

NUI Galway Nun's Island Masterplan

Planning and Environmental Scoping Study



Rialtas na
hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Planning & Environmental Consultants

DOCUMENT DETAILS

Client: National University of Ireland, Galway
Project title: Planning & Environmental Scoping Study

Project Number: 170503
Document Title: Planning & Environmental Scoping Study
Doc. File Name: Planning Report F1 – 2019.03.08 - 170503

Prepared By: McCarthy Keville O’Sullivan Ltd.
Planning & Environmental Consultants
Block 1, G.F.S.C.
Moneenageisha Road, Galway



Document Issue:

Rev	Status	Issue Date	Document File Name	Author(s)	Approved By:
D1	Internal Draft	2017.05.29	Planning Report D1 – 2017.06.13 - 170503	PH	GMcC
F	Final Draft for Client Review	2017.06.20	Planning Report F- 2017.06.20 – 170503	PH	GMcC
F1	Final Draft- Edited Red Line Boundary	2019.03.08	Planning Report F- 2019.03.08 – 170503	EOB	PH
F2	Final – Project Ireland 2040 logo added	2021.08.13	Planning Report F2- 2021.08.13 – 170503	PH	PH

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Project Brief.....	1
1.2	Structure of the report	2
2	Masterplan Area Description.....	3
2.1	Defined Study Area.....	3
2.2	Historical Development of the Study Area	4
2.3	Description of the Character of the Study Area	5
2.4	Transport and Traffic.....	8
3	Environmental and Built Heritage Constraints	10
3.1	Built Heritage Constraints	10
3.2	Archaeological Constraints.....	12
3.3	Environmental Designations.....	15
4	Strengths and Challenges of the Study Area	17
5	Consultation	18
6	Planning Policy Context	19
6.1	National and Regional Planning Policy Framework	19
6.1.1	National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020.....	19
6.1.2	Draft National Planning Framework- Ireland 2040 Our Plan	19
6.1.3	Planning Policy Statement 2015	20
6.1.4	Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2010 – 2022	20
6.1.5	Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas.....	20
6.1.6	Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities.....	20
6.1.7	Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.....	21
6.2	Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023	21
6.2.1	Zoning Designations	22
6.2.2	Development Management Standards.....	26
6.3	Galway Transportation Strategy.....	26
6.4	Other Policy Considerations	27
6.4.1	Living Cities Initiative	27
7	Planning History	28
8	Key Planning Matters to be Considered	29
9	Conclusion	31

Appendices

Appendix 1	A map of NUI Galway owned buildings within the study area
Appendix 2	Photographic Survey of Study Area
Appendix 3	Planning History

1 INTRODUCTION

The Nun's Island area of Galway City has been identified in the adopted *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023* as a potential regeneration area within Galway city centre¹. Furthermore, the National University of Ireland Galway's *Vision 2020 NUI Galway Strategic Plan 2015-2020*² set out a bold vision for the University campus, which aims to foster a vibrant community by building on mutually-beneficial partnerships. As a significant landowner in Nun's Island, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) is spearheading the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the area, with a view to working in partnership with Galway City Council to create a strategic spatial vision for a destination space within Galway City. It is proposed to develop a cohesive, integrated regeneration proposal for the Nun's Island area, to optimise the potential of this underutilised city centre space and bring a wider scale benefit to the city. (A map of NUI Galway owned buildings within the study area is provided in Appendix 1).

It is hoped that the regeneration of the area will cultivate sustainable development, encourage employment and promote continued innovation and learning. NUI Galway and Galway City Council realise that implementing this ambition will require a collaborative approach, based on detailed engagement and long-term strategic planning. There are a significant number of stakeholders with an interest in the proposed masterplan area. Neighbours and residents of Nun's Island will need to be provided with an opportunity to inform and shape the strategic vision for the area and be kept informed as the masterplan unfolds.

A number of national government policy and legislative changes have recently been adopted to promote urban regeneration in the form of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015*³ and the *Construction 2020*⁴ and *Rebuilding Ireland*⁵ policy documents. The proposed masterplan presents an unprecedented opportunity to develop an ambitious, cohesive vision for the subject lands which optimise the potential of this underutilised city centre space and bring a wider scale benefit to the city. As a preliminary step in the masterplan development process, NUI Galway have commissioned this Planning and Environmental Scoping Study to inform the development aspirations for the subject lands in Nun's Island.

The purpose of this Scoping Study is detailed in Section 1.1 below.

1.1 Project Brief

The scope of this Planning and Environmental Scoping Study, in accordance with the agreed brief, is summarised below:

- Clearly define and delineate the area to which the study relates, including description of the nature of the area at present to be informed by photographs and aerial photography;
- Provide a summary of the consultation that has taken place with Galway City Council to-date;
- Compile and interpret of all relevant planning policies and objectives, particularly from the adopted Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023; in addition to national

¹ Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023, Section 5.3 and Policy 5.1 Enterprise.

Available at: <http://www.galwaycity.ie/development-plan-2017-2023/>

² Available at: <https://www.nuigalway.ie/media/nuigalwayie/content/files/aboutus/Vision2020-NUI-Galway-Strategic-Plan-Web.pdf>

³ Available on: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/policy/urban-regeneration-and-housing-act-2015>

⁴ Available on: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/construction-2020-strategy/construction-2020-departments-role>

⁵ Available on: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/>

and regional policies on urban regeneration, housing delivery, sustainable communities, smarter travel, etc.;

- Provide a summary of relevant planning permissions in the area pertinent to any redevelopment proposal that might be provided for under a future masterplan;
- Detail the environmental considerations that the design team should be aware of (e.g. proximity to the River Corrib Special Area of Conservation SAC, qualifying interests of that SAC, likelihood of requirements for Appropriate Assessment, etc.); and
- Identify the key planning items that must be considered and addressed in any future masterplan for the subject lands.

1.2 Structure of the report

Following this Introduction section, the Scoping Report is set out as follows:

Section 2	Provides a description of the defined study area's context within the surrounding area.
Section 3	Details the pertinent environmental, built heritage and archaeological constraints relevant to the study area.
Section 4	Provides a summary of the study area's unique strength and challenges from a planning and urban design perspective.
Section 5	Outlines the consultation exercise which have informed the project to date
Section 6	Summarises the statutory national and local planning policy context relevant to the study area
Section 7	Provides a summary of relevant planning permissions in the area pertinent to any redevelopment proposal that might be provided for under a future masterplan.
Section 8	Summarises the key planning matters that must be considered and addressed in any future masterplan for the subject lands.
Section 9	Concludes the main findings of the Scoping Study.

2 MASTERPLAN AREA DESCRIPTION

2.1 Defined Study Area

For the purposes of this Planning and Environmental Scoping Report (Scoping Report), the defined study area is illustrated in Figure 1 and 2 below. The study area extends to circa 6.3 ha and comprises a number of institutional, educational, residential, recreational, cultural and traffic/public transport related uses. A detailed description of the nature and character of the study area is provided in Section 2.3 below.



Figure 1: Study Area
(Aerial image sourced from Bing Maps)

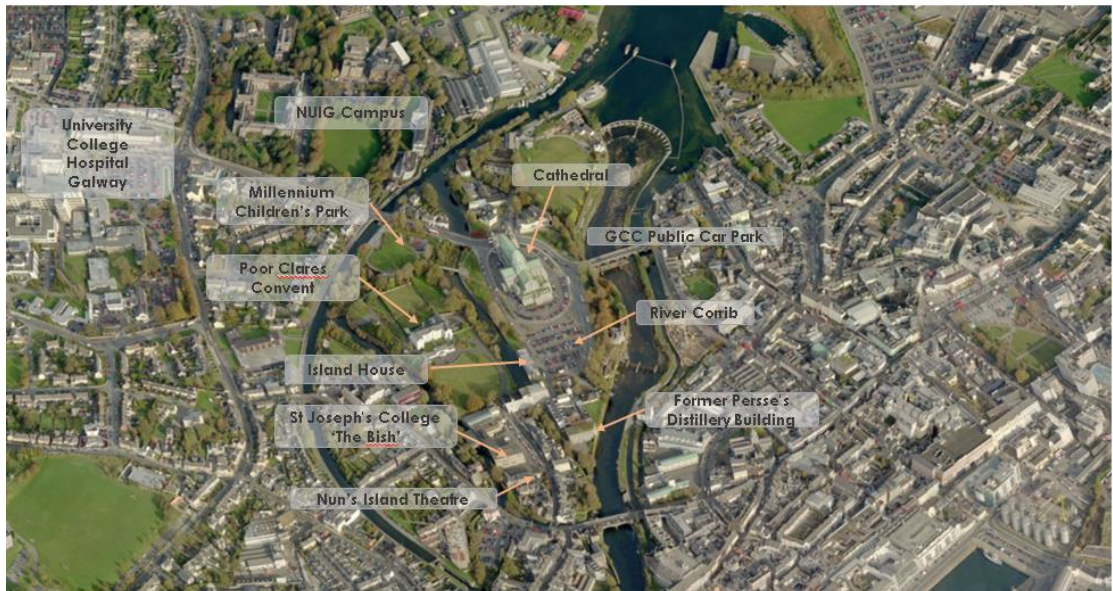


Figure 2: Study Area – Notable Buildings
(Aerial image sourced from Bing Maps)

2.2 Historical Development of the Study Area

In the 19th century Nun's Island was part of the industrial heartland of Galway. Historic 6 inch maps (covering the period 1829-1841) tells us that the area comprised two lodging houses, Grace's Asylum, the Presbyterian Church, a ladies' school, a fever hospital, a County Gaol and Town Gaol, a brewery and malt house, two flour mills, a granite works, the Poor Clares Convent as well as the various residences. See Figure 3 below. The 1897-1913 period saw further consolidation of the area and development of the canal system and waterfront area. See Figure 4 below. Construction of Galway Cathedral began in 1958 on the site of the old city prison. It was completed in 1965, making it the last stone cathedral to be built in Europe.

