

Physical Overview And Analysis

Extracts
for
Ballinacurra Weston





4. Physical Overview and Analysis

and preservation of archaeology on King's Island now and into the future.

Physical Character

There is an opportunity to:

- Restructure the existing layout to address gap sites
- Develop existing poor quality frontage sites and vacant land to improve visual quality
- Consider intensive interventions to remove units to improve legibility and permeability
- Address existing poor housing conditions
- Address the lack of integration between areas of new and existing housing
- Remove environmental black spots to the rear of blocks
- Develop streetscape improvements to enhance the public realm and create pedestrian friendly

environments

- Provide additional soft landscaping to soften the existing hardness of the public realm
- Introduce new frontage development to non-overlooked routes

4.3 Ballinacurra Weston

4.3.1 Study Area

The regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston extends over an area of 14.46 hectares and is located in a suburban residential setting to the south-west of Limerick City Centre. The River Shannon and the Limerick Docklands are situated to the west of the study area at a distance of 1,200 metres. Limerick Railway Station is also an approximate 1,000 metre journey away. There are a number of significant land uses located adjacent to the regeneration area, including Portland Park to the south-west, Caledonian Park to the east and Sarsfield Barracks to the north-west. There are also a number of institutional uses located in close proximity including a large school complex (Our Lady of Lourdes) to the immediate south-west and Mary Immaculate College to the west. A large development of student apartments – 'City Campus' – is located to the north-east of the study area.

Almost 300 metres to the south-east of Ballinacurra Weston is the regeneration area of Southill, which is characterised by a similarly constrained physical layout and a comparable set of socio-economic problems. The Roxboro roundabout – which is surrounded by a mix of land uses including a hotel, supermarket and the LEDP enterprise centre – is located to the east of the study area, at a distance of 1000 metres (10-12 minutes).

Despite the study area's strategic location in the southern fringe of Limerick City Centre, it remains disconnected from its urban surroundings. The reasons why Ballinacurra Weston has failed to successfully integrate into this environment are manifold. Undoubtedly, the complex socio-economic profile of the area has prevented it from progressing and developing in accordance with neighbouring residential areas.



Figure 1.22: Ballinacurra Weston in Context

4.3.2 Existing Physical Context

Land Use

The predominant land use in the regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston is residential. As stated in the baseline analysis, the houses in this area generally consist of low density, council developed estates dating from the 1950s. However, the estate of Clarina Park – one of the worst affected areas in terms of estate management crime and anti-social behaviour – was developed as a cul de sac in the 1990's. All of this development has been demolished in recent times.

Other land-uses prevalent in the area are community-focussed and consist of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church and parochial house to the south-west, with the community centre, crèche and credit union located alongside to the west. Adapt House Women's Refuge Centre provides services which include emergency refuge, education and training and information and help in relation to housing, finance and legal options. To the immediate east of the regeneration area, opposite the junction of Lenihan Avenue and Hyde Road, there is a small cluster of convenience retail units. At Punches Cross – which is located outside of the regeneration boundary – there is a

neighbourhood centre comprising a large Spar outlet, a butchers, off-licence and pharmacy. In the immediate vicinity, to the east, there is a large supermarket (Lidl), a building supplies outlet (Chadwicks) and a modern office development. There is also a hotel-conference centre (Patrick Punch) located adjacent to the study area on the Ballinacurra Road. These types of uses are important for the overall vitality of the regeneration area. The ESB site forms a substantial presence to the north-west of the area, occupying 2.92 hectares of land. It is outside of the regeneration boundary, but directly borders the housing estates of Weston Gardens and Beechgrove Avenue. The use of this site can be classified as 'Light Industrial'. The structures on this site comprise three warehouse buildings of varying sizes, a large office block and a substantial paved area which is used for storage and vehicle parking.

