



Draft Report - 12 June 2020

# A Vision for a new Neighbourhood Sandy Road, Galway



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Foreword by Kathryn Meghen, CEO RIAI

The RIAI's purpose is to drive excellence in the built environment for the benefit of everyone in society. We have developed the Design Review process to bring the benefit of architects' skills to identifying the potential of important sites, with the aim to develop vibrant places to live and work.

The process works by involving Architects at the earliest stage of a project. The Architects on the Design Review panel provide their expertise in analysing the complex considerations of a site and creating development visions that achieve the best solution for the client and the community. Design Reviews are particularly useful where a site is of strategic importance, as is the case in Sandy Road, Galway.

This Design Review has been commissioned by the Land Development Agency in collaboration with Galway City Council. The land falls within the LDA's remit to assemble and unlock strategic State and privately-owned lands for redevelopment and create a sustainable urban neighbourhood.

This report summarises five different development visions by five Architects. Their proposals show the complexity of

the issues considered and how they have used their skills to bring forward a range of innovative and exciting recommendations specific to the site. The Architects have considered the site in broad terms to examine how it can deliver a new sustainable neighbourhood, while also adding to the quality of Galway city.

The analysis of the issues and the proposed concepts by the Architects will be of great benefit in informing the next stages of a project.

The Architects for the Design Review for Sandy Road Galway are:

**Dr. Alice Casey MRIAI,**  
TAKA Architects

**Paul Mannion MRIAI,**  
Scott Tallon Walker Architects

**Jonny McKenna MRIAI,**  
Metropolitan Workshop

**Valerie Mulvin FRIAI,**  
McCullough Mulvin Architects

**Michael Pike MRIAI,**  
GKMP Architects

## 1.2 Foreword by John Coleman, CEO Land Development Agency

The amalgamation of these three parcels of land at Sandy Road in various State and other ownerships for regeneration presents a truly transformational opportunity for the people of Galway city. This RIAI Design Review is an excellent example of how the LDA can work with and support local authorities, public bodies and other interests to strategically assemble land for the delivery of more compact city cores. Ultimately, the ambition of this project is for integrated brownfield regeneration to deliver affordable homes in a new sustainable neighbourhood to support the growth of the city.

We recognise Design Reviews as an effective enabling tool to catalyse the unlocking of the potential for strategic brownfield sites of scale in cities throughout Ireland. This is achieved by bringing landowners together who have a desire to collaborate in a progressive way through a process that delivers a variety of realisable creative ideas which will set a vision for future development – a very positive first step in the regeneration of an area.

This is a process that we see as a blueprint for activating appropriate State and other owned sites around the country again and again to transform underutilised areas for the benefit of the local communities.

We are very impressed by the quality and standard of each of these five individual Architect proposals all of which have been well considered. It is very encouraging to see how closely the common themes that have emerged across all proposals align with our objectives at the LDA, namely, compact growth, sustainability; high quality living and open spaces and the rebalancing of the movement and transport hierarchy in favour of walking, cycling and public transport.

We would like to thank the RIAI, the panel of architects, our partners in this review, Galway City Council and other stakeholders all of whom have participated in the process with shared ambition, drive and enthusiasm.

We look forward to bringing the outputs of this review to the next stage of an appropriate framework for development of this project with Galway City Council.

### 1.3 Foreword by Brendan McGrath, Chief Executive Galway City Council

This is a very important and exciting time for Galway. The National Planning Framework (NPF) has projected a 50 percent increase of the city's population in the next twenty years. To ensure the NPF's sustainability goals of compact growth, 50 percent of development is to be on brownfield sites. To unlock the latent potential of these brownfield sites we must look outside the footprint of the site and take a wider perspective. The amalgamation of adjoining sites will allow for a more integrated area, with higher classes and intensity of uses, better urban structure and layouts, more conducive to good quality and sustainable patterns of movement. Done well, this will afford Galway the opportunity to plan and develop major infrastructure which will benefit the city for generations to come.

The old textile factory at Liosbán was acquired in 1985 and even though being only 1.2 km from Eyre Square would have been considered, at the time, an edge-of-city location. Over the past 35 years the city has expanded significantly, making Sandy Road now a central location. There is a legacy of uses and some, if seen in a collective vision for Galway, can now be relocated to more suitable locations. The continued success of this project will be based on the communication and correlation of all stakeholders' views. Strong political leadership pioneering the potential of this site will be an example of how to make a well connected, safe place where people want to live, work and be.

In the current housing shortage, the redevelopment of these brownfield sites is of critical importance. An affordable housing option is a key objective of this project, as is the supply of good quality, well-located housing, which is paramount to the wellbeing of individuals and the economic life a city. This along with strong educational and employment options will make Galway a very attractive option to attract people and investment.

The site is well served by the Galway Transport Strategy in particular with public transport and cycle routes. This will reduce the need for car parking and car ownership which will reduce Co2 emission and will help the affordability for these new residents.

The site has the potential for appropriate commercial and enterprise uses. There is also an opportunity for an innovation hub, building on the work opportunities driven by digital technologies, medical technologies and potential third level institutional links, thus advancing the goal to make Galway a modern Smart City. This also helps increase the potential for the site to have a distinctive quality and become a destination. It will also increase Galway's attractiveness as a place to live and work in close proximity.

In this RIAI Design Review, Galway has been described as a 'robust city in a poetic landscape'. The site benefits from this connection through the adjoining Terryland Forest Park and close connection to Lough Atalia. These natural physical elements are very much of the character of Galway and can be used as the connecting 'Greenways' of the city. The built environment urban grain of the city also has a very strong character which is very resilient to change. This project affords us an opportunity to marry these two environments together much to the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

We thank the RIAI and the LDA for the collaboration and commitment to this process. We are not alone in this process and our colleagues in Galway County Council and the other stakeholders have been very supportive throughout. The five Architects had a free hand to see what vision they could imagine for the site without a strict brief. We thank them for their, time, expertise and creativity.

### 1.4 Statement by John Martin, Chair

I was delighted to be invited by the RIAI to chair the Design Review process for the Sandy Road site in Galway, as my previous experience with a similar process for Tivoli Docks in Cork in 2017 demonstrated its potential to generate a range of creative solutions for brownfield sites in need of regeneration. The National Planning Framework 2040 aims to develop up to 50% of new housing on brownfield sites within each of our major cities. While this goal is fundamental to achieving more sustainable settlement patterns in Ireland, it brings its own challenges, as brownfield sites often have complex issues and can be more expensive to develop. I warmly commend the new Land Development Agency for commissioning a number of Design Reviews as a means of highlighting innovative solutions for such sites.

The RIAI has brought together five highly experienced architects, each of whom has brought their own design flair in devising sketch proposals for the possible redevelopment of the Sandy Road site. A range of housing typologies, densities and building heights has been put forward.

Nonetheless, some important common elements feature:

- Sustainability and climate change action are common themes for all proposals.
- Creating a new urban quarter based on a close study of the context of the site within easy reach of the city centre and major employment locations.
- Establishing an attractive living space including vibrant and pedestrian-friendly streets, with as many own-door entrances as possible.

- Taking full advantage of the proximity to Terryland Forest Park and the potential to create high quality public and communal open spaces within the layout.
- Developing new pedestrian and cycle routes to the city centre via the Forest Park and / or Lough Atalia.
- Minimising the need for on-site car parking by facilitating greater use of public transport (especially the proposed Bus Connects scheme) and car-pooling.
- Adapting some of the existing depot buildings for workspace / commercial use to provide a central focus for the new quarter.
- Re-imagining the role of Sean Mulvoy Road within the wider area.

I am confident that many of the design concepts emerging from this Design Review can help shape the preparation of any future development for the site, should that course of action be adopted. These concepts have the potential not only to lead to the creation of an attractive new neighbourhood for Galway City, but could also provide an exemplar for similar brownfield sites in other cities and towns.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to all the participants whose work was severely impacted by the coronavirus crisis, but who showed great determination and ingenuity in completing the process. I wish both the Land Development Agency and Galway City Council every success in taking forward the design and planning of the Sandy Road regeneration site.

## 2. Process and Objectives

### 2.1 Design Review Process

The RIAI instigated the Design Review process in Ireland with the objective to provide expert impartial advice to clients on the development potential of a site within a city, town or neighbourhood. The RIAI recommends a Design Review Panel composed of Registered Architects with the relevant skillset for each project. The resulting vision is ambitious, independent and non directional.

There are four stages to an RIAI Design Review:

1. Design Review Briefing
2. Design Review Proposals
3. Presentation of Findings to Client
4. Final Design Review Report

#### Stage 1 – Design Review Briefing

The Architects involved in the Sandy Road Design Review panel received a comprehensive project briefing in January 2020 – in the form of presentations – from GCC and other stakeholders.

The briefing session also included a visit to the project site and the Architects explored the Sandy Road site on foot. An RIAI-appointed Rapporteur recorded the Design Review Briefing and issued a report to the Client and the Registered Architects (Design Review Panel).

#### Stage 2 – Design Review Proposals

Administered by the RIAI, the Registered Architects (Design Review Panel) developed individual proposals and recommendations for the site. The RIAI and the Design Review Chair monitored progress and dealt with any queries that the Architects had.

#### Stage 3 – Presentation of Findings to Client

The Architects on the Design Review presented their findings and proposals to the LDA, local authority and stakeholder representatives in March 2020 via a Zoom video conference call. These presentations provided fresh thinking for realising the shared ambitions for Galway and enlightened the stakeholders on the next steps it could take to begin to realise these ambitions.

