

# LOUGHREA LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

Loughrea Local Area Plan  
2024 – 2030



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council



# LOUGHREA LOCAL AREA PLAN 2024-2030

## LOUGHREA LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview of LTP

### 1.1.1 Galway Transport Support Programme

SYSTRA Ltd has been engaged by Galway County Council (GCC) to provide a range of Transport Support for the County. These include the following workstreams:

- 1) County Level Transport Modelling Assessment.
- 2) County Galway Walking & Cycling Strategy.
- 3) Local Transport Plans (LTPs) for four settlements: Athenry; Gort; Loughrea; and Oranmore/Garraun. As part of a separate contract with SYSTRA Ltd. an LTP has also been prepared for Tuam.
- 4) Community Transport Studies (CTSs) for six settlements: Clifden; Headford; Kinvara; Oughterard; Portumna; and Maigh Cuilinn.
- 5) Cycling and Walking Sub-Plans for:
  - The four LTPs and six CTSs settlements listed above in items 3 and 4.
  - Twelve additional settlements:
    - Small Growth Settlements x six: An Spidéal; An Cheathrú Rua; Ballygar; Dunmore; Glenamaddy; and Moylough.
    - Rural Settlements x six: Carna; Clarinbridge; Clonbur; Craughwell; Miltown; and Mountbellow.

These Studies (known as the Galway Transport Support Programme) will guide future transport investment, setting out the County's Walking & Cycling Strategy as well as each settlement's transport strategy for the period to 2028, but also looking beyond to 2040.

### 1.1.2 Loughrea Local Transport Plan

As part of the Galway County Support Programme, SYSTRA is developing a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Loughrea and its immediate environs. The key purpose of the LTP is to guide the town's future transport and mobility needs, taking into account the transport demand arising from existing and projected development both within the study area and the wider area of influence.

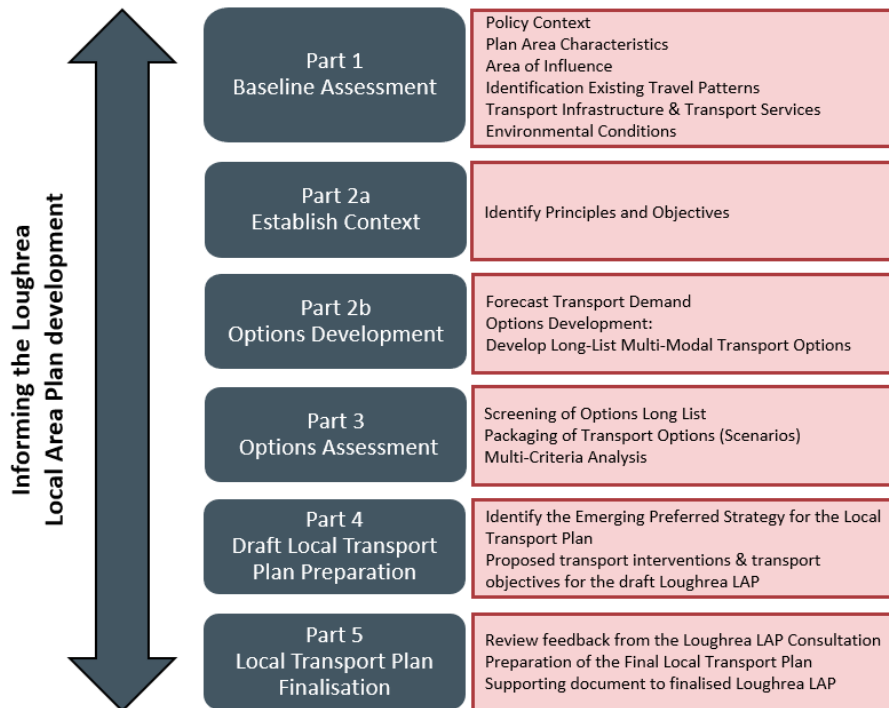
It is one of a number of complementary assessment processes which will be used in the development of the upcoming Loughrea LAP that is currently being prepared by the council. This will help integrate local land use with transport policy with the goal of enhancing quality of life while improving the local environment and supporting sustainable development. The aim of the LTP is to provide a long-term vision for sustainable mobility in Loughrea, creating an integrated transport system across all modes that is accessible to all.

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## 1.2 Study Methodology

The methodology for developing the Loughrea LTP follows guidelines set out in TII/NTA's 'Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes – December 2018'<sup>1</sup>, as illustrated below:

Figure 1. Loughrea LTP Methodology



This report covers parts 1-4 of the ABTA methodology, and provides an overview of all tasks undertaken to derive the preferred strategy for the Loughrea Local Transport Plan (LTP). The preferred strategy will feed transport interventions and objectives into the Loughrea LAP for public consultation. Feedback from the consultation process will then be used to update and inform the finalised LTP for the Loughrea study area.

## 1.3 Report Structure

The Loughrea LTP report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides an overview of existing local polices, plans and guidelines that are relevant to the study area. Background international, national, regional and county policies, plans and guidance can be found in Appendix A: Galway Policy Context Report;
- **Section 3** gives an overview of the Baseline Assessment phase of the ABTA, including a summary of the area characteristics, existing travel patterns and transport conditions;

<sup>1</sup> Source: [https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Area\\_Based\\_Transport\\_Assessment\\_LTP.pdf](https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Area_Based_Transport_Assessment_LTP.pdf)

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- **Section 4** examines the objectives for the LTP which have been determined from consideration of policy, transport baseline and demand information;
- **Section 5** outlines the process for developing and assessing the long-list of transport options to overcome existing constraints within the study area and assist in achieving the overall study objectives;
- **Section 6** sets out recommendations with regard to the combination of transport measures which the LTP will seek to promote and implement (with engagement and assistance from other parties such as the NTA where appropriate);
- **Section 7** outlines the monitoring strategy for this LTP; and
- **Section 8** provides a summary and conclusion to the report.

## 2. POLICY CONTEXT

### 2.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides an overview of relevant local polices and plans, along with relevant international and national policies, plans and guidance relevant to the Loughrea Local Transport Plan. The development of the LTP will be shaped by and reflect these policies.

### 2.2 Policy Report

A technical note comprising a policy review of international, national, regional, and county level policies and plans relevant to the studies in the Galway Transport Support Programme has been compiled. This note will be used as a reference for the LTP development. An overview of the policies, plans and guidance documents reviewed for this note is presented in the table below. More detail can be found in Appendix A: Galway Policy Context Report.

**Table 1. Background Planning and Policy Documents**

International Policy	
○	European Union Green Deal (European Commission, 2020) and Fit For 55 Package (European Commission, 2021)
○	UN Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities (2019)
National Policy	
○	Project Ireland 2040 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ National Planning Framework (NPF)</li> <li>○ National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP)</li> </ul>
○	National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland 2021 (NIFTI)
○	Climate Action Plan 2023 (2022)
○	National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)
○	Our Journey Towards Vision Zero: Road Safety Strategy 2021 – 2030
○	Five Cities Demand Management Study (2021)
○	National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2021
○	Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022
○	Transport – Climate Change Sectoral Adaption Plan (2019)
○	Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
○	Irish Rail Strategy 2027 (2021)
○	Travelling in a Woman’s Shoes (2020)
○	Get Ireland Walking
○	Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2019 – 2025 (2019)
○	Healthy Ireland: National Physical Activity Plan (2019)
○	Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021 – 2024 (2021)
○	Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland (2021)

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National Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)<sup>2</sup> (2019)</li> <li>○ Permeability Best Practice Guide (2015)</li> <li>○ Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool for Roads and Streets</li> <li>○ National Cycle Manual</li> <li>○ Traffic Management Guidelines Manual (2019)</li> <li>○ Greenways Guidelines &amp; Rural Cycleway Design (Offline and Greenways)</li> <li>○ TII/NTA Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes (2018) &amp; ABTA How to Guide, Pilot Methodology (2021)</li> <li>○ Safe to School: An Ideas Document for Safe Access to School (2020)</li> <li>○ NTA Safe Routes to School Design Guide (2022)</li> </ul>
National Consultations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan</li> <li>○ TII National Cycle Network</li> <li>○ TII National Roads Strategy</li> </ul>
Regional Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Northern &amp; Western Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032 (2020)</li> <li>○ Galway Transport Strategy (2017)</li> <li>○ N6 Galway City Ring Road Project</li> <li>○ Western Rail Corridor Financial and Economic Appraisal (2020)</li> <li>○ JASPERS Project Screening Note: Western Rail Corridor Phase 2/3 (2020)</li> </ul>
County Policy and Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028</li> <li>○ Galway County Transport and Planning Study (GCTPS) (2021)</li> <li>○ Galway County Walking &amp; Cycling Strategy (2013)</li> <li>○ County Galway Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024 (2019)</li> <li>○ Galway City and County Age Friendly Programme 2014 – 2019</li> <li>○ Galway County Integration &amp; Diversity Strategy 2013- 2017</li> </ul>

### 2.2.1 Active Travel Advice Note: Rapid Build Active Travel Facilities (NTA, 2023)

In response to rising construction costs and the Climate Action Plan (CAP) requirement for 1,000km of new active travel infrastructure to be built by 2025, the NTA issued an Active Travel Advice Note in February 2023 to local authorities concerning Rapid Build Facilities. This note outlines that cost-

<sup>2</sup> Works to national roads in urban areas are required to adhere to TII Publications (Standards) as well as DMURS. The TII Publication 'The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads' (TII Publications DN-GEO-03084) outlines design standards to be applied to national roads and national road junctions. A Design Report is required for works to national roads in accordance with TII Publications DN-GEO-03030 (Design Phase Procedure for Road Safety Improvement Schemes, Urban Renewal Schemes and Local Improvement Schemes).

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effective rapid build construction approaches, including road space reallocation, are now required as initial options to be considered when planning for new active travel infrastructure.

Rapid build active travel facilities are schemes that utilise cost-effective measures to deliver walking and cycling infrastructure quicker than traditional (full build) construction methods. They do not typically involve major construction works such as full road reconstruction or significant changes to drainage systems or relocation of utilities, however they may involve changes to kerb lines and minor drainage works. The works will also be typically within the boundaries of the existing roadway which can simplify the planning process, with positive impacts on project programme and delivery.

Rapid Build Schemes do not necessarily require bollards, although utilising this type of infrastructure to secure road space for walking and cycling can be a useful interim measure. There are design options available for rapid build projects which use robust materials with a quality finish, resulting in schemes that can remain in place over multiple years.

## 2.3 Local Policy and Plans for Loughrea

### 2.3.1 Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Galway County Development Plan (CDP) defines Loughrea as a self-sustaining town with a high level of population growth (9.76% from 2011-2016). It is acknowledged that there is a limited employment base within the town, with its residents reliant on other areas for employment. The growth strategy for Loughrea is to consolidate and continue to support expansion of the employment base. In addition, residential development will be facilitated that will support sustainable growth.

### 2.3.2 Loughrea Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030

The Loughrea Local Area Plan 2024-2030 (LAP) states its vision as:

**“Loughrea, a self-sustaining town which will continue to grow as a sustainable, vibrant and inclusive community, while supporting the expansion of its self as an innovation growth centre within the County. Continued investment in protecting and enhancing the towns attractive medieval character and natural environment whilst delivering social infrastructure so communities can thrive. The town's growth shall develop in a sustainable manner using the sequential approach, to ensure high levels of connectivity and permeability throughout Loughrea, which will, in turn facilitate the creation of a healthy, safe and age friendly community.”**

The LAP document lists a number of strategic aims relevant to the Local Transport Plan, including:

- Secure the delivery of compact growth with critical mass in a consolidated plan area;
- Support investment in regeneration and other town centre improvement works to maintain Loughrea as an attractive place to live, work and visit;
- Provide future residential and employment development in Loughrea with supporting services and infrastructure as appropriate, including retail, community and amenity areas; and

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- Encourage the promotion of sustainable mobility, including walking and cycling, in accordance with the aspirations of the LTP and support the continued provision of investment in public transport;

Among the key considerations in developing the LAP was that of the transport network: “The location of Loughrea, being at the centre of several national regional and local routes, enables traffic congestion to form in the town centre, especially during peak-traffic times”. A specific reference to Universal Access in the design of future transport infrastructure is included in the LAP document.

In reference to the town centre, GCC will support:

“a vibrant town centre that is a pleasant place for people to live, work and visit. It must be accessible to all, including those with impaired mobility. Sustainable modes of transport will be prioritised in the town centre, with good connectivity to the nearby residential and employment locations”.

Specifically in relation to transport and the role of the LTP, the LAP highlights the GCTPS prepared as part of the GCDP 2022-2028 before outlining the vision for Loughrea’s transport system. The document outlines the need to balance space allocation and the need for “greater emphasis placed on infrastructure in relation to walking, using buggies, wheelchairs or cycling”. The rebalancing of the transport system is to take place in tandem with land use planning, through the development within the existing town footprint.

### 2.3.2.1 Policy Objectives

To support these strategic aims, a number of Policy Objectives relevant to the LTP are outlined in Section 4 of the LAP. These policy objectives are as follows:

#### LSST 1 Consistency with Core Strategy

Galway County Council will ensure that developments permitted within the plan area are consistent with the zoned land allocations in the Core Strategy and associated provisions of the *Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028*.

#### LSST 5 Residential Development Phasing

Support the development of lands designated as Residential (Phase 1) within the lifetime of the plan, subject to normal planning, access and servicing requirements, and reserve the lands designated as Residential (Phase 2) for the longer-term growth needs of Loughrea.

#### LSST 11 Town Centre Management

Subject to appropriate resources, noting and taking account of the Local Transport Plan, the Council in collaboration with local stakeholders shall prepare town centre management plans for Loughrea. The management plan will consider some or all of the following;

- Connectivity of the Town Centre including upgrading of paving, consideration of the feasibility of identified pedestrianised lanes and routes through the Town;
- Upgrade and improvement of street furniture;

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- A co-ordinated vehicular access arrangement, which shall be in consultation and agreement with the Road Design Section of GCC;
- Consistent sustained signage design policy within the Town Centre;
- Provision of appropriate quality landscaping and functional public spaces;
- Provide footpath and cycling links to the Town Centre; and,
- Car parking management.

#### **LSST 14 Social Inclusion and Universal Design and Access**

- a) It is the Policy Objective of Galway County Council to support the principles of social inclusion and universal design and access, to ensure that all individuals have access to goods, services and buildings to assist them to participate in and contribute to all aspects of a vibrant life within Loughrea
- b) Ensure that housing developments, community facilities, public spaces, public roads, public footpaths and transport services give due consideration to the needs of disabled or mobility impaired people and the requirements of the *Disability Act 2005*, the Council's *Disability Action Plan 2007-2015* (and any updates to this document), the *Traffic Management Guidelines 2003*, the *Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and National Disability Authority (NDA) advice notes titled Access: Improving the Accessibility to Historic Buildings and Places 2011* (and any subsequent reviews/updates to these documents).

#### **LSST 23 Strategic Sites in Loughrea**

It is a Policy Objective of the Council to establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites in Loughrea so that brownfield land re-use can be managed and co-ordinated across multiple stakeholders as part of an active land management process.

#### **LSST 25 Industrial**

Promote the sustainable development of industrial and industrial related uses, including manufacturing, processing of materials, warehousing and distribution on suitable lands, with adequate services and facilities and a high level of access to the major road networks and public transport facilities.

#### **LSST 53 Local Transport Plan**

Support the implementation of the Local Transport Plan in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Including complying with the measures outlined in relation to this Policy Objective in Table 9.1 of the SEA Environmental Report and Table 5.1 of the AA Natura Impact Report.

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### **LSST 54 Transportation Infrastructure**

Facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential transportation infrastructure. This shall include the reservation of lands to facilitate public roads, footpaths, cycle ways, bus stops and landscaping together with any necessary associated works, as appropriate.

### **LSST 55 Sustainable Transportation**

Facilitate any Smarter Travel initiatives that will improve sustainable transportation within the Plan Area and facilitate sustainable transportation options including public transportation, rail freight, electric vehicles rentals, car clubs, public bike schemes, cycle parking as appropriate.

### **LSST 56 Pedestrian and Cycle Network**

Facilitate the improvement of the pedestrian and cycling environment and network so that it is safe and accessible to all, through the provision of the necessary infrastructure. New development shall promote and prioritise walking and cycling, shall be permeable, adequately linked and connected to neighbouring areas, the town centre, recreational, educational, residential and employment destinations and shall adhere to the principles contained within the national policy document Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 - 2020 and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013), as updated in 2019 and NTA document Permeability: Best Practice Guide.

### **LSST 57 The Walk**

Protect and enhance the ‘The Walk’ to the rear of the main street, including the restriction of access to ‘The Walk’ to pedestrians and ensure that new development in close vicinity to the moat respects its character and setting.

### **LSST 58 Pedestrian Crossings**

Facilitate the provision of pedestrian crossings adjacent to schools and at other appropriate locations within the Plan Area, as required.

### **LSST 59 Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) and Road Safety Audits (RSA)**

Require all significant development proposals to be accompanied by a Road Safety Audit and Traffic & Transport Assessment carried out by suitably competent consultants, which are assessed in association with their cumulative impact with neighbouring developments on the road network, in accordance with the requirements contained within the TII’s *Traffic & Transport Assessment Guidelines (PE-PDV-02045) 2014* (including any updated/superseding document) and ‘*Road Safety Audit*’ (GE-STY-01024) December 2017.

### **LSST 60 Preservation of Routes, Road Upgrades and Infrastructure Provision**

Prohibit development on lands which are reserved for proposed road/street corridors and associated buffers and where development would affect a route, line, level or layout of any proposed new roadway or any junction required between a proposed and existing road.

### **LSST 61 Reservation of Access Points**

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Reserve access points for future development and the development of backlands that may be identified for reservation by the Planning Authority during the plan period, to ensure adequate vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access to backlands, in order to facilitate efficient development of these lands and to ensure connectivity and accessibility to lands with limited road frontage.

### LSST 62 Road Junction Improvements

Continue to carry out road junction improvements where improvements to traffic flow and safety can be achieved, subject to normal planning and environment considerations.

### LSST 63 Climate Change

To implement, through this Local Area Plan Policy Objectives that support and encourage sustainable compact growth and settlement patterns, integrate land use and transportation, and maximise opportunities through development location, form, layout and design to secure climate resilience and reduce carbon dioxide and greenhouse emissions.

Transport related objectives for the town include general measures to promote the use of sustainable transport in place of the private car in the town, such as safe routes to school, bus shelters, and bicycle storage facilities, as well as specific infrastructural objectives:

- Provision and improvement of existing local footpaths throughout the town centre and to provide linkages to existing cycling routes;
- To support the improvement of bus facilities within Loughrea through the provision of bus shelters in the town centre, and additional stops on Dublin Road, Portumna Road, and Athenry Road;
- A new relief road connecting the north-eastern approach road (R446) to the south-eastern approach road (L4213) in the eastern portion of the Plan Area;
- Road improvements, including widening and realignment of the Coarsing field road which links the Portumna Road and the existing N6 Dublin Road; and
- To protect and enhance the capacity and visual amenity of Loughrea Bypass through preventing new accesses onto the route which have not been accommodated in its design, and through facilitating the development of a walking/cycling/amenity corridor along the southern edge of the bypass route.

