



# Proposed Limerick Public Realm Strategy

## Volume 3: Environmental Reports



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae Luimnigh  
Limerick City  
& County Council

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EUROPEAN EMBRACE  
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# 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.



**Final Habitats Directive Assessment Screening  
For adoption of the Public Realm Strategy for  
Limerick.**

July 2026.

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# ***Appropriate Assessment Screening***

## **Section 1.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this screening report is to establish whether the adoption of the proposed Public Realm Strategy would result in likely significant effects to the Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Significant effects on a Natura 2000 site or “European site” are those that would undermine the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation status of the Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats and or the QI/ Special conservation interest (SCI) species of a European site(s).

## **Section 2.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening Process**

The first test is to establish whether, in relation to a particular plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. This is termed AA screening, and this is the purpose of this document. Its purpose is to determine, based on a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.

The preparation of this screening report has had regard to the following:

- DoEHLG, (2010). 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities'
- Office of the Planning Regulator, (2021). 'Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.'
- European Commission, (2001). 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.'
- European Commission, (2007). 'Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC: Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interests, compensatory measures, overall coherence and opinion of the Commission.'
- European Commission, (2018). 'Managing Natura 2000 Sites. The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.'

The above guidance documents set out the stages and processes for carrying out Appropriate Assessment. Screening is the first stage of the process and is undertaken to determine whether a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required.

In accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended, and to ensure an integrated assessment process, the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was issued to the prescribed Environmental Authorities on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026, concurrently with the SEA Screening Report. A submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026. The EPA did not raise any concerns

regarding the findings of the Appropriate Assessment Screening and did not identify any potential significant effects on European sites arising from the implementation of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy. The comments received from the EPA were considered in the finalisation of the Screening Determination.

### **Section 3.0 Public Realm Strategy Context**

The last Limerick City Centre Public Realm Plan (2006) provided outline design proposals for the city centre. This was followed by a Public Realm Design Guide (2008). The Limerick City Centre Public Realm Update (2010) provided an update on progress achieved. Due to the passage of time and the merger of Limerick City and County a new Strategy was required to account for 80% completion of original projects and a restructured Local Authority.

### **Section 4.0 Description of the Public Realm Strategy.**

The Public Realm Strategy will take place in the following six urban character areas of the city centre:

**The Waterfront** This area encompasses the River Shannon, Abbey River and Park Canal corridors and the adjacent fringes of land including the Strands and the Quays. It stretches from Thomond Bridge in the north to Shannon Bridge in the south.

