



PAUL KEOGH ARCHITECTS

ARCHITECTURE

CONSERVATION

INTERIORS

URBAN DESIGN

CATHEDRAL COURT

NEW STREET

DUBLIN D08 XH26

TEL: +353(0) 1 679 1551

EMAIL: INFO@PKA.IE

WEB: PKA.IE

DIRECTORS:

PAUL KEOGH BARCH MARCA FRIAI
FRIBA

RACHAEL CHIDLOW BA MARCA MIDI

ELLEN MATHEWS MARCH MRIAI ARB
DIPCL

ASSOCIATES

BRIGHDIN NI MHAILLE BARCH (HONS)
MRIAI

KEVIN NOLAN CDVEC CDV

PAUL MAHER MARCH MRIAI ARB

STUDIO PKA LTD.

T/A PAUL KEOGH ARCHITECTS

COMPANY SECRETARY: RACHAEL
CHIDLOW

COMPANY NUMBER: 661535

Proposed Affordable Housing Development

Raheen, Athenry

Galway County Council

Part 8 Planning Application

Design Report

Paul Keogh Architects

January 19th 2025

1. Part 8 Planning Design Report

Introduction

1.01 In April 2025 Paul Keogh Architects were appointed under an architect – led fully integrated design team framework by Galway County Council. The appointment included an affordable housing development at Raheen, Athenry, Co. Galway through the accelerated delivery programme stages (i) to (v), delivery by Design and Build.

1.02 The project will be carried out under The Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) Public Works Contract, PW-CF2 Public Works for Building Works Designed by the Contractor. This contract is for the provision of ‘design and build’ housing projects using modern methods of construction.

1.03 The objective of the project is to deliver the site as a high-quality affordable residential scheme, providing a mix of modern user-friendly family houses and a quality environment for the local community.

1.04 The proposed development comprises of:

i. Construction of 28 no. houses located on a greenfield site, accessed from the Gort Mhaoilir road. The proposed dwellings are two-storey in height, comprising of:

- 18 no. 3-bedroom semi-detached houses
- 10 no. 2-bedroom terraced houses

ii. Construction of hard and soft landscape works including new roadways and paths, provision of 56 no. new car parking spaces, provision of 14no. cycle parking, public open space, public lighting, signage, boundary treatments and all associated infrastructure and site developments work necessary to facilitate the proposed development.

1.05 The report that follows outlines the physical, planning, and historic context within which the scheme now presented for Part 8 approval has been prepared, as well as a description of the development proposed and design principles and statutory objectives underpinning the scheme.

2. Project Personnel

The Client

2.01 The employer / client is Galway County Council Housing Department. Key project personnel are as follows:

- Galway County Council Housing Department – James Farrell (Executive Engineer); John Waters (Affordable Housing); Karen O'Donnell (Senior Executive Officer); Leo Westra (Executive Technician); Daithi Flood (A/Senior Engineer).

The Design Team

2.02 The integrated design team is led by Paul Keogh Architects. Key project personnel are as follows:

- Architect / Design Team Lead - Paul Keogh Architects: Paul Keogh (Director); Aifric Carroll (Project Architect).
- Quantity Surveyor – Mulcahy McDonagh & Partners Ltd.: James Kinsella (Associate Director); Daniel Conway (Junior Cost Manager)
- Civil & Structural Engineer – Structural Design Solutions Engineers: Connor Daly (Associate Director); Mark Walsh (Project Engineer).
- Mechanical & Electrical Engineer - CBS Consulting Engineers : Rory Yates (Director); Pamela Yates (Senior Engineer); Vishnu Pillai (Design Consultant).
- Employer's Representative – Paul Keogh Architects.
- Project Supervisor for the Design Stage – Paul Keogh Architects.
- Assigned Certifier – Structural Design Solutions

