Straitéis um Spáis Ghlas na Gaillimhe
Galway Green Spaces Strategy

Galway Green Spaces Strategy

2026 - 2036



Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe
Galway City Council

ARUP

Connect the Dots

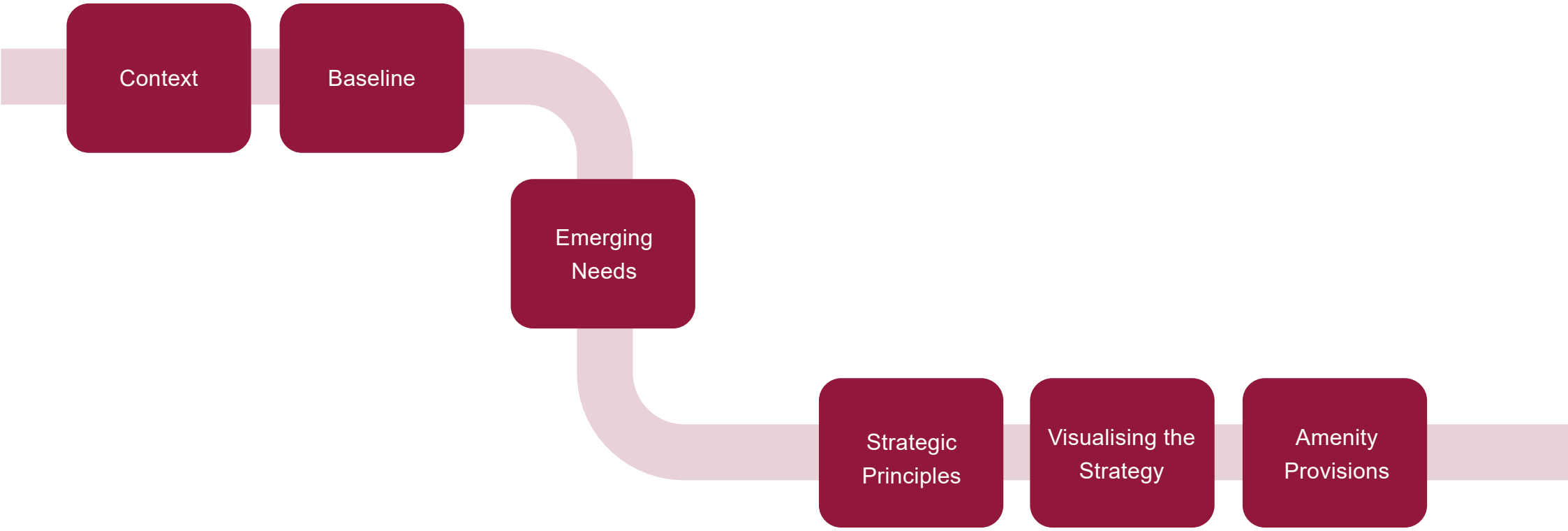
Glossary

Active Teen Space (ATS)	A single or group of small/medium sized play or social facilities linked to public transport and active travel routes specifically designed for and with teenagers/young people to cater for a local catchment. The Council can advise on specifications for proposed ATS in residential developments, as required.
Amenity Open Space	Small areas of open space providing natural surfaces for general amenity, biodiversity, passive recreation, and informal play.
Biodiversity	The variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat, essential for ecosystem health and resilience.
Blueways	Recreational corridors facilitating non-motorised travel along linear routes, often located along rivers or canals.
Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO)	Climate Action Regional Offices coordinate and support local government to lead climate action across Irish cities and counties.
Catchment-Based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM)	CFRAM is a programme within the Office of Public Works that is responsible for the reduction and management of flood risk throughout Ireland.
City Biodiverisity Areas (CBAs)	A wide range of habitats of high biodiversity value, of which 16 City Biodiversity Areas are identified in the City Development Plan 2023 - 2029 and the current Biodiversity Action Plan.
City Development Plan (CDP)	Galway City Council's plan outlining the development and management of the city from 2023 to 2029.
City Park	Large green spaces with a predominately woodland character, offering high scenic and amenity quality, serving the city in terms of recreation, biodiversity, and education.
Climate Resilience	The ability of green spaces to withstand and adapt to climate change impacts, such as flooding and heatwaves.
Community Stewardship	Active participation by local communities in the management and conservation of green spaces.
Development	New residential and commercial projects that include either 2 or more residential units or 1,000 square meters of commercial floor space.

Ecosystem Services	Benefits provided by natural ecosystems, including air purification, water regulation, and climate regulation.
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	The EPA is an independent public body established under the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992. The EPA's purpose is to protect, improve and restore the Irish environment through regulation, scientific knowledge and cooperation.
Green Network	The interconnected natural and semi-natural areas across Galway City, including parks, woodlands, and other vegetative elements.
Greenways	Recreational corridors facilitating non-motorised travel along linear routes, often located along coastal areas, through woodlands and parks.
Gross Value Added (GVA)	GVA is the value that producers have added to the goods and services they have bought. It is an economic productivity metric that measures the contribution of a corporate subsidiary, company, or municipality to an economy, producer, sector, or region.
Habitat Restoration	Activities aimed at restoring natural habitats to improve biodiversity and ecosystem services.
Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)	Intergovernmental body which assesses the state of biodiversity and of the ecosystem services.
Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)	Non-native species that are introduced (intentionally or unintentionally) outside of their natural geographic range, which can drive loss of native species through impacts such as predation, competition, introducing diseases and altering habitat
Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)	A designated play area, designed for children beginning to play independently, featuring formal play structures and equipment.
Local Area Plan (LAP)	A strategic growth area identified for future development in Galway City, including housing and recreational spaces.
Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)	Are a sports and recreation facility designed for various activities, typically with a synthetic surface and adaptable for multiple sports

National Planning Framework (NPF)	A national Government policy agenda that will guide at a high-level strategic planning and development for the country over the next 20+ years, so that as the population grows, that growth is sustainable (in economic, social and environmental terms).
Nature-Based Solutions (NbS)	Interventions that use natural processes to address environmental challenges, such as flood management and habitat restoration.
Natural Flood Management (NFM)	A natural process to reduce the risk of flooding, NFM processes, restore, and mimic the natural functions of catchments, floodplains and the coast to slow and store water.
Natural Heritage Area (NHA)	A conversation designation denoting a protected area in Ireland under the Wildlife Act 2000.
Nature Play Park	A play space in a natural setting, with a access to natural feature and equipment for immersive play.
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)	Larger, community-focused playgrounds designed for older children and teenagers, typically aged 8 and above, which offer a broad range of play opportunities and serving as a hub for physical activity and social interaction.
Neighbourhood Park	Medium to large parks designed to provide a range of needs for surrounding neighbourhoods, including recreation, sports, and play.
Public Green Space	Areas of land designated for public use, including parks, woodlands, and recreational spaces.
Recreation and Amenity Needs Study (RANS)	A study published in 2008 focusing on Galway City's amenity open space, ecological sites, water-based amenities, and sports facilities.
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)	Identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides Regional Policy Objectives for the each of Ireland's three regions.
Riparian Buffer	Vegetated areas adjacent to waterways that help absorb water, filter pollutants, and provide habitat connectivity.
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	Defined by the European Union's Habitats Directive which sets out the protection of special habitats and/or species through a network of designated sites called 'Natura 2000' network.

Special Protection Areas (SPA)	Designation that sets provisions for protecting and managing areas for rare, threatened and migratory birds under the 1979 European Council Directive 79/409/EEC ('the Birds Directive').
Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs)	Systems designed to manage stormwater runoff in urban areas, reducing flooding and improving water quality.
Teen Park	A medium / large sized facilities with substantially equipped play spaces and supporting social space specifically designed for and with teenagers to cater for a wide catchment. It has a variety of amenities and is located on public transport, active travel routes, is fully accessible and has good passive surveillance. Examples of facilities that may be provided as part of a teen park space are skateparks, parkour, pump track, areas of dynamic seating, good WIFI connectivity, flexible spaces that respond to the social needs of teenagers.
Universal Design	Design principles that ensure spaces are accessible and usable by people of all abilities.
Urban Heat Island Effect	The phenomenon where urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to human activities and infrastructure.
Visualising the Strategy	The process of illustrating the vision for Galway City's green network and public green spaces, including detailed strategic provision plan and proposed interventions.
Wetlands	Areas of land saturated with water, providing important ecological functions such as water filtration and habitat for wildlife.


Context
Baseline
Emerging Needs
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1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces green spaces and the purpose of the Strategy. It considers the policy context that shapes decision making about green spaces, it sets out the approach taken to develop this Strategy and provides a guide to the reader on navigating the document and supporting information document.



1.1 About Green Spaces

Green spaces enhance livability, support physical and mental health, and contribute to a more sustainable and pleasant urban environment. Galway City Council (GCC) recognises the value of green space and the importance of providing equal opportunities for recreation, sport and play. The council aims to create a city where its parks, woodlands and natural areas and civic spaces enrich the lives of local communities.

The Green Spaces Strategy (herein referred to as the Strategy) outlines a long-term, strategic vision for Galway City's green spaces over the next decade. It seeks to balance priorities, address known constraints, keep pace with changing trends and plan for emerging needs. The Strategy:

- Delivers on the requirement in GCC's City Development Plan (CDP) 2023-2029 to develop a Green Spaces Strategy. It aligns with GCC's Core Strategy set out in the CDP 2023-2029 and Chapter 5 of the CDP 2023-2029 "Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity".
- Builds on, and replaces, GCC's Recreation and Amenity Needs Study (RANS), published in 2008, which focused on the city's amenity open space, ecological sites, water-based amenities and sports facilities.
- Adopts a landscape-led approach and addresses challenges and pressures including climate change, population growth, and maintaining ecological connectivity.

The Strategy has been developed following an extensive baselining exercise that analysed:

- The current spatial distribution and condition of public green space, recreation, outdoor sport and play facilities across the city.
- The current ecosystem services offered and the value of the green network.
- Emerging needs identified for the existing and future communities and key stakeholders.
- Identifying risks and opportunities across the green network during the lifespan of the Strategy.

The findings were brought together to develop a Vision and Amenity Provision Plan for the city.

The Vision

Galway City's parks, forests, beaches, and open spaces will foster health, wellbeing, and community connection while preserving local biodiversity and combating climate change.

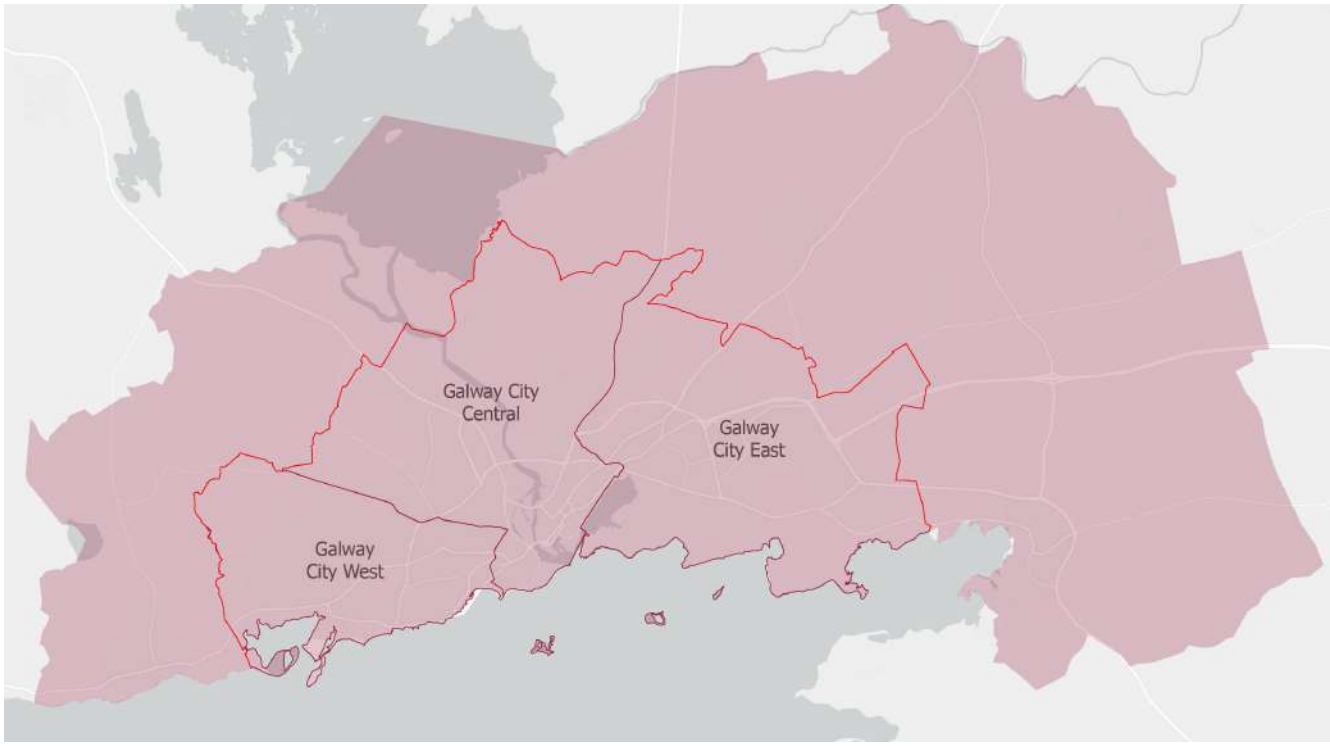
These inclusive, accessible spaces will inspire creativity, support environmental education, and maintain Galway City's unique natural and cultural identity. Through strategic planning and community engagement, The Strategy aims to develop and sustain green spaces that provide lasting ecological, social, and economic benefits for all.

Extent of the Strategy

The Strategy study area includes the city boundary and considers locations overlapping with Galway County Council boundaries. The city is divided into three electoral districts: Galway City Central, East, and West, seen in Figure 1.

Galway City is located on the west coast of Ireland between Connemara's blanket bogs to the west, and County Galway's low-lying farmland to the east. It is divided by the River Corrib that flows from Lough Corrib and is bound by the edge of Galway Bay, a natural harbour that is sheltered by the Aran Islands and the Burren.

The Strategy covers all public green spaces of greater than 1ha and the green network, the interconnected natural and semi-natural areas of the city. While smaller green spaces are valuable, focusing on larger spaces enabled a city-wide strategic approach.



Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS

Figure 1: Extent of the Strategy delineated by the red line

1.2 Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide guidance to assist in achieving the sustainable development of the urban environment over the next decade by establishing the spatial capacity of the green network to adsorb development for recreation purposes verses the expected population growth, while making Galway City more resilient to the challenges posed by the biodiversity crisis and climate change impacts on its natural infrastructure.
The Strategy is intended to act as a reference point/resource providing guidance and assistance to decision-makers and the general public when preparing and deciding on proposals for plans and projects.

Delivery of proactive green space measures to enhance climate resilience and sustainability in urban planning will have the following multi-faceted benefits:

- Mitigate air pollution, reduce the urban heat island effect, and support biodiversity by providing habitats for plants and animals.[1]
- Promote mental and physical health by providing space for relaxation, reducing stress, and encouraging physical activity.[2]
- Foster social cohesion, create communal spaces for social interactions and community building.[2]
- Contribute to neighbourhood identity and advance urban planning goals such as job creation, youth development, and economic growth.[3]
- Improve livability, health outcomes, and environmental resilience through strategic integration into urban planning.[3]

The Strategy informs GCC's approach to managing the city's green network and public green spaces and is a direct response to Galway City Council's City Development Plan 2023-2029 (CDP) which refers to the need for a Green Spaces Strategy and references the different planned and proposed projects in the city. In addition to the CDP, the Strategy has regard to a wide range of international, national and local policy (refer to Figure 2).

The actions outlined within the CPD and the Recreation & Amenity Needs Strategy 2008 (RANS) have been reviewed and where relevant, have been incorporated within the Strategy.

Research Document References

[1] Planning for cooler cities: a framework to prioritise green infrastructure to mitigate high temperatures in urban landscapes. Landscape and Urban Planning (2015)
[2] The three domains of urban planning for health and well-being
Journal of Planning Literature, (2014)
[3] Integrating health in urban and territorial planning: a sourcebook, World Health Organisation



What's included in the Strategy?

The strategy is made up of two documents.

The Strategy document includes:

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Context
3.0 Baseline
4.0 Emerging Needs
5.0 Strategic Principles
6.0 Visualising the Strategy and Amenity Provisions

The Strategy is supported by a Supporting Information Document, which contains:

Chapter 1: Policy Context
Chapter 2: Quantitative needs assessment
Chapter 3: Public & Stakeholder Engagement
Chapter 4: Case Studies

'People living with nature nearby had better relationships with their neighbours and felt safer than those with fewer trees near where they live.'

Global Designing Cities Initiative (2020).

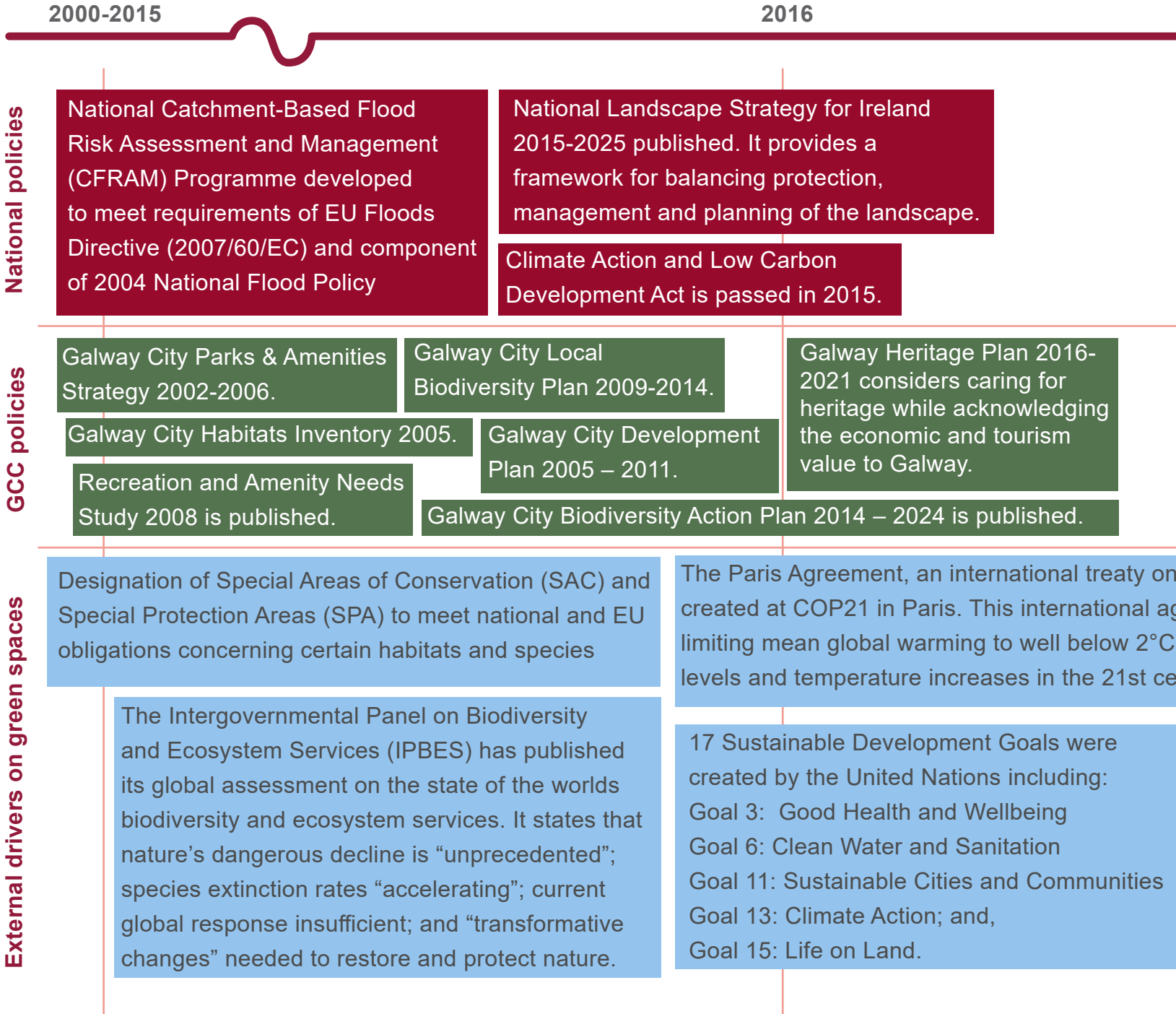
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1.3 The Policy Context

The CDP describes GCC's intentions to develop and use particular areas within the local authority area. Figure 2 summarises the CDP, other important local and national policies, and international policy drivers and commitments that have influenced the Strategy.

GCC's plans and projects currently underway are outlined in Supporting Information Document - Chapter 1. The plans and projects listed include those relevant to the Strategy and were identified through engagement with the council.

Figure 2: Timeline of green space-related policy in Ireland and other external drivers of GCC's Green Spaces Strategy



2017

2018

2019

At regional level local authorities are supported by the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). Galway City is under the remit of the Atlantic Seaboard North CARO.

National Sports Policy 2018-2027 acknowledges the role of Local Authorities in facilitation outdoor recreation and asks each Local Authority to develop a Local Sports Plan to increase participation locally.

Ireland declared a climate and biodiversity emergency

Ardaun Local Area Plan (LAP) 2018-2024 published. Ardaun considered a key future growth enabler for the city.

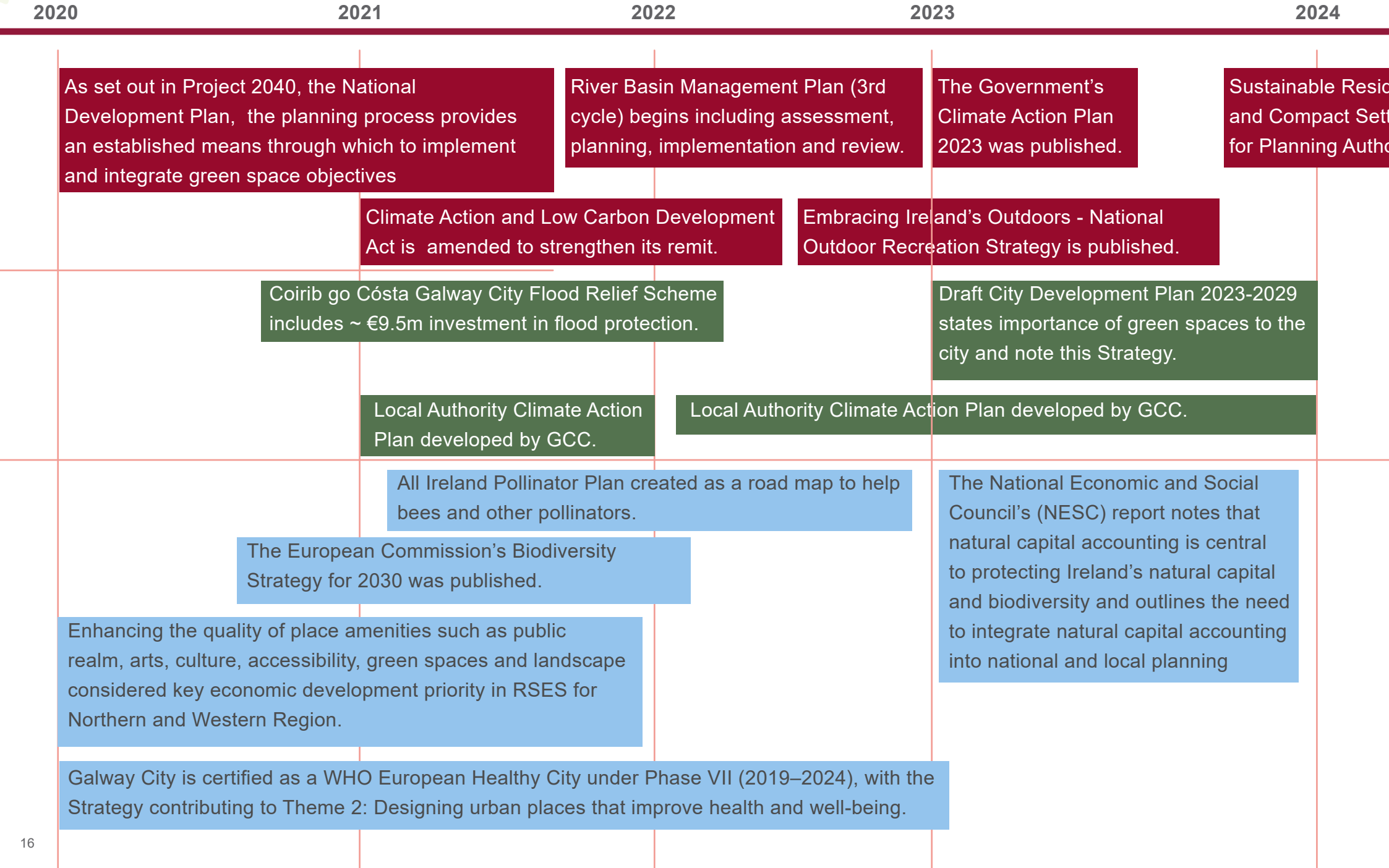
Local Authority Adaptation Strategy recognises climate change as a critical challenge for GCC.

climate change, was
greement with a goal of
above pre-industrial
ntury.

Objectives under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Natura Directives help ensure nature-based solutions are included in mitigation, resilience, and adaptation actions.

COVID-19 pandemic begins. People find a new appreciation for public green spaces.

Galway named European Capital of Culture 2020.


2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
As set out in Project 2040, the National Development Plan, the planning process provides an established means through which to implement and integrate green space objectives
River Basin Management Plan (3rd cycle) begins including assessment, planning, implementation and review.
The Government's Climate Action Plan 2023 was published.
Sustainable Resid and Compact Sett for Planning Autho
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act is amended to strengthen its remit.
Embracing Ire and's Outdoors - National Outdoor Recre ation Strategy is published.
Coirib go Cósta Galway City Flood Relief Scheme includes ~ €9.5m investment in flood protection.
Draft City Development Plan 2023-2029 states importance of green spaces to the city and note this Strategy.
Local Authority Climate Action Plan developed by GCC.
Local Authority Climate Action Plan developed by GCC.
All Ireland Pollinator Plan created as a road map to help bees and other pollinators.
The European Commission's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 was published.
The National Economic and Social Council's (NESC) report notes that natural capital accounting is central to protecting Ireland's natural capital and biodiversity and outlines the need to integrate natural capital accounting into national and local planning
Enhancing the quality of place amenities such as public realm, arts, culture, accessibility, green spaces and landscape considered key economic development priority in RSES for Northern and Western Region.
Galway City is certified as a WHO European Healthy City under Phase VII (2019–2024), with the Strategy contributing to Theme 2: Designing urban places that improve health and well-being.

