

Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan 2025

8th September 2025



Port of Galway
Calafort na Gaillimhe

Scott Tallon Walker Architects

Project Information

Client Name **Port of Galway**

Client Address **Harbour Office, New Docks, Galway.**

Site Address **Galway Inner Harbour**

Project Team

Architects & Urban Planners **Scott Tallon Walker Architects**

Project Management, Planning & Environmental Consultants **MKO Planning & Environmental Consultants**

Engineering Consultants - Civil & Structural, Services **TOBIN Consulting Engineers**



Task	Initials	Signature	Date
Prepared by	COK		08.09.25
Approved by	PJ		08.09.25

Rev	Status	Initials	Date
A			xx.xx.xx

Scale @ Size	First Issue Date
NTS @ A3 Landscape	xx.xx.xx

Contents

1.0 Introduction 13

2.0 Masterplan Development..... 27

3.0 Masterplan 2025..... 37

4.0 Planning Compliance Statement..... 79

5.0 Appendices..... 93



Executive Summary

Introduction

Galway Harbour Company ('GHC') commissioned this Masterplan for the Galway Inner Harbour area to guide the transformation of the existing dock area into a sustainable, mixed-use city centre urban quarter. It forms a vital component of GHC's broader development strategy which also includes the proposed relocation and expansion of its Port facilities. The Galway Inner Harbour area presents a major opportunity to regenerate brownfield land in the heart of Galway city.

This Masterplan is based on and further develops the overall vision and urban design / planning principles set out in the 2021 Draft Harbour Planning Framework. GHC collaborated with stakeholders and carried out significant public engagement regarding the vision for the Inner Harbour area, which culminated in the 2021 Draft Harbour Planning Framework to progress redevelopment of this area. Feedback received, focused on the public realm, quality of place, potential transformation of the area and retaining the unique local 'dock' character and identity. These have all been factored into this Masterplan.

This Masterplan has been developed to align with the requirements of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029, including the specific requirements set out in Section 10.6 and to integrate with current Galway City Council (GCC) plans and strategies, including the Galway Transport Strategy (and GMATS under development by the NTA), Public Realm Strategy, Urban Density and Building Height Study, Heritage Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan, as well as the draft Green Strategy. Active travel, public realm, urban density, heritage and character, nature and biodiversity are all key components of this Masterplan. A compliance statement is included as an appendix.

The Masterplan incorporates the proposed Port Access Road, which forms part of the planning application for the new port facilities currently being determined by An Bord Pleanála and for residential development proposed by the LDA to meet local need, in the context of the national compact growth agenda and national housing strategy (Housing for All). This has involved workshops with the LDA Design Team to coordinate the urban design principles for their proposed scheme with this Masterplan. Preparation of this Masterplan has involved ongoing consultation with the local authority, landowners and stakeholders. This builds on the existing co-operation and embeds a coordinated and integrated approach to enable the overall vision to be achieved.

Overall Vision

This Masterplan provides a vision for the Inner Harbour area to become a living, responsive and vibrant part of the city centre, to create a place with a wide range of uses and high-quality design that attracts people from near and far to come to Galway to live, work and enjoy the city.

The plan is for the Inner Harbour area to be a connected and integrated part of the city centre, wider city and a destination that forms part of Galway's cultural identity. It is envisaged that the existing Docks will be transformed into a destination for city events and public activities, that the city centre public realm will extend to the harbour waterfront and that the Inner Harbour area will become the fulcrum where blue/green pedestrian/cycle routes along Galway's natural waterways and coastline converge and connect. These combined, have the potential to be transformative for Galway.

The overall vision for the Inner Harbour area is to:

- Create a vibrant, sustainable mixed-use urban quarter at the heart of the city - a distinctive place to live, work and enjoy.
- Extend the city centre to Galway's harbour waterfront by connecting the 'green/blue' network of pedestrian and cycle routes along the city's river and waterfronts that converge in the area.
- Provide a significant, marine event space in the heart of Galway. Potential events include the Ocean Race, Tall Ships Race, Small Ships Regatta and the Clipper Round the World Race. These will raise the profile of the city across the world.

- Extend the existing city centre urban network of active streets and public spaces, providing new activities and attractions that complement and broaden the offer in the existing city centre, while keeping a sense of place and identity.
- Plan for flexible, adaptable growth, with development plots and blocks allowing a variety of uses, maximising infrastructural efficiency and providing resilience to meet changing requirements.
- Minimise the need and demand for vehicular movement by providing a mix of uses, with flexible parking provision that can be repurposed in response to people's changing behavioural patterns, as better modal options become available.
- Reintroduce and integrate nature and biodiversity into the Inner Harbour Area with natural connections to nearby 'wetland' areas, through nature-based design measures, including extensive planting, greening and permeable surfaces.
- Provide the opportunity to minimise energy consumption and carbon emissions, by designing for environmentally sustainable living combined with environmental technical standards (e.g. NZEB or similar).





The Overall Masterplan

A contextual approach was taken to the preparation of this Masterplan that considered the historic development of the Port in relation to the city, the physical context today and the opportunities that will emerge as the city develops.

Key master-planning principles are provided that relate to:

- The urban structure, hierarchy of streets and amenity areas.
- Legibility, safety and activity.
- Character, look and feel, including heritage.
- Nature, biodiversity and climate.
- Development quantum and implementation.

These are summarised below and inform the urban layout and architectural design of any development proposals. They should be further considered and developed as part of any design process for the detailed design of any development to be consistent with this Masterplan.

Urban Structure, Hierarchy of Streets and Amenity Areas

This Masterplan provides for sustainable movement and accessibility principles that integrate with the wider city and extend the city centre public realm network through the Inner Harbour area. It provides the opportunity to link potential city-wide active movement routes along the rivers, waterfronts and natural corridors that converge on the Inner Harbour area, to create a ‘green’ network.

This Masterplan proposes to extend the City Centre public realm with high quality streets and spaces. This network reinforces and extends the principles set out in the City Centre Public Realm Strategy (2019) into and around the wider Inner Harbour site and provides links with the surrounding area. While the City Centre Public Realm Strategy only identifies the dockside area around Dock Road as public realm, this Masterplan considers the dockside as both a route and series of linked spaces around all the docks as part of a wider city centre spatial network. The proposed network of streets and spaces in this Masterplan creates a legible urban structure that extends the city centre with a series of linked amenity and event spaces around the Old Inner Docks, along the Harbour waterfront and with new streets, spaces and amenity walks that connect with the adjoining Augustine Hill development area and Lough Atalia.

The hierarchy of streets and public spaces is designed to provide a clear spatial order defined by the streetscape and the urban form of buildings.

The primary streets are traffic thoroughfares that form part of the wider city network, including the proposed Port Access Road, upgrades to the Lough Atalia Road and to the junction with Bóthar na Long, to provide for current and future port operations. The Masterplan envisages, where feasible, that the primary streets will be tree-lined urban boulevards, lined with commercial frontage, with buildings set-back to allow space for wide pavements with planting for people’s environmental comfort. It also provides scope for Lough Atalia Road and Bóthar na Long to form part of the City Centre Access Network connecting with the wider city public transport and active travel network, as identified in the Galway Transport Strategy.

The Masterplan envisages that the secondary streets and spaces are designed as 'shared spaces' which are primarily pedestrian spaces in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and streets (DMURS), with ground floor active uses and extensive nature-based solutions with local access mainly for service and emergency vehicles. To minimise vehicular presence, access/egress to separate private parking/ drop-off areas is to be provided close to the interface with the urban boulevards.

Public amenity areas include quays, walks, parks, etc. where people can sit and relax with little or no disturbance from vehicular traffic. As with the urban boulevards and shared streets, the integration of nature with these places is key to their success and to the overall urban quality of the Inner Harbour area.

Throughout all open spaces, the landscape design is expected to include, where feasible, sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) including permeable surfaces, rainwater gardens and nature-based solutions that include soil and planting strategies to support extensive tree growth and improve biodiversity.

As part of the city, walking surfaces along streets and to building entrances are to be inclusive and accessible to all, with minimal inclines, ramps or steps and include clear wayfinding for people with disabilities.

Legibility, Safety and Activity

The public realm structure and hierarchy of streets and spaces informs and is informed by the urban form of buildings lining and enclosing these streets and spaces, the types and locations of uses and activities at street level and the built edge where the building meets the street. The Masterplan is based on creating a sense of place, with a legible hierarchy of public streets and spaces and clear definition of public and private which enables natural wayfinding and the social use of space.

The design of the urban space should provide a clearly legible ‘natural’ distinction between public and private that protects people's privacy and amenity, while also providing for passive surveillance of public and communal areas. To achieve this, the urban spatial hierarchy should be clearly defined between public, communal and private areas areas through good urban and landscape design. This allows people to understand boundaries between public and private and also to be guided through good urban design, including landscaping with minimal signage or barriers.

Generally, private residential areas should be designed to prevent overlooking from passers-by yet allow for passers-by to feel that they are being overlooked to help minimise poor behaviour and for people to feel safe. People should be able to see their direction of travel with no dark/blind corners. Entrances need to be clearly visible. Good quality lighting which illuminates the street level is essential.

Active frontage is to be maximised, with particular emphasis on corner uses, such as cafes, shops, social and community uses, etc. This helps provide activity, animation and passive surveillance throughout the day in several directions and can assist orientation and wayfinding as local signposts / landmarks. Ground floor uses should generally have active uses with space for display, outdoor seating, etc. along the building frontage.

The Masterplan provides flexibility for public cultural uses and recreation space for all ages for both formal and informal activities, with both indoor venues, multipurpose spaces and outdoor areas, parks, etc. The Masterplan also includes active travel connections and links to larger recreation amenities, parks, sports facilities, clubs and venues in the wider city.

Character Areas

The Masterplan identifies three key character areas - the Docks, Harbour Waterfront and Lough Atalia areas - each of which has a distinct character, based on their context.

The plan is to introduce activity and city life around the Old Inner Dock and to reuse the dock basin for water-based leisure activities once the Port activities have been relocated. New development around the dock will be a mix of commercial and residential on the upper floors, with active ground floors and spaces for destination uses, such as markets, restaurants, cafes and bars, as well as cultural and event spaces. The historical old dock walls and quayside features are to be retained, with the new public realm along the quays to be designed to respect the quality of the existing heritage and character. New buildings and features should be contemporary, yet respectful of the Port's heritage, with high-quality design throughout.

The Harbour Waterfront, which looks out across Galway Bay, can at times feel elemental and exposed to the open sea, strong winds and varied weather patterns, requiring sea walls and flood protection, yet with stunning views. The design of the public realm and buildings must allow for robustness, weathering and protection against the elements, as well as for the sunnier weather.

The Lough Atalia area is bound by the busy traffic thoroughfares of Lough Atalia Road and the Port Access Road includes the area between Lough Atalia Road and the Lough Atalia inlet from the Harbour entrance to the Railway viaduct. It is to be quieter, calmer and more residential in nature towards the water, screened by the more commercial type uses along the Lough Atalia Road, requiring proposals for nature-based solutions and significant planting to reintroduce local biodiversity, leading to Lough Atalia and Renmore Lagoon, with public and private spaces all providing places where people can sit, watch, play and interact.

Look and Feel

The three character areas overlap one another. As such, there is a transition in look and feel between these areas which lends to a variety of design detail, landscape treatment and spatial experience. The Masterplan provides the flexibility for developments to respond to the availability of new materials and design approaches in order to achieve the highest quality design. The Masterplan seeks high-quality, low-maintenance materials that relate to the character of the area

The Masterplan includes precedents and benchmarks of the architectural and spatial quality to be achieved that reflects the character of each of the areas. Consistently high quality robust, well detailed and low maintenance finishes are required for this exposed location, that achieve their purpose while providing usable, liveable space. Particular attention is required in relation to storms and high wind conditions on external finishes and ensuring that any details such as exposed balconies, terraces, canopies, etc. which could cause damage and injury are minimised.

Environmental modelling, including wind and solar analysis, should be carried out as part of development proposals. The useability of outdoor spaces such as balconies, terraces and architectural features need to consider how different weather conditions may influence the Inner Harbour Area. Sustainable urban drainage systems should be thoughtfully integrated, using permeable surfaces and nature-based solutions. In addition, soil and planting strategies should aim to enhance biodiversity and support long-term environmental resilience.



Nature, Biodiversity and Climate

This Masterplan recognises the importance of nature and biodiversity for environmental reasons and for people's health and wellbeing. The EU Nature Restoration and Water management Directives, part of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, include targets to improve urban ecosystems, 'with no net loss of green urban space and tree cover by 2030 and a steady increase in their total area from 2030'.

In terms of biodiversity, this Masterplan includes biodiversity parklands, extensive tree planting and nature-based drainage solutions and sensitive nature-based treatment to Lough Atalia edge conditions, to achieve the 3-30-300 urban greening guideline developed by the Nature Based Solutions Institute and adopted by UNECE in their policy for Sustainable Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry 2021. The 3-30-300 urban greening guideline is designed to improve health, well-being and climate resilience in cities. It recommends three key criteria for urban areas: every dwelling should have visual access to at least 3 mature trees, every neighbourhood should achieve 30% tree canopy cover and residents should be no more than 300 metres away from a high-quality public park or green space. This rule helps ensure equitable access to nature, supports environmental sustainability and promotes social well-being.

