

Physical Overview And Analysis

Extracts
for
St. Mary's Park



- 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

4.2 St. Mary's Park

4.2.1 Study Area

King's Island extends over an area of 170 acres and is bounded on the east by the River Abbey and on the west by the River Shannon.

The study area occupies an attractive island site to the north-east of Limerick City centre. Historically, King's Island would have been an important location at the divergent point of the Shannon and the Abbey Rivers. Today, it represents an important asset to the city, particularly in terms of its ecological importance, archaeological significance, and tourism potential. However, it also functions as an important residential and community environment, containing the large housing estate of St. Mary's Park to the north and numerous terraces of houses to the south. There are a number of modern apartment blocks to the south of the island, in proximity to the riverfront.

4.2.2 Existing Physical Context

Land Use

King's Island is an area which contains a variety of land uses including residential, administrative, ecclesiastical, educational, retail, business and tourism. While the southern part of the island is a lively area with a mix of land uses, the area to the north is predominantly residential and due to its poor transport connections, is disconnected from the rest of the city. This has resulted in the isolation of St. Mary's Park.

Nicholas Street is the core town centre street with retail opportunities, connecting the southern part of King's Island to the Castle. It is an important thoroughfare in the regeneration of the area. However,

at present, there are numerous vacant and under-utilised sites and buildings along this street. In terms of community facilities and amenities in the area, there is an upgraded community centre in to the south-west of the island and two playing pitches (Star Rovers) to the east (on short term lease from Limerick City Council).

Although there are extensive areas of open space to the south, it is generally low-lying and liable to flooding. There is, however, a river-side walkway on three sides of the island which has been upgraded from Verdant Place, along the western, northern and eastern shores of King's Island. The recent opening of a new community crèche (2011) adjacent to the Military Cemetery has improved the level of childcare educational facilities in the area. Existing educational facilities include a boys and girls primary school, and two Gael Scoileanna located to the south of the island.

There is a Garda station in Mary Street that has restricted opening hours and is in poor physical condition. The County Courthouse and District Court are located to the west of the island, in proximity to City Hall which houses the offices of Limerick City Council. King's Island features a delicate ecological environment which has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation.

In addition, the island has a significant architectural and archaeological heritage, containing the remains of the Limerick City Walls and a number of surviving buildings from the 12th and 13th Centuries including King John's Castle and St. Mary's Cathedral. The southern portion of King's Island is regarded as the historic core of Limerick City and consequently has strong tourism potential.

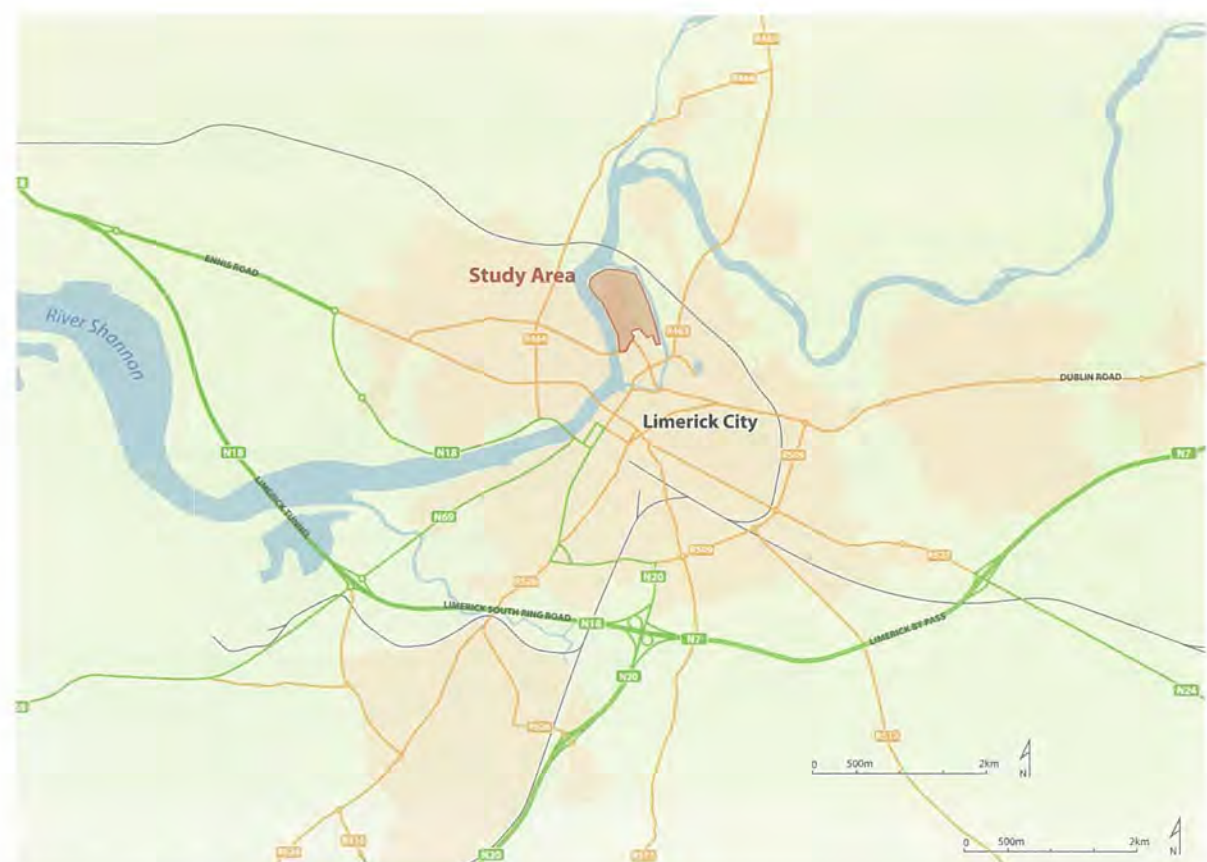


Figure 1.12: St Mary's Park in Context

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Housing Size and Conditions

St. Mary's Park was constructed in 1935 and this makes the units located here the oldest out of the four regeneration areas. 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. 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 St. Mary's Park consists of a ground floor layout of a kitchen/living area/dining area, a bedroom with a single-storey extension to house a bathroom. The upper floor consists of 2 bedrooms. These houses are laid out in terraced blocks (6 blocks in total with a terraced street to the east of St. Munchin's Street) of four to five structures.