2050

dential Development
tlements Guidelines
orities 2024

The Irish Government committed to net zero emissions by 2050.

Revision of the current Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2014 – 2024 for the next 5 years 2025 to 2030 – to correspond to changes in our ecosystems, EU and national legislation, policy and future.

The Nature Restoration Law sets multiple binding restoration targets and obligations across a broad range of ecosystems, including forests, agricultural land, rivers, marine habitats and even urban areas. In total, by 2030 these nature restoration measures should cover at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. Member States are required to develop national Nature Restoration Plans to achieve these targets.

The EU will introduce new reporting requirements on ecosystem accounts by 2026. This will necessitate a more comprehensive and integrated approach.

1.3 The Policy Context

As outlined above (Section 1.2), the Strategy is to act as a reference point and resource in providing guidance and assistance in respect of the development of future plans and projects in Galway City. In this respect, the Strategy's aims and objectives provide guidance in respect of new emerging developments. The Strategy has been developed in the context of many live and developing proposals at various development and consent stages. Information contained within some of these proposals has informed the Strategy and these known projects are considered consistent with the Strategy. It doesn't affect any ongoing projects commenced prior to the published date of this Strategy.

The following non-exhaustive list includes ongoing projects being delivered or planned for delivery under the following programmes, these informed the development of the Greens Space Strategy, and the Strategy is intended to support the delivery of these projects.

The said projects are consistent with and align with the Strategy.

- N6 Galway City Ring Road
- Bus Connects – including Cross City Link and Dublin Road Schemes
- Galway Transport Strategy (GTS)
- Dublin Road Cemetery
- Housing Delivery Action Plan in 2022
- The Galway City Housing Strategy
- Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2023-2029
- Strategic Housing Developments/ Large Scale developments
- Safe Routes to Schools and Active Travel routes and Multi-modal corridors
- Coirib go Cósta - Galway City Flood Relief Scheme
- Ardaun Local Area Plan, or successor statutory or non-statutory plan
- Murrough Local Area Plan, or successor statutory or non-statutory plan
- Headford Road Local Area Plan, or successor statutory or non-statutory plan

The Strategy has been shaped by findings identified from baseline assessments and extensive consultation (refer to Supporting Information Document - Chapter 2 & 4). This process revealed emerging needs for the local community, priority areas for amenity provision, and recommendations for the city. These components collectively informed the vision for the green network, the Strategy's horizontal principles and themes, the amenity provision list. This Strategy is designed for ongoing monitoring and should be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

Figures 3 and 4 present the approach to the Strategy. Findings from the baseline assessments and engagements are detailed and discussed in the Supporting Information Document, and a summary of the findings is provided in the Strategy.

1 Collect information

City-specific information and data were gathered. This informed the baseline assessments.

2 Understand context

Policy and literature were reviewed to understand the socio-economic, environmental, historical and cultural context. (Refer to Supporting Information Document - Chapter 1).

3 Undertake site visits

Ecological and landscape site surveys were conducted at public green spaces (over 1ha). The findings from the site visits fed into the ecosystem services baseline assessment.

4 Assess and engage

A desktop study was undertaken to understand the baseline condition of the green network and public green spaces in terms of ecosystem services. (Refer to Supporting Information Document - Chapter 2).

Public green spaces, outdoor sports and play areas were assessed in terms of quantity of provision and walkability. Provision was compared to best practice benchmarks for today and 2034. (Refer to Supporting Information Document -Section 2).

Extensive public and stakeholder engagement was undertaken. (Refer to Supporting Information Document - Section 3).

5 Identify emerging needs

Key trends, areas of deficiency, opportunities and risks were identified and presented in terms of recommendations.

6 Develop vision

An exercise to identify the overarching vision, horizontal principles and priorities for the Strategy was undertaken.

7 Implement

Key projects, priority areas for amenity provision and actions were identified and shown on the amenity provision lists.

8 Monitor and reassess

The Strategy recommends completing the draft Implementation Plan being prepared by the Council and a review and update every 2 years thereafter.

Figure 3: Approach to the Strategy

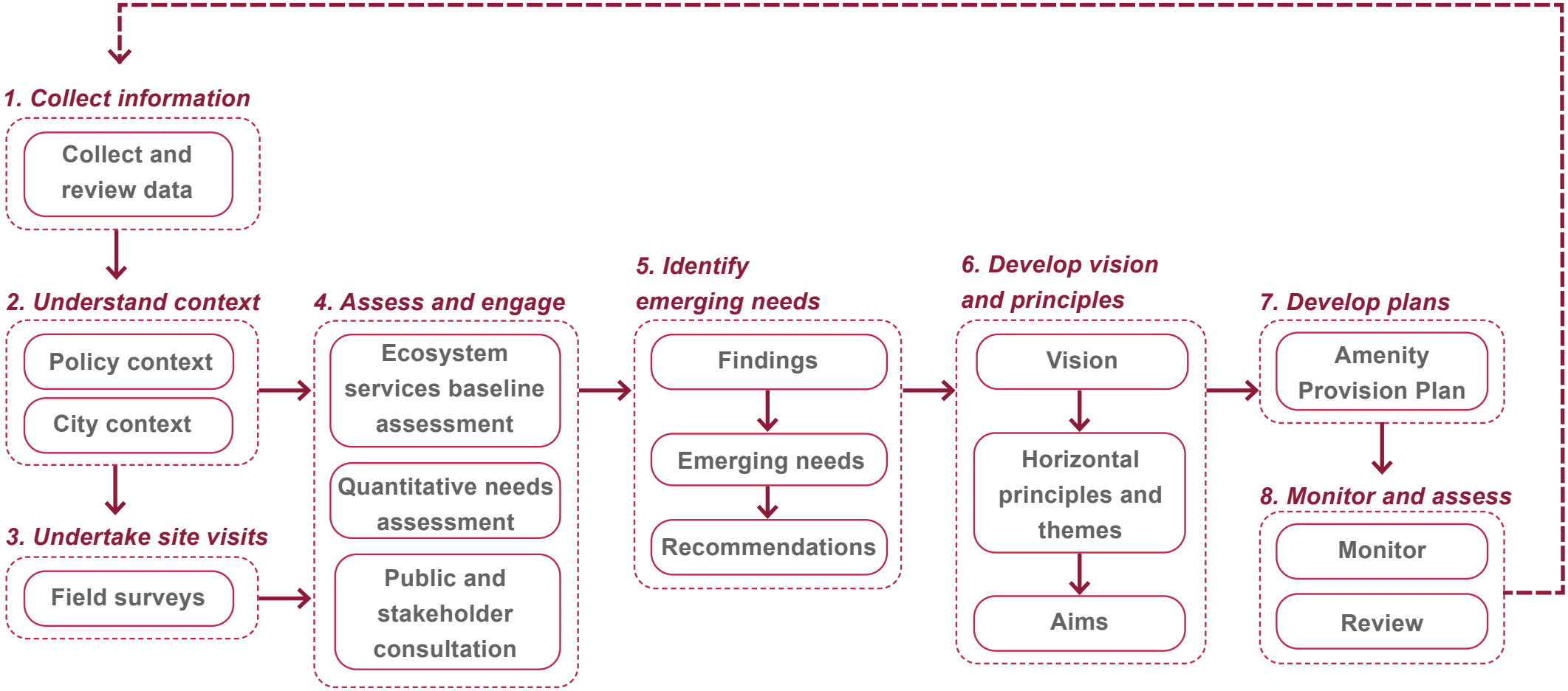
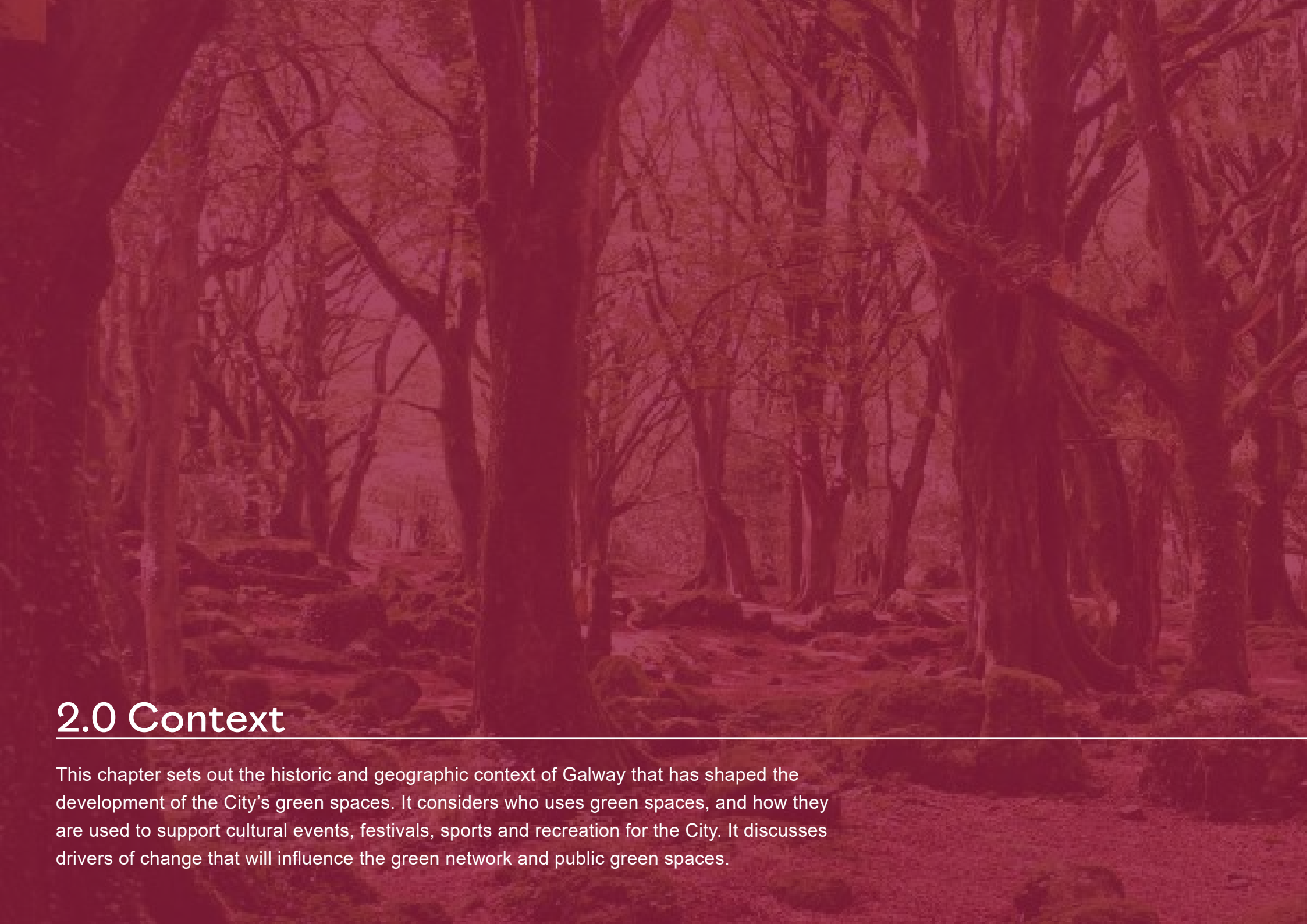


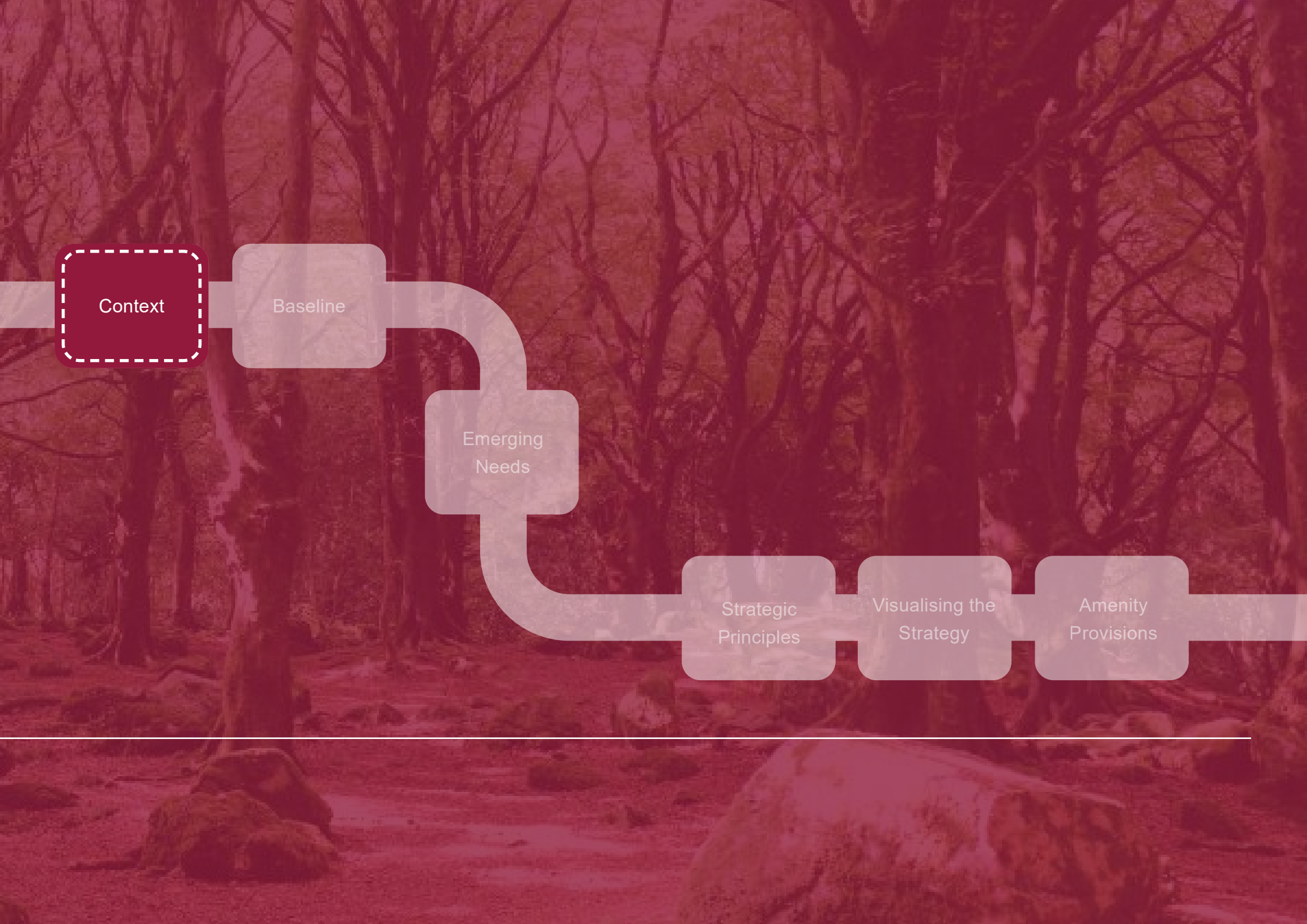
Figure 4: Flow diagram illustrating the approach to the Strategy





2.0 Context

This chapter sets out the historic and geographic context of Galway that has shaped the development of the City's green spaces. It considers who uses green spaces, and how they are used to support cultural events, festivals, sports and recreation for the City. It discusses drivers of change that will influence the green network and public green spaces.


Context
Baseline
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2.1 Geographical Context

The layout of the city has been shaped by its geographical location and environmental systems (including geological, topographical, and hydrological processes). Historic human settlement patterns have influenced the urban development form. In the year 2017 Galway was awarded the Green Leaf City status by the European Commission.

Landform and geology

Galway is built on reclaimed land, on what was originally a series of islands. Reclamation resulted in the formation of the landform is shaped to accommodate the River Corrib valley, that flows south to meet the North Atlantic Ocean. While the areas near water bodies are generally flat, rural landscapes gradually ascend towards peaks such as Ballybrit, Ballindooley, Barnacranny, and Ballyburke.

The physical landscape of Galway City is controlled by the bedrock geology. The eastern part of Galway City, east of the River Corrib, is almost entirely underlain by Carboniferous Limestone, with the exception of a wedge of metamorphic bedrock extending from the 'old' city centre east to Renmore Army Barracks. In contrast, the western part of the city, west of the River Corrib, is almost entirely underlain by igneous and metamorphic bedrock, with the exception of an area of limestone along the low-lying west bank of River Corrib from the NUIG Dangan Sports Fields to Bushypark. These are important features to preserve (see Figure 5).

Coast, rivers and lagoons

Galway has numerous sand and cobble beaches that form an extensive coastline to the south of the city. The River Corrib bisects the centre and splits the east and west of the city. Lough Atalia, a 50 hectare (ha) estuarine lagoon, is located on the east side of the city and is a dominant landscape feature, offering a waterfront setting. The internal waterways are part of the historic economy of Galway. The canal network, which carves through the city centre, reflects its use as a trading port and fishing town.





Figure 5: Granite outcrops forming accessible 'hill' in Westside Park

Habitats and biodiversity

Galway has a number of important ecological sites at European, national and local areas, many of which are linked to the coastal and bay environment. These designations include the Galway Bay Complex and Lough Corrib SACs and the Inner Galway Bay and Lough Corrib SPAs. Coastal habitats range from sand and shingle zones to rocky sea cliffs and salt marshes.

The city hosts significant diversity and extent of natural habitats. Figure 6 illustrates the influence of underlying geology, soils and landform that reflect the distribution of vegetation and human settlement patterns. Habitat types include large areas of woodland, scrub and hedgerows.

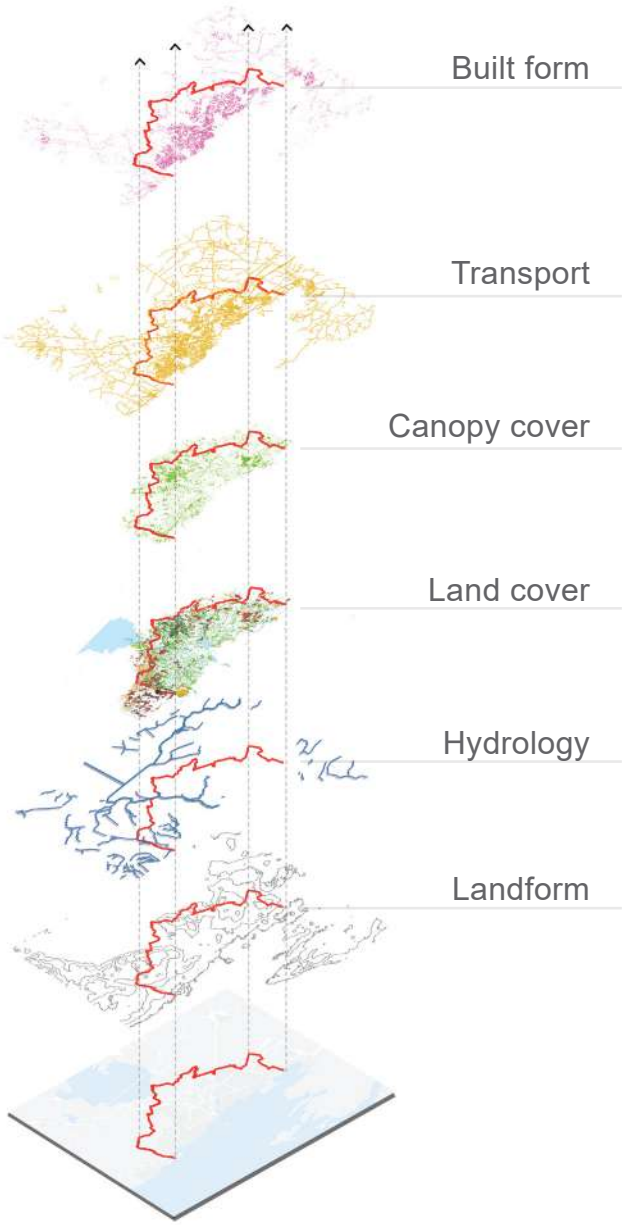


Figure 6: Landscape layers inform patterns of vegetation and human settlement.

2.2 Historical Context

Ancient and holy sites

Evidence of early civilisations have been found along the shores of Lough Atalia including ancient cooking sites (Fulachta Fiadh) dating back to the Bronze and Iron Ages. St. Augustine's well, a tidal well maintained for centuries by the Augustinian monks is a holy well, famous in the area for passing many cures to pilgrims. Tobar Éanna (Saint Enda's Well) is an archaeological site of national significance close to Barna Woods, in the west of the city. The holy well is reputed to have been a resting place of Saint Enda on his way to the Aran islands.

Historic development of the city

The medieval city centre was historically contained within a city wall, built for defense in the 13th century. Fragments of the city wall remain which can still be viewed today at the Spanish Arch and in Eyre Square (Figure 7), and castle remains can be found dotted throughout the landscape. Outside of the centre, the city opens up beyond its medieval core to provide expansive views across the water. Historically, the city has needed to defend itself from the river and coast therefore numerous defensive features, pre-dating the medieval fortifications, were built across the city.

An 15-16th-century Norman tower still stands to the east of Renmore, close to the grounds occupied by Merlin Park Hospital. Castles can also be seen dispersed through the city, including Merlin Castle, Terryland Castle and Menlo Castle. Later defenses continued to protect the city from potential sea invasions, and batteries were erected in the 17th century, one at Rintinnane in the west, and another at Renmore to the east.

History of Galway's Green Spaces

Galway's rich history and heritage are ingrained in the character of its public green spaces. The historical development of the city's parks is inseparable from that of the city itself.

Many of Galway's public green spaces exist on the lands of former 18th and 19th century historic estates that included large mixed woodlands and arable fields. These include Ballinfoyle, Mervue (formerly attached to Merview House), Barna Woods (formerly part of the Barna House Estate) and Lough Rusheen Bay and Merlin Woods (formerly Merlin Park Country Estate).

Over time, land has been reclaimed from the river and the sea. The gradual funneling of various streams from the River Corrib into the present-day river began in the mid-19th century. As part of this reclamation project, the lands at Woodquay were gradually reclaimed forming much of what is known today as Woodquay Park.

South Park's origins go back to the 19th century when it was part of the Claddagh village, a fishing community known for its culture and traditions. A tuberculosis outbreak in the 1930s led to the demolition of the village. In its place, South Park emerged as a green space for the city (Figure 8).

Victorian developments at Salthill included the developments of the promenade, the bandstand and Salthill Park. The area surrounding Ladies Beach and the tidal pools became a popular tourist destination for bathing.

In the 20th century, 'the Prom' was widened, straightened and extended to Grattan Beach. The tidal pools began to silt up and were eventually covered with concrete. Quincentennial Park in Salthill was opened in 1984 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Galway City.



Figure 7: Eyre Square



Figure 8: South Park

2.3 Current Context

The cultural context

Galway is a dynamic, multicultural city, with nearly one-third of the population identifying as non-Irish. The city also supports a higher-than-average population of 20–24-year-olds. Galway's cultural richness shines through its thriving arts scene, exemplified by its designation as 2020 European Capital of Culture.

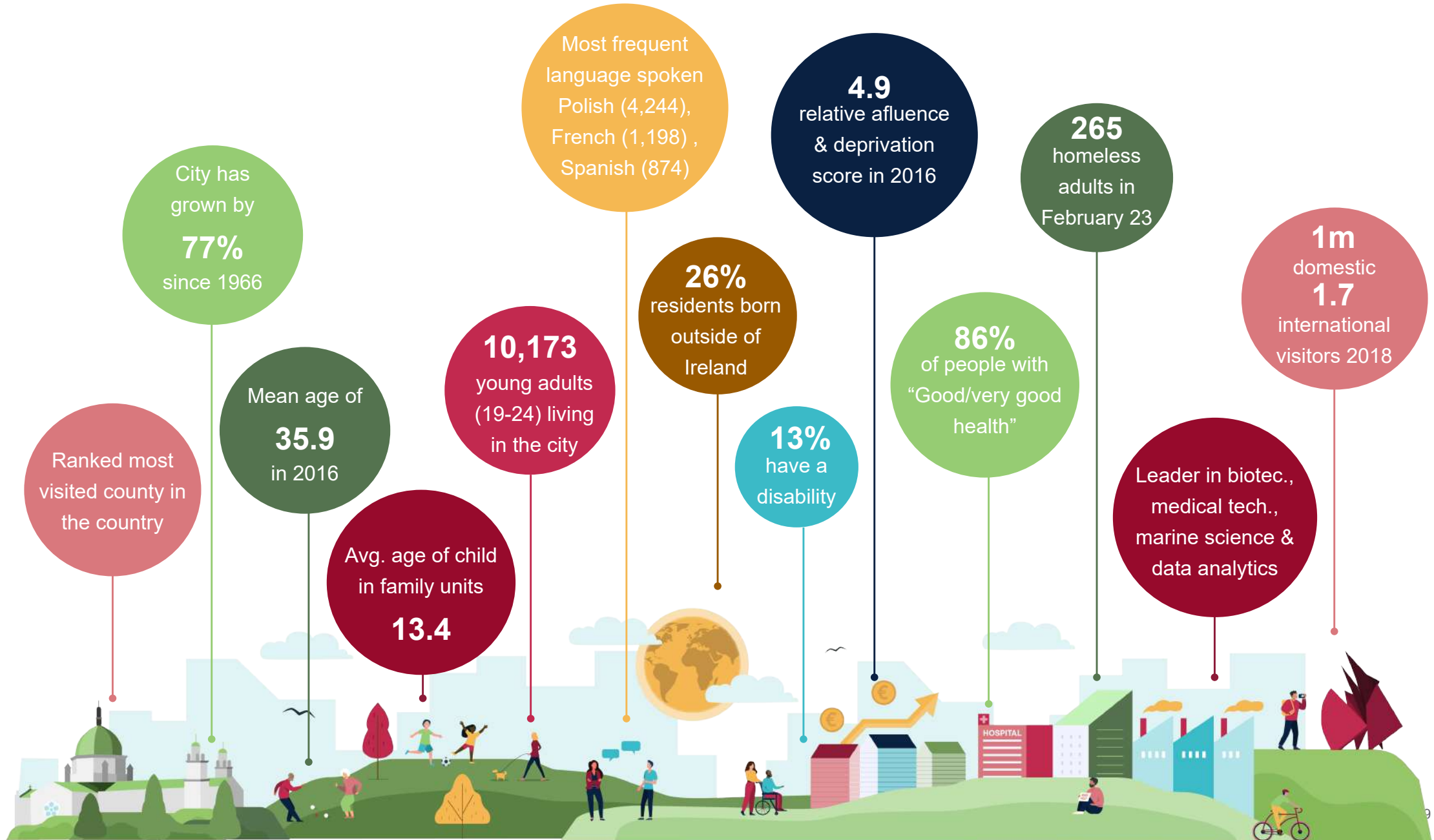
As a bilingual city, Irish is an integral part of Galway's linguistic tapestry, with the city maintaining strong ties to Gaeltacht areas in the county and the wider west of Ireland. Galway continues to embrace its Irish heritage, with 41% of its residents reported as Irish speakers in the 2016 census.