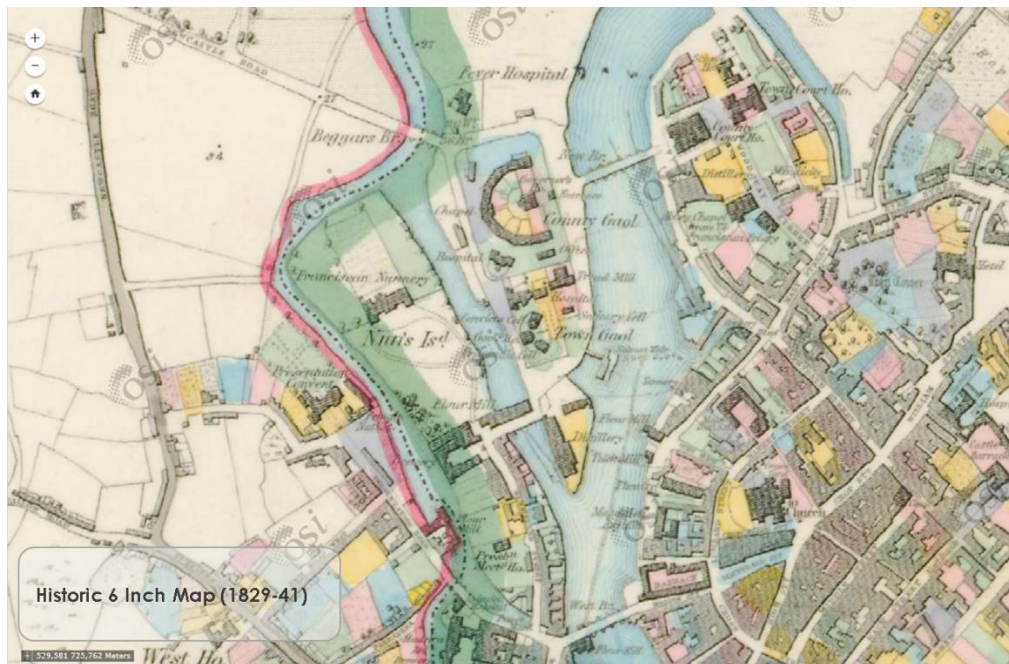


Figure 3: Historic 6 Inch Map (1829-1841)

Source: MyPlan.ie

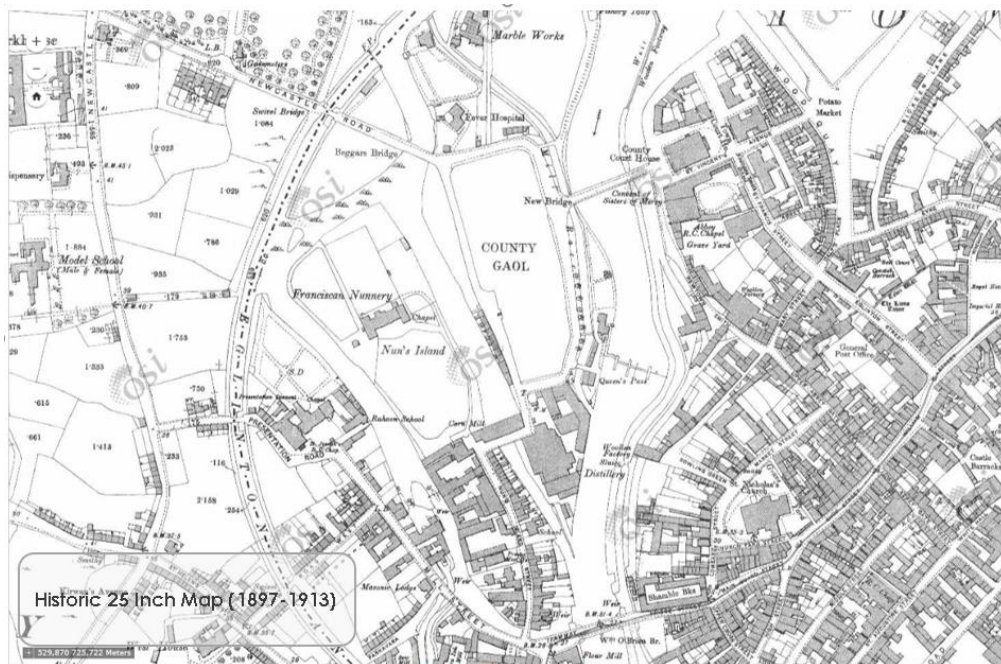


Figure 4: Historic 25 Inch Map (1897- 1913)
(Source: Myplan.ie)

2.3 Description of the Character of the Study Area

The defined study area is located in the north-west inner city and forms a gateway to the city from the west. The study area extends to circa 6.3 ha and comprises a number of landuses, - including institutional, educational, residential, recreational, cultural and traffic and public transport related uses. The site forms the transition between the core city centre and the NUI Galway campus, in addition to being in close proximity to University College Hospital, Galway. The area benefits from good public transport links, including a number of city centre bus routes and private tourist coach services. The site includes two city bike docking stations at Gaol Road and opposite the Cathedral.

University Road forms the northern site boundary. The site is bound to the east by the River Corrib and to the west by its associated canal system. The river basin and its associated infrastructure is designated on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS Ref. 8501). This stretch of the Corrib waterway also lies within the Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 000297). Nun's Island is within Galway's Zone of Archaeological Potential as outlined in the City Development Plan.

The defined study area contains a number distinct character areas. A photographic record of the defined study area is provided in Appendix 2.

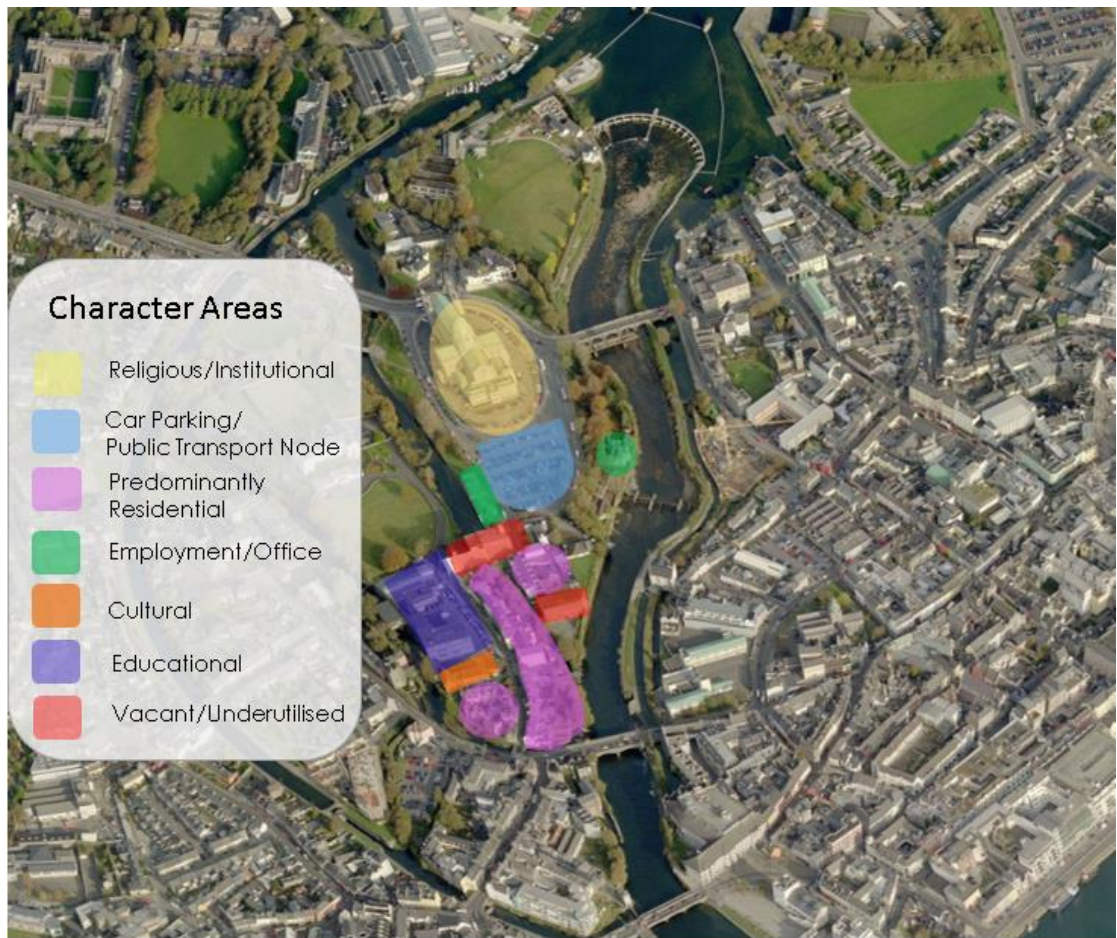


Figure 5: Character Areas

The character of the defined study area can be described as follows:

- The northern portion predominantly comprises the Cathedral, an extensive surface public car park, recreational and amenity land bounding the river and commercial office space located in Island House (RPS Ref. 3605). The area is dominated by traffic based activities and surface car parking.
- The southern area comprises a denser built development pattern than the northern area:
 - The area includes St. Joseph's Patrician College, known as 'The Bish', which was first established at Nuns' Island in 1862 and Nuns Island Theatre (a fully equipped 82 seat theatre).
 - This area also includes a number of three to six story buildings located on Gaol road which are currently underutilised and falling into disrepair (see Figure 6).
 - The southern area of Nun's Island Street predominantly comprises a streetscape of two to three storey terraces of predominantly 19th century townhouses. The rear gardens of the dwellings mostly back onto the River Corrib.