## 2.4 Summary

- A technical note comprising a policy review of international, national, regional, and county level policies and plans relevant to the studies in the Galway Transport Support Programme has been compiled and is available in Appendix A.
- Loughrea is classified as a self-sustaining town in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, with a high level of population growth.
- The Loughrea Local Area Plan 2012-2022 aims for the town to be a sustainable, self-sufficient, vibrant and socially inclusive key town with development progressing in a way that consolidates around the town centre.

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- Both the County Development Plan and Local Area Plan include objectives to promote the use of sustainable transport in place of the private car in the town including the provision of active travel infrastructure and facilities, appropriate traffic management and compact growth.

### 3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT & TRANSPORT CONDITIONS

This section describes the receiving transport environment in Loughrea, identifying existing opportunities and constraints in the town and its environs.

The baseline assessment includes the following:

- Information relating to residents with a focus on elements which may impact on trip-making, such as age profiles, car ownership and employment;
- Identification of key trip generators (i.e. residential areas) and attractors (employment locations and schools) within the study area which drive trip-making;
- Identification of physical constraints such as topography or other natural features which may impact on travel choices and travel patterns for residents and visitors to the area; and
- An assessment of existing transport services and infrastructure.

#### 3.1 Description of Study Area

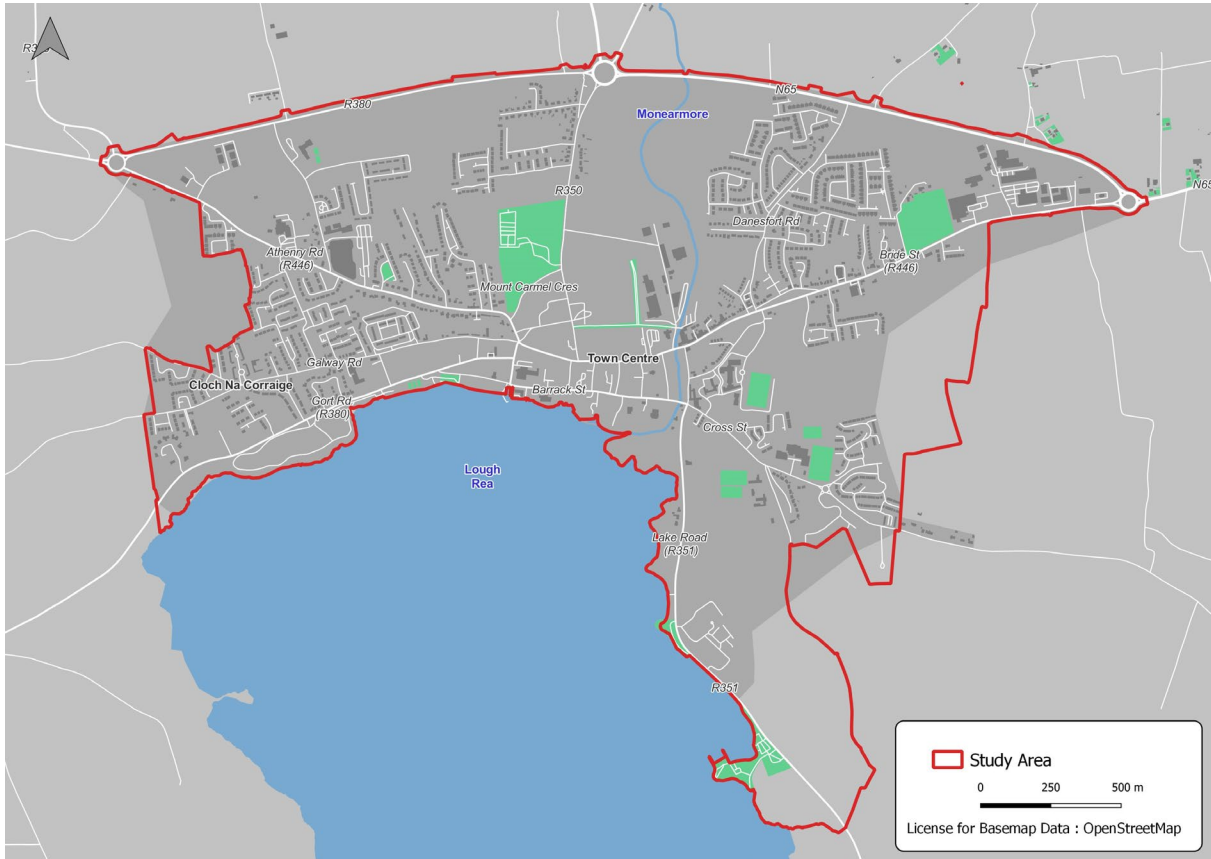
Located approximately 40km south east of Galway City, Loughrea constitutes Galway County’s third largest town with a population of 5,771 as of the 2016 Census. Loughrea hosts 2,169 jobs and is a strategically located urban centre benefitting from a well-established road network. The N65 links Loughrea to the M6 located to the north, with direct onward connections to Galway City and Dublin. The town is served by the regional roads R380 and R446, which link to Oranmore, Portumna, Gort and Ballinasloe.

Loughrea serves a rural hinterland as a market town and is a nodal point for the road network in south east Galway County. It serves a moderate education catchment, with over 1,600 school places in the town. The main attractions in the town are the historic town centre and the Lough Rea waterfront.

The study area boundary for the Loughrea LTP has been identified in collaboration with Galway County Council. This area does not exactly align with the boundaries of Census Small Areas (CSA) within the local area. Therefore, a “best-fit” selection of CSAs has been identified aligned with the study area for the purpose of undertaking baseline analyses. The figure below shows the final study area and CSA selection boundaries established for the Loughrea LTP.

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**Figure 2. Study Area for Loughrea Local Transport Plan**



### 3.1.1 Trip Generators and Attractors

To present the concentration of local trip generators and attractors in Loughrea, maps of the town's distribution of population and employment by 2016 Census Small Area have been generated and are shown below in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4** respectively.

The analysis has been derived from Census 2016 Place of Work, School or College - Census of Anonymised Records (POWSCAR) data. The POWSCAR database includes a range of information on travel patterns for trips to work and school as recorded in the Census. This data was used to identify the total number of destination work trips for each of the Census Small Areas within the Loughrea LTP study area.

### 3.1.2 Population

**Figure 3** illustrates the population density for CSAs within the Loughrea study area, represented as population per square kilometre. The results indicate that the most densely populated areas of Loughrea are the residential estates to the north east, north west and west of the town centre.

Figure 3. Loughrea Population Density

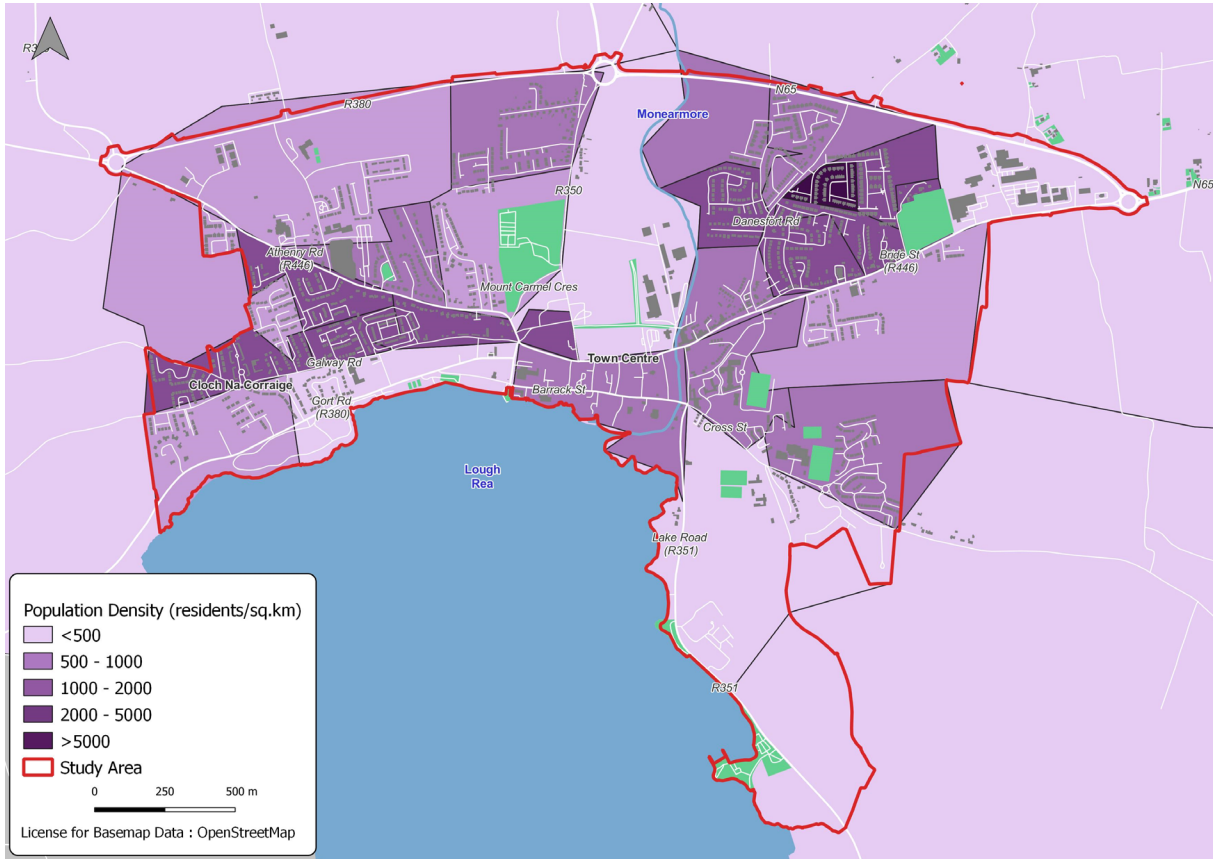
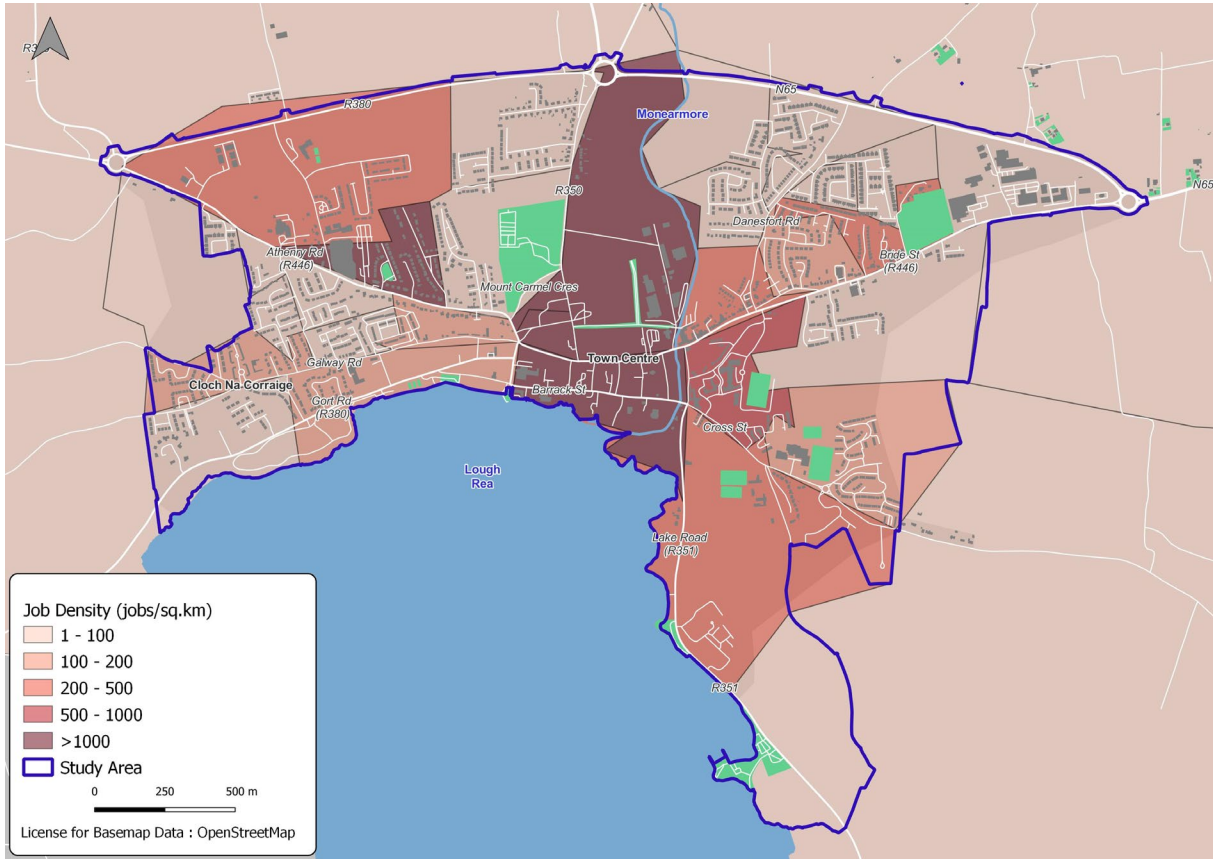


Figure 4 illustrates the employment density for CSAs within the Loughrea study area (represented as jobs per square kilometre). The results indicate that the town centre is the largest attractor of employment trips within the study area. Other key employment destinations in the town include the Loughrea Business & Technology Park and the East Point Business Park, both located on the town’s eastern periphery.

Figure 4. Loughrea Job Density

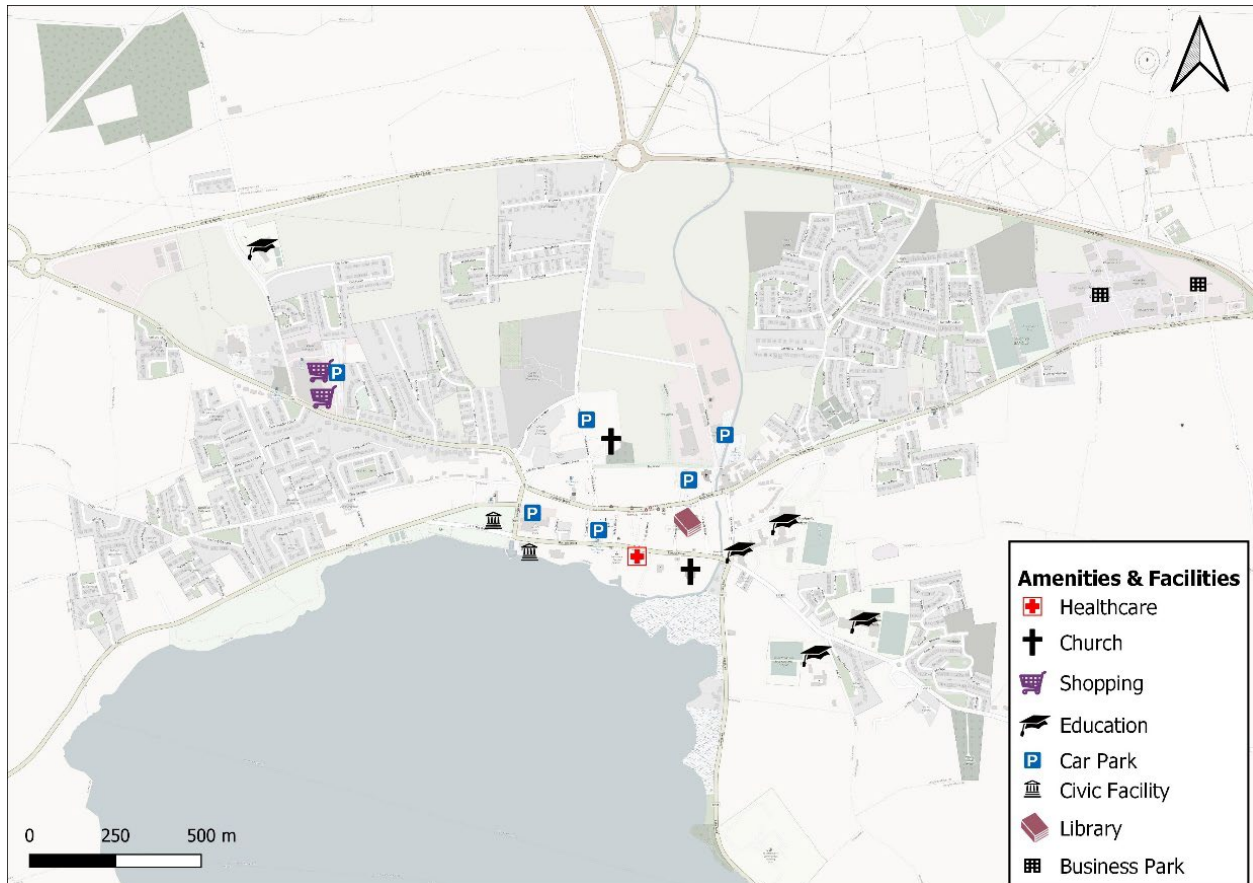


### 3.1.3 Services and Amenities

The location of key services and amenities within Loughrea are presented in **Figure 5** below.



Figure 5. Loughrea Key Services and Amenities



Within Loughrea, there is a clear concentration of services within the town centre, including multiple churches, the town library and medical centre, multiple public car parks as well as the main shopping street.

The majority of the town's education establishments are located to the south east of the town centre, including Scoil Ide Naofa, St Brigids College, and St Brendans National School which are all located on Cross Street, as well as St Raphaels College which is located on Bohercom. Gaelscoil Riabhach is located on Athenry Road to the north west of the town centre.

The Lakeshore Medical Centre is located on Barrack Street, immediately south of the town centre.

Two large supermarkets (McInerney's SuperValu and Aldi) are located to the northwest of the town centre on Athenry Road, with customer parking provided.

The main public car parks in Loughrea are located in close proximity to the town centre. Additional paid public parking facilities are available at Station Road, to the north of the town centre.

The town has two churches which are both located within the town centre. St Brendan's Roman Catholic Cathedral is located on Barrack Street whilst The Abbey is located on Abbey Street, to the north of the town centre. There is a car park located to the north of The Abbey.

Loughrea Business & Technology Park and East Point Business Park are located in the eastern periphery of the town. These areas of employment can be easily accessed from the R446 and N65 routes, via the Fairfield Roundabout.

### 3.2 Demographic Profile

To better understand the profile of residents in the study area, and their travel patterns, this section presents data extracted from the 2016 Census Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) dataset. It summarises information on the proportion of residents travelling to work and school, as well as high level information on age, gender, and car ownership.

#### 3.2.1 Total Population

The Study Area has an estimated population of 5,771 according to the 2016 Census. This represents a population growth of 14% against the population of 5,062 recorded in the previous 2011 Census. This is a higher growth rate relative to the national figure of 3.8%. The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 prescribes a population increase of 9.76% persons for Loughrea during the plan period.