Th environmental principles in this Masterplan include rainwater harvesting and sustainable urban drainage systems as landscape features to all landscaped areas and public spaces.

The Masterplan considers a combination of flood defence and water management solutions. Flood protection measures are proposed along the waterfront that can be integrated into the public realm, urban and architectural design. This approach very much aligns with the principles of the emerging Coirib go Cósta Galway City Flood Relief Scheme .

Flexibility and Implementation

This Masterplan provides a set of urban design and master-planning principles to coordinate the overall quality of place, while allowing for flexibility, evolution and change over time.

This reflects the nature of cities, neighbourhoods and buildings and is fundamental to the resilience of the Masterplan in achieving the vision for the Inner Harbour area to become a living, responsive and vibrant part of the city centre, enabling growth and change for future generations. The Masterplan provides a robust, flexible approach that allows for the detailed design, quantum and mix of uses to be easily varied for each plot in response to changing needs and requirements.

This Masterplan proposes a flexible implementation strategy based on availability of land for development.

The first phase will be the Lough Atalia area where land is already available due to rationalisation of port activities already carried out ahead of the Port relocation.

The proposed initial Phase 1A is the residential area that enables the LDA to provide housing that meets local needs, followed by Phase 1B at the junction the Port Access Road and Lough Atalia Road and Phase 1C adjacent to the railway.

The second phase is dependent on the Port relocation and provides for the delivery of the Port Access Road and associated infrastructure upgrades, which then opens the Phase 2A area to the south. This is followed by Phases 2B and 2C as the port activities are relocated.

This phasing strategy may be varied and later phases may come forward ahead of earlier phases subject to overall compliance with the Masterplan and assurances that the development will not prejudice other phases.

The overall master-planning principles will remain:

- Connectivity with defined boulevards, streets, walks and public spaces.
- Walkability and quality of place.
- Green/blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions.
- Long-term living with services to establish a local community and sense of belonging.
- A place for all to flourish.

Key Features & Facts



Min. 2,000 New Residents

Based on Average 2 bed/4 person per unit

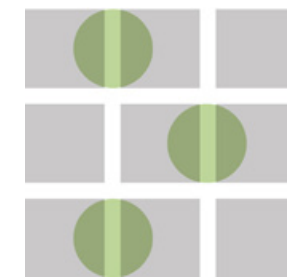
Minimum of 500 new apartments



Mixed-Use

Flexible growth with 40% residential, 10% student accommodation, 50% Commercial (incl. Employment, Hospitality, Leisure, Community Services, etc.)

Average 6-8 storey heights



3-30-300 Rule

3 trees visible from a dwelling

30% tree canopy cover

300 metres to a green space



3 Character Areas

The Docks

Harbour Waterfront

Lough Atalia Area



Green & Blue Connection

Convergence point for Galway's green and blue network

Galway Harbour Park c.1,900 sqm

Lough Atalia Park c.900 sqm



1 New Urban Quarter

Integration into existing street network

A place to live, work and enjoy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Galway Harbour Company ('GHC') commissioned Scott Tallon Walker Architects to prepare the 'Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan 2025' incorporating and developing the previous 'Galway Inner Harbour Planning Framework' (see Appendix 4.1).

GHC also commissioned MKO Planning Consultants to carry out Environmental Screening and prepare a Biodiversity Plan, which are also included as Appendices to this document.

Preparation of this Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan 2025 is a requirement of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 (GCDP). Section 10.6 of the GCDP highlights that this area has the potential for significant redevelopment providing an opportunity to re-establish links between the city centre and the sea, to create a high-quality waterfront setting, a new city centre mixed use neighbourhood and include for water-related leisure uses. The GCDP explicitly states that in advance of specific proposals for development, a Masterplan will be prepared for the overall site and will be required to include a specified list of requirements as set out and detailed under Section 10.6 of the GCDP.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the area identified by GCC includes third party lands, with developments that are either completed, in construction or currently in the planning process. As discussed with GCC Planning Team, this document therefore focuses on the GHC lands.

Since the 2021 Planning Framework, the planning policy context has changed. Scott Tallon Walker Architects have been advised by MKO Planning Consultants on these changes which are taken into consideration and have informed this Masterplan. MKO Planning Consultants have also reviewed this Masterplan in relation to planning compliance and their report is included as an appendix.

Recently, GHC and the masterplan team have coordinated with the Land Development Agency and their design team on the proposed mixed-use, residential-led component which forms part of Phase 1 of this Masterplan. This Masterplan provides for the proposed Land Development Agency development.

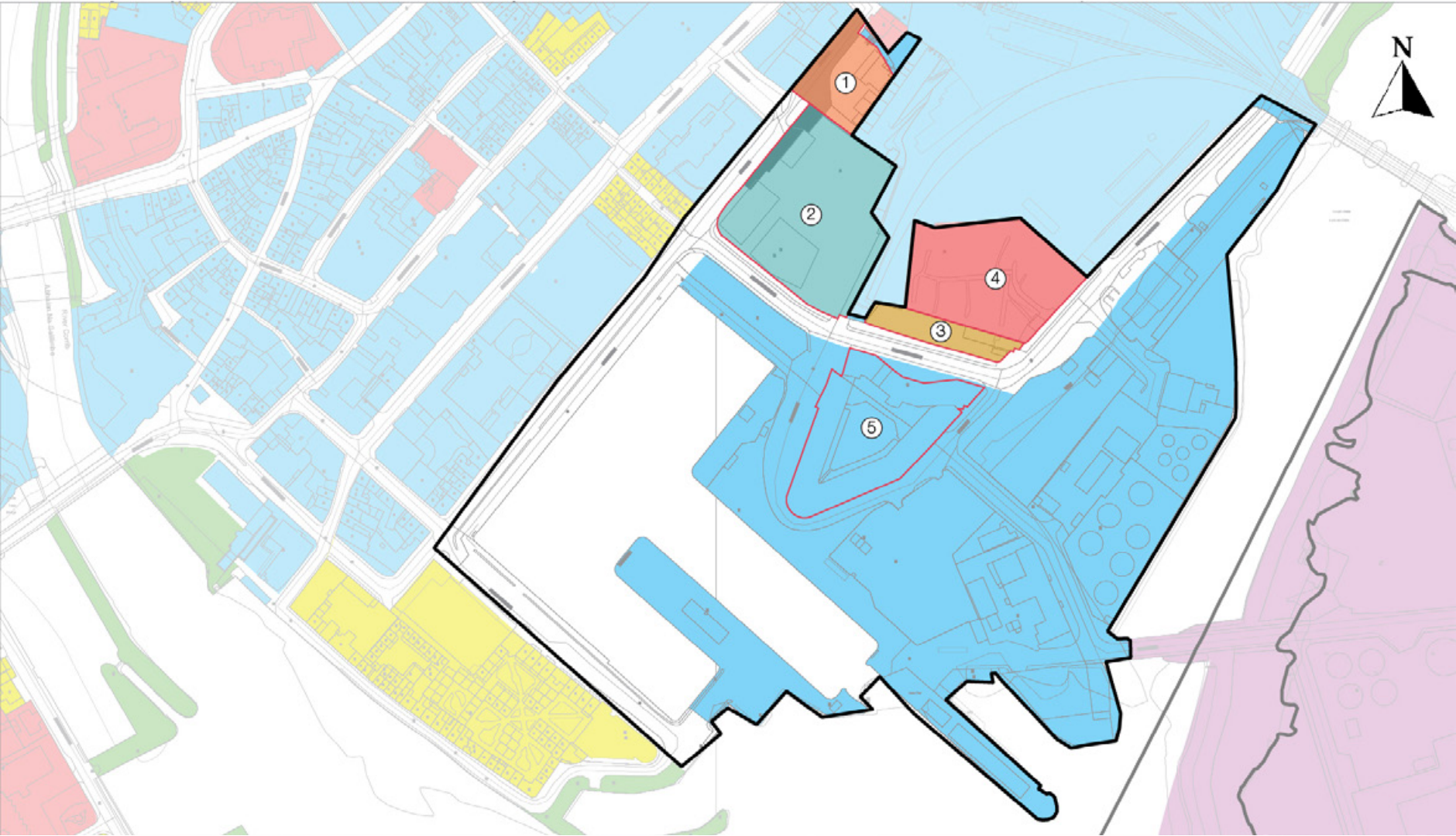


Fig. 1. Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029: 'Fig.10.3 Inner Harbour Regeneration Site'

This Masterplan incorporates the proposed 'Port Access Road' which forms part of the new Port expansion scheme currently progressing with An Bord Pleanála. It also includes a review of building height, density, plot ratio and site coverage to align with the planning objectives in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 that seek to maximise density and intensity of use in urban city centres.

- 1. Queen Street Development - Student Accommodation (Under construction)
- 2. Bonham Quay - Office Development (Completed)
- 3. Coal Yard Site - Live planning application in progress for hotel (*An Coimisiún Pleanála* Appeal Ref. No. of 320100-24).
- 4. Forthill Cemetery and Mortuary Chapel - Protected Structures (Record of Protected Structures, Ref. 4401).
- 5. Existing Harbour Hotel and Apartments (To be retained).



1.2 2021 Planning Framework

The Galway Inner Harbour Planning Framework was prepared between 2018 and 2021. It includes an overall site assessment, the plans for the port expansion area, the policy context at the time, the physical site context and master planning principles.

The 2021 Planning Framework includes an Overall Vision for the Inner Harbour area that proposes to:

- *create a sustainable Mixed-use urban quarter, a place to live, work and enjoy, integral to the city and city living'*
- *provide a breathing space for the city, by opening up the docks as a public realm event space, by extending the city centre to Galway Harbour and by creating 'green/blue links' connecting up pedestrian and cycle routes along the river and waterfronts.*
- *provide a significant, marine event space in the heart of Galway. Potential events include the Ocean Race, Tall Ships Race, Small Ships Regatta, the Clipper Round the World Race and the America's Cup. These will raise the profile of the City across the world.*
- *plan for flexible, adaptable growth, with development plots and blocks allowing a variety of uses, maximising infrastructural efficiency.*
- *minimise the need and demand for vehicular movement by providing a mix of uses, with flexible parking provision that can be repurposed in response to people's changing behavioural patterns, as better modal options become available.*
- *reintroduce nature and biodiversity with natural connections to nearby 'wetland' areas.*
- *minimise energy consumption and carbon emissions through various actions including net zero energy buildings Near Zero Energy Buildings ('NZEB') or similar.*

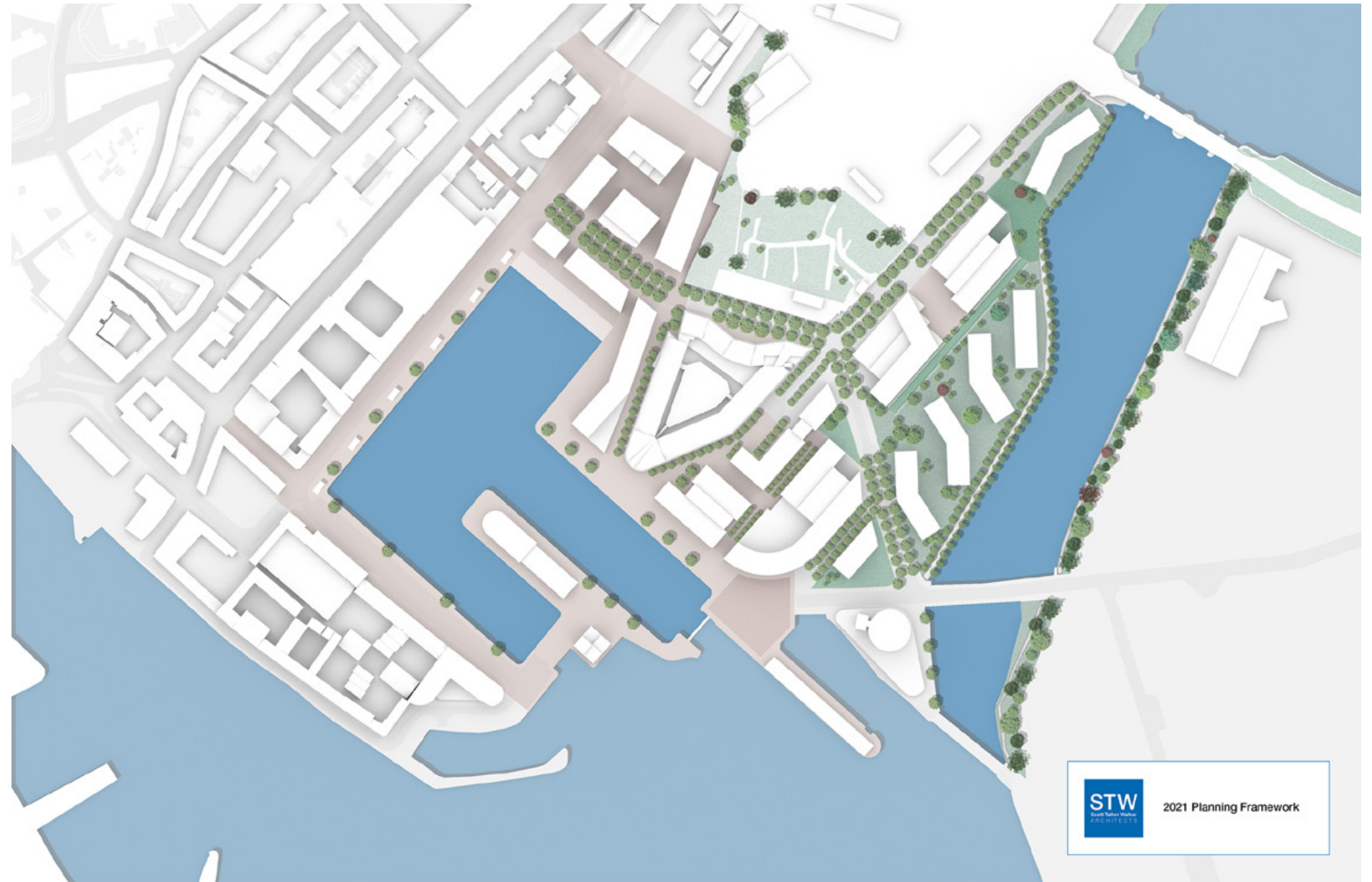


Fig. 2. 2021 Planning Framework

The 2021 Planning Framework considered sustainable movement and accessibility as part of a wider city network and a public realm network with a range of public spaces that related to the Old Docks, Harbour Waterfront and the Lough Atalia Walk, together with a street hierarchy of urban boulevards, shared pedestrian spaces with defined cycle and vehicular areas, pedestrian only spaces and amenity spaces.

