

An Urban Arboretum

RIAI Design Review for Sandy Road Galway
Jonny Mc Kenna



“Consider the site in the context of a high-quality mixed use regeneration project, seeking to create a new sustainable neighbourhood in Galway City with usable public amenity in a vibrant and inclusive development.

A strong residential bias for the site is being sought.”

Context

The site lies north of Galway city and to the east of the Terryland Forest Park. Although currently underused, it is blessed with the sorts of assets and qualities that give it a regional importance, given the rarity of such a central tract of land becoming available for development in Galway city. It is within striking distance of most amenities: 15 minute walk to Eyre Square, 10 minute walk to bus routes which connect to Parkmore and Oranmore. The bus frequency is every 10 minutes, and once the "Bus Connects" strategy is in place, there will be more bus connections within easy reach of the site.

The site is serviced with roads and key utilities infrastructure is already in place to the bulk of the plots along with the attractive existing landscape in the form of the Terryland Forest Park and views to the north over the landscape beyond.



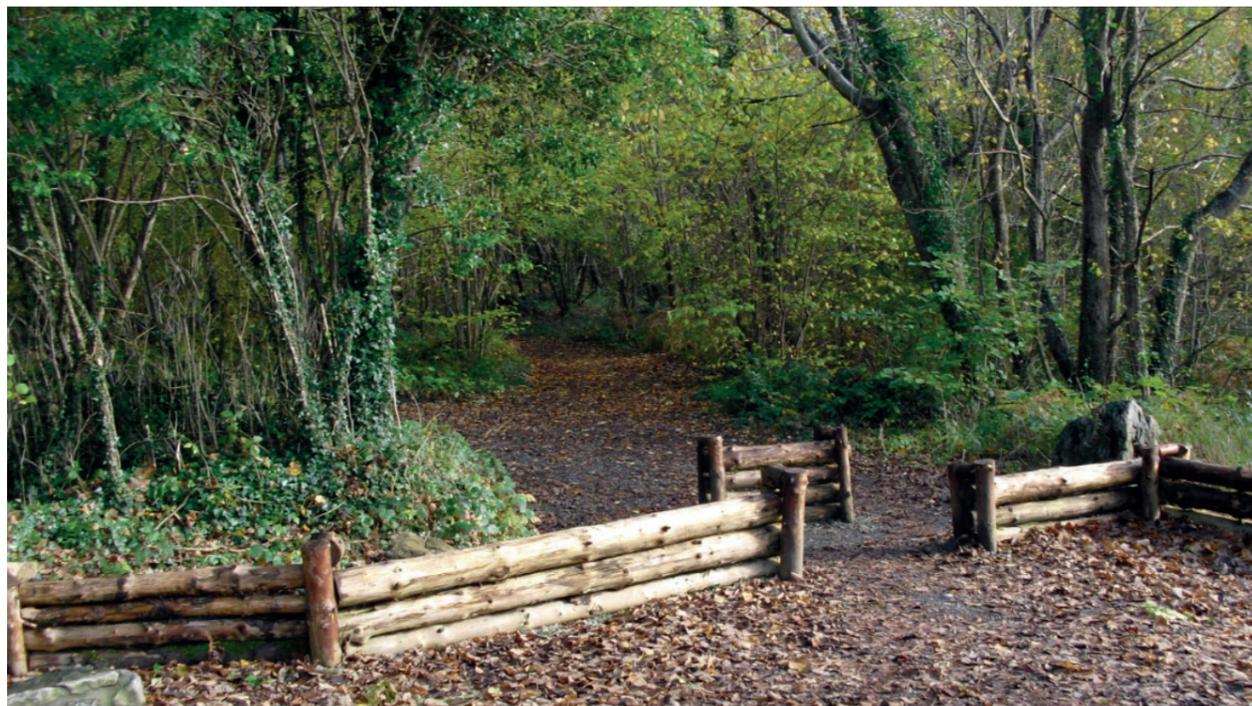
Terryland Forest Park

The Terryland Forest Park was the largest urban neighbourhood forest project in the history of the Irish state when it commenced in January 2000. Initiated as a result of years of campaigning by resident groups, 120 acres was zoned by Galway City Council for a new woodland and riverine park.