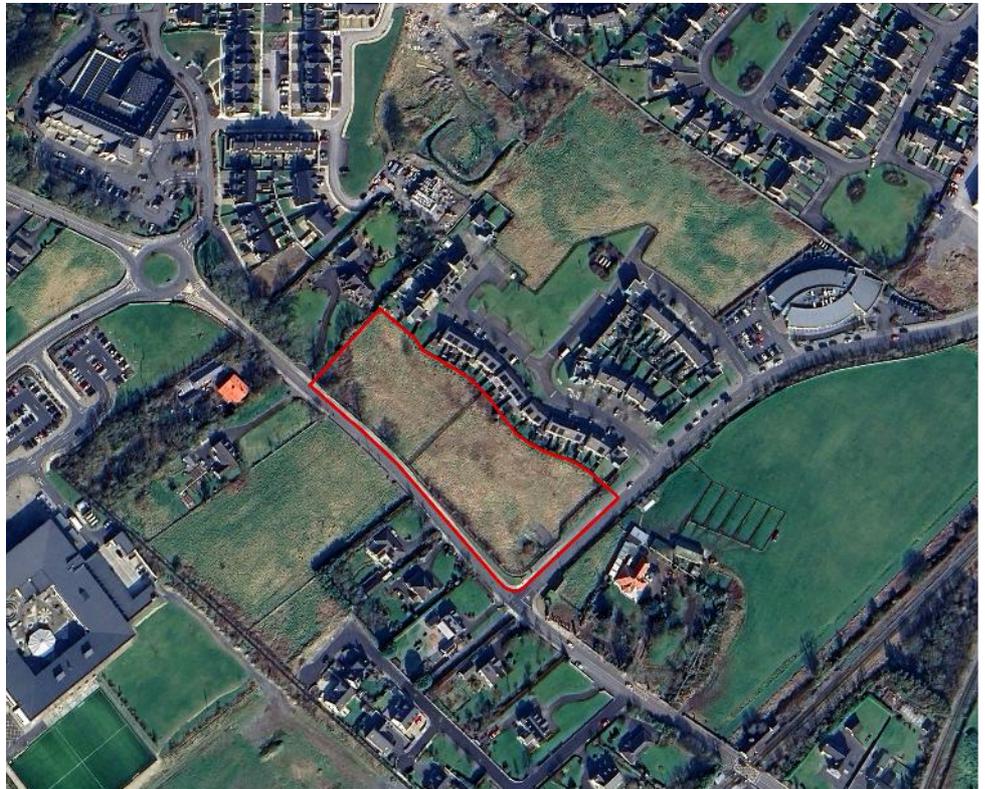
3. Site / Context

Context

3.01 The site is located on a greenfield site, south-west of the existing Gort Mhaoilir housing estate, Athenry, Co. Galway, facing onto roadway L3103 to the southern boundary and Gort Mhaoilir Road to the eastern boundary. The site is accessed from Gort Mhaoilir Road.

Site Area

3.02 The red line boundary of the site measures approximately 1.0815 hectares and is rectangular in shape. The site is bound by rear boundary blockwork walls of the existing Gort Mhaoilir estate and a private house to the northern and western edges, and a natural stone wall and palisade fencing to the eastern and southern edges. The existing site topography is moderately flat, sloping approximately 1 metre from its lowest to highest point.



Aerial view of the site (Google Earth)



Existing site plan



View from L3103 and Gort Mhaoilir Road junction looking towards the south-east corner of the site. (Google Streetview)



View from Gort Mhaoilir Road looking towards the eastern boundary of the site. (Google Streetview)



View from Gort Mhaoilir Road looking towards the eastern boundary of the site.
(Google Streetview)



View of proposed site looking towards the existing site entrance from Gort Mhaoilir Road (PKA)



View from the proposed site looking towards the rear boundary walls of the neighbouring dwellings to the northern and eastern boundary (PKA)



View of proposed site looking towards the existing wastewater treatment tank and the site entrance. (PKA)



View from roadway L3103 looking towards the southern boundary of the site. (Google Streetview)

Site Location

3.03 The proposed housing development will be part of an established suburban neighbourhood located to the north-west of Athenry town centre. The development is accessed via Gort Mhaoilir Road.

Connectivity

3.04 The site is situated approximately 0.8 kilometres from Athenry town centre with local shops and amenities within walking distance of the site. Athenry offers access to schools, a wide variety of shops, restaurants, sporting facilities and public parks. The site is connected to good public transport links; Athenry train station is approximately a ten minute walk from the site, connecting to Galway city, Dublin and Limerick. There is also bus services to Loughrea and Galway city and convenient road access to both Athlone and Dublin via the motorway.



Aerial view of wider site area (Google Earth)

Historic Context

3.05 The site is located within the historical townland boundary of Raheen/Ballygarraun South, which is formed by the existing L3103 roadway.

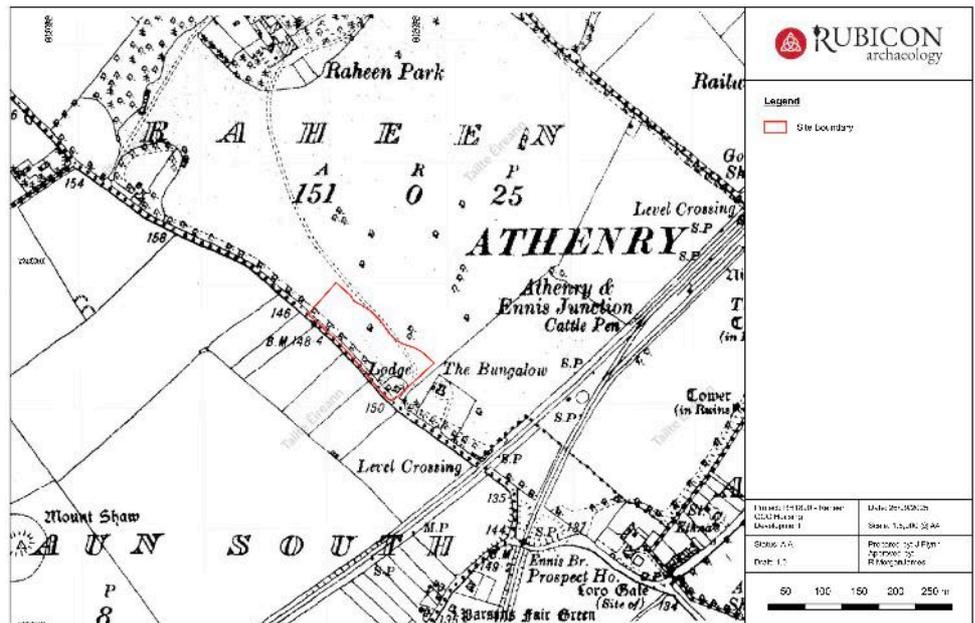


Figure 5 - Cassini 6-inch edition Ordnance Survey map with the proposed development

6-inch ordnance survey map with site boundary line (Rubicon)

Planning History

3.06 Relevant recorded planning permissions on adjoining / adjacent lands as follows:

- App. Ref. LA08/25 refers to a Part 8 application on behalf of Galway County Council for permission of 43 no. residential dwellings, two storey in height, located along the existing Gort Mhaoilir estate roadway, north of the subject site. Decision date 08/07/2025.
- App. Ref 24/61618 refers to permission for retention of revisions and alterations to a private house and garage, as previously approved under planning application reference number 98/2454 at Dunclarin House, Raheen. The private house adjoins the subject site at the western boundary line. Decision date 23/05/2025.
- App. Ref 06/1213 refers to permission of 128 no. residential units, two and three storeys in height, on lands known as the Willows estate, adjacent to Raheen Woods Hotel and north-west of the subject site. The development has had multiple applications for extension of duration. The latest application reference number is 22/141 and refers to 95 of the 128 houses being constructed, with 33 remaining to be constructed. Decision date 18/05/2022.
- App. Ref 21/924 refers to permission of a dwelling house and domestic garage and all associated site works adjacent to the Willows estate, north-west of the subject site. Decision date 13/10/2021.