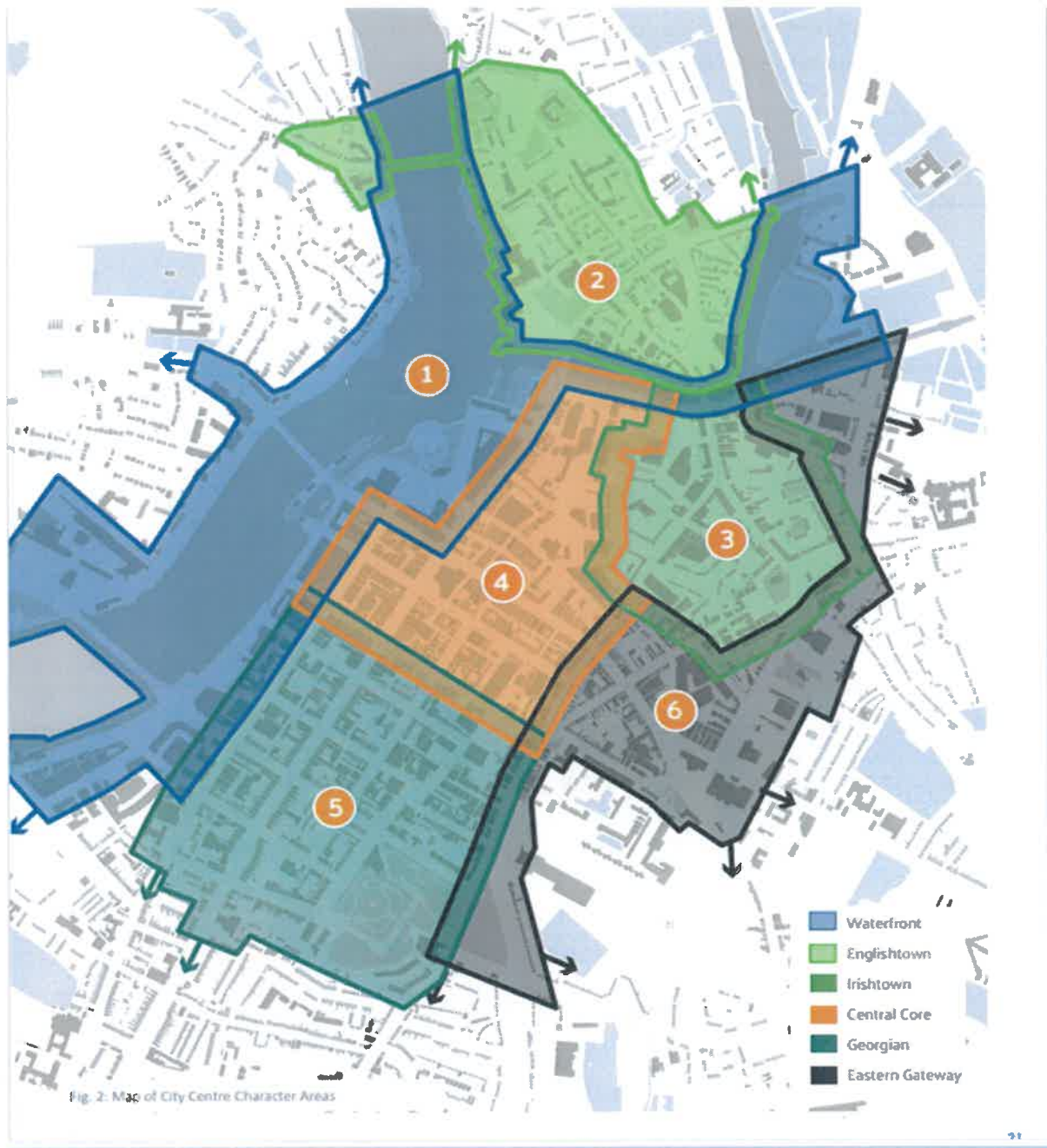
**Englishtown** This area encompasses the historic extents of Englishtown on King's Island and is defined by the extent of the Limerick City Walls and the River Shannon.

**Irishtown** This area encompasses the historic extents of Irishtown, as defined by Limerick City Walls. It centres on the inverted Y shaped street pattern, defined by Broad Street, John's Street and Mungret Street. There is significant overlap in the vicinity of the Milk Market.

**Central Core** This area encompasses the triangular area of land between Irishtown and Newtown Pery, bounded on two sides by the Shannon. Mapping from the 19<sup>th</sup> century refers to the area as Custom house ward the central area of commerce. There is significant overlap in the vicinity of the Milk Market.

**Georgian Neighbourhood:** This area encompasses the late 18th / early 19th century development of Newtown Pery. It extends as far west as the River Shannon, to Parnell Street in the east and St Joseph's Street in the south, where the urban form transitions from three to two storey buildings.

**Eastern Gateway** This area encompasses lands to the east of the City Centre, which historically functioned as the institutional and transport quarter. Colbert Railway is in this character area.

