

STAIÉAR DLÚS UIRBEACH  
AGUS AIRDE FOIRGNEAMH NA

# GAILLIMHE GALWAY

URBAN DENSITY AND  
BUILDING HEIGHTS STUDY

September 2021

Allies and Morrison Limited



Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe  
Galway City Council





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# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

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# 1 ABOUT THE STUDY

## 1.1 The study and its purpose

Galway has been fastest growing city in Ireland for 50 years. The NPF has stated that Galway is one of four cities which should grow by at least 50% of its population in the next 20 years to create more balanced growth across Ireland, alleviating pressure on Dublin. Both National and Regional policy have set out objectives to develop Galway City as a regional city and driver of national growth, lending emphasis to the importance of this study.

Galway is a historic city with a long and colourful history evidenced in its impressive built heritage and natural landscape. The natural landscape which has influenced and shaped the city's growth is also key to the city's unique character. Galway is already a relatively compact city, but with extensive growth planned within the existing built up area of the city, the Council will need an approach to sustainable development which avoids urban sprawl whilst maintaining the city's unique character.

The purpose of the Galway City Urban Density and Building Heights Study is to examine what are the optimal densities and heights that can achieve the most efficient and effective use of land, can make a positive contribution to the character of the city, can create good quality mixed use communities while also contribute to successful place making and liveability. The study will contribute to the formulation of a strategy on density and height that will inform the preparation of the Draft Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029.

The strategy proposed in this document is generated through a thorough analysis of the city's spatial structure, character and setting. It will also take into account important policy objectives relating to sustainability, transport, heritage, public realm, climate adaptation and the green network. All of this will inform a spatial urban density and building heights strategy for sustainable intensification which respects Galway's special character whilst providing a long term solution to an increasing population.

Design guidance supporting the strategy will provide policy and objectives recommendations, as well as guidance relating to urban design principles for high quality, high density development to support successful place making and liveability for mixed-use developments.

## 1.2 The structure of the report

The Galway Urban Density and Building Heights Strategy report is structured as follows:

**Part A** – provides an introduction to the study and outlines the context within which it has been prepared;

**Part B** – provides an overview of the principal findings from the baseline analysis, with emphasis placed on the strands of this analysis which has played a direct role in the evolution of the Galway density and buildings heights strategy;

**Part C** – is a concise summary of the suitability and sensitivity analysis of Galway which builds directly on the baseline analysis summarised in Part B;

**Part D** – presents the Galway density and building heights spatial strategy. Structured to align with policies and strategies in the Galway Development Plan, the spatial strategy reflects on the outcomes of Part B and C and presents a systematic review of Galway's varied urban character, from the city centre to the outer suburbs. Informed by an understanding of prevailing conditions, guidance is outlined on potentially appropriate building densities and heights for new development in each geographic zone and sub zone of the city.



## 1.3 The scale of the challenge

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF), supports ambitious growth targets to enable the four regional cities, including Galway, to each grow by at least 50% to 2040, enhancing their potential to become cities of scale.

The NPF targets the population of the city to grow by between 40,000 - 45,000 people by 2040 which is an increase of almost 55%. It also targets half of the homes to accommodate this population increase to be located within the existing built footprint at locations that are well served by existing and planned public transport, amenity, social and community infrastructure.

The National Development Plan (NDP) sits alongside the NPF, to form a joint publication as Project Ireland 2040. The NDP is currently being reviewed to reflect current key national priorities including climate action, housing and transport and will set out a capital investment framework until 2030.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area provides a high-level development framework to support the implementation of the NPF and includes a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Galway. It sets out how the NPF population targets can be met in accordance with the principles of sustainable development with the aim to deliver compact growth. The population targets set out in the MASP are to accommodate 23,000 persons to 2026 and a further 12,000 persons to 2031.

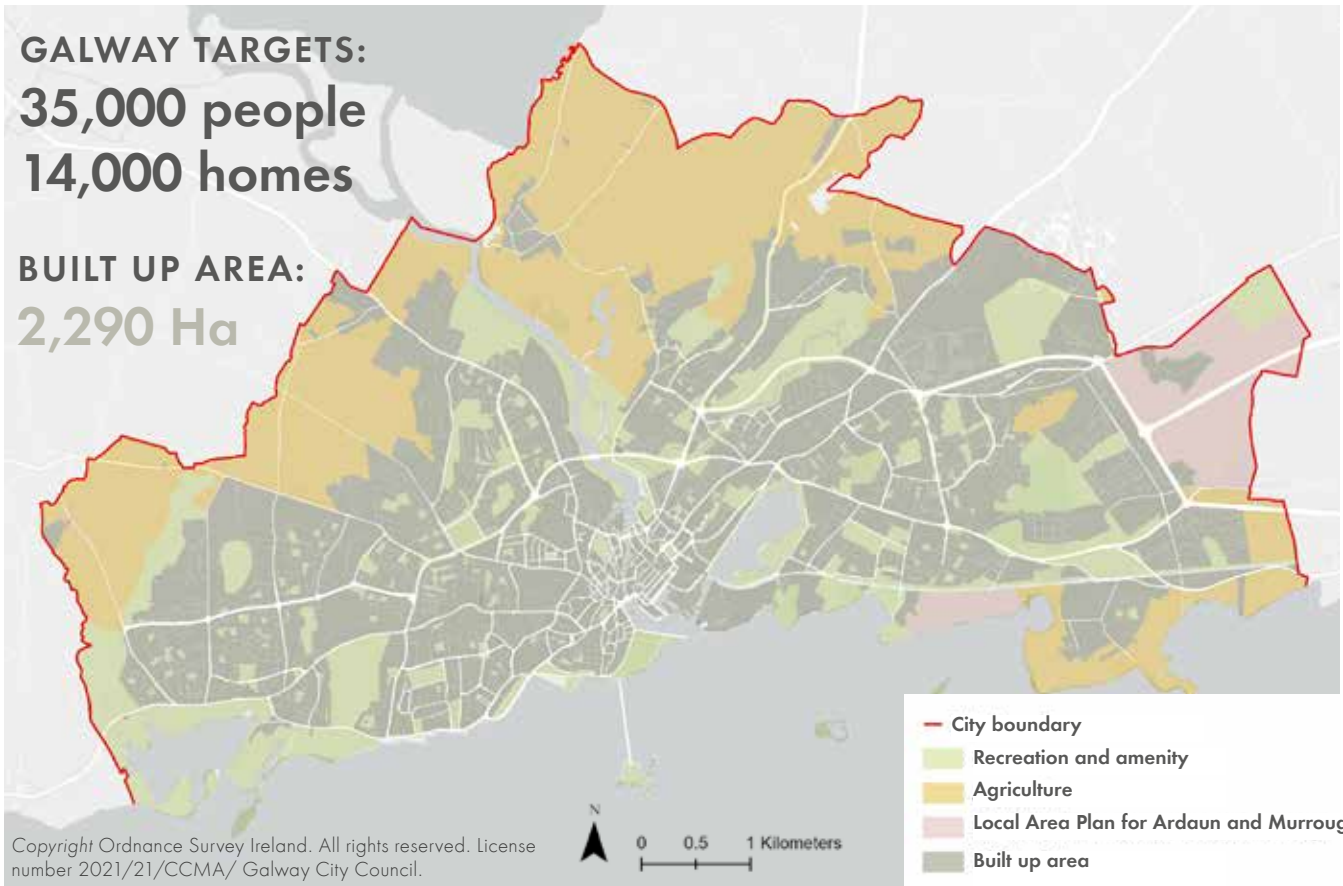
However, in December 2020 following independent research into structural housing demand in Ireland to 2040, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) provided updated figures which are a robust, up-to-date and independently developed housing demand projection, to inform policy and investment with regard to housing at national and local levels. It highlights that the ESRI projection model and paper are now the definitive source of information for Government, in the context of regular and often divergent estimates of housing demand from various sources. The updated figures for Galway City are set out below.

The diagram on the following page highlights the role housing density will play and how different approaches to housing density could result in radically different outcomes for Galway, using the figure of 9,042 households. The grey boxes below the map are presented at the same scale as the map and represent the amount of land that would be required to deliver 14,000 new homes at different levels of housing density.

<b>Table 23: Galway City Council</b>		<b>Annual Average</b>	<b>Total Households</b>
<b>A</b>	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to 2031	619	9,289
<b>B</b>	Actual new housing supply 2017-19	180	540
<b>C</b>	Homeless households, and estimated unmet demand as at Census 2016	N/A	293
<b>D</b>	<b>Housing Demand 2020-31 =Total (A-B+C)/12</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>9,042</b>

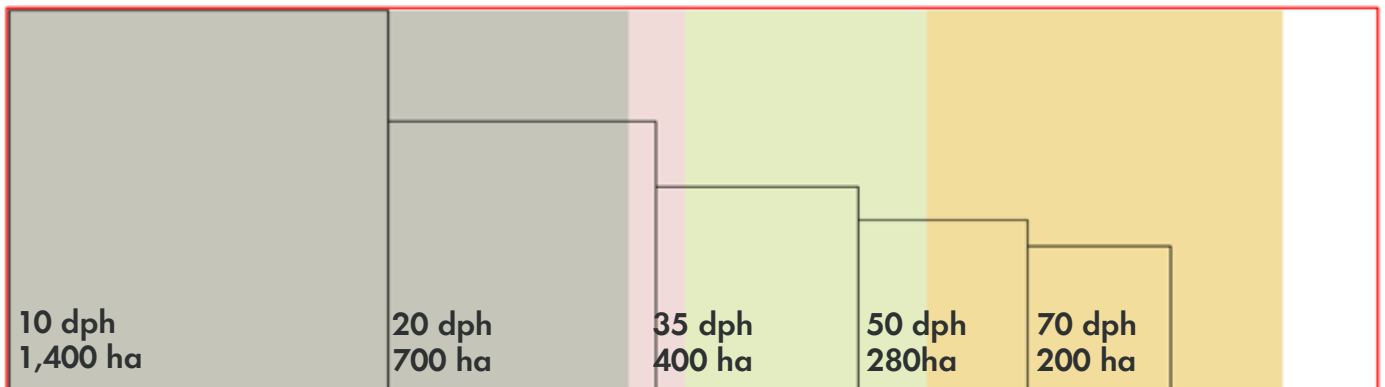
**GALWAY TARGETS:**  
**35,000 people**  
**14,000 homes**

**BUILT UP AREA:**  
**2,290 Ha**



The boxes below the map are presented at the same scale as the map and represent the amount of land that would be required to deliver 14,000 new homes at different levels of housing density.

The background colours of this box represent the land cover types. Based on the size of the built up area (2,290ha) and Galway's population (80,000) we can estimate that there are around 32,000 dwellings within the built up area. This gives an estimated current density of 14 dph.



Semi-detached  
30-45 dph



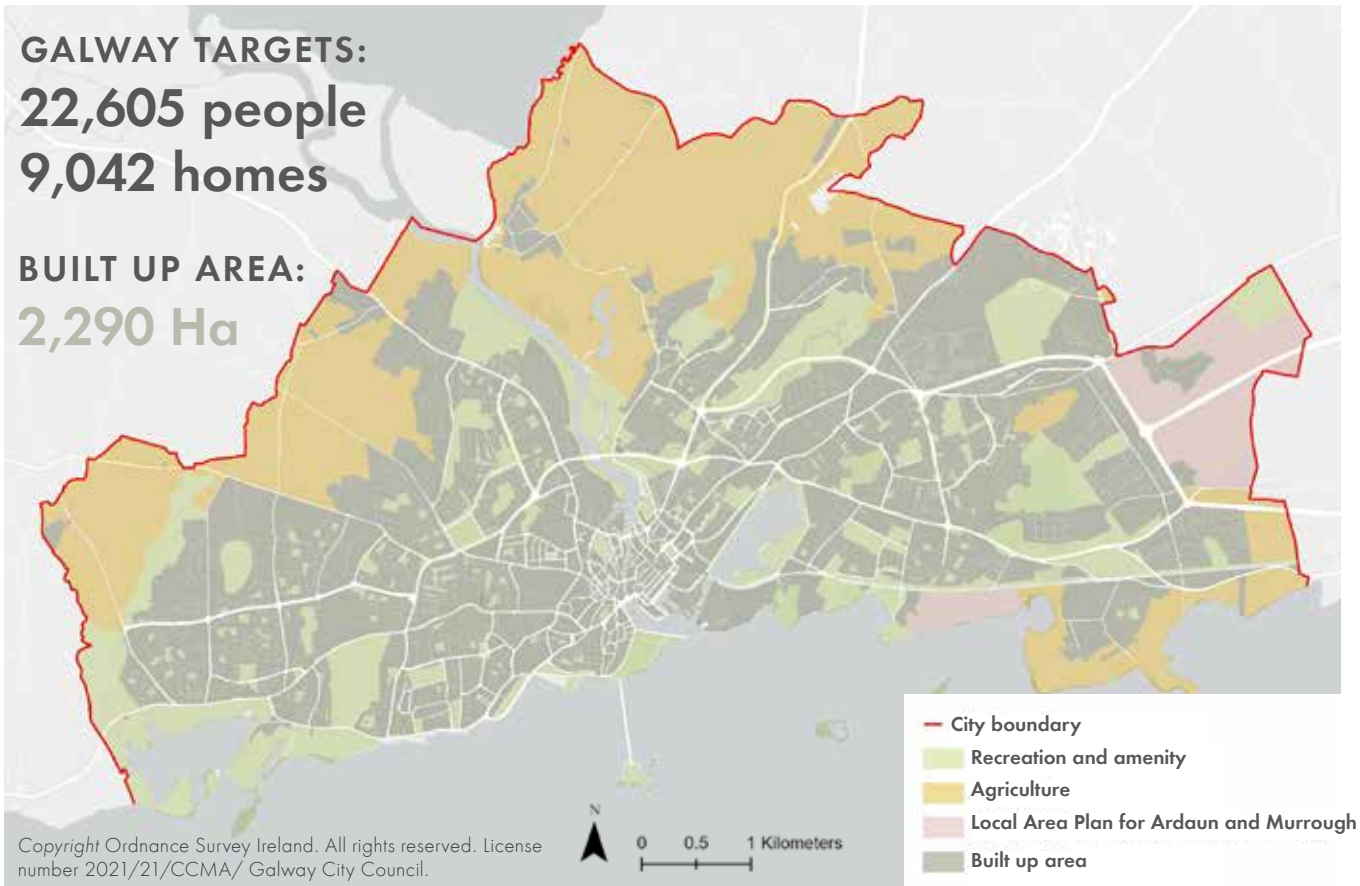
Terraces  
50-80dph



Large family homes  
50-80dph



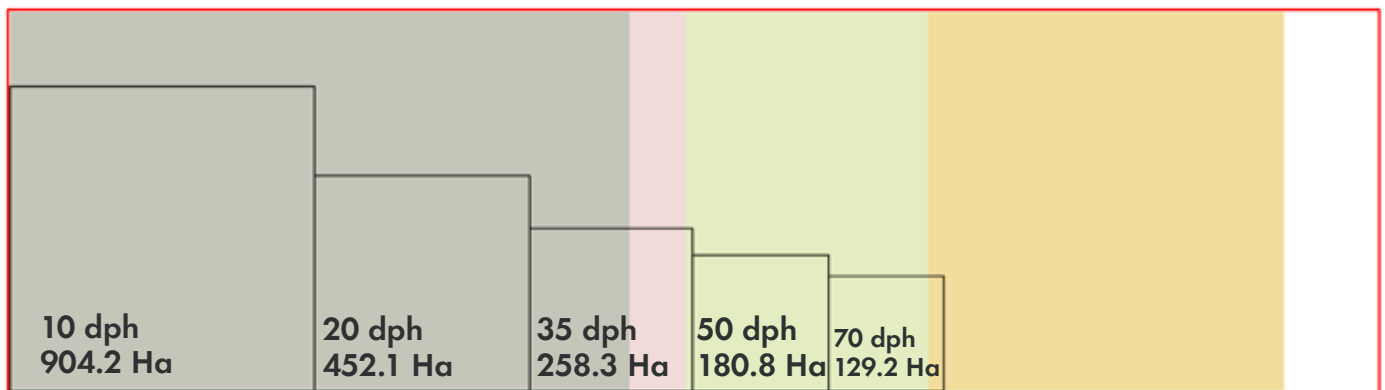
Apartment perimeter blocks  
50-120 dph



Using the Projected Housing Demand by Local Authority Area 2020-2031 ESRI NPF Scenario Housing Supply Target figures issued from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, there is housing demand of 754 households annually from 2020-2031 giving a total to 2031 of 9,042 households. Using a household size of 2.5 this would equate to 22,605 population to 2031.

The boxes below the map are presented at the same scale as the map and represent the amount of land that would be required to deliver 9,042 new homes at different levels of housing density.

The background colours of this box represent the land cover types. Based on the size of the built up area (2,290ha) and Galway’s population (80,000) we can estimate that there are around 32,000 dwellings within the built up area. This gives an estimated current density of 14 dph.



Semi-detached  
 30-45 dph



Terraces  
 50-80dph



Large family homes  
 50-80dph



Apartment perimeter blocks  
 50-120 dph

## 2 POLICY CONTEXT

### Galway City Council Development Plan (2017-2023)

The Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 sets out Galway City Council’s policies for the sustainable development of Galway City to 2023. The Plan sets out a strategy for the city within the context of various national and regional level strategies, plans and guidelines that impact on proper planning and sustainable development.

It should be noted that Galway City Council commenced the statutory review of the City Development Plan 2017 – 2023 on 7th January 2021 and preparation of a new Development Plan for the period 2023-2029. Therefore some policies and objectives set out in the current Development Plan have been superseded by National and Regional policy, particularly objectives around higher densities.

The first section of the plan is the core strategy, which sets out an overarching strategy for the spatial development of the city in line with the NPF and RSES. Some policies will be developed in more detail at a local level through Local Area Plans, Area Plans, Masterplans and Framework Plans, such as for Ardaun, Murrough and Headford Road area and Area Plans for Castlegar and Menlough.

The plan sets out a 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. A city that is environmentally responsible and resilient to challenge. A city that can attract and retain talent and skills and fosters innovation and creativity. An inclusive city where civic engagement is valued and a shared vision is pursued through good governance and leadership. A city that offers sustainable choices in housing, work, transport and lifestyle opportunities.”

The Development Plan sets out the land use zoning objectives for different areas within the city and indicates examples of uses that may or may not be acceptable within each use zone. Zoning seeks to promote the development of uses that achieve the objectives for the area concerned and to prevent the development of incompatible uses. Ten land use zoning categories are utilised in the Plan to indicate the various objectives for these areas. Those relevant include residential, city centre, CI zoned land and low-density residential zones.

The plan notes that the realisation of the vision for Galway City will be supported through the following strategic goals:

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 an NPF designated Regional City, 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 City and Metropolitan Area 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 for facilitating active and healthy lifestyles, the effect 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.

### Core Strategy

The plan discusses land which is zoned and/or available for housing. It states that lands available for residential development are:

- Predominantly undeveloped lands zoned for residential use;
- Brownfield sites in the CC zone and Headford Road LAP lands;
- Lands that are not specifically zoned yet for residential purposes but are anticipated to be required as part of the settlement approach of the Core Strategy, including Ardaun;
- Other designated zones which can sustain housing such as CI zones (though it is not considered appropriate to include a yield from such land in the estimation for housing).

The Housing Land Availability (HLA) as prepared by the City Council provides an estimate of the quantum of zoned residential land available for development. It includes a summary of the estimated capacity of housing units on specifically identified suitable zoned lands, noting these have been calculated based on recent development patterns of density, extant planning permissions, pre-consultation and preliminary land use studies for LAP areas and regeneration lands.

The Core Strategy diagram (see Fig 1) helps to illustrate in map format the composite elements of the overall Core Strategy.

Table 1.2: Estimated potential Housing Yield Galway City Development Plan 2017-23

Residential Land Availability in Development Plan 2017-23	Estimated No. of Housing Units
Residential Zoned – High Density	6020
Residential Zoned – Low Density	815
Ardaun Phase 1	1098
Regeneration	500
Vacancy/Obsolesce/Other Adjustments	660
<b>Total capacity available</b>	<b>9093</b>

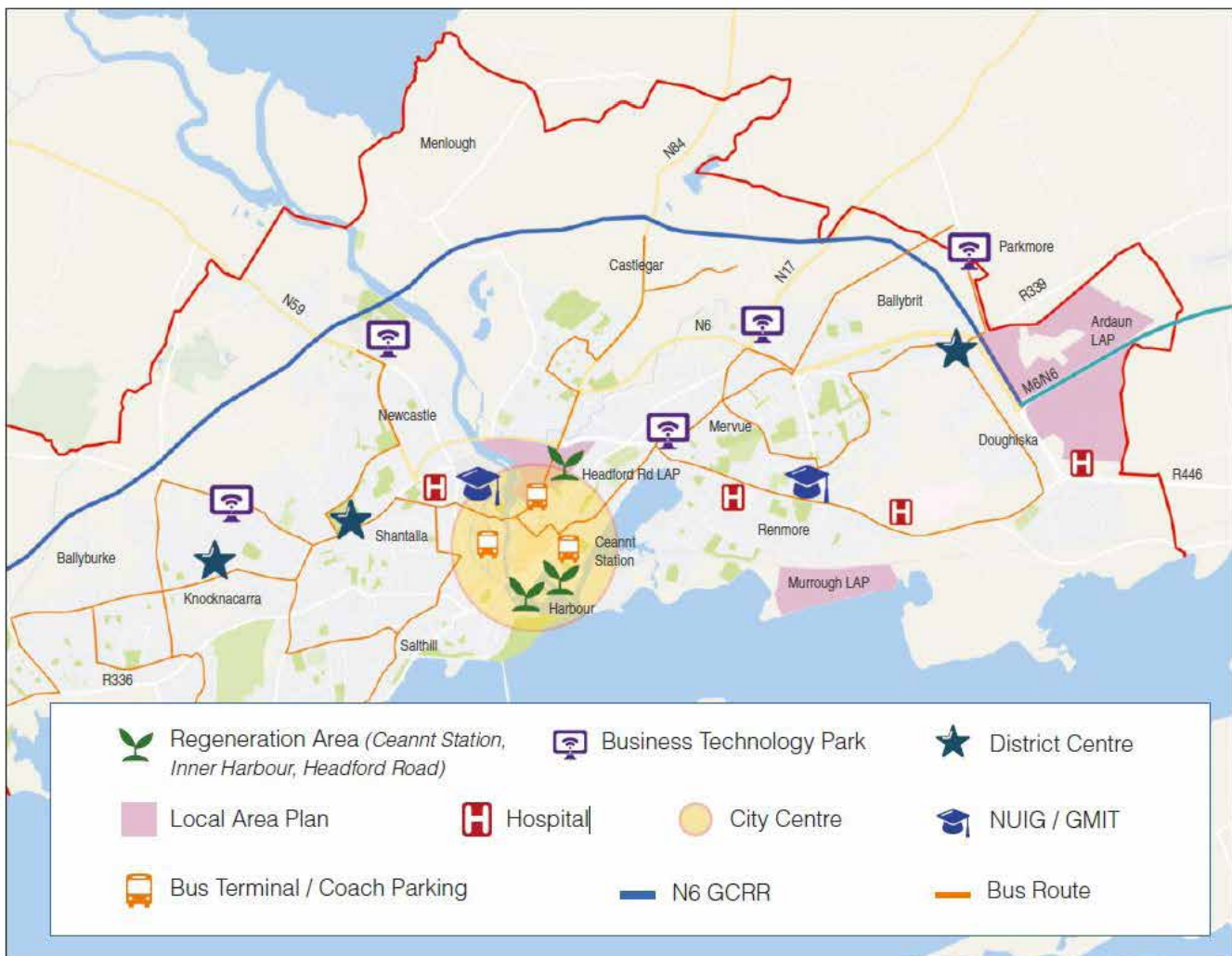


Fig 1 GCDP Core Strategy Diagram

## Residential Densities

In relation to residential densities, the plan refers to the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) guidelines which promote higher residential densities in appropriate locations, especially in conjunction with public transport facilities subject to ensuring that the highest quality of residential amenity is achieved.

The plan has policies to develop sustainable neighbourhoods in the city and includes plot ratio standards for different residential areas - the city centre, inner residential areas, established suburbs and outer suburbs.

In the design and assessment of higher density residential development, it notes that regard shall be had to these guidelines and the accompanying design manual which sets out certain criteria including the following:

- Acceptable building heights;
- Avoidance of overlooking and overshadowing;
- Provision of adequate private and public open space;
- Landscaping where appropriate and provision of safe play spaces;
- Adequate internal space standards;
- Suitable parking provision;
- Provision of ancillary facilities such as community facilities and local services.

The plan goes on to state that the density of housing achieved in newer city neighbourhoods has been well balanced, achieving the necessary critical mass to sustain essential infrastructure and sustainable communities. It highlights that future growth targets can be met using these densities. In the older established neighbourhoods, densities have been balanced with protection

of existing residential amenity and character of these areas.

## Redevelopment

In relation to densities within redevelopment opportunities, the plan notes that in the interest of protecting the amenity of existing residential neighbourhoods in the outer suburbs, demolition of existing dwellings for higher density apartment development will not be acceptable. It notes that exception to this policy will only be considered on recently zoned residential lands, undeveloped lands where no pattern of development has been established, on main distributor roads where mixed uses have already been developed and where the existing form of development is not predominantly conventional housing and where the development will not reduce the existing residential amenity.

## Building height

In relation to building heights, the plan notes that the scale of development in terms of height and massing can have a considerable impact on other buildings and spaces as well as views and skylines. Additional building height over and above the prevailing height can usefully mark points of major activity such as business districts, civic functions and transport interchanges. They can also however, have a considerable impact in the context of historic buildings, Architectural Conservation Areas, areas of natural heritage importance and can detract from a city's skyline and impinge upon strategic views.

In the context of the city which is predominantly low rise with its sensitive historic core and unique natural amenity setting, there is little capacity for dramatic increases in height. However, it is recognised that modest increases at appropriate locations, can help use land efficiently and provide for sustainable high densities.

In the assessment of development proposals, the following principles will be considered when assessing capacity for height:

- Protection of existing built and natural heritage and residential amenity.
- Creation of landmarks that enhance the city's legibility without eroding its innate character
- Retention of existing benchmark heights so as to retain strategic views and to protect and enhance the general character of sensitive locations.
- Promotion of higher density at centres/nodes of activity, on large scale infill sites and along public transport corridors.

Areas where major change is anticipated to occur such as at Ardaun, Murrough, Ceannt Station and the Inner Harbour may present opportunities for increased heights. As these are major development areas, there is potential for these areas to establish their own distinctive character. Such height increase will only be considered in the context of an LAP in the case of Ardaun and Murrough and in a masterplan in the context of Ceannt Station and the Inner Harbour.

It notes that any development proposals for buildings above the prevailing benchmark height will be required to be accompanied by a design statement outlining the rationale for the proposal and an assessment of its impact on the immediate and surrounding environment including buildings, open space, public realm and any views.

### **Ardaun LAP (2018-2024)**

The Ardaun Local Area Plan sets out a framework to guide the proper planning and sustainable development of the lands at Ardaun. It is a comprehensive but flexible long term strategy to deliver high quality sustainable development in Ardaun. The Local

Area Plan includes specific area based policies with particular emphasis on creating a people and business friendly urban village, a new sustainable residential neighbourhood, well connected with the greater city and environs, encouraging private and public investment.

The aim is to ensure that growth in Ardaun is focused around an attractive and accessible new urban village that serves the everyday needs of local people designed to encourage sustainable transport modes. It is envisaged that the LAP area will be developed on a phased basis. Phase 1 comprises the lands to the south of the M6/N6 and the longer term phase 2 comprises the lands to the north of the N6/M6.

### **City Development Plan (2023-2029)**

Galway City Council has commenced the preparation of a new development plan for the period 2023-2029. The plan is being prepared in a changed context from that of the current plan. A new spatial framework for national and regional development is in place which requires policy alignment and consistency at local plan level. The national focus on the need for climate change mitigation and adaptation with the adoption of the National Climate Action Plan (2019) will bring more focus to the drafting of spatial policies in the next plan.

The plan will be prepared in the context of new national and regional planning frameworks namely, the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) which designate Galway and the metropolitan area as a Regional City which has the potential for significant population and economic growth through focused investment.

It will also be informed by local plans and strategies including the Galway City Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 'Climate Resilient Galway City' and the Local Community and Economic Plan 2015-2021.



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**“Areas where major change is anticipated to occur...may present opportunities for increased heights. As these are major development areas, there is potential for these areas to establish their own distinctive character. Such height increase will only be considered in the context of an LAP in the case of Ardaun and Murrough and in a masterplan in the context of Ceannt Station and the Inner Harbour...”**  
GCDP 2017-2023

So far, only the Stage 1 Issues Paper has been issued for public consultation. It highlights the key areas which the development plan covers and which are important to the future direction of development in Galway City, these are:

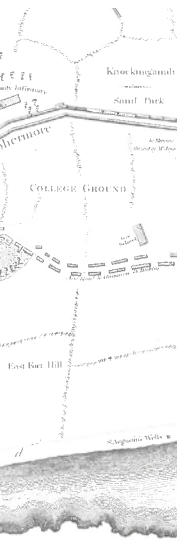
1. Population Growth and Housing;
2. Economic Development, Employment and Enterprise;
3. Transport and Sustainable Mobility;
4. Built Environment and Placemaking;
5. Green Network & Biodiversity;
6. Climate Action;
7. Community, Culture & Education;
8. Energy & Infrastructure; and
9. Environmental Assessments.



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# UNDERSTANDING GALWAY





- 1 The Down Survey of Ireland, 1656-1658, National Library of Ireland
- 2 Prospect of Galway looking north east, 1642 by Thomas Phillips Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016
- 3 Galway, 1610 by John Speed, Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016
- 4 Plan of the town and suburbs of Galway, 1818 by Michael Logan, Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016
- 5 Shop Street, National Library of Ireland
- 6 Ordnance Survey 1842, National Library of Ireland
- 7 Galway Watercolour by JE Davis, 1849, Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016
- 8 Eyre Square, late 1800s, National Library of Ireland



## 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

In the early 19th century, the removal of old fortifications and involvement of the government spurred on development. In this time the gaol, courthouse, Queen's College Galway and infirmary constructed. The railway (1850) and the Eglinton canal (1852) were also established, providing the infrastructure for further growth. However, at the same time Galway's rural hinterland suffered greatly from the great Irish Famine (1845-1852). The population declined and many people used the port to escape to a better life in America. At the end of the 19th century Galway remained a small town (the extent of the town is shown in Figure 14) with a population of 13,000.

### An expanded city

Galway gradually recovered economically in the 20th century, along with which came the extensive expansion of the city. Salthill, once a small resort became a connected suburb. Claddagh Village, a cluster of thatched cabins housing a then-impoverished fishing community was demolished and replaced by local authority houses to re-house the community. Increases in tourists and students also spurred on the development of new homes. Galway was declared a city in 1985 and has continued to grow and prosper since, with growth largely occurring through low-density expansion of the city's footprint.



**Fig 3** Historic photos

- 1 Claddagh Bridge and Fish Market looking south east, c1900
  - 2 The Claddagh, looking west, 1930
  - 3 Corrib viaduct from Woodquay c1900
- All copyright Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016

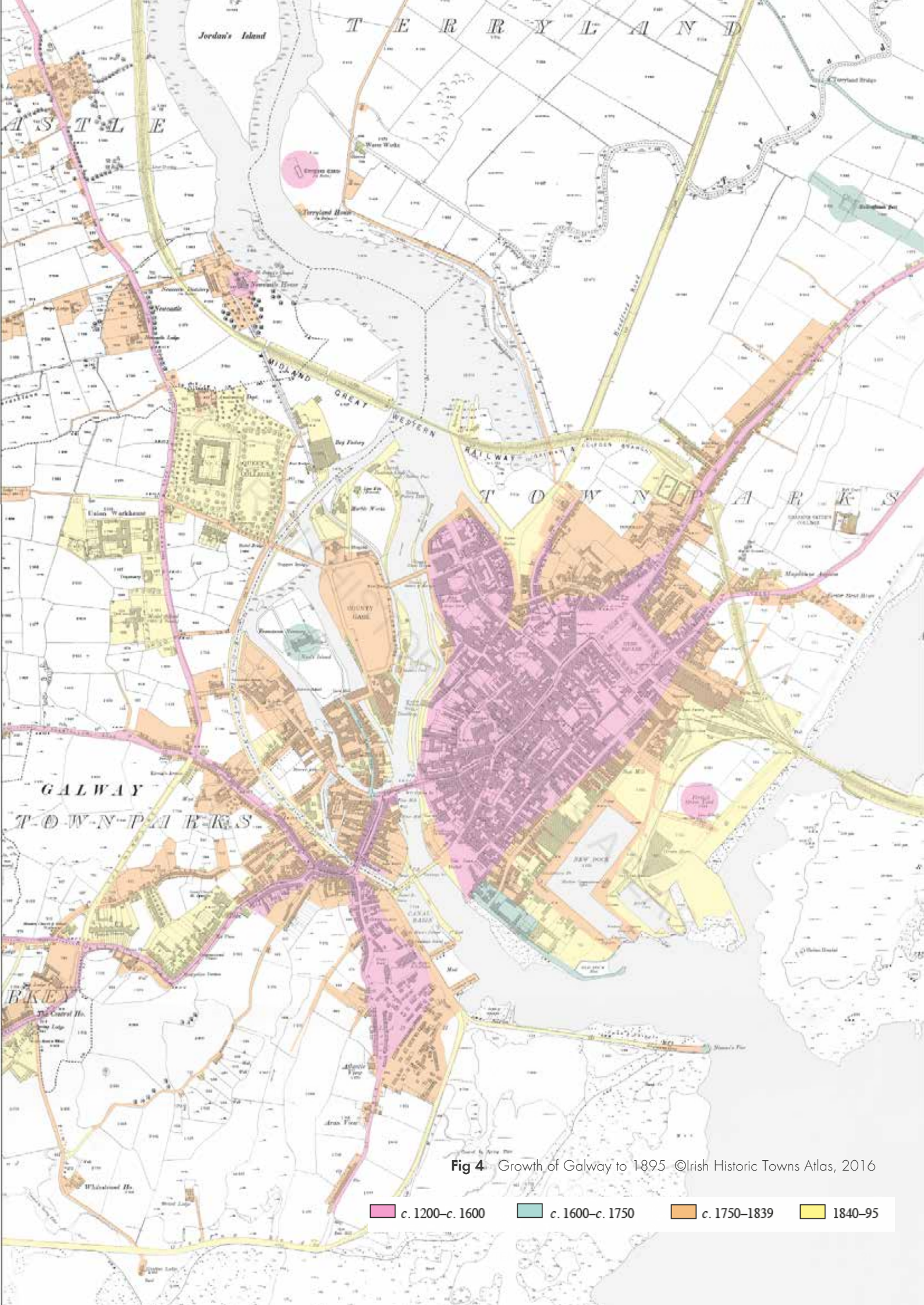


Fig 4 Growth of Galway to 1895 ©Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016

c. 1200-c. 1600
  c. 1600-c. 1750
  c. 1750-1839
  1840-95

Fig 5 Galway historical timeline

## Medieval Galway

origins

1124

1232

1361

The city takes its name from the Gallimh, meaning "stony river", known today as the River Corrib. Galway established itself at the northernmost ridge because the river was fordable at this point.

Gaelic lords build a stronghold at the mouth of the river, mentioned in 1124.

de Burgh's family build their first castle on the eastern side of the river.

A murage charter gives authority to build a defensive wall.



Plan showing the walled town (Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016)



Shop Street, date unknown (National Library of Ireland)

The street pattern reinforced lines of communication between the castle, the ford and the strand. The main route, An Bóthar Mór, led along the crest of the northern ridge, forking into two - Guard / Bridge Street leads to the ford and High Street / Quay Street to the strand. The parish church and market place stood at this intersection. Many of the streets follow the contour lines of the ridge. Narrow lanes off main streets allowed early settlers to increase their burgage plots and capitalise on their investment.

## Victorian Galway

1700s

1800

1837

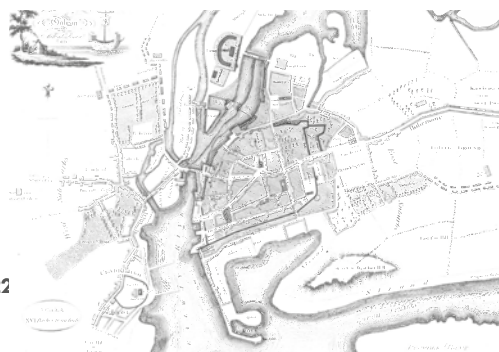
1850

During the 1700s, trade declined but the expansion of agriculture continued. Galway was still an important base for the military. New cultural facilities opened like the playhouse in 1783.

The population is at 5,000 and rose to 23,695 in 1851 but fell during the latter half of the 19th century. The whole region suffered in the potato famine of 1845-9.

The town is first illuminated following the passing of the Galway Improvements Bill in 1836, which sought to improve paving, lighting and markets.

The railways arrive in Galway providing a direct link to the east. Local manufacturers suffered as they could not compete with the cheaper imported goods. The tourist industry rises.



Plot of the town of Galway, 1818 (Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016)



Fish market, date unknown (National Library of Ireland)



Eyre Square, early 1900s (National Library of Ireland)



“This modern city has at its heart, the fabric of its original medieval settlement.” Galway Museum exhibition

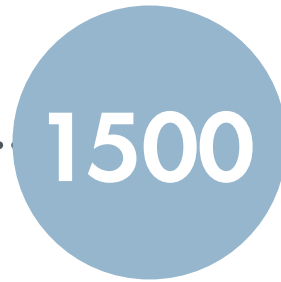
## 17<sup>th</sup> century Galway



Medieval Galway was ruled by 14 merchant families, the “Tribes of Galway”. The city thrived on international trade and was the principal Irish port for trade with Spain and France.



The seaside town received a municipal charter from the crown granting them power to elect their own mayor, bailiffs and corporation.



Population at 3000. Markets were held regularly. Citizens worked in a variety of industries - wines, salt, coal, cloths, silk, fish, olive oil, ropes and wool were all traded.



Establishment of the county of the town of Galway. The war of 1641 to 1652 brought the loss of life, the burning of buildings and interruption to industry. This led to the forfeiture of independent control of local affairs.



Looking north-east towards Galway, 1685 by Thomas Phillips (Irish Historic Towns Atlas)



Plot of Galway, 1625 (Irish Historic Towns Atlas)

ATHY	FRENCH
BLAKE	JOYCE
BODKIN	KIRWAN
BROWNE	LYNCH
DARCY	MARTIN
DEANE	MORRIS
FONT	SKERRET

Tribes of Galway (Galway Museum)

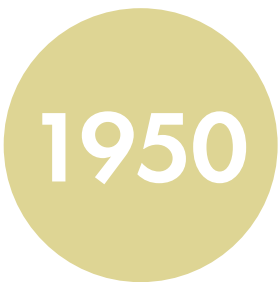
## Modern Galway



Key industries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century included iron, milling, hat and furniture making.



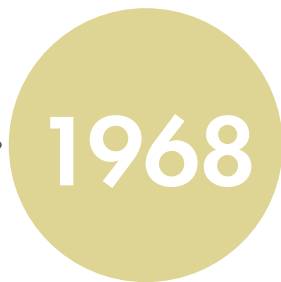
Corrib View, date unknown (National Library of Ireland)



The population reaches 21,000. The town suffered from the emigration of youth from the town. Galway is still a busy port, exporting farm produce, wool and marble.



SS Duras, early 1900s (National Library of Ireland)



The Buchanan report identifies Galway as an investment pole. The coordination of local development plans across the region helps to generate economic growth.



Galway City Museum was founded in the mid-1970s



Today the population is 79,000. The fostering of its creative arts sector has helped make Galway a vibrant city.



Galway today

## 4 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

### 4.1 Topography

Galway city centre sits within the valley of the River Corrib at the mouth of the river where it meets the North Atlantic Ocean.

The areas which sit around the county's main waterways and bodies of water are mostly flat.

In the more rural landscape of the county, the topography gently climbs towards three peaks: around Ballybrit to the east, around Ballindooley to the north; and a more extensive area of higher ground, the highest and steepest ascent around Barnacranny and a wide area of high ground around Ballyburke to the west.

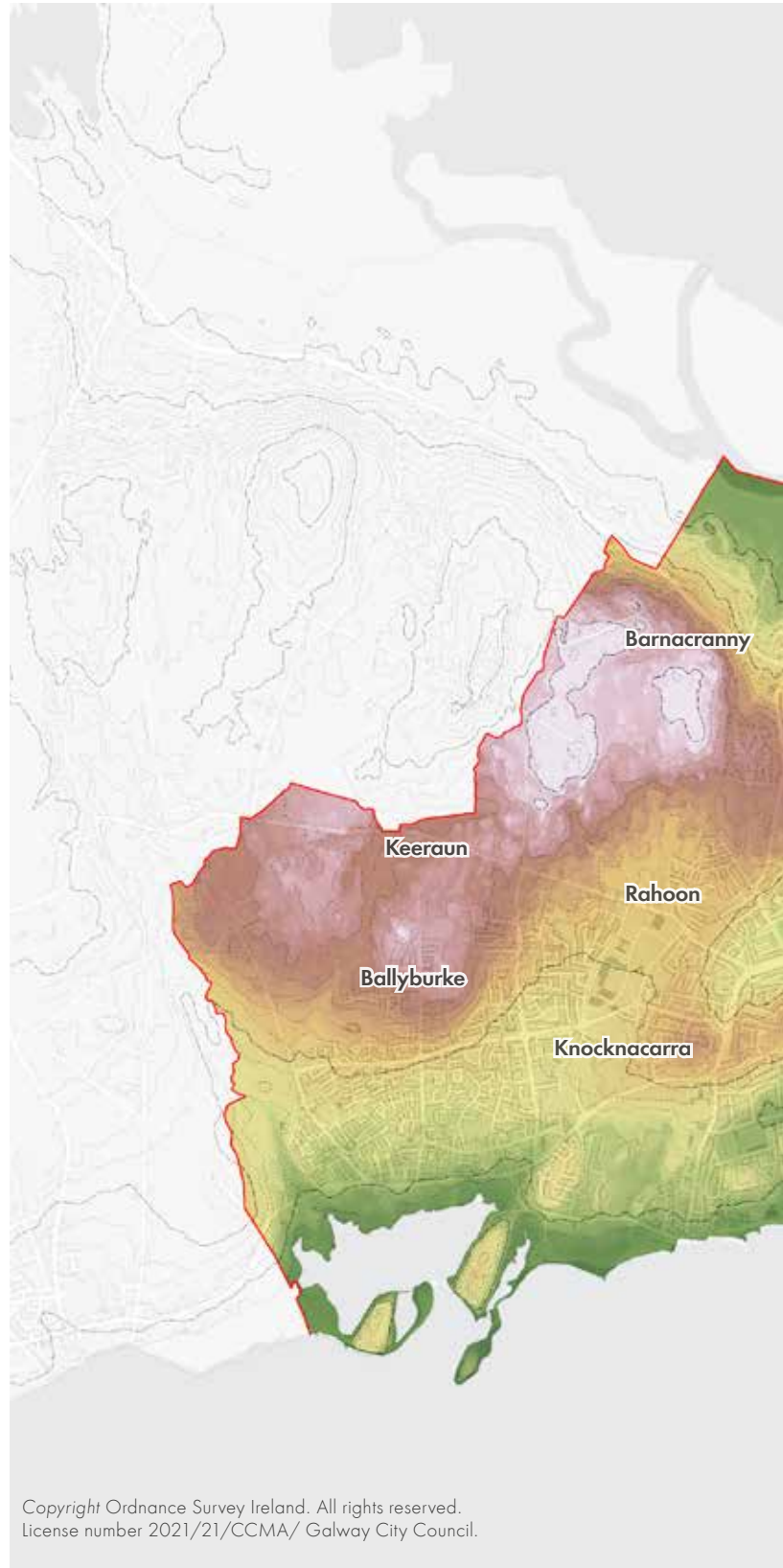
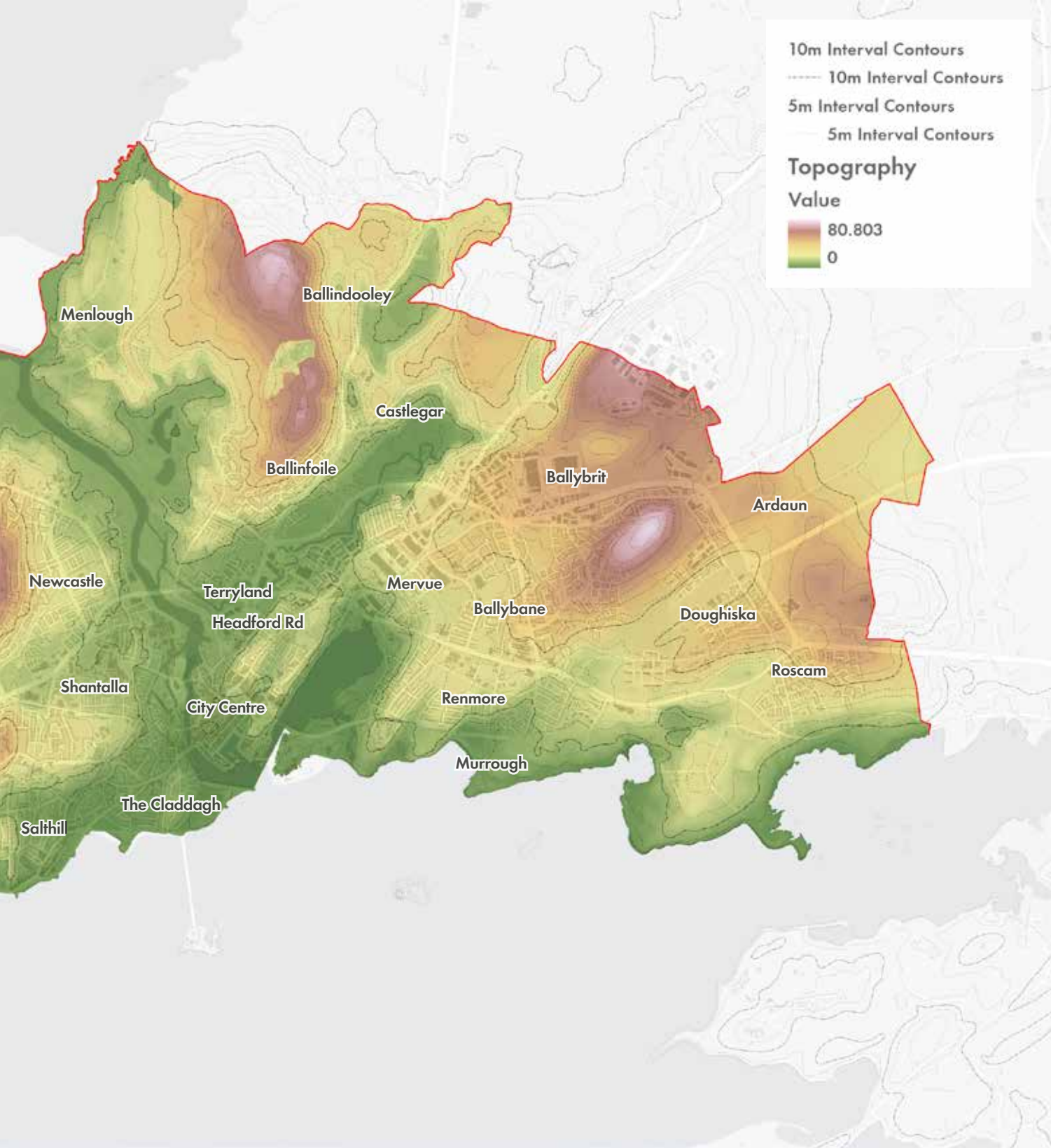


Fig 6 Topography



## 4.2 Waterways and coastline

The River Corrib is the main waterway which shapes and dissects the Galway City area. Both the river and coastline provide impressive landscape and townscape features.

Galway's canals also carve up a large area of the city centre, creating a unique resulting urban form.

Lough Atalia is a large body of water which contains the city centre to the east and provides a waterfront-style environment.



Fig 7 Galway's waterways

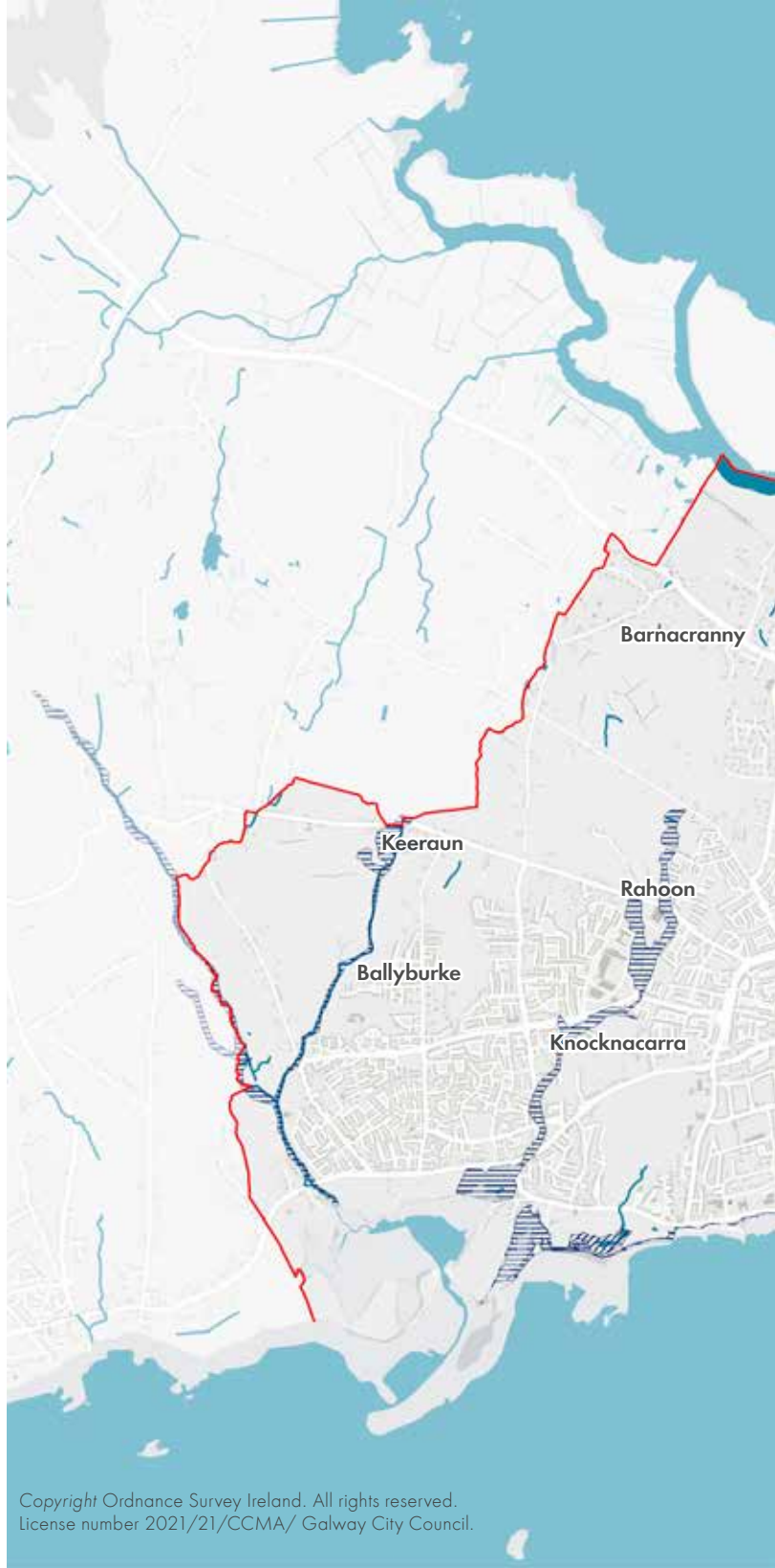




### 4.3 Flood zones

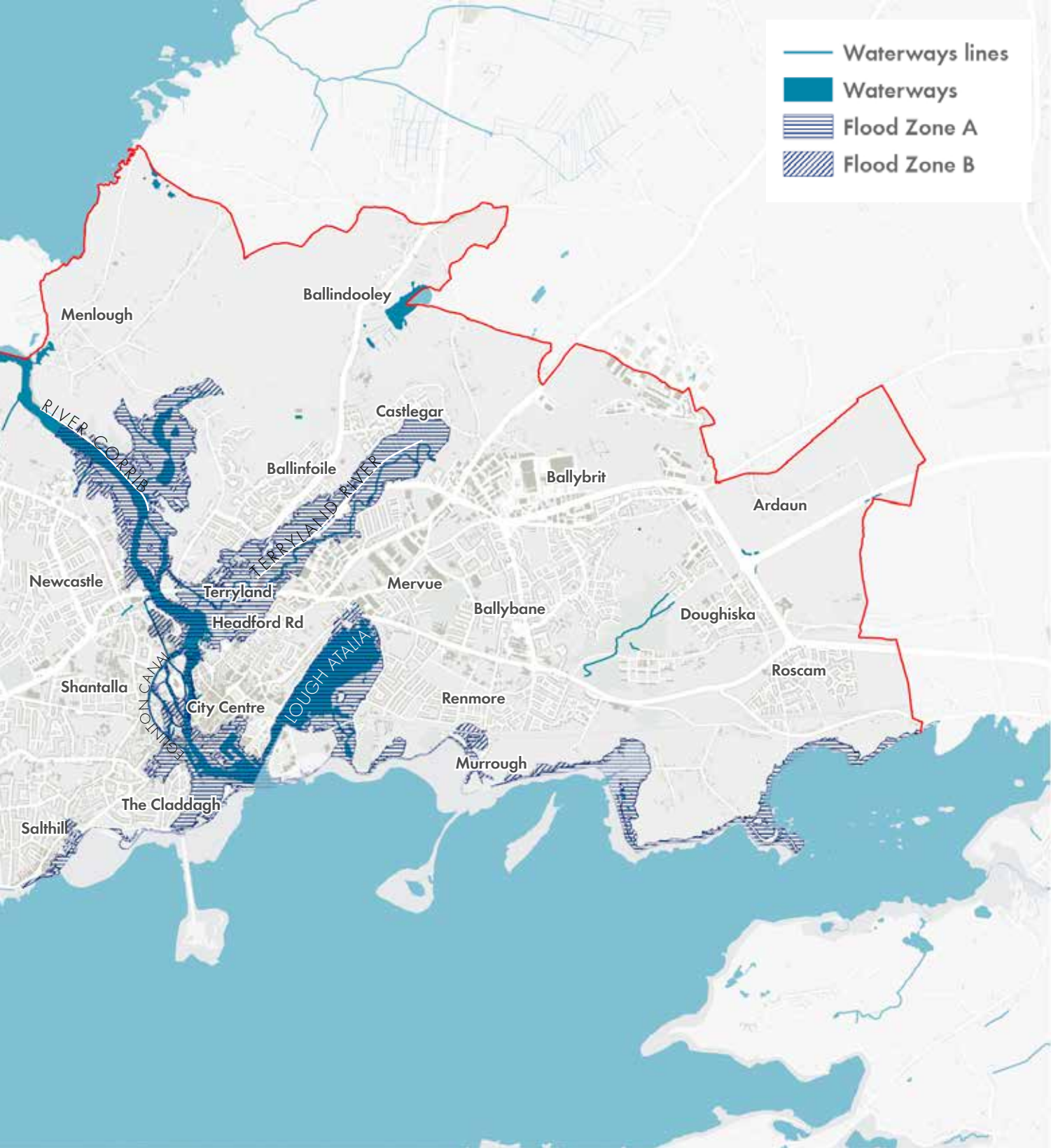
Areas of flood risk are naturally focussed along the coastline, the routes of the River Corrib and Terryland River.

Fluvial, tidal and river flood risks affect the city.



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**Fig 8** Galway's flood zones (source: SFRA of Galway Development Plan 2017-2023)



## 5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

### 5.1 Levels of deprivation

The census data reveals higher levels of deprivation across the eastern side of the city with particular concentrations in the neighbourhoods of Ballybane, the Ballinfoile area and also the Westside area north west of the city.