The general house construction type within St. Mary's Park consists of mass concrete with no insulation, 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, St. Mary's Park is characterised by the following physical features:

- Poor accessibility which has resulted in St. Mary's Park becoming physically, economically and socially isolated
- Unattractive public realm with an over-dominance of hard surfaces with limited soft landscaping
- Several under-used and vacant housing sites, which currently detract from the overall appearance of the estate
- Severe environmental black spot to the east of St. Munchin's Street where a strip of land has been used as a landfill site and filled with domestic refuse
- The layout of the houses to the east of St. Munchin's Street backs onto the landfill therefore providing little in the way of natural surveillance. This has potentially exacerbated the issue of illegal dumping

4.2.3 Historical Character Today

The most frequently used image to represent Limerick City is that which captures the view of King's Island

from the west bank of the River Shannon, taking in King John's Castle, Thomond Bridge and St. Mary's Cathedral. This is the oldest part of the city and today is commonly referred to as its 'medieval core'. A number of significant buildings survive from 12th and 13th Century Limerick (in particular the aforementioned castle and cathedral), as well as some remaining extant stretches of the City Wall, which was dismantled in the 1760s. These structures lend an air of grandeur and magnificence to King's Island, making it a distinctive element of the Limerick cityscape.

However, aside from the above mentioned structures, much of King's Island's medieval character has been eroded in the past century. Although traces of the medieval streetscape remain, the majority of the area's medieval buildings have disappeared. The ruins of buildings such as Fanning's Castle (RMP: Castle Tower House L005-017004, and RPS015) on Mary's Street, and the house containing a carved stone fireplace (RMP: House L005-017123) on Nicholas Street, are isolated clues to the appearance of the older city. There is also a military cemetery at the southern edge of St. Mary's Park. This is not marked on the 1st edition six inch Ordnance Survey (1840-1) of the area, so it is likely that it post-dates this map. However, it is referred to in a book dating to 1866 (Lenihan, M, Limerick: Its History and Antiquities, Ecclesiastical, Civil, and Military, 1866), indicating that it dates from the mid Nineteenth Century. In general this cemetery was reserved for the burial of soldiers and ex-soldiers who had no family links in the city or county. There are an estimated sixty burials in the cemetery.

Current Protection for Architectural & Archaeological Heritage

There are currently 28 structures on the RPS. In addition, 10 structures are currently on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) of Limerick City, but are included under the existing RPS.

Other Statutory Mechanisms

It is evident that there is an adequate level of statutory protection afforded to the built heritage of King's Island. However, there is no Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) in place in King's Island at present. An ACA is defined as 'a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose



Figure 1.13: Existing Land Use



Figure 1.14: Current Protection for Architectural & Archaeological Heritage

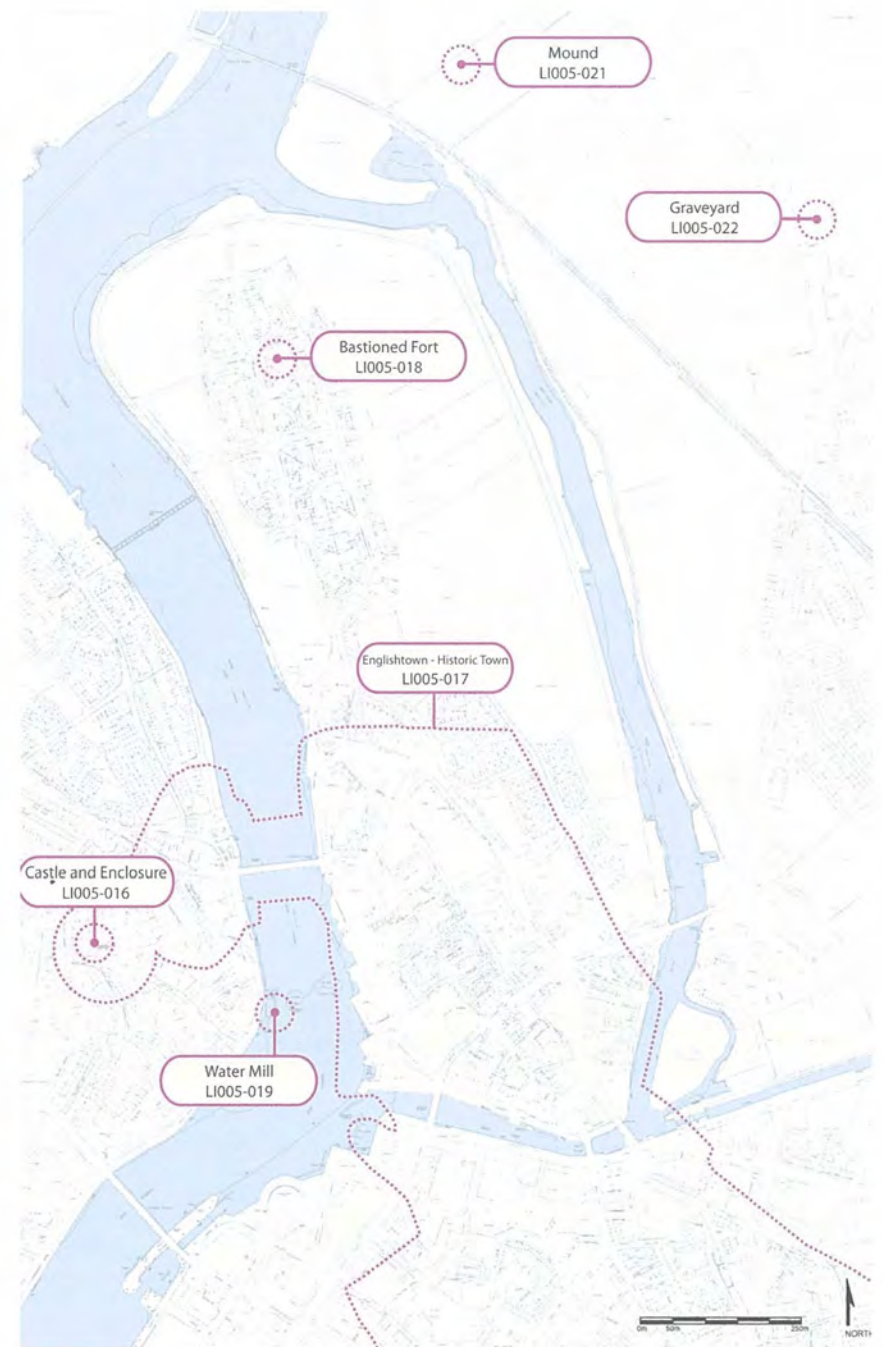


Figure 1.15: Zone of Archaeological Potential

▼ Sunset around Nicholas Street, Limerick



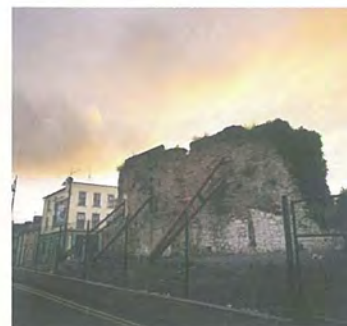
▼ Island View Terrace, St. Mary's Park



▼ Island View Terrace, St. Mary's Park



▼ Nicholas Street, Limerick



▼ Island View Terrace, St. Mary's Park



4. Physical Overview and Analysis

character it is an objective of a development plan to preserve' (Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2004, DoEHLG).

