

# Gort Local Area Plan 2013-2023

**\* Deferred 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018**



**Forward Planning**  
Galway County Council  
Áras an Chontae  
Prospect Hill Galway

**\* Deferral of Notice under 19(1)(d) for a period of 5 years from 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

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# 1. Introduction

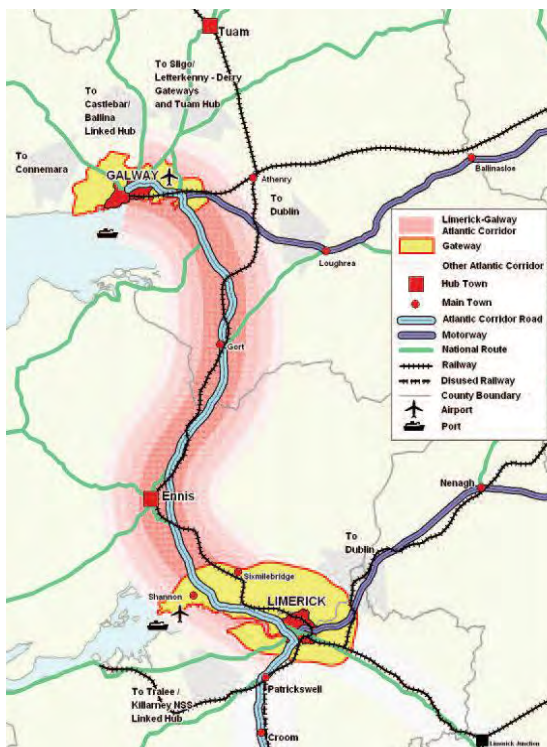
## 1.1 Preamble

The Gort Local Area Plan is a land use plan and overall strategy for the development of Gort over the period 2013-2019. The Plan shall have effect from the date of adoption by the elected members of Galway County Council and shall cease to have effect at the expiration of 6 years from that date, unless the plan period is extended by resolution in accordance with Section 12 (d) to (f) of the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010*. The successful implementation of the Plan will have a positive impact on Gort, ensuring it develops in a sustainable manner, and will also complement the implementation of the current *Galway County Development Plan 2009-2015* and subsequent *Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021*

## 1.2 Profile of Gort

The strategic geographical location of Gort makes it accessible to most major towns and tourist attractions in Connaught. Gort is located approximately 32 kilometres south of Galway Gateway and 64 kilometres north from Limerick Gateway on the M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway. The Gort to Tuam PPP Scheme (M18/M17) will involve the construction of a motorway northwards from Gort via Athenry to Tuam Hub. This scheme forms part of the Atlantic Road Corridor, as outlined under Transport 21, the Government's transport strategy. Gort is also connected to the M6 Galway to Dublin Motorway via the N18 at Oranmore and via the N66 at Loughrea. The town lies in close proximity to Galway Regional Airport and to Shannon International Airport. The Ennis - Athenry portion of the Western Rail Corridor passes through Gort and links Galway City to Limerick City thereby enhancing accessibility to and from the town. Gort also benefits from key energy infrastructure – the town is connected to the gas pipeline network, and has access to the electricity transmission grid of 38kV, 110kV and 220kV. The 440kV (the main national transmission line from Moneypoint to Dublin) is located close to the southern aspect of the LAP boundary. Certain types of wind energy development could be considered subject to the criteria of the County Wind Energy Strategy 2011. The town also benefits from telecommunications infrastructure such as broadband (Metropolitan Area Networks) including co-location, which is considered key for industrial companies.

The majority of the above infrastructure has been developed since the adoption of the previous Gort Local Area Plan 2006-2012.



Gort is also identified as a main town/important urban settlement on the Galway-Limerick/Shannon Development Corridor which connects Galway Gateway with Limerick Gateway and is one of 4 corridors as contained within the Atlantic Gateways Corridor Development Framework. This Overview Report progresses the Atlantic Gateways Initiative (AGI) through an integrated approach to the development of the Gateway cities of Cork, Limerick-Shannon, Galway and Waterford and which forms a key implementation step of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), the Government's overall policy framework to achieve more balanced regional development. In order to develop the Atlantic Gateway Corridor, recommendations of the DoEHLG include: „to accelerate the delivery of the Atlantic Corridor and Western Rail Corridor (both of which pass through Gort), the development of key settlements along the route (including Gort), the management of urban sprawl and the careful management of development pressures at major transportation interchanges”.

Figure 1: Galway-Limerick/Shannon Corridor:

Source: Atlantic Gateways Corridor Development Frameworks, Overview Report.

As an early settlement Gort developed on elevated ground adjacent to the present Market Square which forms the principal open space and focus of the town. The expansion of the town has occurred on relatively flat, low lying land surrounding the Square. The Cannahowna/Gort River, which meanders from the south through this land, is subject to occasional flooding and has acted as a constraint on the development of some areas. The Ennis - Athenry portion of the Western Rail Corridor railway line runs parallel to the river, and this too has tended to act as a physical barrier to the expansion of the town centre.

Gort takes its name, Gort Inse Guaire, from Guaire Aidhne, the sixth century King of Connaught and patron of St. Colman Mac Duach. In 1608, Roger O' Shaughnessy, was given a patent to hold a weekly market in Gort, indicating that it was beginning to expand, possibly due to the existence of the O' Shaughnessy castle and mansion. The first Lord Gort, John Prendergast-Smyth, is credited with founding the modern town of Gort, many new industries were established and new houses were built. As well as being an important commercial centre, Gort became the local government and administration centre with the building of the Court House and bridewell.

Gort's built environment has the appearance of a planned, well laid out town of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most significantly, two civic spaces lie at its heart, the Market Square and Canon Quinn Park to the rear of St. Coleman's Catholic Church. Other important spaces include the graveyard of the former Church of Ireland church. There is also a substantial amount of private open space in the town centre mainly in the form of yards and gardens behind buildings. These backlands offer considerable potential for future development including access but this must take place in a planned and integrated manner so as to maintain the town's character. Church Road and Queen Street form part of an urban block with Bridge Street and Market Square at the centre. Barrack Street, running broadly north east from Market Square, leads to an area which includes the former barracks, workshops and police buildings

The main road, defined by Crowe Street, Bridge Street, Georges Street and Bride Street, is part of the N18. Buildings lining the main streets vary in size, style and age, those fronting Bridge Street and around Market Square are generally more imposing, typically 3 stories. Towards the edges of town, along the southern end of Georges Street, Crowe Street and western end of Church Street, most buildings do not exceed two stories.

Gort provides an important retail, educational and service function for a catchment area, which extends into County Clare. There are significant employment opportunities within the town, which has a viable commercial core. Retail and commercial uses are primarily located along Bridge Street and around Market Square, including the presence of franchise convenience retailers retail and service uses elsewhere. The IDA continues to manage a business/enterprise park to the west of the town and adjacent to the M18 motorway. An established industrial area in the north of the town has been extended under the 206-2012 LAP. The residential growth experienced within the town in recent years (mainly to the northwest and south of the town) has further strengthened the economic base of the town.

Areas of ecological and environmental sensitivity have remained undeveloped, specifically areas along by the Cannahowna/Gort River which flows in a northerly direction through the town.

The Coole-Garryland Complex is designated as a Natural Heritage Area, a candidate Special Area of Conservation (site code 000252) and a Special Protection Area (site code 004107). The Coole-Garryland Complex is located outside the LAP boundary to the northwest and forms part of the pan-European network of designated sites.

Gort is located within the groundwater and surface water catchments of the Coole-Garryland turlough. This is considered to be the most important turlough in Ireland. It is a wetland system of global significance. Coole Park located 3.5km from the town centre and outside the Plan boundary is a National Nature Reserve due to its great wildlife importance - its native woodlands and turloughs.

The pattern and form of development in Gort has been shaped by the landscape, topography and natural features of the area and the various stages of historical development. The town's development pattern and form can be described and characterised as follows:

- **Strategic location and setting** – the main north-south axis through the town has been created by the M18 Motorway, by the railway line and by the barrier created by the Cannahowna/Gort River. The lack of development space within the town coupled with the

physical constraints of the river, its floodplains and railway line has resulted in much of the modern housing estates being located northwest and southwest of the town which contrasts significantly with the compact historic core.

- **Medieval town core** – the area along Crowe Street, Bridge Street, George’s Street contains the original street pattern with a single main street along the north-south axis and is surrounded by a number of occasional lanes perpendicular to the main street all of which converge on Market Square - the main civic focus of the town.
- **Approach routes and expansion** – the extension of linear development out long the approach roads into the town, both historically through the form of street-facing dwellings adjoining the main approach routes and more recently through the development of single houses along the approach routes, together with an increasing tendency toward the development of inward-looking housing estates accessed off the approach routes and local roads.
- **Motorway** – construction of the motorway to the west and north of the town, will potentially restrict future expansion in these areas. The opening of the motorway has removed a significant amount of through traffic from the town centre.
- **Activities and Amenities** – the concentration of activities and amenities in the town centre including the main street network, Canon Quinn Park, town hall, the library and the historic and ecclesiastical heritage, the schools and other community facilities, the Cannahowna/Gort River and associated amenities and local walkways.
- **Town edges** – The edges of the town are defined by agricultural lands, although ribbon development has blurred the demarcation between urban/suburban and rural.

**Tourist Attractions** – Significant tourist attractions include Coole Park, Thoor Ballylee, Kilmacduagh Monastic Settlement, Gort Golf Course and GAA pitch and although located outside of the town they are closely interlinked with the town. Gort is also close to the Burren.

The Core Strategy of the County Development Plan 2009-2015 has identified Gort as self sufficient settlement and a ‘**Key Town**’ in the settlement hierarchy. Presently Gort has 106.20ha of undeveloped residential zoned. In order to align the new Plan with the Core Strategy zoning requirement, a total of 23.66ha is required for new residential development. In achieving this allocation, a variety of options with regard to the existing zoning can be examined through the plan process including phasing development, re-zoning, and de-zoning. It is important that future development for anticipated growth is plan led so that Gort can enhance its vibrancy and grow in a sustainable manner.

In terms of population trends, according to the most recent 2011 CSO figure, the population of Gort was recorded as 2636 persons. This represents a population decrease of -5.2% (-146 persons) from the previous Census of 2006. It is recognised that the population growth targets (an additional 820 persons by 2016) as set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines and the County Development Plan Core Strategy are ambitious in the current economic climate.

## **1.3 Local Area Plan**

### **1.3.1 Background to the Local Area Plan**

This Local Area Plan (LAP) has been prepared by Galway County Council (GCC) to provide a statutory framework for the future growth, development and improvement of Gort that is consistent with the policies and objectives contained in *the Galway County Development Plan (GCDP) 2009-2015* including its *Core Strategy/Settlement Strategy* and which addresses the needs and requirements of the local community, service providers and other stakeholders. The purpose of the Local Area Plan is to guide future development within the town of Gort, in a sustainable and equitable manner and to inform members of the public, the local community, stakeholders and developers regarding policies and objectives for the development of the town, including provisions in relation to land use management, community facilities and amenities, transport and infrastructure, urban design, heritage and the environment.

This Plan shall have effect from the date of adoption by the Members of Galway County Council and shall cease to have effect at the expiration of 6 years from that date, unless the timeframe is extended by resolution in accordance with *Section 12 (d) to (f) of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010*.

The Plan area for Gort is comprised of the town and its immediate environs. The Plan area is considered to provide an appropriate development envelope for the anticipated growth of Gort for the Plan period.

### **1.3.2 Statutory Process**

A Local Area Plan is prepared under the provisions of Sections 18, 19 & 20 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended. A Local Area Plan is statutorily required to be consistent with the objectives of Galway County Development Plan 2009-2015 and consists of a written statement and plans which may include objectives for the zoning of land in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The legislation also requires the provision of detail on community facilities, amenities and detail on standards for the design of developments and structures.

Environmental assessments have also been undertaken to assess the potential impacts of the Local Area Plan on the environment, and on European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network including a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA). The Strategic Environmental Assessment has been prepared in accordance with the *EU Directive on SEA (2001/42/EC)*, the national *Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations (SI No. 436 of 2004 and (SI No. 200 of 2011))* and the *2004 Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines Implementation of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment* issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and had regard to Circular PSSP 6/2011 „Further Transposition of the EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). A Strategic Environmental Assessment is required to assess the likely significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the Local Area Plan, before a decision is made to adopt it. The relevant recommendations and mitigation measures from the Strategic Environmental Report process have been incorporated into this Local Area Plan.

The Habitats Directive Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with Article 6(3) of the *EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, the national *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No.477 of 2011)*, the *Appropriate Assessment Guidelines 2010* issued by the DEHLG and the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended). A HDA (also referred to as an „Appropriate Assessment" or „AA") is required to determine whether a plan or project will have a significant adverse effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on the integrity of any European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network, in view of its conservation objectives. In the case of Gort, this includes the Coole-Garryland Complex candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA) and other European sites within 15km of the Local Area Plan area. The relevant recommendations and mitigation measures from the AA Natura Impact Report process have been incorporated into the Plan.

A Stage 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has also been prepared to consider the flood risk issues relevant to the development of the Plan Area. The Stage 2 SFRA has been prepared in accordance with the *EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)*, the national *European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 (SI No. 122 of 2010)* and the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* issued by the DoEHLG.

## 1.4 Plan Structure

This Local Area Plan has been structured into 4 main sections with separate supporting documents:

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> 1.1 Preamble 1.2 Profile of Gort 1.3 Local Area Plan 1.4 Plan Informants and Considerations
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Strategic Vision and Development Strategy</b> 2.1 Strategic Vision 2.2 Development Strategy
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Development Policies, Objectives and Guidelines</b> 3.1 Land Use Management 3.2 Residential Development 3.3 Social and Community Development 3.4 Economic Development 3.5 Transportation Infrastructure 3.6 Utility and Environmental Infrastructure 3.7 Urban Design and Landscape 3.8 Built and Cultural Heritage 3.9 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Local Area Plan Maps</b> 4.1/4.2 Map 1A & 1B – Land Use Zoning 4.3/4.4 Map 2A & 2B – Specific Objectives 4.5/4.6 Map 3A & 3B – Flood Risk Management

## 1.5 Plan Informants and Considerations

### 1.5.1 Plan Informants

The preparation of the Gort Local Area Plan has been informed by a wide range of inputs, including the following:

<b>Public Consultation</b>	Issues raised by the local community and other stakeholders through the publication of a background Issues Paper, draft public consultation and written submissions.
<b>Legislative Context</b>	All relevant Irish and European planning and environmental legislation, in particular: national legislation, including the <i>Planning and Development Act 2000-2010</i> , <i>Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2011</i> , <i>National Monuments Act 1930-2004</i> and <i>Wildlife Acts 1976-2000</i> ; EU Directives, including the <i>Birds Directive (2009/147/EEC)</i> , <i>Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)</i> , the Environmental Liability Directive, <i>Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)</i> , <i>SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)</i> , <i>Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)</i> and <i>Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)</i> ; and associated national Regulations.
<b>Strategic Planning Context</b>	National and regional plans, policies and guidelines, in particular: the <i>Sustainable Development Strategy for Ireland 1997 including the document Our Sustainable Future</i> , A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland 2012, the <i>National Development Plan 2007-2013</i> , the <i>National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020</i> , the <i>Smarter Travel Policy 2009-2020</i> , the <i>National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012</i> , the <i>National Biodiversity Plan 2011-2016</i> and the <i>Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022</i> ; and a range of national guidelines including the <i>SEA Guidelines 2004</i> , the <i>Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines 2009</i> , the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009</i> , the <i>Appropriate Assessment Guidelines</i>



	<i>2010 and the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012</i>
<b>Statutory Planning Context</b>	Statutory plans, in particular: the previous Local Area Plan for Gort and the need for compliance and consistency with <i>Galway County Development Plan 2009-2015, including the Core Strategy</i> and other relevant policies, objectives and guidelines, and the <i>Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022</i> .
<b>Local Planning Context</b>	Local plans, strategies and studies, including: the <i>Biodiversity Action Plan for County Galway 2008-2013</i> ; the <i>Galway County Heritage Plan 2010-2016</i> ; <i>Galway Transportation and Planning Study 2002</i> ; <i>Developing Sustainable Tourism in Galway: A Framework for Action 2003-2012</i> ; <i>Water-Based Tourism – A Strategic Vision for Galway 2002</i> ; and <i>Working Together: Shaping Our Future: Galway County Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002-2012</i>
<b>Environmental Assessment</b>	Assessment of potential environmental impacts of the Local Area Plan, and flood risk issues in Gort, including a <i>Strategic Environmental Assessment</i> , <i>Habitats Directive Assessment</i> and the elements of the <i>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</i> for County Galway relevant to the Plan area including the Stage 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Gort LAP.

### 1.5.2 Plan Issues, Considerations & Challenges

The proper planning and sustainable development of Gort encompasses a broad range of issues, considerations and challenges. The Plan seeks to balance the wide ranging, and sometimes competing, needs of the local community, businesses, landowners and the environment along with promoting the role of Gort as a „Key Town“ within County Galway, as established in the Galway County Development Plan.

Some of the key issues, considerations and challenges are set out below:

- **Common Vision** – A common strategic vision needs to be developed that provides a positive framework for future growth, consolidation and enhancement of the town in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.
- **Core Strategy** – The Core Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan has identified a target population growth of up to 820 persons for Gort to 2015, which results in a requirement for 23.66Ha of zoned land for residential purposes (based on 50% over-zoning). A key factor in the preparation of the Plan has been the determination of the best locations for residential land uses within the town to accommodate this future growth and to ensure residential development takes place in an orderly and sequential manner.
- **Population Growth** – Given the growth patterns experienced in Gort over the last three Census periods, ensuring appropriate, sustainable settlement patterns, including the provision of the necessary planning framework to accommodate educational, community, leisure and recreational facilities to satisfactorily match the level of population growth, is a key issue in planning for the future.
- **Strategic Location and Role** – Gort’s strategic location within the County, on the southern approach to Galway City with its air and sea transportation routes, at the junction of major road transport routes (including M18 and the N18), the Ennis - Athenry portion of the Western Rail Corridor, energy and telecommunications infrastructure and with the benefit of a high level of self-sufficiency and historic built heritage provides a basis for the future growth of the area and harnessing the strategic role of the town.
- **Economic Activity** – Ensuring the enhancement of Gort’s role as a self-sufficient urban centre that provides an important focus for commercial, industrial, enterprise and business opportunities in the south of the County. This includes fostering and maintaining local and

small scale businesses to protect the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre, while ensuring that Gort remains an attractive place to work, live, visit and do business.

- **Infrastructure and Transportation** – Working towards ensuring that infrastructure is developed (most significantly the M18/M17 the Gort to Tuam PPP Scheme) on an ongoing basis to service future developments so as to accommodate planned population growth, whilst ensuring compliance with statutory obligations to achieve good water quality status under the *EU Water Framework Directive* and associated national legislation. Addressing deficiencies in the existing pedestrian and cycling network, promoting walking/cycling and reducing car dependency are also key considerations in the Local Area Plan process.
- **Heritage and Environment** – Promoting and facilitating appropriate growth of the town, while protecting the built, cultural and natural heritage of Gort in accordance with applicable legislation and policy. This also includes consideration of the environmental designations that are within 15km of the Plan area, including the various natural and heritage features and amenities in the Plan area. The Strategic Environmental Report and AA Natura Impact Report will examine the likely impact of implementing the Plan on the Natura 2000 network and other environmental receptors. Ensure compliance with National Monument Legislation 1930-2004.
- **Flood Risk** – Flood risk issues are an important consideration in the preparation of the Local Area Plan, particularly in zoning lands for appropriate uses in flood risk areas, and the Local Area Plan has been guided by the PFRA and by the Stage 2 SFRA for the Gort LAP area.

## 2. Strategic Vision and Development Strategy

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### 2.1 Strategic Vision

The Local Area Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision intended to guide the future growth and development of Gort in a sustainable manner, achieving the overall objectives set out for the town in the Galway County Development Plan and in a way that reflects the existing character and amenity of the area, the surrounding landscape, heritage, environment and improves the quality of life of residents and the local community.

#### Strategic Vision

Gort will be a sustainable, self-sufficient, vibrant, socially inclusive and innovative growth centre within the County, protecting and enhancing its attractive medieval character and natural environment, supporting an educated workforce, providing a range of supporting services/facilities/amenities and with a high quality of life for the local community. This will be delivered through a managed and phased development strategy on appropriately zoned and serviced lands in a manner that is balanced and sustainable for Gort and the immediate environs that it serves.

The strategic vision is informed by a number of guiding principles, the pursuit and progressive realisation of which will help to ensure that the strategic vision for Gort can be achieved:

- **Realising the town's potential** as a „Key Town“ as set out in the Galway County Development Plan and attracting and planning for the population target established in the Core Strategy up to 2015 and beyond.
- **Reflecting the needs and aspirations** of local communities, businesses and other interested and affected groups, as expressed through the public consultation process.
- **Promoting sustainable land use and transport** by capitalising on the opportunity presented by the delivery of the new M18 Gort to Crusheen motorway, the Ennis-Athenry section of the Western Rail Corridor so that sustainable travel, including walking and cycling, and integrated land use and transportation become central to the development of new neighbourhoods and the future development of Gort.
- **Maintaining a strong and vibrant town centre** that sustains the ability to attract new businesses and meets the retailing and service needs of the town and its surrounding hinterland, in addition to offering a pleasant and attractive environment for shopping, business, recreation and living.
- **Facilitating the provision of a range of facilities, amenities and supporting services** to serve the needs of the town, including educational, recreational, religious, social, community and civic requirements for children, youths, adults and the elderly.
- **Fostering economic development and employment creation** by optimising the potential of the town's strategic location and enhancing Gort as a place of employment through the provision of a positive and flexible framework for the creation of new employment opportunities.
- **Supporting the delivery of support infrastructure** necessary to facilitate the future growth and sustainable development of the town.
- Promoting strong community spirit, social inclusion, civic pride and local identity for the town within the broader rural area surrounding Gort.
- **Protecting and enhancing the heritage and character** of Gort including the natural assets, environment, built heritage, public realm, local character and amenity, for the benefit of current and future generations.