#### Stage 4 – Final Design Review Report

In consultation with the LDA, Galway City Council, the Chair and the Registered Architects (Design Review Panel), the RIAI produced this final Design Review Report which includes a summary of the findings. An Appendix accompanies the Report and includes the full presentations by the Design Review Panel. As part of the public consultation process a video was produced to summarise the Design Review process and the Architects' visions.

### 2.2 Design Review Objectives

#### Vision Statement

*“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.”*

**This Design Review will facilitate a number of outcomes, namely:**

- Embody the DNA of an LDA scheme - Sustainable, Compact, Innovative, Affordable.
- Act as a catalyst for the regeneration of areas around the site and for Galway as a whole.
- Provide proposals that are capable of being implemented.
- Provide solutions to inform, guide and shape local and regional planning policy.
- Respond to national and regional policy for Galway and its projected population growth.



# 3. Galway City Overview

By Emmet Humphreys MRIAI,  
Galway City Council

## 3.1 The Ambition for Galway City

When you consider Galway as European Capital of Culture 2020 along with the objective of Ireland 2040 (for an increase of Galway's population by 40,000 people in 20 years) it would seem that an urban conversation about compact growth is required. As the European Union's sustainability goals are the underlying principles of this national policy there is an opportunity for Galway to demonstrate leadership in this movement.

22,000 people commute (majority in singularly occupied vehicles) into the city each working day which is circa a 25% daily increase of the city's population. If we continue this pattern of development and transport, the length of time spent in cars (and traffic) will continue to increase, levels of social connection will drop and the space occupied by vehicle infrastructure will dominate or divide our communities.

What will a city of 120,000 people be? How will existing infrastructure, services and population absorb the expansion? How do

the new residents connect physically, socially, economically and culturally into the existing fabric of Galway? This Design Review will not answer these questions but will help to start this discussion.

This process is a freehand, an invitation to five architects to explore the possibilities of the place without brief. It asks the practices to consider the site as part of a whole organism not just within the confines of the given site. Sandy Road is less than 1% of the entire city's footprint but this contextual approach could be adapted to any part of the city. The five different proposals are not considered to be a design competition but tentative explorations to help understand the city's potential.

Below is the proposed Sandy Road site superimposed on the Medieval part of Galway. It is clear that an old model of compact growth exists. It is dense, well connected and has a strong sense of place. With modern technology, construction methods, transport, pattern of living this new piece of the city will be completely different but the human/spatial relationship and connectivity of the whole can remain the same.



Footprint of the Sandy Road site outline, superimposed on the Medieval city



Galway City

## 3.2 The Character of Galway

Galway belongs to a medieval network of European cities along the Atlantic seaboard. Over the past 900 years of expansion Galway now occupies roughly the same physical area as many of the 'network' cities yet it has the lowest population and in turn population density.

The establishment of Galway is clearly defined by location, similar to the other port/river settlements in Ireland. The underlying topography, landscape and geology of Galway City are a prime determining factor for the historical pattern of development. The river and coast are obvious borders along with the limited crossing points (regionally as well as locally) create separation between

East and West. During the 18th and 19th centuries the use of the Corrib River for HEP made for a new dynamic industrial landscape. Layers of rail, road and port all expanded the historic urban core.

If we go back to study the DNA of Galway, the medieval town, we should start with the plot. The plot was designed to be large enough to accommodate the number of rooms, stores, outbuildings etc... to make it feasible/attractive for a Merchant to 'buy into' the city. The plot had to be large to accommodate this brief but also small enough in order to maximise the number of plots within the perimeter length of defensive wall. The plots had a different character depending on their position in the city.



Plots within the Blocks of the Medieval city

Some plots located on the Market Space or close to the quay had a higher property value. Plots on the end of blocks also had a lot more street frontage and would be more advantageous to be Inns or guesthouses. The main route between the East and Connemara was straight through Mainguard Street and Bridge Street; this would have changed the dynamic of these streets and the plot value.

The number of plots per block needs to consider the accessibility/permeability of the city. Studying the DNA of Galway allows for an understanding of the simple rationale how the medieval city was laid out. The

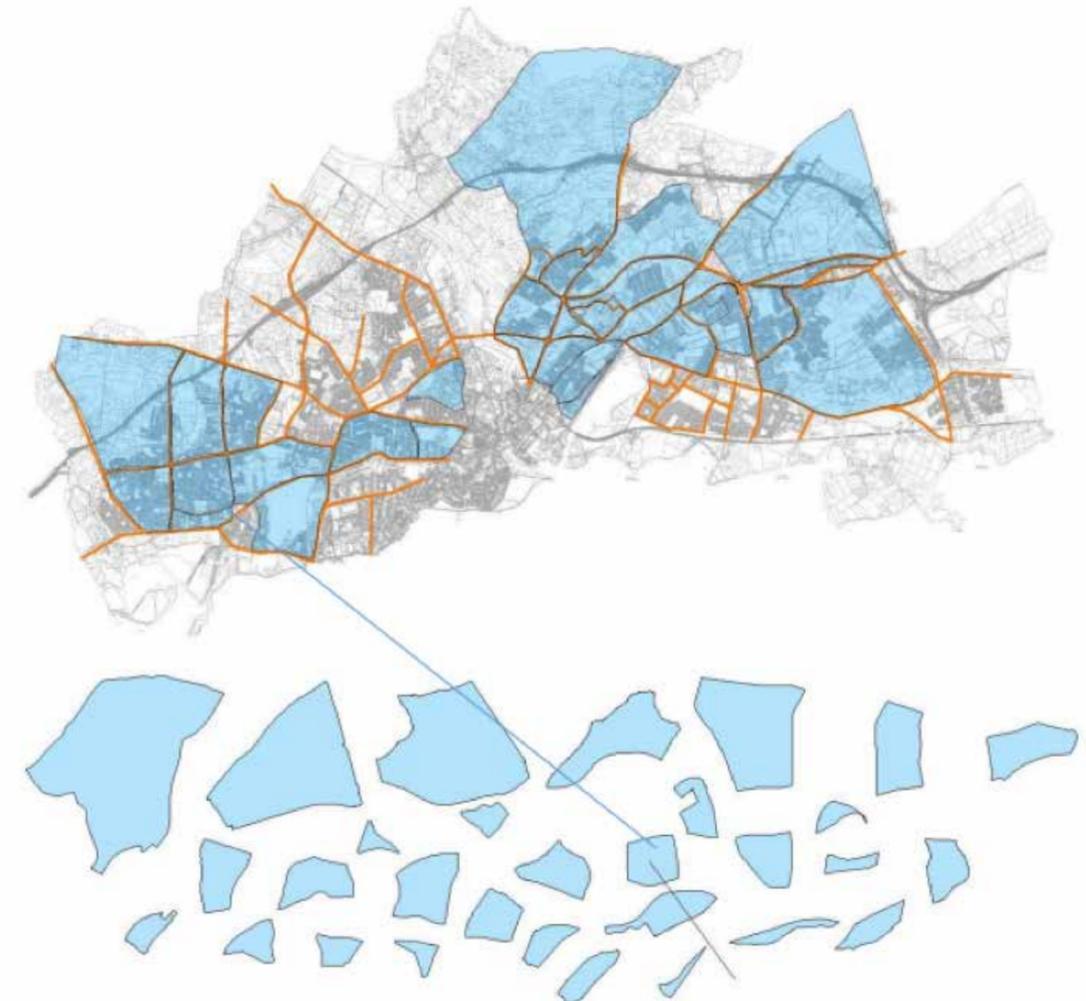
important part is that the relationship between Room-Plot-Block-City was mathematical and logical.

The plots and street structure have remained largely intact. There is an unbuilt resilience in this structure. It has changed/adopted and remained quite used since the original design. The way we use the city now is completely different than the way it was designed is testament to the inherent needs of humans and the resilience of the medieval structure. The narrow streets, laneways and buildings of 'Human Scale' it is a typology of space that is enjoyable.

### Block Design

The physical size of the block is a key determinant to the success of the structure. The medieval block size is circa 65m x 65m; this is a block dimension that performs and adapts quite well, while the block size of Galway new suburbs can be 650m x 650m. Within the larger sections there are plots that will be difficult to gain access to and these are therefore less likely to be developed. The urban equivalent to the rural term 'Road Frontage'. The outer suburb block dimensions are very large in scale.

We analyse the urban form of one of the 600m x 700m Blocks (developed pre 2000). The use is predominately residential and the unit types are all very similar mainly semi-detached and detached. This form of development is driven by the individual/developer needing to develop a plot rather than a holistic design of the City. There is no order or geometry, this block will be very difficult to change use or adapt. The strategy for change will be difficult if taken on a plot by plot scenario. The design and assessment of plot based proposals also lose the morphological potential of good architecture.



