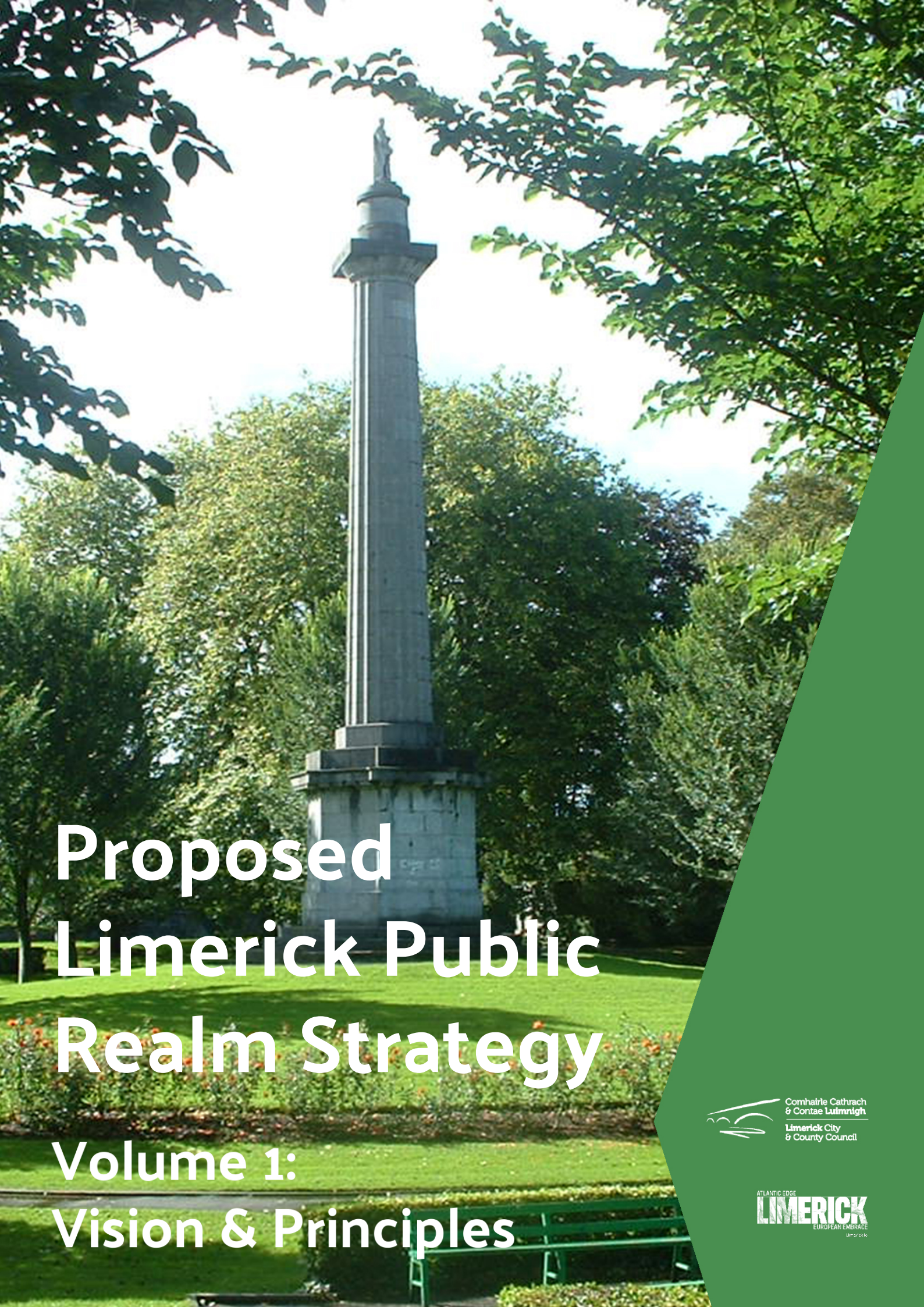




Proposed Limerick Public Realm Strategy

Volume 1: Vision & Principles



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City
& County Council





DRAFT

Project

Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy

This strategy document was developed by Limerick City and County Council's Forward Planning and Public Realm Department.

Input on various design proposals contained within was provided by LUC Landscape Architects.

Date

July 17th 2026

Note

This document and its contents have been prepared by Limerick City and County Council and is intended solely for use in relation to the Public Realm Strategy for Limerick City Centre project.

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Executive Summary

Setting the Scene

Limerick is a place with a different kind of energy - a place established by hardy Vikings, fortified by nature, built upon an island, and encircled by the strong arms of the Shannon.

Since its foundation, it is continuously expanding and is now the third-most populous urban area in the Republic of Ireland. The 2022 census showed an increase in population of 8, 095 since 2016. 102,287 people are now living in the city & its suburbs as of 2022.

Limerick's character and spirit is energetic by nature, with a twist and gritty, driven attitude. It is a city known for its diversity in sporting prowess, cultural contributions, and architectural heritage.

Perceptions of what a city should be and offer its inhabitants is changing. It is now widely acknowledged that a city should support civic function in a meaningful way, through a deep understanding of its public spaces and how people use and live in these public spaces. In the past, when assessing how to improve a city's public realm, there tended to be a focus on the physical attributes of what makes a city unique, as opposed to the dynamic nature of the life that makes up this unique city. Lifestyle is harder to define and integrate into planning.

Public space includes streets, squares, and parks. Public life encompasses all activities happening in these areas, walking, socialising, but beyond simply enjoying café culture or strolling amongst shops.

Public life varies daily and yearly. Influential factors are gender, age, culture, and economic status. These complexities make it challenging to incorporate the full range of human experience into urban design. This strategy employs a full-spectrum approach for future public realm proposals that support the diverse activities Limerick City will offer.

This strategy comprises of 3 Volumes:

- Volume 1 sets out the policy context, historical development, public engagement and the overall visions and principles.
- Volume 2 contains the public design manual
- Volume 3 contains the environmental reports.

Engagement

At the project's inception, a public survey was undertaken to provide an effective way of reaching a large number of people in the most efficient manner. This survey was comprised of a series of open-ended, experiential questions which invited free flow text responses. By the time the survey closed, 864 responses had been received.

These initial findings helped to shape the plan by informing its guiding principles, highlighting and confirming common challenges, cherished experiences and significant places and providing critical advice on the types of interventions people would like to see and where.

The results provided a rich tapestry of information about what matters most to people when asked about their city centre.

People provided insight as to what they cherished about the city's public realm, what they felt were its core challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The results showed the community's desire for improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, more green spaces, and preservation of the city's unique cultural and historical identity. Residents expressed a strong connection to the city's parks, riverside, and historical sites, suggesting areas for improvement and enhancement.



Setting the Scene

Project Aim

This Public Realm Strategy seeks to tie together, in a cohesive manner, all of the identified opportunities and assets Limerick City has to offer. This Strategy will use the gathered information as a tool to improve the design of our public spaces and the quality of living in this great City.

The strategy aims to leverage Limerick's advancement under Project Ireland 2040 towards increased economic growth, new homes, transport infrastructure, balancing growth with the preservation of natural and heritage assets through careful planning.

Limerick's public realm vision aims to create a modern, people focused, and sustainable city centre that is walkable, green, culturally vibrant, and seamlessly connected. It seeks to increase city centre living, promote mixed use neighbourhoods, support local enterprise, celebrate heritage, and deliver a high quality public realm tied together by six-character areas and an integrated network of streets and spaces. Eight key principles guide this transformation: people centred placemaking; enhancing liveability; strengthening climate resilience through green infrastructure; reconnecting the city via sustainable mobility; creating distinct identities across character areas; safeguarding heritage; activating and animating public spaces; and ensuring universal accessibility and inclusivity for all users.

Deliverables

Deliverables for this Strategy began with a review of the existing Limerick City Centre core, a desk-top review, site survey, condition survey, and stakeholder and community engagement activities are included.

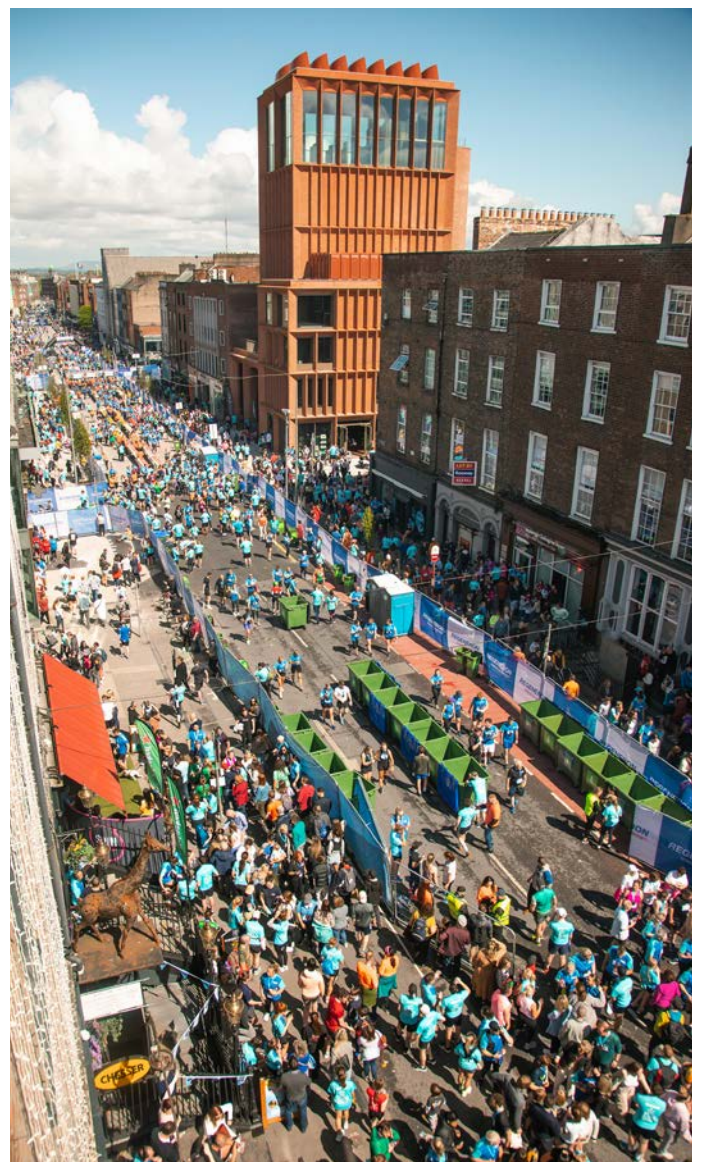
Limerick City Centre's public realm was developed with a vision to the future and the specific aims for the Public Realm Strategy. The Strategy supports the implementation of Local, European and National policy, including existing policies and objectives, but not limited to the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, The 2024 Mayoral programme, Project Ireland 2040, and the RSES for the Southern Region. It also complements measures contained in the Draft transport plan, LSMATS and Limerick City and County Council's Limerick 2030 – An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick.

Opportunities for co-ordination of cohesive public realm projects have been identified to form a network of public squares and plazas, improving connections, and enhance the overall way the city functions.

Implementation

The strategy suggests a phased approach to implementation, with initial projects focusing on areas with the highest impact and potential for transformation. This includes streetscape improvements, development of new green spaces, enhancement of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, and integration of art and cultural elements into the public realm.

In summary, the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy aims to create a cohesive and vibrant urban environment that supports sustainable growth, enhances the quality of life for its residents, and preserves the unique character of the city.





Chapter One

Introduction

- Drivers of Public Realm Enhancement
- The Public Realm & Placemaking
- Aims & Objectives
- Vision and Principles
- Policy Context
- Local Policy
- Changes to Transport

Introduction

“The buildings, places and spaces that are made, shaped, used and managed by people define the social and physical context of our lives. The decisions we make about the environments that surround us directly affect our quality of life, our identity, our health and welfare, sense of place and how we use our time.

The high-quality places we inherit and those we make today not only serve our needs for shelter, commerce, culture, leisure and mobility, they also anchor us in the past and accompany us into the future. Our built heritage enlivens our localities, inspires new creativity and reminds us that buildings were hard won from local materials – stone, earth, iron, wood and water- and were valued and maintained over centuries.”

Extract from Places for People, 2022.

Limerick is a place with a different kind of energy - a place fortified by nature, built upon an island, encircled by the strong arms of the Shannon.

The Vikings founded this great city, discovered the full potential of the place and developed Limerick into an important and desirable settlement. Indeed, the city faces into the direction of the Atlantic, the Americas being just five hours away, but is also an integral part of Europe, with its millennia of rich history. This dual aspect has informed the character of a truly unique place.

Limerick is the third-most populous urban area in the Republic of Ireland. With a population of, 102,287 people now living in the city & its suburbs as of 2022- an increase of 8, 095 since 2016- the city is expanding.

Limerick's character & spirit is energetic by nature. It is a city known for its diversity in sporting prowess, with Limerick GAA having dominated the national sport of hurling in recent years, and is proud to be the home of Munster Rugby at Thomond Park, where many gloriously sweet sporting moments have taken place.

Attributes include fresh Atlantic south-westerly winds, 3 (plus) bridges arching in limestone spanning the River Shannon, the thick barrel towers of King John's Castle, and the rock that witnessed the end of the Williamite war in the autumn of 1691, the Treaty Stone. Adjacent to this Treaty Stone, the bells of St. Munchin's Church punctuate the air daily, acting as reminders to grab a bite to eat, or pack up and head home after a day's work. Every Sunday, the people of Limerick wake up to chiming of the bells of St Mary's Cathedral. The Milk Market is accessed via a labyrinth of narrow lanes, where the city congregates on Saturday mornings to browse the stalls of artisan food producers under a giant canopy.

Irish history described Limerick as "the most handsome riverfront in the country". The King's Island medieval quarter in the north of the city adjoins gleaming glass buildings and rows of Georgian red brick townhouses. This contrast in urban expression, from narrow medieval lanes to the broad confidence of the Georgian neighbourhood makes for a striking visual feast. Cafes have colonised the waterways. The main streets and quays are easy to navigate on foot or by bike. Limerick is a walkable city.



Introduction

Drivers of Public Realm Enhancement

2006 - The first public realm Strategy for the City Centre was published nearly twenty years ago in 2006, providing preliminary design proposals for a range of streets and public spaces, focusing on the city heart within the Orbital vehicular route. It prioritised public realm improvements to the main retail areas (Thomas Street, Bedford Row, William Street), an east-west connection from the riverside to John's Square, north-south links along O'Connell Street, Catherine Street, Baker Place/Pery Square and the riverside.

2008 - A public realm design guide was prepared in 2008 to support the delivery of the public realm by establishing design standards for streets and their hard and soft landscape treatments.

2010 - The Limerick City Centre Public Realm Update of 2010 provided a progress report on the implementation and design of projects identified within the Strategy. Approximately 80% of these are now complete and there is a need to identify the next phase of public realm improvements to support the City's growth.

2014 - Several drivers for change since the last public realm plan include the amalgamation of Limerick City and County in 2014, the Limerick Regeneration programme, the Limerick 2030 initiative, significant active travel funding and the emerging City transport plan, all of which have contributed to enhancing Limerick's growth potential.

2020 – 2025 - Since the implementation of the previous public realm plan projects, other significant urban regeneration and enhancement projects have unfolded. The city's main thoroughfare O'Connell Street has undergone a dramatic transformation with the completion of Phase 1 of this ambitious public realm scheme. Wider footpaths accommodating spill out zones, dedicated cycle lanes, and an elevated material palette have helped make the city's prime street a more welcoming place for visitors and residents alike. A national funding stream dedicated to improving the urban realm has become available in the interim too, in the form of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF). This funding aids regeneration and rejuvenation projects in Ireland's five cities, and to-date supports the development of strategic sites within the City Centre for development, namely Opera Square, Cleaves Riverside Quarter, along with development of preliminary proposals such as, the Limerick City Centre Great Streets initiatives and World Class Waterfront.

A re-evaluation of the City's public realm overall is now needed to build on the good work provided to date and to allow for this vibrant City to cater for the evolving needs of all inhabitants. It is important that public realm enhancement projects are developed holistically with adjacent projects in mind, that they also respect their intrinsic immediate settings, and that any locally enhanced public realm plays a positive addition to Limerick City.