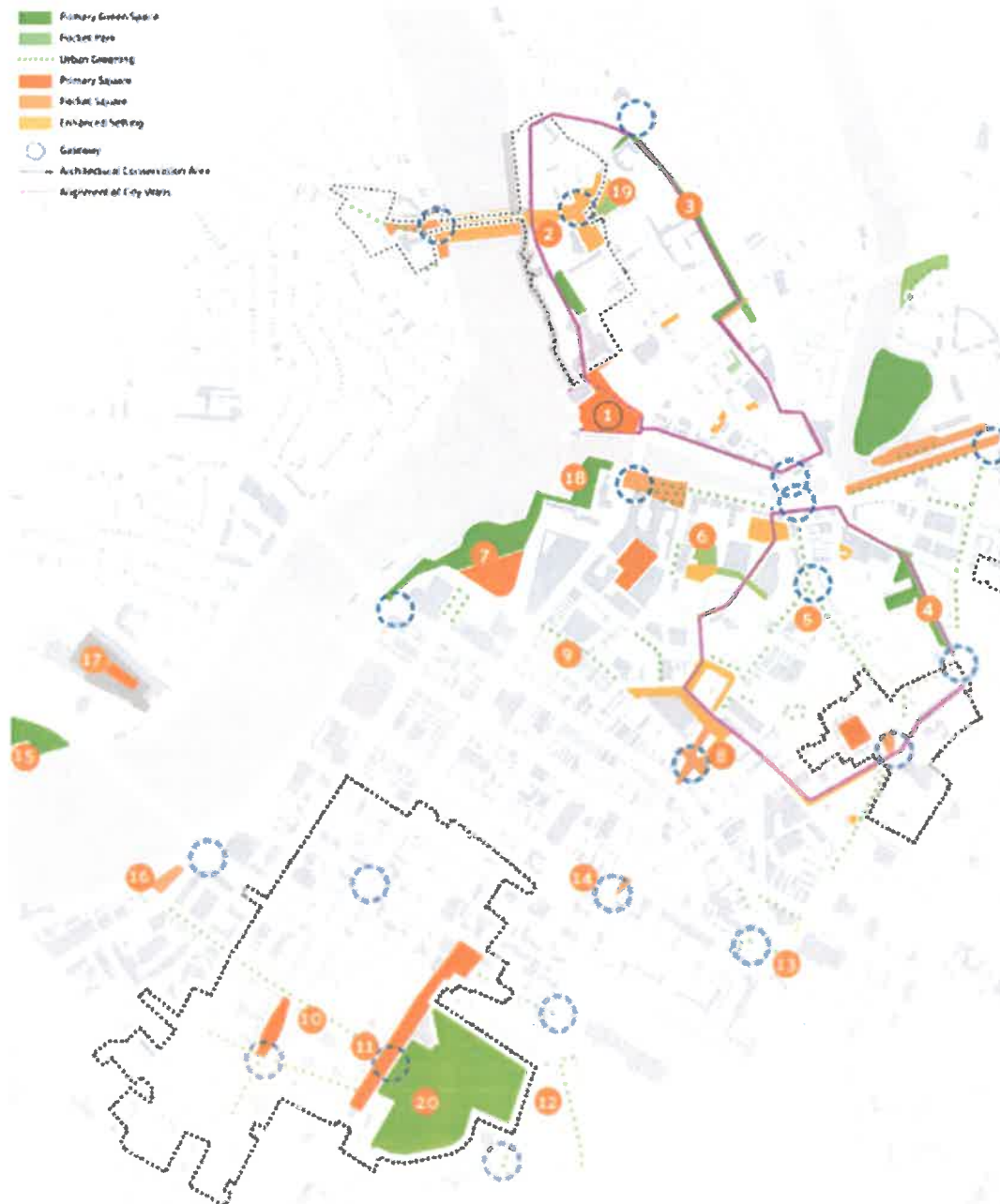


**Figure 1:** the Character areas of the City Centre.

The purpose of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy is as follows:

- 1 To guide future investment in the public realm, supporting public sector funding bids and setting out expectations for private development.
- 2 The PRS will serve as a material consideration by LCCC Planning Team when determining planning applications located within the Strategy Area. This is a non-statutory planning document.

**3** The PRS will provide detailed design guidance and information and a materials palette for the design and maintenance of streets, green spaces and the public realm.



**Figure 2:** Existing green space hierarchy and its open spaces with the boundary of the Public Realm Strategy.

## Section 5.0 Identification of relevant European sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) form the Natura 2000 network of sites. These sites are relevant to this Appropriate Assessment Screening process. The SPAs and SACs are designated under EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended. All European Designated Sites or Natura 2000 sites, with the potential to be affected by the scheme, were considered including their qualifying interests/conservation objectives. The Public Realm Strategy is in a highly modified urban setting, with a large separation distance from other sites. Only the two European sites listed below located closest to the proposed development are considered the only ones that are relevant to this assessment.

**Table 1 Relevant European Sites.**

| Site                                                  | Site Code | Distance (m) |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Special Area of Conservation: Lower River Shannon SAC | 002165    | Adjacent     |
| River Shannon and Fergus Estuary SPA                  | 004077    | Adjacent     |



**Fig 3:** The blue line indicates O Connell Street. The orange shading indicates the location of the SAC, the pink indicates the location of the SPA.