**Appropriate Assessment
Screening Report**

3.07 A Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) was undertaken by Ash Ecology on behalf of Galway County Council to assess the potential for the proposed development could impact the Natura 2000 network (European Sites). Refer to AA Screening Report for further detail.

3.08 The AA screening identified that an Appropriate Assessment is not required, the proposed development will not have a significant effect on any European Site as a result of the proposed works and A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is not required.

3.09 All European sites within 15km of the proposed development have been assessed for potential impacts. The nearest European site, Rahasane Turlough SAC/SPA at 7.6km, along with all other sites identified, were assessed for impacts from the proposed works and all impacts were screened out.

**Environmental Impact
Assessment Screening Report**

3.10 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening report was undertaken by Ash Ecology on behalf of Galway County Council to determine if a full EIA report is required for the proposed development as set out in the mandatory and discretionary provisions of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2019.

3.11 EIA screening assesses the likelihood that the development would result in significant environmental effects which may arise due to the location of the development or the characteristics of the development. The report determined that a detailed EIAR is not required. Refer to EIA Screening Report for further detail.

**Ecological Impact Assessment
Report**

3.12 An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) was undertaken by Ash Ecology on behalf of Galway County Council to assess the potential impact of the proposed development on the ecological features present within the site and its surrounding area and propose mitigation measures to avoid or reduce impacts where necessary.

3.13 The EclA has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2024) and the EPA Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022).

3.14 This assessment demonstrates that the proposed development, with implementation of specified mitigation and enhancement measures, can proceed without adverse ecological impacts. Through adherence to the mitigation strategy outlined in the report, residual ecological impacts are reduced to negligible or minor levels that are not significant in EIA terms, allowing the development to deliver needed housing while maintaining ecological functionality through retained features and enhancement measures. Refer to EclA Report for further detail.

Archaeological Impact Assessment

3.15 An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) was undertaken by Rubicon Archaeology on behalf of Galway County Council to assess the importance and sensitivity of the known, as well as the potential, archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage environment and the impact upon it of the proposed development.

3.16 The assessment concluded that the proposed development will have a potential direct impact on two unregistered cultural heritage sites, a lodge and unfenced trackway within the proposed site (CH120 and CH163) and an indirect impact on two cultural heritage sites, a town defence located 400m east of the proposed site and an architectural conservation area located 239m east of the proposed site. (CH025 and CH162)

3.17 The report recommended mitigation measures including the following;

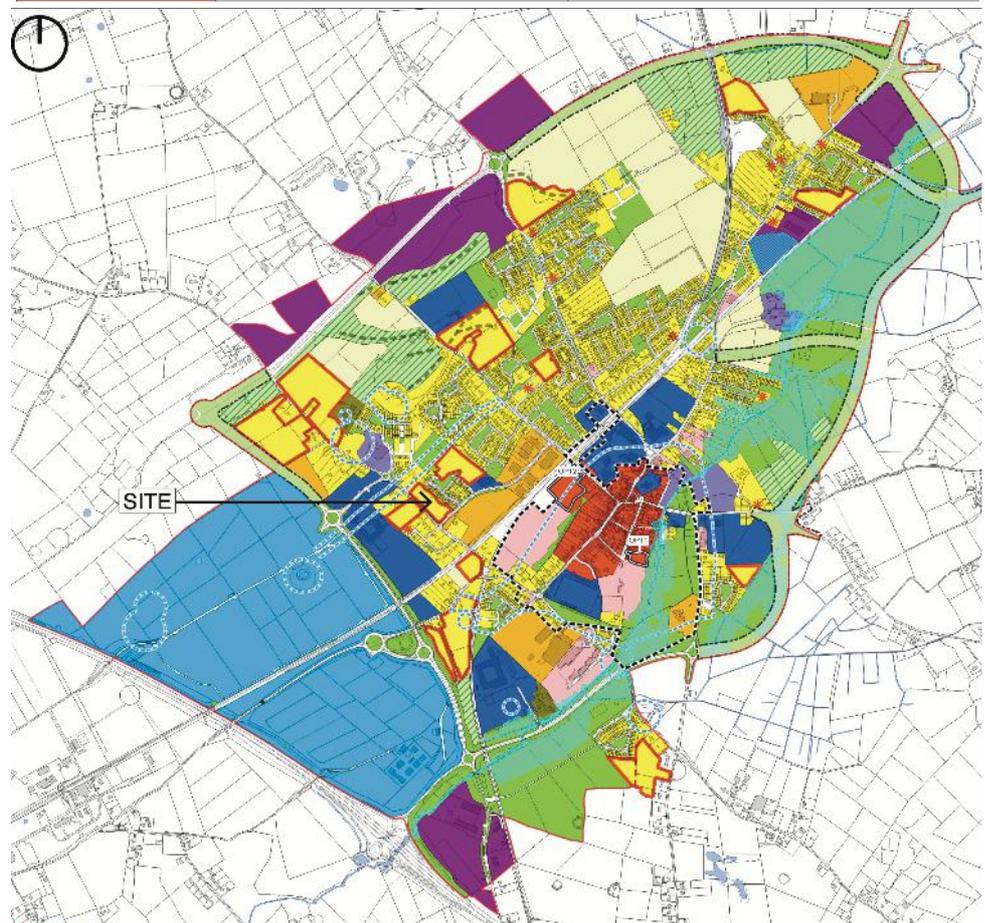
- A suitably qualified archaeological consultant will monitor any sub-surface groundworks undertaken during construction.
- Prior to construction, a combination of advance geophysical survey and advance archaeological test trenching will be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist. Refer to AIA Report for further detail.