Figure 6: Examples of buildings with redevelopment potential



Plate 1: Underutilised Building with Redevelopment Potential (NUIG Building No 57)



Plate 2 & 3: Underutilised Building with Redevelopment Potential (NUIG Building No 69)



Plate 4: Underutilised Building with Redevelopment Potential (NUIG Building No 56)

2.4 Transport and Traffic

The defined study area is located in the north-west inner city and forms a gateway to the city from the west. Figure 7 below illustrates the existing traffic management measures in the study area. Galway City Council operate a long-term surface car park, encompassing

approximately 161 no. car parking spaces on Gaol Road, immediately south of Galway Cathedral. Long-term stay car parks charge a fee of €4 per day. As part of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) (discussed below in Section 6.3), it is proposed to reduce the dominance of car parking within the city. The GTS acknowledges that many of the existing car park sites within the city represent development opportunity site which may be brought forward for redevelopment in the future.

The GTS identifies University Road (which forms the study area’s northern boundary), as part of the ‘Cross City Link’. This link consists of a central corridor traversing the core city centre area which will be restricted to use by public transport vehicles, pedestrian, cyclists and local access only. The GTS also identifies a number of measures to improve the public realm and pedestrian accessibility in the study area, including a proposed new pedestrian bridge adjacent to the Salmon Weir Bridge.

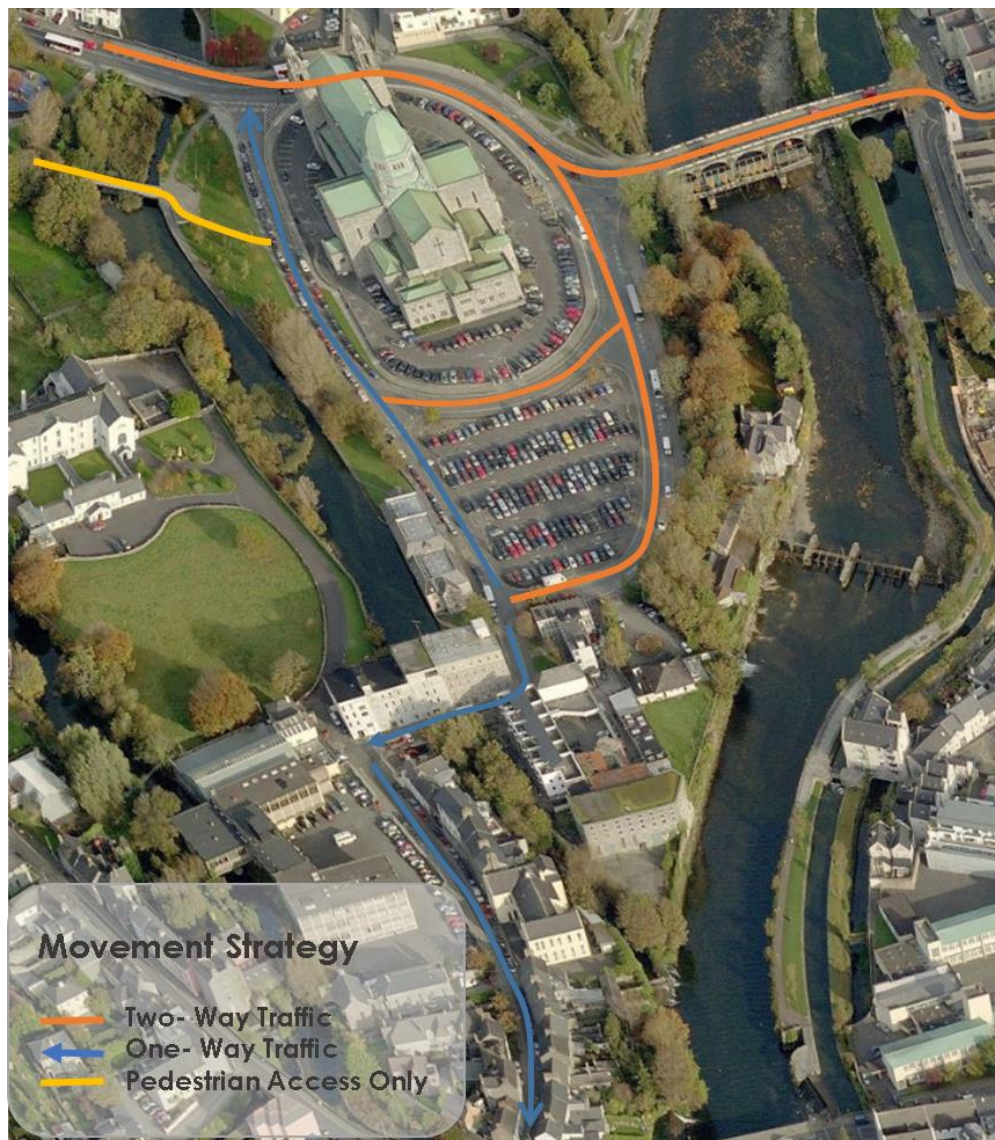


Figure 7: Nun’s Island Traffic Management Strategy

3 ENVIRONMENTAL AND BUILT HERITAGE CONSTRAINTS

3.1 Built Heritage Constraints

The *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended), provides measures for the protection of architectural heritage. These include the establishment of a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The *Galway City Development Plan 2017 -2023* which was adopted in December 2016 includes a Record of Protected Structures in Schedule 3 of the policy document. A significant number of buildings and structures within the city are deemed worthy of protection and 622 are currently on Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

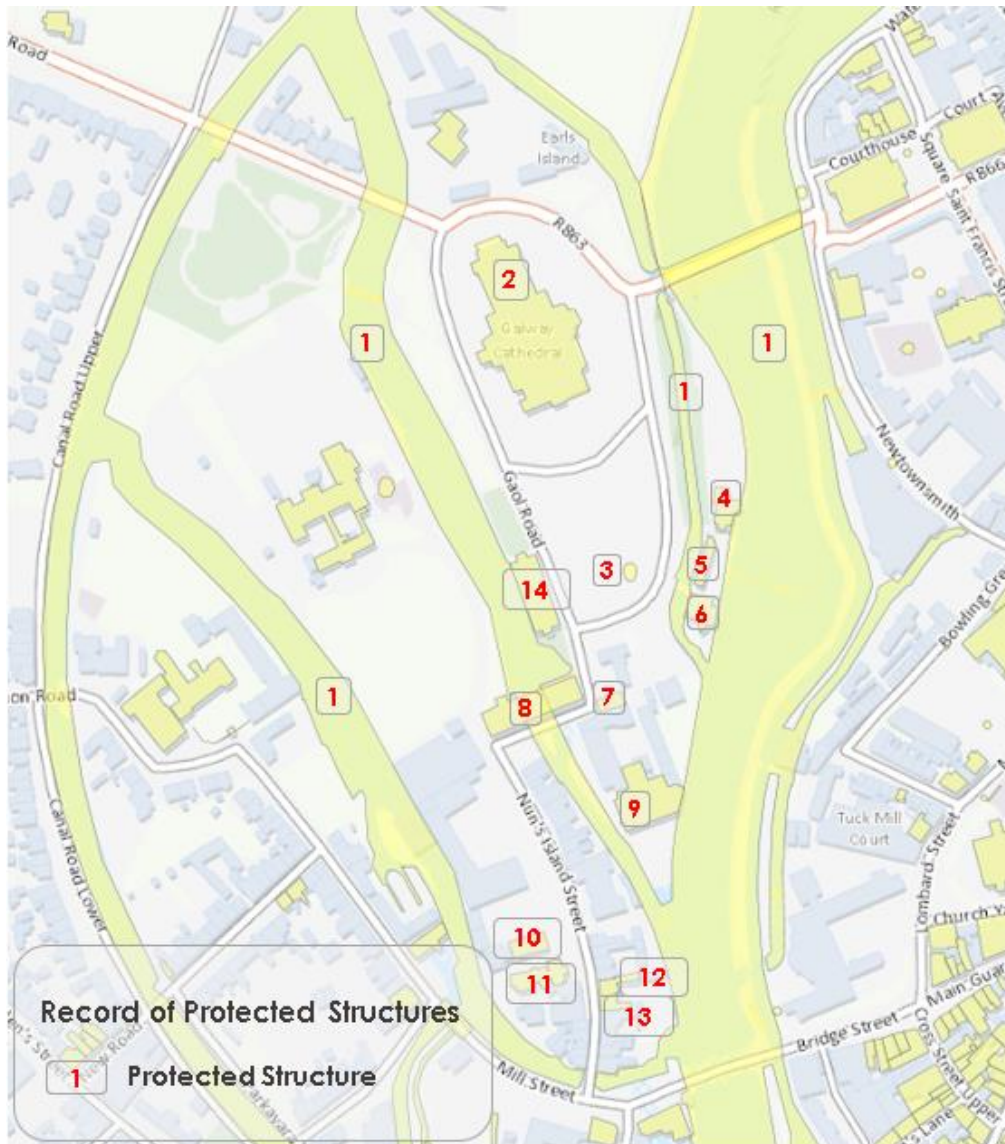


Figure 8: Protected Structures within Study Area

Whilst not located in a designated ACA, the defined study area contains a number of Protected Structures, as illustrated below in Figure 8 and described in tabular format in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Protected Structures within Study Area