The 2021 Planning Framework proposed locations for street level uses and activities related to the public realm structure, in addition to the overall location and mix of uses and the urban form and massing, as well as the residential mix and local services. It referred also to the environmental management and the UN sustainability development goals and Climate Action Plan 2019, which seek low-carbon solutions (embodied and operational). It includes the objective for nature-based solutions for life below water and on land, including integration of nature and biodiversity at every stage.

As part of the 2021 Planning Framework, an engagement process was established between Galway City Council Planning team and the GHC Masterplanning team. This was followed by setting up a public engagement process, which includes a dedicated project website as well as public presentations and meetings, including talks and presentations at the two Galway Urbanism Conferences held in May 2023 and May 2024.

GHC has also engaged with EIB JASPERS on the Draft Masterplan. EIB JASPERS contribution was specifically focused on understanding the level of alignment with the values of the New European Bauhaus policy objectives.



Fig. 4. Aerial render, 2021 Planning Framework.

Fig. 3. 2021 Planning Framework

1.3 Planning Policy Context

Important changes to the planning policy context since 2021 are taken into account in the 2025 Masterplan. These include:

1.3.1 Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines 2024

The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (Government of Ireland, 2024) set out policies and guidance in relation to the planning and development of urban and rural settlements, with a focus on sustainable residential development and the creation of compact settlements. Planning authorities are required to have regard to the policies and objectives of these Guidelines and to apply the specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs).

- Policy and Objective - Area and Density Ranges for Galway City (section 3.3.1). The city centre of Galway is the most central and accessible urban location in their region with the greatest intensity of land uses, including higher order employment, recreation, cultural, education, commercial and retail uses. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 100 dph to 250 dph (net) shall generally be applied in the centre of Galway. However, it is important to note that the Guidelines also state the following in relation to densities: *"The policies and objectives are intended as a tool to guide the appropriate scale of development at different locations, rather than as a prescriptive methodology. Flexibility is offered so that planning authorities can operate a plan-led approach and take the circumstances of a plan area or an individual site into account as part of the decision making processes prescribed under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)."*
- Policy and Objective 5.1 - Public open space (section 5.3.3). The requirement in the Development Plan shall be for public open space provision of not less than a minimum of 10% of net site area and not more than a minimum of 15% of net site area save in exceptional circumstances. In the case of sites that contain significant heritage, landscape or recreational features and sites that have specific nature conservation requirements, a higher proportion of public open space may need to be retained. The 10-15% range shall not therefore apply to new development in such areas.

- SPPR 1 - Separation distances (section 5.3.1). A separation distance of at least 16 metres between opposing windows serving habitable rooms at the rear or side of houses, duplex units and apartment units, above ground floor level shall be maintained.
- SPPR 2 - Minimum Private Open Space Standards for Houses (section 5.3.2). Sets out new private open space requirements for houses. Apartments and duplex units shall be required to meet the private and semiprivate open space requirements set out in the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2023 (and any subsequent updates).
- SPPR 3 - Car parking (section 5.3.4). The maximum rate of car parking provision for residential development at city centre locations, where such provision is justified to the satisfaction of the planning authority, shall be one space per dwelling. Applicants should be required to provide a rationale and justification for the number of car parking spaces proposed and to satisfy the planning authority that the parking levels are necessary and appropriate, particularly when they are close to the maximum provision. The maximum car parking standards do not include bays assigned for use by a car club, designated short stay on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations or accessible parking spaces. The maximum car parking standards do include provision for visitor parking.
- SPPR 4 - Cycle parking and storage (section 5.2.5). In the case of residential units that do not have ground level open space or have smaller terraces, a general minimum standard of 1 cycle storage space per bedroom should be applied. Visitor cycle parking should also be provided. It will be important to make provision for a mix of bicycle parking types including larger/heavier cargo and electric bikes and for individual lockers. Cycle storage facilities should be provided in a dedicated facility of permanent construction, within the building footprint or, where not feasible, within an adjacent or adjoining purpose-built structure of permanent construction. Cycle parking areas shall be designed so that cyclists feel safe. It is best practice that either secure cycle cage/compound or preferably locker facilities are provided.

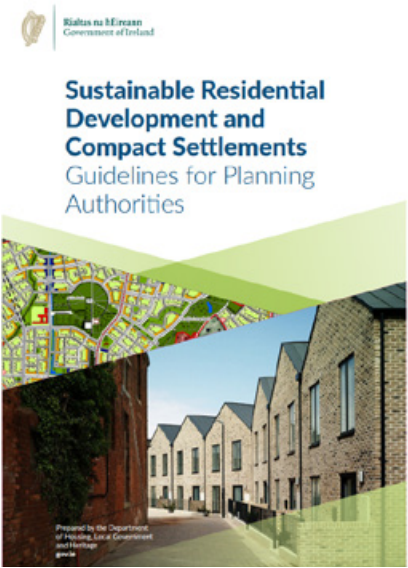


Fig. 5. Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements.



Fig. 6. Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments.

1.3.2 Design Standards for Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2025

The relevant specific planning policy requirements in the Design Standards for Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (revised July 2025) are as follows:

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 1:

(A) With the exception of social housing developments, social/affordable housing provided for under Part V the Act or schemes to provide housing for older persons where a specific mix of unit sizes may be required, such as in accordance with a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA), there shall be no restrictions within statutory plans in relation to the mix of unit sizes or types to be provided within apartment developments. There shall be no minimum or maximum requirements for apartments with a certain number of bedrooms.

(B) Where any such restriction or requirement is set out within a statutory plan, this Specific Planning Policy Requirement shall apply to any single apartment scheme and there shall be no restriction in relation to the mix of unit sizes or types and there shall be no minimum requirements for apartments with a certain number of bedrooms within the development, except in the circumstances set out above.

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 2

The following minimum apartment floor areas shall apply and statutory plans shall not specify minimum floor areas that exceed the minimum floor areas set out below:

- Studio apartment (1 person) 32sq.m
- 1-bedroom apartment (2 persons) 45 sq.m
- 2 bedroom apartment (3 persons) 63 sq.m
- 2-bedroom apartment (4 persons) 73 sq.m
- 3-bedroom apartment (4 persons) 76 sq. m
- 3-bedroom apartment (5 persons) 90 sq.m

The floor area parameters set out above shall generally apply to apartment schemes and do not apply to purpose-built and managed student housing.

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 3

In relation to the minimum number of dual aspect apartments that may be provided in any single apartment scheme, the following shall apply:

(i) A minimum of 25% of units within a development shall be required to be dual aspect. Statutory plans shall not specify minimum requirements that exceed the requirements of this Specific Planning Policy Requirement.

(ii) For building refurbishment schemes on sites of any size or urban infill schemes on sites of up to 0.25ha, planning authorities may exercise further discretion to consider dual aspect unit provision at a level lower than the 25% minimum outlined above on a case-by-case basis, but subject to the achievement of overall high design quality in other aspects.

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 4

Ground level apartment floor to ceiling heights shall be a minimum of 2.7m. For building refurbishment schemes on sites of any size or urban infill schemes on sites of up to 0.25ha, planning authorities may exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis, subject to overall design quality.

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 5

There shall be no requirement within statutory plans or within an individual scheme in respect of a minimum number of units per floor per core.

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 6

The provision of new Communal, Community and Cultural facilities within apartment schemes shall only be required in specific locations identified within the development plan and shall not be required on a blanket threshold-based approach in individual apartment schemes.

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 7

There shall be a presumption against granting planning permission for shared accommodation/co-living development unless the proposed development is required to meet specific demand identified by a local planning authority further to a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) process.

- Specific Planning Policy Requirement 8

(A) (i) There shall be no requirement or restriction in relation to the provision of en-suite bathrooms for single study bedrooms within Purpose Built Student Accommodation schemes.

(ii) The minimum required area for a single study bedroom without en-suite facilities is 8 sq.m and the minimum required area for a single study bedroom with en-suite facilities is 11.5 sq.m; and statutory plans may not set out minimum required areas that exceed the minimum required areas set out within this SPPR.

(iii) The minimum space requirements for kitchen/dining/living areas serving 10 and 12 persons are 3.6 sq.m and 3.3 sq.m per person, respectively; and statutory plans may not set out minimum required areas that exceed the minimum required areas set out within this SPPR.

(B) Where any other requirement or restriction is set out within a statutory plan, this Specific Planning Policy Requirement shall apply to any single student accommodation scheme.

1.3.3 Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

The previous iteration of the Masterplan was prepared under the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023. The Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 was adopted by Galway City Council in 2022 and therefore is now the relevant Development Plan for the 2025 Masterplan.

The current Development Plan designates the Inner Harbour as a 'Strategic Regeneration Site'. Section 10.6 of the Development Plan, 'Inner Harbour Regeneration Site', sets out the key criteria that Galway City Council would like addressed in the Masterplan for the site. Chapter 4 of this Masterplan and the Planning Policy Statement of Consistency in Appendix 5.5 describe in detail how the 2025 Masterplan addresses each of these issues. A summary of the key criteria required to be addressed in the Masterplan is as follows:

- Compliance with the Galway City Development Plan and other plans and strategies.
- Demonstrate how the regeneration of the site will deliver sustainable uses, in particular housing, enterprise and new public spaces of critical scale that will result in creating a successful place with a distinct identity.
- Detail the type, quantum and distribution of uses including for residential, commercial, office, recreational and cultural uses.
- Ensure that opportunities for water-based recreational facilities are maximised and that public access is secured throughout the area and along the waterfront.
- Demonstrate how redevelopment can connect into and extend the historic street pattern of the city centre. Show good relationships with the existing urban grain/structure and links to public spaces.

- Include for maximum public access and permeability throughout the site, give linkage and views to the waterfront and key coastal vistas and consider the challenge of transition areas bounding the site and anticipate opportunities for linkages and continuity in the design and layout of these sites.
- Demonstrate how a favourable amenity can be secured in the transition area edging the adjoining industrial lands at the Harbour Enterprise Park.
- Demonstrate where taller buildings and/or landmark buildings are part of the composition, how existing important views, vistas and landmarks are respected and show how such buildings contribute to aspects of urban design such as accessibility, enclosure, character, permeability and adaptability. The potential for an iconic building should be explored in view of the significance of the site location and the proven record of such buildings for attracting tourist interest internationally.
- Develop the public realm in a manner that maximises the benefits of the waterfront location, achieves a strong sense of place, delivers permeability and reflects a defined functionality and strong landscape impact.
- Include measures to support environmental sustainability and climate action including sustainable building design, green infrastructure and SuDS.
- Include measures to ensure connections to the green network, including green and blue links, city cycle and pedestrian networks and ensure biodiversity gain within the site.
- Include in the design concept, measures which reflect and protect the industrial heritage of the site.
- Take cognisance of the proximity of the Seveso III site in the Harbour Enterprise Park.

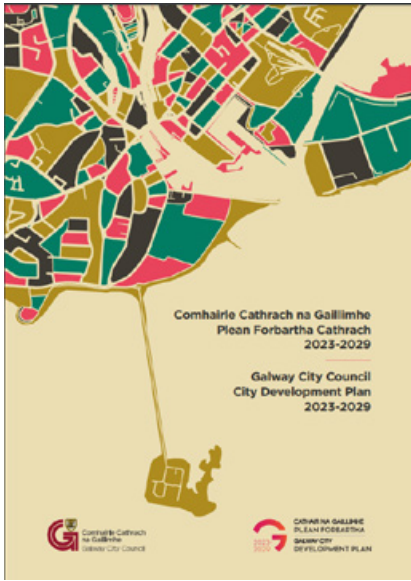


Fig. 7. Galway City Council City Development Plan 2023-2029.

