the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS)*

- To support the sustainable modes of transport and the transition to a low carbon economy
- To safeguard the strategic transport function, carrying capacity, including planning for future capacity enhancements of the national road network

The Policy Objectives for the Galway County Transport & Planning Study and the Galway Transportation Strategy are set out in Section 6.3.3 of the Galway County Development Plan. All are relevant to the proposed N6 GCRR because they address the integration of land use and transportation, sustainable transport, walking and cycling, upgrades to public transport networks and road based public transport, improvements and enhancements to the road network, and collaboration with the Galway City Council to advance transport proposals to enhance travel compatible with the overall GTS and GCTPS.

Galway County Council produced the Galway County Transport and Planning Study 2022-2028 (GCTPS) for the County (Appendix 3 Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028) which is an overview and examination of the existing transport networks and services in the County. It is distinct and separate from the GTS, which consider the transport infrastructure requirements within Galway City and suburbs (i.e. the Galway Metropolitan Area).

Section 6.5.1 of the County Development Plan: *“promotes an integrated approach to land-use and transportation and supports development in existing towns, settlements and villages in accordance with the Core Strategy”* and supports compact urban growth, consolidation of existing settlements and densification through the development of brownfield sites in accordance with the NPF and the NWRSES.

Section 6.5.2 emphasises the role of the GCTPS and GTS in making the transition to more sustainable forms of transport and in meeting the requirements for reduction in GHG emissions under the Climate Action Plan.

In addition to policy support for the promotion of sustainable transport, the Council recognises the importance of the road network and the need to safeguard and develop this infrastructure *“to ensure the safety of road users, the transport of goods and services and connectivity between the settlements and the wider region.”*

The Council will continue to support extensions and improvements to the existing roads network in the County with the Priority Transportation Infrastructure Projects for Galway in the plan period 2022-2028 listed in Table 6.1 including the proposed N6 GCRR among the National Roads section.

Policy Objective PRP 1 for priority roads projects is directly relevant to the proposed N6 GCRR (Plate 2.30).

Policy Objective Priority Roads Projects	
PRP 1	Proposed Roads Projects
	Galway County Council will facilitate the progression of the necessary infrastructure improvements including new roads/projects listed in <b>Table 6.1: Priority Transportation Infrastructure Projects for County Galway 2022-2028</b> and those listed within <b>Table 6.2: Regional/Local Projects Proposed for 2022-2028</b> subject to relevant Irish planning and European environmental legislation including Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and/or other environmental assessment, where appropriate.

**Plate 2.30 Extract from Section 6.5.3 of Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028**

Thus, section 6.5.3.1 is directly relevant and this section highlights the strategic importance of the proposed N6 GCRR to the success of the delivery of the implementation of, inter alia, the Galway MASP (as per the following extract).

*The delivery of the N6 Galway City Ring Road (N6 GCRR) is of significant importance to ensure the success of the Galway MASP and the wider region. The city and environs will continue to grow and without intervention the current congestion on the approach into the city from the county area will impact on the overall function and success of the Galway City*

metropolitan area and county. The GCTPS and the GTS have both outlined measures needed to address this problem including the delivery of a new orbital route (ie. N6 GCRR).

Policy Objectives NR 1 and NR 2 are also relevant from the list of Policy Objectives for National Roads in the County Development Plan 2022-2028 as shown on Plate 2.31.

Policy Objectives for National Roads	
<b>NR 1</b>	<b>Protection of Strategic Roads</b>
To protect the strategic transport function of national roads and associated national road junctions, including motorways through the implementation of the 'Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities' DECLG, (2012) and the Trans-European Networks (TEN-T) Regulations.	
<b>NR 2</b>	<b>Key Roads Infrastructure Developments</b>
To support the delivery of the Galway City Ring Road (N6GCRR), N59 Maigh Cuilinn Bypass and the Galway – Clifden (N59) Schemes.	

Plate 2.31 Extract from Policy Objectives for National Roads in Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

In relation to the Galway Gateway and west of the County, the inclusion of the priority roads objectives in the County Development Plan seeks to enhance connectivity and access across the region, and to deliver on the transportation needs of the Galway Gateway, its environs and the west of the County, and Map 6.1 as shown on Plate 2.32 shows the interconnection of all.

