

# Shannon Town Centre Masterplan

Clare County Council  
January 2022



Rialtas na  
hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR  
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL







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This Masterplan is comprised of eight chapters, and an appendix. Each chapter will cover a separate aspect of this masterplan process and proposed intervention areas.

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The purpose of the Masterplan is to guide the development of Shannon Town Centre into the future and to influence and deliver on real change for Shannon Town in order to make Shannon a more attractive destination in which to live, work and do business.

The masterplan sets out the agreed overall vision, strategy and most significantly, commitment for the proper planning and sustainable development of Shannon Town Centre over a 15 year period. It is informed by a high-level viability assessment undertaken based on a rigorous, strategic and well informed analysis of the economic, construction, retail, residential, commercial and office sectors. A multidisciplinary integrated approach bringing together the development of places and destinations, transport planning, urban design, mixed use architecture and landscape design were used to develop the masterplan strategy for Shannon Town Centre.

The masterplan sets out potential for growth, use of derelict and vacant sites within the town centre, and development potential of key sites at the entrance points from the road network. It will seek to create a vibrant place for people

to meet, relax, and connect with their area. The masterplan is intended to enable the delivery of a high-quality town environment through sustainable economic growth catering for an expansion of services, retail, and residential demand to meet the growth that the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan and the National Planning Framework have identified for Shannon.

The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan was endorsed by the Elected Members at the Shannon Municipal District meeting on the 18th January 2022. The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan has been informed by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening and a Habitats Directive Assessment.

This masterplan was partially funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) Project Ireland 2040 and Clare County Council.

This Masterplan was prepared in conjunction with the following:

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The community of Shannon and all other stakeholders



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01

# Background & Guiding Principles

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# Background

## Guiding future development of Shannon Town Centre

Shannon is a unique and evolving place that in just 60 years has grown to become the second largest town in County Clare. As the site of one of the world’s first modern Special Economic Zones, it is well known for its economic drivers and its international airport. With its dynamic, mixed economy stemming from the Free Trade Zone, its strategic positioning with the international airport, and its strong community ties and local identity, Shannon stands on the cusp of an exciting future with an opportunity to provide more jobs, homes and community infrastructure and to establish a more vibrant town centre.

Shannon Town Centre has been at the heart of Shannon Town since it was built in the late 1970s, but while it provides a wide range of retail and community services, it lacks definition and a sense of place. The challenge of this masterplan is to give it that definition, by attracting future growth and establishing a place that captures and secures the benefit of growth for the local community.

The masterplan is holistic and addresses a wide range of issues; as such, Clare County Council commissioned a multi-specialist team which included the following:

- BDP - urban design, planning, architecture, ecology, landscape, sustainability and consultation advice.
- Momentum - Movement and transport advice.
- Carron and Walsh - Quantity surveying.
- MacCabe Durney Barnes - Economic Viability Assessment.

This masterplan combines observations from desktop research and a review of technical, socio-economic, and demographic data about Shannon, as well as initial thoughts about a development direction for future growth in the town centre.

The masterplan is informed by an Economic Viability Assessment providing key directions to unlock the development potential of Shannon Town Centre and guide it’s built and economic environment. By informing this masterplan, the Economic Viability Assessment ensured the delivery of a feasible masterplan for the town centre based on an understanding and demonstration of economic and market conditions.

The objectives for this masterplan is to reassert Shannon’s position as an entrepreneurial, visionary place that acts as a gateway to Ireland and beyond, and to determine strategies to establish a heart in the town centre beyond the shopping centre.

This masterplan will influence and deliver real change for Shannon Town in order to make it a more attractive destination in which to live, work and do business. The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is intended to underpin and act as a catalyst for change, adding new focus to the creation of a strong urban space in the town centre.





# Need for a Masterplan

## What is a Masterplan?

The definition of a masterplan can vary, but in broad terms it comprises a vision and accompanying images and text that describe how a large area of land can and should be developed over a certain period of time.

The scope of a masterplan can range from very strategic planning concepts at a regional scale to smaller groups of buildings. Generally, it is a plan that describes and maps an overall development concept that specifies existing and future land uses, urban design, landscape and built form, infrastructure, circulation and movement provisions.

