



THORNTON O'CONNOR  
TOWN PLANNING

# Planning Report

## Planning Application

In respect of a Student Accommodation  
Development at

Cúirt Na Coiribe,  
Headford Road,  
Terryland,  
Galway,  
County Galway

Submitted on Behalf of  
Exeter Property Ireland III Limited

June 2020



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The subject planning application falls within the remit of Strategic Housing Development as defined in Section 3 of the *Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016* (amended July 2018) as “strategic housing development”, which includes –

*‘(b) the development of student accommodation units which, when combined, contain 200 or more bed spaces, on land the zoning of which facilitates the provision of student accommodation or a mixture of student accommodation and other uses thereon.’*

The subject application which proposes an extension to the existing Student Accommodation complex increasing the quantum of bedspaces from 405 No. to 920 No. and the introduction of a significant quantum of student amenity spaces not previously provided has been prepared by a multi-disciplinary team on behalf of Exeter Property III Limited as set out in the table below:

<b>Company Name &amp; Address</b>	<b>Documents Prepared</b>
<b>Thornton O’Connor Town Planning</b>  No. 1 Kilmacud Road Upper, Dundrum, Dublin 14 D14 EA89	→ Planning Report → Statement of Consistency → Environmental Report → Student Demand and Concentration Report → Response to An Bord Pleanála Opinion
<b>TODD Architects</b>  No. 4 Lad Lane, Dublin 2 D02 T997	→ Architectural Drawings → Architectural Design Statement
<b>AECOM</b>  Cork Office Montrose House, Carrigaline Road, Douglas, County Cork T12 P088	→ Traffic & Transport Assessment → DMURS Statement of Compliance → Mobility Management Plan → Infrastructure Report → Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessment → Geotechnical Survey → Energy Statement → Lighting Study
<b>3D Design Bureau</b>  No. 63 Rock Road, Blackrock, County Dublin A94 PT62	→ Daylight and Sunlight Analysis → Photomontages and CGIs
<b>The Big Space</b>  Creative Dock, Malahide Marina Village, Malahide, County Dublin	→ Landscape Masterplan → Landscape Development Report → Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

<b>JBA Consulting</b> Unit No. 8 Block No. 66o Greenogue Business Park, Rathcoole, County Dublin D24 YN81	→ Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment → Natura Impact Assessment
<b>AWN</b> The Tecpro Building, No. 17 Clongshaugh Business and Technology Park, Dublin 17.	→ Operational Waste Management Plan
<b>DCON Safety Consultants</b> Suite No. 5, Fitzwilliam Square East, Dublin 2	→ Draft Construction & Demolition Waste Management Plan → Draft Construction Management Plan
<b>O’Herlihy Access Consultancy</b> Guinness Enterprise Centre, Talyor’s Lane, Dublin 8	→ Disability Access Statement
<b>Exeter Property Ireland III Limited</b> No. 88 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2	→ Student Management Plan

The subject lands have been recently purchased by our Client with the intention of completely upgrading and expanding upon the existing Student Accommodation facility, offering an improved level of amenity and services throughout the development. The proposed development comprises of 515 No. additional bedspaces of Student Accommodation and for the first time introduces a large quantity of amenity spaces not currently available within the scheme. The site is currently an active Student Accommodation facility and is open to short stay tourists during the summer months as granted permission originally back in 2000 for dual use.

### 1.1 Layout of this Planning Report

This Planning Report will be organised into the following sections:

SECTION	NUMBER
Introduction	Section 1.0
Site Location and Description	Section 2.0
Planning History	Section 3.0
Pre-Planning	Section 4.0
Proposed Development in Detail	Section 5.0
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## 1.2 Description of Development

The proposed development will consist of: the demolition of the two storey building (582 sq m) at the entrance to the scheme towards the eastern boundary of the site and the removal of the fifth storey (attic) level (1,123 sq m) of the main building; and the provision of horizontal and vertical additions to and extensions of the main existing building providing 920 No. bedspaces (an additional 515 No. student accommodation bedspaces) in 868 No. bedrooms; ancillary student accommodation spaces at basement and ground floor level measuring 1,688 sq m and including gym/fitness studio, games room, library/study spaces, multi-functional spaces, café/restaurant, and student lounge spaces; all provided in a single building in 9 No. linked blocks ranging in height from 2 No. to 6 No. storeys (gross floor space of 24,693 sq m plus basement car-parking (2,443 sq m)).

The scheme also proposes 59 No. car-parking spaces (43 No. basement and 16 No. surface spaces); 656 No. cycle parking spaces; 5 No. motorcycle parking spaces; external student amenity spaces; hard and soft landscaping; attenuation pond/wetland area; boundary treatments; plant; diversion of services and all associated works above and below ground.

## 1.3 Development Rationale

A detailed Development Rationale is included in the separate *Student Demand and Concentration Report* (prepared by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning) which has been included as part of this application. This application is also supported by an *Architectural Design Statement* prepared by TODD Architects which further details the design rationale for this proposed development.

As well as 398 No. bedspaces to be retained within the existing Cúirt Na Coiribe building there is an existing restaurant unit, known as "Scotty's Steakhouse". This restaurant has a total floor area of 172.15 sq m. This is currently the main existing amenity space within the development, as the retail unit in the ancillary services building is currently vacant.

## 2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Site Location

The site of Cúirt Na Coiribe is located just north of the junction of the Headford Road, the N6 National Road and the Sean Mulvey Road, in Terryland, Galway City. This is a prominent location above the Terryland River and associated walking path.

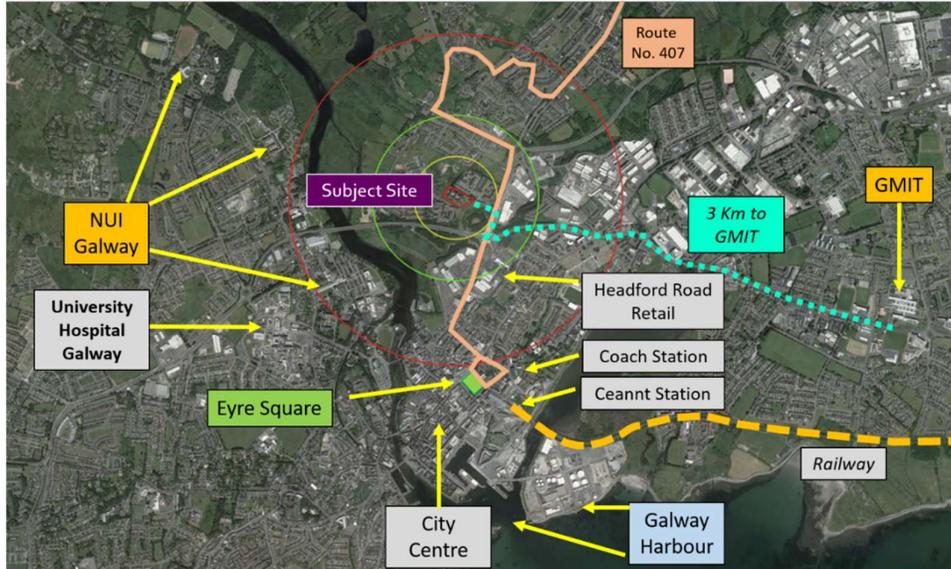


**Figure 2.1** Map Showing the Location of Cúirt Na Coiribe, and Associated Land Holding.

(Source: Myplan.ie, OSI Map, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2018)

### 2.2 Site Context

The site is situated close to the centre of Galway, just over 1 Km from Eyre Square (see Figure 2.2 below) or a 10 No. minute cycle ride. It is also well situated in that it is close to NUI Galway, a 7 No. Minute Cycle via the Quincentenary bridge. Being close to the junction of the N6, the Headford Road and Sean Mulvoy Road provides an abundant access to the Galway region and to the wider National Road Network.



**Figure 2.2:** Wider Aerial View of Galway City, with Cúirt na Coiribe in Context, outlined in Red (Indicative Only). Distance Radii from site of 250 m (Yellow), 500 m (Green) and 1 Km (Red).

(Source: Google Earth, Annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2020)

Located around 1 Km north of the centre of Galway City, the subject site sits above the Terryland River valley as it crosses the northern suburbs. The current development is within comfortable walking distance of the majority of the City Centre and the main campus of NUI Galway.

Located on a slight hill above the Terryland River, the subject site is nestled in an area of mixed residential housing (Dun Na Coiribe) and student accommodation (Gort na Coiribe), generally ranging in height from 3 to 4 No. storeys. The site is easily accessible from the road network and has connections to the walking trails along the River and also to the Quincentenary bridge.



**Figure 2.3:** Aerial View of Cúirt na Coiribe Complex, and the Entrance Roadway

(Source: Google Maps, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2020)



**Figure 2.4:** 3 and 4 No. Storey Development in Gort na Coiribe

(Source: Google Street View)

### 2.3 Site Description

The existing Cúirt Na Coiribe complex is 2 No. buildings, a largely ancillary two-storey service building and the main Student Accommodation building. The main building is the largest structure and is orientated around two courtyards and arranged in 3 No. wings running from north east to south west, and 2 No. spinal columns running from north west to south east. The 5 No. storey building (including attic level) sits on a plinth over the large underground car-park.

The service building is smaller in scale and is made up of 3 No. interconnecting square pitched roof structures comprising ancillary office space/reception, a vacant retail unit, and a laundry room. This structure also contains some 7 No. bedspaces at 1<sup>st</sup> floor level.

To the rear of the site bordering the Terryland waterworks, there are 2 No. outbuildings which are currently in use as plant rooms and storage.



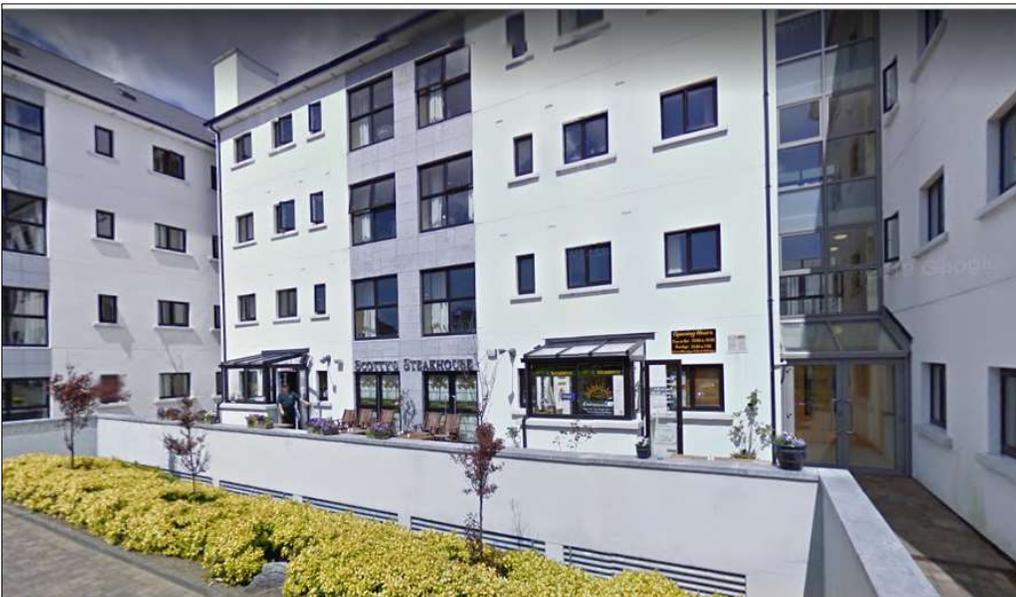
**Figure 2.5:** Two Storey Service Building (Shop now Closed)

(Source: Google Maps)



**Figure 2.6: Main Student Accommodation Building**

**(Source: Google Maps)**



**Figure 2.7: Existing Scotty's Restaurant (to be retained)**

**(Source: Google Maps)**

The existing 'Scotty's Steakhouse' is the main amenity currently within the complex. This restaurant caters to residents and the wider public. It can be accessed from the south-western side of the main building and from the internal courtyard.