However, the south-western portion of King's Island has been included in the Area of Special Planning Control (ASPC) designation. An ASPC is defined as follows as "all or part of an architectural conservation area [which] is of special importance to, or as respects, the civic life or the architectural, historical, cultural or special character of a city or town in which it is situated [and which requires preparation of a] 'scheme' "setting out development objectives for the preservation and enhancement of that area, or part of the area." (Section 84 (1), 2000 Act).

Zone of Archaeological Potential

The Records of Monuments and Places map for Limerick (L005-017) shows that there is a significant amount of archaeology located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential. By and large, this zone follows the line of the medieval core of the city. In this archaeological zone, remains lie within a metre of the modern surface, and these strata can be present to a depth of 3 to 4m in places. In addition to the Medieval Core Monuments there are numerous sites located outside the Zone of Archaeological Potential in the outer suburbs of the city. These are also listed in the Sites and Monuments Record which is an appendix to the Limerick City Council Development Plan (see Figure 2.14). A soon to be published good practice guidance publication, commissioned by Limerick City Council titled "Development and Archaeological Study of King's Island and Limerick" (DASKIL), sets out archaeology and development objectives for the enhancement and preservation of archaeology on King's Island now and into the future.

4.2.4 Existing Movement

King's Island, as the name suggests, is bounded by water on all side. The River Shannon bounds the Island to the west, The Abbey River to the east and south and the confluence of the two rivers bounds the island in the north. The island is situated to the north within the Limerick City Centre environment. There are four main access/egress routes connecting King's Island to the rest of Limerick, all of which are located within the southern half of the Island.

The Island Road and Castle Street form part of the N7 route through the area. This route is heavily trafficked

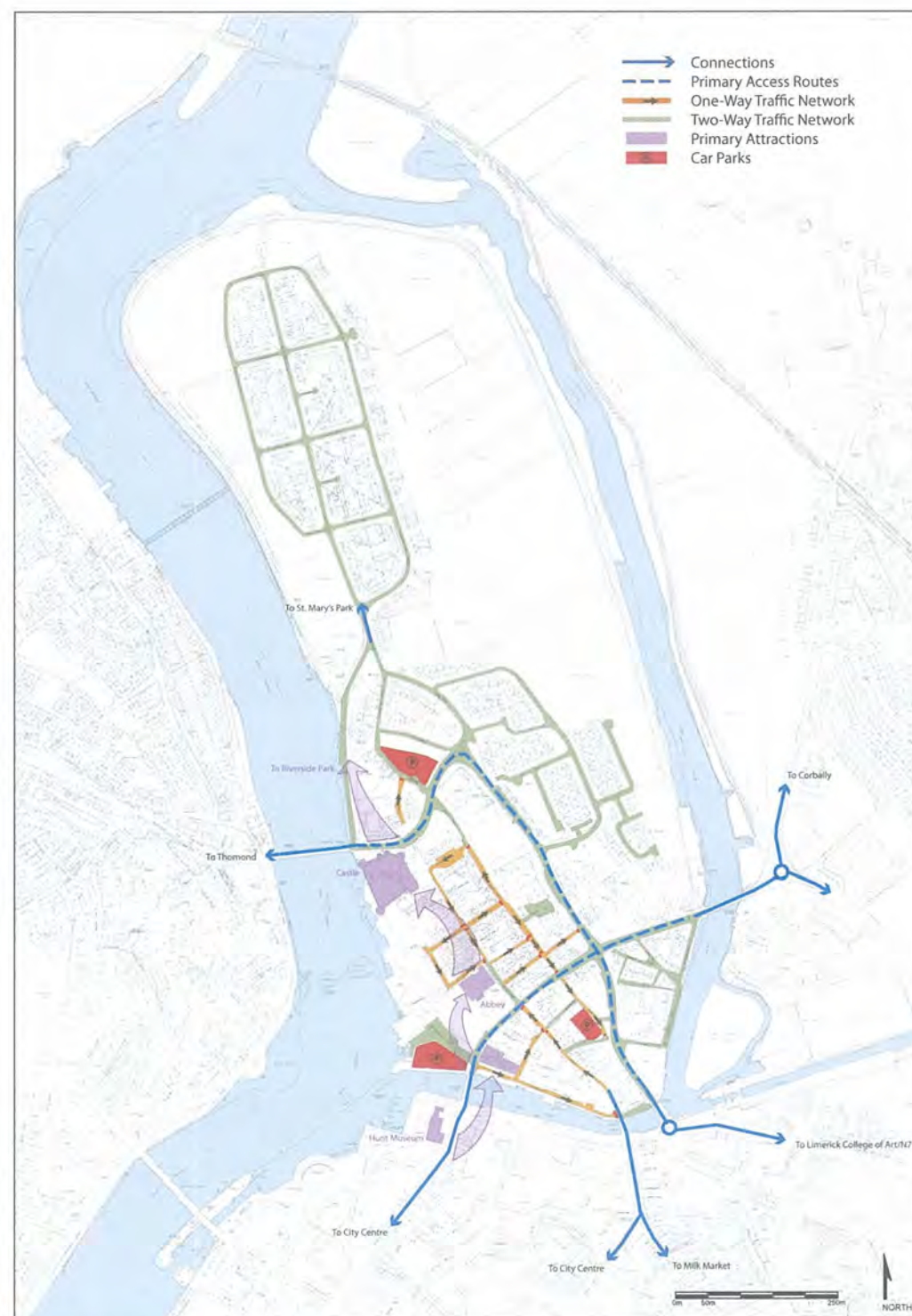


Figure 1.16: Existing Movement

and essentially dissects the north of the island from the south. There is a one-way vehicular system in place within much of the medieval quarter, as the streets are narrow in keeping with the traditional medieval street layout. This is shown on Figure 1.15.