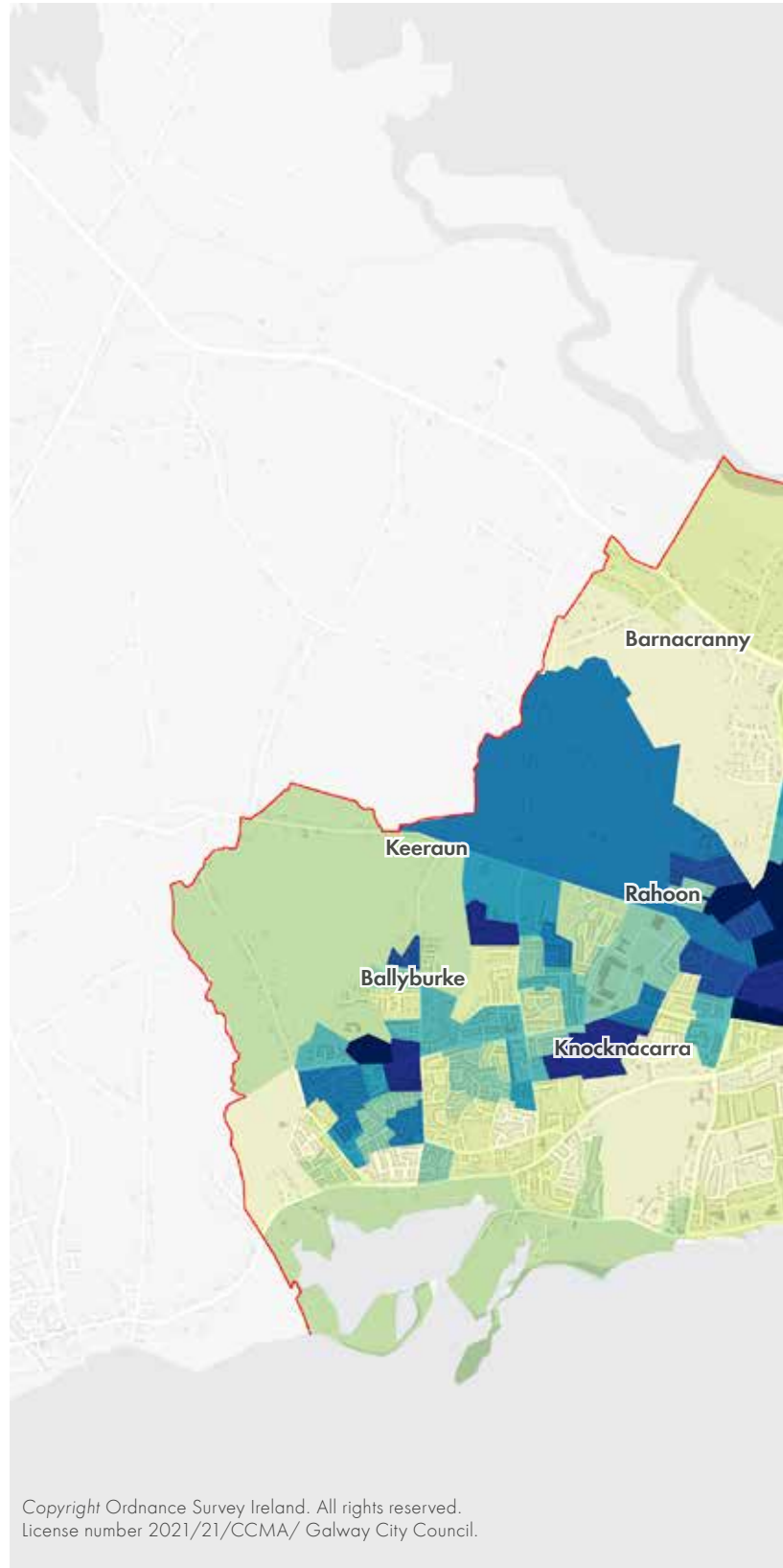
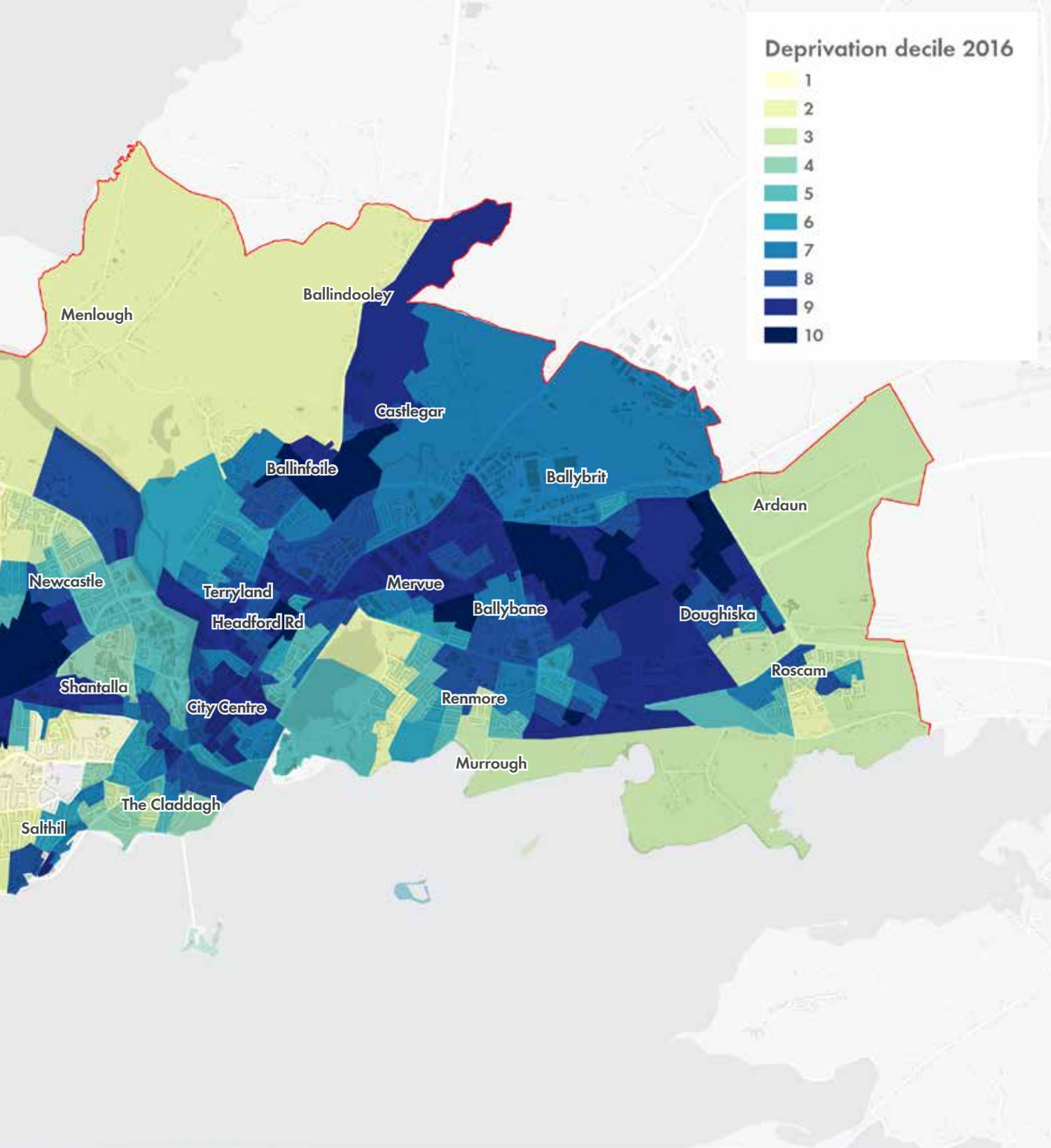


Fig 9 Levels of deprivation





## 5.2 Road hierarchy

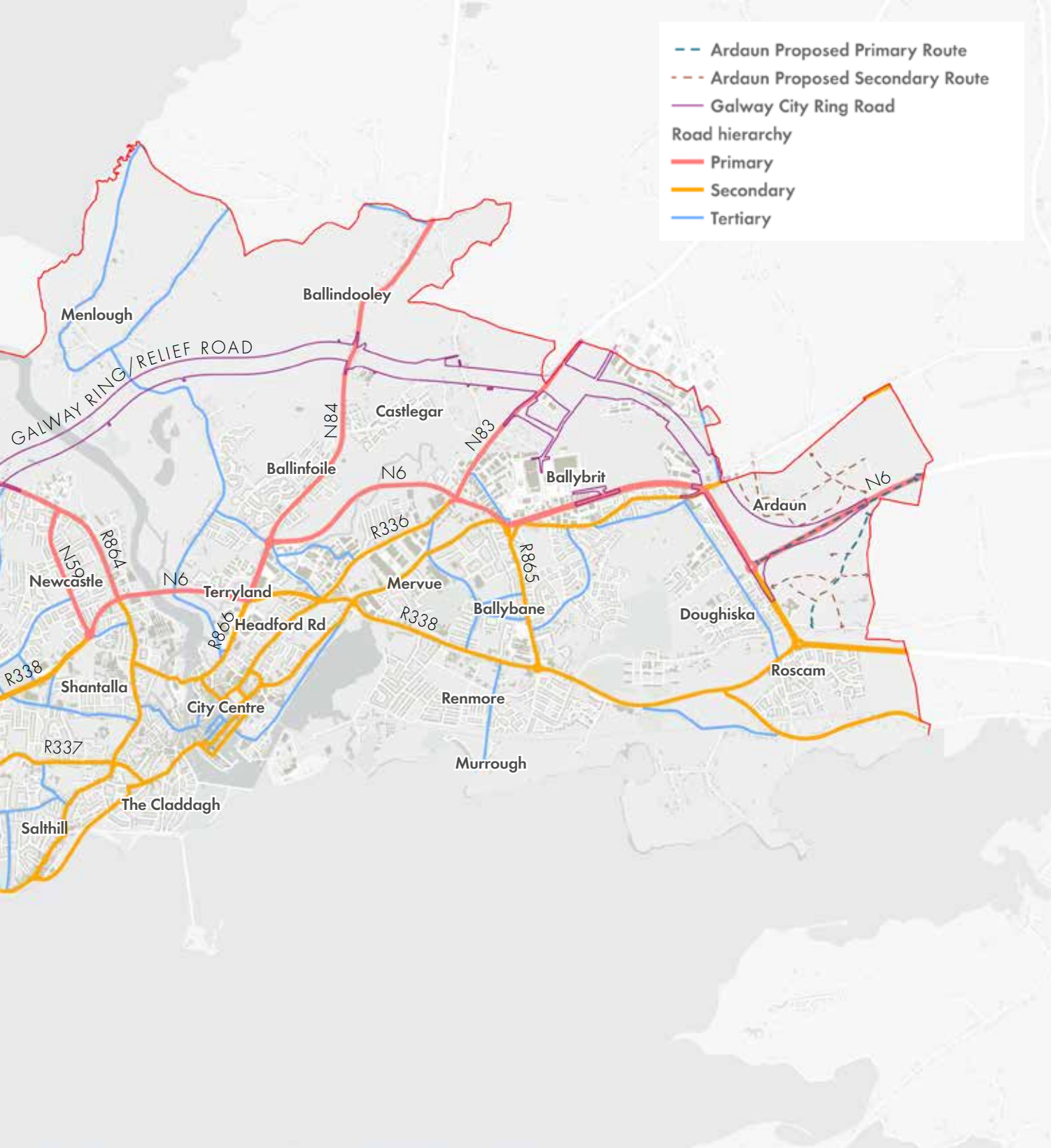
The road hierarchy dictates to a large extent the network of public transport services and facilities.

A number of primary (N) roads currently feed into the city from other key towns and cities, delivering cars onto the secondary (R) roads which link together key areas and neighbourhoods in the more built up areas of the city, with the tertiary local roads leading from these secondary roads to neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city centre.

The planned Galway City Ring Road will have a significant impact on the local road network, which currently brings a large volume of traffic into and through the city centre, with the aim to reduce through traffic in central areas and support the delivery of sustainable transport measures, new public spaces and public realm.

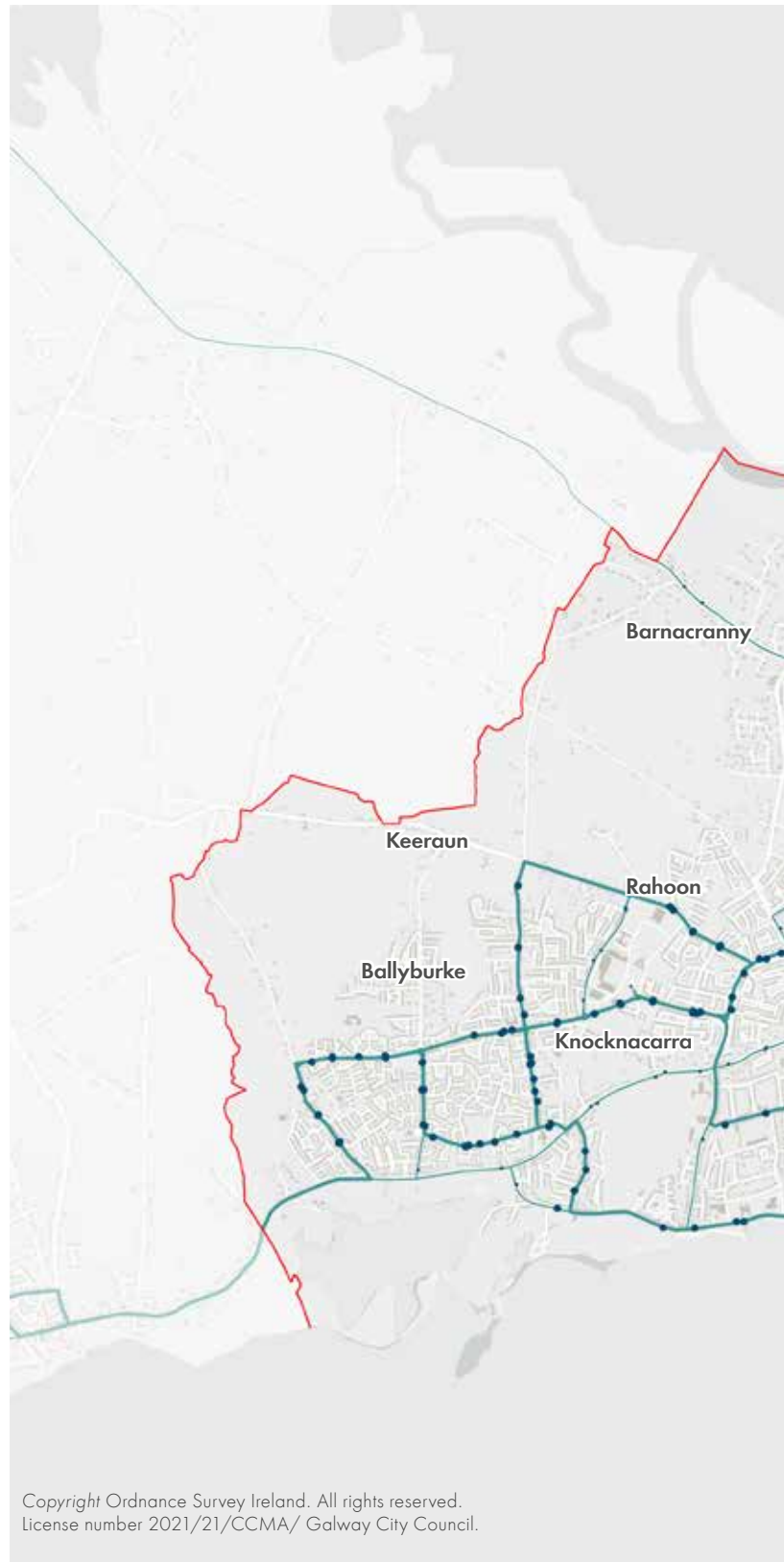


Fig 10 Galway road hierarchy

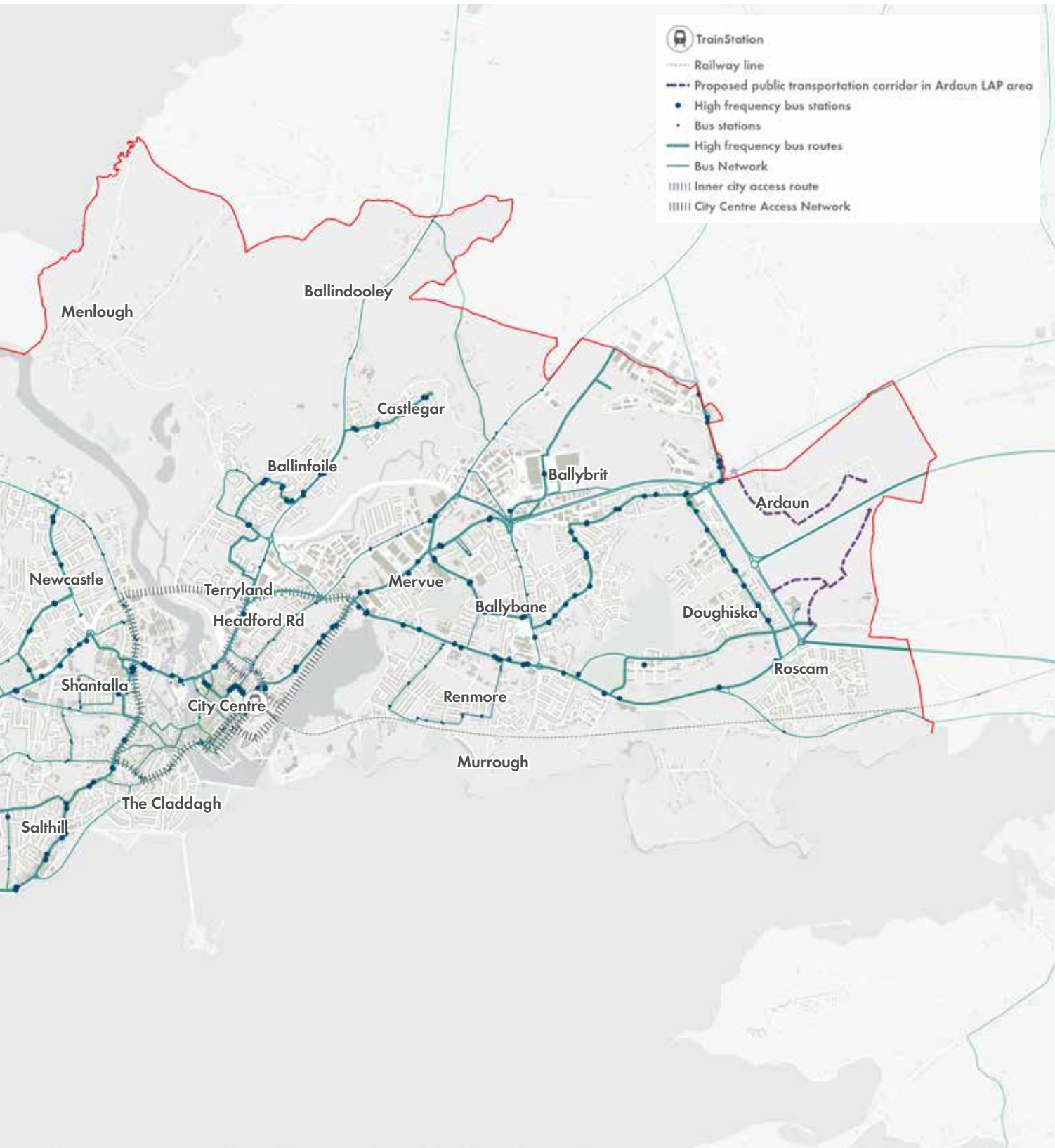


## 5.3 Public transport network

Bus services are critically important to the city and the GTS and bus connects programme of measures will play a central role in helping to support higher density development and the shift towards more sustainable patterns of travel.



**Fig 11** Galway public transport network



## 5.4 Cycle network

Active travel is becoming increasingly important to the sustainable management of cities in providing local people with a sustainable alternative to the private car.

The Galway Transport Strategy proposes a cycle plan which builds on the existing network and has been developed on the basis of three levels of network which support each other and reinforce connections across the city. The proposed networks are classified as 'primary', 'secondary' and 'feeder' routes, indicating the desired function and character of the cycle route.

The primary network and Greenways being advanced provide connectivity from nearby towns and villages, and along the River Corrib and coastline, to the city centre. In general, primary routes are either segregated, off-road cycle only paths, or dedicated cycle lanes along new or existing roads.

The greenway network is a very important element in the development of alternative circulation routes for cycling and walking mainly as recreational routes but also as destination routes enhancing the overall transport network.



Fig 12 Galway cycle route network



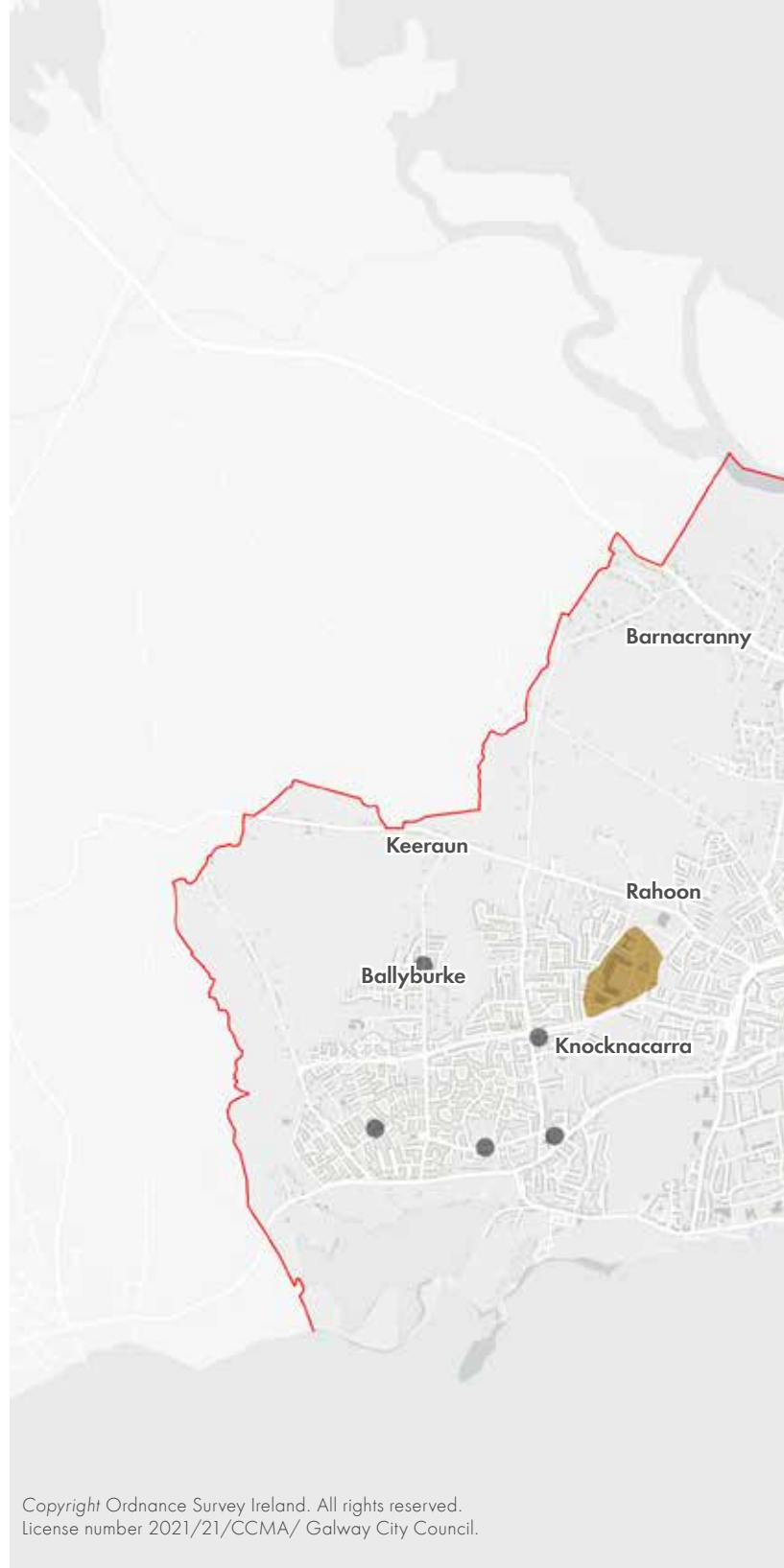
# 6 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ZONES

## 6.1 Galway's centres

The city centre, district and local centres remain the focal points for community life and social exchange. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges for centres, local living and the concept of walkable neighbourhoods have strengthened as a result.

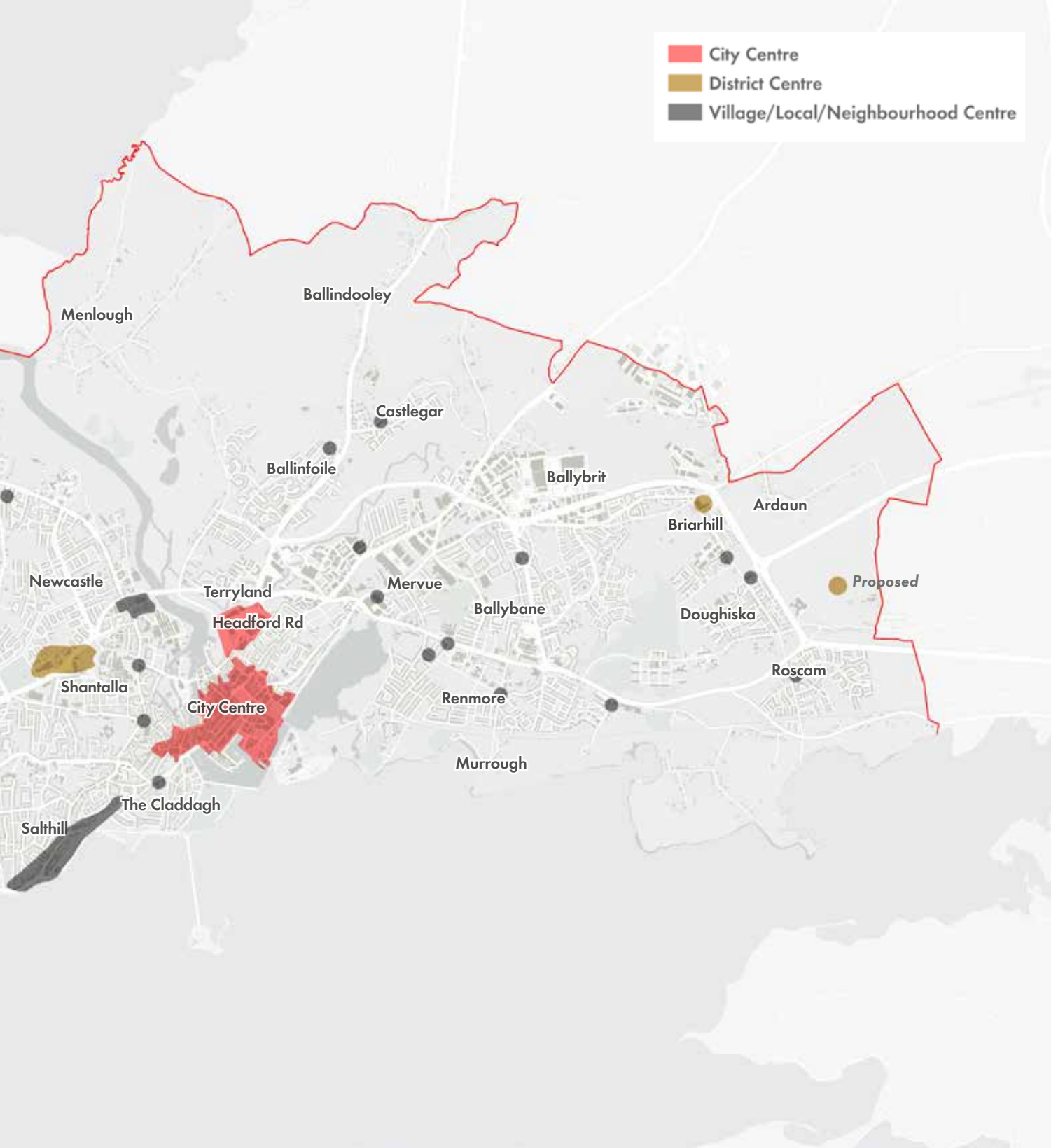
Galway generally has a good distribution of centres supporting local communities, particularly within the city centre and its hinterland, and the neighbourhoods to the east and west of the city. It should be noted that community facility provision is not exclusive to the CF land use zone. These facilities may also be accommodated within other land use zones in particular, R, CI and CC zones.

The city centre, district and local centres, as well as the amenities they provide, are important in supporting communities and are therefore an important suitability to consider when thinking about sustainable development and enhanced density.



**Fig 13** Network of city, district and local centres in Galway





## 6.2 Publicly accessible open spaces and recreation amenities

Good access to public open space can help support models of higher density living. Whilst private amenity space will remain a requirement for all new dwellings, with development densities needing to rise to meet pressing needs, access to public open space is becoming a more important factor in supporting new residential development.

Galway is well served by publicly accessible open spaces with a strong diversity of open spaces and recreation amenities including a hierarchy of public parks (local, neighbourhood, city) and civic spaces and a range of open spaces within residential, commercial and institutional areas. A unique aspect of Galway's diverse landscape is its extensive coastline, canal systems and bodies of water which offer good waterside amenity and beaches in certain coastal locations.

The plan sets out the framework for an extensive green network in the city, by protecting natural heritage areas and designating areas for recreation and amenity. The public realm strategy for Galway city centre also provides plans to provide significant new and improved public realm in key public realm spaces in the city centre area.

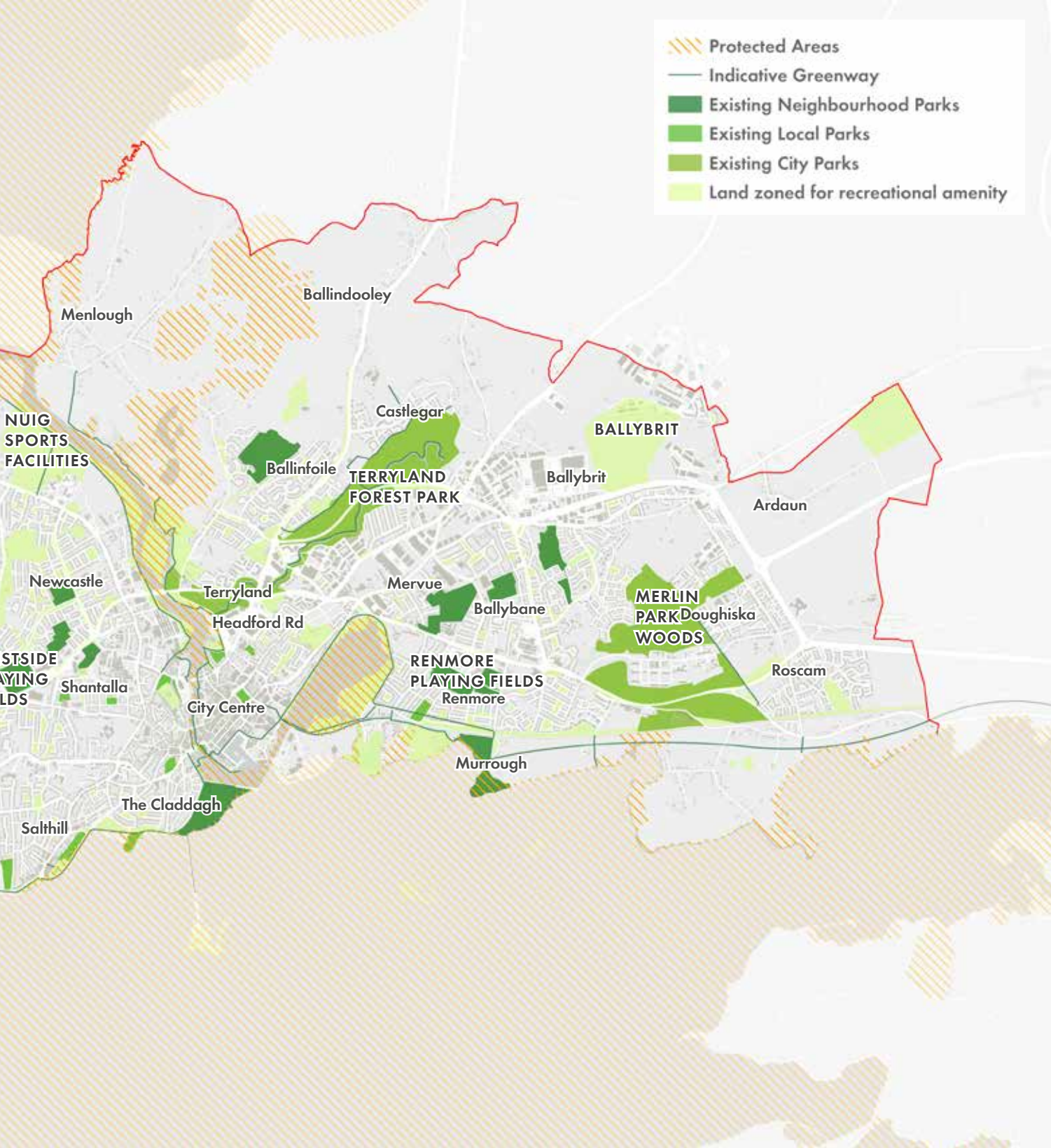
City Parks are defined as large scale open spaces (over 10 hectares) for passive and active recreation, wildlife conservation and education.

Neighbourhood Parks are defined as mixed size parks (between 1-10 hectares) formally designed and maintained for passive and active recreation.

City Centre/Local Parks are defined as small scale parks (less than 1 hectare) designed for passive and active recreation, streetscape value and civic function in central city or suburban locations.



Fig 14 Galway's protected areas, parks and public open spaces



### 6.3 Community, cultural and institutional

Often located within or close to local and neighbourhood centres, community facilities are essential to support the everyday needs of Galway's residents.

New development being located within walking distance of community facilities will help support sustainable patterns of living.

The Galway CDP includes Institutional and Community (CF) as a specific zone in its development plan, shown here in the analysis, in order to 'provide for and facilitate the sustainable development of community, cultural and institutional uses and development of infrastructure for the benefit of the citizens of the city,' highlighting its importance as a feature of a sustainable community, and therefore important in supporting sustainable development.

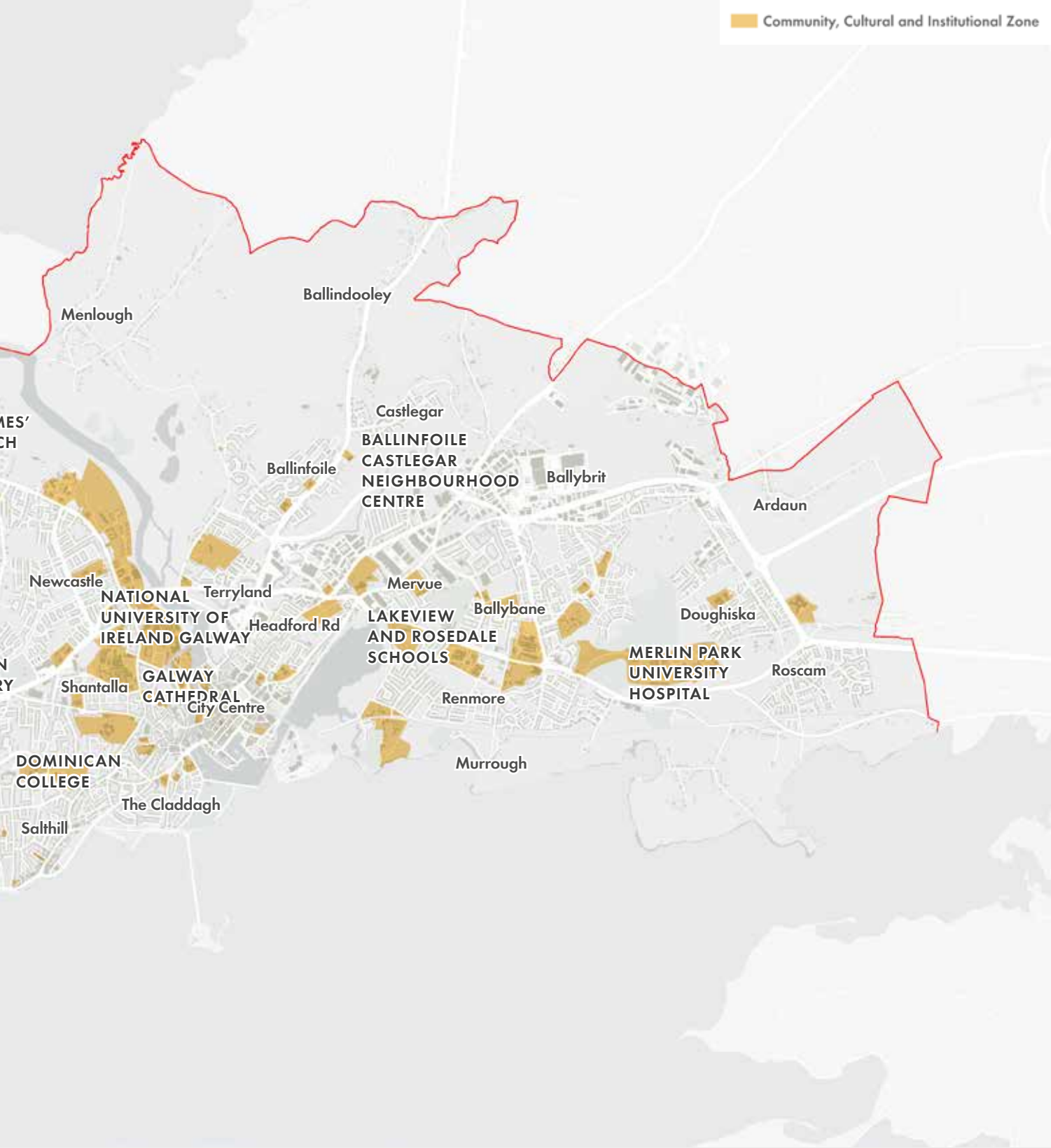
The types of uses which are incorporated into the Institutional and Community zone include:

- Buildings for the care of the health, safety or welfare of the public
- Residential institutions
- Educational establishments
- Places of public worship
- Community and cultural buildings
- Burial grounds and associated services
- Outdoor recreational use
- Accommodation for Travellers
- Childcare facilities
- Public utilities

Community facilities are distributed relatively evenly around the city at present, with a greater and more diverse provision concentrated in the city centre and its hinterlands.



Fig 15 Community facilities in Galway (Development Plan Zone)

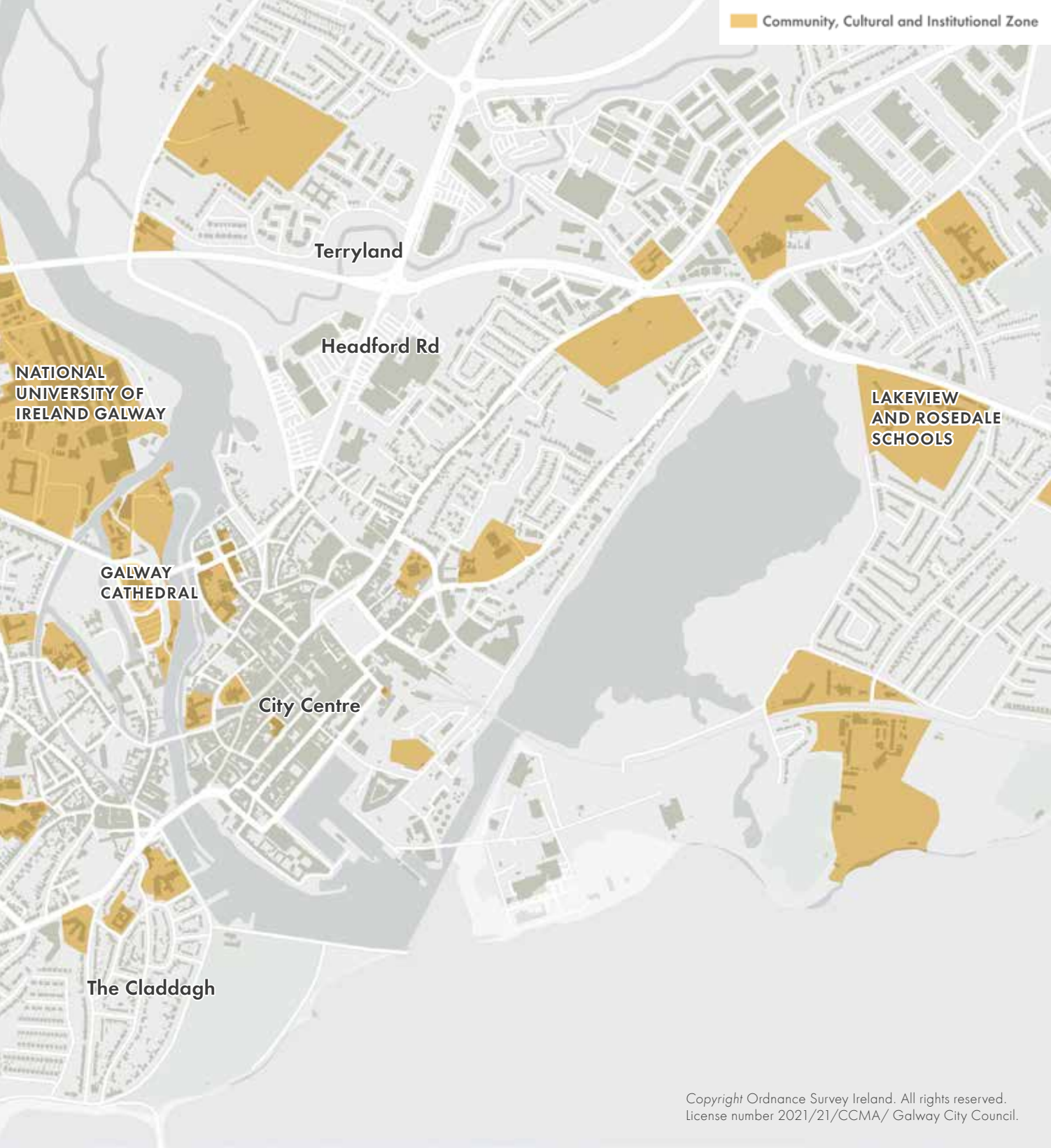


## 6.4 Community, cultural and institutional

The city centre is particularly well served by a range of community facilities, supporting the higher density of population which resides here.



**Fig 16** Community facilities in Galway central area (Development Plan Zone)



## 6.5 Development plan zones

The development plan land use zoning map for the city reveals much about Galway's character. The tight and compact city centre is surrounded by residential neighbourhoods.

The city's major institutions including the University and its hospitals are major elements of the city's composition.

Commercial and employment activities are primarily in the city centre and on the eastern side of the city along the Tuam Road corridor.

There are also undeveloped residential and low density lands and potential opportunity / regeneration sites in the city.

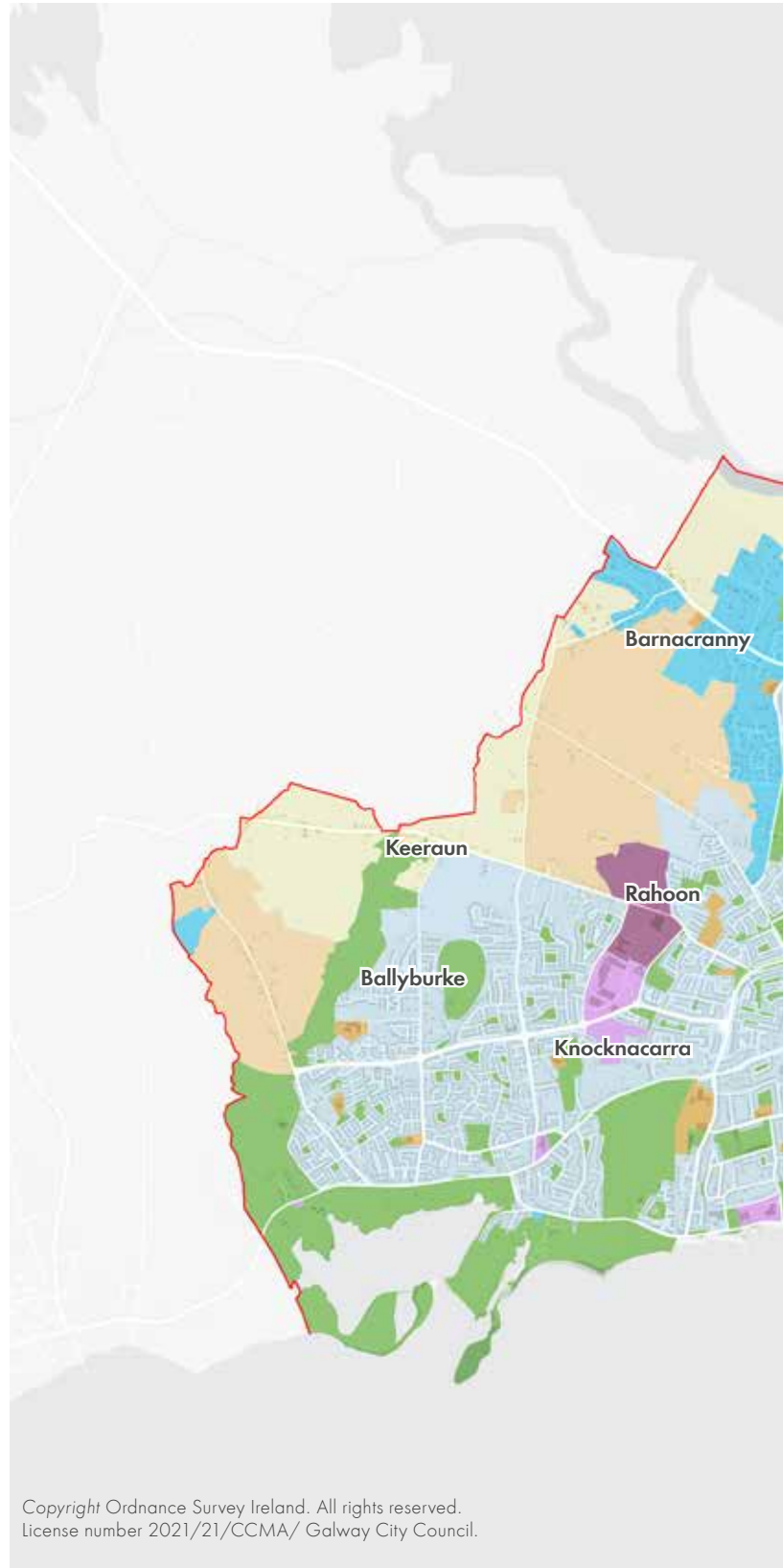
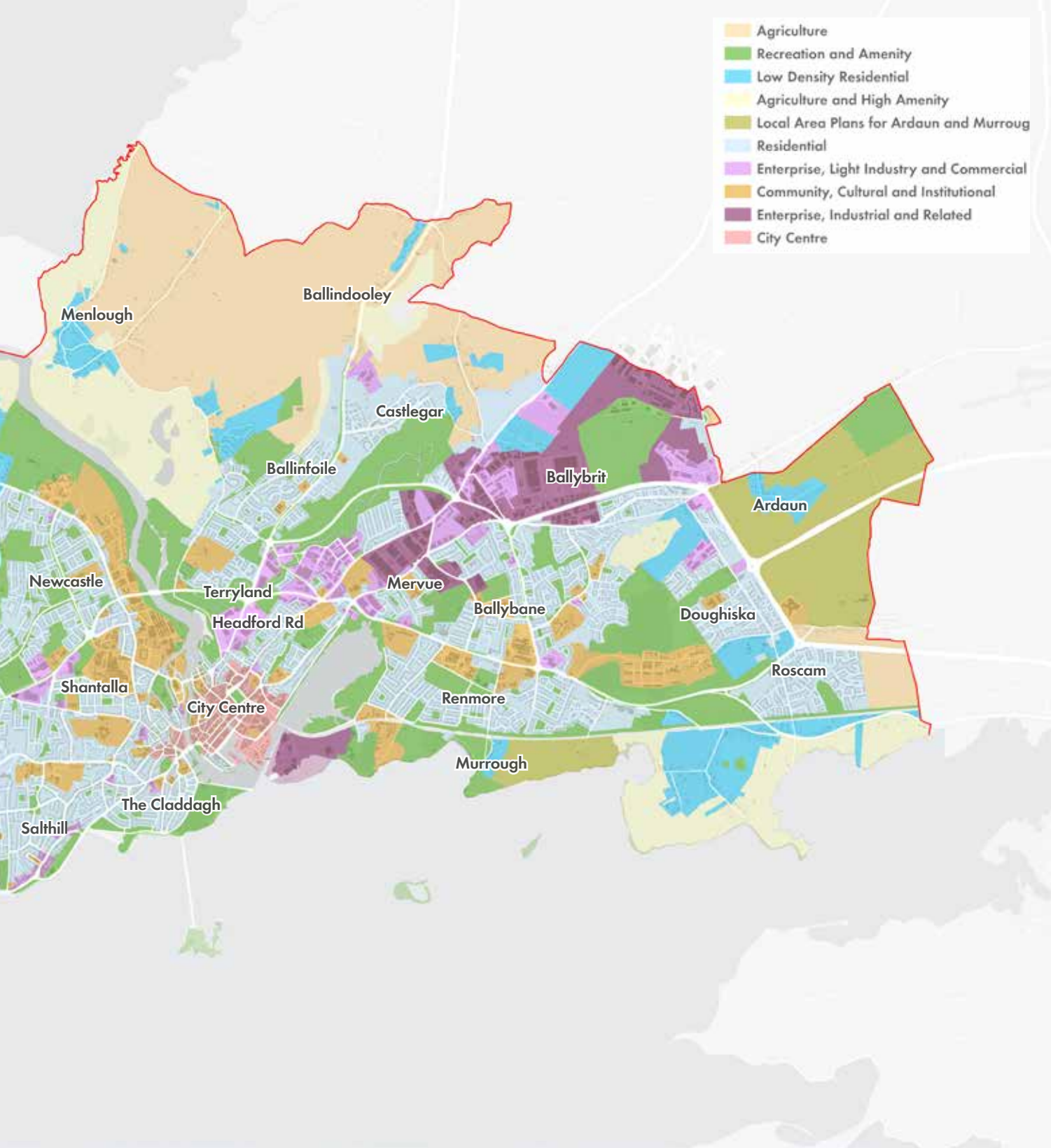


Fig 17 Development Plan Zones





## 6.6 Areas of proposed development

The areas to be developed during the period of the new development plan can be categorised as follows:

- Potential regeneration and opportunity sites - generally focussed in the city centre, these areas represent some of the more significant development taking place in Galway and are significant areas of change.
- Undeveloped residential zoned lands (R) - to provide for residential development and for associated support development, which will ensure the protection of existing residential amenity and will contribute to sustainable residential neighbourhoods.
- Ardaun LAP lands - plans for a significant amount of the residential growth into the east side of the city at Ardaun, with opportunities for high density residential development structured to be co-ordinated with other essential community services.
- Undeveloped low density residential zoned lands (LDR) - to provide for low-density residential development which will ensure the protection of existing residential amenity.

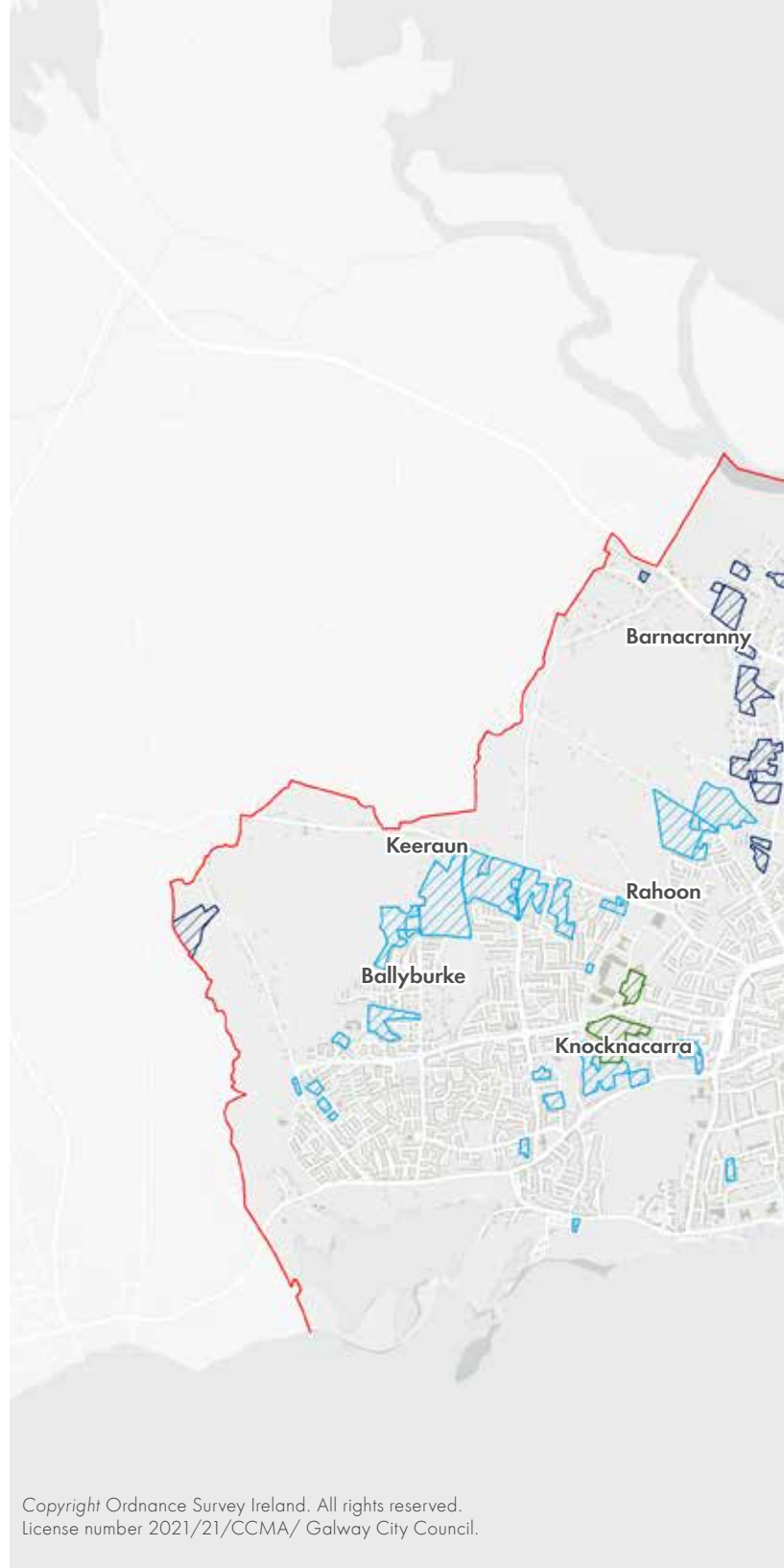
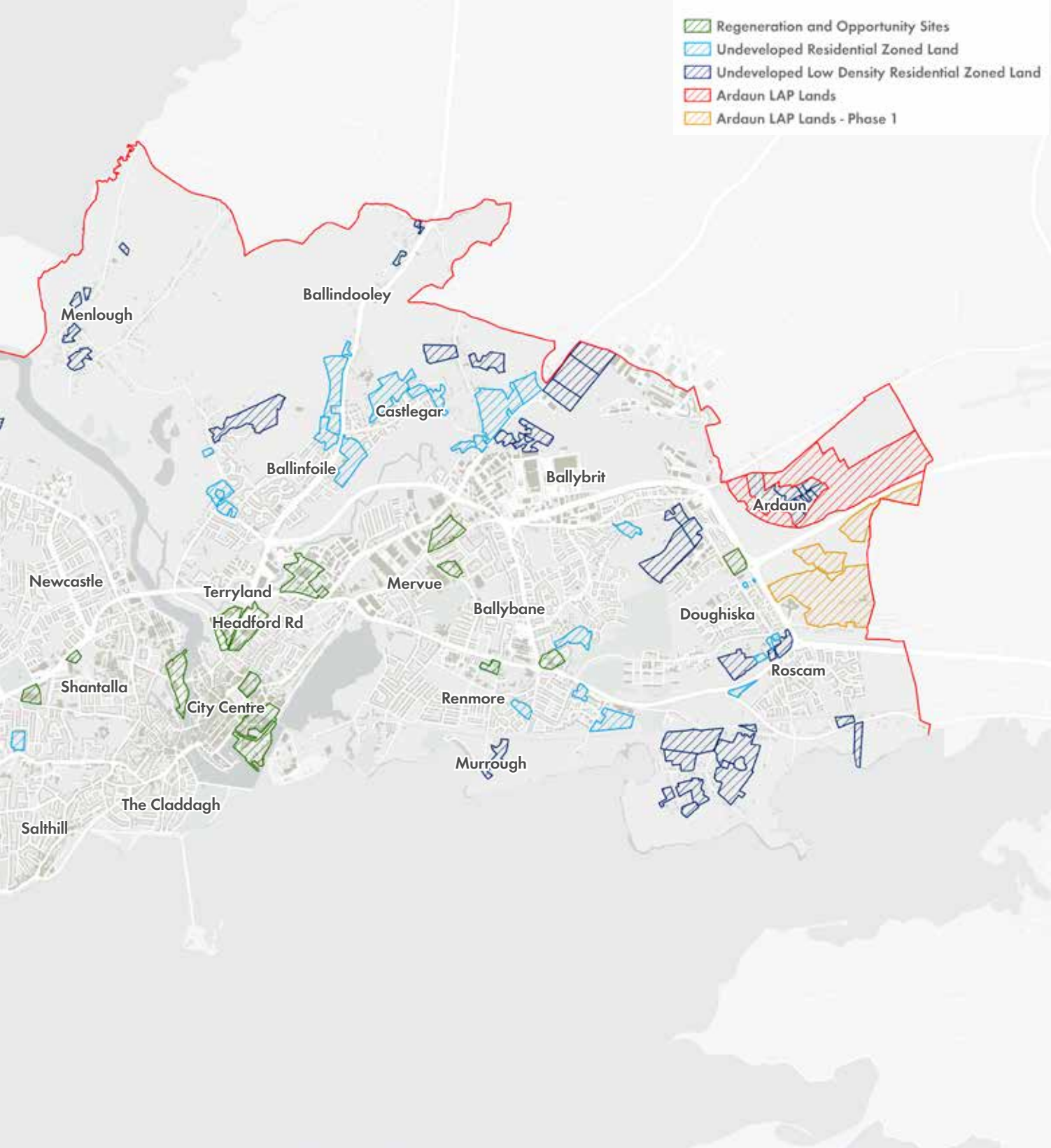


Fig 18 Residential, Regeneration and Opportunity Sites



## 7 HERITAGE

### 7.1 Architectural Conservation Areas and Record of Protected Structures

Architectural conservation areas (ACAs) are concentrated in the city’s central and historic core. These areas will be particularly sensitive to the impacts of new development and their character and setting will be a major consideration as new development comes forward.

The Record of Protected Structures seeks to recognise buildings and structures considered to be of particular importance under the following headings: architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical, and social.

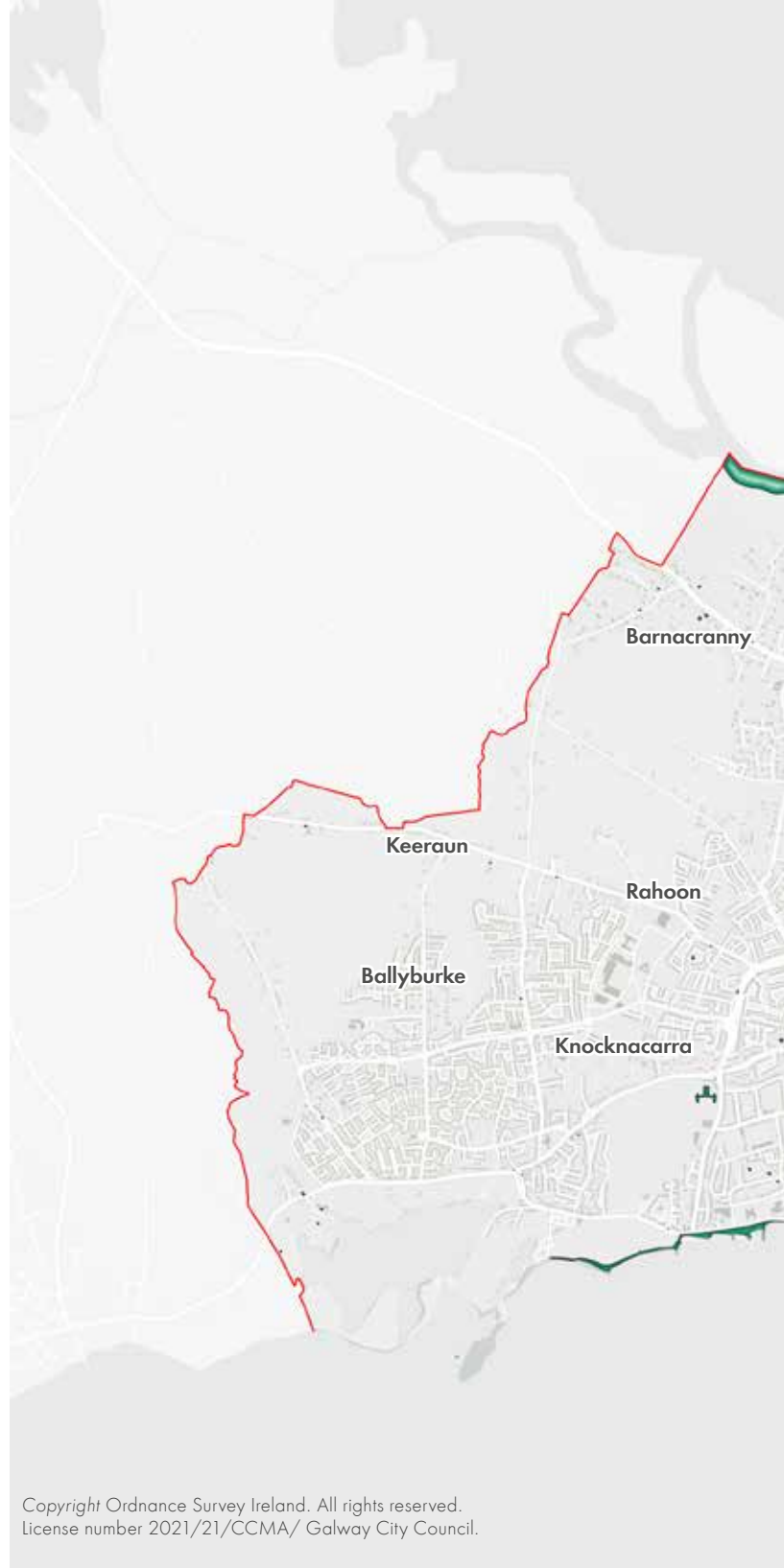
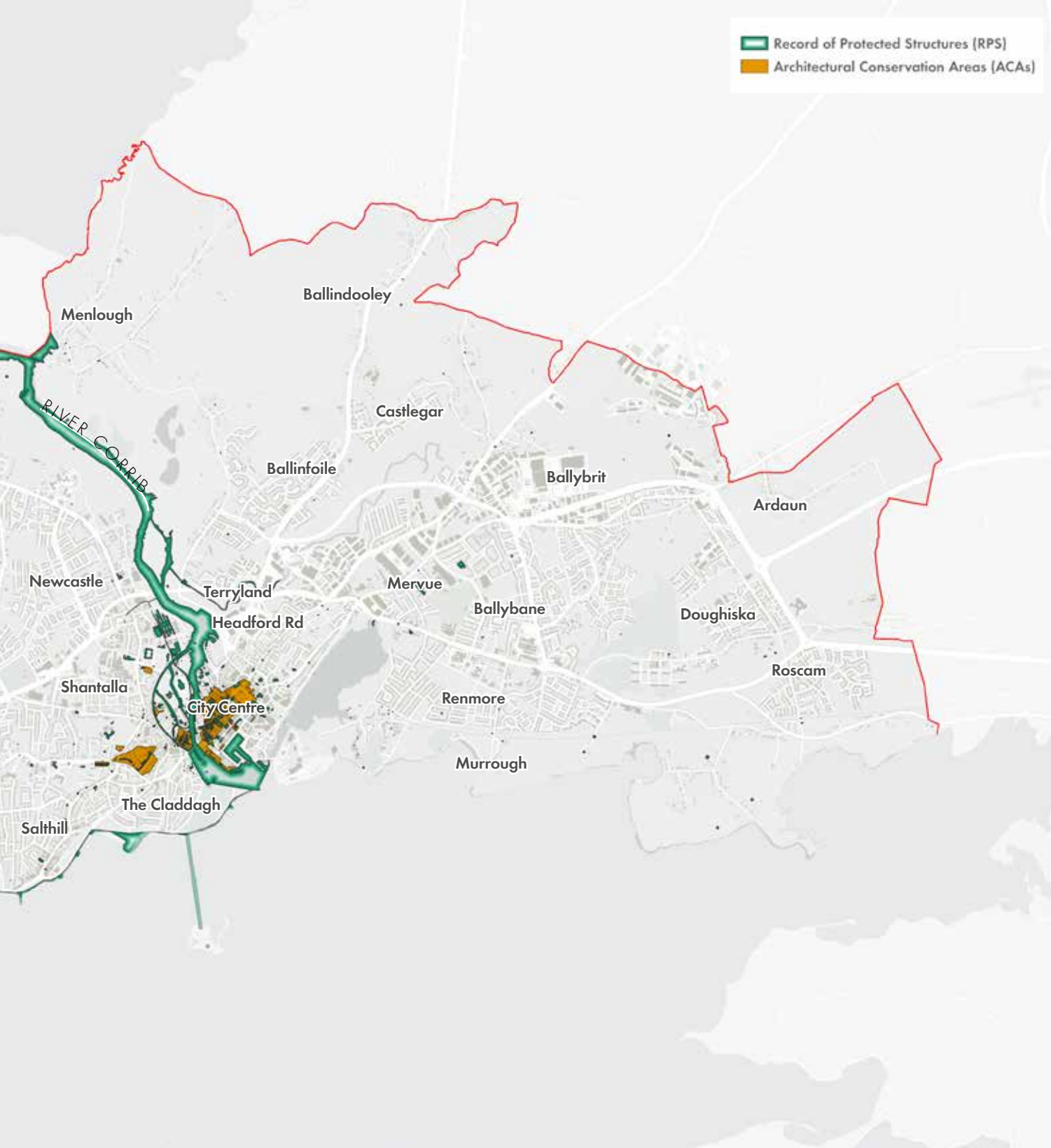


Fig 19 Galway’s registered heritage assets



Galway's city centre is rich with history and, likewise, built heritage. This is demonstrated by the number of Architectural Conservation Areas and structures under the Record of Protected Structures. The ACAs in the town centre are as follows::

- The City Core
- Eyre Square
- Lower Dominick Street
- The Crescent/Sea Road
- The Long Walk
- St Nicholas Street
- St Mary's Terrace
- 1-6 Dock Road
- 11-18 University Road
- 7-14 Presentation Road
- 34-48 St. Marys Road

There are a large number of structures recognised by the Record of Protected Structures, many of them comprise of historic housing, buildings which make up important historic streets, civic buildings such as churches, cathedrals and the university buildings, but also significantly the River Corrib and its bridges, weirs, walls, embankment, piers, stone pillars and embankments.