- Include for a maximum plot ratio of 2:1. Consideration for a higher plot ratio will be given to development proposals in excess of the normally permissible plot ratio where such proposals would contribute to sustainability, architectural quality, urban design, public realm, delivery of housing and make a significant contribution to urban character. This excess will be interpreted as a proportional increase only and will be assessed on performance based outcomes and general standards.
- Include for the provision of an arts/cultural facility.
- Include a delivery strategy and phasing programme.
- Undertake impact assessments such as a Flood Risk Assessment, an Environmental Impact Assessment and an Appropriate Assessment, where appropriate.
- Include economic and investment strategies which detail the role of all agencies involved in the delivery of services and infrastructure.

1.3.4 Galway Urban Density and Building Heights Study 2021

The Galway Urban Density and Building Heights Study, published by Galway City Council in 2021, provides detailed guidance on the densities and buildings heights for 'Long Walk, Inner Harbour and Ceannt Station' (section 16.3):

- Prevailing densities: This is a mixed-use area and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a more appropriate measure of urban density. FAR is typically around 3.0 revealing tight streets, solid building lines and small plots with little amenity space.
- Densities open to consideration: Already high density, the Long Walk area would be sensitive to dramatic increases in density. The harbour area is less sensitive, characterised by large buildings and surface car parks. It would be appropriate for densities here to be higher than those of the historic core if townscape impacts of new development are careful considered.
- Prevailing heights: Typically building heights are between 3 and 5 storeys, with the modern larger developments tending to be the taller.
- Heights open to consideration: Heights should respect prevailing heights in the historic core. Within Ceannt Station and the Inner Harbour regeneration areas where large sites are capable of generating their own character, there is scope for greater height if designed carefully as demonstrated in emerging developments.

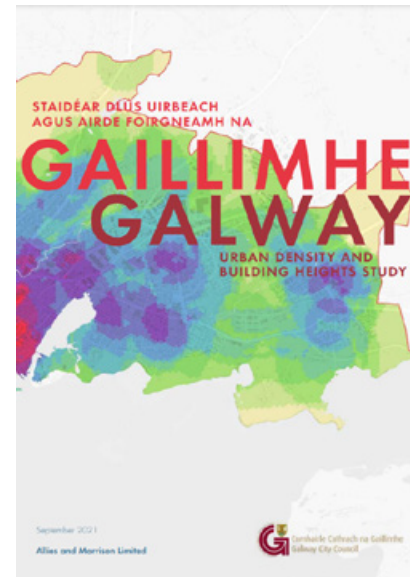


Fig. 8. Galway Urban Density and Building Height Study, 2021.

1.3.5 Galway Public Realm Strategy 2019

The Galway Public Realm Strategy 2019 'explores the current condition of central Galway's townscape and network of public and green spaces, and sets out a vision and strategy for improvements to guide investment and development in the future'. While the Strategy focuses on the existing city centre, it also considers development areas including the Inner Harbour Area, and is framed around the following principles:

- 'Celebrating Galway's uniqueness': the unique qualities of the city, in particular, the fundamental elements of stone and water underpinning its character. It provides a vision of place, design guidance and outline project proposals to improve Galway's streets and public spaces, that is specific to the location, history and character of Galway City.
- 'Making Galway inclusive': it promotes accessibility and age-friendly design to help open up the city centre to all and make getting into and moving around the centre much easier, with places to sit and play.
- 'Getting around the city': Galway's Transport Strategy seeks to redress the balance in favour of pedestrians and cyclists over vehicular traffic. The Public Realm Strategy seeks to capitalise on this by creating a high quality public realm, made possible by reducing the dominance of vehicles and upgrading the quality of the physical fabric, hard and soft.
- 'Making space': with the creation/improvement of public spaces in and around the city centre. Development areas such as the Inner Harbour Area are identified as providing opportunities to deliver new public spaces and public realm that add significantly to the city's public realm as a defined network of interconnected spaces and routes.
- 'Greening Galway': it identifies that one of the city's most valued assets is its close relationship with nature. The Public Realm Strategy states that *'The wild character of Galway is felt most keenly where the water meets the city. It is here where the most interesting opportunities exist for the city's public realm to both better support nature and to enable the city to positively*

respond to the challenges presented by climate change, with every space maximising sustainable flood water management, significantly enhancing tree cover, and introducing green infrastructure across the city centre through a street tree and planting programme.

- 'Delivering Quality': it provides practical design guidance for spatial interventions and identifies areas that can act as catalysts for change, possibly through normal programmes of renewal or as part of development opportunities, such as the quays along Dock Road.

The Public Realm Strategy sets out a vision of place, a set of spatial interventions, a palette of paving materials and street furniture and design guidance tailored to the different types of spaces in the city centre. These include the pedestrianised core, principal streets, approach routes, new public realm, upgraded public realm, canal and riverside, key public realm spaces and microspaces.

Reference is made to Creating Green Infrastructure for Ireland (2010) which creating a network of green space that helps conserve natural ecosystems, including along coastlines, flood measures, parks and streets with significant tree canopy coverage - comparison is made with Melbourne's target for 40% tree canopy coverage as an example.

Specific to the Inner Harbour Area, the Pubic Realm Strategy identifies:

- traffic calming of Dock Road as a 'principal street' and improving the pedestrian environment around the harbour with improved access to the quayside, with cafes and stalls and trees replacing existing car parking and railed areas.
- minimising severance along Lough Atalia Road between the Inner Harbour Area and the city centre while recognising it is a key city centre approach route.
- enhancing and creating waterside spaces.
- redressing the balance of movement in favour of people, with events, activities, public art and play areas (eg. boules)



Fig. 9. Galway Public Realm Strategy, 2019.

- creating a new network of spaces and routes, connecting with the Ceannt station area and city centre.
- opening up significant waterside spaces that are well linked to the city centre and surrounding city.
- maximising greening, improving biodiversity, and introducing proactive flood management measures, to enhance the coastal edge to increase connections and space for nature and wildlife.

This Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan has been prepared in alignment with the principles and specific recommendations set out in the Galway Public Realm Strategy 2019 and extending them across the Masterplan area.

1.4 Climate Action Policy

1.4.1 Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable development sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”) adopted by world’s leaders including Ireland’s government. Galway Harbour Company will develop a sustainable development roadmap over the course of the project informed by these goals. This roadmap will be a strategic plan that allows this vision to be realised as the development opportunities emerge before, during and after the relocation of port activities.

1.4.2 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Irish Government’s National ‘Climate Action Plan 2024’ sets out objectives and targets, including carbon-pricing, electricity and renewable energy capacity, buildings, transport, enterprise and adoption of low carbon technologies, the design of the built environment and buildings to eliminate carbon emissions, transport, land use, waste and the circular economy. The Climate Action Plan includes a requirement for the State/ Public Sector to lead by example. The Climate Action Plan includes key performance indicators for state and public bodies.

1.4.3 Galway City Council Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) sets out how Galway City Council will be responsible for enhancing climate resilience, increasing energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whilst demonstrating a broader role of influencing, advocating and facilitating other sectors. The LACAP translates national climate policy to local circumstances, assists in the delivery of the climate neutrality objective at local and community levels and identifies a Decarbonisation Zone within the local authority (Newcastle, Ragoon, Shantalla and Westside areas).

1.5 Transport Policy Context

1.5.1 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) 2016-2036

The Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) 2016-2036 is a strategy by Galway City Council prepared in conjunction with Galway County Council, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). The aim of the strategy is to address current and future transport requirements in the City and County catchment area. It includes for a range of measures that focus on an integrated and sustainable solution with a strong objective to reduce car dependency in favour of public transport and active modes. In line with good planning principles, this investment is aligned with the settlement and development strategy for the city.

Implementation of the GTS will require investment in walking and cycling, an improved and more accessible public transport system supported by low emission infrastructure, to address transport challenges in the city and accord with national, regional and local policies. Enhanced walking and cycling facilities will be promoted through greater permeability and increased networks, making these travel modes more attractive, accessible, safe and healthier. The GTS emphasises that a transition to the use of these active modes and public transport will also have significant potential to improve air quality, the urban environment, economic performance and the overall quality of life in the city.

1.5.2 NTA BusConnects

BusConnects Galway is a major public transport improvement programme aimed at transforming how people travel across the city and surrounding areas. Led by the National Transport Authority (NTA), in collaboration with Galway City Council, the project includes the redesign of the bus network, delivery of high-quality bus priority corridors—such as the Cross-City Link and Dublin Road corridor—and enhancements to cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. The overarching goal is to create a more reliable, accessible, and sustainable transport system, reducing congestion and supporting Galway’s climate and mobility targets.

The BusConnects Galway Cross City Link, stretching approximately 4 km from University Road through the city centre toward University Hospital Galway, was formally approved by An Bord Pleanála in September 2024. This key east–west corridor is designed to deliver high-quality bus priority lanes, dedicated cycle infrastructure, upgraded pedestrian facilities and traffic management measures to reroute through-traffic from the city centre, improving reliability and reducing journey times. A judicial review application has been lodged in the High Court challenging aspects of the project, particularly alleged conflicts around cyclist provision and traffic diversion impacts. The Dublin Road corridor (a second segment) has since been submitted for planning in early 2025, with expected delivery of the full Cross City Link around 2028, subject to funding and any legal outcomes.

1.5.3 CycleConnects: Galway Cycle Network

The NTA’s CycleConnects was launched in 2022 and proposes an updated cycle network for Galway City. The Long Walk is identified as an Urban Primary Route and the R336 adjoining the Docks is identified as an Urban Secondary Route.

The proposed Galway CycleConnects networks proposes a greenway alongside the main railway line, a route along Lough Atalia Road and around the Old Docks as part of the Galway City Urban Cycle Network. These are shown in the GCDP 2023-2029.

1.5.4 NTA Cycle Design Manual

The updated Cycle Design Manual was published in 2023 and provides updated guidance on provision for cycling and the design of cycle infrastructure.

1.6 Engagement

Extensive engagement has taken place throughout the masterplanning process with Galway City Council, key stakeholders, adjacent land owners and public consultation process.

1.6.1 Engagement with Galway City Council & Stakeholders

As part of the masterplanning process, the Galway Inner Harbour masterplanning team has met regularly with the relevant GCC Officials regarding planning, movement, transport, public realm, flood prevention and biodiversity.

Consultations have also taken place with adjacent landowners and their design consultants to agree a coordinated approach for both the Inner Harbour area and the Augustine Hill Development (Ceannt Quarter/CIE lands) as required in the GCC Development Plan 2017-2023 and with the LDA design team on the proposed Phase 1a residential development of this Masterplan. Further consultations are to take place as required in the current GCC Development Plan 2023-2029.

Statutory Consultees were contacted by MKO Planning Consultants as part of the Environmental Screening process. These included the Development Applications Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, which responded with heritage-related observations and recommendations relating to underwater archaeology surveys of the Masterplan area (eg. unrecorded wrecks, submerged palaeolandscape features, etc.), protection and promotion of any archaeological heritage, and celebrating the city's important maritime and military heritage, for example the association of nearby Forthill Graveyard with the Spanish Armada and other historical features (see Section 3.6.6).

1.6.2 Public Engagement

GHC also conducted a non-statutory public consultation online in 2021. The Vision Document was launched on the 5th May 2021 and public consultation on this interactive exhibit concluded on the 16th June 2021. The process was extensive and included the following:

- Presentations to 20 separate stakeholder groups. These events were attended by 175 people in total.
- There were over 600 individual visitors to the virtual consultation room, **www.galway-harbour.com** and a total of 198 submissions were received from members of the public.

In general, the vision for the lands was well received by the public and stakeholders. Specifically, the response to the public realm strategy was extremely positive. The Public Consultation Report is included in the appendices of this document (4.4 Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan Public Consultation Report).

1.6.3 Initial Engagement

GHC and the masterplanning team have also made several public presentations at meetings and talks including the two Galway Urbanism Conferences held in May 2023 and May 2024, where the plans have been well received.

GHC also engaged with EIB JASPERS, who reviewed the 2021 Planning Framework and noted its compatibility with the guiding ideas of the New European Bauhaus, providing also a number of recommendations for enhancement.

1.6.4 Emerging Themes

Emerging themes from the consultation process were wide support for a sustainable high-quality urban city centre quarter, with the proposed mix of uses, leisure activities and amenities that integrate fully with the expansion of the city centre. The high-quality public realm, spatial hierarchy prioritising active movement, with places for people to sit were seen as highly attractive.

A key finding of the EIB JASPERS appraisal was that the Masterplan should demonstrate ways to incorporate local 'cultural heritage' in terms of activities as part of the Masterplan from the outset so that the development will be an intrinsic part of Galway's identity and character. This includes introducing 'meanwhile uses' for areas prior to and as a 'test-bed' for longer-term development of the area, so that the Harbour area becomes a meaningful part of city life and which could support the business case and potentially qualify for EU funding support. This key finding has informed this Masterplan.