## 2.4 Site Accessibility

Due to the historic fine grain of Galway City, the city core is easily walkable and accessible for residents and visitors alike. The subject site is located only a 1.3 Km walk from Eyre Square, a public amenity renowned as a focal point for the community, business, food & drink services, entertainment and culture, transport and tour operators.

The subject development is also located within approximately 1 Km of the NUIG Campus across the Quincentenary bridge and on the opposing bank of the River Corrib. The GMIT Campus is located 3 Km to the east, or a 10-minute cycle journey.

Due to the proximity of Cúirt Na Coiribe to the City Centre and Higher Education Institutes, the majority of residents walk or cycle to their destinations. As such, the existing basement car park is completely underutilised, providing the opportunity to convert some of this space to student amenity space.

The proposed development will reduce the car parking provision across the site to 59 No. spaces. This includes a reduction of the underground car park from 135 No. car parking spaces to 43 No. car parking spaces, with the remaining 16 No. provided at surface level. There will also be an increase in bicycling parking to circa 656 No. bicycle parking spaces, 80 No. bicycle spaces on Sheffield stands at surface, and 576 No. spaces provided underground for long stay storage for residents.

### 2.4.1 Existing Active Transport – Walking and Cycling

As stated previously the subject site is centrally located within 1.3 Km walking distance from Eyre Square and 1 Km from the NUIG Campus. There is a significant number of students who avail of active modes of transport to reach their campus or to access other parts of the city. This is a sustainable and healthy alternative to car use, which at such short distances would be unrealistic for most able-bodied residents. Access to the nearby National University of Ireland Galway campus is possible via entrances along the N6 and steps down to the Distillery Road beside the sports centre as detailed in Figure 2.8 below.

#### **Bikeshare -Coca-Cola Zero Bikes Galway**

The city of Galway is served by a bikeshare program currently sponsored by Coca-Cola Zero. The network contains 22 No. stations and 195 No. bikes<sup>1</sup>. There is a nearby station on the Headford Road, and stations surrounding the southern portions of the NUIG campus.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bikeshare.ie/>

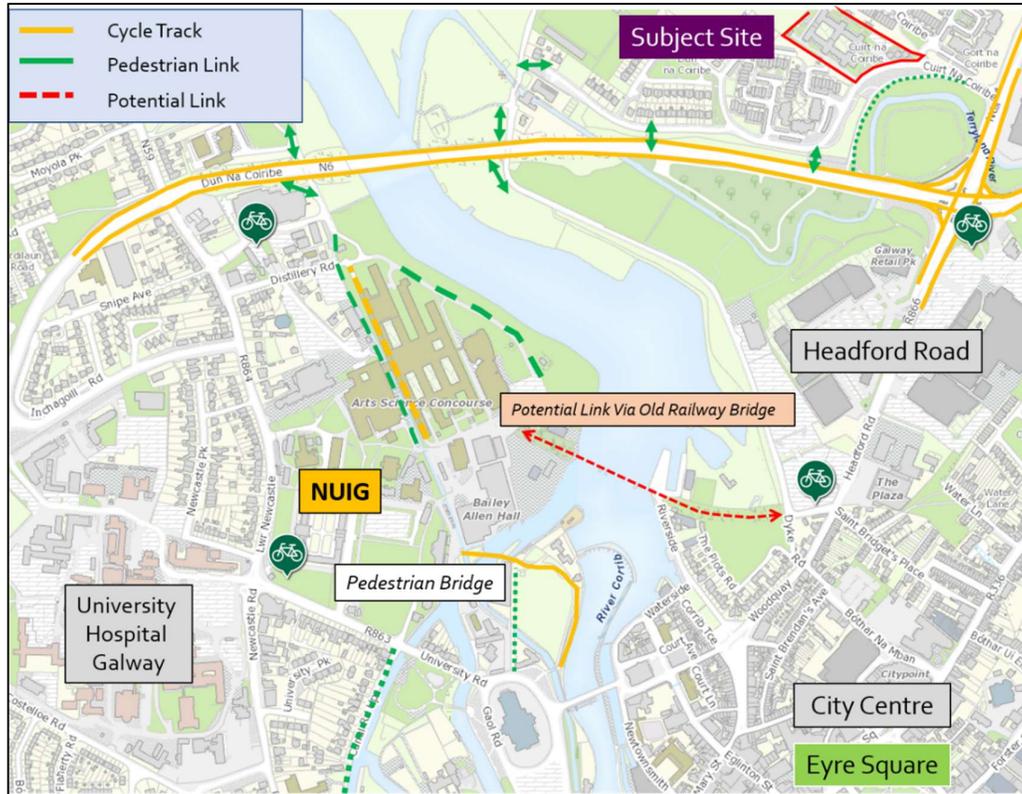


Figure 2.8: Walking and Cycling Infrastructure in the Vicinity. Bikeshare stations indicated by Bicycle Symbol. Subject Site in Red (Indicative Only).

(Source: Google Maps and Bikeshare.ie/Galway, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2020)

### 2.4.2 Existing and Proposed Bus Services

The Headford Road area is currently served by the No. 407 bus which runs every half hour from Eyre Square to the northern suburbs of Galway. This service is operated as part of the Bus Eireann local bus services in Galway City and is part of a wider network which is focused on Eyre Square and Ceann Train Station.

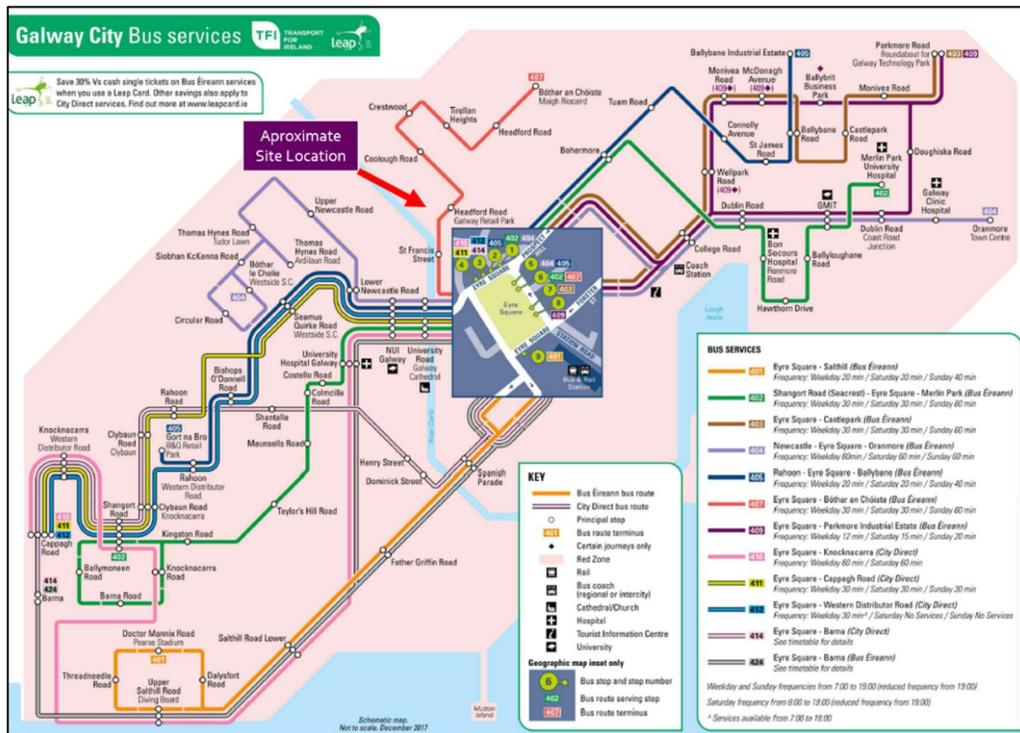


Figure 2.9: Schematic Map of the Galway City Local Bus Services as Provided by Bus Eireann.

(Source: Transport for Ireland and Leap Card, Annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2020)

The integrated ticketed system provided by the 'Leap Card' covers the local bus services and some Bus Eireann Coach services in the Galway Region. The 'Leap Card' also provides access to other major transport networks in Cities and commuter towns of Ireland across public and private operators.

### Proposed Galway Bus Connects

Under the Galway Transport Strategy (2016) there is a longer term goal for an integrated bus priority network for Galway City. This planned bus network is also supported by the National Development Plan under a program for a Galway City 'Bus Connects' network redesign.

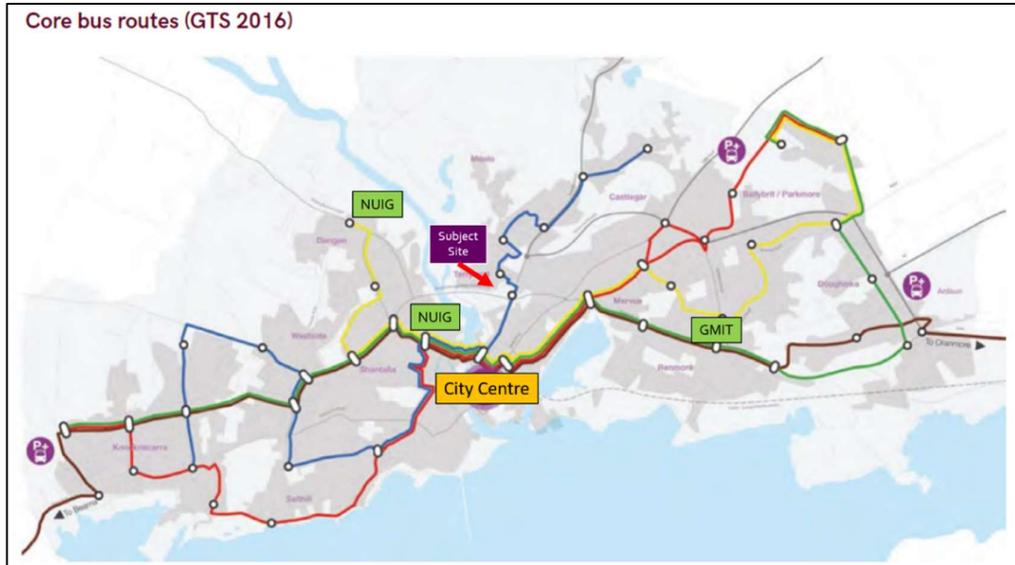


Figure 2.10: Core Bus Routes identified for Bus Priority and Upgraded Services and Infrastructure

(Source: Galway City County Development Plan 2017-2023, Annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2020)

This proposed network will provide for a wider accessibility of the city, bus priority where appropriate, and increased service frequency and capacity. The subject site will remain served by an inbound stop on the Headford Road, near to Dunnes Stores and DID Electrical (350 Metres) and an outbound stop close to the entrance to the access road to Cúirt Na Coiribe (290 Metres).