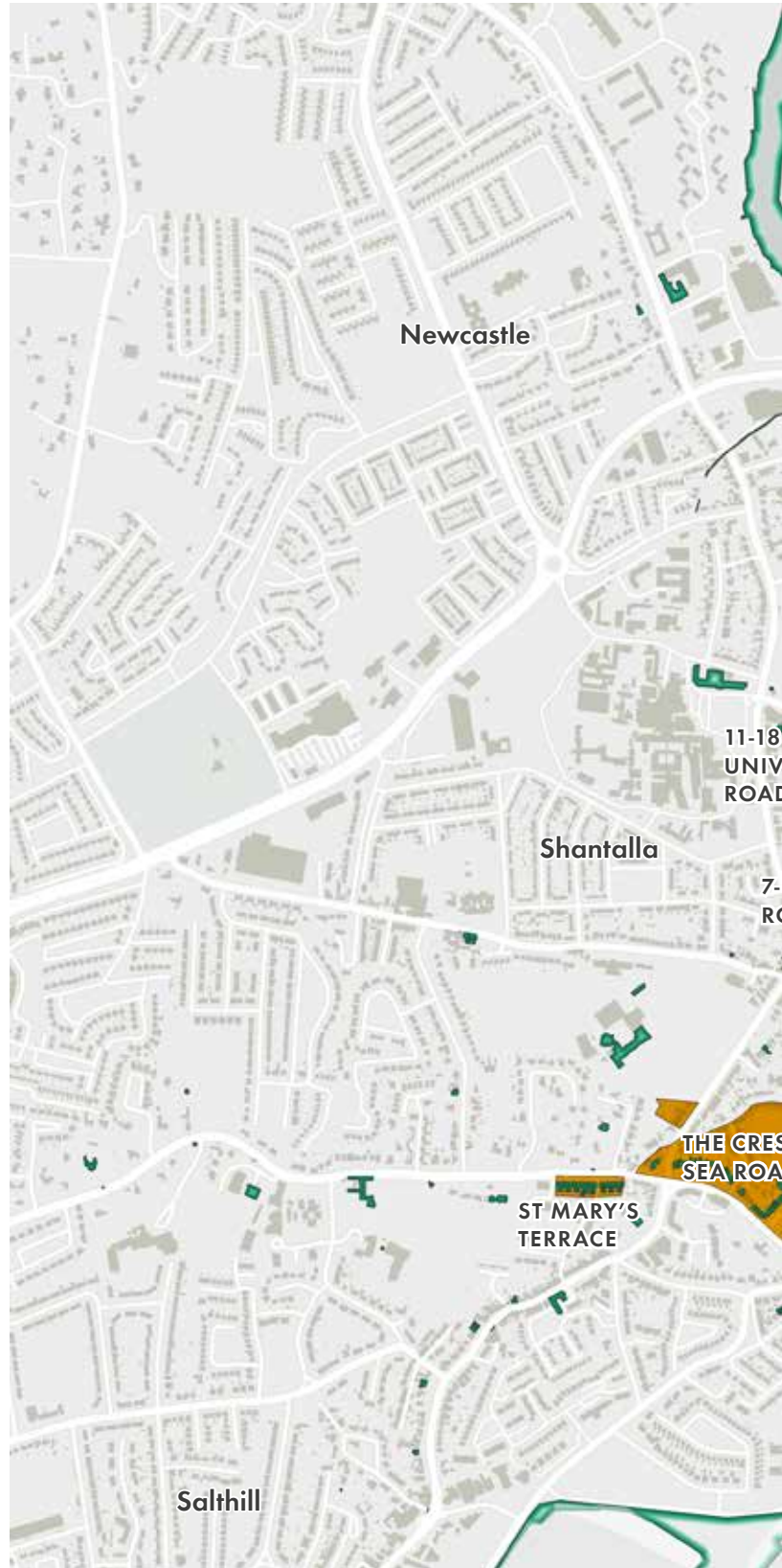
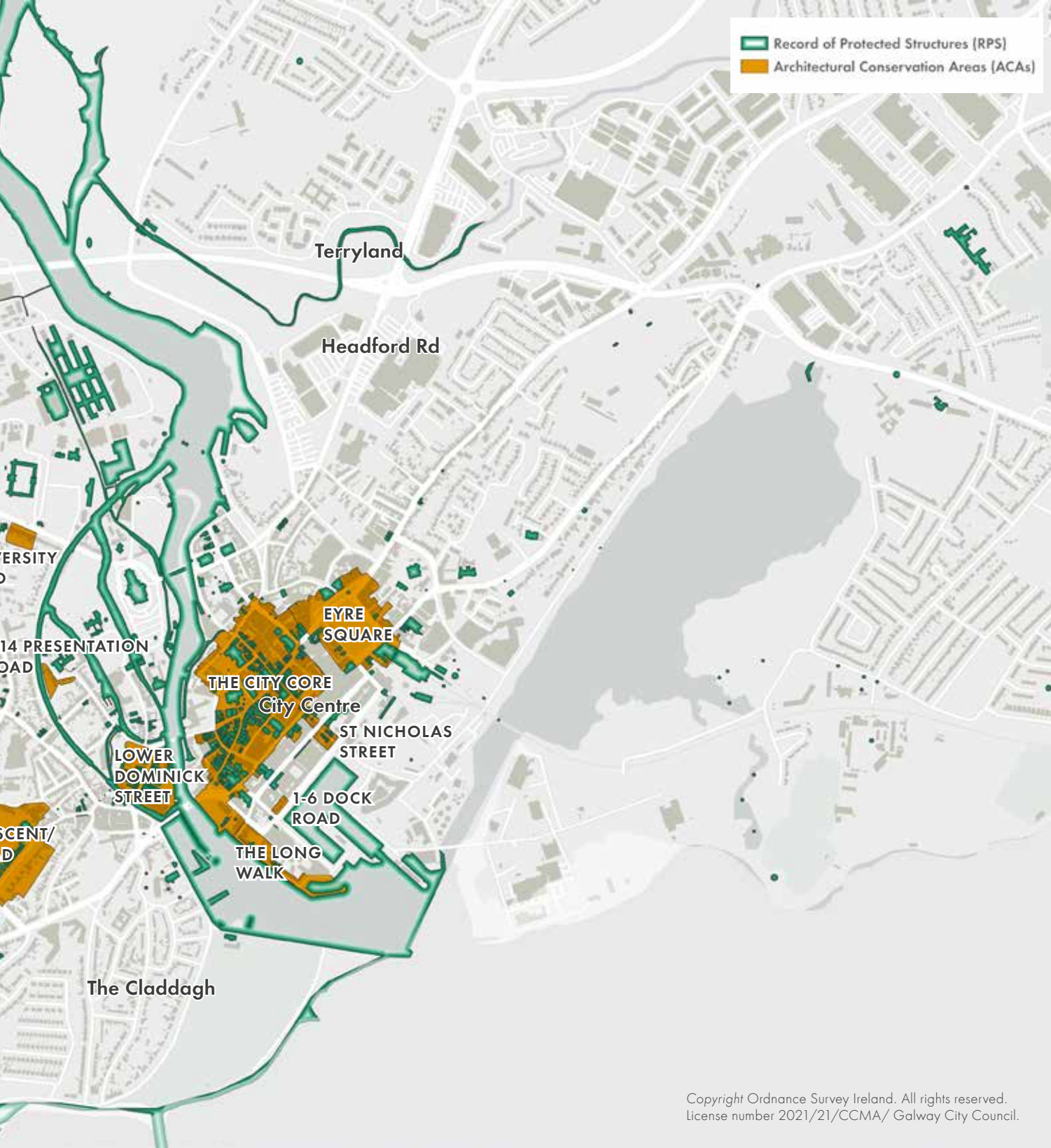


Fig 20 Galway city's registered heritage assets



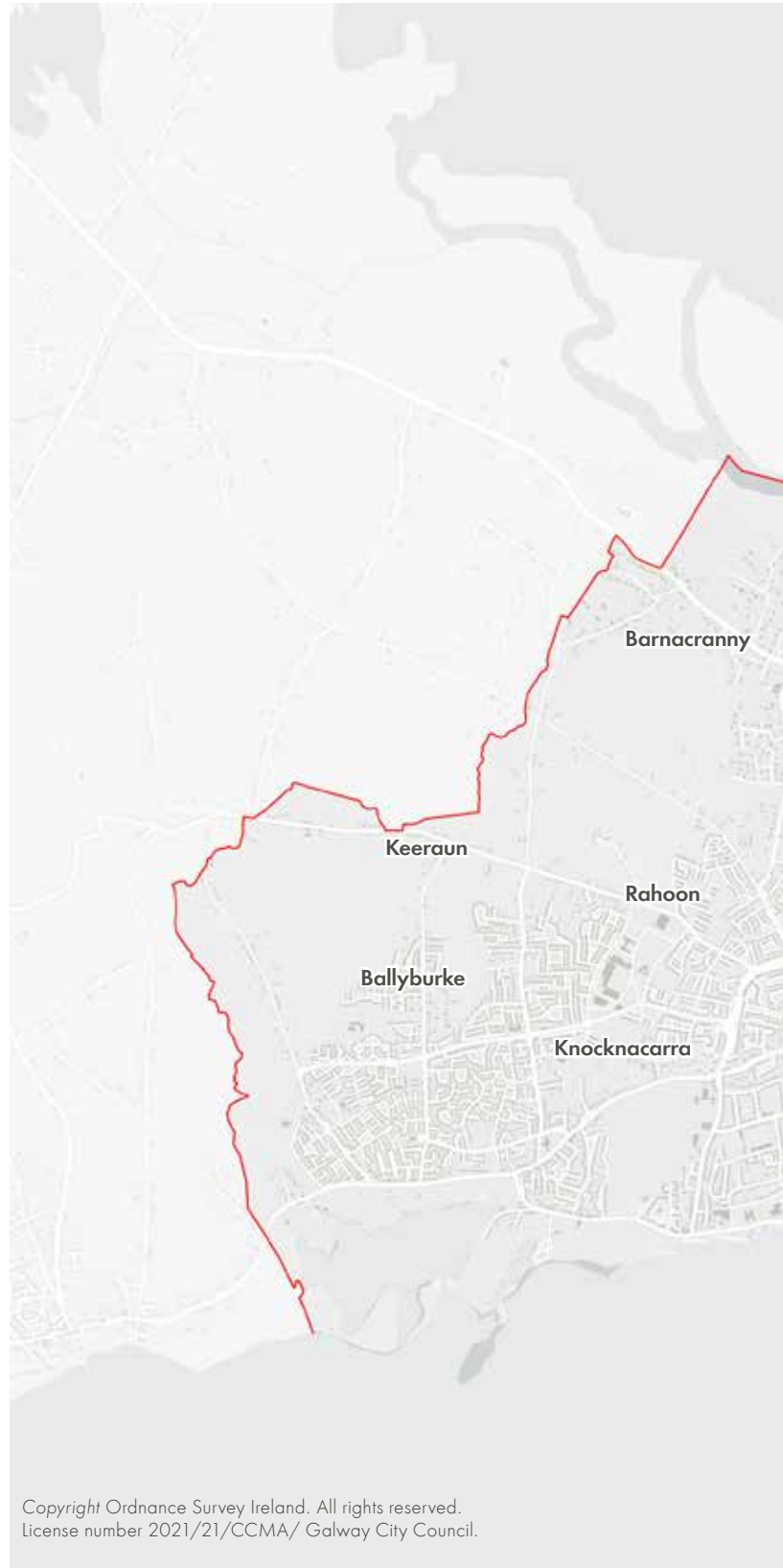
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## 7.2 Village Envelopes

Galway has a number of village settlements which have a historic pattern of development and are considered to have a distinct character. These are Menlough, Castlegar, Coolagh-Briarhill and Coolagh-Menlough.

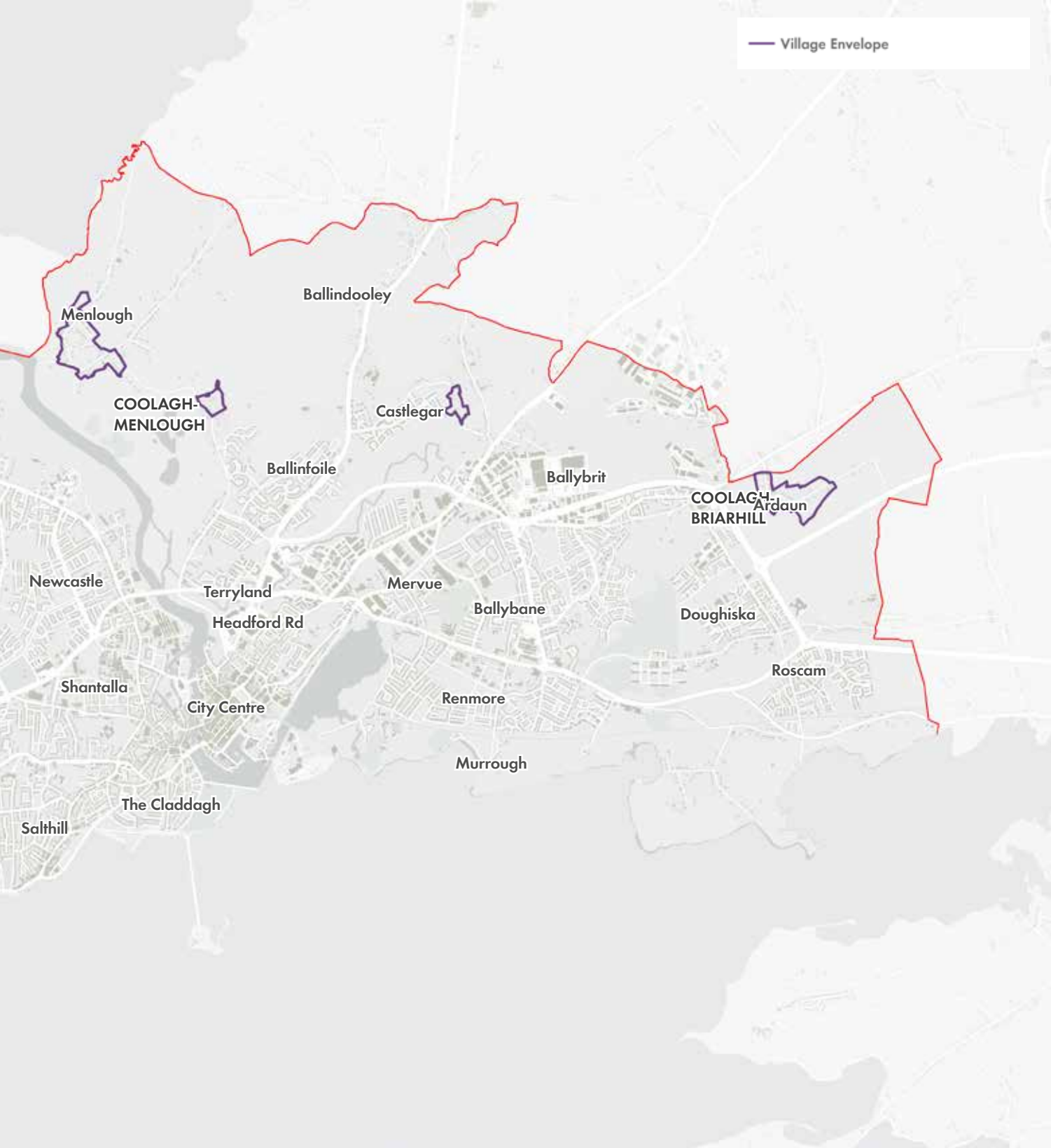
The Galway CDP states that these villages have opportunities for sensitive infill development, and that Council policy allows for housing and limited local services or community facilities where they contribute to enhancing the area's character.

The important historic and rural character, natural setting, rich built heritage and biodiversity of these locations make them sensitive to new development, and particularly high density new development. However, policy indicates there is potential for high quality new infill development which responds to and is sensitive to its context in appropriate locations, and as appropriate uses. For the purposes of this study, these Village Envelopes will be considered as sensitive to new development.



**Fig 21** Identified village envelopes





## 7.3 Views

Views are often considered an important factor in sensitivity analysis. The current city development plan designates the following as protected views:

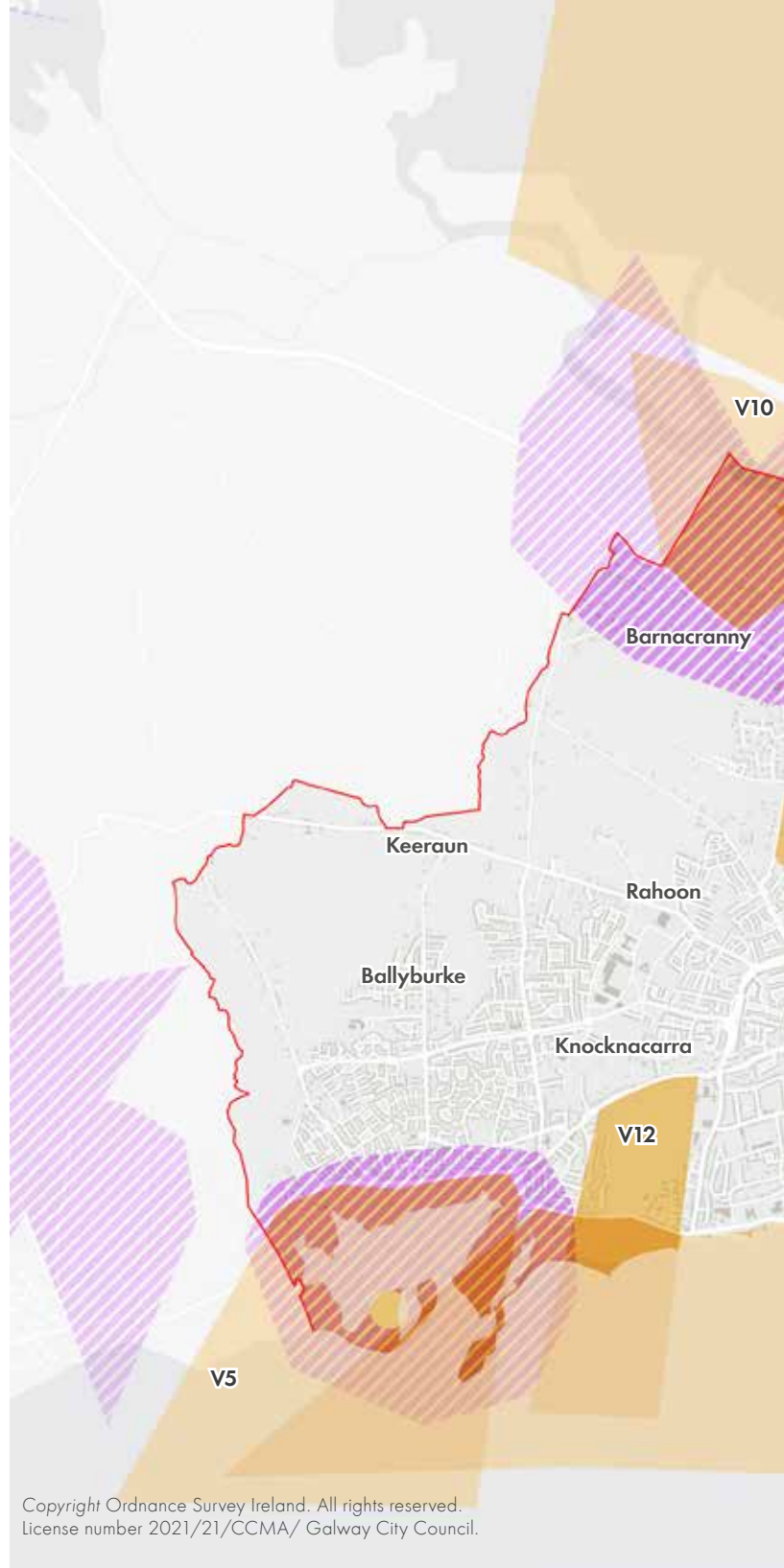
### KEY

#### Panoramic Protected Views

- V.1** Panoramic views of the city and the River Corrib from Circular Road.
- V.2** Views from Dyke Road and Coolagh Road encompassing the River Corrib and Coolagh fen.
- V.3** Seascape views of Lough Atalia from Lough Atalia Road, College Road, Dublin Road and Lakeshore Drive.
- V.4** Seascape views of Galway Bay from Grattan Road, Seapoint, the Salthill Promenade and the coast road to the western boundary of the golf course.
- V.5** Seascape views encompassing Lough Rusheen including section of Blakes Hill, sections of Knocknacarra Road, sections of Barna Road from Knocknacarra to city boundary and including the road to Silverstrand Beach.
- V.6** Panoramic views of the city, and the Terryland Valley from parts of the Castlegar-Ballindooley Road.
- V.7** Views encompassing Lough Corrib from parts of the Quarry Road and Monument Road.
- V.8** Seascape views of Galway Bay from the old Dublin Road to the city boundary.
- V.9** Views towards the sea at Roscam.

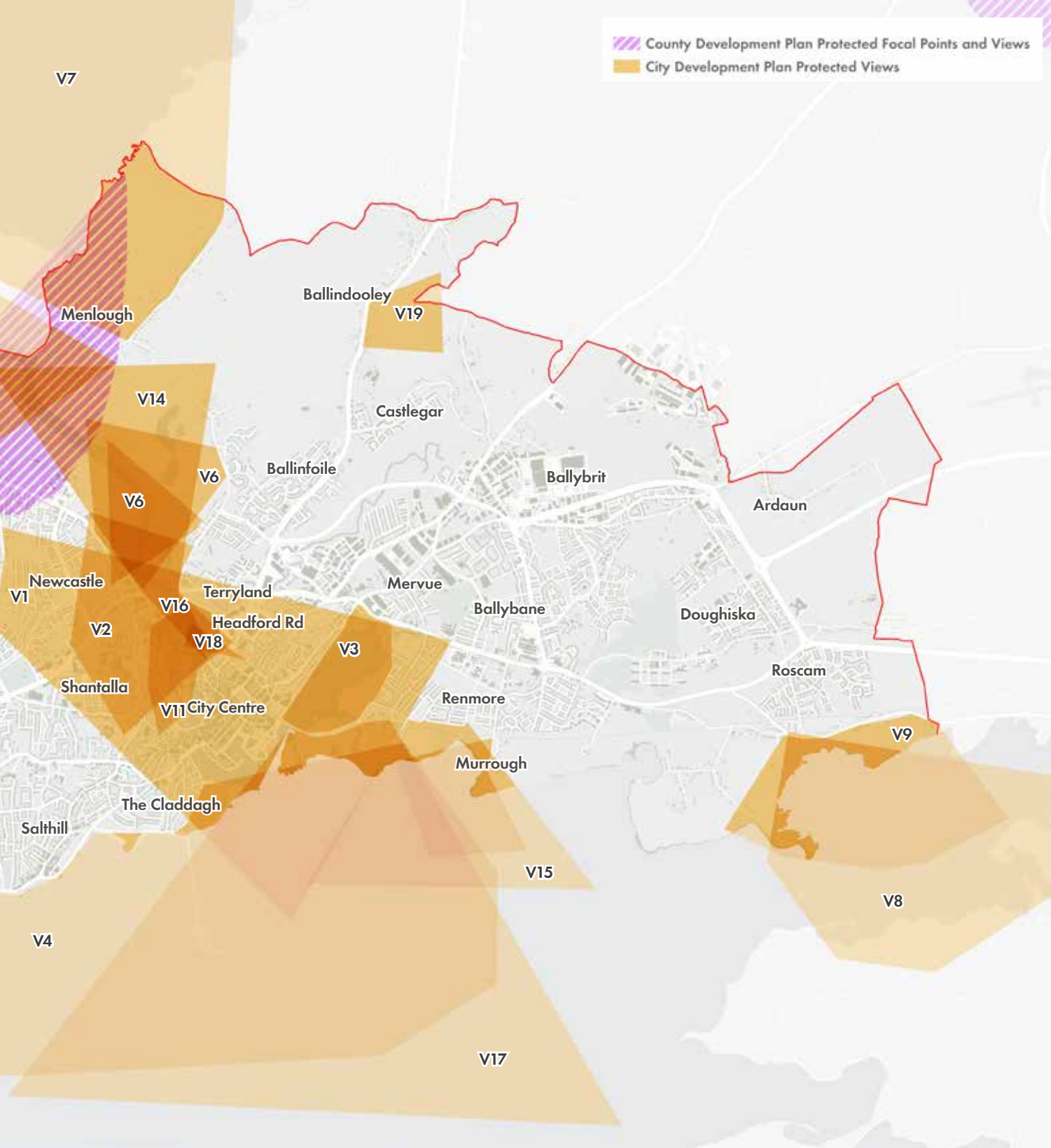
#### Linear Protected Views

- V.10** Views from Galway-Moycullen Road (N59) of the River Corrib.
- V.11** Views from Waterside of the River Corrib.
- V.12** Seascape views of Galway Bay from Kingston Road.
- V.13** Seascape views of Galway Bay at Ballyloughane from south of the railway bridge.
- V.14** Views northwards encompassing the River Corrib and adjoining lands from Quincentenary Bridge.
- V.15** Views towards Galway Bay from Hawthorn Drive, Renmore.
- V.16** Views from Quincentenary Bridge Road southwards over Terryland Forest Park and River Corrib.
- V.17** Seascape views from Military Walk, Renmore.
- V.18** Views towards River Corrib from junction of St. Bridget's Place with St. Bridget's Terrace.
- V.19** Views encompassing Ballindooley Lough from parts of the Headford Road.



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**Fig 22** Identified views in the Development Plan



# 8 DENSITY AND BUILDING HEIGHTS

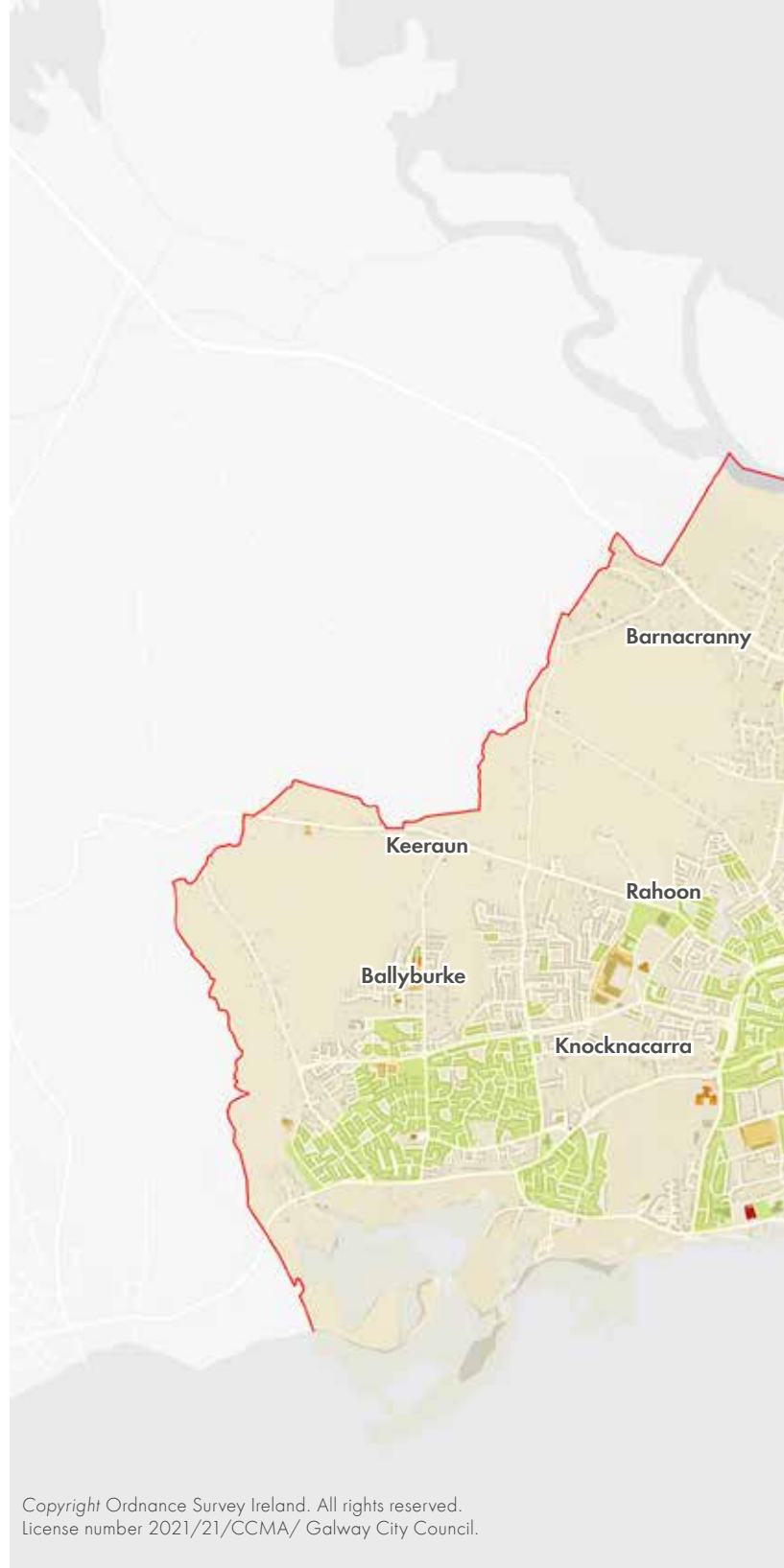
## 8.1 Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

FAR is a very useful measure of urban density. Land use does not factor in this measure of density which makes it a more versatile tool for city planning.

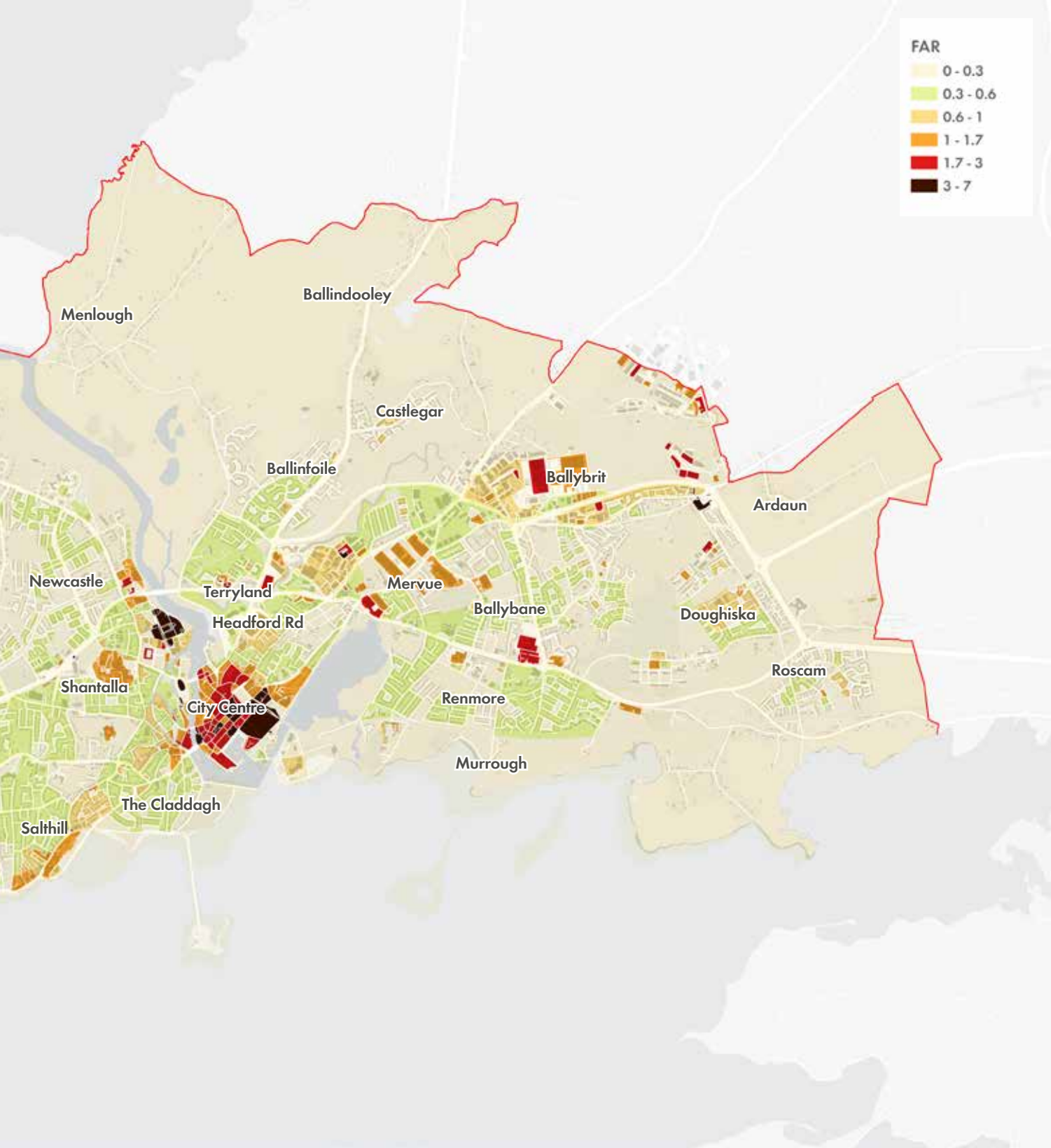
The FAR analysis reveals that the historic core of the city, east of the River Corrib, is the most densely developed.

The University campus also has a high FAR value in this city-wide GIS assessment. The plan also takes account of recent large scale regeneration proposals such as Bonham Quay and Crown Square.

*Please note that FAR values presented here and elsewhere in this report are assessed on a block by block basis in GIS and are not prepared on a site specific basis. They present a useful city-wide overview of FAR densities. They are not however intended to be used as a steer to guide appropriate FAR levels when measured on a more detailed site by site basis. Separate studies supporting development proposals will be required to present their own more detailed and site specific studies.*



**Fig 23** Floor Area Ratio across Galway



## 8.2 Floor Area Ratio - City Centre

The adjacent plan presents a closer and more detailed look at the FAR values assessed for the central and city centres areas of Galway.

The plan takes account of recent large scale regeneration proposals such as at Bonham Quay and recent planning applications approved by the City Council.

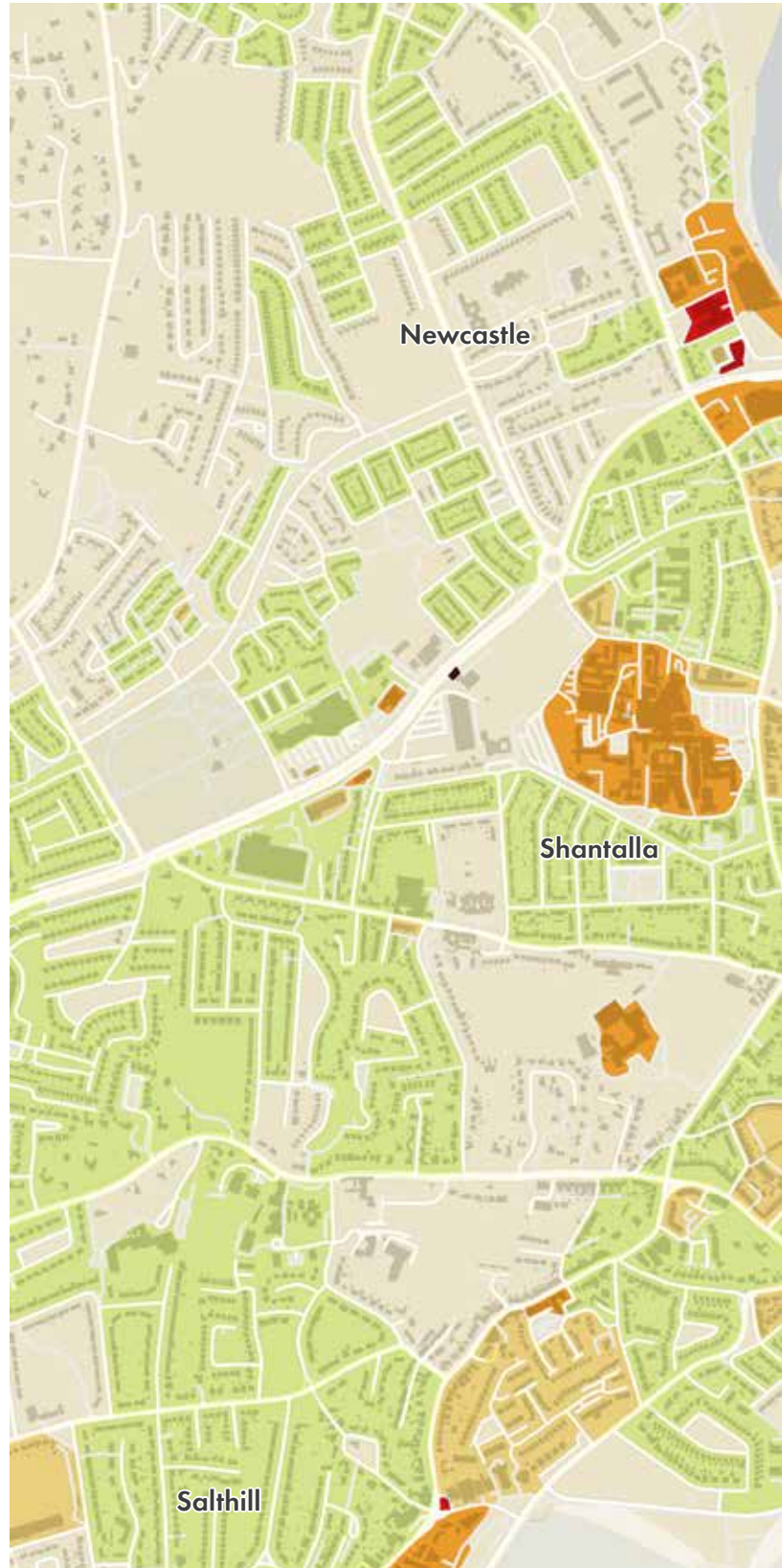
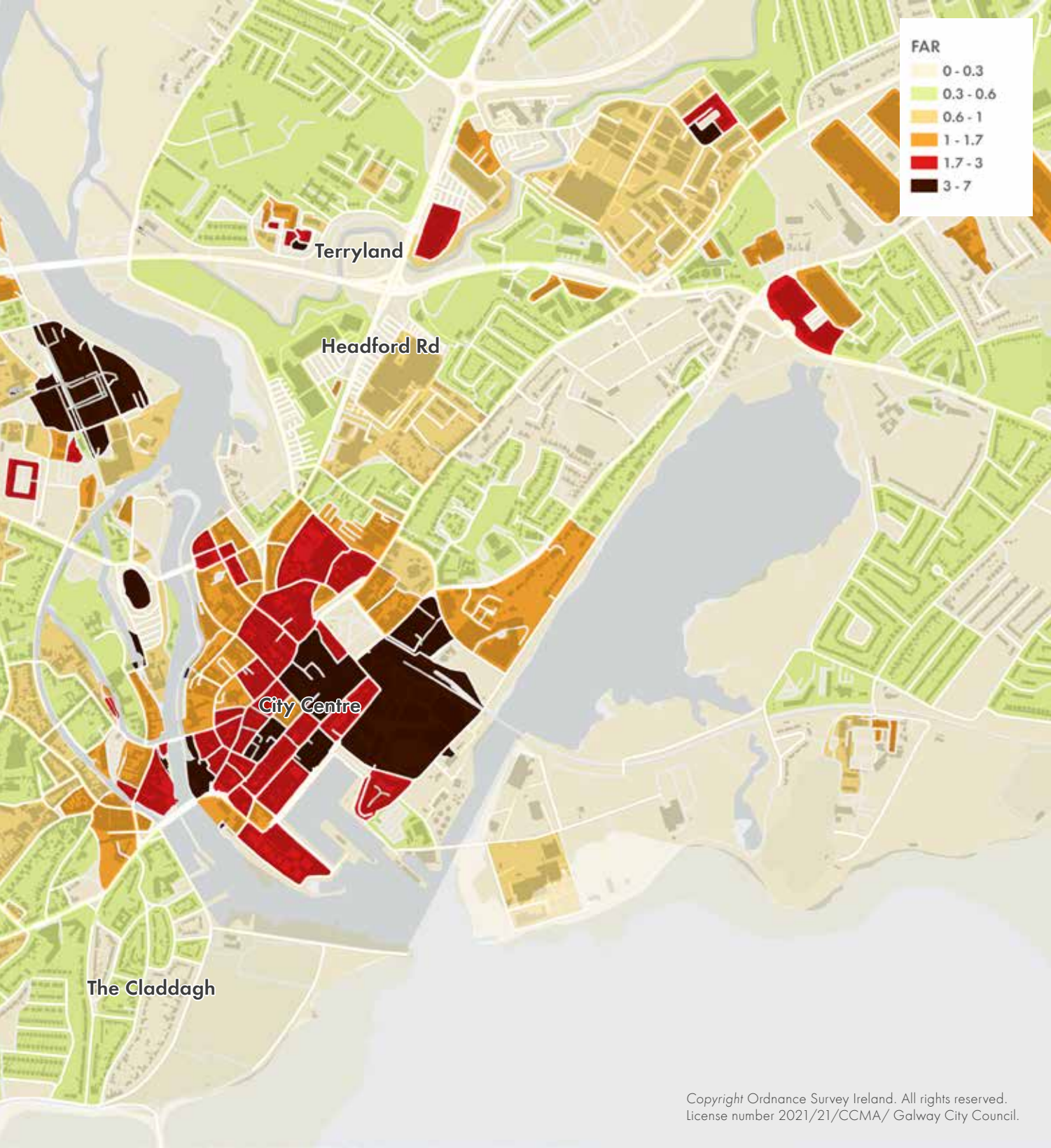


Fig 24 Floor Area Ratio across Galway's central area



### 8.3 Population density

Another form of density is population density with census data revealing that population densities tend to be a little higher in the west of the city

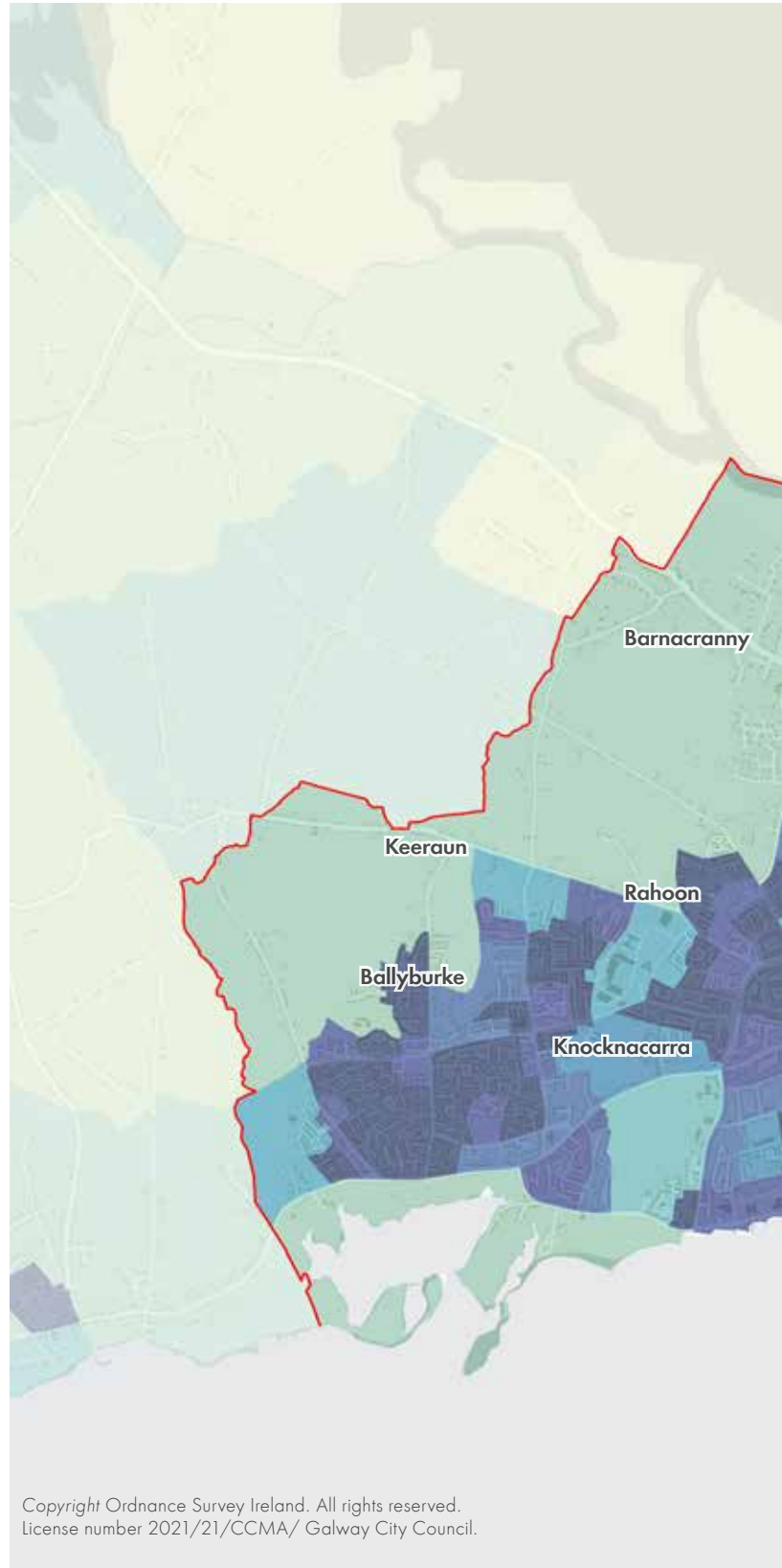
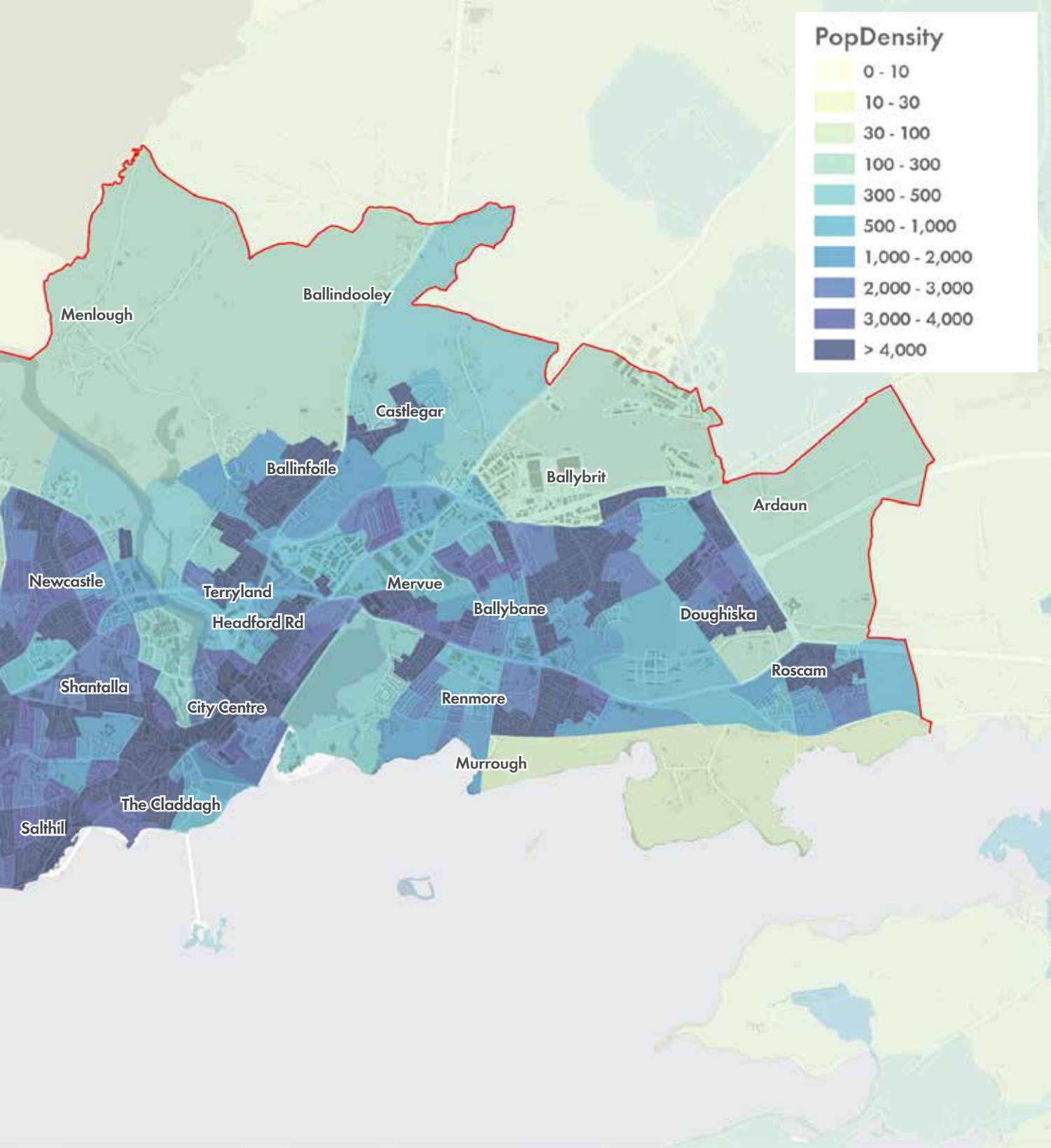


Fig 25 Population density in Galway





## 8.4 Dwellings per hectare

While plot ratio is used in the city, dwellings per hectare (dph) is often the prime currency for planners in seeking to control the density of new development.

Assessing densities by dwellings per hectare can mask true urban density as it is only a measure of housing density - but as challenging housing targets are a key issue for the Development Plan, this measure of density is a key tool.

The city centre is not particularly evident in this dph plan - given its mixed use character. The slightly higher densities in the western neighbourhoods is also evident - but housing densities are seen generally to be relatively modest.

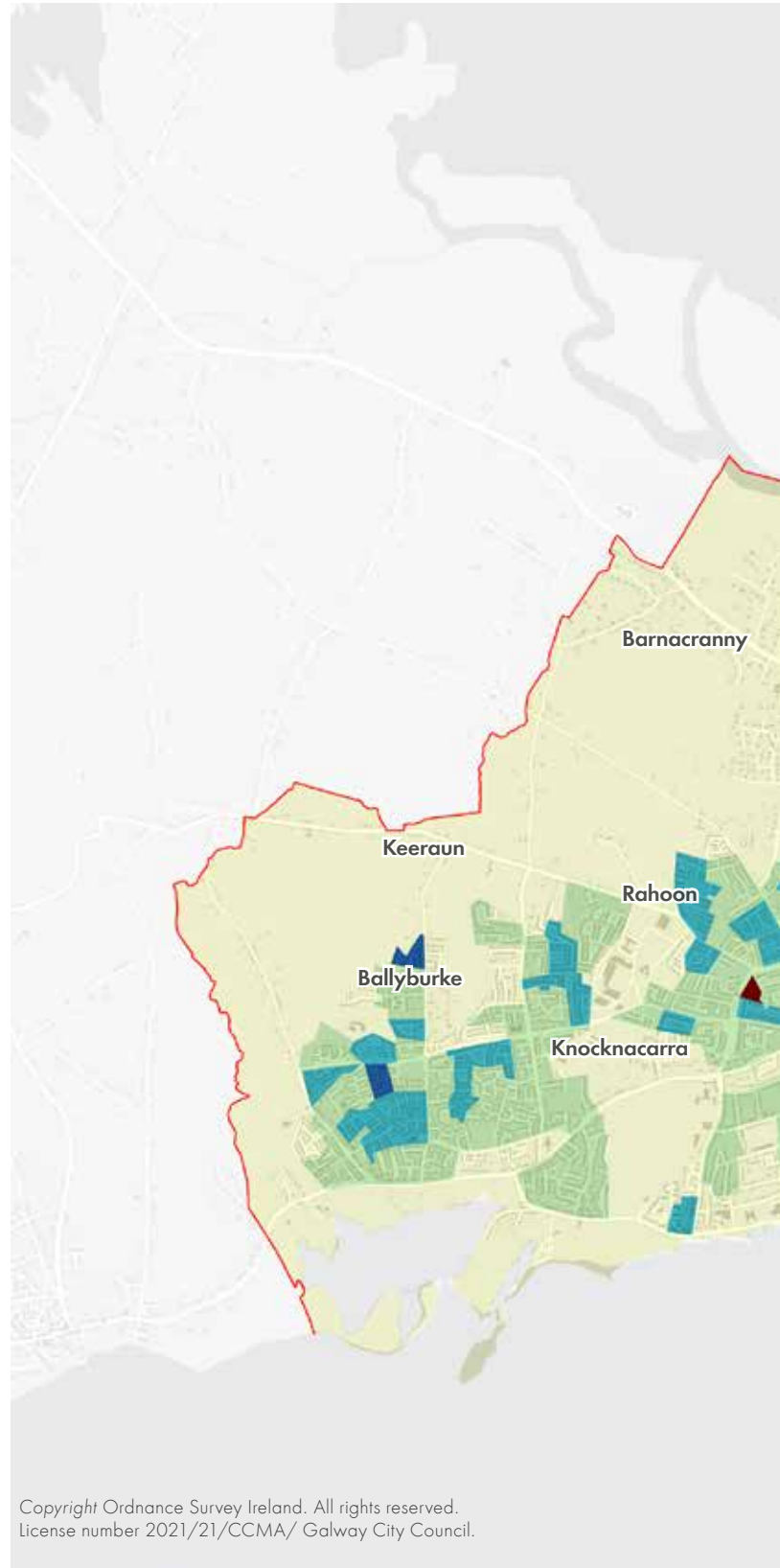
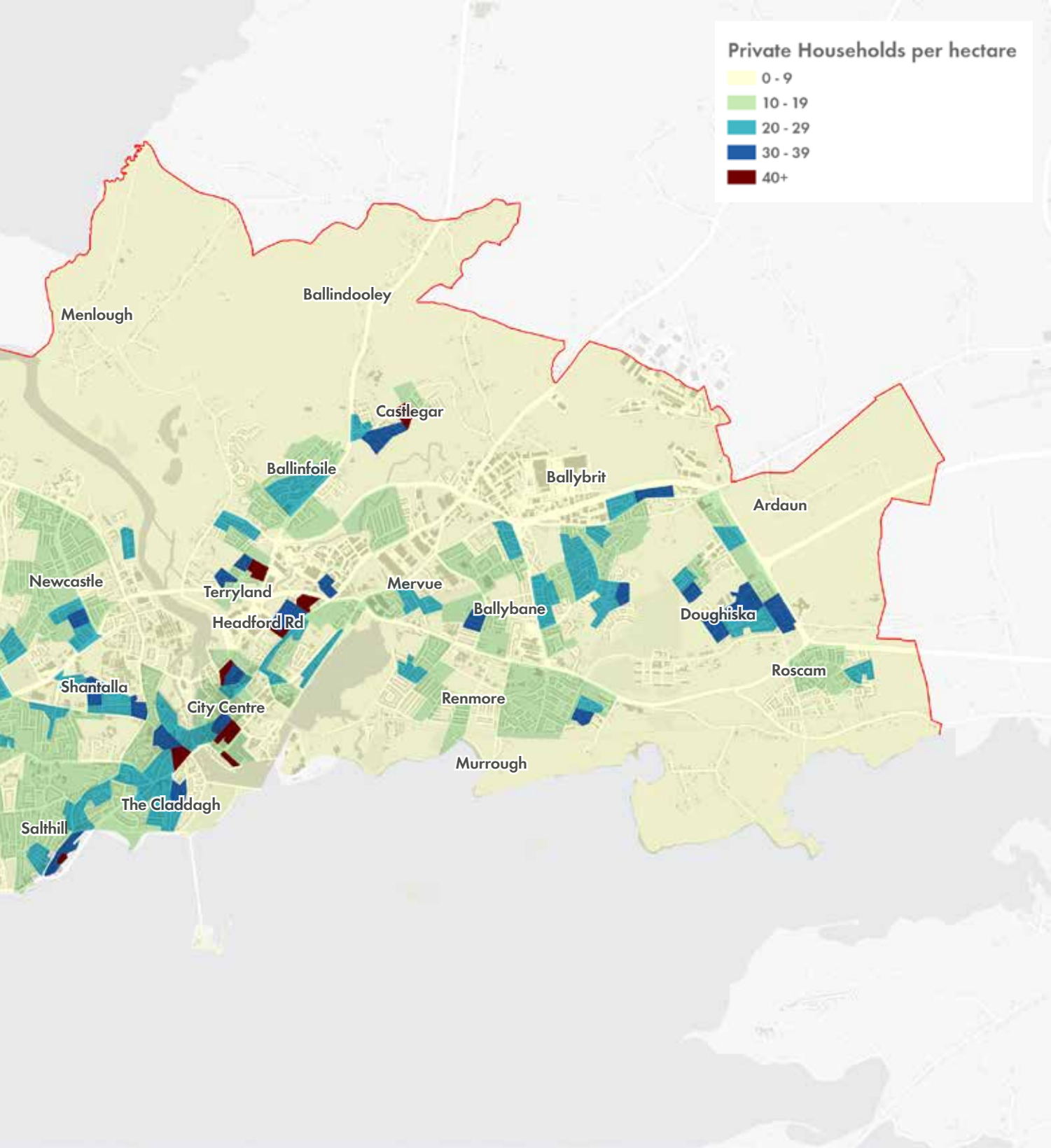


Fig 26 Density assessed as dwellings per hectare across Galway



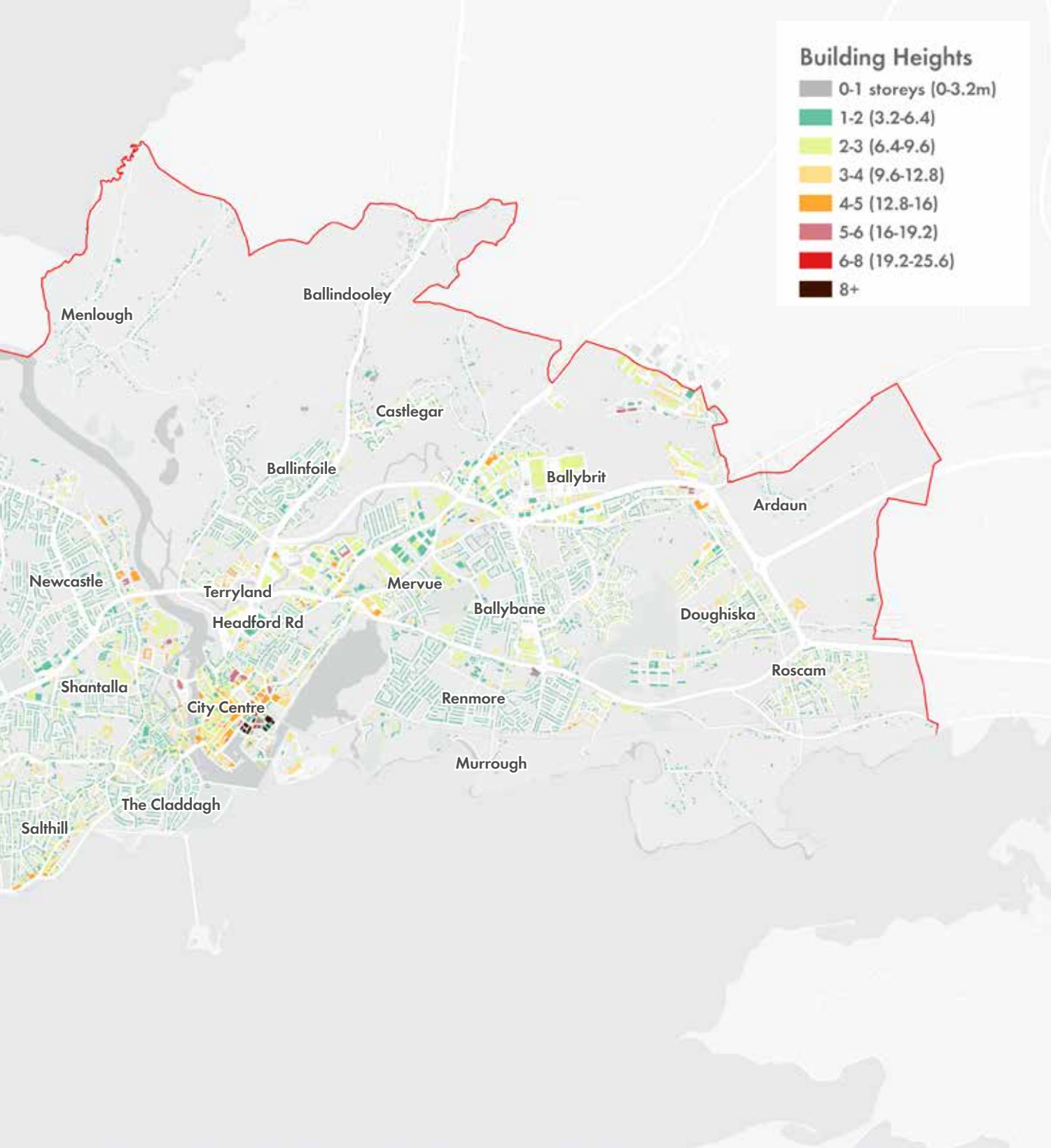
## 8.5 Building heights

Combined use of DTM and DSM data enables us to present a picture of existing building heights across the whole of the city area.

As one would expect, this plan reveals the buildings generally rise in height towards the core city centre.



