

2.3 Physical Framework Plan

This Physical Framework for the regeneration areas reinforces the vision to achieve sustainable communities. Sustainability is a function of efficient land use, mixed use, good design, access to jobs, community facilities, local services and leisure activities and a reduction in travel. Sustainable communities are balanced, inclusive, healthy, and safe from crime and the fear of crime. To guide and deliver this vision, a strategy has been developed consisting of the following key strategic objectives:

Strategic Objectives

1. Build a strong, competitive economy
2. Promote healthy communities
3. Require good design
4. Promote sustainable movement
5. Deliver a wide choice of high quality homes
6. Deliver a positive multi-disciplinary approach
7. Support high quality communications infrastructure
8. Meet the challenge of climate change and flooding
9. Conserve and enhance the natural environment
10. Conserve and enhance the historic environment

Each of these strategic objectives is explored in detail with specific development guidance given for each regeneration area.

2.3.1 Build a Strong Competitive Economy

The regeneration areas face social and economic inequalities in relation to educational achievement at school, adults and young people with low skills on welfare benefits, high levels of ill-health for some residents and high levels of anti-social behaviour. Some of these indicators can be improved through interventions proposed in the physical framework plan but additional support in the form of new or improved services and access to employment opportunities also needs to be provided as part of the social and economic frameworks described in section 2.1 and 2.2 of this volume. This will involve the following considerations:

Community Garden at Ballinacurra Weston



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a) Mixed Uses

All four regeneration areas were developed to meet a housing need and were, in effect, housing projects which resulted in mono-function areas. In the intervening years community, commercial and employment facilities have developed. There is scope for further diversity of activity in tandem with support for existing mixed use facilities. The housing unit types provided within the regeneration areas were relatively limited therefore there is scope to increase the diversity of accommodation units, including the provision of specialist units, e.g., elderly accommodation, to meet the needs of a city with a more diverse demographic profile.

b) Maximising the Use of Existing Assets

Each of the regeneration areas and many parts of the wider city have assets which are unutilised or underutilised. This applies to both land and buildings. In some cases a new permanent use may not be achievable in the short to medium term. In this scenario, alternative uses of a temporary nature, 'meanwhile uses', offer potential to ensure a productive use. Sports use, allotments, small scale urban farms, urban nurseries, use of buildings by arts, community and educational organisations are some of the potential functions for unutilised land and buildings. Temporary uses also offer potential to grow into new or sustainable permanent uses.

c) Planning for Infrastructural Provision

Throughout the regeneration areas potential barriers to investment, including lack of communication infrastructure (high speed broadband) and physical infrastructure will be addressed. The Framework Implementation Plan seeks to plan positively for infrastructural provision and environmental enhancement to promote physical, economic and social regeneration.

d) Flagship Projects

The vision set out in the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (LRFIP) is to create:

"Safe and sustainable communities where people of all ages enjoy a good quality of life, a decent home and feel a strong pride of place. Well serviced and attractive neighbourhoods will be fully integrated with the social economic and cultural life of Limerick".

While the focus of the Regeneration Project is on the defined regeneration areas the overall project needs to be seen in the context of the wider city and, in

particular, it is clear that appropriate development in areas contiguous to, or within the environs of, the regeneration areas will contribute to achieving the regeneration objectives. The redevelopment of the Opera Centre site, adjacent to King's Island/St. Mary's Park, is a project that will play a key role in improving the fortunes of the city in totality and its environs in particular. This project is seen as an economic catalyst for the area, city and region. The redevelopment of this site is considered in the LRFIP and also in the recently launched economic and spatial plan (Limerick 2030).