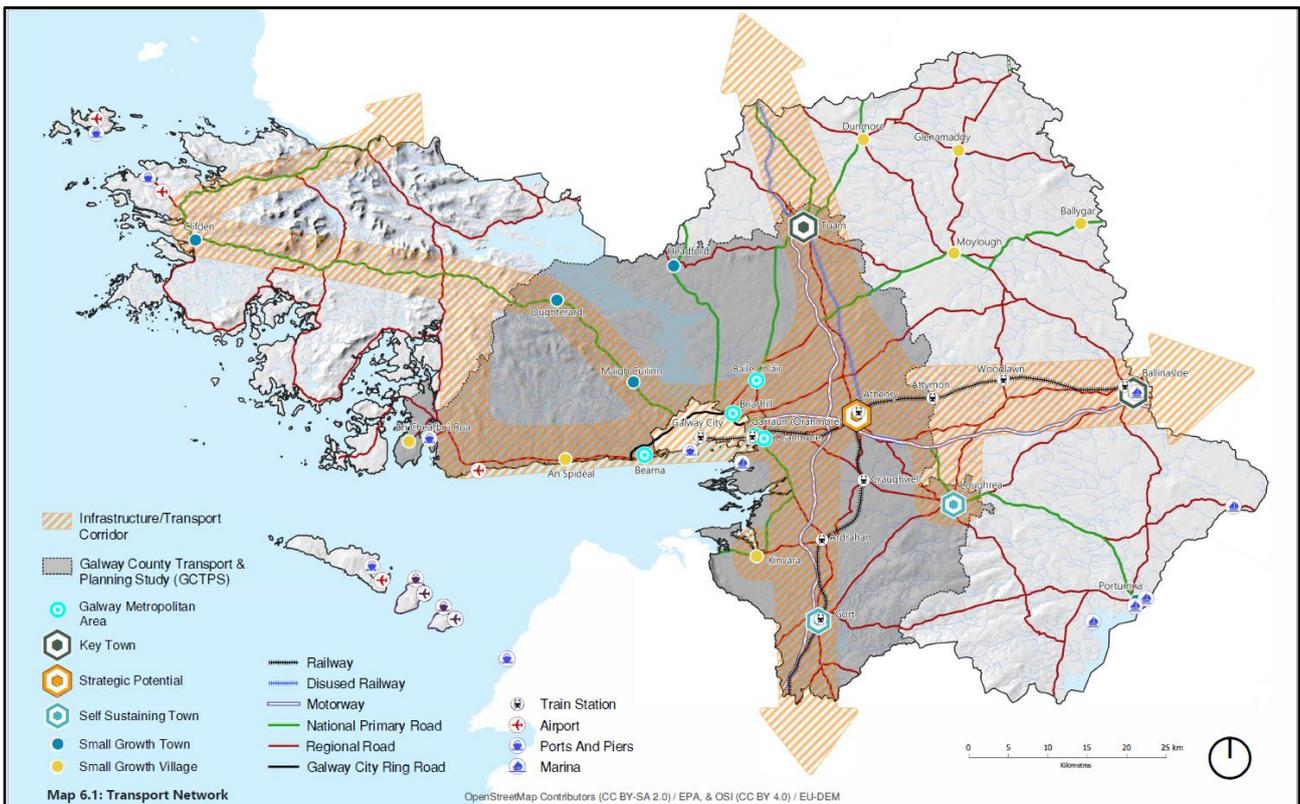


Plate 2.32 Map 6.1 Transport Network in Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

The performance targets of the proposed N6 GCRR align with the strategic aims of the County Development Plan as they include the following targets:

- Reduction of journey times which will promote regional development through improved connectivity to markets and journey time reliability
- Improve connectivity to the Gateway of Galway by providing high capacity linkages connecting east and west sides of the county
- Support sustainable transport policies for shorter commutes which will enable delivery of improved living landscapes
- Protection of existing residential communities and minimise environmental impacts which could make Galway a uniquely attractive place in which to live, work, invest and visit, in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner

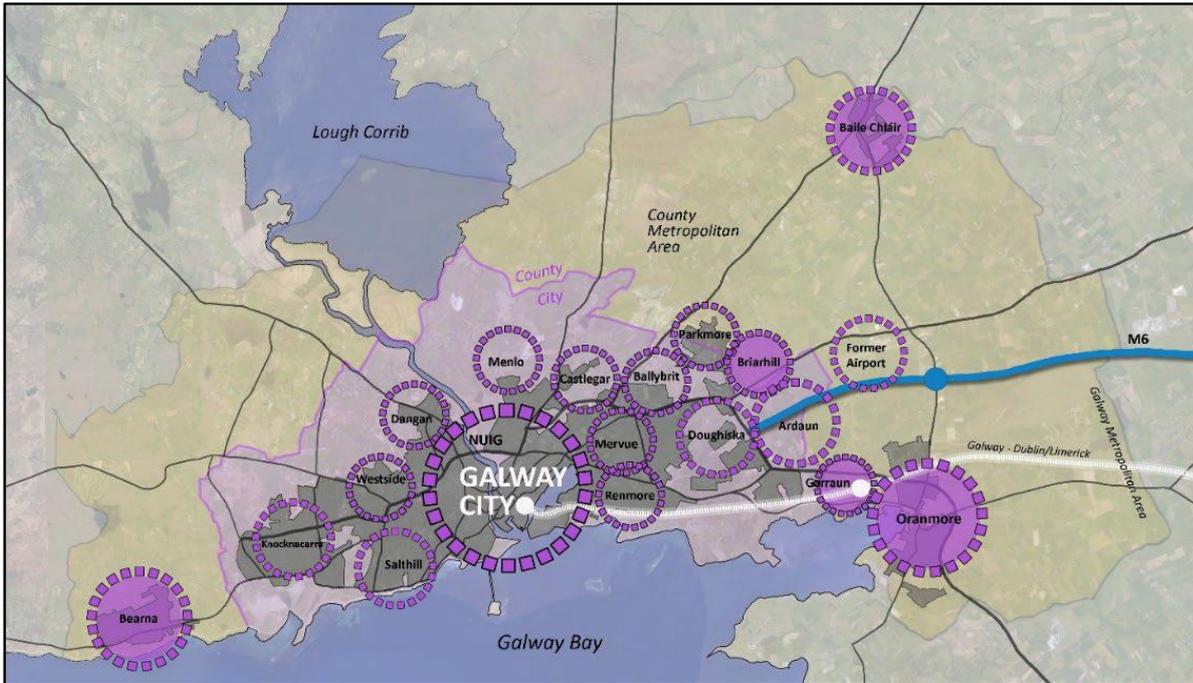
The proposed N6 GCRR is a priority transportation infrastructure project in the County Development Plan and is fully supported by this statutory plan.

#### 2.5.4 Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 [Volume 2]

The National Planning Framework (NPF) includes a national planning objective NPO 67 to prepare a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Galway through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The Galway MASP has a pivotal function in the proper planning and sustainable development of the Northern and Western region to ensure capacity to accommodate the significant population and employment growth anticipated in Project Ireland 2040.

The MASP is in Volume 2 of the County Development Plan and includes the following strategic aims:

- *Supporting development in the Metropolitan Area that will deliver housing for the projected population by 2028*
- *Supporting the economic potential of the Metropolitan Area, including the development of the lands at the former Airport site and the employment zoned lands at Garraun*
- *Ensuring compact growth and consolidation within the Metropolitan settlements of Baile Chláir, Bearna and Oranmore and the planned growth areas at Briarhill and Garraun*
- *Leading a co-ordinated approach to the provision of infrastructure that facilitates compact and sustainable growth*
- *Aligning growth with existing and emerging public transport infrastructure and services, together with a focus of ensuring '10 minute' walkable settlements*
- *Ensuring growth is consolidated with convenient access to established and planned employment, retail, community and amenity areas*
- *Promotion of regeneration as well as development of urban settlements in a manner that consolidated and enhances the identity, appeal and vitality of settlements as attractive places to live, work and invest*



**Plate 2.33 Overview of Galway MASP from Volume 2 of Galway County Development Plan**

Plate 2.33 above is an overview of the Galway MASP. The successful implementation of the strategy for the development of Galway Metropolitan Area depends upon a coordinated and planned approach to securing investment for the delivery of essential infrastructure including transport infrastructure, services and community facilities.

Section 1.8 of the MASP acknowledges the importance of connectivity within the Galway Metropolitan Area and states, *inter alia*:

*“The Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) was prepared in conjunction with both Galway City and Galway County Council. The National Transport Strategy 2016 identified a range of priorities for public transport improvements across the Metropolitan Area as well as construction of the N6 GCRR. Implementation of these measures is key to establishing the Metropolitan Area on the ground and to supporting compact growth as anticipated by the NPF and the RSES.”*

The MASP highlights the importance of the aligning infrastructural investment and the provision of employment with supporting services and amenities to cater for growth in a coherent and planned way. Section 1.9.6 identifies the delivery of the measures in the GTS and specifically the proposed N6 GCRR project as critical to the future development of the Galway Metropolitan Area.