Housing Size and Conditions

Today, the condition of the building stock varies significantly, with a number of areas containing well maintained houses and other areas displaying high levels of dereliction. There are also some incidences of burnt-out houses. In terms of design, the majority of houses are two-storey, two bay structures with small front

gardens or paved parking areas entered via individual gates, with long, linear gardens to the rear.

A typical house layout (approx 60m²) in Ballinacurra Weston consists of a ground floor layout of a kitchen and living area with an extension to house a bathroom. The upper floor consists of 2 bedrooms. These houses are laid out in terraced blocks of four to five structures. To the north-east of the regeneration area, in Clarina Park, more modern types of houses were found (two-storey and bungalows). However, this park has now been completely demolished.

The general house construction type within Ballinacurra Weston consists of mass concrete, which perform poorly against current energy performance specifications. Further information on the works required to achieve an acceptable energy rating are described as part of the refurbishment strategies for each of the regeneration areas in Volume 2.

Public Realm

In terms of public realm, Ballinacurra Weston is characterised by the following physical features:

- Poor accessibility and/or awareness of routes



Figure 1.23: Ballinacurra Weston Walking Catchment

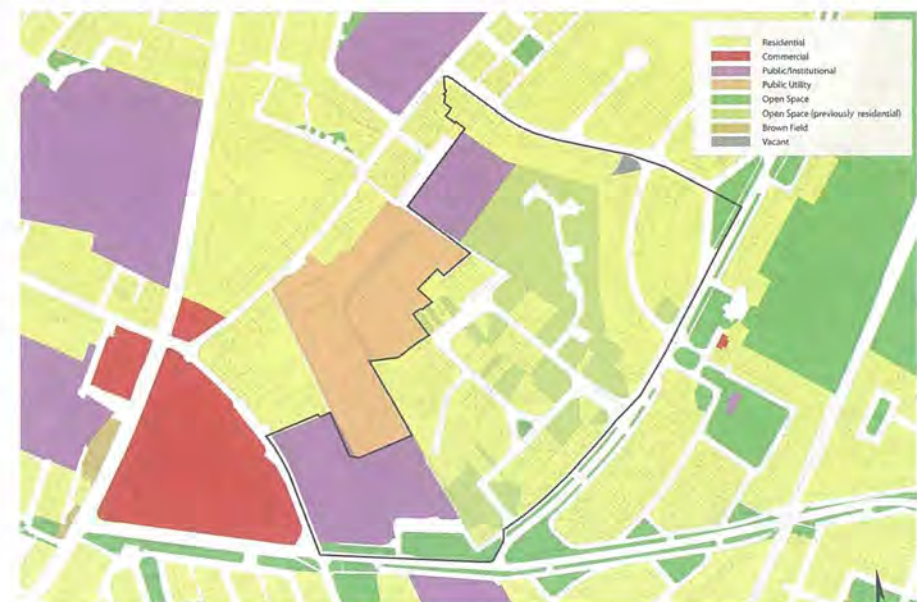


Figure 1.24: Existing Land Use

4. Physical Overview and Analysis

▼ Clarina Park and Alley Lane, Ballinacurra Weston



▼ Clarina Park and Alley Lane, Ballinacurra Weston



▼ Clarina Park and Alley Lane, Ballinacurra Weston



to key locations due to the cul-de-sac layout of the area

- Unattractive public realm with an overdominance of hard surfaces (especially to Byrne Avenue) and rock armoury with limited soft landscaping
- Poorly overlooked pedestrian routes
- A significant amount of vacant land within the regeneration area at the site formerly occupied by Clarina Park
- Several under-used and vacant housing sites, which currently detract from the overall appearance of the estate.

4.3.3 Historical Context

Archaeological Heritage

The National Monuments map indicates that there are no statutory protected archaeological sites, monuments or places within the regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston. The area also falls outside of the Zone of Archaeological Potential identified for Limerick City in the LCCDP 2010-2016.