4. Planning Policy Context

Land Use Zoning

4.01. The site is zoned residential phase 1 under the *Athenry Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030* ‘To protect, provide and improve residential amenity areas within the lifetime of this plan.’ The proposed development of 16no. units is in compliance with Policy Objective ASP 5 Residential Development Phasing of the Athenry Local Area Plan ‘Support the development of lands designated as Residential (Phase 1) within the lifetime of the plan, subject to normal planning, access, and servicing requirements...’

Residential Phase 1	To protect, provide and improve residential amenity areas within the lifetime of this plan.	To facilitate the provision of high-quality new residential developments at appropriate densities with layout and design well linked to the town centre and community facilities. To provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures to meet household needs and promote balanced communities.
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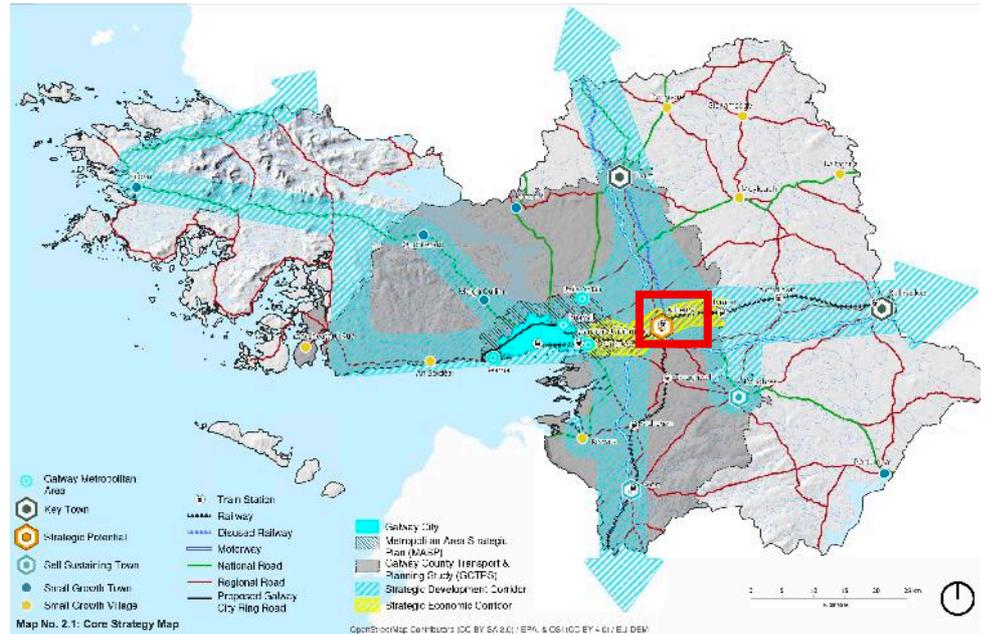
Map 1A Land Use Zoning

Extracts from the Athenry Local Area Plan 2024-2030

National and Regional Policy

4.02. The national, regional and development plan policies relevant to the proposed development are as follows;

- Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework, Government of Ireland (2018).
- Sustainable Residential Developments and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Urban Design Manual; A Best Practice Guide, A Companion Document to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009).
- Design Manual for Quality Housing – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Best Practice Guidelines, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2007.
- Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland, National Disability Authority and Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (2015).
- Best Practice Access Guidelines – Designing Accessible Environments, Irish Wheelchair Association, Edition 4 (November 2020).
- National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland, Health Information and Quality Authority (2016).
- The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (2013).
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, (2009).
- Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice, Building Research Establishment (1991).
- Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future. A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020, Department of Transport (2009).
- Cycle Design Manual – Department of Transport and National Transport Authority (September 2023).



Map No.2.1: Core Strategy Map from the Galway County Council Development Plan 2022-2028

Galway County Council Development Plan 2022 – 2028

4.03. *Chapter 2 - Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Housing Strategy* of the Development Plan identifies Athenry as Level 3 Settlement Hierarchy, Strategic Potential, describing it as a large economically active service centre that provides employment for the surrounding areas. The Core Strategy identifies a significant population growth in Athenry, noting an increase of 1,350 in the populations over the plan period of 2022-2028. This additional population will be accommodated with an additional 544 dwelling units on greenfield sites and 233 dwelling units on infill/brownfield sites.

4.04. In Section 2.3.12 Core Strategy Policy Objectives, the proposed site has been informed by the following core strategies:

- CS 1 Implementation *“To secure the implementation of the Core Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy in so far as practicable, by directing sustainable growth towards the designated settlement.”*
- CS 2 Compact Growth *“To achieve compact growth through the delivery of new homes in urban areas within the existing built up footprints of settlements, by developing infill, brownfield and regeneration sites by prioritising underutilised land in preference to greenfield sites.*
- CS 3 Population Growth *“To support and manage the self-sufficient sustainable development of all settlements in a planner manner, with population growth and the development of economic, physical and social infrastructure.”*
- CS 7 Active Land Management *“To promote, support and facilitate the re-use of under-utilised or vacant lands, or lands identified for regeneration, through a co-*

ordinated approach to active land management between the council and stakeholders.”