A good masterplan is based upon a thorough understanding of place and consultation with residents and users. It is intended to provide a structured approach to creating a clear and consistent framework for development.

Proposed development generally deals with use, scale, character, and principles, and these are often designed to be flexible to accommodate future changes to development demand. Social and economic analysis and a delivery strategy are key elements of a masterplan.

### Why is a masterplan important?

Masterplanning can help to raise the general standards of urban design and create meaningful, quality places, which are designed coherently and with an approach to creating connectivity, phasing, and flexibility. This ensures that future development potential is fully realised and creates new districts, neighbourhoods, or spaces that are functional and also designed to provide the appropriate physical environments to support strong communities, support a rich and high quality of life for inhabitants and visitors, connect people and places by providing ease of movement, and through developments create places of distinction and enduring quality.

Shannon Town Centre requires a masterplan to set out a clear and shared vision for its future development over the next 15 years, to influence and deliver real change for Shannon in order to make it an attractive destination in which to live, work and do business.

### Purpose of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan

The purpose of this masterplan is to define the focus and locations for economic, spatial, social, cultural, community, and commercial development in Shannon Town Centre. This plan is intended to guide and stimulate the development of all lands in Shannon Town Centre to maximise its opportunity to unlock its development potential as a social, cultural, economic, retail, and recreational destination of choice.

In addition, the masterplan will bring focus to the importance of the town centre both economically and socially whilst also providing a vision shared by all stakeholders within Shannon town. It will set out a framework to guide land-use decisions as well as public infrastructure investment which will also attract and enable international, central government, public and private sector investment.

This masterplan contains schematic concepts that provide an indicative layout in terms of proposed design elements and uses within the town centre area.



Shannon Town Centre Today



02

## Shannon: Past, Present & Future

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# Innovative thinking; an International Gateway

Within a decade however, the introduction of longer-range aircraft meant that airlines could start to bypass Shannon and fly directly to and from major urban centres, which began to erode its main asset as an 'entry point' to Europe. The Irish Government responded to this by establishing the Customs Free Airport (Amendment) Act of 1958 to facilitate industrial development in the environs of the airport.

Shannon's history is inextricably tied to its International Airport. This was built in 1939 to serve transatlantic air traffic, which at that time was limited in its range. Shannon Airport quickly came to be used by many commercial airlines in Europe and North America due to its strategic position on the extreme western seaboard of Europe. Aviation technology, though advancing quickly, did not then enable direct flights from the east coast of the United States to continental Europe. Shannon's unique geographical position as a flat plain on the mountainous west coast of Ireland, therefore made it an ideal refuelling point for transatlantic flights.

Shannon grew in the 1960s with the planning and development of Shannon New Town, which included residential areas. As a country in its relative infancy, Ireland started to flex its muscles internationally and used mechanisms of state policy to redefine itself through rapid modernisation. The development of Shannon as a new urban area based specifically on a combination of economic and geographic policy played a key role in this, and was a highly innovative strategy at the time.

A black and white photograph of a busy airport terminal. In the foreground, several people are walking, some carrying luggage. A man in a suit and a woman in a white dress are prominent. In the background, a large airplane is parked at the gate, and a vintage car is visible. The terminal building has multiple windows and flags flying.

## Shannon International - A Transatlantic Hub



Major Airlines advertising Shannon and its connection to North America



*The new Shannon Free Zone with worker accommodation*



## Ireland's Only 'New Town'

'It's much more than an airport — it's an idea'

Shannon town developed with an initial house-building programme to accommodate workers and executives adjacent to the new customs free zone. Its location, 15 miles from larger nearby population centres such as Limerick and Ennis, meant that accommodation for workers needed to be addressed. Connectivity to other areas was relatively poor at that time, with limited public transport accessibility, and it was decided that new residential development needed to take place adjacent to the free zone.