Access to St. Mary's Park is limited to one main entrance from Island Road Roundabout and three other older access routes culminating in essentially one access point at St. Ita's Street to a large cul-de-sac. This has resulted in isolating the northern half of the Island.

Public Transport

Section 3.1.7 Transport of Section 3.0 Volume 1 Baseline Conditions and Analysis highlights that in common with other regeneration areas, St Mary's Park exhibits low levels of car usage with a high percentage of private households having no car (57%) and a generally high use of public transport (6%) which is slightly below the city average (7%). This could be explained by the location of St. Mary's Park within close proximity of the city centre (approx 800m) which suggests that the current bus service provision is adequate compared to the other regeneration areas.

4.2.5 Environmental Considerations

The Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) surrounds King's Island.

The Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) surrounds King's Island and, as shown in Figure 1.16, the results of the environmental study carried out on this area reveals indicative habitats. This study found that to the east of the St. Mary's Park estate there is a strip of re-colonising bare ground – ED2. This area has been subject to grazing, dumping and infill and is higher in elevation than the adjacent wet area.

While this habitat can be species rich it is mostly colonised by opportunistic plants that are common and widespread. This area is associated with foraging birds and, during the summer, is likely to attract butterflies and other insects. The habitats and species here are of moderate biodiversity value and are not associated with the SAC or its qualifying interests. It is adjacent to, but outside the SAC boundary.

The stretches of the Shannon and Abbey Rivers surrounding King's Island are lowland/depositing river – FW2 and constitute the primary feature

of the SAC. An Otter *Lutra lutra* was observed swimming in the river along with Mute swan *Cygnus olor*, Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Greylag goose *Anser anser*, Grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* and Little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. The Otter is listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive and is one of the SAC's qualifying interests.

Along the river banks, and fringing almost the entire island, there is a strip of riparian woodland – WN5. It is dominated with Willow *Salix* sp. with occasional Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. On the island's western shore this fringe is narrow and in some places there is open grassland (with Creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and Reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea*). This area is wet grassland – GS4 and is a part of the rivers' floodplain. However on the eastern shore it is much more developed and uninterrupted. This habitat is an example of the Annex I priority type Alluvial forests (91E0) and is one of the rarest native woodland types in Ireland (Little et al., unknown year). It is of high biodiversity value and home to a range of woodland species as well as being vital for the preservation of water quality and the prevention of bank erosion.

It can be seen that the area designated as SAC is important for qualifying interests such as freshwater fish, otter and riparian woodland, but also for features outside the qualifying interests – particularly wintering wetland birds, but also kingfisher and possibly an Annex I wetland habitat (hydrophilous tall herbs). These habitats perform important functions in the regulation of water flow and the moderation of water quality as well as being valuable for the maintenance of biodiversity in general.

▼ Illegal Dumping, Island Fields, St. Mary's Park.



▼ Hand Ball Alley, St. Mary's Park.



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Island Fields, St. Mary's Park



Island Fields, St. Mary's Park



Island Fields, St. Mary's Park

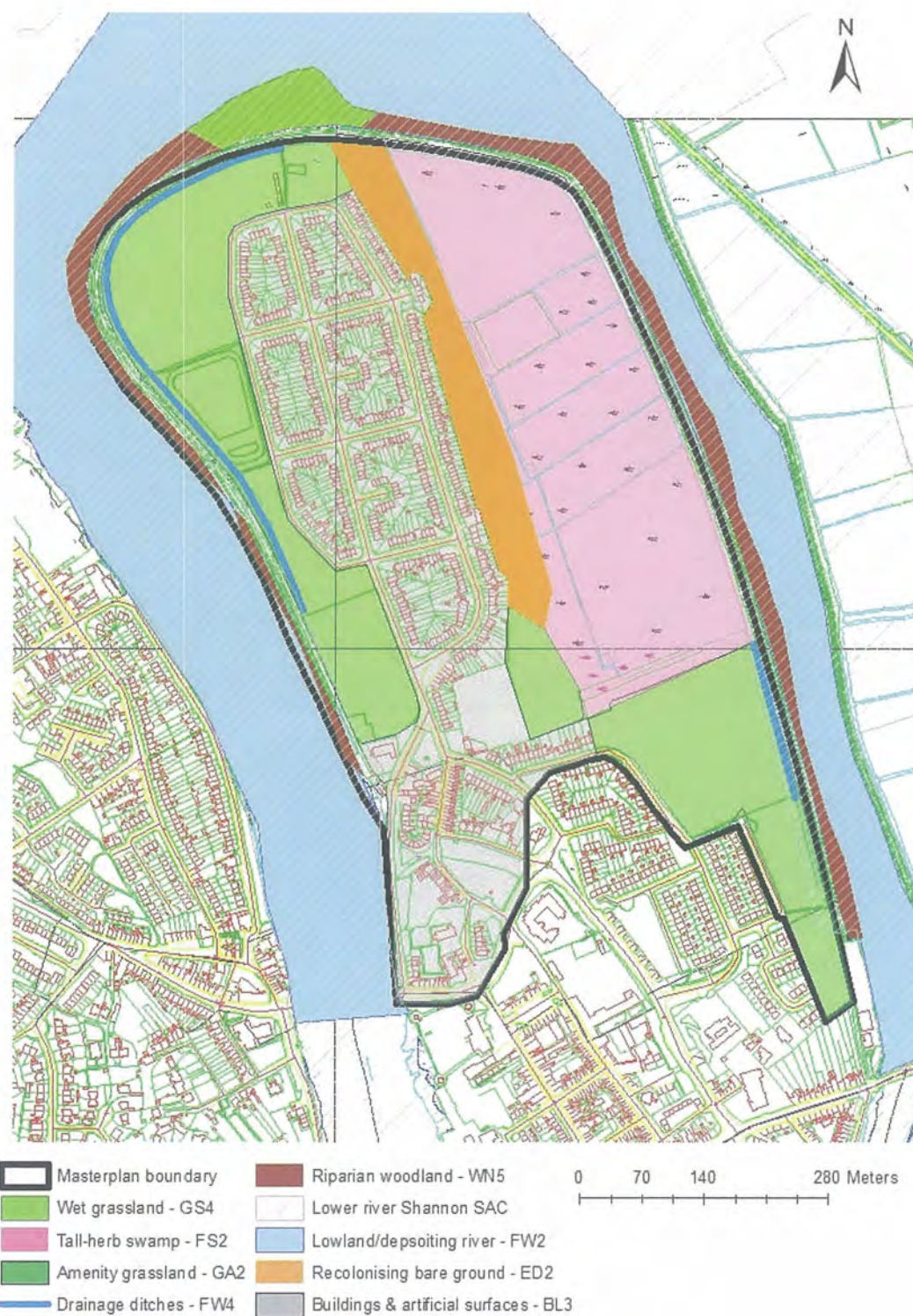


Figure 1.17: Environmental Characteristics of St. Mary's Park

4.2.6 Flooding

St. Mary's Park & Kings Island is an island formed by the waters of the River Shannon and Abbey River. The Abbey River is actually a split of the River Shannon. Both the River Shannon and the Abbey River are tidal in the vicinity of the site of the proposed development and therefore susceptible to both fluvial and coastal flood risk.