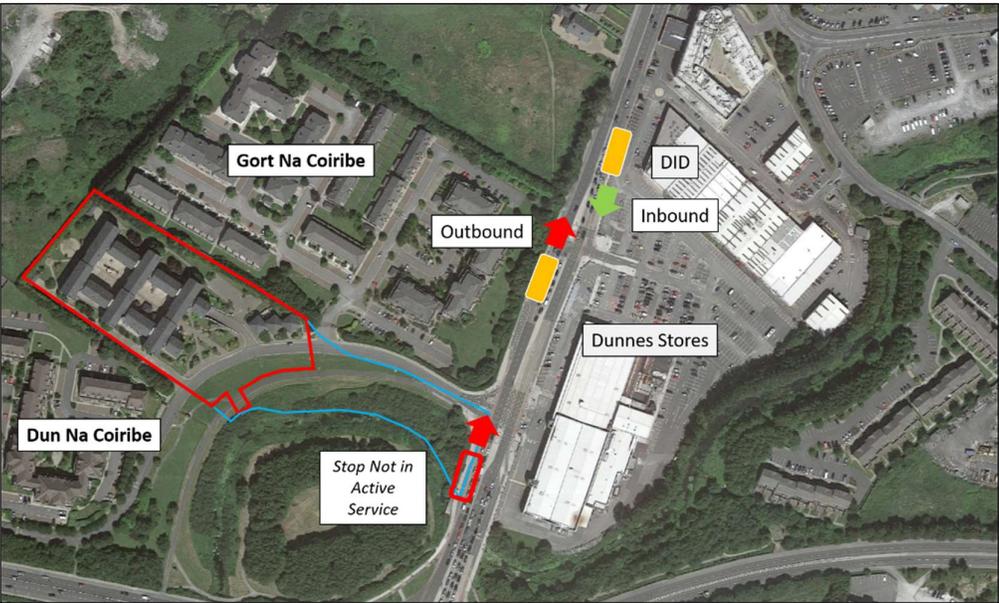


Figure 2.11: Bus Stop Diagram. Note a bus stop not in active service close to the access road

(Source: Google Maps, Annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2020)



### 2.4.3 Summary of Accessibility

It is therefore considered that the subject site is well located for residents during the academic term owing to the subject site's proximity to NUI Galway, local services and the City Centre. This prime location is also suitable walking distance of the city centre and various attractions during the summer months. Nearby public transport options also provide greater access to the wider Metropolitan area and the surrounding region.

### 3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

The purpose of this section is to outline the history of development on the subject site and detail the amendments over time to permitted developments.

#### 3.1 Parent Permission for Accommodation Building

The following is the history of the development of the Cúirt Na Coiribe building in the early 2000s.

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>00/249</b>
<b>Location:</b>	Terryland Td, Headford Road, Galway
<b>Application Date:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2000
<b>Dev. Description:</b>	Permission for 88 no. residential apartments to include use for student and tourist occupation, (2 apts on ground floor to include alternative use as a creche), underground car parking for 139 no. cars and additional surface parking, bedding storage, maintenance storage, shop, launderette, reception/ office, caretakers apt, restaurant/ seminar room, bicycle parking, refuse storage, ESB substations, ancillary site works & services at Terryland Td, Headford Road, Galway Development Bond
<b>GCC Decision Date:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> September 2000
<b>GCC Decision:</b>	Grant Permission
<b>Final Grant Date:</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2000
<b>Note:</b>	14 No. Conditions

This is the parent permission for the currently existing student accommodation, which opened in 2004. The subject application seeks to expand and improve upon the student accommodation element in the redevelopment of the complex as Purpose Built Student Accommodation, serving Galway City's numerous higher education institutions.

### 3.2 Subsequent Amendments and Developments

The following planning applications detail a history of amendments and signage which were applied for on the subject site up to the year 2019.

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>02/919</b>
Location:	Terryland Townland, Headford Road, Galway
Application Date:	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2002
Dev. Description:	Permission for two number E.S.B.M.V. Substation and Switch Room buildings and associated works located either side of approved building, Planning Ref. No. 249/00
GCC Decision Date:	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2003
GCC Decision:	Grant Permission
Grant Date:	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2003
Note:	4 No. Conditions

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>03/400</b>
Location:	Terryland Townland, Headford Road, Galway
Application Date:	6 <sup>th</sup> May 2003
Dev. Description:	Permission for change of use of 2 no. apartments numbered 14 and 15 on original approved application no 249/00 to a Seminar/Café and change of use of seminar area indicated on original approved application no 249/00 to an apartment now numbered apartment no 3
GCC Decision Date:	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2003
GCC Decision:	Grant Permission
Final Grant Date:	5 <sup>th</sup> August 2003
Note:	9 No. Conditions

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>03/422</b>
Location:	Terryland Townland, Headford Road, Galway
Application Date:	14 <sup>th</sup> May 2003
Dev. Description:	Permission for relocation of two number approved E.S.B. MV Sub-station and Switch Room Building to rear of site, planning ref. 919/02 and permission for construction of refuse and gas bulk storage tank screening compounds located at sides of site. All for approved apartment building, planning ref. 249/00
GCC Decision Date:	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2003
GCC Decision:	Grant Permission
Final Grant Date:	13 <sup>th</sup> August 2003
Note:	6 No. Conditions

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>04/118</b>
Location:	Terryland Townland, Headford Road, Galway
Application Date:	24 <sup>th</sup> February 2004
Dev. Description:	Permission for relocation of two number approved E.S.B. MV Sub-station and Switch Room Building to rear of site, planning

	ref. 919/02 and permission for construction of refuse and gas bulk storage tank screening compounds located at sides of site. All for approved apartment building, planning ref. 249/00
GCC Decision Date:	27 <sup>th</sup> July 2004
GCC Decision:	Granted
Final Grant Date:	2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2004
Note:	7 No. Conditions

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>o6/508</b>
Location:	Terryland Townland, Headford Road, Galway
Application Date:	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2006
Dev. Description:	Permission for the retention of 2 retail signs
GCC Decision Date:	14 <sup>th</sup> August 2006
GCC Decision:	Granted
Final Grant Date:	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2006

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>o6/526</b>
Location:	Terryland Townland, Headford Road, Galway
Application Date:	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2006
Dev. Description:	Permission for the Erection of 2 No. Retail Signs
GCC Decision Date:	18 <sup>th</sup> August 2006
GCC Decision:	Granted
Final Grant Date:	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2006
Note:	4 No. Conditions

The above permissions detail the history of the subject development (as permitted by Reg. Ref. 00/249) since its completion. Until the following recent permission, the majority of activity on site related to the continued operation of the apartments, predominantly for the permitted student accommodation use and its ancillary elements.

### 3.3 Recent Application

In 2018 an application was made for alterations to existing units and an expansion of units into the attic space at 3<sup>rd</sup> floor level.

<b>GCC Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>18/340</b>
<b>Location:</b>	Terryland Townland, Headford Road, Galway
<b>Application Date:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> October 2018
<b>Dev. Description:</b>	Permission is sought for renovation and upgrade works consisting of; (a) Reconfiguration of a 4 No. apartments at ground floor level: 6 No. apartments at first floor level: 6 No apartments at second floor level (Total: 16 No. apartments), to provide 1 No additional single bedroom in each apartment ( 16 No. rooms total); (b) Reconfiguration of 6 No. apartments at third/attic floor levels to provide 2 No. additional single rooms in each apartment at attic level (12 No. rooms total); (c) Installation of 12 No. Velux rooflights to existing pitched roofs; (d) Replacement of entrance doors from central courtyards in 4 No. locations by windows.
<b>GCC Decision Date:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
<b>GCC Decision:</b>	Granted
<b>Final Grant Date:</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> April 2019
<b>Note:</b>	Reduced to 22 No. Bedspaces following Request for Further Information.

The originally proposed scheme of works included the following:

- 4 No. apartments at ground floor level;
- 6 No. apartments at first floor level;
- 6 No. apartments at second floor level;
  - To provide 1 No. additional single bedroom in each apartment, 16 No. rooms total.
- Reconfiguration of the following apartments:
  - 6 No. apartments at third/attic level to provide 2 No. additional single rooms in each apartment (12 No. rooms total).

#### Response to Request for Further Information

The Planning Authority issued the following request for Further Information on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018:

1. *'With regards to Fire and Building Regulations, you are requested to submit a report, prepared by a suitably qualified person, which will certify that the proposed internal alterations to the existing building, facilitating the inclusion of the additional rooms, would be in accordance with the relevant fire and building regulation.*
2. *It is noted that a number of the existing bed rooms will be reduced in area, in this instance please demonstrate that the reduced bedrooms and the proposed*



*new bedrooms and apartments communal areas would be of a size which would be in accordance with existing design guidance for apartments and student accommodation.'*

A response to this request for Further Information was submitted by the Applicant on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019. This submission proposed a reduction in the proposed new rooms from 28 No. rooms to 22 No. rooms, with 6 No. rooms at attic level deemed no longer feasible within the available area. This was deemed to be a significant change and a revised newspaper notice and site notice were received on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

The above application received its Final Grant Notice on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

### 3.4 Other Developments in the Vicinity of the Subject Site

#### 3.4.1 Terryland Water Treatment Plant

The following history relates to a recent Planning Application for a new water intake from the River Corrib to connect to the existing Terryland Water Treatment Plant (WTP) which neighbours the subject site to the north-west. This will increase the capacity of the neighbouring facility and provide a greater supply to Galway City and the surrounding Metropolitan area.

<b>Reg. Ref.:</b>	<b>19107</b>
<b>Location:</b>	Dyke Road, Terryland, Galway
<b>Application Date:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> April 2019
<b>Dev. Description:</b>	Permission for development which comprises of a new raw water intake works located on the east bank of the River Corrib, 100m downstream of Quincentenary Bridge; associated pipework to transfer raw water from the new intake works to the existing intakes works , which in turn supplies Terryland Water Treatment Plant (WTP); and a new treated water rising main extending between Terryland WTP and existing rising main on the east bank of the River Corrib. The works comprises: New Intake Works. a) Underground inlet works chamber and associated equipment; b) Control building; c) Compound security fencing and gates, safety fencing, drainage, lighting, hard - standing areas and landscaping, ducting and water supply connection; d) Access road from Dyke Road with new entrance and gates; e) Floating boom system offset 5m into the river from proposed headwall of the intake works. Slipway. f) A new slipway, including a new public access road from Dyke Road. The slipway will be located on the east bank of the River Corrib, circa. 140m downstream of the Quincentenary Bridge. Transfer Mains. g) 215m of 1200mm diameter underground transfer gravity main passing under Terryland parkland, the Quincentenary Bridge eastern approach road (N6) and Terryland River. This will connect the new intake works to the existing raw water mains, which supply Terryland WTP. Works will include 2 no. chambers along the transfer main ( north and south of the N6 Road) and 1 no. chamber for connection to the existing raw water mains at the existing intake site; h) Modifications to the existing intake works in Terryland (decommissioning and civil works). Rising Main. I) 535m of 600mm diameter ductile iron underground rising main from Terryland WTP of the eastern bank to the River Corrib, including a pipe - bridge over the Terryland River, to connect to the existing 450mm diameter ductile iron rising main upstream of the River Corrib crossing. Surge Vessel. j) 1 no. 35m <sup>3</sup> surge vessel tank at Terryland WTP for the proposed rising main. A Natura Impact Statement has been submitted.
<b>GCC Decision Date:</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>GCC Decision:</b>	Granted Permission

Due to issues with the current intake locations, Galway City Council and Irish Water (in consultation with the Office of Public Works, Inland Fisheries Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Services) sought this planning permission to improve water intake to the Terryland Water Treatment Plant. The following extract from the Appropriate Assessment details the site selection and rationale for the proposed project:

*'The Terryland River has issues with supply security (i.e raw water shortages during dry weather flow), raw water quality and in stream vegetation growth. To facilitate this proposal and to mitigate limitations on the current abstraction, it is proposed that the raw water intake works be established. Detailed assessments were undertaken to determine the optimum location for the new intake works. The preferred site, which is proposed to be relocated on the east bank of the River Corrib at Terryland downstream of Quincentenary Bridge, was found to be the most favourable location based on an 'Analytical Hierarchical Process' comprising a review of a selection of criteria including Archaeology, Visual Impact, Cost, Water Quality, Hydraulics, Navigation and Ecology. The site selection report was presented to Galway City Council in October 2013 and further recommended following a detailed Hydraulic Assessment for Irish Water and Galway City Council in June 2015.'*

This long term project is likely to secure a more consistent water flow for Galway City and provide a greater security of supply into the future. It is not anticipated that the proposed project will have any impact on the above development as no impacts are anticipated on the Terryland River, and the proposed new works will move water abstraction to the River Corrib.