**Fig 27** Building heights across Galway



## 8.6 Building heights

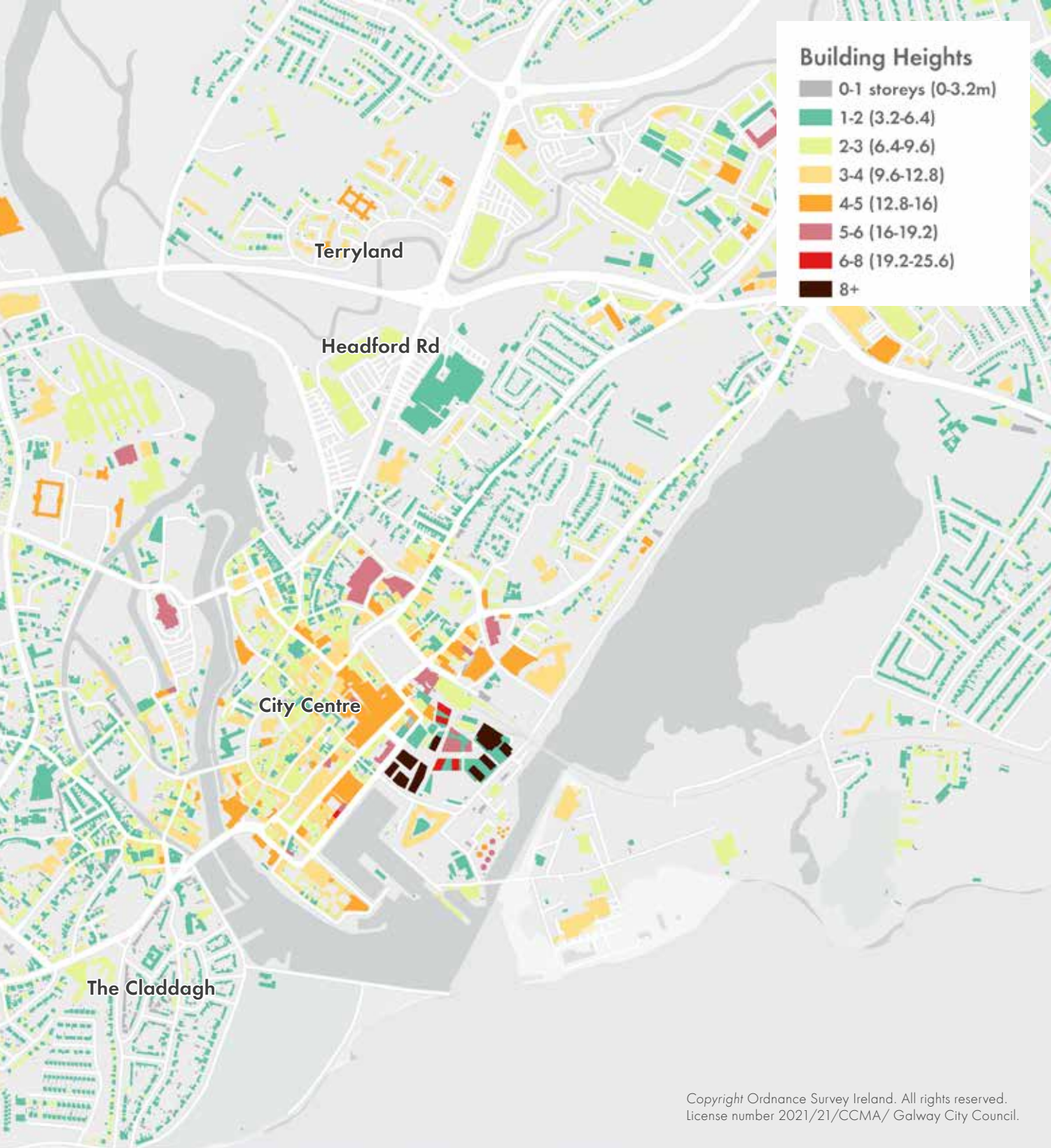
Combined use of DTM and DSM data enables us to present a picture of existing building heights across the whole of the city area.

As one would expect, this plan reveals the buildings generally rise in height towards the core city centre.

A closer look at the historic city centre reveals a strong correlation between building heights and FAR density. The Cathedral is also evident as a major landmark.



**Fig 28** Building heights in the central area of Galway



# 9 NEIGHBOURHOODS

## 9.1 Neighbourhood areas

In planning for future sustainable development, including higher densities and potentially taller buildings, it helps to get a sense of the existing form and character of neighbourhoods which may support growth in Galway's built up areas.

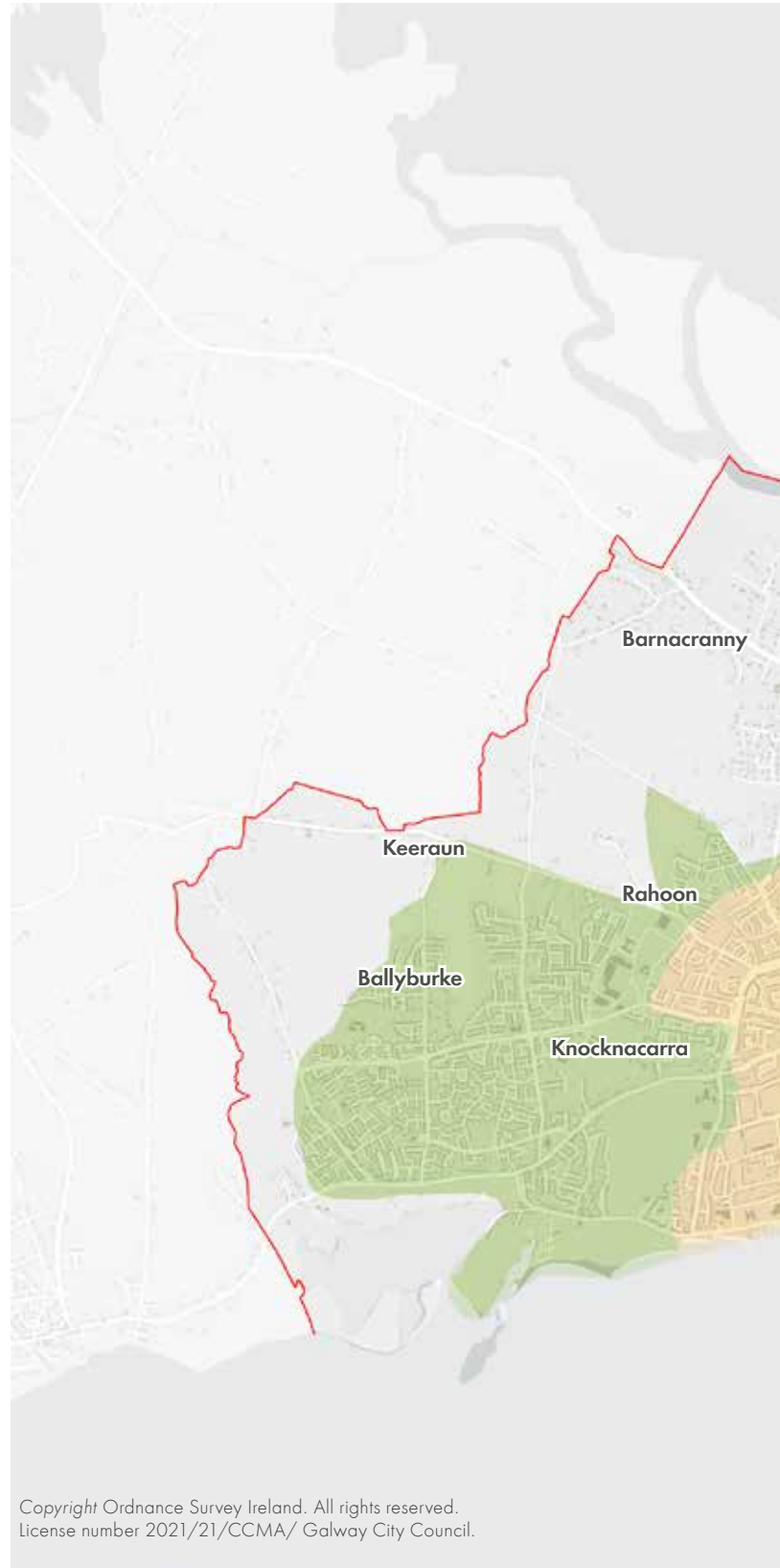
The Galway City Development Plan (2017) defines four distinct areas of the city and provides urban design guidance for each based on their character, these are:

- City Centre
- Inner residential areas
- Established suburbs
- Outer suburbs

While it is anticipated that these areas will evolve during the preparation of the plan, the areas have been used to undertake some initial prevailing heights analysis to help get a sense of the existing character, height and density of neighbourhoods.

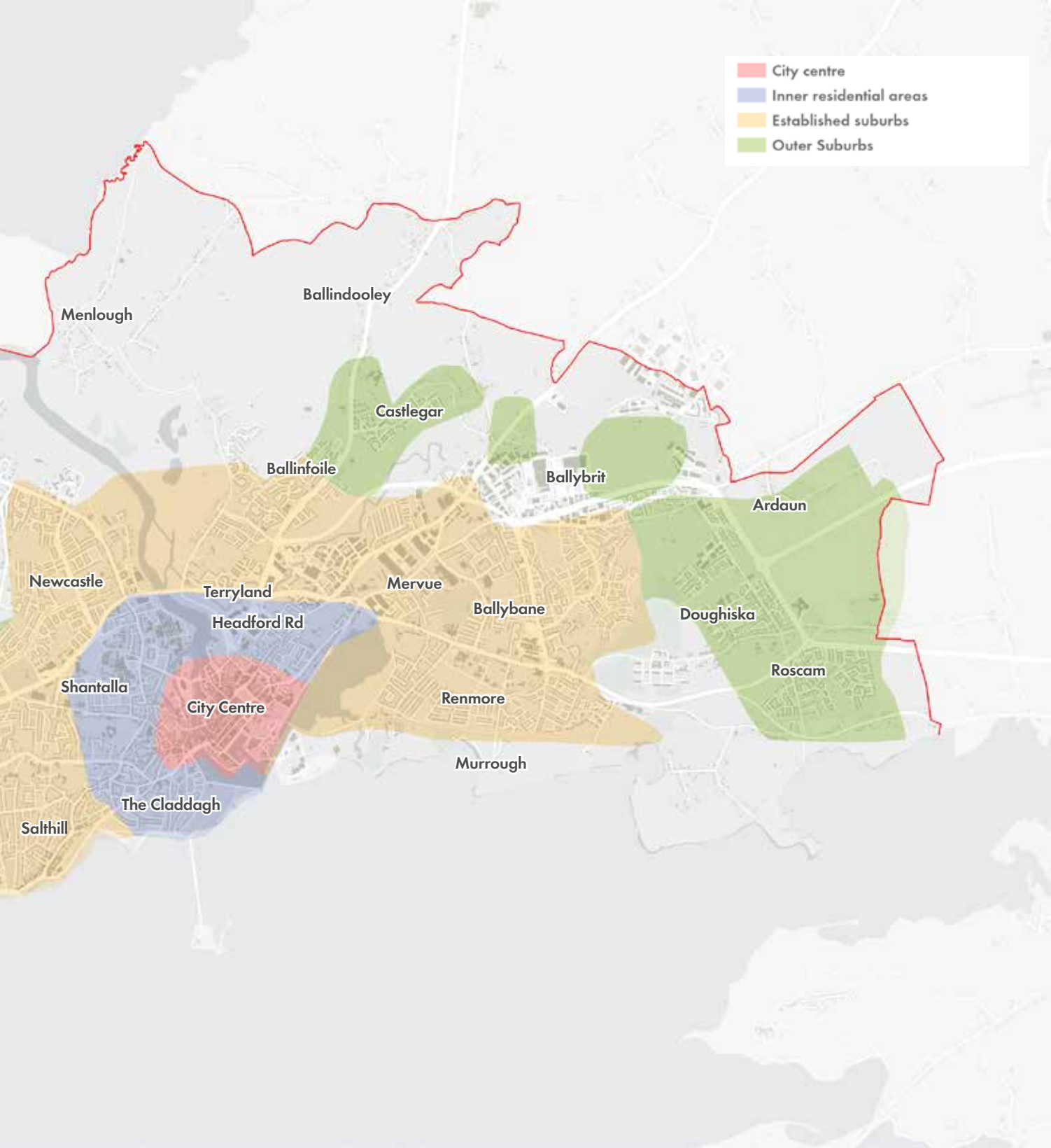
The neighbourhoods which are defined under each area are as follows:

- City centre;
- Inner residential areas;
- Established suburbs; and
- Outer suburbs



**Fig 29** Neighbourhood areas as identified in the Galway City Development Plan 2017 (Fig 11.34)



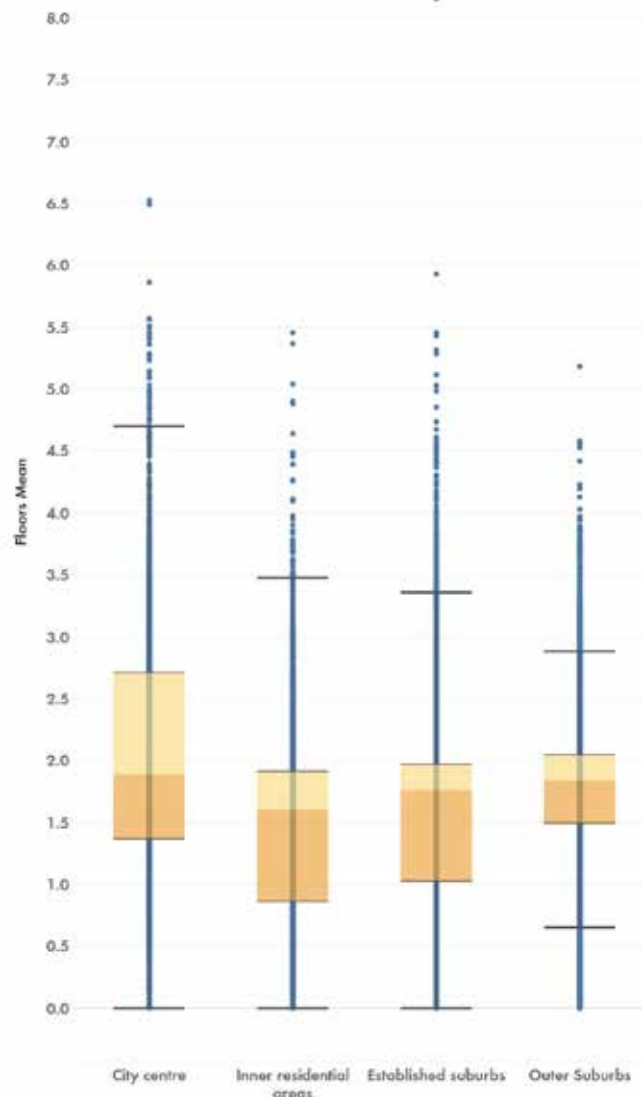
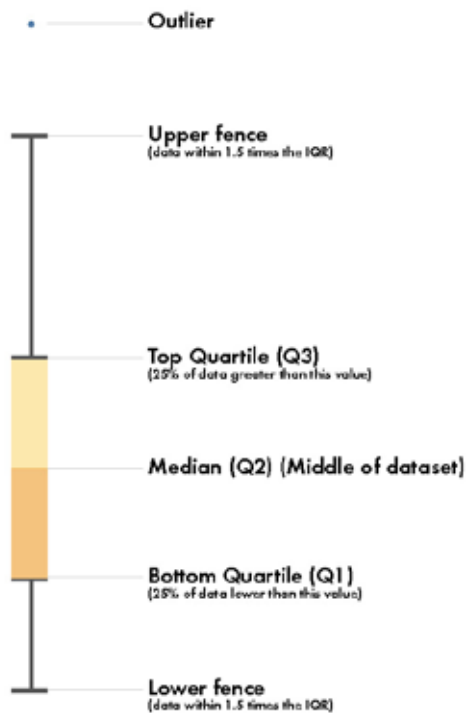


## 9.2 Neighbourhood areas median heights

These plans show the median and top quartile prevailing heights for each of the general neighbourhoods within Galway city.

The median marks the mid-point of the data and is shown by the line that divides the box into two parts (sometimes known as the second quartile). Half the scores are greater than or equal to this value and half are less.

At the top quartile point in the data set, 75% of the buildings are lower than this 'top quartile' height value (also known as the third quartile) and twenty-five percent of buildings are above this height value. It therefore marks the top limit of the middle 50% band of building heights.



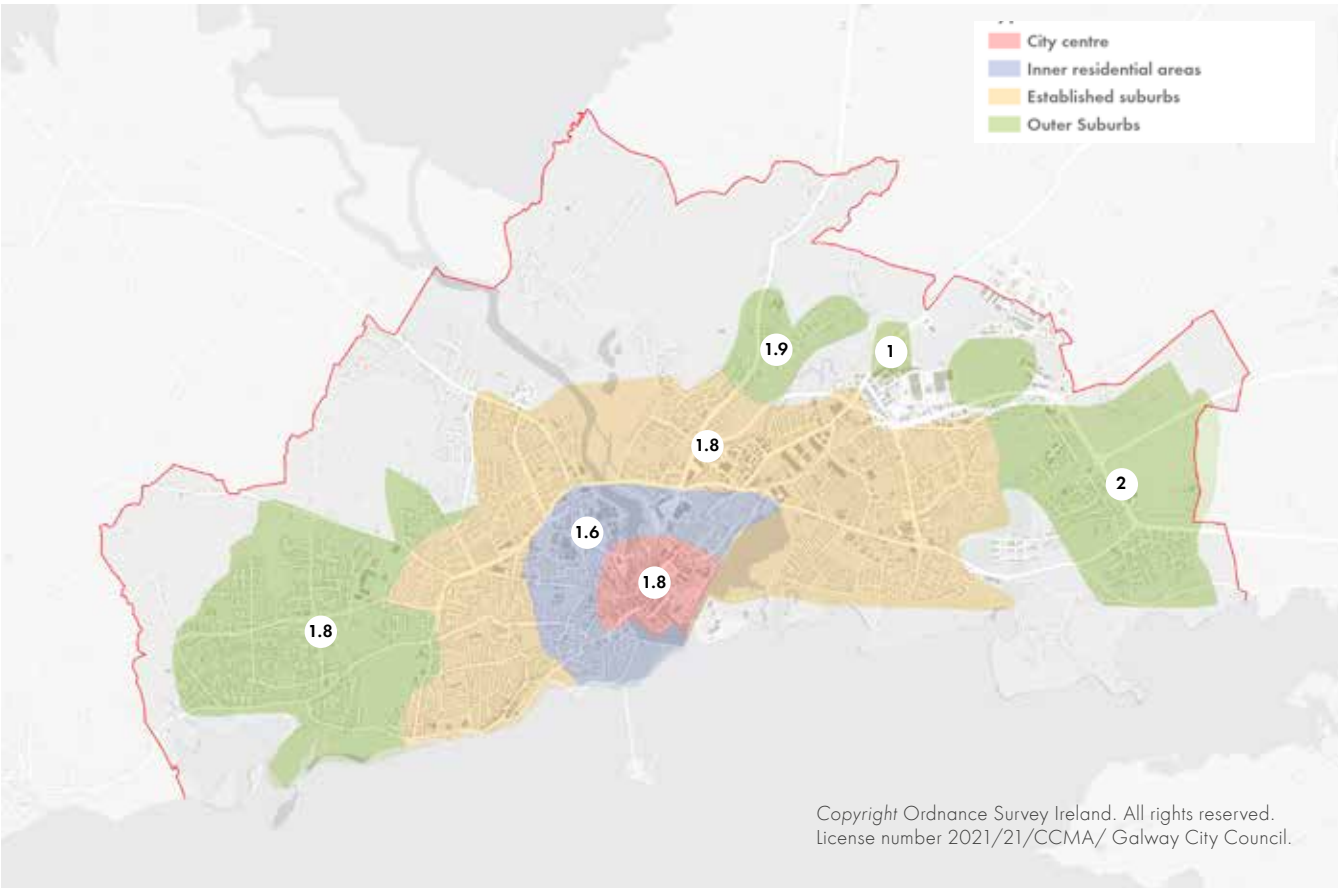


Fig 31 Median prevailing heights

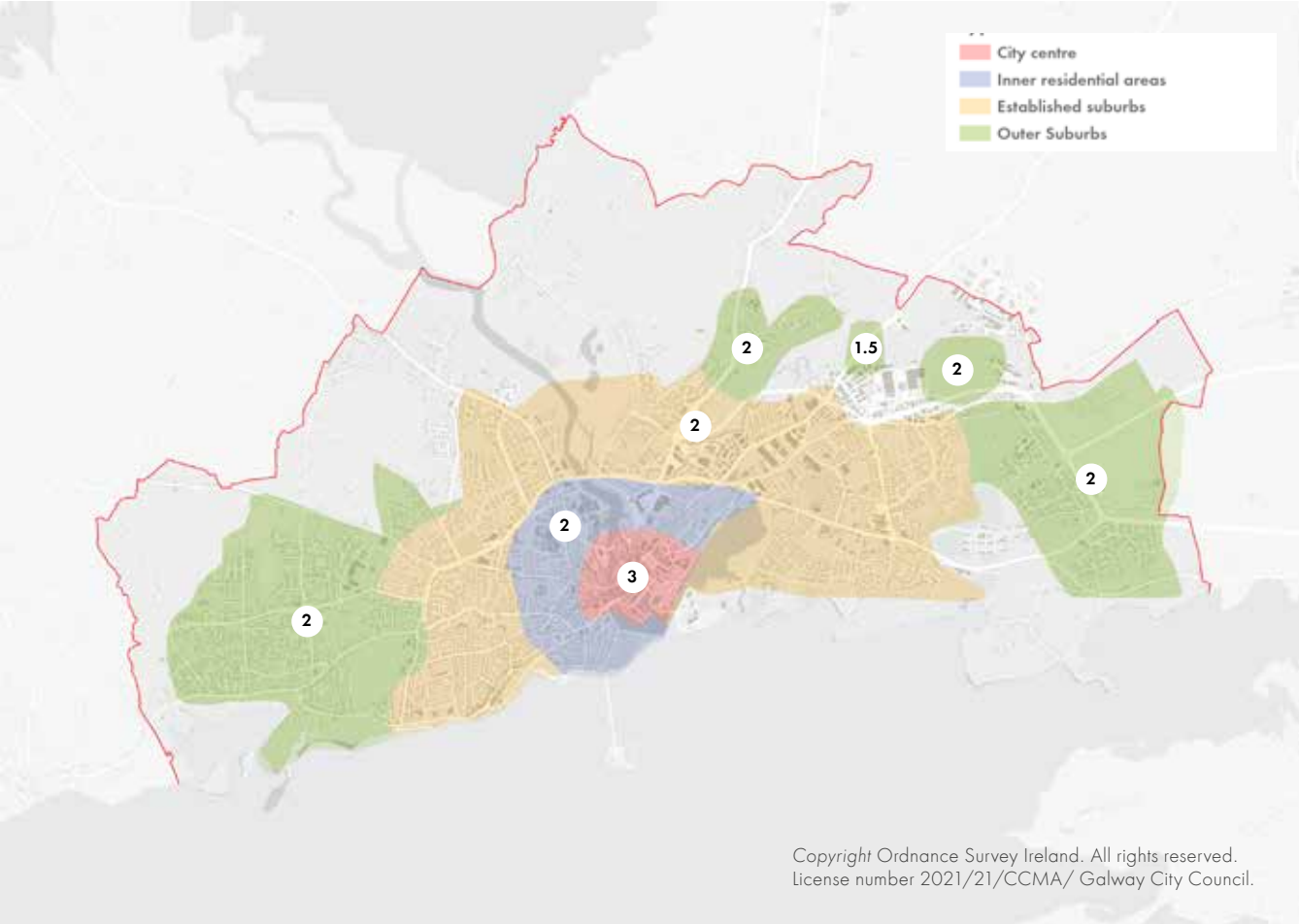


Fig 30 Top quartile/Q3 prevailing heights

## 9.3 Prevailing building heights - Q3/Top quartile heights

### Q3 heights

This plan presents an analysis of the same data set but using the results of the top quartile (Q3) figure for each street block - that is, the value at the upper limit of the middle 50% of all values (building heights).

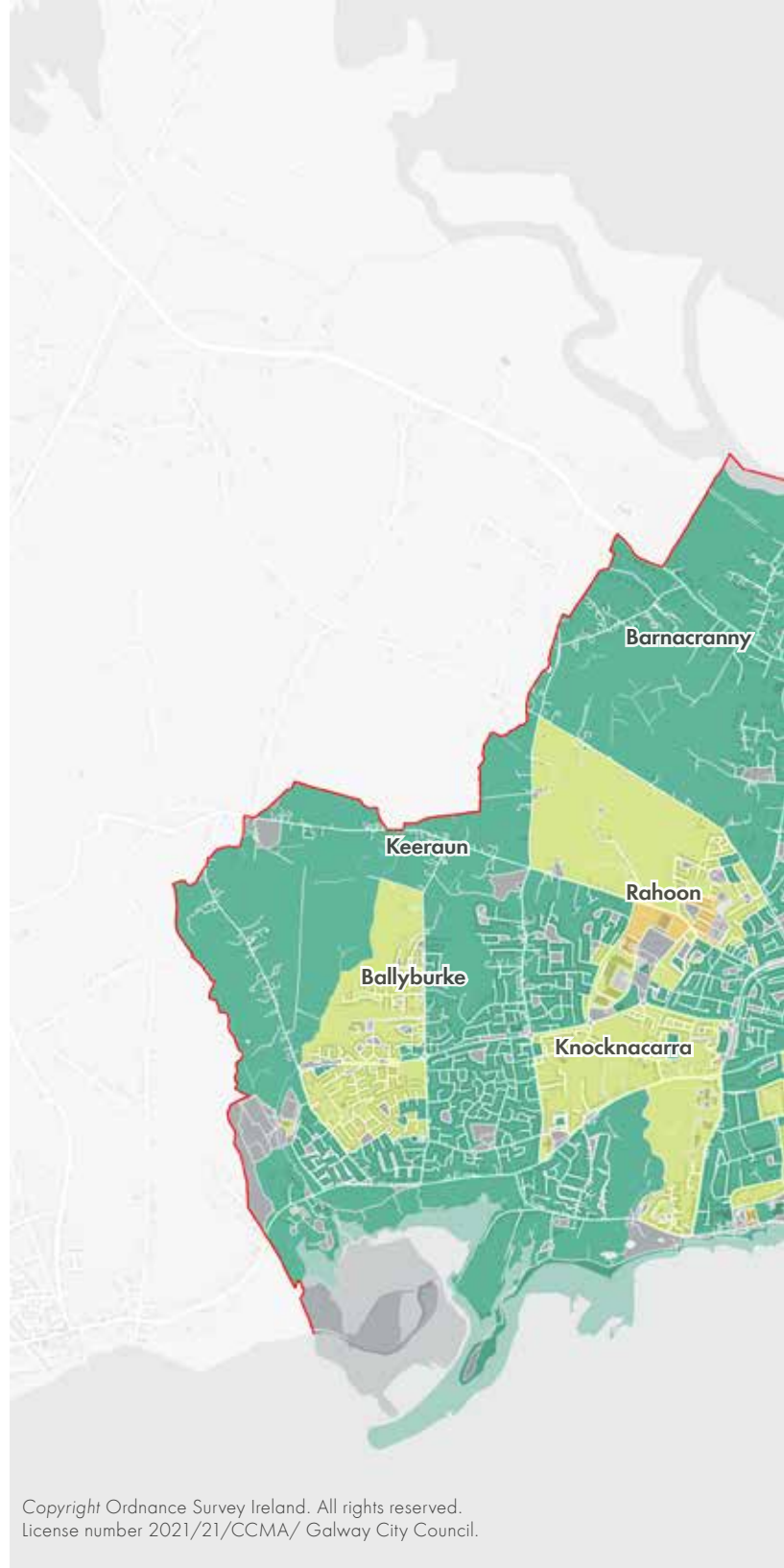
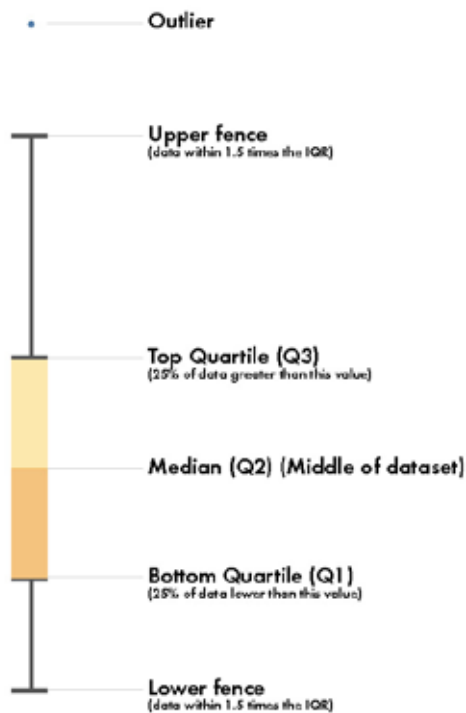
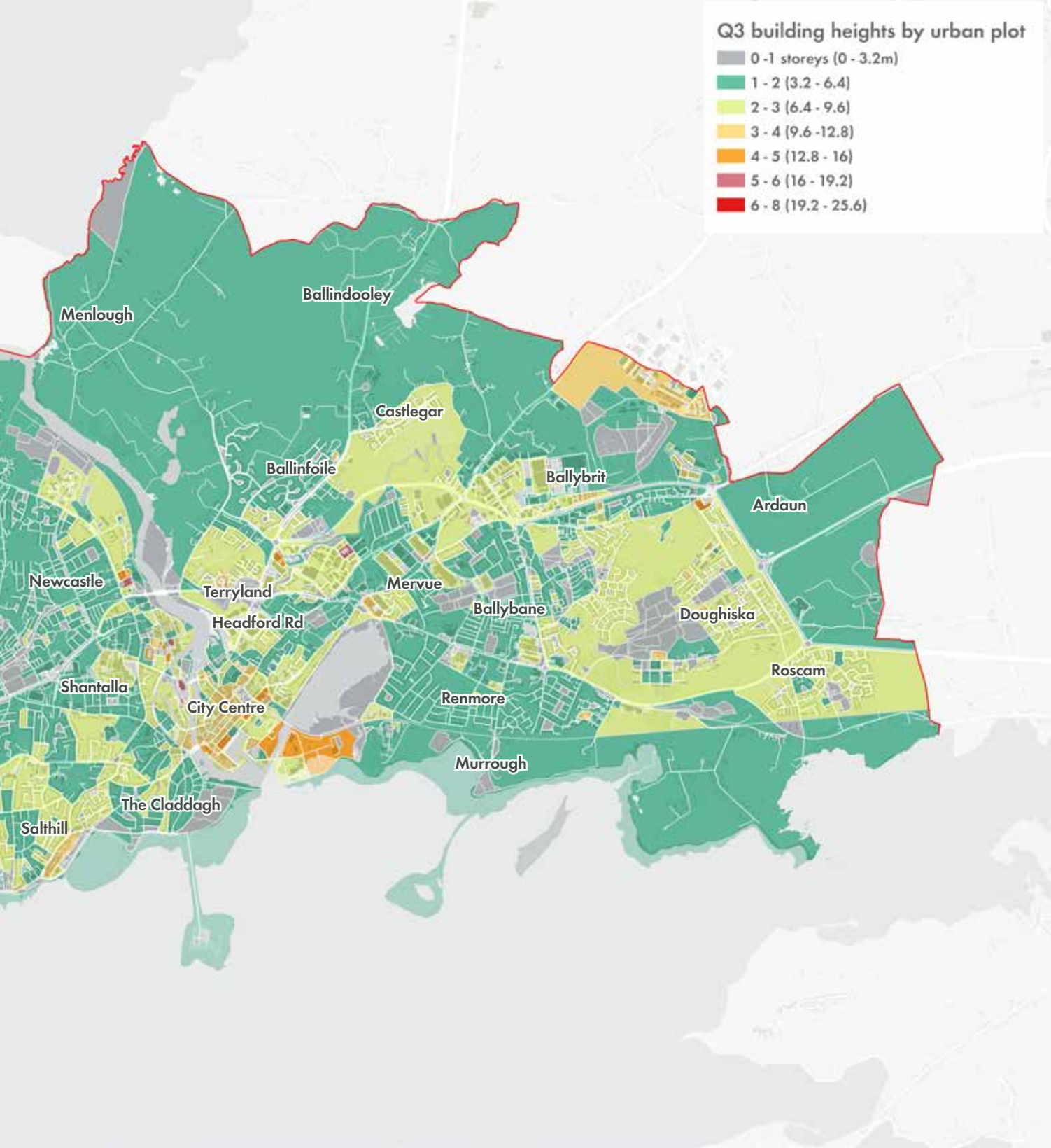
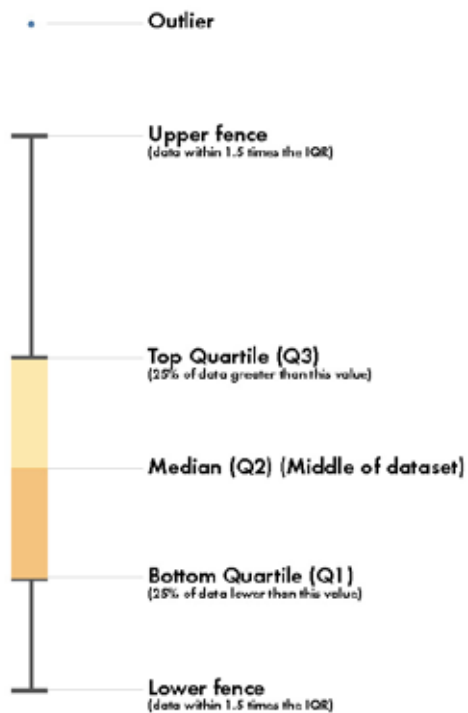


Fig 32 Prevailing top quartile (Q3) building heights by street block

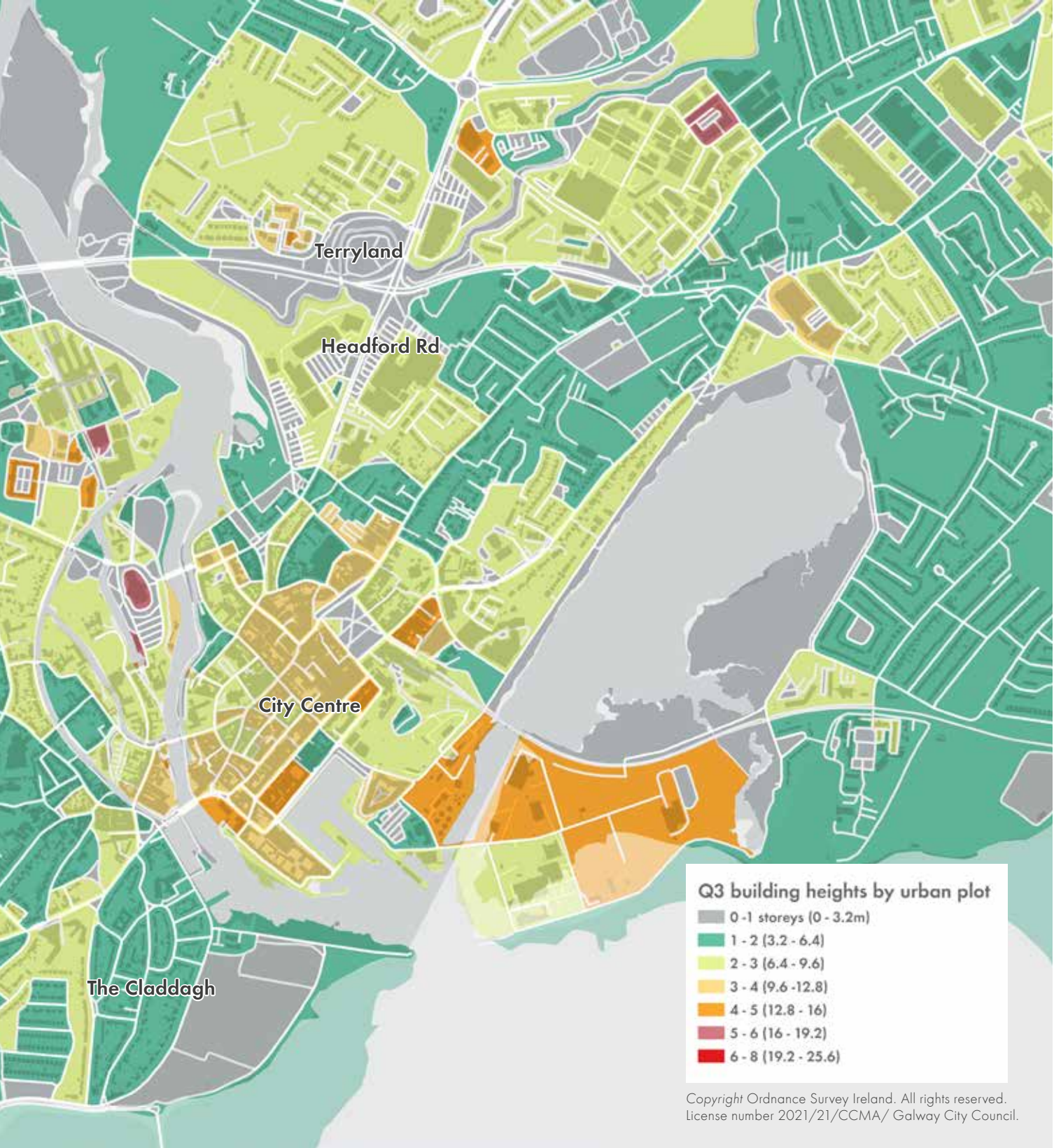


### Q3 heights - city centre

A closer look at the central area of Galway city reveals the distribution of top quartile (Q3) building heights for each defined street block.



**Fig 33** Prevailing top quartile (Q3) building heights by street block for the central area of Galway







# SUITABILITY AND SENSITIVITY

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# 10 SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

## 10.1 Layers of suitability

The Galway urban density and building heights strategy is founded on analysis related to the relative suitability for, and sensitivity to, new higher density development. Suitability analysis forms the backbone of the urban density strategy. Places that are well connected, well served by retail and community infrastructure, that have good access to public open space should in the first instance be considered the most suitable areas for higher density development. They will be best able to support sustainable patterns of compact development which makes best use of existing infrastructure.

The analysis presented here has been undertaken through city-wide GIS mapping. Whilst it is always important to consider urban context and local character, analysis of specific development proposals that might include high density development would be expected to be done at a site specific scale. In terms of density, FAR and height would not be considered in isolation, factors such as architecture, high quality urban design, public realm and amenity will all be important considerations when assessing suitability within the context of a local area.

The analysis uses and manipulates the baseline and data analysis outlined above. An analysis of the suitability of Galway to higher density development is therefore presented against the following suitability criteria:

### **Access to public transport**

- Bus stops
- High frequency bus stops
- Train station/transport interchange
- Cycle routes and green-ways

### **Centres**

- City centre
- District centres
- Neighbourhood/local centres and parades

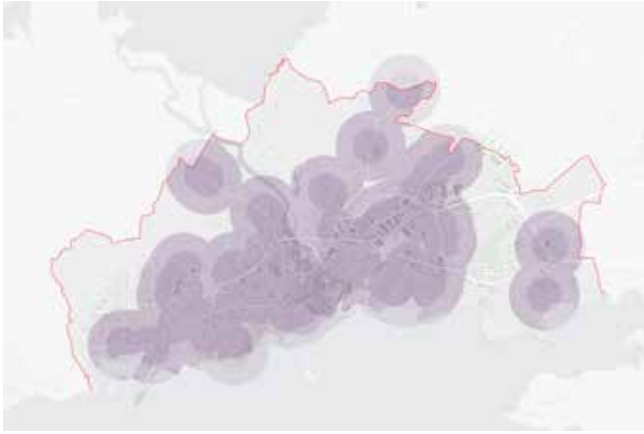
### **Open space proximity**

- City parks
- Neighbourhood parks
- Local parks
- Waterfront amenity

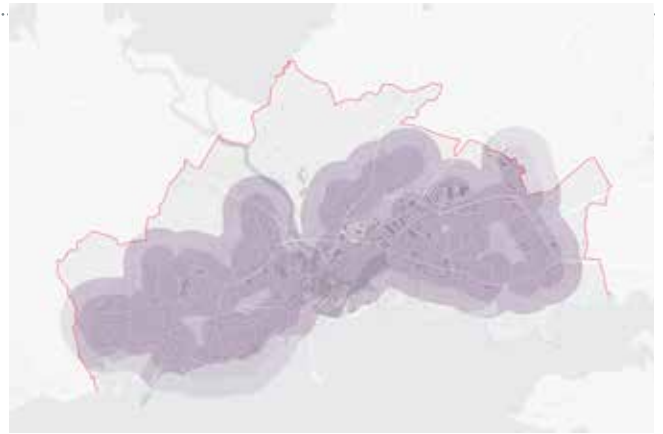
### **Community infrastructure**

- Schools
- Places of worship
- Third level facilities
- Hospitals

We conclude this section by mapping known development commitments as outlined in the current Galway Development Plan over a combined analysis map which gathers these suitability maps together.



**Fig 34** Bus stops



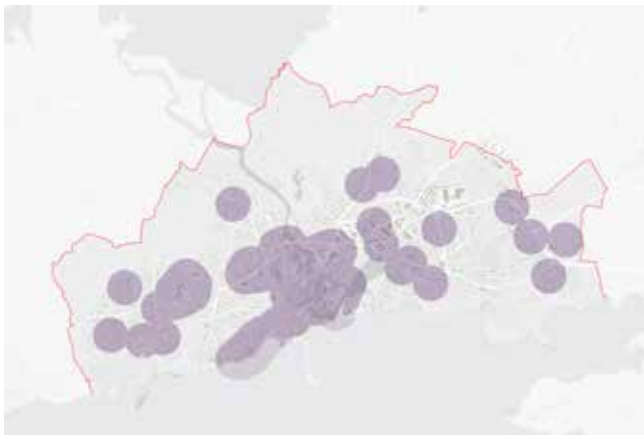
**Fig 39** High frequency bus stops (NTA)



**Fig 37** Train stations



**Fig 41** Cycleway and green-ways



**Fig 38** Centres



**Fig 35** Proximity to open spaces



**Fig 36** Waterfront amenity

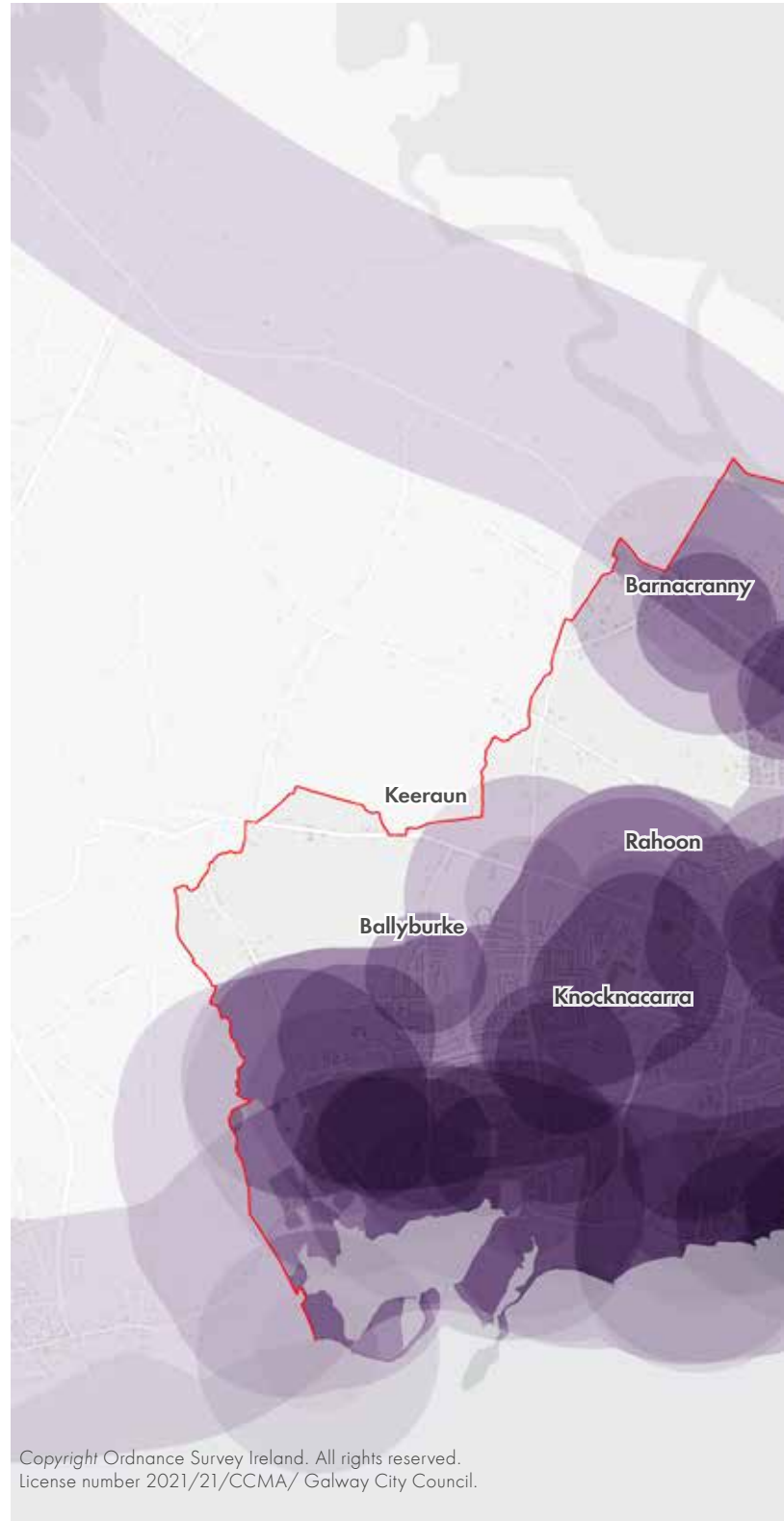


**Fig 40** Community facilities

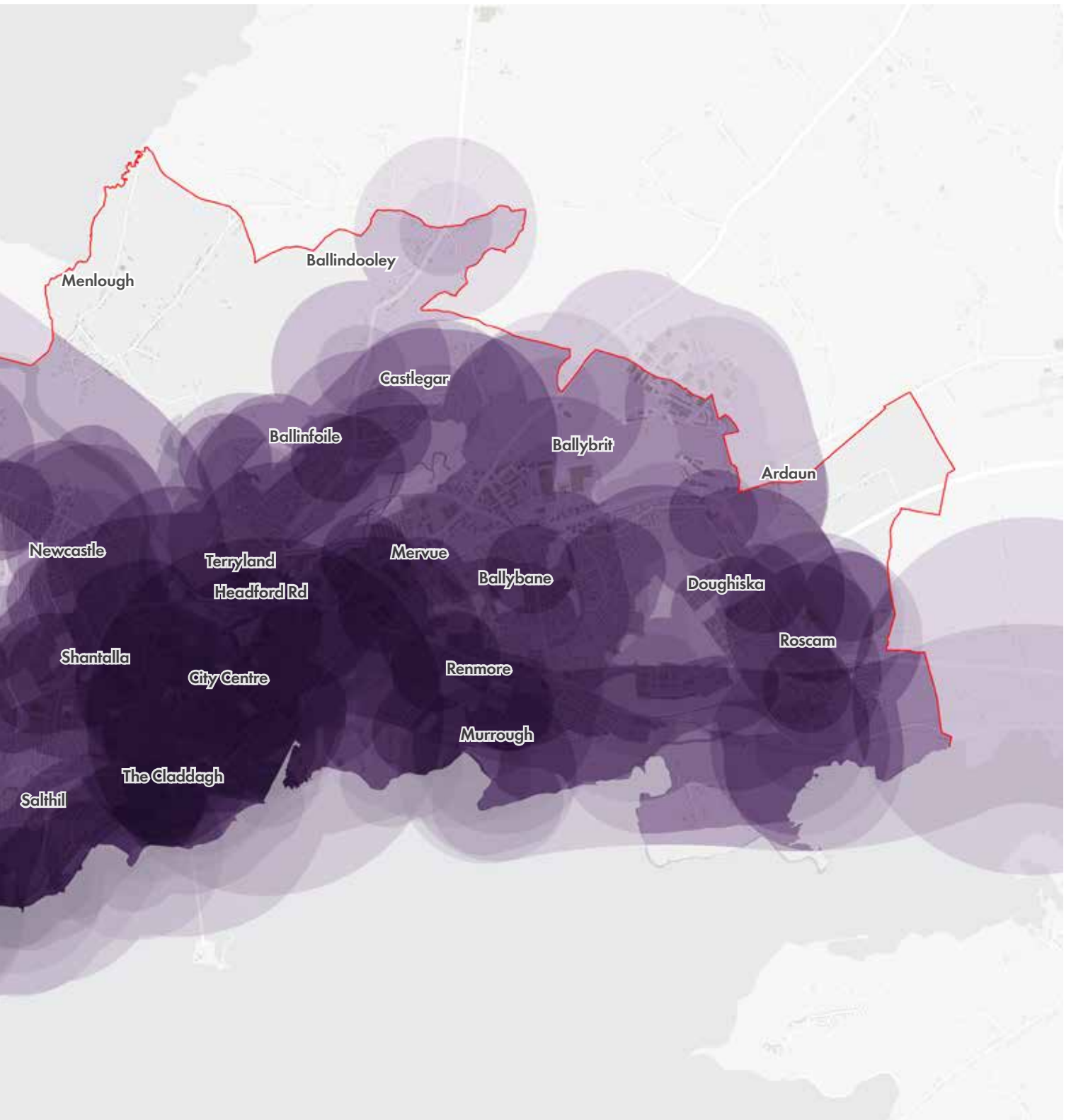
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### All layers

Overlapping all the suitability analysis plans begins to build a picture of relative suitability levels across the entire city administrative area. The darker areas represent those where multiple layers of suitability combine. The areas which satisfy the most criteria in the analysis represent the areas considered to be the most suitable for higher density forms of development.



**Fig 42** Composite urban density suitability spatial strategy (emerging)



# 11 METHOD OUTCOME - SUITABILITY

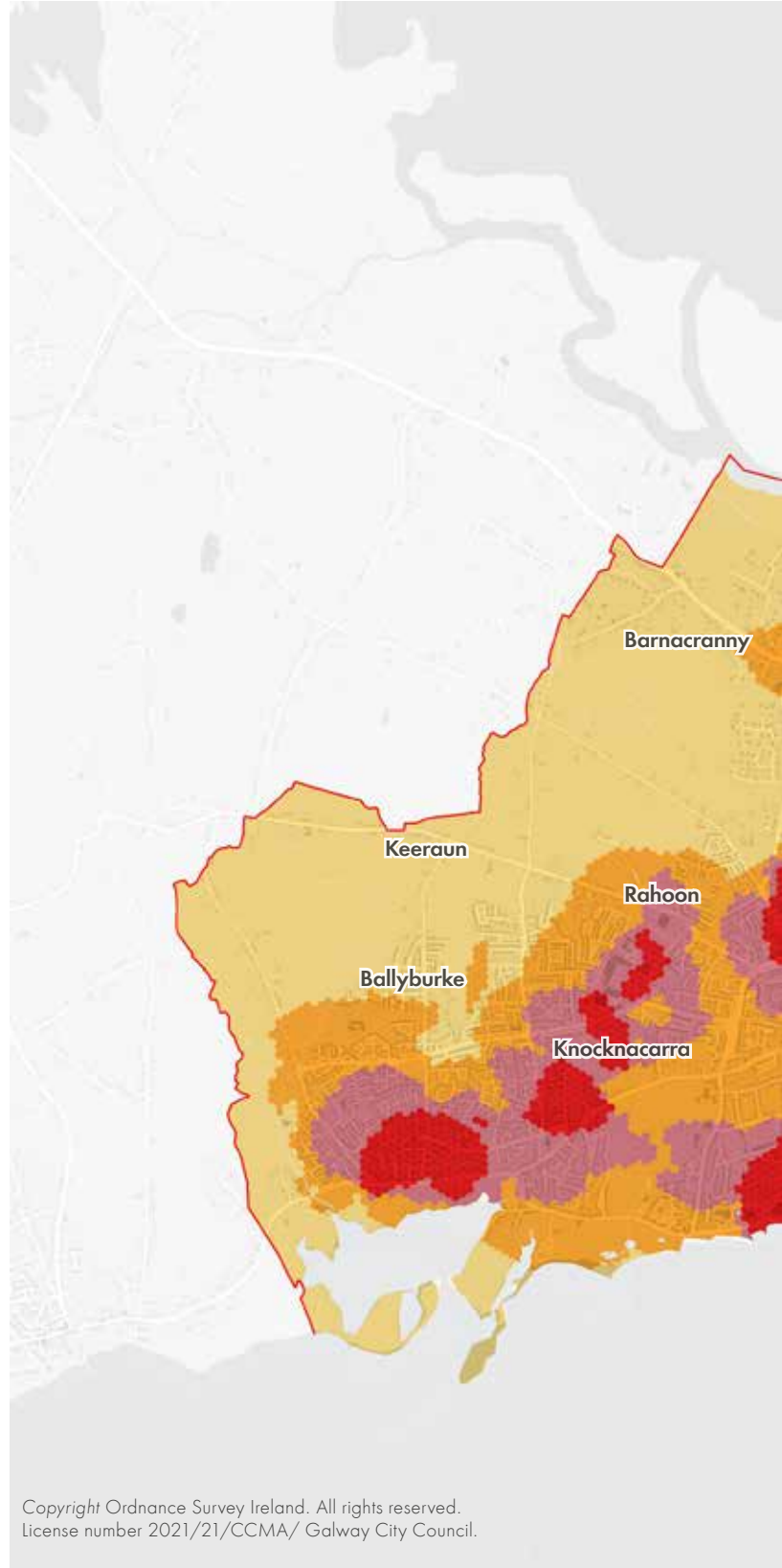
## 11.1 Layers of suitability

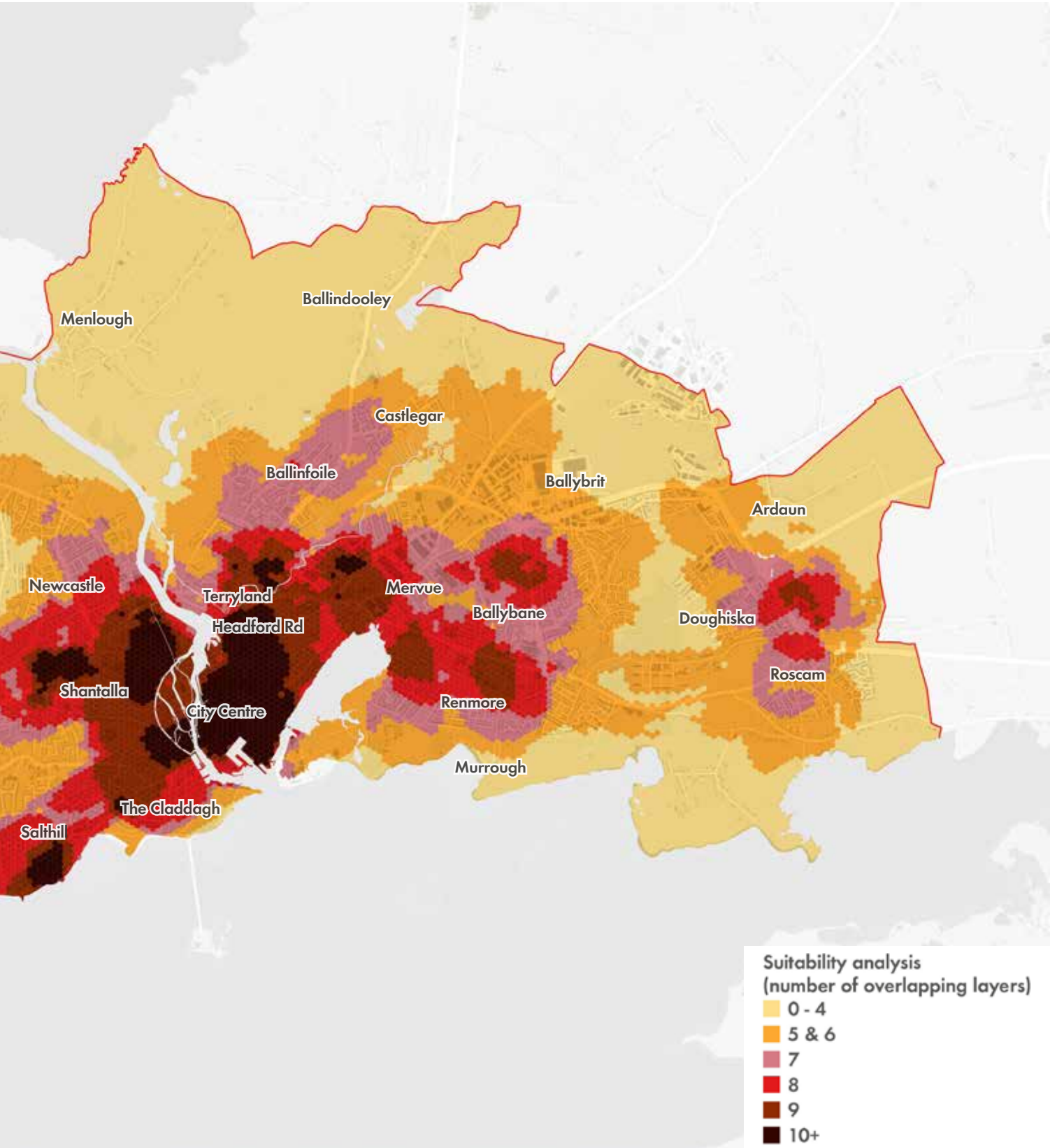
### Why a suitability strategy?

The analysis outlined above presents a range of criteria considered to make an area more suitable for higher density and potentially taller development. Areas meeting multiple criteria are considered generally to be more suitable for higher density forms of development. But this is only half of the picture presented by the analysis.

Suitability analysis takes no account of the constraints of an area which might make it more sensitive to potentially negative impacts of more dense forms of development. These factors, which include the proximity to heritage assets and the potential impact on identified key views, must be considered alongside an area's relative suitability. Indeed, it might be that, even for the locations considered to be the most suitable (i.e. meeting the most suitability criteria), the particular combination of sensitivities may be such that the area is not considered an appropriate location to be identified or earmarked for higher density forms of development.

However, suitability is still seen as the most fundamental part of the density and building heights strategy. Where there are few or no sensitivity factors to consider, an area could only be considered appropriate for more dense forms of development where suitable.





## 12 SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

### 12.1 Layers of sensitivity

It follows that even the most suitable locations might not be considered appropriate for increases in urban density or taller forms of development because of the particular combination of sensitivities relevant to that particular location.

But the strategy should consider first an area's suitability and then carefully considered its townscape, heritage or other sensitivities. An area's suitability for higher density development is fundamental to any assessment of relative appropriateness.

#### **The suitability strategy**

The suitability strategy presented categorises zones of Galway which meet particular numbers of suitability criteria. It is derived purely from GIS analysis and takes no account of townscape character, heritage assets or other sensitivities. These factors, some of which are captured in the sensitivity analysis, should be considered alongside the suitability strategy map to inform the level to which an area might be considered appropriate for denser forms of development.

Some areas will be more sensitive than others to the impacts of new development, and perhaps particularly so to higher density new development. This heightened level of sensitivity doesn't necessarily mean, however, that an area is any less suitable for higher density development. Historic city centres are generally well served by public transport and provide a highly accessible concentration of shops and services. They might however also be historically significant locations which might make them particularly sensitive to the impact of new development.

This section seeks to present a map-based analysis of Galway's relative levels of potential sensitivity to new development based on analysis against a range of criteria as follows:

- Architectural Conservation Areas
- Protected Structures
- Views
- Topography
- Identified historic village envelopes
- Low density residential zones





**Fig 43** Architectural Conservation Areas



**Fig 44** Record of Protected Structures



**Fig 45** Views



**Fig 46** Topography



**Fig 47** Identified historic village envelopes



**Fig 48** Low density residential zones

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### All layers

The datasets and analysis outlined above are a consideration in framing the urban density and building heights strategy.

Overlapping all the sensitivity analysis plans begins to build a picture of relative sensitivity levels across the entire city administrative area. The darker areas represent those where multiple layers of sensitivity combine. The areas which satisfy the most criteria in the analysis represent the areas considered to be the most sensitive to higher density forms of development.