**Table 2** outlines the population size and age profile of Loughrea residents, relative to the equivalent county and national figures. The results indicate that the Loughrea LTP study area has a slightly lower proportion of residents over the age of 65 than Galway County but a slightly higher proportion than the national average. 23.4% of the Loughrea population is under the age of 16, which is slightly higher than the national average and slightly lower than the Galway County average.

**Table 2. Loughrea Population Structure by Age**

LOCATION	POPULATION 2016	0-15 Y.O	16-64 Y.O	65 Y.O
Loughrea	5,771	23.4%	62.7%	13.9%
Galway County	179,390	24.0%	61.4%	14.5%
National	4,761,865	22.4%	64.2%	13.4%

#### 3.2.2 Employment & Education

**Table 3** below outlines the number of employed people and number of jobs within the study area. The number of jobs in Loughrea is lower than the number of employed people, resulting in a Job Attraction/Employed ratio of 0.9. This compares to a ratio of 1.2 for Galway City and 0.5 for the rest of Galway County. The ratio in the Loughrea study area results in a net flow of employed people leaving the town for work.

**Table 3** also outlines the level of education attraction within Loughrea. With 1,635 students commuting to schools within the study area, compared to 2,169 workers, it shows the prevalence of school trips, indicating that the education facilities located within Loughrea serve a reasonable population catchment outside of the town.

**Table 3. Loughrea Employment Opportunities & Education Attraction**

LOCATION	EMPLOYED RESIDENTS	JOB ATTRACTION OF THE AREA	RATIO (JOB ATT/EMPLOYED)	PUPILS / STUDENTS
Loughrea	2,410	2,169	0.9	1,635
Galway City	34,951	42,062	1.2	25,494
Rest of Galway County	75,116	37,325	0.5	33,068
National	2,006,641	1,468,093	0.73	982,185

### 3.2.3 Car Ownership

The percentage of Loughrea households which reported not owning a car in the 2016 Census is 18.1%, which is 2.5% higher than the national figure of 15.6%. It is noted that this figure is within 5% of the Galway City proportion of 22.6%, which covers a much more densely populated area with a higher degree of public transport infrastructure.

While the majority of households within Loughrea own at least one car, the number of households with no car demonstrates the necessity of providing high quality, accessible transport alternatives to access key services and education and employment opportunities.

**Table 4. Car Ownership**

LOCATION	% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO CAR	% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH 1 CAR	% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH 2+ CARS
Loughrea	18.1%	50.1%	31.8%
Galway City	22.6%	46.8%	30.6%
Galway County	9.4%	38.9%	51.7%
National	15.6%	42.3%	42.1%

### 3.3 Environmental Conditions & Physical Constraints

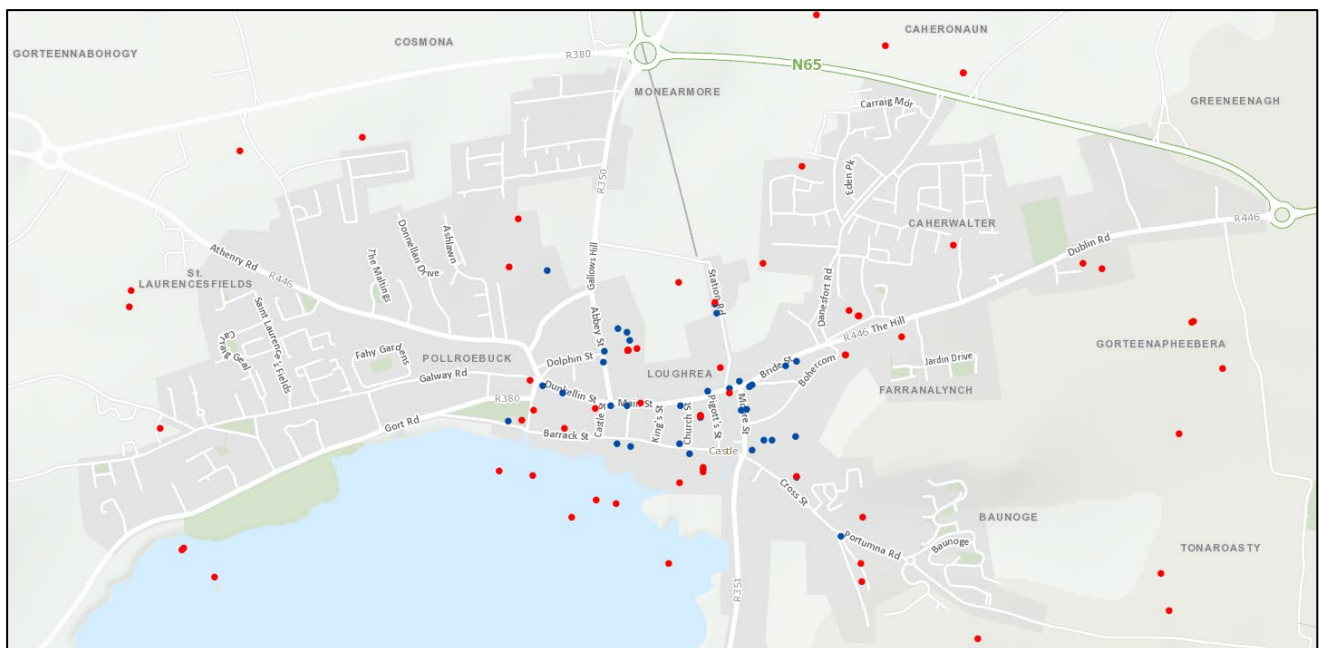
The following environmental conditions are of note within the study area:

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- The topography generally slopes from north east to south west, with a reasonably flat terrain across the town centre, considered beneficial for active travel.
- The St Cleran’s River flows on a general north to south alignment immediately east of the town centre, towards Lough Rea. The river’s alignment is partly covered by buildings as it passes through the town centre.
- A review of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland shows that there are a number of archaeological records for the area. Multiple crannogs (historic artificially built islands) are located within Lough Rea near the shore, as well as a large number of structures within the town centre. The spatial distribution of records is shown in **Figure 6**.

**Figure 6. Sites & Monuments Record, National Inventory of Architectural Heritage – Locations**



### 3.4 Existing Travel Patterns

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

The following section provides an overview of existing travel patterns for residents within the study area based on 2016 Census data, focusing on:

- **Trip Distribution Profile:** Identifying the key destinations and desire lines for travel;
- **Mode Share:** Highlights the proportion of trips undertaken by walk, cycle, public transport and car for employment and education purposes; and
- **Trip Length Distribution:** Outlining the demand for travel at various distance bands for employment trips. This also includes information on the various modes used for different journey distances.

In order to determine the travel pattern for residents, two main Census data sources were used, namely:

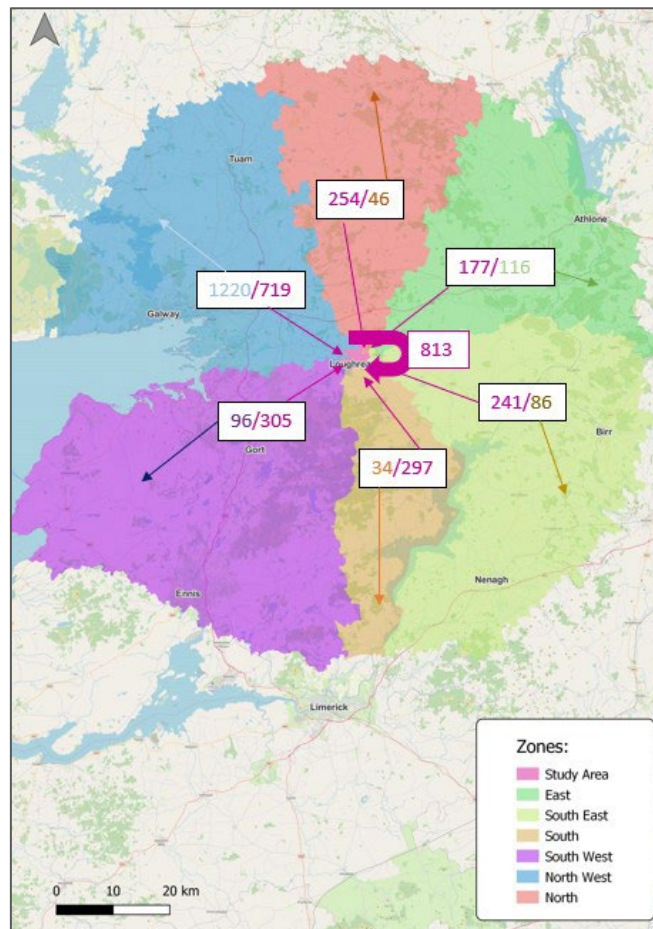
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- **Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS):** provides information on population demographics including details on commuting patterns such as mode used, typical journey times and time of departure; and
- **Place of Work, School or College - Census of Anonymised Records (POWSCAR):** includes a range of information on travel patterns for trips to work and school as recorded in the Census.

### 3.4.2 Trip Distribution Profile

The POWSCAR database was analysed to identify the distribution of employment trips travelling to/from the study area in the AM period. For presentation purposes, areas have been grouped into sectors for the analysis. The results of the sector distribution analysis are illustrated in the figures below.

**Figure 7. Loughrea Employment Trip Distribution**



**Figure 7** shows the trip distribution trips for AM employment trips to and from the study area. There are 813 trips that start and end within the study area, which is 34% of all trips originating in the study area.

The most important external destinations for trips from the study area is the North West sector (1,220 trips). There are 389 trips (314 employment trips and 75 education) from the study to Galway City.

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The most important external origins for trips to the study area are the North West (719 trips), South West (305 trips) and South Sector (297 trips). There are 86 trips (85 employment and one education) to the study from Galway City.

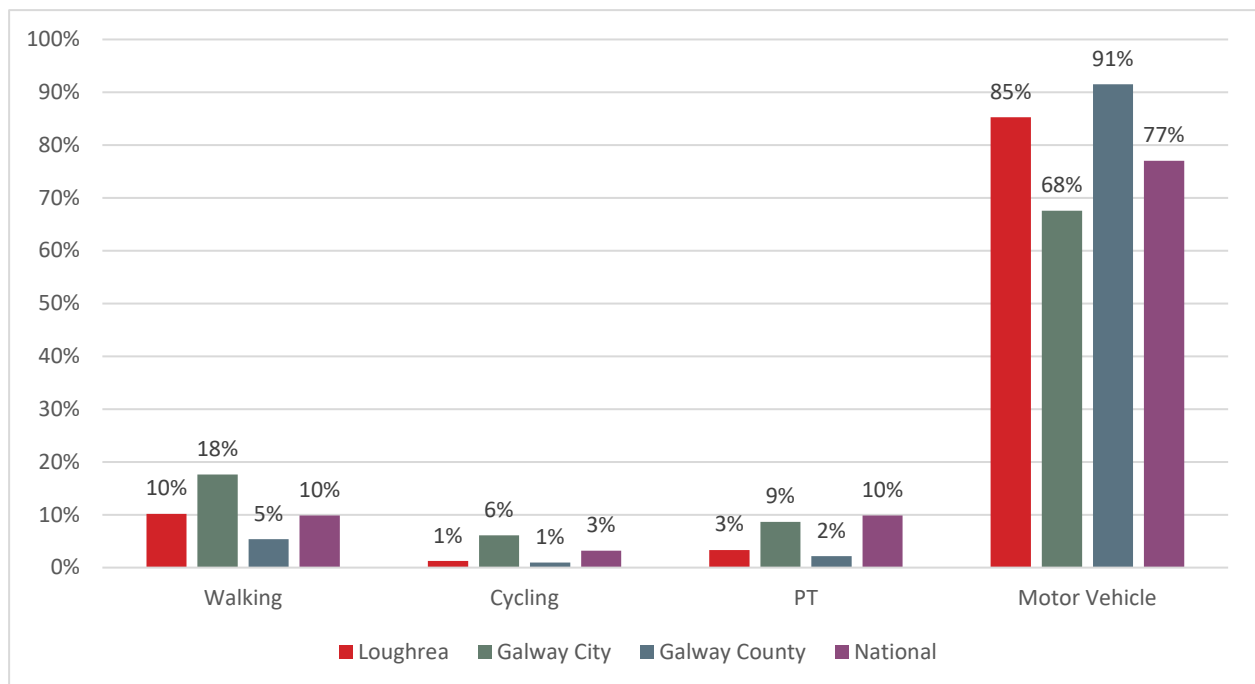
### 3.5 Mode Share

As outlined previously, SAPS data provides information from the census on the typical mode of transport used for travelling to work and education. This data was used to identify the proportion of trips originating within the study which are made by walking, cycling, public transport and car.

#### 3.5.1 Employment Trips

Figure 8 illustrates the mode share for trips to work originating within the study area by walk, cycle, public transport and car (including drivers, passengers, motorcycle/scooters, vans and lorries). A comparison of the study area mode share to the equivalent figures for Galway County, Galway City and nationally is also shown.

Figure 8. Loughrea Employment Mode Share – Origin Trips



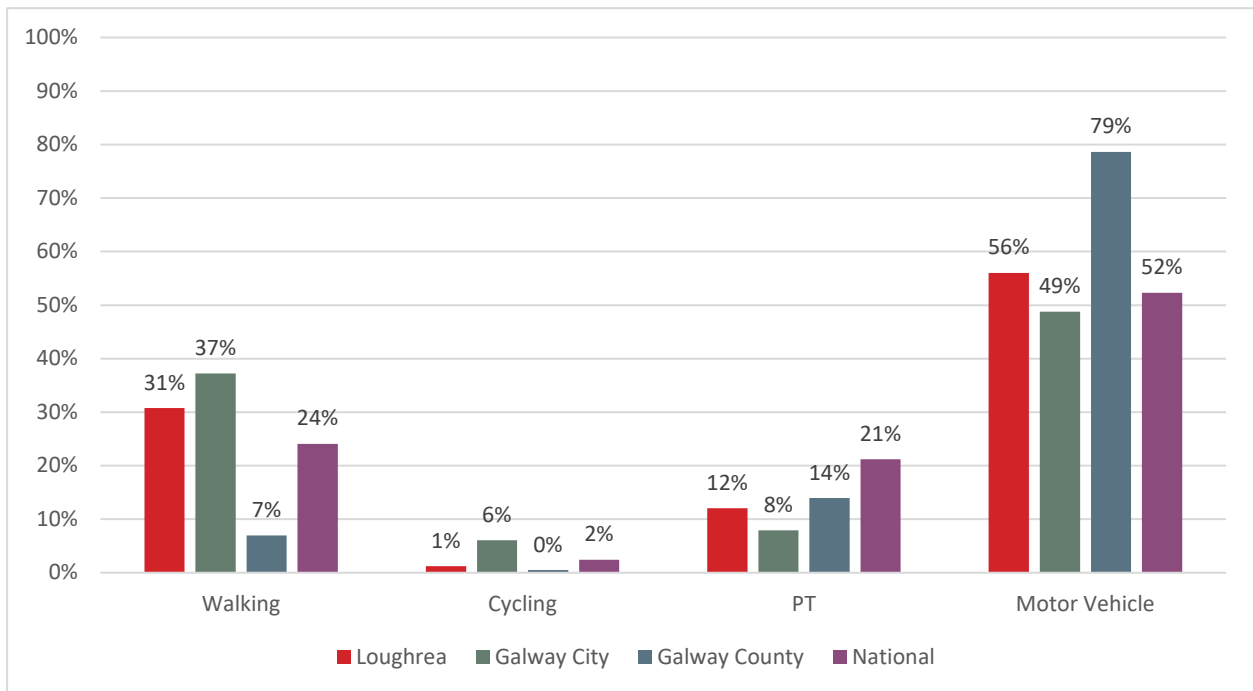
Key findings observed from the mode share data for employment trips in the study area include:

- Approximately 11% of commute trips originating in the study area are undertaken by active modes. Walking trips form the majority of these and are higher than the Galway County and national mode share. Cycling accounts for just 1%, substantially less than the national mode share, and similar to the Galway County mode share.
- Public transport represents 9% of the Loughrea mode share for commute trips, slightly less than the national mode share of 10% and well above the Galway County mode share of 2%.
- The private car dominates the commute mode share for Loughrea at 85%, which is above the national mode share of 77% and below the Galway County mode share of 91%.

### 3.5.2 Education Trips

Figure 9 illustrates the education mode share for trips originating within the study area by walking, cycling, public transport and car.

Figure 9. Loughrea Education Mode Share – Origin Trips



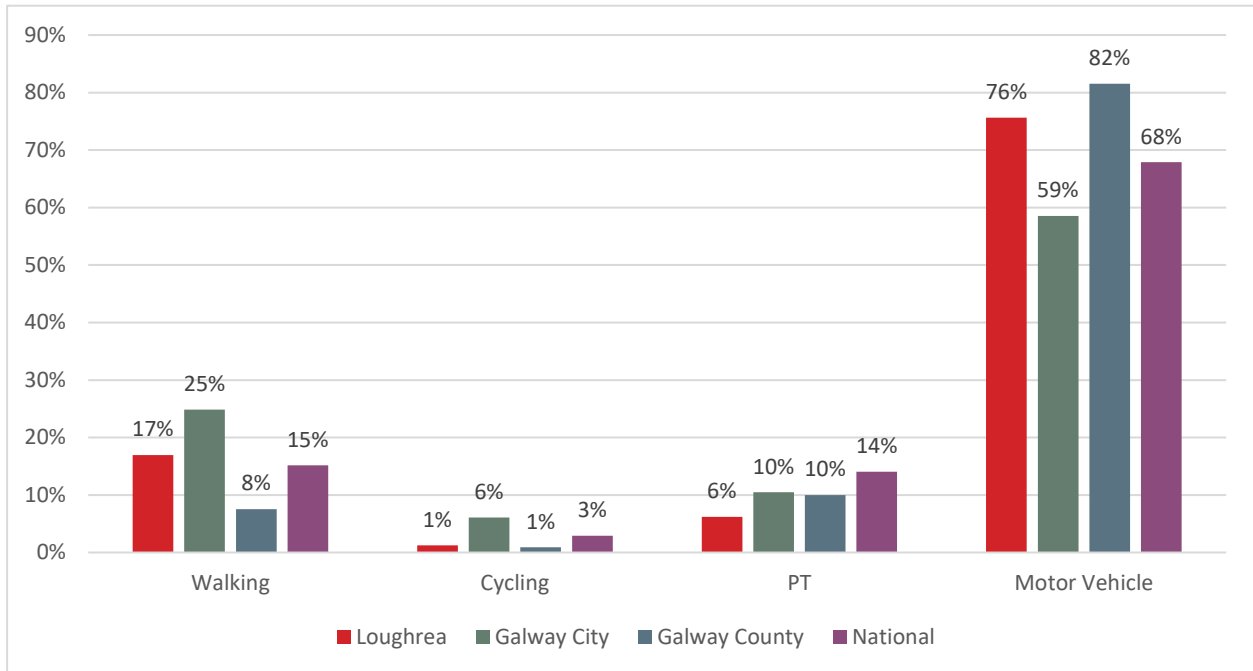
Key findings observed from the mode share data for education trips in the study area include:

- The active mode share for education trips originating in Loughrea is 32%, which is higher than the national mode share of 26% and the Galway County mode share of 7%. The cycle mode share for Loughrea of 1% is slightly below the national mode share of 2%.
- The public transport mode share for education trips originating in Loughrea is 12%, slightly below the Galway County average of 14% and well below the national mode share of 21%.
- The car is the dominant mode of transport for education-related trips, accounting a 56% mode share, substantially below the Galway County mode share of 79% and slightly above the national mode share of 52%.