## Section 6.0 Assessment

The method of assessment used is the Source-Pathway-Receptor model. Potential pathways are restricted to visual and hydrological pathways as the site is located within an established urban area subject to consistent levels of human activity. The Public Realm Strategy area includes parts of both the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Shannon and Fergus Estuary SPA.

A review of the planning history of the immediate area shows that applications within the area are standard for urban areas. These include applications for signage, limited changes of use such as alteration from commercial to residential and applications for works on Protected Structures. All of the historical applications were located outside the SAC/SPA site and are within the existing urban footprint.

The zoning of the open spaces will remain unchanged. Spaces adjacent to the river, will remain in amenity use which is less intensive than development-oriented use. Open spaces when close to the river afford a buffer between the river and more intensive land uses.

Many of the open spaces are also screened from the Shannon and the Natura 2000 sites within the PRS area. Only a small number of the open spaces directly border the river. The largest is Arthurs Quay Park. During the summer months, at maximum usage, the existing tree's leaf cover will help screen any human activity from the river. Such activity is long-established, and it is likely that birds and mammals, such as otters, have become familiar with it.

It is considered that there would not be any direct, indirect or in combination effects on either of the European sites, given the location of the existing open spaces and the qualifying interests/conservation objectives of each site. Many of the open spaces are not adjacent to the river and its Natura 2000 sites, along most of its length (see Figure 2) but also because it does not involve any change of zoning and hence intensification of land use from the zoning template of the Limerick Development Plan which had been subject to its own assessment through its Natura Impact Statement and the its Environmental Report. The open space and amenity zoning with its established pattern of human activity and movement will remain unchanged. The New Public Realm Strategy will not be an encroachment into the SAC or SPA sites but will be within an existing zoning template in a modified urban environment.

**Table 2.0 Connectivity of the Public Realm Strategy to European Sites**

| European Site Name               | Qualifying Interests                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Distance to Natura site. | Hydrological Connectivity to Project (Source Pathway Receptor)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lower River Shannon SAC (002165) | Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110] Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i> ) | Adjacent                 | The PRS area is located adjacent to the boundary of this SAC, at its closest point. Given that there will be no changes to the zoning template of the LDP or any intensification of land use, no pathways for indirect effects on the SAC were identified. No pathway for pollutants was identified, as no construction will be taking place. The document is advisory only. The existing trees and landscaping will mask the longstanding pattern of human activity in open space areas and public realm areas close to the |