## **2.2 Development Strategy**

### **2.2.1 Core Strategy Context**

A Core Strategy is required under the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended) to ensure that the development objectives of Development Plans/Local Area Plans are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the *National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020* and with the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022* as adopted on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2010. The Regional Planning Guidelines prescribe that an additional 15,760 persons will be living in the County (not including Galway City) by 2016.

The Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan set out the additional population allocations for County Galway and the various tiers in the settlement hierarchy up to 2015, having regard to the population growth targets set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines. Gort is on the third tier of the settlement hierarchy and its role as a „Key Town“ is to sustain its growth in order to achieve Gort’s potential as a self-sustaining town.

A key component of the Local Area Plan is to ensure that it aligns with the Core Strategy/Settlement Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan. The Core Strategy indicates that Gort has been assigned a population growth target of 820 persons by 2015 with a housing land requirement of 15.77Ha, or 23.66Ha with 50% over-zoning, in order to accommodate residential development over the Plan period. Under the previous *Gort Local Area Plan 2006-2012*, there was over 106.20Ha of undeveloped zoned residential land within the development boundary. The current Local Area Plan considers various development zoning and phasing options so as to comply with the Core Strategy and to ensure that suitable lands are brought forward for development during the Plan period.

It will be a central element of the Local Area Plan to ensure that the population growth targets specified for Gort in the County Development Plan Core Strategy, and any updated version of same, will be adhered to and accommodated in a sustainable and plan led manner, on serviced residential zoned lands in accordance with the policies and objectives set out in the Local Area Plan and in a manner that is consistent with the principles and intention of the Core Strategy.

### **2.2.2 Development Options**

In order to achieve the strategic vision for Gort, it is important to examine a number of different Development Strategy Options to ascertain which option can deliver most effectively on the vision for the town. Continuing with the previous Local Area Plan is not considered an appropriate approach as it would not take account of advances in planning guidance, best practice or recent changes to legislation or EU Directives. Such an approach would also conflict with the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Core Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan and would therefore not be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the town.

Due to the physical constraints of the motorway, railway line and the Gort/Cannahowna River, there are limited development options available for the future expansion of Gort.

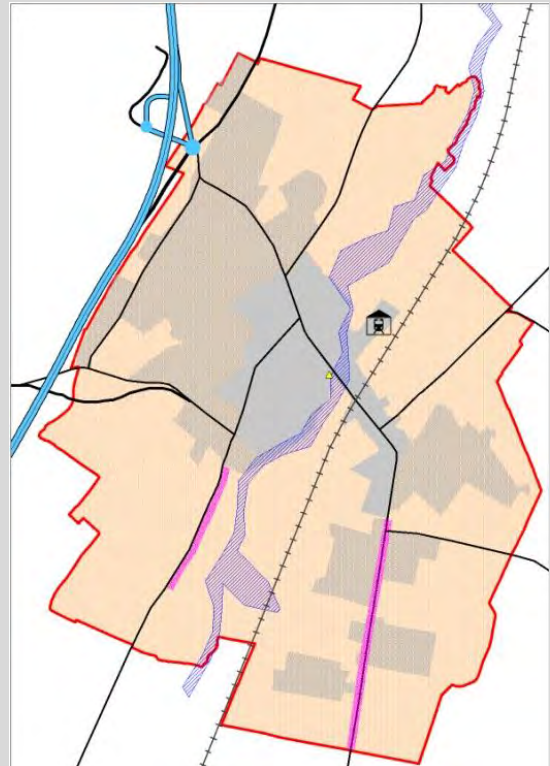
A number of potential development options however have been developed, having regard to the Core Strategy, settlement hierarchy and town role envisaged in the Galway County Development Plan, the population and growth trends and potential of the town, the existing development pattern and character of the town, existing amenities and environmental sensitivities and the lands and services available for future development.

These options are described and illustrated in the maps below, which are indicative and for presentation purposes only. The option maps use a number of common features to aid clarity, including the plan boundary (red outline), existing main roads/railway line (black lines), flood risk areas (blue hatch), existing town centre (dark grey) and built fabric (light grey), new development/growth areas (pink/purple) and residual plan areas (orange).

## Development Strategy Options

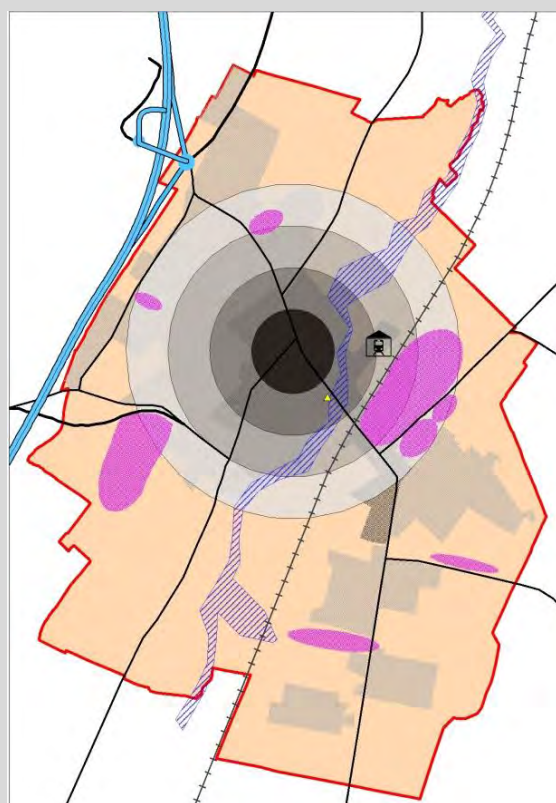
### Development Option 1 – Extend Development Southwards

**Option 1:** This scenario would encourage peripheral, car based development on the southern edges of the town, mainly along the Ennis Road (R458) and Tubber Road (L4514) on undeveloped lands outside the 10 min walking distance (800m) of the town centre, existing built fabric and essential wastewater services. This option is also likely to impact negatively on the vitality and viability of the town centre, on the strategic function of the M18 Motorway, N18 and N66 as traffic arteries, national/regional routes and in relation to public transport via the Ennis - Athenry section of the Western Rail Corridor. Lands have also been identified within flood risk areas particularly south of the Tubber Road and north of the Cannahowna/Gort River. Pluvial flooding has also been identified on lands to the south eastern periphery of the LAP boundary between the Tubber Road (L4514) and the Cannahowna/Gort River and also to the north of the Ennis Road (R458).



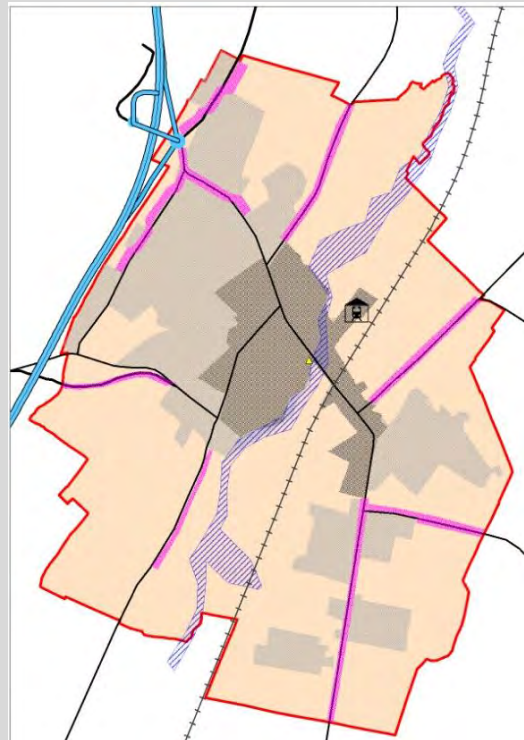
### Development Option 2 – Consolidate Existing Town Centre, Sequential Development around Established Urban Core and Controlled Eastward Expansion

**Option 2:** This option provides for the consolidation of the existing town centre, sequential development around the established urban core within the town and controlled eastward expansion along the N66 Route. Town centre consolidation is achievable through promoting appropriate densities at the right locations and supporting the redevelopment of brownfield, derelict and back land sites including existing laneways which primarily lead to Market Square and within the urban core of Gort. New Town Centre development (C1) and Residential Phase 1 (phased for residential development within the lifetime of the Plan) are proposed in a contiguous and sequential manner in an eastward direction along the N66 in particular. This development option will potentially maximise return on investment of services especially public transport, will also potentially ensure the availability of optimal, residential lands to accommodate anticipated growth defined by the County Core Strategy requirements. This option will also avoid significant environmental impacts in relation to identified flood risk areas and ensures compliance with the Flood Risk Guidelines 2009.



### Development Option 3 – Extend Development out along Existing Approach Roads

**Option 3:** This scenario provides for the intensification and extension of new development along the existing approach roads into Gort. Development under this option would result in an increase in ribbon development on all inward routes with associated impacts in terms of poor environmental quality, increased traffic and congestion along the approach roads, increasingly peripheral, car based development and would militate against easy walking distance to the town centre. This option may also lead to the unsustainable management of development in relation to flood risk areas, the continuance of urban sprawl and the improper management of development pressures at major transportation interchanges specifically in relation to the M18 Motorway located to the north west of Gort.

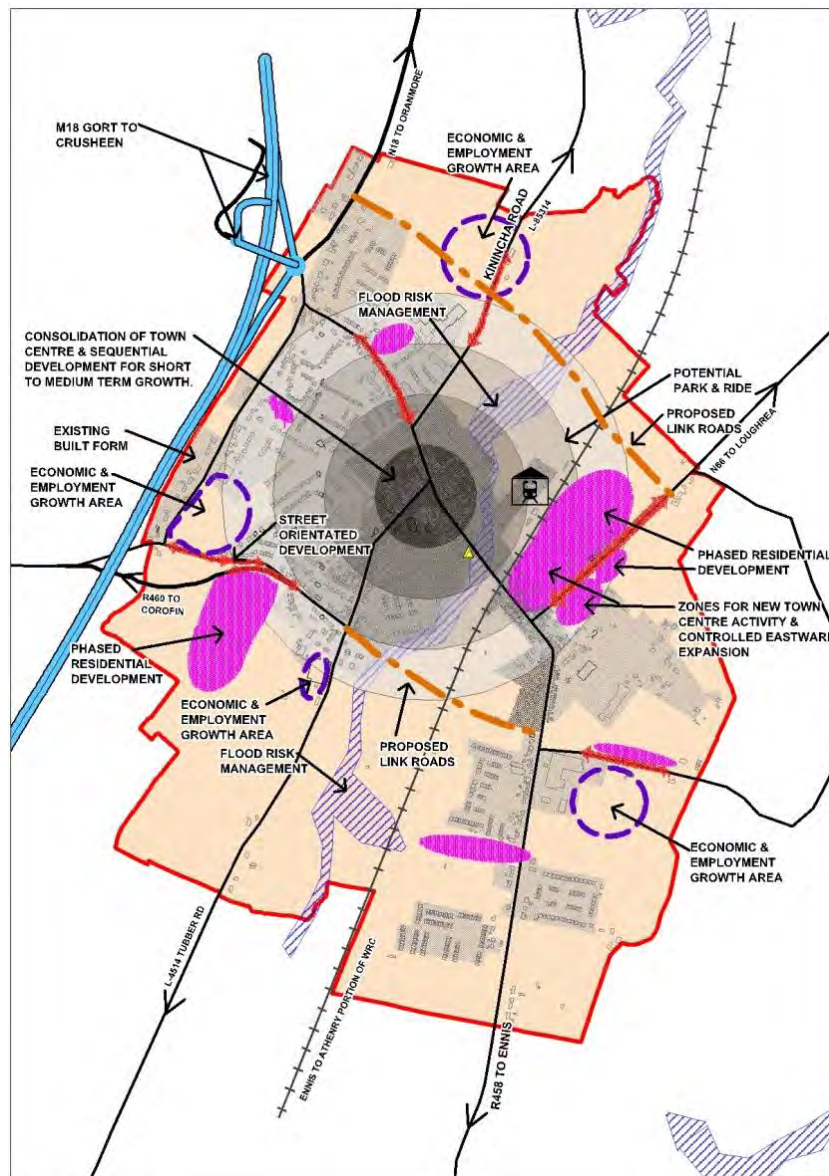


#### 2.2.3 Preferred Development Option

The above development options have been assessed against the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and the Environmental Protection Objectives developed for the SEA (refer to the SEA Environmental Report). On the basis of this assessment, Option 2 is considered the preferred development option for Gort at this time. This option supports the consolidation of the town centre, promotes the infill and sequential development of the town and encourages street-oriented development along the existing urban street network. It also locates new Town Centre (C1) and Residential Phase 1 expansion potential to the east, adjacent to the Gort Railway station and along the N66 and recognises the area as a prime development quarter in terms of integrating land use and public transportation. This approach also integrates improvements in the public realm and smarter travel opportunities for the town.

The preferred development strategy option is informed by the statutorily required environmental assessments and aligns with and aims to deliver on the Core Strategy allocations set out for Gort in the Galway County Development Plan. It also supports the objectives of the Regional Planning Guidelines to provide for the sustainable, dynamic development of Key Towns to a level that can deliver the conditions for critical mass and drive overall regional development.

## Preferred Development Strategy Option



### 2.2.4 Land Use Management and Zoning

In order to deliver on the preferred option, a number of scenarios have been considered in relation to land use management and zoning:

- Rezoning of lands.
- Specifying/introducing phased development on a number of zonings as appropriate.
- De-zoning of lands.

The phasing of residential development and the rezoning of certain lands for environmental reasons is considered the most appropriate approach at this point in time. Residential lands have generally been phased in a sequential manner and Phase 1 residential lands have been identified for short to medium term growth in suitable locations that are serviced and accessible and which avoid significant environmental sensitivities. This includes urban infill sites, sequential extensions to the existing residential fabric and a significant growth area to the east of the Plan Area. The phasing as applied also allows for some flexibility, as detailed in the policies and objectives of the Plan.

Undeveloped town centre and residential lands that are located within identified flood risk areas (in particular Flood Zone A and B) have generally been rezoned as Open Space in accordance with the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* in order to avoid inappropriate development in high to moderate flood risk areas and to address the potential impacts of climate change. The Plan also includes policies and objectives to ensure that the sensitivities of the various environmental and flood risk areas are adequately considered, protected and managed, as appropriate, in the development management process.

Large scale employment uses remain focused on Industrial zoned lands primarily to the north of the Plan, with smaller areas to the south and southwest, centred on Industrial and Business and Enterprise zonings. The town centre remains the primary focus for the location of new retail development, with the land use zoning matrix providing further guidance on other appropriate uses.

Having regard to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Report and AA Natura Impact Report and the Stage 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the Gort LAP area, overall this is considered to be the most appropriate land use management and zoning approach at this point in time for pursuing the preferred development strategy and securing the orderly and sequential development of Gort in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

## 2.2.5 Policy and Objectives

### Development Strategy Policy

#### Policy DS – Development Strategy

It is the overarching policy of Galway County Council to support and facilitate the sustainable development of the Plan Area in line with the preferred development strategy option, **Option 2 – Consolidate Existing Town Centre, Sequential Development around Established Urban Core and Controlled Eastward Expansion**, and in a manner that maintains and enhances the quality of life of local communities, promotes opportunities for economic development, social integration and sustainable transport options, protects the cultural, built and natural heritage and environment and complies with relevant statutory requirements.

### Development Strategy Objectives

#### Objective DS1 – Orderly and Sequential Development

Support the orderly and sequential development of the Plan Area, focusing on the consolidation and continued vitality and viability of the town centre and the protection and enhancement of the existing landscape setting, character, heritage and unique identity of the town.

#### Objective DS2 – Consistency with Core Strategy (refer to Galway County Development Plan)

Ensure that developments permitted within the Plan Area are consistent with the zoned land allocations in the Core Strategy and associated provisions in the Galway County Development Plan. The amount of development permitted within the lifetime of the Plan on the totality of residential zoned land shall remain within the population allocation assigned to Gort in the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan and any updated version of same

#### Objective DS3 – Natura 2000 Network and Habitats Directive Assessment

Protect European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network (including Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) in accordance with the requirements in the EU *Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, EU *Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)*, the *Environmental Liability Directive*, the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010*, the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011)* (and any subsequent amendments or updated legislation) and having due regard to the guidance in the *Appropriate Assessment Guidelines 2010* (and any subsequent or updated guidance). A plan or project (e.g. proposed development) within the Plan Area will only be authorised after the competent authority (Galway County Council) has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, screening for appropriate assessment, and a Habitats Directive Assessment where necessary, that:

1. The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or



2. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or

3. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

**Objective DS4 – Development Management Standards and Guidelines** (refer to Galway County Development Plan)

Ensure that the general development management standards and guidelines set out in the Galway County Development Plan are applied as appropriate in the Plan Area. In addition, any specific development management guidelines set out in Section 3 of this Local Area Plan shall also be applied, as appropriate, to development proposals in the Plan Area.

**Objective DS5 – Service Led Development**

Ensure that development is preceded by sufficient capacity in the public waste water and potable water infrastructure.

**Objective DS6 – Residential Development Phasing (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

Direct residential development into appropriately zoned and serviced areas in accordance with the phased development framework set out in Section 3.1 and 3.2 and as shown on **Maps 1A/1B – Land Use Zoning**.

**Objective DS7 – Flood Risk Management and Assessment (refer to Maps 3A/3B)**

Ensure that proposals for new developments located within identified or potential flood risk areas, or which may exacerbate the risk of flooding elsewhere, are assessed in accordance with the provisions of the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* (or any updated/superseding document) and the relevant policies, objectives and guidelines in this Plan.

## 3. Development Policies, Objectives and Guidelines

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### 3.1 Land Use Management

#### 3.1.1 Context

The Core Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan sets the context and parameters for the development of Gort as a „Key Town“ in the County. Based on population projections forecast by the West Regional Authority and set out under the Core Strategy, the amount of zoned residential land required to meet this target is set at 23.66Ha for Gort. Lands have also been zoned in the Local Area Plan for other land uses based on the designation of Gort in the Core Strategy, existing land use patterns, projected needs derived from medium and long term population targets and the optimum utilisation of existing and planned infrastructure. The land use zones provided for in the Plan include Town Centre (C1), Industrial (I), Business and Enterprise (BE), Community Facilities (CF), Open Space/Recreation and Amenity (OS), Agriculture (A), Public Utilities (PU) and Transport Infrastructure (TI).

#### 3.1.2 Policies and Objectives

##### Land Use Management Policy

##### Policy LU1 – Land Use Management (refer to Maps 1A/1B)

It is the policy of Galway County Council to provide a land use zoning framework for the Plan Area to direct the type, density and location of development in a manner that contributes to the consolidation of the town centre, that allows for the orderly and sequential development of the town, that protects and enhances the existing landscape setting, character and unique identity of the town and that complies with the statutory requirements in the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended). The land use zoning framework is supported by a residential phasing framework to ensure compliance with the Core Strategy and to promote the orderly and sequential development of the town.

##### Land Use Zoning Objectives

##### Objective LU1 – Town Centre/Commercial (C1) (refer to Maps 1A/1B)

Promote the development of the Town Centre as an intensive, high quality, well-landscaped, human-scaled and accessible environment with an appropriate mix of uses, including residential, commercial, service, tourism, enterprise, public and community uses as appropriate, that provide a range of retail services, facilities and amenities to the local community and visitors to the town. The town centre and associated main streets will remain the primary focus for retail and service activity in Gort.

##### Objective LU2 – Residential (R) (refer to Maps 1A/1B and Objective RD1)

Promote the development of appropriate and serviced lands to provide for high quality, well laid out and well landscaped sustainable residential communities with an appropriate mix of housing types and densities together with complementary land uses, such as community facilities, local services and public transport facilities, to serve the residential population of the area.

Protect existing residential amenities and facilitate compatible and appropriately designed new infill development in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

A phasing scheme will apply to residential uses on Residential (R) zoned lands, as set out under Objective RD1 in Section 3.2.2.

##### Objective LU3 – Industrial (I) (refer to Maps 1A/1B)

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 network and public transport facilities. Adequate edge treatments and/or screening will be required to ensure high quality interfaces with public spaces and any adjoining residential areas or other sensitive land uses, as appropriate.

**Objective LU4 – Business & Enterprise (BE) (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

Promote the sustainable development of business and enterprise uses, light industry/warehousing and the facilitation of enterprise park/office park type uses, incubation/start-up units and Small, Medium Enterprises, on suitable lands with adequate services and facilities and with a high level of access to the major road/rail networks and to public transport facilities.

**Objective LU5 – Community Facilities (CF) (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

Promote the sustainable development of community facilities on suitable lands with a high level of access to the local community, including educational, community, civic, public, institutional, recreational, cultural and other complementary uses as appropriate.

**Objective LU6 – Open Spaces/Recreation & Amenity (OS) (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Promote the development of open spaces and recreational activities in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community and retain existing open space and recreational facilities unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of Galway County Council that these uses are no longer required by the community. Ensure that any flood risk areas within the OS zone are appropriately managed to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate, the risk and potential impact of flooding.