The Public Realm & Placemaking

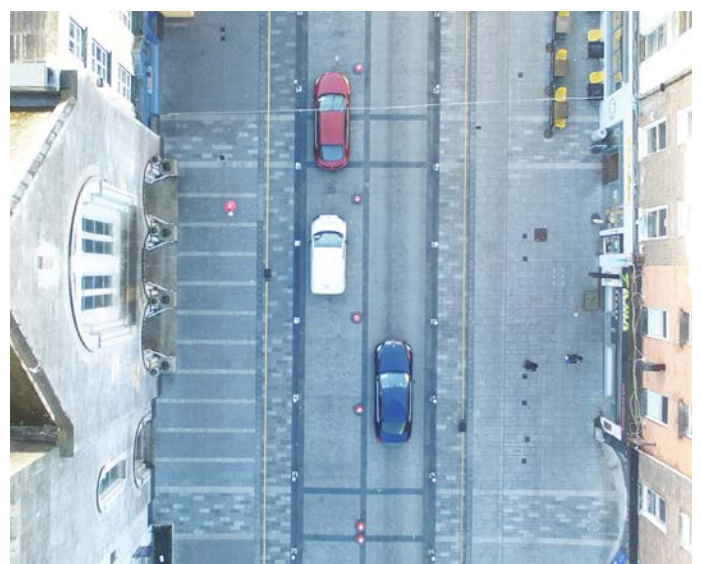
What it means, and why it matters

The public realm is essential for public life, acting as a stage for community interaction, social activities, commerce and cultural expression. A city's overall health is reflected within its public realm. This includes, but is not limited to: roads, streets, lanes, footpaths, cycle lanes, signage, street furniture, parks, squares, open spaces and public buildings and facilities. Responsibility and custodianship for the public realm rests with both the public and private sector and service providers. At a granular level existing public and private elements such as overhead cables, utility boxes, poorly designed signage and shopfronts, and a haphazard mix of street furniture can combine to form weak visual amenity in the public realm.

A proposed simple, uncluttered and consistent design approach is fundamental to achieving a successful public realm, and a key aim of this Strategy is to deliver just that.

From a broader perspective, the overarching aim of this Strategy is to guide the enhancement, management, use and development of the public domain through what is known as placemaking.

The term placemaking is broadly defined as any actions taken, in a planning and development context with the aim of improving the liveability of our towns and cities. It is a multifaceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces that capitalize on a community's unique assets and potential. The creation of public spaces promotes people's health and well-being. Placemaking involves the reimagining of enhanced public spaces to make them lively, engaging and welcoming places where the local community want to spend time.



Introduction

Aims & Objectives

What the updated Strategy will achieve

The aim of this Public Realm Strategy is to guide the enhancement, management, use and development of the public domain in collaboration with all stakeholders. It will support the implementation of national policy and identify opportunities within the public realm for new projects, which will in turn attract funding from the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040) and other funding opportunities.

This Public Realm Strategy sets out a series of projects for streets and spaces, which vary in complexity with some actions suited to short-term delivery, while others take longer to realise. The delivery of the projects will lead to the incremental transformation of Limerick's public realm, improving sustainable mobility and future proofing the city for the coming 10-20 years.

Most projects will depend on the availability of wider funding sources beyond Limerick's own Development Contribution Scheme and resource allocations, and will be subject to further design development, local engagement, and planning approvals. The projects described in Volume 2 are high-level in nature, however they take a holistic account of an array of pipeline projects which involve the future use of public space, some of which have associated funding streams attached to them. Other projects can be driven forward by collaboration, volunteer work, local support, and committee agreement.

An important driver for change within the city's public realm will be the forthcoming Limerick Transport Plan. As part of this plan, Limerick's street network will be reviewed with the aim of prioritising space for

walking, cycling and public transport provision with the intention of creating a more attractive and vibrant experience for residents and visitors. This shift in focus is in line with the recognition of the detrimental impacts that traffic congestion and associated carbon emissions have on the environment and people's quality of life, and will be achieved by reallocating a significant amount of space to sustainable modes in the city centre.

Strategy scope

The function of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy is three-fold;

- It will guide future investment in the public realm, supporting public sector funding bids and setting out expectations for private development.
- As a non-statutory planning document, it will serve as a material consideration by Limerick City and County Council Development Management (planning) team when determining planning applications located within the study area.
- As design guidance it will provide detailed information and materials palette to those in charge of the design and maintenance of streets, green spaces and the public realm, allowing them to effectively programme, cost and specify changes to the public realm.

The map overleaf shows the outline of the city centre area zoned as per the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 and used as the basis for this Strategy's study area.

Strategy contents

The Public Realm Strategy comprises of 3 volumes:

- 1 Volume 1: Public Realm Vision and Principles (this volume);
- 2 Volume 2: Public Realm Design Manual;
- 3 Volume 3: Environmental Screening Reports

Volume 1 contains an overview of Limerick as a city, providing a context, objectives and principles for the public realm to inform future decisions.

Volume 2 applies the public realm principles to a series of six character areas that cover the geographical spread of the City Centre. It also provides exemplar schemes for selected spaces, streets and waterfront areas. This is followed by details of the specific design components and implementation guidance.

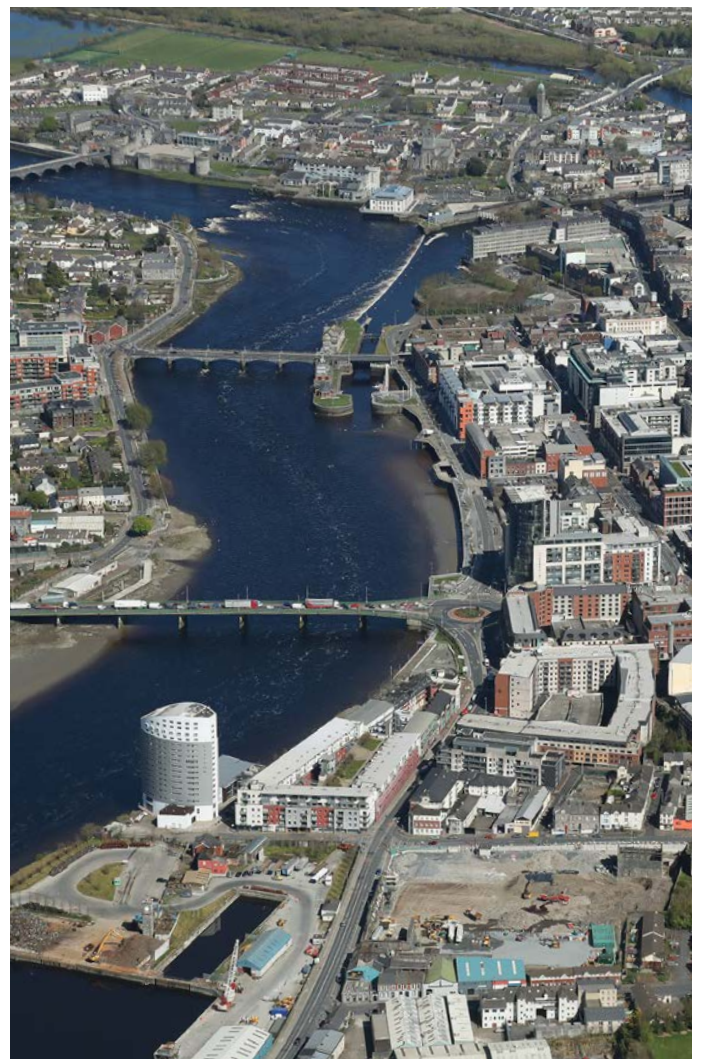
Volume 3 provides details of the required environmental screening assessments, namely;

- Appropriate Assessment Screening
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

The Appendices provide detailed reporting of the various public and stakeholder consultations undertaken during the project;



Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy- Study Area Extents



Introduction

Vision and Principles

The overall vision for the development of Limerick City Centre is set out in strategic documents including:

- The Development Plan (2022–2028) which sets the spatial backbone – “A Green City Region on the Waterfront”, compact growth and connected neighbourhoods.
- The Limerick 2030 Update (2022) prioritises the transformational city centre projects and enterprise focus that drive the vision’s economic core.
- The Mayoral Programme (2024–2029) adds a people first delivery agenda—liveability, prosperity and health—plus a new governance structure to sequence and fund actions.

These documents envision Limerick, through people centred transformative placemaking and targeted investment to become a modern, thriving city that puts people at its heart—a place that is walkable, green, and seamlessly connected where culture and inclusivity shape everyday life. The city centre will be alive with activity, welcoming more residents into vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhoods that combine homes, workspaces, and leisure with future mobility facilitating a fifteen-minute urban fabric.

Public spaces will be animated with events, markets, and social life, creating a sense of safety, belonging and pride. Small businesses and local enterprise will flourish alongside innovation hubs, supported by sustainable mobility and high-quality public realm. Heritage will be celebrated and reimaged, while new developments reflect bold design and create a city where living in the centre is not just possible, but desirable.

The Draft Public Realm and Transport plan sets out a strategy to deliver on the vision by identifying opportunities for co-ordination of cohesive public realm projects to form a network of public spaces, improving connectivity and enhancing the overall way the city functions. The Strategy defines 6 city centre character areas to enhance their identity and functionality.

Character areas help articulate local identity, heritage, and cultural assets and become hubs for specific activities—retail, housing, arts, enterprise, leisure—encouraging clustering of businesses and cultural events, which in turn drives footfall and vibrancy. This fosters pride and attachment among residents and makes the city more legible and attractive to visitors and investors. The six-character areas, which are described further in chapter 3, are Waterfront, Englishtown, Irishtown, Central Core, Georgian Neighbourhood and Eastern Gateway.

Through both the engagement process and baseline analysis stage, eight public realm principles have been identified:

- 1 Ensure people centred placemaking.
- 2 Enhance Places to Live within the City Centre
- 3 Support city resilience through a green, sustainable urban environment.
- 4 Reconnect the city and promote sustainable mobility and reduced car dependence through an integrated, cohesive public realm network.
- 5 Create Enhanced identity through character areas.
- 6 Safeguard the City's identity and heritage.
- 7 Promote activation and animation of public spaces.
- 8 Ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all users.

The table below identifies alignment with the Transport Plan objectives and also opportunities for public realm interventions.



Introduction

Vision and Principles

Public Realm Strategy Principles	Transport Plan objectives	Opportunities for Public Realm Intervention
 Ensure people-centred placemaking	 LCCTP 6 - Discourage through private car traffic in order to provide more space for a growing number of City Centre residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors.	■ In line with the 'superblock principle', redesign the city streets to reduce dependence on through traffic and reclaim space for people. ■ Design streets, squares, and parks to prioritise human comfort, safety, and social interaction. ■ Provide seating, lighting, shade, and weather-friendly features that support daily life, events, and informal gathering. ■ Ensure designs encourage lingering, social activity, and cultural expression.
 Enhance Places to Live within the City Centre	 LCCTP 1 - Provide a more liveable Limerick through a significantly enhanced built and natural City Centre environment.	■ Design a fifteen-minute city where daily needs are within easy walkable reach, anchored by high-quality public realm. ■ Improve access to public realm and play provision. ■ Sensitively incorporate servicing requirements (refuse, deliveries). ■ Accommodate diverse users and activities within the same urban blocks. ■ Improve opportunities for contact with nature and increase green spaces to improve neighbourhood cohesion.

Support city resilience through a green, sustainable urban environment.	LCCTP 2 - Support the delivery of a Net-Zero transport system in Limerick City Centre. LCCTP 3 - Improve the City Centre's air quality and reduce the impacts of traffic noise by encouraging a shift away from the private car to public transport and active modes.	■ Integrate green infrastructure such as street trees, rain gardens, biodiverse planting, and pocket parks. ■ Use climate-responsive design to support shade, cooling, drainage, and carbon reduction. ■ Ensure materials and construction practices prioritise sustainability and durability.
Reconnect the city and promote sustainable mobility and reduced car dependence through an integrated, cohesive public realm network.	LCCTP 4 – Support planned investments in higher-capacity bus services required to enable sustainable growth in the population, economy, nightlife and cultural offer of Limerick City Centre in a compact manner. LCCTP 5 – Support a healthier Limerick City through the development of a safer and connected cycle network and a significantly enhanced pedestrian environment.	■ Strengthen connectivity across the city centre through a coordinated network of public spaces and improved linkages between neighbourhoods, streets, and character areas. ■ Prioritise walking, public transport and cycling. ■ Coordinate public realm projects so they function as a unified network that enhances legibility, functionality, and investment potential across the city ■ Integrate cycle lanes, secure bike parking, mobility hubs, and connections to public transport. ■ Design streets for slower speeds and shared-space principles where appropriate.

Introduction

Vision and Principles

 Create Enhanced identity through character areas.	 LCCTP 1 - Provide a more liveable Limerick through a significantly enhanced built and natural City Centre environment.	■ Use materials that reinforce distinct identities for each of the 6 Character areas. ■ Highlight historical or cultural features through interpretive design, lighting, or artistic elements. ■ Encourage activity clusters appropriate to each area (e.g., arts in Englishstown, retail in the Central Core).
 Safeguard the City's identity and heritage.	 LCCTP 1 - Provide a more liveable Limerick through a significantly enhanced built and natural City Centre environment.	■ Acknowledge and reimagine the city's historic assets, ensuring new public realm projects respect and enhance Limerick's architectural and cultural heritage. ■ Conserve significant historic architecture and incorporate it into new public spaces. ■ Use interpretive signage, lighting, and public art to convey stories of Limerick's cultural evolution. ■ Ensure new interventions complement existing heritage character without imitation or pastiche.

Promote activation and animation of public spaces.	LCCTP 1 - Provide a more liveable Limerick through a significantly enhanced built and natural City Centre environment.	■ Create flexible and robust spaces and streetscapes with infrastructure to support events (power, water, lighting). ■ Prioritise life on the street over movement functions at key locations. ■ Improve access for all to public spaces. ■ Enhance safety and perception of safety during the day and at night.
Ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all users.	LCCTP 7 - Support inclusive access for all, whilst supporting access for deliveries, emergency services and other essential vehicles.	■ Ensure universal design across all public spaces, including level surfaces, tactile cues, accessible crossings, and inclusive seating. ■ Create environments that serve all ages, mobility levels, and cultural communities. ■ Ensure public transport interfaces are legible, safe, and easy to navigate.

Introduction

Policy Context

Spatial plans are a key element in the implementation of more integrated public realm design. They include information on how the principles, approaches and standards of other National Design Manuals can be applied to promote sustainable cities, towns and villages.

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that spatial framework plans align with the policies and objectives of more high-level plans, such as the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES), the Mayoral Programme and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028. While this Public Realm Strategy aligns and adheres to the objectives outlined in the Limerick Development Plan, it also addresses issues which are more closely associated with detailed design outcomes, such as the streetscape design specifications and material palettes set out in Volume 2: the Design Manual.

Investment in the Public Realm

In response to Project Ireland 2040, local planning policy emphasises the need for continued investment in the public realm. Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 and Limerick 2030 Vision: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick, reinforce the role of public realm and place-making in revitalising the urban environment, creating a 'comfortable' and 'appealing' City Centre and prioritising pedestrian movement. Specific improvements identified include the development of a city-wide interconnected set of public parks, urban renewal within the Georgian neighbourhood, World Class Waterfront projects and improvements to O'Connell Street, Limerick's Laneways, the Riverside, Colbert Quarter, Opera Square and Cleeves redevelopment.

Project Ireland 2040: Building Ireland's Future

- Overarching policy to make Ireland a better country for all, prioritizing well-being, equality and opportunity.
- Seeks to rebalance investment from Dublin to other cities, with 50% growth targeted for Limerick.
- Sustainable growth key component, with 40% of housing targeted at existing built up areas, a shift towards public transport and active travel, sustainable water management and a transition to a climate resilient society.

Climate Action Plan 2025

- Outlines a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, with climate neutrality by 2050.
- Calls for a cut in vehicle emissions, placing an emphasis on active travel, public transport, tree & habitat cover.
- Measures to encourage a shift to sustainable forms of transport include reallocating road space from vehicles, delivering safe walking and cycling routes, and reducing parking provision.

National Roads 2040

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland's strategy to enable Project Ireland 2040.
- Strategy focuses on the more efficient use of space with investment targeted towards public transport, electric vehicle charging and active travel.

National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

- Demonstrates the continued commitment to meeting and acting on obligations to protect biodiversity for the benefit of future generations through a series of targeted strategies and actions such as:
 - 1 Conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside.
 - 2 Optimising benefits for biodiversity in Flood Risk Management and drainage schemes.

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025

- Identifies steps to restore pollinator populations to healthy levels.
- Section entitled ‘Councils: Actions to help Pollinators’ includes a series of measures to guide Local Authorities in improving habitats for pollinators

Heritage Ireland 2030

- Celebrates the diversity of Ireland’s heritage and the value placed on it.
- One of the three key themes acknowledges that the role of heritage should be integrated in place-making, economic development and sustainable tourism strategies.