Built Heritage

There are no structures within the regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston on the Limerick City Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Similarly, none of the structures within the study area feature on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) compiled for Limerick City. However, two of the four designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) under the LCCDP 2010-2016 occur in proximity to Ballinacurra Weston. The ACAs at Ballinacurra Road and O'Connell Avenue are intended to safeguard the architectural character of these residential areas.

Hence, any new development within the regeneration area may need to be respectful of the wider residential environment in which it is situated, particularly with regard to the height of new structures and the palette of materials employed. Analysis of the historic Ordnance Survey maps suggests that the area of Ballinacurra Weston now earmarked for regeneration was, in previous centuries, composed of open fields. In the early Nineteenth Century, the land in the study area was significantly free from development and was situated immediately outside the municipal boundary of Limerick City.

In addition, two parallel routes running in a north-south direction also traversed the site. These are no longer present today. It is apparent that by the early

Twentieth Century, the north-eastern corner of the area was in use for quarrying and the production of lime. It would appear that at this date, the quarry was quite active, with a significant amount of excavated ground being present. By this date, significant development had occurred along the Rosbrien Road to the north-west of the study area. The terraces of Ryan's Cottages and Mountvincent were complete, with Rosbrien Terrace also under construction. The Rosbrien – Greenfields Road forms a substantial presence at this date, running along the western boundary of the study area. It can be seen that the bulk of the land in Ballinacurra Weston is still free of development at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Hence, the construction of social housing at Ballinacurra Weston in the 1950s represents the first major use of the site.

4.3.4 Existing Movement
Traffic Movement

The regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston is located in a built-up urban environment with good connections into the centre of Limerick City. O’Connell Avenue (N20), which joins up with the city’s main thoroughfare – O’Connell Street – is located to the north-west of the study area, and the Hyde Avenue/Road, which skirts the south-eastern regeneration boundary, leads to Limerick Train Station. Located to the south of the regeneration area are attractors such as the Mid-Western Regional Hospital and the Crescent Shopping Centre.

Therefore, the area is located within the context of a number of major transport axes which carry large volumes of traffic on a daily basis. The regeneration site itself is directly bordered by transport routes on all sides. To the west is the Rosbrien Road, to the north is Prospect Hill, to the east is Byrne Avenue and to the south-east is the Hyde Avenue/Road. While access to Hyde Avenue/ Road from the regeneration area is reasonable, access to the Rosbrien Road/Prospect Hill via Alley Lane is particularly poor, with there being only one road in and out. This road is quite narrow in size and only runs a short distance. It does not offer access to the entire regeneration area, thereby effectively severing connections to the area from the Rosbrien Road. The situation of the ESB site along this road further compounds this severance, with the large landholding acting as a barrier to vehicular and pedestrian permeability in the area. The road which runs between the study area and the Punches Cross site only accommodates one-way traffic.

Within the regeneration area internally, movement is quite restricted. The area features a number of cul-de-sacs and circuitous roadways which impede the easy flow of pedestrians and vehicles. In addition, the steep topography of the site further hampers circulation. This is particularly apparent to the east of the church, where a narrow laneway, approached by a flight of steps, is used as an access route from the Beechgrove housing estate. This design of this laneway, which is surrounded by high walls, is not a people-friendly space, and would appear to only encourage anti-social behaviour in the area rather than facilitate safe access to the church. Closure of the lane is currently being sought by the residents.



Figure 1.25: Existing Movement

4. Physical Overview and Analysis

Public Transport

Section 3.1.7 Transport of Section 3.0 Baseline Conditions and Analysis highlights that in common with other regeneration areas, Ballinacurra Weston exhibits low levels of car usage with a high percentage of private households having no car (58%) and a generally high use of public transport (9%) which is higher than the city average (7%).

Therefore, the provision of a good quality public transport system will be essential for the regeneration of the area given the existing demand levels. The area is well served by bus operators, however no bus routes currently pass through the regeneration area. There are three Bus Eireann routes which provide transport to and from Limerick City Centre – Ballinacurra Weston, including the 312 and the 304 (Punches Cross – O’Connell Avenue area) and the 304A (Hyde Road).