4.05. In Section 2.4.7 Area of Strategic Potential, it is noted that Athenry has good rail links to Galway, Dublin and Limerick. The town is also located within the Oranmore to Athenry Strategic Economic Corridor, which supports the development of Foreign Direct Investment and indigenous industries/ businesses, building on the existing strategic location and infrastructure.

4.06. Policy Objective SS3 Strategic Potential (Level 3) intends to *“Support the development of Athenry as a town of Strategic Potential as outlined in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy in order to sustain a strong, vibrant urban centre which will act as an important driver for the local economy, reduce travel demand and support a large rural hinterland, while providing a complementary role to the Key Towns and MASP and the smaller towns and villages in the County.”*

4.07. Relevant housing strategy policy objectives of the Planning Authority in Section 2.5 Housing Strategy that apply to the proposed site are as follows;

- HS 1 Housing Requirements *“...to facilitate the housing needs of the existing and future population of County Galway through the management of housing development in the county in accordance with the Housing Need Demand Assessment, Core Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy.”*
- SH 1 Affordable Housing *“Promote the delivery of affordable housing primarily in sustainable locations in towns and villages across County Galway in the first instance in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.”*

4.08. Key policy objectives for placemaking noted in *Chapter 3 Placemaking, Regeneration and Urban Living* that apply to the proposed site are as follow:

- PM 1 Placemaking *“To promote and facilitate the sustainable development of a high-quality built environment where there is a distinctive sense of place in attractive streets, spaces, and neighbourhoods that are accessible and safe places for all members of the community to meet and socialise.”*
- PM 8 Character and Identity *“Ensure the best quality of design is achieved for all new development and that design respects and enhances the specific characteristics unique features of the towns and villages throughout the County.”*
- PM 10 Design Quality *“To require that new buildings are of exceptional architectural quality, and are fit for their intended use or function, durable in terms of design and construction, respectful of setting and the environment and to require that the overall development is of high quality, with a well-considered public realm.”*
- PM 11 Details of Materials *“To ensure that the appearance of buildings, in terms of details and materials (texture, colour, patterns and durability), is of a high standard with enduring quality and has a positive impact on the visual quality of the area.”*

- PM 13 Public Realm Opportunities *“Promote enhanced and increased public realm opportunities including the shared use of spaces, for outdoor experiences, with a priority on pedestrian uses.”*

Athenry Local Area Plan 2024 - 2030

4.09. Relevant policy objectives in *Athenry Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030* are as follows:

- ASP 2 Service Led Development *“Development under the plan shall be preceded by sufficient capacity in the public wastewater infrastructure and potable water infrastructure. Potential developers shall make a Pre-Connection enquiry to Uisce Éireann in order to establish the feasibility of a connection to the public network.”*
- ASP 3 Environment Assessment *“To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the area to have regard to the information, data and requirement of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment that accompany this LAP.”*
- ASP 8 Sequential Development *“Endeavour to promote the orderly and phased development of residential development in accordance with the principles of the sequential approach as set out in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns and Villages) Guidelines 2009 (or as updated). This shall include a positive presumption in favour of the sequential development of suitably serviced Residential Phase 1 lands emanating outwards from the town core and/or sequential extensions to the existing residential fabric of suitably serviced Residential Phase 1 lands within the LAP boundary, subject to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and the current County Development Plan.”*
- ASP 15 Social Inclusion and Universal Design and Access

“a) It is the Policy Objective of Galway County Council to support the principles of social inclusion and universal design and access, to ensure that all individuals have access to goods, services and buildings to assist them to participate in and contribute to all aspects of a vibrant life within Athenry.

b) Ensure that housing developments, community facilities, public spaces, public roads, public footpaths and transport services give due consideration to the needs of disabled or mobility impaired people and the requirements of the Disability Act 2005, the Council’s Disability Action Plan 2007-2015 (and any updates to this document), the Traffic Management Guidelines 2003, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and National Disability Authority (NDA) advice notes titled Access: Improving the Accessibility to Historic Buildings and Places 2011 (and any subsequent reviews/updates to these documents).”

- ASP 22 Active Land Management in Athenry *“To promote and facilitate the re-use of underutilized or vacant lands in Athenry or lands identified for regeneration,*

- through a coordinated approach to active land management between the Council and stakeholders.”*
- ASP 24 Open Space, Recreation and Amenity *“Promote the sustainable management, use and/or development as appropriate, of open space / recreation and amenity lands. This will include: a) Development of open spaces and recreational activities, in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community...”*
 - ASP 28 Public Utilities *“Facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential public utility infrastructure, together with the necessary ancillary facilities and uses, as appropriate. Development proposals in the vicinity of public utility infrastructure will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.”*
 - ASP 29 Water Supply, Wastewater and Combined Drainage Infrastructure *“Support Uisce Éireann in the provision and maintenance of adequate wastewater disposal and water supply and the maintenance of existing combined (sewage and surface water) drainage infrastructure, in accordance with EU Directives, to service Athenry. This will include satisfactory capacity for public wastewater and a satisfactory quantity and quality of water supply, Sustainable Drainage System and approaches and techniques with the plan area shall also be supported. The removal of surface water from combined drainage infrastructure is strongly encouraged in order to free up capacity for future development.”*
 - ASP 30 Water Supply and Water Conservation *“Ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with a suitable quantity and quality of drinking water supply, promote water conservation to reduce the overall level of water loss in the public supply and require that new domestic developments provide for water supply metering in accordance with their connection agreement with Uisce Éireann.”*
 - ASP 31 Connections to the Public Sewer and Public Water Mains *“Developments shall connect to the public sewer and public water mains, subject to a connection agreement with Uisce Éireann, to protect all waters in the plan area, consolidate the urban structure and control ribbon development along approach roads in Athenry.”*
 - ASP 32 High Quality, Contextually Sensitive Design *“Ensure that new developments are responsive to their site context and in keeping with the character, heritage, amenities, environment, and landscape of the area. New development proposals will be required to complement the existing character of the area in terms of scale, height, massing, building line, urban grain, and definition and through high quality design proposals for buildings/structures/shop fronts, the use of high quality, appropriate materials and the provision of appropriate signage, lighting, landscaping proposals and other such details.”*

