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2 Planning and Policy Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the strategic planning policy context and strategic transport policy for the N6 Galway City Ring Road, hereafter referred to as the proposed road development. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the relevant strategic and statutory land use and planning policy context, and strategic transport policy context for the proposed road development.

Please refer to **Chapter 5, Description of Proposed Road Development** for description and overview of the route of the proposed road development.

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

It is set out as follows:

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

An overall conclusion on how the European, national, regional and local policies support the proposed road development is included in **Section 2.6** and references in **Section 2.7**.

The proposed road development is congruent with current transport policy and planning policy as set out in the various policy documents over the past number of years. Specific details for each of the policies and how the proposed road development complies with these, and more local and regional policies, are outlined below.

2.2 European Context

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS, 2001, reviewed 2009), is a framework for a long-term vision of sustainability in which economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection go hand in hand and are mutually supporting. In developing EU Transport Policy, the EU states in its 2009 review *Mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies: 2009 Review of the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development* (pp. 6) that it is essential to take account of all aspects of sustainability (such as emissions, noise, land occupancy and biodiversity) and to base any action on a long-term vision for the sustainable mobility of people and goods that covers the entire transport system, and on complementary efforts at EU, national and regional levels.

The EU SDS dedicates one of its seven key challenges to sustainable transport, with the overall objective to ‘ensure that our transport systems meet society’s economic, social and environmental needs whilst minimising their undesirable impacts on the

economy, society and the environment'. The EU SDS operational objectives and targets include:

- Decoupling economic growth and the demand for transport with the aim of reducing environmental impacts
- Achieving sustainable levels of transport energy use and reducing transport greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing pollutant emissions from transport to levels that minimise effects on human health and/or the environment
- Achieving a balanced shift towards environment friendly transport modes to bring about a sustainable transport and mobility system
- Reducing transport noise both at source and through mitigation measures to ensure overall exposure levels minimise impacts on health
- Modernising the EU framework for public passenger transport services to encourage better efficiency and performance

The Europe 2020 strategy unites two flagship initiatives under the sustainable growth priority to tackle the issue of sustainable transport:

- 'Resource efficient Europe' supports the shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy. This flagship initiative provides a framework for actions in many policy areas including transport. One of the key components is a roadmap presenting a vision for a transport system by 2050 that promotes clean technologies
- 'An industrial policy for the globalisation era' highlights ten key actions for European industrial competitiveness, including a more efficient European transport infrastructure and services.

It is within this broader EU policy context that the proposed road development is set. The proposed road development meets these objectives by providing the necessary infrastructure to support the economic growth of Galway and the Western Region and will also enable other public projects be realised and facilitates the effective implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy which includes improved public transport, walking and cycling measures for Galway City and its environs. This is further detailed in **Chapter 3, Need for the Proposed Road Development**.

2.2.1 Ten-T Connecting Europe

As of January 2014, the European Union (EU) has a new transport infrastructure policy, entitled *Infrastructure - TEN-T - Connecting Europe* that connects the continent between East and West, North and South. This policy aims to close the gaps between Member States' transport networks and to remove bottlenecks that still hamper the smooth functioning of the internal market. It is recognised that integrated transport networks are essential to a single market.

The aim of the EU's Transport Policy is to promote a mobility that is efficient, safe, secure and environmentally friendly. Congestion is not just a nuisance for road

users; it also results in an enormous waste of fuel and productivity. Many manufacturing processes depend on just-in-time deliveries and free flow transport for efficient production. Congestion costs the EU economy more than 1% of GDP – in other words, more than the EU budget. To reduce this, the EU needs more efficient transport and logistics, better infrastructure and the ability to optimise capacity use.

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

The European Transport Infrastructure (TEN-T) includes the core transport routes in all EU Member States for all transport modes: air, rail, road, maritime and inland waterways and consists of two planning layers, namely the core transport network and the comprehensive transport network. The core network represents the major transport corridors connecting Europe and it stretches from Ireland through the United Kingdom and onto mainland Europe. This core network is supported by the comprehensive network. The proposed road development is classified as part of the TEN-T comprehensive road network¹ shown in **Plate 2.1** below as it is a strategic link in the road network in the West Region functioning in accordance with the European Union's (EU) TEN-T transport policy.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/map/maps.html>

Plate 2.1: TEN-T Network Ireland (Source Transport Infrastructure Ireland)

The objectives of the proposed road development align with the European Union's land transport policies given that the following targets are among the objectives of the proposed road development, whose targets meet those set out in the EU SDS operational objectives and targets, as set out above (ref: **Chapter 3, Section 3.3** of this report for the Project Objectives):

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

Galway City to national markets, enhanced tourism accessibility, and the national transport system

- Improvement to the TEN-T network to ensure connectivity of the west of Ireland to the single European market

The proposed road development forms part of the TEN-T comprehensive road network in Ireland and is of strategic importance in a European context as it has a key role in delivering congestion relief, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening economic cohesion. This is further detailed in **Chapter 3, Need for the Proposed Road Development**.

2.3 National Objectives

2.3.1 Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021

This Capital Plan presents the Government's new framework for infrastructure in Ireland over the period 2016-2021. A recovering economy, jobs growth, and strengthening public finances means the Government revised its capital expenditure commitments for the remainder of the decade recognising that *'High quality infrastructure is an important element of a modern society and economy. It strengthens economic growth through enhancing efficiency, productivity and competitiveness'*.

The transport capital allocation in this Capital Plan is largely framed by the recommendations and priorities set out in the 2015 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTaS) *Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport*, which centre on:

- maintaining and renewing the strategically important elements of the existing land transport system
- addressing urban congestion
- maximise the contribution of land transport networks to national development, including providing access to poorly served regions

The Capital Plan incorporates the following key objectives relevant to this proposed road development:

- €6 billion for investment in the national, regional and local road network over the 7-year period, with €4.4 billion to ensure the existing extensive network throughout the country is maintained and strengthened, with €1.6 billion for new projects
- It supports the proposed road development specifically by reference to supporting the commencement of the *'Galway By-Pass'* subject to planning permission

The proposed road development is consistent with these recommendations, priorities and objectives as set out in the DTTaS 2015 investment framework, and the Capital Plan, as it seeks to deliver the N6 Galway City Ring Road, address urban

congestion in Galway City, and enhance national development through improved connectivity to west Galway.

This connectivity is essential to ensure the viability of the western parts of the county which have a very high quality tourist offering which is dependent on connectivity to achieve its potential.

County Galway has a thriving tourism industry which contributes to the national tourism industry. There were over 1.3 million overseas visitors to Galway in 2015 alone, generating an estimated €475 million in revenue (Fáilte Ireland Regional Tourism Performance by County 2015, Oct. 2016). At the time of publication of this report, data for 2016 was unavailable but initial findings indicate an increase in tourism across Ireland in 2016. Approximately, two thirds of the tourists visit the area in the period from May to September, with one of the main attractions being Connemara with its scenic landscapes and unpolluted environment. Tourism traffic, together with local recreation traffic accessing the beaches at the west of the city, add to the traffic volumes on this linear transport corridor in this summer period. Galway is also located on the Wild Atlantic Way which is a new initiative by Fáilte Ireland to encourage tourism into the west and is likely to generate additional traffic into the area.

Tourism is a vital industry to ensure the viability and survival of the South Connemara region, which is linked to overall improved social provision, quality of life and environmental sustainability.

A review of the Capital Plan was published in August 2017 as there was a significant improvement in economic performance of the country which enabled the allocation of additional capital investment for increased public capital investment over the period of the Capital Plan. The increased expenditure is targeted to achieve specific outcomes which achieve value for money.