Over a five year period, approximately 100,000 native Irish trees were planted by the people and schools of Galway city, thus creating an expansive natural habitat for a wide

variety of flora and fauna located not far from the city centre that connects into the vast Lough Corrib waterways, one of the most cherished areas of biodiversity in the country.

However the northern section of the park is currently bounded by low grade industrial units which are nearing the end of their life. The landscape could be made more accessible and there is an opportunity to leverage this asset and make it the defining feature of this new neighbourhood.



Strategy

The Sandy Road site offers potential to connect the Terryland River Park to the Lough Atalia Special Area of Conservation. This move begins to set up a walking and cycling route linking key waterways and green spaces as well as public transport routes back to the new residential area. By extending this thinking the site can begin to link a series of emerging regeneration areas including Ceant Station, Nun's Island, Bonham Quay, Dyke Road and Sandy Road realising the potential of Galway as a truly connected city.

Sandy Road

Terryland Park

Dyke Road

New Green Link over Corrib

Nun's Island

Eyre Square

Ceannt Station Upgrade

Ceannt Station Redevelopment (In planning)

Bonham Quay Development (Underway)

Galway Port – Inner harbour redevelopment
+ public realm in basin

CFRAMS



Terryland to Atalia

The development concept is to extrude the Terryland Forest Park in a western direction creating a new urban space at the heart of the scheme. This space sets up links to the north and south, across Sandy Road and to the city beyond. The strategy anticipates redevelopment to the east enabling a new connection through to Lough Atalia plugging into, enhancing and making best use of the filigree of cycle routes, paths and roads connecting the site to the city beyond. Vehicular traffic from Sandy Road is diverted to the Sean Mulvoy Road as early as possible removing heavy car movements through the site.

The idea of pulling the Terryland Forest Park into the site begins to set up one of the main themes of this proposal – An Urban Arboretum for Galway,