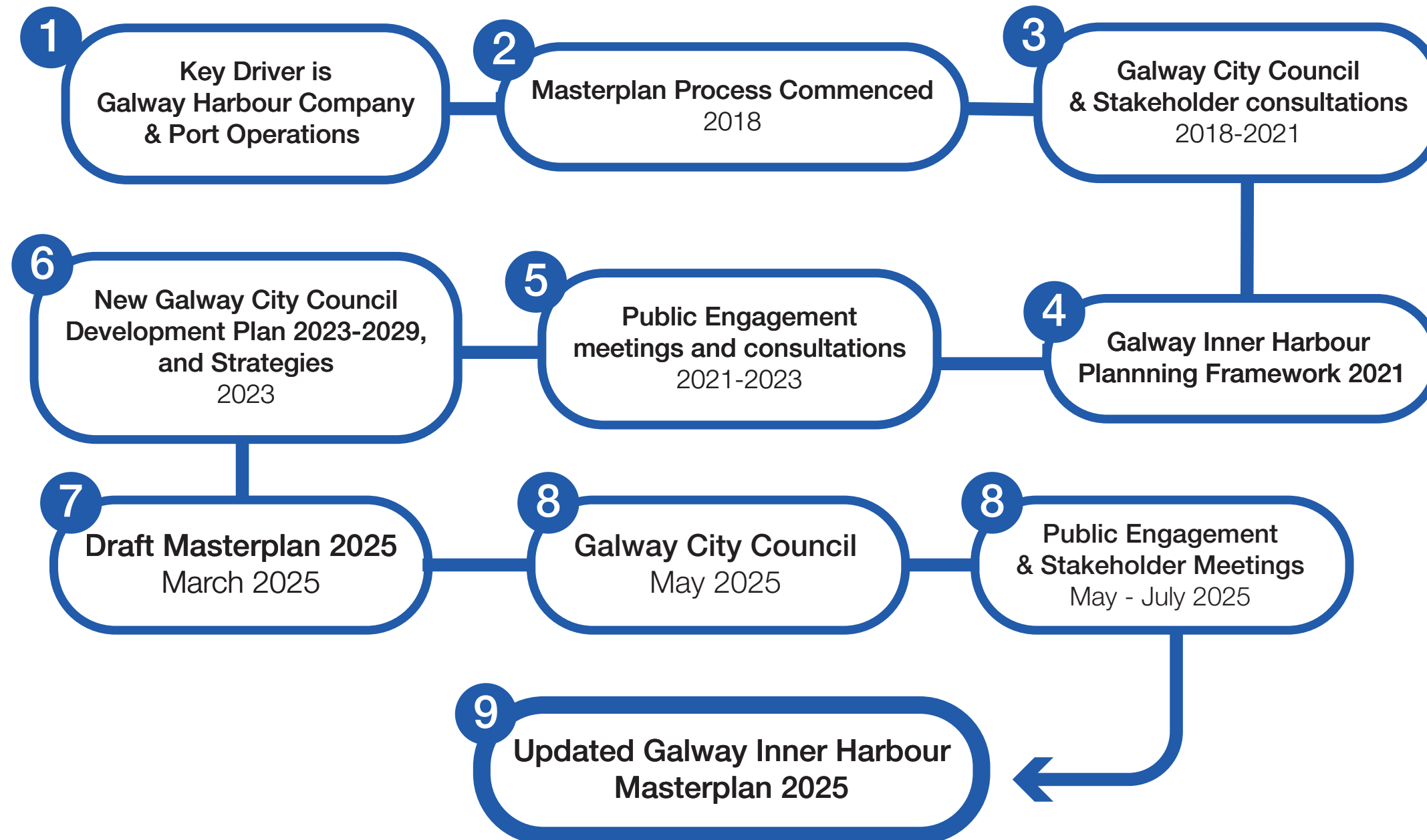
1.6.5 Public Consultation on Draft Masterplan

GHC also conducted a non-statutory public consultation on the Galway Inner Harbour Draft Masterplan 2025. The Draft Masterplan was launched on 22 May and the public consultation phase remained open until 27 June 2025. The residential development by the LDA (Phase 1a; see Section 3.17) was also subject to public consultation at this time.

A full synopsis of the public consultation can be found in the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan Public Consultation Report, which forms Appendix 5.4 of this Masterplan.

1.6.6 Ongoing Engagement

As part of the implementation of the Masterplan, GHC propose that meaningful, participatory engagement with communities (arts, sports, community services, etc.) will be established, particularly in relation to infrastructure and public realm that facilitates accessibility, social inclusion and cultural diversity. Engagement will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis as part of the evolution and implementation of the Masterplan. As the Project progresses, it is also intended that public documents can be provided that are user friendly, accessible and include a glossary of terms.



2.0 MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Context

2.1.1 Development of the Port

The Port developed southeast of the old walled medieval city, beginning with the construction of the Commercial Dock in 1832 by the Harbour Commissioners on former Eyre family lands. These lands included areas now occupied by Forthill Cemetery, Ceannt Railway Station and Eyre Square.

Over the next century, the docks expanded through land reclamation. By 1898, the Dun Aengus and Commercial Docks were separated by a railway siding with the large grain store nearby (now Cé Ná Márá apartments). Infrastructure such as Ceannt Station, the Lough Atalia viaduct and a road serving the docks were also added.

Industrial uses like gasworks, coalyards and storage facilities developed around the harbour, supported by a railway connection. Over the years, many of these were replaced by apartment blocks and offices, especially on the west and south sides. The Harbour Hotel and apartments now stand where the grain store once was. Bóthar na Long now links Lough Atalia Road with Dock Road and port activity has expanded along Lough Atalia Road and into the Galway Harbour Enterprise Park.

Nearby, the medieval city core, including the Long Walk, St Nicholas Street and Nos. 1–6 Dock Road, is protected as an Architectural Conservation Area under the Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029. Notable protected structures include Forthill Cemetery (RPS-4401/ NIAH-30319007), in use since 1500, with historic walls and monuments marking a 1508 Augustinian Friary and a 1601 Bastioned Fort.



Fig. 10. Galway, 1839. OS fair plan of the parish of St. Nicholas (Source: Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016).



Fig. 11. Galway, 1944. OSI. (Source: Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016).

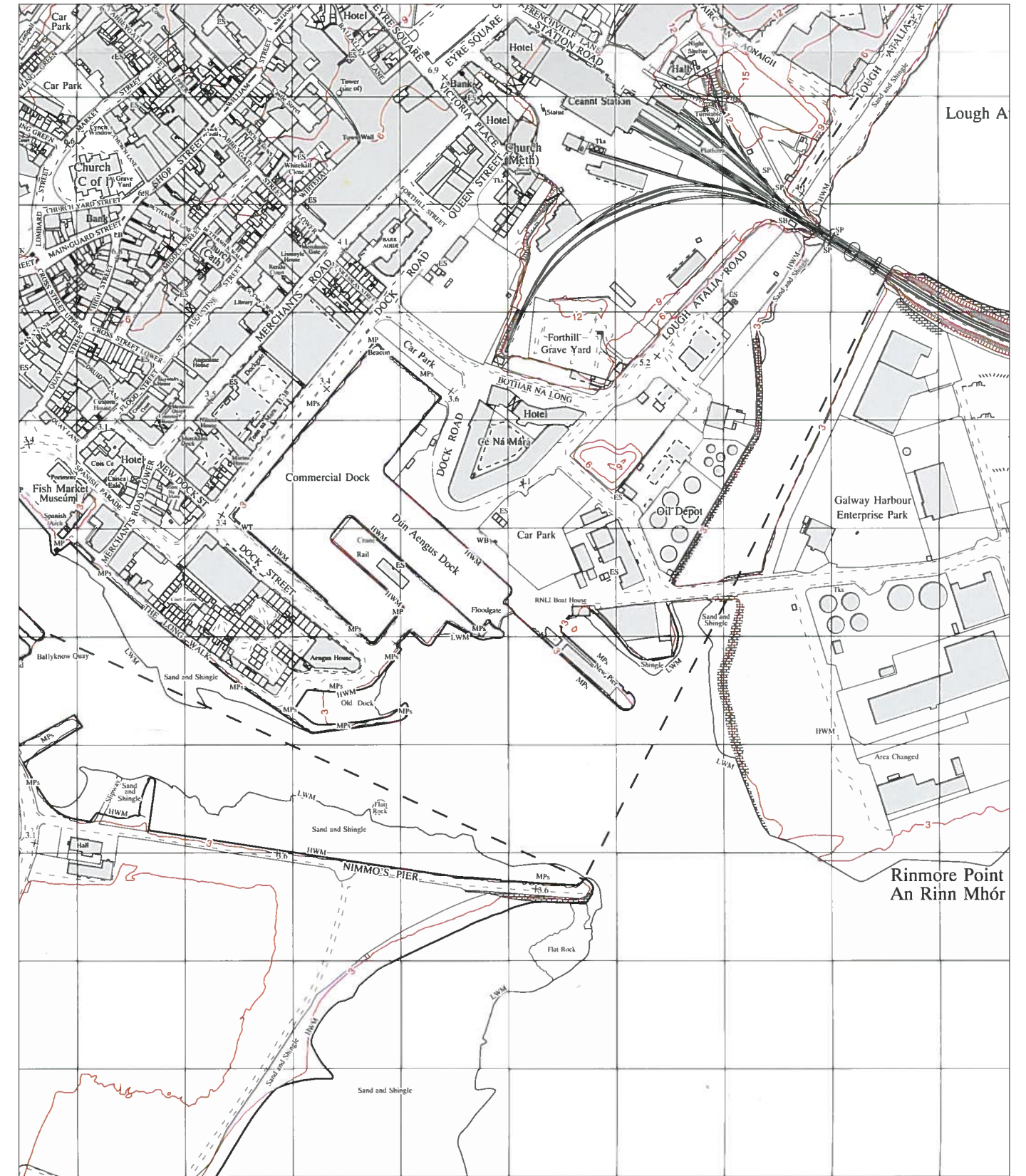


Fig. 12. Galway, 2014. OSI. (Source: Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016).

2.1.2 Physical Context

In contrast to the compact dense city centre core, Galway has established green/blue ‘corridors’ along the River Corrib, Lough Atalia and along the coastline that act as ‘green lungs’. Galway Harbour is at a pivotal location where these corridors converge, but do not currently connect.

A route across the harbour front connecting these corridors would be transformative for the city. This connection will orientate the city to the waterfront and, from this route, enable the interpretation of the industrial heritage landscape that forms part of the character of the Inner Harbour.

As the city develops, there is also the potential to connect the Inner Harbour and Galway Harbour waterfront with the proposed Port expansion area, including the proposed Port marina, as an extension of the city waterfront amenity. Subject to further investigation as part of the Port expansion plan, this could also potentially connect with pedestrian/cycle routes and with biodiversity corridors that link with the Renmore Lagoon nature reserve (Figs. 18-19).



Fig. 13. Lough Atalia vista. (Source: Facebook).



Fig. 14. Spanish Arch and the Long Walk. (Source: Expedia.com).



Fig. 15. Leisure time at Spanish Arch. (Source: Expedia.com).



Fig. 16. Galway Cathedral and Nun's Island waterways. (Source: Expedia.com).



Fig. 17. Existing physical context.



Fig. 18. Proposed physical context, with expanded City Centre and connected greenway and blueway areas.

2.1.3 Port Expansion

GHC has prepared plans for the expansion of the Port. An application has been made to An Bord Pleanála for the reclamation of approximately 24 ha of land from the sea, the creation of new deepwater dock facilities with associated breakwaters, storage areas, roads, rail and landscape infrastructure along with a new marina and boardwalk.

The proposed main vehicular access to the Port expansion area is currently the existing bridge connecting the Inner Harbour with Galway Harbour Enterprise Park. The Port expansion planning application provides provision for a rail connection to the national rail network.