Population who visit green spaces

Galway City and the surrounding suburbs have had the most significant growth rate in the country with an increase of 26% above the national average from 1996-2016. The city's population has surged by 77% since 1986, reaching 83,456 residents in 2022. Census 2022 shows that the population of Galway grew by 8% to 277,737, which means the county population rose by 19,679 between April 2016 and April 2022. There has also been an increase in the average age of residents (CSO 2022).

The city metropolitan area has been defined as an area of growth, with a total increase in 35,000 persons by the end of 2031, as defined within the CDP(p27).

There has been a population decline in the city centre and also within Knocknacarra (The Housing Need Demand Assessment). The 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Indices uncovers higher levels of deprivation, particularly prevalent on the eastern side of the city, with notable concentrations in neighbourhoods such as Ballybane, the Ballinfoile area, and the Westside area northwest of the city.


Ranked most visited county in the country
City has grown by 77% since 1966
Mean age of 35.9 in 2016
Avg. age of child in family units 13.4
10,173 young adults (19-24) living in the city
Most frequent language spoken Polish (4,244), French (1,198) , Spanish (874)
26% residents born outside of Ireland
13% have a disability
4.9 relative afluence & deprivation score in 2016
86% of people with "Good/very good health"
265 homeless adults in February 23
Leader in biotec., medical tech., marine science & data analytics
1m domestic
1.7 international visitors 2018
HOSPITAL

The green spaces of today

As the city's overall population has continued to grow, so too has the number of green open spaces. Notable park openings have included Quincentennial Park (1984), Crestwood Park (1989), Barna Lough Rusheen City Park (~2000), Children's Millennium Park (2002) and Terryland Forest Park (2006). Terryland Forest Park is the most recent addition to the three city parks, established with the community.

Tourism remains important to Galway with many festivals and events held across the city. Many of the public green spaces host events for local residents as well as attracting visitors to the city centre parks.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly influenced attitudes towards public green space. During lockdowns, people increasingly turned to local parks for physical activity, mental health relief, and social interaction within the constraints of social distancing. This shift increased awareness of the importance of local green spaces, leading to greater expectations such as:

- A stronger demand for equitable access to green spaces.
- Better facilities in green spaces, such as seating, walking paths, and natural areas.
- Increased focused on maintenance, safety and the cleanliness of spaces.
- The desire that green spaces should support social cohesion and accommodate a wide range of activities.
- Incorporation of resilient green infrastructure that can withstand future public health crises and other challenges including climate change.

Progress since the Recreation and Amenity Needs Study (RANS)

Since the publication of the RANS, GCC has advanced its recreation and amenity priorities through a series of key projects including:

- Implementation of masterplans for Doughiska Park, Roscam and Quincentennial Park.
- Procurement of lands at Kingston and South Park.
- Development of a new multi-use games area (MUGA) and community memorial garden at Corrib Park, and new pitch
- Improvements at Crestwood Park including the refurbishment of the tennis court, clubhouse and car park.
- Improvements at McGrath's Field including playground refurbishments.
- Implementation of a masterplan at O'Sullivan Park, where works included a new exercise park, picnic area, general facilities, planting, lighting and entrance works. The park received Green Flag status in 2022.

Image source: ©2021 by Galway National Park City.



2.4 Future Context

Population growth and development
Galway is expected to have a significant increase in population growth over the lifetime of the Strategy. The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out a target population increase for Galway City and its suburbs of between 40,000 and 45,000. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) predicts the population of the city will reach 114,900 in 2031.

The CDP identifies Ardaun as one of the strategic growth areas for the city. The neighbourhood will support a significant proportion of the future population growth and will deliver the majority of new housing development required. This development will provide opportunities for additional open space provision to supply the recreation needs of the existing and new communities. Future development should work to provide sustainable green spaces suitable for a changing climate and protecting and enhancing existing biodiversity areas.

Other strategic growth areas include the neighbourhood consolidation in the areas of Knocknacarra, Rahoon, Castlegar, and Doughiska/Roscam neighbourhoods. Large brownfield sites in built-up areas of the city such as the inner harbour/Galway port area, Ceannt Quarter, and Headford Road are proposed for regeneration.

Travel demands will increase in conjunction with population growth; improvements to the transport network should encourage a modal shift to active travel and sustainable public transport options.

Economy and enterprise
It is anticipated that Galway City will reflect the national economic growth forecast. Given that the Gross Value Added (GVA) per person in the region is €29,260, less than half of the national figure €67,639, there is a need for a focused economic strategy to drive sustainable, economic growth in the region.

Climate crisis
Due to rising sea levels and more intense rainfall projections, the city will face an increased risk of coastal, fluvial, and pluvial (urban storm water) flooding. Much of the inner city is built of reclaimed land which intensifies the possibility of flooding. This could pose significant risks to those living and working in flood zone areas. The management of this risk will require adaptation measures within green spaces and to work with wider flood relief schemes.

The city must also prepare for an increase in the risk of tidal surges and coastal erosion due to increased frequency and intensity of storms and projected rises in sea levels. Galway is also vulnerable to high winds which can cause damage and disruption. Summer mean temperatures are also predicted to increase which can place strain on the maintenance of green spaces.

Galway's natural capital is vulnerable to these impacts of climate change and the risks posed by temperature rises and extreme weather events. These hazards are expected to negatively impact the habitats and wildlife that are vulnerable to changes in climatic conditions. Biodiversity is also expected to be impacted due to changes in

the timings of seasonal events. This may result in a reduction in the range of species, habitats and ecosystem services.

Biodiversity crisis

Biodiversity has a supporting role in delivering ecosystem services and maintaining the core ecological functions of the green network. The European Central Bank confirms that biodiversity loss can result in economic losses due to reduced ecosystem services, including diminished crop yields, fish catches, as well as increased susceptibility to flooding, wildfires, and disease. These impacts can severely affect people's quality of life.

Nature restoration

Nature restoration presents significant opportunities for increasing the value of natural capital in the city and encompasses a range of activities, from reforestation and wetland restoration to urban green space enhancement. Studies have shown that every Euro invested in habitat restoration can yield substantial returns in terms of ecosystem service benefits, including improved air and water quality, enhanced soil fertility, and increased pollination services (European Commission 2020).

The EU Nature Restoration Law came into force in June 2024. The law sets multiple binding restoration targets and obligations across a broad range of ecosystems including forests, agricultural land, rivers, marine habitats, and urban areas. It puts in place restoration measures for at least 30% of habitats by 2030, 60% by 2040, and 90% by 2050. The law favours measures that promote habitat connectivity, ensuring the greatest possible extents and inter-linkages.

Artificial light at night (ALAN) has wide-ranging and often harmful effects on wildlife across ecosystems. ALAN disrupts the natural behaviours of wildlife, especially nocturnal species that rely on darkness for foraging, mating, and navigation. It can disorient animals like bats, nocturnal pollinators and migratory birds, interfere with reproduction in amphibians and insects, and alter predator-prey dynamics by making prey more visible. Over time, ALAN can shift entire ecosystems, ultimately reducing biodiversity. If lighting is required, the design and operation of the lighting must adhere to the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note (GN01/21) The Reduction of Obtrusive Light and Dark Sky Ireland Environmentally Friendly Lighting Guide (2024).

Climate action

Galway will continue to take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change and facilitate a transition towards climate resilience and carbon neutrality. This will need to include the implementation of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), flood risk and water management, renewable energy, transport measures, built environment measures and cross-cutting climate change and environmental policies.

The green spaces of the future

Galway faces pressures from population growth, shifting demographics, and climate change. Open spaces of the future will need to be flexible and multi-functional to meet the evolving demands moving forward.

They should be designed to tackle challenges surrounding climate change, providing recreational needs for existing and future generations, and balance the need to protect valuable habitats and improve biodiversity.

Urban Greening

Increasing tree planting and vegetation in built-up areas to help manage future rising temperatures and to help manage surface water runoff from increased rainfall events

Economic benefits

Well-designed green spaces have notable mental and physical health benefits for local residents. Property damage can be reduced by preventing soil erosion and promoting flood mitigation. Development that balances tourism with ecological protection and temperature regulation can create jobs, raise property values and stimulate economic growth.



Enhanced urban planning

Development pressure can incentivise urban planners to integrate green infrastructure into development projects, creating a more sustainable and resilient city.

Community engagement

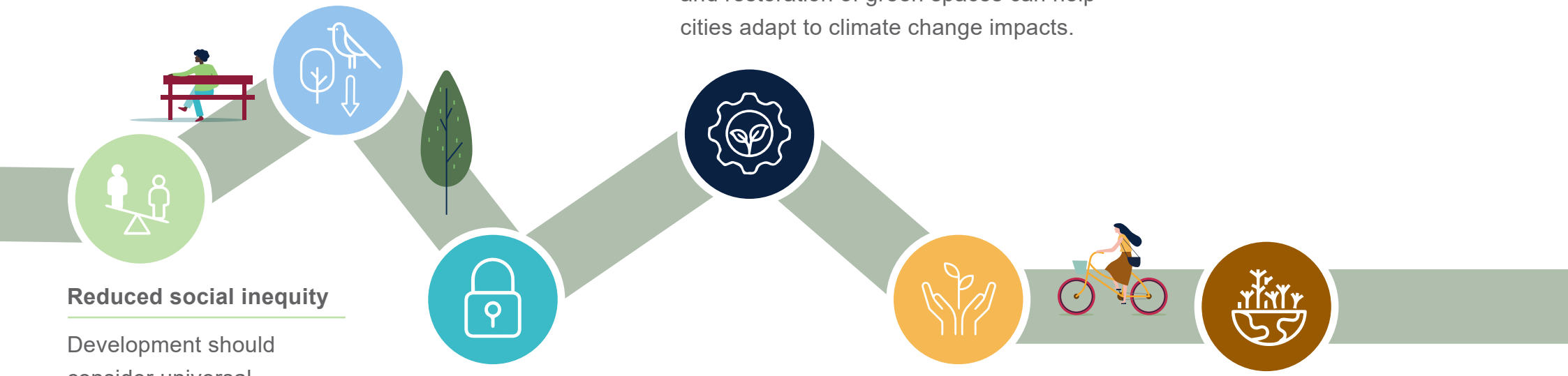
Development pressure can provide opportunities for community engagement in decision-making processes related to the future of green spaces. This can empower residents to voice their concerns and priorities, leading to more inclusive and equitable development outcomes.

Prevent loss of biodiversity

Development that is carefully planned can prevent habitat destruction, fragmentation and loss of biodiversity.

Climate adaptation

Green spaces play a crucial role in climate adaptation by mitigating flooding, reducing urban heat, and sequestering carbon. Development that prioritises the preservation and restoration of green spaces can help cities adapt to climate change impacts.



Reduced social inequity

Development should consider universal accessibility and how green spaces can be designed for all

Access to nature

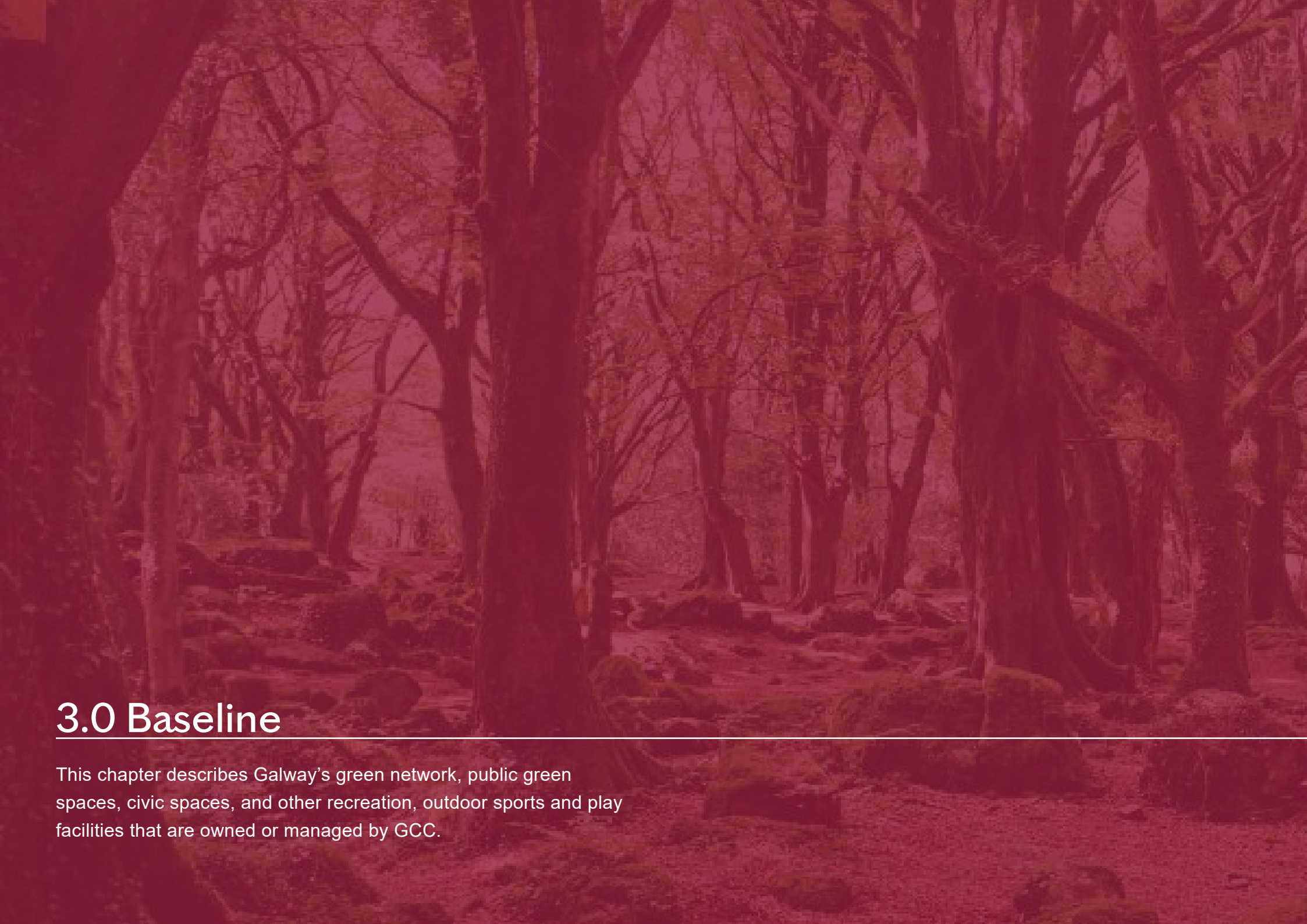
New development can provide an opportunity to improve public access to green spaces and outdoor recreation, exercise, and relaxation. All of which can have a positive impact on physical and mental health.

Increased awareness about environment

Development pressure can raise awareness about the importance of preserving green spaces and the value they provide to communities.

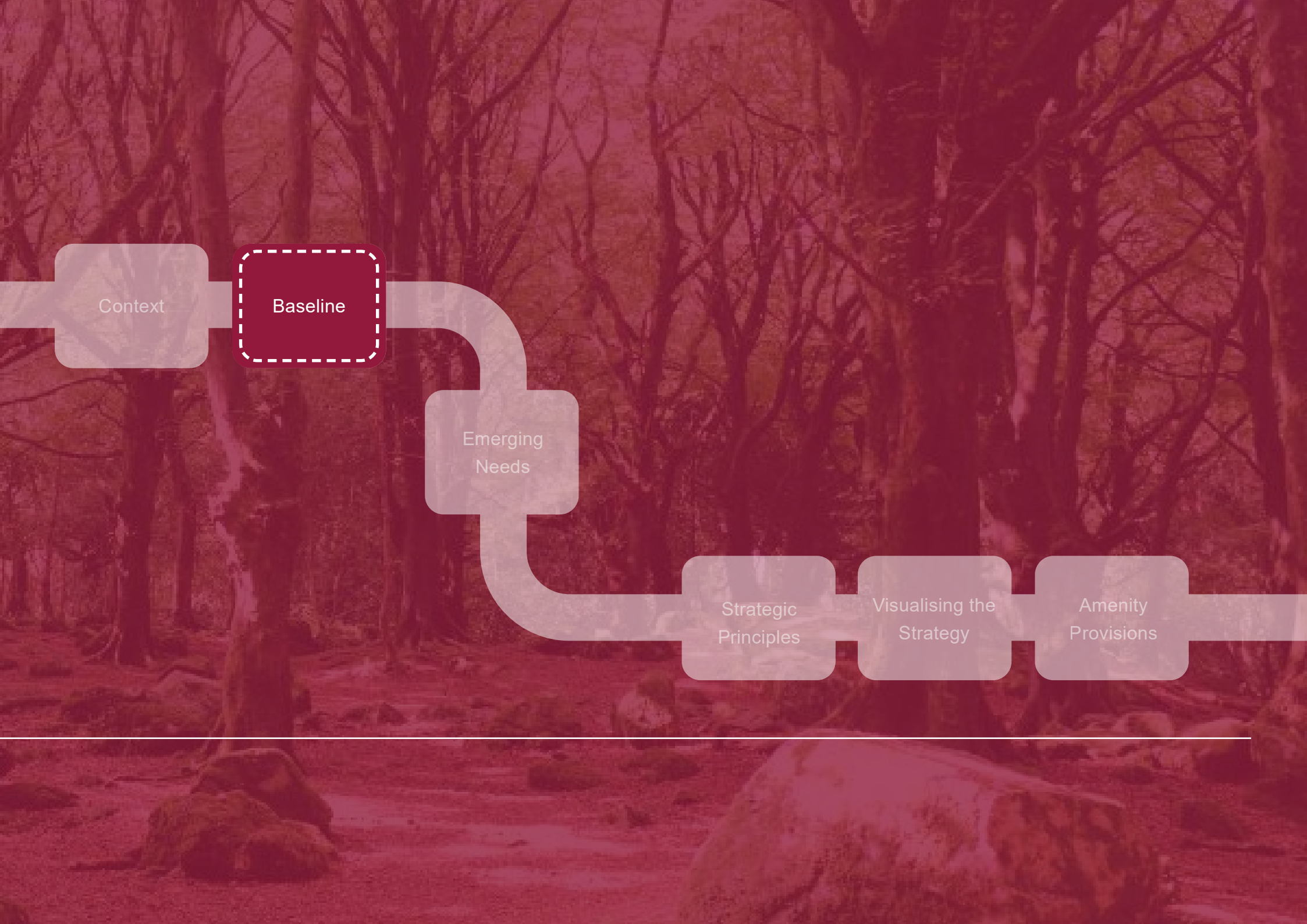
Avoid degradation of ecosystem services

The green network provides essential ecosystem services such as air purification, water regulation, and climate regulation. Manage development to avoid flood risks.



3.0 Baseline

This chapter describes Galway's green network, public green spaces, civic spaces, and other recreation, outdoor sports and play facilities that are owned or managed by GCC.


Context
Baseline
Emerging Needs
Strategic Principles
Visualising the Strategy
Amenity Provisions

3.1 Galway's Green Network

The green network refers to the interconnected natural and semi-natural areas across the city. It is a dynamic and ever-changing spatial pattern influenced by the city's environmental conditions, historical development and social characteristics.

Galway's green network covers 30km² and includes a wide range of vegetative elements including trees, woodlands, grasslands and peatlands, seen in Figure 9. The River Corrib acts a central spine connecting the coast with the Lough Corrib and the extensive mosaic of habitat types that define the city's northern hinterland. Pockets of salt marsh and mudflats are dispersed across various intertidal areas along the coast including Lough Rusheen Bay, Lough Atalia, Renmore Lagoon and Roscam.

North-western regions of the city support areas of blanket bog, fen, wet grassland and scrub and include the Moycullen Bogs Natural Heritage Area (NHA). The site supports a diverse range of species and large areas of intact blanket bog – a globally scarce resource found only in restricted areas across north-western Europe.

Broadleaved, mixed, and coniferous woodlands are clustered across Galway's green network with concentrations in areas such as Barna Woods, Menlo and Terryland Forest, Dangan Woods, Rinville Woods and Merlin Woods. Large, open areas of species-rich calcareous grassland are also present across the city.

The benefits of the green network

The health of the green network is directly related to the condition of ecosystems and biodiversity, resilience to climate impacts, human health and social wellbeing. A balanced, connected and thriving green network ensures clean air, clean water, nutritious food, and healthy soil - the building blocks of life. People have an innate desire to be near nature, and living in increasingly urbanised areas can further the need for natural spaces. Public green spaces refer to smaller, individual components that make up the green network. These spaces are publicly accessible and support recreation and people's connection to natural, outdoor spaces. A large proportion of the green network is included within a European, national or local environmental designation highlighting the importance of these unique ecosystems.

Galway has a wide interconnected green network with 60% of city consists of green spaces, however 6% of the area zoned as 'city centre' is characterised as vegetation or canopy cover signifying a distinct lack of greenery retained in the urbanised core.

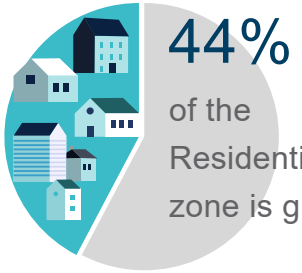
Natural capital and the green network

Natural capital encompasses the stock of vital natural assets—air, water, land, and habitats—that provide indispensable goods and services benefiting society, the economy, and businesses.

Viewing Galway's green network through a natural capital lens can helps to recognise previously unseen values that underpin the city's resilience and prosperity, providing a clear case for protection in the green network. A natural capital lens also enables an integrated approach to environmental management issues, recognising the links and synergies between issues such as climate, biodiversity, water, sustainable development, equity, and flooding.



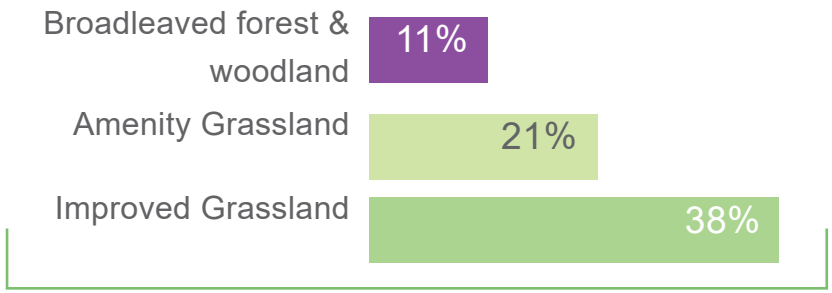
60%
of city's total area is green



44%
of the Residential zone is green



6%
of the City Centre is green



15%
in settlements and other artificial areas in Co.Galway 2000-2018

43%
of city area within a local, national or of international environmental designation.

Green Network Coverage

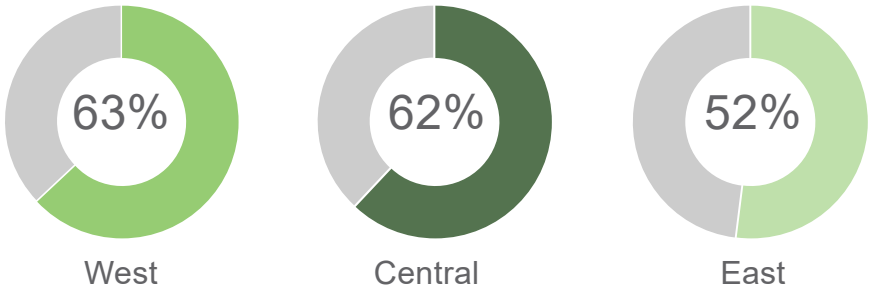




Figure 9: Galway City's green network. Source: Land cover mapping from National Mapping Division of Tailte Éireann (2018).

Legend

- City boundary

Land cover types

- Amenity grassland
- Blanket bog
- Buildings / Roads
- Broadleaved forest
- Coniferous forest
- Dense bracken
- Dry grassland
- Exposed rock
- Wet/dry heath
- Hedgerows
- Improved grassland
- Mixed forest
- Mudflats
- Salt marsh
- Sand dunes
- Scrub
- Transitional forest
- Treelines
- Wet grassland



Photo of Barna Woods taken during site visits

3.2 Galway City's Public Green Spaces

The Strategy presents a hierarchy of the publicly accessible green spaces and incorporates city parks, neighbourhood parks, city centre parks, local parks, and open amenity spaces. It builds on the hierarchy outlined in the RANS and the CDP 2023-2029 and categorises spaces in terms of their size, function, and the services they provide to the community.

The hierarchy defines the roles of public green space within the city and serves as a guide for future provision. Walking catchment distances have been defined for each public green space category. Walking guidelines support the understanding of green space accessibility and distribution.

The Strategy covers all public green spaces of 1ha or greater. While smaller green spaces are valuable, focusing on larger spaces enabled a city-wide strategic approach. 58 public green spaces were identified and included in the baseline assessment. Refer to Supporting Information Document - Chapter 2 for more detail.

The hierarchy provided the basis for assessing the need for green space. The assessment considered both the current and future population of city. Refer to Supporting Information Document - Chapter 3 for more detail.