▼ Kincora / Carew Park



▼ St Augustine Place, off Nicholas Street



2.3.2 Promoting Healthy Communities

The regeneration areas can benefit from better social interaction and the creation of a more healthy and inclusive environment. Addressing existing gaps in provision in the context of community safety, retail, community, healthcare, education and open space uses are key to the creation of a healthy community. This will involve the following considerations:

a) Community Safety

Community safety is a key issue for residents of all four regeneration areas. The pervasive nature of anti-social behaviour in parts of the regeneration areas, in particular behaviour that is perpetrated by children under the age of criminal responsibility, has been highlighted due to its impact on perceived insecurity. The emphasis of the physical regeneration programme is to design out areas which are, or could become, a setting for criminal/anti-social activity. The role of well designed streets with good levels of natural surveillance is central to creating safe areas. The fear of crime can have similar or greater impact as crime itself. Effective CCTV systems can contribute to the perception of public safety and may also act as a deterrent in addition to being an effective tool in securing convictions. The principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) are used to inform the design process. Effectively addressing the social conditions which produce deviant behaviour is also required to deal with the issue at source.

b) Retail

All of the regeneration areas have access to good quality shopping facilities that are within a suitable walking distance. It is imperative that shops are able to develop in a flexible manner in a way that is sustainable and for the benefit of the regeneration areas and the wider community. All new retail uses, as part of existing District or Local Centres within the regeneration areas provide an opportunity to develop their ground floors to activate street frontages helping to increase security in the area and become more vibrant and viable.

c) Community and Healthcare Facilities

The regeneration areas have excellent community and healthcare facilities located within existing district and local centres which are easily accessible to the regeneration areas. A key objective of the Framework Plan is to improve the quality and choice of

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community and healthcare focused uses available in existing facilities and ensure optimum connectivity to the wider community. The existing and extended provision and improved connectivity will help in reinforcing the regeneration area's character and identity in the wider context and ensure its long term viability.

d) Education

Declining numbers of school-goers and uncertainties in relation to the long term feasibility of the existing educational facilities within the regeneration areas has highlighted the need to ensure that a sufficient choice of school spaces and educational programmes are available to cater for the widest mix of communities possible. Proposals for alternative 'neutral' locations for integrated educational campuses, equally accessible and acceptable to the regeneration areas and wider communities will be addressed as part of the framework plan.

e) Open Space

The regeneration areas contain large amounts of passive open space, much of which is underutilised open space and also open space that is not readily distinguishable as either public or private. There is also a major under-provision of active play facilities for those under the age of 15. A key objective of the Framework Plan is to provide for a variety of functional, appropriately scaled, well overlooked and defined open spaces within a suitable walking distance for residents of the regeneration areas. Play facilities within the regeneration areas will be based on the existing and expected child population projections generated by the existing and future need.

Limerick City Council is keen to ensure that the high standards of management and maintenance of existing and proposed open spaces and public realm areas are met and maintained over time and recognises the importance of the role that local residents could play in this. The encouragement of community participation and interaction in open space management, local food production etc. in all the open spaces of the regeneration areas will be promoted.

2.3.3 Requiring Good Design

All of the regeneration areas lack identities and suffer from being drive-by rather than go-to places. To assist in addressing the regeneration area's weak identity the provision of good design will contribute to creating a strong sense of place using buildings and the space between buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. This will involve the following considerations:

a) Balanced Incremental Development

Balanced incremental development as a strategy to development/redevelopment suggests an approach where multiple smaller scale sites are progressed rather than single large scale projects. This method recognises that sustainable communities develop over time. This approach is equally applicable when working with an existing community where redevelopment is proposed, as is the case in the regeneration areas, or building a new urban area. The redevelopment of the area over time provides the opportunity to create much greater diversity in its design, which could respond to the different estates of the regeneration areas, thus helping to create a more distinct identity. The redevelopment process in the regeneration areas has a solid starting point given that many residents have a strong sense of ownership and stewardship. Multiple smaller scale projects will also provide greater opportunity to smaller scale building contractors, subcontractors and construction workers.

b) Setting Context Scale and Character

Each one of the regeneration areas has strengths deriving from its particular setting. The regeneration proposals should respect local tradition and relationships and draw on the strengths to guide new forms of development. Proposed redevelopment must also respond to the social context and recognise that strong communities exist in areas which are experiencing difficulty. Design proposals should recognise the existing patterns of urban form. Re-using existing buildings, where possible, and consolidating existing public spaces will contribute to achieving continuity and integration. Full demolition was proposed in the 2008 masterplan. Significant demolition has taken place. Following a detailed reassessment the scale of demolitions proposed has reduced. The scale of new development should be appropriate to existing context while recognising that land use should be optimised.