Following the allocation of this increased capital investment, the Government published a new 10 year national investment plan for the period 2018-2027, namely the National Development Plan 2018-2027, which closely aligns with the key objectives of the National Planning Framework to ensure the money is spent in accordance with an overall plan.

2.3.2 Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, 2009 and Irelands National Cycle Policy Framework, 2009 to 2020

“Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future” is a policy framework approved by Government in 2009 which sets out how the vision of a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. The policy acknowledges that *“transport is vital for our economy. As an island nation we need good transport connections with our trading partners; we also need to ensure efficient movement on the island. Safe and comfortable travel is also a key element of a good quality of life. The issue is not to restrict travel and transport but to facilitate smarter ways of meeting these needs”*. Chapter 3 of the policy document outlines five key goals which form the basis of the Policy as follows:

- *Improve quality of life and accessibility to transport for all and, in particular, for people with reduced mobility and those who may experience isolation due to lack of transport*
- *Improve economic competitiveness through maximising the efficiency of the transport system and alleviating congestion and infrastructural bottlenecks*
- *Minimise the negative impacts of transport on the local and global environment through reducing localised air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions*
- *Reduce overall travel demand and commuting distances travelled by the private car*
- *Improve security of energy supply by reducing dependency on imported fossil fuels*

Key actions set out in the Smarter Travel policy to achieve this vision include:

- Actions to reduce distance travelled by private car and encourage smarter travel, including focusing population growth in areas of employment and to encourage people to live in close proximity to places of employment and the use of pricing mechanisms or fiscal measures to encourage behavioural change
- Actions aimed at ensuring that alternatives to the car are more widely available, mainly through a radically improved public transport service and through investment in cycling and walking

In keeping with Smarter Travel policy, a national cycle policy was announced in 2009. *Ireland's National Cycle Policy Framework, 2009 to 2020* sets out to create a strong cycling culture in Ireland with a target level of 10% of all trips to be made by bike by 2020. The key to achieving the Government target of 10% commuting by bike by 2020 is threefold; firstly, planning at all levels needs to consider cyclist needs; secondly, transport infrastructure must provide cycle friendly safe direct routes; and finally, education and communication is necessary to foster a cycling culture from a young age.

Over the years, Galway City and Galway County Council have developed a number of plans and strategies to help achieve national Smarter Travel policy objectives. These include:

- Galway Metropolitan Smarter Travel Area Action Plan 2010-2015
- Galway City and Environs Walking and Cycling Strategy (2010)
- Galway Transport Strategy (2016)

In 2010, Galway City and Galway County Council developed the *Galway Metropolitan Smarter Travel Area Action Plan 2010-2015* which was in line with the first key goal of the Smarter Travel national policy and set out to develop Galway and its hinterland as a sustainable travel area. This Plan assumed that the 2006 N6 Galway City Outer Bypass (GCOB, 2006) was delivered.

In 2010, Galway City and Galway County Council also developed the *Galway City and Environs Walking and Cycling Strategy (2010)* which sought to deliver on national cycle policy at the Galway City level, again in line with the first key goal

of the policy to provided facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and non-motorised users (NMU). Proposals included a greenway from the city centre to Bearna and from the city centre to Oughterard.

In 2016, Galway City and Galway County Council in partnership with the National Transport Authority developed the *Galway Transport Strategy* (GTS). This strategy builds on the previous transport studies carried out for the Galway Region and sets out an overview of the proposed actions and measures for implementation, covering infrastructural, operational and policy elements. These consolidated proposals will provide Galway City and its environs with a clear implementation framework for the next 20 years and will underpin the objectives of the current and future Galway City and Galway County Development Plans. Smarter Travel forms the core principle of the Galway Transport Strategy. The GTS is further detailed in **Section 2.5.1** below with a background to the GTS included in **Chapter 1, Introduction**.

The GTS is currently being implemented by Galway City Council, both in terms of the policy objectives established and the delivery of transport projects identified within the strategy. The N6 GCRR forms part of, and is identified as a project within the ‘Galway Transport Strategy’ (GTS).

The GTS aligns with the Key Goals set out above in its efforts to align land use and transportation policy, and in seeking to deliver viable and attractive alternatives to the private car in Galway.

The proposed road development forms part of the actions set out in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and it aligns with smarter travel policies both at a national level and local level. In developing the GTS, cognisance was taken of the Smarter Travel policy to ensure maximum uptake of public transport. Therefore, the GTS aligns with the Smarter Travel policies in so far as full implementation of the GTS (of which the N6 GCRR is a significant component) results in an improvement of 16% in modal shift to public transport.

It is necessary to resolve existing traffic congestion issues in Galway in order to achieve smarter travel policies. The proposed road development will assist with the removal of traffic congestion from within Galway City and its environs by transferring existing and future traffic from the existing road network to the new road infrastructure. Therefore, journey times will reduce and journey time certainty will increase for both public transport and private vehicle users. The reduction in traffic congestion will also help to realise other proposed actions in the Galway Transport Strategy because the existing road space can be reallocated for cyclists, pedestrians and to reconfigure the public transport network. This will result in reducing the number of short commuter journeys by car by facilitating journeys by bicycle which are faster, cheaper, and more sustainable and generate health benefits.

Improvements to the Galway bus network have been identified as necessary to better cater for existing and future travel patterns in Galway City. The reallocation of road space for public transport will assist with the delivery of an improved bus network.

Achieving the targets as set out in Smarter Travel policies will deliver a more attractive, vibrant and economic Galway City and environs with associated health

and environmental benefits, all of which are necessary for sustainable travel into the future. The proposed road development aligns with these policies both at a national and local level.

Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future notes that efficient movement of goods is vital to our competitiveness and economic welfare with the majority of goods currently moved by road. It also acknowledges that investment in roads will remove bottlenecks, ease congestion and pressures in town and villages. Therefore, the actions set out in the policy seek to balance the multiple functions of the road network whilst still achieving the overall key goals.

The policy document sets out 49 Actions identified to achieve these key goals. The provision of the proposed road development supports a number of the 49 actions contained within the Smarter Travel Policy, and is neutral with the remaining as detailed in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1: Smarter Travel Action Compliance Assessment

Action Number	Compliance	Comments
1	Supportive	The reallocation of road space to facilitate the provision of new and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities promotes walking and cycling to access community facilities and public transport throughout Galway City. The proposed road development provides such facilities in all areas of overlap with proposed GTS measures including but not limited to Cappagh Road, Ballymoneen Road, N59 Link Road, Letteragh Road, Rahoon Road, N59, N84, N83 ² , Castlegar Road, Parkmore Link Road, Ballybrit Crescent, City East Business Park Junction. Refer Section 5.5.4.2 Pedestrian and Cyclist Provision .
2	Supportive	Provision of new pedestrian and cycle facilities in all areas of overlap with proposed GTS measures including but not limited to Cappagh Road, Ballymoneen Road, N59 Link Road, Letteragh Road, Rahoon Road, N59, N84, N83, Castlegar Road, Parkmore Link Road, Ballybrit Crescent, City East Business Park Junction supports the sub-actions under Action 2 relating to integration.
3	Supportive	The proposed road development comprises two local authority areas, namely Galway City Council and Galway County Council, with Galway County Council progressing the proposed road development through the statutory process on behalf of itself and Galway City Council. In parallel, Galway City Council and Galway County Council, in partnership with the NTA developed an overall transport strategy for Galway City and its environs culminating in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS), of which the proposed road development is a key component. The GTS provides Galway City and its environs with a clear implementation framework for transportation over the next 20 years. This coordination will ensure coordination and integration of development planning between local authorities across the Gateway of Galway.

² Formally known as the N17 Tuam Road.