There have been a number of instances of flooding in Limerick City centre, including parts of King's Island in the past. The most recent of these events occurred in 1999, 2002 and 2009. The maximum water level observed was in December 1999 where levels were reported to be of the order of 4.4m in the Abbey River. These floods arose from a period of prolonged rainfall, a spring tide and a storm surge which added 1.3m to the tide.

The Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016 Flood Risk Map adjacent indicates that the subject site is at risk from flooding with Flood Zone A (high probability of flooding) highlighted in dark blue in Figure 1.18. All proposed infill developments will be subject to the requirements of the guidance document "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management 2009" prepared by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government and the Office of Public Works

The guidelines require the planning system at national, regional and local levels to:

- Avoid developments in areas at risk of flooding, particularly floodplains, unless there are proven wider sustainability grounds that justify appropriate development and where the flood risk can be reduced or managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management when assessing the location for new development based on avoidance, reduction and mitigation of flood risk, and incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals

There is a lack of substantive flooding data within the four regeneration areas. At this point in time there are no officially publishable Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management studies (CFRAMS). However it is understood that a draft CFRAMS may be available in 2014. Furthermore, The OPW recently

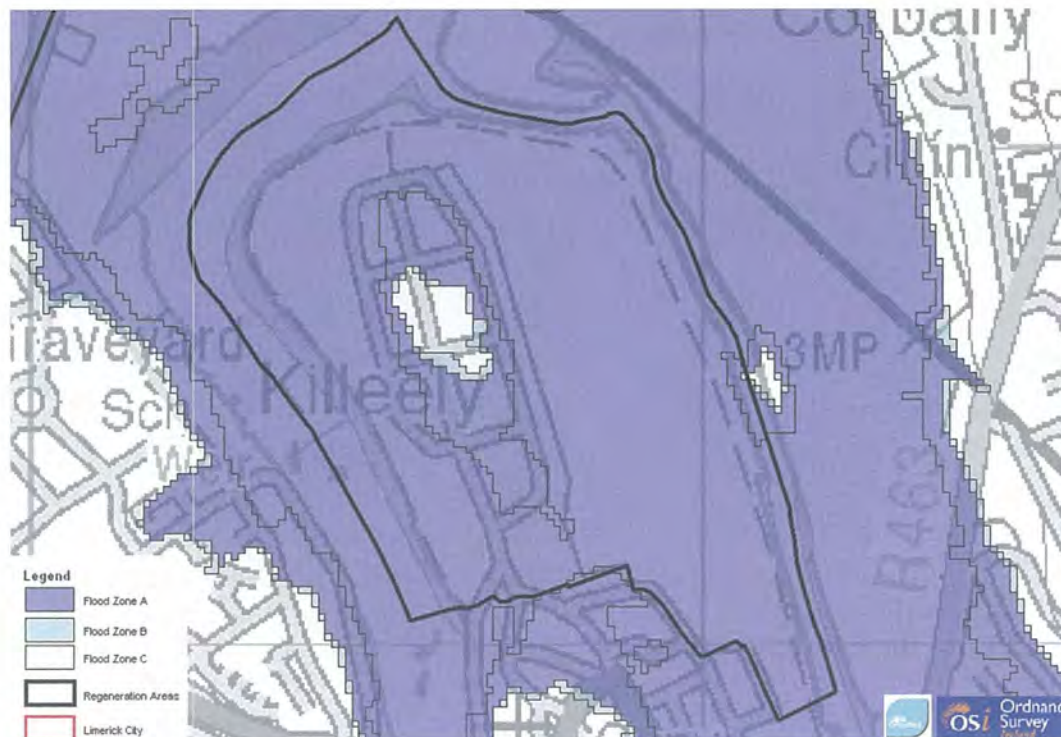


Figure 1.18: Flood Risk Map of St. Mary's Park extracted from the Statutory Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016

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commissioned a study to assess coastal flooding and erosion extents in Ireland, known as the Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS). This study has produced predictive flood maps and levels for flood events with various probabilities of occurrence. The information has not yet been published by OPW. As stated in the Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016 “until such time as comprehensive information and guidance is available on flooding in the city, a flexible approach is required to take account of flood risk to ensure that appropriate measures are taken wherever the need arises”.

4.2.7 Water and Drainage Infrastructure

St Mary's Park is currently serviced by 3 inch cast iron water main network (which date from the 1930s). The network is insufficient to meet the current demands and fire flow standards. In a report dated from 2004, when St Mary's Park consisted of 459 houses (as opposed to 389 units in 2012), water usage in St Mary's Park was in excess of 600m³/day. Based on a typical consumption rate of 135 litres per person per day by 459 gave an expected usage of 183m³/day, significantly under the actual usage in the estate. The level of water leakage in the estate is in excess of 200%, well above the city-wide level of 46% and the desired level of less than 30%. Limerick City Council is committed to upgrading and sustainably developing the water and drainage infrastructure for St Mary's Park, subject to the availability of finance.

4.2.8 Sewerage Infrastructure

Following the completion of the Limerick Main Drainage Scheme, Phase 1, the City and its Environs is now served by a modern sewer infrastructure. The Limerick Main Drainage infrastructure was designed in 1999 to meet the current and foreseeable need of the City and contiguous areas but the City Council is mindful that continued upgrades to both the foul and surface water drainage systems in the city will be required. A key objective of Limerick City Council is the development of Limerick Main Drainage Phase 2 which will involve assessing the capacities of the current plant, delivering a strategy for reducing the quantity of surface water infiltration into the foul network and extending the network, subject to the availability of finance. The main sewerage system in St Mary's Park is deemed as adequate by Limerick City Council and a key objective as part of any development proposal would be to provide a high quality sanitary wastewater collection and treatment system to meet the existing and future demands.