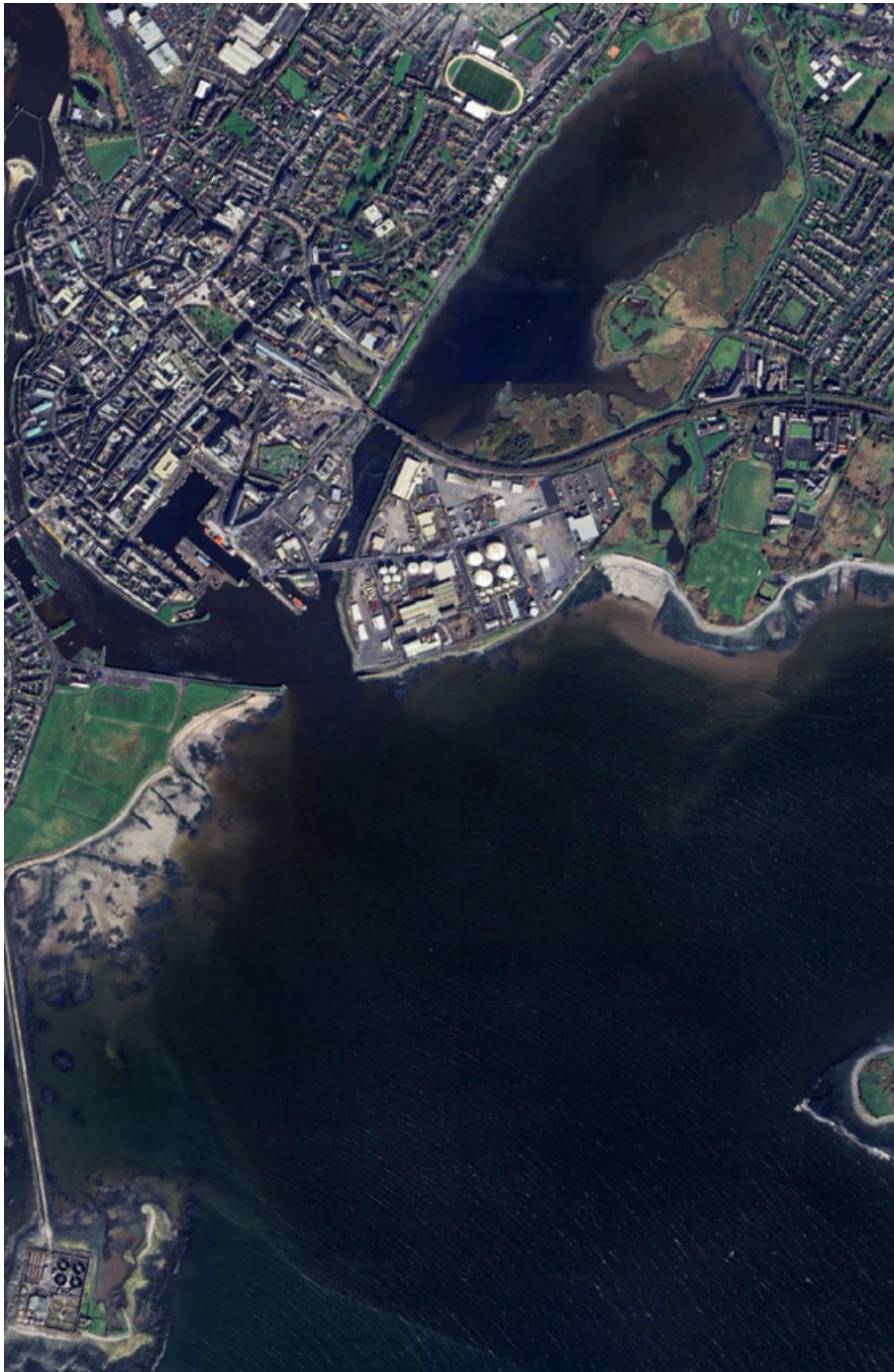


Fig. 19. Aerial View showing Existing Context (Source: Google Earth).



Fig. 20. Aerial View with Proposed Port Expansion (Source: Galway Harbour Company).

2.1.4 Port Access Road

The proposed Port Access Road forms part of the planning application for the new Port currently with An Bord Pleanála. This is intended as the main Port vehicular access and, therefore, needs to be incorporated as part of this Masterplan as a key vehicular route.

The works include a reconfigured junction with Lough Atalia Road and Bothar na Long. The proposed junction includes signalised pedestrian crossings. The road also includes dedicated cycle lanes.

The import of wind turbine blades is a key business operation for the Port of Galway. The proposed Port Access Road will accommodate the manoeuvring of these approximately 86m long blades. The form and massing of this Masterplan allows for the movement of blades through the project site and the flexibility to adapt to changes to operations in the future.



Fig. 21. Port Access Road Diagram with existing condition.

2.2 Masterplanning Principles

The Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan as a major regeneration site has followed a series of good practice design principles.

Urban Structure, Hierarchy of Streets and Amenity Areas

This Masterplan extends the city centre public realm into the Inner Harbour with a network of high-quality, accessible streets and green spaces (green urban parks, green open space, etc.). It promotes sustainable movement and active travel. Street hierarchy is organised into urban boulevards and pedestrian-friendly shared spaces. The plan promotes inclusivity, connectivity and public amenities, enhancing urban quality while still supporting future transport and development needs. Circulation and connection principles extend the urban network of nodes and paths to and throughout the Galway Inner Harbour, linking with the planned Augustine Hill development. The Masterplan provides for flexible cultural and recreational areas and active travel connections with the wider city including parks, venues and amenities for all ages.

Green/Blue Connectivity

Central to the Masterplan is the concept of connecting routes through Galway Harbour. The Masterplan provides the infrastructure necessary to allow pedestrian, cyclist, canoeists, etc. access through Galway Harbour and along coastal greenways, Corrib blueways and areas of biodiversity importance (Lough Atalia and Buaile Bó Ballyloughane Biodiversity Pilot Project).

Legibility, Safety and Activity

The Masterplan enhances walkability through a legible network of nodes and paths, guided by principles of legibility, wayfinding and safety. The Masterplan promotes a clear hierarchy of public, communal and private spaces to support wayfinding, safety and social interaction. Passive surveillance, appropriate lighting and thoughtful landscaping are to be provided for comfort and safety to all public and private areas. Key views and landmarks aid orientation, while connected cultural, recreational and green spaces support active use of space.

Character Areas

The Masterplan identifies three character areas – the Docks, Harbour Waterfront and the Lough Atalia Area – shaped by their context with their own distinctive quality of place. Place-making is, therefore, a key design principle. There should be a soft transition between character areas, contributing to the overall cohesion of the Masterplan area within the surrounding context. The Masterplan proposes mixed-use development around the Old Dock, preserving heritage while enabling leisure and culture. The Waterfront requires robust, weather-resistant design, while Lough Atalia is calmer, residential and biodiversity-focused. High-quality, resilient architecture is essential, with environmental modelling and SuDs guiding design for comfort, safety and sustainability.

Nature, Biodiversity and Climate

The Masterplan recognises the benefits of nature and biodiversity for environmental health and well-being. It adopts the 3-30-300 urban greening principle, promoting tree cover, park access and visual greenery that provide improved biodiversity. Water management measures include Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) such as rainwater gardens, permeable paving, rainwater harvesting and nature-based water filtration. Flood defences are integrated into public realm and design to enhance resilience and sustainability.

Urban Community and Inclusivity

This Masterplan supports long-term urban community by creating a walkable, connected network of streets, green spaces and public amenities. It promotes mixes of cultural, leisure and commercial activities for long-term growth, sustainability and social interaction. High-quality public spaces, homes and services foster a strong sense of place, belonging and community. The Masterplan is inclusive by design by prioritising accessibility, connectivity and community well-being throughout the Inner Harbour area. It provides for walkable, safe and legible public spaces. Design features such as wayfinding, passive surveillance, diverse active frontages and gentle topographic changes create a welcoming environment for all ages and abilities. Community-driven urban living provides support networks for everyone.

Flexibility and Implementation

The Masterplan provides the urban structure to support flexible long-term growth, adaptability and resilience. The Masterplan includes proposed phasing. Phased development begins in the Lough Atalia Area character area, with initial housing (Phase 1A), followed by a hotel (Phase 1B) and landmark building (Phase 1C). Later phases (Phases 2A, 2B, 2C) depend on the relocation of the Port. Each subsequent phase is afforded the flexibility to adapt to evolving developments and demands.



Fig. 22. Masterplanning Principles Diagram, 1:2000.

3.0 MASTERPLAN 2025

3.1 Vision

The green and blue connections in the urban design masterplan for Galway Inner Harbour are essential for creating a cohesive and sustainable urban environment. Galway has established green and blue corridors along the River Corrib, Lough Atalia and the coastline, which act as vital "green lungs" for the city, providing ecological and recreational benefits. The masterplan aims to connect these corridors, which currently converge at Galway Harbour but do not link up. Creating a route across the harbour front will transform the city by orienting it towards the waterfront and integrating the industrial heritage landscape of the Inner Harbour.

The docks will be opened up as public realm event spaces, extending the city centre to Galway Harbour. This includes creating green and blue links that connect pedestrian and cycle routes along the river and waterfronts. The Harbour Waterfront will serve as a pivotal urban space, linking the city's pedestrian and cycle routes and connecting the city centre with the waterfront looking out to Galway Bay. These connections will improve environmental quality, encourage biodiversity and integrate active movement with the natural environment, providing recreational spaces for residents and visitors and enhancing the overall livability of the area.

As the city develops, there is potential to connect the Inner Harbour and Galway Harbour waterfront with the proposed Port expansion area, including the new marina.

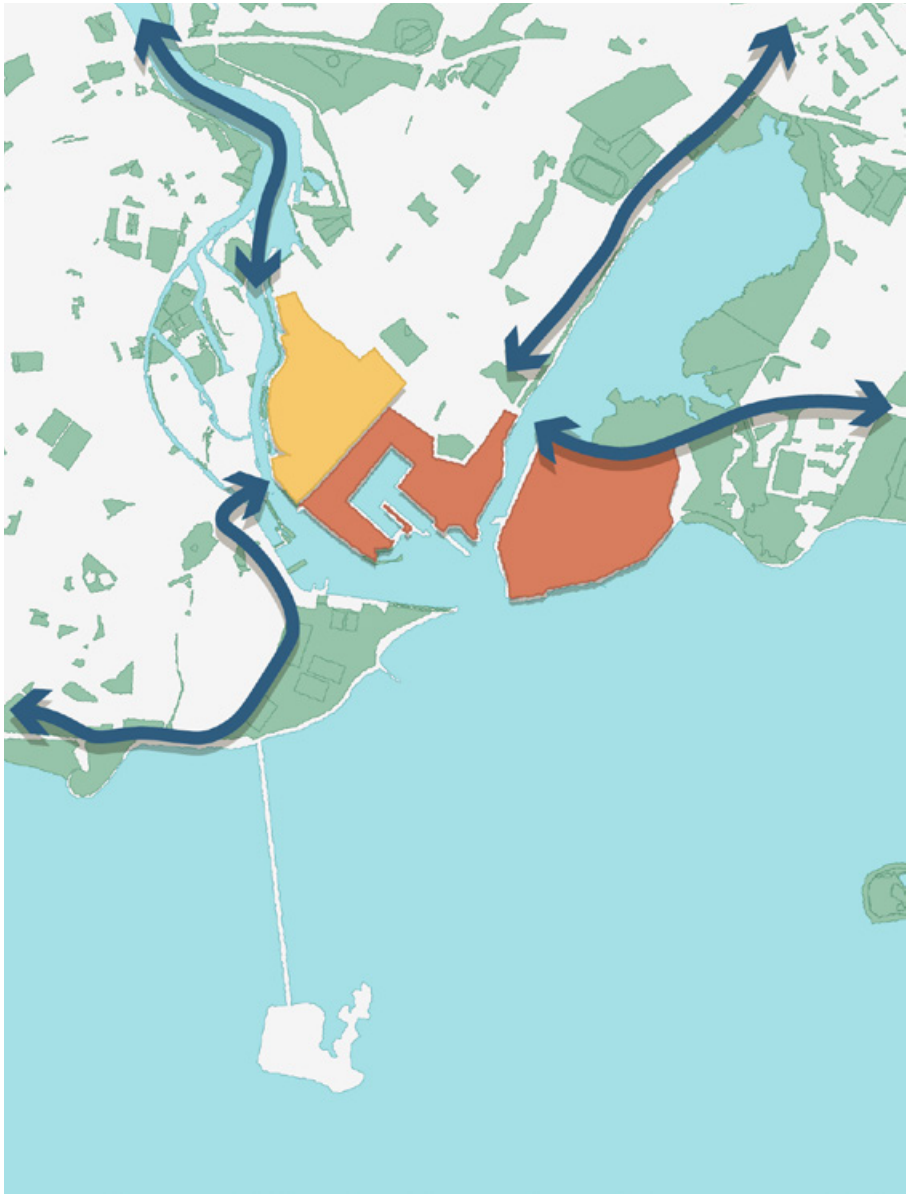


Fig. 23. Existing Urban Relationships

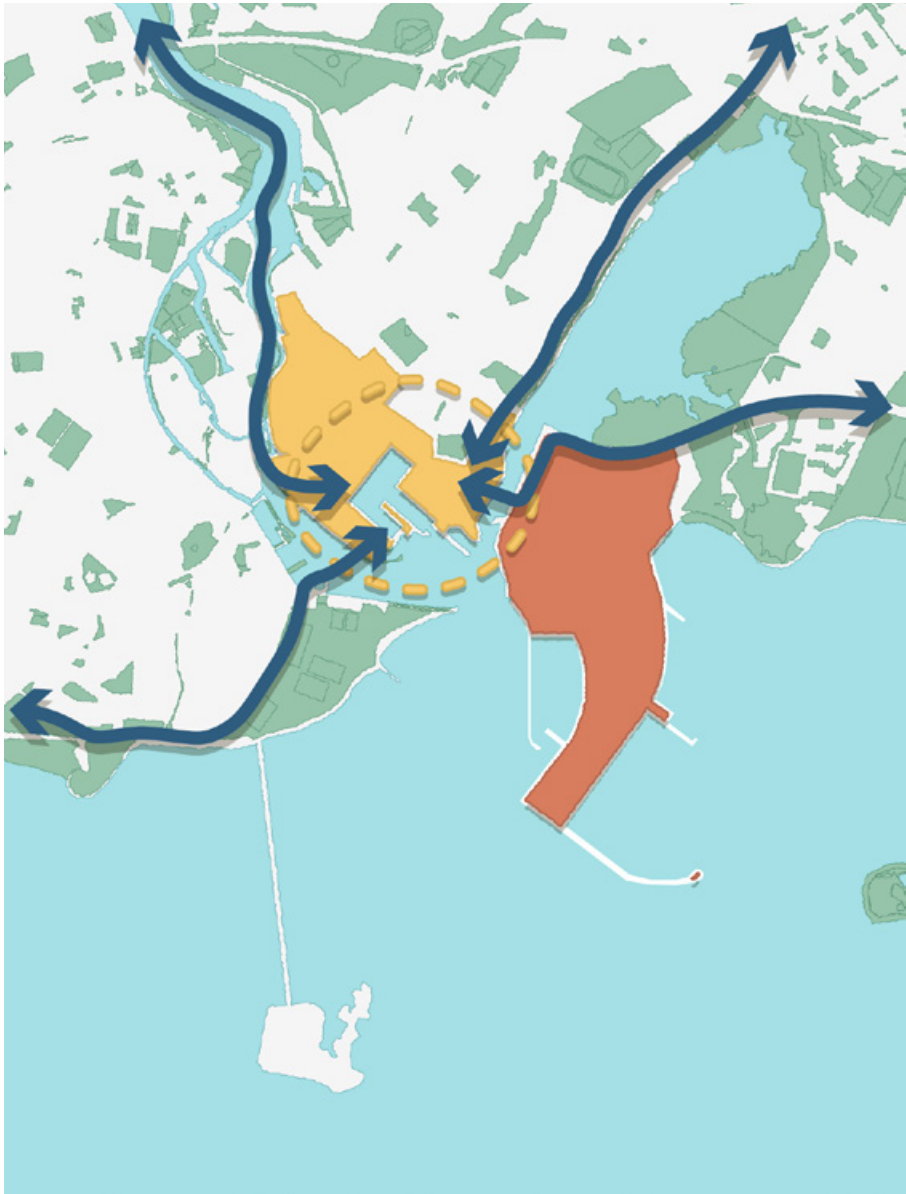









Fig. 24. Proposed Urban Relationships with Port Extension and new Waterfront focus for City Centre and Green Network