Action Number	Compliance	Comments
4	Supportive	The provision of the pedestrian and cycle facilities noted in Action 1 above is supportive of Action 4 in promoting more sustainable travel patterns, such as cycling and walking. The provision of a dedicated bus lane on the N83 is supportive of Action 4 in promoting more sustainable travel patterns. The Parkmore Link Road links the Ballybrit and Parkmore Industrial Estates and facilitates the interchange of bus routes servicing these Industrial Estates thus increasing the level of provision of public transport into the whole of the north eastern quarter of the city. It also provides a shorter direct route with full provision of appropriate infrastructure along the desire line for both pedestrians and cyclists to the Industrial Estates of Parkmore and Ballybrit.
5	Neutral	The provision of the proposed road development will not impact on e-working targets for the public sector. All existing broadband and telephony services impacted by the proposed road development will be reconnected to ensure no loss of service.
6	Neutral	The provision of the proposed road development will not impact on establishment of e-working centres. All existing broadband and telephony services impacted by the proposed road development will be reconnected to ensure no loss of service.
7	Supportive	The proposed road development does provide segregated safe routes for pedestrians from the N59 at Bushypark to Letteragh Road. It then connects to dedicated cycleways and footways on the N59 Link Road South to the Gort Na Bró Link Road. These cycleways and footways connect into the existing networks in the area which feed four major secondary schools on Threadneedle Road, Ballymoneen Road and Taylors Hill. This link road also provides safe routes to connect the residential areas of Letteragh Road to Ragoon Road thus avoiding the existing circuitous route via Seamus Quirke Road. The reduction in traffic volumes within Galway City will also assist improving the safety within the city centre for vulnerable road users and provide the platform for future enhancements to pedestrian and cycle amenities as per the GTS.
8	Supportive	The proposed road development will provide dedicated safe routes for vulnerable road users on the west of the city that connects housing developments to the schools. Provision is also made to connect the major business parks on the east of the city by means of the Parkmore Link Road. The Parkmore Link Road facilitates the interchange of bus routes servicing these Industrial Estates supporting a modal shift to non-motorised forms of transport for commuting to workplaces within the whole of the north eastern quarter of the city. It also provides a shorter direct route with full provision of appropriate infrastructure along the desire line for both pedestrians and cyclists to the Industrial Estates of Parkmore and Ballybrit. A southbound bus lane, dedicated cycle lanes and pedestrian facilities are provided on Ballybrit Crescent Road which provide safe routes from Parkmore East Industrial Estate through the Lynch Junction. All other signalised junctions within the proposed road development provide facilities for vulnerable road users to safely negotiate the junctions.

Action Number	Compliance	Comments
9	Supportive	The provision of the proposed road development does not actively promote personalised travel plans. However, it offers the opportunity to individuals to reconsider their existing travel patterns and move towards a more sustainable travel plan especially in the Parkmore/Ballybrit area and in the western suburbs of Knocknacarra/Rahoon/Westside. In addition, the wider GTS supports such initiatives throughout the city centre.
10	Neutral/Supportive	The provision of the proposed road development will not impact on the promotion of freight policy. There will be a reduction in traffic volumes on the dedicated access route to Galway Port, thus facilitating the efficient movement of goods to/from the port. The reduction in congestion in Galway City and environs will improve the efficiency of road based freight traffic.
11	Neutral	The proposed road development will not impact on the implementation of fiscal measures aimed at reducing car use.
12	Supportive	The provision of a dedicated bus lane on the N83 promotes more sustainable travel patterns. The Parkmore Link Road facilitates the interchange of bus routes servicing these Industrial Estates. A southbound bus lane is provided on Ballybrit Crescent Road to facilitate the bus route from Parkmore East Industrial Estate through the Lynch Junction. These combined measures increase the level of provision of public transport into the whole of the north eastern quarter of the city, into which combined workforce of 10,000 travel daily. The provision of the proposed road development will reduce the current congestion experienced in Galway City Centre and facilitates the provision of a public transport corridor through the city centre with public transport only allowed on the Salmon Weir Bridge, Eglinton Street and College Road.
13	Supportive	The provision of a dedicated bus lane on the N83 forms part of the provision of a reliable bus service into the large urban area of Galway City. The Parkmore Link Road facilitates public transport between the Ballybrit and Parkmore Industrial Estates and facilitates the interchange of bus routes servicing these Industrial Estates, again ensuring a reliable public transport to the north eastern quarter of the city. The provision of the proposed road development will reduce the current congestion experienced in Galway City Centre and facilitates the provision of a public transport corridor through the city centre with public transport only allowed on the Salmon Weir Bridge, Eglinton Street and College Road.
14	Supportive	The provision of the proposed road development supports the action to provide a dedicated public transport route along the N83 corridor, thus facilitating access from the rural area of Claregalway to the city centre. The provision of the Parkmore Link Road connects the Ballybrit and Parkmore Industrial Estates and facilitates the interchange of bus routes servicing these Industrial Estates, In the wider GTS measures, it is envisaged to use this route to link to a future Park and Ride. A southbound bus lane is provided on Ballybrit Crescent Road to facilitate the bus route from Parkmore East Industrial Estate through the Lynch Junction. In the wider GTS measures, it is

Action Number	Compliance	Comments
		envisaged that this route could link to a future Park and Ride site in the Coolagh Roundabout area.
15	Supportive	The provision of the proposed road development supports Action 15, through the provision of dedicated high quality safe pedestrian and cycling facilities linking the residential areas and employment areas. It will be possible to cycle from Cappagh Road to Parkmore West Industrial Estate on a dedicated cycle path, i.e. from the western city limits to the north-eastern city limits. The reduction in traffic volumes in Galway City Centre due to the transference of traffic to the new alignment will afford the opportunity to improve the cycling infrastructure.
16	Supportive	The provision of the proposed road development supports Action 16, through the provision of dedicated high quality safe pedestrian facilities on the N59 Link Road North and South, the Parkmore Link Road, Ballybrit Crescent Road and all the signalised junctions. The reduction in traffic volumes in Galway City Centre will afford the opportunity to further improve the pedestrian infrastructure.
17	Neutral	The proposed road development does not utilise State owned lands for the provision of walking and cycling facilities. However, the walking and cycling facilities provided all link into the greater strategy for walking and cycling in Galway and environs which ultimately gives access to the wider greenway network.
18	Neutral	The provision of the proposed road development will not impact on the establishment of car sharing website and initiatives.
19	Neutral	The provision of the proposed road development will not impact on the establishment of car club schemes.
20	Neutral	The provision of the proposed road development will result in reduced traffic volumes in Galway City Centre, thereby facilitating the advancement of other schemes to give traffic priority to other forms of motorised transport.
21	Neutral	The provision of the proposed road development will not impact on the implementation of integrated ticketing systems on the public transport network.
22	Supportive	The provision of the Parkmore Link Road and the bus lane on Ballybrit Crescent Road facilitate the establishment of future park and ride sites along major public transport modes. These provisions form part of the overall plan for park and ride facilities in the GTS.
23	Supportive	Signalised junctions are provided within the proposed road development to enhance operational safety and performance and to facilitate the efficient movement of all road users. Dedicated crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists are provided at each junction location. The traffic reductions in Galway City Centre will afford the opportunity to improve the pedestrian priority at the key junctions.
24	Neutral / Supportive	The provision of the proposed road development will not impact on the implementation of an on-line integrated journey planner. The work on the development of the overall transport strategy