Shannon began with a limited amount of housing, in the form of apartments on Drumgeely Hill, directly adjacent to the airport, followed by low-rise detached residential homes on Tullyglass and Tullyvarraga Hill which were created for new industrialists and workers. This was rapidly followed in the early 1960s by the commissioning of an Outline Development Plan by Downes, Meades & Robinson Architects in association with a town planner, Frederick Rogerson. Their plan proposed an overall scheme for the development of a "town" made up of several neighbourhoods and an area designated for a town centre at Shannon. This led to the creation of Shannon as Ireland's first and only 'New Town'.

A 'New Town' is a term in urban planning and architecture to define a settlement that was planned and built at once and separate from any existing settlement. This is unique because most towns and cities grow and evolve over time, often at different speeds from one original point. Many new towns were built in the United States and Britain in the 1950s, Shannon is the only one of its kind in Ireland.

New housing began to be built adjacent to the free zone in the 'Radburn' style. This was a town planning movement that became popular in the US and UK and would eventually become known as the 'garden city for the motor age'. New ideas from this movement included creating 'super blocks' much larger than traditional urban blocks at the time, with corridors of natural green space and wildlife running between them, keeping pedestrians completely separated from vehicles on streets, and adhering to a strict road hierarchy, with cul-de-sacs for vehicles leading to front doors and pedestrian connectivity through natural corridors

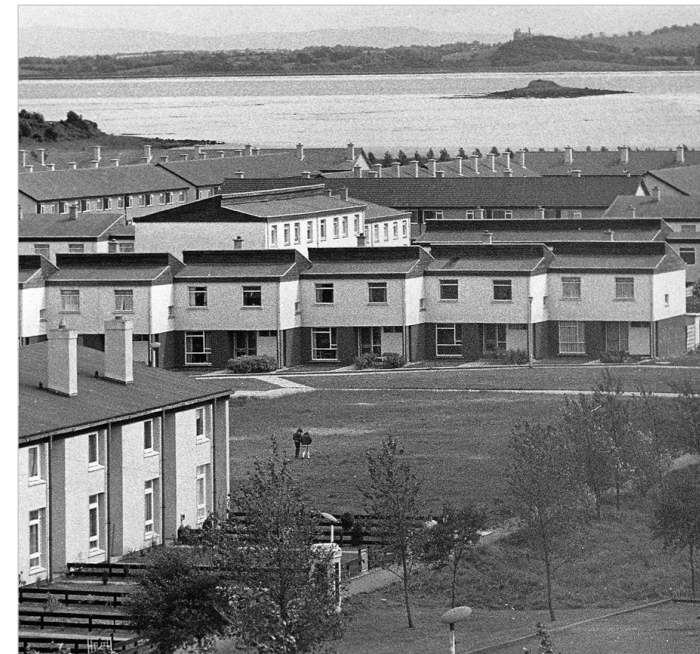
and paved pathways on a separate network linking to back gardens. Projections for the long-term population projections of the town were envisaged to be around 25,000-35,000, and the plan recommended designating the development of up to 3,000 acres for industry, housing, and associated development.

Shannon International Airport also had significant influence on local residents. Among the 150 families then living in the Drumgeely area, 14 different nationalities were represented, which was quite a high figure for such a remote and previously rural part of Ireland. The population also included many returned Irish diaspora who were attracted to Shannon by the availability of jobs and housing. Despite these optimistic statistics, Shannon did not grow as expected.

A report completed in 1968 identified the lack of shopping facilities as a primary source of dissatisfaction among Shannon residents. With the start of phase 1 of the town centre development on 15 March 1972, the town might be said to have come of age. This represented a transition from Shannon as a free zone with housing for workers towards an actual town. The entire 50,000 sq. ft. of retail space, 42 units in all, was fully let months before the official opening. Quinnsworth supermarket was the anchor tenant and a full range of trades and services were provided in the smaller units. This meant that residents of Shannon would be able to buy all their day-to-day items within the town.



*New neighbourhoods are built beyond the Airport and Free Zone, including Drumgeely and Tullyglass*



*New neighbourhoods designed in the Radburn style*



*Only local retail provisions existed until the town centre in 1972*



*The town centre under construction circa 1971*



*The Shopping Street under construction circa 1972*



# Shannon Town Centre

## The heart of Shannon?

The new town centre, opened in 1972, gave Shannon its much-needed focal point, but from the start there was dissatisfaction with the design. The main narrow, open corridor of shops often funnelled wind and rain, causing visitors to 'hug the wall' for protection from the elements.