Site

Terryland Forest Park

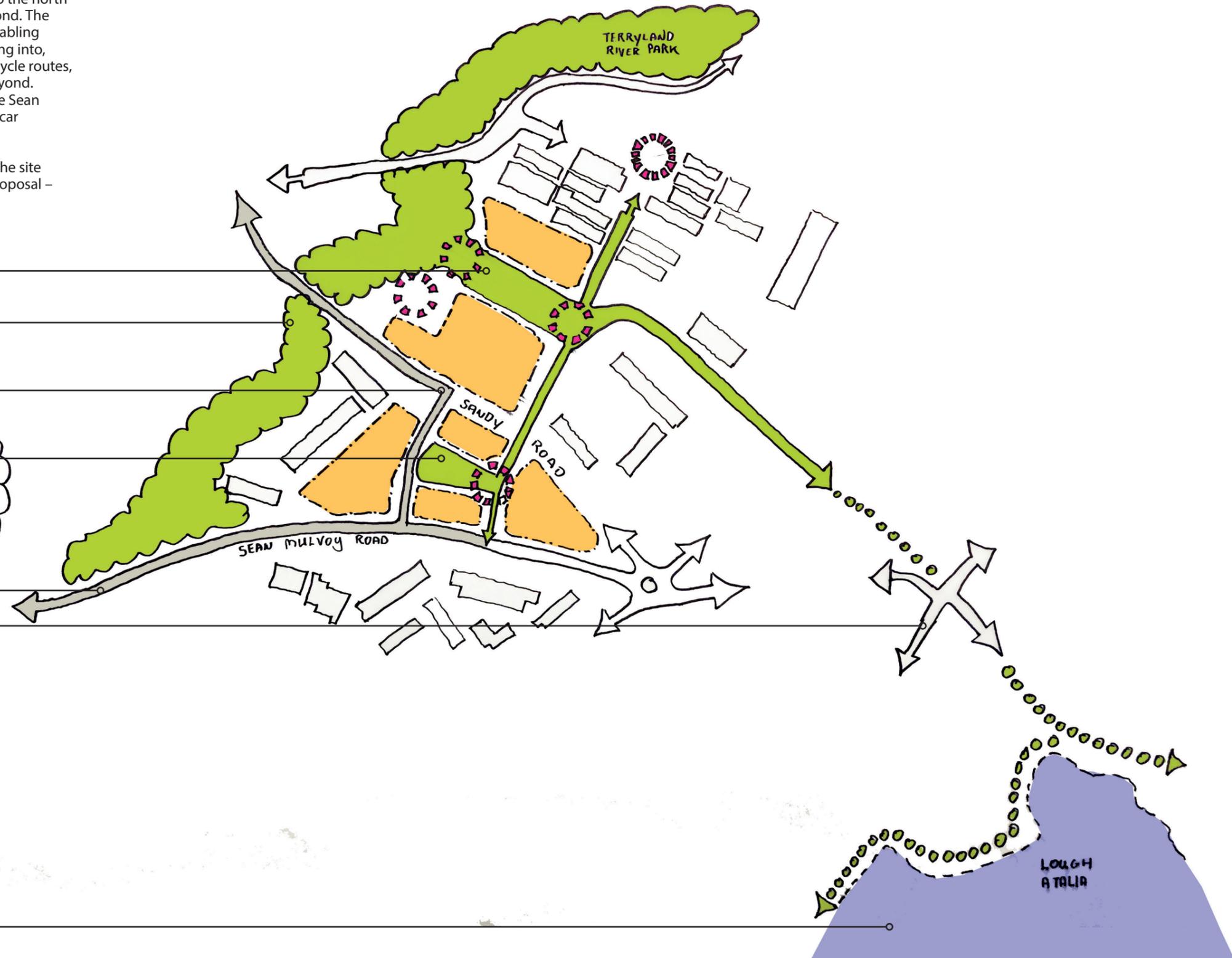
Sandy Road Diverted

New public space

Sean Mulvoy Road

Future Link

Lough Atalia



An Urban Arboretum

It's about living in a park, not beside one. Living in the park is an ethos to be embedded in communal green infrastructure and SUDs expressed as streams, ponds and wildlife verges, in homes defined by their green aspects and access to active landscape. The idea is to create a distinct place to live, offering delight and surprise in its details and a clear sense of identity.