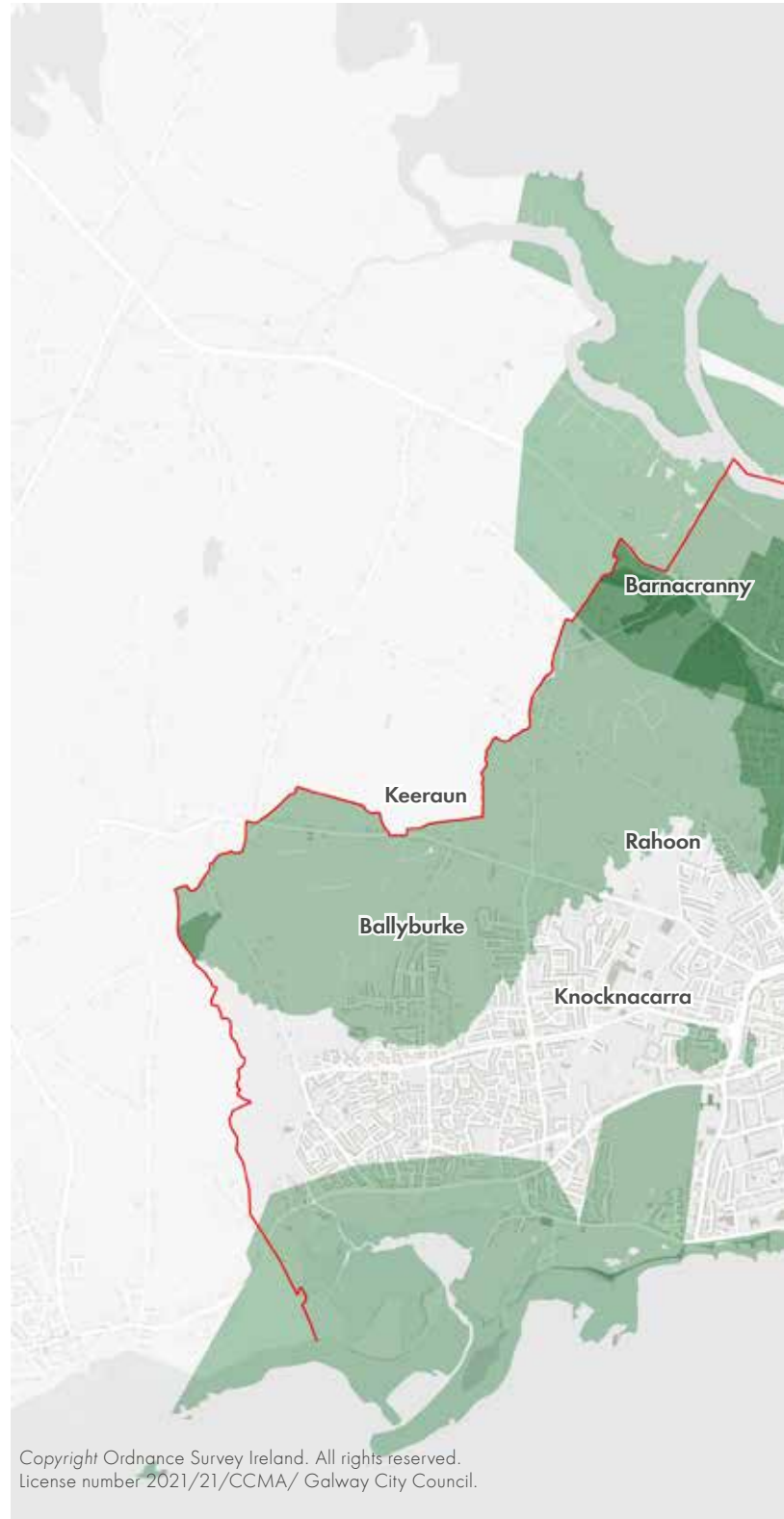
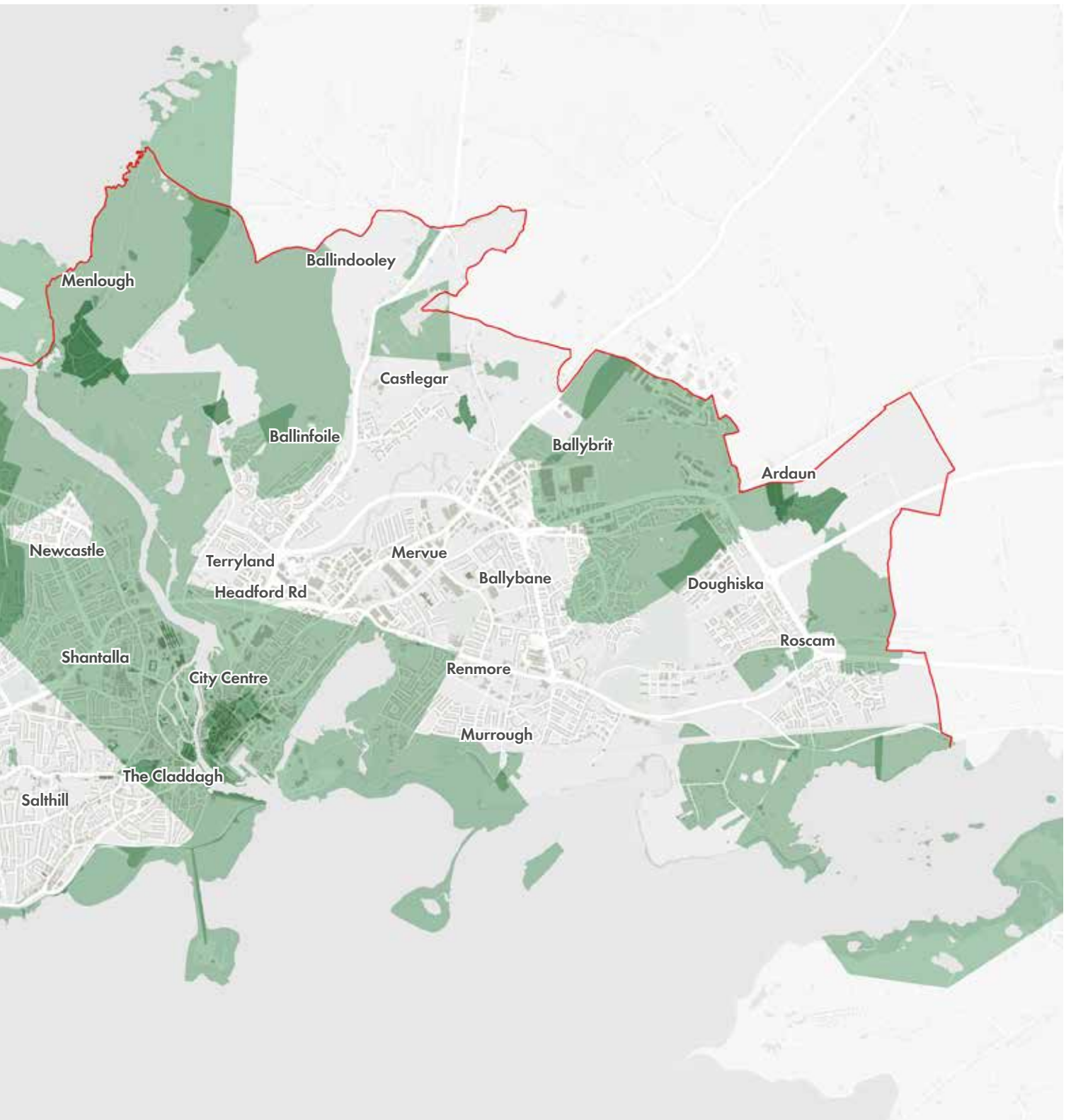
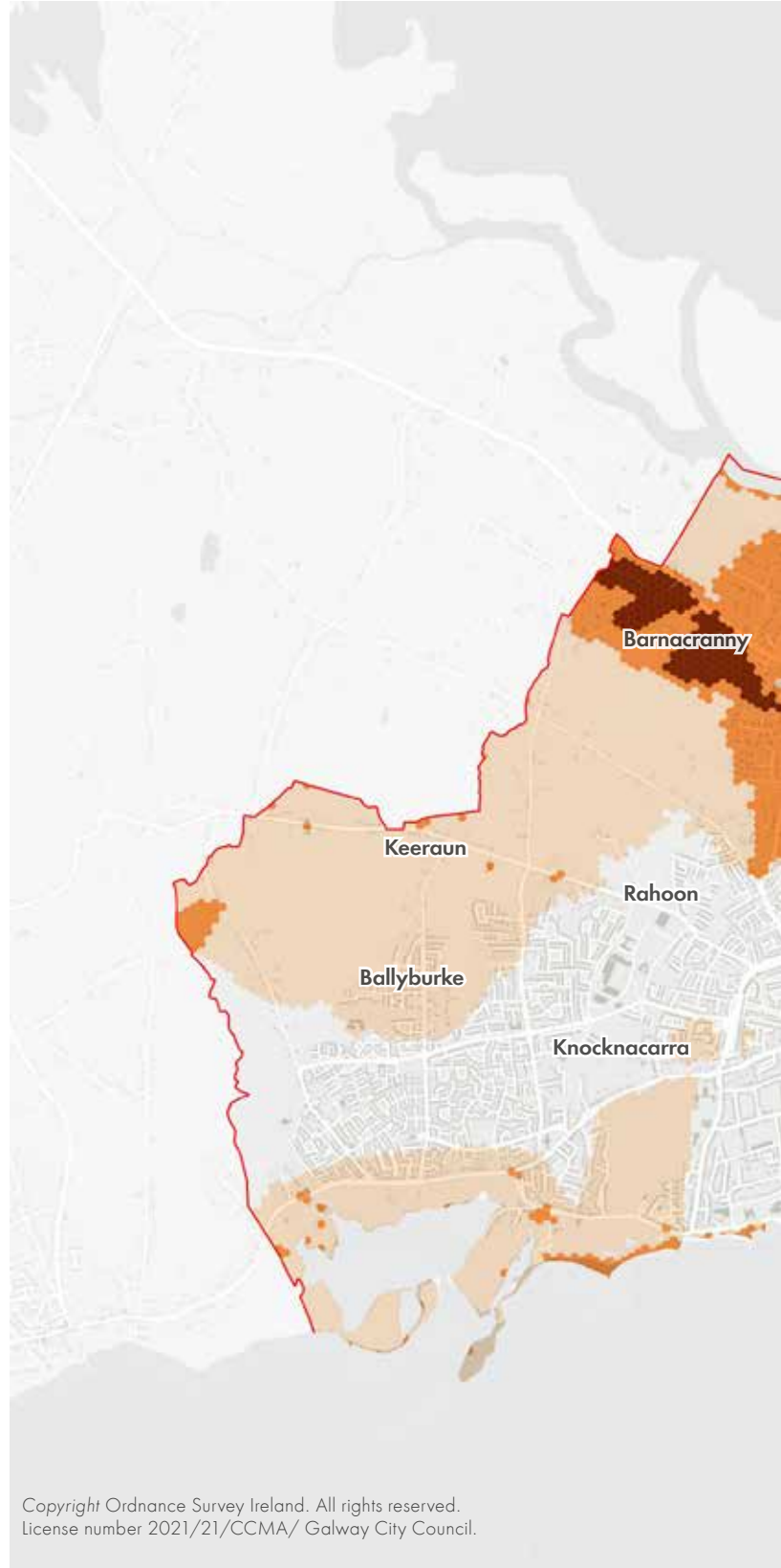
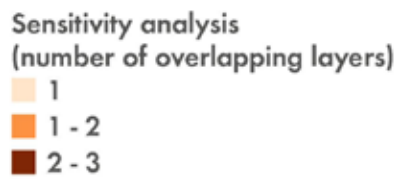


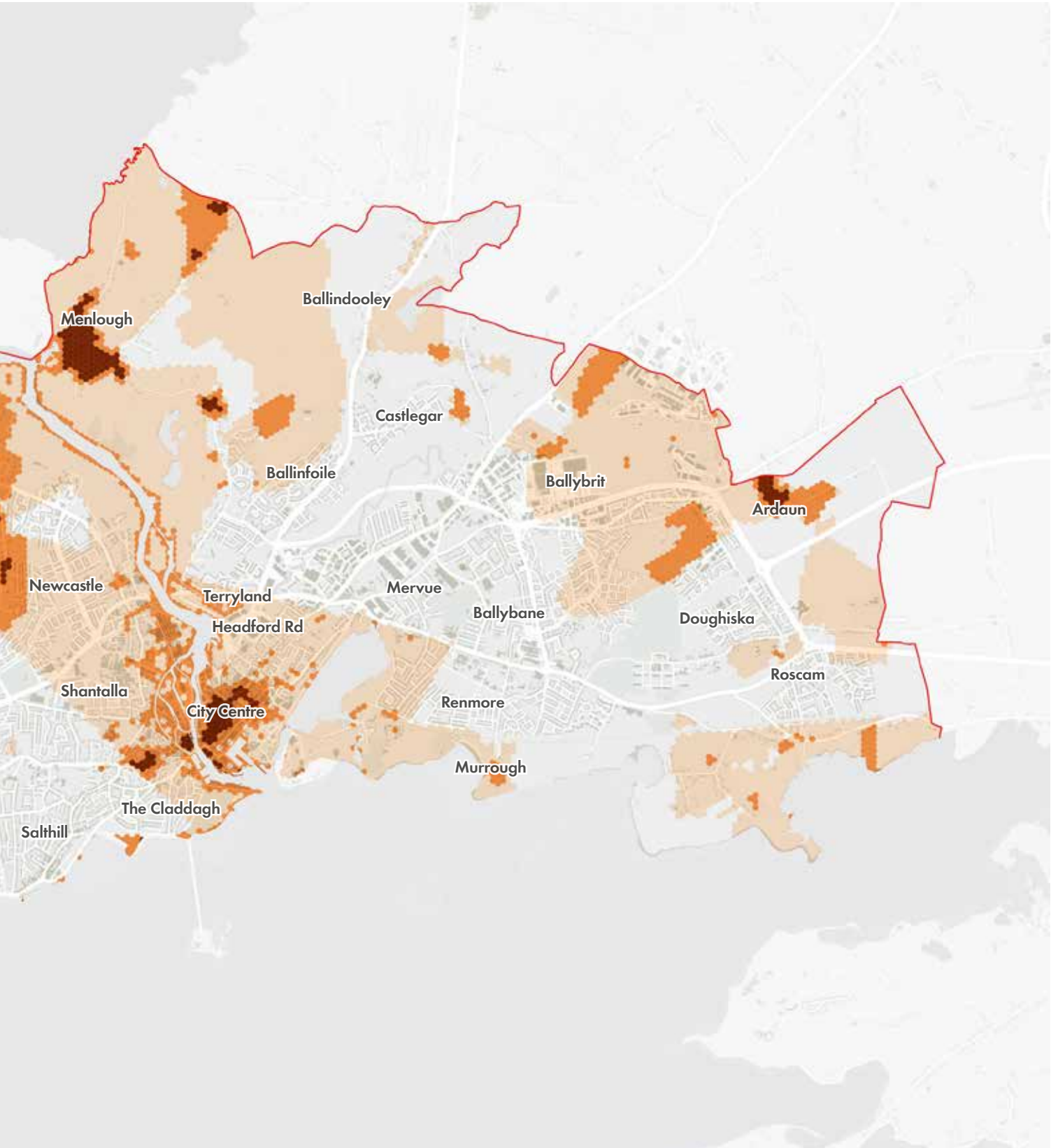
Fig 49 Composite sensitivity layers for Galway



# 13 METHOD OUTCOME - SENSITIVITY



**Fig 50** Summary sensitivity layers - showing where multiple layers of sensitivity apply in different locations





# **SPATIAL STRATEGY**

# 14 AN INTRODUCTION TO GALWAY'S NEIGHBOURHOODS

It is helpful to think about character at different scales. Part B provides an overview of some of the characteristics which help to determine the character of Galway when considered at a district-wide scale. Combining this with reflections on the suitability and sensitivity analysis will help us explore character at a scale best understood by local people - at the neighbourhood and area level.

## The 'neighbourhood concept'

Galway comprises of a series of places and neighbourhoods, each having their own distinct character. The Development Plan introduces the 'neighbourhood concept' in Section 2.4, supported by standards and guidance outlined in Section 11.3. Whilst this concept relates to residential areas only, it provides a useful district-wide four tier categorisation of places, each with a series of distinct neighbourhood places as follows:

### 1. City centre:

- Woodquay, Long Walk, Henry Street Area, and the City Core

### 2. Inner residential areas:

- **East** - Bohermore, College Road, Lough Atalia
- **West** - Claddagh, Shantalla, Newcastle, Fr. Griffin Road

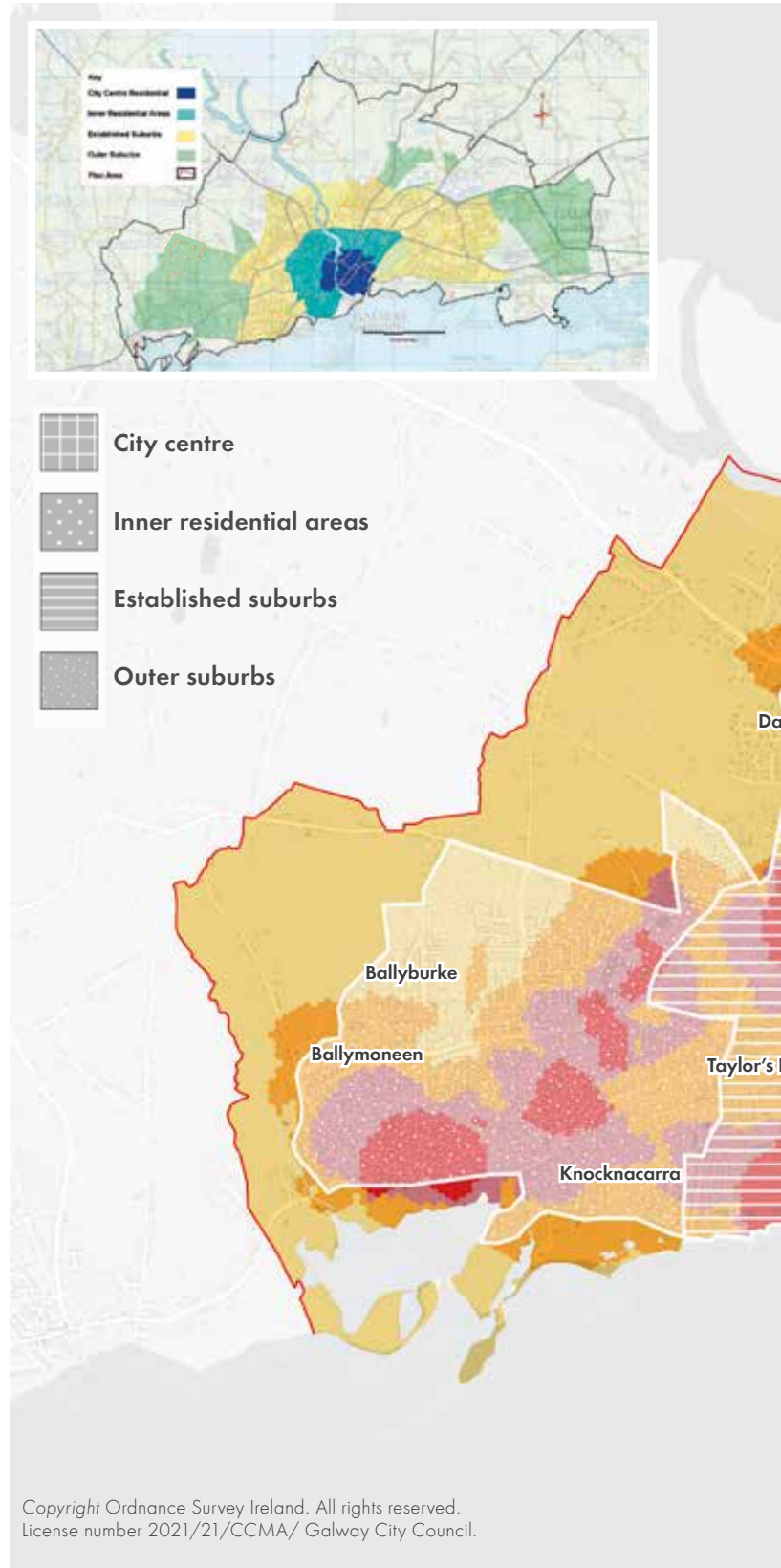
### 3. Established suburbs:

- **East** - Renmore, Mervue, Ballybaan
- **West** - Dangan, Salthill, Taylor's Hill, Westside
- **North** - Tirellan, Ballinfolle

### 4. Outer suburbs:

- **East** - Ardaun, Doughiska, Roscam
- **West** - Knocknacarra, Ballyburke, Ballymoneen
- **North** - Castlegar, Tuam Road

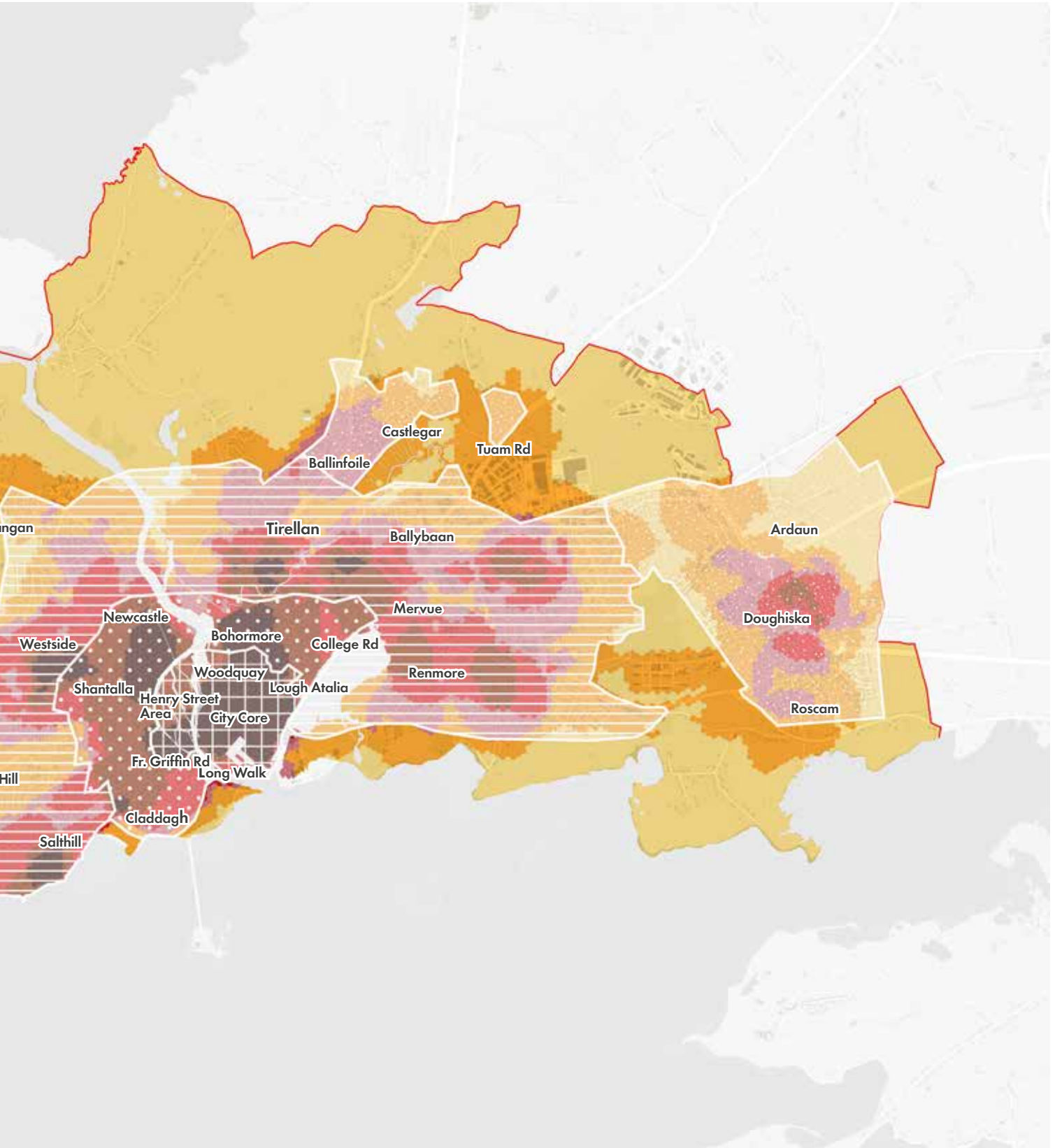
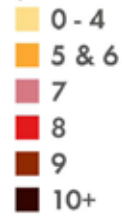
The places and neighbourhoods identified in the 'neighbourhood concept' are not defined – views on where any one place starts or ends will vary. The purpose of dividing Galway into



**Fig 51** Suitability layers with Galway City neighbourhood concept plan as an overlay



Suitability analysis  
(number of overlapping layers)



# 15 RETAIL CENTRES, REGENERATION AND OPPORTUNITY AREAS

these places and neighbourhoods is to help ensure that growth and development is tailored in a way that responds positively to the special qualities and specific issues / challenges of different locations and contexts.

Whilst not a characterisation study in itself and acknowledging that much further work could be done in terms of understanding Galway's varied character, the 'neighbourhood concept' forms the basis of a useful framework around which this density and heights study can be structured.

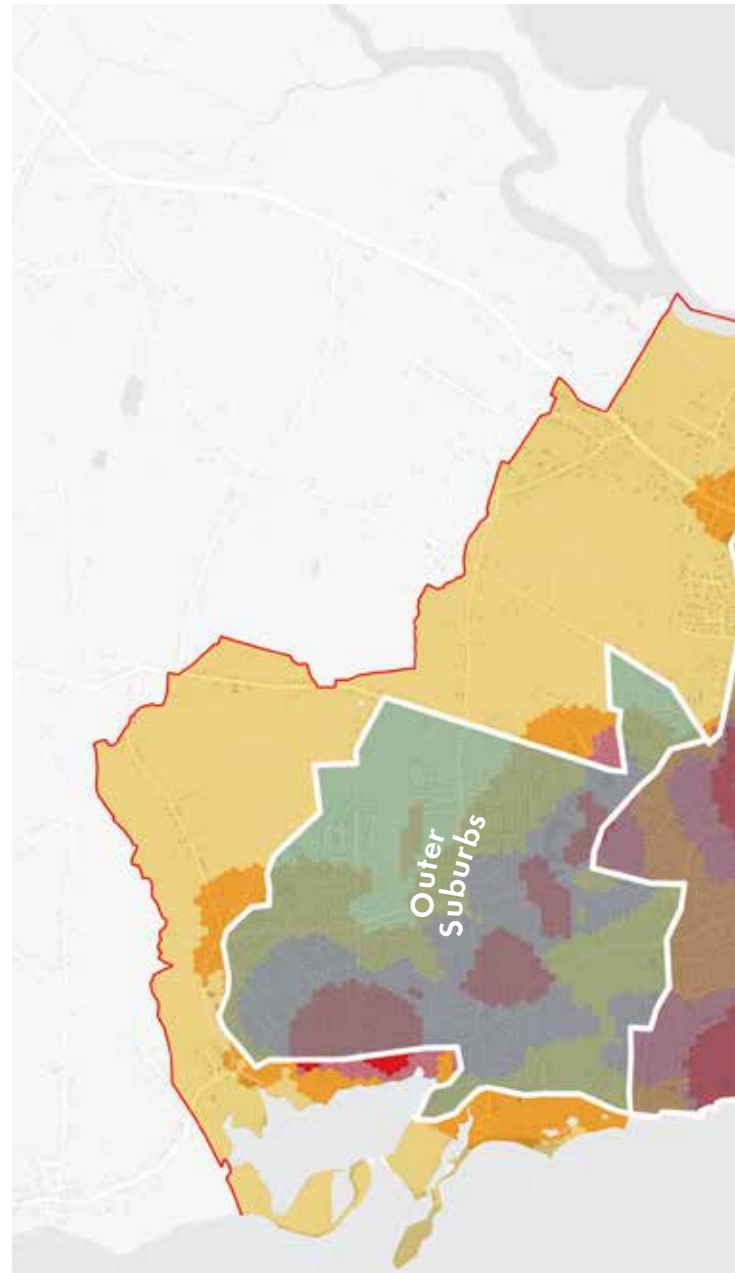
Set in the context of this neighbourhood concept, two Development Plan policy frameworks are considered particularly relevant to the density and building height strategy. Firstly, the network of retail centres distributed across Galway City's administrative area, and, secondly, the known land use zones and lands earmarked for new residential and mixed use development. These include the key identified regeneration lands at Ceannt Station, Inner Harbour, the Headford Road and Ardaun LAP lands.

## Retail hierarchy

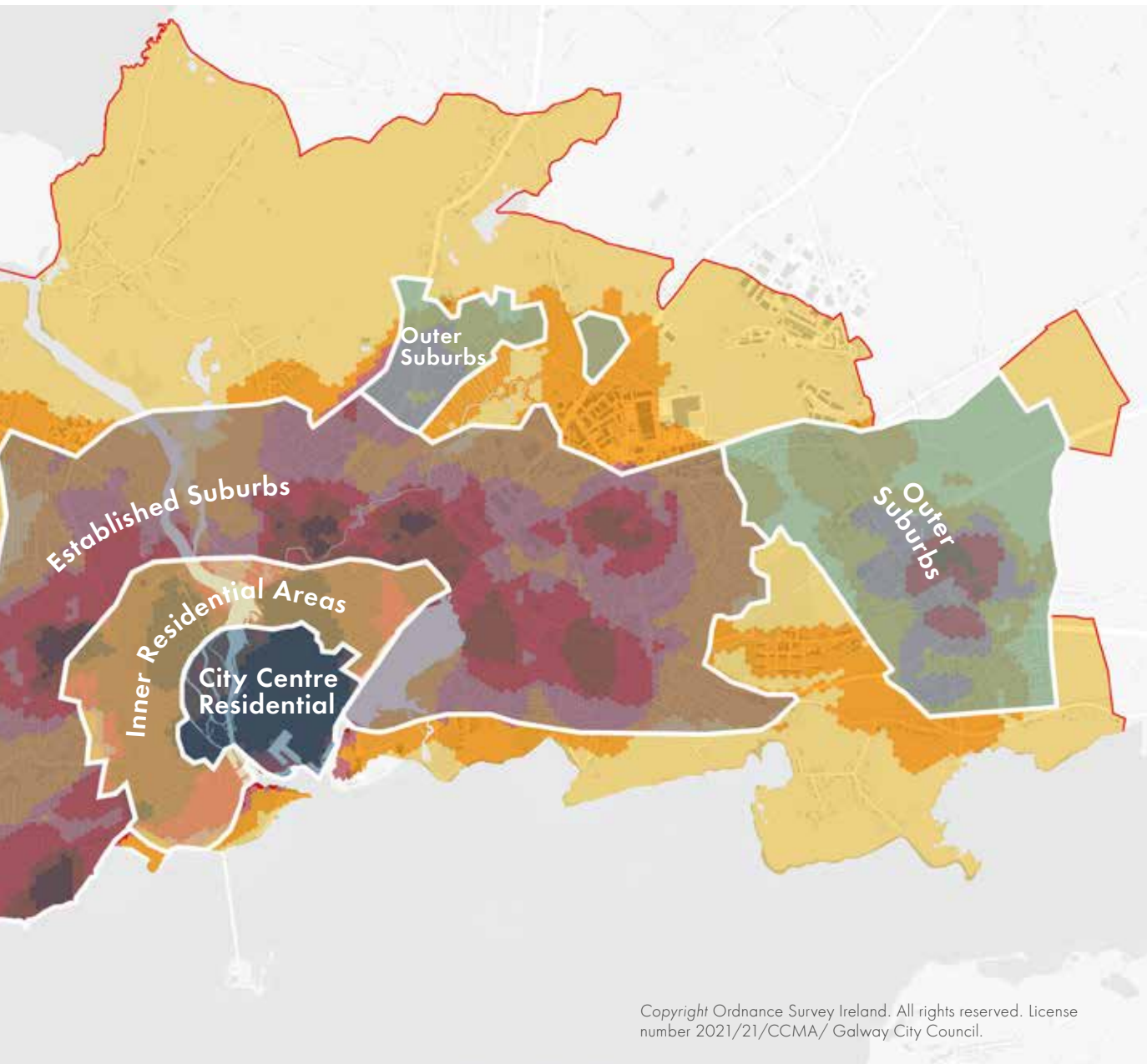
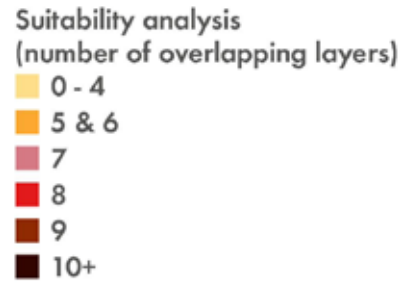
The retail hierarchy for Galway is set out under Section 6.3 of the current Development Plan. Proximity of retail centres and clusters of retail and community services form an important part of the suitability analysis outlined in Part C of this document. Good levels of accessibility, either via means of active travel or public transport, to retail and other centres is a key component for the establishment of sustainable patterns of life. The services these locations provide reduce the need to travel, particularly by car.

Table 6.2 of the current plan provides a summary of how the retail centres across the city of Galway sit within the County-wide hierarchy of retail centres.

There are six levels in the retail hierarchy, with the following being most relevant to Galway city:



**Fig 52** Suitability layers with Galway City neighbourhood concept plan as an overlay



**LEVEL 1 Main town centres** – Galway city centre;

**LEVEL 3 District centres** – Doughiska, Knocknacarra, Westside, Ardaun (proposed);

**LEVEL 5 Village / neighbourhood centres** – of where there are several such as Salthill and Newcastle; and

**LEVEL 6 Corner / local shops** – residential neighbourhoods in the city.

**Regeneration and planned growth and investment**

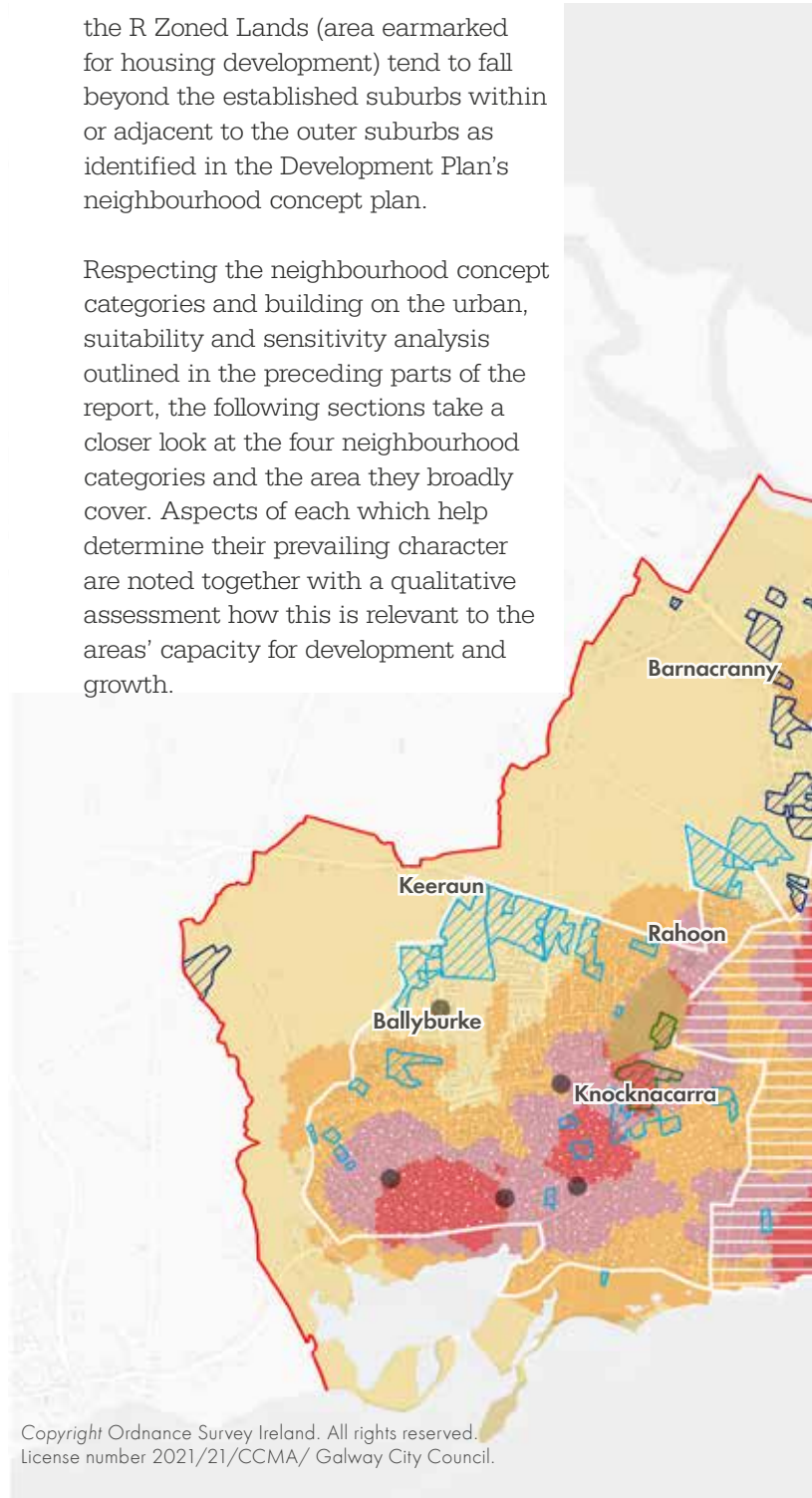
The core strategy of the current plan supports an integrated sustainable land use and transportation strategy. It has a focus on the growth of designated regeneration areas at – Ceannt Station, Inner Harbour and lands in the Headford Road area. It also includes for the direction of development to a sustainable urban extension on the east side of the city at Ardaun, which is supported by a Local Area Plan (LAP). The balance of development is for consolidation of the existing zoned areas mainly located in the outer suburbs.

The designated regeneration and opportunity sites have scope for a significant quantum of mixed use development and the creation of new neighbourhoods. Other emerging key regeneration sites include lands at Sandy Road and at Dyke Road, the potential development of these lands are being progressed by the City Council in collaboration with the Land Development Agency. Significant potential also exists at Nun’s Island with NUIG plans for regeneration, which have been identified for funding under the URDF. Other sites associated with district centre designation and a number of brownfield opportunity sites also have potential to accommodate planned growth.

It is noteworthy that the regeneration (mixed use) lands of Ceannt Station, Inner Harbour and the Headford Road fall within either the City Centre Residential or Inner Residential Areas,

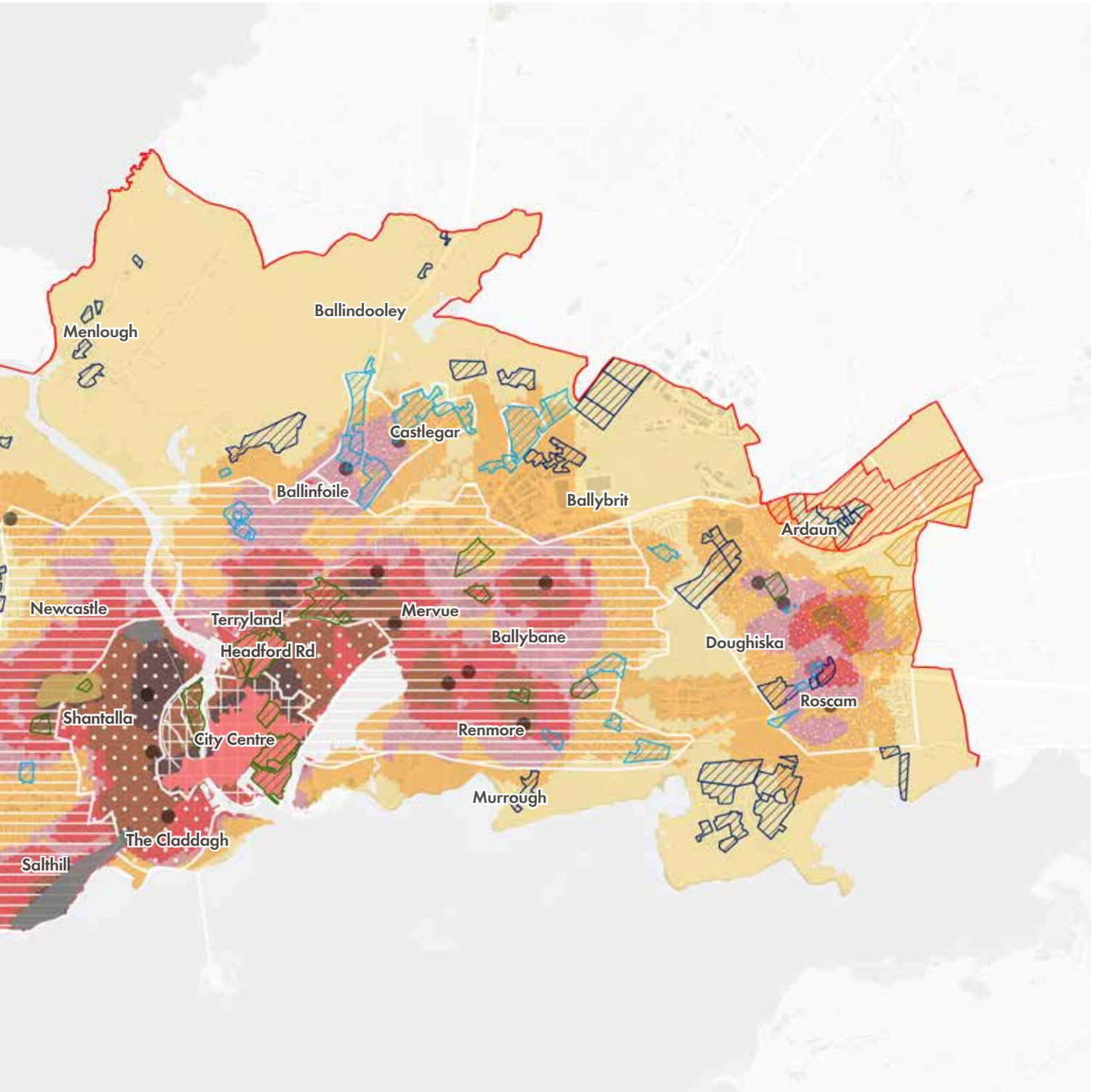
the R Zoned Lands (area earmarked for housing development) tend to fall beyond the established suburbs within or adjacent to the outer suburbs as identified in the Development Plan’s neighbourhood concept plan.

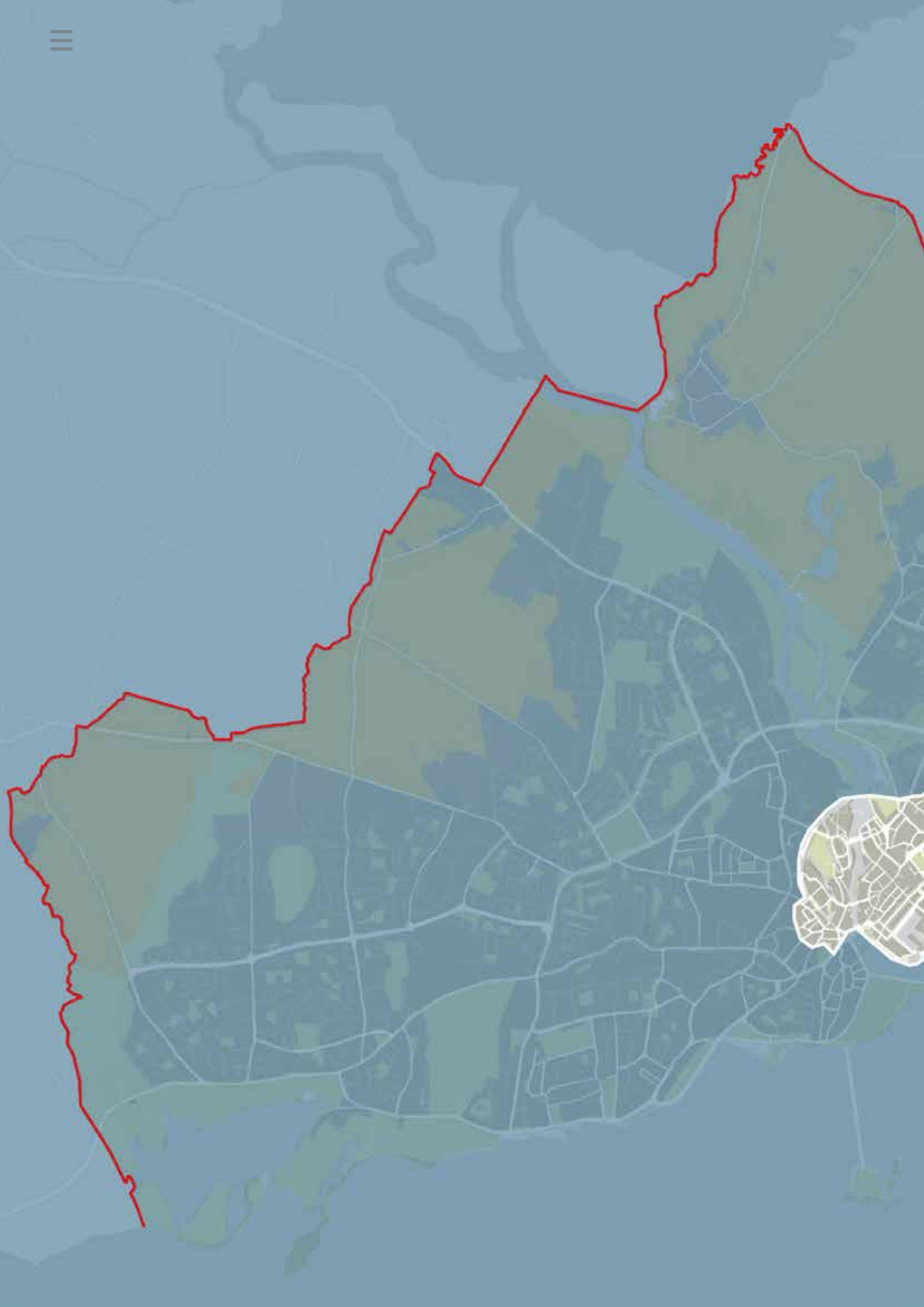
Respecting the neighbourhood concept categories and building on the urban, suitability and sensitivity analysis outlined in the preceding parts of the report, the following sections take a closer look at the four neighbourhood categories and the area they broadly cover. Aspects of each which help determine their prevailing character are noted together with a qualitative assessment how this is relevant to the areas’ capacity for development and growth.

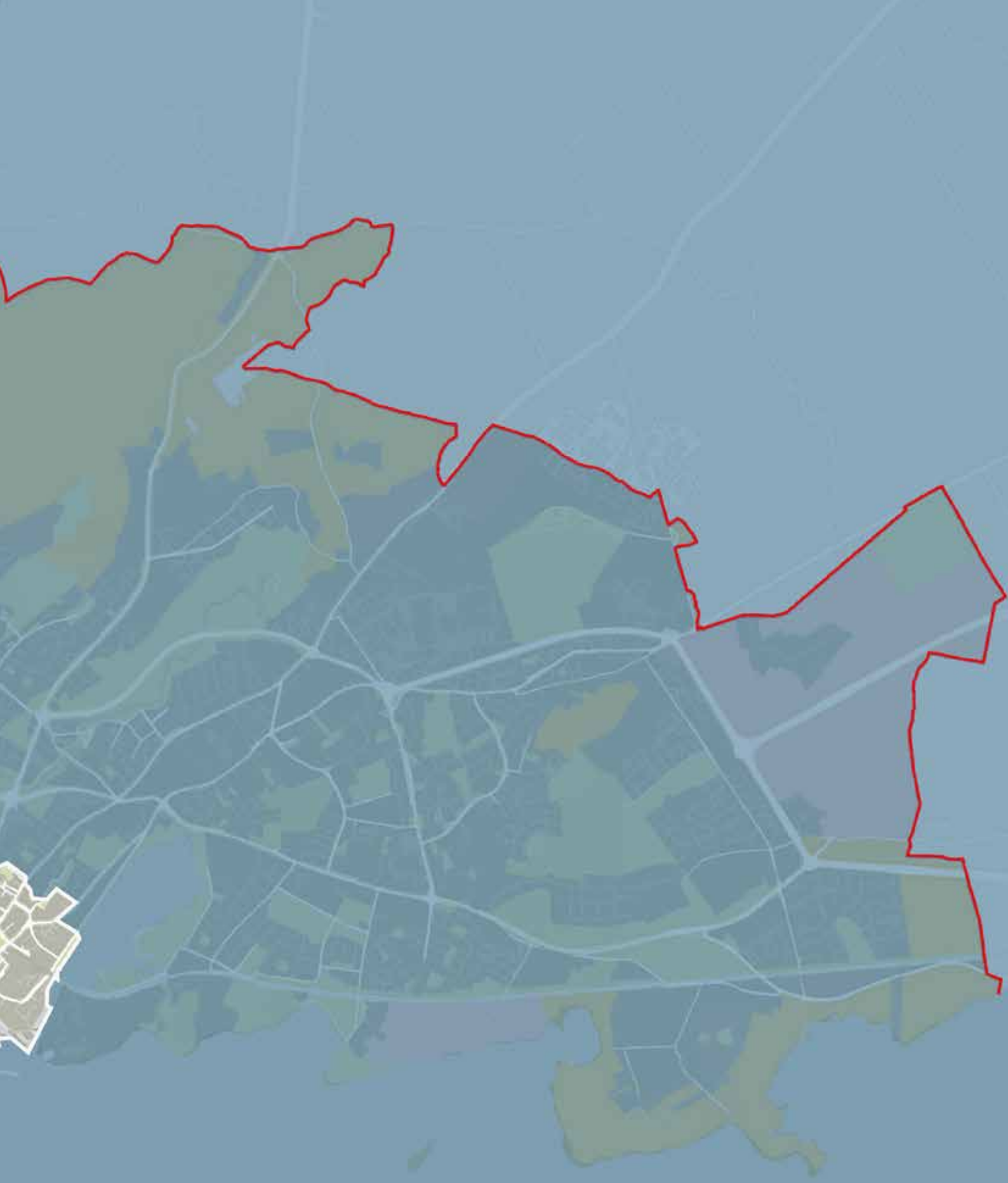


**Fig 53** Suitability plan for Galway with the GDP’s neighbourhood concept plan as an overlay together with the retail hierarchy and Residential, Regeneration and Opportunity Sites

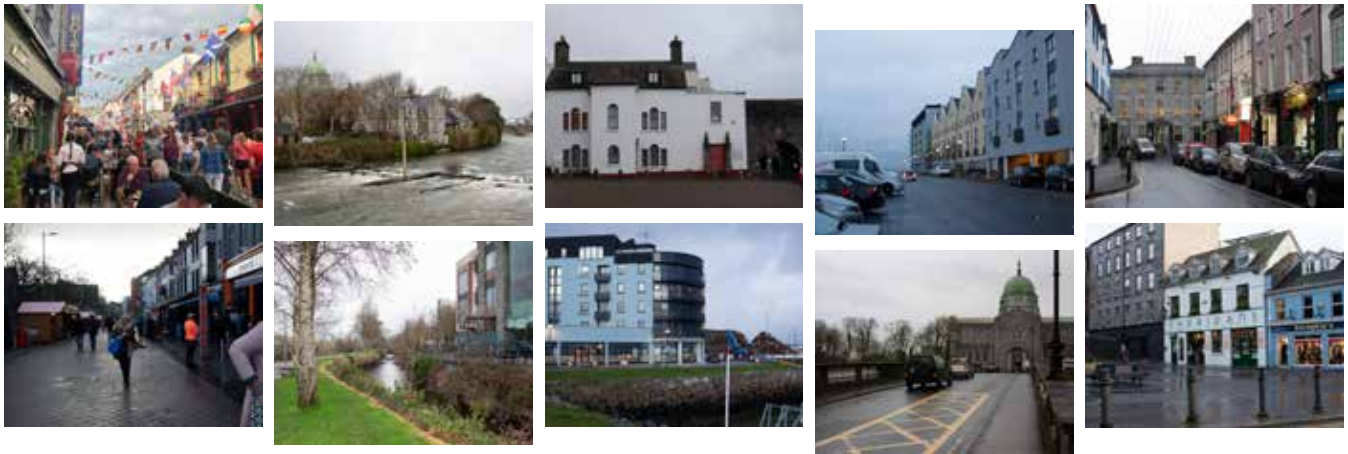
Suitability analysis  
(number of overlapping layers)







# CITY CENTRE



**Fig 55** Environmental analysis of city centre



**Topography**



**Green infrastructure**



**Waterways**



**Morphology**



**Road network**



**Conservation**



# 16 CITY CENTRE

## 16.1 Overview

As the commercial, economic and cultural heart of Galway, the historic city centre is under continuous pressure. In making decisions about potential investments and developments, careful judgements must be made. The need to protect the city's special historic character and townscape must be balanced with the need to continually improve and invest in the centre to retain its vitality and viability.

The current Development Plan has developed an approach which seeks to achieve this balance - by planning for major development within the city centre environment but in locations which need rejuvenation and regeneration and which are better suited to accommodating larger forms favoured by modern developments.

Great care is taken to ensure planning decisions are made which protect the historic townscape character of the core retail area and historic core of the city. At the same time, major developments on regeneration lands at Ceannt Station, Inner Harbour and Headford Road areas have potential to create their own character and sense of place whilst ensuring good quality linkages with the city core. There are also identified opportunities for regeneration at Eyre Square and Nun's Island.

As a time when councils are being asked to plan for a radical phase of growth, this density and building heights strategy for Galway helps to support efforts to strike an appropriate balance between supporting investment and growth whilst protecting what is best about the city.

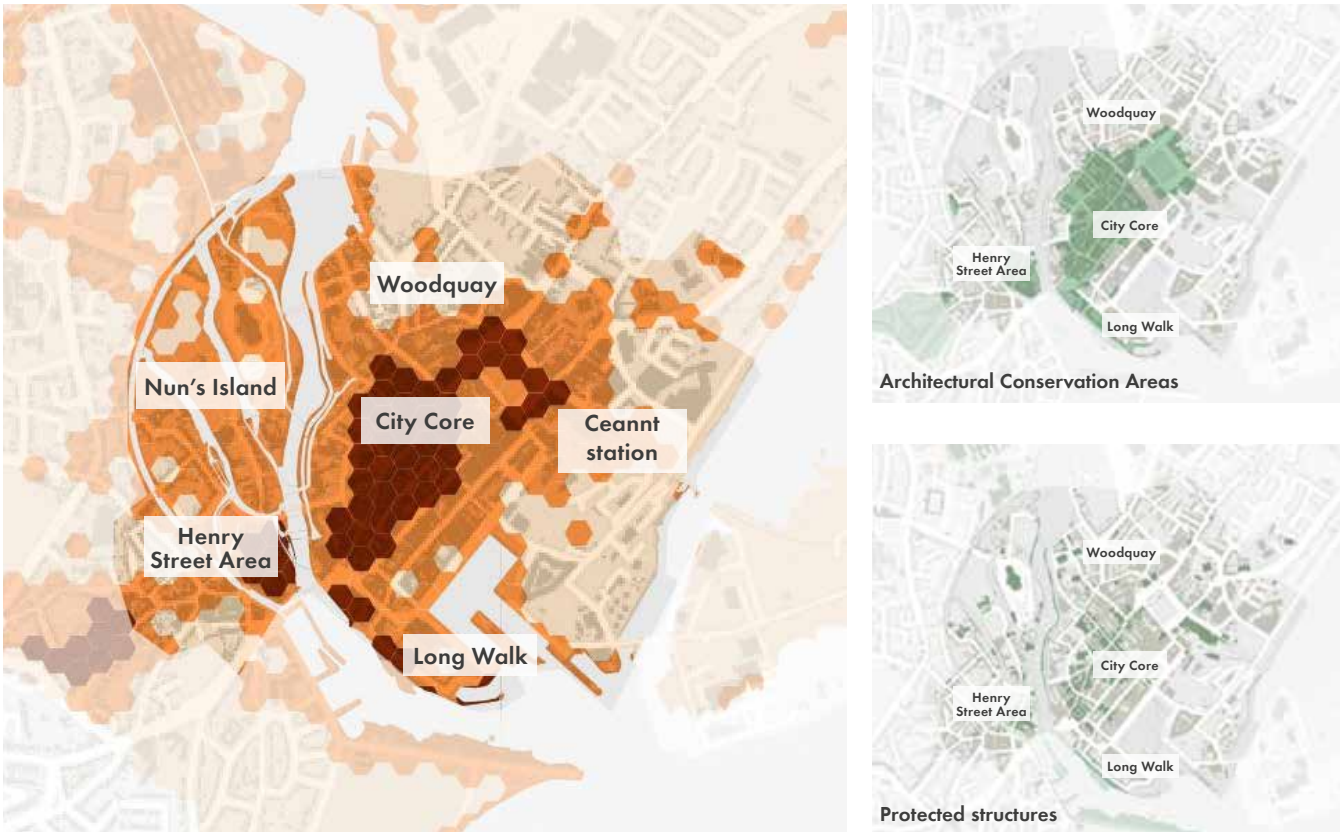
Guided by the neighbourhoods outlined in Section 2.4 of the Development Plan, this section brings together all aspects of the study to help inform recommendations relating to density and building heights for the City Centre. Four areas are addressed in turn, as follows:

1. City core;
2. Woodquay;
3. Long Walk/Harbour/Ceannt Station regeneration area;
4. Henry Street Area/West End.

Determining appropriate levels of density and building height in new development must take account of a wide range of relevant issues including the context of the site and the character of the surrounding area and the need for good quality urban and building design.