Culture 2025

- Sets out the Government’s aspirations and commitments to the cultural sector.
- Cultural and creative activities are recognised as contributing to the sense of place, well-being of communities and attractiveness of urban areas, as well as an important factor in attracting inward investment.

Places for People – National Policy on Architecture

- Outlines ways to promote and embed quality in architecture and the built and natural environment
- Includes a framework of practical actions to deliver buildings and public spaces

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES)

- Policy RPO 10 ‘Compact Growth in Metropolitan Areas’ states that to achieve compact growth, the RSES will identify strategic initiatives to achieve compact growth
- The identification of site regeneration and public realm initiatives and upgrades

The Marmot Principles

- Limerick City and County Council in partnership with the HSE Mid-West have established Ireland’s first “Health Equity Region” initiative.
- This partnership specifically adopts the Marmot Principles approach to addressing health inequalities by implementing the 8 principles including creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities.

Introduction

Policy Context

Supporting the Vision of the Development Plan 2022-2028

A specific public realm objective within the Limerick Development Plan, highlighting Limerick City and County Council's commitment to improving the public realm, is Objective CGR (Compact Growth and Revitalisation) O2 - Place-making, Universal Design and Public Realm. This objective states that the Council will:

- Ensure that all developments are designed to the highest quality with respect to place-making, universal design and public realm.
- Prepare and facilitate implementation of Public Realm Plans for settlements including Limerick City.

Furthermore eight Strategic Objectives are identified with direct relevance to the public realm which are described in further detail in Chapter 5:

- 1 Enhance competitive advantages of Limerick; better quality of life
- 2 Transition to carbon neutral economy
- 3 Create sustainable, healthy and resilient communities
- 4 Protect the unique character of Limerick, create compact, attractive, vibrant and safe environments
- 5 Reduce car dependency
- 6 Protect, enhance and connect areas of natural heritage, green infrastructure and open space
- 7 Protect, conserve and enhance the built and cultural heritage
- 8 Support growth in the tourism sector

The following policies are referenced in Volume 2

Limerick 2030 Vision: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick

The Vision establishes Limerick as a major economic force, capitalising on the strength of its natural and heritage attributes. It sets out ambitions for the City Centre in becoming an attractive magnet for growth, with direct relevance to the public realm such as:

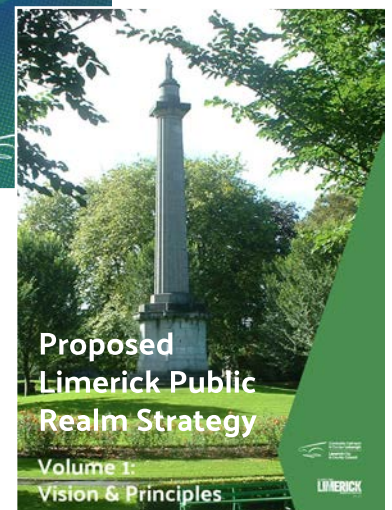
- Creation of a high quality, attractive and safe urban environment which generates a sense of pride in the City
- Build upon the City Centre's rich historic character by protecting and enhancing heritage and complementing with world class design for new developments
- Creation of better quality gateways to the City Centre, making it a welcoming experience for visitors

A number of City Centre Transformational Projects are identified within the spatial plan, with the most relevant to this Public Realm Strategy being:

- 'World Class' Waterfront – a renaissance of Limerick's entire waterfront
- Development of 'Great Streets' projects O'Connell Street, Catherine Street and Henry Street
- New city squares to define the focal point or 'heart' of the city book-ending O'Connell Street at Arthurs Quay and The Crescent
- A new plaza at the Potato Market/Merchant's Quay
- Renewal of the Georgian neighbourhood and Georgian Laneways.

The Limerick Mayoral Programme 2024-2029

The Limerick Mayoral Programme 2024-2029, titled More for Limerick, sets out an ambitious vision structured around creating a more liveable, prosperous and healthy city-region, with actions focused on housing, mobility, community facilities, economic growth and sustainability.



Introduction

Local Policy

Limerick I Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040 (LSMATS)

- Sets out the framework for the delivery of the transport system required to further the development of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area in line with Project Ireland 2040.
- Strategic Objectives include minimising the impact of traffic in urban centres, and supports measures to improve walking, cycling, bus, rail
- Acknowledges that better street design in urban areas will encourage a change in behaviour away from vehicle use.
- Prioritises placemaking functions of the urban street network in line with DMURS
- Seeks that public realm improvements developed in Limerick City are sensitive to their historic settings.

Limerick Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

- Aims to position Limerick as a national leader in climate action and strengthen the delivery of effective climate action through place-based climate action
- Sets out key actions that will support Limerick in its transition to becoming a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050
- Looks at how Limerick City and County Council can transform its own operations and services, and also addresses what other organisations the Council can partner with.

King's Island Flood Relief Strategy

A Landscape Design and Public Realm Strategy was submitted as part of the planning application in 2019. Thomond Bridge and Verdant Place. The King's Island

Flood Relief Scheme was granted planning permission by An Bord Pleanála on 21st May 2021. Works are currently progressing in alignment with the phasing schedule as submitted with the application. The following areas within the study area will be affected during the phased construction:

- 1 Thomond Bridge and Verdant Place
- 2 Potato Market and Civic Buildings
- 3 George's Quay
- 4 Abbey Bridge to Baal's Bridge
- 5 South of Absolute Hotel to Abbey Bridge
- 6 St. Mary's Hall

Limerick City & Environs Flood Relief Scheme

- Limerick City and County Council with the OPW are currently developing the flood relief scheme for the City Centre.
- An initial project specific Public Realm Vision and Strategy identifies a range of defence treatments that may be suitable.
- Collaboration has taken place to ensure that both this Public Realm Strategy and the Flood Relief Scheme align in terms of the ambitions being set-out for upgrading the Waterfront so that Limerick City can evolve in a climate adaptive way whilst retaining it's unique relationship to the waterfront.

Limerick Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

- The overarching aim of the Limerick Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is to inform and guide the planning and management of a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces, helping drive the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.
- The strategy underpins ambitions to establish Limerick as a green city on the waterfront as

set out in the Limerick Development Plan 2022 - 2028: “a Green City Region on the Shannon Estuary connected through people and places”.

- The strategy seeks to ensure that Limerick can realise the potential of its natural assets and riverside setting through creation of new green and blue destinations, amenities for visitors and local people.
- There are ten priority actions seek to enhance the quantum, quality and management of green open spaces and blue infrastructure, with the most relevant to this Public Realm Strategy being to embed GBI (Green Blue Infrastructure) in the implementation of public and private projects.

Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030

From a public-realm perspective, the Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 commits the Council and partners to:

- Embedding biodiversity into parks, streets, greenways, and civic spaces
- Expanding nature-based solutions in the built environment
- Enhancing habitat connectivity through urban corridors
- Supporting pollinators and ecosystem services in public spaces
- Improving maintenance practices (e.g., invasive species control)
- Funding and coordinating community involvement in public-realm biodiversity
- Aligning all public-realm interventions with climate resilience goals

Limerick City and County Tree Policy 2024 - 2030

Sets out appropriate guidance to enable trees to fulfil their full potential. Trees provide significant economic, social, environmental, cultural and aesthetic benefits.

To provide these benefits it is important that the maintenance of Limerick’s tree landscape throughout both the City and County is managed in a proactive and planned manner. Several policies are of relevance to the Public Realm;

- Policy 4: The Council will make adequate budgetary provision in the annual estimates to allow for the planned and proactive management and expansion of it’s tree stock
- Policy 7: Limerick City and County Council recognises the value of trees in the environment and is committed to planting new trees to ensure that their benefits in terms of ecosystem services, visual amenity and climate resilience is assured for future generations.
- Policy 8: The principle of planting the ‘right tree in the right place’ will apply for all tree planting.

Agglomeration of Limerick Noise Action Plan 2024

- Purpose is to inform and consult the public about the health effects of noise exposure from road, rail and major industry sources, identify areas that require consideration of noise mitigation and assess the measures that may be considered to address the issues identified.
- Estimates the potential number of people harmfully affected by environmental noise
- Highlights potential approaches to take account of the acoustic environment in the design of public realm, and identifies Candidate Quiet Areas for the purpose of investigating publicly accessible calm and tranquil areas.

Introduction

Local Policy

Limerick Wayfinding and Orientation Strategy

- Forms part of Fáilte Ireland's Destination Towns Scheme and associated funding.
- Previous wayfinding within the City was a mixture of designs including traditional cast iron finger posts and more modern stainless steel & aluminium signs of various types.
- Concept was to rationalise the existing signage approach in order to provide a cohesive visitor experience of Limerick, and to create a unified signage family across Limerick City environs.
- The completed project saw the removal of 45 existing pedestrian wayfinding and information signs. Along with, the installation of 70 new pedestrian wayfinding and orientation signs comprising 18 map totems, 19 route markers and 33 finger posts which embody the Brand Limerick identity in form and colour.
- A decluttering project ran in tandem with the Wayfinding project which sought to identify and remove legacy wayfinding poles.
- New wayfinding signage should be in accordance with the Limerick Wayfinding Guidelines.

Limerick Tourism Plan, 2025- 2030

Public realm quality is positioned as central to Limerick's tourism competitiveness, shaping visitor experience, dwell time, and perceptions of safety and vibrancy. Action areas relevant to this public realm strategy include:

- Creating a safe, inviting, high-quality urban environment attractive to visitors (streets, lighting, cleanliness, safety).
- Enhancing accessibility and use of heritage

areas (Georgian core, historic landmarks).

- Improving waterfront public spaces as key visitor touchpoints.
- Supporting placemaking through cultural festivals and events.
- Ensuring the public realm supports sustainability and walkable experiences.
- Strengthening the city's sense of place and identity via public realm improvements.

Limerick City and County Council Festivals and Events Strategy, 2024-2028

- The Strategy sets out an ambitious and inclusive roadmap to support and grow a dynamic calendar of festivals and events.

Limerick Heritage Plan 2017 - 2030

Heritage refers to traditions, places, objects, and cultural practices passed down through generations that have historical, cultural, social or environmental value. It helps shape a community's identity and sense of place.

- Includes tangible heritage such as buildings, monuments, landscapes and archaeological objects.
- Also includes intangible heritage like traditions, language, folklore, music and rituals.
- It is important to protect heritage so future generations can appreciate it
- Local plans in Limerick aim to protect historic character while supporting tourism and the environment.

Changes to Transport

Traffic Routes

- LSMATS identifies the proposed Road Network 2040, which includes regional and local roads.
- The new Regional Road network will cater for high-quality walking and cycling connections, access and priority for public transport and restriction of through-traffic across the City Centre.
- Street space will be allocated equally for walking, cycling, public transport and car traffic. Road and footpath surface improvements will be completed in a phased manner to avoid disruption.
- Existing river crossings into the City Centre at Thomond, Sarsfield and Shannon bridges will face continued pressure from vehicle traffic, including two BusConnects routes, and cycle access.

BusConnects

A programme of public transport investment in Ireland's urban centres, the aim within Limerick is to increase patronage and coverage, including additional routes and increased capacity and frequency in the City and suburbs.

A new bus network will be delivered on a phased approach in alignment with the Limerick Transport Plan.

Parking

- LSMATS identifies that on-street parking should be gradually reduced to free-up kerbside space for other demands (bus and cycle networks, pedestrian space).
- Alternatives will be introduced, such as car clubs and bike share, and Park and Ride facilities.

- A review of parking provision has been undertaken and is available to view within the Limerick Transport Plan.

Cycling

- LSMATS identifies a new cycle network for the City Centre, incorporating Primary, Secondary, Inter-Urban, Feeder and Greenway Routes, and Quiet Ways. Active Travel routes in the vicinity of the City Centre include:
 - 1 TUS Moylish to City (ends at Thomondgate)
 - 2 South Circular Road to City Centre (Henry Street to Lower Glentworth Street).
 - 3 Wickham Street to Clare Street
 - 4 Park Canal to Arthur's Quay Park

Walking

- LSMATS identifies a range of measures to improve the pedestrian network.
- The main objective is for the development of a primary pedestrian network throughout Limerick.
- Targeted aims specific to the City Public Realm Strategy include lowering traffic speeds, improving junctions and pedestrian crossings, and the removal of unnecessary signage.

Chapter Two

Historic Limerick

- The Evolution of the City
- Importance of the River
- Historic Street Pattern
- Heritage Context Today
- City Centre Timeline

Historic Limerick

The Evolution of the City

The following is based on from two articles by the former Curator of the City Museum and archaeologist involved in the City Centre Excavations through the 1990s, Brian Hodkinson:

'The Topography of pre-Norman Limerick' & 'The medieval city of Limerick' republished in Aspects of Medieval North Munster: Collected essays, 2012, Thomond Archaeological & Historical Society.

Below: Historic Development of the City of Limerick (Map 27, Growth of Limerick, to 1900. In Eamon O'Flaherty, Irish Historic Towns Atlas, no. 21, Limerick. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2010 (www.ihta.ie, accessed 4 February 2016).

 City Wall; site known/conjectural

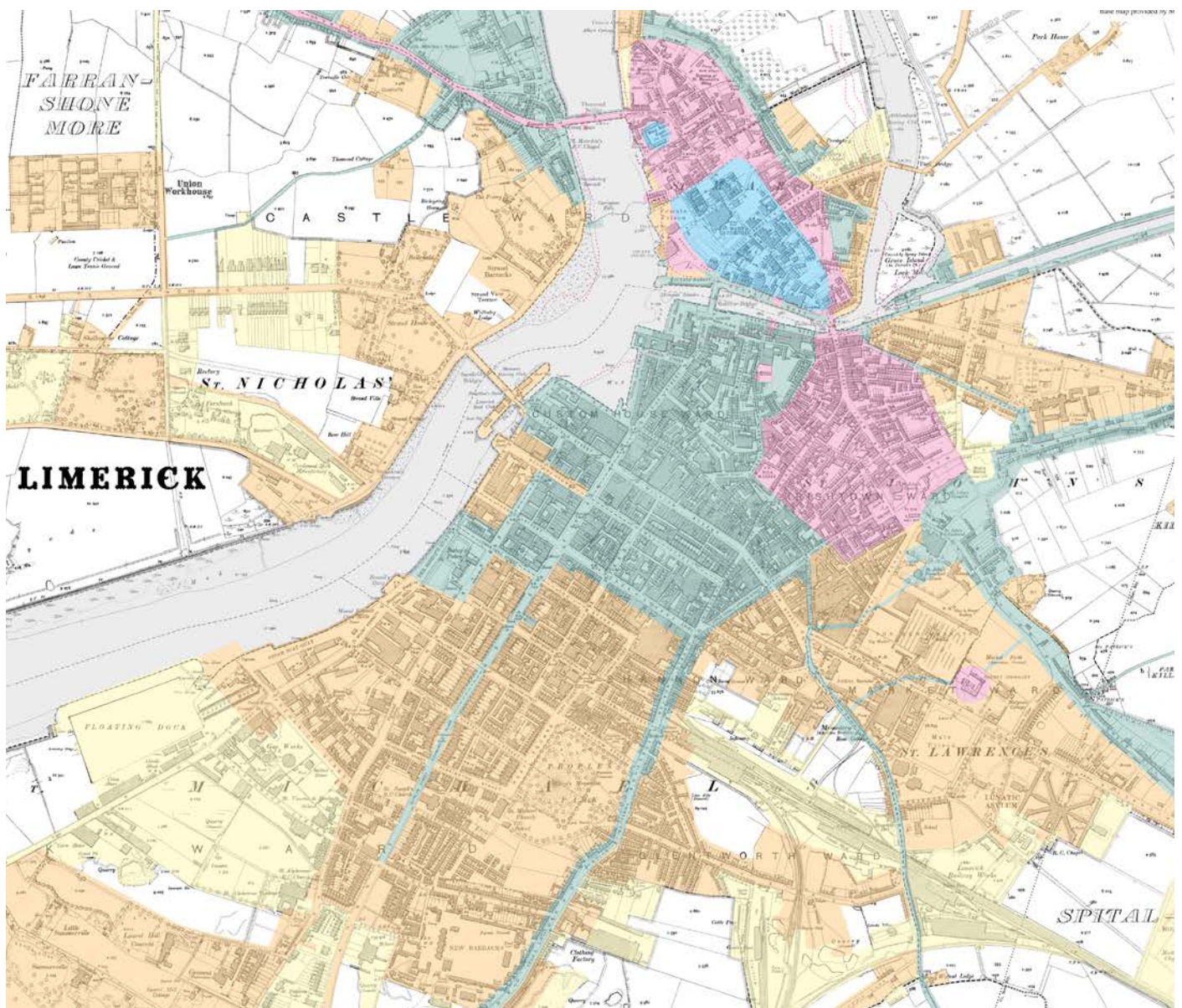
 Development to 1175

 c.1100 - 1600

 c.1600 - 1786

 1787 - 1840

 1840 - 1900





Historic Limerick

The Evolution of the City

Development to c.1175

Arrival of the Vikings

The earliest Viking presence in the area was identified upstream from the City. By the early 10th century, however, a more permanent settlement was established availing of the natural defences provided by the island site, the safe harbour and the location of the Curraghgor Falls just upstream (which could only be accessed at high tide). The primary settlement focused on the waterfront, which became the core of the town.