**Objective LU7 – Agriculture (A) (refer to Maps 1A/1B) (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

Protect the rural character of the area from inappropriate development and provide for agricultural and appropriate non-urban uses.

**Objective LU8 – Public Utilities (PU) (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

Facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential public utility infrastructure, together with necessary ancillary facilities and uses, as appropriate.

**Objective LU9 – Transport Infrastructure (TI) (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

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

**Objective LU10 – Flood Risk Areas and Land Use Zones (refer to Maps 1A/1B and Maps 3A/3B)**

Ensure that any proposed development that may be compatible with the land use zoning objectives/matrix but which includes a use that is not appropriate to the Flood Zone (as indicated on **Maps 3A/3B – Flood Risk Management**) and/or that may be vulnerable to flooding is subject to flood risk assessment, in accordance with *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009* and the relevant policies and objectives of this Plan.

**Objective LU11 – Land Use Zoning Matrix (refer to DM Guideline LU2)**

Direct different land uses into the appropriate land use zone/s in accordance with the land use zoning objectives and the land use zoning matrix set out under **DM Guideline LU2**. Ensure that proposed land uses are compatible with existing land uses and in keeping with the character of the area.

**Land Use Density Objectives**

**Objective LU12 – Development Densities (refer to DM Guideline LU1)**

Ensure that the density of new development is appropriate to the land use zone and site context, is in keeping with the development pattern of the area, does not unduly impact on the amenities of the area and that it results in a positive relationship between new developments and any adjoining public spaces. Promote the development of higher density development in appropriate locations, such as suitable sites within the town centre and adjacent to public transport facilities, where such development is compatible with built and natural heritage and urban design objectives and infrastructure capacity. The density of developments will generally be in accordance with the guidance set out under **DM Guideline LU1**, although the planning authority may consider higher density developments where this is considered appropriate to secure the urban design or other objectives of the Plan.

### Objective LU13 – Residential Densities (refer to DM Guideline LU1)

Promote a range of residential densities within the Plan Area appropriate to the prevailing development pattern, supporting infrastructure, urban character and heritage resources in accordance with the guidance in the *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines 2009* (or any updated/superseding document). Higher residential densities should be encouraged at locations where it is appropriate to the existing context and density of the Plan Area, for example around the town centre and within convenient walking distance of public transport facilities, and where it will not unduly impact on built or natural heritage or impact adversely on the integrity of European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network. The density of residential developments will generally be in accordance with the guidance set out under **DM Guideline LU1**, although the planning authority may consider higher residential densities where this is considered appropriate to the context and necessary to secure the urban design or other objectives of the Plan. Development will only be permitted where adequate infrastructural capacity and services can be provided.

### 3.1.1 Development Management Guidelines

#### Development Densities

##### DM Guideline LU1 – Development Densities

The development of higher densities will need to be appropriate to the context and will be assessed based on the merits of the proposal and subject to good design, compliance with both qualitative and quantitative standards, location, capacity of the site and infrastructure to absorb development, existing character of the area, established densities on adjoining sites, protection of residential amenities, proximity to public transport, etc. The Planning Authority may use its discretion in varying these density standards.

The development density guidance in the tables below indicate the range of densities generally considered appropriate in the various land use zones and in different residential locations within the Plan Area.

Land Use Zone	Plot Area Ratio	Maximum Site Coverage	Minimum Public Open Space
Zone C1	1.00 to 1.25 PAR	80%	Site Specific
Zone R	0.10 to 0.50 PAR	50%	15%
Zone I	0.40 to 1.00 PAR	60%	15%
Zone BE	0.40 to 1.00 PAR	60%	15%
Zone CF	Site Specific	Site Specific	15%
Zone OS	Site Specific	Site Specific	Site Specific
Zone A	Site Specific	Site Specific	Site Specific
Zone PU	Site Specific	Site Specific	Site Specific
Zone TI	N/A	N/A	N/A

Notes:

- Plot Area Ratio** – Plot area ratio (PAR) refers to the gross floor area of buildings on a site divided by the gross site area, where the gross floor area is expressed as a fraction of the gross site area.
- Site Coverage** – Site coverage refers to the percentage of gross floor area of the building/s footprint on the site. Increased site coverage may be considered on sites where underground or part-basement parking is provided, subject to high standards of design, adequate natural lighting and the protection of the amenity of adjacent developments.
- Public Open Space** – Public open space (POS) generally refers to usable, well-located green areas but in certain cases may also include paved areas that can be used for recreation, that are well-landscaped and that form an integral part of the development. POS would generally only be required in non-residential and multiple unit residential developments.

Residential Density	Dwelling Units/Ha	Dwelling Units/Acre	Possible Appropriate Locations
Medium to High	35-50	14-20	Town centre or immediately adjacent to public transport hubs
Low to Medium	15-35	6-14	Neighbourhood centres (typically within 400m walking distance of centre point), inner urban suburbs
Low	5-15	2-6	Urban periphery, outlying lands, areas with capacity/environmental constraints

## Land Use Zoning Matrix

### DM Guideline LU2 – Land Use Zoning Matrix

The land use zoning matrix indicates the types of land uses that are Permitted in Principle (P), Open for Consideration (O) and Not Normally Permitted (N), for the land use zones designated in Section 3.1.2 above. Whilst the matrix does not provide an exhaustive list of potential uses, the uses listed in the matrix should be considered by applicants to provide a clear indication of the overall acceptability of a particular land use within a specific zoning category. Where a use is proposed that is not listed in the matrix, development proposals will be assessed on their individual merits in accordance with the general guidance provided by the matrix and having regard to the nature of existing and proposed uses, to the general policies and zoning objective/s for the area in the Local Area Plan and to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Where there is no perceived conflict between existing and proposed uses, favourable consideration will be given to the proposed development, subject to all other normal requirements and to the principles of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Land Uses	C1	R	I	BE	CF	OS	A	PU	TI
Commercial and Industrial Uses	C1	R	I	BE	CF	OS	A	PU	TI
Amusement	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
ATM	P	O	O	O	O	N	N	N	N
Bank/Building Society	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Bar/Restaurant	P	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
B&B (Bed & Breakfast) <sup>1</sup>	O	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N	N	N	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N
Betting Office	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Boarding Kennel	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N
Café	P	O	O	O	O	N	N	N	N
Caravan Park – Holiday	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Cash & Carry	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Casual Trading	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Cinema	P	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Conference Centre	P	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	N
Data-Centres/Web-Hosting Centres	P	N	O	P	N	N	N	O	N
Drive-through Restaurant	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Enterprise Centre	O	N	O	P	N	N	N	O	N
Extractive Industry	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N
Garden Centre	O	N	N	O	N	O	N	N	N
GP & Medical related Services	P	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Guesthouse <sup>1</sup>	P	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N	N	N	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N
Hair Dressing Salon/Personal/Grooming	P	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Home-based Economic Activity <sup>1</sup>	O	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N	N	N	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N
Hostel	P	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Hotel	P	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Household Fuel Depot	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Industrial	N	N	P	O	N	N	N	N	N
Logistic, Storage & Distribution Units	N	N	P	O	N	N	N	N	N
Media Recording & general Media associated uses	O	O	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Motor Sales Showroom	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Night-club	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Office (<100m <sup>2</sup> )	P	O	N	N	O	N	O	O	N
Office (100m <sup>2</sup> to 1000m <sup>2</sup> )	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	N
Office Park (>1000m <sup>2</sup> )	N	N	O	P	N	N	N	O	N

<b>Land Uses</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>PU</b>	<b>TI</b>
Petrol Station	O	N	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Professional /Other Services	P	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Restaurant	P	O	O	O <sup>2</sup>	N	N	N	N	N
Science & Technology based Business	O	N	P	P	N	N	N	N	N
Scrap Yard	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	N
Service Garage	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Shop – Comparison	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Shop – Convenience	P	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Shops – Large Scale Convenience/ Comparison Centre	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Small Scale Manufacturing	N	N	P	O	N	N	N	N	N
Storage Depot	N	N	P	O	N	N	N	N	N
Take-away	O	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Transport Depot	N	N	O	P	N	N	N	O	N
Veterinary Surgery	O	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N
Warehousing (incl. wholesale)	N	N	P	O	N	N	N	N	N
Warehousing (retail/non-food <700m <sup>2</sup> ) <sup>3</sup>	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Warehousing (retail/non-food/bulky household goods 700m <sup>2</sup> – 5,000m <sup>2</sup> ) <sup>3</sup>	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
<b>Residential Uses</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>PU</b>	<b>TI</b>
Apartments <sup>1</sup>	P	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Halting Site	N	O	N	N	O	N	O	N	N
Residential (excluding Apartments) <sup>1</sup>	O	P <sup>1</sup>	N	N	N	N	O <sup>1</sup>	N	N
Retirement Home	O	P	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
<b>Public, Community and Institutional Uses</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>PU</b>	<b>TI</b>
Buildings for the health, safety & welfare of the Public	P	O	N	O	P	O	N	O	N
Cemetery	N	N	N	N	P	O	P	N	N
Childcare Facilities (Crèche/Nursery)	P	O	O	O	P	N	N	O	N
Club House & associated Facilities	O	O	N	N	P	O	O	N	N
Community Facility	P	O	N	O	P	O	O	O	N
Crematorium	N	O	O	O	O	N	O	N	N
Cultural/Recreational Building	P	O	N	O	O	O	N	O	N
Education – Primary/Secondary	O	O	O	O	P	O	O	O	N
Education – Other Education/Training	P	O	O	O	P	N	O	O	N
Funeral Home	O	O	N	O	O	N	N	N	N
Leisure	P	O	N	O	P	O	O	N	N
Library	P	O	N	N	P	N	N	N	N
Place of Public Worship	O	O	N	O	O	N	N	N	N
<b>Open Space, Recreation and Amenity Uses</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>PU</b>	<b>TI</b>
Golf Course	N	N	N	N	N	O	O	N	N
Recreational/Cultural Activities	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	N
<b>Agricultural Uses</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>PU</b>	<b>TI</b>
Abattoir	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	N	N
Agricultural Building	N	O	N	O	N	N	P	N	N
Mart/Co-op	N	N	P	N	N	N	P	N	N
<b>General/Services and Infrastructure Uses</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>PU</b>	<b>TI</b>
Advertisements – Freestanding	O	N	O	O	O	N	N	O	O
Car Park (excluding Multi-storey)	P	O	P	O	O	N	N	O	O
Car Park – Multi-storey	P	N	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Park & Ride Facility	O	O	P	P	P	O	O	O	O
Recycling/Bring Bank Facilities	N	N	O	O	N	N	O	O	N
Refuse Landfill	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N
Utilities & Public Service Installations	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	P	O
Wind/Renewable Energy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	N

**General Notes on Land Use Zoning Matrix:**

- Residential Phasing** <sup>(1)</sup> – These uses will be considered subject to Policy RD1 and Objective RD1 or RD9, as appropriate.
- Restaurant** <sup>(2)</sup> – This use will be considered where it is ancillary to an overall compatible development and serves the needs of the local area.

3. **Warehousing** <sup>(3)</sup> – The development or subdivision of stores into less than 700m<sup>2</sup> shall not normally be permitted in edge-of centre and out-of-centre locations, in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities Retail Planning 2012 (or any updated/superseding document).
4. **Data Centre** – may be defined as a facility, which has information technology equipment installed and operated, as well as storing and distributing electronic data.
5. **Zone R: Residential** – Phase 1 is phased for residential development within the lifetime of this Plan (total undeveloped area: 23.66Ha); and Phase 2 is generally not developable during the lifetime of this Plan, subject to the provisions and exceptions set out under Section 3.2.2.
6. **Areas** – All areas noted in the above matrix are gross floor areas.

**Notes on Land Use Classes in Land Use Zoning Matrix:**

The land use classes referred to in the land use zoning matrix have been defined as follows:

1. **Permitted in Principle (P)** – A use that is classified as *Permitted in Principle* is one that the local authority accepts in theory in the relevant zone, subject to compliance with the relevant policies, objectives, standards and requirements set out in the Plan and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.
2. **Open for Consideration (O)** – A use that is classified as *Open for Consideration* is one that the local authority may permit where it is satisfied that the suggested form of development will be compatible with the policies and objectives for the zone, will not conflict with permitted uses and conforms to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, including the policies and objectives set out in the Plan.
3. **Not Normally Permitted (N)** – A use that is classified as *Not Normally Permitted* is one that, except in exceptional circumstances, will not be permitted by the local authority. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies, objectives, standards and requirements contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**Notes on Land Use Zones in Land Use Zoning Matrix:**

The land use zones referred to in the land use zoning matrix are comprised of the following:

1. **Zone C1** – Town Centre/Commercial
2. **Zone R** – Residential
3. **Zone I** – Industrial
4. **Zone BE** – Business & Enterprise
5. **Zone CF** – Community Facilities
6. **Zone OS** – Open Space/Recreation & Amenity
7. **Zone A** – Agriculture
8. **Zone PU** – Public Utilities
9. **Zone TI** – Transport Infrastructure

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

**Table1: Capacity of Zoned Lands within the Gort Local Area Plan 2013**

Plan Zonings	Total Area Zoned in Ha	Undeveloped Zoned in Ha
Town Centre/Commercial (C1)	34.26Ha	12.80Ha
Residential R:	150.88Ha	95.67
Existing Developed	55.21Ha	
R Phase 1	23.65Ha	23.65Ha
R Phase 2	72.02Ha	72.02Ha*
Business & Enterprise (BE)	5.27Ha	5.09Ha
Industrial (I)	35.04Ha	27.36Ha
Community Facilities (CF)	11.98Ha	2.71Ha
Agriculture (A)	13.47Ha	10.32Ha
Open Space/Recreation & Amenity (OS)	60.33Ha	60.33Ha
Public Utilities (PU)	0.89Ha	0.19Ha
Totals	312.12Ha	214.47Ha

**Note:**

1. **Transport Infrastructure (TI)** provides for the provision/maintenance of all roads and rail transportation infrastructure and appears as white land on the Land Use Zoning Maps 1A/1B (areas not estimated).
2. \* Assuming all Residential Phase 2 are undeveloped.

## 3.2 Residential Development

### 3.2.1 Context

#### Residential Development

The principles of quality and sustainability must be foremost in all future residential development in the Plan Area, including private, social, affordable and voluntary housing proposals. The Local Area Plan provides guidance in relation to the location, types and design of new residential development, together with a phasing framework for residentially zoned lands, to ensure compliance with the Core Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan and in accordance with the guidance contained in the DEHLG *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009* and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

Residential lands have generally been phased in a sequential manner and Phase 1 residential lands have been identified based on a number of criteria, including access to existing and planned services, pedestrian connectivity to the town centre, etc. Priority has been given to infill sites and logical extensions to the existing residential fabric of the town. This approach will also inform any decision where Phase 2 lands are to develop ahead of Phase 1 lands.

### 3.2.2 Policies and Objectives

#### Residential Development Policy

##### Policy RD1 – Residential Development

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support the creation of sustainable communities and high quality residential areas at appropriate locations with a range of housing options and adequate support services, facilities and amenities, having regard to the guidance contained in the following policy documents or any updated versions:

- Joint Galway County Council and Ballinasloe Town Council Housing Strategy 2009-2015.
- Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 and the accompanying guidance document Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide – A Companion Document to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009.
- *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*, 2013



- *Galway Clustered Housing Guidelines*, where appropriate, in the assessment of any proposals for new multiple unit housing developments within the Plan Area.
- Galway County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- Smarter Travel “A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020”, including the National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2022, and any other related national policy documents.
- Water Framework Directive and the Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines to Planning Authorities 2009.

### **Policy RD2 – Phased Development on Residential Zoned Lands (refer to Maps 1A/B)**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to encourage orderly, sequential and phased residential development in accordance with the Preferred Development Strategy and the land use management and zoning provisions set out in this Local Area Plan. This shall include a positive presumption in favour of the sequential development of suitably serviced Residential (Phase 1) lands in order to align the Local Area Plan with the Core Strategy/Settlement Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan, subject to compliance with the policies and objectives in this Local Area Plan and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. There will be a general presumption against residential development on lands zoned Residential (Phase 2) within the lifetime of the Local Area Plan, subject to the exceptions provided for under Objective RD1.

## **Residential Development Objectives**

### **Objective RD1 – Phased Residential Development (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

Support the development of lands designated as Residential (Phase 1) within the lifetime of the Local Area 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 the town. Lands that have been designated as Phase 1 shall be reviewed for the next Plan having regard to development proposals or otherwise in the interim.

Residential (Phase 2) lands are generally not developable within the lifetime of this Plan, with the exception of the following developments, which may be considered by the Planning Authority within the lifetime of this Local Area Plan subject to a suitable case being made for the proposal:

- a) Single house developments for family members on family owned lands.
- b) Non-residential developments that are appropriate to the site context, any existing residential amenity and the existing pattern of development in the area.
- c) Where it is apparent that Residential (Phase 1) lands cannot or will not be developed within the plan period, residential development may be considered in a phased manner on some Residential (Phase 2) lands.

The above exceptions will be subject to compliance with the Core Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan, the policies and objectives in this Local Area Plan, the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and to meeting normal planning, access and servicing requirements. Developments will only be permitted where a substantiated case has been made to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and the development will not prejudice the future use of the lands for the longer term growth needs of the town.

### **Objective RD2 – Quality Housing Environments**

Encourage the development of sustainable residential communities through the promotion of innovative, high quality building design and appropriate layouts, that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport options and provide for a high level of permeability, accessibility and connectivity to the existing built environment, services and facilities. In this regard, future residential development proposals will be in accordance with the principles set out in the DEHLG document *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009* and its companion document *Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide for Planning Authorities 2009* and the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013* (or any updated/superseding documents).

### **Objective RD3 – Housing Options**

Require that a suitable variety and mix of dwelling types and sizes are provided in developments to meet different needs, having regard to demographics and social changes, social inclusion, life time changes, smaller household sizes, lower formation age, immigration, etc.

### **Objective RD4 – Open Space in Residential Areas**

Ensure the provision of adequate areas of high quality, safe, overlooked and suitably landscaped open space within residential developments and support the provision of play and multi-purpose recreational areas in all new large residential developments. The minimum public open space required in new multiple unit residential developments will be 15% of the total site area and this open space shall be located in central, useable and suitably overlooked locations.

### **Objective RD5 – Social and Affordable Housing**

Require that 20% of all new eligible residential sites are set aside for the development of new social and affordable units, unless addressed through suitable alternative arrangements by agreement with the Planning Authority, in accordance with Galway County Council's *Housing Strategy 2009-2015* (and any updated/superseding document) and Part V of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended).

### **Objective RD6 – Traveller Accommodation**

Provide adequate accommodations facilities for the traveller community in accordance with the *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013* (or any updated/superseding document).

### **Objective RD7 – Compatible Development**

Facilitate the development of appropriate, compatible uses within residential areas, subject to ensuring that adequate Residential (R) zoned lands are retained and can be developed for residential uses to meet the growth needs of the town within the plan period. Non-compatible uses include those uses that may generate large amounts of traffic, emissions, pollution, noise, odour, etc., or uses that can impact negatively on residential amenity.

### **Objective RD8 – Other Residential Development**

There shall be a general presumption in favour of the development of nursing homes and retirement facilities and community/day care centres on residential zoned lands or adjacent to the established town centre or as suitable re-use for protected structures or other buildings (e.g. institutional or educational buildings) that would have a limited re-development potential given their size and architectural character, subject to normal planning, access and servicing requirements.

### **Objective RD9 – Agricultural Zoned Lands**

There will be a general presumption against residential development on Agricultural (A) zoned lands, with the exception of single house developments for family members on family owned lands, which may be considered subject to compliance with the Policy RD1, as appropriate, normal planning, access and servicing requirements and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Developments will only be permitted where a substantiated case has been made to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and the development will not prejudice the future use of the lands for the longer term growth needs of the town. An enurement clause will be applied in the case of any permissions for single house developments for family members on family owned lands.

## **3.2.3 Development Management Guidelines**

### **Open Access Fibre Ducting**

#### **DM Guideline RD1 – Open Access Fibre Ducting**

Request that all new build residential developments have open access fibre connections installed for high speed technologies, where practicable, in accordance with the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources document *Recommendations for Open Access Fibre Ducting and Interior Cabling for New Residential Buildings 'Making Homes Fibre Ready', 2011*.

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

## 3.3 Social and Community Development

### 3.3.1 Context

#### Social Inclusion

Social inclusion refers to a series of positive actions to achieve equality of access to services and goods, to assist all individuals to participate in their community and society, to encourage the contribution of all persons to social and cultural life and to be aware of and to challenge all forms of discrimination. Social inclusion seeks the creation of an inclusive and fair society, combating inequality, social exclusion and poverty.

#### Community Facilities and Amenities

Gort is well served with community facilities and amenities, including primary and secondary schools, a training centre, community centre, churches, medical facilities, Garda station, fire and rescue service, post office, a public library at the Church of Ireland, a town hall, a community playground, sporting facilities including GAA and rugby pitches, 18 hole golf course, open spaces and amenity walkways.

An expanding population generates increased demand for the provision of services, school places, community facilities and amenities. It is desirable that these essential facilities are provided in tandem with new development and as new communities emerge. The role of Galway County Council is to reserve adequate appropriately zoned and located lands to meet future demands for community facilities and to provide a framework for the development of such uses through the policies and objectives contained within the Local Area Plan. In relation to educational facilities, the Local Area Plan has identified a number of potential sites that are considered broadly suitable for a new school development (Gaelscoil) and these indicative locations are identified on **Map 2A/2B – Specific Objectives**.