- ASP 34 Spatial Definition and Animation *“Ensure that new developments are designed to provide spatial definition and animation to public spaces and streets through the use of appropriate building lines and built forms, responsive building frontages and passive surveillance and high-quality streetscapes and/or landscaping edges to enclose and address public spaces. Perimeter block typologies provide a useful approach in generating good spatial definition, adequate enclosure and a high-quality public realm and the creation of focal points, such as landmark buildings and gateways, also help to improve spatial definition and legibility and will be encouraged in appropriate locations.”*
- ASP 53 Pedestrian and Cycle Network *“Facilitate the improvement of the pedestrian and cycling environment and network so that it is safe and accessible to all, through the provision of the necessary infrastructure. New development shall promote and prioritise walking and cycling, shall be permeable, adequately linked and connected to neighbouring areas, the town centre, recreational, educational, residential and employment destinations and shall adhere to the principles contained within the national policy document Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020 and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013), as updated in 2019.”*
- ASP 55 Traffic and Transport Assessment and Road Safety Audits *“Require all significant development proposals to be accompanied by a Road Safety Audit and Traffic & Transport Assessment carried out by suitably competent consultants, which are assessed in association with their cumulative impact with neighbouring developments on the road network, in accordance with the requirements contained within the TII’s Traffic & Transport Assessment Guidelines (PE-PDV-02045) 2014 (including any updated/superseding document) and ‘Road Safety Audit’ (GE-STY-01024) December 2017.”*
- ASP 69 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) *“Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in Athenry. Ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in all new developments. Surface water runoff from development sites will be limited to pre-development levels and planning applications for new developments will be required to provide details of surface water drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems proposals. To maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water, the discharge of additional surface water to combined (foul and surface water) sewers is not permitted. Refer also to Section 3.5 of the accompanying SFRA, “Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Surface Water Guidance and Strategy”.”*

Assessment

4.10. The subject proposal provides for 28 no. affordable housing units on lands, that currently form part of a greenfield site at Raheen, Athenry. The proposed development considers the character of neighbouring buildings; two storey dwellings. The proposal, consisting of 28 no. two-storey semi-detached houses aims to achieve a balance between the provision of higher residential density and sustaining the low-rise architectural form of neighbouring buildings.

- Total Site Area: 1.0815 ha (10,815 m²)
- GFA: 3,876.2 m²
- GIFA: 2,929.8 m²
- Plot Ratio: 0.36 : 1
- Total Units: 28 no. units
- Site Coverage: 18 %
- Proposed Density: 26 dwellings per hectare
- Car Parking: 56 no. spaces (incl. 3 no. accessible parking spaces and 4 no. EV charging spaces)
- Visitor Bicycle Parking: 14 no. spaces

The residential units comprises of:

- 18 no. three-bedroom dwellings (5 person)
- 10 no. two-bedroom dwellings (4 person)

Residential Density

4.11. The proposed residential development on this site considers all aspects of the County Development plan, including land use zoning, the pattern of residential development in the area and the residential policies of the Development Plan.

4.12. It follows the principle that a residential development is in accordance with the *Athenry Local Area Plan 2024-2030* and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area is put in place.

4.13. In relation to the density, having regard to Appendix B: Measuring Residential Density of the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* the use of a net site density is considered the most appropriate means of estimating density. The site area is 1.0815 ha. The development of 28 no. units provides a site density of 26 units per hectare. Having regard to the existing pattern of development in the area and considering the area is characterised by low-density residential housing in the GCC Development Plan 2022-2028, this proposal is achieving a suitable net density and can be considered an efficient use of land in this instance.

Private / Communal Open Space

4.14. Private Open Space in the form of private rear gardens at ground level exceeds the provisions set out in the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Each dwelling will have in excess of 67m² private amenity space.

4.15. Standards for the provision of public open space standards for residential development are set-out in *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*.

4.16. The proposed public open space is 16 % of the site area, comprising primarily of two open spaces between three clusters of semi-detached houses facing onto the L3103 roadway. The two open spaces will include two separate attenuation tanks below ground level. The three clusters of houses are positioned back from the boundary line, creating a planted buffer zone between the main roadway and the houses.

4.17. Given the nature of this greenfield site, it is considered that the combination of good quality private open space and communal open space will provide a good standard of residential amenity in-line with overall policies and objectives of The Development Plan.



Proposed site plan



Axonometric of proposal



Sketch illustration of proposal

5. Architectural Design Statement

Urban Design Rationale

5.01. The proposed development aims to create a strong and coherent streetscape frontage to L3103 and Gort Mhaoilir Road. Two-storey semi-detached houses are arranged in three clusters to the front of the site. The dwellings are set behind an existing low-level stone wall which is retained as a defining boundary feature, contributing to the character of the area while providing a degree of privacy and security for houses facing the main roadway.