No.	RPS Ref	Name/ Address	Description	Special Interest
1.	8501	Rivers and Waterways	Including bridges, walling, embankments, piers and other associated infrastructure	Technical/ Historical/ Social/ Scientific/ Archaeological/ Architectural
2.	3602	Cathedral, Earl's Island	C17th stone carvings	Architectural/ Social/ Archaeological
3.	3606	Grave associated with Galway Gaol	Grave	Historical
4.	3604	County Club House, Earl's Island	Medieval stone carvings in ground	Architectural/ Archaeological/ Historical
5.	3607	Fisheries Offices, Earl's Island	Multi Bay Single Storey with Dormer Commercial Buildings	Limestone plaque. Entrance gate and piers
6.	3607	As above	As above	As above
7.	7409	Former Mill, Nun's Island Street	3 Bay 3 Storey Former Industrial building	Architectural / Technical
8.	7406	Former Mill, Nun's Island Street	Original industrial machinery water inlet under building. 2 IHS carvings	Architectural/ Technical/ Archaeological
9.	7408	Formerly Perse's Distillery/ Hygeia Building, Nun's Island Street	8 Bay 4 Storey Building	Social/ Artistic/ Architectural/ Historical
10.	7407	Arts Centre, Nun's Island Street	2 Bay 2 Storey Arts Centre. Former Presbyterian Church. Boundary walls, gate piers and gates	Architectural/ Social
11.	7403	24 Nun's Island Street	2 Conjoined 3 Bay 2 Storey Residential Building. Former Grace Home. Inscribed plaque on front facade, gate piers and railings.	Architectural/ Social
12.	7402	6 Nun's Island Street	3 Bay 3 Storey Residential Building. Outbuildings to rear.	Architectural
13.	7401	5 Nun's Island Street	3 Bay 3 Storey Residential Building. HIS tiles.	Architectural
14.	3605	Island House	13 Bay 2/3 Storey Commercial Building. Former grain store.	Architectural

3.2 Archaeological Constraints

Galway has a rich archaeological heritage, which extends from the Mesolithic, medieval and post-medieval periods and includes considerable industrial archaeology.

The archaeological heritage of the City is protected by the *National Monuments Act, 1930-2004*. A list of sites, structures, features or objects of archaeological significance known as the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is compiled nationally by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA). Given the medieval legacy of Galway, most of the city centre is designated a Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) - see Figure 9.

The extant City Development Plan advises that in advance of any new development on a site of archaeological significance or within the ZAP, there is a requirement for consultation with the DAHRRGA. It is the policy of the Council to ensure that development within an area of archaeological significance/potential does not adversely impact on the archaeological heritage. The Council will have regard to any archaeological advice received from the DAHRRGA when considering proposed development.

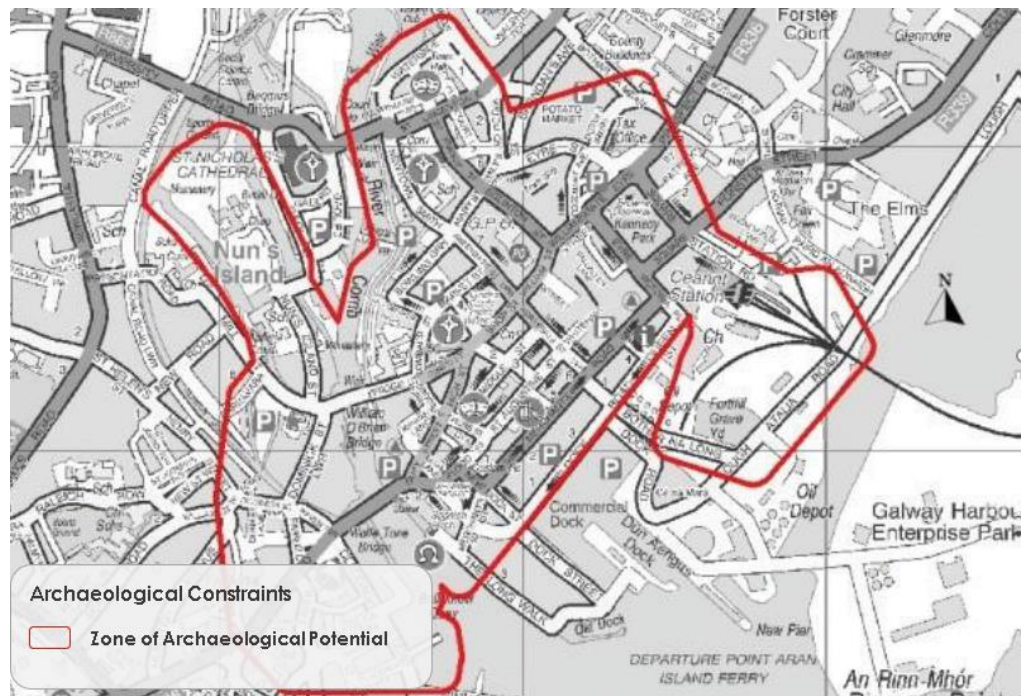


Figure 9: Zone of Archaeological Potential
(Extracted from Figure 8.12 of *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023*)

The defined study area and immediate surrounding area contains a number of National Monuments, as illustrated below in Figure 9 and described in tabular format in Table 2 below.