### 3.4.2 Coolough Student Housing SHD – ABP Ref. 306403-20

The following SHD application is for 255 No. bedspaces at Coolough, Terryland, Co. Galway. This Strategic Housing Development was lodged on 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 Emergency Legislation regarding planning applications, a decision has yet to be made regarding this application as of 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

<b>ABP Ref.</b>	<b>306403-20</b>
<b>Location:</b>	Coolough Road, Terryland, Co. Galway
<b>Application Date:</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>Dev. Description:</b>	The development will consist of a Student Housing development comprising 2 No. blocks ranging in height from 1 to 4 storeys, providing a total of 255 no. single bedrooms (of which 5 will be accessible bedrooms) divided into 38 no. clusters. Ancillary student facilities to include student communal laundry (c. 110.39 sq m), student gym/ fitness centre (c. 133.98 sq m), reception/ security are (c. 109.11 sq m), student common/seminar area (c. 183.73 sq m). Provision for 8 no. car parking spaces, 280 no. bicycle parking spaces, 3 no. motorcycle parking spaces, and coach drop off (with bus shelter). Bin stores, plant areas, switch room, ESB sub-station, gas skid. Access to be provided from Coolough Road. Provision of pedestrian crossing infrastructure at Dyke Road and Coolough Road. All associate site development works, including landscaped areas, boundary treatments, drainage works, lighting; site services and infrastructure.
<b>ABP Decision Date:</b>	Original Decision Date: 5 <sup>th</sup> May 2020

Due to the undecided nature of the above SHD application it has not been included in the calculations prepared for the *Student Demand and Concentration Report* or this Planning Report.

### 3.5 Recent On-Campus Student Accommodation Development

There has recently been an expansion of the provision of purpose built student accommodation on the National University of Ireland Galway campus. The following Strategic Housing Application was recently Granted Permission by the Board:

<b>ABP Reg. Ref.</b>	<b>PL61.303846</b>
Location:	NUIG Northern Campus, Dangan, Upper Newcastle, Galway City
Applicant:	National University of Ireland Galway
Application Date:	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Dev. Description:	<p>The development provides for the construction of a student accommodation scheme comprising 125 no. apartments with 674 no. bed spaces arranged as 85 No. units of 6 No. ensuite bedrooms, 4 units of 5 ensuite bedroom and 36 No. units of 4 No. ensuite bedrooms, together with all ancillary facilities including communal areas and facilities, multi-purpose spaces, ancillary office/reception accommodation, internal plant/service rooms, general and refuse storage and a maintenance/workshop area (gross external floor area 23,858 sq m).</p> <p>The proposed accommodation is arranged in 4 no. blocks which vary in height from 4 to 8 No. storeys. A commercial/retail space of 325 sq m is provided in Block A.</p> <p>The development will include site landscaping and boundary treatment, footpath and cycle links to the campus network, building signage, connections to services and all associated works. A dedicated Biodiversity Enhancement Area, outside the construction footprint will be managed to enhance biodiversity.</p> <p>The development provides for changes to the NUIG internal road network including provision of an access road, a pick up/drop off area and coach set down area.</p> <p>It is intended that general car parking will be provided at the existing Park and Ride facility adjacent to the site with 7 No. accessible parking bays, 4 No. parking bays associated with the commercial/retail development and a delivery set down area provided on site. A total of 376 No. bicycle parking spaces (310 No. spaces for students, 63 No. visitor spaces and 3 No. bicycle spaces to serve the commercial/retail space) are proposed. The development also includes connections to services and all associated works.</p> <p>The proposed development will also be available for short term visitor letting during the summer months.</p>

ABP Decision Date:	4 <sup>th</sup> June 2019
ABP Decision:	Granted Permission

This proposed development ranges in height from 4-8 No. storeys and provides some 674 No. bedspaces across 125 No. apartments. In their report the Inspector stated the following:

*'The development provides for a high quality scheme that respects, responds and integrates with the immediate and surrounding context.'*

*A full assessment of the proposal in the context of existing similar facilities in the area is provided. The development is intended to service an existing substantial shortfall in student accommodation.*

*I consider that the development is generally compliant with the objectives regarding student accommodation as set out in the City Development Plan and will provide for an appropriate on site development that will integrate with existing facilities and amenities and provide much needed accommodation for NUIG which has over 17,000 students.'*

The Inspector in their assessment referred to the findings of the 2015 Department of Education and Skills report into third level student enrollment, as well as the *National Student Accommodation Strategy (2017)* which are further explored in the accompanying *Student Demand and Concentration Report* submitted with this application. As demonstrated in Section 6.1 of the *Student Demand and Concentration Report* there are now more up to date projections as of November 2018, which forecast an increasing population of third level students peaking in 2029 to 2031.

*'The applicants have provided a cumulative assessment of student accommodation schemes in Galway in Appendix E of the 'Statement of Consistency'. Table 1 sets out that there are 12 existing and proposed student residences in a 3 Km radius. It is detailed that considering the spatial relationship between the existing and proposed sites of student accommodation, that it is unlikely there will be a significant cumulative effect from these developments. It is evident from the mapping of these existing and proposed facilities that they are spatially dispersed through [sic] the city.'*

*In conclusion, there is a demonstrable need for student accommodation in Galway and the location of the development on campus is acceptable in principle and considered in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.'*

As demonstrated by a similar cumulative assessment conducted for this application in the accompanying *'Student Demand and Concentration Report'*, there is a distinct geographic spread of PBSAs in Galway City. The Inspector in their assessment of the NUIG Scheme agrees that there is an undersupply of student accommodation and that there is a need for additional bedspaces to meet this demand.

In considering the design, layout and the height of the above scheme, the Inspector stated the following:

*'I consider that the design of the buildings is well considered and crate a high quality edition to the urban environment. The massing and scale of the development appropriately responds to the sites context and the density makes a sustainable use of*

*these zoned and serviced lands. The proposed materials are robust and durable and the use of different brick types colours and patterns will create a visually cohesive scheme. The internal courtyards within the scheme will be landscaped to a high standard and will create pleasant recreational zones for future occupants. Views to the biodiversity zone will be retained and the layout of the scheme affords adequate permeability and connectivity.*

*'The applicants were specifically requested in the pre-application consultation opinion to give further consideration to height and density. I note the amendments made to the scheme in this regard including an increase overall to the height of three of the blocks including an 8 storey block which will provide a visual marker within the scheme. I am satisfied that the height and scale proposed are an appropriate design response to the site. Furthermore, a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment is submitted with the application.'*

When considering the landscape character and visual impact of the proposed development, the Inspector stated the following:

*'This includes an assessment of the development from a number of protected views listed in the City Development Plan. In terms of landscape effects, the overall predicted landscape impact is deemed to be low to medium and the overall landscape character of the area will only slightly be affected. The visual impact of the development was also considered from a number of view points overall, the visual impact of the development was considered Low to Medium. It is evident from the photomontages that the development will be clearly visible from some viewpoints. However, in the context of the campus environment and existing buildings in the vicinity that have recently been constructed, the development is not considered obtrusive and assimilates well with the overall development and intensification of the campus.'*

Overall, the Inspector welcomed the development in terms of its campus environment, the pattern of development to date and the new height guidelines and polices of the NPF which call for consolidated development. The Inspector stated the following in support of design, form and height of the development:

*'In conclusion, I am satisfied that the design, form and layout of the development is to a satisfactory architectural standard and that the height scale and massing have been given appropriate consideration to ensure a development that provides an appropriate intensity whilst assimilating well with the existing pattern of development in the vicinity.'*

It is therefore reasonable to consider that the expansion of the existing student accommodation at Cúirt Na Coiribe is an appropriate development in terms of height, scale, and layout, with due consideration for residential amenity and its proximity to NUIG and well serviced locations such as the Headford Road and the historic city centre. By providing a height range of 2-6 No. storeys the proposed development is cognisant of the surrounding context and provides for a clear urban framework in close proximity to the city centre, which does not exceed the benchmark set by NUIG campus development.

### 3.6 Planning History Analysis

Since completion Cúirt Na Coiribe has been a stable accommodation facility for the city. The majority of applications were for minor changes to the development and the provision of signage. It has only been recently that additional capacity has been sought for bedspaces within the complex.

There is limited planning history in the vicinity as the area is built-up at relatively low-densities. In this regard, there is considered to be an opportunity to sustainably increase the quantum of Student Accommodation bedspaces on this brownfield site without requiring the development of greenfield land.

#### 4.0 PRE-PLANNING CONSULTATION

##### 4.1 Section No. 247 Meeting with Galway City Council 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018

A formal Section No. 247 meeting took place on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018, the following are minutes of what was discussed.

#### **Galway City Council attendees were as follows:**

Caroline Phelan – Senior Planner  
Liam Black – Senior Executive Planner  
Peter Staunton, Executive Planner  
Frank Clancy – Water Services  
Susan Loughnane- Roads  
A number of further GCC Staff members

#### **Applicant's team were as follows:**

Mr Mark Nolan – Exeter Ireland Property III Limited  
Mr Neil McGarry – Project Manager  
Mr John Keoghan – Todd Architects  
Ms Stephanie Gibbons – Todd Architects  
Ms Emma McKendrick – AECOM  
Ms Patricia Thornton – Thornton O'Connor Town Planning

#### **Planning Department:**

- Generally, the Planning Authority were concerned about the number of bedspaces, proximity to boundaries and the impact of the proposed development on Dun na Coiribe.

#### **Roads Engineer (Susan Loughnane):**

- Check cycle and car parking standards
- Consider complimentary use requirements when preparing TTA –ie in the summer rooms are let to tourists so car requirements will be higher.
- To provide adequate set down areas.
- To consider walking and cycling routes.

#### **Frank Clancy (acting Senior Engineer):**

- The river is slow moving and discharges to a swallow hole so water quality important
- Long term there is an aspiration to increase flow in the river, hence attenuating might just be short terms
- Services may need to be piled.



#### **4.2 Section No. 5 Pre-Application Consultation -Tripartite Discussion 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

On 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019 a tripartite meeting took place between the Applicant Consulting team, An Bord Pleanála and Galway City Council. An Opinion and Direction was received by the Agents (Thornton O'Connor Town Planning) on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

Please find attached with this submission a Response to Opinion document which sets out how the proposed development responds to the Direction of the Board.

## 5.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN DETAIL

### 5.1 Design and Adaptation

As part of the proposed development, a series of internal re-organisation of spaces, horizontal and lateral exterior extensions and the utilisation of underutilised basement floorspace is proposed, all of which results in an increase of bedspaces from 405 No. to 920 No. and the introduction of a significant quantum of amenity spaces for the students, which has never previously been provided on site. Thus, as well providing new bedspaces, the proposed development will see significant planning gain for the existing scheme.

### 5.2 Development Description

The proposed development will consist of: the demolition of the two storey building (582 sq m) at the entrance to the scheme towards the eastern boundary of the site and the removal of the fifth storey (attic) level (1,123 sq m) of the main building; and the provision of horizontal and vertical additions to and extensions of the main existing building providing 920 No. bedspaces (an additional 515 No. student accommodation bedspaces) in 868 No. bedrooms; ancillary student accommodation spaces at basement and ground floor level measuring 1,688 sq m and including gym/fitness studio, games room, library/study spaces, multi-functional spaces, café/restaurant, and student lounge spaces; all provided in a single building in 9 No. linked blocks ranging in height from 2 No. to 6 No. storeys (gross floor space of 24,693 sq m plus basement car-parking (2,443 sq m)).