The shopping centre design was entirely inward-focused, with the backs of shops and services facing the main roads; this was common design practice in the 1970s. No shop frontages were visible from outside the main pedestrian shopping street, which caused wayfinding issues and concern among visitors and residents alike.

The town centre was unlike any other in Ireland because it was privately owned, it had no recognisable streets, and the number of restaurants, pubs, and gathering venues was much smaller than in other towns of a similar size.

In the early 2000s, the shopping centre became enclosed. This made the shopping experience more comfortable in poor weather, but it reinforced the disconnect between the shopping centre and the surrounding urban area. Civic offices, a town square, and a wider range of retail units within the covered pedestrian shopping centre were all part of the design, but unfortunately this has not been enough to transform the image of the town centre.

On Tuesday 8 December 2009, the Adoration Chapel was officially opened and blessed by Bishop Willie Walsh. The chapel sits at the western edge of the plaza.

Today the shopping centre is County Clare's largest, with 50 shopping outlets and a large amount of surface and multi-storey parking. It serves the shopping needs of a wide range of customers from the locality of Shannon Town, Shannon Airport, the surrounding industrial estates, and beyond.



The Adoration Chapel, opened in 2009



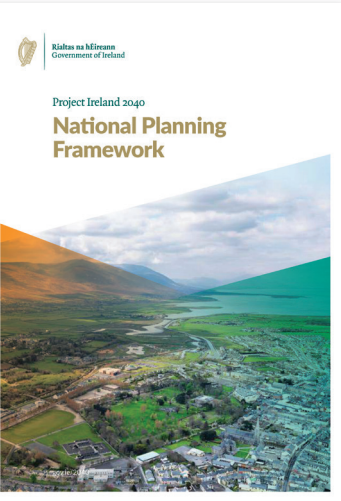
The original 'shopping street' of the town centre before it was enclosed





# Planning Policy Today

## National Context



The **Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (NPF)** is a strategic framework to guide public and private investment, and to protect and enhance the environment. It sets out a spatial hierarchy of urban centres that are in line for significant population and economic growth over the period of the plan. It also sets out the key principles that will guide future development across the country, addressing issues such as compact growth, making stronger urban places, creating strong and vibrant communities, and ensuring a healthy, liveable environment. This will be achieved through 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and priorities for every community in the country.



Aligned with the NPF, the **National Development Plan 2021-2030** sets out the government's overarching investment strategy and budget for that period, enabling delivery of the NSOs and priorities set out in the NPF. This significant funding source will support both urban regeneration and rural rejuvenation through a €3 billion Regeneration and Development Fund.

The NPF identified that a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) would be prepared

for the mid-west region through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process (RSES). In this regard, Shannon Town forms a strategic position as part of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area. It is central to delivering the ambition for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) which aims to strengthen the area's role as an international location of scale and a primary driver of economic growth in the Southern Region. In that regard, Shannon also occupies a strategic location as a gateway to the west of Ireland.

Shannon is recognised as fundamental to the future economic development of the Mid-West Region, and as a nationally and internationally important centre for employment, connectivity, international trade, and foreign direct investment. This masterplan accords with six key areas that the NPF identifies as priorities for managing compact growth, using lands in public ownership for strategic purposes and supporting this with strengthened, more environmentally focused planning at local level:

- NSO 1 – Compact Growth
- NSO 4 – Sustainable Mobility
- NSO 5 – A Strong Economy, Innovation and Skills
- NSO 6 – High-Quality International Connectivity
- NSO 7 – Enhance Amenity and Heritage
- NSO 8 – Transition to a low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

In line with the provisions of NSO 1 Compact Growth, the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan will seek to recognise urban compaction as an essential element for improving urban-growth management in the town and also, to establish connectivity with the wider MASP area.