|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                     | <p>[1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</p> <p>[1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitans</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>) [6410] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p> |                 | <p>river. There is also an intervening developed urban area between much of the public realm area and the river along much of its length. This will ensure that there will be no adverse disturbance effects on the species that use the Shannon and its designated sites.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>River Shannon and Fergus Estuary SPA (4077).</p> | <p>Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]</p> <p>Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038]</p> <p>Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046]</p> <p>Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]</p> <p>Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]</p> <p>Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]</p> <p>Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054]</p> <p>Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]</p> <p>Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062]</p> <p>Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137]</p> <p>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]</p> <p>Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]</p> <p>Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]</p> <p>Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143]</p> <p>Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]</p> <p>Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]</p>     | <p>Adjacent</p> | <p>The long-established pattern of human usage in the city means that much of the wildfowl for which the SPA is designated has become used to activity in open spaces and routes close to the river. There is also an intervening developed urban area between the SPA and much of the PRS area. This means that there is no possibility of disturbance effects as these are not visible from the SPA. Given the distance from the SPA for much of the PRS area and the screening of intervening buildings and the consequent lack of disturbance, it is not considered that there would be any likely effects.</p> <p>Many of the wildfowl species for which the SPA has been designated are also wintering species, a<sup>i</sup> season in which use of the public realm generally reduces. This aspect of seasonal usage of the</p> |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |                                                                  |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Bar-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa lapponica</i> ) [A157]<br>Curlew ( <i>Numenius arquata</i> ) [A160]<br>Redshank ( <i>Tringa totanus</i> ) [A162]<br>Greenshank ( <i>Tringa nebularia</i> ) [A164]<br>Black-headed Gull ( <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> ) [A179]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |  | public realm further reduces the chances of wildfowl disturbance |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Table 3.0 Screening Matrix**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brief description of the project                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Description is set out section 4.0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Brief description of the European Sites                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | The European Sites occurring in the wider surrounding area are identified in Table 1.0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the European Sites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>There is no potential for the project to interact with qualifying species of European Sites and the habitats upon which they rely, as this a strategy for city centre public realm in areas with a long-established history of human activity amid a long- established urban area. Such areas are not frequented by wildfowl species which are part of the qualifying interests of the SPA site.</p> <p>The onsite habitats are those of a built environment. These onsite habitats are not part of the range of habitats for which either the SAC or SPA was designated.</p>                          |
| Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the European Sites site by virtue of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• size and scale;</li> <li>• land-take;</li> <li>• distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;</li> <li>• Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);</li> <li>• emissions (disposal to land, water or air);</li> <li>• excavation requirements;</li> <li>• transportation requirements;</li> <li>• duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;</li> </ul> | <p>The strategy will not have the potential to cause direct, indirect, or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites. The strategy's footprint is in a long-modified environment located outside the Shannon River for most of its length. The project is characterized by its use of existing public realm and does not encroach into any Natura 2000 site boundaries.</p> <p>Given the strategy's use of existing zoning templates, location within the urban area, location outside the SPA and SAC sites and the intervening buildings in many locations, no effects are anticipated on the SPA site.</p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduction of habitat area;</li> <li>• disturbance to key species;</li> <li>• habitat or species fragmentation;</li> <li>• reduction in species density;</li> <li>• changes in key indicators of conservation value</li> <li>• (water quality etc.);</li> <li>• Climate change.</li> </ul> | <p>The strategy uses existing public realm spaces and is not located within any Natura 2000 site ensuring there will be no loss or alteration of a habitat as a result of the project.</p> <p>Its location in the middle of an urban area out of sight from the SPA and SAC for much of its length, ensures there would be no disturbance to key species or habitats of qualifying interest.</p> <p>There are limited pathways between the Public Realm Strategy area and surrounding European Sites and the strategy does not involve consent for development. The Public Realm Strategy is advisory in nature and will not have the potential to result in changes to qualifying habitats or qualifying species of European Sites occurring in the wider surrounding area.</p> <p>In terms of climate change the strategy seeks to promote the use of public realm, and in association with the transport strategy promotes sustainable transport links. It is anticipated that climate effects would be beneficial. The Public Realm Strategy aligns public realm design with public transport and public infrastructure.</p> |
| <p>Describe any likely impacts on the European Sites site as a whole in terms of: interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>For the reasons set out above the strategy will not have the potential to interfere with key relationships that define the structure and function of European Sites</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p>Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loss;</li> <li>• fragmentation;</li> <li>• disruption;</li> <li>• disturbance;</li> <li>• Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).</li> </ul>                                                                             | <p>For reasons set out above the strategy will not have the potential to result in such effects to European Sites.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>The strategy will not have the potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites, due to location in an urban area, location outside Natura 2000 sites and lack of pathways for potential pollutants or disturbance. It will use the existing zoning template from the Limerick Development Plan and existing public realm.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Section 7.0 Screening Determination

### Adoption of Limerick City Public Realm Strategy

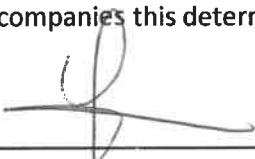
#### Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination In accordance with the EU's Habitats Directive Article 6(3) and The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

An Appropriate Assessment Stage 1 Screening Report has been prepared by the Forward Planning and Public Realm Section of Limerick City and County Council.

Having regard to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, and Section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, the guidance contained in the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government's "Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities" (February 2010) and following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the information provided in the "Appropriate Assessment Stage 1 Screening Report for Limerick Public Realm Strategy prepared by Forward Planning and Public Realm section, as the Competent Authority determines that the proposed **Limerick Public Realm Strategy will not either individually or in combination with any other plan or project adversely affect the integrity of any European Site**. Consequently, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

The reasons for the said determination are set out in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report which accompanies this determination.

Signed: 

**Stephane Duclot**  
**Director of Planning, Heritage and Ryder Cup.**

Date: 16/07/2026

Final Strategic  
Environmental  
Assessment Screening  
Report and  
Determination for the  
Adoption of the  
Proposed Limerick City  
Centre Public Realm  
Strategy.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Requirements for SEA

The last Limerick City Centre Public Realm Plan (2006) provided outline design proposals for the city centre. This was followed by a Public Realm Design Guide (2008). The Limerick City Centre Public Realm Update (2010) provided an update on progress achieved. Due to the passage of time and the merger of Limerick City and County a new Strategy was required to account for 80% completion of original projects and a restructured Local Authority.