The Viking settlement was probably defended by a rampart and its extent has been equated to the civil parish of St. Mary's. Because of its prime location, the site of St Mary's may have originally contained a Viking temple which was subsequently Christianised. By the early 12th century (1111) it was the Cathedral Church. Given the orientation on the harbour it is likely that the earliest main street is on a line represented by Crosbie Row & Courthouse Lane. The administrative centre for a Viking town (thingplass or meeting place) was usually outside the settlement on open ground. This was likely to have been to the north with a market place in the area subsequently occupied by the castle. Following the take-over of the city by the Dál gCais in the late 10th century, their palace may also have been located at the thingplass or further north at St.Munchin's Church. This northern suburb was probably enclosed by ramparts.

In 1175 when the Anglo Normans first arrived in Limerick, they built a ringwork castle at the later castle site, aswell as wooden bridge across the Abbey River (now Baal's Bridge). Domnall Mór O'Brien drove the Anglo-Normans out of Limerick in 1176, burning the first iterations of Baal's Bridge behind them.

Development from c.1190-1600

Return of the Anglo-Normans

This period saw fundamental change to the layout of the town. The construction of the Royal Castle (King John's Castle 1200-1210) forced a reorientation of the road network, so that the Mary Street-Nicholas Street axis became the main thoroughfare. Thomand Bridge was constructed in 1210, Baal's Bridge was rebuilt and the defences were realigned to protect it. It is likely that the southern suburb (known now as Irishtown) had began to grow around the bridge head from 1176. The southern suburb developed on Broad Street leading from the bridge and dividing along John Street and Mungret Street, giving it its distinctive Y shape that is traceable to the present day (see Volume 2, Spaces- Broad Street).

The first recorded murage grant dates to 1237. Over the course of the next century, the existing ramparts were replaced by stone walls, mural towers and gates with an external fosse. There was a further grant in 1310 specifically for walling the suburbs. This probably referred to the northern suburbs, absorbing the castle, extending northward to Island Gate and then returning south to absorb the walls of the Dominican Priory (fd 1227) and St Peter's Nunnery (fd 1171) before returning westward to meet the earlier line of defences on Bishop Street. A Franciscan Abbey was founded in 1267 in the SW corner of the island outside the defences. In 1340 there had been a charter for the Baal's Bridge to be built in stone.

A later 14th century murage grant (1370) is likely to have applied to the southern suburb of Irishtown, though it is also likely that there had been earlier earthen ramparts. In 1370 the city was sacked by the Irish of Thomond. Walling of Irishtown continued through the 15th century.

The port continued to be core to Limerick's prosperity, it became an enclosed harbour centred on the area now known as the Potato Market. It is reported that the long quay wall was constructed in 1497. Other modifications were recorded on the many historical maps. Recent test excavations in advance of Kings Island Flood Relief Scheme have exposed some of the quay elements.

In this period, the housing included cagework or timber-framed houses, with an increasing number of stone houses, especially in the core town represented by St. Mary's parish. The earliest stone houses were likely to be urban tower houses, an example being Thom Cor Castle constructed in the 1390s at the junction of Mungret Street & John Street, bequeathed to the city in 1402. Fannings Castle off Mary Street is a similar structure.

The later stone houses had basements or undercrofts, initially floored in timber but often with later stone vaulting inserted. These were surmounted by three floors with fireplaces in the long walls and crenellations at roof level. A detailed description of the High Street in St Mary's parish in the 17th century included 49 houses on the east side of the street consisting of 37 stonework and 6 cagework. In the northern suburb by contrast, 20 of 30 houses are still cage work, 6 are stone and 4 plots are waste.

The Tholsel or City Hall was constructed on Mary Street/Gaol Lane, originally in 1406 and rebuilt in 1449, remaining in use as the municipal headquarters until 1654. The Tholsel was superseded in 1654 and converted to the City Gaol in 1673. By 1740 it was deemed demolished. The functions of market house & council chamber moved to the New Exchange building beside St.Mary's Cathedral by 1673, while the court was moved to Quay Lane in 1640. The building of Dutch Billies began to change the street scape in the core - Rather than build anew, this was achieved by the adaptation of the facades of the existing stone houses. In 1760, the government declared that Limerick was no longer a fortified city & the piecemeal removal of the defenses began.



Historic Limerick

The Evolution of the City

Development c.1600-1786

The Flight of the Wild Geese

The south-east bastion of the castle was built in 1611.

Later the Confederate troops besieged and took the castle in 1642. In 1651 Limerick was besieged by Cromwell's forces and surrendered. Then as a result the city defences were extended and strengthened both inside and outside the original line of the walls. In 1652-53 the citadel was created in Irishtown and John's Street was diverted and a new gate was built. In 1690 the first siege was repelled and again defences were increased, to no avail as the Williamite army took the town in 1691.

In 1690 the first siege was repelled and again defences were increased. To no avail as the Williamite army took the town in 1691. With the departure of the Irish Jacobite army under the command of Patrick Sarsfield from Ireland to France as agreed in the Treaty of Limerick on October 3rd 1691, the following areas were developed during the period following the end of the Williamite War:

- 1 East side of Englishtown
- 2 Thomondgate
- 3 South east side of Irishtown: Pennywell and Garryowen
- 4 West side of Irishtown: Mardyke to Custom House Quay and south to William Street
- 5 North east of Irishtown

The predominant pattern is for roads passing through medieval gates, connecting streets in the walled town to the hinterland, with building occurring on the roads. Until 1691, parts of these areas underwent suburban growth which was erased prior to 17th-century sieges.

Linear development continued to be a strong pattern, complex street patterns emerged early 18th century. During the 1750s, construction of the first canal to the East of the Abbey River commenced as part of the Shannon Navigation Scheme. After c.1760 many stretches of the medieval walls were demolished, which allowed closer connections between the existing medieval town and early 18th-century developments.

By 1786 Englishtown directly addressed the Abbey River for the first time, at George's Quay. On the west side of Irishtown, new roads were built parallel to the walls (Cornmarket Street, Carr Street, West Water Gate (now gone). By 1786 there was a new connection through the wall near John's Square (Gerald Griffin St). By 1840 there were more connections through the wall on the west side of Irishtown, while the wall had disappeared to the southwest of Irishtown and south east of Englishtown.

Where walls were demolished (southwest Irishtown and southeast Englishtown) smaller brick terraces were built on both sides. Where walls were retained for longer, new developments often had a different character from the buildings inside the walls.

The architectural character of late 18th/early 19th-century developments varied in different parts of the city.

Four-storey Georgian town houses and multi-storey store buildings were to be found on Rutland Street, Patrick Street, Charlotte Quay, Bank Place, Ellen Street, Cornmarket Row, Arthurs Quay, Francis Street and multi-storey stone stores on Michael Street, Robert Street, Cornmarket Row, Upper Denmark Street. The buildings in the eastern part of this area; High Street, Wickham Street, Gerald Griffin Street, were of a smaller scale than those to the west, and exhibited far more variety.

These areas were associated with working class / lower-middle class; all became progressively poorer and more crowded in the 19th century. Built fabric deteriorated, with extensive rebuilding/infill in the 20th century.

Today these areas are not easily distinguished from the medieval town, except by the street pattern. All retain something of their historic character; however, there is also an element of dereliction. These areas have little independent identity and their built fabric less is valued than that of Medieval or Georgian areas. The prominent buildings of architectural significance tend to be in use: the churches, Hunt Museum. The terraces on Rutland St., Patrick St., Ellen St. as well as the Commercial Buildings and the Granary await restoration as part of the Opera development.



Historic Limerick

The Evolution of the City

Development from 1787-1840

Newtown Pery

Limerick began to prosper in the 18th century and was completely transformed into the city it is today. The area of gridded speculative development built between c.1770 and 1840, stretching from William St in the north to Quinlan St. in the south, the river in the west to Parnell St. in the east, is known as Newtown Pery. The development of this new Georgian Neighbourhood can be attributed to the work of Edmund Sexton Pery (created Viscount Pery in 1785) on lands he owned in the south liberties of the city.

Street. Multi-storey stone stores and mills were largely concentrated along Henry Street and the river front, and at the eastern periphery, especially Roches' Street. Georgian Newtown Pery encompassed a variety of other building types. These included: non-conformist churches, banks, St. Michael's Church of Ireland parish church, two squares, a crescent, a 'hanging' garden, industrial developments, re-established friaries, stone-built quays, schools, cultural institutions, Sarsfield Bridge and docks.

The core of the development consists of four-storey terraces with stone-built mews buildings to the rear which address a network of lanes. These are concentrated on two main north-south streets: O'Connell Street and Catherine Street, and lateral streets from William Street to Barrington Street. Terraces on the lateral streets continue towards Henry Street and at least a block beyond Catherine



Newtown Pery became the commercial, residential, and cultural centre of Limerick. As a result the institutions that had been established in the early years grew and multiplied during the 19th century. New uses were established in some of terraces and industry grew on peripheries. The Augustinian, Franciscan and Dominican friars built monasteries and churches with prominent features such as towers and porticos. New banks were established, and existing banks rebuilt in stone to gain a greater street presence. Three main public spaces evolved: Baker Place as the location of major cultural and charity buildings centred on the Tait Clock; Pery Square as a park centred on the Rice monument; the Crescent becoming a focus on O'Connell Street.

In the early 19th century retail development was concentrated in the north part of the new town grid with shops opening on the ground floors of the terraces and families living above. The rest of the terraces were inhabited by relatively wealthy families.

This changed during the 19th century. Ground-floor retail on O'Connell Street expanded to Cecil Street, and Cecil Street to Mallow Street became the location of offices and banks, with the nobility, gentry and clergy' living in the area between Mallow Street and Quinlan Street. These were gradually replaced by professionals and businessmen in the later 19th century. A number of large-scale department stores were built in the lower part of the town: most notably Cannocks and Todds on O'Connell Street, Newsoms on William Street.



Historic Limerick

The Evolution of the City

Development from 1840 - 1900

Industrial Limerick

Industry developed along the quays and the east of the new town, with the development of:

- The port (docks, Ballantyne mills etc) and railway were constructed on the peripheries of the new town in the mid-19th century.
- Small-scale brick infill and housing developments concentrated on the eastern edge of the new town, occasionally found in the centre of the gridded area.

Expansion to the south and over the river to Clancy Strand, O'Callaghan Strand, North Circular Road. The latter saw the building of villas in small demesnes in the early to mid-19th century, as well as some industry. Two lines of development to the southeast of the gridded new town were initiated in the early 19th century and further developed in the later 19th century: Mulgrave Street and the railway. Mulgrave Street became the location of public institutions that moved out of Englishtown. Here it was possible to build state-of-the-art structures and locate them in large grounds. This trend started with the construction of the Artillery Barracks in 1807. It was continued with the building of the County Gaol (1817), the Asylum (1827) the County Infirmary (1827), with the New Markets constructed after 1840. The Great Southern and Western Railway opened between 1848 and 1858. Railway sheds and works were constructed along the railway, leaving this part of the town largely sterile.

Development from 1900 - present day

Modernist Limerick

New buildings and institutions appeared: notably the Carnegie Library; the Belltable Theatre and Shannon Rowing Club; Post Office Henry Street; modernist Post Office on Lower Cecil Street; Guinness building O'Curry Street. All these buildings are distinctive of their period and discreet in urban context.

Terraced houses once sub-let to businesses were subdivided; with commercial businesses in the lower town, and professional practices in the upper town. Significant industrial decline led to corn stores and mills becoming redundant. Many non-conformist churches and Protestant institutions became redundant after Independence. Schools closed and moved to larger premises in the suburbs.

In the mid-20th century there was some demolition and rebuilding - Penneys, Bank of Ireland, Todds, modern buildings on Catherine Street, Roches Street, and in the late 20th century the corn stores and derelict sites on Henry Street and the quays were replaced with blocks of apartments, offices, retail and hotels which has transformed this area, bringing with it the deterioration the lanes. There was some restoration of historic structures and conversion, though it was slow and piecemeal, and other high quality contemporary architecture was constructed in this area; the extension to the Limerick City Gallery of Art and the International Rugby Experience.

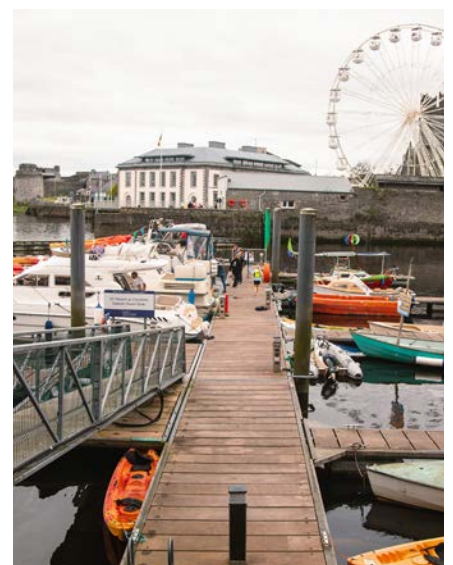


Historic Limerick

The Importance of River to City

The Shannon was named after the Celtic goddess Sionna, and means “Wise (sion) River (abhainn)”. The island on which Limerick was first built became known as Inis Sibtonn. By the 920s, Vikings settled on Kings Island, at the head of the tidal estuary, connected to the mainland by a ford. The River Shannon was always an important route into the interior of the island. Many early settlements were situated on elevated ground adjacent to the river, while it proved very attractive to isolated to Early Christian foundations.

Historically, Limerick’s waterways underpinned its economy as an important trading port and they have always been closely bound to our social, cultural, military, economic and political history. Today, the waterways have a more valuable role for recreation, leisure, pedestrian and cycle networks, ecology and heritage. The Shannon & the Abbey River play an important part in nurturing more intangible values, such as the reinforcement of local identity, belonging, and place. The river Shannon is wide, majestic, and provides expansive and ever changing views within Limerick City.