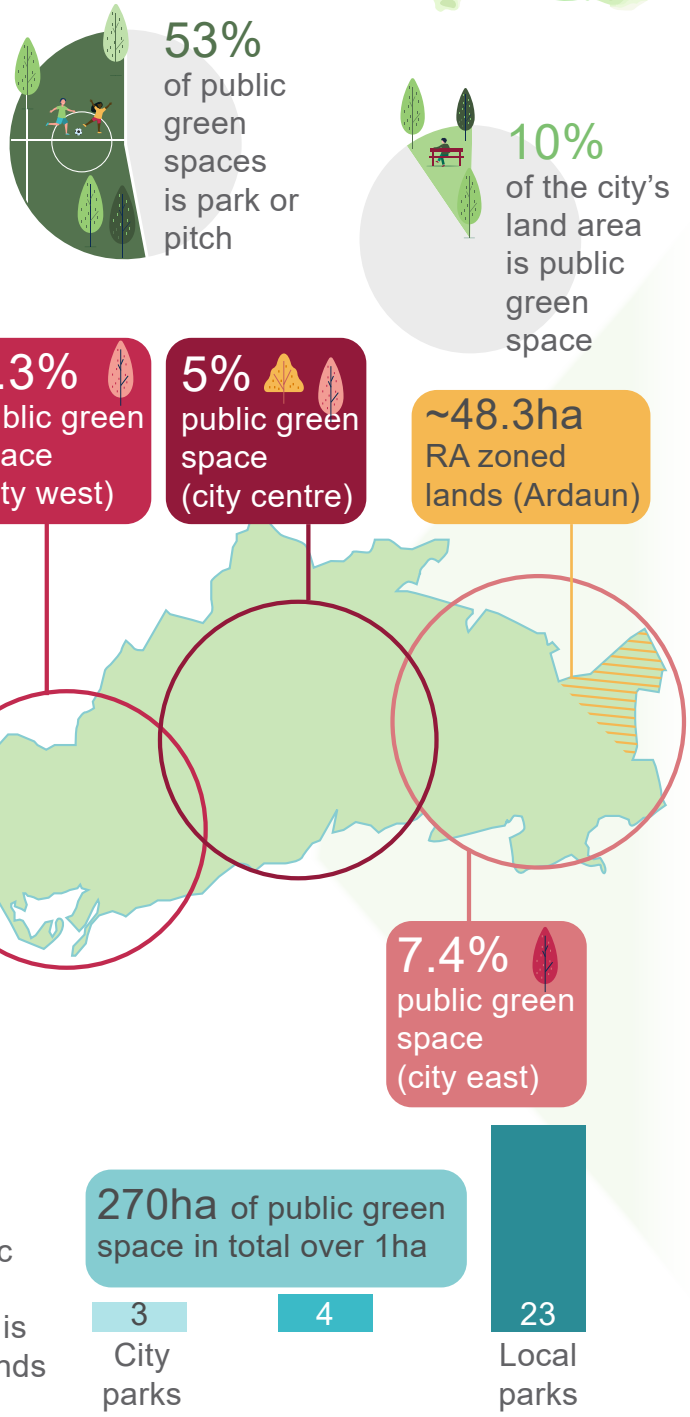




Table 1: Public green space hierarchy and minimum requirements.

Hierarchy	Size (ha)	Walking distance	Description	Minimum requirements
City park	>10	<15 minutes (1200m)	Large green spaces with a predominately woodland character, offering high scenic and amenity quality. They are destination locations that support tourism. They serve the city in terms of passive and active recreation, biodiversity, play, wellbeing and education. The woodlands are of high value and regional importance. They provide carbon storage and are important to the ecological connectivity within the green network.	• Provides key ecological functions within the city • General amenities such as toilets and end of trip facilities • Integrated and interactive walking trails and footpaths
Neighbourhood park	2-10	<10 minutes (800m)	Medium to large parks designed to provide a range of needs for surrounding neighbourhoods and communities. They are designated for passive and active recreation and sports, with a range of activities available for all ages. Activities may include outdoor sports facilities such as MUGAs or playing pitches, play areas for different age groups, walking and cycle trails, and 'kickabout' spaces. They consist of flexible spaces within a landscape setting. They offer a variety of natural features and support local biodiversity ambitions.	• General amenities including toilets, seating, lighting, and drinking water fountain(s) • Formal play facilities for different age groups • Formal outdoor sports facilities • Areas of open space and areas for biodiversity including native planting • Sustainable drainage features

Table 1 continued: Public green space hierarchy and minimum requirements.

City centre park	0.2-2	<5 minutes (400m)	Parks that are located within the inner city centre and have the ability to host a variety of civic functions, such as markets, performances, and festivals. These spaces contribute to the distinctive character of the city centre. They are designed to serve recreation and amenity needs of surrounding residents, workers, tourists and students.	• Flexible space for events and markets that are serviced by ESB and water supply, and are suitable market stalls, with lighting and flexible seating options • General amenities such as drinking water fountain(s), wayfinding signage, and lighting • Formal play facilities • Areas for biodiversity including native planting • Sustainable drainage features
Local park	0.2-2	<5 minutes (400m)	Small to medium parks that are designed to serve the immediate local community's recreation and green space needs. They provide general amenity, biodiversity opportunities, passive and active recreation, sport, and play. Local parks may include seating, outdoor sports facilities, and play equipment.	• Provision of either play and/or sport facilities • Has areas of biodiverse and native planting • Opportunity for sustainable drainage features • Improved access points • Improved/appropriate footpath surfaces
Amenity open space	N/A	N/A	Small areas of open space that provide natural surfaces for general amenity, biodiversity, passive recreation and informal play space. These areas may include seating and play equipment.	• Provides areas for informal recreation • Has areas of biodiverse and native planting • Opportunities for sustainable drainage features
Civic Spaces	N/A	N/A	Urban spaces composed of soft or hard landscape treatment or a combination of both, offering venues for civic events or passive recreation.	• Provision for gathering spaces and seating • Opportunities for collaboration with businesses • Accessible for all

City park
Large green spaces with predominately woodland character, offering high scenic and amenity quality.



Merlin Woods

Neighbourhood park
Medium to large scale parks that are designed to provide a range of needs for surrounding neighbourhoods and communities.



Cappagh Park

City centre park
Parks that are located within the inner city centre and offer the ability to host a variety of civic functions, such as markets, performances and festivals.



Eyre Square

Local park
Small to medium scale parks that are designed to serve the immediate local community for recreation and green space needs.



Lough Atalia foreshore

Amenity open space
Small areas of open space that provide natural surfaces for general amenity, biodiversity, passive recreation and informal play space.



Dun na Mara

Civic spaces
Urban spaces composed of soft or hard landscape treatment or a combination of both, offering venues for civic events or passive recreation.



Galway city centre

Cemeteries
Graveyard or burial grounds, often located adjacent to a church or within a churchyard, with public access, providing a green area within the heart of the community.



Bohermore cemetery

Greenways and Blueways
Recreational corridors facilitating non-motorised travel along linear routes often along coastal areas, rivers, canals, or through woodlands and parks.



Riverwalk

Beach
Landforms along the shoreline of Galway Bay characterised by sand, gravel, pebbles or stones that provide recreational areas for activities like swimming, walking, and beach sports and play.

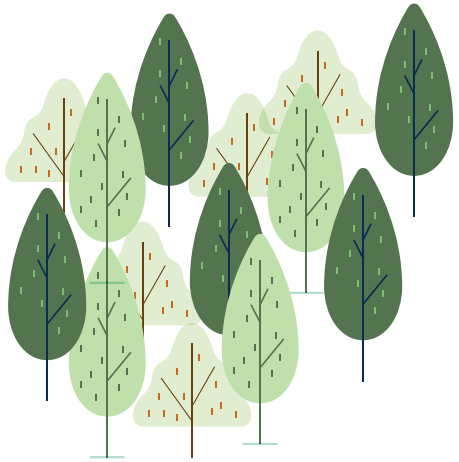


Salthill

Figure 10 illustrates the distribution of public green space across the city. The public green spaces are owned and managed by GCC. The three city parks are evenly distributed across the western, central and eastern portions of the city. There are four neighbourhood parks in total that currently align with the updated green space hierarchy, three of which are west of the River Corrib. Clusters of public green space are located in the established eastern and western suburbs such as Westside and Ballybane. Roscam, Crestwood and Cappagh Parks provide for the outer suburbs of the city providing essential recreational and sport facilities needs.

Recreation and Amenity zoned land

GCC's land use zoning identifies Recreation and Amenity (RA) zoned land. This land use zone aims to provide for recreational uses, open space, amenity uses, natural heritage and biodiversity. Typically, public green spaces are zoned as RA. However, some amenity open spaces are zoned as Residential, as they exist within residential areas and align to planning requirements regarding open space. Not all RA zoned land are public green spaces managed by GCC; other facilities such as Galway Golf Club, and Galway Racecourse at Ballybrit are privately owned and zoned as RA.



Natural capital value of city parks

Galway City's three city parks hold significant value. They represent 75ha of urban forest and offer a wide range of ecosystem services.

National research by Teagasc reveals the substantial contributions derived from forest ecosystem services in Ireland. Teagasc estimated the annual value of forest biodiversity to be €68 million. While the total annual visitation value to Irish forests is estimated at €179 million, with an average of €6.16 per person per visit. The volume of carbon sequestered by Irish forests (including those planted prior to 1990) in 2013 was 3,946.9 kt CO_2 yielding a value of €22.9 million.

While knowledge gaps remain in the valuation of ecosystem services in Ireland, this research suggests Galway City's city parks could be contributing significant value annually to the local economy.

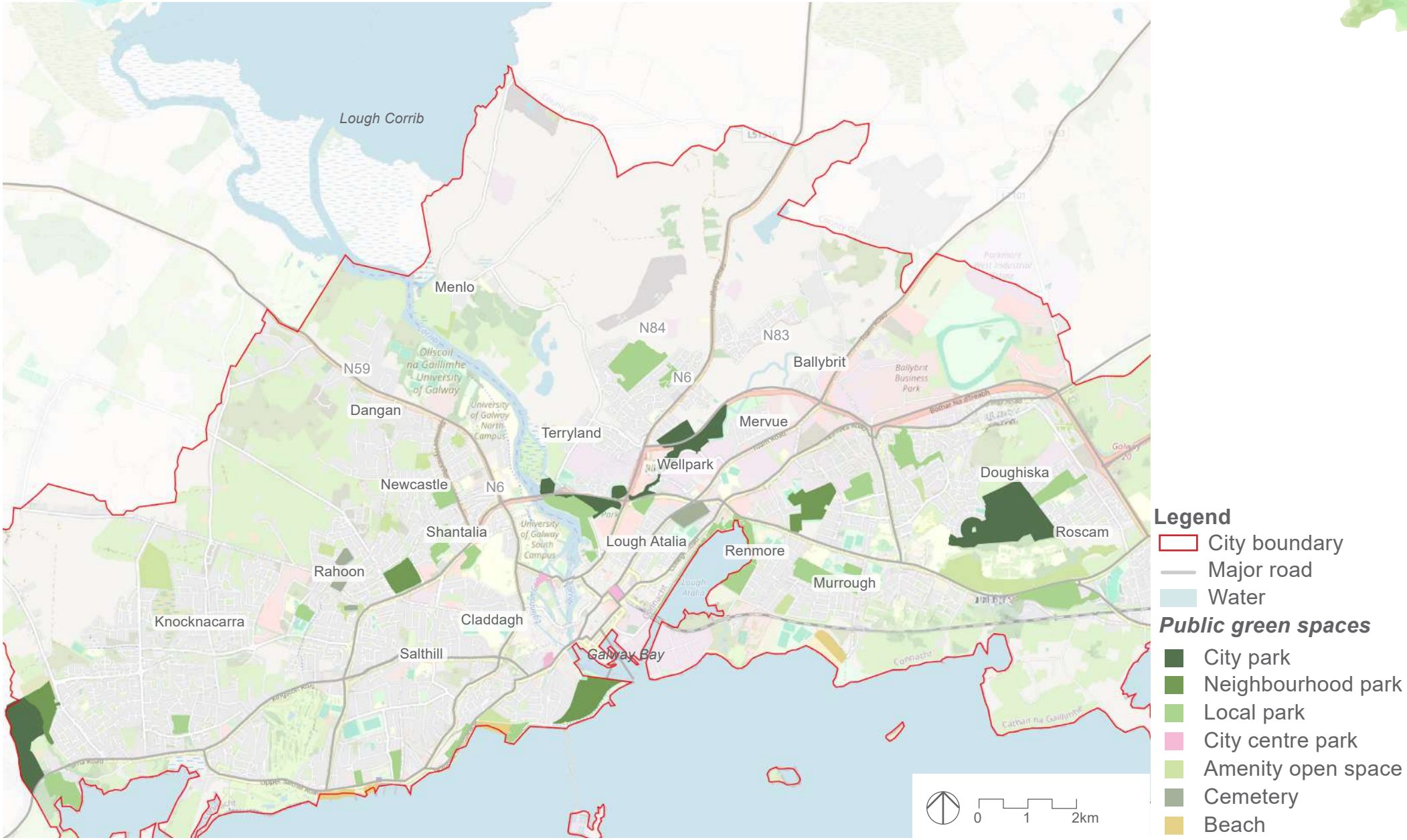


Figure 10: Galway City's public green spaces and Recreation and Amenity (RA) zoned land. Data: GCC (2024) and National Mapping Division of Tailte Éireann (2018).

The Strategy also encompasses other spaces (beyond the public green space hierarchy) that provide recreational and leisure services. These spaces include natural and semi-natural areas, beaches, cemeteries, greenways, outdoor sport areas, designated play spaces, and spaces for teenagers. The Strategy aims to ensure these spaces are sufficiently sized, accessible, suitably located, and fit for purpose.

The Strategy encompasses all outdoor sports areas and designated or equipped play areas that are owned or managed by GCC (Figure 11). In some instances, these spaces may exist within a public green space. While privately owned sports and play facilities offer important facilities, these are outside the control and influence of GCC. The Strategy does not address indoor amenities such as gyms or sports halls.

Recreational value of blue spaces

It is important to maintain high water quality to maximise recreational benefits. In Ireland, each visit to spaces with water-based recreation is valued at ~€20, or €1000 per person per year. Improvements in water quality lead to increased visit frequency, while deteriorations decrease revenue.



Other spaces	Description
Outdoor sport areas	Facilities and infrastructure including playing pitches, other outdoor sports areas, and outdoor provision. Playing pitches include Gaelic football, soccer, rugby. Other pitch sports and minority sports may be provided for within existing facilities, such as hockey, cricket, camogie, and hurling etc. where space permits. Other outdoor sports include courts and greens with natural or artificial surfaces, including tennis courts, pétanque, athletics tracks, etc. Other outdoor provision includes MUGAs, outdoor gyms and skateboard parks etc.
Designated/ equipped play spaces	• Designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play comprising casual or informal playing space. It is recommended that equipped/ designated play spaces be promoted in the form of: • Local Areas for Play (LAPs) aimed at very young children • Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) aimed at children who can go out to play independently • Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) aimed at older children.
Spaces for teenagers	Teen areas that provide for teenage activity or social interaction such as Teen Parks and Active Teen Spaces.
Beaches	Landforms along the shoreline of Galway Bay that are characterised by an area of sand, gravel, pebbles or stones and shaped by the action of waves, tides, and currents. They provide recreational areas for waterbased activities and serve as important natural buffers that protect the city from coastal erosion and storm surges.
Cemeteries	Graveyard or burial grounds, often located adjacent to a church or within a churchyard, with public access, providing a green area within the heart of the community.
Greenways and Blueways	Established or proposed recreational corridors facilitating non-motorised travel along linear routes (including rights of way), often located along coastal areas, through woodlands and parks, rivers or canals. These spaces provide paddling & rowing recreation and alternative circulation routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Refer to the Blueways Strategy for more information related to Galway City's blueways.

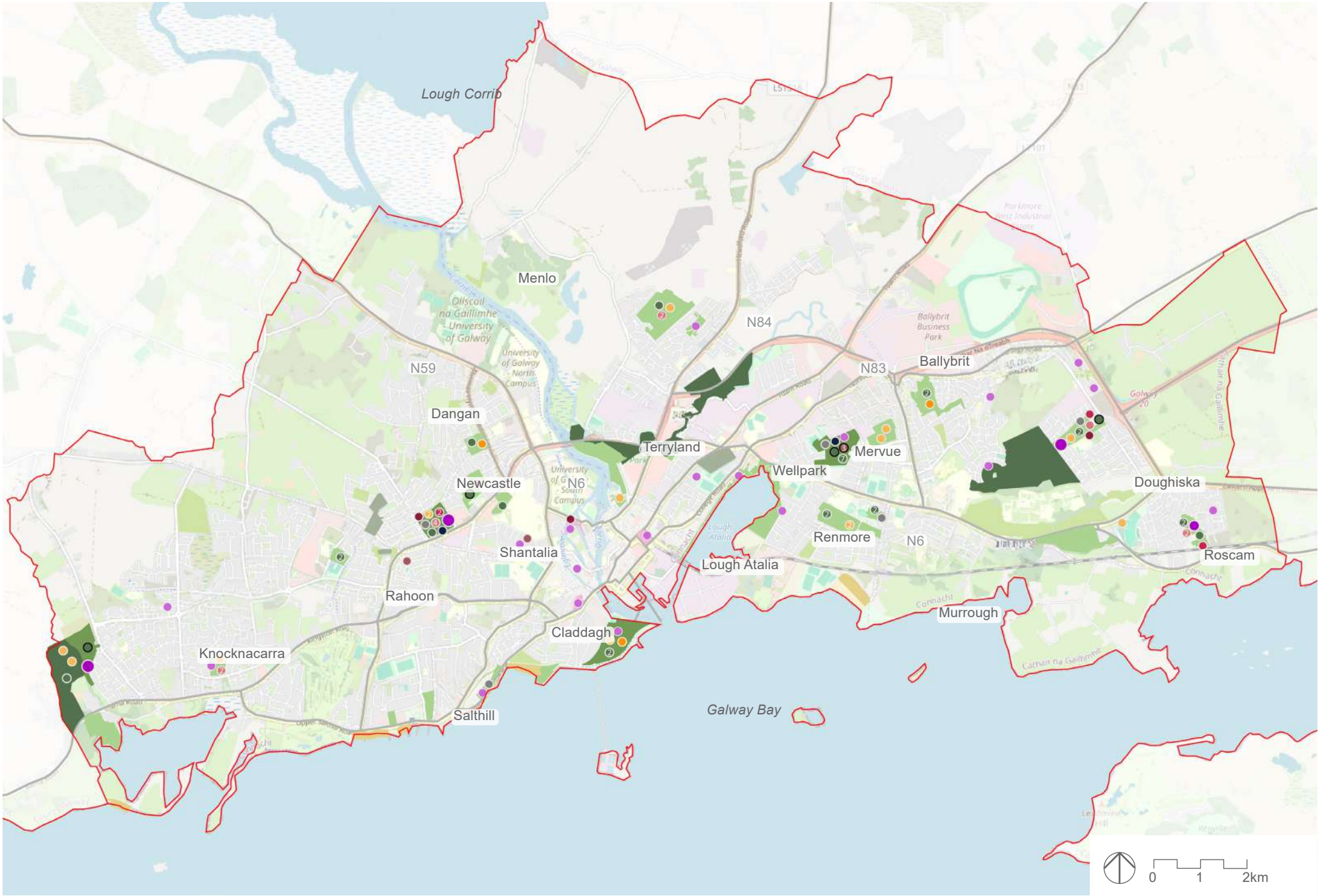


Figure 11: Galway City's public green spaces including designated play areas and outdoor sports facilities. Source: GCC (2025).

Legend

- City boundary
- Major road

Playgrounds

- LEAP
- NEAP

Public green spaces

- City park
- Neighbourhood park
- Local park
- City centre park
- Amenity open space
- Cemetery

Outdoor sports

- Athletics
- Basketball
- Exercise equipment
- GAA
- Skateboarding
- Soccer
- MUGA
- Rugby
- Tennis
- All-weather pitch
- Watersports Hub

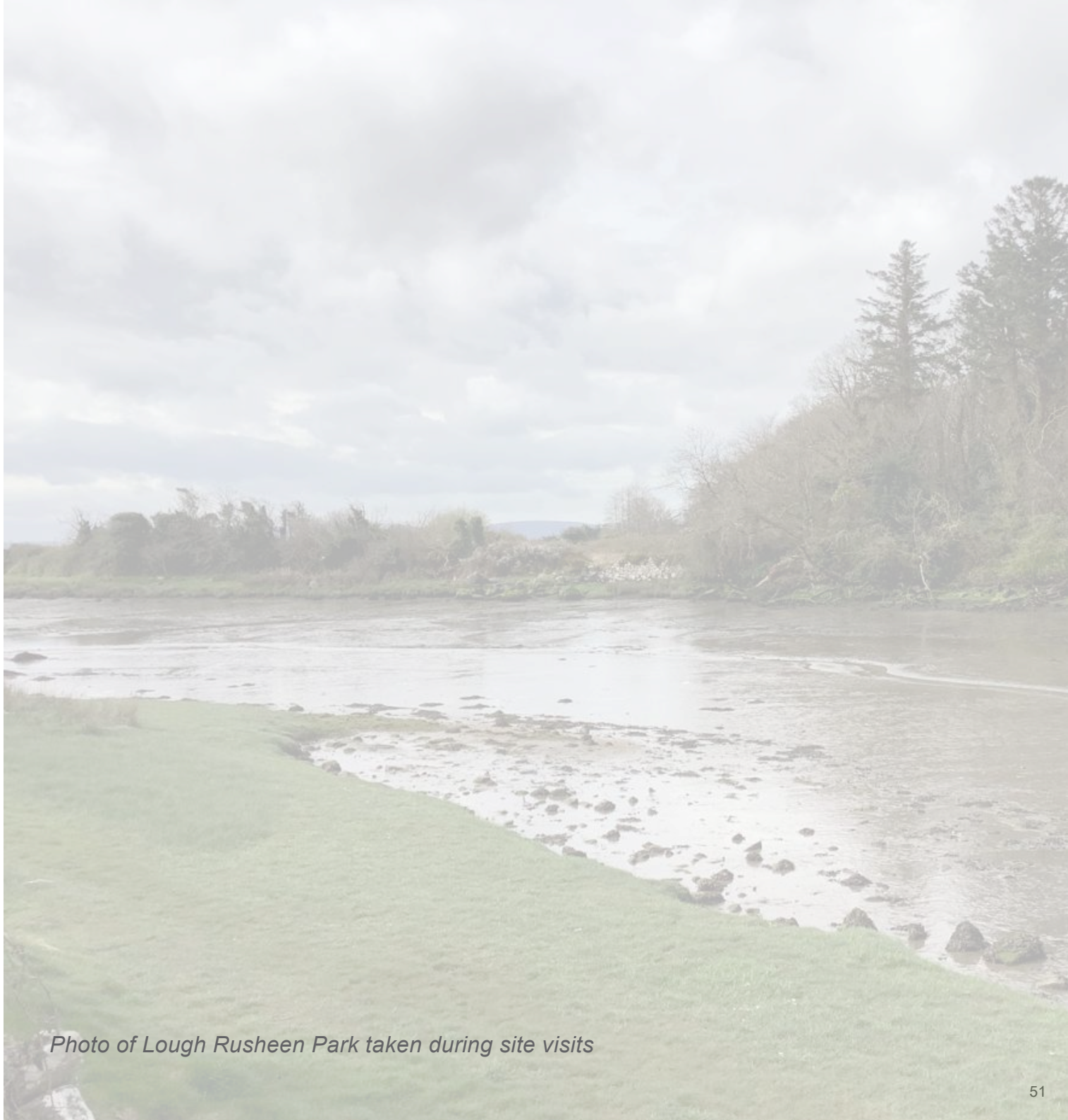
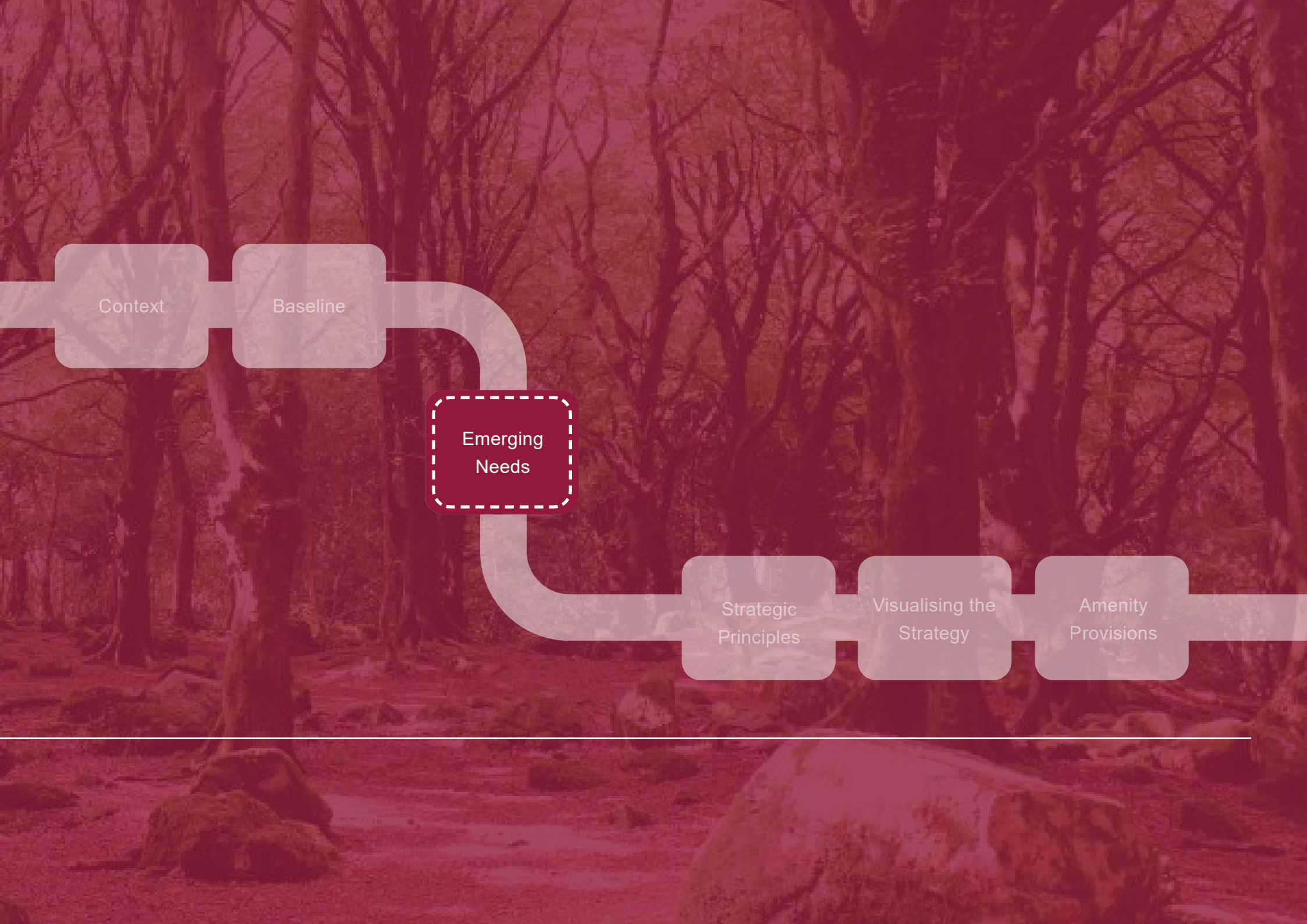


Photo of Lough Rusheen Park taken during site visits



4.0 Emerging Needs

This chapter describes the emerging needs for the green network and public green spaces that were identified from the ecosystem services baseline assessment, the quantitative needs assessment, review of natural capital, and public and stakeholder engagement.


Context
Baseline
Emerging Needs
Strategic Principles
Visualising the Strategy
Amenity Provisions

4.1 Baseline

Public green spaces form 10% of the land area in the city, that is some 270ha of the 2,689ha available. The EU average for publicly accessible green areas in cities is 3% of the total city area, so Galway City is performing well in comparison.