*“Other critical pieces of infrastructure that are required to secure the development of the Metropolitan Area include the provisions set out within the Galway Transport Strategy and Galway County Transport Strategy and the delivery of the Galway City Ring Road.”*

Accordingly, it is absolutely clear that the proposed N6 GCRR is entirely consistent with and, indeed, is a significant enabler of the implementation of the following objectives in the Metropolitan Area of County Galway as shown on Plate 2.34 and Plate 2.35.

<b>GCMA 12</b>	<b>Transport Infrastructure (TI)</b>
Facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential transportation infrastructure, including public roads, footpaths, cycle ways, bus stops and landscaping, together with any necessary associated works, as appropriate. New roads shall be subject to needs assessment and detailed corridor and route selection processes taking into account, inter alia, environmental constraints and opportunities	

Plate 2.34 Extract from Volume 2 of Galway County Development Plan

<b>GCMA 14</b>	<b>Provision of Infrastructure</b>
The Council will work collaboratively with statutory agencies including Galway City Council to secure the delivery of infrastructure such as rail improvements, Galway Transport Strategy N6 GCRR and the delivery of the Greater Galway Area Drainage Study for the entire MASP area.	

Plate 2.35 Extract from Volume 2 of Galway County Development Plan

In addition, the Briarhill Urban Framework Plan set out at pages 79 to 117 inclusive of the MASP provides a good example of the potential contribution of the proposed N6 GCRR to the future sustainable development and proper planning of this development area at the northeast of Galway city. Plate 2.36 is an extract from the Urban Framework Plan which expressly refers to the Galway City Ring Road.

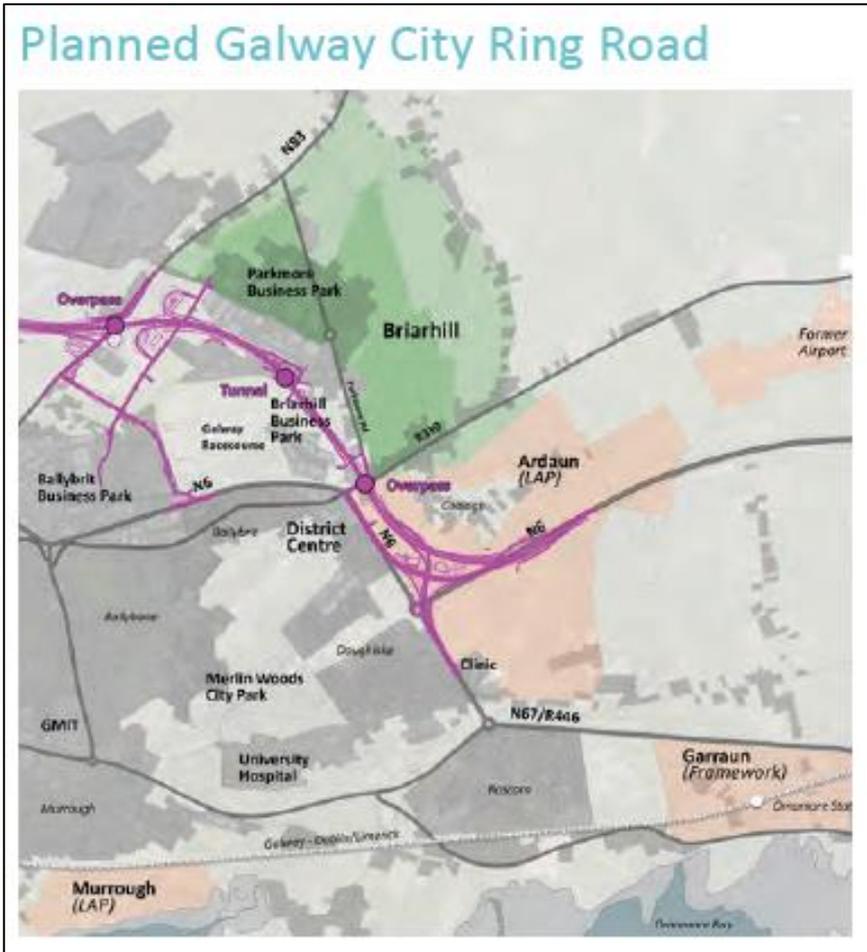


Plate 2.36 Extract Briarhill Urban Framework Plan (Galway County Development Plan Volume 2)

It is stated in the accompanying text to the above extract as follows.