### 3.5.3 Combined Employment & Education Mode Share

Figure 10 illustrates the cobined mode share for education and employment trips originating within the study area by walking, cycling, public transport and car.

Figure 10. Loughrea Combined Employment & Education Mode Share – Origin Trips



Key findings for combined education and employment trips include:

- The combined Loughrea mode share for active modes is 18%, approximately double the Galway County mode share and the same as the national mode share. The cycle mode share of 1% is approximately the same as the Galway County mode share and below the national mode share of 3%.
- The Loughrea public transport mode share is 6%, which is below the Galway County mode share of 10% and national mode share of 14%.
- Overall, car is still the dominant mode of transport for education and employment trips, accounting for 76% of origin trips from Loughrea. This is above the national mode share of 68% and below the Galway County mode share of 82%.

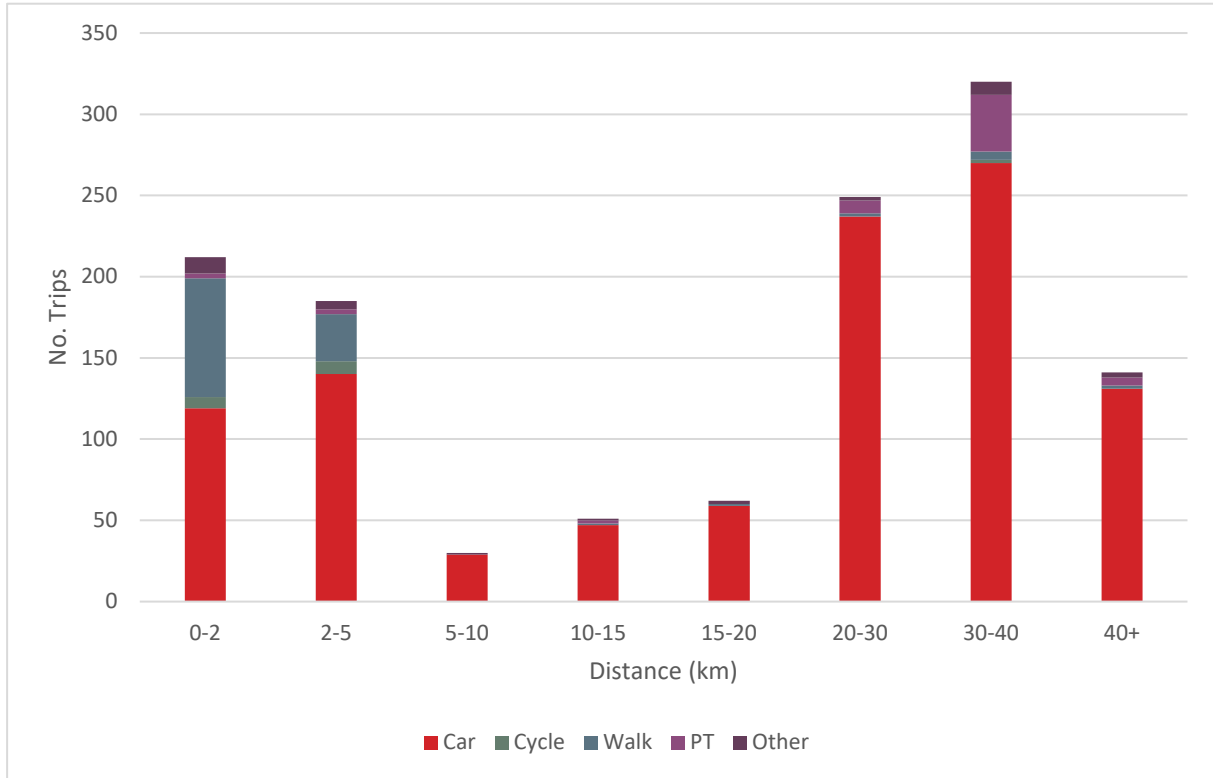
### 3.6 Trip Length Distribution

Analysis was undertaken to determine the trip length distribution by mode for employment and education purposes from 2016 POWSCAR data. This was used to establish the typical trip lengths, and modes used, for journeys by residents of the study area and help identify where opportunities might exist to further support a shift away from the private car and onto sustainable modes.

#### 3.6.1 Employment

Figure 11 below outlines the trip length distribution by mode for all employment trips generated within the study area.

Figure 11. Employment Origin Trip Length Distribution – Loughrea Study Area



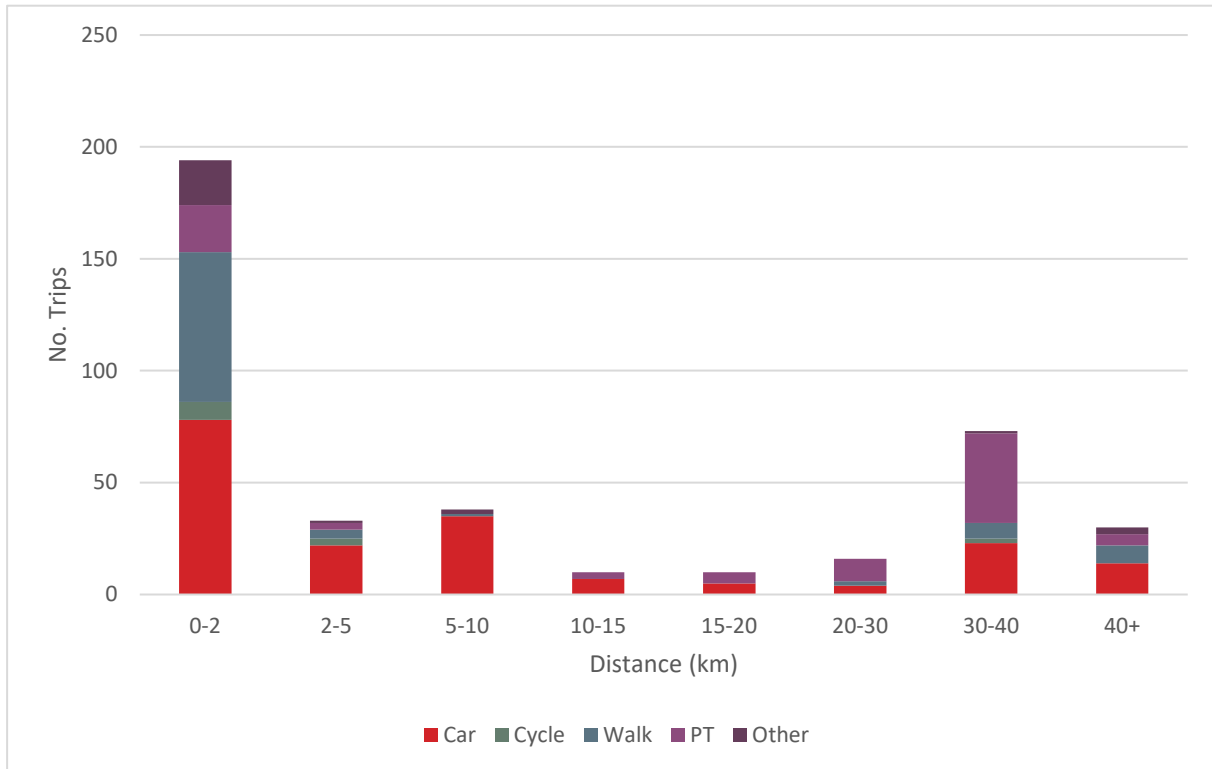
Key findings from this analysis include:

- 38% of commute trips originating in Loughrea are less than 15km in length, with 32% of trips less than 5km.
- Although there is a high level of short employment trips under 2km, the car mode share for this distance category is noticeably high, at 56%.
- Car is the dominant mode of transport for all distance bands, and does not fall below 80% for all distance categories above 5km.

### 3.6.2 Education

Figure 12 outlines the trip length distribution by mode for all education trips generated within the study area.

**Figure 12. Education Origin Trip Length Distribution – Loughrea Study Area**



Key findings from this analysis include:

- 68% of education trips originating in Loughrea are less than 15km in length, with 56% of trips less than 5km.
- Although there is a high level of short education trips under 2km, the car mode share for this distance category is noticeably high, at 40%. For trips under 5km, the mode share is 44%.

### 3.6.3 Summary

There is a general association between trip length and mode choice. For example, at shorter distances the average person may be willing to walk or cycle to access goods, services or employment. However, as trip lengths increase, these modes become less attractive. Similarly, short distance trips by public transport may be unattractive compared to alternative modes as the wait time would be a significant proportion of overall journey time. In terms of distance, trips generally break down into:

- **Short** - generally serviceable by walking or cycling
- **Medium** – generally serviceable by cycling (including eBikes), public transport or car; and
- **Long** – generally serviceable by public transport or car.

The significant proportion of trips in Loughrea under 5km, and particularly under 2km provides an opportunity to shift car trips to active travel given the right package of measures. For trips over 10km, public transport options may be competitive to the car for certain trips patterns.



### 3.7 Access to Education (ATOS Tool)

#### 3.7.1 Introduction to ATOS

ATOS is a measure of how easy it is to access key services and employment by walking and cycling. In developing the ATOS tool, the National Transport Authority (NTA) have followed a methodology established by Transport for London and adapted it to make it more suitable for use outside of large metropolitan areas.

The ATOS tool calculates accessibility to Employment, Primary Education, Post-Primary Education, general medical practitioners (GPs), Food Shopping and Open Spaces using the following data sources:

Table 5. ATOS Data Sources

SERVICE	DATA SOURCES
Employment	Census Workplace Zones
Primary Education	Dept. Education School Lists
Post Primary Education	Dept. Education School Lists
Health (GPs)	GeoDirectory (NACE Q.86.21)
Food Shopping	GeoDirectory (NACE G.47.11)
Open Spaces	Development Plans

Prior to running the calculation, the user specifies criteria for the assessment including the number of services to look for and an acceptable walk/cycle time (e.g. find two primary schools within 15 minute walk). The tool then generates a score for each location within the specified study area (based on 100m grid squares).

The score is calculated based on how travel times to the nearest relevant destinations (for the specific type of service) compare to the average travel time across all locations. This enables any significant geographical differences in accessibility to particular services to be clearly identified, so that in turn the causes of this discrepancy can be investigated.

- **Score A:** Travel times to relevant destinations are more than one standard deviation below the average
- **Score B:** Below the average, but by no more than one standard deviation
- **Score C:** Average or above, but by no more than one standard deviation
- **Score D:** Between one and two standard deviations above the average
- **Score E:** More than two standard deviations above the average.

For employment, the ATOS tool calculates the number of jobs available within a specified journey time by walking and cycling.

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Using ATOS as part of the Baseline Assessment allows identification of areas that have good accessibility to key services, with a low score potentially highlighting areas of poor permeability.

### 3.7.2 Access to Employment

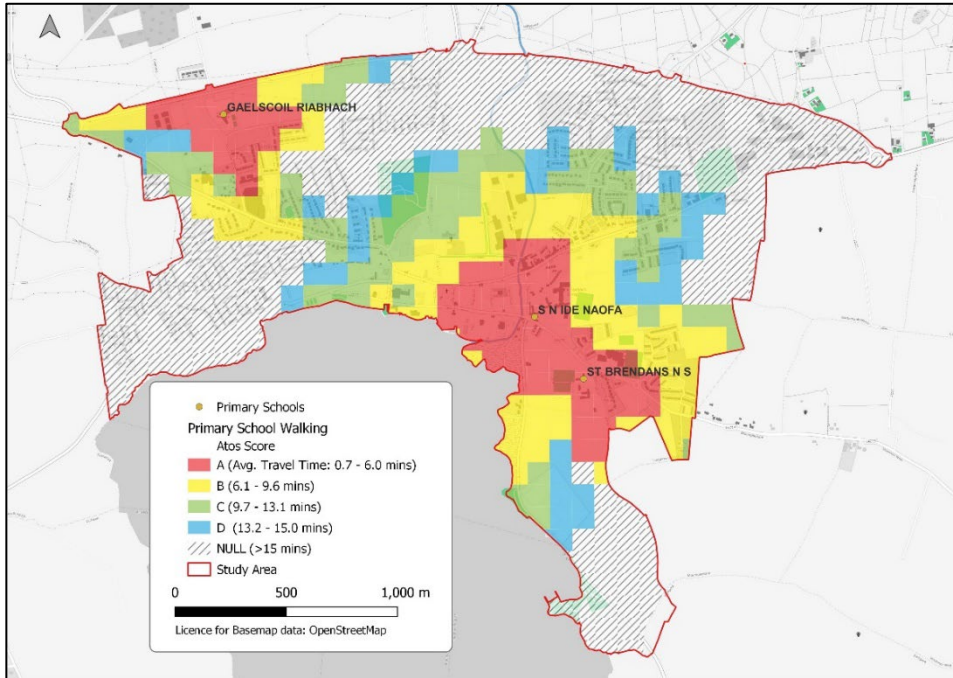
For employment, the ATOS tool calculates the number of jobs available within a specified journey time by walking and cycling. Using ATOS as part of the baseline toolkit allows identification of areas that have good accessibility to key services, with a low score potentially highlighting areas of poor permeability.

The ATOS tool has been run for access to employment opportunities within the study area by walking and cycling. For this analysis, the defined criteria was the number of jobs available within a 15 minute walk and 15 minute cycle. As outlined above, the scoring for each grid is then determined by how the travel time compares to the average.

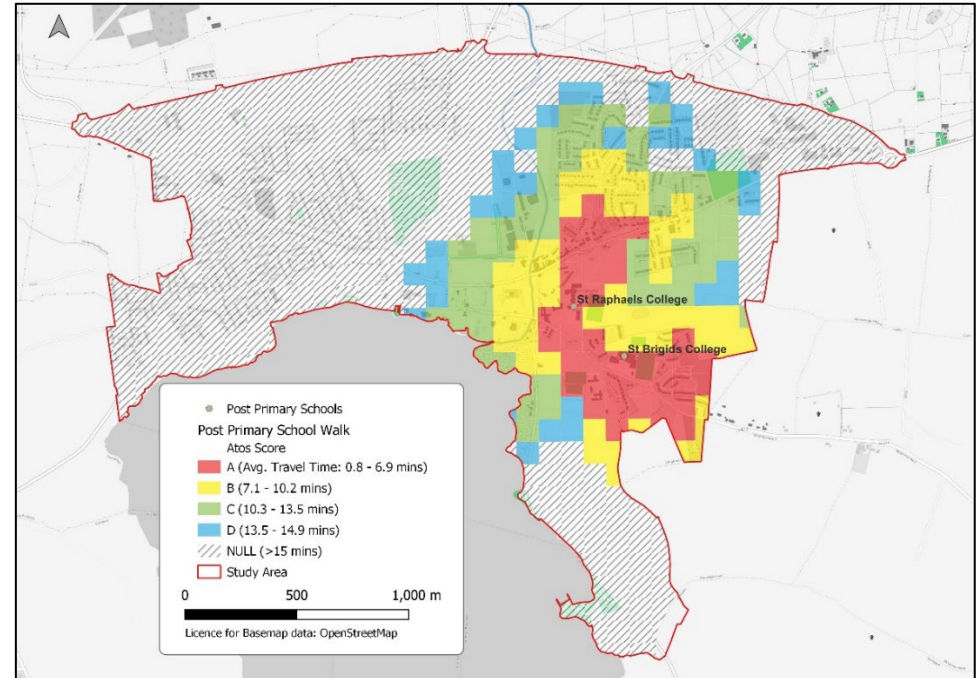
### 3.7.3 Access to Education

The ATOS tool has been run for access to primary and post-primary schools within the study area by walking and cycling. For this analysis, the defined criteria was the ability to access any primary school (at least one) and any post-primary school within a 15 minute walk and 15 minute cycle. As outlined above, the scoring for each area is then determined by how the travel time compares to the average travel time for all squares that have access to a primary/post-primary school within the specified timeframes.

It should be noted again that the score is calculated based on how travel times to the nearest relevant destinations (for the specific type of service) compared to the average travel time across all locations in the study area. The score is comparative, measuring where accessibility is higher and lower than the mean in the study area, rather than an objective score of the levels of accessibility.



**Figure 13. Access to Primary Schools – Walk**



**Figure 14. Access to Post Primary Schools – Walk**

The ATOS results for walking to primary schools in Loughrea shows very high levels of accessibility in the town centre, as well as the south east and north west areas due to the locations of these facilities. The denser street network around the town centre enables a high level of access to the schools from the centre. The relatively poor level of permeability for active modes between the outer western and northern residential areas and the town centre is evident, with a near-continuous area scored as “Null”.

For St Raphaels College and St Brigids College located in the south east of the study area, the lack of connectivity for active modes between these sites and the northern and western residential areas is evident in the relatively small walking catchment of the two schools.