The new blocks are circa ten times larger than Medieval blocks

The 600m x 700m block in Galway

### 3.3 Opportunities and Challenges

By John Martin, Chair

The National Planning Framework 2040 aims to develop up to 50% of new housing on brownfield sites within each of our major cities. While this goal is fundamental to achieving more sustainable settlement patterns in Ireland, it brings its own challenges, as brownfield sites often have complex issues and can be more expensive to develop. They also present exciting opportunities, as in the case of this 8.63ha site in Galway:

#### Opportunities



The site is in **public ownership**, with the exception of Galway Bay FM



Fulcrum site - Lough Atalia and Quincentennial Bridge as **orientation points**



**Proximity of site** to city centre, NUIG, public transport and shopping centres



The site has good and extensive road frontage which will contribute to a **better public realm** and neighbourhood



Presence of Terryland **River and adjacent green lands**



Potential for **activation of Liosbán**



**Potential connections** in different directions - ability of site to tie in with its surroundings



Transformative potential of site for **place making**



Greenness of Galway - the city is not just urban in nature, and greenways can be incorporated into **regeneration proposals**



Potential for **reuse** of some buildings, could lend an identity to site

#### Constraints



Making connections back to city - **imposing road network**



How to make these connections with **car-free neighbourhood**



Car parking **provision**



**Level changes** across the site



**Physical boundaries**, geometries and shapes of roads



Sandy Road development needs to feel like **part of the city**, but this will be a challenge

## 4. Key Observations and Objectives

As the project continued during the COVID-19 crisis, a video conference was held in April 2020 and the attendees included the RIAI, LDA, GCC and the Design Review panel. The clients praised the Architects for the inspiring, thoughtful and exciting proposals, which were human in their response to the site, captured the spirit and essence of Galway and its hinterland, offered new ways of imagining community and showed how different areas of the city could be connected through interventions made at Sandy Road. Many of the ideas and principles in the Design Review outputs could be brought forward to the masterplanning and development stage.

A number of conclusions arose from this meeting, and are outlined below:

### Density

One of the key issues highlighted in the review of the architects' proposals was density. There was a wide range of potential residential densities provided through the architectural proposals. The GCC planning department said that a density of 47units/ha was perhaps more in line with current densities in Galway, and thus more realistic for the site. However, in the initial briefing for the Sandy Road project, it was stated that the proposals should be aspirational and ambitious, and a density of approximately 110 units per hectare was proposed by the LDA as a target. Proposals to gently densify the Liosbán estate by adding to it were welcomed.

### Precedent Studies

Each proposal included references to international precedent studies that could inform development at the site. There was a desire for more local exemplars so that proposals would sit within Ireland's cultural and architectural context. These were added to the Final Report.

### Greenways and Connectivity

All of the initiatives to expand the Terryland Forest Park into the site were welcomed, as were proposals to connect the site to other parts of the city via routes through the site from Terryland Forest Park to Lough Atalia. Any proposals to create connectivity from the medieval core and Lough Atalia through the site to the north should be strengthened to create a solid argument for development that would act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider city region. Schemes that involved softening and making more habitable the current vehicular arteries surrounding the site were also praised.

### Site identity

A number of the proposals focused on distilling Galway's unique identity and incorporating it into the Sandy Road development. Of particular interest were proposals that celebrated Ireland's community culture and reimagined where and how community might be formed, gather and meet in a 21st century context. Historical analysis of the site was also welcomed as it provided a strong basis for more intuitive readings of the site's potential. Galway's medieval core and its poetic relationship to its rugged hinterland were identified as central to the city's identity.



The Cotton Factory

### Cotton Factory

Central to many of the proposals was the retention and reappropriation of part or all of the concrete vaulted cotton factory building in the middle of the site. From becoming an exemplar of sustainable reuse, accommodating a cultural venue, providing units for start-ups and co-working spaces to forming a fulcrum of the development which would be central to the community, the adaptation of the cotton factory was deemed exciting and innovative in an Irish context. It was noted that the area of the cotton factory is similar to that of Eyre Square, so it could provide a familiar scale of public amenity in the Galway context.

### Permeability

Residential schemes put forward by the panel ranged from an urban grid to housing blocks to stepped terraces and streets. Proposals that echoed the laneways of the medieval core without imitating them were welcomed, but there were concerns that dense residential blocks would not lend themselves to permeability across the site and a sense of openness to the wider context. There were also concerns raised about the viability of semi-private structures and spaces in terms of maintenance, ownership and cultural tolerance, and proposed courtyards and gardens were questioned in terms of daylight access.

## 5. Common Themes



**Sustainability** and climate change action are common themes for all proposals.



Creating a **new urban quarter** based on a close study of the context of the site within easy reach of Galway city-centre and major employment locations. Working with existing communities and the current users of the site is key.



Establishing an attractive living space including vibrant and **pedestrian-friendly streets**, with as many own-door entrances as possible.



Taking full advantage of the **proximity to Terryland Forest Park** and the potential to create high quality public and communal open spaces within the layout.



Developing new **pedestrian and cycle routes** to the city centre via Terryland Forest Park and / or Lough Atalia.



Minimising the need for on-site car parking by facilitating **greater use of public transport** (especially the proposed Bus Connects scheme) and car-pooling.



Adapting some of the existing depot buildings for **workspace or commercial use** to provide a central focus for the new quarter.



**Re-imagining** the role of Sean Mulvoy Road within the wider area.

## 5. Design Review Proposals



### Dr. Alice Casey MRIAI, TAKA Architects

**Alice Casey is a Director of TAKA**, an architectural practice based in Dublin. The practice has won national and international design awards and is renowned for creating buildings, places and moments which have a distinct character. TAKA's approach involves a careful and economic approach to materials and construction, and a first-principles approach to sustainability. TAKA collaborates closely with clients, professional consultants and expert makers to ensure the ambitions of projects are met and exceeded. TAKA have experience in a wide range of project types ranging from domestic extensions to commercial and public buildings.

#### Introduction

The opportunity presented by the Sandy Road site is immense – for Galway and for Ireland. The Land Development Agency's (LDA) aim to provide affordable housing is THE challenge of our generation. The LDA says that new housing should be 'sustainable, compact, innovative, and affordable'. We would add that housing should also be comfortable, appropriate, and achievable.

#### An Identity for Sandy Road

Galway is a city known for its vibrant medieval centre; the fast-flowing Corrib River; the docks and quays, and Galway Bay beyond. But it's also known for its location on the rugged west coast, and its relationship to the wild landscapes of Connemara to the North, the Burren to the South, and the Aran Islands to the West. Landscape is important in Galway.

The success of any new development depends on its ability to create a sense of identity or place. We think of Galway as having a dual identity – that of a compact

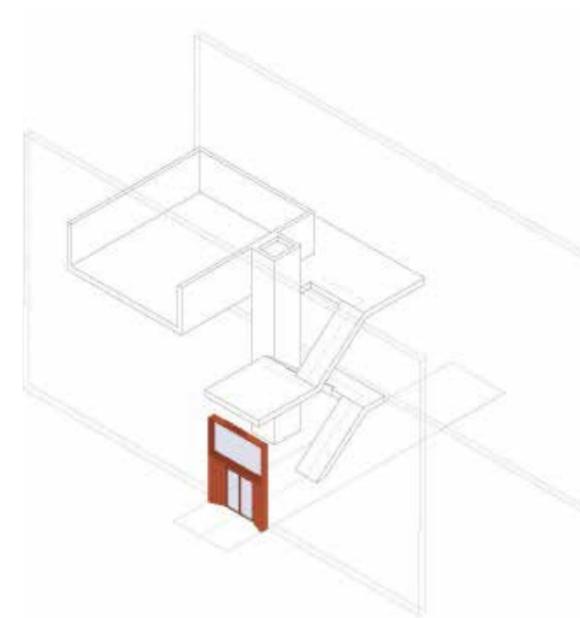
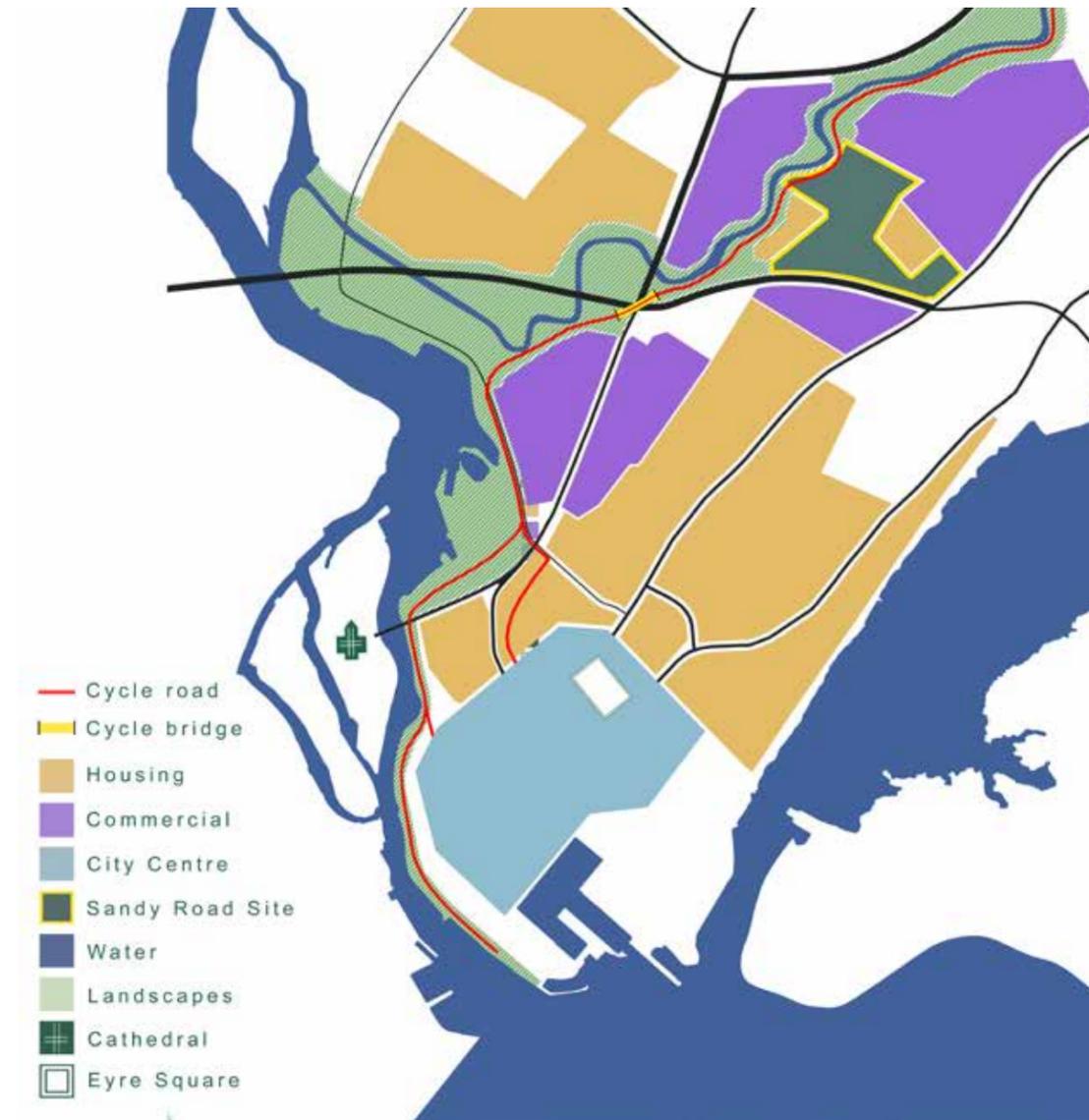
and robust city, but one which has a deep and poetic relationship to its surrounding landscape.