The scheme also proposes 59 No. car-parking spaces (43 No. basement and 16 No. surface spaces); 656 No. cycle parking spaces; 5 No. motorcycle parking spaces; external student amenity spaces; hard and soft landscaping; attenuation pond/wetland area; boundary treatments; plant; diversion of services and all associated works above and below ground.

### 5.3 Key Site Statistics

<b>Site Area:</b>	1.414 Ha (14,140 sq m)
<b>Existing Basement Area:</b>	4,302 sq m
<b>Existing Gross Floor Space:</b>	11,114.03 sq m
<b>Existing No. Short Stay Apartments:</b>	88 No.
<b>Existing No. Bedrooms:</b>	404 No.
<b>Existing No. Bedspaces:</b>	405 No.
<b>Existing Roof Pitch Height:</b>	15.46 metres
<b>Existing Scotty's Restaurant:</b>	172 sq m
<b>Existing Car Parking:</b>	
○ <b>Underground:</b>	135 No.
○ <b>Surface:</b>	15 No.
<b>Proposed GFS:</b>	24,693 sq m
<b>Proposed No. Units:</b>	151 No.
<b>Proposed No. Bedrooms:</b>	868 No.
<b>Proposed No. Bedspaces:</b>	920 No.

<b>Proposed New Internal Amenity:</b>	1,688 sq m
<b>Proposed Car Parking:</b>	59 No.
○ <b>Underground:</b>	43 No.
○ <b>Surface:</b>	16 No.
<b>Proposed Bicycle Parking:</b>	656 No.
○ <b>Long Stay (Underground):</b>	576 No.
○ <b>Short Stay (Surface):</b>	80 No.

### 5.3.1 Calculating Plot Ratio

Considering the varying site areas involved within the subject site the following determinable areas have been defined within the total area of the site.

<b>Total Site Area:</b>	1.414 Ha
<b>Developed Site Area:</b>	1.135 Ha
<b>Site Including Footpath:</b>	1.159 Ha
<b>Site Including Road:</b>	1.229 Ha
<b>Site Including Wetland and Open Space:</b>	1.414 Ha

Gross Floor Area / Site Area = Plot Ratio

$$\frac{22,180 \text{ sq m}}{11,350 \text{ sq m}} = 1.95$$

**Plot Ratio:** 1.95

The Plot Ratio is Calculated based on the 'Developed Site Area' within the confines of the surrounding public realm.

### Compliance with policies of the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023*

The following policies of the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* set out the plot ratio requirements.

#### Section 11.4.2 Plot Ratio

- *The plot ratio density standard is designed so as to help prevent the adverse effects of over-development on the amenities of the area.*
- ***In general for new development, the maximum plot ratio permitted will be 2:1.***
- *In the case of infill development in an existing terrace or street, it may be necessary to have a higher plot ratio in order to maintain uniform fenestration and parapet alignment or to obtain greater height for important urban design reasons. In such circumstances, an increased plot ratio may be permitted.*
- *Where a site has an established plot ratio in excess of the general maximum for its zone, re-development may, in exceptional circumstances, be permitted in line with its*

existing plot ratio if this conforms to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

- Minor extensions, which infringe plot ratio, may be permitted where they are necessary to the satisfactory operation of the building.

Therefore, the plot ratio complies with the policies of the *Development Plan*.

Note: These policies were prescribed prior to the adoption of *Urban Development and Building Heights – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2018)*.

#### 5.4 Proposed Schedule of Accommodation

The following tables breakdown the proposed residential accommodation proposed for the Student Accommodation Apartments.

NATURE OF ACCOMMODATION PROPOSED			
Unit Type	No. of Apartment Units	No. Bed Spaces	Gross floor area (sq m)
Studio	4	4	97.59 sq m
1 Bed	0	0	N/A
2 Bed	0	0	N/A
3 Bed	0	0	N/A
4 Bed	0	0	N/A
5 Bed	66	382	7,357.91 sq m
6 Bed	47	282	5,646.82 sq m
7 Bed	20	140	2,618.86 sq m
8 Bed	14	112	2,548.27 sq m
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>18,269 sq m</b>

Room Type Distribution							
Proposed Room Type	Ground Floor	1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor	5 <sup>th</sup> Floor	Total
Single Study Bedroom	118	148	157	157	150	61	791
Twin Study Bedroom	8	10	10	10	10	4	52
Single Accessible Bedroom	7	5	3	3	2	1	21
Studio						3	3
Accessible Studio						1	1
<b>Total Rooms</b>							<b>868</b>
<b>Total Bedspaces</b>							<b>920</b>

<b>PROPOSED</b>	
TOTAL Apartment Clusters Internal Gross floor area (sq m)	18,269
TOTAL number of Bedrooms in all Blocks	868
TOTAL number of bedspaces in all Blocks	920

## 5.5 Proposed Schedule of Internal Amenity Space

Total Proposed New Internal Amenity floor area (sq m)	1,688.15
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The existing scheme provides limited amenity space compared to that which a student would reasonably expect to have access to in a contemporary student accommodation development. Thus, as set out in the table above, the scheme provides some c. 1,700 sq m of new amenity space at ground and basement level in a range of different uses including the following:

### Provided Within Existing Basement:

- Cinema Room 34.84 sq m
- Party/ Function Room 298 sq m
- Gym/Studio Space 381.48 sq m
- Games Room 64.53 sq m
- Laundry Room 25.4 sq m

### New Build Basement Areas:

- Multi-Functional Space (Block No.7) 118 sq m
- Combined Library/Study Spaces 46.34 sq m
- Study Space/Library (Block No. 8) 124.44 sq m
- Study Space / Library (Block No. 9) 156 sq m
- Study Space (Block No. 9) 146 sq m

### Ground Floor Communal Areas:

- Student Reception Area 40.36 sq m
- New Café/ Restaurant 123 sq m
- Student Lounge/ Coffee Dock 129.76 sq m

The existing laundry space (19.42 sq m) within the external services building will be replaced with a new laundry area of 25.4 sq m within the existing basement.

Thus, the subject development introduces a range of amenity spaces within the scheme for the benefits of the students that will be fitted out to the highest standards. They will also be complemented by external landscaped spaces as per the Landscape Masterplan. There are 3 No. courtyard areas specifically identified for additional amenity spaces this amounts to 1,393 sq m.

### Assessment of Proposed Amenity

A number of the spaces provide the opportunity to congregate socially, which has not been available before in Cúirt na Coiribe to this scale. These social spaces are recognised as a key benefit for mental health and thus have a important role to play in the scheme.

There will also be a provision of multiple quiet study/library spaces to allow students study, with these spaces becoming increasingly important as nearby universities expand their student populations in the coming years, which puts increasing pressure on available library and study spaces within the third level institutions.

As detailed previously, there is an existing restaurant unit, known as “*Scotty’s Steakhouse*” which has a total floor area of 172.15 sq m. This is currently the only existing amenity space within the development, although as it is open to the public it is not dedicated to the students use. This space is to be retained and will continue to offer a facility to both the students and the wider public.

### 5.6 Proposed Elevational Treatment

The entire external appearance of the development will be significantly upgraded both in visual and thermal performance terms and there will be no discernible difference between the existing buildings and the newly constructed elements.

The external palette of proposed materials has been carefully considered to provide a colour palette based on the surrounding landscape and the transition between the ‘*Wild Atlantic Way*’ and the urban appearance of the city.

The overall height of the development will vary between two and six storeys in response to differing surrounding conditions and to protect the amenity of surrounding developments. In this regard, the building steps down as it approaches Gort na Coiribe with the final mass proposed resulting from the Board’s Opinion and a detailed design reconfiguration developed and assessed by TODD Architects and the Daylight/ Sunlight modelling produced by 3D Design Bureau. Please refer to the *Response to Opinion* prepared by Thornton O’Connor Town Planning accompanying this application for further information.

This results in the new front block (Block 8) ranging in height from 2-6 No. storeys. Similarly, the extensions to Block Nos. 1, 2 and 3 facing the south-western boundary have also been reduced to 5 No. storeys. On the north-western boundary, the proposed new wings of Block Nos. 3 and 4 have been reoriented to provide no overlooking of properties to the west and to present gable ends to the adjoining site to the north-west.

Figure 5.1 below provides an aerial image of the site, whilst Figure 5.2 shows the heights now proposed ranging from 2 No.- 6 No. storeys. (Please see the document *Response to An Bord Pleanála Opinion* which provides a more detailed assessment of these changes)

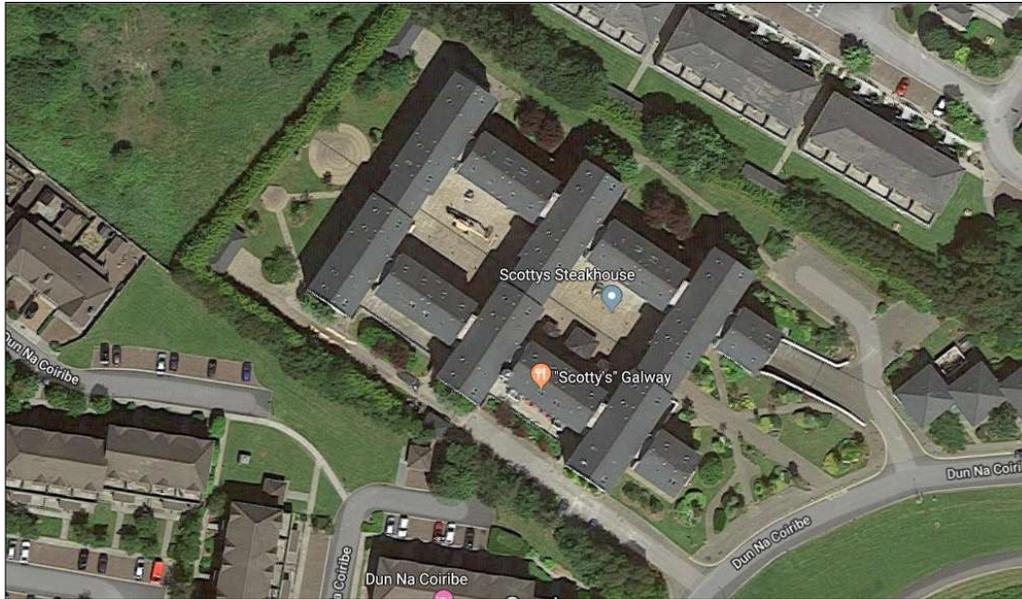


Figure 5.1: Direct Overhead Image of Existing Facility

(Source: Google Maps)



Figure 5.2: Image Demonstrating Proposed Heights

(Source: TODD Architects, March 2020)

## 5.7 Proposed Landscape Masterplan

As part of this application a 'Landscape Development Report' has been prepared by The Big Space Landscape Architects. The primary aim of their landscape strategy is to identify the important elements within the subject lands to provide high quality improvements to the semi-private open space and to the internal courtyards. The primary landscape components include:

- *Enhanced courtyards providing attractive outdoor spaces*
- *New entrance plaza*
- *Perimeter walkway and planting*
- *Increased cycle parking*
- *Tree and shrub planting*

The proposed layout successfully utilises the existing landscape elements including the topography of the site. The primary design consideration within the landscape was to consider the requirements of the existing and future residents, through the provision of high quality public spaces with a strong landscape character. The proposed landscape strategy forms part of the overall green space network within the overall development. The landscape design provides for the following uses:

- *Space for informal gathering*
- *Seating*
- *Walking*
- *Space for passive recreation*
- *Playscape elements*



**Figure 5.3: Landscape Masterplan Plan View**

(Source: Landscape Development Report, The Big Space Landscape Architects, March 2020)

The following summary of proposed works and their impacts is an extract from the *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* prepared by The Big Space Landscape Architecture:

- *New entrance plaza;*
- *Enhanced courtyards to provide attractive outdoor spaces, recreation and amenity, including seating and lighting elements;*
- *Access to outdoor seating from the existing restaurant, with new canopy;*
- *Perimeter pathways to provide recreational opportunities, as well as linking the various external areas and courtyards;*
- *Increased cycle parking spaces;*
- *Tree and hedge shrub planting within, at the entrance and at certain locations around the perimeter of the subject site; and*
- *Playscape elements.*

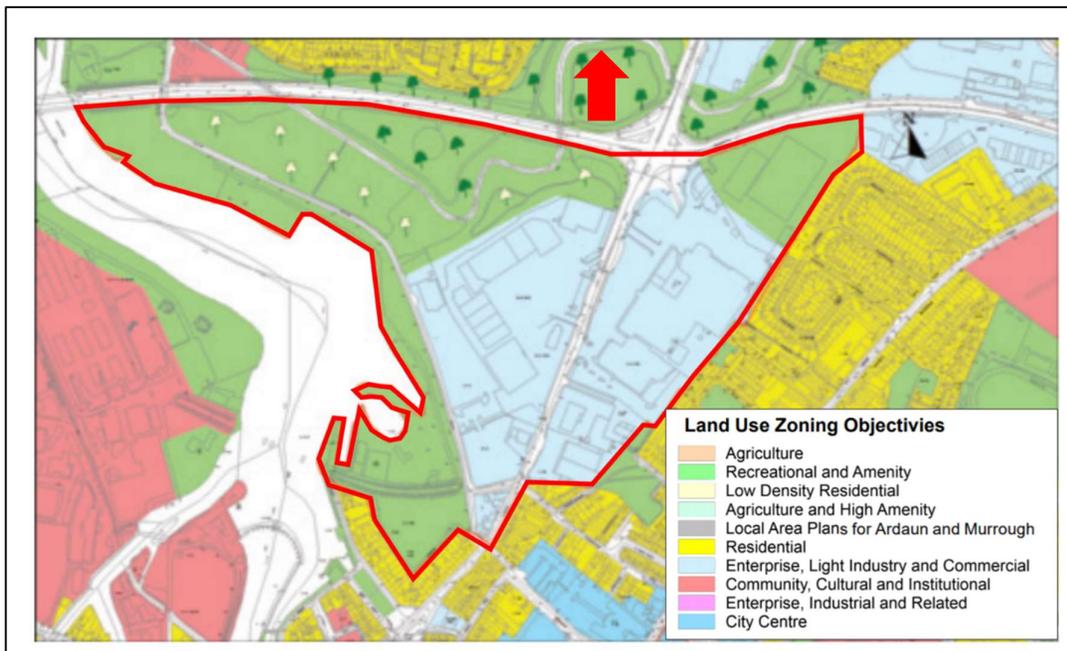
This network of linked public spaces will provide for passive recreation within an attractive environment. New tree planting will be provided including smaller specimen tree/multi-stem shrubs around the perimeter of the subject lands. Further detail of this new and replacement planting is available in the *Landscape Development Report* and *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*.



The student accommodation at Cúirt Na Coiribe has been extant for a number of years, dating back to Reg. Ref. 00/249. In that time, it has become part of the surrounding community and it provides legibility due to its high quality of design.

To the south of the subject site the Terryland river curves through the landscape. This water course also features a series of walking trails, these are marked in the Development Plan for improvement to greenway use and will connect with other trails in the Lough Corrib region and towards Tuam, County Galway. The subject site also has strong permeability across the green space to the N6 and the Headford Road. A specific policy marked on the Map (light blue line, as shown in Figure 6.1 above) also indicates an improvement to road layout which will see the introduction of a bus route adjacent to the site to Galway's northern suburbs.

Immediately adjacent to the subject site, to the south, is the area defined as the Headford Road regeneration area. This area features a number of large retail parks and their associated car parks. This area is a modern extension of the traditional city centre and has been identified as a location for regeneration and further consolidation by the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* and the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (2020)*.



**Figure 6.2:** Headford Road Area, just to the south of the subject site. Red arrow indicating the location of subject site, just outside the map.

(Source: *Galway County Council 2017-2023 Development Plan, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2020*)

The subject site is well placed to support the long term aims of regeneration in the vicinity. The proposed application is suitable to increase density and utilisation of land to support the neighbourhood character of the Headford Road and develop a sense of place.

### 6.1.2 Compliance with the General Policies of the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023*

There are a number of general policies within the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* that are applicable to the subject site, which will be outlined and referred to in this section.

#### **Policy 8.7 Urban Design**

- *Encourage high quality urban design in all developments.*
- *Improve the qualitative design standards through the application of design guidelines and standards of the Development Plan, in particular the Galway Shop Front and Signage Design Guidelines (2012) and Design Guidelines: Canopies (2011).*
- *Ensure that high quality urban design contributes to successful urban regeneration in the city.*
- *Encourage innovation in architecture and promote energy efficiency and green design.*
- *Prepare Local Area Plans for Ardaun, Murrough and the Headford Road Area (south of the Bodkin junction) which provide an urban design framework to contribute to the development of sustainable and vibrant living and working environments.*
- *Encourage the use of design statements and masterplans/framework plans for large-scale development where appropriate.*
- *Proposals for buildings which are taller than the prevailing benchmark heights will only be considered where they do not have an adverse impact on the context of historic buildings, Architectural Conservation Areas, residential amenity or impinge upon strategic views.*

#### **Policy 9.3 Flood Risk Assessment**

- *Require site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for planning applications in identified areas at risk of flooding, where appropriate, in accordance with the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for the Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023.*
- *Ensure the use of SUDS, sustainable urban drainage systems, wherever practical, in the design of development to reduce the rate and quantity of surface water run-off.*
- *Ensure new development, where appropriate, is designed and constructed to meet the flood design standards outlined under Section 11.27 Flood Risk Management and the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for the Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023.*

#### **Policy 9.5 – Sustainable Building Design and Construction**

- *Increase the energy performance of future buildings in the city by encouraging energy efficiency and energy conservation in the design and construction of development.*
- *Encourage new development to limit greenhouse gas emissions and make use of opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy including through design, layout, orientation and use of materials.*
- *Encourage consideration of orientation in the siting, layout, massing, land form and aspect in the design of future housing developments, in order to avail of passive solar gain and natural ventilation.*

### **Policy 9.8 – Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)**

- *Ensure the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and sustainable surface water drainage management, wherever practical in the design of development to enable surface water run-off to be managed as near to its source as possible and achieve wider benefits such as sustainable development, water quality, biodiversity and local amenity.*
- *Proposals for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) should include provisions for the long term management, operation and maintenance of these systems.*

The subject development has been designed to adhere to these policies of the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* and will provide a sustainable densification to an existing student accommodation scheme.

## **6.2 Overview of the National Planning Hierarchy**

Galway is a burgeoning mid-sized city in the Irish context and is a priority of the National Planning Framework for additional housing provision and economic growth. An important aspect of this growth is that Galway is a major location for higher education, research and investment. The importance of higher education to Galway is enhanced with the presence of National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), Galway Community College, and diploma and apprenticeship programs such as those offered by the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB).

It is within this context that Galway has been identified as one of the top 5 No. cities in Ireland for residential and economic growth. This is supported by the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA).

For a more in-depth assessment of how the subject scheme is consistent with National and Regional Planning Policy please see the Statement of Consistency included with this application.

### **6.2.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)**

Under the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Irish Government has set out long term strategic planning goals for the Republic of Ireland. These goals are geared towards compact growth and the sustainable development of Ireland to accommodate an increase in population of one million people by the year 2040.

As part of this strategy the public consultation, spatial planning, economic investment and environmental assessment conducted for this overarching plan has identified 5 No. cities as ideal for the targeted growth of the nation. This is supported by the following strategy and policy:

## Section 2.2: Overview of the NPF Strategy (Pg. 22)

### Ireland's Cities

- *Supporting ambitious growth targets to enable the four cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to each grow by at least 50% to 2040 and to enhance their significant potential to become cities of scale.*
- *Enabling the four cities to be regional drivers and to lead in partnership with each other and as partners in regional/ inter-regional networks as viable alternatives to Dublin.*
- *Focusing investment to improve the collective 'offer' within each of the four cities, i.e. infrastructure, quality of life and choice in terms of housing, employment and amenities.'*

### National Policy Objective No. 3b

*'Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints.'*

The NPF has set a specific objective in relation to lifelong learning and investment in higher education as a means of also improving employment and innovation in Ireland. It views investment in education and training as central to delivery of sustainable communities, promoting inclusion and offering a range of choices and pathways to better education and employment.

### National Policy Objective No. 3z

*'Prioritise the alignment of targeted and planned population and employment growth with investment in:'*

- *The provision of early childhood care and education (ECCE) facilities and new and refurbished schools on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, that meet the diverse needs of local populations.*
- ***The expansion and consolidation of third level facilities at locations where this will contribute to regional development.***
- *Programmes for life-long learning, especially in areas of higher education and further education and training where skills gaps are identified.'*

[Our Emphasis]

This means that growth cities like Galway with a strong higher education sector will play a key role in delivering further consolidated expansion of its Institutions and Universities. An important element of such growth will be an increased demand on student accommodation. With an eye to the changing pressures of the housing market, this means delivery of more student housing as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) develop in the near future.

*"Demand for student accommodation exacerbates the demand pressures on the available supply of rental accommodation in urban areas in particular. In the years ahead, student accommodation pressures are anticipated to increase. The location of purpose built student accommodation needs to be as proximate as possible to the centre of education, as well as being connected to accessible infrastructure such as walking, cycling and public transport. The national student accommodation strategy supports these objectives." (NPF Pg 95)*

It is with this demand in mind that compact growth and increased capacity for student housing can be achieved through the adaptation and improvement of existing accommodation such as the subject site. Already well placed proximate to the City Centre and NUI Galway, the proposed development limits its new footprint to an accessible and desirable location without harnessing new lands or harming the surrounding amenity.

### 6.2.2 **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (2020)**

Galway City is located within the Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). Following the creation of the National Planning Framework the Regional Assembly has been tasked with the formation of a new Regional Plan to operate on a longer timescale than Local Authority plans and to guide future growth in concert with the policies of the NPF. This new form of Regional Plan is called a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy or RSES.

In late 2018 the NWRA produced a draft RSES for public consultation. Following consultation and amendment the RSES was adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

Within the RSES is also a specific plan for the growth of Galway City, this is known as the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan or MASP. This sets out the policies and ambitions of the Regional Assembly for the growth of Galway City and how it should be managed between the relevant local Planning Authorities (Galway City Council and Galway County Council).

#### **Galway Vision**

*'The MASP provides a strategic focus on the City and environs and sets out how it is envisaged the NPF will be implemented in the regional context of the RSES. The vision for Galway is that it will be a leading European city renowned for its quality of life, its history, its culture and its people. It is and will be a place that embraces modern technologies, high standards of education, competitive and sustainable enterprises.'*

The Galway MASP also recognises the importance of purpose built student accommodation to the City:

#### **Student Accommodation**

*'It is important to specifically refer to the student population of the city as it comprises a significant quantum of the city population (over 24,000 students attend third-level colleges in the city) and there is a particular demand for student niche accommodation in the city to meet their needs. The objective of the MASP is to support the provision of purpose-built student accommodation both on and **off-campus at appropriate locations**. Delivery of this type of accommodation can be met on a variety of mixed zoned sites and is beneficial in freeing up existing private housing stock within existing housing developments. **This type of accommodation also has the potential to meet tourism accommodation demands outside of term time.**' [Our Emphasis]*

In combination the RSES and the Galway MASP offer an opportunity to implement the national planning hierarchy and foster population and economic growth. The subject scheme is consistent with the aims and objects set out to date within the RSES for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.