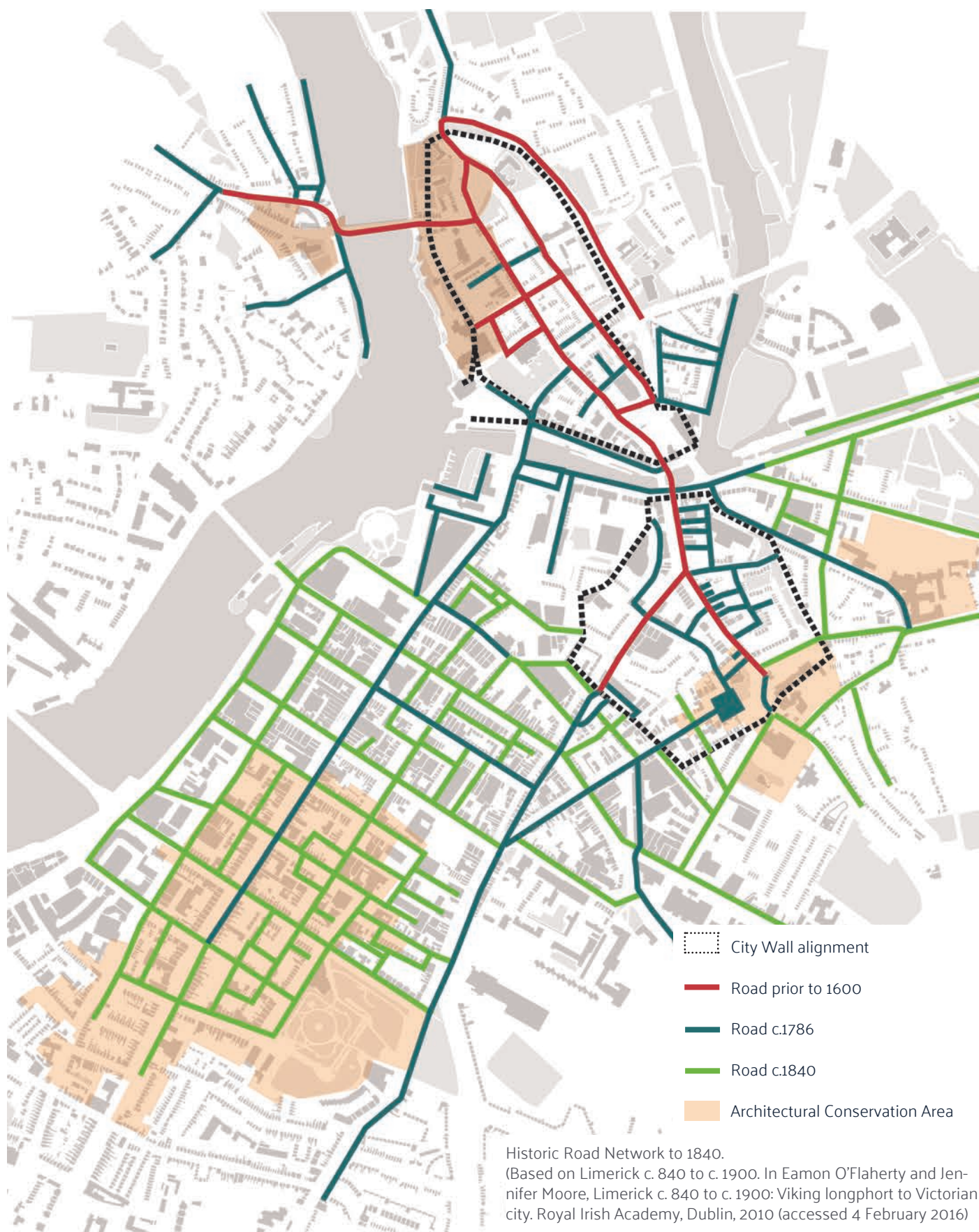
Historic Limerick

Historic Street Pattern

Many streets within Limerick City are of historic importance, especially those within the original twin walled towns of Englishtown (Nicholas Street, Bishop Street, Mary Street) and Irishtown (Broad Street, John's Street and Mungret Street).

Mapping also reveals the significant and preserved integrity of the network of laneways connecting the main streets. The Later Georgian town is laid out on a grid system orientated on main streets (ex. O'Connell Street) but also connected by minor streets and laneways.

The map overleaf displays the Historic Road Network in Limerick in the context of the architectural conservation areas and historic city walls.



Historic Limerick

Heritage Context Today

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

Four ACAs are designated within the City Centre, signifying a consistency in townscape character and quality, due to retained groupings of buildings or structures of a similar age and style:

- 1 ACA 1 - South City Centre and Newtown Pery
- 2 ACA 4 - John's Square, parts of Lower Gerard Griffith Street and John's Street
- 3 ACA 7 - Part of Thomondgate, Castle Street, Verdant Place and part of Nicholas Street
- 4 ACA 8 - Clare Street and Limerick Institute of Technology Campus – School of Art and Design

The ACAs contribute significantly to visual amenity within the city. Axes of significant views to local landmarks, and views that are representative of the historic character are identified.

Other Areas

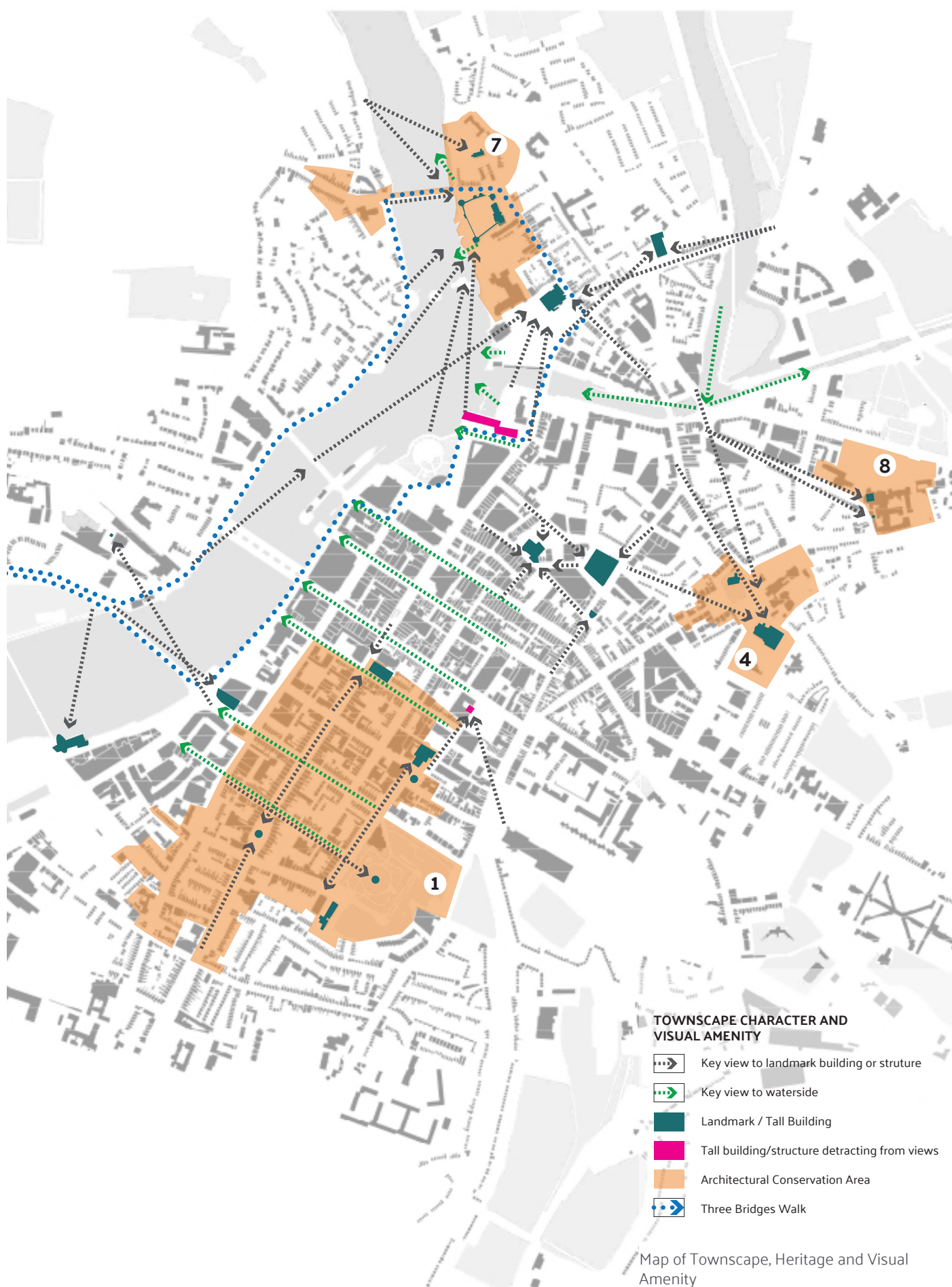
Heritage features or patterns may be less evident in other undesignated areas due to the fracturing of the urban grain surrounding them, unsympathetic infill development, neighbouring land uses and poor quality public realm. For example:

- The Northern Relief Road has separated the North end of the walled city from the remainder and covered the line of the city wall on the east.

- The development of Sarsfield House and Arthur's Quay Shopping Centre. Block the visual connectivity along the river.
- The historic inverted Y-shaped street pattern defined by Broad Street, John's Street and Mungret Street within Irishtown is retained, along with a small section of it's historic pattern of laneways. However most original buildings are removed.

City Walls

Limerick's historical city walls, which formerly enclosed Englishtown and Irishtown, now exist in fragmented parts. In some areas they have been completely removed, or are amalgamated within more recent developments, such as surface-level car parks and housing. Surviving visible stretches of the city walls are generally in the public domain. Island Road in Englishtown and the linear park at Grattan Street / St Leila Street provide the best locations to view the most continuous stretches of the walls and get a sense of their scale.



Historic Limerick

Heritage Context Today

Archaeological Recorded Monuments

There are 54 entries on the sites & Monuments Record. Some of these relate to standing buildings such as St.Mary's Cathedral, King John's Castle & Fanning's Castle & the Citadel, which would all be deemed National importance. Others relate to known sites of monuments with no above-ground remains, but where evidence such as medieval architectural stone, positive archaeological test trenches, or standing remnants of structures.

Record of Protected Structures

There are almost 300 buildings and structures listed within the Record of Protected Structures Metropolitan District of Limerick. The largest grouping is within the greater Georgian Neighbourhood area.

The setting of these heritage assets varies considerably. Fanning's Castle (RPS 383) on Mary Street sits within a gated area of surface car parking. Remnant houses at Emily Place (formerly Gaol Lane, RPS No. 3053) and Curry Lane sit behind unsympathetic fencing. In contrast, the former limestone town houses of John's Square are set beautifully.

Key Recorded Monuments

- Historic Town
- City Walls
- King John's Castle (No. 288)
- Fanning's Castle (No. 383)



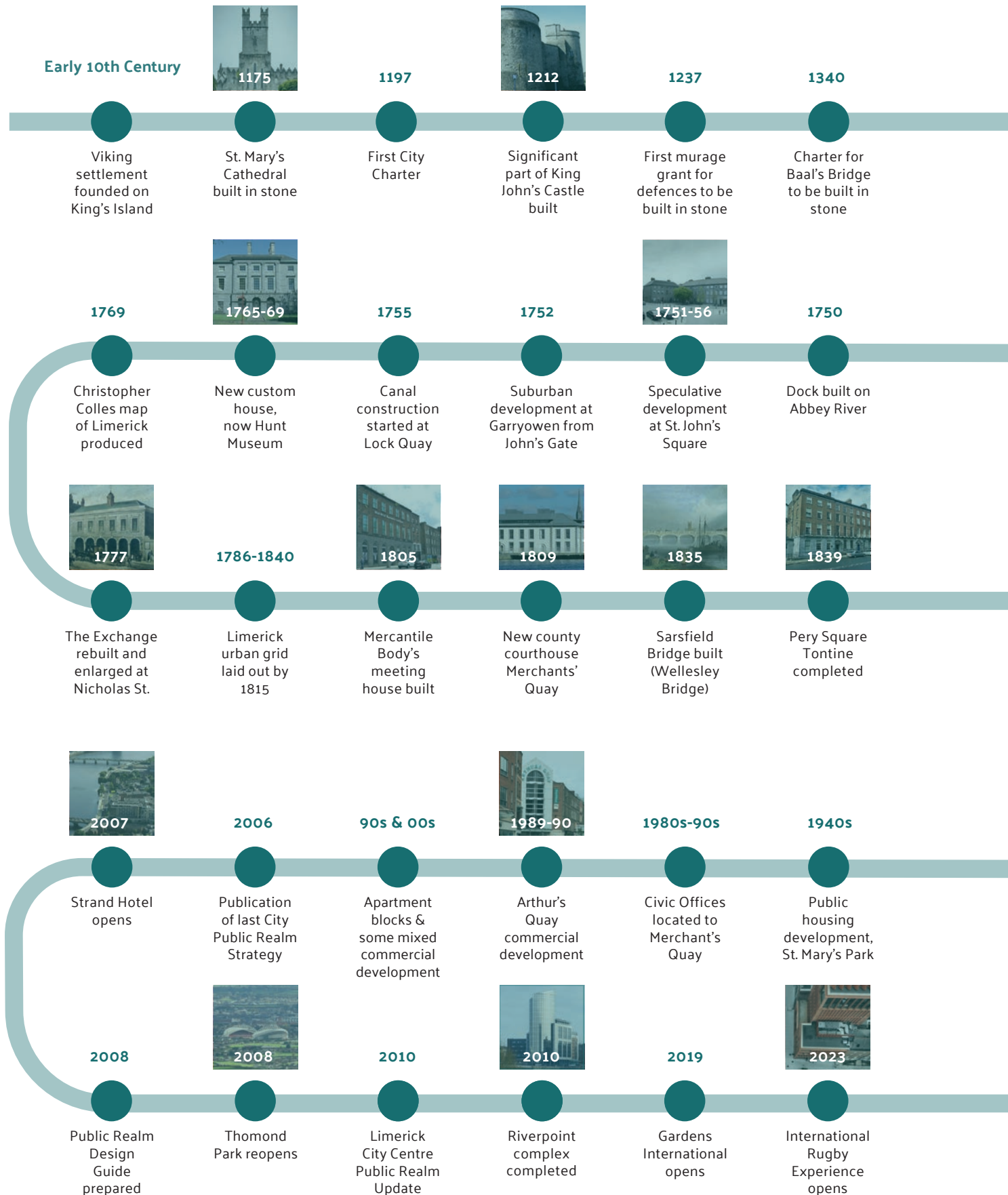
● Protected Structure

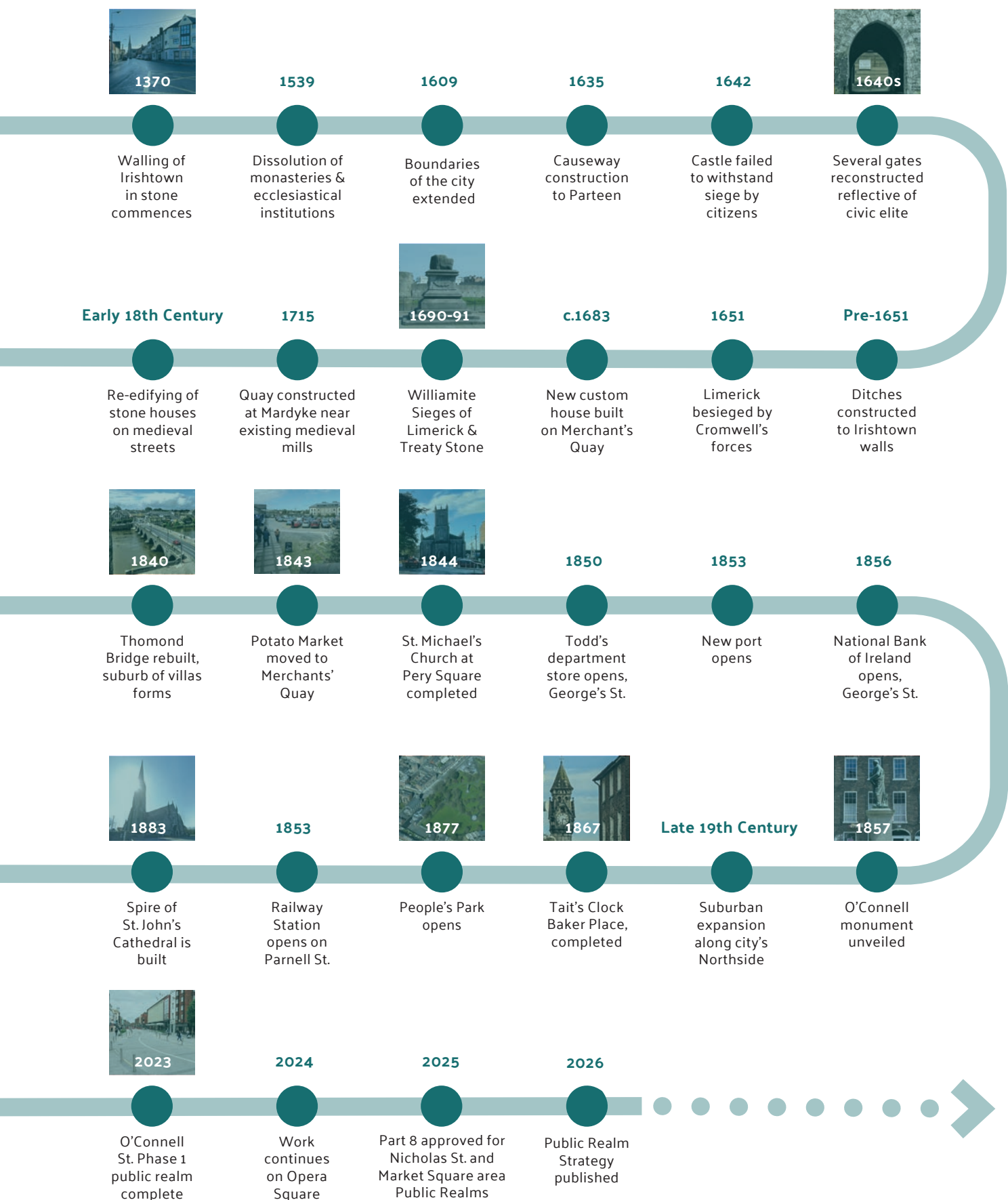
■ Study Area

Map of Protected Structures within Study Area

Historic Limerick

City Centre Timeline





Chapter Three

Limerick Today

- Engagement
- Demographic Context
- Economic Context
- Movement Context
- City Spaces
- Green Spaces
- Climate Change & Environmental Context
- Cultural Context
- Defining City Centre Character Areas

Limerick Today

Engagement

This Public Realm Strategy is rooted in the belief that consulting the local community from the outset and empowering them to contribute positively is essential. The public element of the consultation process giving direction to the Public Realm Strategy has included various tools to date:

- Creation of a MyPoint landing page to advertise the project and future engagement
- A public engagement survey
- Public engagement events
- Stakeholder engagement workshop
- Elected Members workshop

The process and timeline of the engagement process undertaken was underpinned by the following principles:

- 1 Include all voices
- 2 Enlist the help of community leaders, knowledge organisations
- 3 Invite people to come to us as the process develops
- 4 Provide a variety of ways to participate
- 5 Keep the process relevant, and make it easy

Through the engagement tools implemented and described further in this chapter, it became clear that the residents and workers participating in daily city life have a deep understanding and love for their city, and a desire to see it progress in the right direction.