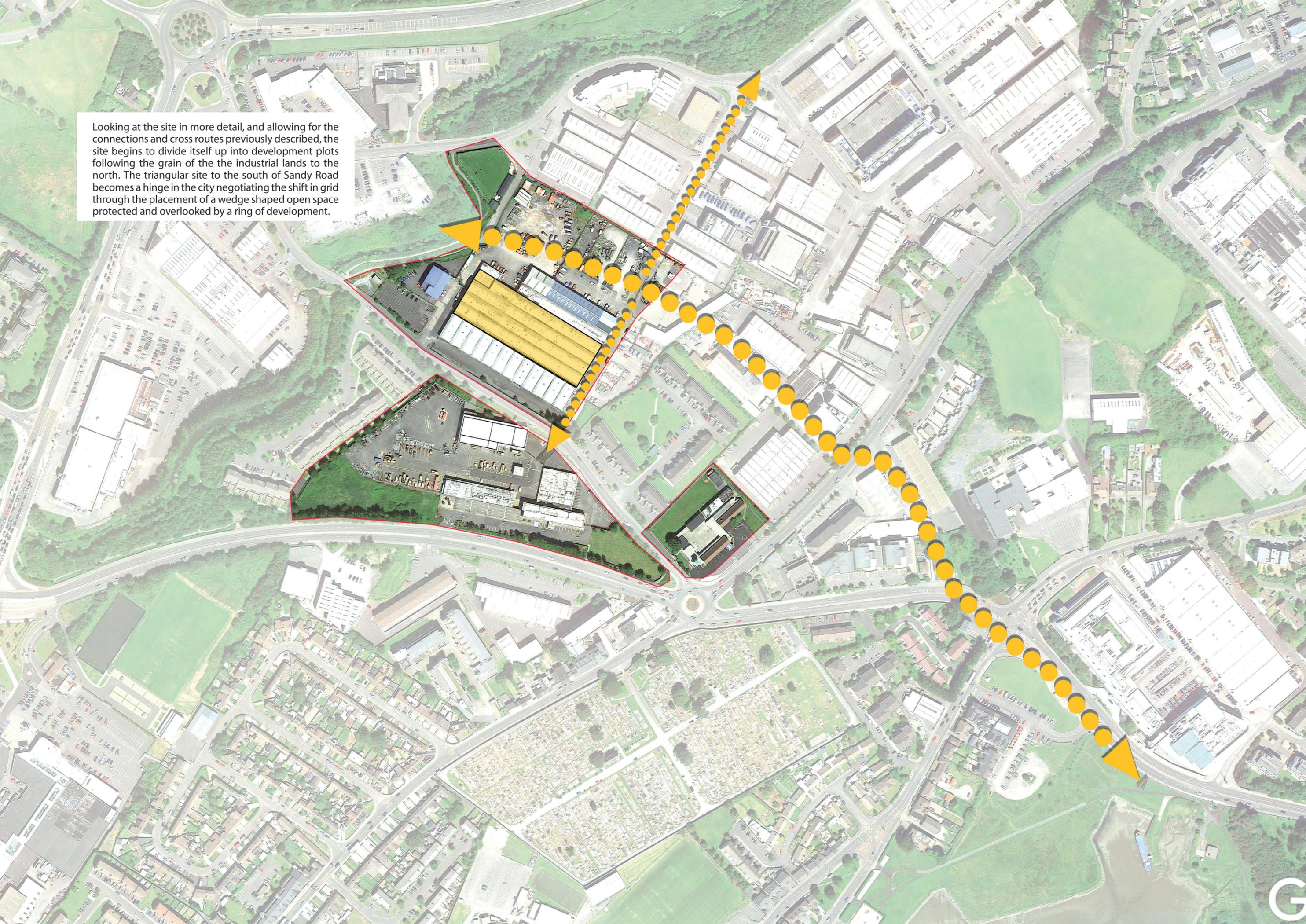
Existing Assets

The site offers the opportunity to re-purpose the existing concrete arches to become an innovation hub for the area supporting startups and co-working which could become a feeder for the FDI employers to the north. This proposal offers the option to retain part of these structures, primarily the two storey elements to the north of the site which can provide a significant amount of workspace.

Such a move will offer a diverse, sustainable mix to the area supporting Galway's sustainability ambition as: "an Innovative City".



Looking at the site in more detail, and allowing for the connections and cross routes previously described, the site begins to divide itself up into development plots following the grain of the industrial lands to the north. The triangular site to the south of Sandy Road becomes a hinge in the city negotiating the shift in grid through the placement of a wedge shaped open space protected and overlooked by a ring of development.



The forest is brought into the principle open space to the north. This is lined by residential accommodation to the north and repurposed workspace to the south. A single villa type building at the western edge of the square aids navigation to a future route to Lough Atalia. This drawing demonstrates how development outside the site might take place to enable this.





Looking at the subject site in more detail we begin to see how courtyards are cut into the arched buildings to provide daylight deep into the plan. The arches are extended to the west providing a closer relationship with the forest park and creating a new entrance to the facility.

The new neighbourhood should have an urban feel to attract key FDI workers and also take advantage of the parkland located in the immediate vicinity of the site. These workers crave proximity, intensity, chance encounter and exchange. Because of its unique combination of assets, notably its simultaneous proximity to the city core and the City's greatest public park, it is a unique opportunity to create a development with powerful appeal.

The wedge-shaped site at the centre of the southern neighbourhood offers a different type of space, greener and more intimate while taller buildings along the Sean Mulvoy Road protect this space from traffic noise. These villa type buildings provide a new rhythm along the Sean Mulvoy Road moving away from the idea of a trafficked corridor and closer to a notion of an activated street.

The residential accommodation has been conceived to provide clear definition of public and private with all open spaces and streets actively surveilled with more intimate courtyards for resident use only.

Forest Gardens

This view looking from east to west begins to illustrate how the scale and massing responds to the surrounding context. Buildings are generally up to 6 or 7 storeys with accent buildings defined by their architecture rather than excessive height. This drawing also begins to show the potential connection between Terryland Forest Park and Lough Atalia.