### 3.3.2 Policies and Objectives

#### Social and Community Development Policies

##### Policy CF1 – Social Inclusion and Universal Access

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support the principles of social inclusion and universal access and to ensure that all individuals have access to goods, services, facilities and buildings in order to assist them to participate in and contribute to social and cultural life within Gort.

##### Policy CF2 – Community Facilities and Amenities

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support the provision of an adequate level and equitable distribution of community facilities and amenities in the Plan Area that:

- Meets the needs of the local community as they arise and resources permit.
- Are located in appropriate, accessible locations to serve the residential population in the Plan Area.
- Are clustered or linked together wherever facilities and amenities are complementary and it is practicable to do so, to allow for shared and multi-purpose use of facilities.

Community facilities and amenities projects will be facilitated in appropriate locations and additionally in the vicinity of all new and existing residential development, following an assessment of each proposal and, where appropriate, subject to co-operation and consultation with the local community and other relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Education and Skills, and available resources.

## **Social Inclusion and Universal Access Objectives**

### **Objective CF1 – Social Inclusion**

Support the implementation of the provisions of the Galway County Council *Social Inclusion Action Plan 2010* and *Social Inclusion Work Programme 2011* (and any subsequent updates to these documents).

### **Objective CF2 – Universal Access**

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*, Galway County Council's *Disability Action Plan 2007-2015* and the *Traffic Management Guidelines 2003* (and any updated/superseding documents).

## **Community Facilities and Amenities Objectives**

### **Objective CF3 – Lands for Community Facilities and Amenities (refer to Maps 1A/1B and Maps 2A/2B)**

Ensure that there are adequate zoned and serviced lands to cater for the establishment, improvement or expansion of educational, community, recreation and amenity facilities within the Plan Area. This will include the following:

- a) Reserve lands for existing community facilities and for the expansion and provision of additional community facilities adjacent to existing community facility lands.
- b) Reserve lands for the provision of community facilities adjacent to large blocks of residentially zoned lands to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

### **Objective CF4 – Educational Facilities (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Support the provision of adequate educational facilities for the local community, including primary, post primary, third level outreach programmes, research and development facilities and other training facilities to meet the needs of the widest range of residents within Gort and its environs.

Galway County Council is positively disposed towards the provision of new school facilities in appropriate location/s and has identified a number of areas considered to be generally suitable for new school provision particularly in relation to the Gaelscoil which is in temporary accommodation. The indicative locations of areas considered suitable for new school provision are shown on **Maps 2A/2B – Specific Objectives**. Other sites may also be considered where these are considered suitable in terms of location, access, servicing, etc.

### **Objective CF5 – Childcare Facilities**

Facilitate and promote the development of childcare facilities in suitable locations in accordance with national policy, including the DEHLG *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (or any updated/superseding document) and in tandem and in the vicinity of all new and existing residential development.

### **Objective CF6 – Open Spaces (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Protect existing open spaces from inappropriate development so as to maintain their role in providing places for active and passive recreation, social interaction and civic activities, visual relief from the built environment and enhancing the residential and overall character of the town. Facilitate the development of open spaces, including local parks, civic spaces and amenity areas, at suitable locations within the Plan Area.

### **Objective CF7 – Sports, Play and Recreation Facilities**

Support the provision of new sports, play and recreational facilities to service the needs of the local community, require the provision of play/recreation facilities in new large residential developments and facilitate the development of same in other appropriate locations in the town, including supporting public/community initiatives to provide such facilities.

### **Objective CF8 – Existing Community, Recreation and Amenity Facilities and Zoned Lands (refer to Maps 1A/1B)**

Retain existing community, recreation and amenity facilities and lands zoned for such uses, and prevent their change of use or redevelopment, unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the planning authority that the facility/land is no longer required and that the new use or development contributes to the overall community, recreation and amenity needs of the Gort area.

### **Objective CF9 – Amenity Network (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Support the establishment of an accessible network of greenway linkages and amenities that provide safe and attractive circulation routes for pedestrians and cyclists for the enjoyment and recreational use of the entire community. This network will include an amenity walking circular route along the Kinincha Road returning via the river bank to George's Street. The network will also link together community facilities, amenities and built heritage features in the Plan Area and surrounding areas. Galway County Council will also seek to promote the functioning of greenway networks as wildlife corridors and habitats to enhance biodiversity and the natural environment.

### **Objective CF10 – Linear Park along the Cannahowna/Gort River (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Ensure that any development of lands along the Cannahowna/Gort River which may incorporate a linear park and amenity walkway is designed to avoid lands that are identified in flood risk areas associated with the river. The existing river, riparian vegetation and nearby tree lines should be retained as part of the park and any new development along the river will be required to be compatible with the aim of achieving good ecological status for the Cannahowna/Gort River as well as having a positive relationship with the park, including high quality streetscapes, overlooking development and active/responsive ground floor uses, where appropriate. This will include the lands zoned Open Space (OS) both north and south of the Gort Bridge and Town Centre (C1) located to the north and south of the Gort River in the vicinity of the Pound/Kinincha Roads and in adjacent to the Gort Railway station.

### **3.3.3 Development Management Guidelines**

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

## **3.4 Economic Development**

### **3.4.1 Context**

Gort is identified as a „Key Town“ in the Galway County Development Plan and has the potential to become increasingly self-sufficient through the creation of new large scale employment opportunities and continuing to accommodate small scale and start up businesses including the retail sector. The Local Area Plan recognises and supports the role and potential of Gort and provides a land use framework and policies and objectives to promote the development of a range of commercial, industrial, enterprise and tourism activities and to encourage and sustain a diversity of employment opportunities within the Plan Area.

#### **Retail and Town Centre Uses**

The town centre remains the primary retail area in Gort. The impact of the new M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway, in removing traffic from the town area will shape how the town centre and retail/commercial activity develops. The development of any future retail and non-retail services in the town and local neighbourhood centres needs to be carefully planned, designed and managed in order to protect and enhance the town's unique character while promoting the economic vitality and viability of the town centre, in accordance with the *Retail Planning Guidelines*. The exiting Town Centre/Commercial (C1) and proposed new lands on the N66 provide for a range of retail and service facilities in suitable locations within the town, which will protect the vitality and viability of the town centre, while providing a strong base for employment opportunities.

#### **Industrial, Business and Enterprise Development**

Sustainable enterprise development involves the creation of an attractive environment, working to strengths, taking a broader view of innovation such as implementing collaborative approaches, and by learning from other regions through adapting and adopting good practice.

Gort is identified as a main town/important urban settlement on the Galway-Limerick/Shannon Atlantic Gateway Corridor Development Framework, which forms part of and progresses the implementation of the DoEHLG's Atlantic Gateways Initiative (AGI) including a regional economic development focus. The town has been recognised as an attractive place to work, live and do business, with benefits of motorway/rail/ICT infrastructure and its strategic location on the Atlantic Gateway Corridor between two main Gateways - Galway and Limerick provides for the creation of sustainable enterprise.

The Core Strategy in the Galway County Development Plan also reflects the key town status of Gort and its potential as one of the main economic drivers for the County. The IDA continues to manage a business/enterprise park on the eastern edge of the town within lands zoned as Business and Enterprise (BE). The Local Area Plan proposes to increase the amount of land within this zoning objective at this location. The Plan also identifies ample lands zoned for Industrial (I) to facilitate and cater for a variety of industrial uses.

### **Tourism**

Tourism is an important element of Gort's local economy and is a sector that has the potential for further growth. The cultural, built and natural heritage of the town and significant local tourist amenities such as Coole Park, Thoor Ballylee, Kilmacduagh monastic settlement and the town's proximity to the Burren are important tourist attractions and opportunities for further tourism development, which in turn can help to ensure the appropriate management and protection of Gort's local heritage and amenities.

## **3.4.2 Policies and Objectives**

### **Economic Development Policy**

#### **Policy ED 1 – Economic Development**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support sustainable economic development and employment creation in Gort through the identification of appropriately located and adequately serviced lands for business and enterprise, retail, industrial, commercial and tourism developments, the promotion of investment in transportation and other support infrastructure and the creation of a high quality environment to encourage economic investment. The promotion of economic development and employment creation will be appropriately guided to ensure the protection of residential amenities, built and natural heritage, landscape/ townscape/streetscape character and the vitality and viability of the town centre. Support the aims, objectives and recommendations, where appropriate in the context of Gort, of the following (and any updated/superseding documents):

- West Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.
- The *Small Towns Report 2012* drafted by the West Regional Authority and which analyses the towns of Gort, Swinford and Boyle.
- Galway County Development Board Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development entitled *Working Together, Shaping Our Future 2002-2012*.
- Economic Development Strategy for County Galway 2007- 2013.
- Galway City and County Development Board Tourism Strategy entitled *Developing Sustainable Tourism in Galway: A Framework for Action 2003-2012*.

### **Economic Development Objectives**

#### **Objective ED1 – Employment and Economic Development**

Support the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy in the West Regional Authority *Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022* and the economic development and tourism policies and objectives set out in the Galway County Development Plan (and updated/superseding documents).

#### **Objective ED2 – Business/Enterprise and Industrial Development (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Facilitate and encourage the establishment of business, enterprise and industrial developments that are considered compatible with surrounding uses on suitably zoned and serviced sites. Where such

uses are developed adjacent to residential areas or community facilities, buffer zones shall be provided as well as adequate screening, in the form of planting and landscaping, as appropriate. The Business and Enterprise (BE) and Industrial (I) zonings will be the primary focus for such uses, subject to the guidance provided in **DM Guideline LU2 – Land Use Zoning Matrix**.

### **Objective ED3 – Retail Development**

Support the development of appropriate types, scales and patterns of retail development in suitable locations within the town and high quality designs that:

- Support the vitality and viability of the existing town centre and associated main streets and/or do not undermine their vitality and viability.
- Protect investment in strategic roads and infrastructure and that are easily accessible, particularly in terms of public transport.
- Comply with the provisions of the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities Retail Planning 2012* (and any updated/superseding document), including the application of a sequential approach to retail development, the policies and objectives of any future Retail Strategy for Galway that may be adopted in the lifetime of the Local Area Plan and the guidance in the *Retail Design Manual 2012 - A Good Practice Guide Companion Document to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (and any updated/superseding documents).
- Contribute to the creation of a high quality retail environment.

The Town Centre (C1) zoning will remain the primary focus for the location of new retail development and within proposed new CI lands located south east of the railway station. The Planning Authority will ensure that the location of future retail development is consistent with the key policy principles and order of priority as set out in the *Retail Planning Guidelines 2012* (and any updated/superseding document) and will require Retail Impact Assessments, including details of the sequential approach, and, where considered necessary, Transport Impact Assessments and/or Design Statements, for retail developments in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, the Retail Design Manual and DM Guideline ED1 and ED2.

### **Objective ED4 – Tourism Development (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Encourage and facilitate the sustainable development of the tourism potential of Gort and its environs in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built and natural heritage of the town and the local amenities within the Plan Area. Key projects and initiatives that will be supported will include:

- a) Support the sustainable development of a river walkway and a linear park including recreational facilities and activities that will benefit the local community and visitors to the area and enhance the tourism infrastructure in an environmentally sustainable manner that recognises the Water Framework Directive, water quality and Natura 2000 conservation management objectives for the Coole-Garryland Complex and associated protected species including otter and bat species.
- b) Investigate the provision of a tourist/information centre within the town centre.

### **Objective ED5– Quality Working Environments**

Encourage the provision of high quality designs (including variations in design and scale), layout, boundary treatment and arrival views of development within Industrial (I) and Business and Enterprise (BE) zonings in order to contribute positively to the character and visual amenity of the area.

### **Objective ED6 - Non Conforming Uses**

Where existing uses do not conform with the land use zoning objectives or the matrix of the Plan, the Planning Authority shall facilitate their relocation to more sustainable and appropriately zoned lands.

### **Objective ED7 – Proliferation of Individual Uses**

Protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre by ensuring that it remains the primary retail, commercial and mixed use centre in the town and prohibit a proliferation of any individual use that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, does not contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

### 3.4.3 Development Management Guidelines

#### Retail Impact Assessments and Design Statements

##### DM Guideline ED1 – Retail Impact Assessments

Retail Impact Assessments will be required with planning applications for large retail developments (such as shopping centres or large food/grocery chain stores), mixed use developments with a large retail component, developments that may have a significant effect on the vitality and viability of the town centre or as otherwise considered appropriate by the Planning Authority. Retail Impact Assessments will be in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, including details of the sequential test.

##### DM Guideline ED2 – Design Statements

Design Statements may be required with planning applications for major retail proposals, retail proposals that are located within a sensitive area or as otherwise considered appropriate by the Planning Authority. Design Statements should address the issues raised in Section 5.3 of the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities Retail Planning 2012* (and any updated/superseding document), including an appraisal of the character of the area adjoining the site and proposals for high quality design that integrates successfully with the context. Design Statements should also take account of the design and layout guidance set out in the Retail Design Manual - A Good Practice Guide Companion Document to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

## 3.5 Transportation Infrastructure

### 3.5.1 Context

#### Smarter Travel

The Local Area Plan recognises and supports the importance of sustainable transport, including the integration of land use and transport and encouraging a modal shift from private transport to public transport, walking and cycling. The Plan has had due regard to applicable national legislation and policy, including *Smarter Travel: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020*, *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines 2012* and the *Traffic Management Guidelines 2003*.

#### Public Transport

The Ennis - Athenry portion of the Western Rail Corridor provides Gort with rail services between Galway City and Limerick City and under Phase 11 of the WRC programme a new station was planned for Gort. The further development of new commuter rail facilities and the opportunities for new land uses that this and the opening of the new M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway presents will have further positive impacts for the town. In this regard, it is important that the focus remains on sustainable public transport options and facilitating the continued improvement of same.

Bus links to and through Gort remain strong and are predominantly inter-urban and are delivered by Bus Éireann with some specific local services continuing to play a vital role in connecting Gort and its environs to Galway City, as well as to other important national and local destinations. At present, the only bus shelter within Gort is located on Market Square.

#### Walking & Cycling

The walking network in Gort is comprised of existing footpaths adjoining public roads. There is no dedicated walkway/cycling network within Gort and cycling is limited to using existing roads and walkways.

Given the relatively compact urban form of Gort, there is great potential for a modal shift from the private car towards walking and cycling as a mode of transport, particularly if improved linkages between the town centre, car parks, residential areas and schools are realised and new developments focus on connectivity, legibility and permeability. The previous Local Area Plan included objectives and proposals for improving walking and cycling. The current Plan will continue to support measures



to improve the walking and cycling network in Gort and its immediate environs in accordance with any proposed recommendations for Gort as outlined in the Galway County Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Gort Walking and Cycling Strategy and to encourage a modal shift from private/motorised transport to walking and cycling. The Council shall support proposals to create a town cycle network and to promote Gort as a mini hub for recreational cycling in County Galway.

### **Roads, Streets and Parking**

Gort is located at the convergence of a number of national, regional and local roads. Major transportation projects such as the opening of the M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway have dramatically changed the patterns of traffic movement in the Plan Area and its hinterland. There are also proposals for further network improvements, including the M18/M17 Gort to Tuam PPP Scheme which will continue the Atlantic Corridor northwards to Tuam Hub and onwards towards Sligo and Derry. The reduction in through traffic within the town centre has increased the general quality and attractiveness of the town centre for investment and recreational purposes and has created an ease of access for all using this area. It was noted through the public consultation process the need of signage on the Crusheen side of the motorway to increase footfall into Gort.

The aim of Galway County Council is to support the enhancement of the urban street network, to promote the efficiency of traffic circulation and management around Gort and to facilitate the provision of parking convenient to the town centre. A pay and display system is presently operating in the town centre including the availability of free car parking on Church Street. It is proposed to provide for a park and ride/park and stride facility within Industrial lands adjoining Gort Railway Station. This may induce a modal shift from the private motor vehicle to public transport and/or walking.

The Traffic Management Plan for Gort was reviewed in 2008 and deals with issues of traffic/parking management and including the provision of pedestrian crossings and disabled parking areas throughout the town.

## **3.5.2 Policies and Objectives**

### **Sustainable Transportation Policy**

#### **Policy T11 – Sustainable Transport, Walking and Cycling**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to promote the use of public transport, walking and cycling as safe, convenient and environmentally sustainable alternatives to private transport and to implement the key goals, policy guidance and relevant actions set out in the Department of Transport's policy documents *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* and the *National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020*, any forthcoming guidance in relation to street design and cycling facilities including the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013* (and any updated/superseding documents) and any Smart Travel Plan(s) that may be adopted by Galway County Council.

### **Sustainable Transportation Objectives**

#### **Objective T11 – Integrated Land Use and Transport**

Ensure that land use planning is integrated with transportation planning and reduce the need to travel, particularly by private transport, by:

- Promoting the consolidation of development.
- Encouraging intensification and mixed use development along public transport corridors and at public transport hubs and nodes.
- Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport within, and providing access to, new development proposals, as appropriate.
- Ensuring that land use and zoning are fully integrated with the provision and development of a comprehensive, sustainable, efficient, high quality transportation network that accommodates the movement needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

**Objective TI2 – Sustainable Transportation**

Facilitate any Smarter Travel initiatives that will improve sustainable transportation within the Plan Area and facilitate sustainable transportation options including public transport, electric vehicles, car clubs, public bike schemes, park and ride/park and stride facilities, improved pedestrian and cycling facilities, as appropriate.

**Objective TI3 – Public Transport (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Promote Gort as an integrated transportation location, which supports the provision of improved and enhanced public transport services and facilities, including rail, bus services, the Rural Transport Initiative services, park and ride /park and stride facilities and all associated ancillary requirements in consultation with the relevant transport providers.

- Seek to provide enhanced public access along the Pound Road to the Railway Station, its existing parking facilities and to the proposed park and ride site.

**Objective TI4 – Walking**

Facilitate the improvement of the pedestrian environment and network so that it is safe and accessible to all through the provision of the necessary infrastructure such as footpaths, lighting, pedestrian crossings, traffic calmed streets etc. New developments shall promote and prioritise walking, shall be permeable, adequately linked and connected to neighbouring areas, the town centre and train station, recreational, educational and employment destinations and shall adhere to the principles contained within the national policy document *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* (and any updated/superseding document). Galway County Council will ensure that new lighting in sensitive areas, such as close to water-bodies or stands of broadleaved trees, will be sensitively designed so as to avoid impacts on foraging bats and other nocturnal wildlife.

**Objective TI5 – Cycling**

Facilitate the improvement of the cycling environment and network so that it is safe and accessible through adequate traffic management and the provision of the necessary infrastructure, such as surface treatment, junction treatment, traffic calmed streets, cycle track/s, cycle lane/s, lighting, road crossings, etc. New developments shall promote and prioritise cycling, shall be permeable, adequately linked and connected to neighbouring areas, the town centre and train station, recreational, educational and employment destinations and shall adhere to the principles contained within the national policy documents *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* and the *National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020* (and any updated/superseding documents).

**Objective TI6 – Bicycle Parking**

Ensure that adequate levels of bicycle parking are provided as required within the Plan Area in accordance with the standards set out in the Galway County Development Plan and ensure that new developments provide adequate safe, secure and sheltered bicycle parking facilities.

**Objective TI7 – Walking and Cycling Strategy**

Support the preparation of a County Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Gort Walking and Cycling Strategy and the implementation of any specified objectives for the town of Gort and its environs as resources permit, such as the provision of a walkway/cycleway from the town centre to Coole Park.

**Objective TI8 – Pedestrian Crossings**

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

**Objective TI9 – Mobility Management Plans**

Require Mobility Management Plans for all medium to large scale residential, commercial, mixed use, business/enterprise or industrial developments, as appropriate.

**Objective TI10 – Charging Points for Electric Vehicles**

Facilitate the provision of recharging points for electric powered vehicles within public car parks and at other appropriate locations in Gort for domestic, transition and end of journey type travel.

**Objective TI11 – Bus Facilities and Services (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Support the improvement of bus facilities and services within Gort, including the following:

- a) Facilitate the provision of an additional bus shelter in Market Square and at any other bus stops that may be provided in the future.
- b) Consider any proposals for the provision of additional bus stops serving Gort including stops on the Ennis Road and on the Loughrea Road.
- c) Investigate the potential of developing a Public Transport Node in the vicinity of Gort Railway station, or other suitable location/s, to provide a facility for transferring between one transport service or mode and another.

#### **Objective TI12 – Amenity/Walking/Cycling Network**

Support the progressive improvement of the amenity/walking/cycling network, to include existing and enhanced public footpaths along the main streets and providing linkages to existing and future schools, cycling routes where possible and amenity corridors linking town centre, residential, community facility, public amenity, commercial and transport nodes.

### **Roads, Streets and Parking Policies**

#### **Policy TI2 – Roads, Streets and Parking**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to ensure that the road and street network is safe and convenient, that it has adequate capacity to accommodate motorised traffic and non-motorised movements, that it has a high environmental quality with appropriate adjacent development and built form, particularly in the case of urban streets and streetscapes, and that adequate parking facilities are provided to serve the needs of the town. This policy and its associated objectives will be guided by relevant national policy, including the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013*, the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines 2012*, the *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines 2009* and accompanying *Urban Design Manual 2009*, the *Traffic Management Guidelines 2003*, the *Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines 2007* (and any updated/superseding documents) and any forthcoming guidelines in relation to street design and cycling facilities.