### 6.3 *Urban Development and Building Heights – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2018)*

The *Height Guidelines* set out that a key objective of the NPF is to see that greatly increased levels of residential development in our urban centres and significant increases in the building heights and overall density of development is not only facilitated but actively sought out and brought forward by our planning processes and particularly so at local authority and An Bord Pleanála levels.

The Minister's foreword to the *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines*, December 2018 acknowledges that Ireland's classic development models for city and town cores has tended to be dominated by employment and retail uses, surrounded by extensive and constantly expanding low-rise suburban residential areas. This is regarded in the guidelines and research literature as an unsustainable model in need of proactive and inventive solutions.

The *Height Guidelines* state that there is an opportunity for our cities and towns to be developed differently. Urban centres could have much better use of land, facilitating well located and taller buildings, meeting the highest architectural and planning standards. The Building Height Guidelines note that:

*'A key objective of the NPF is therefore to see that greatly increased levels of residential development in our urban centres and significant increases in the building heights and overall density of development is not only facilitated but actively sought out and brought forward by our planning processes and particularly so at local authority and An Bord Pleanála levels.'* [Our Emphasis].

These Guidelines are intended to set a new and more responsive policy and regulatory framework for planning the growth and development of cities and towns upwards rather than outwards. The Guidelines note that increasing prevailing building heights has a critical role to play in addressing the delivery of more compact growth in our urban areas, particularly our cities and large towns through enhancing both the scale and density of development and our planning process must actively address how this objective will be secured.

**SPPR 1 of *Urban Development and Building Heights – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2018)*:**

*In accordance with Government policy to support increased building height and density in locations **with good public transport accessibility**, particularly town/city cores, planning authorities shall explicitly identify, through their statutory plans, areas where increased building height will be actively pursued for both redevelopment, regeneration, and infill development to secure objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and **shall not provide for blanket numerical limitations on building height.*** [Our Emphasis]

**6.3.1 Special Planning Policy Requirement No. 3 of the *Height Guidelines***

SPPR<sub>3</sub> of the Building Height Guidelines sets out that:

*'It is a specific planning policy requirement that where;*

(A) *1. an applicant for planning permission sets out how a development proposal complies with the criteria [below]; and*

*2. the assessment of the planning authority concurs, taking account of the wider strategic and national policy parameters set out in the National Planning Framework and these guidelines;*

*then the planning authority may approve such development, even where specific objectives of the relevant development plan or local area plan may indicate otherwise.'*

The Guidelines also note the following:

*'In relation to the assessment of individual planning applications and appeals, it is Government policy that **building heights must be generally increased in appropriate urban locations**. There is therefore a presumption in favour of buildings of **increased height in our town/city cores and in other urban locations with good public transport accessibility**.'* [Our Emphasis].

As increased heights are proposed at the subject site, we have demonstrated how the proposed development satisfies the specified criteria set out in Section 3 of the Height Guidelines as follows:

<b>Development Management Criteria</b>	
<b>At the Scale of the Relevant City/ Town</b>	
<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The site is well served by public transport with high capacity, frequent service and good links to other modes of public transport.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The subject site has excellent public transport accessibility, as detailed in section 2.4 of this Report.</li> <li>A <i>Mobility Management Plan</i> prepared by AECOM has also been submitted as part of this application.</li> <li>The subject site is considered eminently suitable for student accommodation given the availability of sustainable modes of transport, proximity to NUIG and the existing use on site.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Development proposals incorporating increased building height, including</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A complete LVIA by The Big Space Landscape Architects has</li> </ul>

<p><i>proposals within architecturally sensitive areas, should successfully integrate into/ enhance the character and public realm of the area, having regard to topography, its cultural context, setting of key landmarks, protection of key views. Such development proposals shall undertake landscape and visual assessment (LVIA), by a suitably qualified practitioner such as a chartered landscape architect.</i></p>	<p>been completed in conjunction with Verified View Montages prepared by 3D Design Bureau.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>On larger urban redevelopment sites, proposed developments should make a positive contribution to place-making, incorporating new streets and public spaces, using massing and height to achieve the required densities but with sufficient variety in scale and form to respond to the scale of adjoining developments and create visual interest in the streetscape.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed development utilises the frame of an existing building to gain an additional 2 No. storeys in part and develop new blocks extending from existing gable ends, as well as new blocks extending to the front of the site.</li> <li>• By maintaining the dominant building form within this site area, the subject scheme seeks to limit urban sprawl by making best use of an existing brownfield site and the core structure of an existing building.</li> </ul>

Development Management Criteria	
At the scale of District/ Neighbourhood / Street	
Assessment Criteria	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The proposal responds to its overall natural and built environment and makes a positive contribution to the urban neighbourhood and streetscape.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The contemporary additions to the existing development provides additional passive surveillance to the entrance and a cohesive blending of the new additions to the existing structure.</li> <li>• New internal landscaping and the addition of an attenuation pond/ wetland area to the landscaped area adjacent to the Terryland River provides for an improved semi-public area for residents and provides sustainable drainage features.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The proposal is not monolithic and avoids long, uninterrupted walls of building in the form of slab blocks with materials / building fabric well considered.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed development extends outward from the existing gable ends of the double-courtyard building and extends the kitchen and living areas along several wings providing new window opes in keeping with the extension blocks.</li> <li>• The <i>Architectural Design Statement</i> prepared by TODD Architects enclosed with this application submission further details the use of materials, design, and stepped heights of the proposed development.</li> <li>• The proposed development has responded to the Boards opinion and provide a stepped approach to height from 2 No. storeys to 6 No. storeys which minimises overlooking and overbearing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The proposal enhances the urban design context for public spaces and key thoroughfares and inland waterway/ marine frontage, thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure while being in line with the requirements of "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)".</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed development is on a slight rise above the Terryland River and is predominantly within Flood Zone C and a small portion is also within Flood Zone B, as detailed in the <i>Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessment</i> carried out by AECOM as part of this Application.</li> <li>• The Finished Floor Level of new Blocks and the basement entrance have also been altered to reflect changes to massing, drainage and proximity to Flood Zone B. This has been raised to 6.01 m OD Malin.</li> <li>• New attenuation storage will be included as part of the development to limit increased run-off into the surrounding drainage and the nearby Terryland River to current base levels.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The proposal makes a positive contribution to the improvements of legibility through the site or wider urban area within which the development is situated and integrates in a cohesive manner.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The high-quality design of the scheme will ensure the development will be a legible and attractive addition to the area. There will be active frontages resulting from new ground floor amenity spaces which contribute towards enhancing the legibility of the scheme within its context.</li> <li>Additionally, a public lighting plan produced by AECOM provides for an appropriate external lighting of the structure given its location in the urban landscape.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The proposal positively contributes to the mix of uses and/ or building / dwelling typologies available in the neighbourhood.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As discussed within the Statement of Consistency (Section 4.7) and Student Demand and Concentration Report, the subject development is designed to accommodate additional students at a location of an existing student accommodation development. This helps to limit urban sprawl and provide proximity to Higher Education Institutes and surrounding services such as the Headford Road retail area.</li> </ul>

Development Management Criteria	
At the Scale of the Site/ Building	
Assessment Criteria	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The form, massing and height of proposed developments should be carefully modulated so as to maximise access to natural daylight, ventilation and views and minimise overshadowing and loss of light.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Daylight/ Sunlight report has been prepared by 3D Design Bureau as part of this application.</li> </ul> <p><i>'The ADF has been calculated for 31 rooms, all of which have met the recommended level of ADF and should receive sufficient daylight. The majority of assessed LKDs have an ADF of more than 5%, and should be considered very well daylight spaces.'</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Appropriate and reasonable regard should be taken of quantitative performance approaches to daylight provision outlined in guidelines. Where a proposal may not be able to fully meet all the requirements of the daylight provisions above, this must be clearly identified and a rationale for any alternative, compensatory design solutions must be set out, in respect of which the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála should apply their discretion, having regard to local factors including specific site constraints and the balancing of that assessment against the desirability of achieving wider planning objectives. Such objectives might include securing comprehensive urban regeneration and an effective urban design and streetscape solution.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As noted above there is a Daylight/ Sunlight report prepared by 3D Design Bureau, which found the following:  <i>'Should the proposed expansion to the student accommodation at Cúirt na Coiribe be constructed as per the current proposal, it will not result in a perceptible level of impact to the daylight or sunlight received by the neighbouring properties.</i>  <i>Future residents of the proposed development will enjoy excellent levels of daylight within the proposed units.'</i></li> </ul>
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Development Management Criteria	
Site Specific Assessments	
Assessment Criteria	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Specific impact assessment of the micro-climatic effects such as down-draft. Such assessments shall include measurements to avoid/ mitigate such micro-climatic effects and, where appropriate, shall include an assessment of the cumulative micro-climatic effects where taller buildings are clustered.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no anticipated impacts on micro-climatic factors when the tallest component of the development is 19.55 metres.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>In development locations in proximity to sensitive bird and/ or bat areas, proposed developments need to consider the potential interaction of the building location, building materials and artificial lighting to impact flight lines and/ or collision.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment Report found no potential impacts for bird or bat habitats. The NIS stated the following:  <i>'There are no recordings of protected floral or faunal species within the proposed site from the National Biodiversity Datacentre (NBDC, 2019).'</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An assessment that the proposal allows for the retention of</i></li> </ul>	N/A

<p><i>important telecommunication channels, such as microwave links.</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An assessment that the proposal maintains safe air navigation.</i></li> </ul>	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An urban design statement including, as appropriate, impact on the historic built environment.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An Architectural Design Statement has been prepared by TODD Architects as part of this application. The scheme has been sensitively designed to integrate into the surrounding context and protect the residential amenity of the adjacent developments.</i></li> <li>• <i>A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment and Verified View Montages have also been prepared to accompany this application in order to provide a complete overview of the subject design.</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Relevant environmental assessment requirements, including SEA, EIA, AA and Ecological Impact Assessment, as appropriate.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An Appropriate Assessment Statement has been prepared as part of this application. A Natura Impact Statement has also been completed.</i></li> </ul>

It is considered that the proposed development providing heights ranging from part 2 No. to part 6 No. storeys and comprising of 920 No. bedspaces of student accommodation at the subject site represents the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The parapet height of the proposed development is marginally increased above the height of the existing pitched roof of Cúirt Na Coiribe. The subject site is a suitable location for consolidated development and infill development in accordance with National Objectives and in the interests of protecting the surrounding amenity.

We submit that the development proposed is in accordance with the direction of recent National Planning Policy, National Guidelines and the direction of the Minister in relation to assessment and design of taller buildings, consolidated development, and increased density in appropriate locations. It is therefore our contention that the subject development can be successfully assimilated into its receiving environment and context.

#### 6.4 ***National Student Accommodation Strategy (2017)***

There are currently no set statutory student accommodation standards within the consolidated *Planning and Development Acts 2000-2018*. The most applicable standard is contained within the legislation known as *Section 50 Finance Act 1999 - Guidelines on Residential Developments for 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Students*. These earlier guidelines were established as a tax relief scheme for earlier qualifying developments. For further detail please see Section 6.4.4 which sets out these standards in relation to the student accommodation policy of *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* which requires that student accommodation developments 'generally' be of the type laid out in *Section 50 Finance Act 1999*.