Action Number	Compliance	Comments
		was managed by the National Transport Authority in parallel, thus ensuring integration of all transport modes.
25	Supportive	The proposed road development provides investment for new dedicated, safe walking and cycling routes linking residential areas to employment areas and the city centre. The reduction in traffic volumes in the city centre will facilitated further improvement to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure within the city centre. The proposed road development will provide economic benefits through alleviation of the congestion and journey time reliability.
26	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the restructuring of the air navigation system in Europe and Ireland.
27	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the public service obligation for regional air transport services.
28	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the maritime transport sector emissions.
29	Neutral	There will be a reduction in traffic volumes on the dedicated access route to Galway Port, thus facilitating the efficient movement of goods to/from the port. The reduction in congestion in Galway City and environs will improve the efficiency of road based freight traffic.
30	Supportive	The provision of the proposed road development will provide a safer road for motorised traffic, removes traffic including heavy goods vehicles from congested urban areas and facilitates the reallocation of the existing road space for public transport and non-motorised transport, thus supporting a mobility that is efficient and is a safer environment for active modes.
31	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact meeting the 10% target for Bio-fuels by 2020.
32	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact in meeting the 10% target for electric vehicle technology by 2020.
33	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the implementation of fuel efficient vehicle fleets in the public sector.
34	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the implementation of VRT and Motor Tax systems.
35	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact the Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) initiatives to introduce energy efficient technologies to the transport sector.
36	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on efficient driving module of the national driver test and implementation of on-board technologies to encourage eco-driving behaviour.
37	Neutral/Supportive	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact the introduction of a Sustainable Travel and Transport

Action Number	Compliance	Comments
		Bill. The proposed road development will however support sustainable modes of transport through the provision of new pedestrian and cycle facilities and new bus lanes as part of the development. It also facilitates the further public transport, cycling and walking measures included in the overall GTS.
38	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the interdepartmental working group.
39	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the establishment of the National Sustainable Travel Office.
40	Neutral	The implementation of the proposed road development will not impact on the establishment of the Dublin Transportation Authority.
41	Neutral	The proposed road development will not impact on the strategy of the Dublin Transportation Authority.
42	Supportive	The proposed road development forms a key component of the overall GTS, which is developed to achieve sustainable travel and transport services in Galway City and environs. The proposed road development assists in modal shift through the provision of bus lanes and safe segregated pedestrian and cycle facilities connecting residential areas and employment areas.
43	Neutral	The proposed road development will not impact on the sustainable transport initiatives between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
44	Supportive	The proposed road development will assist in delivering a modal shift of transport to more sustainable forms of transport through the provision of bus lanes and dedicated, safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists to access the employment centres, education centres and residential areas, whilst also alleviating congestion in Galway City Centre, affording the opportunity to further improve facilities for road based public transport and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
45	Supportive / Neutral	The proposed road development forms a key component of the GTS which has been presented to the elected members and staff of Galway City Council and Galway Council. The endorsement of the GTS by the elected members is the basis to implement the sustainable travel.
46	Neutral	The proposed road development will not impact on the introduction of branding to support the concept of smarter travel.
47	Neutral	The proposed road development will not impact on the introduction of fund to support innovative sustainable travel projects.
48	Supportive	The results of the National Travel, Transport and Mobility Household Survey 2012 were utilised in the development of the NTA Western Regional Model. This model was used for the multi-modal transport analysis undertaken for the proposed road development to ensure that the travel patterns in the off-peak periods are addressed in the model.

Action Number	Compliance	Comments
49	Neutral	The proposed road development will not have an impact on the biennial reporting on the progress of the Smarter Travel Policy.

2.3.3 Forfás Regional Competitiveness Agendas

Forfás was Ireland’s national policy advisory body for enterprise and science until 2014 when it was dissolved and integrated with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. Forfás' policy functions included the provision of independent and rigorous research, advice and support in the areas of enterprise and science policy. This work informed the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and wider Government in its responses to the fast-changing needs of the global business environment.

In their suite of seven Regional Competitiveness Agendas (RCAs): *Overview, Findings & Actions of December 2009*, Forfás assessed how each region could strengthen its competitive environment in support of enterprise. The RCAs proposed specific actions to address barriers to development and focused efforts on realising the potential of each region. The N6 Galway City Outer Bypass (GCOB, 2006) is listed under Priority Actions for Physical Infrastructure in the West.

The additional Forfás publication of 2012, entitled *Overview of Main Infrastructure Issues for Enterprise*, was published post the publication of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016 (November 2011). It noted the need to develop smarter solutions to leverage the significant investments already made and improve our competitiveness and a *Galway ring road* is listed as a priority:

“Given the limited capital resources available in the short to medium term, it is critical that we prioritise investment that will support economic recovery and sustainable growth. These include the completion of the Cork and Galway ring roads and two short sections of the Atlantic Corridor (Galway - Limerick-Cork) which will improve the mobility of people and goods in and between Ireland’s main regional cities. Improving public transport in the main cities is critical to enhance mobility for all urban transport users.”

This was subsequently continued through to the *Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021* produced by the department of Public Expenditure and Reform, as referenced above at **Section 2.3.1**.

The proposed road development is identified as a project at a national level which is necessary to support economic recovery and sustainable growth because of its ability to improve mobility of people and goods into and out of Galway, and is vital to the economic recovery of the Western Region as a whole. This is further detailed in **Chapter 3, Need for the Proposed Road Development**.

2.3.4 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework now represents the overarching national planning policy document, of direct relevance to the planning functions of regional and planning authorities, including An Bord Pleanála and from the 16 February 2018 it replaces the National Spatial Strategy (NSS).

The National Planning Framework (NPF), together with the new ten-year National Development Plan, are jointly named *Project Ireland 2040: Building Ireland's Future* and will provide the framework for future development and investment in Ireland. It is the overall Plan from which other, more detailed plans will take their lead, hence the title, National Planning 'Framework', including city and county development plans and regional strategies. The National Planning Framework will be a tool to assist the achievement of more effective regional development. The National Planning Framework also has statutory backing.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) focuses on ten strategic outcomes:

- Compact Growth
- Enhanced regional accessibility
- Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
- Sustainable Mobility
- A strong economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
- High quality international connectivity
- Enhanced amenity and heritage
- Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society
- Sustainable management of water and other environmental resources
- Access to quality childcare, education and health services.

(Ref: *Project Ireland 2040, Building Ireland's Future*).

The objectives of the NPF will be applied on a regional basis through statutory Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs), see **Section 2.4.1.1** below. The RSESs must accord with the NPF and in turn, local authority development plans which address further detailed local matters, must be in accordance with the RSESs.

Section 2 of the NPF sets out the strategy to plan for population and economic growth. The NPF supports as a key element of the strategy "*ambitious growth targets to enable the four cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to each grow by at least 50% to 2040 and to enhance their significant potential to become cities of scale.*" (NPF Section 2.2). It further sets national policy objectives arounds population and employment growth.

Section 3.3 of the NPF focuses on the Northern and Western Region. It focuses on Galway as one of the country's five main cities and as a key driver for the west of Ireland. The NPF states that Galway needs to "*address recent growth legacy issues and build on key strengths including a world class med-tech cluster, third level institutions embedded within the City, a vibrant arts and cultural scene, year round*

tourism and an attractive natural setting”. It states that “*challenges to be addressed include housing choice and affordability, transport / mobility and urban quality, especially outside the core-city centre area*”. The NPF targets a population growth to 2040 of 40,000-45,000 people for Galway City and Suburbs, to achieve a total population of at least 120,000 total population (Table 2.1 NPF).

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

- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing and the development of supporting public transport and infrastructure, such as at Ardaun
- Improving sustainable transport links
- Provision of a Citywide public transport network (The National Development Plan 2018-2027 states that the Bus Connects network of five high performing cross-city routes will be delivered in Galway)
- Development of a strategic cycleway network
- Delivery of the Galway City Ring Road

“*Enhanced Regional Accessibility*” is one of the National Strategic Outcomes in the NPF. This seeks enhanced connectivity between centres of population and improved accessibility to the northern and western region, and seeks to advance orbital traffic management solutions including the proposed road development to achieve these objectives.