**Fig 56** Prospect of Galway, looking north-east, 1685, by Thomas Phillips (National Library of Ireland) (Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 2016)



**Fig 57 SENSITIVITY** This summary map shows darker colours where multiple layers of the sensitivity analysis overlap. The city core area is seen as the most sensitive location in the city centre

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**Fig 58** Historic map of Galway City, 1842 (© National Library of Ireland)



**Corrib View**, date unknown  
(National Library of Ireland)



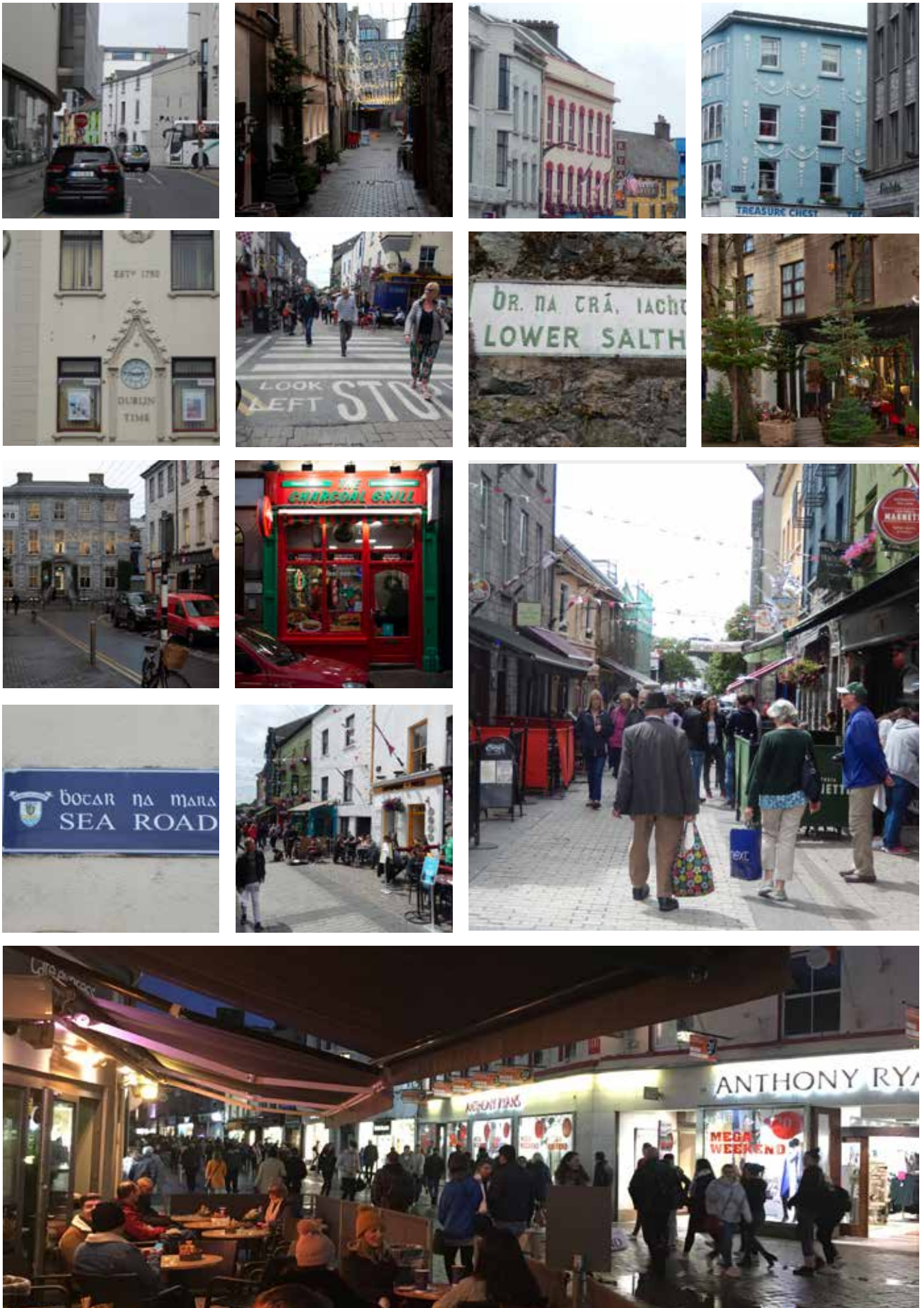
**SS Duras**, early 1900s  
(National Library of Ireland)

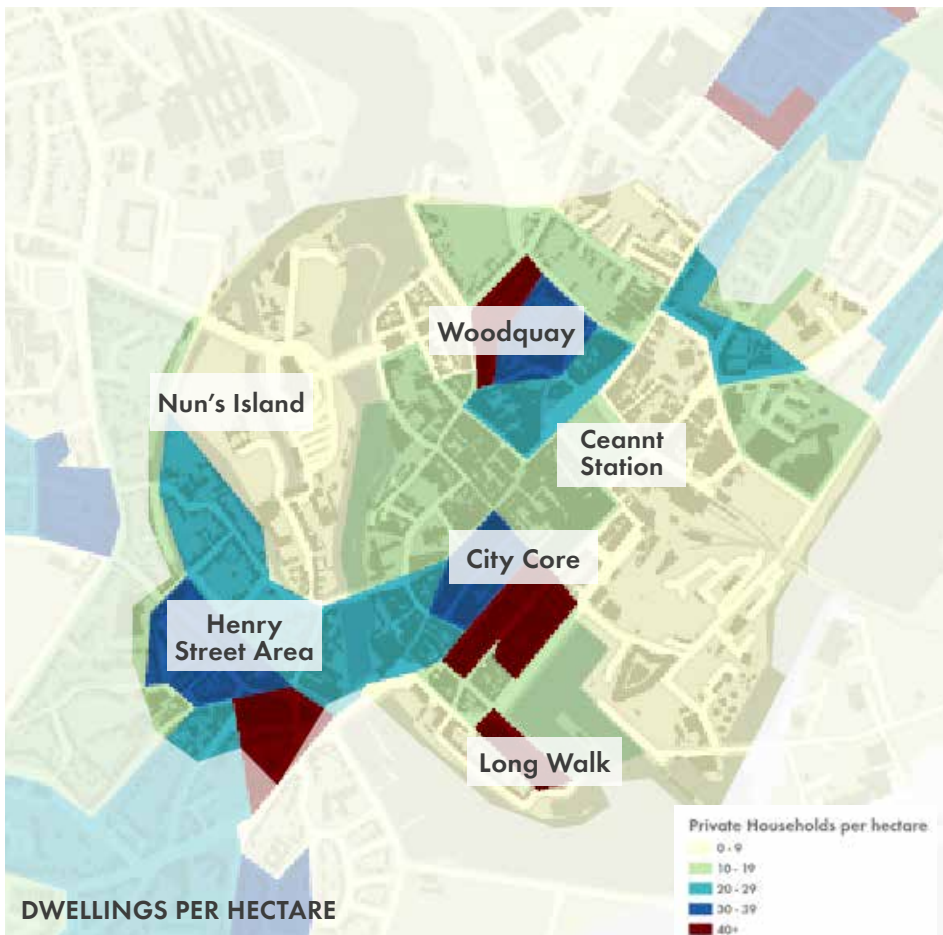
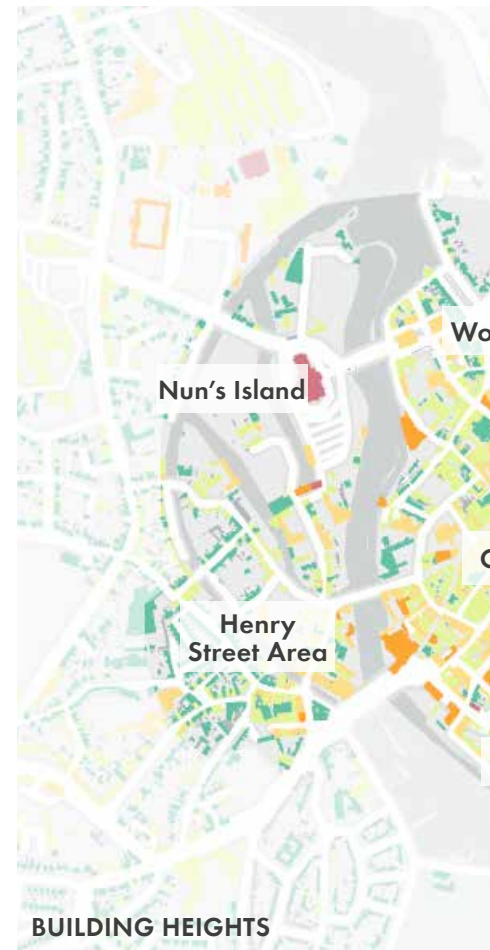
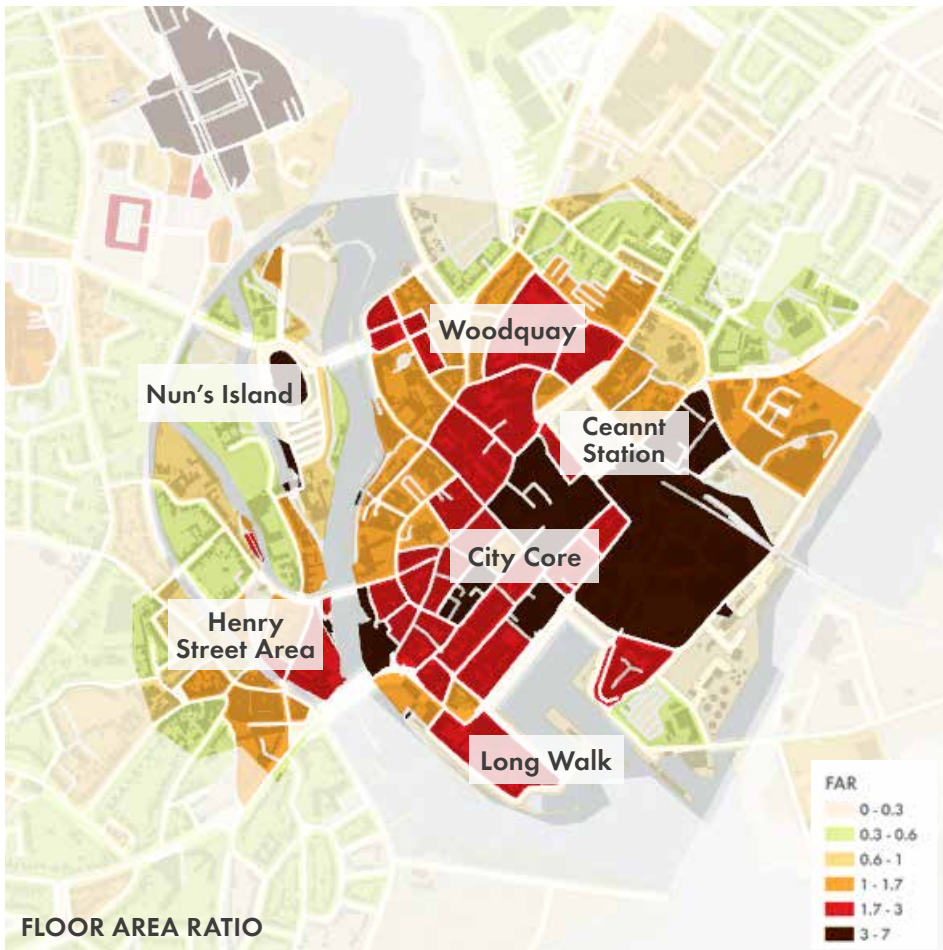


**Fish market**, date unknown  
(National Library of Ireland)

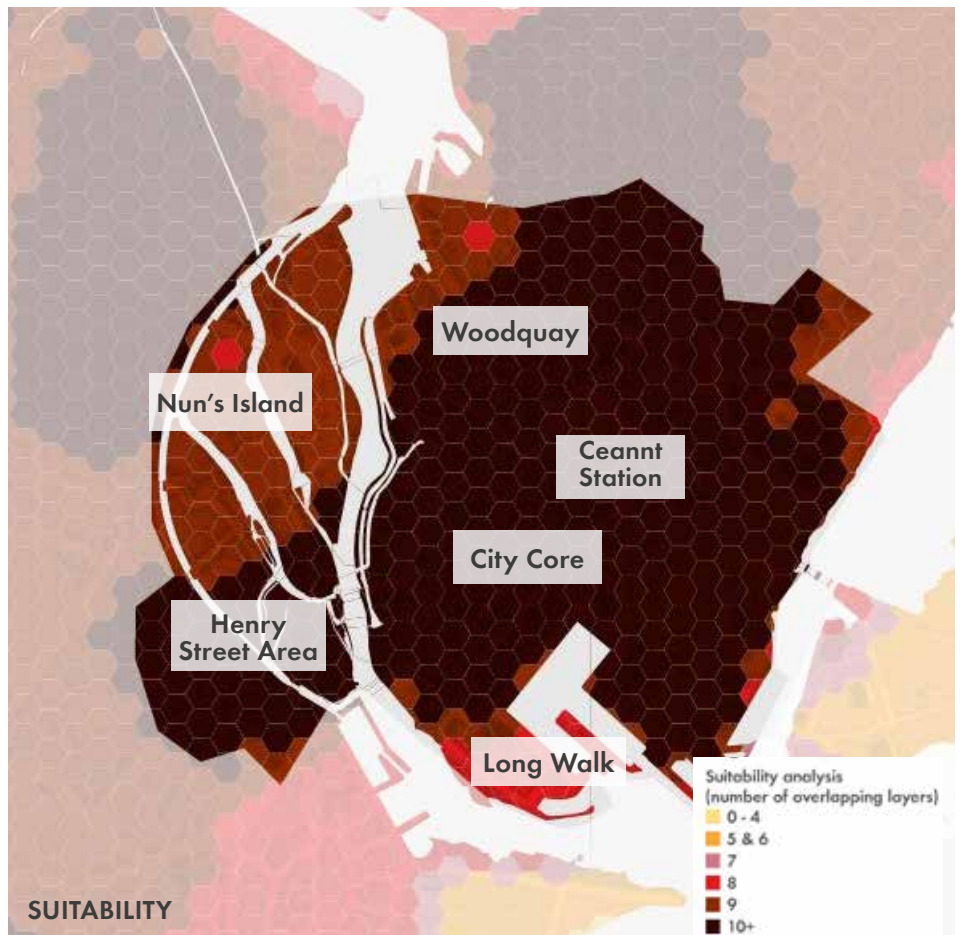
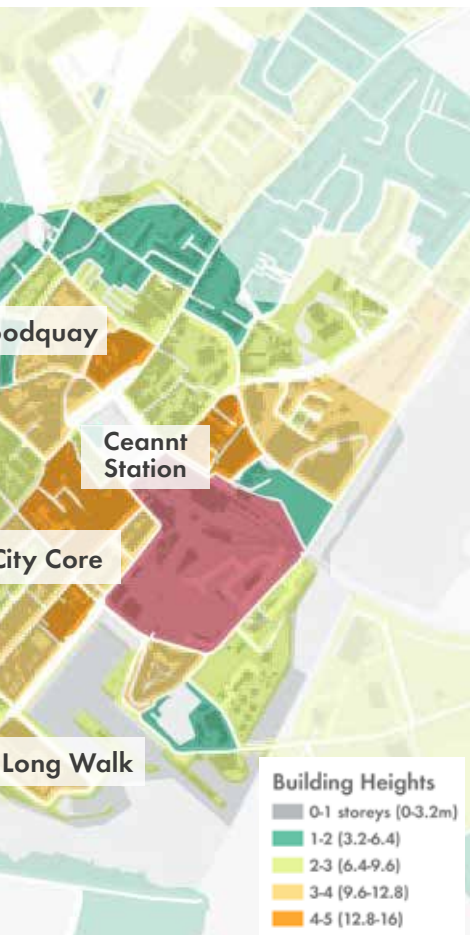
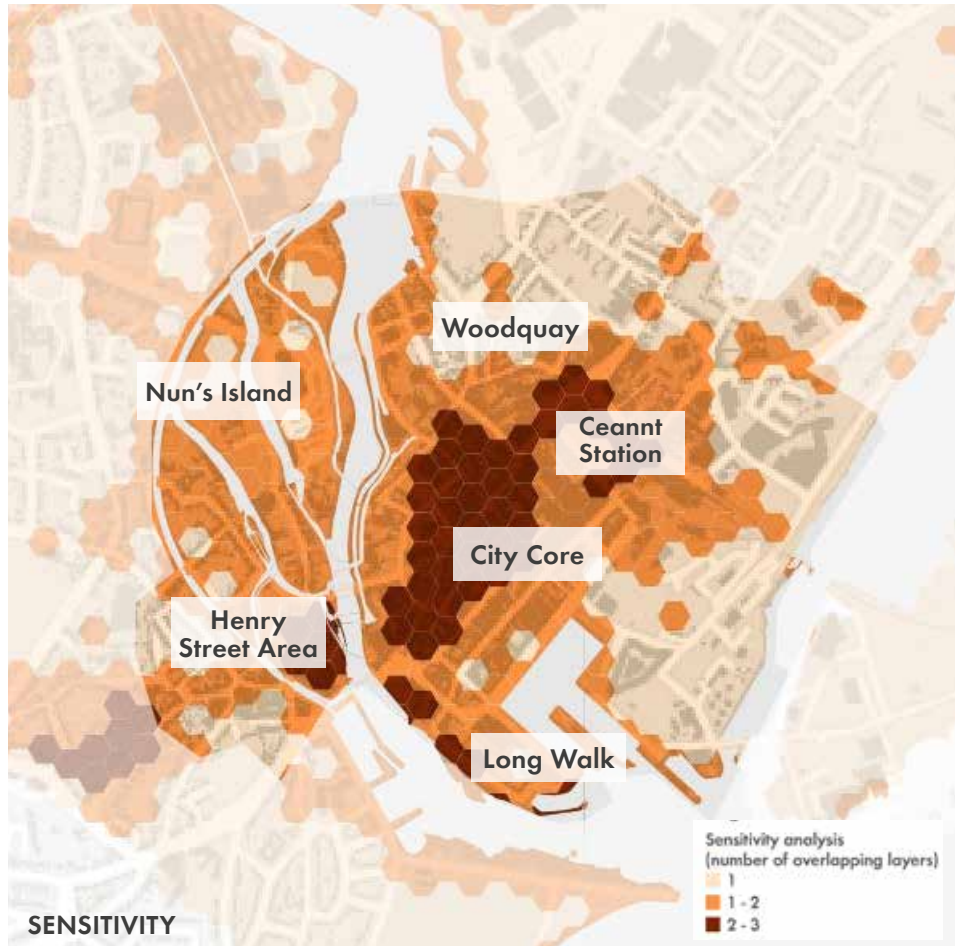


**Eyre Square**, early 1900s  
(National Library of Ireland)





**Fig 59** Density, height, suitability and suitability mapping analysis of the city centre



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## 16.2 City Core

### What makes this place distinct?

With origins as a walled medieval market town, the city core is compact and dense. Buildings are very consistent in their form and type; they are arranged in tight terraces following the medieval street pattern, all of similar height (from two to five storeys). Streets are well fronted, with very few gaps or breaks. Granite stone is used throughout, with colourful façades and decorative elements. Notable buildings include Spanish Arch, originally the entrance into the walled city from the port and Saint Nicholas Church whose spire remains the tallest element. Public spaces in the centre are modest in size - key spaces include Eyre Square, Fishmarket, Shop Street and medieval lanes such as Kirwan's Lane. The consistent and historic nature is what makes Galway's city core special.

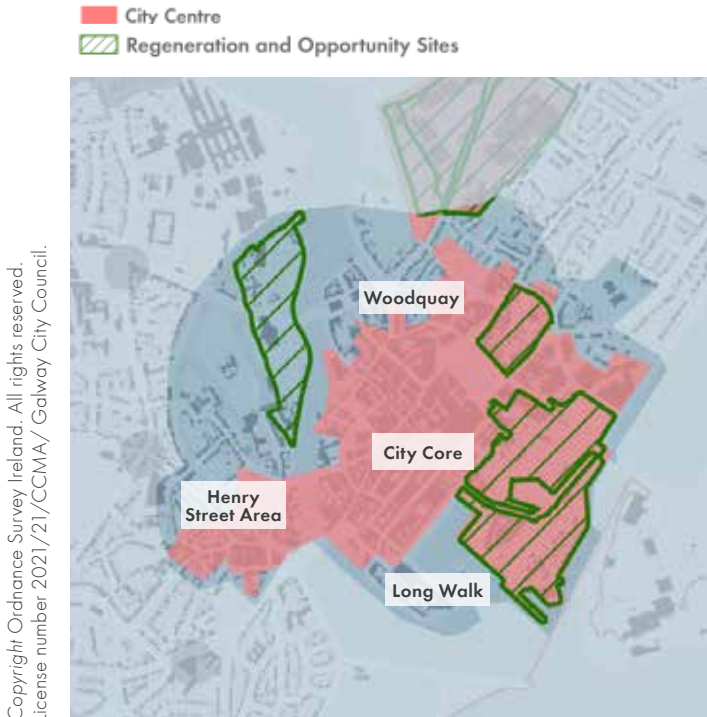
The city core is the main retail centre for Galway, focused along and around Shop Street and High Street. The area also plays a key role for tourism, culture, arts, and leisure. As a result, there are many hotels and many formerly residential buildings have been converted over time to hotel or tourist accommodation. Given this mix of uses, while development density in terms of floor area ratio is high residential density in terms of dwellings units per hectare is relatively low.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

Balances must be struck when considering opportunities for growth. The whole of the city centre must be considered suitable for higher density development given the concentration of services and excellent access to public transport facilities. However, in light of its special character, heritage assets and the important role this character plays in sustaining its economic success, the core is also amongst the most sensitive locations to potentially adverse impacts of higher density new development. On one hand, the city core is considered a sustainable location for development, with prime access to public transport, shops, activities and services to support a growing population. However, its distinct, historic character makes it highly sensitive to development out of keeping with the existing character.

Growth within the city core could take place in a form which aligns with existing buildings types/forms and in keeping with the existing character. Growth could also be accommodated through bringing unused or underused buildings into use, or converting buildings from other uses to residential use.





**Fig 60 STRATEGY OVERLAY** The extent of the Development Plan's city centre designation encompasses most of the historic core. The hatched sites include the current Development Plan's designated regeneration areas at Ceannt Station and the Inner Harbour and potential regeneration and infill sites. Development also extends north of the city centre to the Headford Road area



**Fig 61** Galway is characterised by stone and water

## CITY CORE DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

### Prevailing densities:

Whilst dwellings per hectare density is relatively low, FAR levels are the highest in the city - rising above 3.0 in some central places.

### Densities open to consideration:

Given the heritage sensitivities associated with the city core area, appropriate densities for new development are not likely to significantly exceed current levels.

### Prevailing heights:

Building heights are typically 3 - 5 storeys in the city core.

### Heights open to consideration:

Given the heritage and townscape sensitivities associated with the city core area, whilst there might be some limited sensitive infill opportunities, heights should generally respect those of the existing buildings in the area.

## 16.3 Long Walk, Inner Harbour, Ceannt Station

### What makes this place distinct?

To the south west of the city core, the city has evolved gradually on land reclaimed from the sea and converted in use over time. The area is mixed use, with hotels, office, retail, car parks, port and industry. Long Walk is an iconic row of terraced colourful houses facing into the confluence of the River Corrib and Galway Bay. The port remains active, the area is bisected by rail lines behind the station. Along Dock Street and Dock Road, there have been development schemes of five/six storey buildings which slightly raises the height and density from the historic core. Moving further away from the historic core, the compact city gives way to open industrial and port spaces.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

The area includes large regeneration areas, some of which already have planning permission or proposals. Being adjacent to the historic core, height and massing must be careful not to negatively affect key views and the character in the centre. Bonham Quay which is currently under construction will deliver four blocks ranging from 7-8 storey in height of new office space, retail and student accommodation. There is also a proposal for the land behind Ceannt Station. Augustine Hill has been approved by the Council with modifications and is currently under appeal to An Bord Pleanála. This proposal puts forward a mixed-use development of homes, retail, a cinema and workspace, as well as new streets and spaces. Additional harbour lands are earmarked for regeneration subject to a master plan.

### DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

#### Prevailing densities:

This is a mixed use area and FAR is a more appropriate measure of urban density. FAR is typically around 3.0 revealing tight streets, solid building lines and small plots with little amenity space.

#### Densities open to consideration:

Already high density, the Long Walk area would be sensitive to dramatic increases in density. The harbour area is less sensitive, characterised by large buildings and surface car parks. It would be appropriate for densities here to be higher than those of the historic core if townscape impacts of new development are carefully considered.

#### Prevailing heights:

Typically building heights are between 3 and 5 storeys, with the modern larger developments tending to be the taller.

#### Heights open to consideration:

Heights should respect prevailing heights in the historic core. Within Ceannt Station and the Inner Harbour regeneration areas where large sites are capable of generating their own character, there is scope for greater height if designed carefully as demonstrated in emerging developments





## 16.4 Woodquay

### What makes this place distinct?

Woodquay is home to city centre uses – retail, civic (including the Courthouse) and culture – which are focused nearer to the centre and along the main routes. The area is more residential and lower density than the city core. Buildings tend to be in terraces, though this form breaks away to detached and semi-detached moving further away from the centre. The area benefits from proximity to amenities along the River Corrib. Views of the River Corrib and across to the Cathedral are notable. The nearby Corrib Shopping Centre and the adjacent County Hall building are a contrast to the prevailing domestic townscape character.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

While a growing population would be well served by public transport, shops and services, opportunities for growth are more likely to be small infill developments or by bringing unused or underused buildings into use or converting buildings into residential use. The adjacent Headford Road area is an opportunity for growth and transformation.

### DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

#### Prevailing densities:

Dwellings per hectare densities are higher in the Woodquay area at 30 - 40 and higher in parts. FAR however is lower than the city core, the prevailing rates being between 1.5 and 3.0.

#### Densities open to consideration:

Despite the area being beyond the City Core Architectural Conservation Area, townscape character is still a key consideration in the Woodquay area of Galway, with the only development opportunities being infill. A balance should be struck to ensure the best use is made of land and townscape character is retained. Existing densities should be the starting point in design development.

#### Prevailing heights:

With the exception of the Corrib Shopping Centre and County Hall building which are larger and taller, the prevailing heights are 2 - 4 storeys.

#### Heights open to consideration:

3 - 5 storeys, that is, heights that respect local character but make best use of land.





## 16.5 The West, Nun's Island

### What makes this place distinct?

On the opposite side of the River Corrib from the historic core, Galway's West End is a lively centre in itself. The local centre is focused around the meeting of Dominick Street and William Street and is home to independent businesses, a lively nightlife and arts and culture. The area is served by the Eglinton Canal and its towpath, Millennium Park and Father Burke Park. Two canals separate the Cathedral, Nun's Island and Earls Island from the rest of the west end. This area is less densely developed and largely offers civic, religious and educational uses.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

Nun's Island and Earls Island offer opportunities for regeneration particularly for the public realm and at NUIG properties. The regeneration of this area is subject to a masterplan which is being progressed by NUIG. Beyond the Nun's Island masterplan area, opportunities for growth are more likely to be small infill developments or by bringing unused or underused buildings into use, including converting buildings into residential use.

### DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

#### Prevailing densities:

Part of the historic city centre, but characterised by development that is of a lower and more consistent scale. Residential densities are higher than the core at around 30 dph. FAR is high adjacent to the River Corrib at around 2.0 but drops off further west.

#### Densities open to consideration:

The area adjoins University Road and Lower Dominick Street Architectural Conservation Areas. Densities should respect prevailing levels.

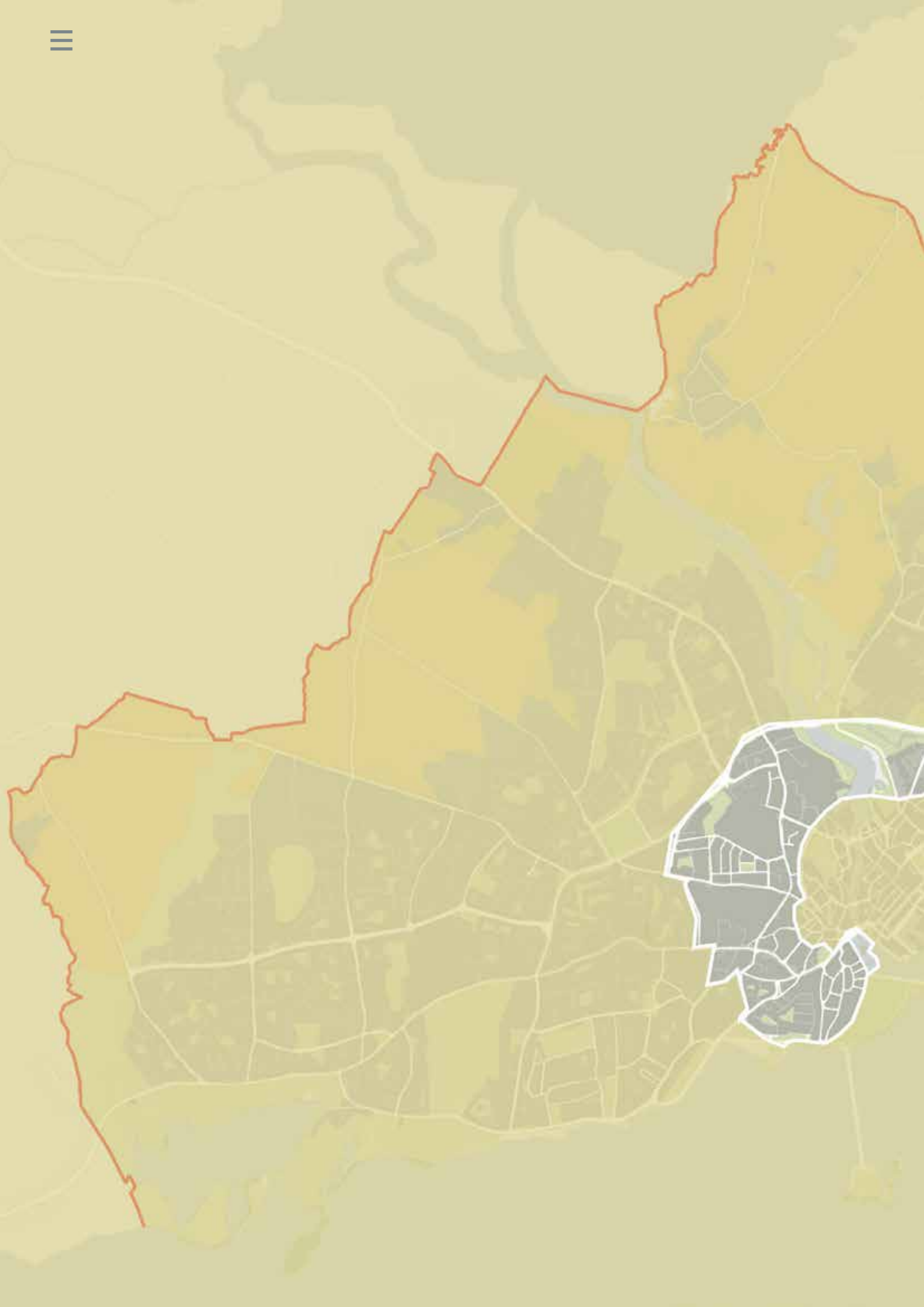
#### Prevailing heights:

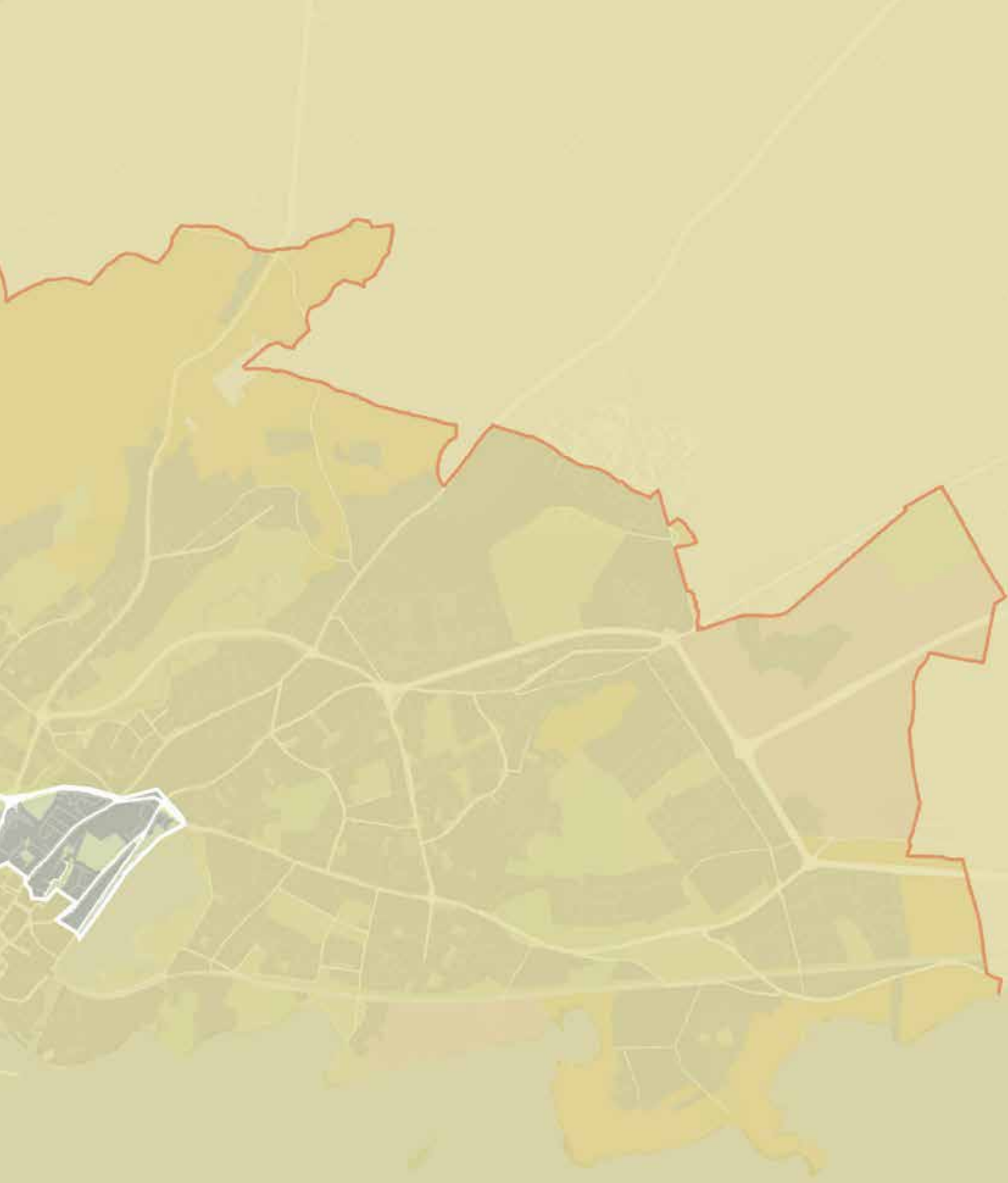
Building heights are consistently around 2 - 3 storeys with a limited amount of variation.

#### Heights open to consideration:

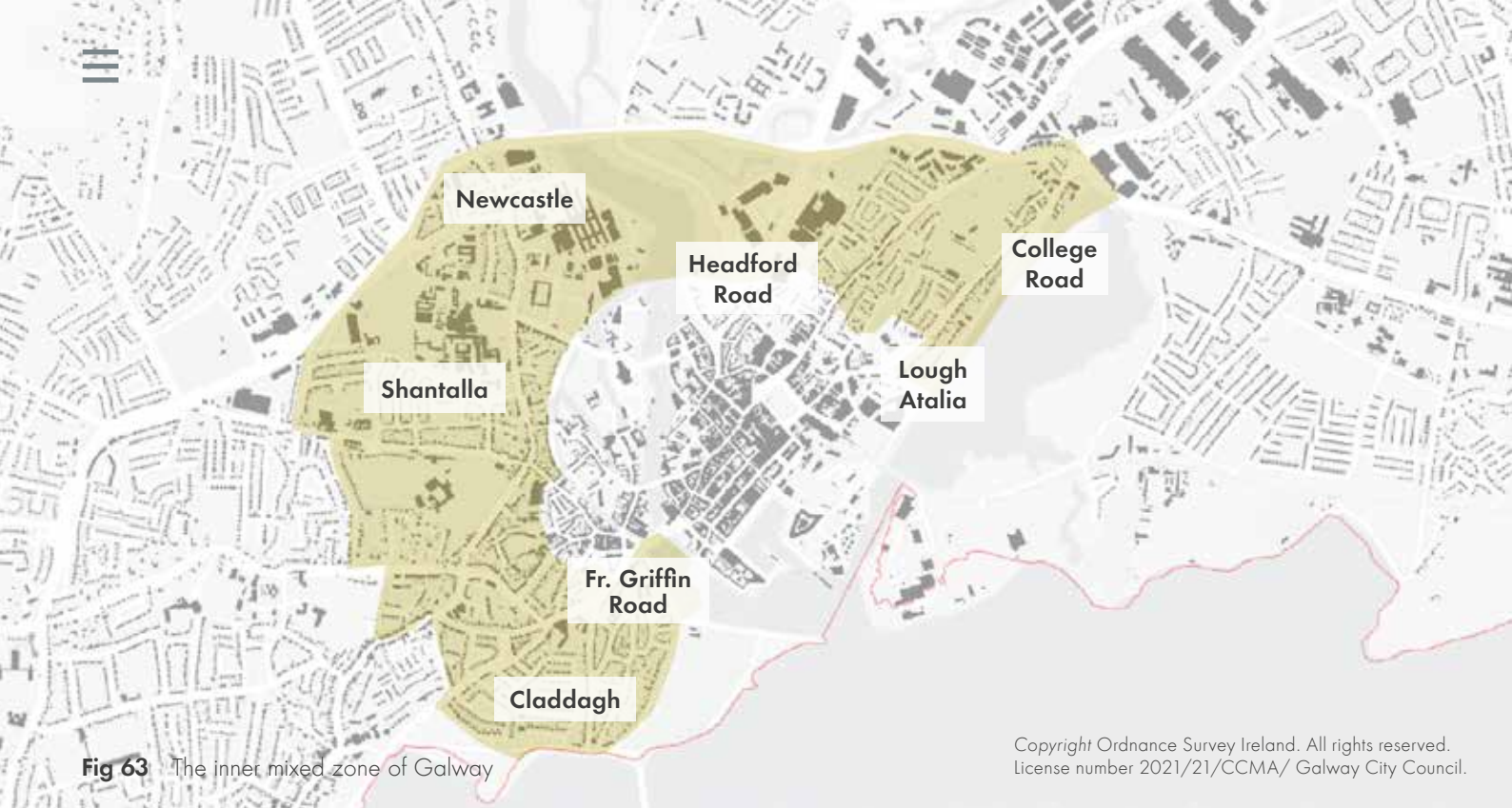
New development should respect prevailing building heights and the character of the area, 2-5 storeys, that is, heights that respect local character.



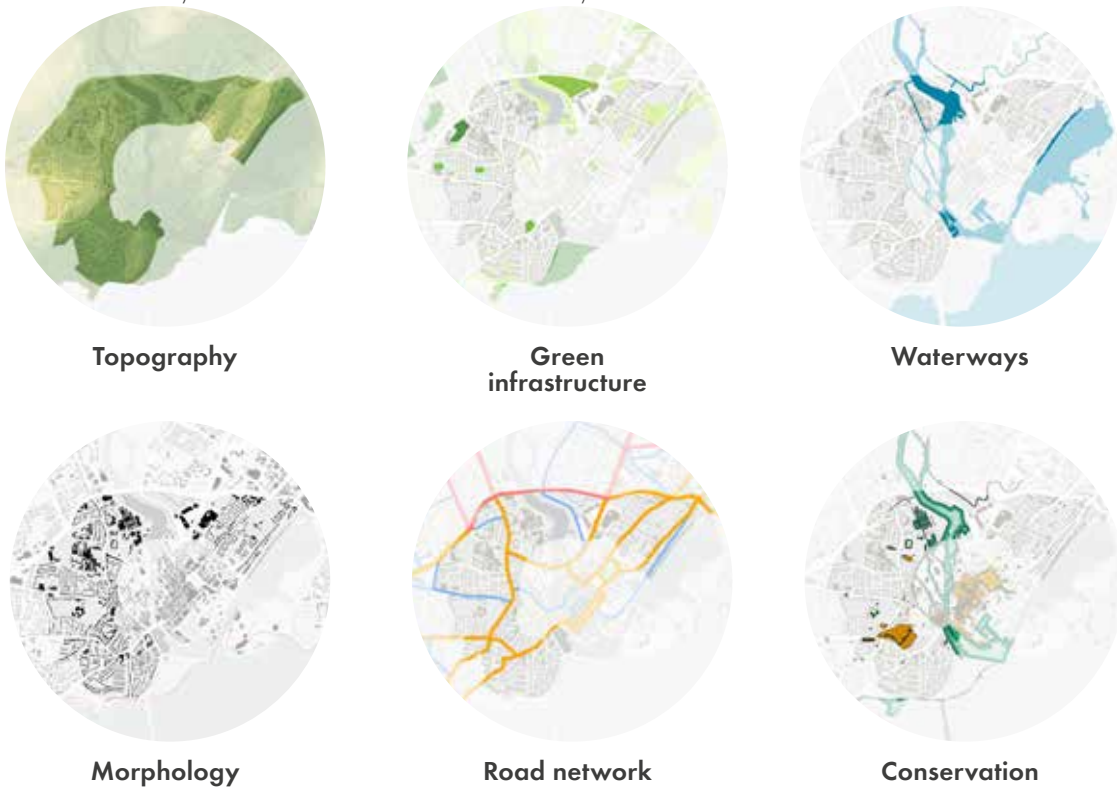




# INNER MIXED ZONE



**Fig 64** Environmental analysis of the inner mixed zones of Galway



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# 17 INNER MIXED ZONE

## 17.1 Overview

The inner mixed zone which arcs around the city centre is a diverse collection of buildings and environments. Some of the city’s principal institutional uses can be found here including the expansive University Hospital Galway lands, National University of Ireland Galway lands, the Galway Retail Park and Galway Shopping Centre either side of the Headford Road.

The area also includes the Claddagh, Shantalla and Bohermore residential areas. The areas east of the River Corrib are considered first followed by the neighbourhoods to the west.

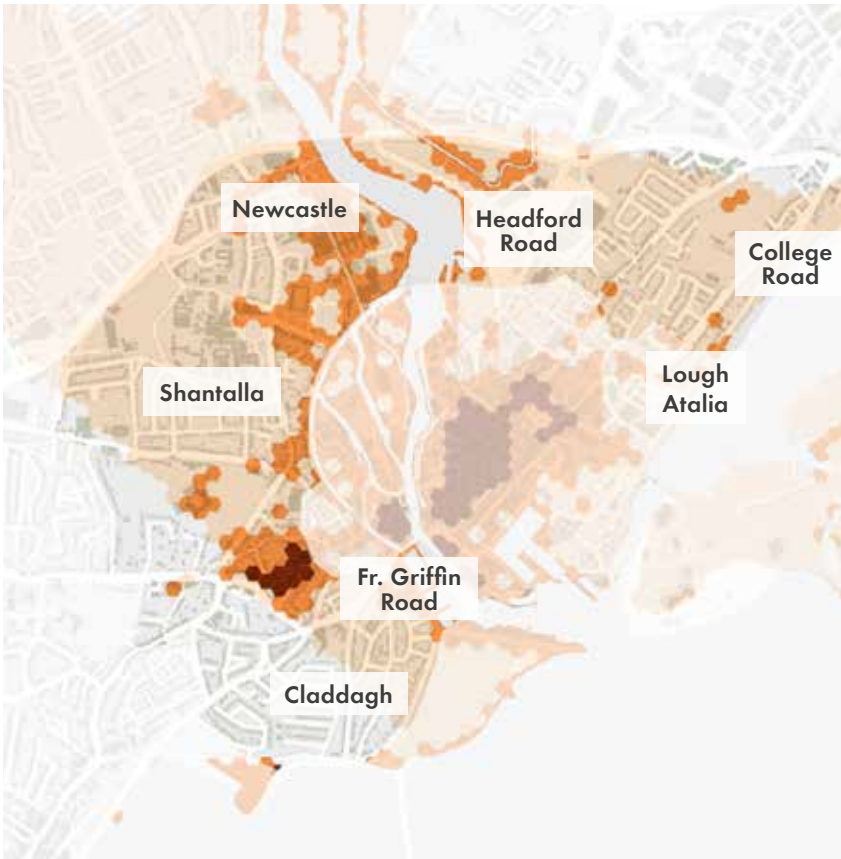


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**Fig 65** The Inner Mixed Zone with designated retail centres and land zoned for mixed use development



**Fig 66** The Quadrangle, NUI Galway (Creative Commons, © Copyright Ian Capper)



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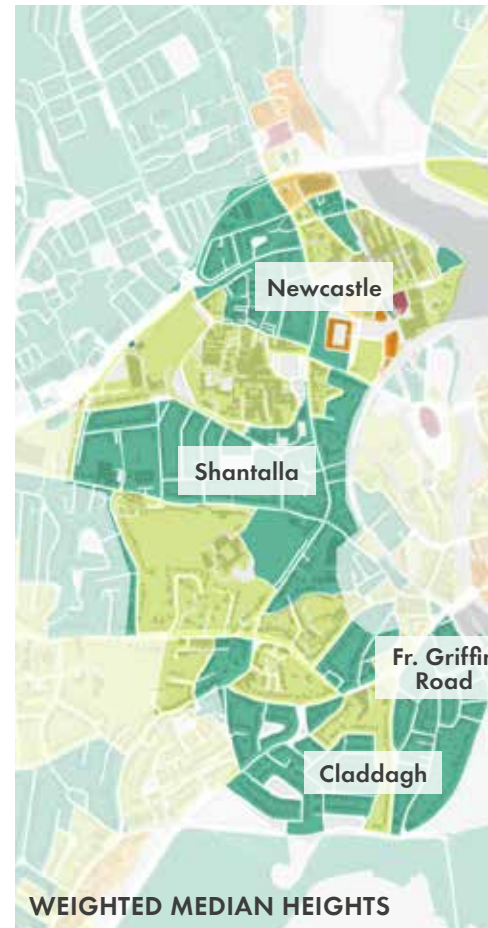
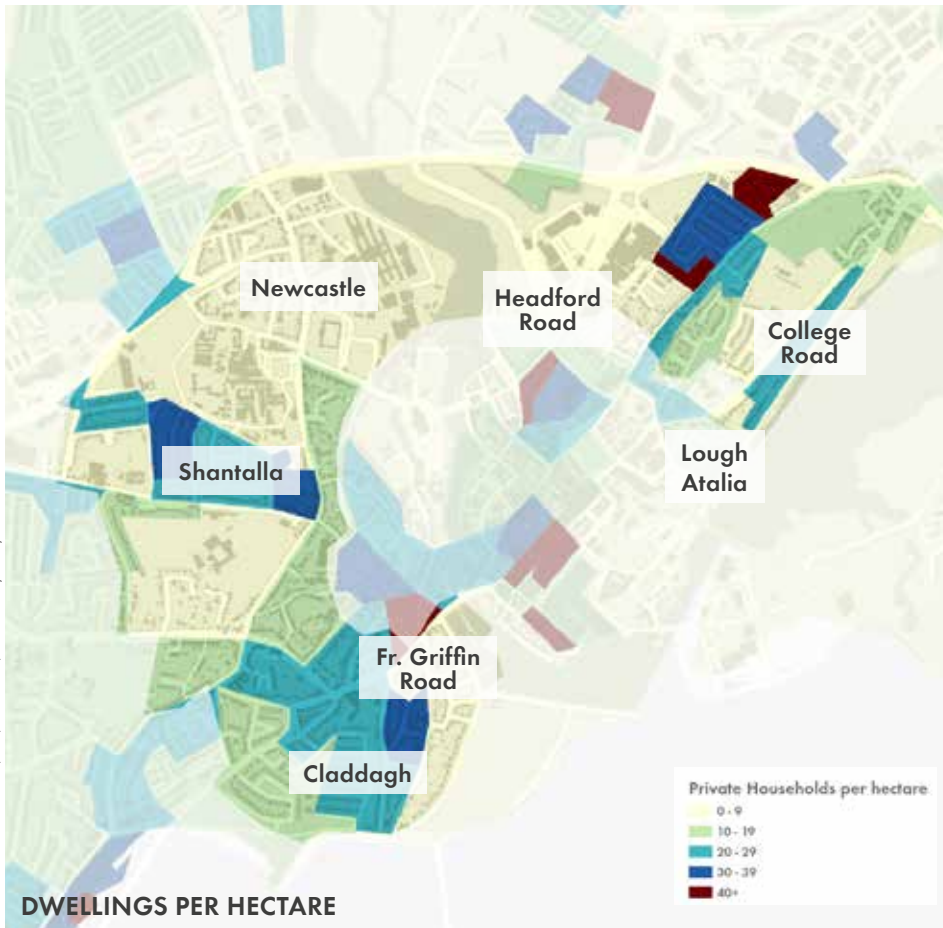
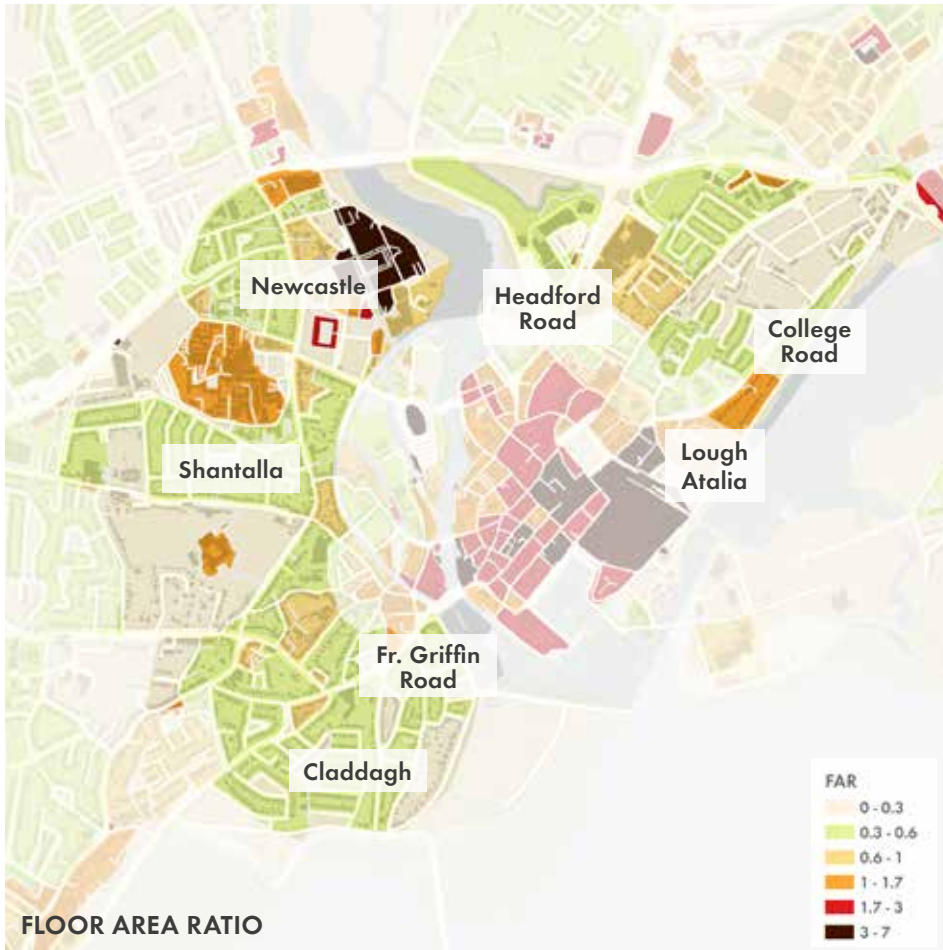
**Fig 67 SENSITIVITY** This summary map shows darker colours where multiple layers of the sensitivity analysis overlap. Notable areas likely to be sensitive to higher density development include The Crescent/Sea Road ACA area which includes a sweep of late Georgian / early Victorian townhouses known as Palmyra Crescent. The clutch of Protected Structures in the southern part of the University campus is also evident.



**Fig 68** The early thatched cottages of Claddagh, all now demolished (© The National Library of Ireland)

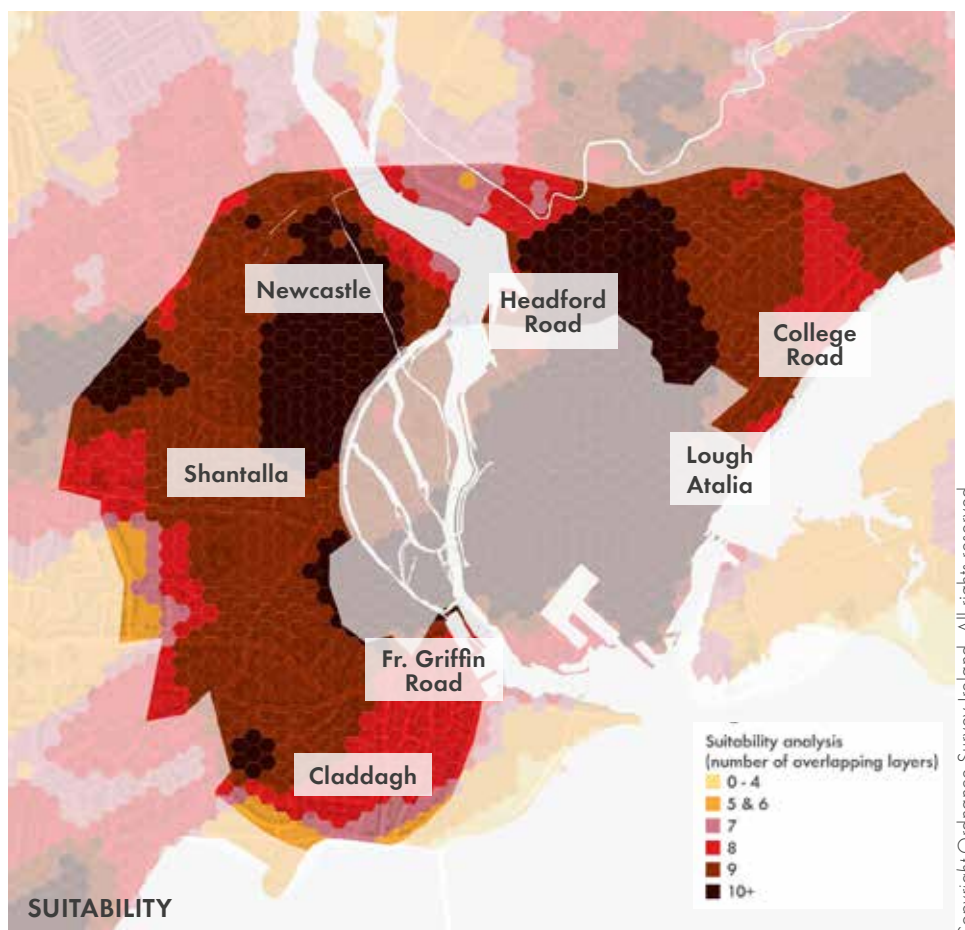
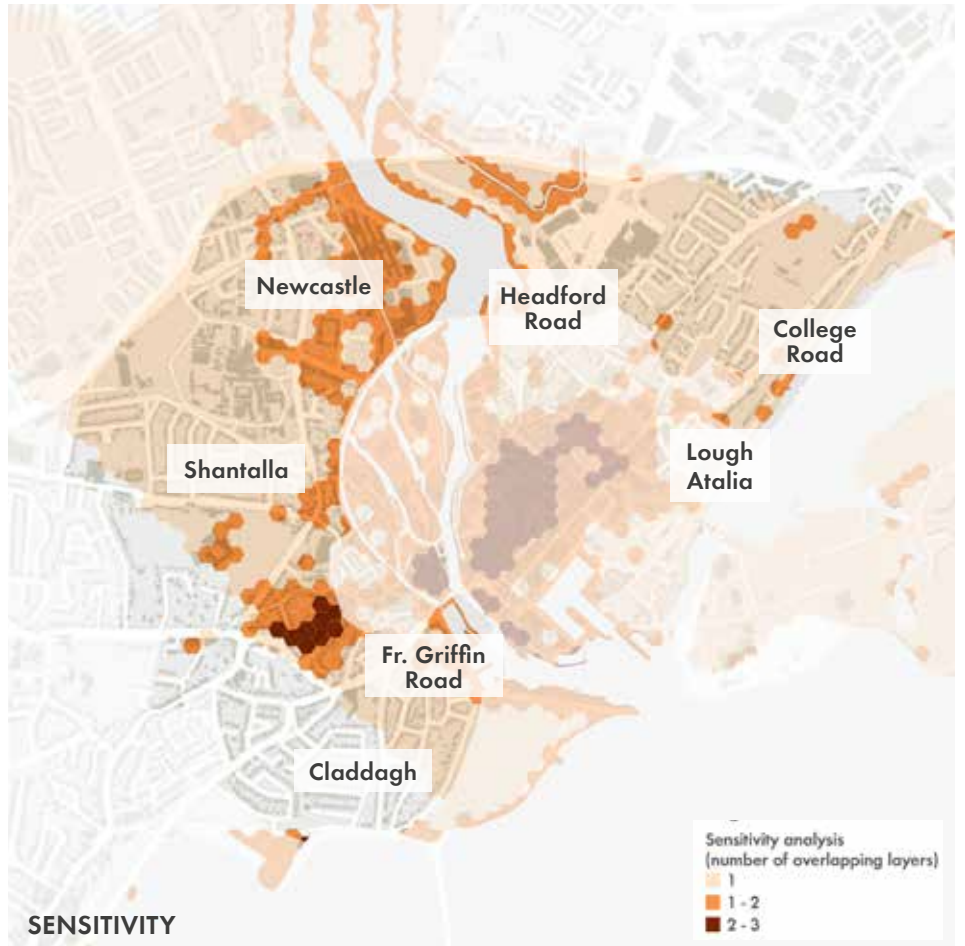






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Fig 69 Density, height, suitability and suitability mapping analysis of the inner mixed zone



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## 17.2 West: Shantalla, Newcastle, Fr. Griffin Road, Claddagh

### What makes this place distinct?

The western inner neighbourhoods are leafy residential streets of detached and semi-detached houses. The large campuses of The National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway and the University Hospital Galway are located to the north of the city centre. St Mary's College also has a significant footprint.

The Claddagh is an historic neighbourhood which saw total redevelopment replacing the buildings in the early 20th century. The Claddagh offers mainly terraced and semi-detached houses, within easy reach of Galway's city core. In terms of public space, it is well catered for with Claddagh Quay, Nimmo's Pier and South Park, as well as nearby Grattan Beach.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

There are no major regeneration sites within this area. Infill and brownfield development or the reconfiguring of large health and educational campuses could accommodate some modest growth.

### DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

#### Prevailing densities:

These are vibrant, mixed and long established communities, within walking distance from the city centre. Housing densities of the residential communities range between 20 to 40 dph. The FAR density of the large institutional uses of the hospital and university is higher than the residential areas, rising to around 3.0.

#### Densities open to consideration:

There are few redevelopment opportunities in the area. Densities should therefore respect prevailing levels as infill opportunities emerge. Where larger site opportunities emerge, densities might be able to be increased.

#### Prevailing heights:

Residential heights are 2 - 3 storeys while heights of institutional uses rise to 5 storeys.

#### Heights open to consideration:

Heights of new development should respect prevailing heights.



## 17.3 East: Bohermore, Headford Road, College Road, Lough Atalia

### What makes this place distinct?

The inner residential neighbourhoods to the east of the city centre – College Road, Bohermore and Lough Atalia – provide mainly terraced and semi-detached houses with generous gardens. Lough Atalia and Terryland Forest Park offer residents expansive views and recreational access.

These eastern neighbourhoods are home to Galway Greyhound Stadium, Connacht Rugby and Galway Hibernians Soccer Club. Along Headford Road is the Galway Shopping Centre and the Headford Road Retail Park.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

The major opportunity for growth would be the regeneration of the Headford Road area, which has the benefit of permission for development rising to 7 storeys in height.

If redeveloped, this area has huge potential to provide good access to shops, services and jobs in the city centre, while also being directly connected to the wider road network via the N6. The Headford Road area is also in proximity to the Terryland Forest Park and River Corrib with opportunities for strong frontage.

Densities could be significantly increased to create a high density new northern neighbourhood for the city centre, with the Headford Road axis as its High Street.

### DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

#### Prevailing densities:

Residential densities in Bohermore approach 40 dph with apartment schemes exceeding this. Other neighbourhoods including the College Road area are nearer 20 - 30 dph.

#### Densities open to consideration:

Redevelopment of the Headford Road area provides significant opportunities. There is scope for greater density with a mixed use development capacity to deliver 50+ dph.

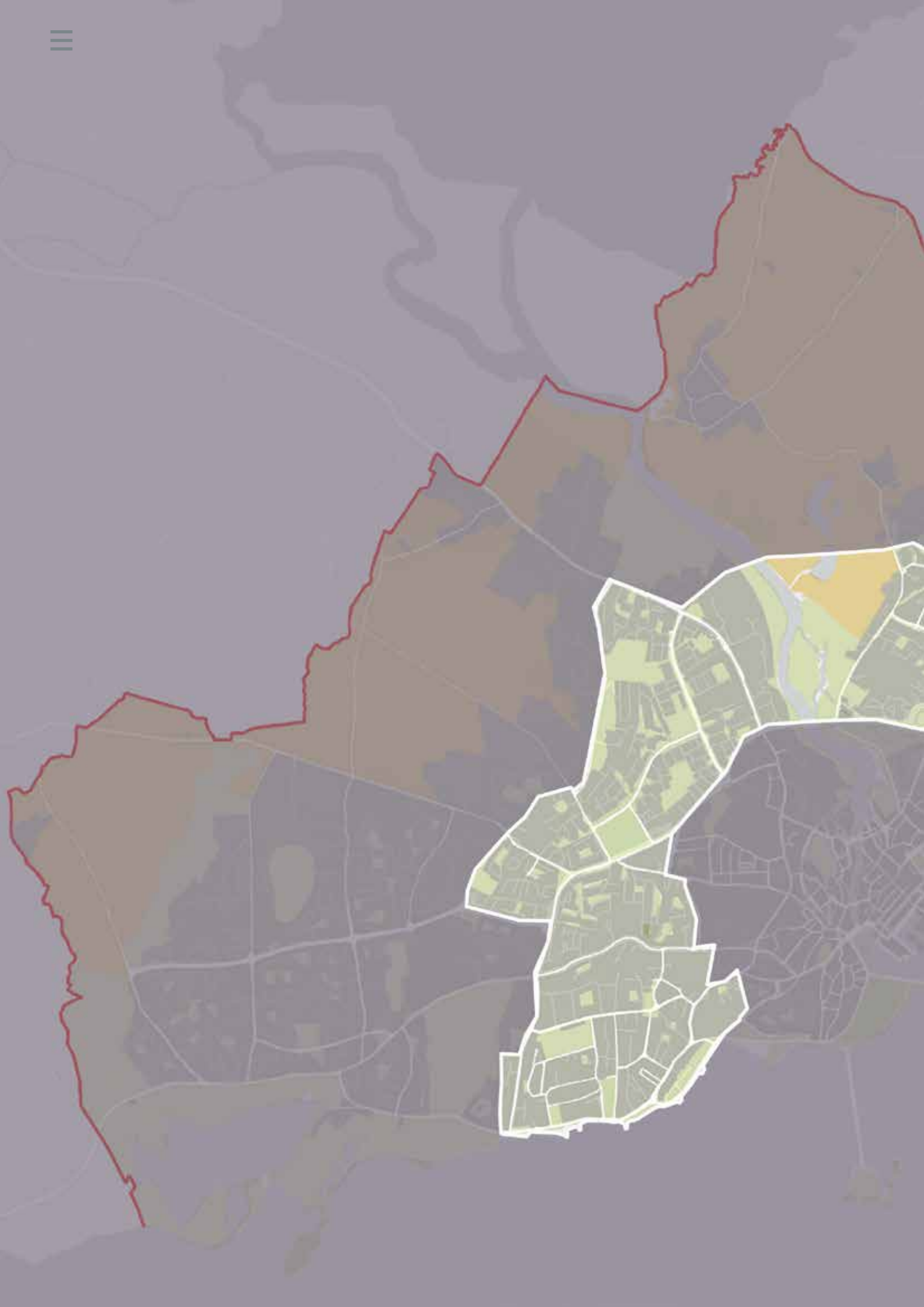
#### Prevailing heights:

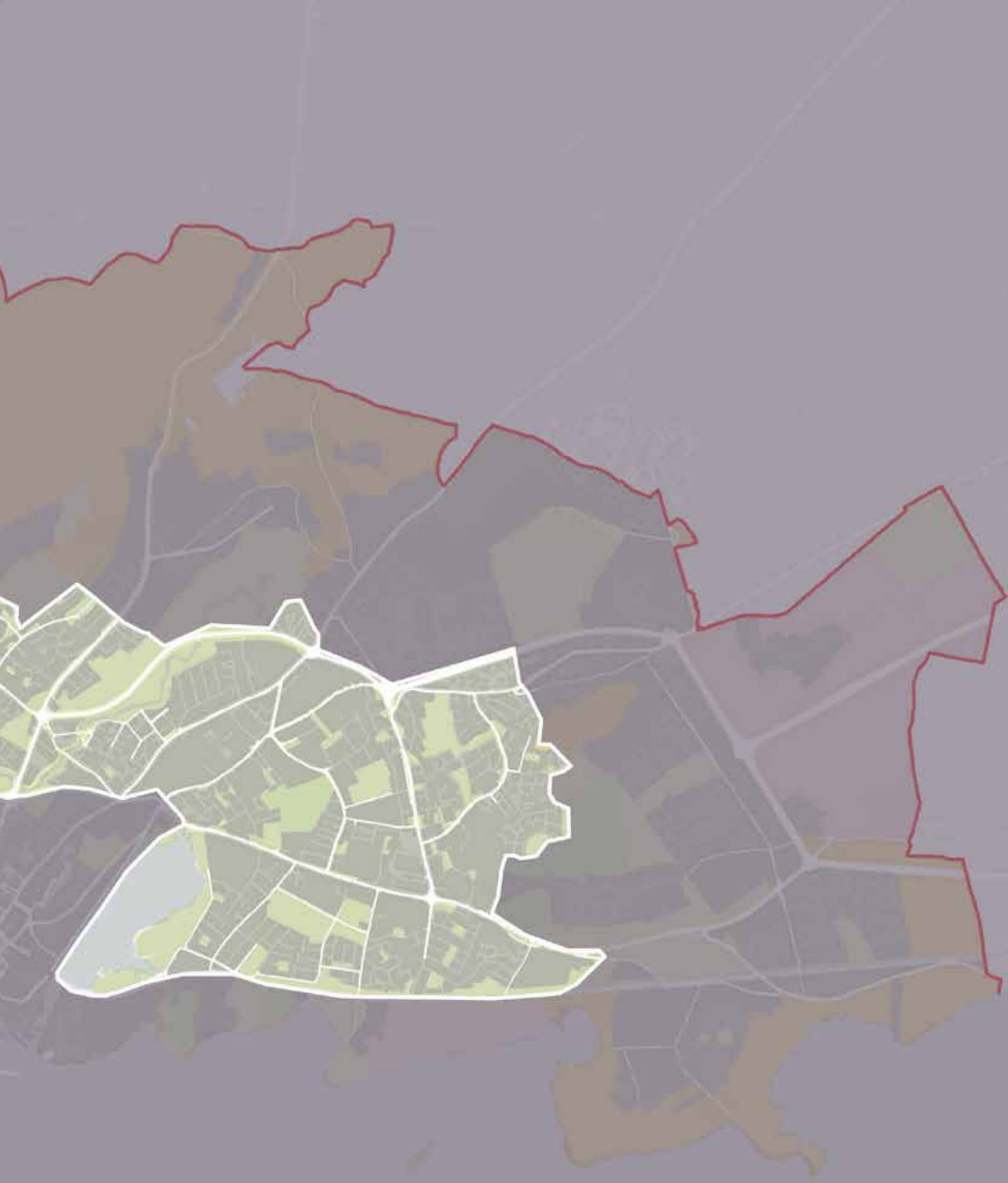
With the exception of Headford Road and Lough Atalia prevailing building heights are typically 2 storeys.