Existing facilities for cyclists are inadequate. In this regard, it is positive to note that the Ballinacurra Road–O’Connell Avenue area has been earmarked for redevelopment under the Limerick City Council Green Route Corridors scheme.

4.3.5 Environmental Considerations

The topographical character of the regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston is defined by noticeably undulating lands. The most elevated part of the study area occurs to the north-east in proximity to the Adapt House complex, with the highest recorded point being 20 metres above ordnance datum (AOD). The topography rises from 8 metres on Hyde Avenue (in the east) to 22 metres on Prospect Hill, giving an overall level difference of 14 metres. The fact that there was once a quarry sited to the north-east of the study area further exacerbates level differences at this location.

As was indicated on the historic Ordnance Survey maps, there was previously a quarry located to the north-east of the Ballinacurra Weston regeneration area. This quarry is no longer present today.



Figure 1.26: Existing Contours

4.3.6 Soils

The GSI (Geological Survey of Ireland) Teagasc Sub-Soil database demonstrates that soil types found within the study area include a mix of Made Ground and Bedrock. Active bedrock is evident to the north-east of the regeneration area which might result in subsidence or instability of the ground surface. Made ground is present within the study area and is associated with prior road construction and other developments.

4.3.7 Groundwater Vulnerability

Groundwater Vulnerability within the study area was found to be mainly "High to Low." An "Extreme" pocket where rock is near the surface exists to the north-east of the study area, near the Adapt House complex.

4.3.8 Flooding & Drainage

Information from the Limerick City Council Development Plan 2010-2016 Flood Risk Mapping indicates that there are no Flood Points within, or in very close proximity to the regeneration area at Ballinacurra Weston. The nearest area which has flooded in recent times is located to the south of the study area adjacent to Portland Park. This area is described as having 'Benefiting Lands' which typically indicates low-lying land near rivers and streams that might be expected to be prone from flooding. To the north of the study area, the South Circular Road is also indicated as being a Flood Point where more than one flood has occurred.

Areas prone to flooding as indicated in the Limerick City Development Plan suggest that there are no flood zones located immediately adjacent to the study area.

4.3.9 Water, Sewerage and Drainage Infrastructure

All main services such as water, sewage, gas, Eircom and electricity are available in the area. An infrastructural survey was carried out by Tobin Consulting Engineers to ascertain the extent and location of existing services in Ballinacurra Weston and this information is contained within Appendix 7 of this document. All services are available adjacent to the site in the footpaths along the surrounding roadways.

▼ Clarina Park and Alley Lane, Ballinacurra Weston



▼ Clarina Park and Alley Lane, Ballinacurra Weston



▼ Clarina Park and Alley Lane, Ballinacurra Weston



4. Physical Overview and Analysis

4.3.10 Existing Open Space & Amenity

Current amenity and public open space provision within the regeneration boundary of Ballinacurra Weston is poor. In terms of amenity uses, the complex to the west of the church contains the area's only community facilities. This consists of a community centre, crèche and credit union. However, the housing estates in the area appear to be well served in terms of private open space, with the majority containing long back gardens, as well as space to the front (semi-private open space) which generally consists of grass areas, but in some cases has been paved over to accommodate carparking. The largest expanses of open space in the area at present include the piece of land to the rear of the community centre and the area

of ground to the south of the Adapt House complex. With regard to the site to the rear of the community centre, the recent provision of a number of active open space areas, including a seven-a-side pitch, with two areas of passive open space – consisting of a garden for older people and a garden for the crèche – have enhanced significantly the area's amenity provision. The other area of significant open space – at the former site of Clarina Park – located to the northeast of the study area presents problems in terms of anti-social behaviour due to the lack of surveillance and security in the area.