#### **Policy TI3 – County Development Plan Policies, Objectives & Development Management Standards.**

New developments including developments proposed onto and in proximity to National and Class II Controlled roads shall be assessed, as appropriate, in relation to details including the provision of a safe means of access/egress, provision of sightlines, car and bicycle parking, loading bay provision, building setbacks from routes/roads etc., in accordance with the policies, objectives and Development Management Standards set out in the current County Development Plan or any varied or updated version.

### **Roads, Streets and Parking Objectives**

#### **Objective TI13 – National Road/Motorway Network**

Protect the national road network and safeguard the efficiency, safety, capacity and strategic investment in the M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway, the proposed M18/M17 Gort to Tuam PPP Motorway, N18 and the N66 national routes, having regard to the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012* and obligation, under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, to ensure that no plans or projects, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a European Site. Direct access from future development to these national roads should be avoided outside of the speed limit zones for the town and there will be a presumption against large retail centres located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads. Proposals for large scale developments will be required, where appropriate, to submit Traffic and Transport Assessments to assess the impact of the proposed development and associated traffic movements on the efficiency, safety and capacity of the national road network.

**Objective TI14 – Urban Street Network and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets**

Support the treatment of the route network within the built areas of the town as urban streets that prioritise the needs of pedestrians, that facilitate cyclists wherever possible and that support public and private transport movements, stopping and parking, as appropriate. In this regard, the principles, approaches, and standards set out in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* 2013 (or as updated) shall be applied to new development as appropriate. New developments will be required to facilitate the extension of the urban street network and/or the provision of improved connectivity and permeability, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, where appropriate.

**Objective TI15 – Transport Network Improvements (refer to Specific Objectives Maps 2A/2B)**

Support the improvement of the road and street network in and around the Plan Area, subject to normal planning and environmental considerations, in accordance with the DoECLG *„Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines’* and including in combination effects under the EU Habitats Directive Assessment as appropriate. This will include the following new routes and projects and any other appropriately approved transport schemes/improvements to roads and streets in and around the Plan Area:

- a) Continue to implement the provisions of the current Traffic Management Plan for Gort (and any updated/superseding documents)
- b) Consider the reservation lands for a new relief/link road/street connecting the north-eastern approach N66 Loughrea road to the N18 Oranmore in the north western portion of the Plan Area, in compliance with the provisions of Section 2.7 of the DoECLG *„Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines’*.
- c) Consider the reservation of lands for a new relief/link road/street connecting the south eastern approach road R458 Ennis Road to the L4514 Tubber Road on the south western portion of the Plan Area. Both of the above new routes should be designed to provide adequate access points to adjacent lands with adjacent street-oriented development and provide opportunities for smarter travel improvements within the town.
- d) Continue to carry out road and junction improvement, widening and realignment as required.
- e) Improve and maintain existing public footpaths within the town as resources permit.
- f) Improve culverts and all roadside drainage, maintain and renew pavements, widen and improve existing roads, improve road signage and facilitate the provision of new roads/streets within Gort, as the need arises and as resources permit. All new or modified culverts or bridges in the Plan Area shall be designed and constructed to allow for the safe passage of Otter, where this is required.

Require proposed developments to consider incorporating provisions for busways, footpaths and cycleways where properties bound main arterial routes, new link routes or other routes determined by the NRA. Prohibit development on lands that 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.

**Objective TI16 – Galway County Development Plan Policies, Objectives and Guidelines**

Ensure that new developments, including developments proposed onto and in proximity to National and Class II Controlled roads are assessed, as appropriate, in relation to details including the provision of a safe means of access/egress, provision of sightlines, car and bicycle parking, loading bay provision, building setbacks from routes/roads etc., in accordance with the policies, objectives and development management standards and guidelines set out in the Galway County Development Plan.

**Objective TI17 – Road Safety Audits and Traffic Impact Assessments**

Require all proposed new commercial, industrial and retail developments (or where significant changes are proposed to existing commercial, industrial or larger retail developments) and residential developments greater than 4 units to submit Road Safety Audits and Traffic Impact Assessments as part of their planning application documentation.

**Objective TI18 – Noise**

Require all new proposed development, within 300m of roadways with traffic volumes greater than 8,220 AADT to include a noise assessment and mitigation measures if necessary with their planning application documentation. Mitigation measures proposed as part of M18 in order to protect the noise environment of existing residential development will be facilitated or enforced as necessary.

**Objective TI19 – Schools**

Promote and facilitate greater ease of traffic movement and safe routes to schools in partnership with local schools and ensure that schools have safe drop off/collection facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and adequate and appropriately located staff parking.

**Objective TI20 – Parking Facilities (refer to Specific Objective Maps 2A/2B)**

Ensure that existing parking facilities in the town centre are managed appropriately. Provide additional long stay public parking facilities in suitable locations within the Plan Area to serve the needs of the town in accordance with applicable standards and guidelines.

Provide disabled car parking facilities at appropriate locations throughout the town and ensure that all new developments have adequate car parking, disabled parking and cycling facilities. Requirements for car parking are contained in the Galway County Development Plan.

**Objective TI21 – Traffic Safety and Access (refer to Galway County Development Plan)**

Ensure that all new developments are properly located in terms of traffic safety and adequately address issues of traffic safety and access.

- a) Provide adequate facilities for people with special mobility needs to create a safe and accessible environment by providing parking facilities on ground floor level, tactile crossing points, audio facilities on traffic lights and ramped kerbs.
- b) Encourage new developments to use existing access junctions that enter onto major traffic routes rather than allowing a proliferation of new individual vehicular access points.
- c) Require developers to bear the cost of improvements to junctions, road widening and the provision of footpaths in association with public lighting requirements where these will facilitate or benefit the proposed development.

Require, where possible, the provision of adequate off-street parking and adequate loading/ unloading facilities as part of each development to ensure that parked vehicles do not cause a traffic hazard, obstruct vehicle or pedestrian movement or create a negative visual impact. Underground car parking will be considered in the Town Centre (C1) zone, where it would not conflict with residential amenity, geological, natural heritage or archaeological sensitivities or traffic safety.

**Objective TI22 – M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway (refer to Specific Objective Maps 2A/2B)**

Protect the section of the M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway which is located within the area covered by the Gort LAP from future inappropriate development.

In this regard the following shall apply:

- A building setback of 90m minimum shall be required on each side of the route edge for the M18 Gort to Crusheen route in areas where a speed limit greater than 50kph applies.
- Prevent new accesses onto the M18 route that have not been accommodated in the motorway design in the interest of traffic safety.

**Objective TI23 – Access Points (refer to Specific Objectives Maps 2A/2B)**

Reserve access points for future proposed relief/link roads/streets and at the junction of Bridge Street/Loughrea Road to undeveloped backlands. This will include those shown on **Map 2 – Specific Objectives** and any other access points that may be identified for reservation by the planning authority during the plan period.

**Objective TI 24– Walkways (refer to Specific Objectives Maps 2A/2B)**

Provide a walkway along the Cannahowna/Gort River including the Kinincha and Pound Road in a sustainable manner where possible. Regard should be had to the protection of Otters and Otter breeding sites and resting places along the proposed river walk.

### **TI 25 – Signage on or Visible from National Roads**

Avoid the proliferation of non-road traffic signage on and adjacent to national roads outside of the 50-60kmh speed limit area in the interest of traffic safety and visual amenity, in accordance with the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012*. The NRA document Policy and Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Road March 2011 shall also be considered in the assessment of relevant developments.

### **3.5.3 Development Management Guidelines**

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

## **3.6 Utility and Environmental Infrastructure**

### **3.6.1 Context**

The sustainable growth of Gort is dependent on the satisfactory provision of utility and environmental infrastructure, including water supply, wastewater disposal, surface water drainage and energy and communication networks. There is a need to ensure that there is adequate availability and delivery of utility and environmental infrastructure to support future development in a manner that is environmentally appropriate, cost effective and efficient and that protects public health. In accordance with the requirement of the Water Framework Directive, there is a Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas which consists of an inventory of protected area sites representing area categories to include waters used for the abstraction of drinking water, areas designated to protect economically significant aquatic species, recreational waters, nutrient sensitive areas, and areas designated for the protection of habitat and species.

The European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 278 of 2007) transpose outstanding aspects of the EU Drinking Water Directive into Irish Law by underpinning comprehensive supervision and maintenance regimes for both sanitary authority and group water scheme supplies and by providing for increased penalties for non-compliance. Achieving and improving appropriate water quality standards for the town are of significant importance to the Council.

### **Water Supply**

The public water supply for Gort is supplied from the Gort Regional Water Supply Scheme which is sourced from the Gort/Cannahowna River, the water treatment plant is located at Rindifin Townland. A remedial action programme/list (RAL) for the water treatment plant was completed in 2011 and included an upgrade in the intake/treatment of the plant and along with water conservation works have improved the capacity of the plant, secured the supply and improved the drinking water quality. Network improvement was also undertaken along the Ennis, Corofin and Galway roads. The issues were resolved and Gort is off the RAL list.

Since the start of the Water Conservation Project 2007, there have been 230 leaks found and repaired in Gort. In March the UFW as m<sup>3</sup>/km/hr was 1.03m<sup>3</sup>/km/hr, an acceptable rate for an urban area would be 1m<sup>3</sup>/km/hr. Partial network upgrade works are proposed under the Water Conservation Rehabilitation works which are due to commence 2014-2015. The plant is currently designed for a throughput of approximately 1,500m<sup>3</sup>/day.

### **Wastewater Disposal**

Gort is serviced by a public wastewater collection network with both primary and secondary treatment. The Gort Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) is located on the Kinincha Road to the north of the town. The treated effluent from the WWTP is finally discharged into the Cannahowna/Gort River which goes underground at Kiltartan before finally draining into Corranroe Bay south of Kinvara.

The design PE of the wastewater treatment plant is 3,000PE. There is an estimated 469PE spare capacity which is based on population figures from the 2011 Census and the existing biological spare capacity of the treatment works. There will be sufficient capacity at the works to treat effluent from the Gort Agglomeration in the short to medium term. The system is a combined system and often overflows in very wet weather. Un-serviced areas include Ennis Road, Gallagher's Lane and the Galway Road which have private septic tanks. Problem areas include flooding on Crowe Street which

is the lowest point on the system. There has been significant improvement within the plant within the last two years and further improvements are being reviewed by the Water Services Section of Galway County Council.

### Surface Water Drainage

There is no dedicated surface water sewer network serving Gort. In order to ensure that surface water is disposed of in a controlled and sustainable manner, future developments will be required to address surface water disposal through on-site systems, (depending on site characteristics), discharge to adjacent surface water (where available), or discharge to an existing surface water sewer if available. The Local Area Plan will facilitate the upgrading of surface water infrastructure where necessary and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in developments, such as permeable surfaces, retention ponds and rainwater harvesting, to restrict surface water runoff in new developments to Greenfield levels and to minimise flood risks and potential impacts. Proposals for SuDS will be in accordance with the recommendations as contained within the EPA document entitled *Guidance on Authorisation of Discharges to Groundwater 2011* (or any updated/superseding document).

### Flood Risk Management and Assessment

The DEHLG and the OPW published national flood risk management guidelines in 2009 entitled *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009*. The *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* require Planning Authorities to ensure that, where relevant, flood risk is a key consideration in preparing development plans, local area plans and the assessment of planning applications. The aim of the Guidelines is to avoid flood risk where possible, substitute less vulnerable uses when avoidance is not possible and mitigate and manage the risk where avoidance and substitution are not possible.

The Guidelines provide guidance on identifying areas where the probability of flood risk is high (Flood Zone A), moderate (Flood Zone B) and low (Flood Zone C) and identifies the types of land use that are appropriate within each Flood Zone. The Guidelines also highlight the need to assess the potential impacts of climate change as part of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for a plan. The Guidelines suggest that where mathematical models are not available, climate change flood extents can be assessed by using the Flood Zone B outline as a surrogate for Flood Zone A with allowance for the possible impacts of climate change.

The OPW has produced flood maps as part of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) that identify areas at risk of flooding, including fluvial, coastal, pluvial and groundwater flooding, for the entire country. Galway County Council has also carried out a Stage 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Gort Plan Area. As part of the Stage 2 SFRA, the historic flood risk areas have been identified and a number of local level assessments have also been carried out, including local knowledge of flood events and site walkovers. The Stage 2 SFRA has confirmed the flood extents identified in the OPW PFRA mapping for the Gort Plan Area and identified additional flood risk areas along the Cannahowna/Gort River south of the L4514 Tubber Road and south of the L85314 Kinincha Road to the north east of the Town Centre.

The Local Area Plan takes due consideration of the national *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009*, the flood risk mapping available from the PFRA and the recommendations emanating from the Stage 2 SFRA. The Plan identifies Flood Zones in accordance with the Guidelines using data from the PFRA and the Stage 2 SFRA (shown on **Maps 3A/3B – Flood Risk Management**), designates land use zones (see **Maps 1A/1B – Land Use Zoning**) considered appropriate to each Flood Zone and includes policies and objectives dealing with flood risk assessment and management (see also **Maps 2A/2B – Specific Objectives**). The Flood Zones identified are:

Flood Zone	Probability of Flooding	Flood Risk Areas Included
Flood Zone A	High	> 1:100 for river flooding Combined OSi & SFRA historic flood areas
Flood Zone B	Moderate	1:100 to 1:1000 for river flooding
Flood Zone C	Low	< 1:1000 for river flooding

## **Water Quality**

The EU *Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)* requires member states to ensure that all their waters (including surface and groundwater) achieve at least „good status“ by 2015 and to ensure that the current status does not deteriorate in any waters. In accordance with the requirement of the Water Framework Directive, there is a Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas which consists of an inventory of protected area sites representing area categories to include waters used for the abstraction of drinking water, areas designated to protect economically significant aquatic species, recreational waters, nutrient sensitive areas, and areas designated for the protection of habitat and species.

Gort is located in the Kinvara Water Management Unit in the Western River Basin District (WRBD) and the recently finalised *Western River Basin Management Plan 2009-2015* (WRBMP) recognises the need to integrate water protection measures with land use planning at regional and local level, as responsibility for taking measures within the plan lies with all public bodies whose activities impact on water quality or who regulate such activities. There are no proposals for actions to be taken in the Gort area at present, under the Western RBD Catchment Management Plan.

Gort is found in a regional important karst aquifer underlain by limestone rock. The water bodies of relevance for water protection in Gort are surface water (rivers and streams) and groundwater. The groundwater body underlying the Gort area (WE\_G\_0091 Caherglassaun) has been assigned Good status.

The Ground Water Protection Scheme identifies that approximately 40% of the area within the LAP is rated as having groundwater vulnerability of Extreme (including bedrock at surface), 50% is rated as High with only 10% at Moderate vulnerability.

The Beagh river which is the outflow from Loch Cutra goes underground after 3km and then reappears as the Cannahowna/Gort River which flows through Gort. The river goes underground again at Kiltartan, where it is joined by flow from other hill rivers. The whole drainage system of surface water and underground flow is known as the Coole/Garryland Complex, ultimately emerging at the sea near Kinvara. The Beagh /Cannahowna (WE\_29\_2) has improved to Good status (EPA, June 2011).

Part of the Western portion of the LAP area is considered to drain towards Lough Nacarriga and the Coole Lake outlet and that river water body area (WE\_29\_679 Kinvara\_Coole\_Loch outlet) has been assigned Poor status. The Plan requires that this river water body achieve Good status by 2021.

Lough Nacarriga is at Good status while Coole Lake is at Moderate status and is required to achieve Good status by 2021.

It is, therefore, essential that this resource is sufficiently protected in line with the Groundwater Directive and the Water Framework Directive.

## **Waste Management**

The Connaught Waste Management Plan provides policy guidance on waste management in County Galway. Best practice in terms of waste management recommends that as much waste as possible is dealt with through reduction, reuse and recycling, with as little as possible remaining to be disposed of and this approach will be supported through the Local Area Plan. Galway County Council also promotes environmental awareness measures, initiatives and campaigns in the local community through involvement with various groups and organisations and through the implementation of the Green Schools programme – an international programme designed to encourage and acknowledge whole school action for the environment.

## **Energy and Communications Infrastructure**

Developments require adequate energy and communications services, including electricity, gas supply, telephone services and broadband, which are provided by a number of different service providers. The development of sustainable energy infrastructure and high speed broadband, have been identified as key factors for economic development and inward investment.

The Gort Metropolitan Area Broadband Network (MANS) is fully constructed with the co-location located to the rear of the fire-station and is routed around the town centre, it also services the IDA site,



industrial lands and educational facilities. The network is managed on concession by E-Net Ltd on behalf of the Government. MANS have been constructed in County Galway towns which are considered key for industrial companies.

The town is connected to the transmission grid with access to 220kV and 110kV, the 400kV transmission grid runs parallel and close to the southern aspect of the LAP boundary.

Gort also has access to the gas pipeline network which is located along the western periphery of the town.

Galway County Council will continue to implement the Council's *Energy Action Plan* regarding energy efficiency and conservation in existing and future residential, commercial and industrial buildings within Gort. The Council will also have regard to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and their methodology for developing local authority renewable energy strategies (LARES).

### **Climate Change**

Climate change refers to changes in climatic conditions whether through natural variations or as a result of anthropogenic influences. The impacts of climate change present very serious global risks and threaten the basic components of life, including health, access to water, food production and the use of land. Climate change also poses threats in terms of likelihood and severity of flooding and impacts on water resources, biodiversity, natural habitats and species distribution.

The *National Strategy on Climate Change 2007-2012* sets out the cross-sectoral measures necessary to achieve Ireland's Kyoto Protocol commitments. The national target under the Kyoto Protocol is to limit greenhouse gas emissions for 2008-2012 to 13% above the 1990 level as part of its commitment to the overall EU target.

At a local level, Galway County Council must contribute to the stabilisation and reduction of national greenhouse gas emissions and including climate change adaptation through the promotion of renewable energy sources and energy conservation in policies and objectives regarding the environment, housing and infrastructure. The policies and objectives within the Local Area Plan will contribute to the national commitment to limit the impact of climate change and reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. This includes support for measures aimed at reducing travel demand by integrating land use and transportation, facilitating an increased modal share of sustainable travel modes, encouraging passive solar design and energy efficient buildings, promoting greater use of renewable energy and energy conservation, re-use of existing building stock, promoting waste reduction and addressing increased flooding risks due to climate change.

### **Air Quality and Radon Gas**

The EU *Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)* was transposed into Irish legislation by the *Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011)*. The air quality within the Gort area is generally good. The Plan contains a number of policies and objectives that focus on air quality, including ensuring adherence to relevant air quality standards and promoting planting and landscaping, enhanced public transport and energy efficiency buildings.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive and carcinogenic gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils. Radon has no smell, colour or taste and can only be detected using special detectors. The Radon Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) has identified less than 1% of homes in a 10km grid square within the Gort area is estimated to be above the reference level. The RPII highlights the dangers of exposure to radon, including increased risk of lung cancer. The RPII website provides details with regard to assessing homes for the risk of radon ([www.rpii.ie](http://www.rpii.ie)).

### 3.6.2 Policies and Objectives

#### Water Services Policy

##### Policy UI1 – Water Supply, Wastewater Disposal and Surface Water Drainage Infrastructure

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support the provision and maintenance of adequate wastewater disposal, water supply and surface water drainage infrastructure to service the development of Gort, in accordance with EU Directives, national legislation and applicable standards. This will include the provision of adequate capacity in the public wastewater sewer network, wastewater treatment plant and storm-water sewer network, an adequate quantity and quality of water supply and the promotion of Sustainable Drainage System approaches and techniques for developments within the Plan Area.

#### Water Services Objectives

##### Objective UI1 – Water Services Infrastructure (refer to Maps 2A/2B)

Support the maintenance, improvement and monitoring of the public water supply, wastewater disposal and surface water drainage infrastructure, as necessary to address any deficiencies in infrastructure capacity and/or service the development needs of the town. This will include the following and any other projects approved during the period of the Plan:

- a) Continue to implement the Water Conservation Strategy within Gort and carry out improvements to the existing infrastructure, including the partial network and reservoir upgrade works under the Water Conservation Rehabilitation works as proposed to commence in 2014/2015.
- b) Continue to implement the water leak detection programme including the use of a strategic metering system to aid in leak detection and reduction in unaccounted for water.
- c) Ensure that trade effluent from new development is managed properly and discharged to sewers in accordance with relevant discharge licenses.
- d) Progress the upgrading of the existing wastewater treatment plant and the sewer network for the town under the Water Services Investment Programme in accordance with the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007, S.I. No. 684 of 2007.
- e) Improve and maintain an adequate surface water drainage system throughout the Plan Area.

##### Objective UI2 – Water Services for New Developments

Require all new developments to be adequately serviced with water supply, wastewater disposal and surface water drainage in accordance with applicable legislation, standards and guidelines and to submit the necessary documentation with their planning applications to confirm same. Encourage only as much development, both in terms of quantity and type of development, that can be provided for based on the utility services available and prohibit any proposed development that cannot be adequately serviced, that would lead to significant environmental effects or that would pose an unacceptable threat to the capacity of water, wastewater or surface water infrastructure in the Plan Area.

##### Objective UI3 – Water Supply and Water Conservation

Ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with a suitable quantity and quality of a sustainably sourced drinking water supply, promote water conservation to reduce the overall level of water loss in the public supply and require that new domestic developments provide for water supply metering. Verification of the effectiveness of the remedial action programme for the current water supply scheme will be progressed in consultation with the EPA.