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 seeks the delivery of major national infrastructure projects in the interest of regional connectivity and names the N6 Galway City Ring Road as one such major project (Section 1.7 and 5.2).

The proposed road development is situated within this national planning framework as a key growth enabler for Galway City and the western region.

2.3.4.1 National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002 to 2020 was a twenty-year national planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions. The NPF replaced the NSS on the 16 February 2018. The NPF builds on many of the objectives of the NSS particularly the strategy that the main cities and surrounding hinterlands of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford can deliver more balanced growth to the regions, to counterbalance the growth of the Dublin region.

The NSS provided the policy framework for all regional and local plans, including the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region (referenced below), which are to be replaced by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) for each of the three new regions of the Northern & Western Region (relevant to Galway), the Midland & Eastern Region, and the Southern Region, under the NPF. In the absence of the RSES for the Northern and Western Region, it is considered that the framework which the NSS provides for the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region (see Section 2.4.1 below), and consequently for the Galway City and Galway County Development Plans, should be referenced. This is captured in **Plate**

2.2 below which sets out the framework structure for the West Region in terms of urban-rural structure, transport connectivity, infrastructure provision etc. which has been reflected in the regional and city/county level plans. With regard to the proposed road development, this extract from the NSS shows the national transport corridor extending from the existing N6 on the east of Galway City across the River Corrib to the west of Galway in order to serve Connemara and Galway County.

The goal in all of the NSS was that this spatial restructuring would lead to:

- *strategically placed, national scale urban areas, acting as gateways, which individually and in combination will be key elements for delivering a more spatially balanced Ireland and driving development in their own regions*

(reference Section 3.1 of NSS).

2.3.5 Climate Change Act 2015

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 provides for the establishment of a national framework with the aim of achieving a low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. The Act provides the tools and structures to transition towards a low-carbon economy and it anticipates that it will be achieved through a combination of:

- a national mitigation plan (to lower Ireland’s level of greenhouse gas emissions)
- a national adaptation framework (to provide for responses to changes caused by climate change)
- tailored sectorial plans (to specify the adaptation measures to be taken by each Government ministry)

The Act obliges “relevant” bodies to have regard to the following factors in the performance of their functions:

- the most recent approved national mitigation plan
- the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectorial adaptation plans
- the furtherance of the national transition objective
- the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State

The Act also provides for the establishment of an independent national expert advisory council on climate change which was formally established on 18 January 2016. The heads of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Teagasc and the Economic and Social Research Institute are members of the Advisory Council.

The functions of the Advisory Council are to advise and make recommendations to the Minister and the Government in relation to matters such as the preparation of a national mitigation plan, a national adaptation framework, a sectoral adaptation plan, or any policy that is proposed to be submitted to the Government for approval in relation to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to the effects of climate change in the State.

The Advisory Council is required to conduct an annual review of the progress made during the previous year in achieving greenhouse gas emissions reductions and furthering a transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. The Advisory Council is to produce an annual report on its findings and recommendations stemming from its annual review.

The proposed road development supports the principles of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 in so far as it provides the necessary strategic infrastructure which has sufficient capacity to cater for the traffic needs of Galway and its environs which in turn reduces bottle necks and congestion within the city itself, even allowing for any increased traffic generated by the proposed road

development. The proposed road development with the GTS measures in place results in a 16% increase in modal shift to public transport at Design Year when compared with the Do Minimum scenario, i.e. the non-scheme scenario. Essentially this means that vehicle trips are removed from the existing traffic and these passengers become public transport users, all of which is a benefit to reducing emissions. Every shift, however small, from the private vehicle to public transport or walking or cycling is a positive and is a gain in terms of climate action. Therefore, as the proposed road development facilitates the effective implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy it is supporting the principles of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, even allowing for any increased traffic generated by the proposed road development.

An appraisal of the proposed road development under the heading of Climate is included in **Chapter 16, Air Quality and Climate**.

2.3.6 National Mitigation Plan 2017

The first National Mitigation Plan was published in July 2017 by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The Plan is designed to be a whole-of-Government approach to tackling greenhouse gas emissions, particularly, in the key sectors i.e. electricity generation, the built environment, transport and agriculture. The objective of this Plan is to transition Ireland to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

The National Mitigation Plan recognises the inter-relationship between settlement patterns, transport and land use planning, and seeks solutions to effectively meeting travel demand in a manner that avoids congestion and limits transport emissions.

As set out in **Section 2.3.5** above the proposed road development facilitates the effective implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy and in doing so it is supporting the principles of the National Mitigation Plan, even allowing for any increased traffic generated by the proposed road development.

An appraisal of the proposed road development under the heading of Climate is included in **Chapter 16, Air Quality and Climate**.

2.3.7 National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016) and Update 2015-2017

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016 (NAPinclusion) identified a wide range of targeted actions and interventions to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty.

The plan prioritised 12 high level goals and identified up to 150 actions across Departments and agencies with a remit in social policy, as part of a strategic approach to make a decisive impact on poverty over the period to 2016.

Relevant goals and actions set out in the NAP inclusion which reference improved accessibility for all sectors of the community, include improvements to public transport (section 3.1 Vision), improved access to public transport (section 5.6.3,

Section 4.1 Vision, Section 5.1 Vision), access to buildings and infrastructure (section 5.6.2), improvements to rural transport provision (section 6.3.7).

As a result of dynamics in economic, social and political contexts, certain NAPinclusion goals and actions became out of date or less relevant. Current priorities and policies indicated that updating of NAPinclusion for its remaining two years 2015-2016 was required and an extension of one year to the Plan to coincide with other related Strategy reviews at Government level. This updating process was carried out as a transitional measure pending a full review of NAPinclusion in 2017.

The proposed road development will provide the necessary infrastructure for strategic traffic accessing Galway and the Western Region. It will also enable other public projects be realised and facilitates the effective implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy which includes improved public transport, walking and cycling measures for Galway City and its environs. This is further detailed in **Chapter 3, Need for the Proposed Road Development.**

2.4 Regional Policies, Guidance and Objectives

2.4.1 Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the West Region (2010-2022)

The *Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the West Region 2010 – 2022* (adopted 2010) set out the planned direction for growth for the West Region, within which Galway County and City is located, up to 2022 by giving regional effect to national planning policy under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). The RPGs inform and direct the City and County Development Plans of each of the Councils in the West Region, comprising Galway City and Galway County, Roscommon, Mayo.

The RPGs recognise that the West Region has a significant and valuable resource in its natural heritage environment with a wide variety of species and habitats of local, national and international importance, the extent of which enhances the quality of life but also represents a real challenge in achieving sustainable development.

The RPGs acknowledge that the West Region has experienced difficulties in the past due to its peripheral location along the Atlantic seaboard and on the periphery of the EU. For the West Region to achieve critical mass and growth and ultimately offer an alternative development corridor to the east coast corridor, strong communication links are required to achieve this through well-developed road, rail and air links as they are key stimuli for ‘corridor’ growth.

Section 3.5.2 of the RPGs, sets out specifically the need for a reduction in transport costs by improving the road networks particularly the *M6 and potential Galway Outer Bypass* as part of the economic development of the region. Section 5.2.1 of the RPGs outlines the necessary road priorities for the Region, including the *Galway City Outer Bypass*.

As outlined above, the proposed road development is necessary to support economic recovery and sustainable growth of the Western Region as a whole which is of overriding public interest at a national level as the country moves towards sustainable growth and recovery.

2.4.1.1 New Regional Assemblies

Three new Regional Assemblies came into being on 1 January 2015, namely the Northern & Western (relevant to Galway), the Midland & Eastern and the Southern Regional Assemblies, following on from the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and Putting People first – Action Programme for Effective Local Government. Galway and the West Region has been subsumed into the Northern & Western Regional Assembly.