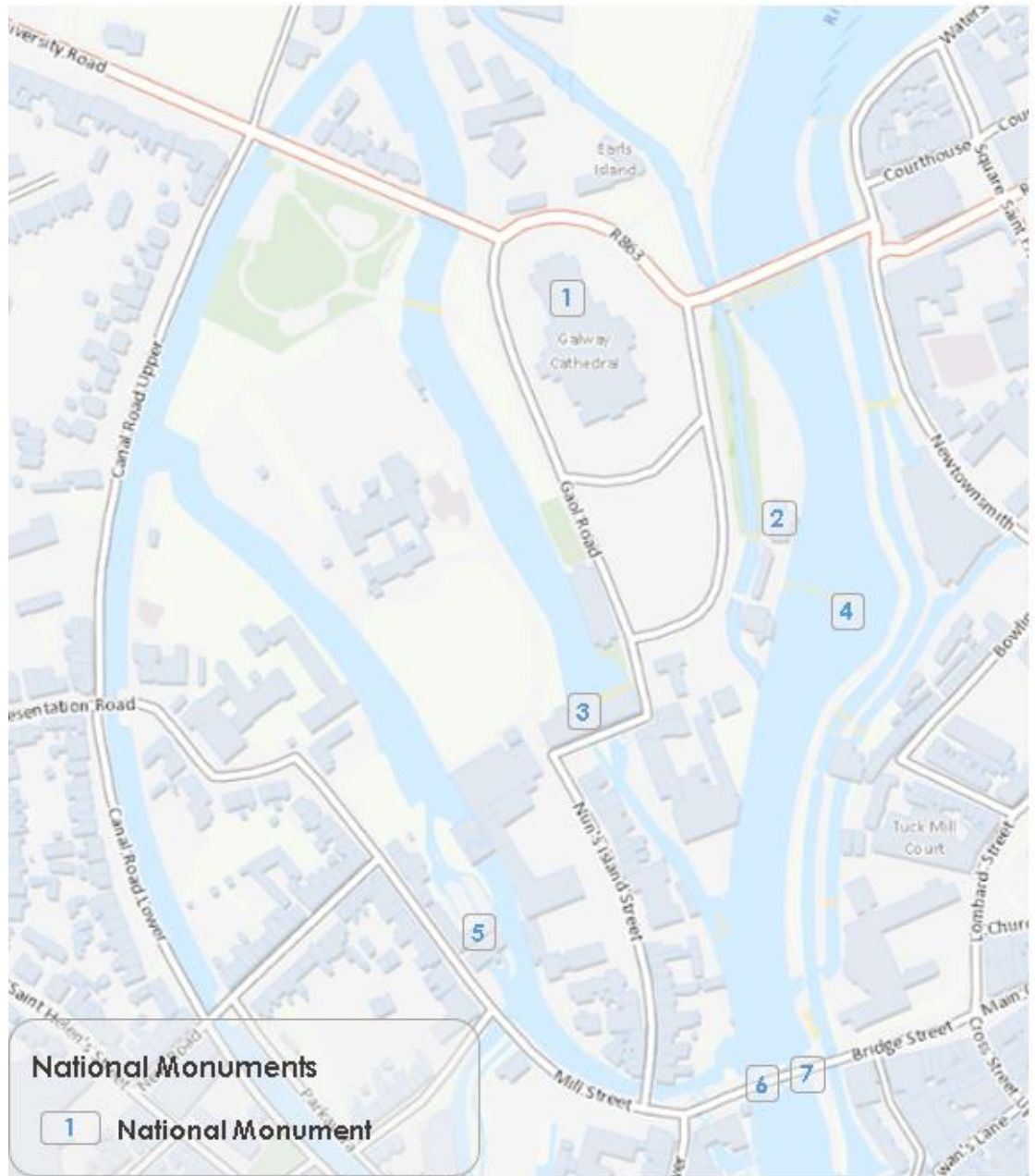


Figure 10: Designated National Monuments within Study Area

Table 2: Designated National Monuments within Study Area

No.	Record No.	Scheduled for Protection	Classification	Description
1.	GA094-139	1	Stone sculpture	In the chapel of St Nicholas in the Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and St Nicholas. The reredos above the altar consists of four limestone panels arranged so as to represent the coronation of Our Lady by the Holy Trinity. Three of these date to the mid-seventeenth century (God the Father, God the Son, Blessed Virgin) and the fourth (Holy Ghost) is a modern carving. The older panels came from the Pro-Cathedral in Middle Street where they had been transferred from St Nicholas' church some time in the early 19th century. Richard Pococke, who visited Galway in 1752, records these as follows: 'In the vestry on three large stones are cut as big as human life, Our Saviour, the Virgin Mary to the right, and to the right of that God the Father and over his head the Dove, they were dug up some where about the church' (Pococke 1752, 105). Originally they probably were intended to form part of an altar or tomb-surround that was never completed. The panel depicting God the Father formerly contained to the right of the figure the unfinished carvings of a dove and an angel with a censor. These were removed when the panels were re-erected in this chapel.
2.	GA094-103001	1	Mill - unclassified	Description not available.
3.	GA094-100033	1	Causeway	Description not available.
4.	GA094-100056	0	Weir - regulating	Description not available.
5.	GA094-104	1	Mill - unclassified	Description not available.
6.	GA094-100051	1	Water mill - unclassified	Description not available.
7.	GA094-100031	1	Bridge	Description not available.

3.3 Environmental Designations

The *Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)* was transposed into Irish law by S.I. 94 of 1997, the *European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997*. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are marine and terrestrial areas of international importance that have been designated for the protection of wildlife habitats and species (other than birds), which form part of EU Natura 2000 network of ecologically significant sites throughout Europe. Special protection measures should be applied regarding these habitats of specified wildlife species, in order to ensure the survival and reproduction in their distribution area. Two SACs designated areas exist in the city, the Galway Bay Complex and Lough Corrib Complex.

The defined study area is bound to the east by the River Corrib and to the west by its associated canal system. This stretch of the Corrib waterway also lies within the Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 000297).

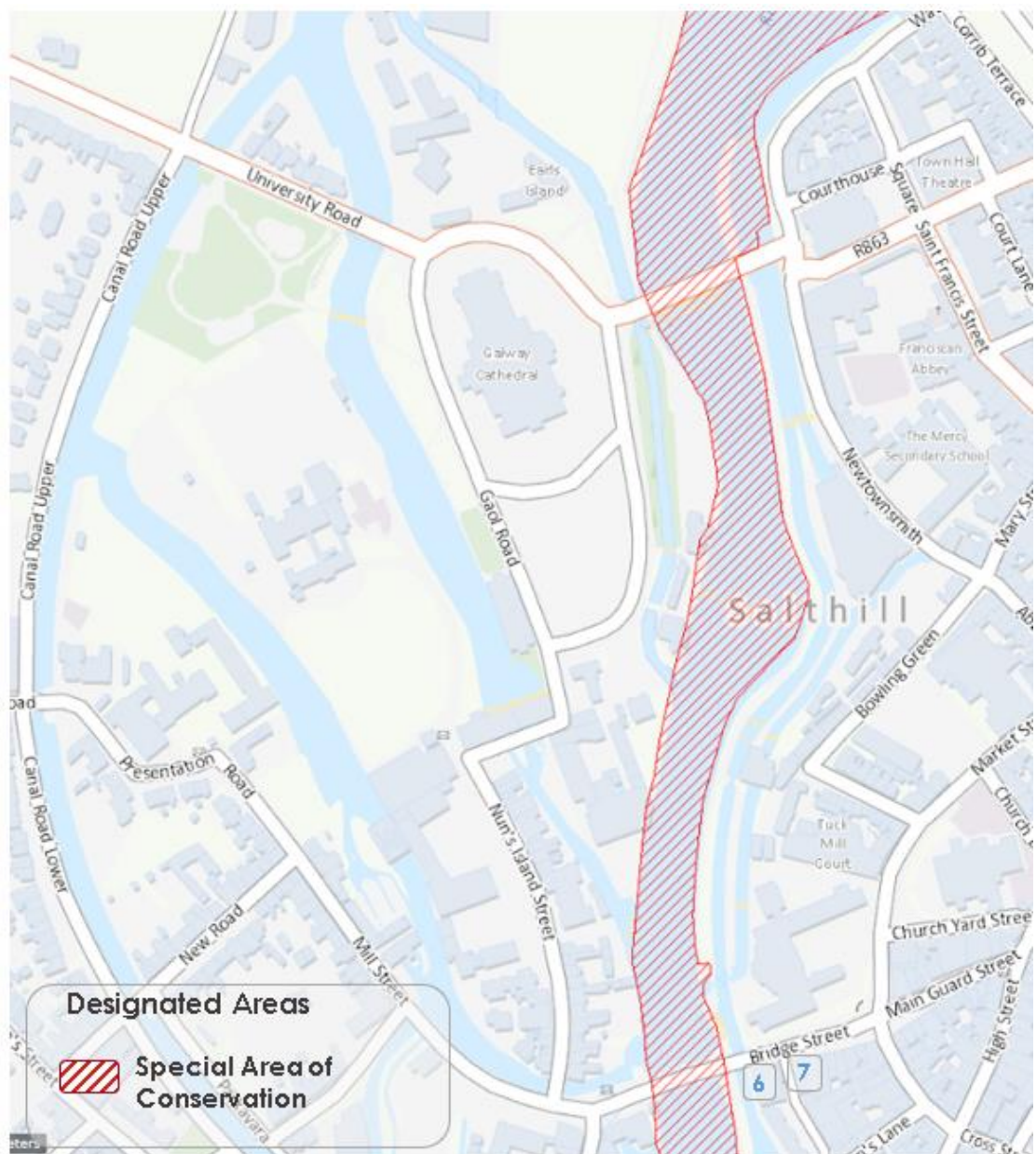


Figure 11: River Corrib SAC

The key features on interest of the SAC are detailed below. Numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes:

- Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]
- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]
- Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]
- Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]
- Active raised bogs [7110]
- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]
- Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]
- Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]
- Alkaline fens [7230]
- Limestone pavements [8240]
- Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]
- Bog woodland [91D0]
- Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]
- Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]
- Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]
- Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]
- Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]
- Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]
- Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]
- Drepanocladus vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [1393]
- Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]

Proposed plans and projects in the study area should consider DEHLG *Guidance for Planning Authorities on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland* (2009) and potential impacts identified in the Natura Impact Report (NIR) of the City Development Plan relating to habitat loss and fragmentation, water quality, disturbance and in combination effects. The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance/protection, mitigation and compensatory measures and is based on a precautionary approach.

4 STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY AREA

A summary of the study area’s unique strength and challenges from a planning and urban design perspective are set out below:

Table 3: Summary Analysis of Study Area

Summary Analysis of Study Area

Strengths/Opportunities

- The Nun’s Island area is identified in the *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023* as a potential regeneration area. **Policy 5.1** supports a joint initiative between NUI Galway and Galway City Council to prepare a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nuns Island.
- Major route and Gateway to City Centre - (transition between the core city centre and the NUI Galway campus, in addition to being in close proximity to University College Hospital, Galway)
- Unique setting on River Corrib
- Waterways- recreational opportunities
- Rich architectural and archaeological heritage- the subject lands contain a number of Protected Structures and National Monuments
- Significant landowners (e.g. NUI Galway and Galway City Council) with potential to assemble development sites
- Good public transport links, including a number of city centre bus routes, private tourist coach services and bike docking stations
- Underutilised/vacant buildings with potential to bring a wider scale benefit to the city.
- University Road is a designated ‘Cross City Link’ (Galway Transport Strategy)
- Potential to improve pedestrian links over the River Corrib
- Opportunity to provide enabling infrastructure to facilitate the future regeneration of the study area
- Opportunity to adapt/redevelop vacant buildings with ‘green’/sustainable building technology

Challenges/Constraints

- Poor public realm environment and lack of pedestrian crossing points
- Prevalence of hard landscaping (particularly around Galway Cathedral)
- Area is dominated by private car use
- Constrained road/pedestrian network
- Existing built development turns its back to the river
- Ability to develop a shared vision (i.e. large number of stakeholders involved)
- Adjacent to Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation
- The area contains several Protected Structures and National Monuments
- Located within Zone of Archaeological Potential

5 CONSULTATION

The Nun's Island area of Galway City has been identified in the adopted *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023* as a potential regeneration area within the city centre. *Policy 5.1* supports a joint initiative between NUI Galway and Galway City Council to prepare a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nuns Island.

As a significant landowner in Nun's Island, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) is leading the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the area, with a view to working in partnership with Galway City Council to develop a cohesive, integrated regeneration proposal for the Nun's Island area, to optimise the potential of this underutilised city centre space and bring a wider scale benefit to the city.

To date, informal discussions have taken place with Galway City Council at senior and departmental level. The opportunity to develop a strategic vision for the area has been received favourably. On the back of these discussions, the local planning policy framework has been updated to reflect the potential of the Nun's Island Area. The Galway City Development Plan includes a number of specific reference to the future redevelopment potential of the subject lands. Further Policy 5.1 Enterprise supports a joint collaborative initiative to prepare a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nun's Island. Policy 5.1 states the following:

"Initiate in conjunction with NUIG, the preparation of a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nuns Island".