*“The planned Galway City Ring Road (GCRR) will remove through traffic crossing the city from the Metropolitan Area. Removal of through traffic from the N6 will reduce the current demand for carriageway capacity on the N6 and afford opportunities to re-think these roads for the provision of dedicated public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities that will provide excellent connectivity within the eastern Metropolitan Area and between Briarhill and Galway City. Adapting the N6 in this manner will break down the existing barrier separation the residential and employment areas in the eastern Galway Metropolitan Area.”*

Accordingly, as identified, the proposed N6 GCRR is a vital element of the transport infrastructure required to facilitate the planned growth in population and jobs envisaged under the MASP and is fully supported by this strategic plan.

#### **2.5.4.1 Gaeltacht Local Area Plan, 2008-2018**

Gaeltacht Na Gaillimhe is the most populous of the Gaeltacht areas. It stretches from Claregalway, which is east of the city of Galway to Cloch na Rón in west Connemara, a distance of approximately 100km, and from Oileáin Árann northwards to the Mayo border. The Gaeltacht Local Area Plan, 2008-2018 was prepared and adopted in February 2008 and amended and extended in 2013.

Chapter 13 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, incorporates the objectives and aims that were previously set out in the Gaeltacht Local Area Plan, 2002-2018. This chapter sets out the strategic aims of Galway County Council to protect and enhance the Galway Gaeltacht and Islands. These aims include provision of improved transport networks as well as promoting and facilitating sustainable development.

#### **2.5.5 Údarás na Gaeltacht Strategic Plan 2021-2025**

An tÚdarás na Gaeltachta published its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 for the Gaeltacht in June 2021. This Plan aims to cultivate vibrant Gaeltacht communities where Irish is the primary language of communication. A key objective is to establish the Gaeltacht as a hub of entrepreneurship, attracting and nurturing businesses in the region. The Strategic Plan sets out an ambitious theme-based approach, *Enable, Strengthen, Sustain* as follows:

1. Empower communities to engage in entrepreneurship and development (Enable)
2. Build on what has been achieved so far (Strengthen)
3. Ensure that all actions support the sustainability of Gaeltacht communities and the Gaeltacht itself (Sustain)

The Strategic Plan contains four objectives under each of the three strategic themes. The following seven objectives are the most pertinent here:

- Encouraging and building a creative and innovative mindset among Gaeltacht communities
- Laying a strong foundation for the community structure in the Gaeltacht and strengthening it by providing supports that will enable community-based organisations to set up successful projects in their own communities
- Supporting the establishment, growth and sustainability of companies in the Gaeltacht by providing them with a wide range of incentives and by creating and fostering an entrepreneurial environment to provide employment opportunities in the Gaeltacht
- Working in partnership with the Gaeltacht community and other stakeholders to ensure that the needs of the community are met through the availability of appropriate social structures as well as attractive leisure/entertainment/recreation facilities
- Fostering partnerships with public, voluntary and private sector stakeholders to strengthen the economic, physical, social and cultural infrastructure of the Gaeltacht
- Actively supporting projects that enhance the sustainability of Gaeltacht areas and that identify them as distinct areas in terms of language, culture, entrepreneurship and creativity

- These elements to be based on the environmental, natural, human and cultural resources of the Gaeltacht

The Strategic Plan identifies growth sectors such as digital, blue, food & drink, medical/biomedical economies, tourism, climate change, the green economy, community development, the social economy, language planning, and the creative sector. There is a focus in the Plan on engagement with the Gaeltacht Diaspora to create opportunities for people to return home to live and work. Another element of the strategy is the roll out of a network of digital hubs throughout the Gaeltacht and the islands of Ireland known as gteic Gréasán Digiteach na Gaeltachta.

Section 13.3 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 indicates the strategic context for the preparation of Chapter 13, which includes the Údarás na Gaeltacht Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

The proposed N6 GCRR development is essential transport infrastructure in the region enhancing regional connectivity including to and within the Gaeltacht in County Galway, and its development therefore aligns with the strategic aims and objectives in the Údarás na Gaeltacht Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Having examined all relevant and applicable planning policy, including the additional planning policy documents adopted since 2018, it is clear that the proposed N6 GCRR development is entirely consistent with all European, national, regional and local transport policy and planning policy.

Six years have passed since the preparation of the 2018 EIAR. In the interim, policy instruments have expired, evolved or been superseded and new planning policy has been published. This chapter assesses the current planning policy context in 2025 and the strategic transport policy for the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road.