#### Heights open to consideration:

Within the Headford regeneration area where large sites are capable of generating their own character, there is scope for greater height if designed carefully as demonstrated in approved developments.







**ESTABLISHED SUBURBS**



**Fig 71** Environmental analysis of established suburban areas



**Topography**



**Green infrastructure**



**Waterways**



**Morphology**



**Road network**



**Conservation**

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# 18 ESTABLISHED SUBURBS

## 18.1 Overview

Around the city centre and the more central suburbs, is a network of diverse and distinctive neighbourhoods and clusters of employment uses.

Thriving Salthill in the east is the city's seaside destination. The Taylor's Hill area to the north includes many of the city's larger houses.

The northern and eastern suburbs are a feature of the city's rapid growth over the last 60 years with many discrete suburbs now well established.

The area comprises older established residential areas, industrial areas, retail centres and major institutional uses, hospital and education campuses.

The Tuam Road area includes the city's largest cluster of industrial uses at Liosban and Mervue.

The radial routes extending from the city are defining streets and generally support mixed uses as well as functioning as transport corridors, with bus routes and walking and cycling connections.

Such an expansive and varied zone of the city cannot easily be characterised. The analysis and guidance presented here first addresses the distinctive western area - including Salthill and Taylor's Hill. A separate combined assessment is made of the northern and eastern areas.



## WEST



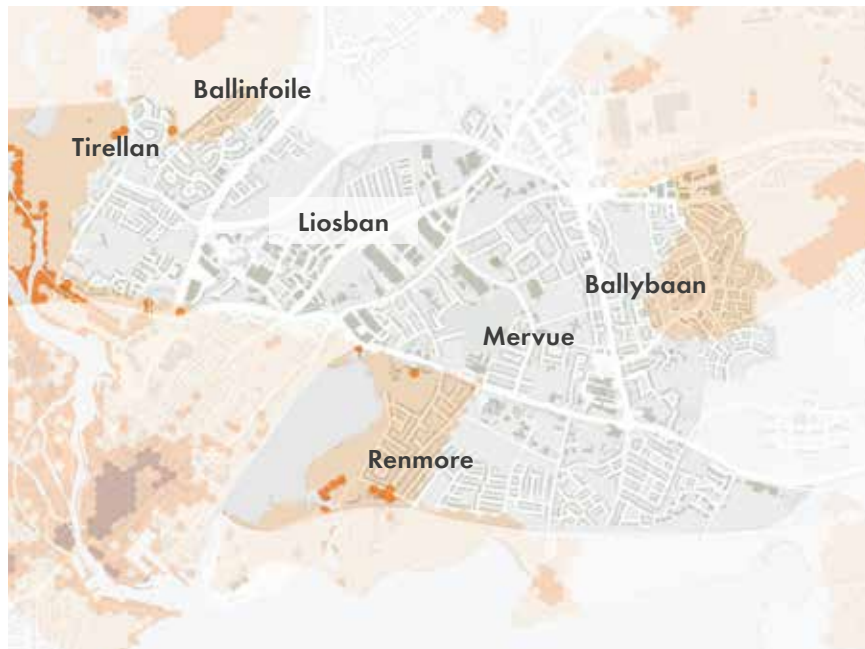
**Fig 72 SENSITIVITY** A popular holiday destination since the 1850s, the character and charm of Salthill is evident in the centre's varied mix of old and new buildings. This character is not recognised in this sensitivity analysis however with no ACA and few protected structures in the Salthill area. The mature landscaped streets to the north of Salthill including Taylor's Hill also have qualities which make the area sensitive to change, although again this is not formally recognised in historic designations.

**All suitabilities layered, including:**

- Views
- Low density residential
- Topography
- Record of protected structures



## NORTH & EAST



**All suitabilities layered, including:**

- Views
- Low density residential
- Topography
- Record of protected structures

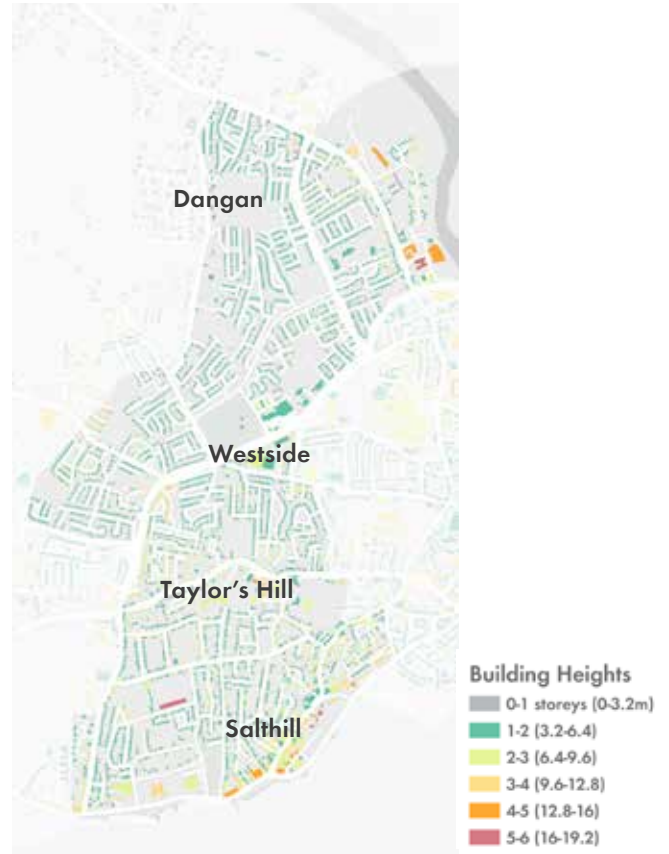
**Fig 73 SENSITIVITY** Parts of Renmore feature recognised long views of the sea and across the city to the west, there are also sensitivities with the rising terrain towards Briarhill in the east.



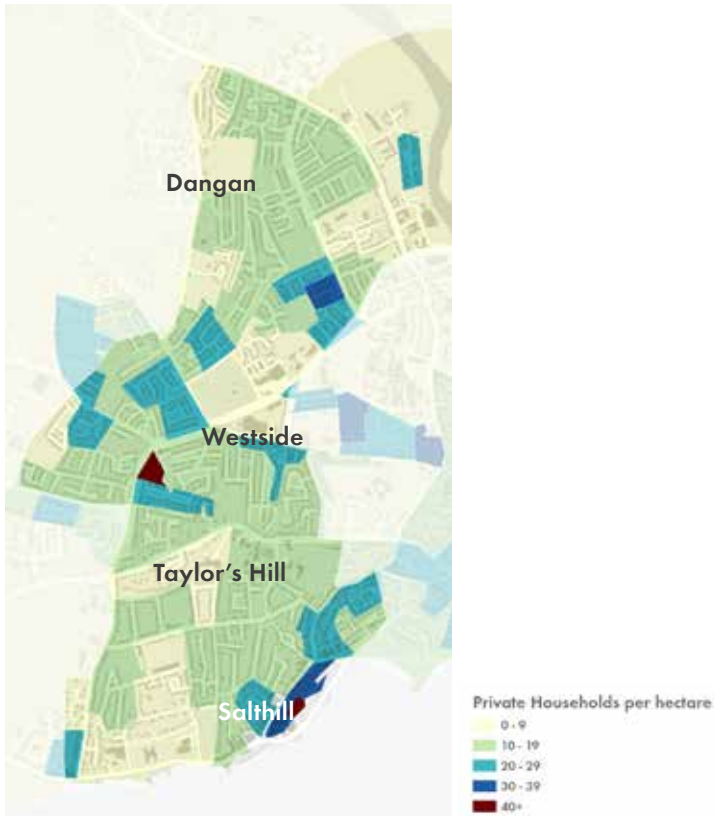




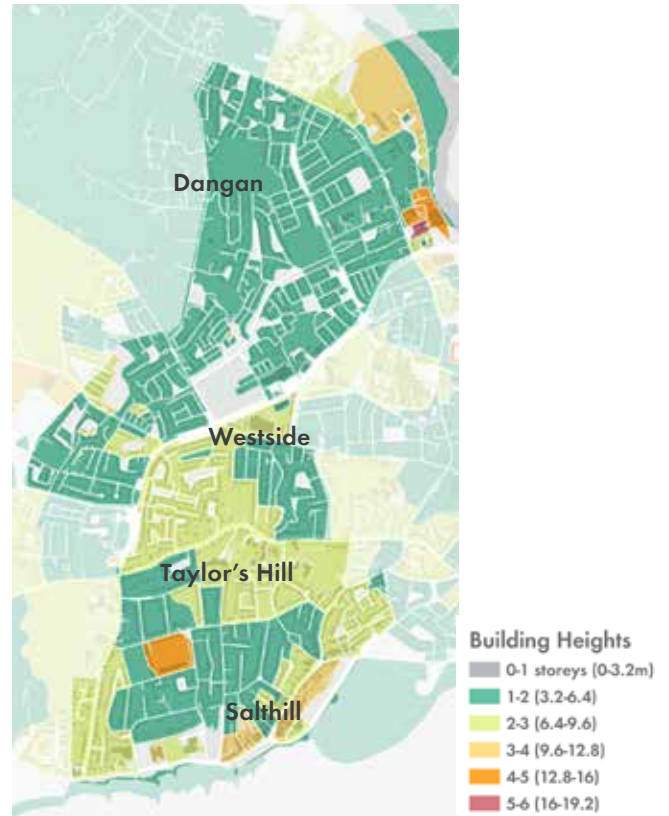
FLOOR AREA RATIO



BUILDING HEIGHTS



DWELLINGS PER HECTARE

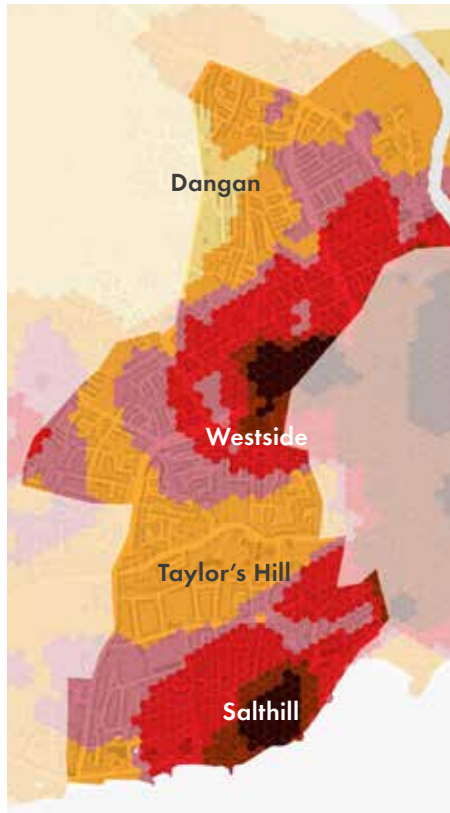
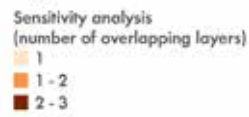


WEIGHTED MEDIAN HEIGHTS

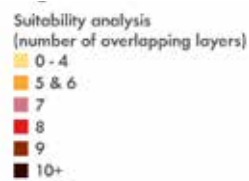
Fig 74 Density, building height, sensitivity and suitability analysis of Galway's established suburbs



**SENSITIVITY**



**SUITABILITY**



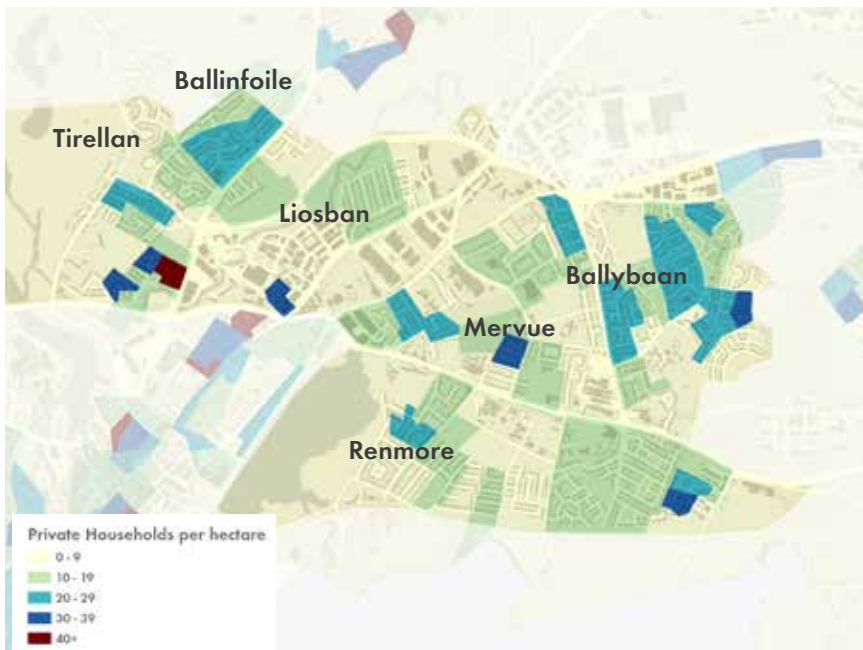
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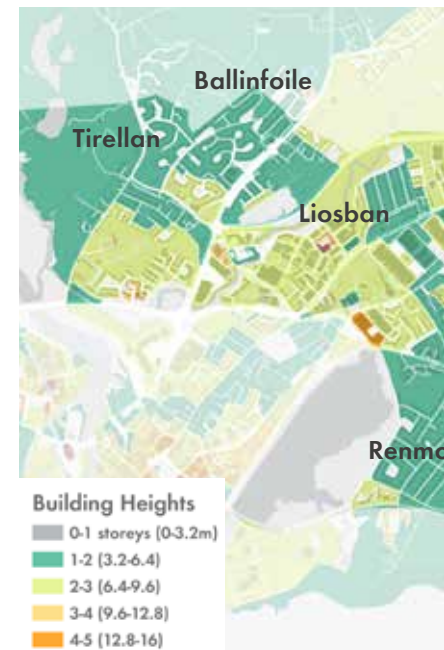
FLOOR AREA RATIO



BUILDING HEIGHTS

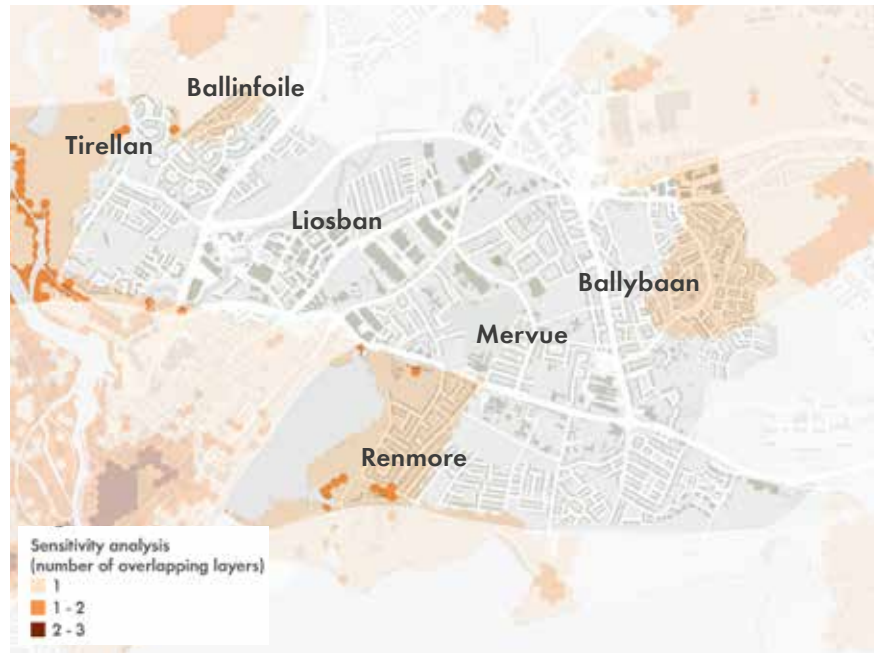


DWELLINGS PER HECTARE

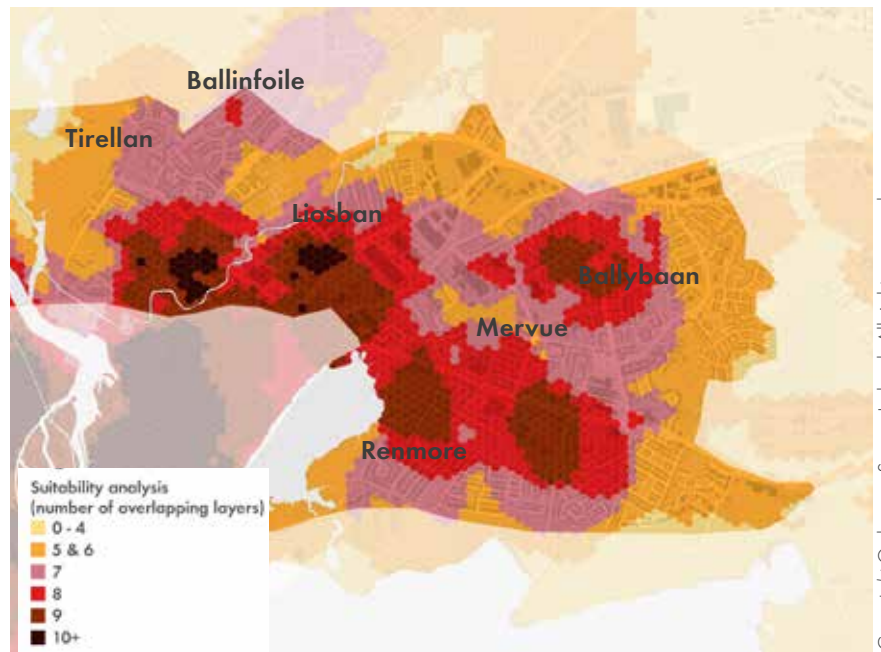


WEIGHTED MEDIAN HEIGHTS

**Fig 75** Density, building height, sensitivity and suitability analysis of Galway's established suburbs



SENSITIVITY



SENSITIVITY

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## 18.2 West - Dangan, Westside, Taylor's Hill, Salthill

The established neighbourhoods on the west side of the River Corrib. The area roughly extends from the National University of Ireland, Galway campus and, north of it, the Galway Business Park and Dangan, Westside, Taylor's Hill and Salthill.

### What makes this place distinct?

The areas to the north of the area such as Dangan are typically discrete residential developments, each with accesses off Upper Newcastle or Thomas Hynes Road. Developments are typically two storey semi-detached houses. The University campus is an exception with large institutional buildings of three and four storey (at the central campus entrance including the recent Alice Perry Engineering building).

South along the Seamus Quirke Road into the Westside District Centre, the urban grain becomes coarse with large retail floorplates and areas of surface parking. The road corridor itself is wide, largely lacking in enclosures and with a central reservation giving greater vehicle priority.

The Taylor's Hill area benefits from a more mature landscape character, particularly along the meandering and gently rising Taylor's Hill Road itself as it travels west. The area is characterised by large, detached houses, set back discretely behind stone walls and established landscaping.

The character changes again as the land descends towards Salthill and the coast. The grain tightens, the street narrows and the character becomes more organic, varied and urban. Salthill Road Upper and Lower is the

vibrant and varied urban environment, with colourful buildings of contrasting ages, types and styles, culminating in the seafront environment of bars, cafés, tourists' shops and amusements.

These mixed, varied and vibrant activities contribute to Salthill's charm.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

The western established neighbourhoods of Galway are places of great contrasts. The housing estates of the north are lower densities environments but with plentiful open spaces and many opportunities for sensitive infill and intensification. But it is the district centre of Westside that would appear to offer the most significant potential for redevelopment opportunities.

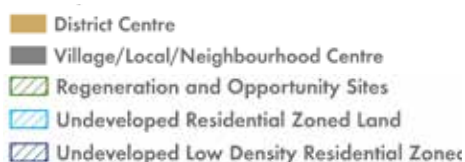
This area succeeds in providing an important cluster of retail and community facilities and is well served by transport infrastructure including bus priority facilities and services along the Seamus Quirke Road. The area lacks focus and could be transformed with much stronger and higher density supporting the west of the city with a strengthened/enhanced streetscape.

The residential neighbourhood of Taylor's Hill is an established and attractive suburb with good examples of attractive older buildings, many of which have been retained and converted and refurbished. Opportunities for major change here are limited.

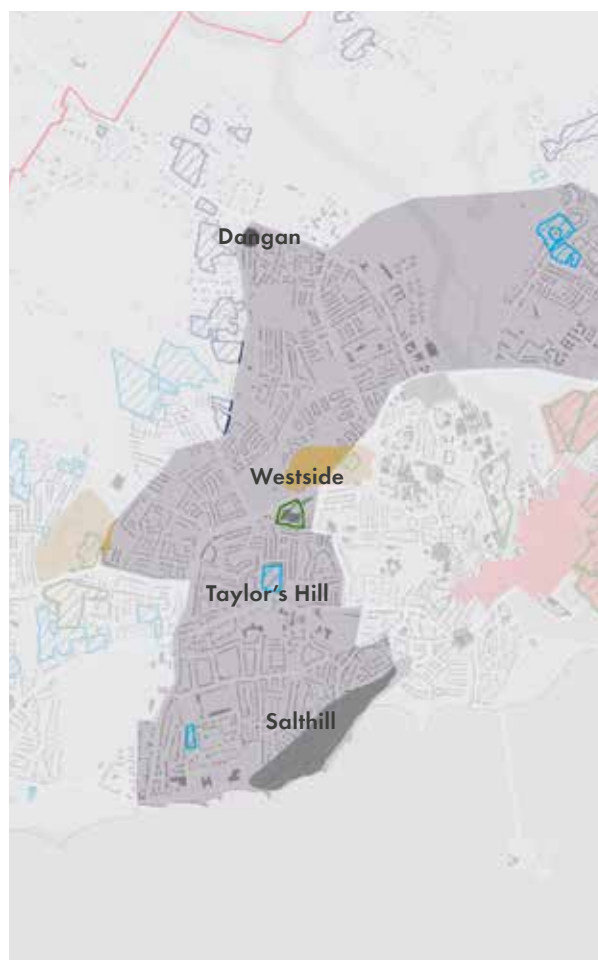
Salthill is a thriving and vibrant centre providing a complementary visitor offer to the historic city centre. The varied townscape would be resilient to some high-density infill mixed use development.







However, the scale of the centre is relatively domestic which is an important part of its character and helps underpin its success. This general analysis is supported by the suitability analysis which returns highlighted areas of Westside and Salthill as particularly suitable areas for higher density development. The sensitivity analysis does not highlight any particular issues although this does not pick up the more historic nature of the Salthill townscape area which is an important attribute to respect.



**Fig 76** The western established suburbs area with designated retail centres and land zoned for development

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## DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

### Prevailing densities:

Between 25 and 40 dph within the established neighbourhoods north of Taylor's Hill. Lower densities in the Taylor's Hill area with larger and high value detached housing. Densities rise in and around Salthill, with older stock along the Salthill Road axis - likely to be around 40 dph.

### Densities open for consideration:

Where there are opportunities for infill housing development, densities of 30 dph rising to around 50 dph around key community centres and along key public transport corridors would be appropriate subject to local conditions. Whilst not identified for redevelopment, with the infrastructure investment that has taken place over the last decade along the Seamus Quirke Road, the Westside District Centre can be seen as a significant potential focus for comprehensive regeneration to further strengthen its role as an important district centre for the city. Mixed use development with housing densities of 50+dph should be sought if schemes come forward. Redevelopment of Westside District Centre / Seamus Quirke Road should be delivered to density (FAR and dph) levels typically seen in Salthill.

### Prevailing heights:

Around 2 storeys within the established suburban housing areas. Building heights rise in the University Central Campus area and in the Salthill area to heights of typically 3 - 4 storeys.

### Heights open for consideration:

Between 2 - 3 within the established suburbs, rising to between 2 - 4 at key community centres and nodes. There is significant scope for taller heights along Seamus Quirke Road which will help to establish a more urban and contained urban character across the area. Infill development along the main street should respect the prevailing height, there is potential for marginally greater height if carefully handled along the seafront.

## 18.3 North and east - Tirellan, Ballinfoile, Renmore, Murrough, Mervue, Ballybaan

An older, established collection of suburbs and industry. Principal roads across the area include the Old Dublin Road to the east towards Oramore; the Tuam Road and the northern section of the Headford Road as it runs into the N84 towards Headford. Lough Atalia and the railway are defining features to the west and south of the area. The area is also long associated with the Defence Forces barracks and buildings and hosts a number of lower tier neighbourhood centres.

### What makes this place distinct?

This is a large area contiguous with and, in many cases, comprising an extension to the city's inner residential areas. The area comprises older established residential areas, industrial areas, retail centres and major institutional uses, hospitals and education campuses.

The radial routes extending from the city are defining streets and generally support mixed uses as well as functioning as transport corridors, with bus routes and walking and cycling connections.

The Tirellan and southern Ballinfoile area are characterised by cul-de-sac housing developments off spine roads where single and two storey semi-detached housing prevail. Towards Sandy Road more modern, higher density four storey apartments, three storey town houses and duplex maisonettes – developments which are better served by public transport, anchored by the Terryland Forest Park and in closer proximity to the retail services within the Terryland Retail Park have been developed.

Renmore is on the eastern side of Lough Atalia, south of the Old Dublin Road. Lough Atalia and the railway are defining features to the west and south of the area. The area is also long associated with Renmore Barracks and GMIT. The Renmore of today - characterised by a simple orthogonal residential street pattern of mainly two storey semi-detached houses – was established in the 1950s and 60s alongside the private Bon Secours Hospital.

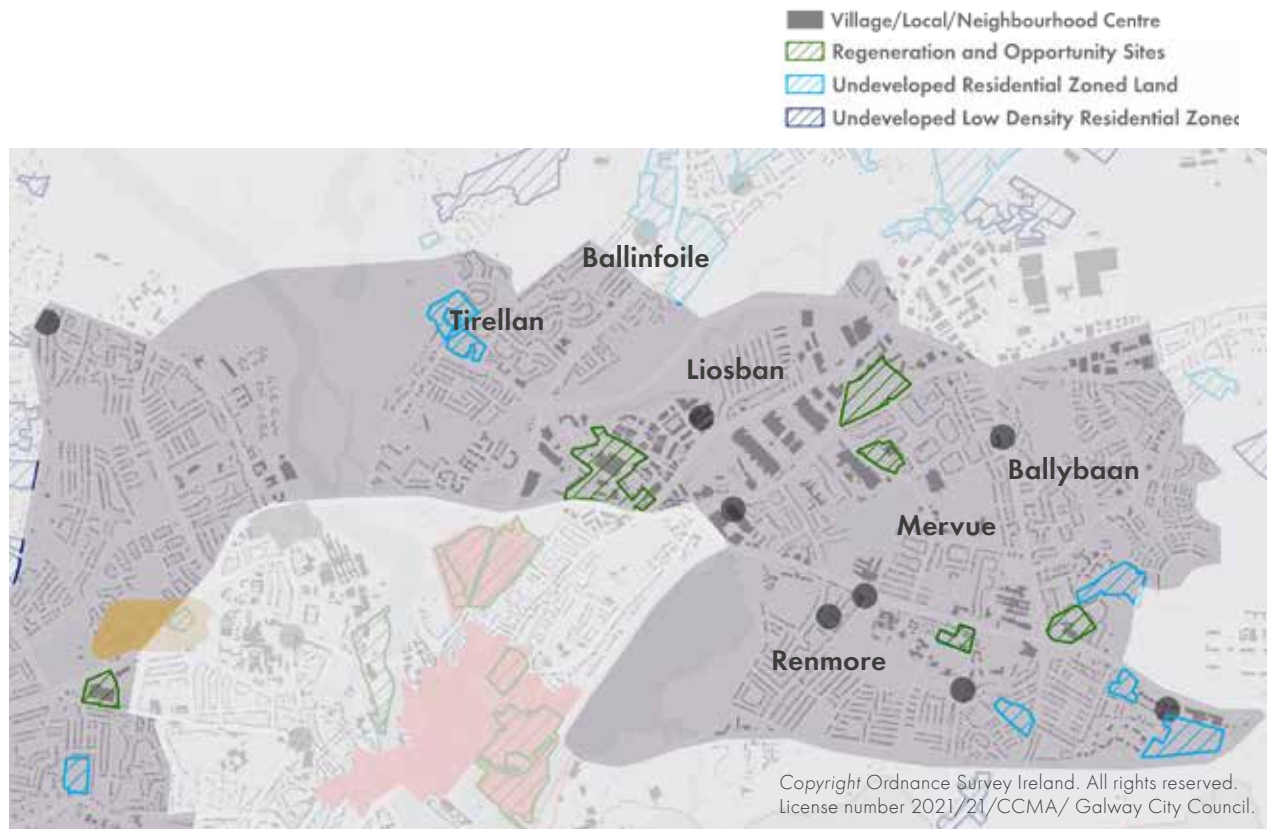
The area is characterised by open spaces. Nolan Park is at the heart of the community although doesn't benefit from much frontage from the residential streets which surround it. More notable are the single storey houses that tend to form the edges of the neighbourhood, addressing Ballyloughane Beach to the south and Lough Atalia to the west.

West of Renmore is the neighbourhood of Murrough, a lower density housing neighbourhood of short two storey terraces with generous landscaped estate lands.

North of the Old Dublin Road, the Mervue neighbourhood centres on the distinctive Holy Family Catholic Church. Streets here are typically lined with two storey post-war housing arranged in short terraces, with some higher density apartments near the central community heart.

The Mervue Business Park is an extensive and expansive commercial business park and industrial estate adjacent to Mervue's residential





**Fig 77** The north and eastern established suburbs area with designated retail centres and land zoned for development

neighbourhood accessed off both the Wellpark Road and Tuam Road. Buildings are typically large commercial footprints with height generally around three commercial storeys. Some parts of the estate, particularly to the south, are lower density uses.

Also in this area is the Crown development site, which is currently under phased construction and represents a significant transformation of the area with mixed use development of scale and with a recently approved Build to Rent scheme rising to 8 storey height.

The expansive Ballybaan neighbourhood is east of Mervue and the Ballybane Road, centred along the axis of Castlepark Road with St Brigid's Catholic Church. There is a cluster of retail and

community facilities located centrally in the neighbourhood. The Ballybaan neighbourhood is characterised by small clusters of two storey semi-detached or short terraced housing interspersed by an irregular pattern of open spaces.

The Liosban industrial estate is characterised by a mix of industrial/warehouse and office space interspersed with limited residential use. Within this area are the City Council and County Council depots which are earmarked for residential led development in conjunction with the LDA. This large scale site has the benefit of being within an existing employment hub, close to public transport links and adjacent to Terryland city park.



## What are the opportunities for growth?

Generally, the eastern established suburbs of Galway are low density areas of typically two storey housing. Open spaces have typically been left between different phases of housing development. The area has plentiful open space provision and Merlin Park Woods to the south east provides a mature woodland setting.

The grain of development along the Old Dublin Road leading to the lands around the Skerritt Roundabout is course and in stark contrast to that of the residential areas around it. The new Garda Station, GMIT and the now derelict Corrib Great Southern Hotel are an appropriate scale to this busy transport corridor. This corridor is appropriate for larger scale – denser and taller – development.

The radial and principal routes extending from the city are the principal defining streets and generally support mixed uses as well as functioning as transport corridors, with bus routes and walking and cycling connections. Within the established residential areas, there are opportunities for intensification along the principal corridors of Ballybane Road, Castlepark Road and Old Dublin Road east of the Skerritt

Roundabout, particularly and within the immediate vicinities of their respective concentrations of community and retail facilities. These routes and corridors benefit from local bus services and the clustering of community uses which serve and support local communities on a daily basis.

The Merlin Hospital site is a campus hospital set in established woodland. The campus is currently the focus for health care investment in new hospital accommodation. With the institutional character of buildings set in the landscape rather than street-based character, there is opportunity for greater height and density. This is supported by the site's secluded setting.

Within the Crown site there is ongoing scope for redevelopment. The Mervue Industrial Estate also presents redevelopment opportunities. With a mix of uses (retail, commercial and industrial) having established along the southern end of the Tuam Road which is also a bus corridor, this area is assessed as being amongst the most 'suitable' for an increased density of development. Part of the area is earmarked for mixed use redevelopment in the Development Plan.

Immediately to the west, the Sandy Road area between the Kirwan junction (where the N6 meets the N84) and the Joyce Roundabout presents development opportunities along its length and most particularly through the redevelopment of its existing low density single storey sheds and workshop buildings. The area is only a 1.5 km from the city centre.





## DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

### Prevailing densities:

Between 25 and 30 dph within the established suburbs.

### Densities open for consideration:

Between 30 dph rising to around 50 dph around key community centres and nodes. Densities could be higher again along the Dublin Road corridor and around the Skerritt Roundabout and also along the Sandy Road regeneration area given its proximity to the city centre.

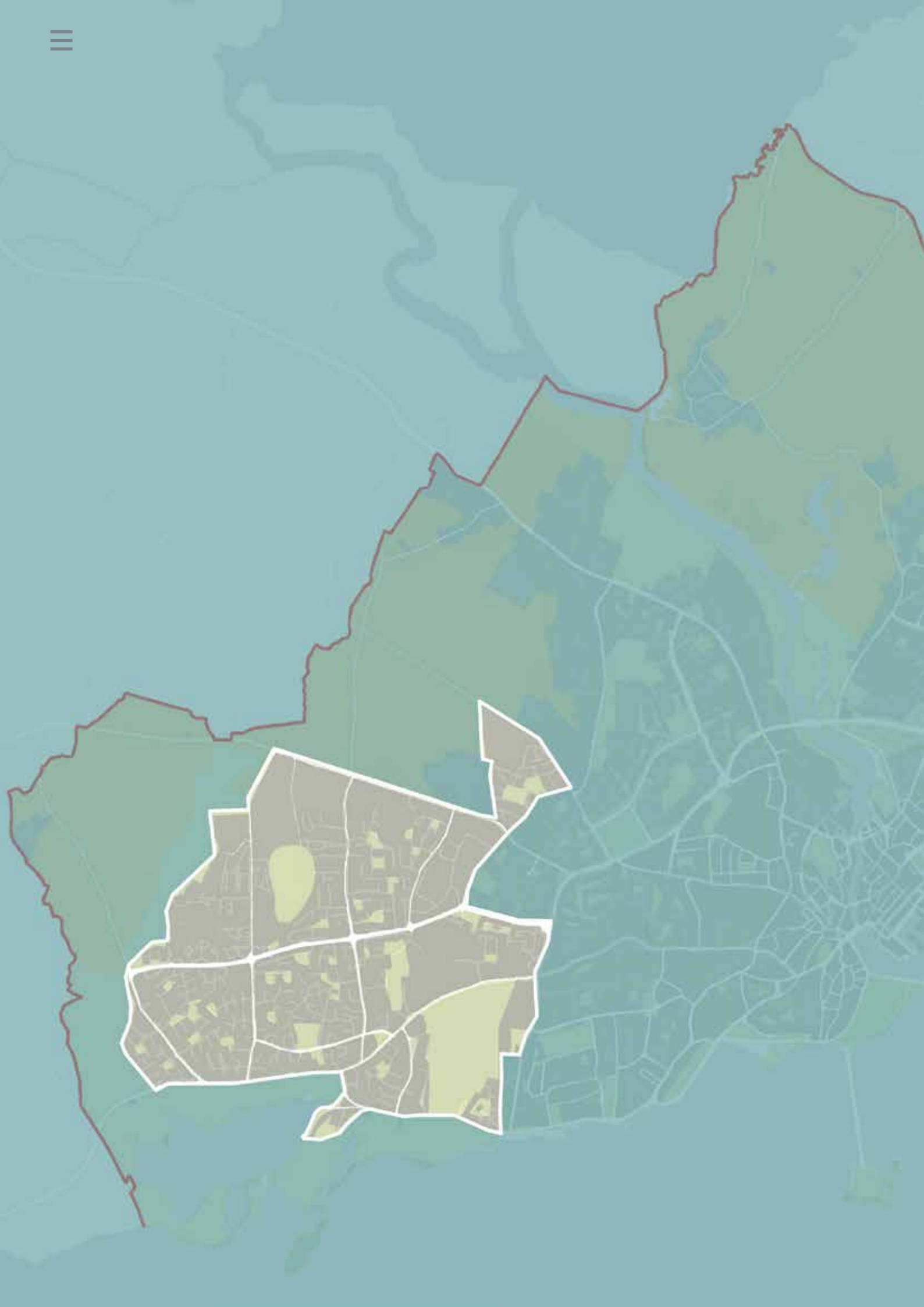
### Prevailing heights:

Generally 2 storeys within the established suburbs.

### Heights open for consideration:

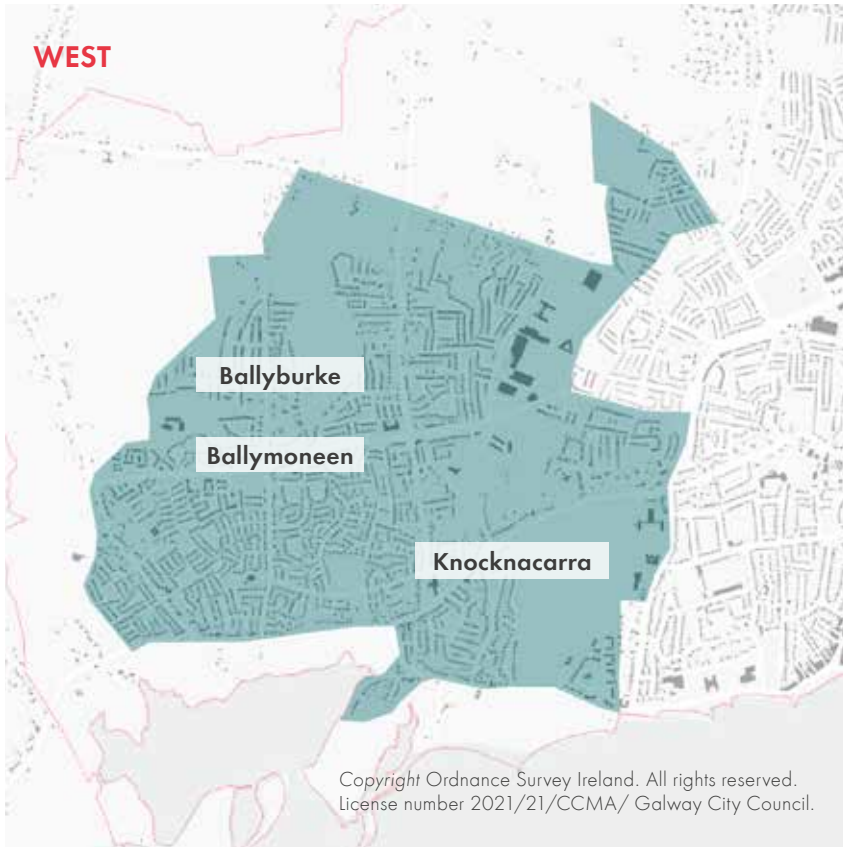
Between 2 - 3 storey within the established suburbs, rising to between 2 - 4 storey at key community centres and nodes. Heights along key corridors such as the Dublin Road, and other areas earmarked for major change such as Sandy Road are less sensitive and could rise above these levels where justified. Similarly, within the Crown Square site where major regeneration is occurring, there is scope for greater height as demonstrated in emerging developments.







# OUTER SUBURBS



**Fig 78** Galway's outer suburbs and surrounding areas

**Fig 79** Environmental analysis of western outer suburban areas



**Topography**



**Green infrastructure**



**Waterways**



**Morphology**



**Road network**



**Conservation**



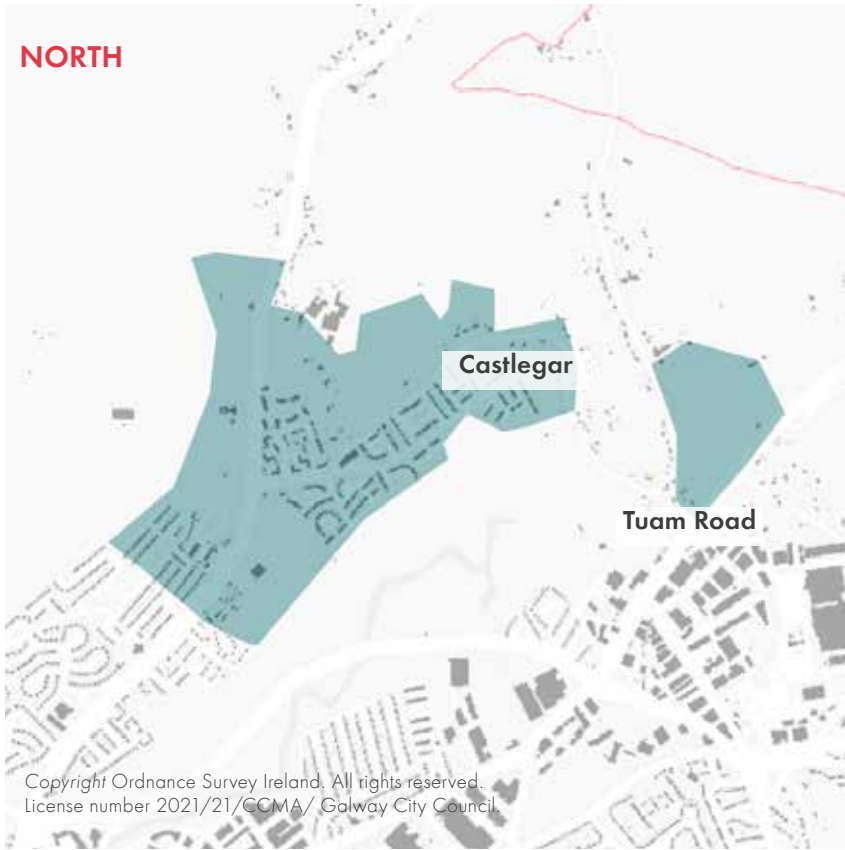
# 19 OUTER SUBURBS

## 19.1 Overview

This is a large area and it is hard to characterise given the diverse range of environments. The major approach routes into / out of the city are defining features. Generally larger scale commercial / industrial / mixed use developments are focused along the transport corridors which contrasts with the otherwise suburban scale found across the area.

Notable places towards the east include Merlin Park hospital and woods, and Ballybrit Racecourse. The west largely comprises the Knocknacarra, Ballyburke and Ballymoneen residential communities, with the district centre along the Western Distributor Road. The east of the city is characterised by the residential communities of Doughiska and Roscam, and by Parkmore, Doughiska and Briarhill commercial areas.





**Fig 80** Galway's outer suburbs and surrounding areas

**Fig 81** Environmental analysis of northern outer suburban areas



**Topography**



**Green infrastructure**



**Waterways**



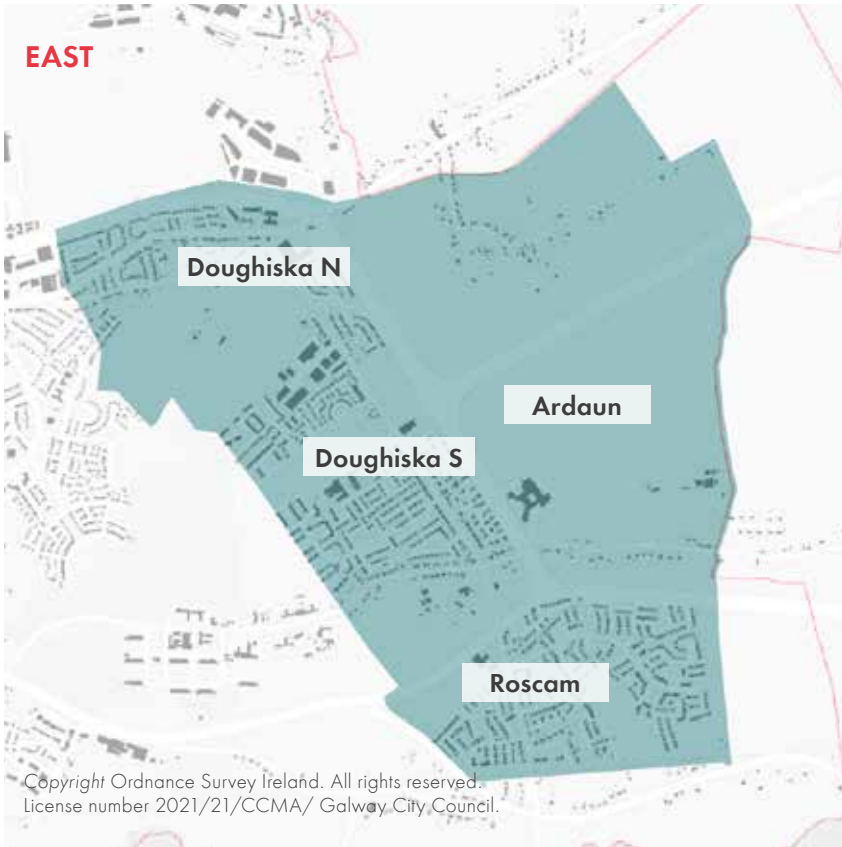
**Morphology**



**Road network**



**Conservation**

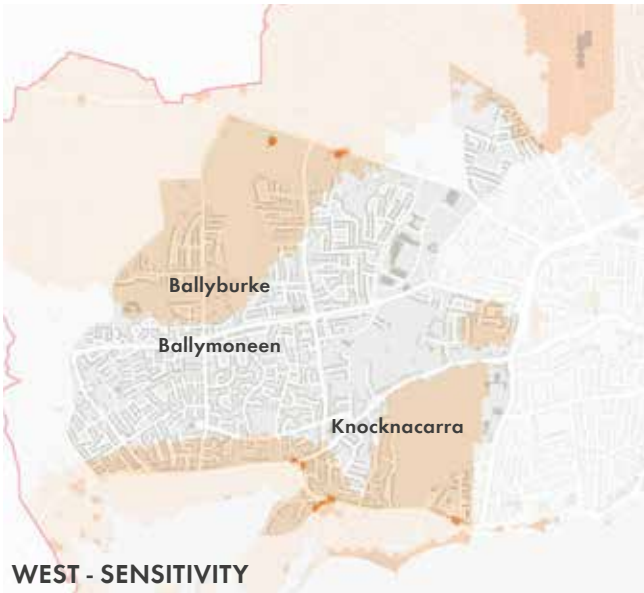


**Fig 82** Galway's outer suburbs and surrounding areas

**Fig 83** Environmental analysis of eastern outer suburban areas



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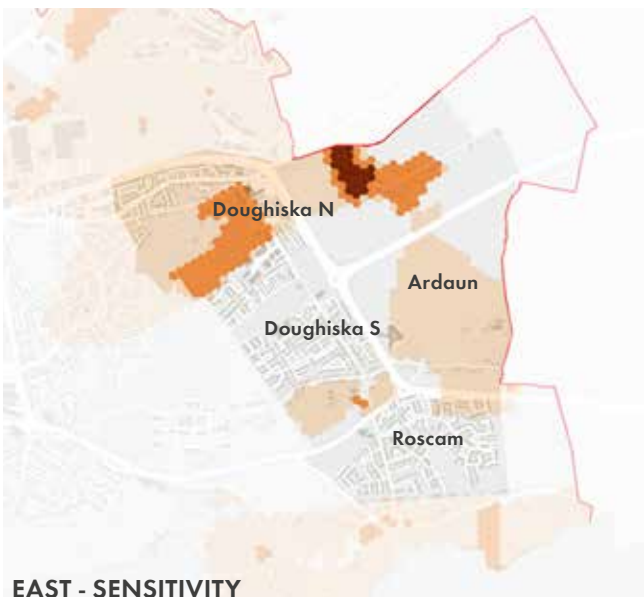
**All suitabilities layered, including:**

- Views
- Topography
- Record of protected structures



**All suitabilities layered, including:**

- Village envelopes
- Topography
- Low density residential zone



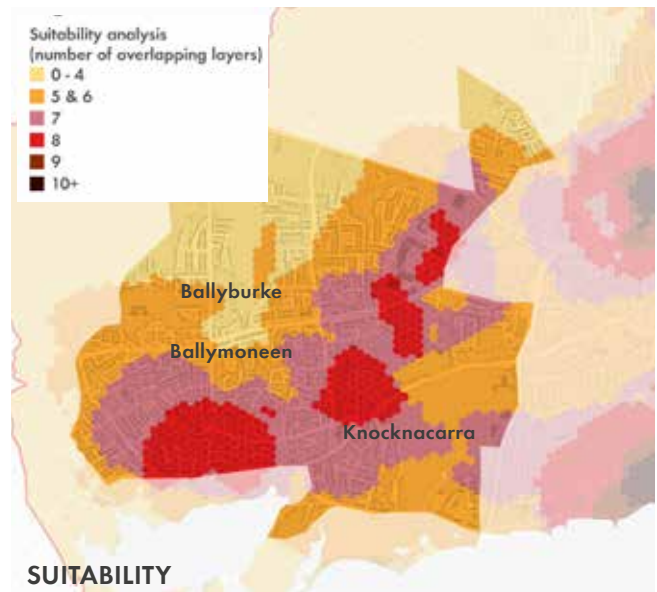
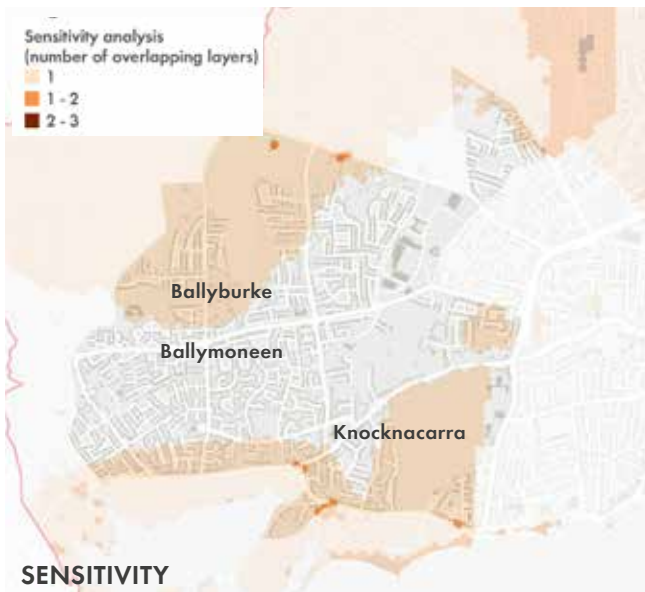
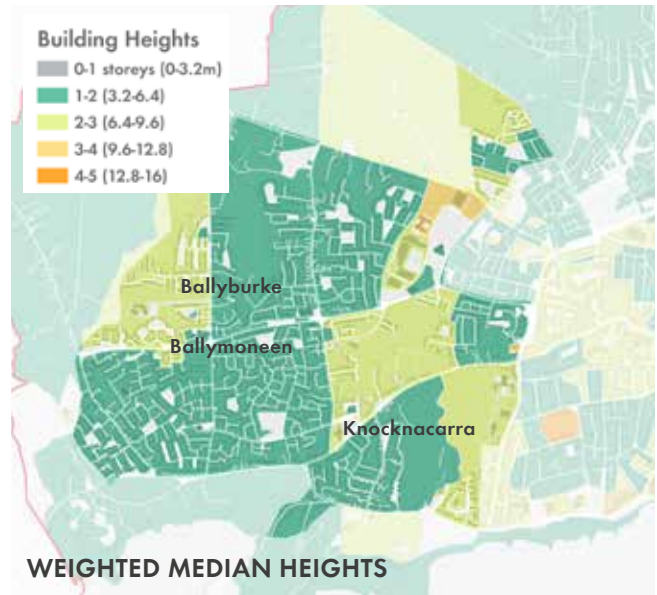
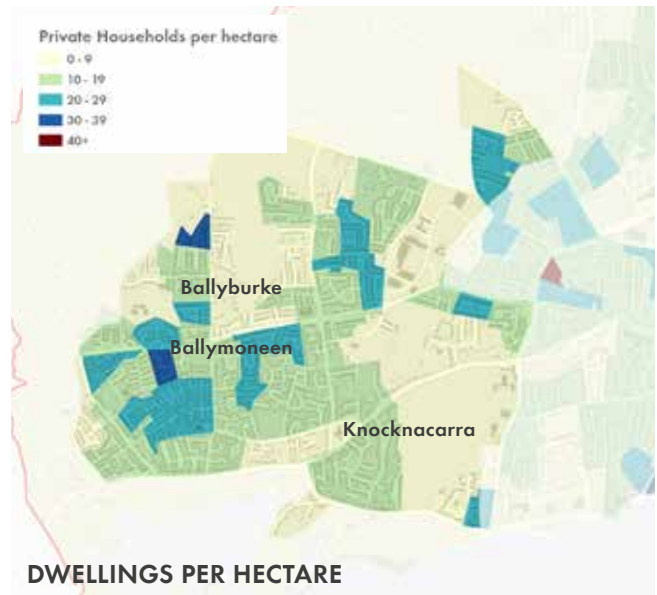
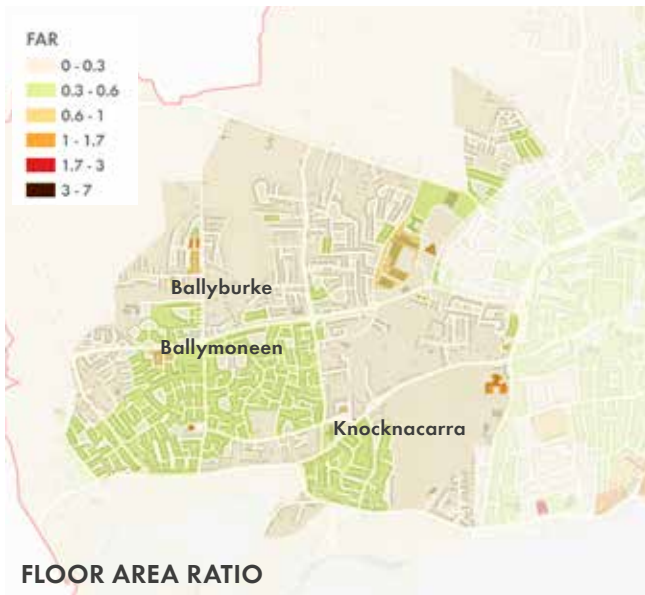
**All suitabilities layered, including:**

- Village envelopes
- Topography
- Low density residential zone

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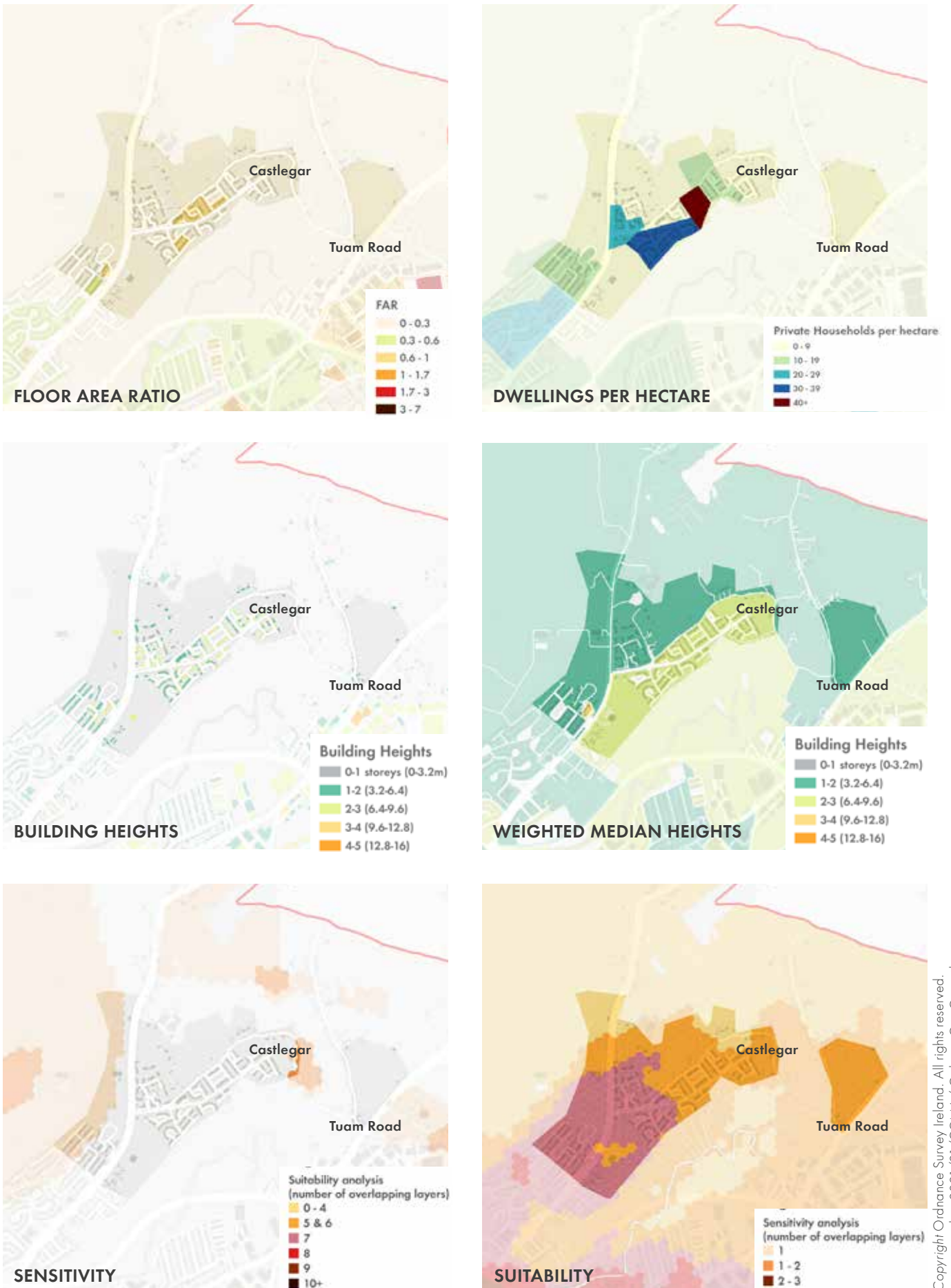
**Fig 84** Sensitivity and suitability analysis of Galway's outer suburban areas





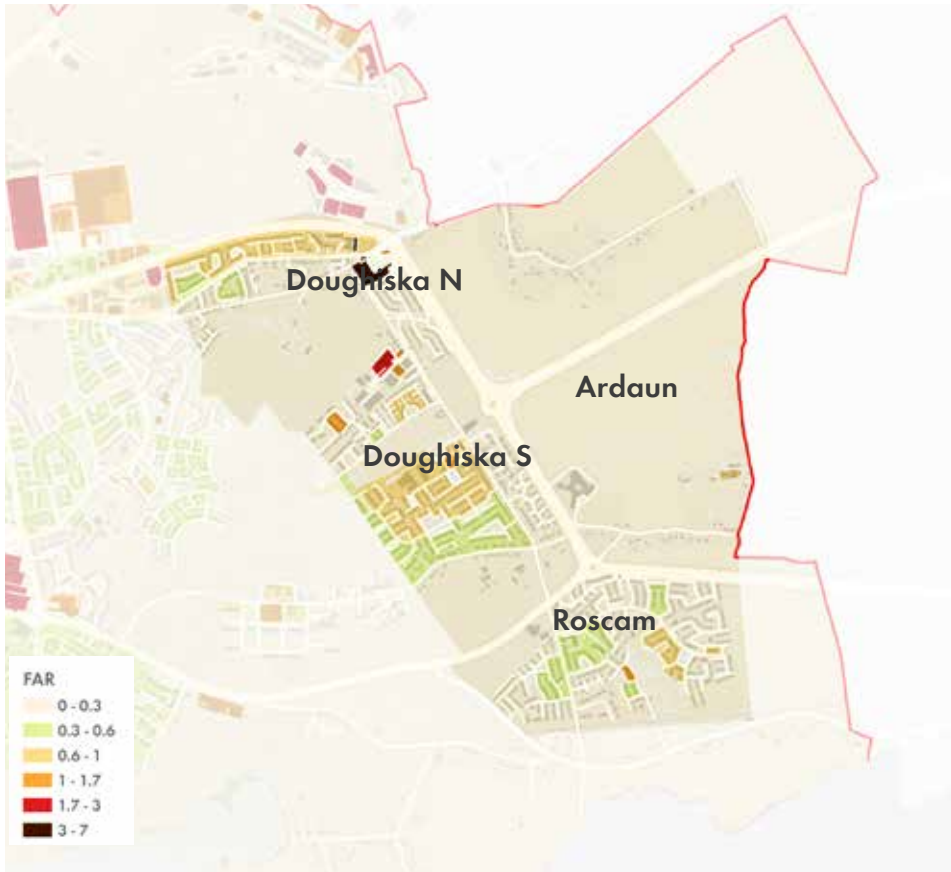
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**Fig 85** Density, building height, sensitivity and suitability analysis of Galway's western outer suburbs