There are a significant number of stakeholders with an interest in the proposed masterplan area, including (but not limited to):

- Galway City Council;
- National University of Ireland, Galway
- Waterways Ireland;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- Office of Public Works;
- Corrib Navigation Trustees;
- Diocese of Galway;
- St. Joseph's Patrician College;
- Existing landowners and residents etc.

Initial enquiries/expressions of interest in the lands have been received from several private and public bodies, interesting in pursuing a range of civic, enterprise, educational, cultural and recreational uses. In addition, existing landowner and residents of Nun's Island will be consulted and provided with an opportunity to inform and shape the strategic vision for the area and be kept informed as the masterplan unfolds.

6 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The current statutory planning policy document for the subject lands is the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023. There are a number of other relevant planning policy documents that inform the City Development Plan (CDP) and these are also summarised in this section.

6.1 National and Regional Planning Policy Framework

6.1.1 National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a twenty-year planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions. Key to the strategy is balanced regional development. Under the provisions of the NSS, Galway's strategic location in the West region is reflected in its designation as a Gateway in the NSS, which is defined as "a city having a strategic location nationally and relative to their surrounding areas and providing national scale social, economic infrastructure and support services". A core objective of the NSS is to strengthen the critical mass of the gateways.

With particular reference to Galway City, the NSS states that:

"Galway, with its population catchment, quality of life attractions, transport connections and capacity to innovate with the support of its third level institutions, will continue to play the critical role which has been essential in activating the potential of the region."

6.1.2 Draft National Planning Framework- Ireland 2040 Our Plan

The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government are currently formulating a new National Planning Framework (NPF) to succeed the NSS. A Draft Issues Paper has been published in February 2017. The purpose of this paper is to set out the main issues and possible choices for the development of Ireland to 2040. It is intended that the National Planning Framework will be a high-level document that will provide the framework for future development and investment in Ireland, providing a long-term and place-based aspect to public policy and investment, and aiming to coordinate sectoral areas such as housing, jobs, transport, education, health, environment, energy and communications, into an overall coherent strategy.

In relation to regional cities such as Galway, the Issues Paper notes the following:

"Ireland's regional cities appear to offer significant potential to be the focal point to drive growth and development in their regions. The regional cities are all major centres of employment, third-level education and healthcare and are accessible to the motorway network and other communications infrastructure such as airports and ports".

With regard to Galway's population growth, Section 4.1 of the Issues Paper notes the following:

"It is notable that of the five Cities (Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford), only the Galway built-up area experienced consistent population growth in excess of the national average (31%) from 1996-2016, increasing in population by more than 23,000 or 41%".

6.1.3 Planning Policy Statement 2015

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government's (DECLG) Planning Policy Statement 2015 encourages Planning Authorities to engage in active land management by leading and managing the development process and ensuring that land zoned for development comes into use in accordance with Development Plan policy and in tandem with supporting infrastructure.

The policy statement acknowledges that creating a consolidated urban form fosters the development of compact neighbourhoods and a critical mass which contributes to the viability of economic, social, and transport infrastructure.

6.1.4 Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2010 – 2022

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the West Region 2010 – 2022 provide a framework for long-term strategic development in the West Region, which comprises the administrative areas of Galway County Council, Galway City Council, Mayo County Council and Roscommon County Council. The current RPGs were adopted in October 2010 and are set within the context of national planning policy, including the National Spatial Strategy, providing a statutory link between national and local planning policy and objectives. RPGs have become much more influential within the planning policy hierarchy with the enactment of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, which requires all relevant Development Plans to comply with the RPGs.

The RPGs set out the aims for the West Region through a number of strategic policies and objectives, including in relation to Economic Development, Population and Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, Environment and Amenities, Social Infrastructure and Community Development.

6.1.5 Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas

The 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the accompanying 'Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide' (2009) set out the criteria on planning for sustainable neighbourhoods under four main themes, namely, provision of community facilities, efficient use of resources, amenity or quality of life issues and conservation of the built and natural environment.

The Guidelines advocate an urban design and quality-led approach to creating urban densities will be promoted, where the focus will be on creating sustainable urban villages and neighbourhoods. A varied typology of residential units is promoted within neighbourhoods in order to encourage a diverse choice of housing options in terms of tenure, unit size, building design and to ensure demographic balance in residential communities.

6.1.6 Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities

The DECLG published the *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities* in December 2015. The new guidelines are the result of an updating of previous Departmental guidelines published in 2007 and are intended to enhance consistency between local authorities as regards planning requirements, affordability of construction and living standards for residents.

The focus of this guidance is on the apartment building itself and on the individual units within it. The 2015 guidelines specify planning policy requirements for:

- Internal space standards for different types of apartments, including studio apartments;
- Dual aspect ratios;

- Floor to ceiling height;
- Apartments to stair/lift core ratios;
- Storage spaces;
- Amenity spaces including balconies/patios; and
- Room dimensions for certain rooms

6.1.7 Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets⁶ (DMURS) was published by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in April 2013. DMURS provides guidance relating to the design of urban roads and streets. DMURS encourages designers to give due consideration to creating a 'sense of place' which is of core significance to the creation of safe and more integrated street designs. The guidance document notes that four interlinked characteristics influence the sense of place within a street, including:

- **Connectivity:** The creation of vibrant and active places requires pedestrian activity. This in turn requires walkable street networks that can be easily navigated and are well connected.
- **Enclosure:** A sense of enclosure spatially defines streets and creates a more intimate and supervised environment. A sense of enclosure is achieved by orientating buildings toward the street and placing them along its edge. The use of street trees can also enhance the feeling of enclosure.
- **Active Edge:** An active frontage enlivens the edge of the street creating a more interesting and engaging environment. An active frontage is achieved with frequent entrances and openings that ensure the street is overlooked and generate pedestrian activity as people come and go from buildings.
- **Pedestrian Activity/Facilities:** The sense of intimacy, interest and overlooking that is created by a street that is enclosed and lined with active frontages enhances a pedestrian's feeling of security and well-being. Good pedestrian facilities (such as wide footpaths and well-designed crossings) also make walking a more convenient and pleasurable experience that will further encourage pedestrian activity.

The DMURS guidance emphasises that these four characteristics represent the basic measures that should be established in order to create people friendly streets that facilitate more sustainable neighbourhoods.

6.2 Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023

The current statutory planning policy document for the subject site is the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 (CDP), which was adopted by the City Council in December 2016 and came in to effect on the 7th January 2017. The CDP includes a Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy that notes the need to accommodate continued population growth, in line with the City's designation as a 'Gateway', in a sustainable manner. In this regard, the adopted Settlement Strategy is primarily based on consolidating the urban form of the City. The strategic goals of the CDP include the following:

⁶ Available on: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload%2C32672%2Cen.pdf>

- *Promote balanced and sustainable economic development that will enable Galway City to fulfil its role as a National Gateway and a Regional Centre, providing sufficient employment opportunities and appropriate services.*
- *Use the role of the Gateway to harness the strengths and maximise the economic development of the region.*
- *Provide for a built and natural environment that is of high quality and that contributes to providing a good quality of life for residents and visitors and affords sustainable transportation opportunities.*

The Nun's Island area of Galway City has been identified in the adopted Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 as a potential regeneration area within the city centre. *Policy 5.1 Enterprise* supports the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the area:

"Initiate in conjunction with NUIG, the preparation of a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nuns Island".

The CDP sets out a co-ordinated and integrated spatial framework for the continued development of Galway City in a sustainable and inclusive manner. It is set within the overall national and regional planning contexts, taking into account relevant national guidelines published by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

6.2.1 Zoning Designations

The Galway City Development Plan 2017 -2023 incorporates land use zoning objectives and development management standards and guidelines to be applied to future development proposals in the city. The Council is required to manage development to ensure that permissions granted under the *Planning and Development Acts 2000* (as amended) are consistent with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan.

Provision is made for a flexible application of standards and guidelines, in particular circumstances where proposed development is otherwise consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and achieves high urban design quality. The achievement of the policies and the objectives of the plan and the encouragement of good design, rather than the mechanistic application of development standards, will be the aim of development management.

The designated zoning objectives pertinent to the study area are illustrated in Figure 12 overleaf.