Galway City's public green spaces are serving a population of ~80,596. The density of residential population within each neighbourhood area varies. A notable higher density zone is the city centre (64 people per hectare) compared to the overall average (30 people per hectare)
The geographic location and area of public green space is not uniform throughout the city, which reflects the organic growth of the city over many years and the historic development of its parks.

The breakdown of open space types is as follows:
City park: 75ha
Neighbourhood park: 38ha
City centre park: 3ha
Local park: 107ha
Open space: 34ha[1]

Although green space provision is meeting the benchmark, the provision of sport facilities and play areas are not achieving the benchmark. Privately owned facilities (gardens, open spaces, private membership or fee-based green spaces, schools, universities) have not been counted and do significantly contribute to the provision. There is still a demand for additional facilities to meet the current and future needs of Galway City.

See next page for a snapshot of key findings from the baseline assessment of the condition of the green network and public green spaces. For more information refer to Supporting Information Document - Section 2 & 3.

13% of the city - ‘High’ probability of impact from coastal flooding events and **11%** has a ‘High’ probability of fluvial flooding events.

42/52 public green spaces had **up to 2 spaces designated for sport activities.**

Opportunities in under-utilised smaller green spaces in residential areas zoned for recreation and amenity use.

Areas that need to improve ecological connectivity

- City centre
- Shantall
- Westside
- Mervue
- Ballybrit
- Parkmore
- Ballybane

Large area of the city **(42.9 km²)** has above average above-ground carbon storage potential in vegetation.

Issues with barriers impeding access, minimal access points impeding catchment to existing parks.

Galway City supports rich marine life including birds, fish, and marine mammals via providing crucial breeding and feeding grounds for many bird species.

17/52 public green spaces had good quality play areas.



4.2 Consultation - Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Approach
The Strategy was shaped by extensive community and stakeholder feedback collected between April 2023 and July 2024 through various engagement activities.

Engagement Activities: An outreach campaign informed the public via local media, social media, and radio. GCC conducted a city-wide survey to gather preferences and needs for green spaces, receiving detailed feedback on 35 public green spaces, 27 sports or activities, and 33 facility types.

Public Workshops:
In total, 6 workshops were carried out - 3 public workshops and 3 with key stakeholder groups (youth, older people, and people with disabilities) - focusing on green spaces, sports facilities, unmet needs, and lived experiences. ree public workshops and three key stakeholder workshops (youth, older people, and people with disabilities) were held to discuss green spaces, sports facilities, unmet needs, and experiences.

Council and Community Network Workshops: Consultations with Council stakeholders focused on plans, policies, and needs related to the Strategy.

Environmental Stakeholders' Workshops: Workshops with environmental groups and Inland Fisheries Ireland addressed ecological elements and inland fisheries.

Sports Clubs and Educational Institutions: Workshops with environmental groups and Inland Fisheries Ireland addressed ecological elements and inland fisheries.

Participation
GCC received a total of 457 general survey responses and 94 youth survey responses, with youth respondents aged 8 to 18. Most feedback came from city residents (88%), with significant participation from Knocknacarra, Renmore, Menlo, Salthill, and Ballybrit. Responses were distributed across Galway City West, green spaces, and Central electoral areas.

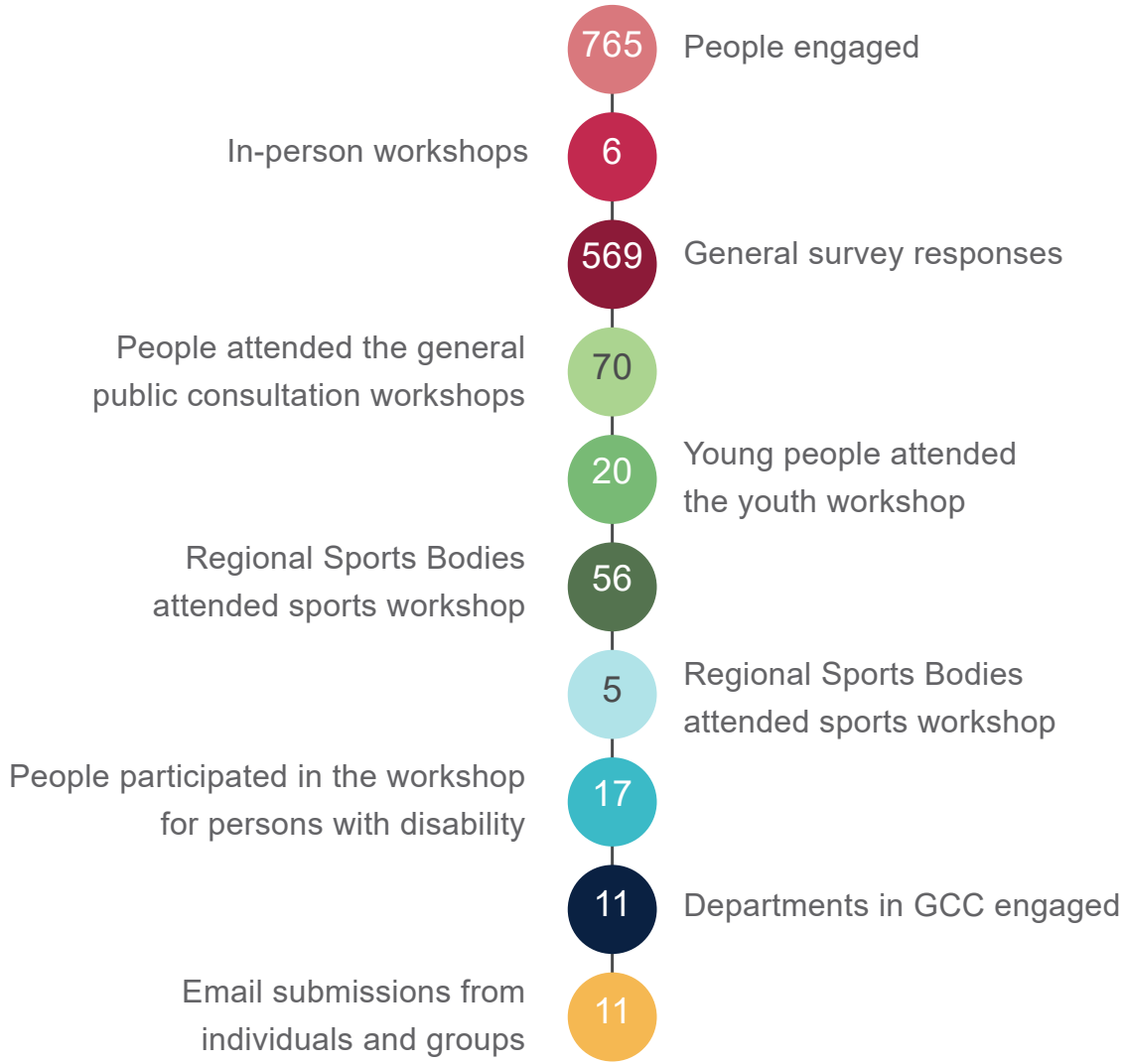
Fifty-six sports clubs, community groups, schools, and colleges responded to the sports survey. Public workshops saw participation from 70 people, with additional workshops for youth (20 attendees) and

people with disabilities (17 attendees), including representatives from Ability West, Access For All, and Galway Community Network. The older persons' information day engaged around 40 people.

Workshops included representatives from various organisations such as Ability West, Access For All, Galway Community Network, and regional sports bodies. The PPN workshop was attended by 15 members of the environment and climate change linkage group. GCC also received feedback through email, writing, and social media, including 11 detailed submissions and 15 social media responses.

To ensure the Strategy meets the needs of GCC's departments, 1:1 and small group interviews were conducted with 19 officers from various departments, including Planning, Housing, Water, Transport, Environment, Recreation and Amenity, and Community and Culture.

Consultation snapshot



Summary of key feedback themes

Detailed review and analysis of the feedback has provided GCC with a thorough understanding of preferences for green spaces, key themes, and issues for further consideration.

Insights from 765 participants across the city revealed common themes, which are highlighted below:

- Teen spaces
- Universal Design
- Sports for all
- Local, accessible, playable parks and pitches
- Maintained and managed parks and pitches
- Multi-functional leisure spaces for diverse communities
- Ecological quality and connectivity
- Communication and engagement challenges
- Spaces for girls
- Maximising use of existing facilities



Teen spaces

Facilities for teenagers that are safe, accessible, maintained and integrated with the natural environment. Participants would like Knocknacarra to have open facilities similar to those in Westside



Universal Design

Need for accessible spaces that meaningfully consider the needs and experiences of participants with disabilities. Universal Design principles must be applied, in the words of one participant “Universal Design should be top of the list”.



Multi functional spaces for diverse communities

Participants would like to see more places, spaces, and facilities for people of all ages and abilities. Participants would like spaces that provide for interests and sports beyond the traditional and that can reflect new, emerging, and changing preferences.



Local, accessible, playable parks & pitches

People’s most frequently visited green space tended to be those nearer to their house. Participants indicated that they often visit green spaces to relax and enjoy open space and nature. Participants noted the absence of play spaces. The need for improved crossings and entrances and the removal of kissing gates and locks was highlighted by many.



Maintained & managed parks & pitches

Participants avoid poorly maintained green spaces due to litter, pollution, and anti-social behavior. They urged GCC to improve management, add bins, public toilets, lighting, and address dog waste. Concerns include poor drainage, and inadequate pitch maintenance. Maintenance crew training is needed.



Ecological quality and connectivity

Participants emphasised protecting nature in the city, including wildlife habitats, biodiversity, and natural heritage areas. Concerns included ecological breakdown, climate crisis, and coastal pollution. They advocated for ecological corridors, native species use, and community stewardship schemes.



Communication and engagement challenges

Communication and engagement challenges highlighted such as inadequate communication between GCC and clubs and Regional Governing Bodies of sports, and the need for clubs to better coordinate with schools regarding facility use. The decline in volunteering due to COVID has exacerbated challenges.



Spaces for girls

Participants highlighted the urgent need for improved facilities for girls and women. Key issues include inadequate changing rooms, poor overall facilities hindering female membership growth in sports clubs, and dependency on men's schedules. A strategic approach is essential to ensure equal access and opportunities for both genders.



Maximising the use of existing pitches and faciltiies

Maximising the use of existing pitches requires floodlights, overcoming planning permission hurdles, ensuring pitches are fit for purpose, and consistent, considerate scheduling according to participants. Maintenance must align with usage times to optimise facility availability and efficiency. The pitch booking system should be improved.



Sports for all

Participants underscored the need for inclusiveness in sports clubs including through efforts to recruit from satellite areas and connect them to main facilities, and overcoming the notion that play must occur on neighborhood pitches. Additionally, there is a need for clubs to cater to all age groups and disabilities, and to give consideration to minority sports.

4.3 Quantitative Needs Assessment Summary

Public Green Spaces

The city currently exceeds the public green space benchmark, providing 3.4 hectares per 1,000 residents (34m² per person). Many areas, including the city center and eastern suburbs, already have green spaces within walking distance. While access is more limited in the west and outer suburbs, key locations like Barna Woods/ Lough Rusheen Bay and McGraths Fields provide important green amenities.

By 2034, public green space is expected to cover 321 hectares, or 12% of the city's land, with an additional 11 hectares needed to meet future targets. Residential developments are projected to contribute 33 hectares, alongside 18 hectares of new public green space.

Outdoor sports facilities

Galway City offers a strong network of sports facilities, including 47 council-owned and managed playing pitches. These facilities benefit from good walkability, ensuring many residents have accessible options for outdoor activities. However, the city currently falls below the benchmark for outdoor sports facilities, with the greatest shortages in the city center and western areas. Privately owned venues and sport facilities owned by the university are not considered in the benchmark and significantly make up for this shortfall.

By 2034, an additional 15 hectares of outdoor sports facilities are planned, including 10 new playing pitches, further enhancing provision.

Designated/equipped play areas

Galway City offers a variety of play areas, with 24 equipped sites spread across the city: 9 in the east ward, 5 in the west ward, 10 in the central ward and 4 in inner residential areas. These provide good walkability for Galway City.

This provision falls short of the benchmark significantly, this is due to LAP facilities are not counted within the assessment and do contribute to the overall supply and current provision is predominately traditional playgrounds within public parks and limited amount of neighborhood focused play areas.

By 2034, an additional 18 new LEAPs and 4 new NEAPs are planned, which will help address current gaps in play facilities but increased focus on play provisions is required to meet the needs.



Figure 12: Current and future supply of public green space compared to benchmark

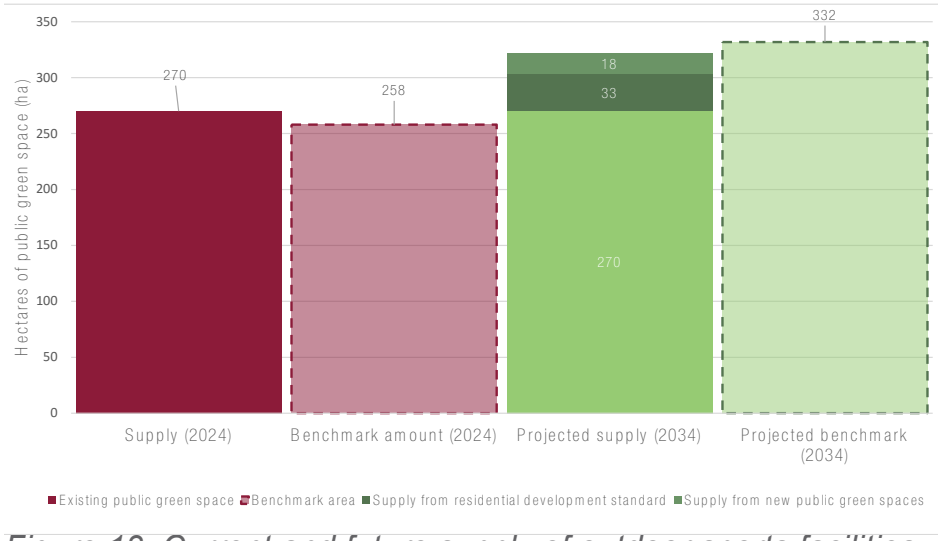


Figure 13: Current and future supply of outdoor sports facilities compared to Fields in Trust benchmark.

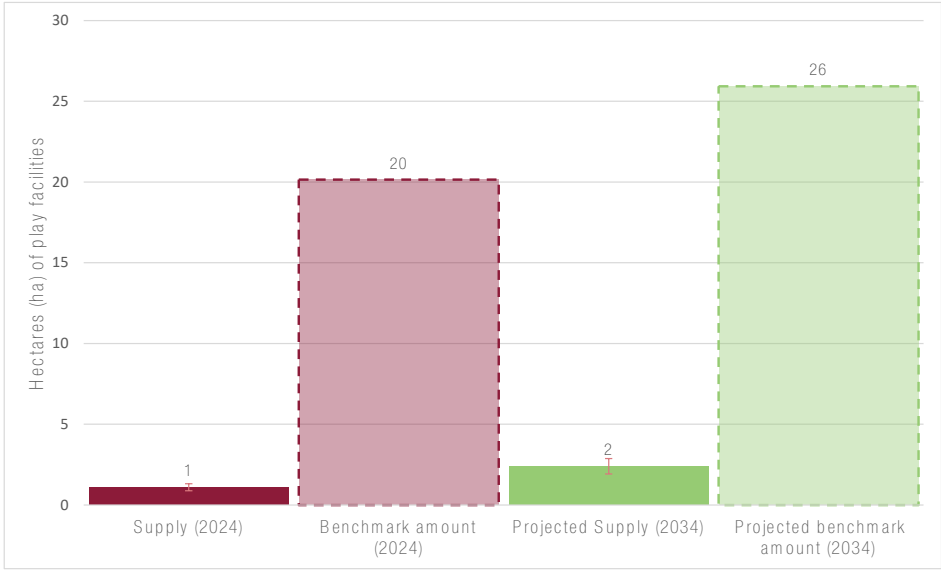


Figure 14: Current and future area of equipped play facilities compared to Fields in Trust benchmark.

4.4 Current Public Green Spaces Walkability & Quantity

The current provision of green spaces aims to provide accessibility to green spaces within a typical walking catchment area to ensure people have adequate supply of spaces to be accessible without the use of public transport or car usage. This aligns with the modal shift to encourage sustainable modes of transport and reduce pressure on Galway City's transport network.

Legend

- City boundary
- Main road
- Waterway
- Water

Planning

- Local Area Plan (LAP)
- Community Culture & Institutional Zone

Public green space hierarchy

- City park
- Neighbourhood park
- City centre park
- Local park
- Open space
- Sports pitch, beach, cemetery

Accessibility and amenity

- Park access point

Walking catchment *(Ref. Table 2.1 in Supporting Information Document for distances)*

- Walking catchment areas

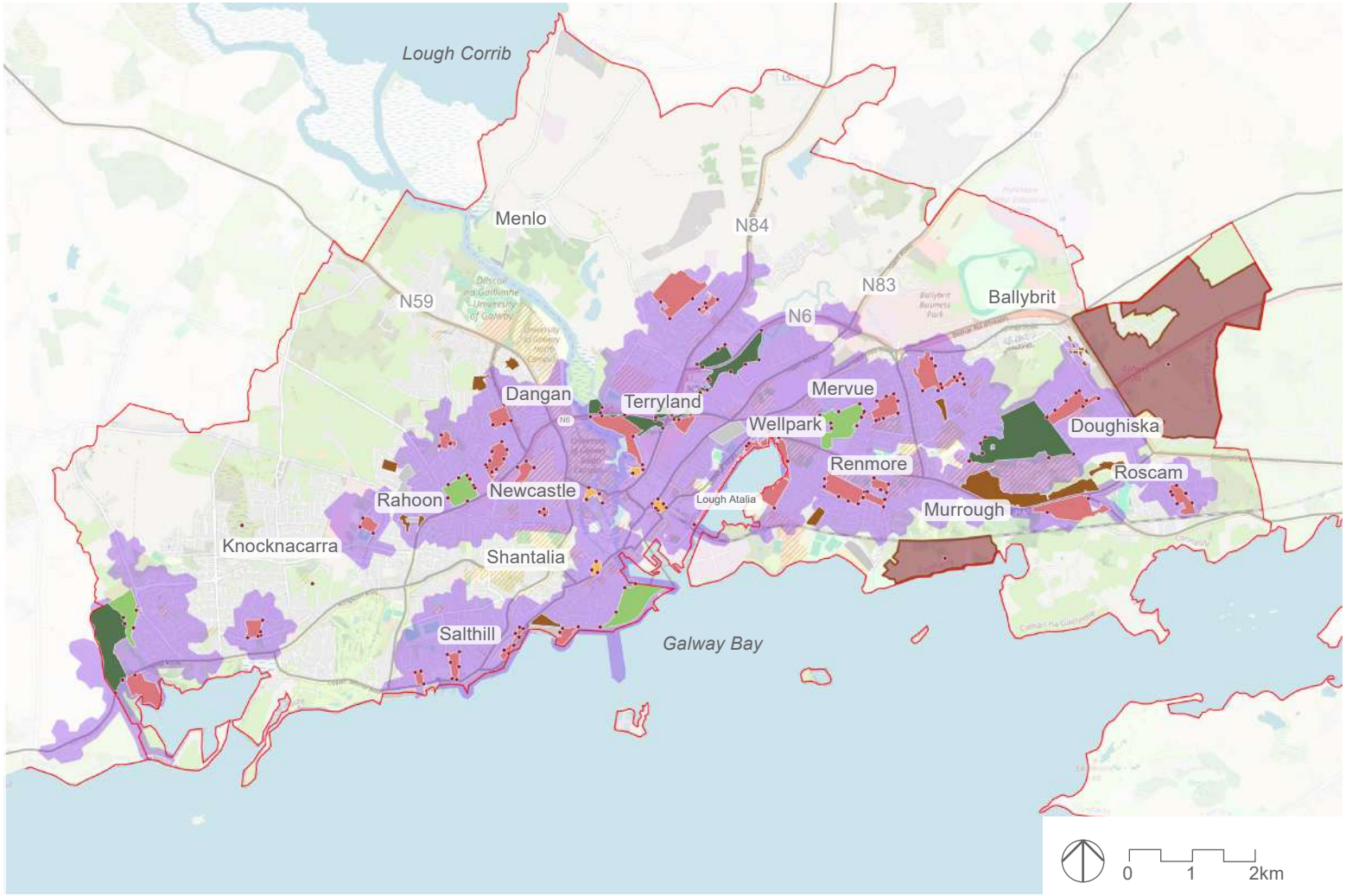


Figure 15: Galway City's public green spaces current walkability catchment across the city.

4.5 Future Green Spaces Walkability & Quantity

The currently planned upgrades to public green spaces and additions of new parks will improve city's access to green space, with focus to the areas in the west, east and northeast of the city where planning new housing is to be provided. This will ensure the city provides suitable provisions of green space for new residents.

Legend

- City boundary
- Main road
- Waterway
- Water

Planning

- Local Area Plan (LAP)
- Community Culture & Institutional Zone

Public green space hierarchy

- City park
- Neighbourhood park
- City centre park
- Local park
- Open space
- Sports pitch, beach, cemetery

Accessibility and amenity

- Park access point
- Proposed toilet facilities (7 no.)

Walking catchment *(Ref. Table 2.1 in Supporting Information Document for distances)*