Galway has a compact historic core, surrounded by residential and commercial estate-type developments. The challenge of the Sandy Road site is not to re-make a piece of the medieval city at a distance, or to try to extend the existing core out to Sandy Road. We see it rather as an opportunity to create a place which takes something of the dual identity of Galway – a new place which is characterised by a compact and robust urbanity combined with a relationship to a more rugged landscape.

As part of the Design Review process, we have not tried to make a coherent masterplan for Sandy Road. Instead we have identified elements or characteristics which we think the new development should have. We are presenting them here as a series of proposals at a variety of scales.

**Proposal 01**  
 Connection to the City Through Landscape

We propose that the Terryland Forest Park be extended and upgraded to create a new cycling and walking infrastructure which would deliver commuters from Sandy Road directly to the city centre to the south, and business parks to the north. This new scenic route would be made possible and practical by the provision of a new cycling and pedestrian bridge over the junction of the Headford Rd with the N6.

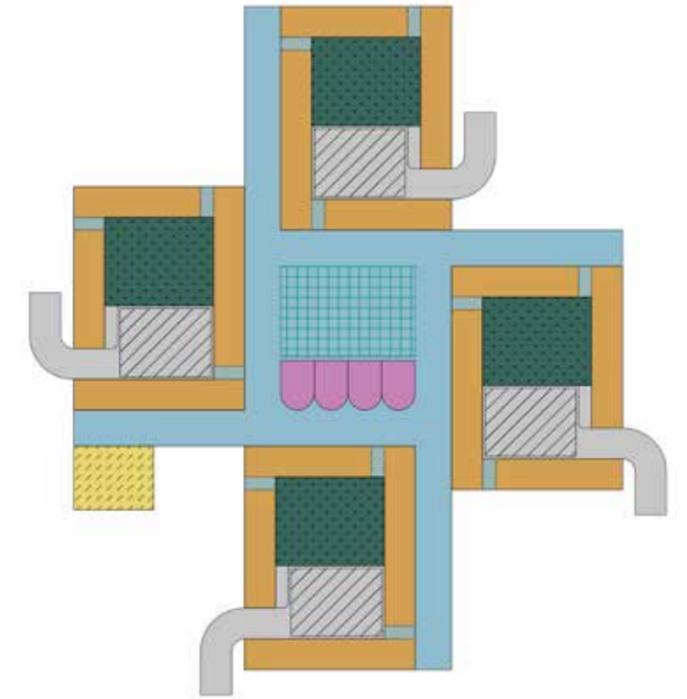


**Proposal 02**  
 Elements of a Cost Rental Scheme

The LDA are proposing a 'Cost Rental' model for the housing in Sandy Road. For this type of housing, buildings should be simple, robust and easily maintained. Tenancies should be long-term, minimising vacant periods which result in lost income.

To create long-term tenancies, we must create communities where people want to live, and where neighbours become friends. Our proposals focus on combining a compact and efficient apartment size with enlarged communal areas like entrances, corridors, porches, and garden terraces. Housing at ground level which opens on to the street, encourages chance meetings between neighbours and fosters a sense of community.

Ease of maintenance is provided through creating simple building forms using familiar construction methods and robust materials. Careful design will ensure that buildings and streets are characterful and humane.



**Proposal 03**  
 Elements of Place-Making

The success of any new development depends on its ability to create a sense of identity or place. For Galway, we think this is a combination of a robust urban form with a connection the wider landscape.

We are proposing to take inspiration from Galway's physical features - like the stone warehouses, the pedestrian laneways, the compactness - to make the housing blocks and their immediate surroundings. Galway's culture and landscape should be reflected in the making of a public square at the heart of the development which has a direct relationship to the Terryland Forest Park. A portion of the existing depot building at Sandy Road should be reused and adapted as a commercial or cultural hub, becoming a landmark and anchor to the vibrant life of the new community.



### Proposal 04 Sandy Road

The advantage of our 'elements' strategy is that our proposals can be adapted to suit particular conditions. However, we would like to highlight some of the specific opportunities of the Sandy Road site.

1. The Terryland Forest Park as a sustainable commuter infrastructure and recreational space
2. Multiple points of connection to existing infrastructure and communities
3. Potential to extend the bus network to directly access the site
4. An adapted depot building as a landmark in the new community

### Proposal 05 Innovation in Procurement

This site has an opportunity to be an exemplar in public procurement – to light the way for similar housing developments across the country. There is a capacity issue in the construction industry currently. To overcome this, we need to find new ways of engaging with the broadest spectrum of the available resources – contractors, subcontractors, architects, engineers, surveyors. Small, medium and micro companies (SME's) are a large and expert resource which is currently under-utilised in public projects.

We propose that any procurement associated with this site should pay particular attention to encouraging SME participation – either through partnering with larger companies, or through the parcelling of the site into smaller lots or elements.

### Schedule of Accommodation

<b>Site area</b>	8.63 ha
<b>Total units</b>	1105
<b>Density</b>	128 Units/Ha
<b>Block height</b>	6 floors (20m)
<b>Commercial / Cultural</b>	3,400 sqm (total)
<b>No. floors</b>	2
<b>Parking</b>	430 spaces (surface)

Unit types	Mix	Unit size (SQM)
1B/2P	50%	50
2B/4P	30%	80
3B/5P	20%	100



imagery l-r:  
1. Elm Park, Bucholz McEvoy Architects, Photo: Michael Moran 2. Timberyard Housing, Dublin, O'Donnell + Tuomey, Photo: Alice Clancy 3. Housing by Kay Fisker, Dronningegården, Copenhagen 1943-1958, Photo: Seier + Seier 4. Depot Conversion, MVRDV Architects



## Paul Mannion FRIAI, Scott Tallon Walker Architects

Paul is an Associate at Scott Tallon Walker architects and leads the Galway studio. He has been responsible for the direction of a wide variety of institutional and commercial projects in both the West of Ireland and the UK. Paul is currently focused on developing STW's West of Ireland practice with a particular emphasis on Healthcare, Laboratory & Science as well as Conservation projects. Paul was project lead for the Human Biology building project at NUI Galway and is currently working on a Blood & Tissue Laboratory building for University Hospital Galway (UHG). He has been involved in a previous masterplan review of the NUI Galway campus and recently the UHGalway/MerlinParkUH Hospital sites review as well as the Galway Inner Harbour master plan. Paul brings his broad experience to teaching on the Construction Operations course at the College of Engineering & Informatics, NUI, Galway.

### Introduction

The project is really about opportunity for transformation rather than regeneration. The site, as assembled, has existing uses that sit reasonably comfortably in their location, working more or less as the site has historically to provide support services at the edge of town; the Local Authority yards and warehouse, the ESB offices and engineering yards, the local radio station and a school. These uses fit in the wider neighbourhood of commercial park and office use, edge of town retail and big box stores. Transformation therefore is demanded beyond the development site boundaries if it's to be successful. The Sandy Road site, centred on the Cotton Factory structure, cannot afford to develop as a residential enclave with it's back turned to this wider neighbourhood.