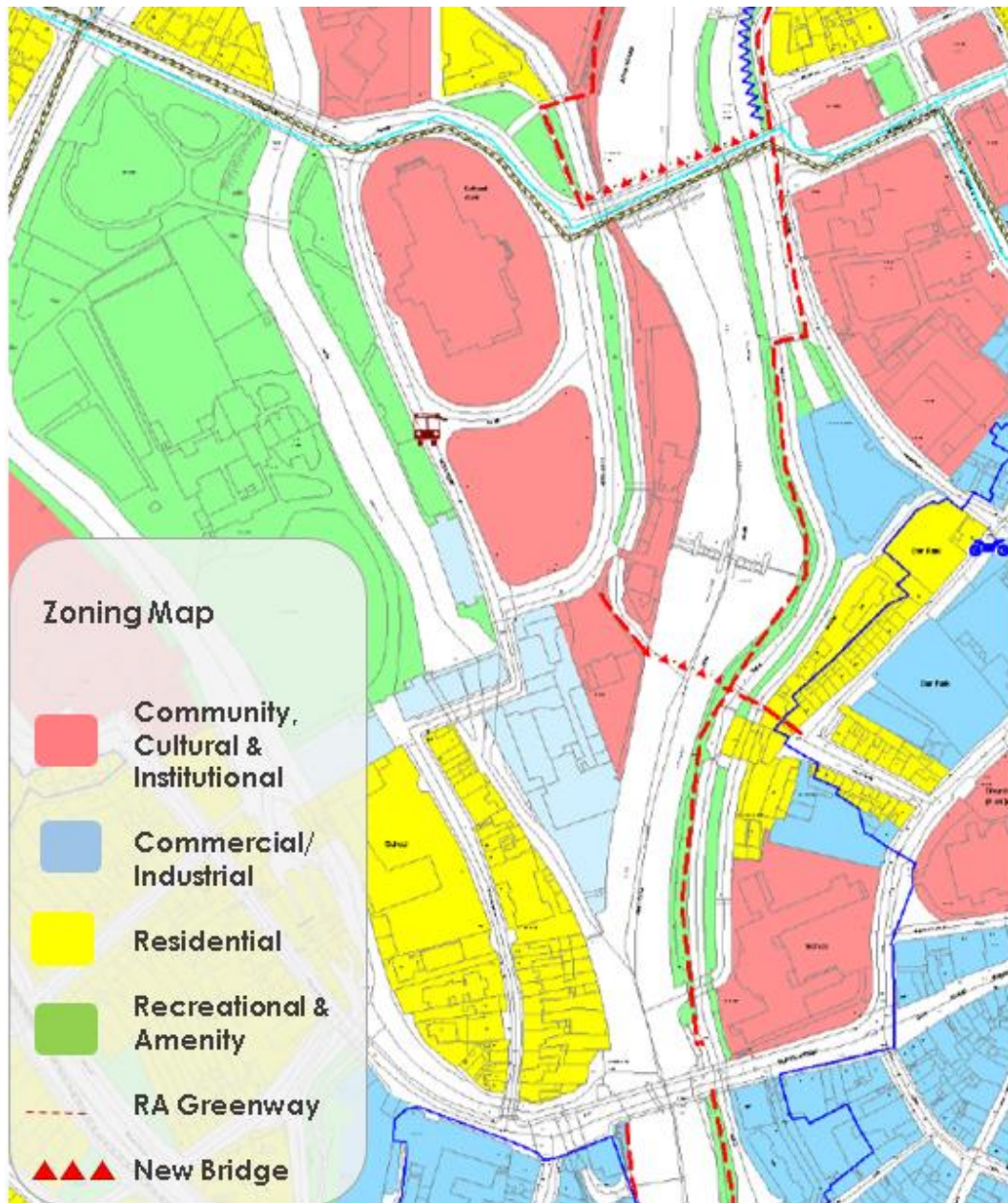


Figure 12: Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 Zoning Designations

Table 4: Zoning Objectives

Zoning Objective and Description	Permitted/Compatible Uses and Site Specific Objectives
<p>Institutional and Community:</p> <p><i>To provide for and facilitate the sustainable development of community, cultural and institutional uses and development of infrastructure for the benefit of the citizens of the city.</i></p>	<p><u>Uses which are compatible with and contribute to the zoning objective, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buildings for the care of the health, safety or welfare of the public • Residential institutions • Educational establishments • Places of public worship • Community and cultural buildings • Burial grounds and associated services • Outdoor recreational use • Accommodation for Travellers • Childcare facilities • Public utilities <p><u>Uses which may contribute to the zoning objectives, dependant on the location and scale of development, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential uses on surplus institutional lands where some of the original open character of institutional lands is retained and a minimum 20% of the total site area is reserved for communal open space. Note: This will not apply to similar development granted and built under previous development plan policies where a higher open space standard was required pre-2005. • Additional uses, which are allied to/or have established supporting relationship with the primary use on lands in the NUIG and GMIT campus such as collaborative activities with industry and student accommodation. <p><u>Site Specific Objective:</u> CF lands at Fisheries Field, (Earls Island). The Council will consider the development of part of these lands for residential and or commercial use of a residential nature, where a significant cultural facility is proposed as part of the development, subject to other planning considerations in particular design standards, traffic safety, environmental suitability and where public access is secured.</p>
<p>Recreational/ Amenity:</p> <p><i>To provide for recreational and amenity uses</i></p>	<p><u>Uses which are compatible with and contribute to the zoning objective, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor recreation <p><u>Uses which may contribute to the zoning objectives, dependant on the location and scale of development, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of buildings of a recreational, cultural or educational nature or car parking areas related to and secondary to the primary use of land/ water body for outdoor recreation • Public utilities • Burial grounds and associated services <p><u>Site Specific Objective:</u> RA lands at NUIG in the vicinity of the Quincentenary Bridge. The Council will consider the strategic requirements to link the northern and southern campus. This will be subject to examination of all potential options, transport, visual and environmental considerations and where it can be demonstrated that the preferred option will have sustainable benefits.</p>
<p>Residential:</p> <p><i>To provide for residential development and for associated</i></p>	<p><u>Uses which are compatible with and contribute to the zoning objective, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential • Residential institution • Outdoor recreational use • Accommodation for Travellers

Zoning Objective and Description	Permitted/Compatible Uses and Site Specific Objectives
<p><i>support development, which will ensure the protection of existing residential amenity and will contribute to sustainable residential neighbourhoods.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local shops, local offices, licensed premises, banks & other local services • Buildings for education • Childcare facilities • Buildings for the care of the health, safety or welfare of the public • Buildings for community, cultural or recreational use <p><u>Uses which may contribute to the zoning objectives, dependant on the location and scale of development, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotels, Guesthouses, Hostels and B&B's • Part conversion or extension of private residence to studio, office, childcare facility or small enterprises by the occupier of the dwelling, at a scale as would not unduly interfere with the primary use of the dwelling • Places of worship • Public utilities <p><u>Site Specific Objective:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R zoned lands at Nun's Island Street (St. Joseph's school site). The design of residential development shall have regard to the streetscape context and shall also contribute to the protection and enhancement of the adjacent waterways.
<p>Commercial/ Industrial:</p> <p><i>To provide for light industry and commercial uses other than those reserved in the City Centre zone</i></p>	<p><u>Uses which are compatible with and contribute to the zoning objective, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warehousing/Storage • Retail of a type and of a scale appropriate to the function and character of the area • Specialist offices • Offices of a type and of a scale appropriate to the function and character of the area • Light Industry • Accommodation for Travellers • Childcare facilities • Community and cultural facilities <p><u>Uses which may contribute to the zoning objectives, dependant on the CI location and scale of development, for example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General industry (small scale) • Service retailing • Residential content of a scale that would not unduly interfere with the primary use of the land for CI purposes and would accord with the principles of sustainable neighbourhoods outlined in Chapter 2 • Offices • Car parks (including heavy vehicle parks) • Waste management facility • Public transportation facility • Public utilities • Outdoor recreation • Commercial leisure/indoor recreation • Places of worship <p><u>Site Specific Objective:</u></p> <p>CI zoned lands on Shantalla Road, Nun's Island Street, and on the former Connaught Laundry Site. Residential development on the full extent of these CI zoned sites will be considered. The density of any residential development on these sites will have regard to the surrounding context.</p>

6.2.2 Development Management Standards

Section 11 (Part B) of the adopted *Galway City Development Plan* sets out Development Management Standards for each zoning designation.

City Centre Residential Areas

Development Management Standards for residential development in the City Centre Areas are set out in section 11.3.4. Key design issues include:

As per standards for Outer Suburbs except:

- 11.3.4 (a) General: New commercial development will not normally be permitted in residentially zoned land in the city centre.
- 11.3.4 (b) Open Space: When residential content is proposed in commercial developments in the city centre an area the equivalent of 30% of the gross floor area of residential content shall be provided as open space except in certain circumstances where the established form and layout would deem compliance with this standard inappropriate.
- 11.3.4 (c) Bin Storage: Adequate storage for waste disposal shall be provided on site.
- 11.3.4 (d) Car Parking Standard: Maximum 1 car parking space per dwelling:
For new developments in the city centre residential areas where a reduction in car parking standards is considered acceptable by the Council on grounds of urban design or sustainability, a transport contribution will be levied in lieu of on-site parking spaces.

Commercial and Industry

Development Management Standards for Commercial/Industrial are set out in section 11.9.1. Key design issues include:

- Maximum Site Coverage: 0.80
- Maximum Plot Ratio: 1.25
- Open Space Requirements: 5% of the total area of the site and 50% of the gross floor area of residential content where a residential content is proposed.
- Lands zoned RA or G shall not be included as part of the open space requirement for development on commercial or industrial lands.
- Maximum densities shall only be attainable under optimum site conditions having regard to criteria such as height, open space and protection of amenities.
- In the case of infill development in an existing terrace or street, it may be necessary to have a higher plot ratio in order to maintain a uniform fenestration and parapet alignment or to obtain greater height for important urban design reasons. In such circumstances, the Council may allow an increased plot ratio.
- Developments shall be required to provide an element of open space which would include a landscaping scheme for the site having regard to screening of boundaries and vehicle parking areas and to the visual appearance of the site, in particular the area between the front building line and the front boundaries.

6.3 Galway Transportation Strategy

Galway City Council & Galway County Council, in partnership with the National Transport Authority, have developed the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS), an Integrated Transport Strategy for Galway City & Environs. The GTS sets out a series of actions and measures, covering infrastructural, operational and policy elements to be implemented in Galway over the next 20 years and sets out a framework to deliver the projects in a phased manner.