At the same time as the publication of the draft National Planning Framework in November 2017, three Regional Assemblies of all 31 local authorities across the country began the preparation of new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs), framed in the light of the NPF but extending its approach at more detailed levels to shape local planning and economic development in each local authority area.

Each Regional Assembly published an Issues Paper for public consultation (submissions made by 16 February 2018). Key spatial and economic issues to be addressed are set out in the Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) Issues Paper, with reference to the National Planning Framework. These include issues such as location of development, provision of infrastructure including transportation, provision of educational and healthcare facilities, economic development and regional economic performance.

A key focus for the RSEs will be the preparation of a co-ordinated Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Galway (and potentially for other identified urban locations). The MASP will be provided with “*statutory underpinning to act as twelve-year strategic planning and investment frameworks for the city metropolitan areas*”. The purpose of the MASP will be “*to provide high level long term strategic development focus on areas such as the identification of strategic growth areas, infrastructure (particularly transport and water services), regeneration, the location of housing and employment and metropolitan scale amenities such as regional parks and cycle networks.*” (see section 2.1.1 of the NWRA Issues Paper).

The RSEs also seeks to enhance regional performance by identifying regional strengths and opportunities and identifies the Region’s strong employment base, both multi-national operations and SMEs, and the Region’s strong educational base, (NUIG identified as ranked in the top 1% of global universities). It also identifies the Region’s “*internationally important environmental assets*”, and the “*desire to protect these assets for the value they contribute*” to the lifestyle and economy of the Region (acknowledged as important to tourism), as well as for their intrinsic value (see sections 3,4, and 5 of the Issues Paper).

Among the “Critical Enabling Infrastructural priorities” for the Region identified by the NWRA as being “*crucial to the ability*” of the major urban centre’s to harness potential and “*act as Regional drivers*” are the completion of the N6 Galway City

Ring Road, and the full implementation of the Galway Transportation Strategy (see section 6.3 of the Issues Paper).

The NWRA Issues Paper recognises the proposed road development as critical to the spatial and economic success of the Region.

2.5 Local Policies, Guidance and Objectives

The proposed road development passes through two local authority areas – Galway City Council and Galway County Council.

Both Galway City and County Councils are committed to intensifying public transport delivery and usage to deliver growth and improve quality of life in Galway. Both the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 and Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 support the proposed N6 GCRR as part of the GTS which is the overall transport strategy.

2.5.1 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) 2016

Galway City Council and Galway County Council, in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA), prepared a Galway Transport Strategy which aims to address the current and future transport requirements of Galway City and its environs, including Bearna, Oranmore, Moycullen and Claregalway. The NTA are the national body responsible for public transport and are fully committed to the delivery of a sustainable transport solution for Galway City and its environs. As Galway City and its environs continue to develop as the principal economic centre serving the West of Ireland, there is a critical need to address the transportation issues facing the city and surrounding areas, and to underpin future growth by establishing a long-term strategy for transport to, across, within and around the city.

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

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

The major components proposed under the GTS comprise:

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

The proposed road development represents a key element of the GTS in planning for the future transport requirements of Galway City and its environs. The GTS, incorporating the N6 GCCR, will allow the city to ‘breathe’ again.

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

2.5.2 Galway City Council

2.5.2.1 Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023

The Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 as varied, hereafter referred to as the City Development Plan, sets out Galway City Council’s policies for the sustainable development of Galway City to 2023. It establishes the vision for Galway City *“to be a successful, sustainable, competitive, regional centre that creates prosperity, supports a high quality of life and maintains its distinctive identity and supports a rich cultural experience.”*

The strategic goals for the city to realise this vision are set out as:

1. Achieve a high quality of life for all citizens through the provision of a good quality, attractive, built environment, through the protection of the unique natural environment and through facilitation of key economic, cultural and social supports
2. Enable the city to fulfil its role as a National Gateway, a Regional centre and contribute to the economic recovery through the provision of balanced and sustainable economic opportunities for growth, innovation and investment

- across all employment sectors and allow the role of the Gateway to harness the strengths and maximise the economic development for the whole West Region
3. Promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through proactive measures in line with EU commitments to tackle climate change and reduce vulnerability to the harmful effects of climate change, in particular sea level encroachment and extreme weather events, through specific adaptation measures
 4. Apply the principle of sustainability particularly where it relates to the uses of land, buildings, water, energy, waste and through the encouragement of sustainable modes of transport and the integration of transportation with land use
 5. Aspire to make Galway an equal and inclusive city, particularly through facilitating all forms of social inclusion in the built environment, including in the public realm, housing, community facilities, in access to employment opportunities and public transportation
 6. Protect the distinctive and diverse natural environment in the city and strengthen the green network and linkages, recognising the biodiversity value of the amenity, the range of recreational benefits this provides, the potential through facilitating active and healthy lifestyles, it can have on the quality of general health and well-being and the value it has for providing an attractive city setting
 7. Encourage a sense of collective identity and a shared vision through civic engagement on projects such as the development of a Local Economic and Community Plan for Galway and also on the promotion of specifically focused projects such as the European Capital of Culture 2020, that will promote the unique form and character of the city, give opportunities for the development of cultural, community and other beneficial infrastructure and enhance and diversify the city economy (Galway City secured the European Capital of Culture 2020 designation in July 2016)

The City Development Plan's Core Strategy includes for Galway to continue to be the regional growth centre and to create the synergies for wider prosperity in the West Region. It focuses on the development of key regeneration locations in the city centre to reinforce the *“prime role of the city centre in both Galway City and the Gateway Region”*. The Strategy focuses a significant amount of new residential development and population growth in the Ardaun area of the city (see **Section 2.5.2.2** below), while acknowledging that *“other residential areas of the city will grow but at a more constrained rate and in character with the established nature of development”*. It designates the key centres of commercial, retail and local community activities are located *“to co-ordinate with the prime role of the city centre”*. (Section 1.4 Galway City Development Plan).

The Core Strategy is further supported and informed by the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) set out in **Section 2.5.1** above.

The transport strategy for the city in the City Development Plan aims *“to integrate sustainable land use and transportation, facilitating access and choice to a range*

of transport modes, accessible to all sections of the community that ensures safety and ease of movement to and within the city and onward connectivity to the wider area of County Galway and the West Region.” The City Development Plan notes that while the implementation of various measures stemming from the Galway Transport Unit have made improvements to the transport network, “...serious traffic congestion still prevails which impacts on peoples’ quality of life and the economy of the city, and the regional role of Galway as Gateway”.

The City Development Plan sets out that these issues have now been assessed in the preparation of the Galway Transport Strategy 2016 (see **Section 2.5.1** above), prepared by Galway City Council and Galway County Council in partnership with the NTA.

In this regard, the City Development Plan incorporates Policy 3.3 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) which aims to “*Continue to progress a sustainable transport solution for the city through the implementation of measures included in the GTS and required supporting projects in particular the N6 GCRR project*”.

The City Development Plan furthermore, incorporates the GTS through other policies and provisions including Policy 3.2 Land Use and Transportation;

“Facilitate the future development of Galway City and environs within the strategic framework of the Galway Transport Strategy and the associated implementation phasing to ensure that the city has the necessary transport infrastructure and services to support its continued growth and development.”