Under *Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, Rebuilding Ireland (2016)*, the Government set out a commitment to prepare a strategy for student accommodation to meet the need of this demographic and free up additional housing stock for the general rental market. The *National Student Accommodation Strategy (2017)* states the following:

*'The impact of an additional 21,000 student accommodation bedspaces, in addition to an additional 1,500 digs spaces, will free up at least an additional 5,000 rental units for the wider rental sector.'*

When it comes to the assessment of current student accommodation developments, the aims and objectives of the *National Student Accommodation Strategy (2017)* provide guidance and an evidence base for the delivery of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) and other forms of residential development aimed at students such as 'digs'.

Ireland's higher education sector has been an important engine of our economic success and continues to grow and expand. The demand for higher education contributes to housing demand within our already constrained supply. There is additional demand for housing around Higher Education Institutions, which means that there is an increased pressure on many types of housing, especially on rental units. With demand for higher education spaces expected to rise by up to 27% or more by 2030, demand for accommodation is also anticipated to rise sharply.

Thus, the strategy recognises the following in relation to the role Student Accommodation can play in housing supply, and planning outcomes:

*"Appropriately located high-quality, purpose-built and professionally managed student accommodation, can make educational institutions more attractive to students from Ireland and abroad, and can also become a revitalizing force for regeneration areas."*

The subject proposal is an appropriate and sustainable response to the need for additional student accommodation. By providing on-site regeneration of an existing structure the proposed development is an innovative and creative design which aligns with National and Regional policy for compact growth and the use of infill/brownfield sites. For additional information in relation to the growing demand for student accommodation please refer to the *Student Demand and Concentration Report* submitted as part of this application.

## 6.5 Policies of the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023*

There are a number of policies of the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* which have influenced and informed the planning and design process of the subject application.

### 6.5.1 Building Height within the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023*

The existing development at Cúirt Na Coiribe is a 4 No. storey building plus attic level (above a basement car park) with a tall pitched roof, which contains a handful of attic apartments. The separate ancillary services building is a 2 No. storey structure above basement with a pitched roof.

The proposed development would remove the pitched roof and in several locations articulate upwards to an overall height of 2-6 No. storeys. Similarly, the new additional blocks will not exceed 6 No. storeys. This provides a completed parapet height (excluding PV panels and lift overrun) of 19.55 metres, compared to the existing 15.46 metres.

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

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

These policies of the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* have now been superseded by the *Height Guidelines* as per Special Planning Policy Requirement No. 1. The policy of the *Development Plan 2017-2023* have been given due regard as part of this application. The proposed development has completed assessments and tests in accordance with the *Height Guidelines* under Special Planning Policy Requirement No. 3 (See Section 6.3.1).

### 6.5.2 Galway City Council- Student Accommodation Objectives

The *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* sets out a number of objectives and statements in support of the sustainable management of student housing. Recognising the differing needs of their student population likened to comparable cities, there is an understanding that due to the scope and nature of housing availability in Galway, a more dedicated supply of student accommodation has been required in recent years. There is support in the policy for high quality PBSAs. Galway is a city of culture, tourism, and education, and with this comes a need to provide accommodation for the increasing number of students attending third level education. Thus, the Development Plan supports student accommodation:

*'Support the development of third level student accommodation both on campus and through private student accommodation schemes. Require such private student*

*accommodation, in particular new build, to generally be of the type that would have otherwise qualified for tax relief under Section 50 of the Finance Act 1999.'*

The following are the standards of Student Accommodation within the now ended *Section 50 Finance Act 1999 (this tax relief ended in 2008)*:

### **Guidelines on Residential Developments for 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Students (1999)**

The following standards from these Guidelines still have a bearing on the design considerations of purpose built student accommodation.

#### **6. Total Floor Areas of Qualifying Premises**

*Accommodation under the scheme shall be provided by groupings of study bedrooms in "house" units. Each unit shall consist of a minimum of 3 No. bedspaces and an overall minimum gross floor area of 55 sq m, up to a maximum of 8 No. bedspaces and a maximum of 160 sq metres.*

##### **6.1 Kitchen /Living Room**

*The provision of shared kitchen/ dining/ living room space shall be based on a minimum of 4 sq m per bed space in the unit.*

##### **6.2 Bedrooms**

*These will be used as study bedrooms requiring desk space, and storage. Therefore, one of the following minimum areas shall apply depending on provision of bathroom facilities:*

- *Single study bedroom 8 sq metres*
- *Single study bedroom with ensuite 12 sq metres*
- *Twin study bedroom 15 sq m*
- *Twin study bedroom with ensuite 18 sq m*
- *Single Disabled study bedroom with ensuite 15 sq m*

##### **6.3 Bathrooms**

*These shall be either ensuite with the study bedrooms or separately provided to serve a maximum of 3 No. bedspaces.*

#### **8. Communal Facilities and Amenities**

*'The floor area of these facilities shall not exceed 12% of the total area.'*

#### **9. Internal Design and Layout**

*'The number of apartment units per lift/core in a development shall not exceed a maximum of 30 No. apartments.'*

*As stated Section 50 of the Finance Act 1999 is a tax relief which is no longer in place.*

However, it is the only national guidelines relating to student accommodation, and therefore is a useful guidance tool for the design of schemes. The scheme has been designed to adhere to these standards.

There is also a desire to maintain higher levels of quality and control over the nature of student accommodation, in order to create attractive, safe and affordable dedicated accommodation that is not sub-standard or at the expense of the health, well-being, or amenity of students. The Development Plan states the following:

*'Student accommodation should be designed to be attractive, accessible, safe, and minimise adverse impacts on the surrounding area while creating mixed, healthy and inclusive communities. The nature, layout and design of the development should be appropriate to its location and context and should not result in an unacceptable impact on local character, environmental quality or residential amenity.'*

By providing additional capacity within an existing student accommodation facility, the proposed development is less likely to impact the existing amenity or accessibility enjoyed by the subject site.

As part of the upgrade and expansion works, the Cúirt Na Coiribe Student Accommodation will adapt and sustain its effective management to account for the increase in student bedspaces and changes to ancillary facilities.

*'An appropriate management plan should be part of student accommodation applications to minimise potential negative impacts from occupants and the development on surrounding properties and neighbourhoods and to create a positive and safe living environment for students.'*

A *Student Management Plan* prepared by Exeter Ireland Property (III) Limited will be submitted as part of this planning application.

The existing Cúirt Na Coiribe provides an important part of the supply of student accommodation in Galway City with 405 No. bedspaces currently. By consolidating and expanding within the same development, the potential of any impacts on surrounding residential amenity are mitigated.

As part of the redevelopment of the subject site, some 1,700 sq m of communal amenity is incorporated within existing space and the new extensions, providing a far greater level of amenity for existing and proposed students.

When assessing planning applications for student accommodation, the Planning Authority has set out that it will consider the following as per the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023*:

<b>Galway City Council Student Housing Objectives</b>	
<b>Policy Objective:</b>	<b>Response:</b>
<i>The location and accessibility to educational facilities and the proximity to existing or planned public transport corridors and cycle routes;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.3 Km walk from Eyre Square, 10 Minute Cycle to NUI Galway Campus, adjacent to planned Transport Corridor.</li> </ul>

<p><i>The potential impact on local residential amenities;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of existing scheme provide the following results in the Daylight/Sunlight Report: <i>'Should the proposed expansion to the student accommodation at Cúirt na Coiribe be constructed as per the current proposal, it will not result in a significant level of impact to the daylight or sunlight received by the neighbouring properties.'</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>Adequate amenity areas and open space;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of c. 1,700 sq m new internal dedicated amenity space, therein significantly improving amenity not currently provided.</li> </ul>
<p><i>The level and quality of on-site facilities, including storage facilities, waste management, bicycle facilities, leisure facilities, car parking and amenity;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New waste management plan, new launderette, altered parking arrangements and new bicycle parking, new and improved internal and external amenity spaces.</li> <li>• 656 No. bicycle spaces and 5 No. motorbike parking spaces.</li> <li>• Reduced car parking to 59 No. spaces.</li> </ul>
<p><i>The architectural quality of the design and also the external layout, with respect to materials, scale, height and relationship to adjacent structures. Internal layouts should take cognisance of the need for flexibility for future possible changes of uses;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern and contemporary design which features several new blocks and extensions which links the design across the development.</li> <li>• This new development provides a sustainable upgrade / expansion of existing facilities within the same development footprint.</li> </ul>
<p><i>The number of existing similar facilities in the area. In assessing a proposal for student accommodation the Council will take cognisance of the amount of student accommodation which exists in the locality and will resist the over-concentration of such schemes in any one area, in the interests of sustainable development and residential amenity;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As set out in the <i>Student Demand and Concentration Report</i>, there are a number of Higher Level Institutions and Further Education and Training facilities within Galway City and easily accessible to the subject site.</li> <li>• There is also a wide range of student accommodation within Galway. There is only 1 No. facility within 250 metres of the subject site, at Gort Na Coiribe.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Details of the full nature and extent of use of the proposed use of the facilities outside of term time.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new proposed bedspaces will be managed as short term holiday lettings by the operators of this facility outside term time. The existing permitted development permitted by Reg. Ref. 00/249 will maintain its existing permission for tourist accommodation</li> </ul>

	throughout the year, although it has very limited use outside of the summer months.
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**6.5.3 Bicycle Parking and Car Parking Standards**

The *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023* states the following regarding bicycle parking standards:

*'In residential developments, where appropriate, a minimum of one cycle stand per 20 car spaces or over shall be provided. For every additional 50 car parking spaces, an additional cycle stand should be provided. Each cycle stand should accommodate a minimum of five bicycles. Cycle parking must be sheltered where appropriate. Where compliance with this standard is not deemed appropriate a transportation contribution will be levied accordingly.'*

The subject scheme proposes 59 No. car-parking spaces (43 No. underground and 16 No. surface car parking spaces). The following is a breakdown of the car parking provided within the proposed development:

- Basement:**
- 35 No. standard spaces
- 4 No. accessible spaces
- 4 No. electric car charging spaces

- Surface:**
- 14 No. standard spaces
- 2 No. Accessible spaces

Given the nature of the student accommodation use which provides limited car-parking and there will be a provision of 656 No. bicycle spaces within the development. At basement level this will provide for 576 No. bicycle spaces. These bicycle stands are provided within 6 No. secure storage areas, which can be locked. The bicycle parking spaces provided within the re-arranged underground car park are designed to be for long-term parking for residents.

At surface level an additional 80 No. bicycle spaces will be provided through Sheffield stands in small clusters across the site. These spaces are proposed for short-term use and visitor parking.

Additionally, there will be 5 No. motorcycle spaces provided at basement level.



## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The Applicant Exeter Ireland Property III Limited are dedicated to improving upon the Student Accommodation offering in Galway City. Through the redevelopment and expansion of Cúirt Na Coiribe as demonstrated, they wish to offer an improved and holistic approach to affordable student housing in the Galway region.

The subject site is eminently suitable for student accommodation due to the site's character, which can accommodate the additional bedspaces proposed through proposed horizontal and lateral extensions. The subject development will provide for a total of 920 No. bed spaces, with an increase of 515 No. bedspaces proposed in this SHD application. In addition to this the development will provide a significant quantum of internal amenity space, where there has been no dedicated space provided previously to residents.

As laid out in this report, the existing premises and its associated uses have been established at the subject site and it is with this in mind that it is our view that the further development of this land for this use is acceptable as part of sustainable planning practice in accordance with the *Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023*.

We trust you will find this application in order.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Patricia Thornton'.

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**Patricia Thornton**  
**Director**  
**Thornton O'Connor Town Planning**