Public Engagement Survey

As part of the initial phase of engagement to inform the Public Realm Strategy, an online survey was launched. The survey was designed to gather people's experiences of the City Centre, and their thoughts on the challenges and opportunities presented. It provided an effective way of reaching a large number of people in the most efficient manner. By the time the survey closed in January 2023, 864 responses had been received. Many provided extremely detailed, well-considered responses to the qualitative questions asked. There was a real sense that Limerick people are incredibly passionate about their city and the enormous potential for revitalisation.

A detailed Survey Outcomes Report is provided as an appendix, summarising the key findings. These have helped to shape the Public Realm Strategy by:

- Informing draft guiding principles;
- Highlighting and confirming common challenges, cherished experiences, significant places; and
- Providing critical advice on the types of interventions people would like.

Whilst not all the themes emerging fall within the scope of what a public realm strategy might or even could address, the results provide a rich source of information about what matters most to people when asked about their City Centre. Based on the responses, a set of emerging themes formed, which fall into three categories as follows:

1. What we cherish

- Favourite Places
- Special Memories

2. Core challenges

- Moving Around Limerick Efficiently
- Visible Social Struggle
- Dereliction and Decay

3. Improvements

- Provide Places to Live
- Promote Commercial Vibrancy
- Enhance Space for Public Life
- Make Room for Nature
- Safeguard the City's Identity and Heritage
- Amplify the Cultural Vitality of the Place
- Consolidate and Build on Good Work Done
- Prioritise Responsive Planning and Design

Engagement with Elected Members

Following the closure of the online survey, a workshop was held with Elected Members on Thursday 26th January 2023 by way of introducing members to both the aims of this Strategy and the high-level feedback received from the survey. This provided a backdrop of the current interests and concerns of citizens regarding the city's public realm. Elected Members were invited to share their own particular interests and concerns in turn, out of which some common themes emerged:

- The need to declutter the streetscape and provide a cohesive design approach to the public realm
- Inclusivity objectives of the Strategy (age-friendly/universal design)
- Daytime dwell time and the night-time economy
- Nodes and general absence of a city centre "focal point"
- Active and Passive surveillance, and creation of safer and more plentiful public outdoor spaces
- Making our future public realm enhancements specific and unique to Limerick



Limerick Today

Engagement

"Milk Market and Wickham Way - it is the essence of Limerick. I'm only living in Limerick for three years but it's one of the things that made me fall in love. If you go early you meet the real locals and see that Limerick people love a tradition and to buy local. I also love how many sole trader shops there are and not many franchises in the city so you can do all your shopping for example at places like butchers and fishmongers etc. Limerick's food scene isn't known that well but could be something that could be used more for events and so on".

"The People's Park - because those of us that live in the city use it all the time. It's a beautiful park, a social hub for a diverse community of city dwellers. A treasure to be celebrated. Other parts of the city should have similar green spaces to enjoy. More evening events in the park might be welcomed by residents and visitors also. Sadly there is so much dereliction and poor quality retail/dining options close by".

"Park behind Hunt Museum, it's close and we play there with the kids (we have no garden)".

"Thomas Street, the outdoor furniture is very cleverly designed. More of that around the city would be welcomed".

"Nicholas Street is another gem that taps into old Limerick and huge work and effort has been put in to revitalising this area in recent years so more of that would be great".

"Great Patrick's Day parades, international band competition, Massive Art Murals on the side of some buildings in recent years they really brightened up the dull street corners, Live music on the streets..."

"The visit of the Granny during the City of Culture year, and consequent pedestrianisation of the city. Showed the latent potential of the city".

"Growing up in the Abbey, our doorsteps were our playgrounds. We were surrounded by some of Limerick's oldest history. We had space to play, holes to hide in. The Abbey river to fish, swim, row on... amazing area!"

"The first two-three years when Riverfest was good. The boat club when it was used for music events. Pery Square when the Wicked Chicken hosted music events. Basically the rich music scene Limerick had in 2000-2008".

"I lived on Thomas Street for years and have so many memories. I'd love to live in town with my family but it's not something that's achievable so we live in Dooradoyle. There is no soul out here but there is in town. Limerick city has so much soul. The music and the art makes it ".

"There used to be a man playing classical music on a violin on Cruises St and sometimes O'Connell Street. It was lovely to hear him and people stopped to listen".



Limerick Today

Engagement

Public Engagement Event

A public consultation event was held at the Citizen Innovation Lab on Friday 24th March 2023. The event was held to raise awareness of the Strategy, share the online survey feedback and gather people's thoughts on their experience of the public realm within the City Centre.

The presentation content included a summary of the baseline findings and the online survey results, with space for further observations. Event attendees were enthusiastic in their participation and provided valuable feedback to the team. Many of the responses echoed those arising from the online consultation.

Two additional boards focused on specific questions related to city streets and city spaces. When asked which streets should be prioritised for the movement of pedestrians and cyclists the following responses were received:

- Key shopping areas (O'Connell Street, Thomas Street, Roches Street, Cruises Street, William Street, Nicholas Street)
- City Squares (John's Square, Cathedral Place, Pery Square)
- Adjacent to the Waterfront (Callaghan's Strand, Clancy's Strand, the Bishop's Quay, George's Quay, Arthur's Quay)
- Areas associated with entertainment / night-time economy (Denmark Street, Ellen Street, Robert Street, Catherine Street)

When questioned where new green spaces should be located, the following responses were received:

- Adjacent to the Waterfront (Bishop's Quay, The Docks, Arthur's Quay Park, Honan's Quay, Riverside south of King John's Castle)
- Within areas subject to development frameworks / strategic development sites (Cleeves, Colbert, Arthur's Quay, Ellen Street surface car park)
- Within Architectural Conservation Areas (The Crescent, The Parade, Baker Place)

When asked where new hard spaces should be located, the following responses were received:

- Adjacent to the Waterfront (Honan's Quay, The Docks, Potato Market, Park Canal)
- Within areas subject to development frameworks/strategic development sites (Cleeves, Colbert, Hyde Park Road, Ellen Street surface car park)
- Within the Markets area (Upper Denmark Street, Carr Street, Mungret Street, High Street, Wickham Street)
- Within Architectural Conservation Areas (The Crescent, The Parade, Baker Place)

City Centre Stakeholder Engagement

An online event for City Centre stakeholders was held on Wednesday 22nd March 2023. The aim of the event was to garner further opinion on the public realm from those who are actively engaged with its use, either as members of the community, interest groups or relevant organisations.

The event focused on achieving a good level of representation across the following themes:

- Community
- Movement & Mobility
- History & Heritage
- Visitor Economy / Arts & Culture
- Education & Learning
- Sport & Recreation
- The River
- Utilities

A detailed report is provided as an appendix to the strategy, summarising the key findings to the engagement session. Some of the comments received are listed overleaf.

City Centre Management Meeting

A second workshop for key stakeholders was held with the City Centre management team on Wednesday 22nd March 2023. Members of An Garda Síochána and Limerick Fire Services participated, along with Local Authority representatives involved in day-to-day operations and maintenance of City Centre. The aim of the meeting was to feedback comments made during the online survey to those responsible for the management and maintenance of the public realm. These focused on usability, safety, cleansing and anti-social behaviour.

See appendix for detailed report summarising the questions put to the group, responses received, and suggestions addressing Strategy proposals.



Limerick Today

Engagement

"If you improve Limerick city for pedestrians, you'll improve it for everybody".

"If you want to get people living in the City Centre, it does mean that every kid should be able to look at a tree, even if it's in a pot, you know, not a parked car".

"The prospect of Limerick being a gathering place for performance, a gathering place for entertainment so that we make it a really exciting city to visit".

"There's not much activity in the evening to attract families into the City Centre. Could we look at some type of late evening opening of King John's Castle, or an art gallery or even the rugby museum when it comes to fruition - places that would bring families into the City Centre and improve the dynamic and the mix of people coming into town."

"The look and feel of the City Centre is so important. It's very encouraging to see the potentially transformative nature of the works in O'Connell Street and the prospect of the rugby museum as well. There are lots of positive things happening".

"We just need to drive it on and we need to be bold about creating this new city. We're building a new city and that's a chance that only comes along once every 100 years. So we need to really drive it and there might be mistakes and people will give out over certain things. But we need to make that plan and then stick to that plan".

← Tweet



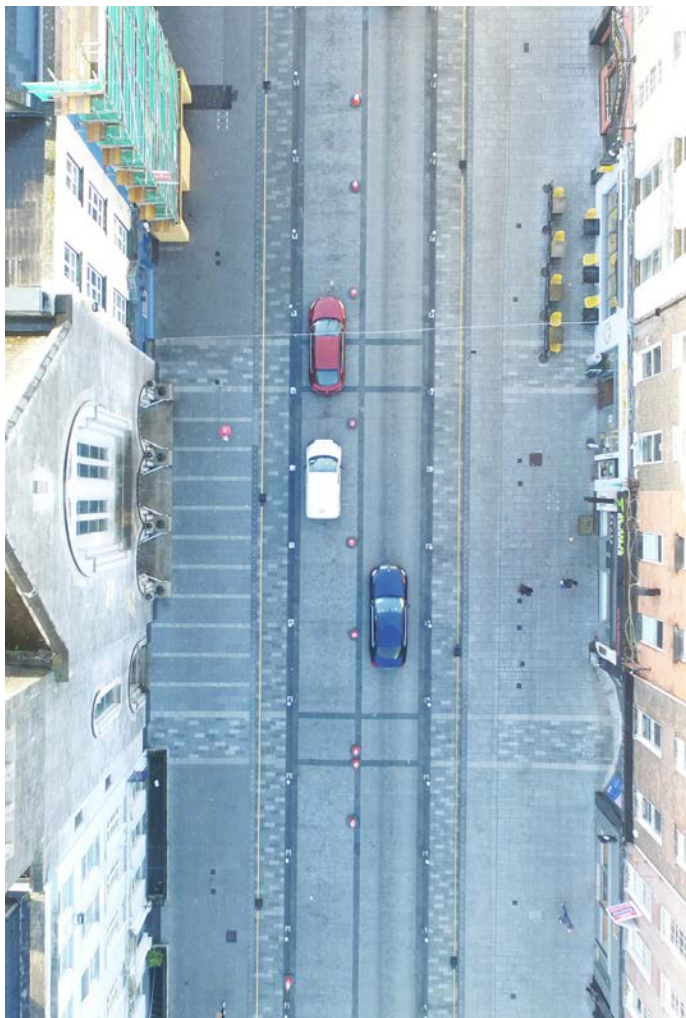
Limerick Council - Comhairle Luimnigh ✓
@LimerickCouncil

...

Would you like to have a say on Limerick's Public spaces & how they could be improved? We are developing a new Public Realm Strategy for the City Centre. Join us at the Citizen Innovation Lab on Sarsfield Street, this Fri. 24th of March, between 11am & 5pm to give us your views.



Public Engagement Event, Citizen Innovation Lab. 24th March 2023



Limerick Today

Demographic Context

Public Engagement Feedback

Many respondents cited the importance of living in the City Centre and how addressing the needs of the significant resident population as well as attracting newcomers could be an important catalyst for change. Respondents also expressed the importance of addressing the residential amenity of the area: dealing with the impact of traffic, lighting on pedestrian routes, making provision for outdoor play, providing amenities for teenagers as well facilities for families.

Baseline Analysis

Project Ireland 2040 has identified a 50% growth target for Limerick by 2040. This equates to an additional 50,000 people. The census of 2022 shows that the population grew by 8% to 209,536, with a higher rate of growth (6.6%) within the metropolitan area compared to the county (5.4%). However, in order to meet government plans the rate of population growth should be greater.

In keeping with the vision of compact smart growth, 50% of housing growth is targeted at sites within the city and suburbs: requiring an increase in density, use of derelict sites and redevelopment of sites that no longer serve their purpose. These measures have the potential to change the underlying character of the City Centre and the public realm. An increase in population will place additional demands on city infrastructure such as public transport, parking, streets and green spaces.

Residential Uses, Housing and Population Density.

There are 6,483 dwelling units in total within the study area. The densities are varied, as can be seen on the map overleaf. The highest densities are largely accounted for by apartment developments that have emerged within the last 20-30 years.

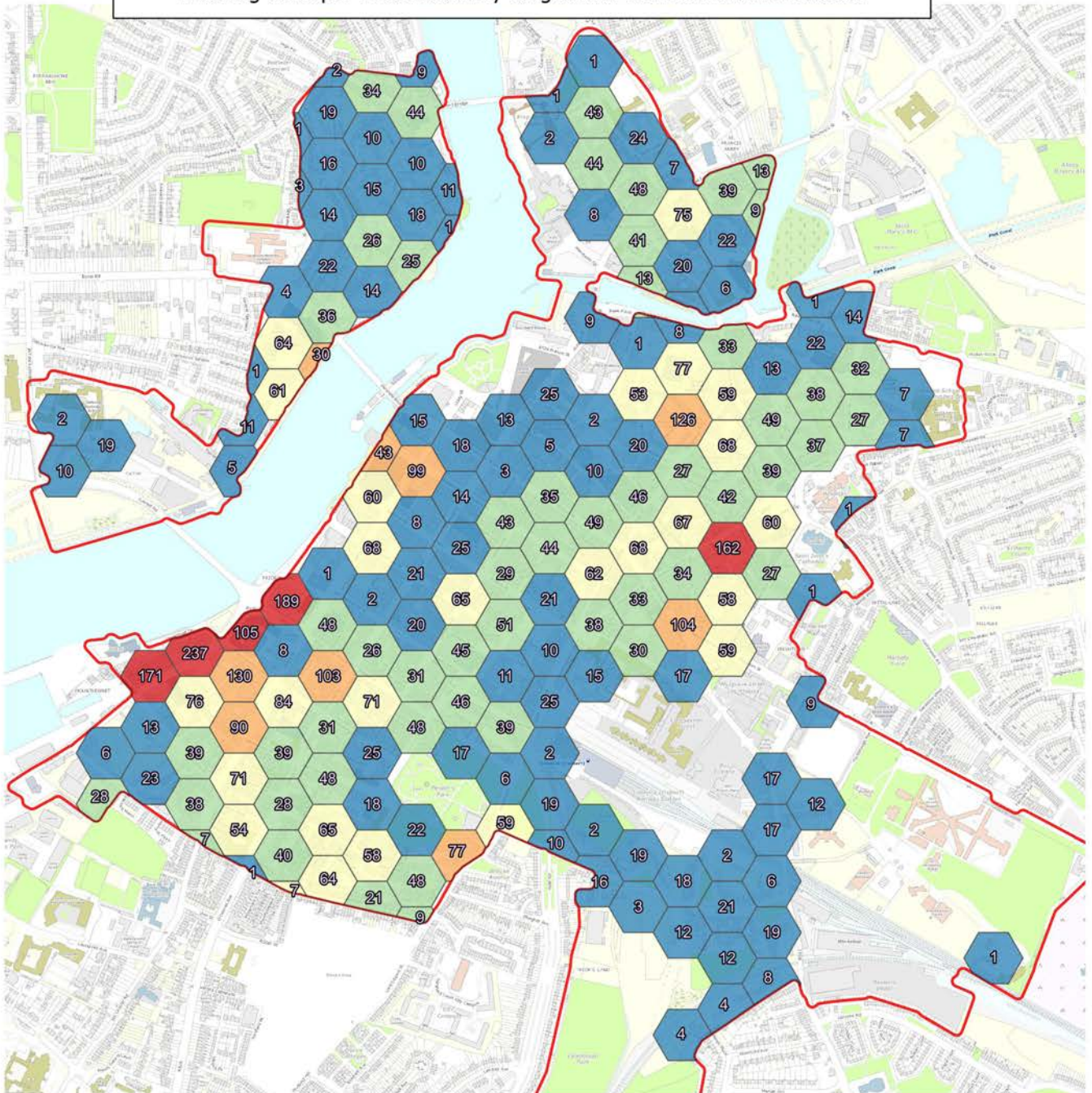
Commercial versus Residential uses

As might be expected for the city centre there is a strong commercial element in the overall land use composition. For the purpose of this baseline analysis, commercial is defined any non-residential use with a postal address that is not residential. Therefore it includes health and medical uses, education and public administration. In terms of floorspace, commercial uses take up more floorspace than residential uses in the city centre. On average only 33.17% of internal floorspace in the city centre either is currently occupied by residential uses or has recently been.