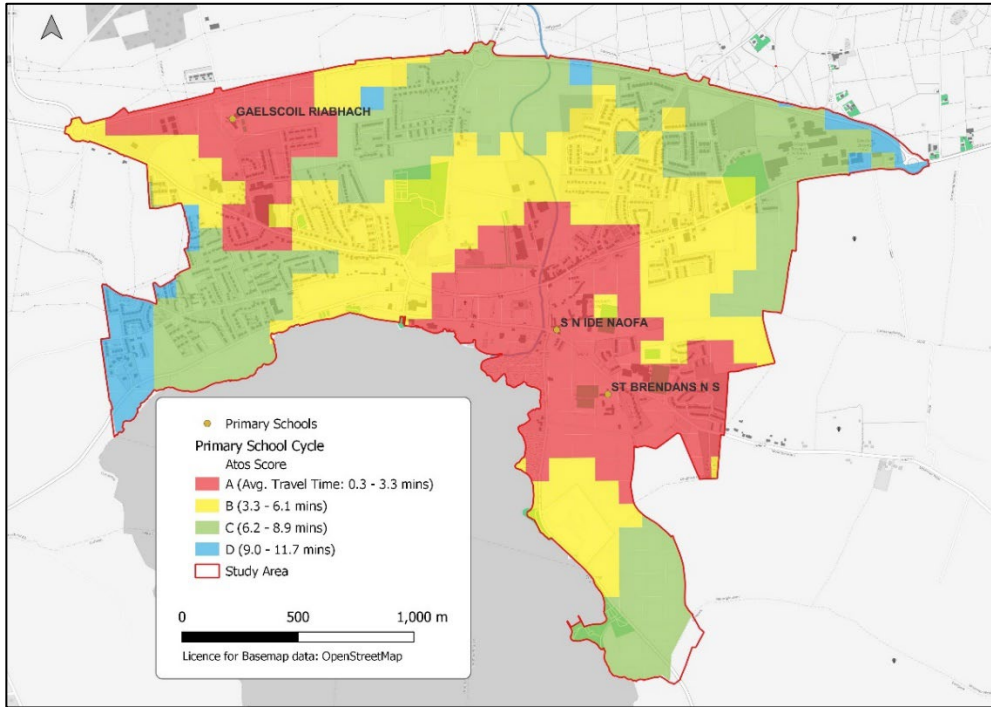


Figure 15. Access to Primary School – Cycle

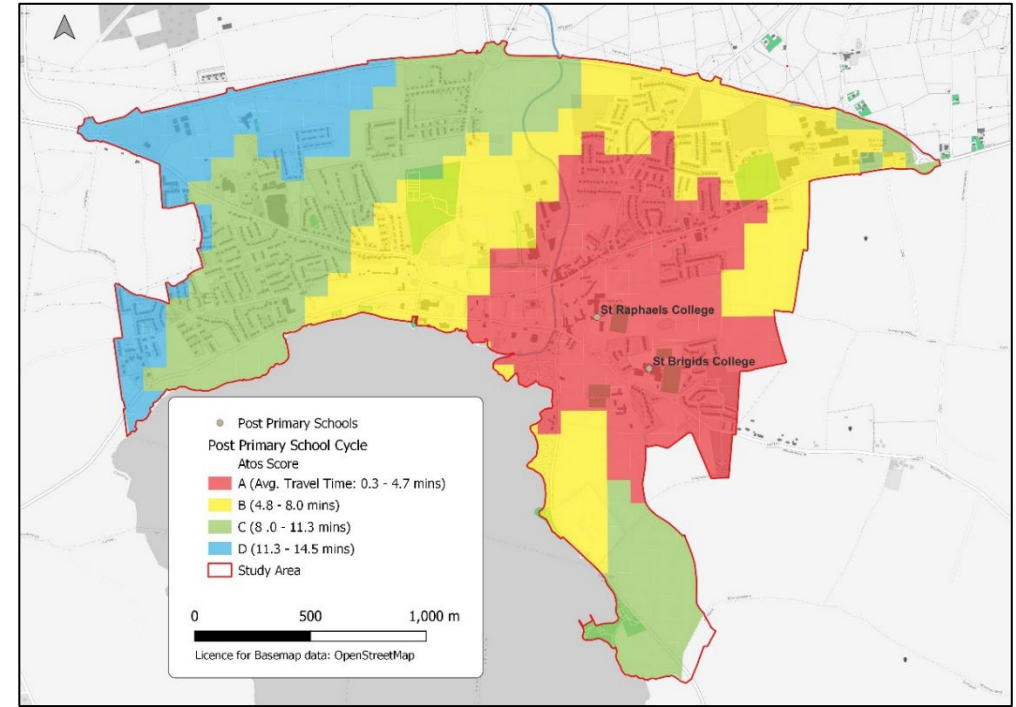


Figure 16. Access to Post Primary School – Cycle

The increased distances that can be covered by cycling are again evident in the much greater area that gets achieves a B or C rating for access to both primary and secondary schools compared to walking. The much higher levels of access by cycling than walking to schools in the study area shows the potential of cycling in Loughrea to provide a high degree of access without the need to drive.

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## 3.8 Existing Transport Infrastructure and Services

### 3.8.1 Overview

This section sets out the characteristics of the existing transport infrastructure in the Loughrea LTP study area, including:

- **Active Travel:** provides an overview of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists including elements such as footpath provision, crossing facilities and cycle tracks;
- **Public Transport:** outlines the key public transport services operating throughout the study area with information on destinations served and typical headway;
- **Road Network:** identifies the key roads within the study area including information on areas of congestion and a review of key junctions;
- **Parking Provision:** an overview of parking provision within the study area; and
- **Road Safety:** accident mapping of available Road Safety Authority data.

### 3.8.2 Walking Network

An analysis of the walking network in Loughrea has been undertaken through both a desktop review and site visit. Key areas, including both strengths and weaknesses are highlighted in **Figure 13** below and the accompanying commentary.



Figure 17. Loughrea Key Walking Routes



**Main Street** runs on an east-west axis and forms the town centre on an approximately 600m stretch between the junctions with Athenry Road and Moore Street. Footways generally consist of good quality paving, with widths varying from approximately three metres at the widest to less than 1.5m at the narrowest. Signalised crossings are present at junctions with Athenry Road, King Street, Church Street and Moore Street. Seating and landscaping features are provided, with bollards present on the outer edges to discourage parking on double yellow lines.

Figure 18. Main Street – Varying Footway Widths, Seating & Landscaping



**Bride Street** is a radial route linking the town centre with the eastern residential areas and business parks. Footways are present on the northern side of the road only, east of Beechwood Close, with a width of approximately 1.6 metres and subject to wear. The width and quality of the footways improve towards the town centre, with the width of the northern footway reaching up to three metres in places. The footways on both sides of the road narrow west of The Crescent due to limited space between the historic buildings. Vehicles were observed encroaching on the southern footway to park.

Figure 19. Bride Street – Vehicle Parking on Narrow Footway



**Athenry Road** connects the town centre with the north west neighbourhoods and two supermarkets. Footways are mixed in quality, generally on a slope from the drives of the residential properties on the eastern stretch of the road, and subject to wear. Towards the town centre, prevailing footway widths are approximately 1.8 metres, however this increases to approximately three metres in the proximity to the supermarkets. There are no controlled pedestrian crossings present, but crossings generally provide dropped kerbs and tactile paving.

**Galway Road** is a radial route connecting the town centre to the western neighbourhoods. The footway surfaces are consistently of good quality, however they are narrow at approximately 1.5 metres in width. Crossings between intersections are unsignalised and do not provide tactile paving or dropped kerbs.

**Cross Street** is a radial route connecting the town centre to the south east neighbourhoods as well as multiple schools. In the area surrounding Scoil Ide Naofa, the footway is narrow, at approximately one metre in width on the northern side with fencing to separate the pavement from the road. Beyond St Brigid’s College to the southeast, there is a stretch of approximately 30 metres with no footpath, and upon its reintroduction towards the Baunoge Roundabout, the surface is subject to significant wear. Zebra crossings are present at the junctions with Moore Road and An Sruthan.

Figure 20. Cross Street Footways



**Barrack Street** runs on an east-west axis to the south of the town centre, parallel to Main Street. Footways are of varying quality, with much of the most eastern sections subject to significant wear, with a width of approximately two metres. Footways on the northern side are approximately three metres at the widest points.

**Lake Road** runs south from the town centre, along the eastern edge of Lough Rea. There is no footway on the western side beyond the water treatment facility approximately 120 metres to the south of the junction with Cross Street, and the footway on the eastern side is approximately 1.7 metres in width.

### 3.8.3 Cycling Network & Parking

It is noted that Bride Street, Cross Street, Main Street and Athenry Road are classified as urban primary routes by the NTA CycleConnects Proposed Cycle Network, with a number of feeder links designated as secondary urban routes. Radial links to the west, north west, east and south east are designated as interurban routes.

Despite these designations, there is currently minimal formal cycle route infrastructure in Loughrea. It is noted that traffic calming measures are present in the town centre.

Cycle parking facilities are located within the town centre, within the supermarket car parks and by the lake shore to the south west and south of the town centre. A total of 30 spaces on 15 double sided Sheffield Stands as well as 30 single cycle spaces are provided, giving a total of 60 cycle parking spaces.

**Figure 21** shows the location of the cycle parking stands.

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Figure 21. Existing Cycle Parking Locations



### 3.8.4 Bus Network

Figure 22 illustrates the bus routes and stops currently present in Loughrea.



Figure 22. Loughrea Bus Routes



There is a mix of infrequent local/rural routes and regular long distance routes serving the town. The bus routes and frequencies serving Loughrea are listed in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Loughrea Bus Routes

ROUTE	OPERATOR	MAX NUMBER OF WEEKDAY SERVICES	MAX NUMBER OF WEEKEND SERVICES
548 (Loughrea – Ballinasloe)	Local Link Galway	3	N/A
763 (Galway City – Dublin Airport)	Citylink	8	8
844 (Galway Merchants Road – Birr)	Kearns Transport	2	2

ROUTE	OPERATOR	MAX NUMBER OF WEEKDAY SERVICES	MAX NUMBER OF WEEKEND SERVICES
920 (Loughrea Dublin Road – Galway City)	Galway Bus Ltd	12	7
934 (Loughrea Beatty’s Jewellers – Gort)	Local Link Galway	2	N/A

The provision of bus stops in Loughrea is relatively sparse, with demarcated stops located on a single east-west axis. A set of bus stops are located in the town centre on main Street, as well as an additional stop on Barrack Street.

Two sets of bus stops are located on Athenry Road to the west of the town centre, with one set located to the west on Bride Street, all of which serve Galway Bus Route 920.

The Main Street bus stops provide a flagpole and a layby, indicating the presence of the stops. All other bus stops do not provide passenger infrastructure. It is considered that the lack of dedicated bus stop poles at stopping locations, timetable information or real time information presents a barrier when encouraging people to consider travelling by bus rather than by car, due to the lack of clarity over stopping locations and passenger information.

This lack of formal bus waiting infrastructure also hinders people with many types of mobility or visual impairments from using the bus due to lack of tactile paving, seating, level access and other issues.

Walking access to the stops is generally provided with footpaths on both sides of the street and crossings to access the stops. It is noted that the Main Street footways are generally narrow, with parked cars on both sides of Main street creating a visual barrier for pedestrians in the town centre.

Cycling access is poor with no dedicated cycle tracks and limited cycle parking at key destinations.

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan is a major national public transport initiative developed by the NTA, with the aim of increasing connectivity, particularly for people living outside our major cities and towns. Consultation on the proposed network took place during 2022, with the feedback currently being assessed by the NTA. For Loughrea, there are no new services proposed, with the existing routes retained.

### 3.8.5 Road Network & Key Junctions

The N65 and R380 routes form a northern bypass around Loughrea, linking the town to the M6 located to the north, with direct onward connections to Galway City and Dublin. The town is served by the R380 and R446 regional roads, which link to Oranmore, Portumna, Gort and Ballinasloe. In addition to

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this main route, the R349 and R351 regional routes serve the town and link to settlements located to the north west and south east respectively.

The current road layout results in most local through trips having to route through the town centre to a certain degree. The R446 regional route runs on an east-west axis, with the town centre being broadly defined by the section of Main Street between the junctions with Moore Street and Athenry Road.

The junction with Athenry Road is signalised, with pedestrian crossings provided on all arms. This junction is noted to be the cause of congestion, with three radial routes, Main Street and pedestrians each requiring a separate green phase.

Speed humps are present on Main Street in order to help provide a traffic calmed environment, shown below.

**Figure 23. Main Street Traffic Calming**



Source: Google Streetview

Three pedestrian crossings are located on Main Street, between the junctions with Athenry Road and Moore Street, an example of which is shown in the figure below.



**Figure 24. Main Street Pedestrian Crossing**



Source: Google Streetview

### 3.8.6 Car Parking

A count of the available public car parking spaces has been undertaken to understand the level of existing car parking provision in Loughrea.

Approximately 916 marked public parking spaces are provided within Loughrea, this includes approximately 655 spaces within public car parks and 261 spaces in marked bays on-street. The largest car park is in Loughrea Shopping Centre.

Charging facilities for electric vehicles are provided in the Barrack Street car park, with two dedicated spaces.

### 3.9 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) exercise has been undertaken for the Loughrea area; this analysis is based upon all of the data and other information which has been collated and reported in Sections 2- 3 of this document.

The SWOT analysis is presented in tabular format below.

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Table 7. Loughrea SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local residential neighbourhoods are relatively small so that connection distances to corridors serving the town centre area are short</li> <li>Walking distances within the town are fairly short (20 minutes from town centre to eastern and western-most residential areas)</li> <li>Public Transport services concentrated into single main corridor through town will good connectivity to adjacent residential areas</li> <li>Outside of main through-routes, streets are relatively quiet in terms of general traffic and thus amendable to on-street cycling</li> <li>Relatively compact town centre with various shops and key services which encourages “trip linking”</li> <li>Good direct connectivity between technology cluster, town centre and western retail area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of connections between some adjacent residential areas (particularly those built at different times)</li> <li>Lack of infrastructure at some existing bus stops</li> <li>Multiple uses and high demands on street space on Main Street lead to lack of space for pedestrians / inconsistent provision</li> <li>Very little dedicated provision (on or off-street) for cyclists</li> <li>Cross Street has multiple schools in proximity and limited provision for pedestrians / no dedicated provision for cyclists</li> <li>Substantial amount of “through” traffic in town centre, particularly vehicles to/from south-east or south-west routing through the town centre to access the main town bypass</li> <li>Main Street/Gort Road/Galway Road/Athenry Road signal junction identified locally as problematic both in terms of congestion at peak times and unfriendliness to active modes (walk and cycle)</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant proportion of short car trips that could potentially shift to active modes</li> <li>Reduction in town centre through traffic with measures such as traffic management and mode shift</li> <li>Potential to increase local connectivity for active modes, either via new links or improvement of existing infrastructure (“quick wins” by targeting areas of footpath or carriageway degradation)</li> <li>Several areas of existing street are potentially suitable for on-street cycle provision</li> <li>Create an improved town centre environment with a focus on improving public realm for residents and local businesses</li> <li>Walking and cycling improvements can contribute to easier and more convenient access to schools cluster on Cross St</li> <li>Re-evaluation of Main Street/Gort Road/Galway Road/Athenry Road signal junction to improve accessibility for pedestrians and provide for more efficient movement of people and vehicles in this area</li> <li>Reduce volume of through traffic from main town centre area via traffic management measures (e.g. a new local bypass between Cross St and Bridge St corridors) and mode shift from the significant proportion of short car trips that could potentially shift to active modes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Piecemeal redevelopment of existing development plots could lose opportunities to address “dead ends”</li> <li>On-street parking needs appropriate management to ensure that improvements for sustainable modes can be realized</li> <li>Complexities of Main Street/Gort Road/Galway Road/Athenry Road signal junction and balancing of active vs. vehicular needs</li> <li>Sufficient funding to deliver desired improvements</li> </ul>

## 4. LTP OBJECTIVES & FUTURE DEMAND FOR TRAVEL

### 4.1 Overview

Part 2 of the ABTA process focuses on applying the information gathered from the baseline assessment (including the SWOT analysis) to determine the principles and objectives that guide the development of the LTP. The following sections provide an overview of the methodology used to derive the objectives for the LTP, along with the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to assess the performance of the strategy options in meeting the study objectives.

### 4.2 Developing the Objectives & KPIs

The development of the principles and objectives for the Loughrea LTP were informed by:

- The opportunities and constraints identified in the Part 1 Baseline Assessment SWOT Analysis;
- Existing local policies and objectives; and
- National level policy guiding the delivery of sustainable development.

In order to ensure a robust assessment of transport options, the objectives were broadly aligned with the key categories outlined in the Department of Transport’s Common Appraisal Framework (CAF) with common themes identified:

- Accessibility & Social Inclusion: supporting local accessibility by walking and cycling within Loughrea for all users;
- Environmental: supporting climate change initiatives and a general switch to more sustainable modes of travel;
- Economic: supporting the vibrancy and connectivity to Loughrea town centre enhancing its economic competitiveness;
- Integration: supporting the integration of land use and transport planning in a manner that can affect significant modal shift to walking, cycling, and public transport; and
- Safety & Physical Activity: promote walking and cycling, and provide a safe environment for vulnerable users.

A detailed review was then undertaken of local and national policy to identify existing objectives under each of the CAF headings and themes outlined above. In particular, strategic outcomes and policies from the GCDP 2022-2028 were identified which could inform the principles and objectives for the Loughrea LTP. The SWOT analysis from the baseline assessment was also reviewed to identify specific constraints and issues currently within the study area which should be addressed by the Loughrea LTP objectives.

Whilst the objectives developed for the LTP focus on the need to improve travel by sustainable modes, in accordance with DoECLG Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines ‘Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities’, an overarching aim in the development of all LTP transport



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measures is the need to safeguard the strategic function, capacity and safety of the existing national road network in the Plan area, including planning for future capacity enhancements. Further, it is an aim of the LTP to ensure that transport networks in the study area are maintained to a high level.

Performance measurement is used to determine if the full set of recommendations proposed under the LTP achieve the desired outcomes. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) have been identified and were used to measure the performance of the LTP strategies under the various objectives. **Table 8** below outlines the objectives and associated KPIs developed for the Loughrea LTP.