Ensure any new potential water supply for Gort, in particular any proposals for water abstraction from Lough Cutra, will be subject to required environmental screening, including Appropriate Assessment Screening.

#### **Objective UI4 – Wastewater Disposal**

Restrict development that does not connect to the public sewer and discourage the proliferation of individual septic tanks and treatment plants in order to protect groundwaters, consolidate the town structure and control ribbon development along the approach roads into Gort. Implement and promote the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001 and 2004.

Ensure the changeover from septic tanks to mains connections in all cases where this is feasible and that all new developments utilise and connect to the existing wastewater infrastructure subject to adequate capacity prior to any connection. Connection to the public sewer will be encouraged as an alternative to the provision of individual septic tanks and treatment plants in the Gort area in order to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution. Where such facilities are permitted, full compliance with the prevailing regulations and standards, including the EPA's a Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e.≤ 10), (EPA, 2009), will be required.

#### **Objective UI5 - Wastewater Treatment Plant Buffer (refer to Specific Objectives Maps 2A/2B)**

Provide and protect a 100m buffer around the wastewater treatment plant (Public Utilities Zoning Objective) site and protect buffer zones around any other treatment plant in the town as appropriate. The council will support and facilitate protection measures for the town's existing wastewater treatment plant which is located within Flood Zone A.

#### **Objective UI6 – Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems**

Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in the Plan Area, ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in all new developments. Surface water runoff from development sites will be limited to pre-development levels and planning applications for new developments will be required to provide details of surface water drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems proposals. The Council will also implement all relevant Surface Water legislation including „Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No 272 of 2009) or any updated/superseding document.

Developers will be required to adopt site specific solutions to surface water drainage systems in all cases.

#### **Objective UI7 - The Cannahowna/Gort River and Drainage Catchment (refer to Specific Objectives Maps 2A/2B)**

Require new development proposals within the catchment of the Cannahowna/Gort River or that potentially drain towards this river to include full details of proposals to address the high probability of flooding associated with the river and its catchment and the need to provide adequate surface water drainage, including the incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

### **Flood Risk Management Policy**

#### **Policy UI2 – Flood Risk Management**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support, in co-operation with the OPW, the implementation of the EU *Flood Risk Directive (2007/60/EC)*, the *Flood Risk Regulations (SI No. 122 of 2010)* and the DEHLG/OPW publication *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* (and any updated/superseding legislation or policy guidance). Galway County Council will implement the relevant aspects of the *Western Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study* (Western CFRAMs), the output of which will be a Flood Risk Management Plan for the catchment), along with the mitigation measures and recommendations arising from the associated SEA and Appropriate Assessment. Galway County Council will also take account of the *Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment* (PFRA) and *the Stage 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment* for the Gort LAP Area and any recommendations and outputs arising from same that relate to or impact on the Plan Area.

#### **Policy UI3 – Flood Risk in Pluvial and Groundwater Flood Areas**

Where the probability of flooding from rivers is low (less than 0.1%, flood zone C) the developer should satisfy him or herself that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. Among other things, mapping including the OPW's **Pluvial and Groundwater Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment** mapping should be considered for this purpose

## Flood Risk Management Objectives

### Objective UI8– Flood Risk Management and Assessment (refer to Maps 3A/3B)

Ensure the implementation of the DEHLG/OPW publication *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* (or any updated/superseding document) in relation to flood risk management within the Plan Area. This will include the following:

- a) Avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate in accordance with the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009*, the risk of flooding within the flood risk areas indicated on **Maps 3A/3B – Flood Risk Management**, including fluvial, pluvial and groundwater flooding, and any other flood risk areas that may be identified during the period of the Plan or in relation to a planning application.
- b) Development proposals in areas where there is an identified or potential risk of flooding or that could give rise to a risk of flooding elsewhere will be required to carry out a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment, and justification test where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* (or any superseding document). Any flood risk assessment should include an assessment of the potential impacts of climate change, such as an increase in the extent or probability of flooding, and any associated measures necessary to address these impacts.
- c) Development that would be subject to an inappropriate risk of flooding or that would cause or exacerbate such a risk at other locations shall not normally be permitted.
- d) Galway County Council shall work with other bodies and organisations, as appropriate, to help protect critical infrastructure, including water and wastewater, within the plan area, from risk of flooding. Where certain measures proposed to mitigate or manage the risk of flooding associated with new developments/critical infrastructure are likely to result in significant effects to the environment or European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network downstream, such measures will undergo environmental assessment and Habitats Directive Assessment, as appropriate.

### Objective UI9 – Flood Zones and Appropriate Land Uses (refer to Maps 3A/3B)

Protect Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B from inappropriate development and direct developments/land uses into the appropriate Flood Zone in accordance with the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* (or any superseding document) and the guidance contained in **DM Standard UI1 – Flood Zones and Appropriate Land Uses**. Where a development/land use is proposed that is inappropriate within the Flood Zone, then the development proposal will need to be accompanied by a Development Management Justification Test and Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment in accordance with the criteria set out under the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009*.

### Objective UI10– Waterbodies and Watercourses (refer to Maps 2A/2B and to Maps 3A/3B)

Protect waterbodies and watercourses within the Plan Area from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include a **10m environmental management buffer** between any new development and all watercourses including the Cannahowna/Gort River. Promote the sustainable management and use of watercourses and avoid the culverting or realignment of these features. Any hard landscaping proposals shall be located outside of any buffer zone areas.

### Objective UI11 – Groundwater and Pluvial Flood Risk

Planning applications on lands identified within groundwater and pluvial PFRA areas shall be accompanied by a Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment that corresponds with that outlined under Chapter 5 „Flooding and Development Management“ of the DEHLG Flood Guidelines (2009). Such assessments shall be prepared by suitably qualified experts with hydrological experience and shall quantify the risks and the effects of any necessary mitigation, together with the measures needed or proposed to manage residual risks.

### Objective UI12 – Boundaries of Flood Zones

In the case of lands transected by the outer boundary of Indicative Flood Zone A or B, where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the PA [by more detailed local topographic survey information] that the outer boundary does not reflect local topographical and /or flood path conditions, the PA may consider the extension of uses allowed in an adjacent land use zone into the Indicative Flood Zone

area, where the extended area inside the Indicative Flood Zone does not exceed 50% of the site area outside of the indicative flood zone or 1acre/.404ha, whichever is the lesser.

The proposal will also be subject to the submission of a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment and Justification Test as appropriate and the developer satisfying the PA and him/herself that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed and will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

## **Water Quality Policy**

### **Policy UI4 – Water Quality**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to protect and improve water quality in all waters, in conjunction with other agencies and stakeholders and in accordance with the EU *Water Framework Directive (2006/60/EC)*, EU *Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)* and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance, (including any superseding versions of same), and to support the implementation of the Western River Basin District Management Plan. Galway County Council will take account of the above requirements to protect and improve water quality when assessing new development proposals.

## **Water Quality Objectives**

### **Objective UI13 – Western River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters**

Support the protection of water quality in accordance with the EU *Water Framework Directive (2006/60/EC)* and the *European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (SI No. 722 of 2003)* (as amended) (or any updated legislation), including the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the *Western River Basin District Management Plan 2009-2015* and associated Programme of Measures and any updated/ superseding documents). Development will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface water, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. Galway County Council is statutorily obliged to protect the existing good quality status of the waters in the Gort area (including the Cannahowna/Gort River and tributary/stream, the Kiltartan drainage area and including the surface water catchments of the Coole-Garryland turlough (a wetland system of global significance).

### **Objective UI14 – Groundwater and Aquifers**

Support the protection of groundwater resources and dependent wildlife/habitats in accordance with the EU *Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)* and the *European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 (SI No. 9 of 2010)* (or any updated legislation). Protect the regionally important aquifer that under lays the Plan Area from risk of environmental pollution and have regard to any groundwater protection schemes and groundwater source protection zones where data has been made available by the Geological Survey of Ireland.

## **Waste Management Policy**

### **Policy UI5 – Waste Management**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support sustainable waste management through the prevention, reduction and recycling of waste and by facilitating the provision of adequate waste infrastructure, such as bring banks, at locations that will not adversely affect residential amenities.

## **Waste Management Objectives**

### **Objective UI15 – Waste Prevention, Reduction and Recycling**

Promote the prevention, reduction and recycling of waste in new developments. New development proposals will be required to submit proposals demonstrating how this is to be achieved with their planning applications.

### **Objective UI16 – Bring Bank Facility**

Facilitate the installation of bring bank facilities at suitable locations within the Plan Area and where they will not adversely affect residential amenities.

### **Objective UI17 – Waste Management**

Implement the Connaught Waste Management Plan 2006-2011, the Galway County Council's Litter Management Plan 2007-2010, the National Waste Prevention Programme, the EPA's National Hazardous Waste Management Plan and any superseding plans/programmes over the lifetime of the Gort Local Area Plan.

## **Energy and Communications Infrastructure Policy**

### **Policy UI6 – Energy and Communications**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support the provision of adequate energy and communications infrastructure to service developments, including gas, electricity, broadband and telephone services. In particular, the Council supports the increased development and use of renewable energy and the aims of sustainable energy use and conservation in building design and construction.

## **Energy and Communications Infrastructure Objectives**

### **Objective UI18 – Electricity and Gas Supply**

Facilitate the provision of an adequate supply of electricity and gas to developments in the Plan Area, to the requirements of the relevant service provider and in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

### **Objective UI19 – Energy Conservation and Efficiency**

Continue to implement Galway County Council's *Energy Action Plan* regarding energy efficiency and conservation in existing and future residential, commercial and industrial buildings within Gort. Ensure that new buildings are sustainable in their siting, orientation, design and construction. Passive solar design techniques, high energy efficiency, low impact construction methods and the use of local/sustainable building materials, recycled aggregates and local craftsmanship will be encouraged to ensure that new developments minimise their environmental impacts and long term costs.

### **Objective UI20 – Broadband and Telecommunications**

Facilitate the provision of adequate telecommunication infrastructure in the Plan Area, including telephone and broadband services (MANS), to the requirements of the relevant service providers and in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

### **Objective UI21 – Renewable Energy**

Promote and facilitate the development and use of renewable energy sources and associated infrastructure within the Plan Area, including wind, solar, bioenergy, geothermal/CHP, hydropower and other renewable energy sources, as appropriate. Encourage the integration of micro-renewable energy sources into the design and construction of new developments, as appropriate.

## Climate Change and Air Quality Policy

### Policy UI7– Climate Change and Air Quality

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support and promote, in conjunction with other agencies, local, national and international initiatives for limiting/reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and encouraging the development of renewable energy in accordance with the *National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012*, the *EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)* and the *Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011)* (or any updated/superseding documents).

## Climate Change and Air Quality Objectives

### Objective UI22 – Climate Change

Support the implementation of the *National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012* (or any updated/superseding document) and continue to implement Galway County Council's *Energy Action Plan* regarding energy efficiency and conservation in existing and future buildings, in energy use and procurement activities and in raising awareness and stimulating action within local communities.

### Objective UI23 – Air Quality

Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development throughout the Plan Area in accordance with the *EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)* by seeking to protect and maintain the regulatory standards contained with the EPA's *Air Quality in Ireland 2009: Key Indicators of Ambient Air Quality 2010* (or any updated/superseding document) and by ensuring that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the *Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011)* (or any updated/ superseding documents).

### Objective UI24 – Air Purification

Encourage landscaping and deciduous tree planting in an environmentally sensitive manner within the Plan Area as a means of air purification, the filtering of suspended particles and the improvement of Gort's micro-climate.

### Objective UI25 – Radon

Have regard, in accordance with Galway County Council's statutory role under the *Building Control Act 2007*, to the specific guidance on radon prevention measures for new homes as contained within the Building Regulations.

## 3.6.3 Development Management Guidelines

### Flood Risk Management

#### DM Guideline UI1 – Flood Zones and Appropriate Land Uses

The table below indicates the types of land uses that are appropriate in each of the Flood Zones identified within the Plan Area, in accordance with the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009*. Where developments/land uses are proposed that are considered inappropriate to the Flood Zone, then a Development Management Justification Test and Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment will be required in accordance with the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009*.

Land Uses	Flood Zone A	Flood Zone B	Flood Zone C
<b>HVD – Highly Vulnerable Development</b>	Inappropriate (if proposed then Justification Test & detailed FRA required)	Inappropriate (if proposed then Justification Test & detailed FRA required)	Appropriate (screen for flood risk)
<b>LVD – Less Vulnerable Development</b>	Inappropriate (if proposed then Justification Test & detailed FRA required)	Inappropriate due to climate change (if proposed then Justification Test & detailed FRA required)	Appropriate (screen for flood risk)
<b>WCD – Water-Compatible Development</b>	Appropriate (detailed FRA may be required)	Appropriate (detailed FRA may be required)	Appropriate (screen for flood risk)

**Notes** (refer to *Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009* for additional detail):

1. **HVD** – Houses, schools, hospitals, residential institutions, emergency services, essential infrastructure, etc.
2. **LVD** – Economic uses (retail, leisure, warehousing, commercial, industrial, non-residential institutions, etc.), land and buildings used for agriculture or forestry, local transport infrastructure, etc.
3. **WCD** – Docks, marinas, wharves, water-based recreation and tourism (excluding sleeping accommodation), amenity open space, sports and recreation, flood control infrastructure, etc.

Refer to the summary of provisions of the Guidelines in *Appendix I* of the Stage 2 SFRA for the Gort LAP which is a separate supporting document.

## Water Quality

### DM Guideline UI2 – Waterbodies and Watercourses

Require all relevant applications, which are located in close proximity to waterbodies or watercourses (including the Cannahowna/Gort River and tributaries), to submit measures to reduce and prevent pollution to the waterbody/watercourse, both during construction and after completion of the scheme.

## Energy Statements

### DM Guideline UI3 – Energy Statements

All proposals for new non-residential developments with a floor area of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more and residential developments comprised of 10 or more units may be required to submit an Energy Statement outlining the methods proposed to minimise energy use in the development, such as building orientation and passive solar design, materials and insulation, renewable/alternative energy sources, etc.

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

## 3.7 Urban Design and Landscape

### 3.7.1 Context

#### Urban Design and Place-making

Urban design refers to the theory and practice of creating urban places and involves buildings but focuses particularly on the spaces between buildings, including the streets, frontages, civic spaces and overall place-making, such as building types and arrangements, urban block types and patterns, mix of uses and activities, etc. Successful urban design is essential in the creation of attractive and sustainable living and working environments and the establishment of a unique identity and sense of place for the town.

It is important to protect the distinctive character of the town and to enhance the quality of the built environment so as to enable people to continue living in attractive and safe surroundings, and to ensure a similar standard for future generations. This can be achieved through promoting new development, places and spaces that are of high quality, which promote sustainable lifestyles, are appropriately scaled, are responsive to their contextual surroundings, amenity, heritage, environment and landscape of the town and contribute to the future potential of the area.

#### Landscape, Townscape and Visual Amenity

In terms of landscape sensitivity, the Galway County Development Plan classifies landscapes in the Plan Area as being a combination of Under the Landscape Sensitivity Rating in the County Development Plan, Gort and its hinterland are classified as Class 2 – Moderate Sensitivity (to the south and southeast and Class 3 – High Sensitivity (to the north and northwest). The Galway County Development Plan also identifies a number of protected focal points/views in the area including focal points to the south and south west of the LAP boundary including Cill Mac Duach – historic ecclesiastical village.



The townscape and streetscapes of Gort including the church spires are an important part of the built heritage and visual amenity of the town. The protection and enhancement of the townscape, streetscapes and historic street pattern would all need to be considered with respect to the future conservation and development of the town.

### 3.7.2 Policies and Objectives

#### Urban Design and and Landscape Policy

##### Policy UD1 – Urban Design and Landscape

It is the policy of Galway County Council to promote the use of sustainable urban design principles and approaches that will help to create high quality built and natural environments appropriate to the context and landscape setting of the town, having regard to the guidance contained in the *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines 2009* and the accompanying *Urban Design Manual 2009* (or any updated/superseding documents). This will focus on the development of a high quality, well landscaped and appropriately scaled built environment with a strong civic and commercial core, responsive building frontages, appropriate building forms, heights, designs and materials and high quality civic, community, recreational and amenity facilities. The creation of a high quality natural environment will also be supported through the protection of the landscape sensitivities, views and prospects in the town and the promotion of the development of a green network and high quality landscaping.

#### Urban Design and Landscape Objectives

##### Objective UD1 – High Quality, Context Sensitive Design

Ensure that new developments are responsive to their site context and in keeping with the character, amenity, heritage, environment and landscape of the area. New development proposals will be required to complement the existing character of the town centre/area in terms of scale, height, massing, building line, urban grain and definition and through high quality design proposals for buildings/structures/shop fronts, the use of high quality, appropriate materials and the provision of appropriate signage, lighting, landscaping proposals and other such details. External lighting and light spill will be minimised in general and the use of lighting in areas of ecological sensitivity avoided and/or minimised where possible. Lighting should not be directed at the Cannahowna/Gort River.

##### Objective UD2 – Public Spaces and Streets

Promote the development of high quality public spaces consisting of streets, squares, parks and amenities connected by a network of pedestrian and cycling routes. Public spaces should have a high standard of design and street furniture that will create a coherent character for the area. This would include appropriately designed and located park benches, bus shelters, cycle storage facilities, refuse bins, signage, street sculpture, etc. but should avoid the over-proliferation of different elements and/or cluttering of public spaces.

##### Objective UD3 – Spatial Definition and Animation

Ensure that new developments are designed to provide spatial definition and animation to public spaces and streets through the use of appropriate building lines and built forms, responsive building frontages and passive surveillance and high quality streetscapes and/or landscaping edges to enclose and address public spaces. Perimeter block typologies provide a useful approach in generating good spatial definition, adequate enclosure and a high quality public realm and the creation of focal points, such as landmark buildings and gateways, also help to improve spatial definition and legibility and will be encouraged in appropriate locations.

##### Objective UD4 – Green Network and the Landscape

Support the development of a network of amenities, open spaces and natural areas that support biodiversity, that incorporate existing landscape features such as local rivers, streams, trees, stone walls and hedgerows, that provide pedestrian and cycling linkages and active and passive recreation opportunities, that help to structure and provide relief from the built environment and that can provide areas for surface water attenuation and flood risk management.

#### **Objective UD5 – Street-Oriented Development and Responsive Frontages**

Promote street-oriented development along the urban street network within the built areas of the town and along the approach routes to the town. This will include improved facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport as appropriate and the promotion of high quality building or landscaping edges to these routes. Buildings and spaces should be designed to provide a human scale along street frontages with the use of appropriate building heights and responsive ground floor treatments. Intensive, fine-grained developments will generally be encouraged to provide a diversity of building forms and public spaces.

#### **Objective UD6 – Design Statements**

Require design statements with all large scale or sensitively located development proposals, such as in close proximity to an Architectural Conservation Area, protected structure, natural heritage designation, significant public amenity, elevated position or visually vulnerable area, and in the case of any other development proposals where this is considered necessary by the planning authority. Design statements should include a site appraisal examining the location, context, landscape/townscape setting, accessibility, features and characteristics of the development site, which should be used to inform the selection of appropriate development forms and design responses and the incorporation and provision of any important landscape features in the layout and design of the development. Design statements should be succinct documents that include both text and supporting graphics demonstrating how the site context and characteristics and design principles, policies and objectives have been addressed in the design and layout of the development proposal.

#### **Objective UD7 – Landscape, Townscape, Views and Prospects (refer to Maps 2A/2B and Galway County Development Plan)**

Protect the landscape character, values, sensitivities, focal points and views in the Plan Area, including those identified in the Galway County Development Plan and included in the *Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway 2002* and as shown on **Map 2A/2B – Specific Objectives**. This will include, *inter alia*, the following:

- a) Ensure that new developments are responsive to the high and special sensitivity of the Cannahowna/Gort River and surrounds, to the elevated and open character of Market Square with its converging narrow lanes entered through carriage arches, surviving military buildings, to the vistas of St Coleman's Church and former Church of Ireland church and graveyard, and to any other visually vulnerable areas or locally important townscape contexts.
- b) Require Visual Impact Assessment for developments with potential to impact on areas of significant landscape character, value or sensitivity, including both urban and natural features, such as the Cannahowna/Gort River, significant townscapes and historic buildings, as appropriate.
- c) Prohibit development that will block or interfere with a significant focal point or view. Where it is considered that a development may impact on focal points or views, have regard to the significance of any such impact and any appropriate mitigation measures that should be incorporated.

### **3.7.3 Development Management Guidelines**

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

## 3.8 Built Heritage & Cultural Heritage

### 3.8.1 Context

The built and cultural heritage within Gort contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the area. The built heritage includes both architectural and archaeological heritage and Gort has a number of significant elements of both that form part of the history and character of the town. The built heritage is a significant asset for the town on account of the numerous sites and monuments identified for protection and the sense and quality of place this creates, which can have significant benefits in terms of the quality of life of residents and the attraction of visitors and tourism investment and activity.

#### Architectural Heritage

Gort is a historic town with a rich architectural heritage and a number of key features, including ecclesiastical, monastic and religious buildings and structures, historic core, street pattern, plot arrangement and historic streetscapes, mainly within the town centre. Galway County Council recognises the value of the built heritage to the character of Gort. The Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of this heritage through the measures contained in planning legislation, through the implementation of appropriate conservation led policies and objectives as well as sensitive land use objectives, good urban design principles and development management standards, which will significantly enhance the architectural setting within Gort.

