C4 ↔ ArchiMate mapping cheat sheet

A pragmatic, non-normative mapping, plus which view answers which question.

How to use: agree on one convention per row (and one for relationships), give each application the same name in C4 and ArchiMate, and pick the view from the question and its reader before drawing.

C4 concept → ArchiMate element

C4 concept	C4 meaning	ArchiMate element (Archi blog proposal)	Common alternative	Note
Person	A user of the software system (actor, role, persona)	Business Actor	Business Role, if you model roles rather than people or teams	External actors keep the same type, flagged by a property
Software System	The highest level of abstraction: something that delivers value to its users	Application Component	Grouping of Application Components for a large system	The pivot with the enterprise landscape: same name in both models
External software system	A system outside the scope you own	Application Component	Same, flagged "external" by a property or a grouping	Keep it: it carries the integration risk
Container (application, API, front end)	A deployable/runnable unit inside the system	Application Component (nested in the system)	Node or System Software when the container is really a runtime platform	A C4 container is not a Docker container
Container (data store)	A database, file store or bucket holding data	Not covered	Data Object for the data + System Software for the database engine (+ Artifact when deployed)	Separating data from engine avoids confusing the two
Component	A grouping of related functionality inside a container	Application Function	Application Component (fine grain) if you need to show its interfaces	Only model components in ArchiMate if a cross-system question needs them
Code element	Classes, interfaces, functions	Application Function (flagged as probably too fine)	Do not model it in ArchiMate	Leave code to the IDE and to UML
Relationship ("uses", "calls")	A dependency or interaction between elements	Triggering, from caller to callee	Serving (callee serves caller) for dependency; Flow for data exchange	Pick one convention, write it down, apply it everywhere
Deployment node	Infrastructure on which containers run (server, VM, cluster, cloud service)	Not covered	Node, Device, System Software; container instance as Artifact	Matches the ArchiMate technology layer

> Element names follow ArchiMate 3.2. ArchiMate 4 (The Open Group, published 27 April 2026) supersedes it: layers become domains, behaviour elements are merged across domains (an Application Function becomes a Function) and the Business Role becomes a generic Role. Check which version your tool implements.

Question → recommended view

Question	Typical reader	Recommended view	Language
Which applications support this business capability?	CIO, business leadership	Capability-support view (Capability → Application Component)	ArchiMate
Which applications exchange data with the ERP, and in which direction?	Architects, integration team	Application cooperation view (Application Components + Flow)	ArchiMate
Which business processes stop if this server goes down?	CIO, CISO, continuity manager	Layered view (Node → Application Component → Business Process)	ArchiMate
Why are we running this programme, and which goals does it serve?	Executive committee	Motivation and strategy views (Goal, Outcome, Capability)	ArchiMate
How do we move from today's landscape to the target?	Transformation leads	Implementation and migration view (Plateau, Work Package)	ArchiMate
What is this system, who uses it and which systems does it talk to?	Everyone, including non-technical readers	System Context diagram	C4
What runs inside this system and which technology does each part use?	Developers, ops, security reviewers	Container diagram	C4
How is this system deployed across environments?	Ops, SRE	Deployment diagram	C4
How is this container organised internally?	The development team	Component diagram	C4
What happens, call by call, when a payment fails?	Developers, testers	Sequence diagram (or C4 dynamic diagram)	UML
Which states can an order go through, and what triggers each change?	Developers, analysts	State machine diagram	UML
Who does what, in which order, in this process?	Process owner, business teams	Process diagram	BPMN

Sources: the C4 model (Simon Brown, c4model.com); The Open Group ArchiMate 3.2 and ArchiMate 4 specifications; Archi blog post "C4 Model, Architecture Viewpoint and Archi" (archimatetool.com).