The most extensive non-built areas in non-residential use in the city centre belong to the Colbert Quarter area, including the former St. Joseph's Hospital. The Colbert Quarter is 69 hectares in total, approximately 57 hectares of which is open, and which is earmarked by the Land Development Agency as having potential for major mixed redevelopment with a strong residential component. There is extensive underutilisation of the upper floors of buildings that are nominally commercial, but which in principle could be converted to residential use.

Limerick City Centre Residential Density Q1 2024

Dwelling Units per hectare density ranges with numbers of units labelled



Legend

 City Centre Zoning

**Dwelling Units per hectare,
with count of cells in each density band [193]**

- 1 - 29 [96]
- 29 - 59 [53]
- 59 - 100 [26]
- 100 - 150 [9]
- 150 - 311 [5]

Table showing summary
statistics of dwelling unit
numbers and densities

Key attributes	Statistics
No. of dwelling units	6,221
Median density	21
Max density	237

Limerick Today

Economic Context

Public Engagement Feedback

The reduction in range of retail offer featured prominently in responses. Of fundamental concern were vacant shops, in relation to the health of the business economy and the resulting impact on the public realm. There is a clear opportunity to revitalize and diversify the retail offerings, to create a vibrant shopping experience which is unique to Limerick City.

Many commented on the positive benefits resulting from the animation programme developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g. the outdoor dining experience. Respondents were keen to see these accommodated on a permanent basis.

A repeat of initiatives to activate the commercial environment (festive lighting, flowers, more benches) was also suggested. Some suggested retail in line with the historic significance of particular parts of the City Centre, such as investing in developing an appealing commercial offer within the medieval core and corresponding public realm (Nicholas Street) that would be of interest to local people as well as visitors en-route to King John's Castle.

Baseline Analysis

- The 2022 Limerick census identifies that there were 90,623 people of work age in Limerick, an increase of 17% between 2016 and 2022.
- The three largest economic sectors in Limerick are 1. Wholesale & Retail Trade, 2. Construction, 3. Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities. Unemployment has fallen in line with the national trend and there have been significant improvements in job creation and investment since 2013, with 7,000 new jobs in the City.
- Since the outbreak of COVID-19 there has been further decline in the regional and national retail market, brought on originally by the recession and a subsequent national economic downturn in 2009.
- Limerick City and Suburbs is home to three major third level institutes, University of Limerick (UL), Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) and Mary Immaculate College, educating over 30,000 students. UL is currently developing a masterplan for the City Centre campus on Sarsfield Street.



Limerick Today

Movement Context

Public Engagement Feedback

A highly-ranked theme was the challenge of traffic congestion and difficulty moving around the city efficiently. People shared various frustrations with traffic, with perceptions that it is getting worse. Divergent opinions on the causes were given: poor transport planning, bike lanes, insufficient infrastructure, not enough/too much parking, a lack of regulation, over-reliance on cars.

In the midst of concerns for safety and ‘access for all’, which is a key objective of the Limerick Development Plan, emphasis was placed on the need for an expanded public transport service. Active transport also featured strongly; walkability for residents to access core services, for families with young children to be able to walk unhindered by parked cars, or for visitors to discover places of interest. Difficulties encountered by cyclists were also raised in terms of the continuity, coherence, connectivity and safety of biking infrastructure. There were also calls to expand pedestrianisation and close City Centre streets to local traffic.

Baseline Analysis

- The dominance of vehicles has a significant impact on pedestrians’ experience of the public realm: overly generous roadways geometry, traffic congestion, fractured urban grain created by the prioritisation of roads and parking, visual clutter from roadways infrastructure.
- City Centre transport requirements have a negative aesthetic impact on setting of heritage assets.
- Traffic congestion on Sarsfield Bridge and Thomond Bridge is detrimental to visitor experience and detracts from the strong sense of arrival into the city over the River Shannon.

Cycling

The cycle network has been developed incrementally over many years. It does not yet offer continuous coverage of the City Centre. The majority of cycle provision is immediately adjacent to the road, posing potential conflicts with traffic that need to be addressed.

The existing network contains barriers to cycling including natural barriers, the rivers and waterways and their limited bridge crossings. Only one bridge currently provides dedicated cycle facilities (Shannon Bridge). The potential to retrofit Sarsfield Bridge and Thomond Bridge is limited due to their width. Manmade barriers include railway, one-way/circuitous routes, junctions with little provision for cyclists and high traffic volumes.

Traffic Routes

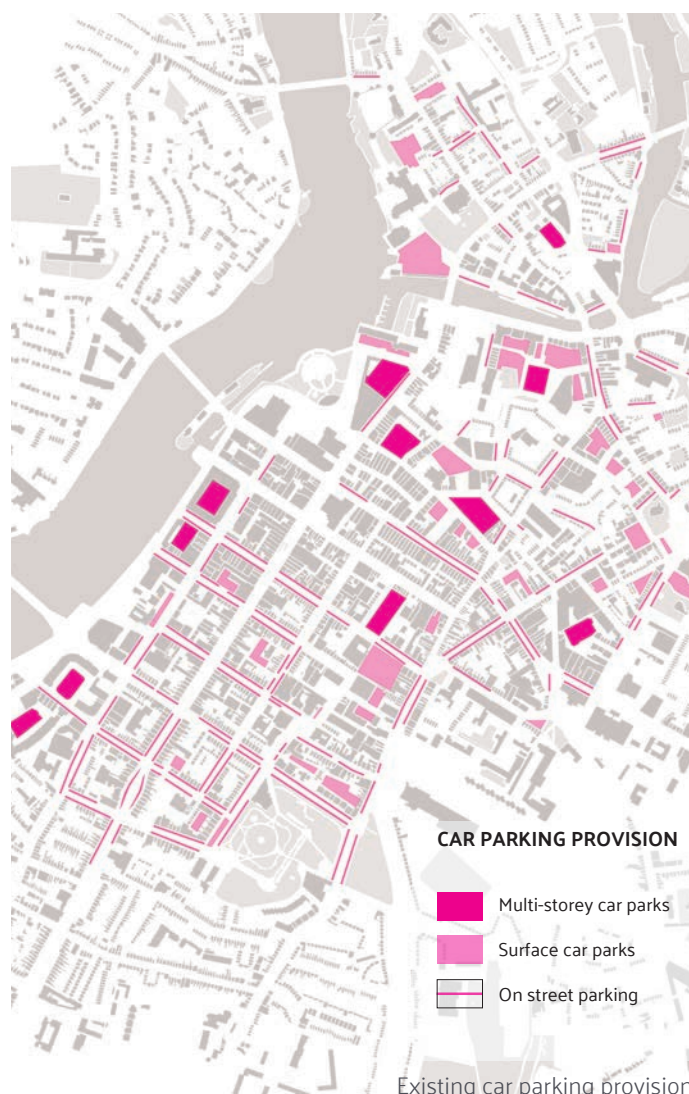
Traffic currently enters Limerick City Centre via several two-way traffic routes, then once in the City Centre traffic enters an extensive one-way traffic system.

Bus Network

Bus Éireann operates a reasonably extensive city bus network. Most are cross-city radial routes, three of which terminate in the City Centre. At present, there is one orbital bus route to the north. The one-way system separates bus routes on inward and outward legs. This can be confusing for less frequent bus passengers and visitors to the city.

Parking

Publicly available car parking provision within the City Centre comprises a mix of on-street parking, surface car parks and multi-storey car parks located throughout the City. There are 4,169 on-street parking spaces in the city centre and 18 private car parks amounting to circ. 5,317 spaces. Parking data indicates an average weekday occupancy of 70%. A possible reason is the cheaper cost of on-street parking and convenience it offers. Short term on-street parking is plentiful within the city central business district. Private, surface level car parks are also plentiful but create gaps within the urban grain and a negative impact on street amenity.



Limerick Today

City Spaces

Public Engagement Feedback

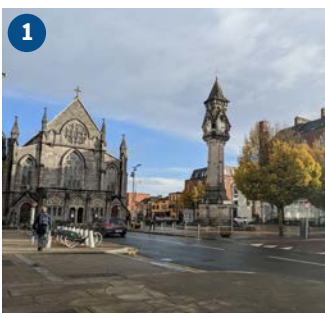
The need for public spaces that allow people to meet outdoors, unencumbered by traffic and parked cars, was a high priority. Developing linear routes, by linking existing public spaces, was identified. Suggestions for the revitalisation of other routes/spaces, is a key priority being currently addressed by the Limerick Laneways Project. The absence of a focal point - a central meeting place was also noted.

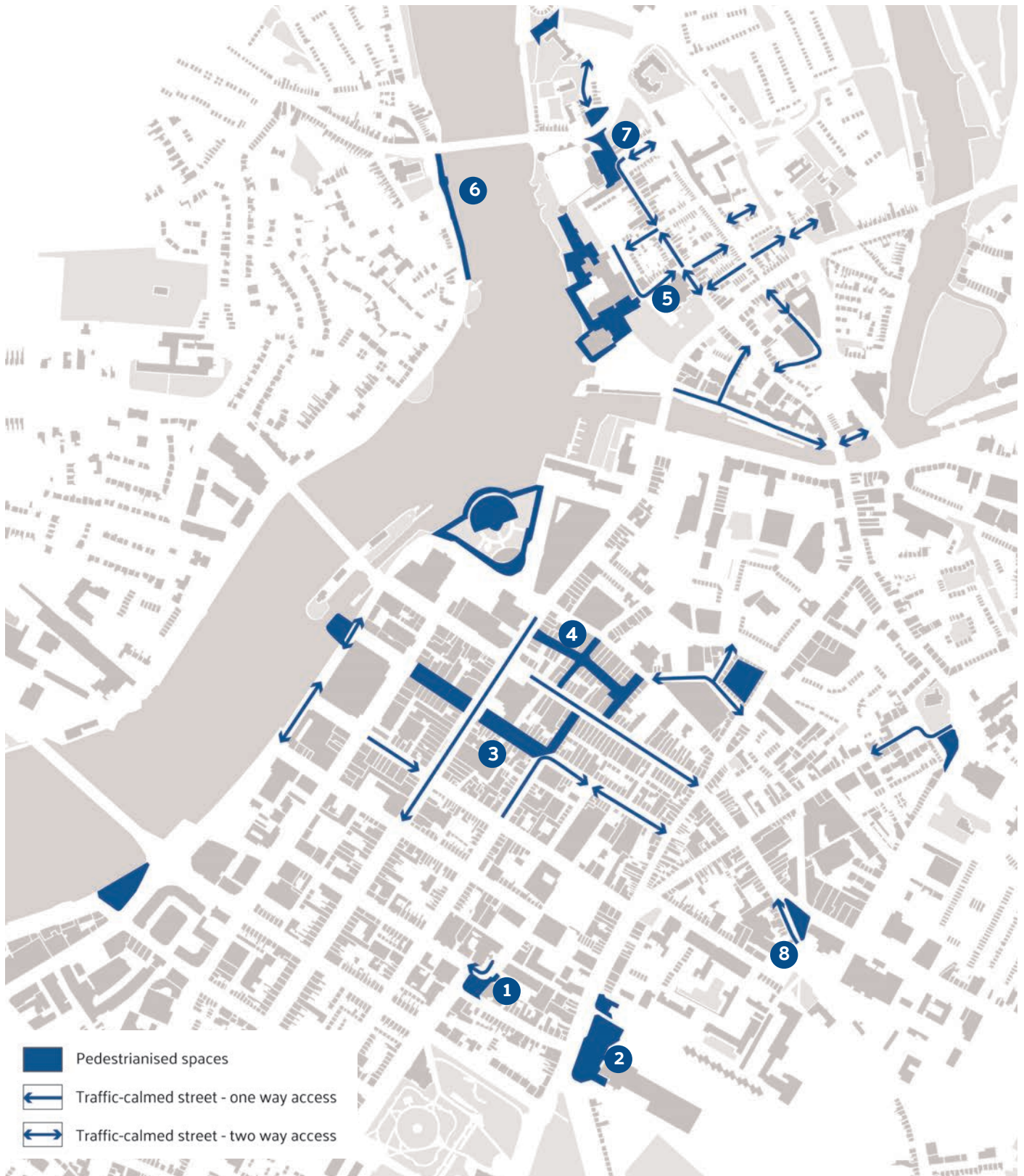
Many responses focused on the river, enhancing pedestrian access, animating the quays and bringing existing routes, such as the Three Bridges Walk, to life, especially in the evening time. Linking these routes back into the places where people live, was seen as an important way of encouraging walking within the City Centre. Opportunities to access the river for recreation were also highlighted.

The need for more comfort within the public realm was stressed, for example providing sheltered spaces that can be used year-round, with adequate seating and the benefit of good views.

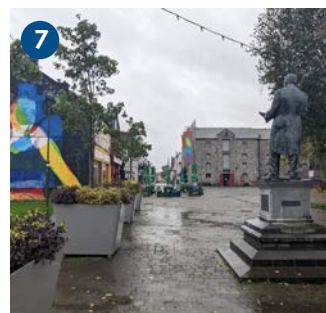
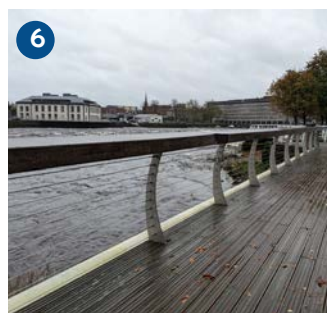
Baseline Analysis

- Limited number of public squares or plazas
- Pedestrianisation focuses on the retail core and waterfront. Traffic calmed streets are also located within King's Island
- New pedestrian-friendly schemes could meet the need for existing events: Slow Sundays/ Markets on Nicholas Street, Milk Market, night-time economy areas.
- Pedestrian space on the streets is squeezed by other needs: car and cycle parking, bar spill-out spaces and street clutter.
- Barriers to pedestrian movement along the Three Bridges Walk include roadways (Sarsfield Bridge) parking (Merchants Quay), built form (Sarsfield House) and change in levels (Sarsfield Bridge).
- The eastern edge of the city and historic routes to and from King's Island from Irishtown have not been prioritised within the public realm.





Existing hard spaces and pedestrian-friendly areas



Limerick Today

Green Spaces

Public Engagement Feedback

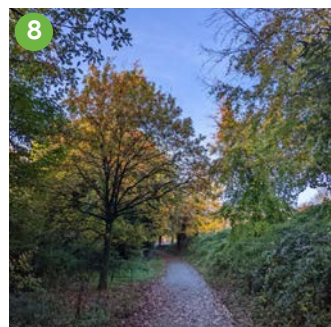
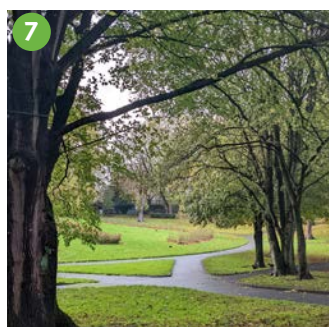
The central importance of the river and the need to better utilise this natural asset was highlighted. Other considerations included the importance of both formal and informal green spaces, and the need for more trees in the City Centre.

The role of greenery in softening infrastructure and making areas more attractive was noted. Greening suggestions ranged from planting more trees, creation of mini-parks and linear riverside parks, to using flowers to add colour to public realm. The significance of King's Island was highlighted along with opportunities to enhance biodiversity through initiatives set out within the Green & Blue Infrastructure strategy such as the Blue-Green Ring and through more extensive SuDS features such as the Fosse case study represented again by the GBI Strategy.