- Walking catchment areas
- Proposed catchment buffer

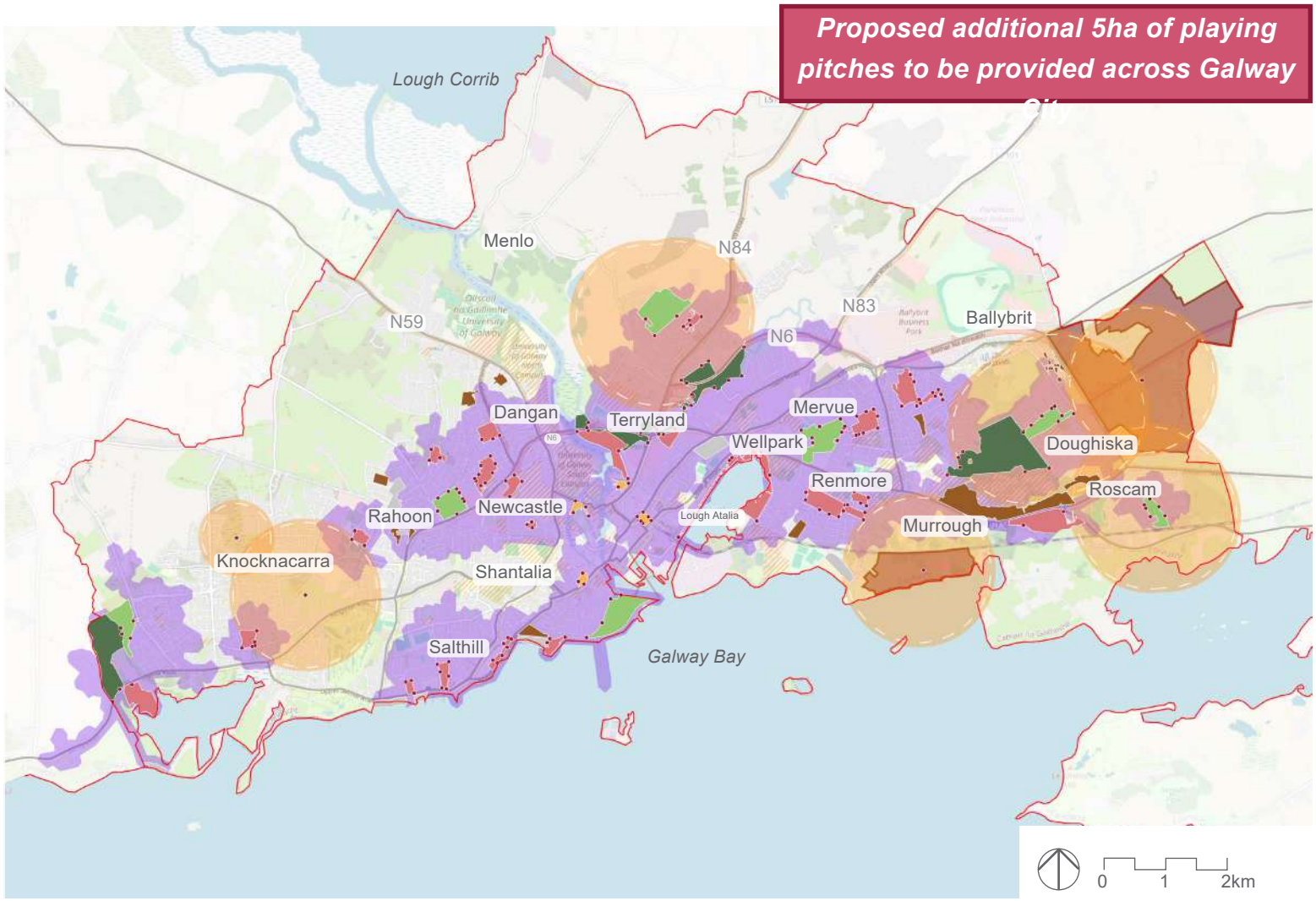
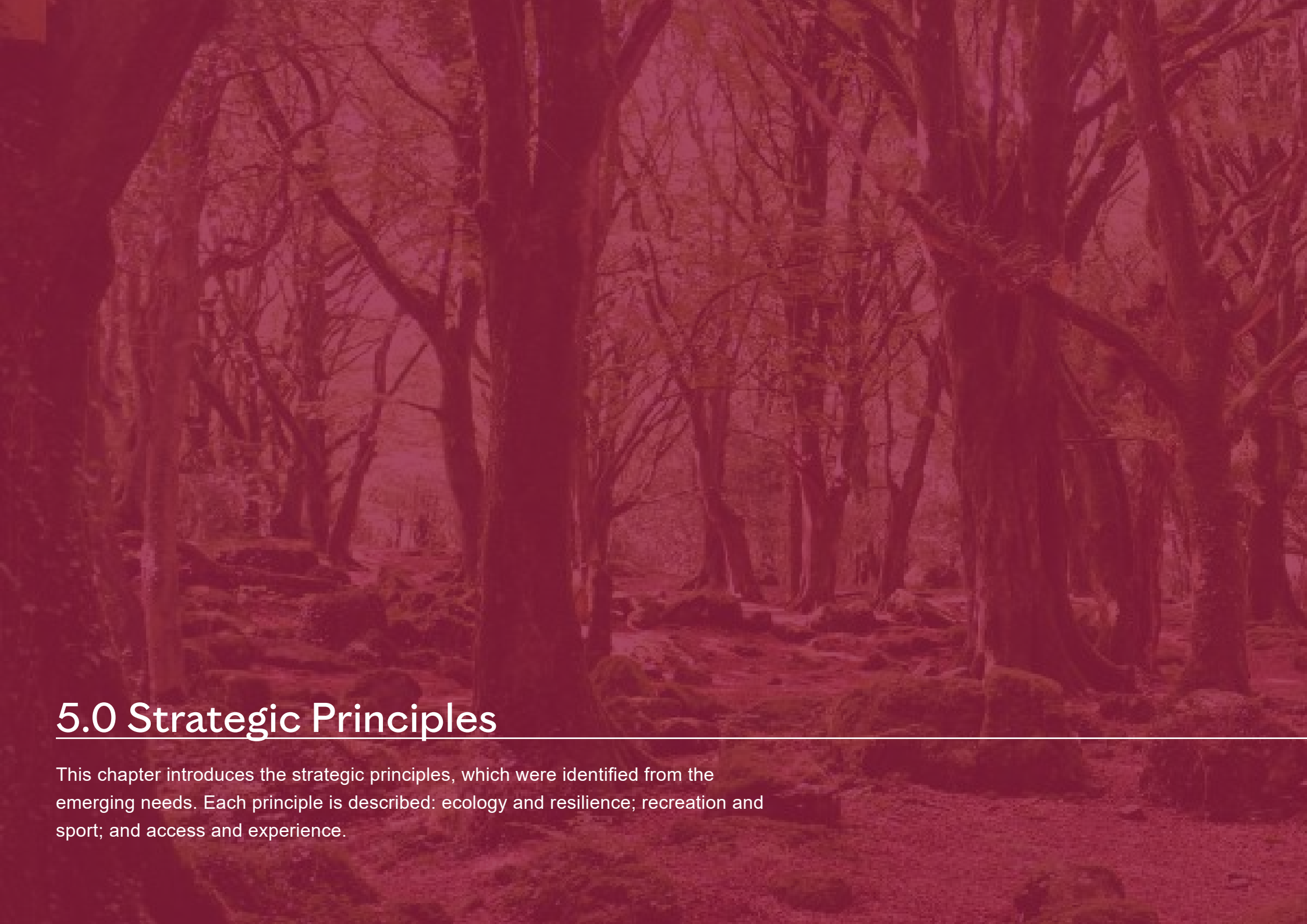
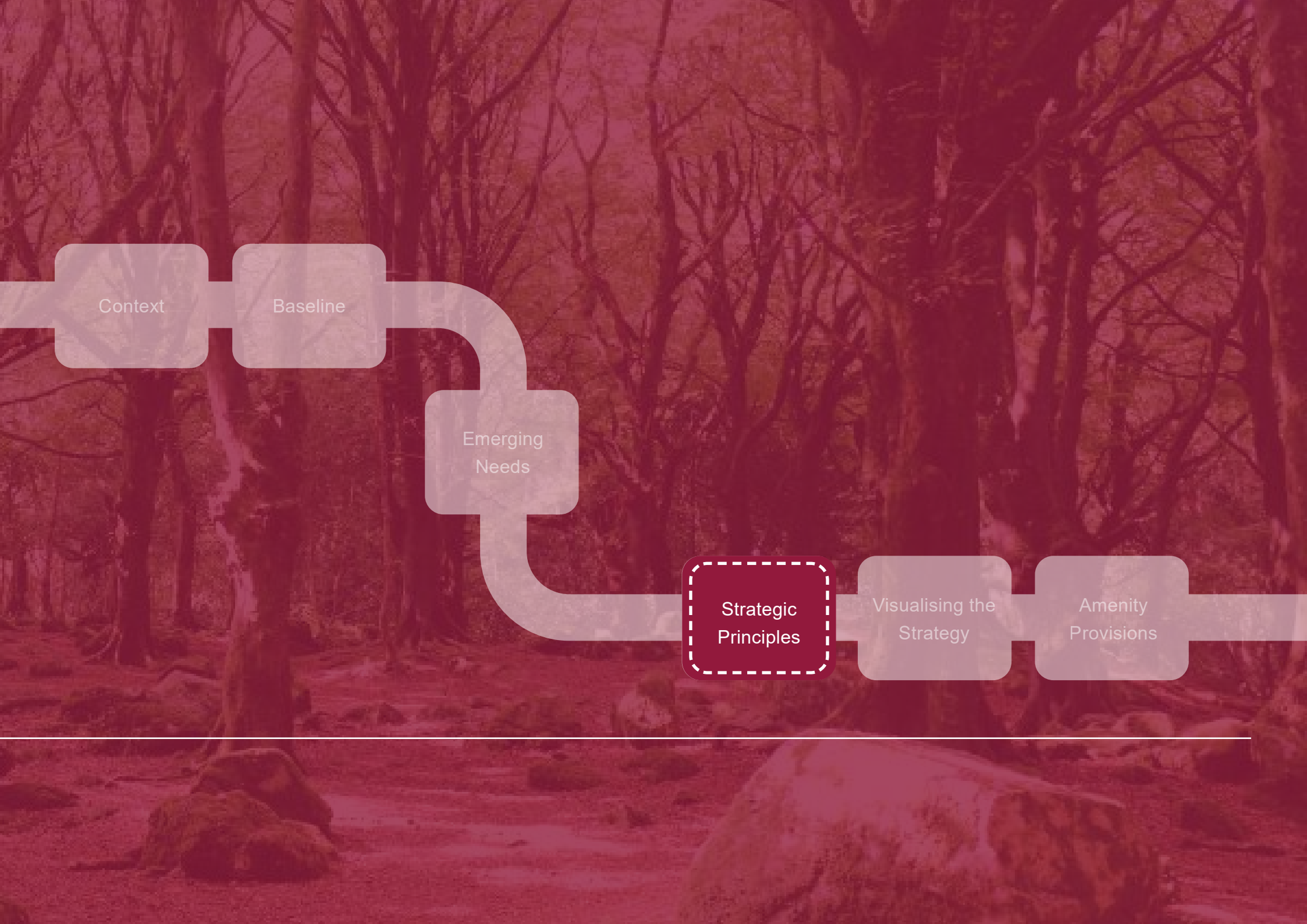


Figure 16: Galway City's future public green spaces current walkability catchment across the city.



5.0 Strategic Principles

This chapter introduces the strategic principles, which were identified from the emerging needs. Each principle is described: ecology and resilience; recreation and sport; and access and experience.


Context
Baseline
Emerging Needs
Strategic Principles
Visualising the Strategy
Amenity Provisions

5.1 Introducing the Principles



The broader findings were brought together to inform the vision for Galway City's green network and public green spaces. The Strategy aims to support a vibrant, sustainable, and resilient city that enhances quality of life and promotes recreation, play, and sports.

The Vision

Galway City's parks, woodlands, beaches, and open spaces will foster health, wellbeing, and community connection while preserving local biodiversity and combating climate change.

These inclusive, accessible spaces will inspire creativity, support environmental education, and maintain Galway City's unique natural and cultural identity. Through strategic planning and community engagement, GCC aims to develop and sustain green spaces that provide lasting ecological, social, and economic benefits for all.

The vision is anchored by three principles:

- Ecology and Resilience
- Recreation and Sport
- Access and Experience

These principles, and their supporting themes presented on the following pages, will work interdependently to drive the implementation of the vision. Public green spaces will work to provide a range of benefits across the three principles, balancing recreational and environmental priorities.



Ecology and resilience

Galway City's green network will promote species diversity and allow habitats to thrive and flourish. The Ecology and Resilience principle aims to:

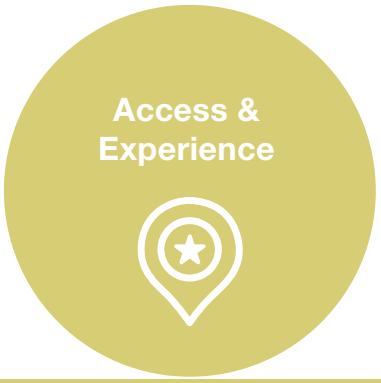
Increase resilience and promote climate adaptation
Improve the water quality and water absorption of the green network
Protect existing biodiversity
Increase biodiversity and ecological connectivity of green network.



Recreation and sports

Galway City's green spaces will be active and engaging. The Recreation and Sports principle aims to:

Increase the provision, distribution, and quality of equipped play areas
Increase the provision of green space and expand the range of recreational opportunities
Increase the provision of natural green playful spaces
Increase the variety and maximise the use of outdoor sport facilities.



Access and experience

Galway City's green spaces will be vibrant hubs of community life. The Access and Experience principle aims to:

Create safe, comfortable and inclusive green spaces
Improve accessibility to and within green spaces
Enhance sense of place and local identity.

5.2 Synergies with Galway City Development Plan

The Principles and the CDP

The three principles of the Strategy have been mapped across the ten strategic objectives outlined in the CDP 2023-2029. This mapping exercise ensures that this Strategy assists/contributes to the deliverer of GCC's wider development objectives.

1. **High Quality of Life:** Ensure a good quality of life by creating an attractive built environment, protecting cultural heritage, and providing essential economic, cultural, and social supports.

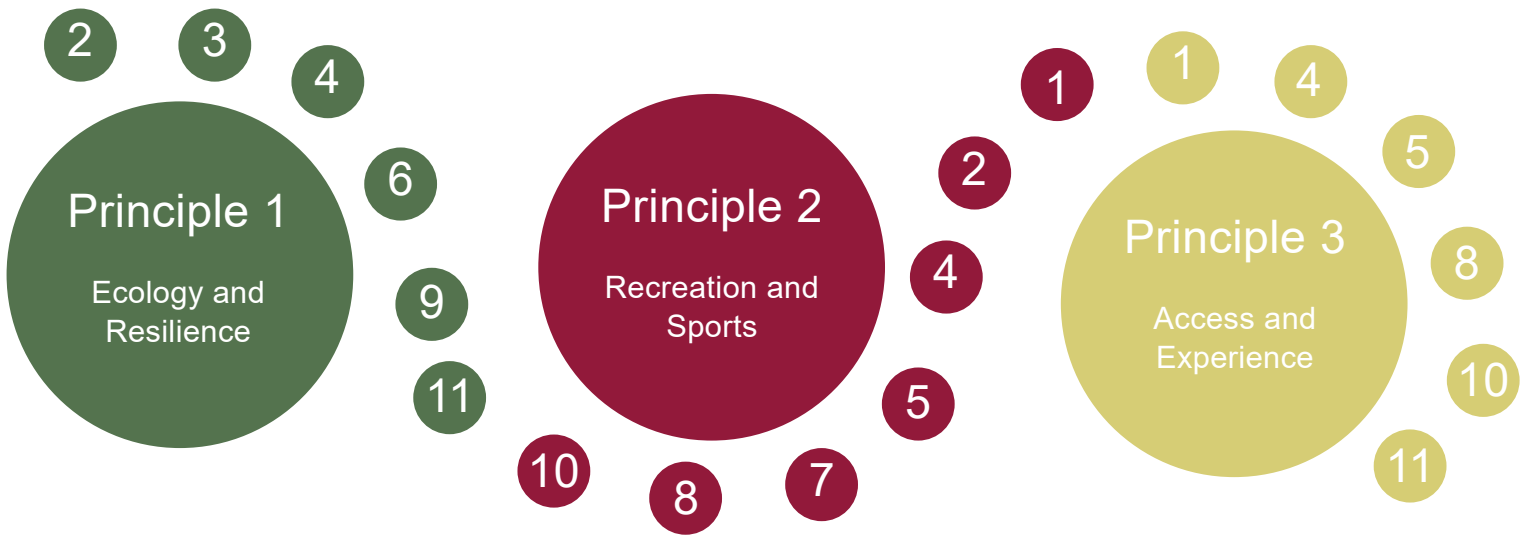
2. **City of Scale and Economic Driver:** Transform Galway City into a significant regional development hub that fosters economic growth through balanced and sustainable opportunities for development, innovation, and investment.

3. **Climate Action:** Commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, and carbon-neutral society through proactive and specific climate adaptation and mitigation measures.

4. **Sustainability Integration:** Apply sustainability principles and integrate the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on land use, buildings, water, energy, waste management, and promoting sustainable transportation.

5. **Equality and Inclusion:** Strive to make Galway City an inclusive city by facilitating social inclusion in public spaces, community facilities, and access to services and amenities.

6. **Natural Environment:** Integrating the needs of the city's natural environment into decision making , recognising its biodiversity, recreational benefits, and contribution to health, wellbeing, and the city's attractiveness.



The strategic objectives of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 mapped to the strategic principles of the Green Spaces Strategy.

7. **Civic Engagement and Identity:** Foster a sense of collective identity and shared vision through civic engagement and community-benefit projects that promote indigenous culture and the city's unique character.

8. **Integrated Land Use and Transport:** Integrate land use and transport planning to promote active travel, public transport, and key transport projects.

9. **Sustainable Resource Use:** Ensure the efficient and sustainable use of water services, environmental resources, and infrastructure.

10. **Urban Compact Form:** Develop a more compact urban form with attractive, integrated, and accessible neighborhoods supported by appropriate services and amenities.

11. **Forest Park Management & Woodland Restoration Plan:** Manage and develop woodlands in the ownership of Galway City Council for natural heritage, recreation and amenity use.

5.3 Principle 1: Ecology and Resilience

This principle aims to maximise biodiversity and enhance climate adaptation in green spaces. It emphasises enhancing the ecological function and the diverse ecosystem services green spaces provide. This principle seeks to reverse biodiversity loss through the restoration and sustainable management of natural and semi-natural areas.

Theme 1.1: Increase resilience and promote climate adaptation

This theme supports Galway City's transition towards climate resilience and carbon neutrality. Extreme weather events can occur in the city and climate change is leading to more frequent and intense events. Sea level rise due to climate change will lead to an increased risk of coastal flooding, erosion and tidal surges. The baseline assessment identified that a significant portion of the city is expected to be affected by climate change. 6 public green spaces near the sea are potentially vulnerable.

Green spaces can play a role in increasing Galway City's resilience to climate changes, the coastline must adapt to climate hazards like storms and heatwaves. Coirib go Cósta - Galway City Flood Relief Scheme has been developed to address those vulnerabilities. When combined with nature-based and hybrid solutions, which include both green and grey infrastructure, the scheme can bring additional benefits including recreation and habitat restoration opportunities.

Other opportunities such as urban forests should be explored to capture and store carbon, regulates climate and air pollution by reducing the impact of rising temperatures in urban areas, providing shade, absorbing pollutants and supporting water drainage. There are opportunities for carbon storage in vegetation, such as trees, in the established suburbs in the west and east of the city. Including carbon storage opportunities of urban meadows and benefits of managing soil health for carbon storage and biodiversity improvements.



	Aim
1.1.1	Protect coastal areas from erosion and flooding using natural and built infrastructure where possible, maximising other benefits such as recreation and habitat restoration
1.1.2	Implement coastal NbS that promote natural processes to create resilient ecosystems and coastal management strategies as appropriate (e.g., dune regeneration to reduce erosion and create habitat for migratory birds at Grattan Beach)
1.1.3	Expand the urban forests and urban meadows to increase the carbon potential stored in trees and soils (including street trees, No Mow areas, private gardens, and woodlands)
1.1.4	Procurement of RA zoned lands for woodland expansion

Theme 1.2: Improve the water quality and water absorption of the green network

Climate change will lead to more frequent, heavy rainfall events in Galway City and an increase in mean annual rainfall. Heavy downpours can overwhelm the drainage network, causing flooding. The baseline assessment indicated a significant risk of fluvial flooding in the city, including some public green spaces. Additionally, 30% of the city was found to have a low stormwater absorption rate, particularly in urbanised areas with hard surfaces, such as in the city centre. Heavy rainfall can result in increased surface run-off into waterbodies, which can lead to pollution. The east of the city has a 'high' or 'extreme' groundwater vulnerability status, indicating that pollutants can be quickly absorbed into the water system.

Galway County Council plays a key operational role in maintaining drainage infrastructure and managing water following flood events, particularly in areas where services overlap with Galway City. By taking a catchment-wide, holistic approach to water management, the green network can make the city more resilient to flooding events. Buffer strips (linear vegetated bands) adjacent to flooding zones and waterways provide a multi-purpose adaptive solution, giving room to flood water, filtering pollutants, and creating ecological connections. Opportunities for rain gardens, permeable paving, bio-retention basins (systems that provide efficient treatment of stormwater) and areas for water harvesting can improve the quality of surface water run-off and provide enhanced biodiversity.

	Aim
1.2.1	Where possible strengthen riparian buffer strips to increase resilience, ecological connectivity, slow streamflow, absorb nutrients, and increase infiltration of water
1.2.2	Integrate Natural Flood Management (NFM) that includes habitat restoration where appropriate
1.2.3	Include sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs), blue and green infrastructure in public green spaces and across the city
1.2.4	Maintain good water quality in coastal areas and rivers

Theme 1.3: Integrating biodiversity considerations in decision making

Ensuring decision makers have due regard to existing biodiversity by integrating biodiversity considerations into planning and development proposals where possible, ensuring the sustainability of natural ecosystems in the green network and connectivity to City Biodiversity Areas. To improve ecological outcomes at site level proposed new developments could take into account existing habitats by integrating vegetation and retaining natural features, seeking to maintain or improve their current condition where possible.

Public consultation highlighted people's concerns about the threats and impacts on nature developments can cause when ecological concerns are not integrated in the planning process. Strengthening revitalisation efforts for enhancing habitat areas on public land, and encouraging community participation in environmental protection in public parks and open spaces owned or managed by GCC is critical for protecting biodiversity.

RA zoned lands have the dual role of providing recreational open space and habitat areas as part of new development. Designated paths and trails through sensitive areas can also influence the flow and movement of people. Education and training in managing biodiversity and habitats and recreation and amenity areas is important for land managers.

When proposals are made to convert amenity grassland to all weather pitches/multi-use game areas, wintering and breeding bird surveys are necessity to assess potential impacts to species listed as part of the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

	Aim
1.3.1	Integrating biodiversity considerations into planning and development proposals where possible in City Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)
1.3.2	Continue to align Recreational & Amenity operational objectives with biodiversity objectives in areas managed by GCC
1.3.3	Support Action 6.1 of Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 to have the identified City Biodiversity Areas surveyed and mapped, as a priority action for the Council.

Theme 1.4: Increase biodiversity and ecological connectivity of the green network

Increase the biodiversity in the city by creating a connected and resilient green network. Habitat connectivity supports healthy populations of organisms and allows species to move between habitats to find food, shelter, and support biological diversity. Connectivity across the landscape facilitates species movement throughout the city and is essential to their survival. The ecosystem services assessment identified areas that contribute to connectivity, notably on the city's outskirts and along the River Corrib. Ecological corridors which connect to City Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) that act as 'stepping stones', were identified. Several locations show large gaps in vegetation coverage or contain City Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) that need support. Site surveys identified a range of opportunities for improving biodiversity and ecological connectivity of public green spaces.

Public engagement revealed a strong interest in actively stewarding local green spaces, expanding 'wild' areas, and planting native species. This interest translates into the ongoing stewarding work of the Tuatha of Terryland Forest park, Friends of Merlin Wood, Nature Link West and Community Volunteers Galway in partnership with Galway City Council. Nonetheless, concerns were raised about the fragmentation of green spaces like Terryland Forest Park.

	Aim
1.4.1	Demonstrate biodiversity enhancement within all proposed development
1.4.2	Establish and strengthen ecological connections across the city
1.4.3	Increase biodiversity through appropriate planting and improved soil and vegetation management
1.4.4	Improve the existing ecological condition of degraded areas

5.4 Principle 2: Recreation and Sport

This principle focuses on the equitable distribution of high quality public green space, recreation, sport, and play facilities across the city to enhance people's health and wellbeing. It aims to provide opportunities for everyone by supporting a diverse range of formal and informal activities. It ensures that new and existing public green spaces are designed to accommodate the future population, are of a high quality standard, and are suitably located throughout the city



Theme 2.1: Increase the provision, distribution, and quality of equipped play areas

Community playgrounds offer children opportunities for new experiences, relationship-building, and the development of essential social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. Playgrounds designed for a range of ages create environments where children and young people of all ages and abilities can interact and explore. They help children understand their emotions, interests, and values.

More play spaces are needed across the city for both children and, particularly, for teens. The assessment revealed a deficiency in formal play facilities city-wide. Of the site surveys conducted 29% did not provide equipped play facilities. This was echoed by community engagement participants who noted the absence of age appropriate playgrounds in various neighbourhoods. Proposed developments and recent refurbishments are prioritising the inclusion of designated play spaces that act as hubs for the community. Participants also highlighted the need for natural play areas and the lack of facilities for older children and teens across the city. Improved engagement with teenagers during the design process was also highlighted. To address these needs, Teen Parks (substantially equipped play spaces, specifically designed for and with teenagers to cater for a wide catchment area with a variety of amenities), and Active Teen Spaces (an area with a small group of facilities (3 or 4) designed for and with teenagers to provide local spaces for teen peer-to-peer social interaction) will be integrated into the overall play space strategy. All teen play areas are to be fully accessible and incorporated into neighborhood parks and smaller green spaces along public transport and active travel routes with good passive surveillance.

Play spaces should incorporate inclusive design principles to ensure they are accessible and enjoyable for children of all abilities. Key components such as materials, durability, and safety must be carefully considered. Engaging with the local community and children in the design process will ensure the playground meets local needs..

	Aim
2.1.1	Increase the provision of equipped play areas citywide
2.1.2	Improve the quality of play spaces delivered to be inclusive, accessible and respond to local needs
2.1.3	Provide age appropriate play area for Teens citywide

Theme 2.2: Increase the provision and quality of green space and expand the range of recreational opportunities

Public green spaces make urban environments healthier and more livable. Research shows that well planned green spaces positively impact physical and mental health by promoting social interaction, community cohesion, relaxation, and encourage activities such as walking, jogging, or cycling. To promote people's engagement with green spaces, parks should be strategically positioned for easy access by active or public transportation. Green spaces should be interconnected to facilitate easy movement between spaces.

Connecting them to public transport and active travel routes (walking and cycling for example), also offers an opportunity to integrate permeability to the city and make sustainable transport more efficient and enjoyable. Access Walkability Audits of the main parks will improve universal access for older people, people with disabilities and parents/ guardians of young children and babies. The baseline assessment demonstrated the lack of diversity in recreational facilities within green spaces. Parks can cater for a diverse range of people, with varying interests. Enhancing the multi-functionality of green spaces was frequently raised during consultations. The strategy will identify existing green spaces to be upgraded based on need and equitable distribution across the city.

Increase the provision and quality of public green spaces. Any new developments need to consider high-quality green space to support residents, workers, and visitors.

	Aim
2.2.1	Increase the understanding of the provision, condition and accessibility of public green space
2.2.2	Ensure equitable access to designated public green spaces
2.2.3	Provide sufficient public green space for new and existing communities
2.2.4	Include a diverse range of formal and informal recreational facilities

Theme 2.3: Increase the variety and maximise the use of outdoor sport facilities

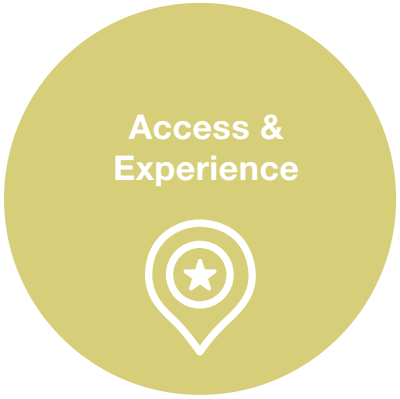
Sporting and physical fitness facilities offer numerous benefits, including opportunities for exercise, promoting an active lifestyle, encouraging community participation, supporting local and regional sports, and providing spaces for training and learning new skills. The assessment revealed a limited range of sports facilities available across the city, with soccer pitches comprising 38% of the total council-managed amenities. Public and stakeholder consultation highlighted the need for more informal sport opportunities and minority sports such as skateboarding, cycling & biking, and cricket. Minority sports such as pickleball or pétanque may be accommodated within existing facilities where space permits, to reflect the diverse interests of the communities they serve.

Space restrictions pose a challenge, making it essential to improve the efficiency of facilities throughout considered design (MUGA's, all weather pitches etc) or management such as timetabling and programming. Maximising the available time for facility use, and providing amenities such as lighting, will help increase their utilisation.

	Aim
2.3.1	Understand the needs and define standards for playing pitches and the impact of increased flooding due to climate change
2.3.2	Provide new and upgraded sport facilities where possible
2.3.3	Provide a diverse range of formal and informal sports facilities in proposed green spaces
2.3.4	Maximise the use of existing sport facilities
2.3.5	Minimum requirement for wintering and breeding survey in case of amenity grassland conversion

5.5 Principle 3: Access and Experience

This principle focuses on providing high-quality, engaging, inclusive and accessible public green space and recreational facilities. It emphasises the creation of unique, culturally responsive spaces that reflect local identity and heritage. These spaces should be designed to meet the needs of the surrounding community, offering outdoor leisure spaces that everyone can enjoy and experience.



Theme 3.1: Create safe, comfortable, and inclusive green spaces

To maximise the benefits of green spaces for people's well-being, making everyone feel safe and welcome. 42% of surveyed sites received a low score for 'sense of place,' which measured factors such as evidence of pride, care, and overall design coherence. Many sites also lack general amenities that enhance comfort in outdoor spaces, such as toilets, seating, lighting, and pathways. Public consultation revealed that the perceived maintenance and upkeep are preventing people from visiting green spaces. Additionally, there is an urgent need to improve facilities for women and girls by improving access to toilets at parks and toilets and changing areas at sports facilities. The lack of access to toilet facilities in parks and at sporting facilities emerged as a key barrier for girls, women and older people in accessing open spaces.

The layout and design of green spaces significantly influence the feeling of safety. Incorporating natural surveillance and activating green spaces allows 'eyes on the street,' where increased activity leads to more people overseeing and moving through spaces. When people feel a sense of ownership over a space, they naturally protect and respect it. Promoting local stewardship and allowing the community to 'make the space their own' positively impacts how green spaces are perceived and used.

Park infrastructure should enable comfortable experiences and encourage people to spend quality time immersed in green space. Elements such as well-placed seating and sheltered areas, drinking fountains, clean and safe restrooms, and informative signage are essential. These features reflect the quality of a park, contributing to an inclusive, safe, and comfortable environment for all.

	Aim
3.1.1	Enhance the sense of safety throughout green spaces by increasing passive surveillance through increased footfall
3.1.2	Improve walking trails and footpaths within the parks that enable increased use and accessibility
3.1.3	Improve access to toilet facilities in/ nearby the parks
3.1.4	Improve systems within the Council for appropriately managing anti-social behaviour in the parks

Theme 3.2: Improve accessibility to and usability within green spaces

Providing accessible green spaces makes them more valuable to society and better integrated into people's daily routines. 25% of surveyed sites received a medium to high score for urban connectivity, which measured factors such as accessibility measures, connections to footpaths and cycle lanes, the quality of footpaths and surfaces within green spaces, and the quality of wayfinding. Public engagement highlighted the fundamental importance of applying universal design principles and meaningfully considering people with restricted mobility. Addressing the application of Universal Design principles throughout Galway City's green spaces is urgently needed.