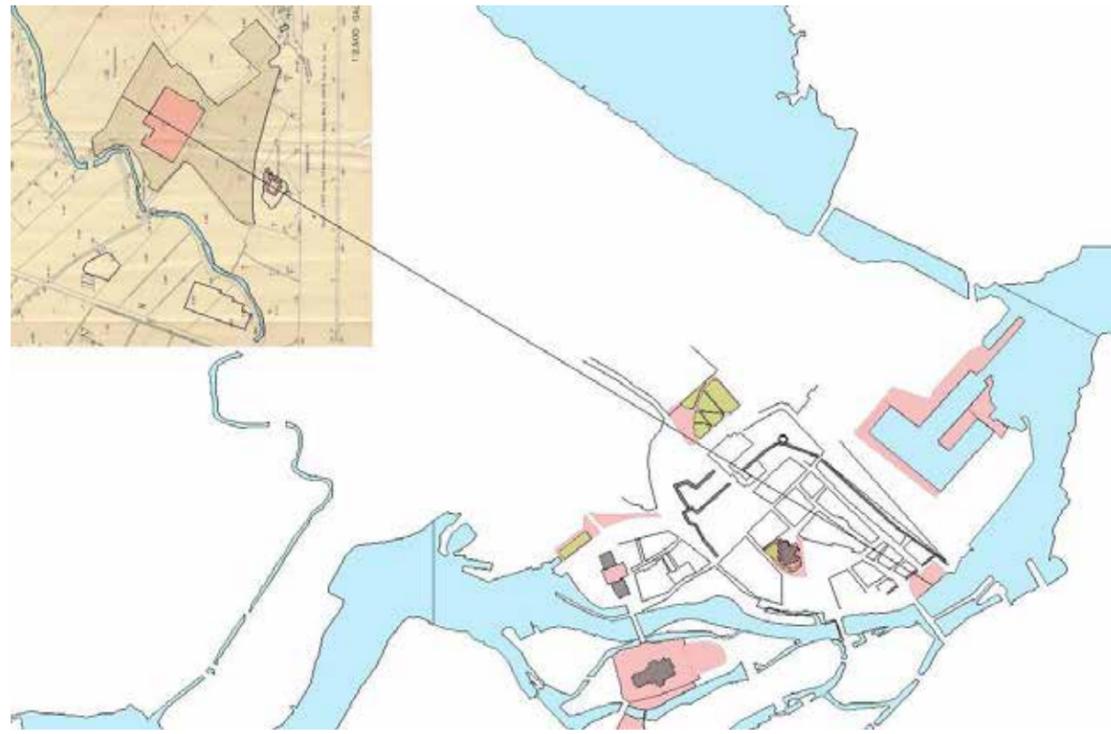
### Context

The aerial view reveals an irony, that for a city with so much water surrounding it, the major obstacles to connectivity are roads. The Sean Mulvoy Road in particular, with it's continuation across the river at the Quincentenary Bridge carves an east-west divide that belies the topography.

### Neighbourhood

The defined boundary of the development site is not that significant compared to that of a wider "neighbourhood" that self-defines. This would include the whole of the Liosbán "Commercial Park", the adjacent Sandy river and forest path, Terryland commercial park, Dunnes Stores and everything bounded by the Sean Mulvoy Road. For a truly transformative scheme to be successful, it must include and anticipate transformative effects beyond the site edges. Borrowing from the briefing presentation, this map shows the site location in relation to the historic core and at the junction of the major eastern land approaches to the medieval city.

In modern times, however, the Quincentenary bridge has introduced an east-west axis in the form of major road development across the city. This has already impacted on the integrity of the University estate, dividing as it does the campus there into a "north" and "south" campus, a great pity since the master plan vision there was for a great linear riverside campus running along the West bank of the River Corrib.



The Cotton

### Significance

At Sean Mulvoy Road there are the remains of the Cromwellian siege fortifications (no longer visible) built by Sir Charles Coote's men in 1651-2. The last of these fort structures remain as a grassy knoll, the avoidance of which to some extent determines the curve of Sean Mulvoy Road. The major existing built intervention on the site is "the Cotton" or cotton factory printing works. This building is oriented in a north-east to south-west direction in response to old field boundaries which themselves inherit their orientation from the layout of Cromwellian siege structures since demolished. The historic connection to the major siege and the physical traces of that event creates a link to the medieval core. The structure of the "Cotton" is significant in scale as can be seen from the drawing highlighting the city's major structures and public realm of the medieval core area in relation to the modern industrial structure.

This stripped back diagram with elements of historic mapping also begins to suggest a relationship between two "places", another

town if you like. The traditional approach to the medieval core from here is Bóthar Mór/Prospect Hill/Eyre Square. With proposed public transport links located on either flank (at the "Huntsman" at Lough Atalia/College Road and on the Headford Road) this leaves the traditional route free for consideration.

### Recommendation

Thought should be given to bringing forward the transformation of this historic approach to the city by linking with the Sandy Road site. This should both recognise the "ownership" of this road by existing residents and businesses and its historic significance.

The transformation can be considered within the physical enhancements proposed in the Galway Public Realm Strategy. Elements to consider - traffic calming, wider footpaths, cycle lanes, planting, opening up pedestrian side routes to increase connectivity. The "Cotton" becomes then a hub for bicycle rental, repair and storage connected to potential cycle lanes and greenway routes heading in all four points of the compass.

### Existing Structures & Landscape

The grid of the Cotton building relates to the land boundaries created by the Cromwellian siege whether the building's architect realised this or not. This imposingly large structure in concrete, built during the 1950's, housed a series of significant employers in the textile printing industry. This phenomenon was noted on the briefing visit and it presents us with an unavoidable decision in transforming the neighbourhood. Either we decide that the Cotton factory is of no relevance or it becomes in fact our starting point. The existing riverside walk should have the hard landscape elements upgraded in terms of its surface finish, accessibility and street furniture ahead of or in parallel with the development.

### Recommendation

A sustainable landscape should be designed and implemented on the existing and proposed green areas adjacent to the site. The Lee Valley VeloPark cycling centre on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, East London shows the legacy of the games in the form of extensive sustainable landscape. This very extensive landscape is designed rather than "natural" but does not require a small army of maintenance gardeners to maintain it.

### Transformation

Sean Scully acknowledges that sometimes he makes things that look like buildings in his painting. His blocks and grids however are not exact and have deliberate "wet" and fussy edges.

So, recognising that our transformation project must engage with Liosbán and other adjoining lands and that it will be an evolving project rather than a single site clearance and build, we can accept the historic setting out of the Cotton as a starting point.

### Conceptual Approach

Constraints considered included the difficulty of connecting the site to the city centre (in terms of walking and cycling but also the bus corridor locations).

### Recommendation

That the conceptual approach to a master plan might start with Sandy Road as a destination in its own right, therefore drawing in visitors eventually itself. A starting point could be to provide in the medium term some park and ride facilities that allow people to "land" at this gateway location and explore it on foot as well as making use of the proposed quality transport corridors that surround it. Visitors might leave their hire cars here and walk, cycle or take the bus into the medieval core. The opportunity arises to start the interpretation of the city from here and allow people to follow the footsteps of the Cromwellian forces to the main gate.

### A Connected Place

The development of a successful neighbourhood requires the participation of residents and in Sandy Road the best approach might be a phased development, gradually building up the density of residents and transforming the site and the adjoining built and natural environments in partnership. To start this off the transformation and retention of parts of the existing cotton factory could be key.

The exemplar layout shows how the site could leverage its history and context to determine a future of mainly residential use.

There are both primary and secondary schools in walking distance, the extensive forest park and greenway along the Sandy River, the retail offer of Liosbán together with other community services all of which would support a new residential district.

In the sketch the site could accommodate an office building and suggests that the existing education building be enhanced with additional spaces for community support services. The latter could perhaps include a viewing tower from the high point of the site from where visitors might see the view of the medieval core in the middle distance before setting off to explore it on foot or bicycle. Neighbourhood parking can either be resolved in the detail design or master planned in existing under-utilised Liosbán parking structures and adjoining commercial lands.

The emerging neighbourhood can build on the existing urban structure, transforming its form and character in doing so. Connectivity across the site and to the more distant medieval core

of the city is seen as a two-way relationship, designed to guarantee interaction between the new neighbourhoods and the old. The variety of uses, particularly those supporting increased residential density and the viability of the existing retail offer when it pivots to face towards the regeneration site rather than towards the road network all make for a more sustainable development.

All of the stakeholders, residents new and old, neighbouring commercial interests, existing users who may be accommodated on the site can find a way to establish stewardship structures in partnership with the local authority in the course of the phased development that will be crucial to long term success.



clockwise l-r:

**1. LX Factory, Lisbon, Photo Paul Mannion**

The LX Factory district is an example of repurposed industrial buildings. Low impact interventions have allowed the occupying businesses and arts activities to confer their mark on the place. The 'Cotton' structure can be physically adapted and transformed in its function to develop over time into a community hub, a place for the whole city to enjoy the arts and an innovation space for business.

**2. Abode, Great Kneighton (UK), Proctor and Matthews Architects, Photo Tim Crocker**

To help with density, the buildings around the court tend to be higher, with family housing on the lower floors, and flats above.

**3. Accordia, Housing, Cambridge, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Maccreeanor Lavington, Alison Brooks Architects.**

The Accordia scheme has an overall density of about 47 dwellings per hectare. This scheme utilises terraces on first and second floors instead of gardens, a variety of house types and detailing.

**4. Brentford Lock West Housing, London, Mae Architects**

The pavilion type gives rise to a very rational layout where circulation cores serve four dual-aspect flats per floor, in a quadrant arrangement over six floors. Townhouses and inhabited bridges link the pavilions and enclose a resident courtyard garden.