5.02. Vehicle and pedestrian access to the development is from Gort Mhaoilir Road and forms a new internal street through the site. A linear layout of two-storey semi-detached houses face onto the new roadway, formed around the north and west edges of the site. The low-rise layout forms an attractive new streetscape, promoting passive surveillance of the public realm, achieving efficient land use and ensuring a high level of green amenity space.

5.03. The position of the dwellings have been carefully considered to maximise sunlight and daylight, while also minimising overlooking of neighbouring gardens. The houses are positioned at the lowest feasible floor level to minimise the extent of retaining walls.

Dwelling Design

5.04. All proposed houses comply with space standards and design principles set out in the *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* (2007) and the DHLGH's *Design Manual for Quality Housing*, including the minimum dimensions and areas for aggregate living and bedroom areas. Adequate storage and WC facilities have been provided for each unit, including access for persons with disabilities.

5.05. Each dwelling is provided with a private own-door entrance directly facing the pedestrian boundary. All units benefit from private, secure rear garden spaces, accessed via individual gated entrances. The two-bedroom semi-detached dwellings use a shared rear laneway to access their private gardens.

Design Evolution

5.06. The proposed development was originally considered as all terraced units, in order to maximise efficiency on the site. Following further development and consultation with the design team and Galway County Council, the layout was refined to prioritise a proposal of semi-detached dwellings. This revised design achieves a balanced and contextually appropriate development, while also facilitating private external access to rear gardens, improving residential amenity, and ensuring that adequate car parking provision is accommodated across the site.

Materials and Finishes

5.07. The design seeks to ensure that the development contribute to the quality of the surrounding residential estates and local context. The front elevations will include a light coloured render finish with contrasting blue-faced limestone detailing on the front gables at ground floor level. The proposed front garden walls will also have the

same limestone finish. The dwellings will have a contemporary and robust design, while remain in-keeping with the local character of the area and the traditional Galway vernacular.

Open Space

5.08. The design seeks to create shared open spaces that are functional, manageable and with careful consideration of paving treatments, boundaries, hard and soft landscaping.

5.09. The proposed open space includes two central communal green spaces between three clusters of houses. New tree planting, wildflower meadows and ornamental planting are proposed to improve the quality of the streetscape and the public realm.

5.10. The inclusion of street trees, landscaped boundaries, and generous open space further contributes to a high-quality residential environment, reinforcing a sense of place and creating an attractive neighbourhood.

Overlooking and Overshadowing

5.11. The positioning and design of the proposed dwellings ensure that no overlooking impacts arise in relation to the neighbouring properties. All upper-floor habitable room windows are located at separation distances in excess of 16 metres. Where upper-level windows occur at distances of less than 16 metres, these serve non-habitable rooms only, such as bathrooms, and will be fitted with opaque glazing.

5.12. The side gable of unit no. 18 is positioned approximately 9 metres from the nearest neighbouring dwelling, house no. 42 within the existing Gort Mhaoilir estate. House no. 42 contains no upper-level windows on the nearest elevation facing the proposed development, thereby avoiding any potential overlooking.

5.13. The proposed development will have minimal overshadowing to the rear gardens of the existing Gort Mhaoilir estate, which adjoins the site at the northern boundary. Refer to PKA's Shadow Analysis Report illustrating the extent of overshadowing to the neighbouring gardens.

5.14. During the spring and autumn equinox, the shadow analysis illustrates minor impact in the late afternoon to the existing house no. 23, 30, 31, 40, 41 and 42 in the Gort Mhaoilir estate.

5.15. Additionally, during the winter solstice, when the angle of the sun is at its lowest, the shadow analysis illustrates very minor additional impact in the early afternoon to the existing house no. 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 41 and 42 in the Gort Mhaoilir estate.

5.16. The *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* note that low-rise housing which meets the recommended separation distances between existing and proposed dwellings is not expected to adversely affect neighbouring properties and does not require a technical daylight and sunlight assessment.

Car and Cycle Parking

5.17. The proposed development includes the provision of 56 no. new shared car parking spaces and is more than the requirements of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. The off-curtilage parking provides 2no. spaces per dwelling and includes 3 no. wheelchair accessible spaces and 4no. electrical vehicle (EV) charging spaces.

5.18. 4 no. dedicated EV charging points are provided to serve the 28 no. dwellings. The adequacy of this provision has been assessed having regard to typical residential EV charging behaviour, whereby vehicles are charged intermittently, often overnight, rather than continuously. On this basis, the level of charging infrastructure provided is sufficient to accommodate shared use, peak demand periods, and future growth in EV ownership, ensuring convenient and sustainable provision for residents of the development.

5.19. Additionally, a provision for ducting for EV charging points will be made to all parking spaces, in accordance with *Galway County Council Development Plan 2022 – 2028*, which specifies in DM Standard 31(g) that all developments should provide facilities for the charging of battery-operated cars at a rate of up to 20% of the total car parking spaces.

5.20. The proposed development also includes the provision of 14no. visitor cycle parking, in the form of Sheffield racks along the street. All houses include a private front and rear garden for bicycle storage if required.

Safety and Security

5.21. Passive surveillance will be enhanced by ground and first floor windows to the front elevations providing 'eyes on the street' around the open spaces.

5.22. All houses include private and gated access to rear gardens.

Universal Access

5.23. The proposed development has been designed with close adherence to *Technical Guidance Document Part M – Access & Use (2022)* ensuring the proposal meets the needs of its future occupants.

5.24. The dwellings are provided with level access via the front entrance and include a minimum width of 800mm clear corridors, minimum level clearance of 1.2 m at all front doors, and a Part M compliant accessible visitor bathroom on ground floor.

5.25. Proposed roadways and pathways follow the natural topography of the site and have been designed to have a gradient no less than 1:20. Pathways will be a minimum 1.8 metres wide throughout the site.