New Link

New Link

New Link

Sean Mulvoy Road

Sandy Road

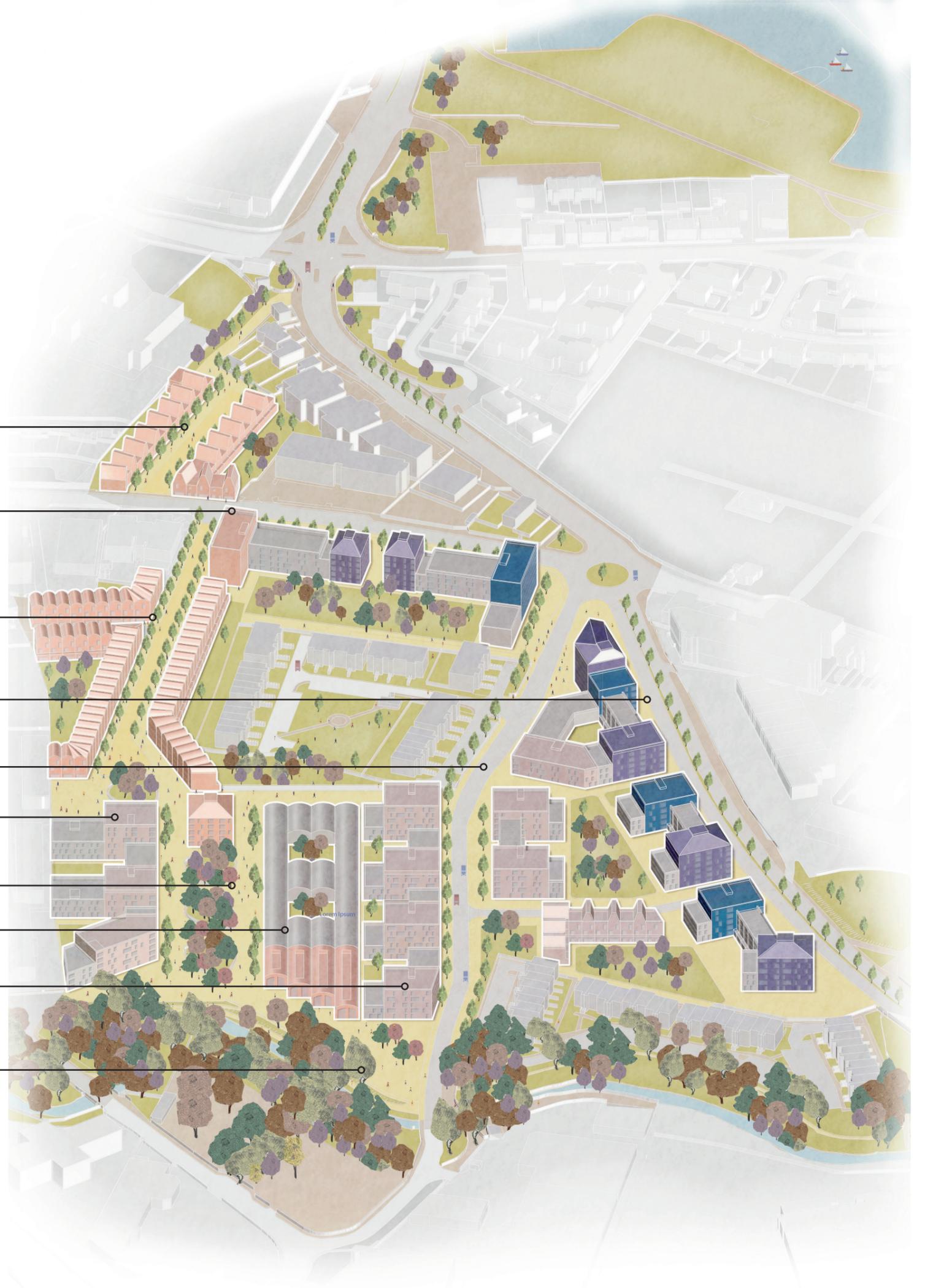
Residential
Development

Forest Square

Work Hub

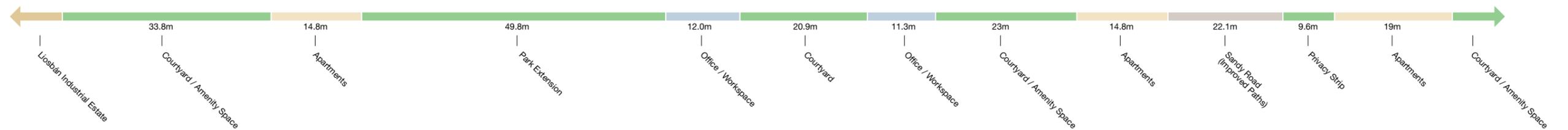
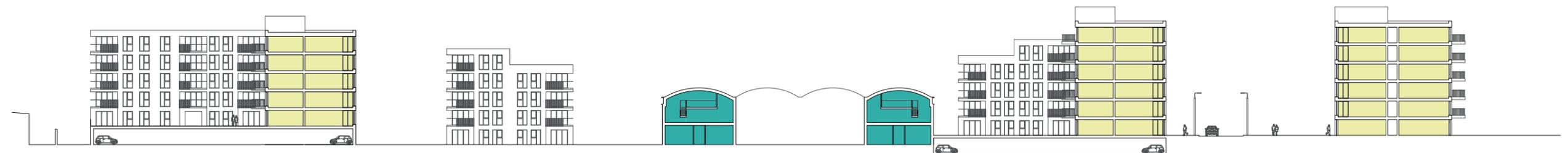
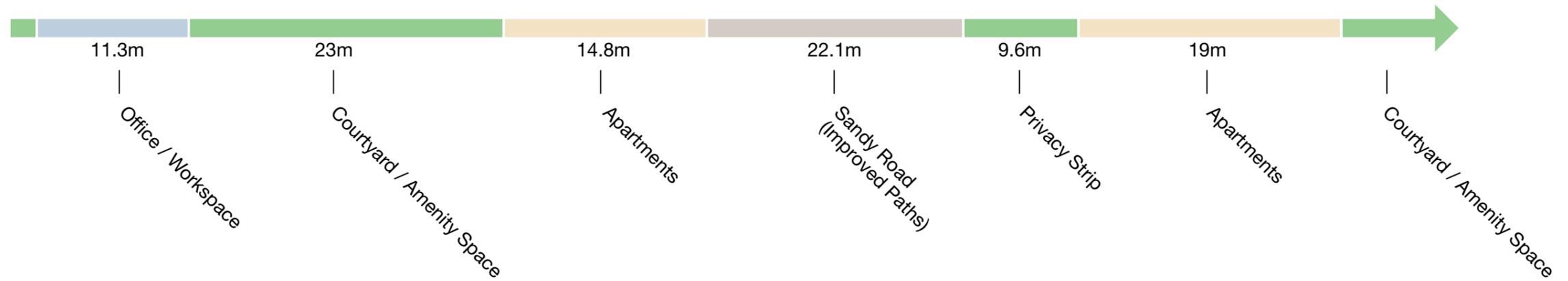
Residential Buildings

Terryland Forest Park



Topography

But what about the pragmatics? Car parking is generally housed in podiums to achieve increased density without the need for basement structures. Where possible, the topography is used to the advantage of the scheme. The top section on this slide illustrates the relationship between Sandy Road and the site to the north. The car parking podium is used to mitigate the level difference. In all cases the podium is wrapped in a skin of accommodation to ensure the public realm is always well overlooked. Generally car parking is provided at 0.6 spaces per home.



Layout

This plan begins to illustrate how the car parking podiums can be tucked away providing raised courtyards to the residential blocks. Circulation cores can be brought through to the podiums providing access to the homes above. This particular scheme provides for 802 units within the red line boundary of the site at a density of approximately 110 dwelling per hectare.

- Total 932 apartments (+164 units outside red line boundary)
- Total car parking in podium - 498
- Total car parking at grade - 60
- Car parking percentage - 0.6
- Site area - 8.63ha
- Density - 107 dph



As one moves up through the floors, the buildings are kept reasonably efficient providing appropriate net to gross ratios allowing scope to provide for many different living formats such as Private for Sale, Private Rental Sector, Affordable Rent or Elder Care. 10% social housing is also assumed.