## Schedule of Accommodation

Unit Type	Mix	Unit Size m <sup>2</sup>	1 bed	2	3/4	Total
Pavillion Apartments	3x2 bed x 6 floors 1x1bed x 5 floors		316	60		
"Street" Apartments (over "Cotton")	2x2bedx 4 floors		48			
"Street" Apartments (Commercial-Sandy Road)	1x1bed x 4 floors 2x2bedx 5 floors		40	24		
Townhouses	1x1bed x 5 floors 3/4 bedx 3 floors			20	56	
			<b>404</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>564</b>

Parameter	Calculation	Note
Site Area (hectare)	8.63	Total Site
Residential primary use (hectare)	6.64	Area mostly Resi
Non-Residential uses (hectare)	1.99	Area with no Resi
Total Units	564	
Residential Density (Units/hectare total site)	65.35	
Residential Density (Units/hectare primary use)	84.94	
Block Height (floors/meters)-Pavillion Apartments	5/6 Floors	
Block Height (floors/meters)-Street Apartments	4/5 Floors	
Block Height (floors/meters)-Townhouses	3/4 Storey	
Parking (no of Spaces -Residential)	421	0.75 per resi unit
Parking (no of Spaces -Other)	80-100	
Office Space	5,472sqm (gross/4fl)	Dedicated Office Use
Community uses	800sqm + 1,400sqm	(GRET B Site)



## Jonny McKenna MRIAI, Metropolitan Workshop

**Jonny is a Director**, architect and urban designer. He has played a lead role in masterplanning and residential projects since joining Metropolitan Workshop in 2006, having previously had wide-ranging experience in Ireland and France. He studied architecture at University College Dublin and Urban Design at the University of Westminster, graduating with distinction. He is Hon. Secretary of the RIAI Urban Design Committee, teaches on Urban Design London's foundation courses and sits on the RIAI's design review panel (having previously been a member of Hackney's Design Review Panel). He was recently appointed to DCC's Strategic Committee for planning and Urban Form and leads Metropolitan Workshop's Dublin Studio. Jonny specialises in residential led master planning and housing and has particular skills in estate regeneration and public engagement.

### **An Urban Arboretum for Galway**

The site lies to the north of Galway city and to the east of the Terryland Forest Park. 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 well serviced with roads and key utilities infrastructure is already in place along with the attractive existing landscape in the form of the Terryland Forest Park which was the largest urban neighbourhood forest project in the history of the Irish state when it commenced in January 2000.

The Sandy Road site offers potential to connect the Terryland Forest Park to the Lough Atalia Special Area of Conservation. The principle concept is to extrude the Terryland Forest Park in a western direction creating a new type of 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.

The proposals are about living in a park, not beside one. The idea is to create a distinct place to live, offering delight and surprise in its details and a clear sense of identity – An Urban Arboretum for Galway.



Sean Mulvoy Avenue by Jonny McKenna

There is potential to re-purpose the existing concrete barrel vaults 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. Such a move will offer a diverse and attractive mix supporting Galway’s sustainability ambition as “an Innovative City” There are many examples of industrial structures being repurposed in this way adding character and vibrancy to an area. It can also be something which happens quite quickly, a catalyst for regeneration giving the public confidence that something is happening.

On a more detailed level the forest park is brought into the principle open space to the north. This is lined by residential accommodation and repurposed

workspace. A single villa type building at the western edge of the square aids navigation to a future route to Lough Atalia.

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. This space offers a different type of environment, 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 road moving away from the idea of a trafficked corridor and closer to a notion of an activated street. Sean Mulvoy Road becomes Sean Mulvoy Avenue.

Buildings are generally up to 6 or 7 storeys with accent buildings defined by their architecture rather than excessive height. The proposals can accommodate between 800-930 units depending on how much of the existing structures are retained on site. This gives a density between 110 and 130 dwellings per hectare. Car parking is generally housed in podiums to achieve increased density without the need for basement structures and provided at 0.7 spaces per home.

The building typologies allow 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. 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. 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 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 spaces.



imagery l-r:  
1. ‘Bottleneck Park’ (Flaschenhals), Park am Gleisdreieck, Atelier Loidl Architects, Photo: Atelier Loidl. 2&3. Peckham Levels, Turner Works. 4. Rue de Meaux Housing, Renzo Piano Building Workshop.



Sandy Road New Square view Jonny McKenna



## Schedule of Accommodation

### Version 1

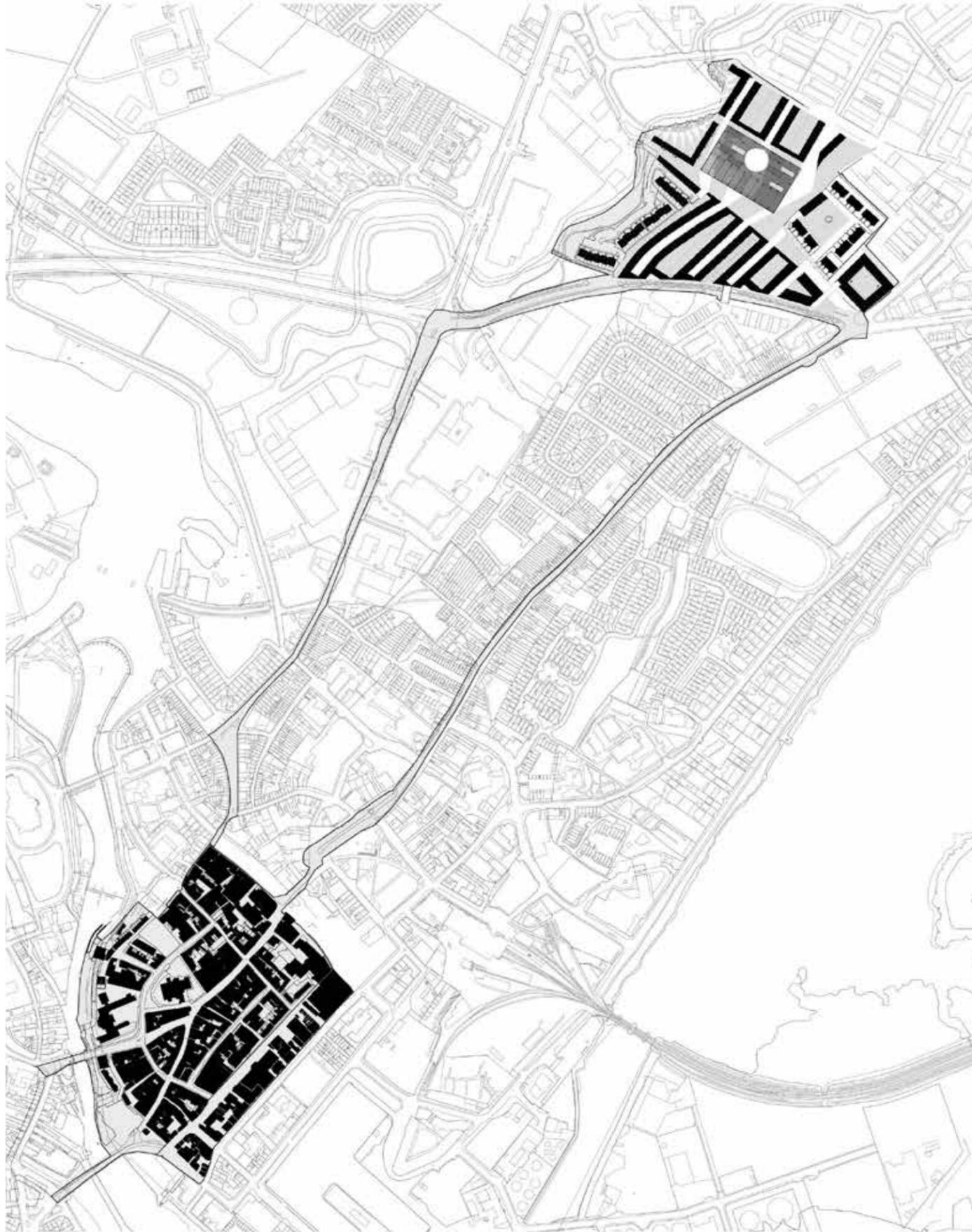
Unit Type	Mix	Unit Size m <sup>2</sup>
1 bed apartment	423	45-50m <sup>2</sup> (50% are 10% oversized)
2 bed apartment	318	73-80m <sup>2</sup> (50% are 10% oversized)
3 bed apartment	191	90-100m <sup>2</sup> (50% are 10% oversized)

<b>Site Area (hectare)</b>	8.63 hectares
<b>Total Units</b>	932 Units
<b>Density (units/hectare)</b>	107 dwellings per hectare
<b>Block Height (floors/meters)</b>	Varies – Generally 6 storey
<b>Parking (no. spaces)</b>	560

### Version 2

Unit Type	Mix	Unit Size m <sup>2</sup>
1 bed apartment	489	45-50m <sup>2</sup> (50% are 10% oversized)
2 bed apartment	388	73-80m <sup>2</sup> (50% are 10% oversized)
3 bed apartment	220	90-100m <sup>2</sup> (50% are 10% oversized)

<b>Site Area (hectare)</b>	8.63 hectares
<b>Total Units</b>	1095 Units
<b>Density (units/hectare)</b>	127 dwellings per hectare
<b>Block Height (floors/meters)</b>	Varies – Generally 6 storey
<b>Parking (no. spaces)</b>	650



## Valerie Mulvin, McCullough Mulvin Architects

Valerie Mulvin is a co-founder (with Niall McCullough) of McCullough Mulvin Architects - a Dublin-based collaborative practice making modern architecture in Ireland and abroad; their work is influenced by European attitudes to the history and culture of the city. McCullough Mulvin's architecture is grounded in place, making buildings with a special understanding of geography, scale, geometry and landscape. In particular, Valerie has worked in university design, extensively for University College Cork and for Trinity College in Dublin, building many projects over a 20 year period (Beaufort Wave Energy Research laboratory, Ussher Library, Long Room Hub) which have had a seminal impact on the 20th and 21st century Irish university architecture. In concert with the practice, she has taken a leading position in Ireland in designing layered interventive work, where old buildings are renewed and brought to life by the addition of often radical contemporary architecture to make a new synthesis deeply engaged with ideas of Irish history and culture (Blackrock College of Further Education/Blackrock Public Library; Dublin Dental School and Hospital, Cathal Brugha Barracks) The practice has recently become engaged with a series of housing projects for public and private clients, often working on complex sites that include Protected Structures. In recent years the practice has expanded internationally, bringing Irish architectural ideas to a wider world stage: in London, and most particularly in India, where she has been working on new University buildings in the Punjab, which are sensitive to climate, light and landscape. Valerie's work is extended by publication, teaching and research.