It is a requirement of Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that planning authorities shall have regard to Ministerial Guidelines in the performance of their functions and comply with any specific planning policy requirements contained in such Ministerial Guidelines. In addition, Section 10(1A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that Development Plans are consistent with inter alia planning policy requirements specified in Ministerial Guidelines. To align with this requirement, the planning authorities are to update the LDP, as needed, by developing variations that revise and/or incorporate new policies, objectives and measures. One of the measures is the adoption of the updated Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy (PRS). The PRS will be a non-statutory planning document. The PRS will serve as a material consideration by LCCC Planning Teams when determining planning applications located within the Strategy Area. It will provide detailed design guidance and information and a materials palette for the design and maintenance of streets, green spaces and the public realm. Because of its role as a planning document, it was decided to subject the adoption of the Public Realm Strategy to the SEA screening process.

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans that are prepared for certain specified sectors, including Development Plans. The following Regulations transpose this Directive into Irish law:

- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004)
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) and further amended by
- S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (amendment) Regulations 2011) and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended) state that the SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. The purpose of this screening report is to determine whether the adoption of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy will lead to significant environmental effects for the city centre area and if it will require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

In deciding whether a particular plan or strategy is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive - which is reproduced in the Schedule 2A to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as inserted by article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening assessment was undertaken by examining the contents of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy (PRS) against the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended. To ensure consistency with the statutory land-use framework established under the Limerick Development Plan 2022–2028, upon which the PRS is based, the assessment considered the characteristics of the Strategy and its potential environmental effects against the Schedule 2A criteria. This process assisted in determining whether the implementation of the Strategy would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and informed the identification of any necessary mitigation measures.

In parallel with the SEA Screening process, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening was undertaken pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The AA Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the SEA Screening Report.

In accordance with the SEA Regulations, the SEA and AA Screening Reports were issued to the prescribed Environmental Authorities on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026 for consultation. A response was received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA did not raise any concerns regarding the findings of the SEA or AA Screening Reports and did not identify any reason why the Strategy should not be screened out from the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment.

## 2. Adoption of the Public Realm Strategy

As outlined in Section 1, it is a requirement of Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that planning authorities shall have regard to the Ministerial Guidelines in the performance of their functions and comply with any specific planning policy requirements contained in such Ministerial Guidelines. In addition, Section 10(1A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that plans and strategies are consistent with *inter alia* planning requirements specified in

Ministerial Guidelines. Thus, the City Centre Public Realm Strategy has been prepared by Limerick City and County Council to align with the LDP. The PRS operates within the policies and zoning template of the Limerick Development Plan.

### 3. SEA Screening

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, (also known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive), requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans, strategies and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

In Ireland, the SEA Directive has been transposed into national legislation through 'the SEA Regulations':

- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).
- S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

As the relevant plan relates to a proposed adoption of the Public Realm Strategy which is to be a non-statutory planning guidance document for the city centre public realm, S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended, is the applicable legislation.

Under Article 7 (13K) of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004) as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011), "where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan, it shall.....consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A." While this is not a variation to development plan it is the adoption of a Planning guidance Document whose possible environmental effects also require consideration.

Thus, LCCC, as the planning authority is required to determine whether the adoption of the City Centre PRS needs to be subject to SEA. This process is referred to as 'SEA Screening'.

### 3.1. Screening Methodology

SEA Screening is the process for determining whether a particular plan, strategy or variation to a Development Plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA. Such a determination is required to take account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A, 'Criteria for Determining Whether a Plan is Likely to Have Significant Effects on the Environment' of the SEA Regulations, as amended, and submissions or observations from relevant environmental authorities. The criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations is outlined below:

1. The characteristics of the plan or strategy having regard, in particular, to:
  - The degree to which the plan or strategy sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
  - The degree to which the plan or strategy influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy
  - The relevance of the plan or strategy for the integration of environmental considerations with a view to promoting sustainable development
  - Environmental problems relevant to the plan or strategy; and
  - The relevance of the plan or strategy for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
  - The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;
  - The cumulative nature of the effects – the transboundary nature of the effects;
  - The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);
  - The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
  - The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
    - a. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage
    - b. Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values.
    - c. Intensive land-use.