In addition, the provision of space that actively supports the recreation and social needs of teenage girls is a key priority, ensuring green spaces are welcoming, safe, and inclusive for this underrepresented user group.

Since not everyone can arrive by car, it is also important to connect green spaces with all modes of transport. This approach ensures accessibility and convenience, making green spaces an integral part of daily life for everyone. Including end-of-trip facilities, ample parking, and footpaths that seamlessly connect to the wider urban area creates user-friendly environments that encourage frequent visits and active use.

Areas for improvement noted are restricted access due to kissing gates, bollards, barriers, or narrow entrances. Improve footpaths both within and leading to the entrances.

	Aim
3.2.1	Incorporate universal design principles into all green spaces
3.2.2	Provision of space that actively supports the recreation and social needs of teenage girls
3.2.3	Improve access to green spaces
3.2.4	Improve wayfinding and signage within parks

Theme 3.3: Enhance sense of place and local identity

Green spaces such as Quincentennial Park, Children's Millennium Park, Barna Woods, Lough Rusheen Bay and Merlin Woods received high scores for their overall sense of place. This was due to complementary factors such as the presence of distinctive features, acknowledgment of historic events or structures, and a diverse mix of habitats and memorable landscape features that create interest. The city's identity is deeply rooted in its historical connection to the landscape and green spaces.

The sense of identity in local green spaces 'on your doorstep' was frequently raised during consultations. Residents living near parks often develop a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to stronger emotional bonds with their environment and neighbourhood.

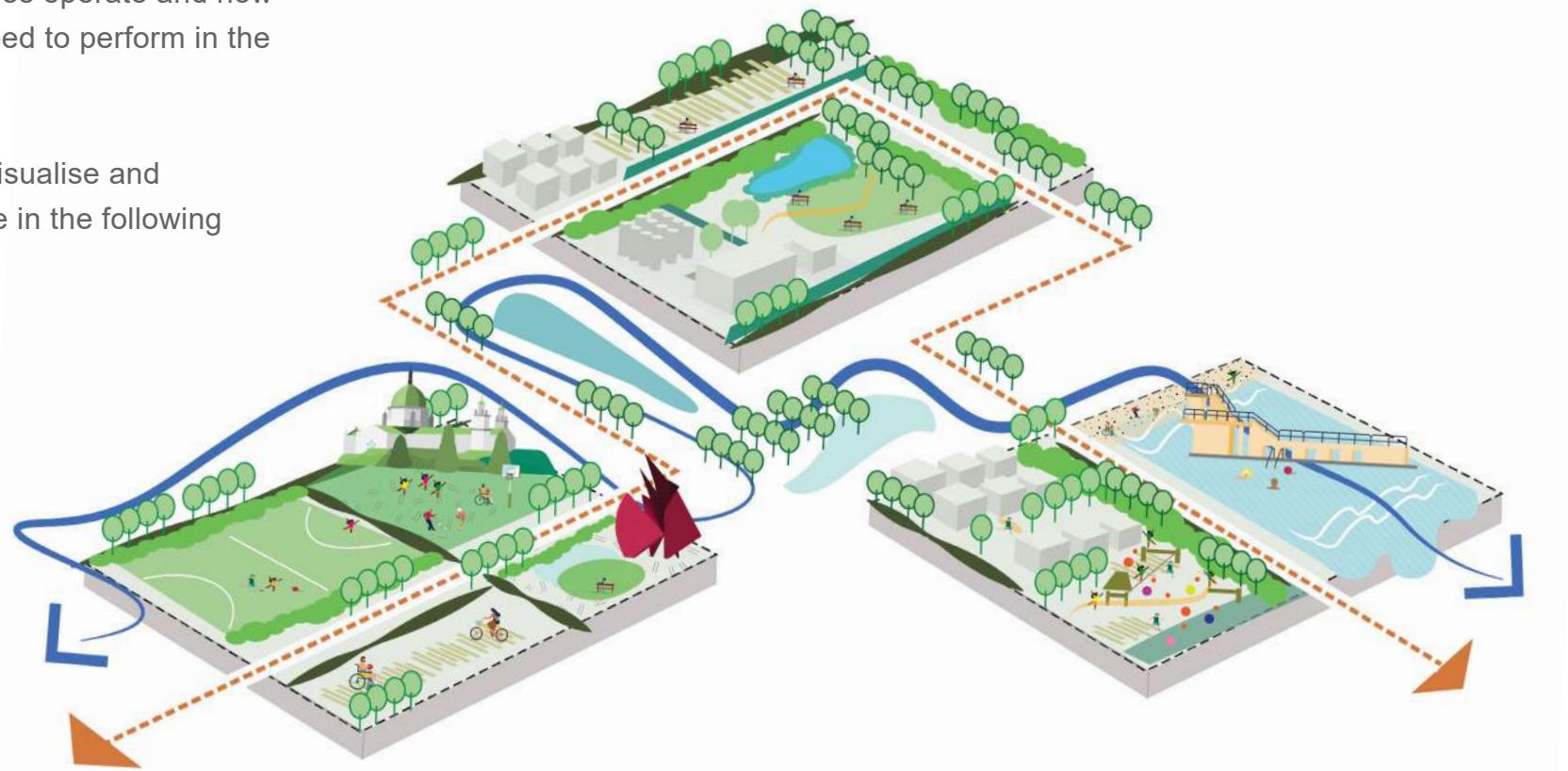
The need for increased outdoor space for events was also highlighted during consultations further bolstering the creative and vibrant identity of Galway City. Since the pandemic, the expectation for green spaces to foster social and community connections has increased. This principle aims to promote opportunities for social interaction within green spaces.

	Aim
3.3.1	Increase the use of green spaces for events
3.3.2	Provide areas that promote shared social experiences
3.3.3	Create interesting and unique experiences within green spaces

5.6 Applying the Strategy

To efficiently apply these principles at a high level, the strategy has formulated three regions of green spaces, each type should /strive to integrate all principles, however each region have a focus on a single principle, this is to ensure Galway City green spaces maintain diversity and respond to the existing context of how the city green spaces operate and how the cities green spaces need to perform in the future.

Future details on how to visualise and implement the strategy are in the following chapters.



City-wide Park & Green Spaces

Focus : Ecology & Resilience

These green spaces are defined by their characteristics of large green spaces with a predominately natural character, offering high scenic and amenity quality. These spaces currently provide a wide range of amenities that support Galway residents and visitors, and the existing ecological complexity of Galway.

The vision for these spaces are to play increasing active role in increasing the cities resilience to the impact of climate change, such as sustainable water management, carbon storage, ecological restoration, biodiversity and strength the green network. Special care is required to ensure these spaces continue to provide amenity value for people of Galway.

Neighbourhood Green Spaces

Focus : Recreation & Sports

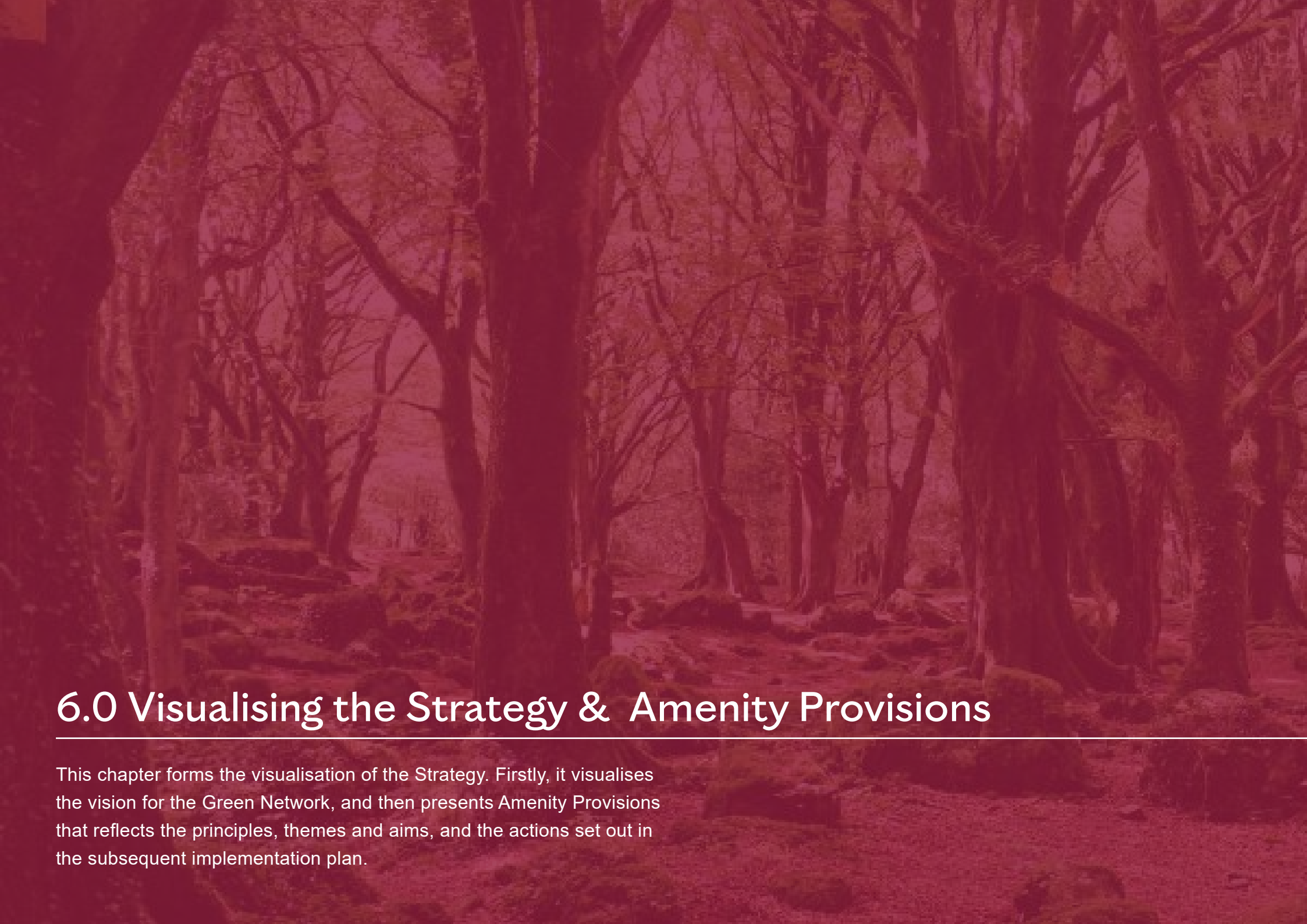
This region green spaces is defined by medium to large parks designed to provide a range of needs for surrounding neighbourhoods and communities. These green spaces currently provide the provision of green spaces to a large proportions of Galway City's residents but lack high quality designed active and passive recreation facilities.

The vision for these spaces to play an increasing active role in the provision of passive and active recreation needs of Galway City. It requires future development in how existing parks can be upgraded to increase their capacity to provide recreation provisions.

City Centre Green Spaces

Focus : Recreation & Sports

This region is defined by parks and civic spaces that are located within the inner city centre and have the ability to host a variety of civic functions, such as markets, performances, and festivals. They are designed to serve recreation and amenity needs of surrounding residents, workers, tourists and students.
The vision for these spaces is to act as a stage for life of Galway City via integrating measures that enable flexible use of spaces to create experience such as power/water supply for events to be well organised and supported. This region should also seek to celebrate the heritage, culture aspects of Galway City.



6.0 Visualising the Strategy & Amenity Provisions

This chapter forms the visualisation of the Strategy. Firstly, it visualises the vision for the Green Network, and then presents Amenity Provisions that reflects the principles, themes and aims, and the actions set out in the subsequent implementation plan.


Context
Baseline
Emerging Needs
Strategic Principles
Visualising the Strategy
Amenity Provisions

6.1 Visualising the Green Network

This diagram (Figure 17) highlights the key elements which will inform the development of a future Blue Green Infrastructure Plan for Galway City's green network to support the green network as defined in 5.2 of the City Development Plan. It is intended to guide the evolution of the interconnected green spaces across the city to create a cohesive network designed to:

- Enhance biodiversity
- Promote environmental sustainability
- Improve ecosystem services

City Biodiversity Areas

The City Biodiversity Areas are important centres of biodiversity in their own right and also serve as important recreational assets throughout the Galway City. They are included in the City Development Plan 2023 - 2029 and the current Biodiversity Action Plan.

- CBA1 Barna Woods, Stream & Wetlands outside SAC
- CBA2 Cappagh-Ballymoneen Peatlands
- CBA3 Ballagh-Barnacranny Hill
- CBA4 Knocknacarra Hill Heathland
- CBA5 Dangan Grasslands & Scrub
- CBA6 River Corrib Grasslands
- CBA7 Menlo to Coolough Hill Limestone habitats
- CBA8 Ballindooley-Castlegar Limestone & Wetland Habitats
- CBA9 Ballybrit Grasslands & Turlough
- CBA10 Merlin Park Woods
- CBA11 Doughiska Grasslands
- CBA12 Roscam Grasslands
- CBA13 Roscam-Curragrean Limestone Habitats
- CBA14 Doughiska-Ardaun Limestone Habitats
- CBA15 Coolagh Grasslands
- CBA16 Terryland Forest Park

Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI)

- GBI1 Barna - Roscam
- GBI2 Lough Corrib - Galway Bay
- GBI3 Barna - Dangan
- GBI4 Menlo - Roscam
- GBI5 Terryland - Ballybrit

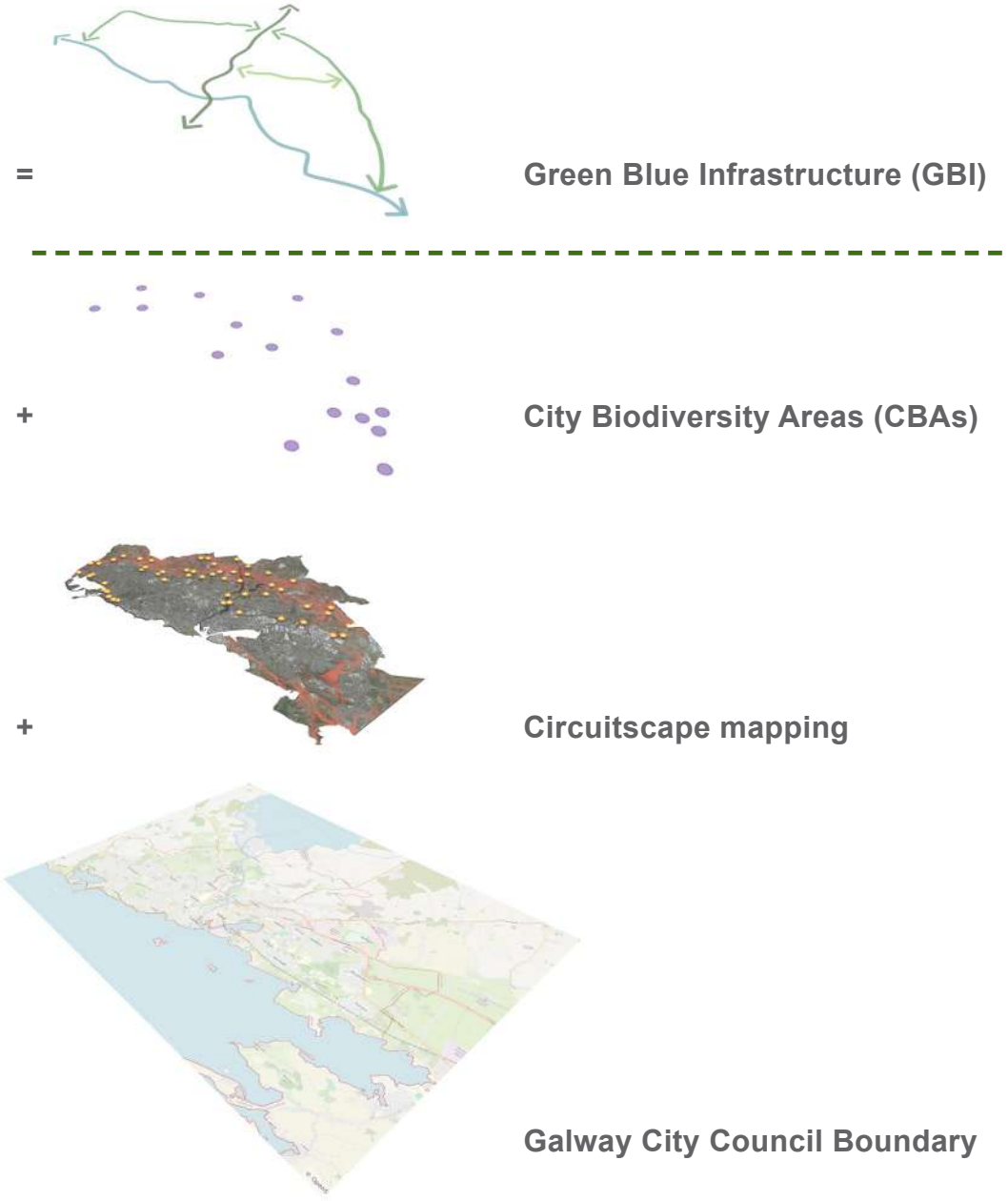
Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI) are identified existing corridors that facilitate ecological connectivity across the city. A future Green Blue Infrastructure Plan may identify how new developments located near a GBI corridor could, on a case-by-case basis, propose initiatives that support and strengthen ecosystems in these corridors.

The Council acknowledges that developments are likely within the vicinity of some of these City Biodiversity Areas. A precautionary approach will be adopted and the Council will have due regard to the sensitivity and the biodiversity importance of these areas, where developments are proposed. City Biodiversity Areas shall be taken into account in the planning, design and assessment of development

applications and will inform local area plans, where appropriate.

Creating the green network

A data driven approach was taken to develop the green network. The City Biodiversity Areas are connected via the GBI corridors that are developed from an analysis of circuitscape mapping within the Static Surveillance Bat Survey of Galway City (2024) which provides indication of current species movement across the cities green network. The Strategy supports the Action 6.1 of Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 to have the identified City Biodiversity Areas surveyed and mapped, as an priority action for the Council.



Legend

City boundary

River/ Stream/ Canal/ Waterbodies

N6 Galway City Ring Road

City Biodiversity Area

CBA1 Barna Woods, Stream & Wetlands outside SAC

CBA2 Cappagh-Ballymoneen Peatlands

CBA3 Ballagh-Barnacranny Hill

CBA4 Knocknacarra Hill Heathland

CBA5 Dangan Grasslands & Scrub

CBA6 River Corrib Grasslands

CBA7 Menlo to Coolough Hill Limestone habitats

CBA8 Ballindooley-Castlegar Limestone & Wetland Habitats

CBA9 Ballybrit Grasslands & Turlough

CBA10 Merlin Park Woods

CBA11 Doughiska Grasslands

CBA12 Roscam Grasslands

CBA13 Roscam-Curragrean Limestone Habitats

CBA14 Doughiska-Ardaun Limestone Habitats

CBA15 Coolagh Grasslands

CBA16 Terryland Forest Park

Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI)

GBI1 Barna - Roscam

GBI2 Lough Corrib - Galway Bay

GBI3 Barna - Dangan

GBI4 Menlo - Roscam

GBI5 Terryland - Ballybrit

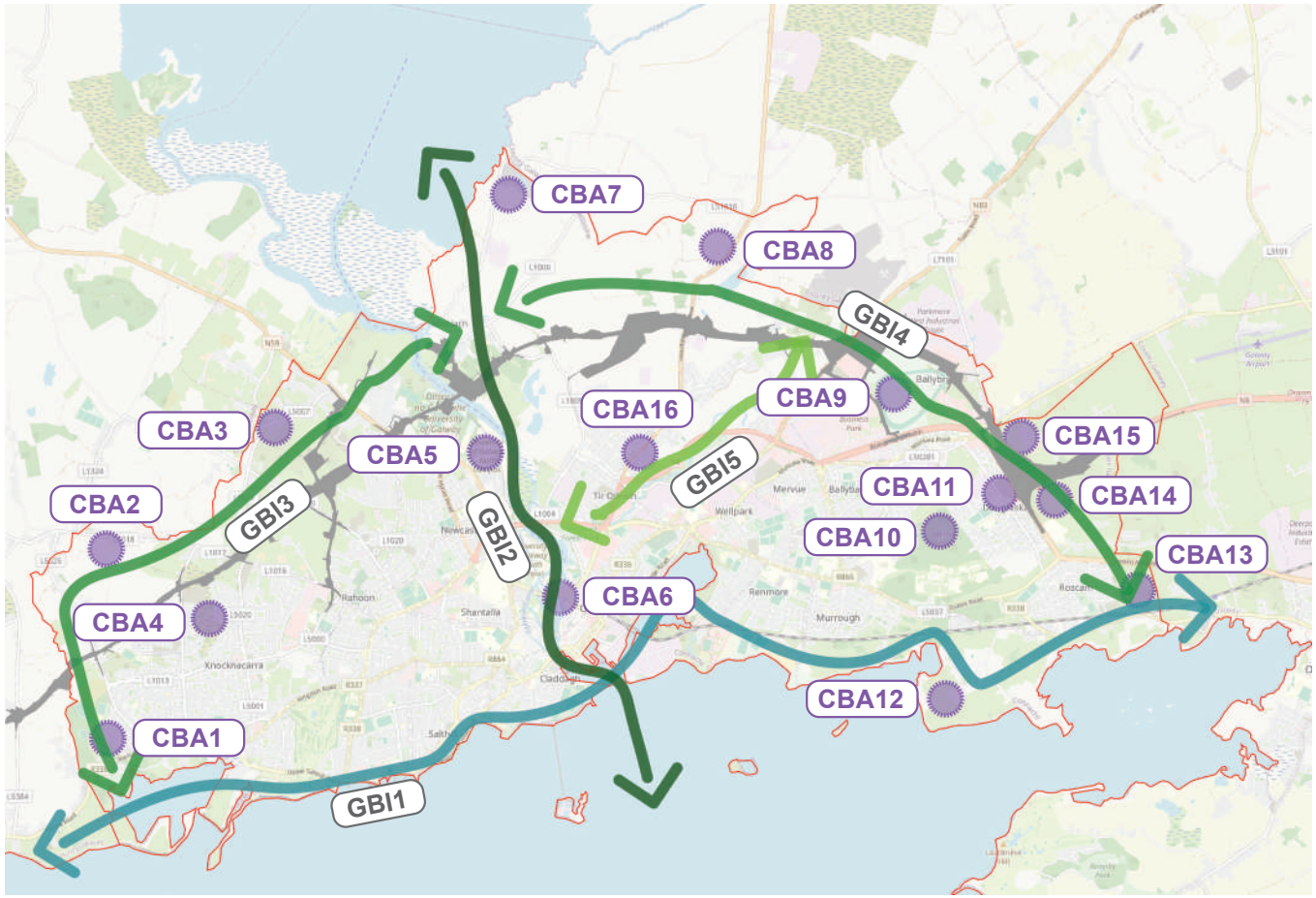


Figure 17: Green Blue Infrastructure Diagram



Image source: © 2024 Expedia, Inc., an Expedia Group company.

6.2 Enhancing the Green Network

When a development proposal is submitted at Planning stage. from time to time, consideration may be required by the Council that proposals include opportunities to strengthen existing green infrastructure and enhance connectivity on site, as appropriate.

Green infrastructure measures for development proposals within or adjacent to City Biodiversity Areas (stepping stones for nature) may require the implementation of site-specific interventions. Those interventions will be will be subject to agreement with Council.

The following comprises a non-exhaustive list of interventions that developers can include in proposals:

Natural Features

- Utilising woodlands, hedgerows, trees, watercourses, ponds, and grasslands to strengthen the green network.
- Wetland restoration to improve water quality, provide wildlife habitat, and enhance flood control.
- Establishing green corridors to connect fragmented habitats and allow wildlife movement through the site.

Native and Pollinator-Friendly Species

- Planting new native trees and plants, and pollinator-friendly species in line with the all Ireland National Pollinator Plan.
- Establishing wildflower meadows to support pollinators and create visually appealing landscapes.
- Using native seed mixes or upcycled native soil to promote growth from native seeds.

Lighting proposals

- Lighting proposals may be required by the Council to refer to the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note (GN01/21) The Reduction of Obtrusive Light and Dark Sky Ireland Environmentally Friendly Lighting Guide (2024), as appropriate.

Nature-Based Solutions

- Incorporating SuDS schemes, permeable paving, green and blue roofs, green walls, swales, SuDS tree pits, rain gardens, and ponds to support biodiversity and mitigate development impacts.
- Implementing rainwater harvesting systems to reduce water consumption and manage stormwater.
- Designing green parking lots with permeable surfaces and green spaces to reduce runoff and heat island effects.

Tree and Hedgerow Conservation

- Ensuring no net loss of existing trees and hedgerows where possible.
- Using living fences made of shrubs or trees to create natural boundaries and enhance biodiversity.
- Infilling gaps in existing hedgerow, tree, and grassland corridors in the landscape plans submitted for planning to improve connectivity.

Management Plans

- Including management and maintenance plans for hedgerows, trees, and grasslands in the landscape plans submitted for planning

Allotments and Orchards

- Providing spaces for residents to grow fruits and vegetables through allotments and orchards.
- Developing community gardens to promote local food production and community engagement.

Heritage Feature Retention

- Preserving heritage features like old walls and bridges etc. that have an ability to provide homes for habitats.

Wildlife Interventions

- Installing bird boxes, bat boxes, hedgehog passes, and other wildlife-friendly features.
- Including bee bricks in new developments to support pollinators.

Sustainable Materials

- Using recycled, upcycled, or locally sourced natural materials, including landscape materials

Recreation and Connectivity

- Propose sensitively designed recreation and connectivity between habitats.
- Encouraging greenway options such as bike lanes, pedestrian paths
- Adding water features such as ponds or small streams to enhance aesthetic appeal and support local wildlife.
- Creating vertical gardens on building facades to increase green space in urban areas.
- Designing eco-friendly playgrounds with natural materials and incorporating elements that promote environmental awareness.

6.3 Amenity Provisions

Galway City's green spaces, including parks, forests, beaches, and open areas, are designed to enhance health, wellbeing, and community connections while preserving local biodiversity and addressing climate change. These spaces are meant to be inclusive and accessible, fostering creativity, supporting environmental education, and maintaining Galway City's unique natural and cultural heritage. The Amenity Provisions aims to create and maintain green spaces that offer lasting ecological, social, and economic benefits for everyone through careful planning and community involvement.