Fig. 25. Aerial perspective. Galway Inner Harbour Planning Framework 2021. (Source: Scott Tallon Walker Architects)



2025 Masterplan

-  Quayside
-  Public Green Space
-  Public Urban Space
-  Pedestrian / Cycle Amenity
-  Urban Street
(Pedestrian, Cycle, Emergency, Service Vehicle)
-  Tree Lined Urban Boulevard
-  Residential Area

Residential Buildings:	8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 18
Commercial Buildings:	2, 4, 5, 12
Mixed Use Buildings:	14, 15, 16
Cultural Buildings:	7, 17
Hotel Buildings:	3, 6
Student Accommodation:	1

Fig. 26. 2025 Masterplan, 1:2000.



Fig. 27. 2025 Masterplan Isometric Diagram.

3.2 Urban and Public Realm Strategy

The proposed Masterplan achieves a strong connection with Galway's historic urban structure by respecting existing site boundaries within the docklands, ensuring alignment with historic plots and pathways. The layout creates a generous public realm around the docks by setting buildings back from the dock edge which forms a natural extension of the city centre. This design encourages pedestrian movement and social interaction, similar to traditional urban spaces in Galway.

The development extends the city's pedestrian and cycling networks, connecting with existing routes along the River Corrib, Lough Atalia and the Greenway from Oranmore to Barna. These connections integrate the new area into the broader urban landscape, facilitating easy movement between old and new areas. Green and blue links along the river and waterfronts create natural pathways that echo historic routes, enhancing environmental quality and urban connectivity.

The public realm strategy includes a variety of spaces, such as tree-lined boulevards, shared surface pedestrian streets and traffic-free areas, designed to complement the existing urban structure. These spaces are flexible and adaptable, supporting a range of activities that reflect the vibrant public life of historic Galway.

Additionally, the development connects with adjacent projects like Bonham Quay and Augustine Hill, creating a cohesive urban environment where new and existing developments enhance each other. This fosters a sense of continuity and community, making the new development a seamless and vibrant extension of Galway's historic city centre. There is also the potential for a pedestrian-cyclist connection to the Enterprise Park to the east subject to planning, exact site selection, environmental considerations, etc.



Fig. 28. Circulation and connection to existing street pattern.

3.2.1 Wayfinding: Key Views, Vistas & Landmarks

Key wayfinding principles include natural orientation, ensuring high permeability for pedestrians and cyclists to easily navigate through a network of streets and spaces. Linked spaces along sight-lines connect with existing city streets and new developments like Bonham Quay and Augustine Hill. Defined character areas such as the Docks, Harbour Waterfront and Lough Atalia Area relate to the surrounding context which provides natural wayfinding cues. A hierarchy of urban streets and spaces, from tree-lined boulevards to traffic-free pedestrian areas, helps users understand the layout and navigate effectively.

Public spaces are areas primarily designed for public use, accessible to everyone for various activities. Examples include key public spaces, pocket parks, microspaces, green spaces, pedestrian-only areas and shared pedestrian spaces. These spaces feature high-quality paving, planting, street furniture and lighting to create attractive, pedestrian-friendly environments.

Communal spaces foster social interaction and community activities. Examples include residential amenity spaces around apartment developments, communal gardening areas and social spaces for residents. These spaces feature soft landscaping, grassed areas, play spaces for children and areas for communal activities with passive supervision from surrounding buildings.

Private spaces are intended for exclusive use by residential or commercial properties. Examples include private gardens, balconies and internal courtyards within residential or commercial developments. These spaces have defined boundaries through soft landscaping, such as hedges, to provide privacy while maintaining a connection to communal and public spaces.

Tall and landmark buildings also play a crucial role in wayfinding within the urban design. These buildings are strategically located to serve as visual reference points, helping people orient themselves and navigate through the area.

This approach ensures a well-organised urban environment where wayfinding is intuitive and spaces are clearly defined to support various activities and interactions.

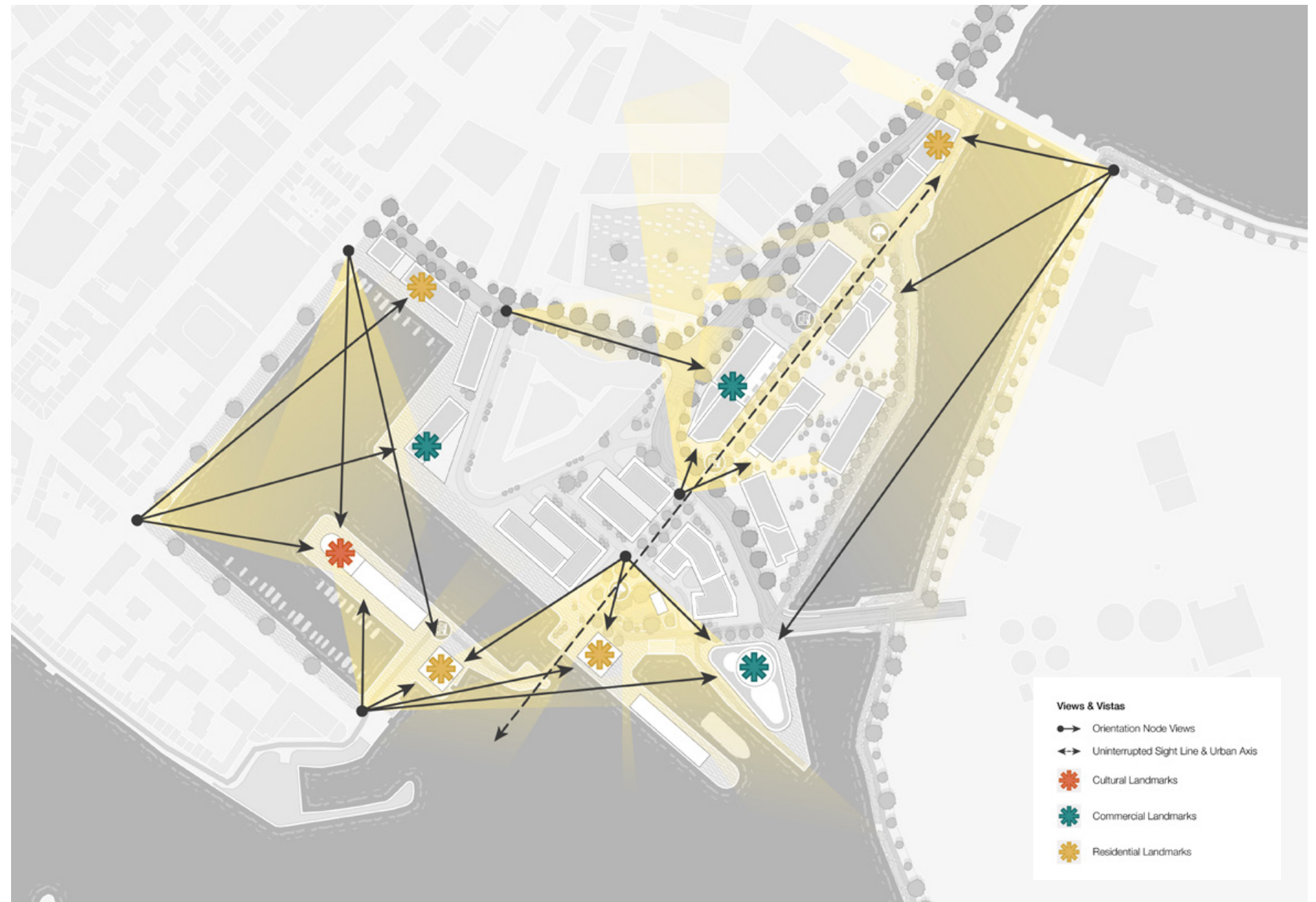


Fig. 29. Orientation nodes and corresponding landmark buildings.

3.2.2 Active Frontage

Active frontages play a key role in shaping vibrant urban spaces that cater to both residents and visitors. By integrating ground-floor spaces such as cafes, retail shops, community centres and open markets, the design fosters a lively street life, encouraging interaction and engagement with the public realm. These active frontages not only attract foot traffic but also create opportunities for social exchange, cultural expression and economic activity.

The seamless connection between buildings and the street ensures that the area remains dynamic and welcoming, enhancing the overall experience for those living in and visiting the space. This approach aims to create a pedestrian-friendly environment that contributes to the area's sense of community and vitality.



Fig. 30. East River Waterfront. SHoP Architects. (Source: Archdaily)



Fig. 31. Oostenburg Island. Urhahn + Studioninedots. (Source: Archdaily)



Fig. 32. Active Frontage Diagram.

3.3 Spatial Hierarchy, Movement & Connectivity

This Masterplan reinforces the movement and connectivity principles integral to the 2021 Planning Framework based on the following hierarchy of urban streets and spaces:

- tree-lined urban boulevards with wide pavements that carry through traffic as primary routes;
- low-traffic shared surface pedestrian streets and arrival areas providing local access;
- traffic-free streets and spaces designed for pedestrians, cyclists with emergency access only;
- amenity space, including parks, paths and residential communal garden areas where children can safely roam and play close to home.

This spatial hierarchy forms an integral part of the overall public realm structure that supports natural wayfinding with clear spatial logic of public and private areas, vehicular movement areas, etc. This is particularly important in terms of people's perception of their residential privacy and control of their private space.

The Masterplan provides a highly permeable urban network of streets and spaces that facilitate active movement with high quality public realm, seating and planting. Vehicular areas (parking areas, set-down areas, service bays, etc.) are secondary and must be carefully integrated into the design to minimise vehicular visual impact and dominance.

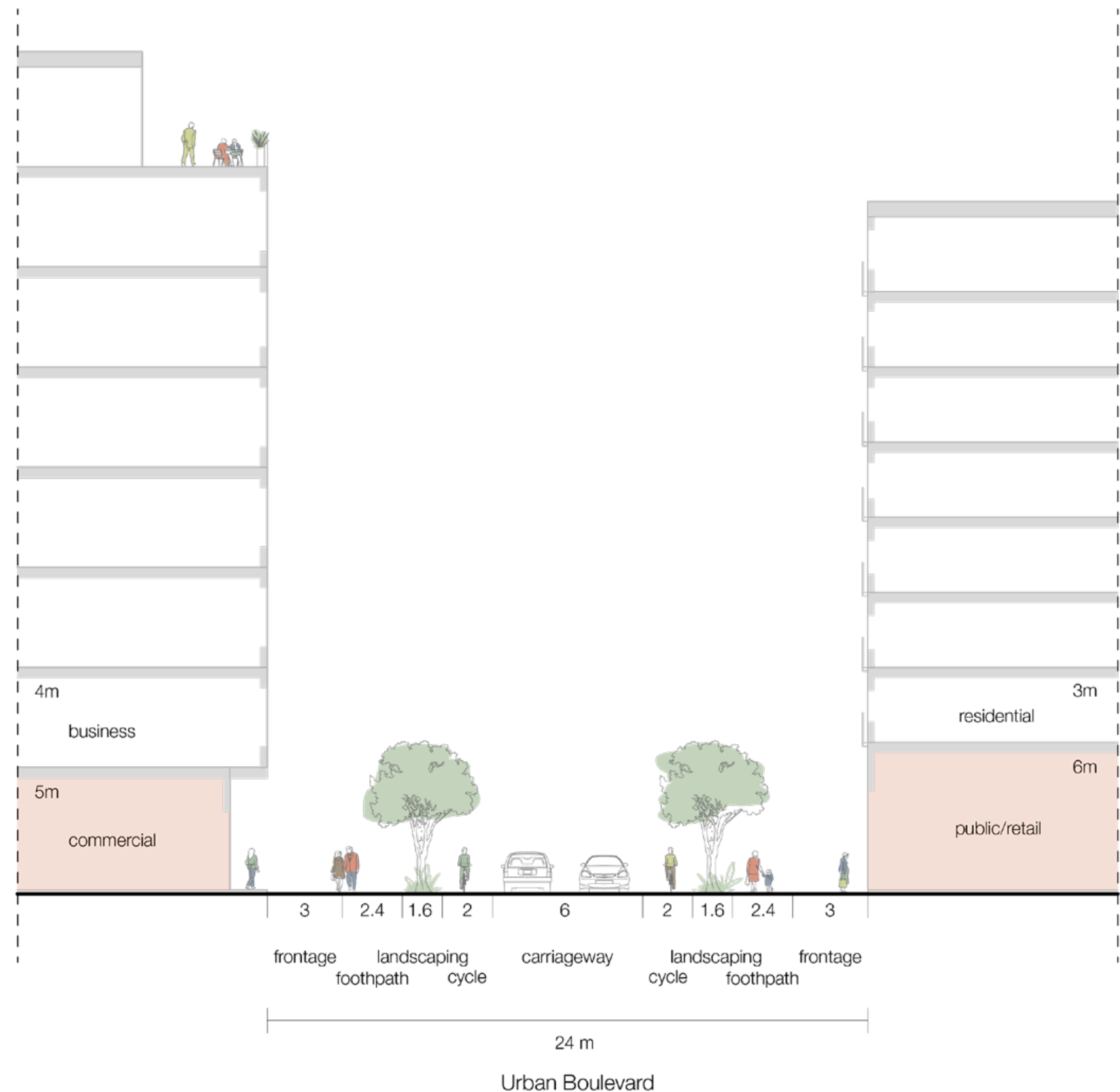


Fig. 33. Urban Boulevard Section Diagram.