The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

## 4. SEA Screening of Adoption of the Public Realm Strategy

Table 4.1 sets out the criteria for determining whether a plan or a strategy as it relates to this Screening, is likely to have significant effects on the environment as set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations. A response to each of the individual criterion, as they relate to the adoption of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy.

| <b>Schedule 2A Criteria for determining whether a Plan is likely to have Significant Effects on the Environment.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| The Characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular to:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
| The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| <p>The purpose of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 To guide future investment in the public realm, supporting public sector funding bids and setting out expectations for private development.</li> <li>2 The PRS will serve as a material consideration by LCCC Planning Team when determining planning applications located within the Strategy Area. This is a non-statutory planning document.</li> <li>3 The PRS will provide detailed design guidance and information and a materials palette for the design and maintenance of streets, green spaces and the public realm.</li> </ol> <p>It is a non-statutory planning guidance document which operates within the policies and zoning template of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-28.</p> |  |
| The degree to which the plan or strategy influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  |
| <p>The Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy is a non-statutory guidance document below the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 in the hierarchy of planning documents which begins with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region and the provisions of relevant planning guidelines issued by the Department of Housing, Planning, Local Government and Heritage.</p> <p>The Limerick Development Plan sets out the zoning pattern and policies on which the PRS is based. The PRS is an advisory document for planning staff when dealing with planning applications in the city centre area.</p>                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| The relevance of the strategy for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
| The purpose of the PRS is to update responses to the management of the public realm in the city centre. It has been subjected to both AA and SEA screening to assess its effects. Its basic premise is that careful management of the public                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |

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| realm will result in both quality-of-life benefits for residents and ecological benefits. There are frequent planting proposals of trees appropriate for urban locations for instance in the PRS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Environmental problems relevant to the plan</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p>The PRS is designed to update an earlier public realm strategy which is now outdated. By reflecting the current open space situation in the city centre and offering practical suggestions for its management, the intention is to ensure that the PRS keeps pace with current open space needs and the environmental issues that are linked to open space provision.</p> <p>The updating of the strategy itself is a response to changing environmental issues with updated suggestions of materials to be used and reflecting current best practice on how open spaces should be managed.</p> |
| <b>The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| One of the main aims of the strategy is to improve the urban environment in the city centre and make the city more liveable. In this it will make the city centre more attractive for residents which is in line with basic planning principles and ensures the best and most suitable use of urban space, allowing open space needs to be met close to residential areas. By promoting this aspect of urban living, it offers an alternative to urban sprawl and the further development of green field sites. This promotes sustainability in its broadest sense.                                |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <b>Schedule 2A Criteria for Determining Whether a Plan is Likely to have Significant Effects on the Environment</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Effects are likely from the subsequent planning applications and are likely to be long term in nature, perhaps for a period of 20 years or so. However, in addition to the PRS content the Development Management Guidance content of the plan (Chapter 11) and the Section 28 guidance will result in development only in suitable locations and in suitable site conditions. This would minimise environmental effects from the outset. |
| <b>The cumulative nature of the effects</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| With the additional guidance of the PRS it is considered that the overall effects will be beneficial in safeguarding well planned open spaces, ensuring a gradual improvement of the urban environment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>The transboundary nature of the effects</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| There are no trans-boundary effects. The potential scale of development associated with the adoption of the PRS will be confined to the city centre.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| None. As outlined elsewhere there are control measures in place in Chapter 11 of the Limerick Development Plan and through advice of city engineers to reduce risk to pedestrians from traffic, which would be the main risk in an urban area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| The geographical area of the Strategy extends to the 6 character areas (Waterside, Englishtown, Irishtown, Customs House, Newtown Pery and Eastern Gateway), covering an approximate area of 2.5 km <sup>2</sup> . The Strategy is not envisaged to lead to any negative effects but rather to an enhancement of the City centre public space.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:<br>a. special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,<br>b. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,<br>c. intensive land-use                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p>(a) The Limerick Development Plan identify the following protected areas/elements of the natural/cultural heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protected Structures</li> <li>▪ Architectural Conservation Areas</li> <li>▪ Sites of Archaeological Significance</li> <li>▪ Areas with natural history designations</li> <li>▪ Tree protection in the plan.</li> <li>▪ Proposed landscape Structure and Reinforcement Policies.</li> </ul> <p>(b) Protection policies for these are in Chapter 6 Environment and Heritage of the Plan. Planning applications for the city centre area would be assessed with this in mind.</p> <p>(c) None anticipated. The proposed PRS would help better inform Planning decisions in the city centre area.</p> |
| The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| None- see comments above in relation to ACAs, Protected Structures and other sensitive locations which are protected in the LDP.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## 5. Appropriate Assessment