Other policies in the Plan that integrate the GTS with City objectives are:

- Policy 3.4 Traffic Network, which specifically references the N6 Galway City Ring Road (GCRR) project by “...supporting the reservation of a corridor route to accommodate an orbital route as provided for in the N6 GCRR project.”
- Policy 3.5 Public Transport
- Policy 3.6 Cycling and Walking
- Policy 3.7 Road and Street Network and Accessibility, which also specifically supports the N6 GCRR
- Policy 3.10 Specific Objectives emphasises the principles and objectives of the GTS, with specific reference to the N6 GCRR
- Economic Activities (Chapter 5) Strategy which incorporates specific reference to the delivery of the GTS and the N6 GCRR, to “Enhance the economic performance of Galway as a Gateway and regional growth centre...”
- Policy 5.1 Enterprise supports the “...implementation of the phased plan of transportation measures as proposed for in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) including for public transport, walking and cycling, and a strategic new road, the N6 GCRR”
- Section 8.7 Urban Design Public Realm incorporates principles and objectives of the GTS in relation to improving the quality and experience of the public realm and city environment

- Chapter 10 City Centre/Area Based Plans reflect the principles and objectives of the GTS, including the delivery of the proposed N6 GCRR, and resulting potential for city centre wide improvements to public realm and urban environment, and improved pedestrian and cycle facilities, networks and linkages
- Chapter 11 Land Use Zoning Policies and Objectives, Section 11.2 Land Use Zoning General states that “Priority will be given to the reservation of the N6 GCRR Preferred Route Corridor and the associated land requirements over other land use zonings and specific objectives”

The overall Transport Strategy of the City Development Plan is to:

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

The Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 fully integrates the aims, objectives, and strategies of the GTS into core policies and strategies, which includes the proposed road development.

2.5.2.2 Ardaun Local Area Plan 2018-2024

Galway City Council has prepared a Draft Local Area Plan (LAP) for lands situated at the area known as Ardaun on the east side of the city (164ha), approximately 5km from the city centre. The Draft LAP was subject to a public consultation period from 7 September to 20 October 2017. It was further subject to material alterations, which were put to public consultation during January-February 2018 and adopted in April 2018.

The Core Strategy of the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 identifies Ardaun “as a key development area that can accommodate long term growth in population, economic activity and employment opportunities” (Section 1.1 Ardaun LAP), and the preparation of a LAP for the area is a specific objective of the Development Plan (Policy 8.7). This supports regional planning policy where the “West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2020 consider Ardaun as the most optimal area for growth in the city and environs” (LAP 1.3).

The LAP seeks to deliver the concept of an urban village, with the principal urban village centre in the southern section of Ardaun i.e. south of the N6/M6 corridor, with two urban nodes / local centres north of this corridor, linking to surrounding

areas including the existing Coolagh Village. It is anticipated that the area can support a population of over 8,000 people and also function as a mixed use business and retail district (LAP Section 1.2).

Strategic Goal 4 of the LAP (Section 3) supports the development of sustainable transport modes as proposed in the Galway City Development Plan and the Galway Transport Strategy. This Strategic Goal is further supported by the policy to “*Promote interconnectivity between all modes of transport, in particular sustainable and public transport modes in order to efficiently link Ardaun with the main hubs for activity including the city centre in accordance with the GTS*”. This is further supported in Section 4.5 of the LAP by a key objective to “*Support and facilitate the provision of an integrated public transport network to service Ardaun through the implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy and in conjunction with relevant transport providers, NTA and other stakeholders.*”

This LAP reserves the preferred route corridor of the proposed road development as it traverses the LAP area, as per Galway City Development Plan objectives, Section 1.4 and Section 3.10.

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

2.5.3 Galway County Council

2.5.3.1 Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021

The Galway County Council Development Plan (2015-2021) which includes a Variation to incorporate GTS, hereafter referred to as the County Development Plan, sets out the aspirations for Galway County within its lifetime and the near future. As noted in the background to the plan, it aims to “*sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of Galway County Council*”. With reference to local, regional, national and European policies the plan sets out the main strategies for the County in the areas of:

- Spatial Strategy, Core & Settlement Strategy, including for development of lands at Ardaun as part of the City and County development strategy
- Urban & Rural Housing
- Economic Tourism & Retail Development
- Roads & Transportation
- Water, Wastewater, Waste Management & Extractive Industry
- Energy/Renewable Energies & Communications Technology
- Climate Change & Flooding
- Heritage, Landscape & Environmental Management
- Cultural, Social & Community Development
- Agriculture, Fishing, Marine Resources & Forestry

The County Development Plan further sets out its vision for the County which is to *“enhance the quality of life of the people of Galway and maintain the County as a uniquely attractive place in which to live, work, invest and visit, harnessing the potential of the County’s competitive advantages in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner.”*

The strategic aims of the County Development Plan (Refer to Section 1.7) include:

1. Promote regional development and growth through harnessing the competitive advantages of County Galway
2. Afford suitable protection to the environment
3. Recognise the importance of living landscapes while ensuring they are managed in a sustainable and appropriate manner
4. Seek balanced urban and rural development
5. Encourage and support the development of inclusive communities
6. Ensure integrated development
7. Promote sustainable mobility
8. Promote An Ghaeltacht as an Irish speaking community
9. Facilitate the development of infrastructural projects which will underpin sustainable development
10. Enhance and protect the built heritage and natural environment
11. Integrate climate change consideration in planning and delivering work programmes

The principle of sustainable development is a major component of the County Development Plan which is reflected in the Plan’s policies and objectives. The Core Strategy in the County Development Plan is supported and informed by the GTS.

The Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 retains the objectives of the previous County Development Plan to provide a solution to congestion, to provide better connection from all parts of the County to the trans-national network, and to improve safety levels on all public roads. *“The integration of land use and transportation shall continue to be the overarching strategic aim of the Galway County Development plan 2015-2021”* (Refer Section 5.1).

The County Development Plan further states that *“the timely provision of high quality transportation infrastructure within County Galway is critical to the County’s socio-economic development and in the promotion of social and economic well-being”*. (Refer Section 5.1).

The County Development Plan transportation objectives (Section 5.1.1) include the following strategic aims among others:

- *“To provide a safe and efficient network of transport to serve the needs of the people and the movement of goods and services to and within County Galway*
- *Provide access for all in an integrated manner with an enhanced choice of transport options including the Rural Transport Programme*

- *To promote and encourage the use of alternative sustainable modes of transport and to promote the use of transport energy from renewable resources*
- *To safeguard the strategic transport function and carrying capacity of the motorway and national road network and associated junctions in order to provide for the safe and efficient movement of inter-urban and inter-regional traffic”*

In relation to the Galway Gateway and west of the County, the County Development Plan incorporates objectives to enhance connectivity and access across the region, and to deliver on the transportation needs of the Galway Gateway, its environs and the west of the County, as per Policy TI2 and TI8 and Objective TI 15, as follows:

Policy TI 2 – Development of an Integrated and Sustainable Transport System

It is the policy of the Council to promote the development of an integrated and sustainable high quality transport system for the county, which includes the specific areas identified in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS), which shall:

- a) Promote closer co-ordination between land use and sustainable transportation;*
- b) Continue the provision of a range of transport options within Galway and in collaboration with Galway City Council, the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland(TII), other statutory agencies and transport providers, including safe road network, a range of bus and rail services, adequate facilities for walking and cycling and opportunities of air and water-based travel.*

Policy TI 8 –Transportation Infrastructure Requirements for the Gateway and West of the County

It is the policy of Galway County Council to work with Galway City Council and all relevant statutory bodies including the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) to deliver an appropriate infrastructural response to the transportation needs of the Galway Gateway, its environs and the west of the County as part of the proposed measures of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) including the plan level environmental protection policies and mitigation measures set out in the GTS. This shall include the provision of new infrastructure such as potential park and ride facilities, bus corridors, greenways, cycling and walking routes and the N6 Galway City Ring Road (GCRR) which are all integral in the delivery of the GTS with a view to relieving congestion, improving travel times, increased safety of all road users and enhancing connectivity and access within the region and enhanced accessibility of the western region in a national and international context. Any such solution shall have due regard to the necessity to protect the environment and will comply fully with the requirements of the Habitats Directive

Objective TI 1 – Sustainable Transportation

Support and facilitate ‘Smarter Travel’ initiatives contained in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and other initiatives together with the plan level environmental protection policies and mitigation measures set out in the GTS, which will improve sustainable transportation within the County including public

transport, electric and hybrid vehicles, car clubs, public bike schemes, park and ride/park and stride facilities, improved pedestrian and cycling facilities, as appropriate.