Island Fields



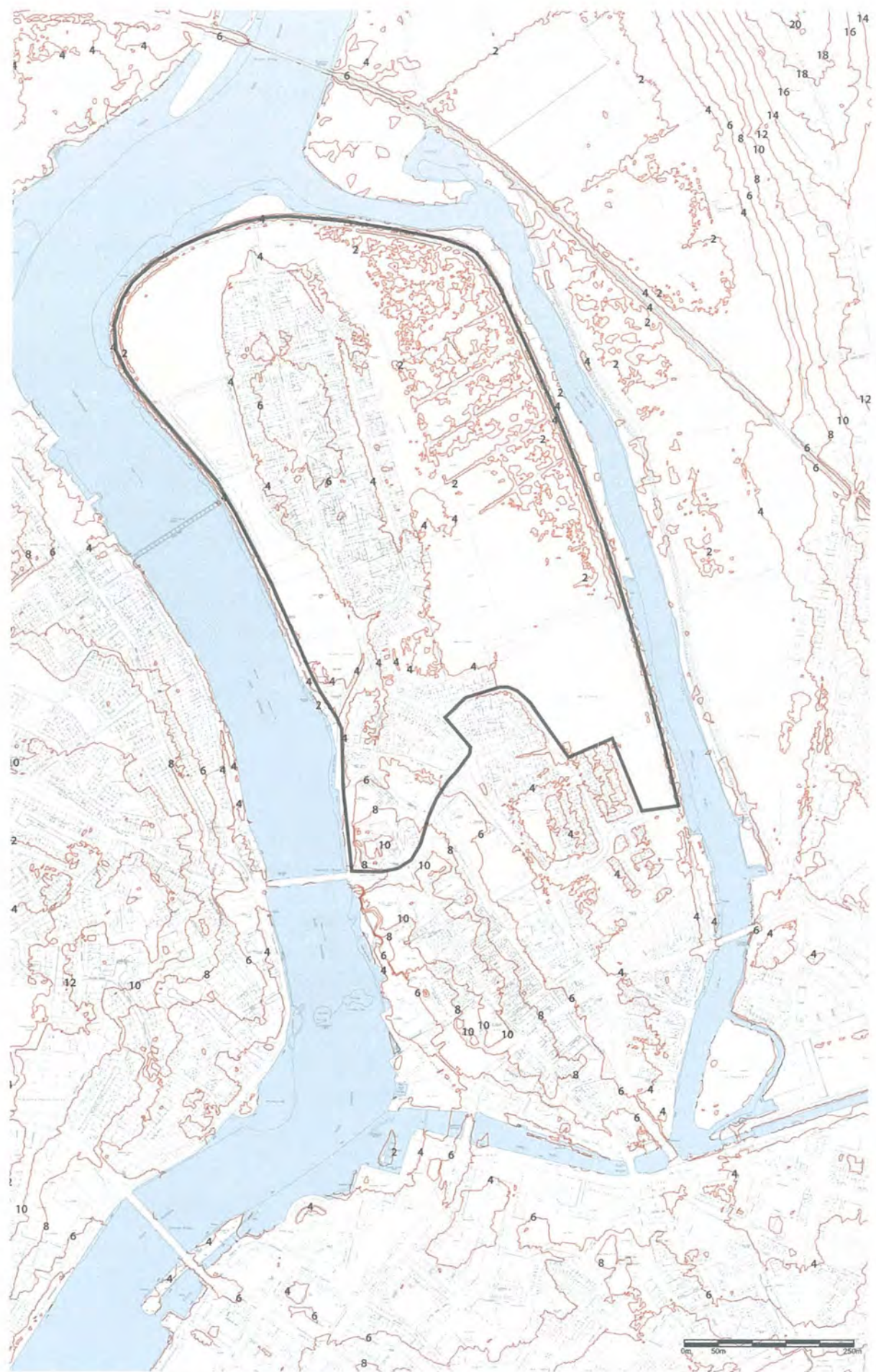


Figure 1.19: Contours of St. Mary's Park

4.2.9 Soils and Geology

The GSI (Geological Survey of Ireland) Teagasc Sub-Soil database demonstrates that the soil type found within the study area consists of 'made ground' and "Till derived chiefly from limestone". Made ground is natural soil altered, partly with fill materials and is associated with prior construction.

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4.2.10 Existing Open Space & Amenity

Open spaces can provide a variety of functions, including active recreation (pursuits such as football, basketball, athletics, etc.) and passive recreation (activities such as strolling, dog walking and birdwatching). Other important elements include visual amenity (important landscape views), ecology (bird and wildlife habitat, biodiversity of plant species), drainage management (particularly stormwater control) and socio-economic needs (such as meeting places).

Passive Open Space

Within King's Island, there are ample amounts of passive open space areas which are accessible to the public and provide a worthwhile visual setting. However, there are some areas of underutilised and undeveloped passive open space that offer little in terms of passive recreation facilities, aside from the earthen embankment topped with a footpath which surrounds three sides of the island.

Much of the land (in particular the north-eastern portion) is covered by the candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC - Lower River Shannon) designated under the EU Habitats Directive. It comprises fresh water wetland which floods in winter and slowly drains during spring and summer. Species of interest are also to be found adjacent to the Abbey River. Towards the south of the island, there are a number of areas of green open space which offer amenity value. To the south of King John's Castle is an area of landscaped green space which is used as an informal meeting area, for picnics and other passive recreational uses.

Active Open Space

Existing areas of active open space include a handball alley set in an area of open space to the north of the island, and a large soccer pitch to the east. In addition, there is a community centre set within its own grounds to the west of the island. Athlunkard Boat Club is located to the east of the island, adjacent to Athlunkard Street. Given the amount of public open space in King's Island at present, it would appear that the area is significantly under-resourced in terms of active recreational facilities and areas according to quantitative recommendations outlined in best practice guidelines¹. This is discussed in more detail in Volume 2 Open Space Strategy.

Hard Surface Public Spaces & Thoroughfares

There are a number of well maintained and attractive hard surface public spaces and thoroughfares within King's Island. These are mainly concentrated along the riverside area to the south-west of the island.

1. The area leading from Church Street, features an attractive terrace of Georgian houses and leads into a public space positioned at the entrance to King John's Castle. This public space consists of a hard surface area containing public seating, green landscaping, public sculpture, and flagpoles.
2. The area from Castle Lane to the rear of City Hall. This area contains paving, railings along the riverside, public lighting, green spaces and public sculpture.
3. The area focused on St. Mary's Cathedral, from St. Augustine Place, which features large stone steps, leading to Merchant's Quay. This area features landscaping, paving and public sculpture, however the amount of on-street car-parking detracts from this setting and the cars become barriers to pedestrian fluidity.
4. The area running from Matthew Bridge to Baal's Bridge along the length of George's Quay. This is an attractive, pedestrianised space which enjoys a high level of footfall. Further down the quay is a marina. The mature trees, riverside seating and mix of architectural styles combine to make this an interesting and inviting space.