The study area is well served by open spaces located in the wider surrounding area. Portland Park, located to

the south, is a large area of passive open space, which provides ample parkland amenity. To the immediate east of the regeneration area is Caledonian Park, which contains a number of large sports grounds, thus providing important active open space areas. However, internally, the study area is very poorly served by meaningful public open spaces. In terms of environmental features, there are a number of mature trees in the study area. The most significant tree groups occur at different intervals to the north of the area, particularly to the rear of Adapt House and to the rear of the Beechgrove estate. There appears to be large trees in the back gardens of many of the houses, particularly in the estates of Lenihan Avenue, Clarina Avenue and Crecora Avenue.



Figure 1.27: Existing Open Space and Amenity

4.3.11 Planning Context

The City Development Plan stated specific key local objectives that the Ballinacurra Weston Framework Plan should address, these include:

- That a new connection be made between the Childers Road and Hyde Avenue.
- That a neighbourhood centre be developed along the frontage of Childers Road and Ballinacurra road.

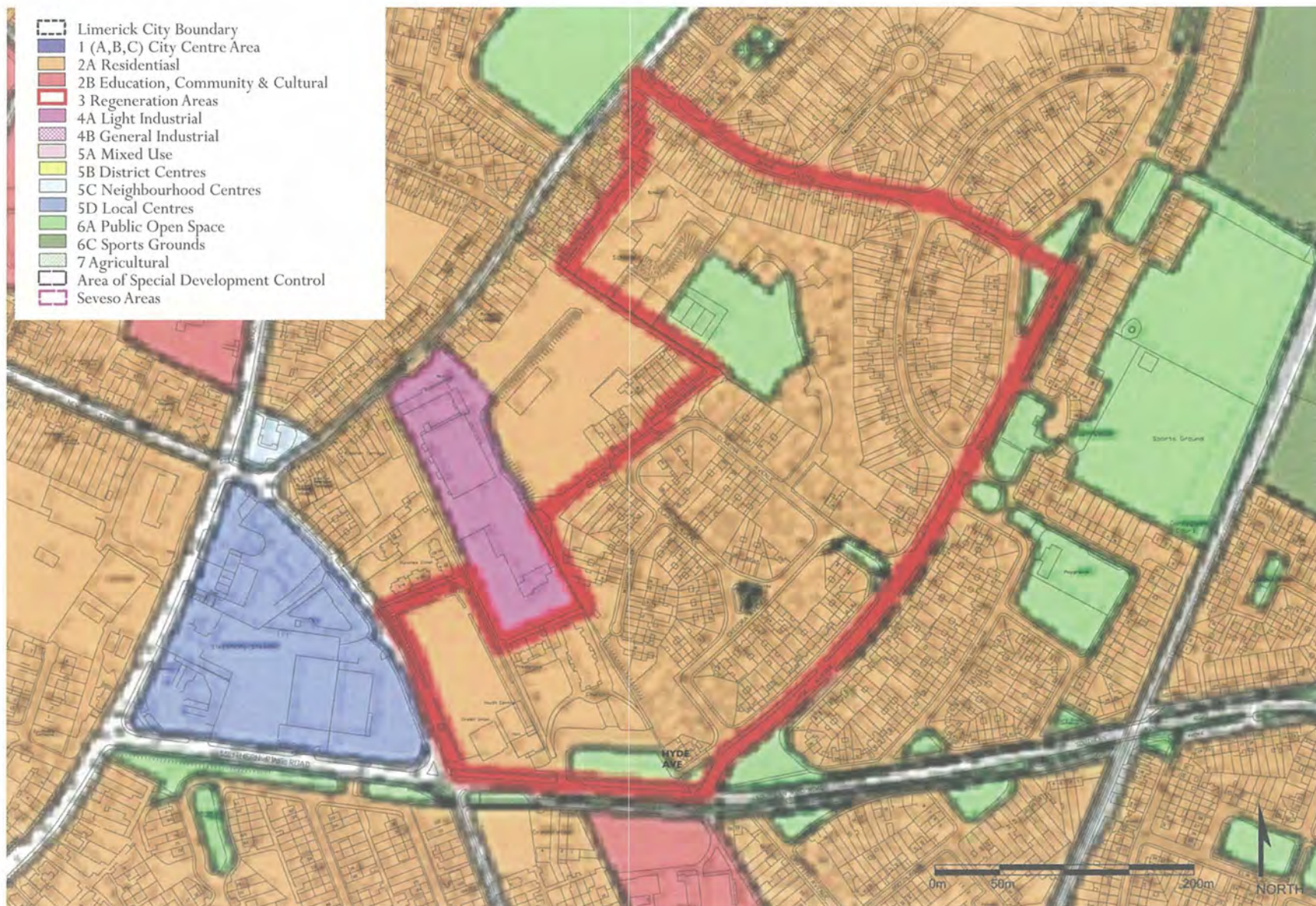


Figure 1.28: Land Use Zoning Map Extracted from the Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016

4. Physical Overview and Analysis

4.3.12 Key Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Land Use

Due to the demolition of Clarina Park, there is a significant amount of vacant land within the regeneration area. A key challenge is to identify interventions for the land in the short to medium term to ensure its protection from anti-social activities.

Movement

The following key challenges exist within Ballinacurra Weston:

- Within the regeneration area internally, movement is quite restricted. The area features a number of cul-de-sacs and circuitous roadways which impede the easy flow of pedestrians and vehicles.
- In addition, the steep topography of the site further hampers circulation.

Open Space

Much of the internal open space within Ballinacurra Weston is poorly overlooked. A key challenge is to provide functional, safe and well overlooked open spaces within the estate.

Topography

The following key topographical challenges exist within Ballinacurra Weston

- East of the church site
- Eastern side of Rosbrien Road leading into the site of the community centre
- To the south of Adapt House