1st Floor Plan



2nd Floor Plan



3rd Floor Plan



4th Floor Plan



5th Floor Plan

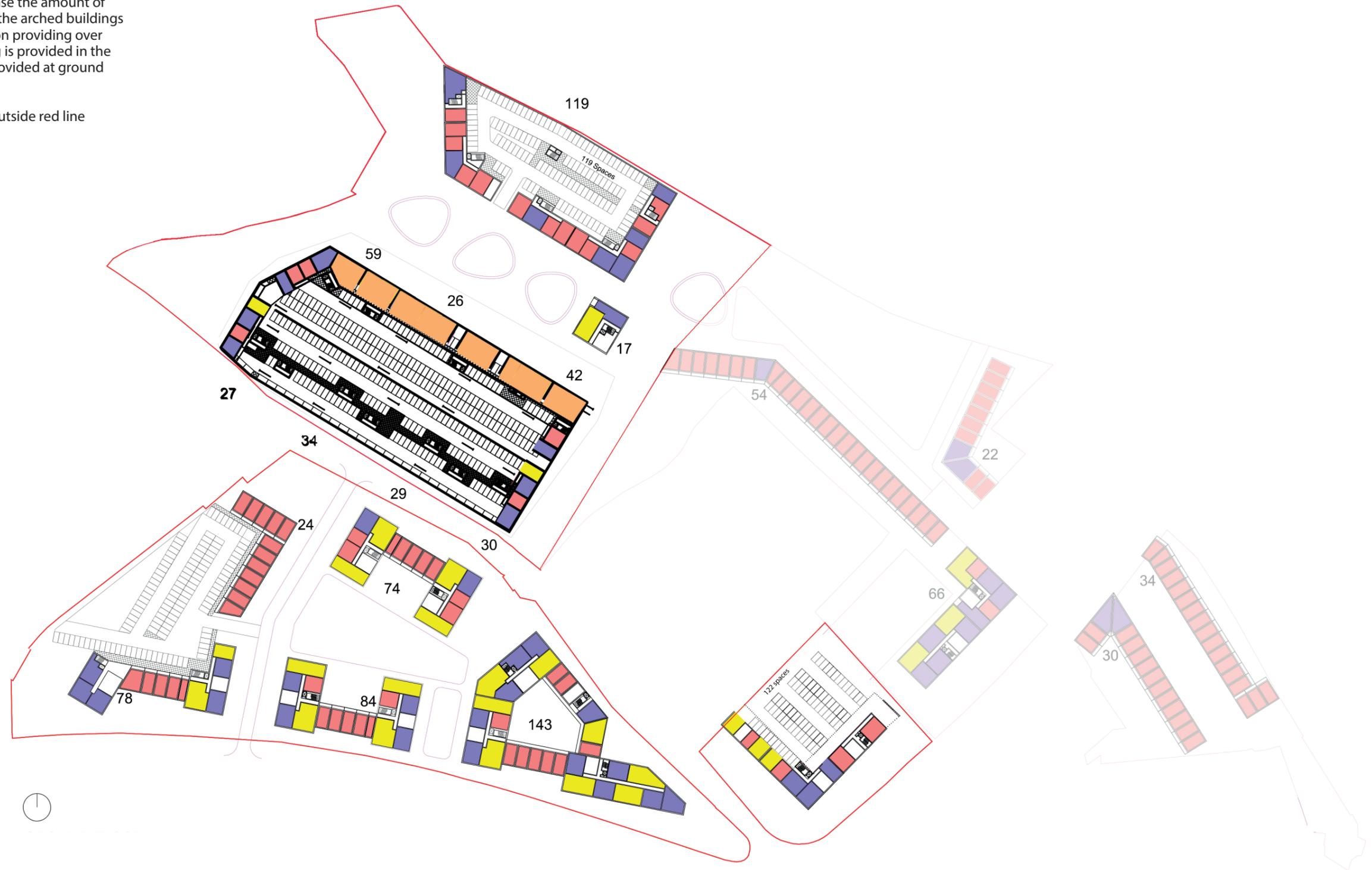


6th Floor Plan

Alternative Layout

It is also worth noting that the scheme allows for an option to remove all existing buildings to increase the amount of residential accommodation. In this case the arched buildings go in favour of courtyard accommodation providing over 930 homes on site. Increased car parking is provided in the podiums and some mixed use can be provided at ground level facing onto the public spaces.