Objective TI 15 - Transportation Infrastructure Requirements for the Gateway and West of the County

It is an objective of Galway County Council to work with all other relevant bodies including the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Galway City Council to deliver the necessary improvements to transportation infrastructure, including new infrastructure if necessary and the plan level environmental protection policies and mitigation measures set out in the GTS. This shall include the provision of new infrastructure such as potential park and ride facilities, bus corridors, greenways, cycling and walking routes and the N6 Galway City Ring Road (GCRR) as set out in the Priority Transportation Infrastructure Objectives 2015-2021 in Table 5.1 which are all integral in the delivery of the GTS with a view to secure the medium and long term economic and social development of Galway Gateway and the west of the County. Any such investment or project shall be carried out with due regard to the necessity to protect the environment and in full compliance with the provision of relevant legislation, including the Habitats Directive

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

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

The proposed road development is included as one of the priority transport infrastructure objectives in the County Development Plan and is fully supported by this plan.

2.5.3.2 Bearna Local Area Plan 2007-2017 (Adopted 17 December 2007 and Amended 20 December 2012)

The Bearna Local Area Plan (LAP) sets out a Strategic Vision for Bearna to be ‘...an attractive, prosperous and sustainable settlement with a high quality built and natural environment, a range of supporting services, facilities and amenities and a high quality of life for the local community.’ It also promotes the creation of a settlement that, *inter alia*:

- Is well connected to, but has strong local identity separate from, nearby settlements, in particular Galway City to the east and Na Forbacha to the west
- Has an appropriate level of services and infrastructure to support existing and future development in a manner that protects and is complementary to the environment, heritage, character and amenities of the village, including: an adequate road network, traffic management and parking facilities; improved public transport with regular bus services; safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists; and adequate wastewater disposal, water supply and surface water drainage

The Bearna LAP at Section 2.7 supports a new road that would bypass the village, with the stated view that it would have ‘.....a positive impact for Bearna in that it will facilitate easy access to and from Bearna while reducing the volume of through traffic in the village. This would have a positive impact on the village centre and would help to create a more cycle and pedestrian friendly environment’.

The Development Strategy of the Bearna LAP clearly sets out that it supports the funding and construction of a bypass of Bearna which now takes the form of this proposed road development.

The Galway County Development Plan was varied to incorporate the Bearna Local Area Plan. Public consultation on the variation, referenced as Proposed Variation No 2(a) to the Galway County Development Plan (CDP) 2015-2021, was sought during the period 1 December 2017 to 8 January 2018. This Variation was adopted in July 2018.

The Variation No. 2(a) Bearna Plan, has, as its Strategic Vision at Section 1.2, to seek “the achievement of the overall objectives set out for the village in the Galway County Development Plan”. Transportation and Movement Objectives set out in the Variation, refers to Chapter 5 of the Galway County Development Plan, as set out in **Section 2.5.3.1** above. It has, as its Strategic Vision Statement “‘To promote Bearna as a sustainable and vibrant coastal village, which maintains its attractive character, capitalises on its existing and future accessibility strengths, while offering a pleasant environment for a growing community, for living, shopping, education, business, recreation and tourism, all balanced against the need to safeguard and enhance the environmental sensitivities of the area, for present and future generations to come’. This is informed by guiding principles, which carry forward those of the Bearna LAP.

This Variation, therefore endorses the overall objectives of the Galway County Development Plan, and consequently the objectives of the GTS and this proposed road development.

2.5.3.3 Gaeltacht Local Area Plan, 2008 – 2018

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

The purpose of the plan is to put in place controls and guidelines, consistent and compatible with the Galway County Development Plan, to facilitate the provision of infrastructure so that the younger generations will be encouraged to remain in their native area, out of choice, and develop its economy in a way that is both language and culture friendly, thus halting the decline in population. The Gaeltacht Local Area Plan sets out the strategic development principles relating to roads and transport infrastructure in **Section 3.3.2** and identifies a bypass of Galway City as being of importance to advancing the development of the social and economic advantage of the Gaeltacht and developing an integrated approach to planning.

The aims of the proposed road development align with this Gaeltacht Local Area Plan as it seeks to provide the necessary additional infrastructure to maintain existing rural communities by providing connectivity to them.

The Galway County Development Plan was varied to incorporate the Gaeltacht Local Area Plan. Public consultation on the proposed variation, referenced as Proposed Variation No 2(b) to the Galway County Development Plan (CDP) 2015-2021, was sought during the period 1 December 2017 to 8 January 2018. This Variation was adopted in May 2018.

The Variation No. 2(b) Gaeltacht, has, at its Strategic Vision at Section 1.2, *“The Gaeltacht area is a unique and special place, and it is important that it retains that distinctive cultural heritage and natural beauty through the principles of sustainable development, whilst meeting the needs and aspirations of both the residents’ and visitors alike. Achieving the objectives of the Galway County Development Plan in order to sustain and develop the local economy and improve the quality of life for local residents.”*

This Variation supports the County Development Plan, and its objectives, which include the proposed road development.

2.5.4 Údarás na Gaeltacht Strategic Plan, 2014 - 2017

The main strategic themes of Údarás na Gaeltachta’s Strategic Plan 2014 - 2017 are:

1. Support and develop language, community and cultural resources
2. Enhance innovation and competitiveness through the development of enterprise and natural resources

The Plan has four key objectives under each strategic theme set out above, of which the objectives pertaining to the second theme of innovation and competitiveness are most pertinent here:

1. Encourage a strong innovative enterprise culture which will create and sustain wealth and employment in the Gaeltacht by supporting new and established businesses to maintain and increase their employment
2. Develop new opportunities for the Gaeltacht’s coastal resources through innovation in a changing economic environment

3. Stimulate the development of tourism as a driver of economic development in the Gaeltacht
4. Facilitate the provision of essential infrastructure in order to expand the enterprise capacity of the Gaeltacht

As the proposed road development seeks to deliver essential infrastructure to the western region, it aligns with the Údarás na Gaeltacht Strategic Plan.

2.6 Conclusion

As outlined in **this chapter**, the proposed road development is congruent with current European, national, regional and local transport policy and planning policy as set out in the various policy documents over the past number of years.

In recent years, there has been a major shift towards sustainable transport which is reflected in the policies discussed earlier. The changing demographics in our society whereby population is migrating to cities to avail of employment opportunities, education and improved living conditions necessitates the promotion of a wholly sustainable transportation network. Our cities are undergoing fundamental change as they strive to become living spaces for an increased population which is concentrated in a smaller tighter space. Key to a thriving urban experience is the ability to navigate a city at leisure whether as a pedestrian, a cyclist, or in a vehicle. Therefore, congestion relief through reallocation of the provision of space for cars in the city centre to other modes of transport, is key to creating more people friendly environments, additional public space, and essentially better cities.

The proposed road development functions to relieve congestion in the city. It is a key component of the Galway Transport Strategy which seeks to create a vision for Galway whereby additional space is reallocated for public transport, cycling and walking in the city centre area, all of which fosters sustainable and healthy behaviours. Reducing congestion also allows the city to prosper and connect with markets to become a thriving economic centre, in which it is attractive to work, live and play. Such a city in turn supports the Western Region and provides balanced regional development. The GTS, incorporating the N6 GCCR, will allow the city to ‘breathe’ again.

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