c) Enhanced Connectivity through Urban Structure

Although there are active local centres within each of the regeneration areas, their viability is hampered due to the existing layout which lacks connections to the wider community. Creating connected regeneration areas to the wider context will assist in maximising the catchment and creating and sustaining a mix of uses and facilities.

d) Built Form

The built form of the regeneration areas is defined by poor quality and bland design that is easily identifiable as local authority housing. To ensure the development of a cohesive and integrated community it will be important that there is no visual distinction between private, social and voluntary housing. Diverse and high quality architectural design is required to encourage the development of character and identity and to ensure the augmentation of the existing estate character.

e) Compact Development and Density

Currently the density of the regeneration areas is low. The current density and proposed redevelopment provides scope for more intensive levels of development without compromising the living environment of the existing community, whilst also supporting good local services such as retail and public transport. By increasing the density of the estates, more efficient use of land can be made as well as contributing to the activity and vitality of the area and increasing the viability of services and facilities. It will however, be critical that good urban design principles be applied to ensure that appropriate density is created in the right place with accessibility to facilities and services being a key driver. Higher densities should focus on local and district centres, community facilities and along transport corridors.

f) Improved Quality Of The Public Realm

Best practice urban design guidance suggests that frontages that are active add interest, life and vitality to the public realm. Characteristics of most active and very active frontages are considered in more detail as part of the Public Realm and Design Code which forms supporting documentation to this LRFIP. It is a strategic objective for the regeneration areas that Grade A and Grade B frontages are achieved. Grade A frontage shall be the required frontage in all mixed use and local centres. Generally, given the density of development and predominantly residential use, most residential areas of the areas should achieve Grade B frontages.

Location of Regeneration Areas



St. Mary's Park



Carew and Kincora Park



O' Malley Park



Ballinacurra Weston



Keyes Park



Moyross



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Active Frontage Guidelines (extracted from The Urban Design Compendium, 2000)

Grade A Frontage

- More than 15 premises every 100m
- More than 25 doors and windows every 100m
- High quality material and details
- No blind facades
- Much depth and relief in the building surface

Grade B Frontage

- 10-15 premises every 100m
- More than 15 doors and windows every 100m
- Good quality materials and details
- A few blind or passive facades
- Some depth and modelling in the building surface

2.3.4 Promoting Sustainable Movement

The regeneration areas require better walking and cycling facilities and an improved provision of public transport in order to improve health, enhance social interaction, reduce congestion and negative environmental impacts. This requires more connected, high quality and safe connections where these are lacking in the regeneration areas as well as improving those that exist in line with the recently published 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' guidance. Investment in a new and improved movement network throughout the regeneration areas is guided by the following principles:

a) Public Transport

As stated in Volume 1: Section 3.0 Baseline Conditions and Analysis, the use of public transport is higher in the regeneration areas (between 9 and 14% with the exception of St. Mary's Park - 6%) than in the city (7%) but generally falls below the national average of 13%. The improvement to the quality, frequency and accessibility of public transport that is integrated into an improved movement network within and beyond the regeneration areas will be key to the regeneration area's transformation. It is also important that the proposed uses within the existing community hubs are accessible by public transport with the provision of adequate boarding and alighting facilities.

b) Car Parking

The socio-economic information baseline information states that currently car ownership levels in the regeneration areas are low in comparison to local, regional and national standards. It is likely that a high number of existing and future residents will still rely

on public transport with a resultant increase in demand when the density of the regeneration areas are increased. In any case, parking provision for the regeneration areas should be reassessed in the context of proximity of the area to the city core, existing ownership trends, access to public transport and type and size of unit proposed.