To address these problems, Galway City Council's strategic objectives for transport are:

- to promote and encourage sustainable transport;
- to manage the traffic in a way which maximises mobility and safe movement; and
- to maintain and develop/upgrade Infrastructure.

The GTS identifies University Road (which forms the study area’s northern boundary), as part of the ‘Cross City Link’. This link consists of a central corridor traversing the core city centre area which will be restricted to use by public transport vehicles, pedestrian, cyclists and local access only. The GTS also identifies a number of measures to improve the public realm and pedestrian accessibility in the study area, including a proposed new pedestrian bridge adjacent to the Salmon Weir Bridge.

6.4 Other Policy Considerations

6.4.1 Living Cities Initiative

The Living City Initiative focuses on the regeneration of retail and commercial districts and encouraging people to live in the historic centres of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford. The aim of the Living City initiative is to bring life back into the heart of the relevant cities by offering tax relief for qualifying expenditure incurred on the refurbishment or conversion of certain buildings where conditions are met.

The designated Special Regeneration Area in Galway City is outlined below in Figure 13.

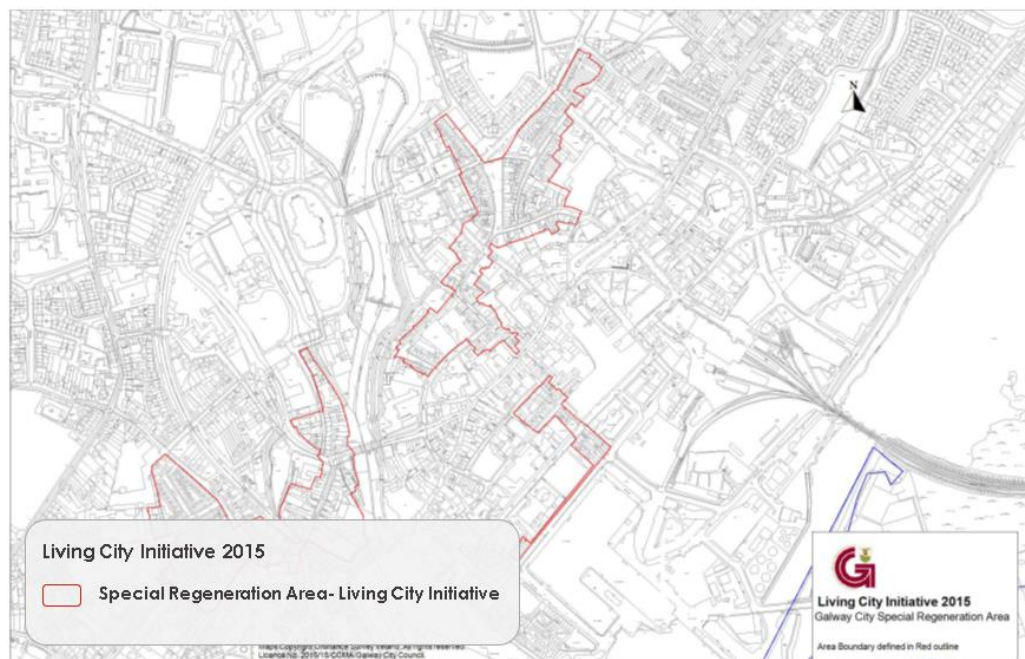


Figure 13: Special Regeneration Area- Living City Initiative

Residential element of the initiative

- The residential element of the Living City initiative provides for an income tax deduction for qualifying expenditure incurred on the refurbishment or conversion of a building for use as a dwelling over a ten-year period.
- The building must have been constructed before 1915 and be located in a Special Regeneration Area of the city in question.
- The property must be occupied by the claimant as his / her sole or main residence in order to avail of the income tax relief.

Commercial element of the initiative

- The commercial element of the Living City initiative provides for capital allowances over a seven-year period in respect of qualifying expenditure incurred on the refurbishment or conversion of a property located in a Special Regeneration Area for use for the purpose of retailing goods or the provision of services within the State.

- The amount of tax relief available under the commercial element of the initiative is effectively capped at €200,000 for any individual project.

7 PLANNING HISTORY

A review of GCC's Planning Register shows that there have been a number of applications lodged within the defined Study Area boundary.

A detailed summary of the relevant planning history is provided in tabular format in Appendix 3.

8 KEY PLANNING MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED

Remit for Preparing a Masterplan

The Nun's Island area of Galway City has been identified in the adopted Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 as a potential regeneration area within the city centre. Policy 5.1 Enterprise supports the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the area:

"Initiate in conjunction with NUIG, the preparation of a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nuns Island".

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

As a significant landowner in Nun's Island, NUI Galway is leading the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the area, with a view to working in partnership with Galway City Council to develop a cohesive, integrated regeneration proposal for the Nun's Island area, to optimise the potential of this underutilised city centre space and bring a wider scale benefit to the city.

To date, informal discussions have taken place with Galway City Council at senior and departmental level. The opportunity to develop a strategic vision for the area has been received favourably and agreement has been reached to progress the masterplan for the subject lands. There are a significant number of other stakeholders with an interest in the proposed masterplan area. Initial expressions of interest in the lands have been received from several private and public bodies, interesting in pursuing a range of civic, enterprise, educational, cultural and recreational uses. In addition, existing landowner and residents of Nun's Island will need to be provided with an opportunity to inform and shape the strategic vision for the area and be kept informed as the masterplan unfolds.

National Planning Policy Framework

- National and Regional Planning Policy Context
- Draft National Planning Framework
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022
- Rebuilding Ireland
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Guidance for Planning Authorities on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (2009)
- Living City Initiative

Local Planning Policy Context- **Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023:**

- *Policy 5.1 Enterprise:* Initiate in conjunction with NUIG, the preparation of a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nuns Island.
- Zoning Objectives: Various zoning objectives on site (Institutional and Community; Recreational and Amenity; Residential; Commercial/ Industrial).
- Site Specific objectives applicable- refer to Table 4 above.
- Development Management Standards (e.g. density, car parking, open space etc.)

Relevant Planning History

- See attached Appendix 3

Key Cultural Heritage and Environmental Constraints

- 14 no. Protected Structures
- 7 no. National Monuments within the vicinity of the site
- Lough Corrib SAC- Qualifying interests; requirement for Appropriate Assessment Screening; Appropriate mitigation measures will be required

Strengths/Opportunities

- The Nun’s Island area is identified in the *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023* as a potential regeneration area. **Policy 5.1** supports a joint initiative between NUI Galway and Galway City Council to prepare a masterplan for the regeneration of lands and buildings at Nuns Island.
- Major route and Gateway to City Centre - (transition between the core city centre and the NUI Galway campus, in addition to being in close proximity to University College Hospital, Galway)
- Unique setting on River Corrib
- Well established network of waterways
- Rich architectural and archaeological heritage
- Significant landowners (e.g. NUI Galway and Galway City Council) with potential to assemble development sites
- Good public transport links, including a number of city centre bus routes, private tourist coach services and bike docking stations
- Underutilised/vacant buildings with potential to bring a wider scale benefit to the city
- University Road is a designated ‘Cross City Link’ (Galway Transport Strategy)
- Potential to improve pedestrian links over the River Corrib
- Key opportunity to provide enabling infrastructure to facilitate the future regeneration of the study area
- Opportunity to adapt/redevelop vacant buildings with ‘green’/sustainable building technology

Challenges/Constraints

- Poor public realm environment and lack of pedestrian crossing points
- Prevalence of hard landscaping (particularly around Galway Cathedral)
- Area is dominated by private car use
- Constrained road/pedestrian network
- Existing built development turns its back to the river
- Ability to develop a shared vision (i.e. large number of stakeholders involved)
- Adjacent to Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation
- The area contains several Protected Structures and National Monuments
- Located within Zone of Archaeological Potential

9 CONCLUSION

A number of national government policy and legislative changes have recently been adopted to promote urban regeneration in the form of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015* and the *Construction 2020* and *Rebuilding Ireland* policy documents. As a significant landowner in Nun's Island, NUI Galway is leading the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the area, with a view to working in partnership with Galway City Council to create a cohesive, integrated regeneration proposal for the Nun's Island area. As a preliminary step in the masterplan development process, NUI Galway have commissioned this Planning and Environmental Scoping Study to inform the development aspirations for the subject lands in Nun's Island.

This Scoping Study has identified a number of challenges and constraints which the proposed masterplan will need to address at the outset. These challenges include the existing poor public realm environment and lack of pedestrian crossing points, the dominance of surface car parking and the constrained road/pedestrian network. There are also a number of cultural heritage and environmental designations which the proposed masterplan will have to give due consideration to. Notwithstanding the site constraints, the proposed masterplan also present an unprecedented opportunity to develop an ambitious, cohesive vision for the subject lands which optimise the potential of this underutilised city centre space and bring a wider scale benefit to the city. The proposed masterplan has the opportunity to optimise the site's unique setting on River Corrib and canal network and provides a strategic opportunity to provide enabling infrastructure to facilitate the future regeneration of the study area.

Stakeholder and community engagement will need to form an integral part of the masterplan development process. There are a significant number of stakeholders with an interest in the proposed masterplan area. Neighbours and residents of Nun's Island will need to be provided with an opportunity to inform and shape the strategic vision for the area and be kept informed as the masterplan unfolds.

Appendix 1

A map of NUI Galway owned buildings within the study area

Appendix 2

Photographic Survey of Study Area

Appendix 3

Planning History of Lands within the Defined Study Area