- The rear gardens of Beechgrove Avenue (backing onto the ESB site)
- Clarina Park to the rear gardens of Byrne Avenue.

Physical Character

The following key challenges exist in Ballinacurra Weston in relation to the physical realm:

- Poor accessibility and/or awareness of routes to key locations due to the cul-de-sac layout of the area
- Unattractive public realm with an overdominance of hard surfaces (especially to Byrne Avenue) and rock armoury with limited soft landscaping
- Poorly overlooked pedestrian routes
- A significant amount of vacant land within the regeneration area at the site formerly occupied by

Clarina Park

- Several under-used and vacant housing sites, which currently detract from the overall appearance of the estate.

Opportunities

Land Use

A key opportunity exists to strengthen the existing neighbourhood centre at Punches' Cross to ensure its vibrancy and vitality for the residents of Ballinacurra Weston.

Movement

Efforts to promote greater local connectivity to adjoining residential areas is a key opportunity and will require consultation with stakeholders and residents within the area. The extension of a link north-eastwards through Clarina Park to Byrne Avenue south-eastwards towards Lenihan Avenue will increase connectivity. Strengthening the existing access at Alley Lane is also a key objective.

Open Space

There is an opportunity to protect the existing mature treestands at the following locations:

- to the rear of Adapt House
- to the rear of the Beechgrove estate

There is an opportunity to design new buildings to overlook open spaces and ensure safety and security of the public realm

Topography

The topography of some sites within the estate is difficult and there is an opportunity to sensitively design new development to respect and protect sightlines and views within and from outside the area.

Physical Character

There is an opportunity to:

- Restructure the existing layout to address gap sites
- Develop poor quality frontage sites and vacant land to improve visual quality
- Consider intensive interventions to remove units to improve legibility and permeability
- Address existing poor housing conditions
- Address the lack of integration between areas of new and existing housing
- Remove environmental black spots to the rear of blocks
- Develop streetscape improvements to enhance the

public realm and create pedestrian friendly environments

- Provide additional soft landscaping to soften the existing hardness of the public realm
- Introduce new frontage development to non-overlooked routes