**Table 8. Loughrea LTP Objectives**

HEADING	OBJECTIVE	KPI
Accessibility & Social Inclusion	Support and implement transport measures which reduce car dependency and improve access to local services by sustainable modes	Access to key services (ATOS Analysis)
		Qualitative (Rating scale) access to PT opportunities
Integration	To align and integrate with existing and emerging national, regional, and local planning policy	Compatibility of transport measures with local, regional and national policy - Rating Scale
Safety & Physical Activity	Provide safe access to schools for vulnerable road users and ensure a safe front of school environment	Qualitative assessment of walking and cycling infrastructure to schools - Rating Scale
		Reduction in walking/cycling distances to school sites (GIS/ATOS assessment)
Environment	Contribute to achieving Climate Action Plan targets through the creation of an environment which encourages a modal shift from the private car to more sustainable modes	Anticipated change on sustainable mode shares - rating scale
		Length of additional / improved walk and cycle infrastructure
Economy	Contribute to Loughrea's economic vitality through improved connectivity and enhanced public realm	Access to Town Centre for each mode - Comparison of change in journey length (can be measured back to Do Min) and quality of route to town centre by mode
		Quality of Town centre streetscape /public realm – Rating Scale
		Deliverability Rating Scale- (With consideration to cost, engineering

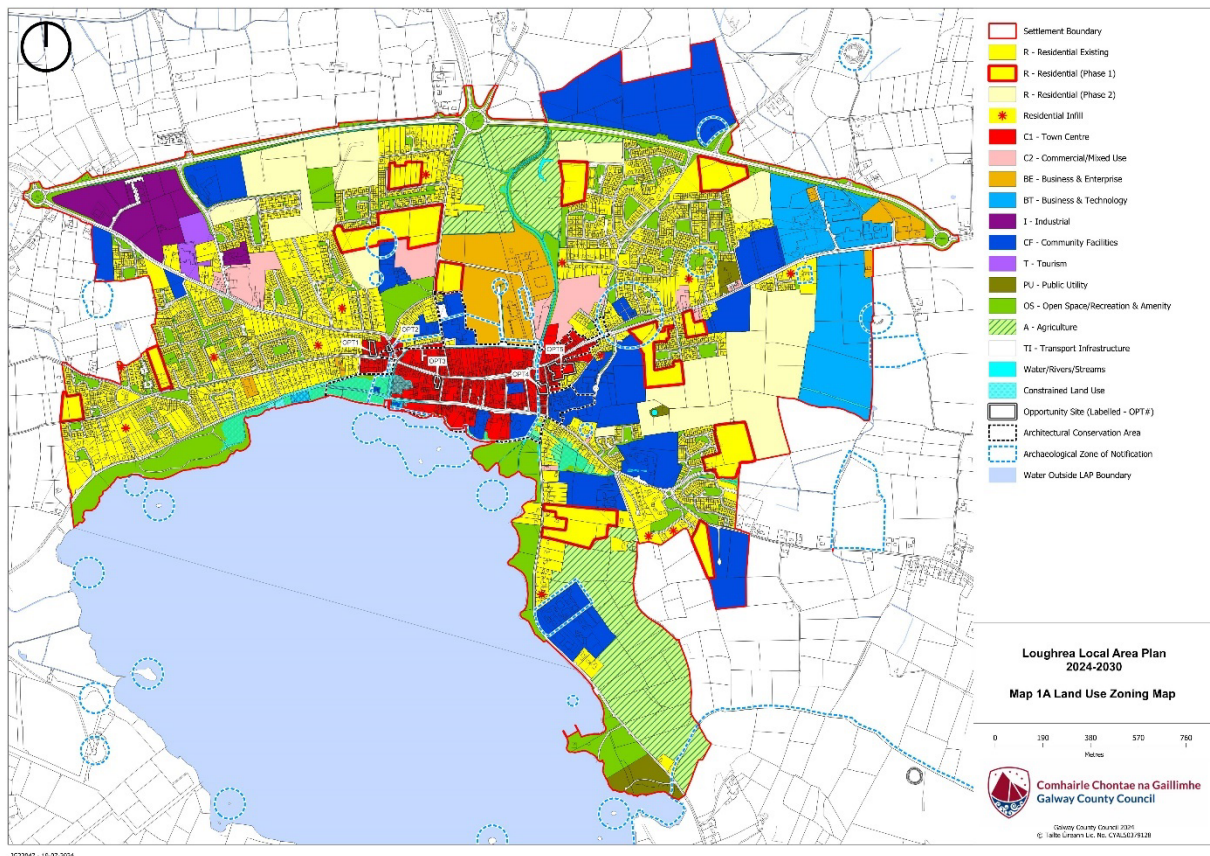


HEADING	OBJECTIVE	KPI
		constraints e.g. topography / flooding constraints, third party support/acceptability e.g. does the measures require land acquisition from a single or multiple bodies)

### 4.3 Future Demand for Travel

In addition to the review of present-day conditions in Loughrea, the project team examined the Loughrea Land Use Zoning Map. In collaboration with Galway County Council, an assessment of appropriate lands for future potential development was completed. The existing development patterns in Loughrea were taken into account during this process. Access to existing, and planned, development sites was taken into consideration when determining the transport options for the LTP.

Figure 25. Loughrea Land Use Zoning Map



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## 5. OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENT PROCESS

### 5.1 Options Development

#### 5.1.1 Overview

An initial long-list of transport options were developed to address some of the weaknesses and constraints identified in the baseline assessment, and achieve the defined objectives for the LTP. The options list was developed in collaboration with the wider project working group including members from GCC and the NTA, through the following:

- **Data review** to identify proposals from wider policy/strategies for the study area;
- **Discussions and site visits** accompanied by local engineers to review issues identified in the baseline assessment and opportunities for improvement; and
- Options **workshops** with the project team.

The option development process has broadly followed the Department of Transport’s National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) modal and intervention hierarchies (Figure 26). As such, options for applicable measures were first considered in relation to active modes (walking and cycling), followed by public transport and finally general vehicular traffic. The options were also initially focused on maintaining, optimising and improving existing facilities before considering the construction of new infrastructure. All LTP options have been developed in a manner that safeguards the function and safety of the strategic national road network, and associated junctions.

Figure 26. NIFTI Modal and Intervention Hierarchy



The following sections provide a brief overview of the options considered across active modes, public transport, vehicular traffic and supporting measures identified to assist in achieving the overarching Loughrea LTP objectives. Full details on the long list of options can be found in **Appendix B**.

#### 5.1.2 Active Travel – Walking and Cycling

The development of the walking and cycling options is built on the existing proposals of the NTA’s Cycle Connects inter-urban network and planned network improvements identified by Galway County Council.

The key aim in developing Active Travel Options is to provide Loughrea with a safe, comfortable and integrated walking and cycling network enabling trips to school, work, shopping and all other purposes

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to be made using active travel. Options focused on improving connectivity and permeability from residential areas to main trip attractors, including the town centre, key employment and education sites and leisure opportunities. Of particular focus is connecting residential areas with schools on the Cross Street corridor, building on the work underway with An Taisce’s Safe Routes to School programme.

Where feasible, fully segregated cycle facilities are proposed to improve safety for cyclists. Where segregation is not possible given space constraints, particularly on Cross Street, measures have been proposed to provide a safe, low speed, traffic calmed environment for sections of cycle trips which must be made on-road.

Certain streets in and around the town centre are very narrow, creating difficulties for the provision of segregated cycle infrastructure. Footpath widths are generally below minimum standards with a lack of formal road crossings creating an unattractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Given these spatial constraints and existing conditions, improving pedestrian safety and comfort was the priority in central areas. In addition, a number of contra-flow cycle tracks are proposed to increase cycling safety and permeability on the town’s one-way streets.

### 5.1.3 Public Transport Options

While active travel investment focuses on encouraging people to switch from car to cycling or walking for short distance journeys, public transport has the potential to encourage mode shift from car journeys for medium and longer distance trips.

The development of public transport options has incorporated insight from the Baseline Assessment and engagement with the NTA, with the aim of encouraging increase in use. As such, the options within the LTP seek to:

- Enhance accessibility for active modes from residential areas to bus stops;
- Improve facilities at public transport nodes, through the provision of sheltered waiting areas, cycle parking, passenger information etc; and
- Work alongside the NTA to deliver enhanced bus and rail services to villages and towns in the wider region.

### 5.1.4 Road & Traffic Management Options

Options for the Road Network strategy were identified in order to improve safety for all road users. The priority in the development of the road network options (as per NIFTI) is to maintain, renew, manage and operate the existing road infrastructure in a more efficient manner, and any new road schemes must demonstrate that public transport, traffic management or demand management measures cannot effectively address the problem prompting the road proposal or are not applicable/appropriate.

Therefore, road options that would unduly induce car trips that could otherwise be made by active travel would not be appropriate. However, road options that facilitate the reallocation of road space in the town centre by enabling traffic to bypass the town centre streets are more in line with the LTP objectives and current national policy.

Given these considerations, the main road options are associated with the link road as defined in the LAP, connecting the Cross Street and Bride Street corridors. No further new road infrastructure options are proposed as part of the long list.

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In addition to options concerning upgraded and new road infrastructure, a number of traffic management options have been developed in combination with associated Walking & Cycling proposals. These traffic management options are mainly located in the town centre where streets are narrow and active travel facilities are presently poor. These options and their associated Walking & Cycling measures aim to improve the public realm in key areas and provide a safer environment within the town.

### 5.1.5 Supporting Measures

In line with the Five Cities Demand Management Study Avoid-Shift-Reduce-Manage Transport Demand Management (TDM) Toolkit to reduce carbon, improve air quality and the urban environment, and manage congestion, a range of TDM Measures have been identified to support the switch to sustainable modes across the Study Area.

In line with Safe Routes to School measures proposed by An Taisce in Loughrea, a number of potential Park & Stride<sup>4</sup> sites have been identified which would reduce congestion at school gates. Schools in Ireland which have implemented park and stride have found that children are more alert in the morning, having had some fresh air and exercise<sup>5</sup>.

Supporting measures include those to promote Active Travel, Public Transport and School Travel. A number of behavioural change measures are identified, including the role that Mobility Management can play in both avoiding the need to travel and supporting a switch from car travel to sustainable modes on a site by site basis.

## 5.2 Options Assessment Methodology

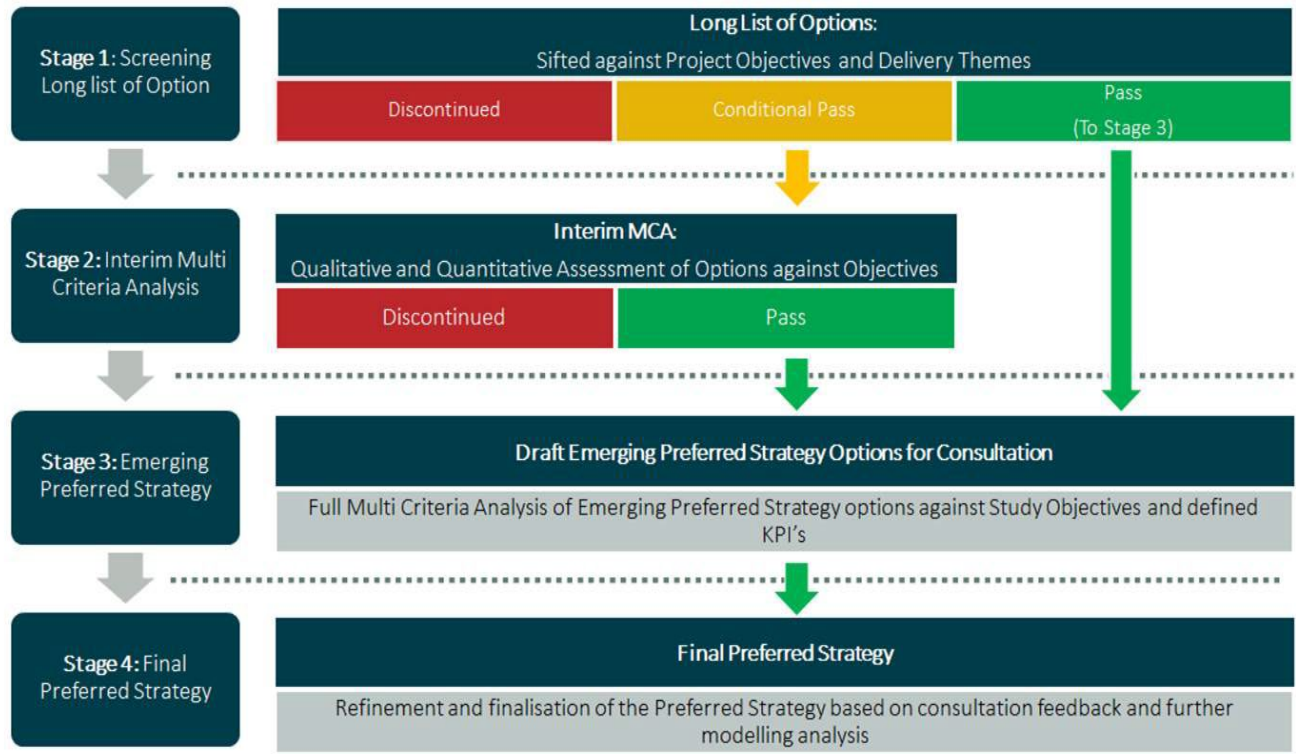
Having developed a long list of options, an assessment process was undertaken to determine which of these options are to be included in the Emerging Preferred Strategy for the Loughrea LTP. The long-list of options were passed through a four-stage assessment process as outlined in **Figure 27**, including:

<sup>4</sup> The concept of ‘Park & Stride’ means parking the car a short distance from your destination and making the last leg of the journey on foot. This can have health benefits in terms of promoting physical exercise, whilst also removing traffic from heavily congested areas e.g. outside school gates.

<sup>5</sup> Fingal School Streets: Pilot Review 1 <https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2020-03/20200302-300548-school-streets-pilot-review-1-issue-1.pdf>

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Figure 27. Options Assessment Methodology



- **Stage 1 Options Screening:** The longlist of options were screened against the overall project objectives and core delivery themes to identify which should be discontinued, which could pass directly to the final strategy, and which required further assessment.
- **Stage 2 Interim Multi-Criteria Analysis:** Options requiring further analysis were passed through a MCA with indicators used to score each option against the study objectives and the core delivery themes.
- **Stage 3 Emerging Preferred Strategy Options for Consultation :** Options passing Stage 1 and Stage 2 form the initial Emerging Preferred Strategy for the LTP.
- **Stage 4 Final Preferred Strategy (Post LAP Consultation):** Feedback from the project steering group and public consultation as part of the Loughrea LAP process, will be used to refine the preferred strategy for the LTP.

The following sections provide a more detailed description of Stages 1-3 outlined above.

### 5.2.1 Stage 1: Options Screening

Stage 1 of the Options Assessment examined each of the long list of measures against the LTP objectives. The options were also assessed against the following core delivery themes:

- Engineering feasibility;
- Acceptability;
- Funding potential; and
- Value for money

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A five point scoring system, outlined in **Table 9**, was used to assess the options across the study objectives and delivery themes. This produced a performance matrix which was reviewed to rank the scenarios and identify which ones performed best and therefore, passed into the Emerging Preferred Strategy or required further analysis.

**Table 9. MCA Scoring System**

<b>Major Benefit</b>	The proposal is expected to have a clear and considerable benefit or positive impact when compared to existing conditions.
<b>Minor Benefit</b>	The proposal is expected to have a minor benefit or positive impact when compared to existing conditions.
<b>Neutral</b>	Overall, the proposal is expected to have neither a positive nor negative impact when compared to existing conditions.
<b>Minor Disbenefit</b>	The proposal is only expected to result in a minor negative impact when compared to existing conditions.
<b>Major Disbenefit</b>	The proposal is expected to have a clear and considerable negative impact when compared to existing conditions.

Based on this initial screening, options were classed as follows:

- **Discontinued:** the option did not align with the LTP objectives, and as such, it was not included in the Emerging Preferred Strategy.
- **Pass:** the option satisfied the project objectives, and the core delivery themes, and no alternative proposals were identified in the options development process. These options passed directly into the Emerging Preferred Strategy without the need for an interim MCA assessment.
- **Conditional Pass:** the option aligned with the LTP objectives. However, the option either did not fully meet all of the core delivery themes or had a number of alternative proposals identified within a mode. In these instances, the options were assessed in further detail as part of the interim MCA described below.

Full details of the Stage 1 Option Screening are set out in **Appendix B**.

### 5.2.2 Stage 2: Interim MCA

The Stage 2 Interim MCA was used to evaluate options classed as having a Conditional Pass (as outlined in Stage 1). At this stage, options were assessed in more detail based on their ability to meet the core delivery themes outlined above and also their performance against the study objectives.

The feasibility criteria which were employed in Stage 1 are also used for the Stage 2 Interim MCA. However at this step, these criteria are scored on a 'PASS/FAIL' basis. This assessment was predominantly qualitative in nature.

Similarly to the Stage 1 Screening, the five point scoring system outlined in **Table 9** was used to assess and compare options in the Interim MCA. This identified the options which performed best in terms of

achieving the defined objectives of the study, and therefore, passed into the Emerging Preferred Strategy. Full details of the Stage 2 Interim MCA are set out in **Appendix C**.

### 5.2.3 Stage 3: Emerging Preferred Strategy Assessment

The options that passed from Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the assessment process form the Emerging Preferred Strategy for the LTP. This included a wide range of proposals across walking, cycling, public transport, school travel, road network changes, junction upgrades, parking and wider supporting measures – which together form a preferred combined multi-modal strategy.

This Emerging Preferred Strategy was then compared back to the ‘Do-Nothing’ scenario and comprehensively reassessed against all of the Study Objectives using the KPIs outlined in **Table 8**. This included a qualitative assessment for the cumulative impact of the combined Strategy as a whole against the LTP objectives.

Further details of the Emerging Preferred Strategy are provided in Section 6.

## 5.3 Summary

This section has outlined the process followed in developing a longlist of options for active travel, public transport, road & traffic management and supporting measures for Loughrea as well as the assessment process followed to determine which options would be included in the LTP’s Preferred Strategy. The full details and results of this process are available to view in **Appendix B** and **C**.

The following chapter outlines the Preferred Strategy arising from this Options Development and Assessment process.

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## 6. PREFERRED STRATEGY

### 6.1 Overview

Following the options development and appraisal processes discussed previously, this section summarises the preferred options identified for this LTP report.

It is noted that the overwhelming majority of the proposed measures do not encroach on the strategic roads network, focusing on enhancing sustainable transport modes as well as encouraging modal shift away from car trips. It is therefore envisaged that traffic using the strategic roads network in the Loughrea area would be reduced, with no negative impacts arising as a result of the measures proposed within this LTP.

Where proposed measures do interact with the strategic road network, the application of the TII Publication ‘The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads’ (TII publications DN-GEO-03084) will be applied in relation to design standards to national roads and national road junctions, as well as the Design Manual for Roads and Streets (DMURS).

### 6.2 Walking & Cycling

The overall proposed walking and cycling measures in the Preferred Strategy for Loughrea are illustrated in **Figure 28**. The proposed measures will provide a comprehensive and integrated walk and cycle network supporting increased accessibility and permeability.

The key elements of the active travel strategy are summarised in the remainder of this section with the following terminology used to describe proposed interventions:

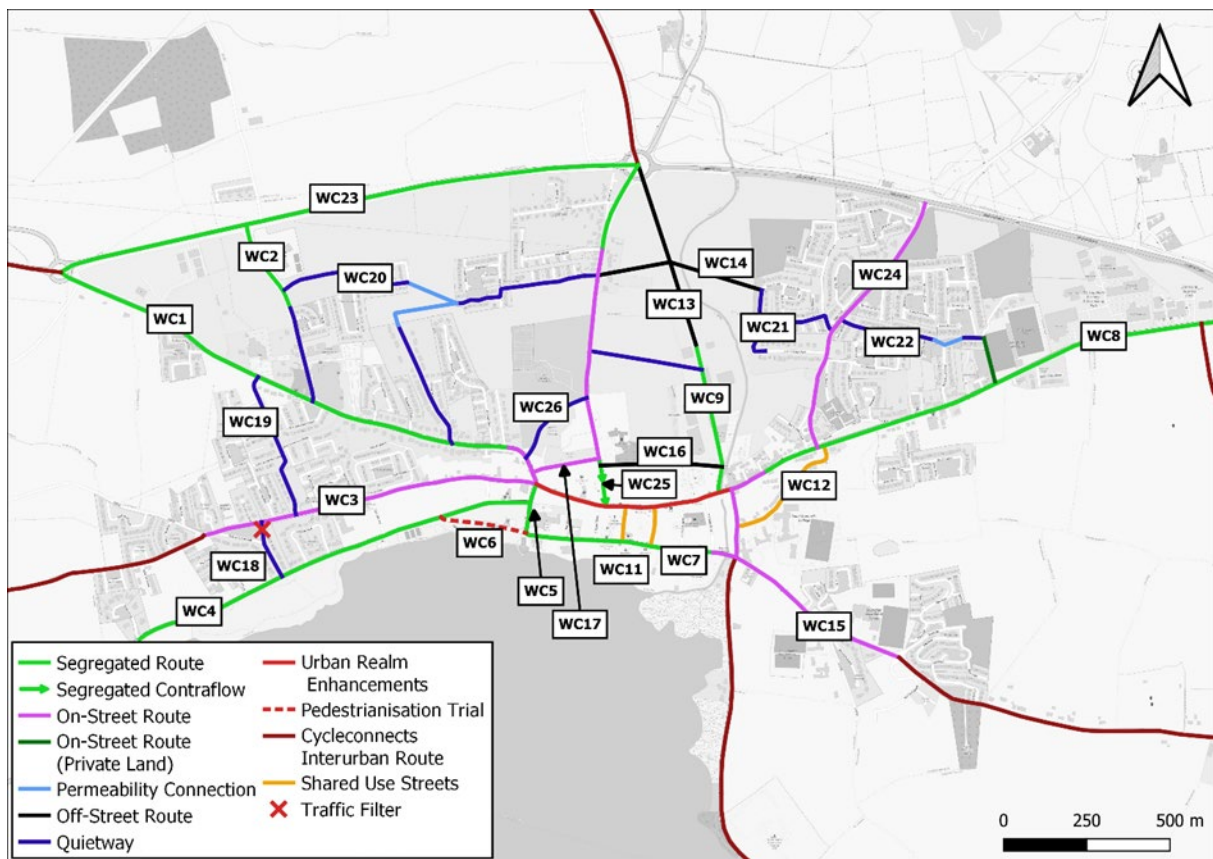
- **Cycle Tracks/Segregated Route** = footpath provision/upgrades and cycle lanes separated from vehicular traffic with a physical barrier.
- **Segregated Contra-Flow** = segregated cycle tracks running in the opposite direction to traffic on a 1-way road. This facilitates safe 2-way cycling on 1-way streets.
- **Traffic Calming (On-Street Route)** = measures to reduce vehicle speeds and create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Typical measures include:
  - Narrowing of the traffic lanes to minimum recommended widths;
  - Footpath upgrades and raised pedestrian crossings to provide priority for pedestrians;
  - Tightening of corner radii at residential estates to reduce crossing distances and improve safety;
  - Reduced speed limits; and
  - surface treatments, streetscape and landscaping enhancements.
- **Quietway** = low-trafficked street (typically <2,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)) and low-speeds meaning cyclists can safely share the carriageway. Typical measures include:
  - Traffic calming to enforce low-speeds;
  - Improved public realm to encourage active travel;
  - Improved signage and way-finding to encourage use; and
  - surface treatments and landscaping.