Energy Efficiency

5.26. The proposed development will comply with *Technical Guidance Document Part L - Conservation of Fuel and Energy – Dwellings (2022)* and aim to achieve an A2 energy rating.

5.27. A provision for ducting for EV charging points will be made to all parking spaces and there will be 4no. dedicated EV charging point spaces.



Sketch illustration of proposal

6. Services Design Statement

Roads and Access

6.01. Vehicle and pedestrian access to the proposed development will be from Gort Mhaoilir Road via a new entrance and internal roadway through the site. Traffic calming ramps and stop lines at internal junctions are proposed within the site. An auto-track swept path analysis for a HGV (heavy goods vehicle) has been completed by SDS Engineers demonstrating sufficient access from the site entrance and turn-around space for deliveries and services.

6.02. A 3.5 metre active travel zone has been indicated from the existing edge of the kerb around the site boundary line along roadway L3103 and Gort Mhaoilir Road to allow for future cycling and walking infrastructure. The existing light poles will be relocated 3.5 metres from the existing edge of the kerb.

6.03. A new pedestrian crossing and footpath improvements are proposed at the junction of Gort Mhaoilir Road and the L3103 as part of a separate, already approved application by Galway County Council. These works will enhance pedestrian safety and improve connectivity between the site and the existing walking network.

6.04. Traffic and Transport Assessment was undertaken by ORS on behalf of Galway County Council to assess the potential impact of the proposed development on the existing local transport network and ensure the proposed site access and existing junctions will have adequate capacity to carry the development traffic. Refer to TTA for further details.

6.05. A Stage 1/2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) was carried out by CST Group on behalf of Galway County Council to identify any features of the design that could be removed or modified to improve the safety of the scheme. The design team has reviewed all recommendations outlined in the RSA. Refer to RSA for further details.

6.06. A Mobility Management Plan (MMP) was not required for the proposed development. The recommended threshold in the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* is 100 or more residential units and the proposed car parking is more than the requirements of the Galway County Development Plan.

6.07. A MMP was prepared for the proposed housing development within the adjoining Gort Mhaoilir estate to the north of the site, assessing accessibility and promoting sustainable transport modes. The analysis demonstrates that most of central Athenry is accessible within a 15-minute walk, with the wider surrounding area reachable within 30 minutes. Cycling significantly extends accessibility, with a 15-minute cycle covering all of Athenry and a 30-minute cycle reaching neighbouring towns. Athenry Rail Station is located approximately a 10-minute walk from the site and provides connections on the Galway–Dublin rail line, including services to Ennis and Limerick. In addition, Gort Mhaoilir Road and the L3103 offer direct access to regional and national road network.

Flood Risk

6.08. The site is identified as Flood Zone C. The probability of flooding from rivers of the sea is less than 0.1% or 1 in 1000 for both river and coastal flooding under the *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment* carried out for *Athenry Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030*.

Surface Water and Attenuation

6.09. There is existing surface water infrastructure on the site serving the existing Gort Mhaoilir estate, where surface water is being discharged into two soakaways and a swale on the subject site. A new infiltration tank will be constructed in the existing Gort Mhaoilir estate to take the surface water run-off from the existing estate, as part of a separate, already approved application by Galway County Council.

6.10. A new surface water collection network will be created for the proposed development, in the form of two infiltration tanks, positioned in the two larger green spaces within the proposed site. Any additional surface water being taken by the existing soakaways and swale will be directed to the proposed infiltration tanks on the site. Refer to Engineer's Services Design Report for further detail.

Foul Drainage

6.11. There is an existing wastewater treatment system on the site that will be decommissioned by a licensed operator. The treatment tank will be emptied, cleaned, and removed from site.

6.12. A new wastewater sewer is proposed to intercept the existing wastewater sewer to the north west of the site and will run down through the centre of the proposed development. This wastewater sewer will then connect to an existing wastewater sewer outside of the site boundary to the south east of the site. The foul drainage will be designed in compliance with the UE standards and will be fully scoped to ensure capacity of existing network. Refer to Engineer's Services Design Report for further detail.

Uisce Éireann

6.13. A pre-connection enquiry was made to Uisce Éireann in relation to a water and wastewater connection for the proposed development. UE advised a water connection is feasible without infrastructure upgrades. Refer to Engineer's Services Design Report for further detail.

6.14. Existing water and wastewater infrastructure is in private/ third party ownership and written agreement is to be obtained for permission to connect to third party infrastructure. An application for foul and water services to be completed, granted and signed.

Public Lighting

6.15. A public lighting layout has been prepared by CBS consulting engineers for the proposed development. Refer to Outdoor Lighting Report for further detail.

7. Statutory Matters

Pre-planning consultation

7.01. The statutory approvals required for the development is planning permission, obtained by way of the Part 8 planning procedure for development by local authorities.

7.02. Pre-planning consultations have taken place with representatives of Galway County Council's planning and housing departments. Comments and recommendations received have been incorporated into the plans now presented for approval.

8. Executive Summary

Summary

8.01. We are confident that the proposed residential development at Raheen presented herewith is a well-considered response to the project brief, the site context and the specific requirements of the user group as outlined by the applicant, as well as contributing to the quality of the surrounding streets and improving the perception of the estate as a safe and positive place to live.

8.02. The planning drawings appended to this report seek to provide a high quality architectural design that complies with and/or has regard for all the objectives of the Galway County Council Development Plan (2022 – 2028) and in accordance with national and local policy.

8.03. We look forward to the Planning Authority's determination of this application in due course.

Signed



Paul Keogh FRIAI FRIBA

January 19th 2025