Significant Trees

Trees are important from an urban context, not just from an ecological perspective and can add a vertical, softening dimension within the streetscape.

Important existing trees and treelines are located:

- Along George's Quay,
- Merchants Quay and within the grounds of St. Mary's Cathedral.

Figure 1.19 outlines the key areas of open space in Kings Island and some of the more notable environmental features, particularly tree groups.

▼ Hand Ball Alley, St. Mary's Park.



▼ Hand Ball Alley, St. Mary's Park.



▼ Hand Ball Alley, St. Mary's Park.



¹ At present there is no legislation that sets out precisely how much outdoor space is made available per child. However, it is suggested in the publication 'We Like This Place, Guidelines for Best Practice in the Design Of Childcare Facilities' written by the National Children's Nurseries Association on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000- 2006, that a minimum of 9m² of uninterrupted outdoor space per child should be provided.

▼ Illegal dumping, Island Fields, St. Mary's Park



Figure 1.20: Open Space and Amenity

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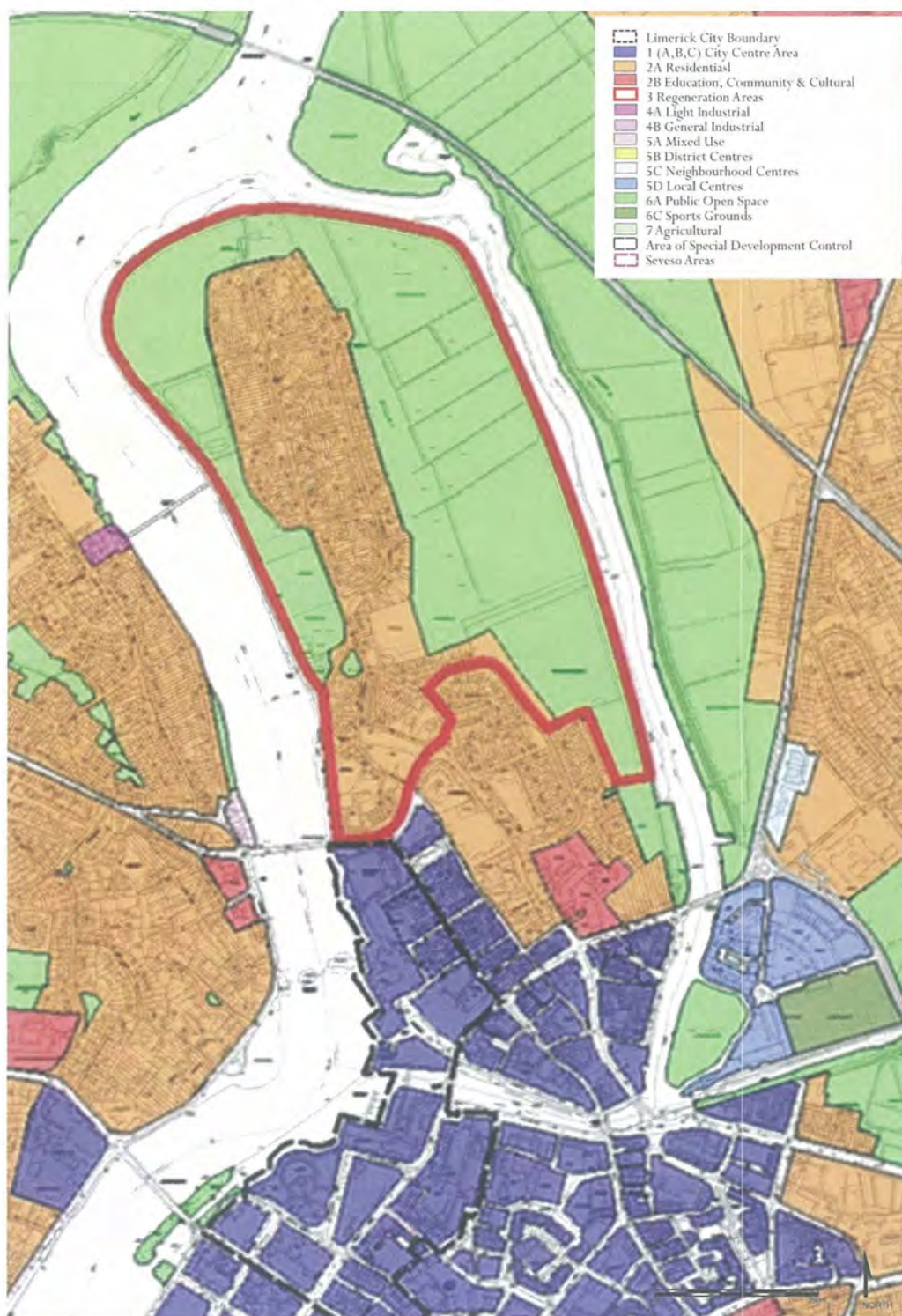


Figure 1.21: Ballinacurra Weston in Context

4.2.11 Planning Context

The following policies specifically deal with regeneration and the King's Island & St. Mary's Park area:

Policy RG.1: Implementation of Regeneration

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to support the implementation of the Regeneration Programme in a coordinated and sustainable manner and to co-operate with the regeneration agencies and the other agencies in the region to delivery the goals and objectives set out in the Regeneration Programme (page 7.4).

Policy RG.2: Zoning

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to zone the regeneration areas in a flexible manner to facilitate the delivery of the masterplans (page 7.3). Fig. 1.2 shows the land use zonings for King's Island & St. Mary's Park, with the thick red boundary line indicating the Regeneration area. (A, B, C) City Centre Area.

This zoning is applicable to the southern portion of King's Island. It is broken down into three different zoning categories, two of which are relevant to the study area

- Objective ZO.1 (B) City Centre Commercial Area (CCCA) and Objective ZO.1(C) Inner City Residential Neighbourhoods (see Fig 1.3).

Objective ZO.1 (B) City Centre Commercial Area (CCCA)

- To support the retention and expansion of a wide range of commercial, cultural, leisure and residential uses in the commercial core area, (apart from comparison retail uses).