The EU Habitats Directive, its transposing Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provide the

requirement to screen for effects on Natura 2000, or 'European Sites'. These sites have been designated or proposed for designation by virtue of their ecological importance. If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain then an Appropriate Assessment (AA) must be undertaken.

The proposed Limerick City Public Realm Strategy was subjected to a screening process to establish whether an AA is required. The AA Screening identified that the contents of the PRS will not have a likely significant effect on European Sites.

Therefore, at this stage, AA is not required. Any proposed changes to the proposed PRS will be subject to further Screening for AA.

## 6. Conclusion

SEA Screening is the process for determining whether a particular plan or strategy, or as the regulation relates to this Screening the adoption of a strategy other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA.

The purpose of the report is to evaluate if an SEA is required to be undertaken of the proposed adoption of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy.

The assessment of the strategy here provided in this report (including against the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended) and in a previous screening has found that the adoption of the PRS would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

The AA Screening of the PRS undertaken has likewise determined that no AA is required.

Therefore, based on the above assessment, including consideration of the criteria as set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2023 (as amended), the adoption of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy does not require full SEA. This is for the following reasons:

**1** The PRS operate within a heavily modified city centre area. The PRS will inform application as they relate to open space which over time will lead to enhancement of local urban surroundings and the retention of green space, through current best practice measures.

**2** Chapter 11 Development Management Standards of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, Table DM5 contains many measures, which when applied to urban development reduces their visual and ecological impact and helps them integrate into the urban landscape. As outlined above many objectives in Chapter 6 of the Limerick Development Plan also help to ensure the protection of local environmental features and

archaeology when applied to potential planning applications. The Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy will complement this guidance by offering specific measures for use to conserve and enhance open space.

## 7. SEA Screening Determination.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Determination under Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004), as amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) for:**

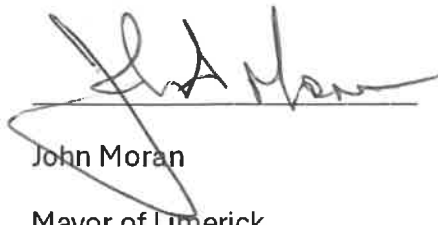
### **Adoption of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy**

An SEA Screening determination as to whether the adoption of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment is being made under Article 7 (13K) of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004) as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011).

In making the determination, the information contained in the Screening for SEA Report (including information provided by environmental authorities and an examination of the need to undertake SEA against relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A 'Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment' of the above Regulations), and the observations received from the Environmental Protection Agency, has been taken into account. That information has been carefully considered and its reasoning and conclusion agreed with and adopted – allowing a determination to be made that the adoption of **Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.**

Furthermore, the accompanying Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concludes that the adoption of the Limerick City Public Realm Strategy will not give rise to any effect on any European sites, alone or in combination with any other plans, programmes, and project etc.

Taking into account the measures that have already been integrated into the Limerick Development Plan and relevant actions that provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development, any potential effects arising from the adoption of the Limerick City Centre Public Realm Strategy would not be significant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Moran', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

John Moran

Mayor of Limerick.



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion.

As the world's population grows, the demand for food and other resources will increase. This will put pressure on the environment and on the world's food supply.

One way to meet this demand is to increase the amount of food that is produced. This can be done by using more land for agriculture, or by using more intensive farming methods.

Another way to meet this demand is to reduce the amount of food that is wasted. This can be done by improving food storage and distribution systems, or by encouraging people to eat less meat.

There are many other ways to meet the world's growing demand for food and other resources. It is up to us to decide which way is best.

The world's population is growing, and the demand for food and other resources is increasing. We need to find ways to meet this demand in a sustainable way.

One way to do this is to use more land for agriculture. This can be done by clearing more land, or by using more intensive farming methods.

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