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- **Permeability links** = walking and cycling links connecting neighbourhoods and providing greater accessibility along desire lines.
- **Traffic Filter** = interventions that allow through access for pedestrians and cyclists but local access only for vehicles.
- **School Zone** = front of school works to prioritise safe pedestrian and cycle access to the school, improving school visibility through signposting & placemaking, reducing vehicle congestion & preventing illegal parking in the area.

It is envisaged that the walking and cycling mobility measures put forward in the LTP will encourage a degree of behaviour change in travel mode, shifting trip mode share from private car in favour of active modes. A full description of the measures proposed in the LTP, illustrated in the figure below, is available in Appendix B.

**Figure 28. Proposed Walking & Cycling Measures**



### Primary Cycle Network

The primary network consists of key radial links deemed suitable for segregated cycle tracks, primarily connecting the town centre and employment areas. Unsegregated on-street routes are marked where road widths do not allow for segregated infrastructure but which connect to key areas or facilities, such as the schools on Cross Street.



The existing disused railway corridor was considered to offer a unique opportunity for an active travel corridor linking the town centre with the northern parts of the town. It is noted that the route is required to be maintained for a potential railway link and that a conversion to an active travel corridor would not prevent the land later being adapted as part of any future public transport scheme.

### ***Secondary Cycle Connections***

The secondary cycle network consists of permeability routes which supplement the primary network, most of which consist of quiet residential streets or short links between built-up areas. These measures are focused on strengthening and improving existing links, providing connectivity to the wider network and key services.

It is proposed to close the section of Galway Road fronting the courthouse to vehicles on a trial basis, in order to deliver a high quality walking and cycling space by the town's waterfront. It is also proposed to restrict vehicle access on Coscorríg Crescent in order to enhance walking and cycling links between the Gort Road and Galway Road corridors. These changes have been proposed due to alternative routes being available which do not require lengthy diversions. Further details on each of these measures is provided in Section 6.4 below.

### ***Pedestrian Crossings***

The implementation of additional high quality of pedestrian crossings within Loughrea will improve both the perception and experience of the walking environment. Crossings will be integrated with the preferred options within the town centre and other measures which are discussed below.

### ***Additional Cycle Parking***

Similarly to the consideration of pedestrian crossings, the provision of appropriate new local cycle parking, both within the town centre and at key locations elsewhere in the town, is considered to represent a "quick win" which can be progressed either alongside the development of other schemes identified within this LTP, or brought forward as a stand-alone action where opportunities arise. It is noted that the future implementation of the NTA's proposals for county-level cycle route infrastructure can be supported by this action and would encourage cyclists making longer journeys as well as shorter ones to stop and visit attractions and businesses in Loughrea.

### ***Rapid Build Infrastructure***

As outlined in Section 2.3, Rapid Build active travel facilities are schemes that utilise cost-effective measures to deliver walking and cycling infrastructure quicker than traditional (full build) construction methods. This approach can aid the deliverability of the proposed walking and cycling networks, including:

- Road markings/traffic restrictions;
- Narrowing/converting general traffic lanes to active travel facilities;
- Converting on-street parking to active travel facilities;
- Creating Traffic Free streets; and
- Redesigning junctions to provide greater capacity for walking, cycling and public transport.

### **Town Centre Improvements**

The town core under the current layout is deemed to prioritise the movement of vehicles over pedestrians and cyclists, effectively forming a barrier to an increased uptake in these modes for short-distance local trips within the town.

Main Street has been identified as having the potential to accommodate improvements with regards to retail land uses, vehicle dominance, narrow footways, limited road space and parking constraints. The proposed options focus on reducing the dominance of vehicle traffic whilst retaining vehicular access to the town centre, in order to improve the connections for active modes through the town core, as well as providing an enhanced civic space for the town. Through vehicle access in at least some form is deemed to still be required for through trips and for vehicles servicing properties.

The proposed options for Main Street therefore include the rationalising of on-street parking by converting the perpendicular bays to parallel and removing excess provision, expanding the space available for bus stop infrastructure, installing cycle parking infrastructure and increasing the presence of landscaping and benches in order to make the Main Street thoroughfare a more welcoming and inviting place for pedestrians. It is envisaged that with these measures, travel behaviours for trips to and from the town centre will change, with people encouraged to shift away from car trips towards active modes and public transport.

### **Connections to Future Zoned Land**

As outlined previously in Section 4.3, the proposed LTP measures considered access to existing development but also took cognisance of the Loughrea land use zoning illustrated in **Figure 25**. This was to ensure that all future zoned land are served by strong active travel infrastructure to support the sustainable growth of Loughrea.

Where new development is proposed to take place on future zoned land in Loughrea, active travel and public transport measures proposed within the LTP serving the relevant lands will be delivered in a timely fashion to support the sustainable development of these areas. Through the planning process, all new major residential or employment developments (including expansion of existing sites) in Loughrea, will be required to provide active travel infrastructure throughout the proposed developments, integrated with the wider active travel network and the proposed set of measures outlined in this LTP. This is to ensure future residents/employees are provided with a choice of sustainable transport modes at the outset, and that connectivity across the network is maintained as Loughrea is developed into the future.

The Phase 1 residential lands located east of the town centre will be primarily served by proposed segregated cycle facilities and footpath upgrades along Athenry Road (WC1) and Bride Street (WC8). As outlined previously in this report, these links provide connections to the wider active travel network linking to the town centre and waterfront.

The largest banks of Phase 2 residential lands are located to the north west of the town centre bordering the R380 northern bypass route and to the east, between the Bride Street and Cross Street corridors. It is envisaged that the north west site would be served by the proposed segregated cycle facilities and footpath upgrades along Athenry Road (WC1, WC2) and the northern bypass (WC23). The east site would be primarily served by the proposed cycle facilities and footpath upgrades along Bride Street (WC8) and Cross Street (WC15).

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The largest banks of zoned employment land are located on the east and west outskirts of the town respectively. These sites would be primarily served by proposed segregated cycle facilities and footpath upgrades along Athenry Road (WC1) and Bride Street (WC8).

### 6.3 Public Transport

The proposed public transport measures for the Transport Strategy are shown in **Figure 29**.

**Figure 29. Proposed Public Transport Measures**



#### **Bus Stop Infrastructure & Routes**

The NTA’s Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan shows proposed Route 23 connecting Galway City and Dublin via Loughrea. This corridor will see improved frequencies and better integration of services, with a minimum frequency of two hours proposed for stopping services.

It is proposed to install formal passenger infrastructure such as flagpoles, timetable information and shelters to the unmarked bus stops, prioritising those in the town centre. Any changes to bus service routes and frequencies will depend on dialogue with the NTA and local bus service operators.

#### **Reopening of Railway Line**

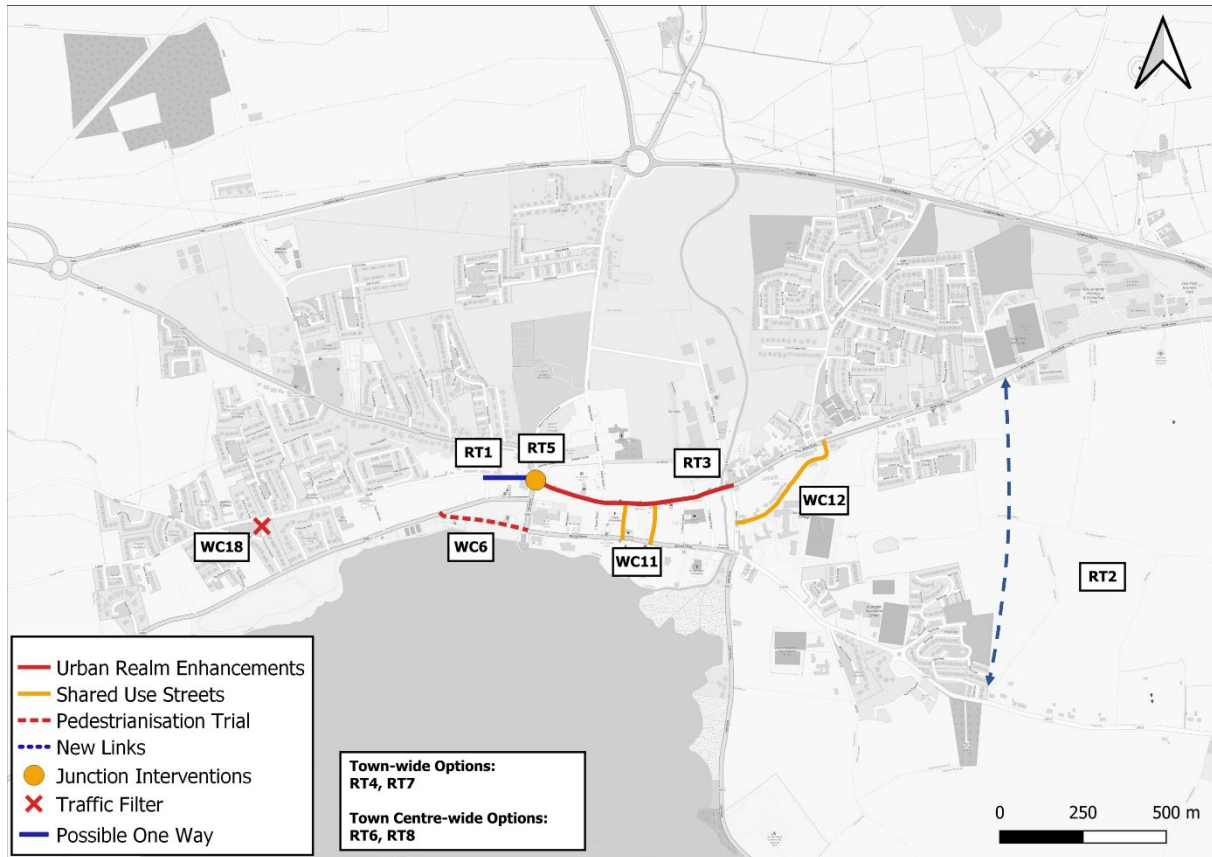
The potential rail link has been retained for the Preferred Strategy. It is acknowledged that this scheme is likely to not come forward during the LTP’s lifetime, therefore the active travel route proposed for the same link has also been retained, with conversion to a rail link when the scheme comes forward.

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## 6.4 Road & Traffic Management Options

The proposed road transport measures for the Transport Strategy are shown in **Figure 30**.

**Figure 30. Proposed Road Transport Measures**



### ***Main Street / The Green / Galway Road / Athenry Road Junction Upgrades***

A key area of focus within the development of the LTP was the operation of Westbridge junction. It is proposed to reduce the footprint of the Main Street/The Green/Galway Road/Athenry Road junction, located at the western end of the town centre. This would increase the space available for pedestrians and reduce the severance this junction currently causes. It is also proposed to close the unnamed section of road linking the junction to Dolphin Street to vehicles.

This measure as part of RT5 and WC26 is proposed to both increase pedestrian safety in the area, providing a safe active travel connection from Dolphin Street to Main Street, and to improve the operation of Westbridge junction where significant congestion is experienced at peak time. Care has been taken across all measures proposed in the LTP to facilitate deliveries to businesses. While exact details of all measures will be defined at project level, the approach to pedestrianisation of this link will be cognisant of business loading needs, and the street could be open for delivery vehicles on a timed basis to enable deliveries.

With respect to the measure's effect on traffic flow at Westbridge junction, due to the geometry of the junction, currently to facilitate the right-turning movement from Main Street to the link towards Dolphin Street, there are limitations on signal timing, usually enabling only one junction arm to move

at a time. While necessary for road safety reasons within the current traffic management layout, this leads to inefficient signal phasing and exacerbates congestion at the junction. The closure of this link to Dolphin Street under RT5/WC26 would ease this constraint, enabling the implementation of more efficient signal phasing, and reducing congestion at Westbridge Junction.

In order to further improve pedestrian accessibility and the operational efficiency for motor traffic at this junction, it is proposed to designate the section of Galway Road between the junction and the link to Gort Road one-way to vehicles in the westbound direction. This would increase green time for the remaining arms as well as the pedestrian phase, ensuring improved pedestrian links and improving capacity for the remaining arms. This arrangement would allow vehicle access for the properties fronting the one-way section of Galway Road.

This one-way arrangement is proposed not only to create space for improved active travel facilities along this section of road, but also to improve the operation of Westbridge junction. As noted above in relation to the Dolphin Street link, the geometry of Westbridge junction leads to considerable constraints in its traffic signal phasing when all movements are facilitated. The pedestrianisation of the Dolphin Street link is proposed in part to enable more efficient signal phasing at Westbridge junction, and measure RT1 along Galway Road would have a similar function. By removing eastbound movements on Galway Road from the signal phasing at Westbridge junction, particularly in combination with the pedestrianisation of the Dolphin Street link, more efficient signal phasing of Westbridge junction could be programmed. This would significantly improve the junction's operation, reducing congestion at the junction and in the surrounding area.

The individual proposals at Westbridge junction form part of a combination of measures, aimed at improving safety for active mode users and improving junction efficiency for motor traffic. Any specific changes to the layout and traffic arrangements at Westbridge junction will undergo further consultation along with more detailed optioneering and design prior to implementation.

### ***The Green Pedestrianisation***

It is proposed to close the section of The Green fronting the courthouse to vehicles, with the road converted into a shared pedestrian and cycle link. Complementary landscaping and seating would help provide a high quality traffic-free waterfront space for the town. Removing vehicle access from this link would eliminate the current safety concerns at the Gort Road/The Green junction.

Making the link largely traffic free would create a high-quality active travel facility connecting WC4 and WC11 via a route along Lough Rea. This would facilitate active travel trips from the west of the town to the playground and the town centre, resulting in a link with substantial transport and amenity value. It would have the further benefit of improving road safety outside the courthouse, a location which can become constrained due to on-street parking of garda and other vehicles when the court is busy. Finally, the measure would offer the advantage of simplifying and improving the operation of the Barrack Street junction. It is anticipated that rapid build facilities such as planters could be utilised to initially deliver this road closure scheme.

It is recommended that this measure is implemented on a trial basis for a limited period of time. The impact of the measure during this trial will be reviewed, including further consultation with the community, before any decision on a permanent arrangement is made.

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### **Traffic Filters & Shared Use Streets**

The walking and cycling strategy in the LTP has sought to create a safe orbital north-south active travel route from the Gort Road to the Athenry Road, to serve Gaelscoil Riabhach and Loughrea Shopping Centre and to knit together proposed segregated cycle tracks on the Athenry Road and Gort Road, creating a network of segregated cycle infrastructure in the west of Loughrea. The de-facto existing quietway on St Laurence’s Fields, with a cul de sac for motor vehicles and off-road active travel route at the northern end to the Athenry Road fills the need for a high-quality connection between the Athenry Road and the Galway Road. As such, a segregated or quiet route between the Galway Road and Gort Road would complete this north-south link.

Given widths of the existing links between the Galway Road and Gort Road, and the lack of greenfield space for the creation of an off-road route, the provision of a fully segregated route is not feasible. Therefore, to provide a safe active travel link suitable for use by children cycling to school, a quietway is needed.

To fulfil this need, Quietway WC18 along Coscorrig Crescent is proposed. Coscorrig Crescent will not be closed to through traffic. It is proposed in consultation with the community to introduce traffic calming measures along this residential street to reduce vehicular speeds and provide a safer environment for cycling on carriageway connecting the Gort Road to the Galway Road. A traffic filter on the eastern side of the fork at the northern (Galway Road) end could be introduced to reduce traffic along this link, while still maintaining the Galway Road to Athenry Road link for motor traffic via the western side of the fork. Signage and road markings will be provided to highlight this as a key cycling route in the overall active travel network.

It is proposed to designate King’s Street, Kelly’s Street and Bohercorn as shared use streets, with appropriate surfacing. A visually distinct surfacing and a 20kph speed limit would be applied to these links to calm traffic and ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. These changes will create more liveable streets for residents and reduce the dominance of vehicles at the expense of pedestrians and cyclists on narrow routes.

It is anticipated that rapid build facilities such as planters could be utilised to initially deliver these schemes.

#### **Eastern Link**

In terms of more strategic road links, a new link route to the east of the town centre is proposed, linking the Cross Street and Bride Street corridors. Such a link would enable a large proportion of through vehicle traffic to avoid the town centre and the one-way system entirely. The proposed link would be designed to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, expanding on the current networks available and delivering similar benefits to those modes in terms of faster and safer connections between the northern and eastern areas of the town. This would also provide a major alternative route for traffic which presently routes via the “schools quarter” and would enable a full “School Streets” scheme for restricted vehicle through-access to be brought forward.

It is acknowledged that a bypass route scheme to the east of the town is effectively a longer-term aspiration and would need to be fully assessed against national and regional policy as well as travel demand subsequent to the implementation of the LTP. However, if combined in future with other proposed improvements, the scheme has potential to improve access for all modes within the town.