- Total 1095 apartments (+164 units outside red line boundary)
- Total car parking in podium - 590
- Total car parking at grade - 60
- Car parking percentage - 0.6
- Site area - 8.63ha
- Density - 127 dph





1st Floor Plan



2nd Floor Plan



3rd Floor Plan



4th Floor Plan



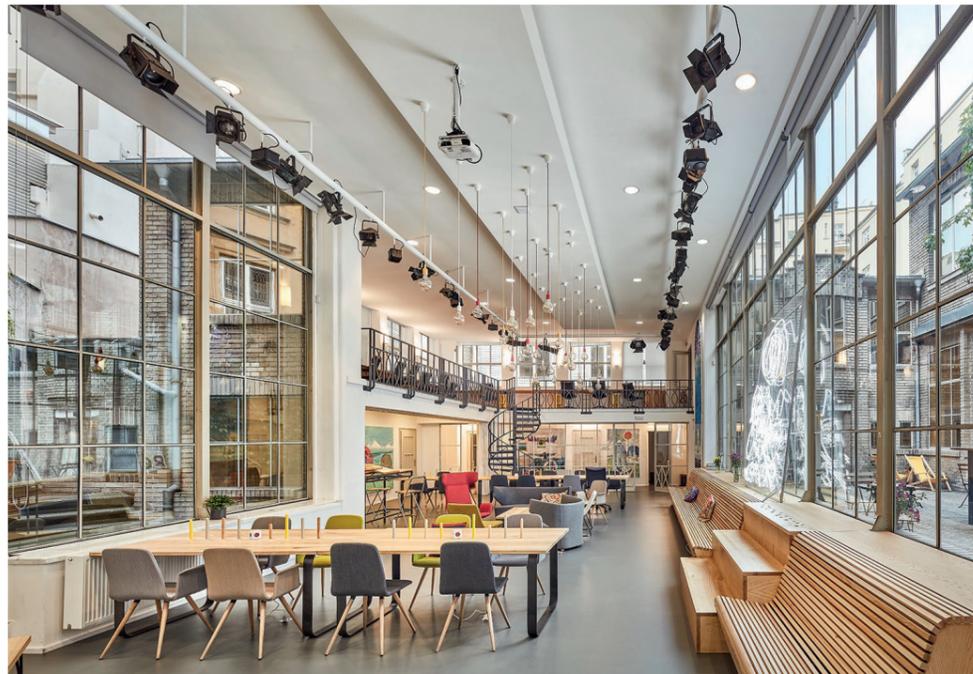
5th Floor Plan



6th Floor Plan

Ideas Hub

However, the scheme could and should be more than just a new residential area. It can be an "Ideas Hub" for the city and demonstrate sustainable principles of adaptive reuse. There are many examples of industrial structures being repurposed in this way adding character and vibrancy to an area. Not only this but it can be something which happens quite quickly, a catalyst for regeneration giving the public confidence that something is happening.



Active Open Spaces

Such a move could be central to this housing-led, mixed-use masterplan for a 21st Century neighbourhood with a distinctly Galwegian flavour – denser AND greener, set in the park right in the heart of the city. A neighbourhood to live well by accident.

The place should offer something for everyone, a diverse garden neighbourhood for all ages and incomes. Somewhere everyone feels welcome, has a place and can feel at home; and multiple tenure options to suit different ages, pockets and household formations.



Engaging Spaces

We know that successful neighbourhoods fulfil more than just our housing needs; a future neighbourhood is a rich and liveable place with lots to do. Strong foundations for a community can be built through social activity and the places we meet, whether through leisure or work.

The existing arched structures can work very well as roof lit workspaces with direct connections to lively public spaces. Double height spaces allow for mezzanine accommodation



Sean Mulvoy Road

Finally, the site affords an opportunity to reimagine the Sean Mulvoy Road. Currently engineered as a traffic corridor the redevelopment of this site hints at what it could be.



Sean Mulvoy Avenue...

Sean Mulvoy Road becomes Sean Mulvoy Avenue. Lined to the north with villa like buildings behind a screen of street trees anticipating future development to the south. The road becomes a humanised and vibrant street.



Joined-Up Galway

Coming full circle we see how the proposals take their place amongst the larger plans for Galway. Part of a coherent whole learning from the signature quality of Galway living, providing plenty of direct physical and visual access to abundant green space.