The existing parking provision in rear courts and on street in many of the regeneration areas are disorganised and poorly laid out with little space for amenity. Car parking within these areas should be reorganised to create where possible parking on street in designated bays designed in a manner to help traffic calming and improve the overall environmental quality of the street.

c) Reducing Poor Connectivity

All four regeneration areas suffer, to a greater or lesser extent, from poor connectivity to the surrounding city and hinterland. This lack of connectivity has been, and continues to be, a major contributing factor to the underperformance of these areas. Saint Mary's Park and Ballinacurra Weston occupy edge of city centre locations while Southill and Moyross are on the periphery. The scale of interventions required varies from major infrastructure projects, i.e., roads and bridges to the removal of walls which segregate areas. The design of some existing roads through or adjacent to the regeneration areas has a severance effect due to the overemphasis of traffic movement over the needs of other road users. Improved connectivity is not limited to direct physical interventions but also includes improvements to services such as broadband and public transport to create a more attractive environment for investment and job creation. This is discussed in more detail in other strategic objectives.

Improved connectivity should ensure that the regeneration areas seamlessly integrate with the surrounding city. Interventions at a local level are required to ensure that neighbourhoods are permeable and accessible. Urban block dimensions will be kept to a size which encourages walking and cycling with frequent connecting routes. The creation of pleasant and convenient streets and routes with high levels of passive surveillance goes hand-in-hand with improved permeability.

2.3.5 Deliver a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes

The Government has committed major investment to the regeneration areas of Limerick. The intention in the short-medium term is to replace housing required for strategic demolition with a mixture of unit types and tenures based on the existing need. The remainder of the existing housing units are proposed for refurbishment. In regenerating the areas, current national policy seeks to build mixed and balanced residential communities and it is a key objective of Limerick City Council to create socially inclusive communities, a wider range and fluidity of tenure and a diverse unit type to meet national policy guidance.

a) Tenure and Income Mix

Tenure mix and income mix are grouped as it is clear from experience in Limerick that tenure mix as an indicator of the well being of an area can be misleading. Indeed some of the most deprived areas in Limerick, which are also among the most deprived in the State, have very high levels of home ownership. Therefore, an arithmetic balance of tenure is only one aspect of a more complex equation. The physical design for the regeneration areas should be of a standard which encourages tenure and income mix by creating a wider choice of housing options. Given the low levels of private house construction, alternative strategies to achieve the required balance, particularly the removal of barriers between traditional local authority and private estates as well as the identification of suitable lands for additional private development is required. The role of tenure and income mix also has a role in overcoming stigmatisation which is a particularly acute issue in Limerick.

b) Addressing Current and Future Need

The redevelopment of the regeneration areas will provide a diverse range of unit sizes that takes account of the existing housing need in the regeneration areas whilst also allowing for a buffer to plan for future demographic trends and the needs of different groups in the community (elderly housing, single persons etc). Once the replacement need has been allocated, any additional lands will be proposed for private housing in order to create more choice and potentially fund the regeneration process in the medium-long term. Please refer to Tenure Diversity Strategy in Volume 3 for further information.

c) Bring Houses Out of Dereliction

A key objective for all regeneration areas will be to identify and bring back into residential use unoccupied housing immediately to prevent the cycle of abandonment, vandalism and burn-outs.

2.3.6 Deliver a Positive Multidisciplinary Approach

This facilitation of a high quality, appropriate and timely interventions will be critical to ensure that the key strategic objectives of the Framework Implementation Plan are met. Limerick City Council will work proactively to secure interventions that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the regeneration areas by developing the following approach:

a) Multidisciplinary Approach

The range and complexity of issues presented in the regeneration areas requires a multidisciplinary approach which draws on the experience and expertise of a wide range of collaborators. This work method, where competent people cooperate and collaborate to achieve a common objective, presents the best prospect of fulfilling the aims of the regeneration programme. Successful implementation of the key strategic objectives for the regeneration areas will require a positive partnership approach between Limerick City Council, the community, key service providers and landowners.