Our vision is guided by three core principles (Refer to Chapter 5.1):

- Ecology and Resilience
- Recreation and Sport
- Access and Experience

These principles work together to ensure that public green spaces provide a balanced mix of recreational and environmental benefits. By prioritising these principles, the Amenity Provisions aims to support the active lifestyles and well-being of Galway City's residents and visitors, ensuring that our green spaces remain vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable for future generations.

The Strategy provides a list of active recreation facilities on a Ward-by-Ward bases, the provision of these amenities is evidence based and outlined in the report. When adopting the Green Spaces Strategy at the Council meeting, a motion was put forward by the elected members to include a running track in the West Ward, which is in addition to the findings of the report.

West Ward

West Ward features a diverse range of green and open spaces, including coastal areas like Silverstrand Beach and Lough Rusheen Bay, and urban parks such as Cappagh Park and Barna Woods. The amenity provisions of West Ward should place greater emphasis on **ecology and resilience** due to its significant biodiversity and the need for habitat restoration and coastal protection.

The proposal for the West Ward includes coastal resilience projects, habitat restoration, and the establishment of management plans for biodiverse woodlands. Recreational amenities will be improved with new sports pitches, multi-use facilities, a running track and enhanced play areas. Access and experience will be enhanced through the development of local amenities, wayfinding, and improved pedestrian connections.

Central Ward

Central Ward includes iconic areas like The Prom, South Park, and The Claddagh, as well as various sports and recreational facilities. Amenity provisions of Central Ward should place greater emphasis on **access and experience**, aiming to improve connections between existing parks and open spaces and enhance the overall experience for the community.

The proposal for the Central Ward includes upgrades to improve accessibility to parks, new publicly accessible amenities, and enhanced pedestrian connections. Ecology and resilience will be supported through coastal resilience projects, woodland management, and nature-based solutions to improve ecological connectivity. Recreational opportunities will be expanded with new multi-functional leisure spaces, upgraded amenities, and enhanced sports facilities.

East Ward

East Ward encompasses urban parks, woodlands, and coastal areas, with significant housing development planned. The primary focus of East Ward lies in recreation and sports, aiming to enhance recreational amenities and create vibrant, engaging environments for all community members, addressing the growing demand for high-quality play and recreational spaces.

The proposal for the East Ward includes the development of walking trails, multi-functional leisure spaces, and new sports facilities. Ecology and resilience will be supported through the daylighting of streams where feasible, coastal buffers, and the protection of mature tree lines and hedgerows where appropriate. Access and experience will be improved with new pedestrian connections, removal of kissing gates, and the provision of access to toilets and changing amenities. The vision for the East Ward of Galway City should be developed in collaboration with the other masterplans in development

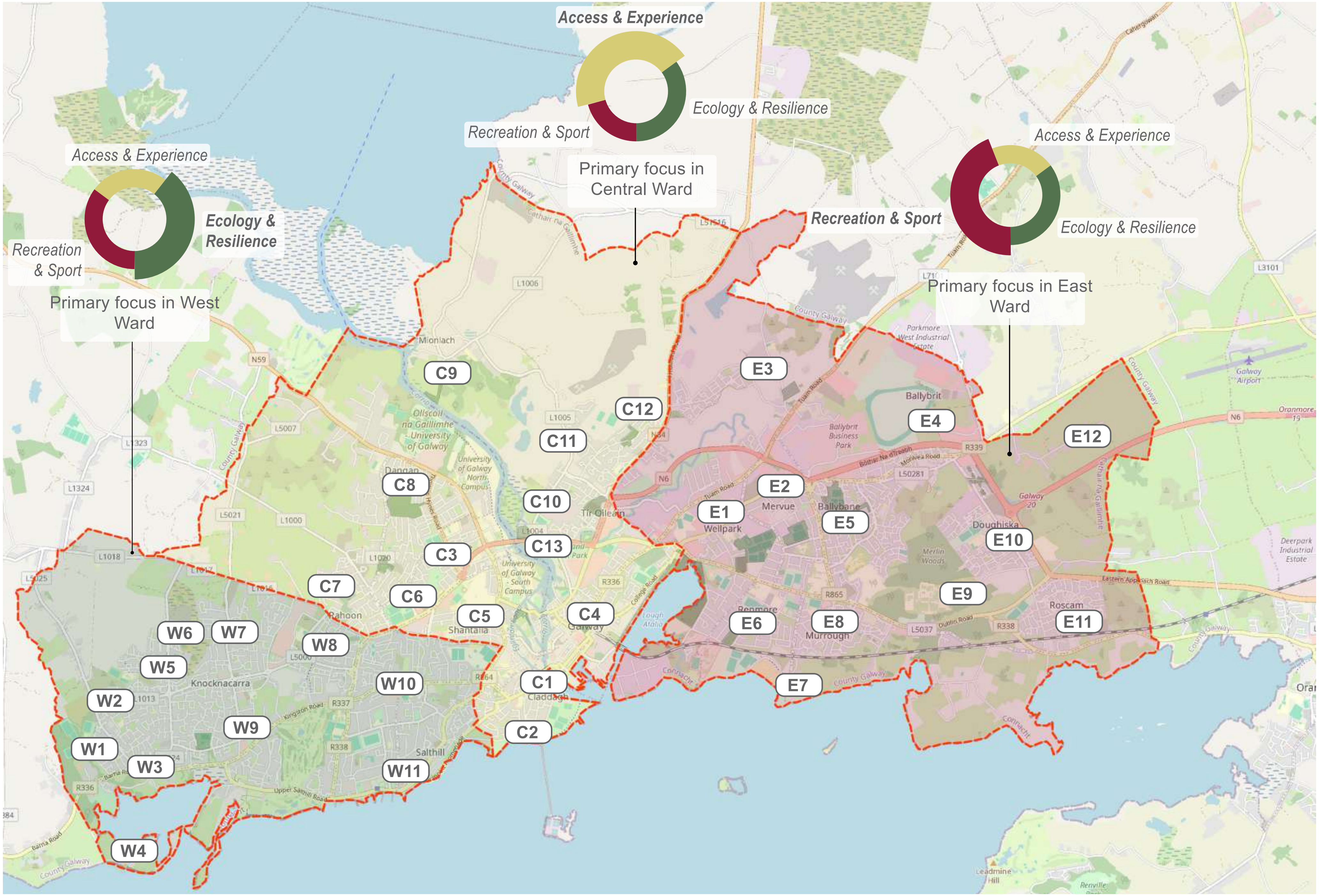


Figure 18: Amenity Provisions



West Ward

Areas included

- W1 Barna Woods
- W2 Cappagh Park
- W3 Lough Rusheen Bay
- W4 Silverstrand Beach
- W5 Ballyburke
- W6 Knocknacarra
- W7 Clybaun
- W8 Miller's Lane
- W9 Kingston
- W10 Taylor's Hill
- W11 Salthill

Location plan



Site photos



















West Ward

Existing site condition

The West Ward features a diverse range of green and open spaces, including coastal areas like Silverstrand Beach and Lough Rusheen Bay, and urban parks such as Cappagh Park and Barna Woods. Barna Woods, a beloved city park with broadleaved forest, acts as a buffer to the city boundary and is crucial for biodiversity. It has experienced changes due to Storm Eowyn, presenting opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement.

Cappagh Park offers high-quality sporting, play, and community facilities, such as all-weather pitch.

Lough Rusheen Bay and Silverstrand Beach are important biodiversity sites with various habitats and species.

The area includes RA-zoned land, primarily wet and dry grassland around Knocknacarra, surrounded by new developments like the Ballyburke Neighbourhood Centre. Miller's Lane, home to Galway Bohemians FC, has two pitches and a new path to the Western Distributor Road. The Kingston lands, zoned RA, offer potential for pedestrian and ecological connectivity, with existing pitches and neighborhood parks.

The Prom in Salthill is a popular walkway connecting Blackrock diving tower to South Park and the city center, offering scenic walks and beach access. The study promotes community involvement through stewardship programs and educational initiatives, ensuring vibrant and inclusive green spaces.

Proposal description

The West Ward proposal aims to enhance the area's green spaces through a balanced approach focusing on ecology and resilience, recreation and sport, and access and experience. The strategies are in line with the guiding principles, which aim to increase resilience and promote climate adaptation, improve water quality and absorption, protect and increase biodiversity, expand recreational opportunities, and create safe, inclusive green spaces.

For this area, the proposal puts more emphasis on **Ecology and Resilience** due to the area's significant biodiversity and the need for habitat restoration and coastal protection.

West Ward

General approach & strategies

To implement the aims of the green space strategy, a range of approaches and strategies should be considered. Below is a series of potential approaches aligned to the principles to be considered for these areas.

Ecology and Resilience	
	Coastal resilience projects
	Restore Barna streams and coastal areas, including wetlands and dunes
	Establish management plan for biodiverse woodlands
	Integrate biodiversity considerations into decision making regarding City Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)
	Provide nature-based solutions to improve ecological connectivity and surface water infiltration
	Habitat restoration projects

Recreation and Sport	
	Create passive recreation areas with raised trails to minimise disturbance
	Improve recreation amenities
	New sports pitches, running track, sports pavilions and multi-use facilities
	New nature play area and enhance play facilities
	Provide a new teen park

Access and Experience	
	Procure lands to develop local amenities and integrate access points with surrounding streets.
	Implement wayfinding and signage illustrating local flora and fauna.
	Upgrade parks with high-quality finishes
	New pedestrian connections between green spaces.
	Improve access to green spaces and enhance pedestrian connections.

West Ward

Provision of new facilities

New facilities are to be provided in West Ward. A table of proposed facilities as below:

Number of proposed new facilities	
5	LEAPs
1	NEAPs
5	Active teen spaces (ATS)*
1	Teen park
3	Grass pitches (1 no. new, 2 no. upgrade)
3	All-weather pitches (3 no. new)
1	Basketball court
1	Pump track
1	Athletics facilities (running track inside Cappagh Park)
1	Multi-use batting cage
1	Hard surface court
1	Sports pavilion
1	Boules/ Pétanque*
1	Cricket mat
1	Water based recreation amenity (Water sports/ Kayak launching zone)

* Location has not been defined within the green space strategy. Location to be selected to maximise catchment.



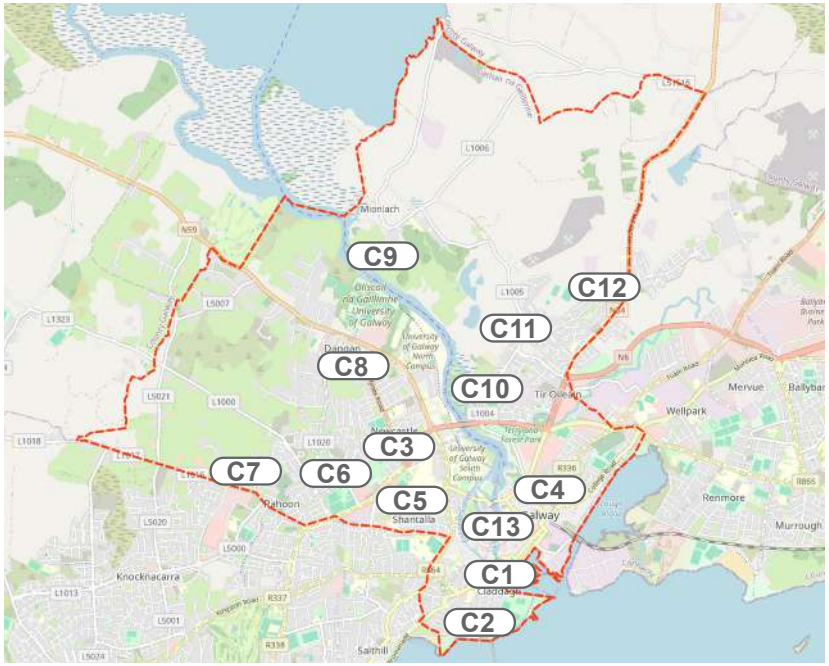
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Central Ward

Areas included

- C1 The Claddagh
- C2 South Park
- C3 Newcastle
- C4 City Centre
- C5 Shantalla
- C6 Westside
- C7 Rahoon
- C8 Dangan
- C9 Menlo
- C10 Tirellan
- C11 Crestwood
- C12 Ballinfoile
- C13 Lough Corrib

Location plan



Site photos



















Central Ward

Existing site condition

The Central Ward features a variety of green and open spaces, including iconic areas like The Prom, which connects Blackrock diving tower with South Park and the city center, offering expansive views across the bay. South Park and The Claddagh are popular coastal areas with significant recreational use.

Westside Park is a hub for sports and recreation, featuring a running track, sports pitches, courts, a skate park, and a large play area. Corrib and Laurel Parks provide grass pitches for various sports and a community garden, while Shantalla is a well-established residential neighbourhood that includes community allotments and small parks and open spaces for community events. These green spaces are situated along key connecting roads, enhancing accessibility.

Crestwood Park, located in the north-eastern extent of the city, includes Gaelic sports fields, hard-surface courts, and a community center. A trail weaves through karst limestone outcrops and hedges, offering expansive views towards the city center. Ballinfoil, next to Crestwood, offers sports pitches, play areas, and walking trails for local residents. Menlo, north of Crestwood, features riverside walks, woodlands, and meadows, supporting biodiversity and nature-based recreation.

Terryland Forest has a rich history of community engagement with extensive planting programs since the late 1990s. It is fragmented by the N6 and industrial development, but remains a key ecological area. The Terryland River/Sandy River is a vital tributary of the River Corrib.

The Central Ward currently offers various sports and recreational facilities, with existing amenities like changing rooms and multi-functional leisure space. These facilities support a wide range of activities and community engagement, making the Central Ward a vibrant and accessible area for residents and visitors alike.

Proposal description

The Central Ward proposal aims to enhance the area's green spaces through a balanced approach focusing on ecology and resilience, recreation and sport, and access and experience.

Greater emphasis on is placed on **Access and Experience**, aligning with the goals to create safe, comfortable, and inclusive green spaces, improve accessibility and usability within these spaces, and enhance the sense of place and local identity. Given that the Central Ward is rather well-established with abundant high quality open and green spaces, the primary focus for the area is to improve connections between existing parks and open spaces and to enhance the overall experience for the community.

Central Ward

General approach & strategies

To implement the aims of the green space strategy, a range of approaches and strategies should be considered. Below is a series of potential approaches aligned to the principles to be considered for these areas.

Ecology and Resilience	
	Coastal resilience projects (e.g. coastal buffers and wetland restoration)
	Manage riparian buffers to support biodiversity and water quality
	Extend the area of woodlands
	Provide nature-based solutions to improve ecological connectivity and surface water infiltration

Recreation and Sport	
	New multi-functional leisure spaces
	Upgrade recreation amenities
	New sports facilities (e.g. pitches, MUGAs, hard-surface courts)
	Enhance existing sports facilities
	New nature play area and enhance play facilities
	Provide a new teen park

Access and Experience	
	Access to publicly accessible amenities (e.g. toilets and changing rooms)
	Upgrades to improve accessibilities to parks
	New access points
	Enhance existing coastal trails
	Enhance footpaths to ensure compliance and accessibility
	Recreation trail
	New pedestrian connections between green spaces.
	Improve access to green spaces and enhance pedestrian connections.

Central Ward

Provision of new facilities

New facilities are to be provided in Central Ward. A table of proposed facilities as below:

Number of proposed new facilities	
6	LEAPs
1	NEAPs
5	Active teen spaces (ATS)*
1	Teen park
1	All-weather pitch
2	Grass pitches (1 no. new, 1 no. upgrade)
1	MUGA
1	Athletics facility (Track and training area inside oval of O'Sullivan Park)
1	Boules/ Pétanque*
1	Water based recreation amenity (Water sports/ Kayak launching zone)

* Location has not been defined within the green space strategy. Location to be selected to maximise catchment.



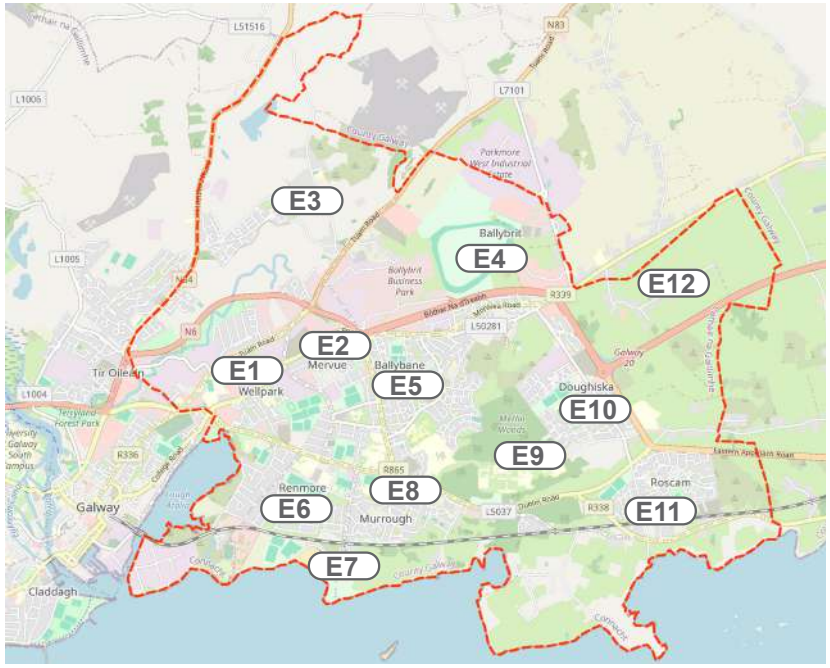
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East Ward

Areas included

- E1 Wellpark
- E2 Mervue
- E3 Castlegar
- E4 Ballybrit
- E5 Ballybane & Castlepark
- E6 Renmore
- E7 Ballyoughane
- E8 Murrough
- E9 Merlin
- E10 Doughiska
- E11 Roscam
- E12 Ardaun

Location plan



Site photos



















East Ward

Existing site condition

The East Ward features a diverse range of green and open spaces, including urban parks, woodlands, and coastal areas.

The estuarine lagoon of Lough Atalia supports an impressive variety of bird species and mammals such as otter. The inlet is surrounded by walking trails connecting the homes in the area with the city centre.

Renmore offers grass pitches, open green spaces, and community facilities, with mature trees and no-mow planting. Currently, there are no children's play facilities, and a masterplan for RA-zoned lands is in progress.

The well-established neighbourhoods of Mervue and Wellpark offer playing pitches and recreational park amenities and will be the location a new cemetery off the Dublin Road.

Merlin Woods is an extensive urban woodland with a variety of old tree species, The woodlands feature nature trails and signs detailing local flora. There are allotments managed by the Council, although large areas of conifer woodland were affected in Storm Eowyn in 2025. The privately owned HSE lands to the south include woodlands and Merlin Meadows, a species-rich grassland supporting diverse biodiversity.

Castlegar is a semi-rural area with green fields and sports amenities.

Ballybane provides parks, pitches, and community gardens for residents.

Castlepark, next to Ballybane, features open green areas and play facilities.

Ballybrit is known for its racecourse and sports grounds, with green corridors connecting to nearby neighbourhoods.

Doughiska Park offers a large playground with diverse features, including a rope tower, skate park, and an astro-turf pitch, etc.
Roscam, to the south east, is a growing suburb with coastal green spaces, walking trails, and local parks for recreation and nature access.

Ardaun is a 164ha greenfield site identified for housing development, aiming to provide homes for over 12,000 people integrated with recreation and amenity areas.

Murrough includes a planned recreational and amenity area with improved coastal access.

Ballyloughane Beach, known for its high-quality sports and recreation amenities and community biodiversity projects, is located here. The coastal area hosts marine and seabird habitats of national and international importance.

East Ward

Proposal description

The East Ward proposal aims to enhance the area's green spaces through a balanced approach focusing on ecology and resilience, recreation and sport, and access and experience. Greater emphasis on **Recreation and Sport**, aligning with the goals to increase the provision, distribution, and quality of equipped play areas, expand the range of recreational opportunities, and maximise the use of outdoor sport facilities.

Additionally, the presence of RA-zoned lands and large areas designated for housing development, such as the Ardaun LAP, will lead to significant population growth. This increase in housing development heightens the need for high-quality recreation and play spaces to support the well-being and active lifestyles of the new and existing residents. By prioritising the enhancement of recreational amenities, we aim to meet the growing demand for diverse and accessible green spaces that cater to a wide range of recreational needs.

East Ward

General approach & strategies

To implement the aims of the green space strategy, a range of approaches and strategies should be considered. Below is a series of potential approaches aligned to the principles to be considered for these areas.

Ecology and Resilience	
	Daylighting of streams
	Coastal buffer and identify floodable green spaces
	Integrate biodiversity considerations into decision making, ensuring the sustainability of natural ecosystems. of coastal and marine habitats
	Implement no-mow and woodland management plan
 E6	Protection of mature treelines and hedgerows where possible
	Naure-based solutions in new development
 E9	Partnerships for engagement to protect habitat

Recreation and Sport	
	Walking trails and footpaths connecting green spaces
	Multi-functional leisure space and passive recreation space
	Upgrade recreation amenities
	New sports facilities (e.g. MUGAs, hard-surface courts, sports training areas, running tracks, all-weather pitchs)
	Enhance existing sports facilities
	Play area for all ages
	Provide a new teen park

Access and Experience	
	Removal of kissing gates to improve access
	Toilets and changing amenities
	Access to changing rooms and toilet amenities withing existing facilities
	Recreation trail
	New pedestrian connections between green spaces.
	Improve access to green spaces and enhance pedestrian connections.

East Ward

Provision of new facilities

New facilities are to be provided in East Ward. A table of proposed facilities as below:

Number of proposed new facilities	
7	LEAPs
2	NEAPs
5	Active teen spaces (ATS)*
1	Teen park
7	All-weather pitches (6 no. new)
2	MUGAs
1	Hard-surface court
1	Exercise equipment/facilities (Outdoor gym)
2	Athletics facilities (Full size running tracks inside Ardaun and Doughiska Park)
1	Boules/ Pétanque*
1	Cricket Mat
1	Water based recreation amenity (Water sports/ Kayak launching zone)

* Location has not been defined within the green space strategy. Location to be selected to maximise catchment.



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6.4 Enhancing the Amenity Provisions

Along with the green network, the amenity provisions for Galway City green spaces, as derived in Chapter 6.3, enables the principles of the strategy to be applied across Galway City. This comprehensive plan outlines the specific approaches and strategies tailored to each area, ensuring that the unique characteristics and needs of each area are addressed. While each area has a distinct focus, all principles are taken into account to ensure a balanced and holistic approach to green space development.

Below is a full breakdown of all approaches and strategies included within the strategy, aligned to the three core principles:

- Ecology and Resilience
- Recreation and Sport
- Access and Experience.

Principle 1: Ecology and Resilience

Coastal/stream protection & restoration

Strategies to protect and restore the waterbodies within the site, including:

- Riparian buffer
- Waterway buffer
- Stream protection and restoration
- Coastal protection and buffer
- Daylighting stream
- Monitored dune restoration
- Ponds and restored wetland
- Blue and green infrastructure (e.g. permeable paving, SuDS)
- Nature-based solutions (NbS)

Planting/woodland protection & restoration

Planting related strategies to protect and restore the woodland areas and enhance biodiversity, including:

- Biodiverse woodland management to support City Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)
- Woodland expansion
- Tree planting along footpath connections
- Planting for biodiversity to promote habitat connectivity
- New woodland planted areas
- Pocket woodland planting
- Areas for community planting
- Nature-based solution strategies
- Protection of mature treelines and hedgerows where appropriate
- Areas of no mow and native planting

Habitat protection & restoration

Strategies to protect, restore and create habitats, including:

- Habitat management, restoration and protection
- Designated areas for environmental conservation and restoration management
- Establish and maintain or enhance ecological corridors
- Protection and restoration of coastal and marine habitats
- Protection and restoration of freshwater habitats

Partnership initiatives/ heritage restoration

Partnership strategies to maintain or enhance habitat and heritage, including:

- Engage with landowners to provide expert advice and supports around the appropriate management of local habitats
- Develop a partnership approach with landowners and stakeholders to manage and maintain habitats and enhance ecological corridors in the city
- Restoration of heritage features and castles

Principle 2: Recreation and Sport

Proposed recreation facilities/ amenities

Strategies include:

- Hard-surface area for recreation
- Passive recreation area
- Multi-functional leisure space
- Walking trails and footpaths connecting green spaces
- New playing/ training pitch facility

Upgraded recreation facilities/ amenities

Strategies include:

- Improved recreation facilities/ amenities
- Upgraded multi-functional leisure space
- Upgraded walking trails/ footpaths

Proposed sports facilities

Strategies include:

- Basketball courts
- Boules/ Pétanque area
- Exercise equipment
- Athletics facilities
- All-weather pitch with flood lighting
- Informal sports area
- Sport pavilion
- Grass pitch
- Multi-use facilities (e.g. MUGA, batting cages, etc.)
- Hard surface courts (e.g. basketball, tennis, pickleball, etc.)
- Areas designated for sports training
- Ball wall
- Running track
- Skateboard facilities
- Pump track

Upgraded sports facilities

Strategies include:

- Upgrade pitch to all-weather MUGA
- Restore tidal pool
- Upgrades to MUGA and hard surface courts
- Upgrades to skate park
- Upgrades to skateboard facilities

Proposed play facilities

Strategies include:

- Play area for toddlers, children and teens
- Play area for all ages
- Nature-based play
- Active teen space
- Teen park

Upgraded play facilities

Strategies include:

- Upgraded play area and facilities

Principle 3: Access and Experience

Proposed access and amenities

To ensure accessibility provision is compliant and universal principles are successfully applied throughout the public green space. Strategies to enhance the experiential quality of the space include:

- Procurement of RA zoned land to provide new amenity facilities
- Amenities for events
- Toilet and changing facilities
- Recreation trail
- Integrated and interesting wayfinding and signage that illustrates local flora and fauna
- Various access points that seamlessly integrate to the locally surrounding streets
- Designed ‘gateway’ or arrival point to the promenade
- Enhanced existing trail and footpaths
- New access/entry points

Proposed access and amenities

Strategies include:

- Improved accessibility
- Improved access points
- Improved pedestrian connectivity
- Improved footpath surfaces
- Improved seating provision
- Improved trails and recreation amenities

Proposed trails and footpaths

Proposed trails and footpaths supporting pedestrians and cyclists. Trails will include holistically designed wayfinding, accessibility measures, regular rest stops, drinking fountains and access points connecting with the wider transport network and public realm

Improved pedestrian connections between green spaces

Locations for improved permeability and increased accessibility between public green spaces