Baseline Analysis

- Limited 'designed' parks or greenspaces;
- Strong green character along the waterfront; Shannon, Abbey and Park Canal, Westfield Wetlands and Grove Island, tidal vegetation, views to northern hills;
- A need for 'quiet spaces' which provide respite from noise levels within the urban environment;
- Limited formal tree planting; much results from recent public realm improvements targeted at the riverside and retail areas;
- Underground vaults, protected structures, sub-surface archaeology and above/below-ground utilities are significant constraints to in-ground tree planting;
- Limited other types of planting; many amenity areas are unprogrammed grassed spaces.
- Sporadic vegetation is apparent along stretches of city walls, along the Laneways and on derelict sites; which lends an organic character to certain quarters of the city. Sporadic vegetation provides an ecological value, habitat for invertebrates and bat corridors.





Limerick Today

Climate Change & Environmental Context

Flooding

Limerick City Centre is at risk from both river and coastal flooding with notable floods occurring in February 1997, 2002, 2014. Very severe flooding to King's Island occurred in February 2014 when existing flood defences failed locally due to overtopping and through breach.

The King's Island Flood Relief Scheme is due to begin construction in 2024, with an approximate 24 month construction period. Works include the construction of new river walls, glazed screens and embankments. This Public Realm Strategy has been developed with full cognisance of the detailed proposals.

The Limerick Flood Relief Scheme is at design stage. Coordination meetings have been held with the project team to understand implications for the public realm and initial design criteria.

Noise

The Noise Action Plan includes a new aim around noise and the public realm:

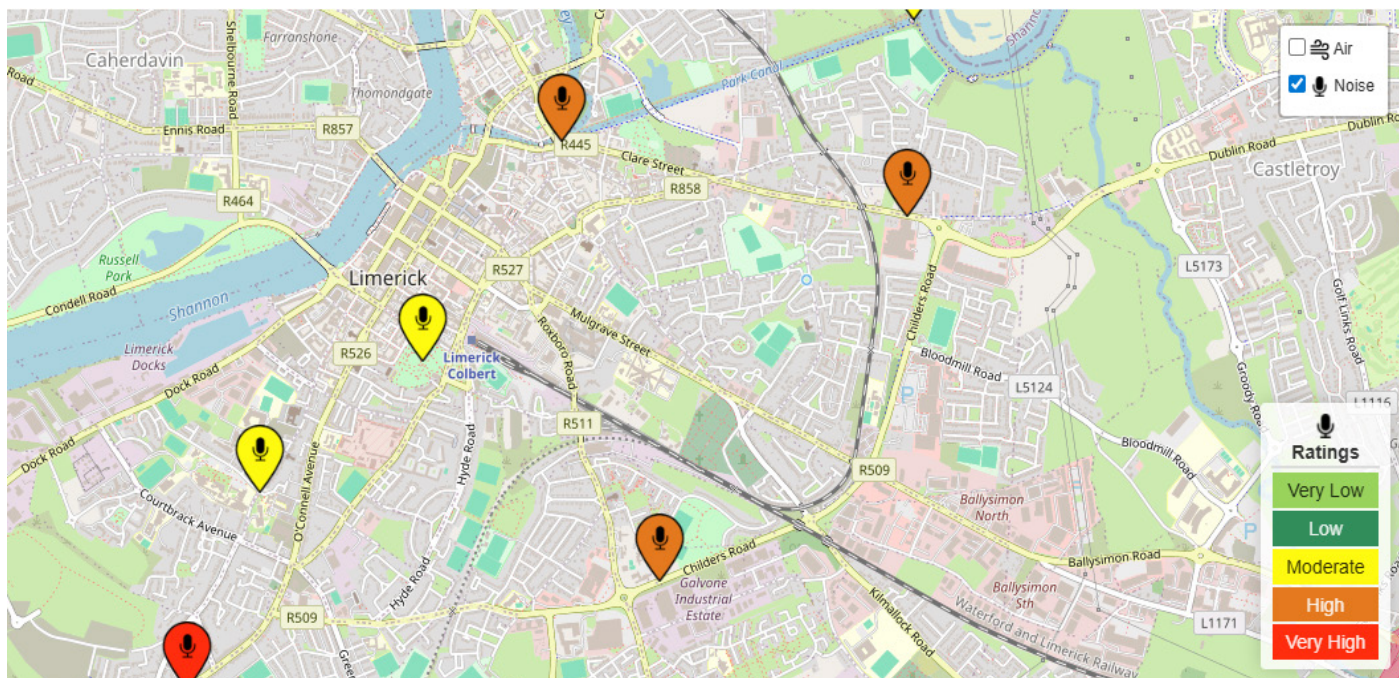
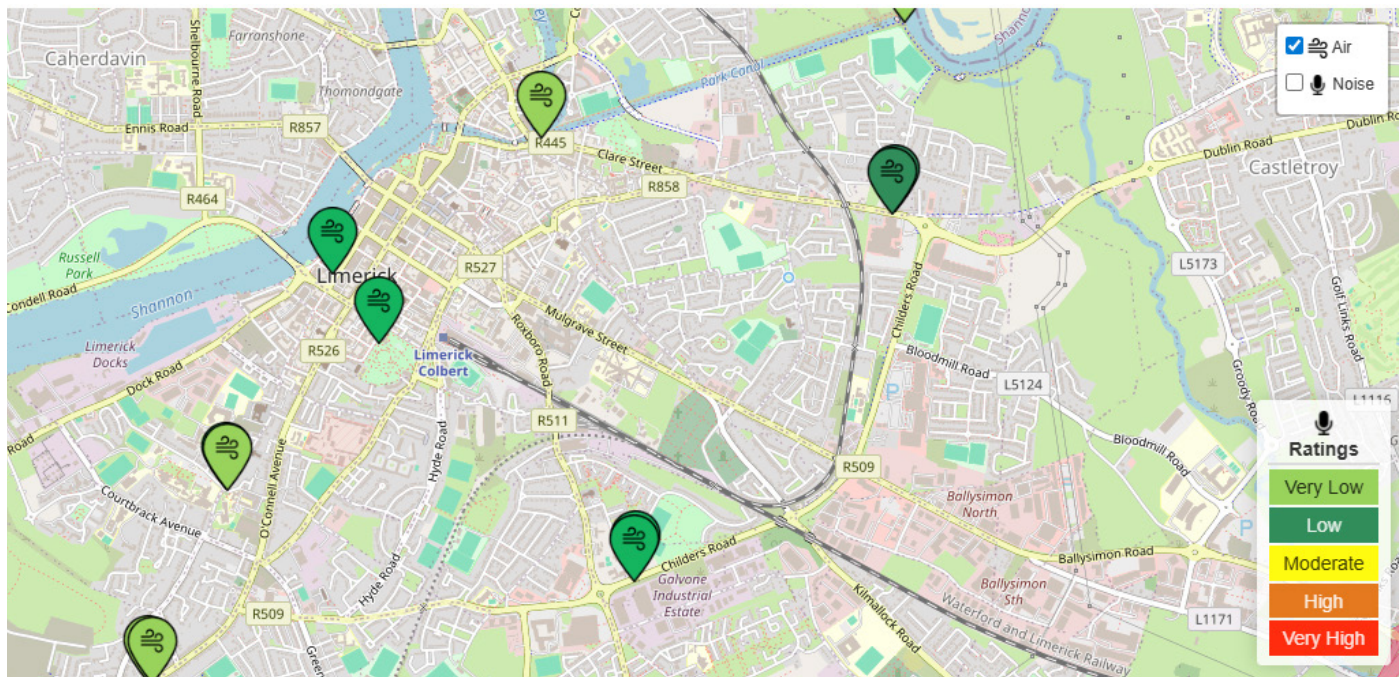
- Where practicable reduce environmental noise and improve or maintain the quality of sound in the public realm, to create an acoustic environment that is appropriate to people.

Within the NAP, the Council will be investigating Candidate Quiet Areas for designation by the Minister for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. These are spaces which are quiet or relatively quiet, and generate significant benefits (in terms of health, wellbeing, and quality of life) for communities. Spaces might include city parks and public gardens. Figure 7 overleaf identifies the location of a Relative Candidate Quiet Area (CQA) within the City Centre, located at the People's Park.

Air Quality

Limerick City and County Council currently has air quality monitors operating at five locations in the metropolitan area of Limerick, to provide live indicative air quality data to the public. These monitors are in Mungret, Castletroy, O'Connell Street, Henry Street and the Peoples Park. The monitors measure particulate matter and gases, including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and ozone (O₃).





24 hour Air and Noise quality map, Limerick City

Limerick Today

Cultural Context

Public Engagement Feedback

A hugely important aspect of Limerick's cultural offering is its arts scene including amongst other disciplines its street art, theatre, music-making and public art. The city's reputation as a cultural hub was widely acknowledged in the online survey.

Baseline Analysis

The public realm is host to a myriad of public art works, which include:

- Fixed sculptures: multiple sculptures within the City Centre, comprising a mix of historic statuary, memorials and more recent art works.
- Murals: a street art trail of Limerick's murals can be downloaded online.
- Temporary installations: such as the eye-catching mural at the University of Limerick City Campus and adjacent painted bollards.

Baseline analysis on events and animation was collected and a summary of the key issues is provided below:

- Limerick has many local festivals & events, and primarily runs off niche events with capacity of 300-500 attendees.
- 3-phase power, an essential component for mid to large-scale music events in particular, and also markets is limited (see reference opposite);
- Multiple access points can be challenging for policing and control of numbers.

Events

- While raised planters add to the streetscape in terms of greening and benefit by controlling crossing points, they impact use of the streetscape for large-scale events;
- Temporary marquees can only provide limited shelter when driving rain or wind is present. The Shannon carries prevailing south-westerly winds, hampering connectivity with river events;
- Promotion of animation would benefit from a well thought out event branding system, using existing public realm infrastructure.
- Further public animation through Meanwhile Use pilot projects (similar to that at Honan's Quay) should be considered to transform areas undergoing regeneration or development.



Existing events spaces and locations

Spaces which host existing events

- 1 King John's Castle (c.2000sqm): Concerts, Curragour Park, Culture Night
- 2 Potato Market (c.2000sqm): Riverfest
- 3 Rear of Hunt Museum (c.2000sqm)
- 4 Arthur's Quay Park (c.7000sqm): Riverfest People's Park & St. Patrick's Parade Finish Point
- 5 Milk Market (c.1000sqm): Weekend Markets, Concerts
- 6 People's Park (c.18,000sqm), Party in the Park

Streets which host existing events

- 7 Samhain Parade: Thomond Bridge, Nicholas St., Castle Street, Convent St., Barrack St., Bridge St.
- 8 Nicholas St., Street parties, Slow Sundays
- 9 Great Limerick Run route, Various Streets
- 10 Pery Square: Homecomings & GLR Starting Line
- 11 GLR Finish Line
- 12 The Crescent, St. Patrick's Parade
- 13 St. Patrick's Parade, Various Streets
- 14 Catherine Street: street party events
- 15 Thomas Street: Small-scale pop-up events
- 16 Bedford Row: Small-scale pop-up events

Limerick Today

Defining City Centre Character Areas

Urban Characterisation

Having carried out the baseline analysis, context appraisal, and early engagement to inform the next stages of this Strategy, a review of the urban characterisation of the city centre followed. Character Area studies are an important tool in helping to deliver contextually appropriate urban design and placemaking. Urban character is informed by both the underlying townscape characteristics of the space and the patterns of use. By understanding the intrinsic qualities, values and condition of the spaces, the decision-making process is in turn guided fundamentally by placemaking principles. This assisted in:

- Identification of valued features to be retained.
- Specific areas for enhancement or safeguarding.
- Characteristics that are unique to the area and which help to create a sense of place, and in turn strengthen the identity of the area.

Recent city plans and initiatives such as the Limerick Development Plan, the Building Heights Strategy and Wayfinding Strategy have used characterisation to define specific quarters of the city. This has focused on either their historic qualities (Medieval Quarter, Georgian Quarter) or their land use (Markets Quarter), and left the functions of other areas (such as the Core) up for interpretation.

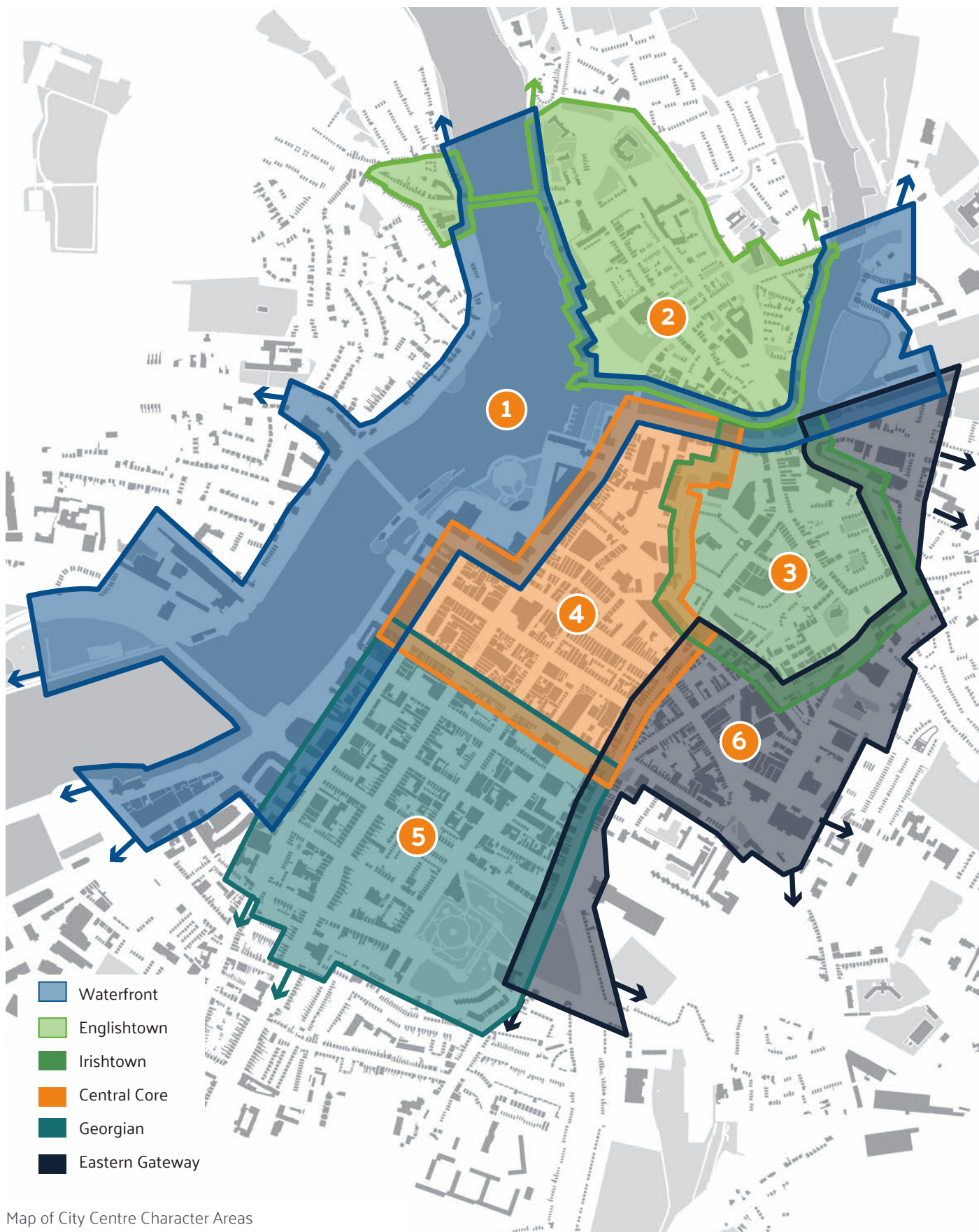
The City Centre areas defined in this Public Realm Strategy are identified on the adjacent plan. They have been informed by the layers of survey and analysis undertaken during the baseline stage:

- Historic development pattern
- Integrity of remaining buildings and structures
- Integrity of urban grain
- Land Form
- Land Use
- Distribution of hard and soft space
- Views and visual amenity
- Designations
- Physical connections, inter-relationships

Volume 2, Chapter 3 provide profiles of the six character areas identified:

- 1 Waterfront
- 2 Englishtown
- 3 Irishtown
- 4 Central Core
- 5 Georgian Neighbourhood
- 6 Eastern Gateway

As identified on the plan overleaf, there is some overlap of the character area boundaries. This reflects development patterns, land uses and physical features as they are perceived by users.



Map of City Centre Character Areas