2.3.7 Support High Quality Communications Infrastructure

Key existing employment generating uses within the regeneration areas are deficient in advanced high quality communications infrastructure to ensure sustainable economic growth and enhance the provision of local facilities and services. Furthermore, the Census statistics from 2011 suggests that the level of access to the internet within the regeneration areas is below the State average.

a) High Speed Internet

New services such as video conferencing and high definition television require fast internet connections. To remain competitive in a global market it is anticipated that download rates greater than 30 megabytes per second is required. The Akamai "State of the Internet" report, highlights that for the fourth quarter of 2012, Ireland had an average peak connection speed of just under 27 megabytes per second.

Grotto at Castle Park



b) E-inclusion

Over 50% of the EU uses the internet daily but over 30% have never used the internet at all (EC, 2013). It is a key objective to develop an e-inclusion strategy within the regeneration areas particularly amongst the elderly, unemployed and those on low incomes who may lack the skills, confidence and means to use digital media and are thus unable to participate in today's society.

2.3.8 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change and Flooding

The Framework Implementation Plan will play key role in helping shape the regeneration areas to secure reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and can be achieved with the following approaches:

a) Sustainable Construction and Environmental Responsibility

Buildings and the public realm should be designed and delivered to a high standard, using durable materials, appropriate technology and orientated in a manner that minimises energy usage. Development should enhance the environment and recognise the requirement for adaptable, flexible structures which

Moyross Wall



can respond to changing requirements over time.

The architectural design and construction of the new homes and the refurbishment of existing stock can make a major contribution to the creation of a more sustainable environment. Currently much of the existing housing stock in the regeneration areas consume significant amounts of energy and emit large amounts of CO₂ as a consequence, in part, to extremely poor or non-existent insulation. All refurbishment of existing private and local authority tenanted homes will be upgraded to a BER rating of C. In proposed new build developments, Part L of the building regulations will provide the minimum requirement for energy efficiency and significant improvements can easily be achieved with these regulations.

B) Re-use of Existing Building Stock

Arguments for the re-use of existing building stock and refurbishing, as opposed to the demolition and rebuild of housing in the regeneration areas, fall into four categories, namely:

Social – Existing communities, Social impact of significant physical changes

Removal of substantial portions of the existing housing fabric will have a significant impact on this sense of place. As it is the intention of regeneration to

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improve the living conditions of communities in the regeneration areas that they have expressed an interest in staying in, it is imperative not to destroy their physical nature and that which gives the area its identity.

Environmental – Embodied energy versus energy in use

The environmental decision about whether to refurbish or demolish and reconstruct is a balance between embodied energy costs versus lower running costs possible with new build. The embodied energy over the life of a building has been estimated at approx 30% of the overall energy of the building but the construction of a new house with an expected BER rating of A3 would have an energy in use of between 30 and 50% the BER level of C, which is the current Department of Environment, Community and Local Government stated retrofitting level.

We would aim to increase the level of BER rating achieved through refurbishment in line with Government policy and step changes in new building regulations over time.

Financial – Number of properties, fuel poverty

The lower cost of individual unit refurbishment is clearly beneficial, allowing for significantly more houses to be refurbished than newly built for the same capital expenditure.

In addition the increased thermal performance of these houses will demonstrably reduce the annual heat demand for these properties and therefore have a positive impact on alleviating fuel poverty.

Physical – Strategic demolition

There are a number of strategic demolitions still planned due to strategic planning reasons. These can generally be characterized as being necessary due to improvements to and reshaping of the physical environment. It is however our aim to minimise this level of demolition by making final assessments of the need for demolition on a house-by-house basis with a view to retaining and refurbishing as many as possible.

C) Managing Flood Risk

St Mary's Park is a regeneration area at risk of flooding. The sequential approach and justification test of the National Flood Guidelines can be applied to St Mary's Park ensuring that where the construction of new infill replacement homes due to strategic

demolitions are required that the key objective is making the area flood resilient and resistant without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

2.3.9 Conserve and Enhance the Natural Environment

The Framework Implementation Plan has a key aim to contribute to and enhance the natural environment in the regeneration areas by:

- Protecting and enhancing environmentally designated landscapes minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible
- Remediating, mitigating and monitoring contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate in line with EPA guidance.

Island View Terrace, St. Mary's Park.



New Houses in Moyross