The spatial hierarchy informs the urban scale of streets and spaces, building height and spatial enclosure. These affect the quality and attractiveness of the street and space for people to use. Environmental conditions and vehicular movement can affect footfall and 'dwell-time'. This provides places for people to stop and sit in sunshine, with wind protection and minimal vehicular movement.

As stated in the 2021 Planning Framework, high-quality natural landscape that attracts biodiversity is desired, particularly for the more residential areas along Lough Atalia. The historic dockside will retain its harder character, while the outer harbour waterfront area has a more exposed elemental character.

All streets will be designed in compliance with the current version of Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets ('DMURS') first published by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport ('DTTAS') in 2013.

All cycle infrastructure and facilities including cycle parking should be designed in compliance with the current version of the Cycle Design Manual first published by the National Transport Authority (NTA) in September 2023 and the NTA CycleConnects strategy for Galway. This Masterplan recommends a coordinated public realm and cycle infrastructure plan to be prepared in collaboration with GCC.

The Masterplan sets out the public realm infrastructure efficiently to maximise site development area and flexibility, based on the existing landholdings.

The Masterplan aligns with the Galway Transport Strategy (2016-2036), which seeks to reduce car dependency, promote more sustainable travel patterns and develop an integrated transport network across the city. The spatial hierarchy of streets and spaces supports this objective by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport through a permeable urban framework with reduced private vehicular activity. Ongoing public transport initiatives such as Bus Connects and Cycle Connects provide the public transport needs of Galway City Centre and this Masterplan area. This approach reflects national and regional policy objectives and contribute to improved air quality, urban amenity and overall quality of life within the city. There is also the potential for a pedestrian-cyclist connection to the Enterprise Park to the east subject to planning, exact site selection, environmental considerations, etc.

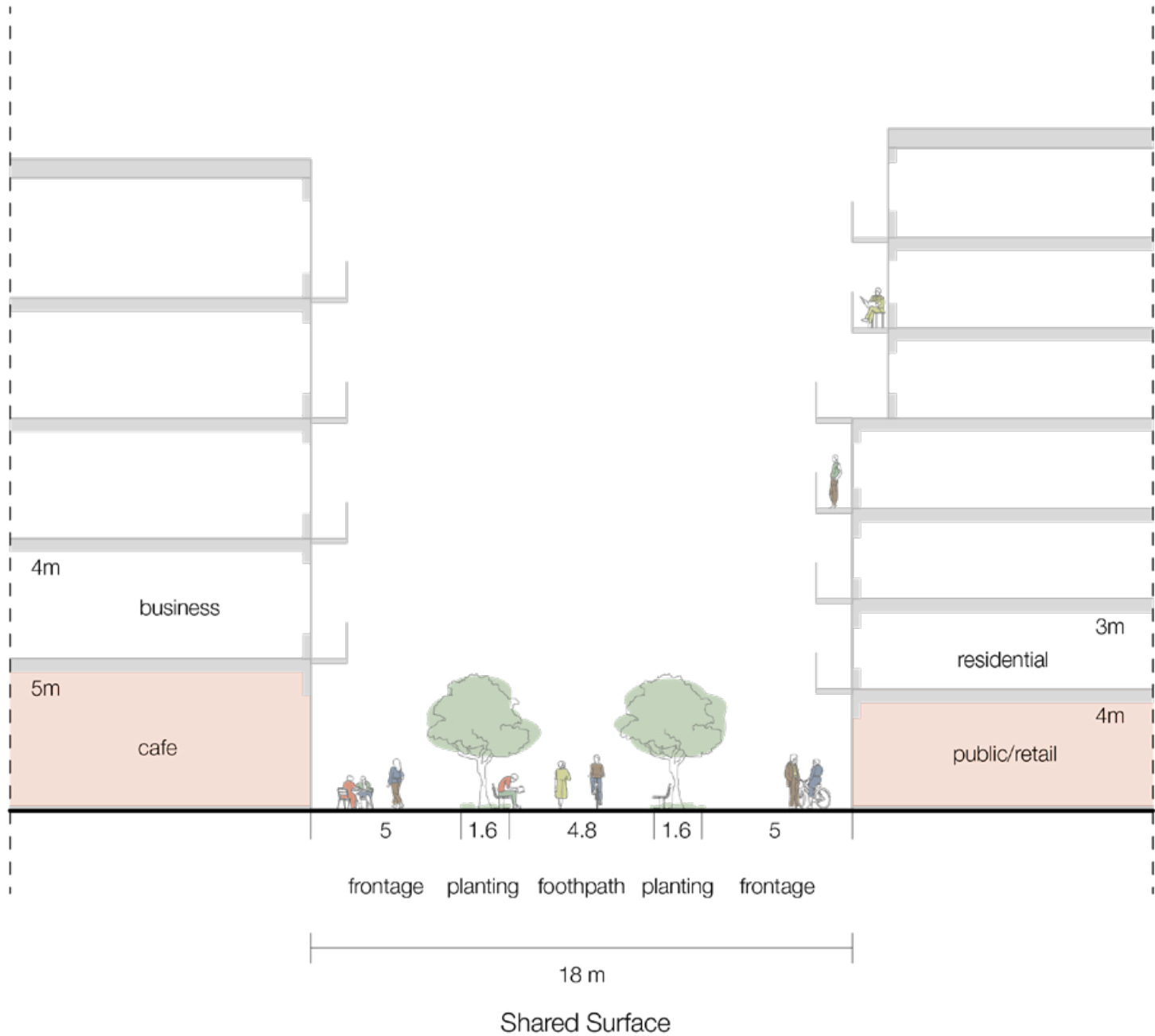


Fig. 34. Shared Surface Section Diagram.

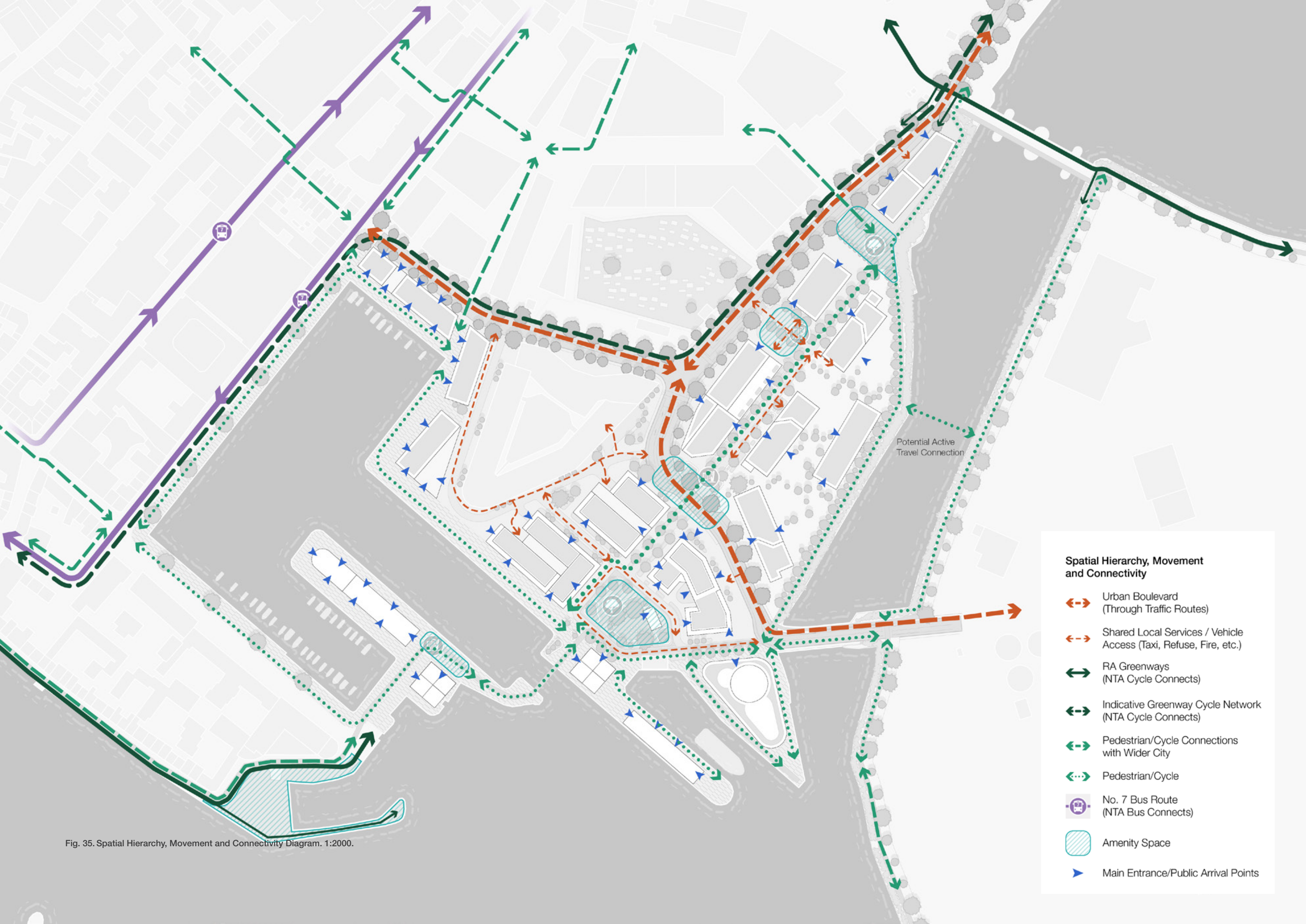


Fig. 35. Spatial Hierarchy, Movement and Connectivity Diagram. 1:2000.

3.4 Public Spaces

As part of the Urban and Public Realm Strategy, the Masterplan has arranged a series of sequential public spaces with green and urban characteristics. These spaces are integrated into the larger urban network of nodes and paths, greenways, blueways and amenities.

3.4.1 Lough Atalia Park

Lough Atalia Park is one of two green public spaces. This space acts as an entry point to the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan area from the Augustine Hill Development, Lough Atalia and wider greenway/blueway network.

3.4.2 Forthill Square

Forthill Square provides access to key residential, hotel and mixed-use plots. As such, this space balances requirements of quality public realm with access and connectivity.

3.4.3 Boulevard Square

Boulevard Square is a principal gateway space between a commercial/business district (Sites C and F) and residential/accommodation areas (Sites A, B and D). Users of this space transition between work and play spent in the adjacent hotel, or vice-versa, by picking up a coffee at the café en-route to work.

3.4.4 Galway Harbour Park

The Galway Harbour Park is the central green public space in the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan. Enclosed by several buildings, the Galway Harbour Park provides a green location to host leisure activities and public events. This Masterplan proposes to retain the New Docks Workshop (1977) by Irish architect Noel Dowley (1927-2023) and repurpose it as either a tourist office, café, bicycle repair shop for greenway users or a combination of the three. GHC has acquired the bow of the MV *Naomh Éanna*. This Irish-built ship operated vital services to the Aran Islands between 1958 and 1986, playing a significant role in Galway's maritime history, commerce and culture. There is the potential here to restore the bow and display it in the Galway Harbour Park as a marker of harbour heritage near the quayside.



Fig. 36. Section AA, Public Space Elevation Diagram, 1:500.

3.4.5 Waterfront Public Space

The Waterfront Public Space is a prominent quayside public space. This Masterplan proposes that this pier be given a culture-focused programme, as such, this public space will support water-based cultural and leisure activities.



Fig. 37. Public Space Axis and Route, NTS.