The key elements of the architectural heritage in Gort include Protected Structures, which form part of the Record of Protected Structures in the Galway County Development Plan, the Gort Architectural Conservation Area and structures of local interest.

Refer to Maps 1A/1B and Maps 2A/2B of this Plan in relation to the Gort ACA and to the Record of Protected Structures in the Galway County Development Plan in relation to Protected Structures.

The **Record of Protected Structures** (RPS) lists the structures that are considered to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical interest or value. A statutory framework for protecting, managing and enhancing protected structures is set out in the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended). Structures that form part of the RPS are afforded protection under the Galway County Development Plan but this does not preclude appropriate use or development. Gort has a wealth of protected structures, including the Courthouse and the former Church of Ireland church designed by James Pain in 1811.

An **Architectural Conservation Area** (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest. The ACA can also include areas that contribute to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. An ACA may or may not include Protected Structures. Planning permission must be obtained before significant works can be carried out to the exterior of a structure in an ACA. Gort has a designated ACA, which seeks to protect the special character of the historic core. The designation of the historic town centre core as an ACA and the associated management of both individual buildings and the public realm in the area will significantly enhance the quality of the local environment within Gort.

According to the *Architectural Inventory for Gort 2004*, Gort's principal significance lies in the combination of its street pattern, plot sizes, architectural coherence, distinctive landmark buildings or groups and countryside setting. The majority of buildings span the late 18<sup>th</sup> to late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and share many characteristics. A large proportion of buildings are in the classical vernacular style, ranged along two wide intersecting roads which focus on Market Square. The river and its banks, surviving military buildings, traditional shopfronts and narrow lanes entered through carriage arches are distinctive and important features. Stone walls are another significant feature of the area, particularly those around Slipper Street and Barrack Street. The retention of the character of the historic core in Gort is recognised as being a major attraction. Gort for its size contains a significant number of buildings of national or regional significance for a town of its size.

**Structures of local interest** are buildings of local significance that retain traditional features and that also contribute to local distinctiveness and identity. Galway County Council recognises the importance of structures of local interest and the heritage, tourism and visual amenity value of conserving and sustainably reusing such buildings.

### **Archaeological Heritage**

Gort also has a rich archaeological heritage providing evidence of early settlement in the area. The *National Monuments Acts 1930-2004* provide for the protection of archaeological heritage, including the establishment of a **Record of Monuments and Places** (RMP), which is a national inventory of archaeological sites and monuments, under Section 12 of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994*. Some archaeological sites and monuments may also be of significant architectural heritage value and be afforded dual protection as a Recorded/National Monument under the National Monuments Acts and as a Protected Structure under the Planning and Development Acts.

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's full database of archaeological monuments can be accessed at [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie).

The Archaeological Constraint Maps prepared for County Galway as part of the RMP identify the approximate locations of archaeological sites and monuments and give an indication of the extent of the site or monument, although the area around the site or monument may also have archaeological potential and significance. Accordingly, the Local Area Plan identifies **Zones of Archaeological Potential** (ZAPs) around recorded monuments and places (typically 30m from the outline indicated on the Archaeological Constraint Maps). In advance of any new development on a site of archaeological significance or within a ZAP there is a requirement for consultation with the Monument Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Galway County Development Plan also provides that, where developments are located within areas of archaeological potential or within close proximity to a Recorded Monument, then further archaeological assessment and/or mitigation may be necessary.

The Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht (DAHG) is responsible for the protection of our archaeological heritage, including the licensing of archaeological excavations under the *National Monuments Acts 1930-2004*. When the owner or occupier of a property, or any other person proposes to carry out, or to cause, or to permit the carrying out of any work at or in relation to a Recorded Monument or Place they are required to give notice in writing to the Minister 2 months before commencing that work.

Refer to Maps 2A/2B of this Plan in relation to ZAPs and to the Archaeological Constraints Map for County Galway and the website of the National Monuments Service [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) in relation to Recorded Monuments and Places on the RMP.

**Burial Grounds** often contain the standing remains or sites of earlier structures and they also can contain a great diversity of natural heritage. Burial Grounds, which are included in the Records of Monuments and Places, are afforded protection under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. The former Church of Ireland church and graveyard are afforded this protection.

### **Cultural Heritage**

The cultural heritage of the town is a general term that includes cultural services, such as public buildings (e.g. public libraries and museums) and also encompasses a range of characteristics that help define an area and its population, including local customs, traditions, language and literature. It is important to acknowledge the unique cultural identity that a town like Gort displays and ensure that new development supports and complements same.

## **3.8.2 Policies and Objectives**

### **Built and Cultural Heritage Policies**

#### **Policy BH1 – Built Heritage**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support the conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage, including the Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Area and Recorded Monuments and Places and other important features of architectural or archaeological heritage within the Plan Area. Galway County Council will ensure the implementation of the legislative, statutory and policy provisions relevant to the conservation of built heritage, including the following (and any updated/superseding documents):

- Legislative provisions in the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended) and *National Monuments Act 1930* (as amended).
- Statutory provisions in the Galway County Development Plan, including the Record of Protected Structures.
- Policy guidance in the Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015, the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2004, the Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers and the National Policy on Town Defences 2008.

### **Policy BH2 – Cultural Heritage**

It is the policy of Galway County Council to acknowledge and promote awareness of the origins, historical development and cultural heritage of the town, to support high quality developments that relate to local heritage and to ensure that new development respects and is responsive to the cultural heritage of Gort.

## **Built and Cultural Heritage Objectives**

### **Objective BH1 – Architectural Heritage**

Ensure the protection of architectural heritage in the Plan Area, in particular by implementing the legislative provisions of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended) in relation to architectural heritage and the policy guidance contained in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2004* (and any updated/superseding document).

### **Objective BH2 – Protected Structures (refer to Galway County Development Plan and to Maps 2A/2B)**

Ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of structures included and proposed for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, together with the integrity of their character and setting.

### **Objective BH3 – Architectural Conservation Area (refer to Maps 1A/1B and 2A/2B)**

Protect, conserve and enhance the essential character of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) through the appropriate management and control of the design, location and layout of new development, alterations or extensions to existing structures and/or modifications to the character or setting of the Architectural Conservation Area.

### **Objective BH4 – Development/Works relating to Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Area**

Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions materially affecting the character of a Protected Structure, or a structure adjoining a Protected Structure, or a structure within or adjacent to an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), is sited and designed appropriately and is not detrimental to the character or setting of the Protected Structure or the ACA. This will include the following:

- a) Works materially affecting the character of a Protected Structure or the exterior of a building/structure within an ACA will require planning permission.
- b) Any works/development carried out to a Protected Structure or the exterior of a building/structure within an ACA shall be in accordance with best conservation practice and use sustainable and appropriate materials.
- c) Works/development within the ACA shall ensure the conservation of traditional features and building elements that contribute to the character of the area. New proposals shall have appropriate regard to scale, plot, form, mass, design, materials, and colours and function.
- d) Prohibit development proposals, either in whole or in part, for the demolition of Protected Structures, save in exceptional circumstances, or the demolition of structures within an Architectural Conservation Area that contribute to the special character of the area.

#### **Objective BH5 – Demolition**

Prohibit development proposals, either in whole or in part, for the demolition of protected structures or structures within an Architectural Conservation Area, save in exceptional circumstances.

#### **Objective BH6 – Architectural Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

Prepare and publish an ACA Appraisal and Management Plan for Gort over the lifetime of the Plan, to preserve, protect and enhance the character of this area, including the public realm and implement any recommendations arising from same.

#### **Objective BH7 – Vernacular Architecture and Structures of Local Interest**

Recognise the importance of the contribution of vernacular architecture to the character of Gort and ensure the protection, retention and appropriate revitalisation and use of vernacular heritage, including structures of local interest that contribute to the local distinctiveness, built heritage and/or streetscape character of Gort, and resist the demolition of these vernacular structures.

#### **Objective BH8 – Archaeological Heritage**

Ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of archaeological heritage in the Plan Area, in particular by implementing the relevant provisions of the *Planning and Development 2000* (as amended), the *National Monuments Act 1930* (as amended), the *National Policy on Town Defences 2008* and the *Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers*.

#### **Objective BH9 – Monuments and Places**

Ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of the monuments and places included and proposed for inclusion in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), together with the integrity of their character and setting, in particular by implementing the relevant provisions of the *Planning and Development 2000* (as amended), the *National Monuments Act 1930* (as amended), the *National Policy on Town Defences 2008* and the *Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers*. This will include the protection of all monuments on the list provided by the National Monument Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, which has statutory responsibility in this area.

#### **Objective BH10 – Zones of Archaeological Potential (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Ensure that all planning applications for new developments and all proposed infrastructure projects/schemes in close proximity (30m) to Recorded Monuments and Places (RMPs) and within Zones of Archaeological Potential (ZAPs) are referred to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and take account of the archaeological heritage of the area, any advice received from the DAHG and the need for archaeological assessments and, where appropriate, mitigation measures.

#### **Objective BH11 – Local Place Names**

Protect local place names as an important part of the cultural heritage and unique character of the Plan Area. Support the use of appropriate names for new developments that reflect the character and heritage of the area and that contribute to the local distinctiveness of Gort. New developments will be required to consult with *Coiste Logainmneacha Chontae na Gaillimhe*, the Galway County Council „Placename Committee“, and to identify an appropriate name for new developments that reflect the local heritage and character of the area.

### **3.8.3 Development Management Guidelines**

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

## **3.9 Natural Heritage & Biodiversity**

### **3.9.1 Context**

Natural heritage includes the variety of life we see around us every day and also includes the landscape and its geological foundation. The variety of life is often referred to as biological diversity or biodiversity. Biodiversity is a word used to describe the natural world that includes people, animals, plants, microbes as well as the places they live which are called habitats. Natural heritage includes a wide range of natural features and processes that make an essential contribution to the environmental quality, ecological biodiversity, landscape character, visual amenity, recreational activities, public health and investment potential of the town.

#### **European Directives, Natura 2000 and Environmental Assessments**

At European level, the *Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)* and the *Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)* mandate the identification and protection of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which together create a network of protected wildlife areas, known as the Natura 2000 network, across the European Union. The designation of these sites forms part of a range of measures aimed at conserving important or threatened habitats and species. The Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas as required under the Directive also contains an inventory of protected area sites representing area categories to include areas designated for the protection of habitat and species.

There is a legal requirement that all land use plans comply with the Birds and Habitats Directives, in particular by undertaking a Habitats Directive Assessment. The *Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC)* also requires that all land use plans legally comply with the SEA Directive, including the undertaking of a Strategic Environmental Assessment where necessary. Further details regarding the AA Natura Impact Report and the Strategic Environmental Report undertaken for the Local Area Plan are available separately as supporting documents to the Plan.

#### **Natural Heritage Areas and Associated Legislation**

The national designation for wildlife and nature conservation is the Natural Heritage Area (NHA), and established Natura Heritage Areas are protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000. These areas are considered important for the habitats present or hold species of plants and animals whose habitat need protection under national legislation. NHAs and proposed NHAs may also be regarded as stepping stones or ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the EU Habitats Directive. The Coole-Garryland Complex is designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (site code 000 252) and a Special Protection Area (site code 004107) and a Natural Heritage Area. The Coole-Garryland Complex is located outside the LAP boundary to the northwest and this site forms part of the pan-European network of designated sites. The Local Area Plan includes policies and objectives to protect the site in accordance with applicable legislation and policy.

#### **Ecological Networks**

Ecological networks are supported at EU level through the *European Spatial Development Perspective* and *Natura 2000* and underpin the *Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS)*, which has been ratified by Ireland. The various habitats within Gort and surrounding areas form part of an "ecological network" that facilitates the movement of species between areas and ensures the effective functioning and survival of the diverse range of habitats and species. Ecological networks provide „corridors“ or „stepping stones“ that support species migration, dispersal and daily movements between the „core areas“ and thereby contribute to a more integrated and functional ecological system.

Inland waterways, which include lakes, rivers, and streams, are living systems of high local biodiversity value due to the habitats associated with them, and function as ecological corridors that connect related habitats/designated sites, enabling species to move between them. The Cannahowna/Gort River and its tributaries within the Plan Area perform such an ecological network function and connect to designated sites downstream of the Plan Area before they drain into the Galway Bay Complex SAC, SPA & pNHA. Established trees and hedgerows are also of high local biodiversity value and contribute to ecological connectivity. Features that contribute to the creation of an ecological network should be retained and included in the design plans for development proposals.

### 3.9.2. Policies and Objectives

#### Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Policies.

##### Policy NH1 – Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

It is the policy of Galway County Council to support the conservation and enhancement of natural heritage and biodiversity, including the protection of the integrity of European sites, that form part of the Natura 2000 network, the protection of Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas and the promotion of the development of a green/ecological network within the Plan Area, in order to support ecological functioning and connectivity, create opportunities in suitable locations for active and passive recreation and to structure and provide visual relief from the built environment. The protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, including European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network, will be implemented in accordance with relevant EU environmental directives and applicable national legislation, policies, plans and guidelines, including the following (and any updated/superseding documents):

- EU Directives, including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC), the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC),
- National legislation, including the Wildlife Act 1976, the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1989 (SI No. 349 of 1989) (as amended), the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011).
- National policy guidelines, including the Landscape and Landscape Assessment Draft Guidelines 2000, the Environmental Impact Assessment Sub-Threshold Development Guidelines 2003, Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines 2004 and the Appropriate Assessment Guidelines 2010.
- Catchment and water resource management plans, including the *Western River Basin District Management Plan 2009-2015*.
- Biodiversity plans and guidelines, including Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016: Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan, the Biodiversity Action Plan for County Galway 2008-2013 and the Biodiversity Guidelines produced by Galway County Council.
- Ireland's *Environment 2012* (EPA, 2012), and to make provision where appropriate to address the report's goals and challenges.



## Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Objectives

### Objective NH1 – European Sites

Protect European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network (including Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) in accordance with the requirements in the EU *Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, EU *Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)*, the *Environmental Liability Directive*, the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010*, the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011)* (and any subsequent amendments or updated legislation) and having due regard to the guidance in the *Appropriate Assessment Guidelines 2010* (and any subsequent or updated guidance). A plan or project (e.g. proposed development) within the Plan Area will only be authorised after the competent authority (Galway County Council) has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, screening for appropriate assessment, and a Habitats Directive Assessment where necessary, that:

1. The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or
2. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or
3. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

### Objective NH2 – Protected Habitats and Species

Support the protection of habitats and species listed in the annexes to and/or covered by the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), and regularly occurring-migratory birds and their habitats, and species protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000.

### Objective NH3 – Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Protect Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas in accordance with the requirements of the *Wildlife Act 1976*, the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000* and the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended). Where a proposed development within the Plan Area may give rise to likely significant effects on any Natural Heritage Area or proposed Natural Heritage Area an Ecological Impact Assessment may be required.

### Objective NH4 – Impact Assessment

Ensure full compliance with the requirements of the EU *Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, *SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)* and *EIA Directive 2011/92/EU and associated legislation/regulations, including the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011)*, *European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004-2011*, the *Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004-2011* and the *European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1989-2011* (or any updated/superseding legislation). Planning applications for proposed developments within the Plan Area that may give rise to likely significant effects on the environment and/or any designated site may need to be accompanied by one of more of the following: an Environmental Impact Statement, an Ecological Impact Assessment Report, a Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Report or a Natura Impact Statement, as appropriate. Ensure that Natura Impact Statements and any other environmental or ecological impact assessments submitted in support of proposals for development are carried out in accordance with best practice methodologies

and contain all necessary baseline assessments.

#### **Objective NH5 – Biodiversity and Ecological Networks (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity within the Plan Area, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive:

- a) Seek to retain and/or incorporate these natural features into developments, in order to avoid ecological fragmentation and maintain ecological corridors and stepping stones.
- b) Protect and enhance the water quality and ecology of the Cannahowna/Gort River and its function as ecological corridors, by maintaining the existing banks and channel and ensuring that new developments are set back at least 10m from the top of the bank of the stream.
- c) Ensure maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity through the appropriate planting of native trees, shrubs and hedgerows indigenous to the Gort area and of Irish provenance in public and private areas and in new developments. Seek to prevent the introduction of imported ash trees/plants or other such species, into the Plan area in line with the Plant Health Directive and any other relevant legislation.
- d) Support the development of links between larger areas of green infrastructure including important tree clusters, hedgerows, watercourses and their riparian zones, the banks and buffer zones of the railway/motorway and the surrounding countryside.

#### **Objective NH6 – Water Resources**

Protect the water resources in the Plan Area, including the Cannahowna/Gort, its tributaries and downstream water bodies, other streams, springs, surface water and groundwater quality and wetlands in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU *Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC)*, the *European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended)*, the *Western River Basin District Management Plan 2009-2015* and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same). Support the application and implementation of a catchment planning and management approach to development and conservation, including the implementation of Sustainable Drainage System techniques for new development in the Plan Area.

#### **Objective NH7 – Environmental Management Buffer (refer to Maps 2A/2B)**

Protect and seek to improve the water quality in the Cannahowna/Gort River. Limit development within the environmental management buffer so as to protect the qualifying interests of all European Sites which are linked indirectly to the Gort Local Area Plan area via the Cannahowna/Gort River and to mitigate against pollution risks, reduce flooding potential and maintain habitat. Seek to ensure that **a minimum setback of 10 metres** is maintained on either side of the Cannahowna/Gort River, save for exceptional circumstances where it can be reasonably demonstrated that this setback is not feasible.

In the event of lighting being proposed along watercourse corridors an Ecological Impact Assessment (and where necessary an Appropriate Assessment) including bat and otter survey shall be conducted by specialists. The recommendations of the specialist studies shall be implemented to the greatest extent possible. No lighting will be installed without prior consultation with NPWS and shall be in line with advances in knowledge into the impact of lighting on bats and other species and also to reflect advances in technology in the lighting industry.

Support the carrying out of a river corridor habitat survey of the Cannahowna/Gort River as resources permit.

#### **Objective NH8 – Trees, Parkland/Woodland and Hedgerows**

Protect important tree clusters and hedgerows in the Plan Area and ensure that development proposals take cognisance of significant trees/tree stands. Seek to retain natural boundaries, including stonewalls, hedgerows and tree boundaries, wherever possible and replace with a boundary type similar to the existing boundary where removal is unavoidable. Ensure replacement planting of semi-mature trees where mature trees are removed within developments

**Objective NH9 – Geological and Geo-morphological Systems**

Protect and conserve geological and geo-morphological systems, sites and features from inappropriate development that would detract from their heritage value and interpretation and ensure that any plan or project affecting karst formations are adequately assessed with regard to their potential geophysical, hydrological or ecological impacts on the environment.

**Objective NH10 – Control of Invasive and Alien Invasive Species**

Seek to prevent the spread of invasive and alien invasive species and noxious weeds and promote measures to achieve this objective. Raise awareness and seek to inform developers of the need to comply with the requirements of the Noxious Weeds Act 1936, the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (or any updated/superseding legislation) with regard to the control of noxious weeds and non-native invasive species. Cognisance should also be taken of information available from The National Invasive Species Database. Where the potential for spread of invasive species are identified as part of a development proposal the developer will be required to submit an invasive species management plan.

A landscaping plan will be required for developments near waterbodies and ensure that such plans do not include alien invasive species.

**Objective NH11 – Consultation with Environmental Authorities**

Ensure that all development proposals are screened to determine whether they are likely to have a significant direct, indirect or cumulative effect on any European site in view of its conservation objectives and, where significant effects are likely or uncertain, there will be a requirement to prepare and submit a Natura Impact Statement, including prior consultation with the relevant environmental authorities.

**Objective NH12 - Protection of Bats and Bats Habitats**

Seek to protect bats and their roosts, their feeding areas, flight paths and commuting routes. Ensure that development proposals in areas which are potentially important for bats, including areas of woodland, linear features such as hedgerows, stone walls, watercourses and associated riparian vegetation including the Cannahowna/Gort River, the railway line corridor and specifically the entirety of the Plan area east of the Cannahowna/Gort River which may provide migratory/foraging pathways from Lough Cutra and Pollduagh Cave, shall be subject to suitable assessment for potential impacts on bats. This will include an assessment of the cumulative loss of habitat or the impact on bat populations and activity in the area and may include a specific bat survey. Any assessment shall be carried out by a suitably qualified professional and where development is likely to result in significant adverse effects on bat populations or activity in the area, development will be prohibited or require mitigation and/or compensatory measures, as appropriate. All development shall be required to include green infrastructure measures which provide the potential for enhancement of local bat populations.

**3.9.3. Development Management Guidelines**

Refer to the Development Management Standards and Guidelines in the Galway County Development Plan.