The Galway project offers a singular opportunity to develop ideas about housing and place for a new generation in Ireland. The site is typical of peripheral places which are found on the edge of many Irish cities, non-space made up of unambitious housing, used and disused factories and excessive roads; one of its main benefits is its relative closeness to the City of Galway-which acts as a beacon for community life, but also for its limpid planning of streets and lanes that allow residential, commercial and social lives to successfully interact. Our view on the new housing is that it should take the one-off opportunity the debate offers to forge an intelligent and local and sustainable way of building which suits Irish conditions- which is more than simply about numbers. The key points of this are- suitable density, a requirement for a mix of functions and facilities- and a mix of occupants, and a need for an appropriate public space and 'identity' in schemes.

This includes looking at Ireland's traditional architecture and public space as models for contemporary work, finding typologies for ideas- for how people in Ireland actually

meet and talk. The schemes should also address requirement for sustainable practice and conservation; this should not be all about new things, but a mixed mode incorporating the value and energy of structures of the past. The aim of the new Irish housing should be to be original rather than simplistically modish- a model for the world in the 21st century.

Two schemes are presented; Option 1 and 2;. Both share core elements; they use the topography and section of the site; both make a public space across the centre of the site, a relaxed widening rather than a formal square; The street/space is a shared surface; vehicular access is permitted at both ends to allow access to existing schemes and to some car parking for new blocks in a stepped plinth. Both schemes also retain the Sandy Road building as a central public element. The building is repurposed into a series of shops, a start-up space and an internal/external public space suitable for the Irish climate; a new residential tower- the highest point on the scheme takes up one corner of it.

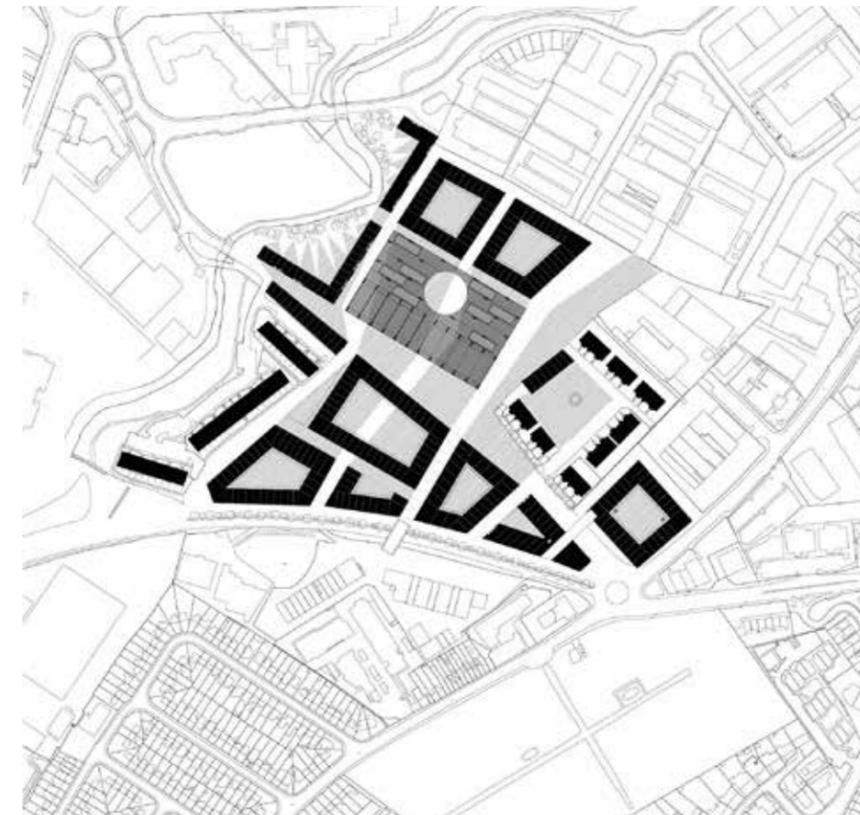
As an additional point, both of the existing housing schemes around the given sites should be included in the overall planning of the 'quarter', their architecture integrated into the wider scheme; the 'riverside' units in the new plans take up the open courtyard of one of the existing housing schemes to make a common pattern along the river; the new block in this case is raised on pilotis on one side closest to the water, allowing for a wet garden beneath; balconies are large dynamic angles thrust out on columns into the open ground.

Both schemes also present similar buildings on the two corner sites at the Cemetery Road junction; these sites- one square, the other triangular, are six stories in height and form a dramatic three-dimensional sculptural unit- a gateway to the quarter. The square building- with deck access around an internal court- consists of integrated elderly and family housing. The triangular building consists of lofts, with some double height units spread through the section. Both schemes would support a general construction methodology of shell and core loft-type space which would allow single people, groups, couples and families to purchase them and fit them out over time within a defined external envelope planning order.

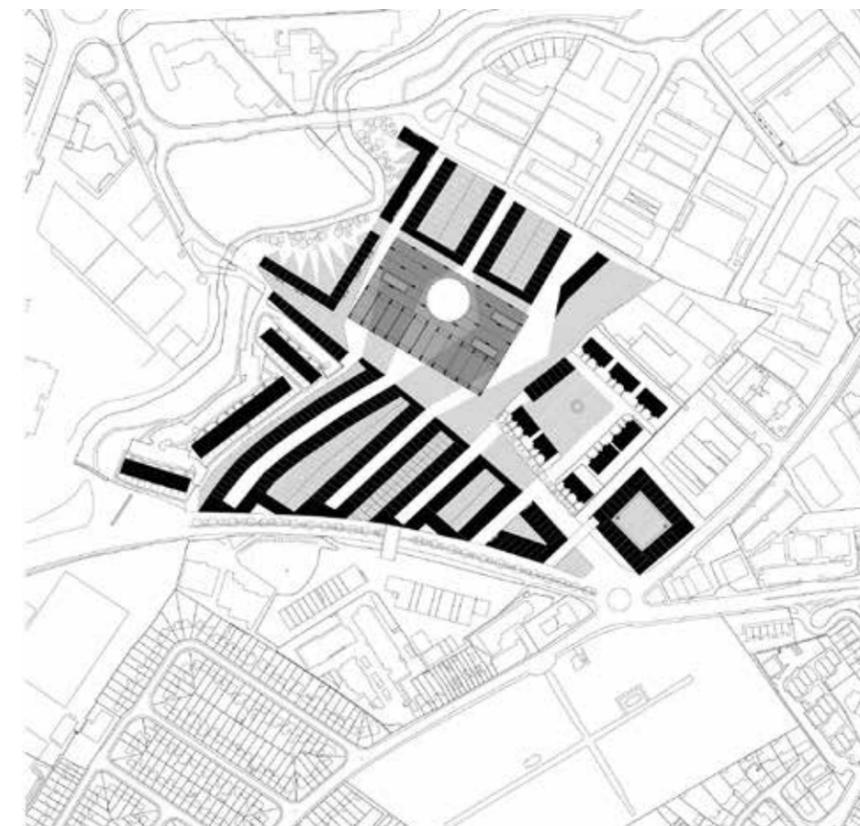
Option 1 and Option 2 differ mainly in the treatment of the remainder of the housing blocks on the site; in both cases,

the streets South of the new space are pedestrianized and stepped- like a Greek town- with some car parking in the plinth made by the section. Option 1 presents a series of courtyard housing/apartment blocks six stories high; Option 2 develops a separate idea of streets which takes its cue from the streets of medieval Galway- these fold and step down the site across the new space and North into the space behind the Sandy Road building in a lazy grid much like the city below. Units along these streets are typically single story units with a duplex over; The streets in option 2 are terminated on the dual carriageway by a series of six story apartments which block noise but allow light through to rear gardens.

Essential to both schemes is the idea of building a community of people of different ages, income groups and interests, which encompasses older peoples' housing; loft-type units which can be fitted out for living and/or working with basic services provided to a minimum standard; family homes of various types; family apartments; and more expansive riverside apartments. The scheme can deliver the densities required while leaving plenty of space for communal activities and public realm. Supporting these areas of housing, are projects of the public realm which link and enhance community living and create a true village related to the city of Galway, well connected but with its own identity.



Scheme A - Apartments  
Building a community with perimeter blocks, courtyard housing, older people's housing and student housing co-living and community, rentable rooms at ground floor, riverside apartments and tower and loft-style housing.