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## 6.5 Supporting Measures

A number of supporting measures have been proposed in the LTP to complement the transport network improvements and support modal shift. These measures include a number of Park & Stride sites on the periphery of the town centre (shown in the Figure below), the roll out of additional cycle parking facilities, the provision of improved bus stop infrastructure and a range of behavioural change measures including mobility management plans. A full list of supporting measures included in the Preferred Strategy is shown in the table below.

Figure 31. Proposed Park & Stride Locations



Table 10. List of Supporting Measures

Option Reference	Measure	Description
PO1	Gaelscoil Riabhach Park & Stride	Use of car park as Park & Stride location outside of school hours
PO2	Loughrea Shopping Centre Park & Stride	Use of car park as Park & Stride location
PO3	Station Road Park & Stride	Use of car park as Park & Stride location
PO4	St Brigid's College Park & Stride	Use of car park as Park & Stride location outside of school hours



Option Reference	Measure	Description
PO5	Loughrea Business Park Park & Stride	Use of car park as Park & Stride location
PO6	East Point Business Park Park & Stride	Use of car park as Park & Stride location
SM - O1	15/10 Minute Town Principles	15/10 Minute Town Principles - embed within Loughrea land use planning decisions and development of transport network and transport investment decisions. Under the RSES, the Southern Regional Assembly have developed a framework and methodology to be used by local authorities to integrate the '10 Minute Town Concept' into future Local Development Plans. This approach was developed following assessment of three key towns (Carlow, Ennis and Tralee) and aims to support increase in sustainable transport and reduce carbon emissions.
SM – O2	Slow Zones	Slow Zones – introduction of 30kph speed limit on town centre streets and on residential streets in the Study Area, supported by traffic calming measures and signage to encourage driver compliance.
SM – O3	Workplace Mobility Management Plans (MMPs) & Area MMPs	Workplace Mobility Management Plans (MMPs) & Area MMPs – support major employers & business parks/industrial estates with the implementation of MMPs in conjunction with the NTA Smarter Workplaces Team.
SM – O4	Residential Mobility Management Plans (RMMPs)	Residential Mobility Management Plans (RMMPs) - introduce requirement for RMMPs for all new residential developments over certain size. RMMPs manage transport demand at source and combine hard measures (e.g., access to a car club, pool bikes) and soft measures (e.g., Travel Welcome Packs, PT taster tickets).
SM – C1	Cycle Parking Strategy	Including on-street short-stay parking locations & volume (consistent with development standards); provision of parking for cargo bikes & adapted bikes, etc; longer stay bike parking / mobility hubs (e.g., at rail station, residential areas); eBike public parking Strategy; eScooter public parking strategy

Option Reference	Measure	Description
SM – C2	End of trip facilities	Encourage the provision of showers, changing rooms, lockers, etc. at major employment/leisure destinations
SM – C3	Public Bike Repair Stands	Deliver at key locations, e.g., at town centre, large schools
SM – C4	Cycle Skills Training - children and adults	Deliver at schools, workplaces and via community events
SM – C5	Cycle Maintenance Training & Bike Maintenance Checks	Deliver at schools, workplaces and via community events
SM – C6	Behavioural change campaigns to tackle speeds, inconsiderate parking & engine idling near schools	Behavioural change campaigns to tackle speeds, inconsiderate parking & engine idling near schools
SM – S1	Education Mobility Management Plans (MMPs)	Provide Council resource for Education MMP support (in partnership with An Taisce Green Schools/SRTS) for large schools in Loughrea
SM – S2	Bike and scooter parking at schools	Enhancement of existing facilities
SM – S3	School based Active Travel initiatives & events	Delivery of activities to support active travel (e.g., Bike Week, Scoot to School), challenges, curriculum activities – link to Green Schools Programme
SM – S4	Walking Bus & Cycling Bus support for local schools	Council support for cycle and walking buses to schools
DM – P1	Public Parking Controls – refresh of town centre Parking Controls and Pricing Strategy to strengthen parking as a Traffic Demand Management Measure	Including: Review parking duration to reach suitable balance between long and short-term parking, with duration limits well signed and enforced; proactive enforcement to ensure short stay parking not used for long-stay parking e.g., on main centre streets; proactive enforcement to reduce incidents of inconsiderate parking (e.g., on pavements & cycle tracks) to safeguard road space for vulnerable and active travel users;
DM – P2	Electric Vehicle (EV) Parking Strategy	At new developments, in public car parks, on-street (for rapid charging and those without access to private driveways), taxi ranks, mix of rapid and slow charging, distinguish between O&D charging needs.

Option Reference	Measure	Description
		Expanding on existing provision as identified in the baseline report, typically planning mandates 10% of parking spaces be EV charging spaces
DM – P3	Electric Vehicle (EV) Parking Pricing Strategies	Integration over time with Public Parking Pricing policies, balanced to encourage take up of EVs without encouraging unnecessary car trips by providing free parking for EVs.
DM – P4	Car Clubs	Car Club provision in town centre and at key residential and mixed use developments (currently no providers) – promotes concept of shared mobility, reducing need for individual car ownership & storage. Reliant on commercial operators to deliver, who are impacted by market conditions/demand.
DM – P5	Parking for new developments	Reduced Residential Parking & Workplace Parking standards for new developments in appropriate locations (e.g., in areas well served by sustainable transport options); require EV spaces within new residential, workplace and mixed use developments; require Car Club spaces within new residential, workplace and mixed use developments

## 6.6 KPI Assessment

The Transport Strategy as a whole has been assessed against the objectives and KPIs listed in **Table 8**. The strategy has been assessed against an existing ‘Do Nothing’ scenario using the five point rating scale outlined in **Table 9**. The following sections provide an overview of the performance of the Preferred Strategy in meeting the overarching study objectives.

### 6.6.1 Accessibility & Social Inclusion

**Table 11. Accessibility & Social Inclusion Objectives – Strategy Outcomes**

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Support and implement transport measures which reduce car dependency and improve access to local services by sustainable modes	Access to key services (ATOS Analysis)	<span style="background-color: #92d050; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></span>
	Access to Public Transport	<span style="background-color: #92d050; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></span>

Strong pedestrian and cycle linkages are proposed to existing, as well as future planned employment locations within the town to support sustainable travel to work. The NTA’s ATOS tool was re-run for the future Preferred network proposed as part of the LTP and showed an improvement in accessibility to services within Loughrea as a result of the LTP measures.

The improved quality of the bus stop infrastructure in both the town centre and the stops located on the eastern and western radial routes is deemed to likely increase accessibility to public transport for the town’s residents.

### 6.6.2 Integration

**Table 12. Integration Objectives – Strategy Outcomes**

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
To align and integrate with existing and emerging national, regional, and local planning policy	Compatibility of transport measures with local, regional and national policy - Rating Scale	

The overwhelming focus of the Transport Strategy on active modes and urban realm enhancements is deemed to comply with national and regional policy, in particular regarding modal shift targets. Existing constraints such as street and footway widths preventing the development of a full walking and cycling network are noted.

### 6.6.3 Safety & Physical Activity

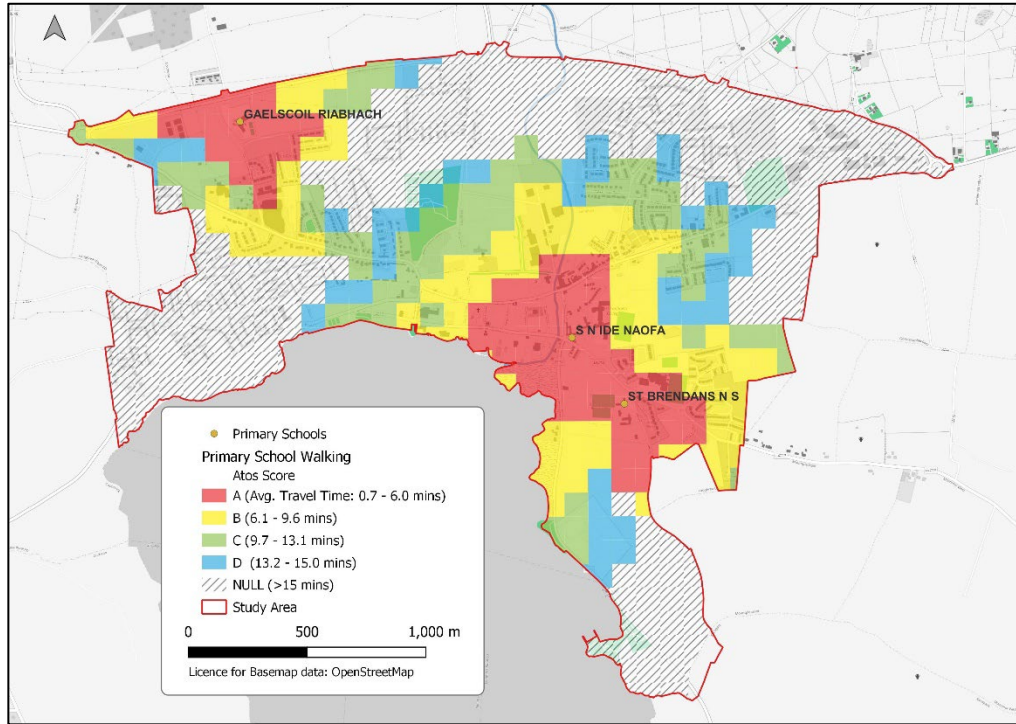
**Table 13. Safety & Physical Activity Objectives – Strategy Outcomes**

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Provide safe access to schools for vulnerable road users and ensure a safe front of school environment	Qualitative assessment of walking and cycling infrastructure to schools - Rating Scale	
	Reduction in walking/cycling distances to school sites (GIS/ATOS assessment)	

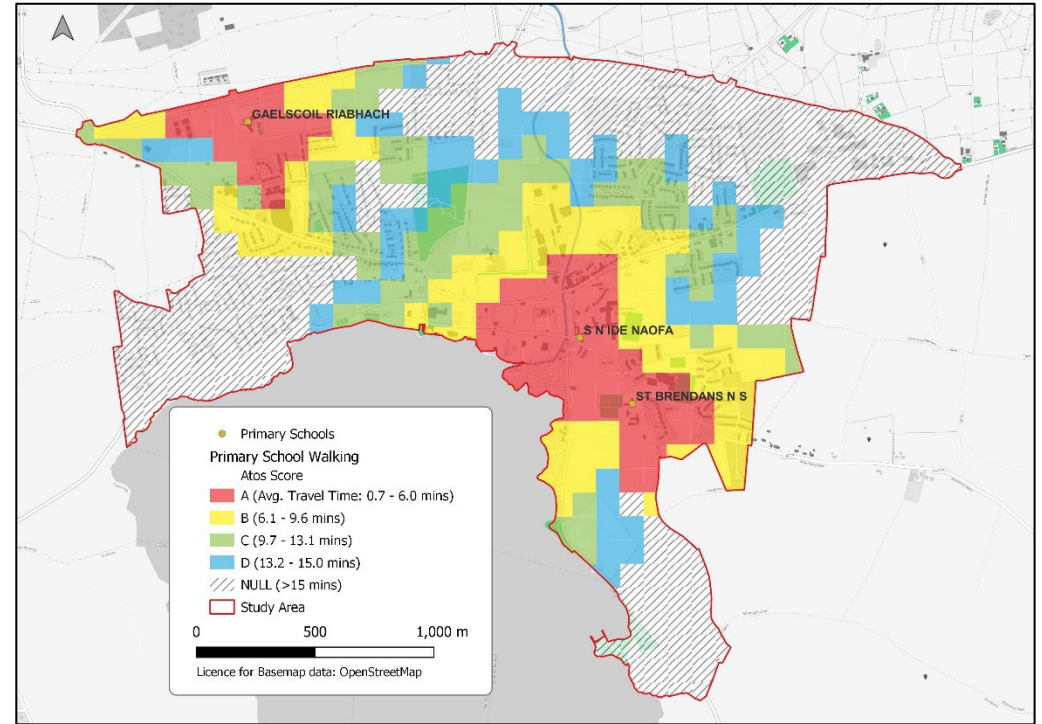
The LTP Transport Strategy will significantly develop opportunities for safer, healthier and active travel options in Loughrea and surrounding areas by delivering an enhanced environment for active travel choices. This will support a reduction in the number of road collision casualties and help to increase physical activity levels through increased walking and cycling trips.

Given the limited existing provision of safe cycle infrastructure in Loughrea, the benefits resulting from the implementation of the Transport Strategy are considered substantial.

The ATOS tool was re-run with the future LTP active travel network to illustrate the impact of the proposed measures on access to schools. The figure below shows the results for walk access to primary schools within Loughrea. The results highlight an increase in accessibility due to the proposed LTP active travel network with more areas in the north west of the town moving from a “Null” score to B, C or D.




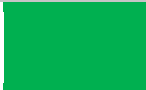
**Figure 32. Access to Primary Schools – Walking (Current)**



**Figure 33. Access to Primary Schools – Walking (Proposed)**

## 6.6.4 Environment

**Table 14. Environment Objectives – Strategy Outcomes**

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Contribute to achieving Climate Action Plan targets through the creation of an environment which encourages a modal shift from the private car to more sustainable modes.	Anticipated change on sustainable mode shares - rating scale	
	Length of additional / improved walk and cycle infrastructure	

The proposed cycle network route length is shown below in **Table 15**.

**Table 15. Proposed Cycle Network Route Length**

CATEGORY	ROUTE TYPE	LENGTH (KM)
Primary Network	Two-Way Segregated Routes	10.6
	Traffic Free Routes	0.3
	Off Street Routes	1.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12.5</b>
Secondary Network	Quietway Routes	3.7
	Permeability Connections	2.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>19.0</b>

The proposed strategy includes approximately 19km of cycle routes for Loughrea. Of this, over 12km forms the primary network, consisting of segregated cycle tracks, off-street routes and traffic free streets. A further 6.5km consists of Quietway routes and permeability connections which form part of the secondary network.

As the current provision of safe cycle infrastructure within Loughrea is minimal, the proposed network represents a substantial benefit to active travel and safety within the town, with particular regard to helping increase the cycle mode share for shorter trips.

The Loughrea LTP Transport Strategy will deliver enhanced sustainable connectivity across the town, supporting environmental improvements through reductions in carbon emissions, safeguarding local air quality and enhancing the public realm to support active travel. This will support the delivery of the Climate Action Plan targets.

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Given the limited existing provision of safe cycle infrastructure in Loughrea, the benefits resulting from the implementation of the Transport Strategy are considered substantial.

### 6.6.5 Economy

Table 16. Economy Objectives – Strategy Outcomes

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Contribute to Loughrea’s economic vitality through improved connectivity and enhanced public realm	Access to Town Centre	Green
	Quality of Town centre streetscape and public realm – Rating Scale	Green
	Deliverability Rating Scale	Green

The Loughrea LTP Transport Strategy will support, protect and improve the economic growth of Loughrea for the plan period and beyond. The delivery of an efficient and sustainable transport network will connect people to employment and education opportunities while supporting inward investment and the retail and tourism vitality of the town. It will also enable opportunities for enhanced place making and urban realm improvements, particularly in the town centre. This will support the delivery of the Loughrea LAP and the function of Loughrea as a self-sustaining town.

The options proposed are considered as realistic to be delivered within the lifetime of the Loughrea LAP, with the exception of the more strategic schemes such as the eastern road link.

The table below summarises the proposed schemes as well as their intended timeframe. Short-term is defined as within the next 1-2 years, medium term as 2-6 years (covering the remainder of the LAP period) and long term as beyond the LAP period (>7 years).

Table 17. Proposed Measures Summary

CATEGORY	PROPOSED MEASURE	TIMEFRAME
Walking & Cycling	Primary Network	Short Term (temporary measures), Medium Term (permanent measures)
	Permeability Connections	Short Term (locations requiring simple works), Medium/Long Term (locations requiring bridges /new road links)
	Existing Disused Rail Corridor	Medium Term
Town Centre Improvements	Main Street Urban Realm Enhancements	Short Term
	Parking Rationalisation	Short Term

CATEGORY	PROPOSED MEASURE	TIMEFRAME
Public Transport	Bus Infrastructure	Short Term
Road Improvements	Vehicle restrictions on specified links	Short Term
	Eastern Link Route	Long Term
Supporting Measures	Behaviour change support and Mobility Management	Across Programme Timeframe

## 7. MONITORING STRATEGY & LTP REVIEW

A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be developed and implemented as part of the delivery process for the Loughrea LTP. This will monitor mode share ambitions and benchmark performance during the plan period.

The NTA guidance recommends undertaking reviews during defined timeframes (e.g. short term 1-2 years; medium 2-5 years; long term 5 to 10 years; future-term 10 to 15 years). At the end of each timeframe, monitoring can be conducted to establish the following:

- Progress on the implementation of all infrastructure measures for each mode of transport.
- Progress on the implementation of all public transport service measures for each mode of transport.
- Progress on the implementation of all demand management and supporting smarter travel measures.
- Cross-checking of assumptions in the ABTA against current transport patterns and population at the time of monitoring.
- Assessment of actual development and land use outcomes within the ABTA Study Area at the time of monitoring against the original ABTA assumptions related to land use.

Evaluation of the outcomes of the ABTA can also be undertaken within similar timeframes including evaluating the following:

- Sustainable Travel Mode Share – for example via updated Census POWSCAR data, Employment and School Mobility Management Plan data, local residents’ surveys, cycling and walking counts and bus patronage data.
- Economic Benefits – for example via town centre footfall and spend surveys, distinguishing between those who travelled to the town centre by car and by sustainable means.
- Health and Safety Benefits – for example via analysis of available local road safety statistics.
- Environmental Benefits – for example via Air Quality and Noise monitors at key locations within the Town Centre and usage of public Electric Vehicle car charging and eBike parking facilities. User surveys can also be conducted to determine user satisfaction levels with new active travel infrastructure and public transport services and waiting environments.
- Accessibility and Social Inclusion – updated catchment analysis for access into and within town centre, including for those without access to a car.

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## 8. SUMMARY

### 8.1 Overview

This report outlines the process undertaken to develop the Loughrea Local Transport Plan (LTP) for consultation. The key purpose of the LTP is to guide the future transport and mobility needs of Loughrea, taking into account the transport demand arising from existing and projected development both within the study area and the wider area of influence.

In developing the LTP, SYSTRA have followed guidelines set out in TII/NTA's 'Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes. A detailed Baseline Assessment was undertaken to understand existing conditions within Loughrea along with potential opportunities and constraints. Core study objectives were identified for the Loughrea LTP grounded in National, Regional and Local policy.

Through site visits, and a review of existing conditions and relevant policies and plans, a long-list of proposed measures were identified to support the future transport needs of Loughrea. These options were passed through a detail options assessment process to determine the package of measures that would form the Loughrea LTP for consultation. The full set of strategy measures were assessed against the study objectives using identified Key Performance Indicators.

The LTP proposes a series of interlinked measures which are designed to increase the mode share of walking and cycling trips within the town, improve active mode connections within the town centre, enhance accessibility by active modes to the town's education facilities, improve the town's public transport connections and rebalance the road network in and around the town in line with the desired modal hierarchy.

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