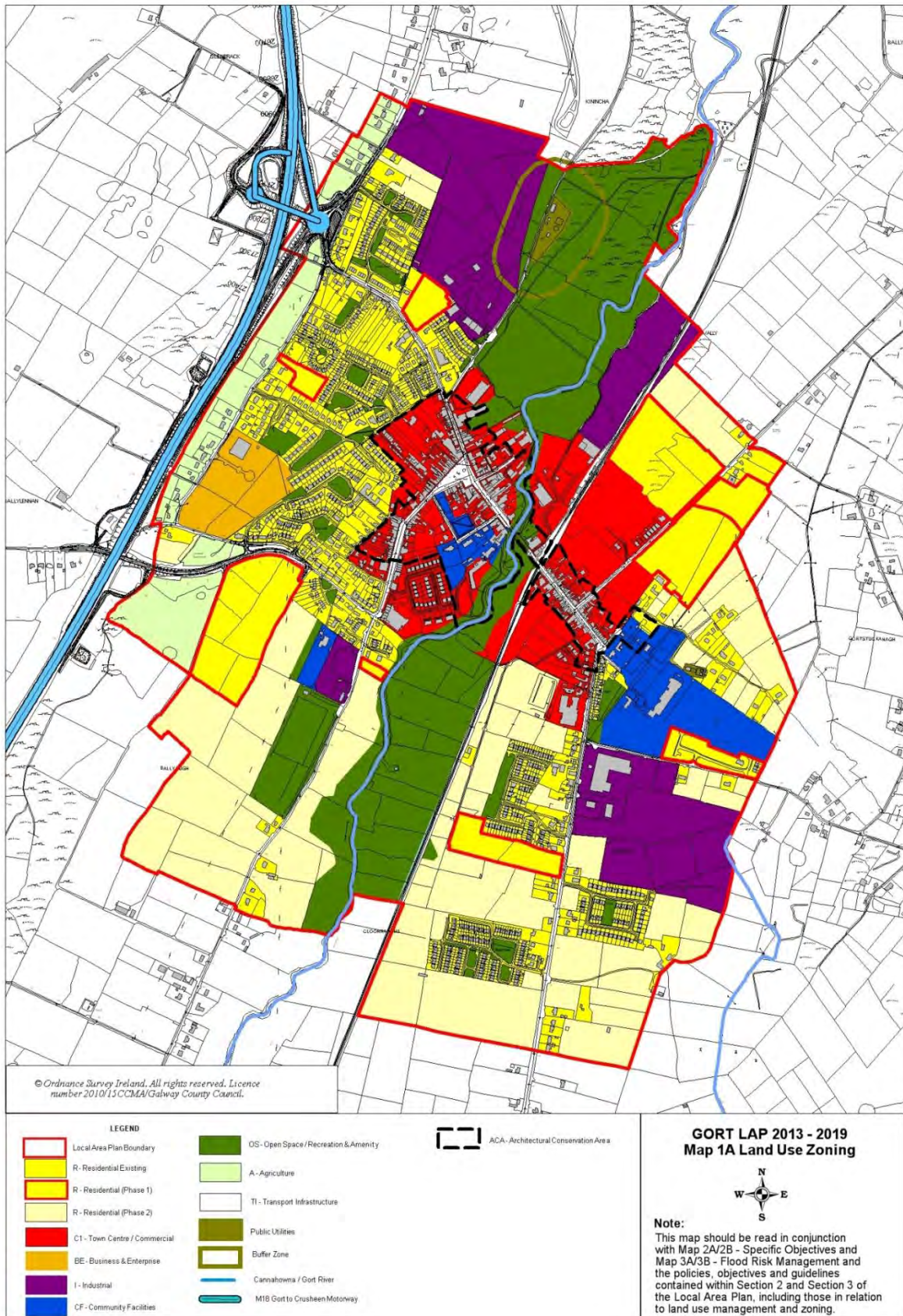
## **4. Local Area Plan Maps**

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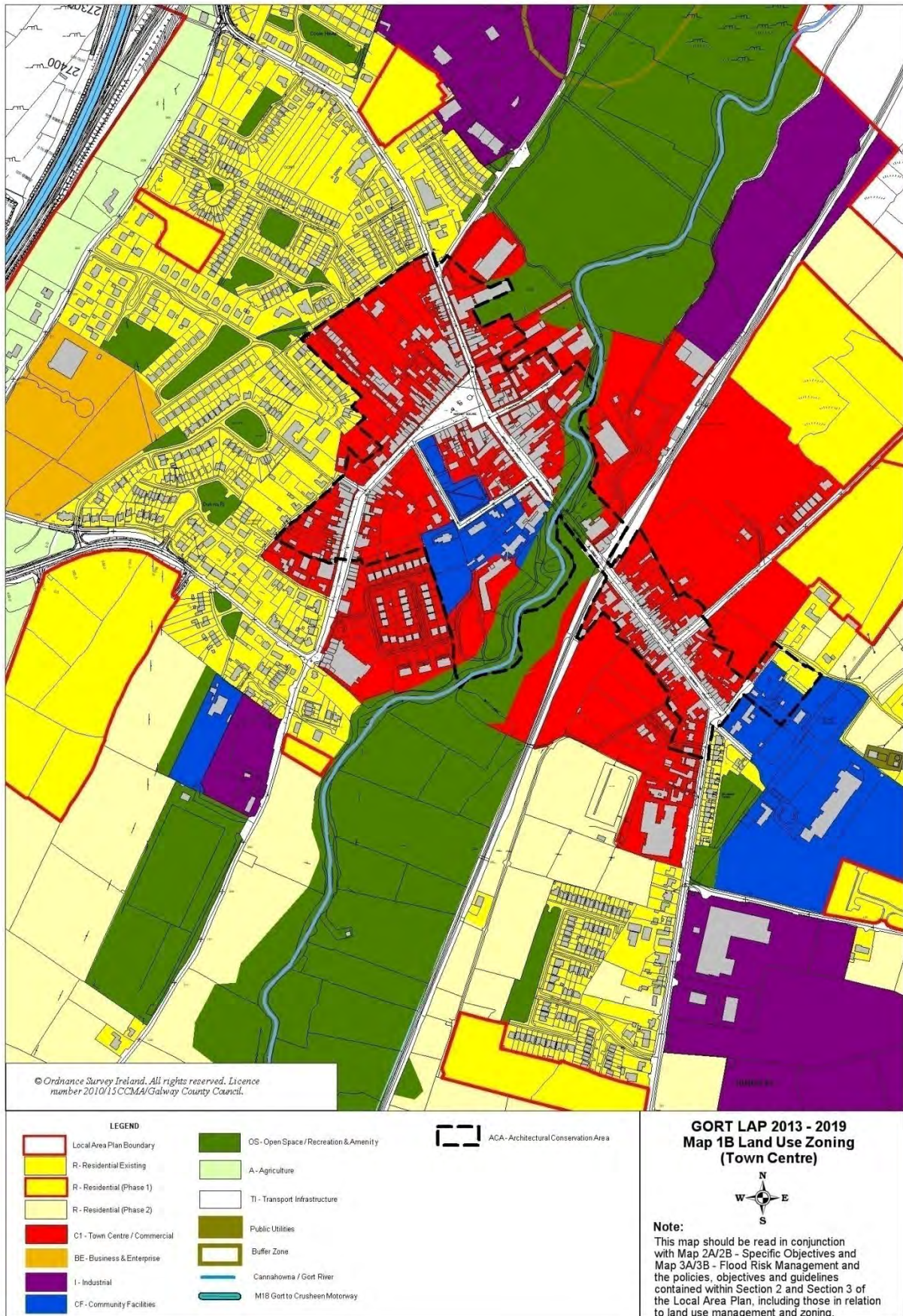
The following maps form part of the Local Area Plan:

- Map 1A – Land Use Zoning
- Map 1B – Land Use Zoning (Town Centre)
- Map 2A – Specific Objectives
- Map 2B – Specific Objectives (Town Centre)
- Map 3A – Flood Risk Management
- Map 3B – Flood Risk Management (Town Centre)

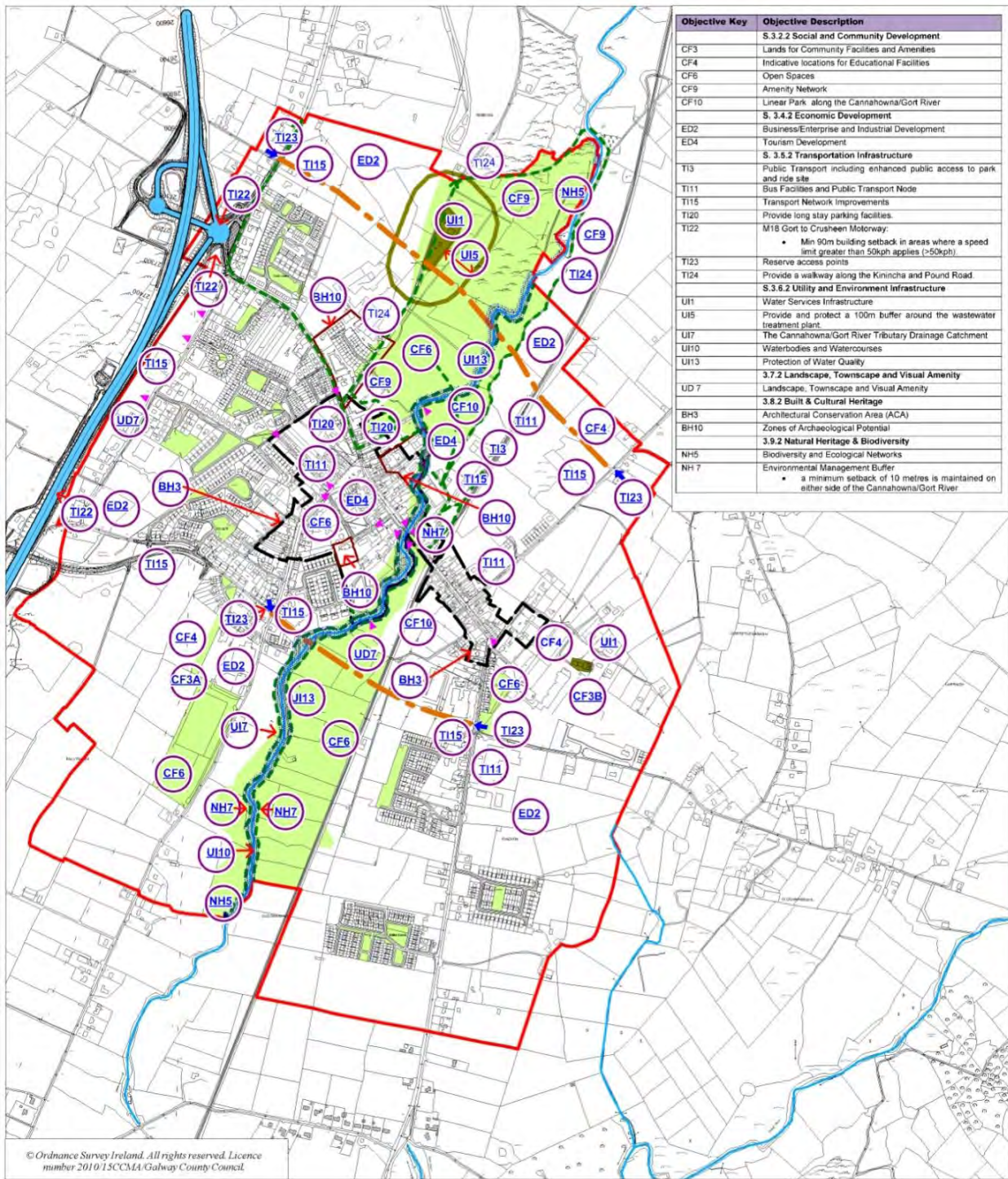
## 4.1 Map 1A – Land Use Zoning



## 4.2 Map 1B – Land Use Zoning (Town Centre)



### 4.3 Map 2A – Specific Objectives



Objective Key	Objective Description
<b>S.3.2.2 Social and Community Development</b>	
CF3	Lands for Community Facilities and Amenities
CF4	Indicative locations for Educational Facilities
CF6	Open Spaces
CF9	Amenity Network
CF10	Linear Park along the Cannahowna/Gort River
<b>S.3.4.2 Economic Development</b>	
ED2	Business/Enterprise and Industrial Development
ED4	Tourism Development
<b>S.3.5.2 Transportation Infrastructure</b>	
TI3	Public Transport including enhanced public access to park and ride site
TI11	Bus Facilities and Public Transport Node
TI15	Transport Network Improvements
TI20	Provide long stay parking facilities.
TI22	M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Min 90m building setback in areas where a speed limit greater than 50kph applies (&gt;50kph)</li> </ul>
TI23	Reserve access points
TI24	Provide a walkway along the Kinricha and Pound Road
<b>S.3.6.2 Utility and Environment Infrastructure</b>	
UI1	Water Services Infrastructure
UI5	Provide and protect a 100m buffer around the wastewater treatment plant.
UI7	The Cannahowna/Gort River Tributary Drainage Catchment
UI10	Waterbodies and Watercourses
UI13	Protection of Water Quality
<b>3.7.2 Landscape, Townscape and Visual Amenity</b>	
UD7	Landscape, Townscape and Visual Amenity
<b>3.8.2 Built &amp; Cultural Heritage</b>	
BH3	Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)
BH10	Zones of Archaeological Potential
<b>3.9.2 Natural Heritage &amp; Biodiversity</b>	
NH5	Biodiversity and Ecological Networks
NH7	Environmental Management Buffer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a minimum setback of 10 metres is maintained on either side of the Cannahowna/Gort River</li> </ul>

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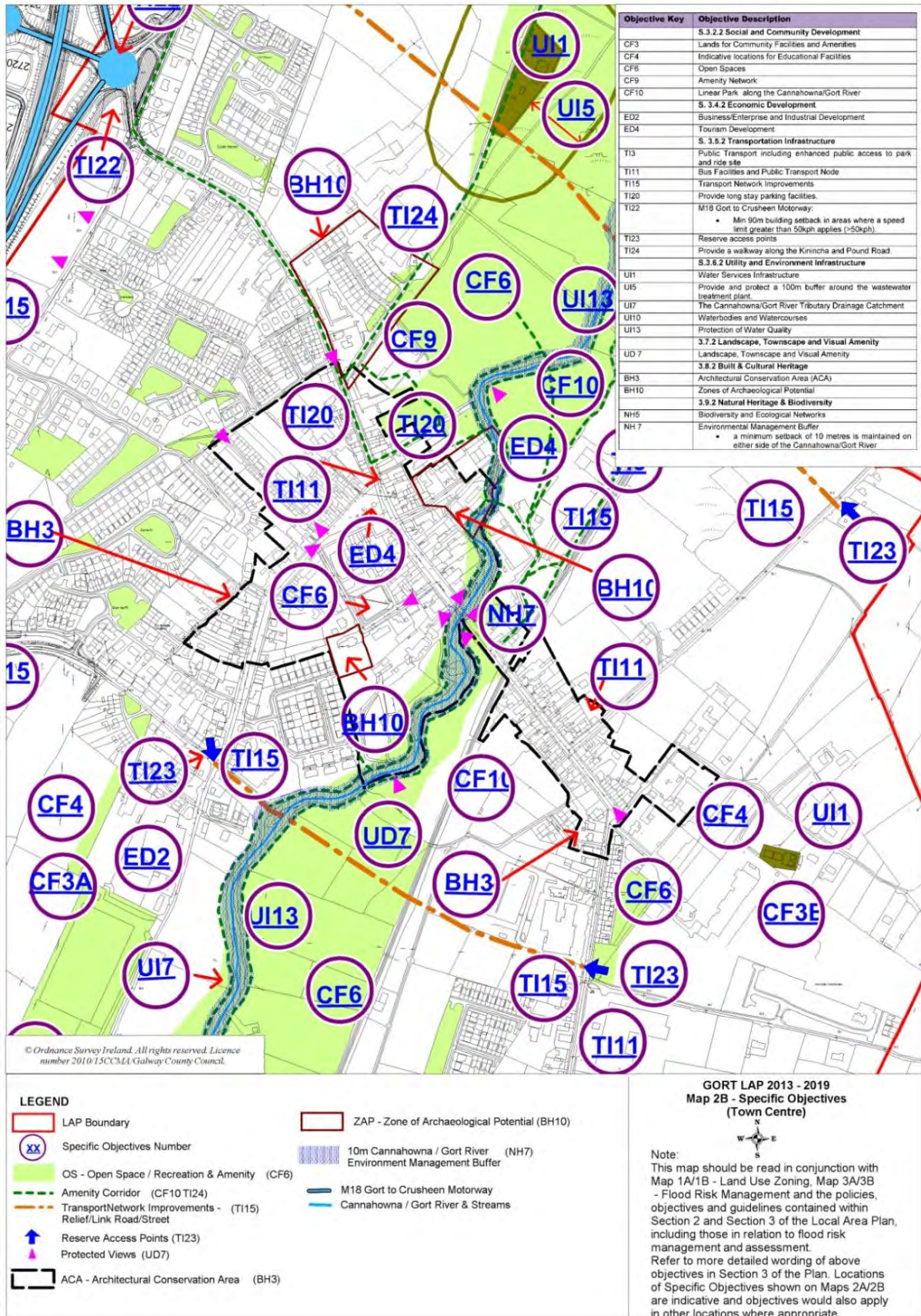
**LEGEND**

LAP Boundary	ZAP - Zone of Archaeological Potential (BH10)
Specific Objectives Number	10m Cannahowna / Gort River (NH7) Environment Management Buffer
OS - Open Space / Recreation & Amenity (CF6)	M18 Gort to Crusheen Motorway
Amenity Corridor (CF10 TI24)	Cannahowna / Gort River & Streams
Transport Network Improvements - (TI15) Relief/Link Road/Street	
Reserve Access Points (TI23)	
Protected Views (UD7)	
ACA - Architectural Conservation Area (BH3)	

Note:  
 This map should be read in conjunction with Map 1A/1B - Land Use Zoning, Map 3A/3B - Flood Risk Management and the policies, objectives and guidelines contained within Section 2 and Section 3 of the Local Area Plan, including those in relation to flood risk management and assessment. Refer to more detailed wording of above objectives in Section 3 of the Plan. Locations of Specific Objectives shown on Maps 2A/2B are indicative and objectives would also apply in other locations where appropriate.

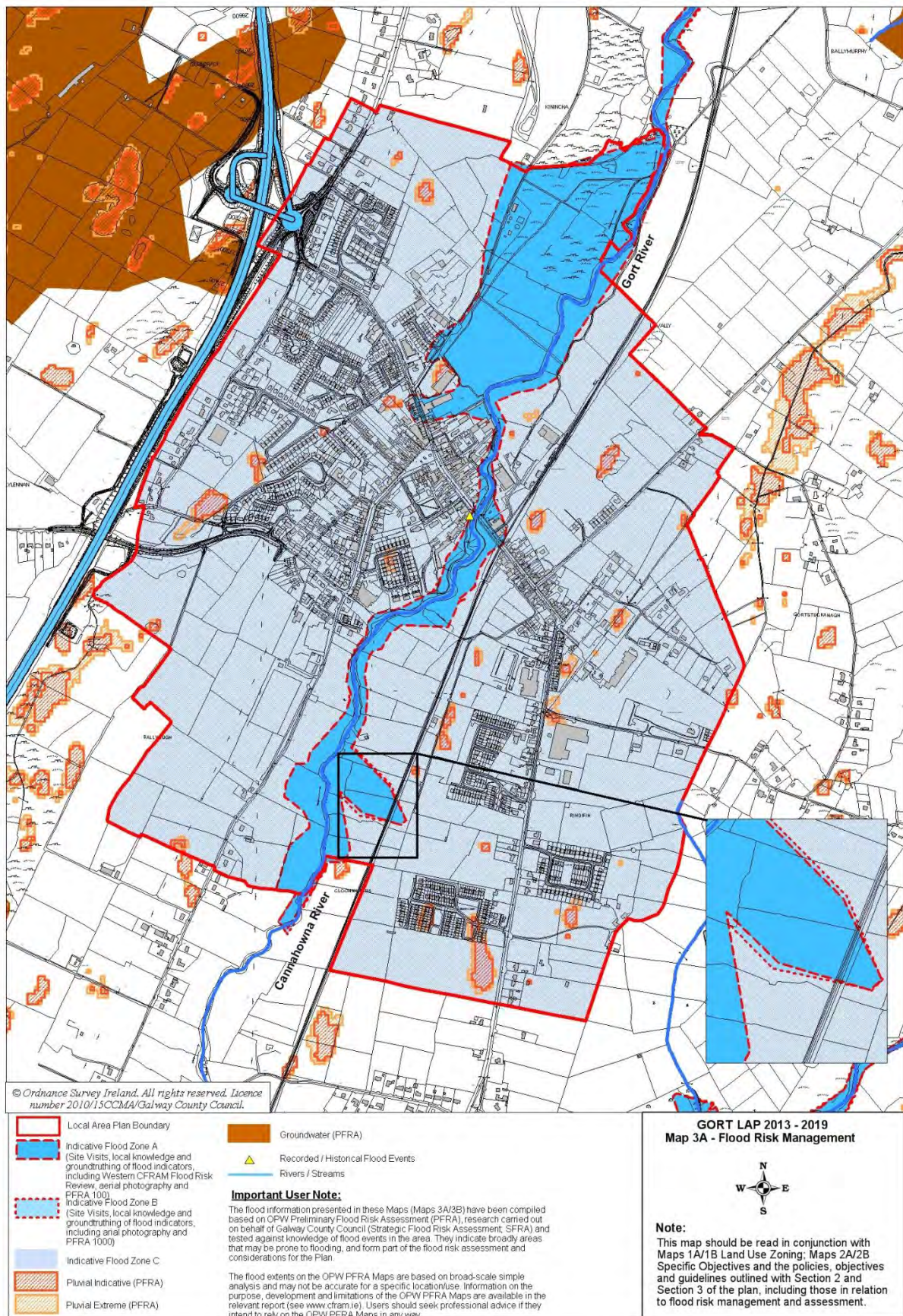
**GORT LAP 2013-2019  
 MAP 2A - SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

#### 4.4 Map 2B – Specific Objectives (Town Centre)





## 4.5 Map 3A – Flood Risk Management



## 4.6 Map 3B – Flood Risk Management (Town Centre)