Scheme B - Streets  
Building a community with a variety of house types and ways to live together, including mews housing, courtyard housing, older people's housing and student housing, co-living and community rentable space, street housing, riverside housing, tower and loft-style housing.



clockwise l-r:  
 1. Malopolska Garden of Arts in Krakow-Ingarden & Ewy Architects  
 Photo: Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre 2. Malmo Salu Hall Sweden, Wingardhs  
 Architects, Photo Andre Pihl 3. State & Bond Condos Brooklyn New  
 York Ben Hansen Architects, Photo Lester Ali 4. Munich Housing  
 - SHAG Schindler Hable Architekten GbR 5. Essonne Housing -  
 Fabien Gerin-Jean Architects

## Schedule Of Accommodation

### Option 1

Unit Type	Mix	Unit Size	Block A	B	C	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	O	Total
2 Bed		75	144	132				135	30	144	202					787
3 Bed		100											72	72		144
Loft		100												72		72
Elderly Bed Space		18				150										150
Student Bed Space		12					192									192
Courtyard Houses 2 Bed		80			2							2				4
Courtyard Houses 3 Bed		110			1							2				3
Duplex 3 Bed		120														8
Single Storey Apt 2 Bed		75														8
																<b>1368</b>

Site Area (hectare)	8.63
Total Units	1352
Density (units/hectare)	158
Block Height (floors/meters)	Varies
Parking (no. spaces)	300

### Option 2

Unit Type	Mix	Unit Size	Block A	B	C	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	O	Total
1 Bed																0
2 Bed		75														0
3 Bed		100														0
loft		100													72	72
Elderly bed space		18				150										150
Student bed space		12					192									192
Houses 2 Bed		80		2								2				4
Houses 3 Bed		110		1								2	36	36		75
Duplex 3 Bed		120														0
Duplex 2 Bed		90	25	25				24	32	40	32					186
Single storey apt 1 bed		75	25	25				24	32	40	32					186
Single storey apt 2 bed		75														0
																<b>865</b>

Site Area (hectare)	8.63
Total Units	849
Density (units/hectare)	100
Block Height (floors/meters)	Varies
Parking (no. spaces)	150



## Michael Pike, GKMP Architects

**Michael Pike is a Director of GKMP Architects** and an Assistant Professor in the School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy in University College Dublin. The work of GKMP Architects is primarily concerned with the design of domestic space, both individual houses and housing projects. The practice has received a significant number of architectural awards and has been exhibited and published internationally, including the Venice Biennale 2018 and the Chicago Architecture Biennial 2015. Michael has recently co-edited a book entitled "Irish Housing Design 1950-1980, Out of the Ordinary", published by Routledge (2020). In 2017 he completed a Research Masters in UCD on the housing projects of the Catalan architect, José Antonio Coderch (1913-84).

Our proposal aims to make a new city quarter that relates to the scale, sense of place and civility of Galway city centre. We consider that low-rise high-density is the most appropriate form of development for this site, allowing each dwelling to have a strong connection to the ground and engendering a sense of intimacy and community.

The existing context of Sandy Road has a difficult scale. There is a chaotic disaggregation of the environment, a fragmentary and arbitrary urbanism that consists more of buildings as autonomous objects than any coherent idea about urban morphology. The predominance of traffic planning has resulted in a loss of any sense of streets and of public space. It is a territory defined by the needs of cars rather than people and is very difficult to navigate as a pedestrian or cyclist. This type of spatial condition runs the risk of forgetting the values of the culture of Galway and the

aspirations of its citizens, values that are very apparent in the historic city centre.

Our proposal sets out a landscape infrastructure for the entire site in the form of a network of streets and pedestrian and cycle routes that connect to the existing context. These streets set up urban blocks of a similar scale to the city centre. There is a main street that connects across the site from the south-west to the north-east and ties in with the existing road in Liosbán.

These blocks are then overlaid with a system of structural walls at 8-metre centres that provide an economical structure for the housing as well as for basement car parks where required. In this way we are designing the site first. It is like designing the rug first and then the picnic, as described by Florian Beigel. The urban design concepts can then be easily adjusted to changes that will occur in time.

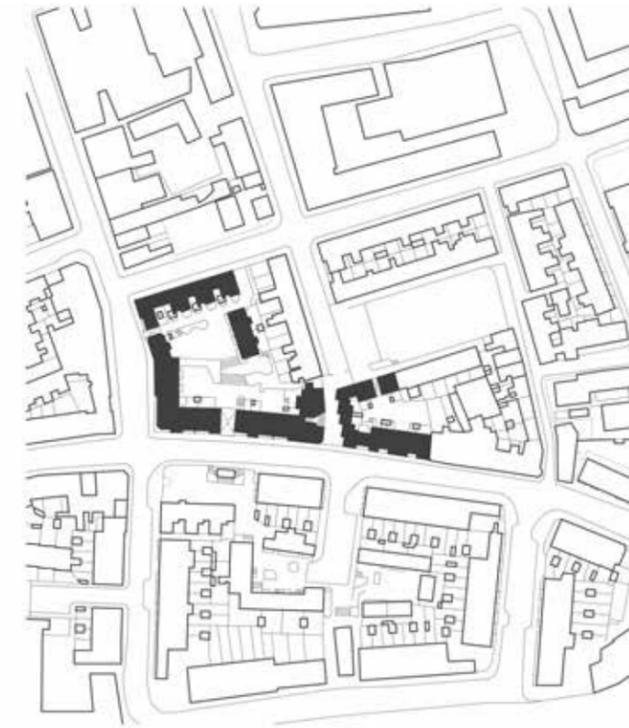
These walls are then in-filled with a dense carpet of three and four storey housing with gardens and courtyards in between. The cars and parking are kept to the streets and these in-between spaces are protected pedestrian areas. With the ground densely occupied by housing the offices and other communal facilities are arranged as a series of small towers that emerge from the blocks and enjoy views of the wider landscape. The inhabitants live on the ground and work in the sky. The idea of coexistence, bringing different functions together in close proximity to each other is guiding us towards a sustainable piece of city. The aim is an integrated city quarter full of vitality and liveliness.

The in-between spaces are laid out as shared gardens and public spaces. The aim is to design rich and robust public spaces embedded within the urban structures, providing social theatres for gathering and relaxing. We are thinking of the high-quality public realm that grows with the city. The idea is that the everydayness of the city quarter carries civility and culture.

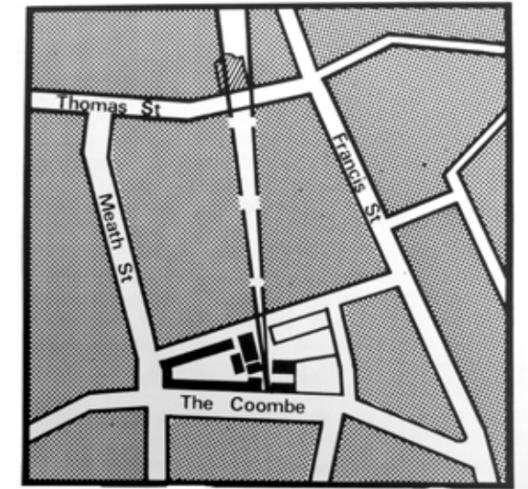
The typical dwellings are L-shaped and arranged around a courtyard. They are organized with one-bedroom apartments on the ground floor with a private courtyard and with two-bedroom duplexes above with balconies and roof terraces. There are variations, including two and three storey houses that work within the same basic configuration. Every dwelling

has its own front door and there are no lifts. The repetition of the dwellings and their organization as four-metre wide bays lends itself to possible prefabrication and modularization. The arrangement of the dwellings allows for window locations to be adjusted to avoid overlooking of the neighbours while allowing strong connections to the private courtyards and to the shared gardens, creating a strong feeling of connection to nature from the interior.

The typical urban block measures 60 metres by 90 metres and relates to the scale of the urban blocks in the city centre. A series of laneways and shared gardens weave their way through the block and form a protected pedestrian realm for children's play and for convivial relaxation. The typical block comprises between 100 and 120 dwellings, depending on the dwelling types adopted. Overall, we are proposing a density of 125-150 dwellings per hectare, providing between 1,000 and 1,200 dwellings and approximately 25,000 square metres of office and amenity space. The intention of the proposal is to concentrate urban fabric in localities of density, rather than allowing a dispersed and undifferentiated sprawl. In this way the development of this site can be made to be more site-specific, more grounded in the place, more cultured and more civic. We consider our proposed strategy to be a canvas for city life, specific in determining the spatial quality of the city quarter and its relationship to its surroundings, yet adaptable in the way it is inhabited.



The Coombe North Housing - site plan



The Coombe North Housing - site plan



imagery l-r:  
 1. Internal Courtyard, the Coombe North Housing, Delaney McVeigh Pike, Photo: Miriam Delaney  
 2. The Coombe North Housing, Delaney McVeigh Pike, Courtesy Irish Architectural Archive



### Site Area/Density Residential Development

<b>Site area (hectare)</b>	8.63 ha
<b>Total Units</b>	1,050 dwellings
<b>Density (units/hectare)</b>	122 dwellings/hectare
<b>Block Height (floors/meters)</b>	3+4 storeys
<b>Parking (no. spaces)</b>	840 spaces

### Office and Amenities Development

<b>Site Area (hectare)</b>	8.63 hectares
<b>Total Floor Area</b>	25,000 sq.m.
<b>Block Height (floors/meters)</b>	7+8 storeys
<b>Parking (no. spaces)</b>	360 spaces

### Unit Size/Schedule of Accommodation

The intention of the proposal is that the dwelling layouts and configurations are interchangeable depending on the mix required. This table is therefore indicative:

Unit Type	Mix	Unit Size sq.m.
1-Bed GF Apartment	36%	55 sq.m.
2-Bed Duplex	22%	73 sq.m.
2-Bed Duplex	22%	84 sq.m.
3-Bed Duplex	12%	105 sq.m.
3-Bed House	8%	135 sq.m.

## 6. Feedback

### **A Vision for a new Neighbourhood Sandy Road, Galway**

This Design Review Report and Architects' visions are available on [galwaycity.ie](https://galwaycity.ie), [lda.ie](https://lda.ie) and [riai.ie](https://riai.ie)

Please send your comments to [galway.sandyroad@lda.ie](mailto:galway.sandyroad@lda.ie) up to **31 July 2020**.

We would like to hear from you.

Thank you!



Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe  
Galway City Council