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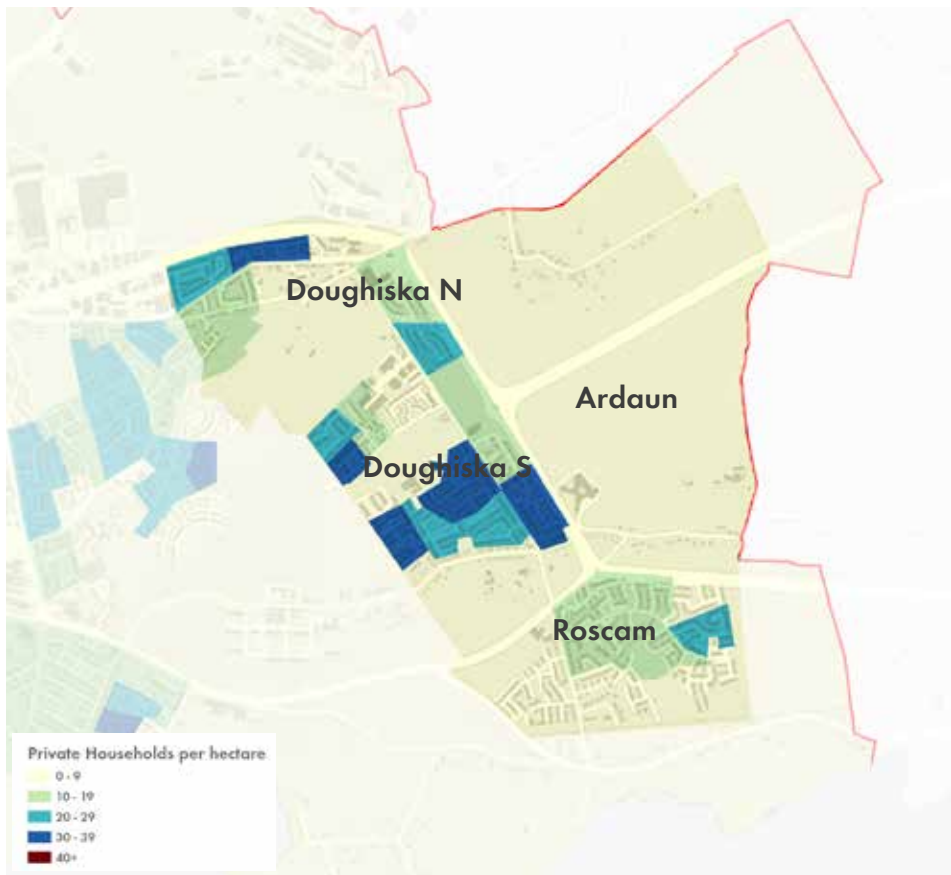
**Fig 86** Density, building height, sensitivity and suitability analysis of Galway’s northern outer suburbs



FLOOR AREA RATIO



BUILDING HEIGHTS



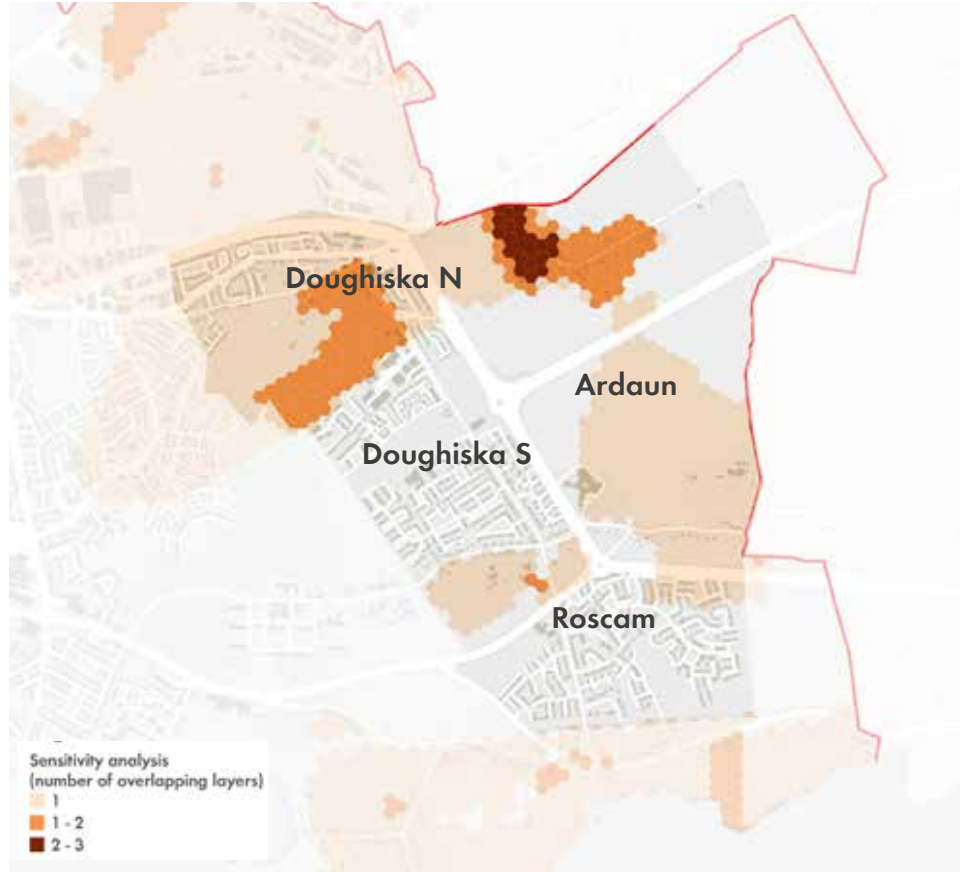
DWELLINGS PER HECTARE



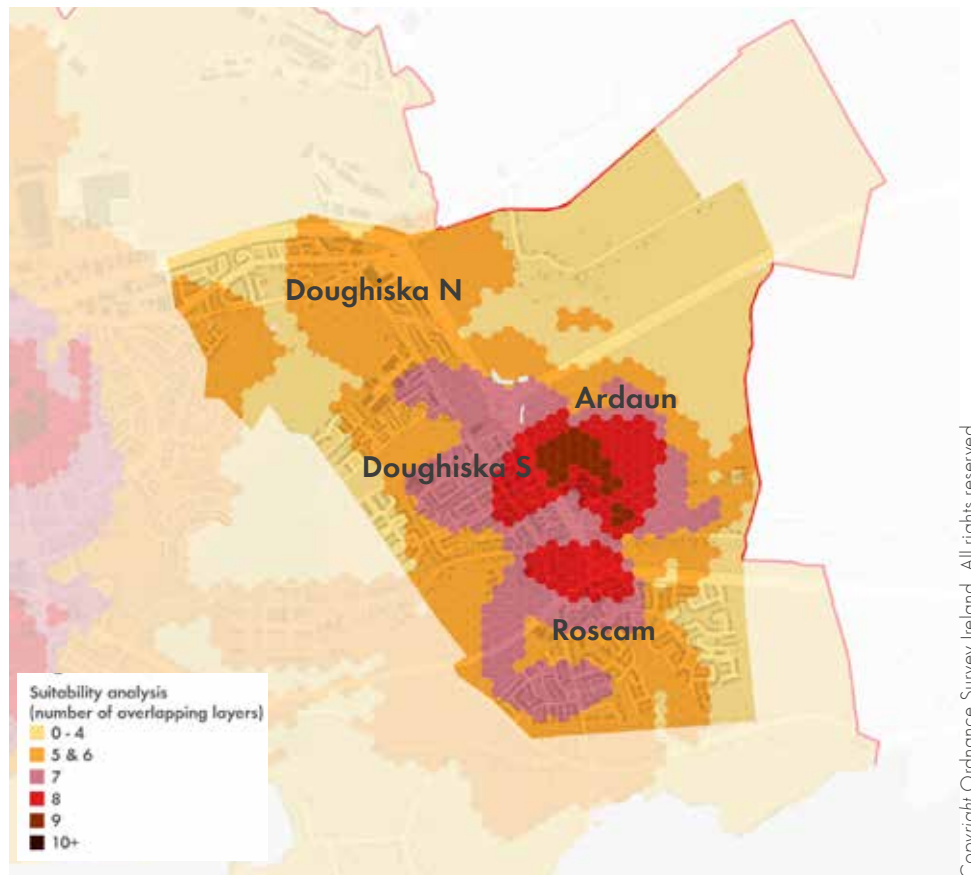
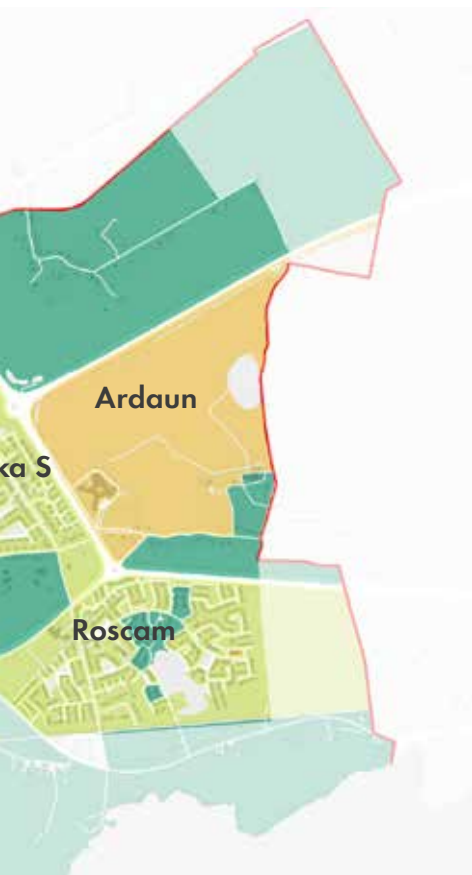
WEIGHTED MEDIAN HEIGHTS

Fig 87 Density, building height, sensitivity and suitability analysis of Galway's eastern outer suburbs





SENSITIVITY



SUITABILITY

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## 19.2 West - Knocknacarra, Ballyburke, Ballymoneen

Knocknacarra is a large and rapidly growing western suburb of Galway, located to the west of Salthill and the Taylor’s Hill Road area. Similarly, north of the Western Distributor Road, Ballyburke and Ballymoneen areas have successfully been developed and now provide neighbourhoods of family housing.

### What makes this place distinct?

The vast majority of the areas has been developed since the 1980s. The Western Distributor Road, connected to the southern end of Bishop O’Donnell Road, is the principal spine which provides access to the neighbourhoods. Access is also provided by Kingston Road and Barna Road to the south.

The scale of development is almost exclusively two and three storey detached and semi-detached housing, arranged in cul-de-sacs accessed off distributor roads. Newer developments in the area have a greater mix of densities, house types and sizes. Community facilities are provided at key corners and junctions together with Knocknacarra Church in the centre of the neighbourhood along the Ballymoneen Road. However, the main cluster of commercial activity is concentrated at the Gateway Retail Park – a District Centre in the city’s retail hierarchy – which is a modern and recently expanded out of centre format retail development.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

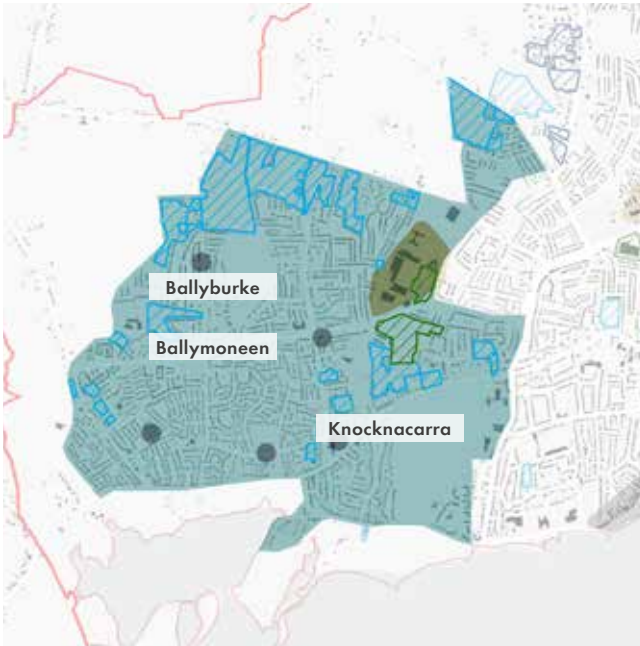
The area has proved popular and has established itself quickly as one of the city’s primary outer suburbs. There is scope for further development there, particularly as an extension to the residential neighbourhoods of Ballyburke to the north and west.

There is also identified scope for further mixed use development as a southerly expansion of the district centre which will see the centre expand to the southern side of the Western Distributor Road to deliver a mixed use urban village type development.

Rusheen Bay forms the southern coastal extent of Knocknacarra. This area has a mature landscape character with wonderful views south.



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- District Centre
- Village/Local/Neighbourhood Centre
- Regeneration and Opportunity Sites
- Undeveloped Residential Zoned Land
- Undeveloped Low Density Residential Zoned Land

**Fig 88** Western outer suburbs with retail centres and lands zoned for development

**DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE**

**Prevailing densities:**

Aside from the contrasting scale of development at the Gateway Retail Park, the prevailing housing density is in the region of 25 - 30 dph, more recent developments have achieved between 30 and 40 dph.

**Densities open for consideration:**

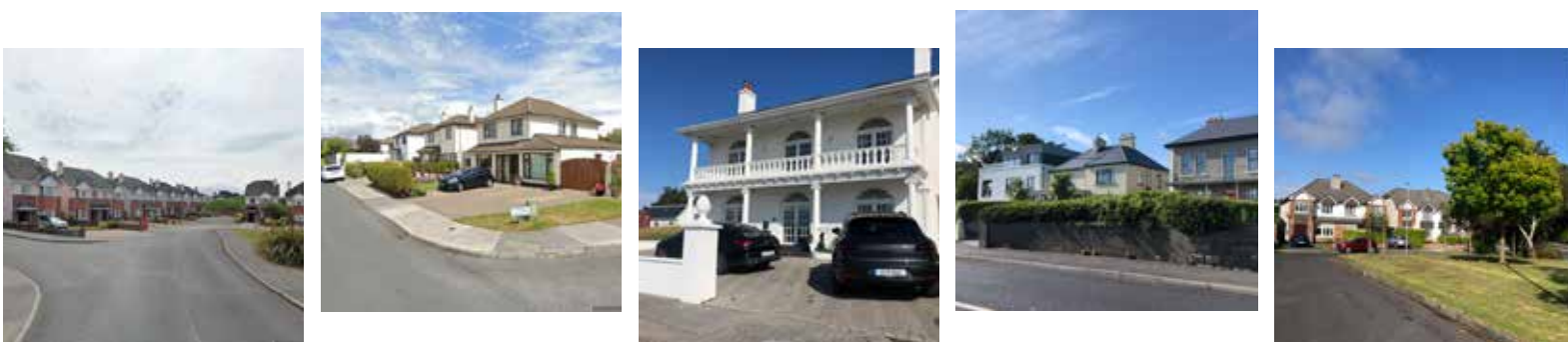
With good levels of infrastructure supporting the establishment of this relatively recent neighbourhood, there is significant scope for further phases of housing development on existing zoned and serviced lands. Within the context of a stable and established residential neighbourhood, densities should seek to make the best use of land, targeting levels of up to 35-40 dph.

**Prevailing heights:**

Building heights are generally 2 storeys across the majority of the area. More recent developments with mixed unit types are between 2 - 3 storeys.

**Heights open for consideration:**

New development should respect the scale of recent development. Key junctions and nodes of activities present opportunities to provide more urban enclosure and a sense of clustering of activities with 3 - 4 storey development.



## 19.3 North - Ballinfoile, Castlegar

### What makes this place distinct?

North of the Kirwan junction, the neighbourhood of Ballinfoile continues with small individual communities accessed off the Headford Road. At the northern extent of this neighbourhood, is three storey modern mixed use development with ground floor convenience retail. The Ballinfoile/Castlegar Community Centre is located opposite.

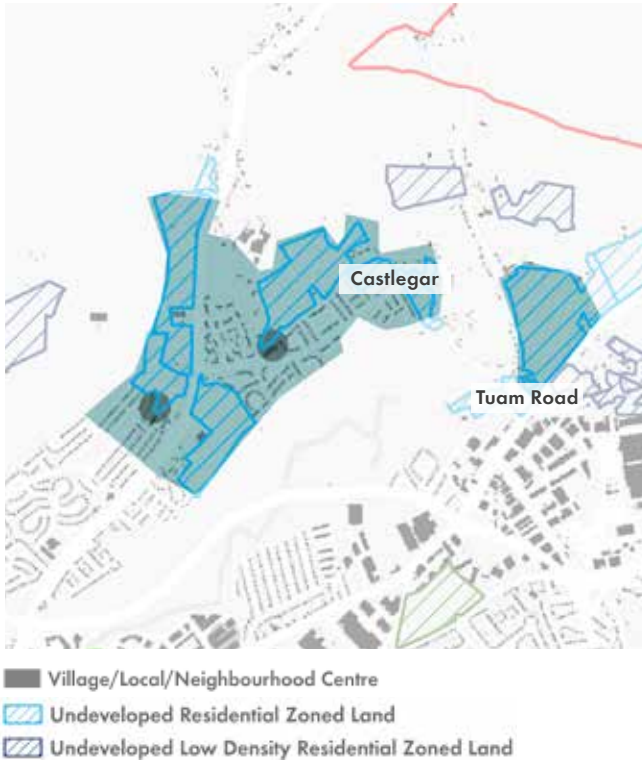
The Castlegar area is a little further north. This neighbourhood is built to higher densities than those of more established Galway neighbourhoods – with a higher proportion of three storey dwellings and apartments within the housing mix.

### What are the opportunities for growth?

Much investment has already been made in these northern communities, with improved road infrastructure and public transport services and new community and retail facilities. This investment is evident in the 'suitability' analysis which shows this area having a good level of suitability for higher density development. A significant amount of land has been zoned for housing development and, to make best use of this land and the investment already made in the area, the higher densities of recent housing development in Castlegar should be pursued



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**Fig 89** Northern outer suburbs with local service centres and lands zoned for development

**DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE**

**Prevailing densities:**

In the older established outer suburbs, densities are between 20 and 30 dph, falling lower in the more rural areas. The more recent developments see densities increase to around 40 dph.

**Densities open for consideration:**

With much of the lands zoned for new housing being adjacent to more recent higher density development in and near Castlegar, densities should make best use of land and the infrastructure and investments already made. An appropriate target density range for new development is therefore between 40 and 50 dph.

**Prevailing heights:**

Existing height ranges from bungalows in Castlegar Village to 3 storey mixed use development and 4 storey apartments and stacked duplexes in the more recent developments.

**Heights open for consideration:**

New development should be of a scale that respects the scale of prevailing neighbourhoods and newer areas. In the newer areas of Castlegar where high density development has taken place, building heights of between 2 and 4 storeys is appropriate development.



## 19.4 East - Doughiska, Roscam, Ardaun

### What makes this place distinct?

Located between the Merlin Park Hospital to the west and the N67 road to the east, Doughiska is a modern housing neighbourhood with mixed housing of semi-detached, short terraces and apartment blocks.

There is a good mix of commercial and community facilities with the Briarhill Shopping Centre to the north alongside the four storey Clayton Hotel. There are also retail and community facilities at Doughiska including a primary school.

Roscam is a suburban area south of the Old Dublin Road and largely contained by the railway line and the east-west axis of the N67. The neighbourhood has grown around a small enclave of slightly older detached homes at Roscam. The neighbourhood is well landscaped and housing is predominantly two storey semi-detached housing with some denser forms including four storey apartment buildings on primary roads. A local retail centre at the junction between the neighbourhood's two main roads meets the day-to-day retail needs of local people. South of the Old Dublin Road, is a more established area of Roscam.

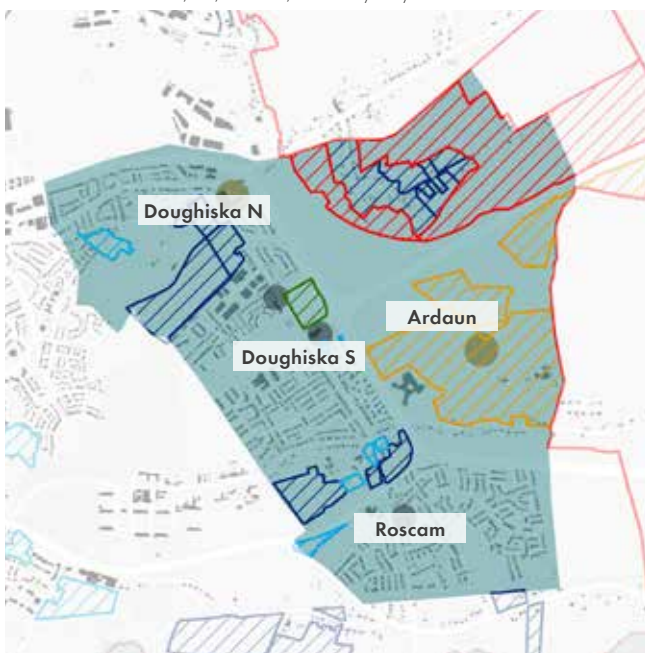
### What are the opportunities for growth?

The eastern neighbourhoods of Galway are a major focus of housing growth. The Ardaun LAP proposes a large new residential community. Ardaun will benefit from a new district centre in the form of an urban village centre at its heart. Along with the existing retail and community facilities in Doughiska, the eastern suburbs are well serviced by community infrastructure and services.

Whilst significant amounts of land are earmarked for low density housing development, in view of the range of services in close proximity, the new community facilities that have been delivered and the largely new-built character of the surrounding neighbourhoods, there may be opportunity to increase density, subject to environmental considerations to help deliver a more sustainable pattern of development



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- District Centre
- Village/Local/Neighbourhood Centre
- Undeveloped Residential Zoned Land
- Undeveloped Low Density Residential Zoned Land
- Ardaun LAP Lands
- Ardaun LAP Lands - Phase 1

**Fig 90** Eastern outer suburbs with retail centres and lands zoned for development

**DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE**

**Prevailing densities:**

The recent housing developments of Doughiska and Roscam areas generally achieve housing densities of between 30 and 40 dph.

**Densities open for consideration:**

New development should reflect prevailing density in the range of 30 - 40 dph. The Ardaun LAP gives guidance on the appropriate densities in the LAP area.

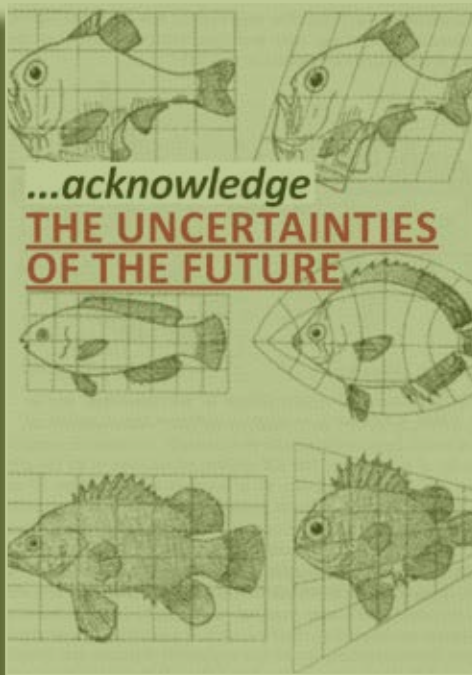
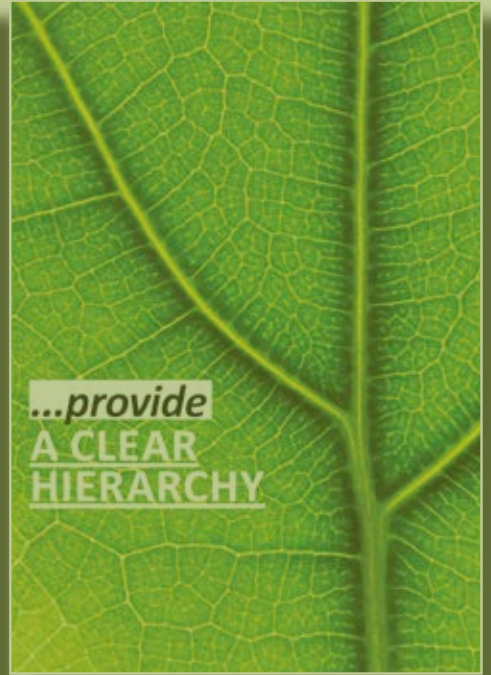
**Prevailing heights:**

Generally a housing pattern of 2 - 3 storey.

**Heights open for consideration:**

This pattern is appropriate and should continue. Given the largely new-build character of the area as a whole, there are few sensitivities in relation to the scale of development and opportunities to push for marginally increased height where appropriate to do so should be taken. The Ardaun LAP gives guidance on the appropriate heights in the LAP area.



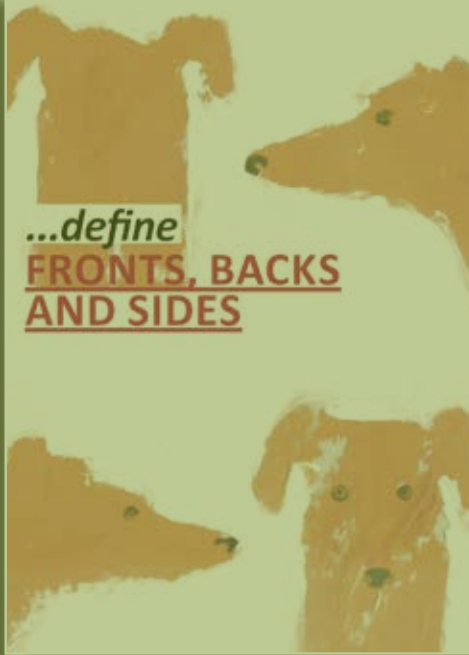




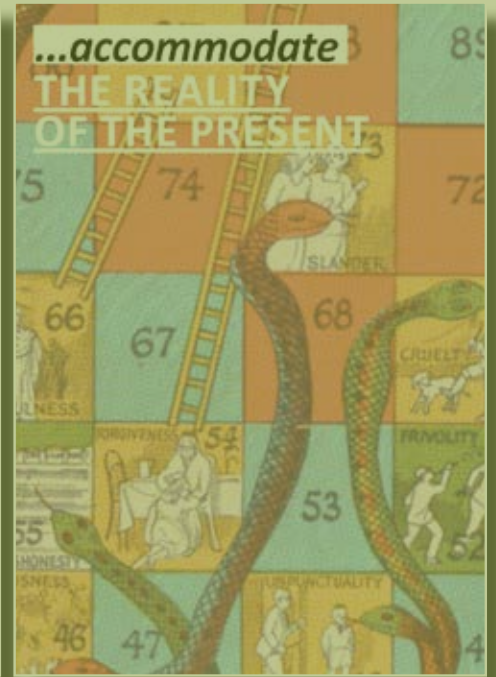
*...establish*  
**CONTINUITY**  
**OF CONNECTIONS**



*...define*  
**FRONTS, BACKS**  
**AND SIDES**



*...accommodate*  
**THE REALITY**  
**OF THE PRESENT**



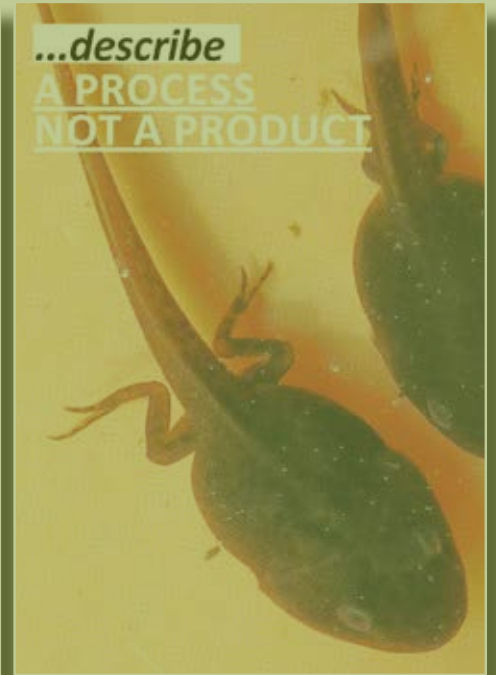
*...promote*  
**DIFFERENCE**  
**AND DIVERSITY**



*...look*  
**OUT NOT IN**



*...describe*  
**A PROCESS**  
**NOT A PRODUCT**



# DESIGN GUIDANCE

# 20 DESIGN GUIDANCE

## 20.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this study is to outline a strategy to help guide and influence the density, including height, of new development across the City of Galway. It is prepared in the context of a national policy agenda which revolves around nurturing a more compact form of development in the context of the need to plan for significant population increases in the foreseeable future.

Whilst the analysis underpinning the guidance contained within the strategy is firmly oriented towards development density and building heights, in light of the significant planned growth for Galway, it is useful and appropriate to outline some more general design principles and guidance to help encourage the highest standards of design, both in buildings, streets and public spaces.

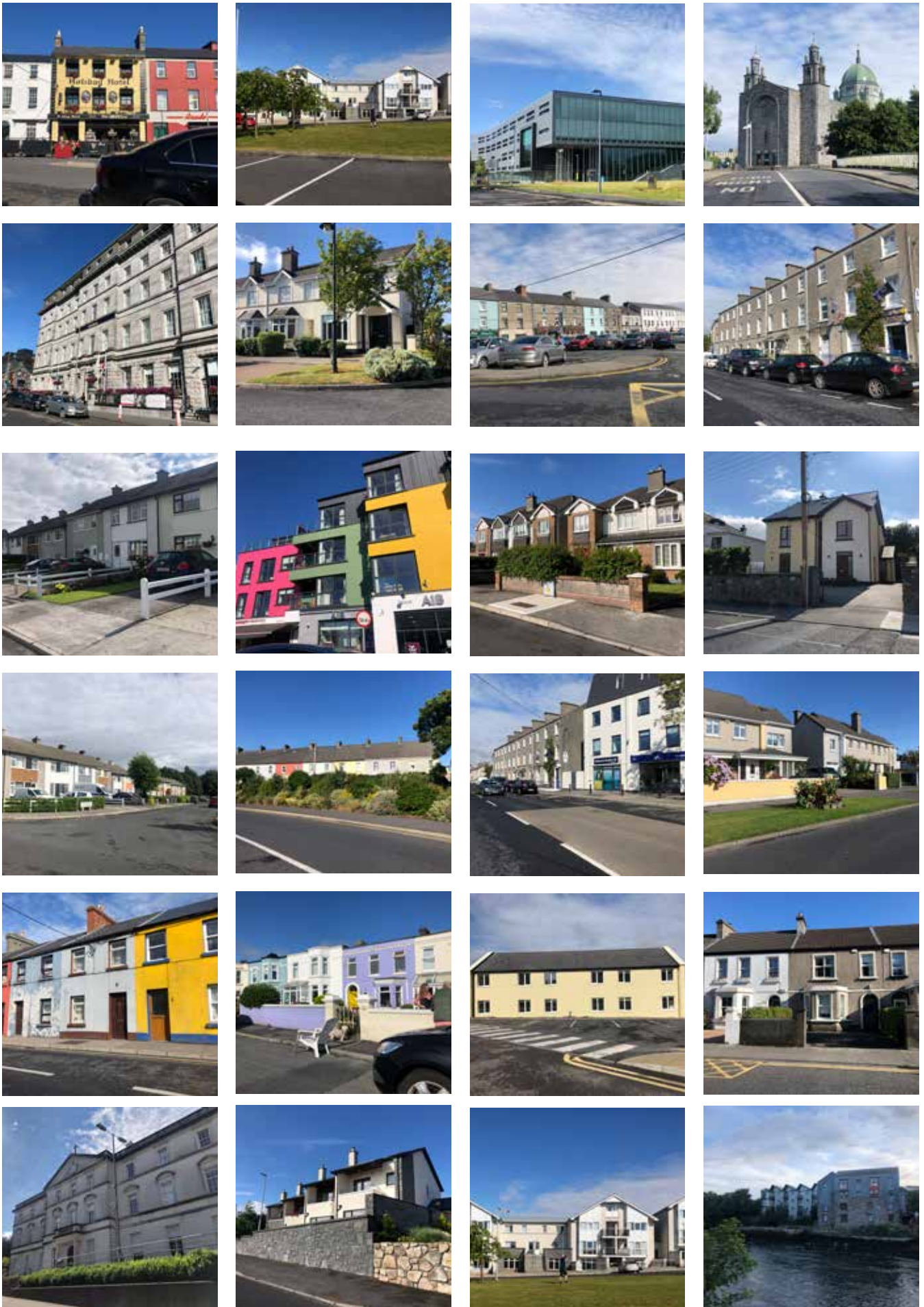
This guidance will be outlined in a descending range of scales, from the neighbourhood scale, through the urban block towards the scale of individual buildings and their elements. Within those scale changes, there are also a series of primary conditions of particular relevance to Galway to guide the opportunity for intensification, in particular on regeneration and opportunity sites and the consolidation of suburbs.

This study has been prepared to inform policy and is not intended to be used in a prescriptive manner. It will assist in informing planning policy and can be used as a guide to support the development management process. It has been carried out at a strategic level and should be considered in the context of the broader range of policies which apply to other aspects of planning and having regard to their importance and priority.

The densities and heights set out in the study are not absolute measures to be pursued or achieved. Each site should be considered on its merits. Densities and heights lower or higher than those outlined in the study may be appropriate when assessed against other relevant planning policies and guidance. Complex sites may give rise to opportunities for exceptional forms of development. Where large sites are capable of generating their own character, there is scope for greater height if designed carefully.

The study includes densities and building height ranges open for consideration. These ranges should be used as a guide and there may be reasons which justify deviation from these ranges. The dph densities are generally put forward on the assumption that development proposals are 100% residential. Where mixed use developments are appropriate a more open ended estimate of dph may be more appropriate and usage of FAR/plot ratio may be a better determinant measure of density.

Notwithstanding the pursuance of compact growth, Galway's city core is a historic environment with a sensitive and distinct character. Both the river and coastline provide impressive landscape and townscape features. As such, the impacts of new development on the city's character and setting will be a major consideration in new development coming forward within the visibility envelope of the historic core.



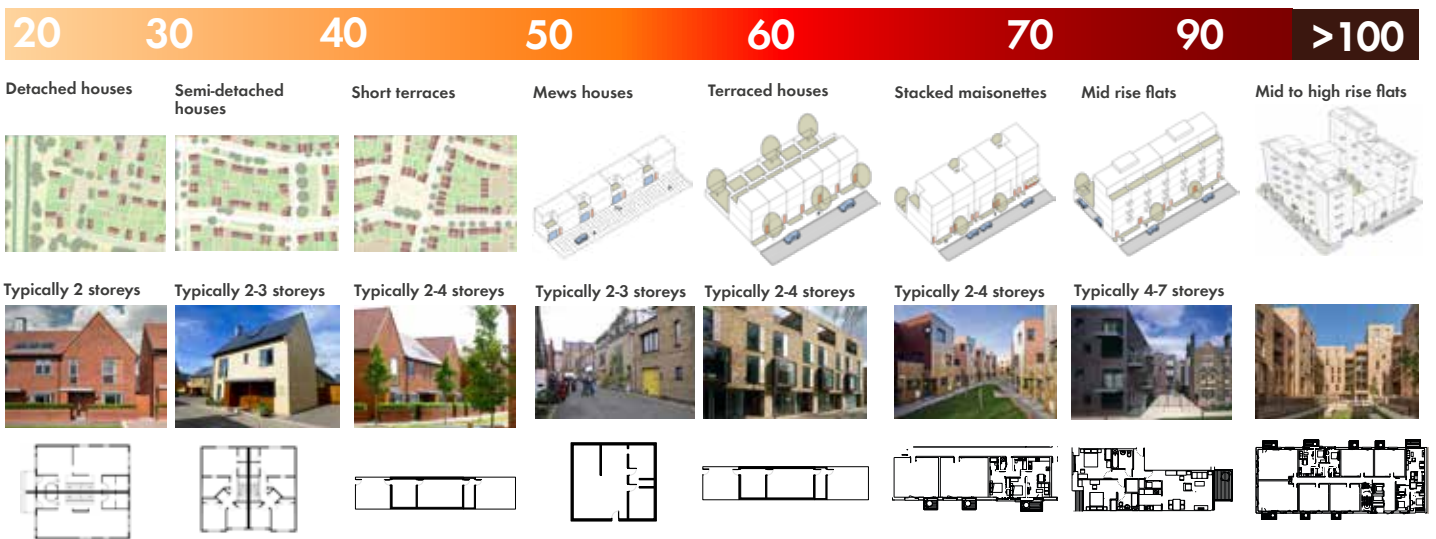
## 20.2 Neighbourhood

### Compactness

The development of more compact cities and towns is central to the Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework's ambitions to manage significant levels of growth across the country. The concept of the *15 minute city* has been strengthened by the changes people have made as daily patterns of life have been adjusted to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Planning carefully to ensure that major new developments can support community life – either through the provision of retail and community services within their own boundaries or by establishing strong and legible connections with surrounding neighbourhoods – without the need for over-reliance on the use of the private car is a fundamental principle of good planning and urban design.

### Routes and links

The best cities are easy to traverse and navigate, with frequent streets and lanes offering a choice of routes between destinations. Streets play host to changing buildings and activities but rarely deviate or radically change themselves. New development should therefore pay great respect to the alignment and continuity of streets. The continuity of the building line with active frontages is a key element of a successful street. Opportunities to extend, reconnect or enhance streets and lanes should be taken to help ensure the neighbourhood is generally well connected to, and fully integrated with, the local street network.



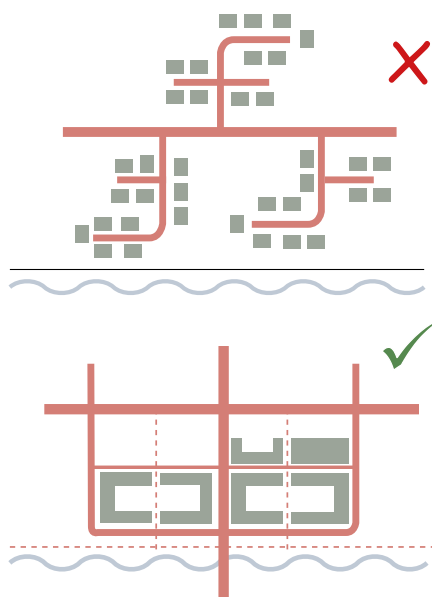
**Fig 91** Making the best use of urban land with dense forms of development in locations already well served by public transport will not only help create thriving neighbourhoods but will also reduce the pressure to development sites beyond the urban area (© Allies and Morrison, 2021)

### Grain and morphology

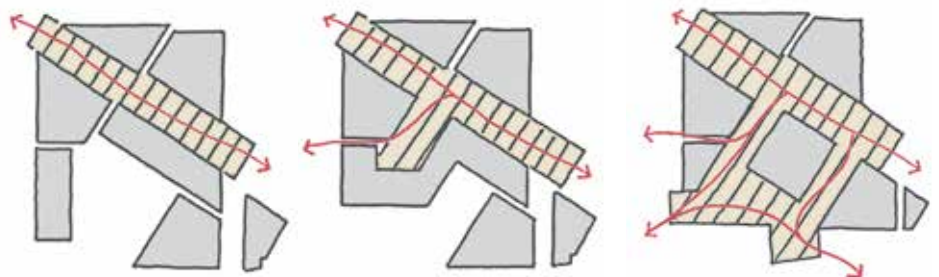
New development should respond positively to prevailing urban grain – the pattern of plots in an urban block. The arrangement and rhythm of buildings, the relationships between them, their relative size and scale are all important factors which determine the character of a place. Fine urban grain – where buildings are tightly arranged, sharing boundary walls creating a continuity of street frontage – is an urban quality which should be respected and protected. New development which contrasts with this fine grain pattern of development is likely to undermine many of the positive aspects of urban character in that area.

### Galway’s waterfront setting

Special attention should be paid to ensuring developments respect the city’s unique coastal and river waterfront setting and contributes positively to creating high quality, publicly accessible environments which are connected to the wider city.



**Fig 92** New development should create new routes and links with the surrounding area (© Allies and Morrison, 2021)



**Fig 93** The best towns and cities are easy to traverse and navigate, with frequent streets and lanes offering a choice of routes between destinations (© Allies and Morrison, 2021)

## 20.3 Urban block

### Contextual and responsive

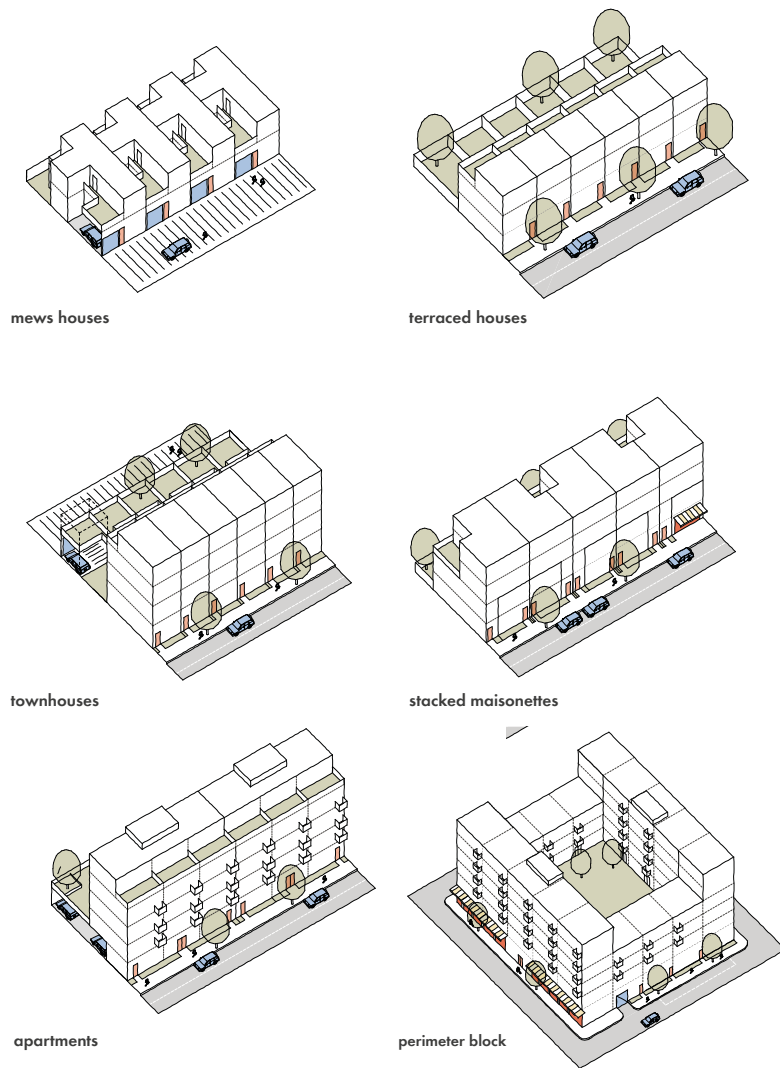
New development should take account of prevailing character and context in terms of the height, scale and form of development. Analysis of the surrounding area should be undertaken to ensure a proper understanding of prevailing character. Building heights, FAR and densities, the distribution of land uses, proximity to public open spaces, key frontages, public space and street hierarchy, and public transport accessibility – these are some of the key issues that new proposals must positively address and complement to ensure it is an appropriate form of development.



**Fig 94** Modern design in a historic area - a contextual response in Pavillion Road, London

### Flexibility and adaptability

New development should be designed in a manner which supports flexibility, adaptability, refurbishment, and reuse. Similarly, opportunities to adapt, repurpose and reuse existing buildings for new uses, especially where that building contributes positively to local character, should be actively explored and positively taken. This is important to ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively.



**Fig 95** Adaptable buildings - Consider how the planning grid can be flexible enough to accommodate varied locations for a mix of unit sizes and tenure types (© Allies and Morrison, 2021)

## Frontages and relationships

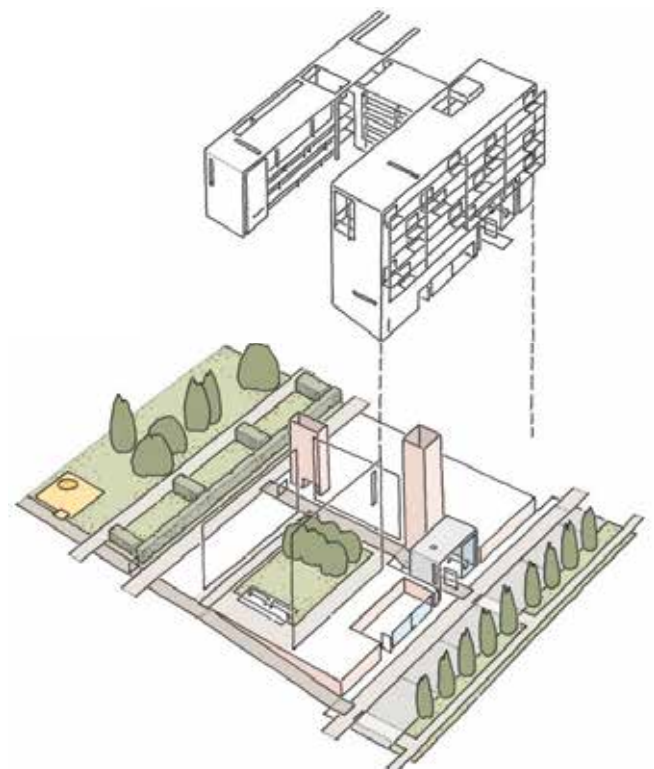
The fronts of buildings should present a welcoming address to the street. The best streets are those which are clearly defined by building frontages. This principle applies as much to the city centre streets like Shop Street and High Street as it does to the residential streets of Knocknacarra and Newcastle.

## Public and private

An extension of this principle regarding frontages around the edge of urban blocks, the clear definition of public and private space is similarly critical to successful places. Places that are not clearly either public or private – places where responsibilities for management and maintenance are not clear – tend to be neglected places. Such places often attract anti-social behaviour and create a nuisance to those around them.



**Fig 96** A direct relationship between the front of the building and the street - the front door is accessible directly from the street; windows and balconies address and add life to the street; a low boundary wall offers privacy without presenting a blank frontage



**Fig 97** An apartment building with a clear distinction between public space which is addressed either side of the block with private amenity space for residents only within the courtyard (© Allies and Morrison, 2021)

## 20.4 Buildings

### Design quality

Supported by relevant current and emerging development plan policies, new development should be of an appropriately high standard of design. Accordance with density and height guidance outlined in this study will not discharge this requirement. Similarly, it may be possible to prepare a case for new development which deviates from the density and height guidance contained here if the quality of design and wider regenerative benefits merit such an approach. Design review – a process of peer review of development proposals – is a tool and process which provides an additional, and independent, level of support and scrutiny to help ensure high quality design in new development.



Unacceptable impact of significant new buildings in the direct foreground, background or in close proximity of existing landmarks



Potential opportunities for landmarks of civic importance within areas of the city outside of this trinity



Careful consideration of how new roofs nestle into the varied roofscape, below the line of the nave of the Cathedral

### Variety and vitality

Variety underpins vitality. A new development should be designed to support a mix of uses, particularly in mixed use and commercial areas – in and around the hierarchy of centres across Galway. Commercial and community uses on the ground floor of principal street frontages will help to support the life and vitality of that street. Similarly in largely residential suburbs, new housing developments should be designed to support a mix of dwelling types to meet the diverse housing needs of the area.



**Fig 98** The impact of new development on views and vistas (© Allies and Morrison, 2021)

**Fig 99** Even small sites offer the opportunity to provide variety - like this plot on the corner of Foster Street and Frenchville Lane



## Materials and details

A building's material palette plays an important role in establishing its character and how well that building complements, or potentially contrasts with, its local context. In sensitive historic locations, new buildings which are contemporary in design but executed with building materials which respect and interpret those around them can help to ensure new development makes a positive contribution to a street scene and local character which is always experiencing a process of change and regeneration.

## Storage, parking, servicing and maintenance

The detail of how a building works – how it is serviced, how waste is stored and collected, how cars and bikes are stored – can play a huge role in how successfully it performs on a day-to-day basis. Whilst some of these issues can be addressed through building management, they are heavily influenced by and dependent on building design. Discrete but efficient service bays, a combination of on-street and off-street parking, convenient yet discrete integrated bin stores – these are all design issues which must be carefully considered and resolved.



**Fig 100** The Pálás Cinema designed by dePaor contributes to the streets character



**Fig 101** Examples of waste and recycling storage integrated into the overall built form of the development. Photo credits: © Allies and Morrison

## 20.5 Supporting the development management process

In addition to the general guidance set out in this study and specifically to support the development management process, proposals for increased density and height will be subject to specific contextual assessment and should clearly demonstrate:

### 1 Heritage assets and their setting

How the proposed development responds positively to the setting and significance of relevant heritage assets, and the wider historic character of the area that contributes positively to the city's distinctiveness.

### 2 Design quality

How the proposal represents exceptional design quality in terms of urban grain and layout; scale, height and massing; proportion and detailing; materials; and associated public realm. Both the design quality of the building itself, and how that scheme positively contributes to its relationship with the surrounding area, will be important considerations.

### 3 Townscape rationale

Where proposals involve taller buildings, they must be supported by a clear townscape rationale. This would include an approach to how key locations are marked and how proposals respond to and exploit good levels of public transport accessibility and supporting services.

### 4 Tall building statement

Where a tall building, one that significantly exceeds the prevailing benchmark heights is proposed, it shall be accompanied by a Tall Building Statement which gives justification for an exception for such height and includes at a minimum the case for the proposal based on location, design, context and assimilative capacity.

### 5 Impact assessment

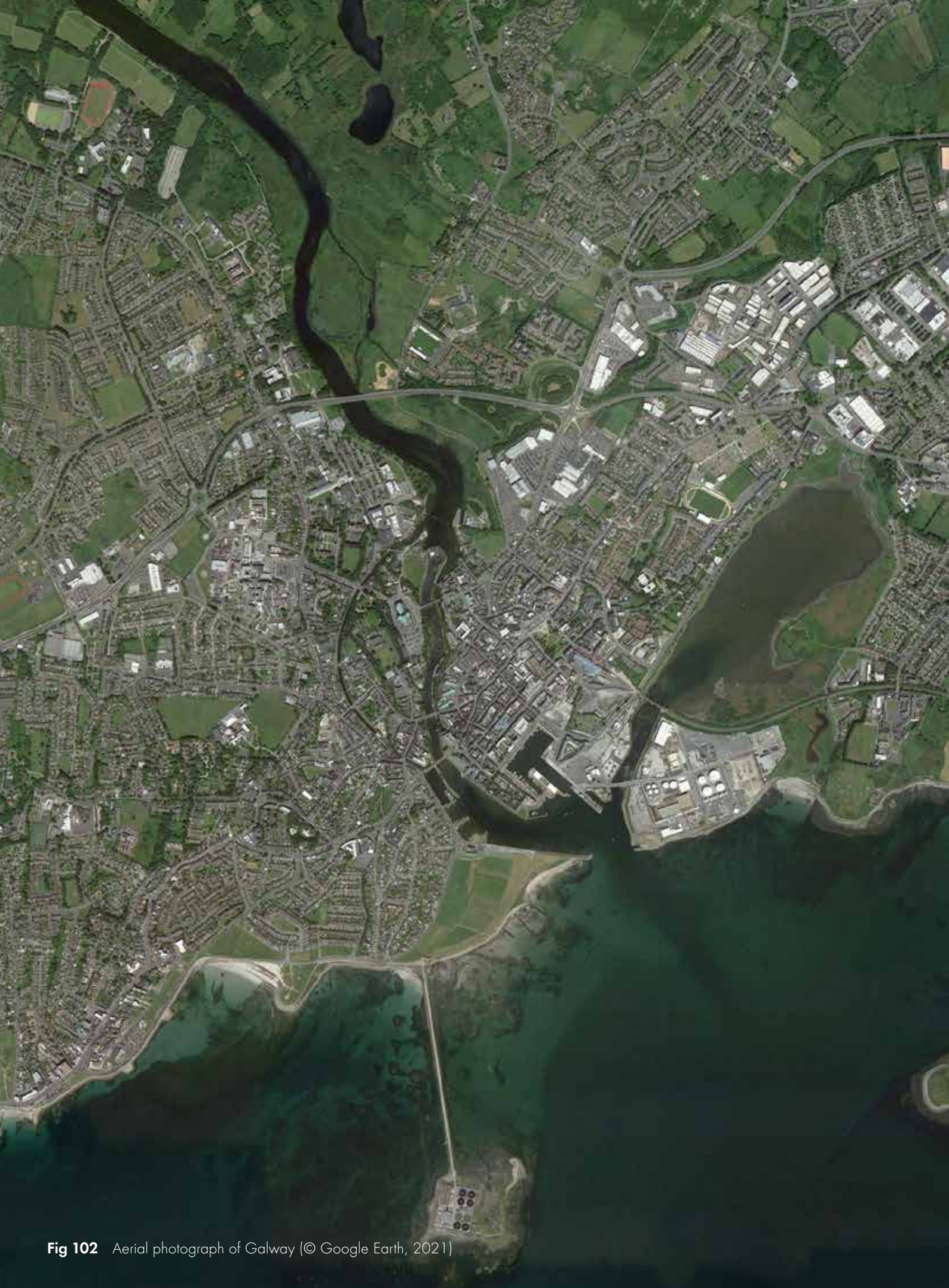
An assessment of all visual and environmental impacts including microclimate, daylight and sunlight, overlooking, overshadowing, impact on skyline and views, ecological assets and green spaces and the provision of appropriate mitigation where required.

### 6 Sustainability and climate benefits

Significant sustainability and climate action benefits including in building design, construction, operation and connections to the surrounding area.

### 7 Public realm

That appropriate public realm, amenity, landscaping, rest and play spaces are incorporated to a high standard.



**Fig 102** Aerial photograph of Galway (© Google Earth, 2021)

## 20.6 Guidance for masterplans and framework plans

The major regeneration schemes in and around the city of Galway will have a significant impact on Galway’s growth, evolution and future character and success. Every major regeneration scheme should be the subject of a masterplan/framework plan. Masterplans and urban / development frameworks take many forms and mean different things to different people. Engagement with all stakeholders will inform the process.

The following principles are outlined to help communicate the Council’s expectations of what masterplans and framework plans should aspire to do in promoting new development. These high-level principles are not comprehensive, and they might not all always be relevant depending on the scope of the masterplan/framework plan in question, but they are helpful promoting good practice:

### Exploit the potential of the pre-existing

The history and topography of a site are important, not only because they help explain the nature of its past, but because they can inform the shape of its future.

Galway’s topography has directly influenced its development and should continue to do so. The viewing framework reflecting some of the more prominent and important views and vistas which the city benefits from because of its unique topography.

### Prioritise space over form

The focus in a masterplan/framework plan must be as much on the spaces between buildings as it is on the buildings themselves. A city’s streets and spaces are more durable and permanent than its buildings.

### Provide a clear hierarchy

Cities are easier to understand, and therefore easier to use, when their urban structure conforms to a hierarchy, because it is this that defines and discloses the relative significance of its constituent parts. Despite its organic form, Galway has a street and public space hierarchy that will inform a masterplan/framework plan.

### Establish continuity of connections

In an urban plan, the making – or re-making – of connections is essential to establishing a continuum between the existing city and the new. The city has a number of major redevelopment opportunities – and making connections with the surround street network to create genuinely integrated places should be the aspiration.

### Define fronts and backs

A masterplan should both set out the rules that define the nature of the urban fabric and make clear the roles expected of each building. Building frontages should hold and define streets and spaces. Eyre Square is so successful because buildings front on and address it all the way around its perimeter.

### Accommodate the reality of the present

A masterplan/framework plan must propose buildings that people want to build today. Proposals that are inappropriate or contrived will deter investment rather than attract it.

### **Provide a surrogate context**

In the absence of an established context, a masterplan/framework plan offers a virtual setting within which individual buildings can be designed and against which they can be judged. It follows that major regeneration proposals such as that at Ceannt Station and in the Headford Road area will create a new urban context for that part of the city. This is an opportunity and a responsibility of masterplans and framework plans.

### **Acknowledge the uncertainties of the future**

Cities are not static, and buildings change over time. A masterplan/framework plan which ignores this, which fails to anticipate the inevitable processes of regeneration, may not only become an obstacle to change but may, at some stage, become an agent of decline. Regeneration of employment areas such as at Crown Square and the Sandy Road area should be guided by masterplans and development frameworks which are flexible enough to enable changes over the long term.

### **Create complex spaces with simple buildings**

It is much easier to achieve complexity and richness within a masterplan or urban framework by manipulating the relationships between buildings than to achieve it by forcing the shape and configuration of the buildings themselves. A masterplan/framework plan which incorporates buildings with very particular shapes and geometries, perhaps to accommodate very particular uses, may well be too specific to support a long-term vision for a place.

### **Promote difference and diversity**

A masterplan/framework plan should provoke and encourage, not to constrain and prescribe. What unites a plan is the consistency of its structure not the limitations imposed on its aesthetics. Buildings should be left to be designed to provide and offer variety and diversity in tenures, use and aesthetics.

### **Look out not in**

Too many contemporary masterplans and development frameworks are so absorbed in their vision for the interiors of their sites that they fail to address the often much more significant, and much more difficult, issues associated with their edges. Masterplans for major new developments – including those promoting phases of housing growth in growth areas east and west of the city, should prioritise integration with existing communities to encourage active travel and more sustainable patterns of life.

### **Describe a process not a produce**

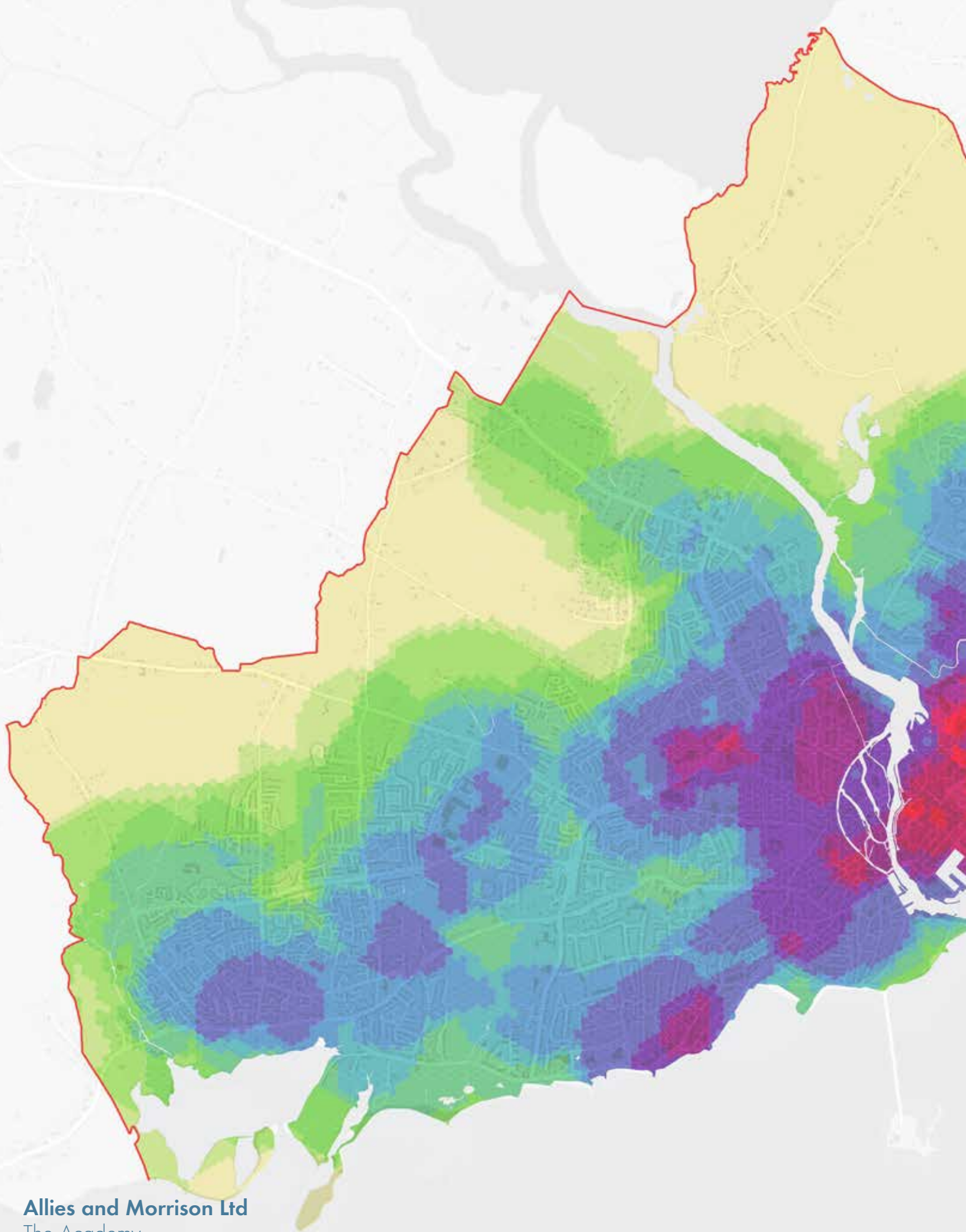
A masterplan is not a rigid architectural proposition, it is a flexible, informal and open-ended definition of relationships that must be expected to evolve and change as it is implemented. The presence of a single imposed order – often essential to the design of a building – is irrelevant to the design of a masterplan/framework plan.



All plans and figures are illustrative.

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