Objective ZO.1(C) Inner City Residential Neighbourhoods

- To reinforce the residential character of inner city residential neighbourhoods, while supporting the provision and retention of local services, and civic and institutional functions.

The City Development Plan stated specific key local objectives that the King's Island Framework Plan should address, these include;

- To protect the integrity of all Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity. In this regard the development proposals developed shall be subject to HDAA and SEA.

To prepare a flood risk assessment for King's Island and the general catchment to determine the long term flood remediation solution for King's Island and to identify lands for future development subject to HDAA.

- To develop a strategy to integrate King's Island into the city centre core through selective site redevelopment and improved connections.
- To examine the potential of improved/new multi modal connections to the adjacent area.

The following policies are relevant to Limerick City as a whole and could have a bearing on development within King's Island & St. Mary's Park.

Policy ACT.8 (Requirement for Arts & Cultural Infrastructure)

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to require Arts and Culture Infrastructure to be integrated into large scale re-development of key sites in the city centre area which include lands in the Georgian Quarter, the Medieval Quarter, the Riverside Area, in or near John's Square, the Railway Area and the Docklands.

Policy ACT.22 (Maritime Heritage)

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to promote the maritime heritage of the city.

Policy ACT.25 (Creative Spaces)

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to facilitate the establishment of incubators for start up creative businesses within the city in conjunction with all interested bodies.

Policy ACT.31 (King John's Castle)

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to facilitate the redevelopment of King John's Castle and Nicholas Street as a tourist destination.

Policy ACT.36 (Cultural Quarters)

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to promote and develop cultural quarters in the city and in particular, John's Square, the Georgian Quarter, the Commercial Core, the Medieval Quarter and the Docklands.

Policy BHA.4 (Protection of Limerick's Historic Street Pattern & Medieval Plot Widths)

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to protect Limerick's historic street pattern, and in particular, seek to conserve and enhance the laneways within the

setting of the streetscape and seek to retain and protect historic building lines and traditional plot widths where these derive from medieval origins.

Policy BHA.5 (Survey of Medieval Remains)

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to require a detailed Archaeological Survey of buildings proposed for demolition, where in the opinion of the City Council medieval fabric may be present

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4.2.12 Key Challenges and Opportunities for St. Mary's Park

Challenges

Flooding

A key challenge in St Mary's Park is the designation of the majority of the area under Flood Zone A. Residential use is classed as a highly vulnerable use within this area and new build residential development is not permitted except in exceptional circumstances.

Special Area of Conservation

The following key challenges exist in St Mary's Park in relation to the statutory environmental designations: These include:

- Potential disturbance to birds as a result of amenity use of lands adjacent to the wetland;
- Potential loss and fragmentation of habitat resulting from the construction of new replacement housing, streets and connecting bridges.
- The educational value of the environmental designations has not been maximised upon.

Movement

A key challenge in St. Mary's Park is the lack of permeability to the north of the island, which have resulted in this area becoming socially and economically isolated.

Open Space

A deficiency that exists in St. Mary's Park is the lack of active play facilities for those persons under the age of 15 years and this issue has been raised at public consultation meetings by the residents of St Mary's Park. Furthermore, the following key challenges exist:

- Poor condition of existing recreational facilities such as the handball alley and lack of a modern clubhouse and changing facilities at the soccer pitch
- Lack of non-sporting related open space recreational amenities
- Gated access to some parts of the riverside walkway to the east of the island
- Presence of under-utilised environmental assets, e.g. cSAC wetlands
- Lack of public seating, particularly adjacent to St. Mary's Cathedral.

Historic Character

Stakeholders such as Limerick City Council, Shannon Development and Limerick Civic Trust have been instrumental in promoting the historic image of King's Island. Yet, in terms of the overall character of King's Island architectural heritage, and the management of its archaeological heritage, considerable challenges remain. These include:

- Lack of maintenance, repair and care of the overall historic fabric
- Significant number of derelict sites in key locations, particularly along Mary Street, and vacant properties, particularly along Nicholas Street
- Presence of under-utilised historic assets, e.g. upstanding remains of Fanning's Castle, and remains of house with carved stone fireplace on Nicholas Street
- Use of inappropriate materials on historic facades, e.g. uPVC windows and doors, plastic signage & shop fronts
- Visual problems caused by proliferation of uses such as fast-food outlets, convenience stores and amusement centres.

Physical Character

The following key challenges exist in St. Mary's Park in relation to the physical realm:

- Poor accessibility which has resulted in St. Mary's Park becoming physically, economically and socially isolated
- Unattractive public realm with an over-dominance of hard surfaces with limited soft landscaping
- Several under-used and vacant infill housing sites, which currently detract from the overall appearance of the estate
- Severe environmental black spot to the east of St. Munchin's Street where a strip of land has been used as a landfill site and filled with domestic refuse
- The layout of the houses to the east of St. Munchin's Street backs onto the landfill therefore providing little in the way of natural surveillance. This has potentially exacerbated the issue of illegal dumping

Key Opportunities

Movement

It is recognised that optimal access to the entire King's Island area, and increased permeability within the area, are critical for its future growth and

management. A key opportunity exists to:

- Improve permeability to the northwest and southeast of the island to facilitate the regeneration St. Mary's Park. This will allow for the creation of more balanced and sustainable living environments. The tourism base of St. Mary's Park and King's Island will also benefit from better connectivity and accessibility.

There is an opportunity to increase permeability in the south of King's Island, particularly around Merchant's Quay where the presence of numerous car parks act as a barrier to permeable pedestrian movement.

Open Space

There is an opportunity to retain existing treestands and notable landscape features and incorporate into future development proposals where possible and practical so as to give a certain sense of maturity to the existing environment.

Flooding

Any new housing will need to robustly satisfy the sequential approach and justification test as outlined in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for proposed replacement housing use in St Mary's Park.

Special Area of Conservation

A key opportunity exists to minimise potential environmental impacts by careful planning and design of the final proposal. Furthermore, a key opportunity exists to develop environmental training, ecology awareness and eco-tourism within the statutory environmental designations of St. Mary's Park whilst protecting the integrity of the designations.

Historic Character

There is an opportunity to:

- Consider the introduction of an ACA in King's Island – particularly within the environs of Nicholas Street. Such a mechanism would ensure that the varied historic character of what is widely acknowledged to be the oldest part of Limerick city is further safeguarded.
- Ensure that the good practice guidance enshrined within the upcoming publication, "Development and Archaeological Study of King's Island and Limerick" (DASKIL) is mandatory as part of any planning application. The document will provide good practice guidance setting out archaeology and development objectives for the enhancement



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