Ireland was added to the Atlantic corridor in a post- Brexit Europe and the proposed N6 GCRR is part of the comprehensive network under TEN-T. The proposed N6 GCRR is identified as a key future growth enabler in the NPF and is listed as major transport infrastructure in the National Development Plan, which prioritises capital investment under Project Ireland 2040.

The proposed N6 GCRR aligns with the investment priorities of the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) and seeks to reduce congestion in Galway City and to re-allocate the urban spaces for walking, cycling and active modes improving the attractiveness, vibrancy and economic vitality of the city.

NR2040 acknowledges the long-term strategic issues for national roads in terms of their contribution towards the 50% reduction in GHC emissions by 2030 in the transport sector. Climate Action Plan 2024 supports Project Ireland 2040 and sets out the investments necessary to accommodate population growth in a compact, connected and sustainable manner.

The Galway Transport Strategy 2016-2036 aims to reduce dependency on cars and bring about significant modal shift to public transport and active modes. The proposed N6 GCRR is a critical part of the strategy and facilitates traffic movement around the city centre, reduces congestion and frees up road space for bus priority, improved public transport network and services and cycling and walking. Whilst real progress has been made in the delivery of elements of the strategy including the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge, major junction upgrades to improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities, a bus network re-design for Galway and the roll-out of the Galway City Cycle Network, other key projects of the GTS are dependent, for their optimal delivery, on the development of the proposed N6 GCRR.

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 superseded Smarter Travel, and the proposed N6 GCRR together with the roll-out of the transport measures and infrastructure in the GTS aligns with and supports actions under Goals 1, 3, 5 and 9 of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan.

Regional Policy Objectives 3.6.7 and 6.6 in the NWRSES support the delivery of the proposed N6 GCRR and the RSES endorses Galway Transport Strategy as best practice example of the integration of transport, spatial and economic planning. It is an objective of the Galway MASP to continue to improve the road network around Galway city and to support the delivery of the GTS including the proposed N6 GCRR.

The Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 is the first development plan since the statutory NPF and the NWRSES were made identifying Galway as one of the five cities targeted for population and jobs growth. The strategic aims of the Plan include the integration of transport and land use and encouraging sustainable transport to achieve the ambitions of the Core Strategy. The proposed N6 GCRR strategic orbital route is critical infrastructure required to deliver the fully integrated transport system under the GTS and to cater for the projected growth in the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan.

Whereas elements of the GTS can be implemented independently of the proposed ring road, the City Development Plan clearly identifies that the full extent of measures and the successful delivery of the GTS require the provision of this orbital route. Sustainable transport policy and road network policy in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 support the full implementation of the GTS underpinned by the proposed N6 GCRR, which is also identified as a strategic addition to the EU TEN-T Comprehensive Network.

The Public Realm Strategy 2019-2040 refers to the positive contribution of GTS infrastructure such as the proposed N6 GCRR, the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge, the Cross-City Link and improvements to cyclist and pedestrian facilities being developed throughout the city to the quality of the public realm.

The new Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 “*promotes an integrated approach to land-use and transportation*” and supports compact urban growth, consolidation of existing settlements and densification as per the NPF and NWRSES. The Plan considers that the proposed N6 GCRR is important to ensure the successful implementation of the objectives of the MASP and the proposed N6 GCRR is supported as a Priority Transportation Infrastructure Project for Galway through Policy Objective PRP 1. The Briarhill Urban Framework Plan demonstrates how the proposed N6 GCRR can help achieve sustainable development and proper planning in this development area.

Reducing congestion and densification supported by sustainable mobility allows the city to prosper and connect with markets to become a thriving economic centre, in which it is attractive to work, live and play. Such a city in turn supports the strategic outcomes in Project Ireland 2040 enabling Galway to become a regional city of scale and an economic driver in the Region. This outcome will help deliver the objective of balanced regional development in the NPF. The GTS, which is being delivered, incorporating the proposed N6 GCRR, will allow the city to ‘breathe’ again and will facilitate sustainable growth in the wider city region.

Whereas this chapter confirms there has been considerable change in the planning and policy environment within which this application for approval is to be considered, the proposed N6 GCRR complies with all, and in certain respects, is required to deliver certain, of the relevant current policies at EU, national regional and local levels. Each tier of the hierarchy supports the N6 GCRR, which is critical to the growth of the Galway Metropolitan Area.

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