The augmentation of the town centre will increase Shannon's attractiveness as a place to live for the many people working in existing and new enterprises in the Shannon area. In addition, as a place to visit, dwell, and spend time, tourists entering Ireland through Shannon Airport will have immediate access to the Atlantic Economic Corridor, the Wild Atlantic Way, and the linked Shannon Estuary Way.





The proposals as presented in the masterplan’s develop- mental framework will build on existing assets in the area, which demonstrates links with other strategic outcomes such as sustainable mobility, in line with NSO 4, through the location of the proposed new civic building and connections to existing and proposed cycling and walking facilities, e.g., the Town Park and Green Infrastructure Plan. The town centre is well serviced with bus links to Galway, Ennis, and Limerick. Surface and multi-storey car parking is readily available in the town centre. Shannon is a cycle- and walk-friendly town, and the residential areas are within walking distance of the town centre and this site.

The masterplan also addresses aspects of NSOs 5 and 6: a strong economy, supported by enterprise, innovation, and skills, through contributing to higher standards of living and quality of life by making Shannon, already a competitive regional cluster, more attractive for jobs and growth. Under NSO 6: high-quality international connectivity, Shannon Town’s proximity relative to Shannon Airport, and that trade in goods and services enhances the attractiveness for direct investment.

In compliance with NSOs 7 and 8, it is proposed to improve the public realm in Shannon Town Centre through an improved public realm and parking strategy. The new town square will seek to expand on the existing square and focal point of the Adoration Chapel. It will aim to improve the public realm, mobility and car parking, whilst prioritising pedestrians and will be directly linked to the proposed new civic building. The proposal for enhancing the streetscape, public space, and cultural opportunities presented also achieves the outcome of enhancing amenity and heritage. The strategies proposed contribute positively to the objectives of NSO 8 by developing low-carbon construction and an operational model towards a Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) design: environmentally sustainable buildings.



**Town Centre First Policy** - The objective of this policy is to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cul- tural and recreational hub for the local community. The significance of vibrant towns is also advocated as being an important catalyst for balanced regional development. A vibrant and attractive town centre is further acknowledged as being an increasingly key element in competitive advantage and in driving economic investment, with Foreign Direct Investment increasingly being influenced by the quality of a life that towns can offer to prospective talent.

This Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is one of the first masterplans prepared under the Town Centre First Policy. Recognising that local communities and local businesses can be central to reimagining their own towns and plan- ning their own futures, Clare County Council through the collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders in the prepara- tion of this masterplan will seek to revitalise Shannon Town Centre through several interventions and a range of infra- structural and commercial, civic and amenity town centre projects. Coupled with the need to secure a vibrant and viable town centre is the need identified by stakeholders to foster a strong identity and sense of place. This masterplan will set out a placemaking framework to create an enhanced public realm.

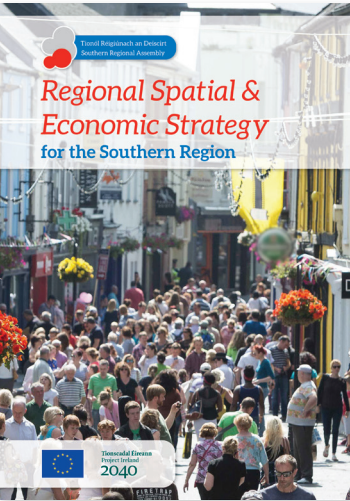
Clare County Council in recognition of the vital role that it plays in assisting towns and communities shape their futures set out in Town Centres First, will continue to collaborate with stakeholders, government agencies and the private sector to harness the potential that exists in Shannon Town. The focus of the masterplan will be to leverage private and state investment in a range of sectors, retail, commercial, education, residential to create a vibrant mix of day and night time uses, creating footfall, and enhancing economic development of the town.





# Planning Policy Today

## Regional Context



The **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)** is the implementing framework for the NPF through which the vision of the NPF and related government policies and objectives will be delivered in the three regions governed by a Regional Assembly. The RSES for the Southern Region establishes a broad framework and foundation for how society, the environment, economy, and land use should evolve. From a regional perspective, the RSES recognises the strategic position that Shannon

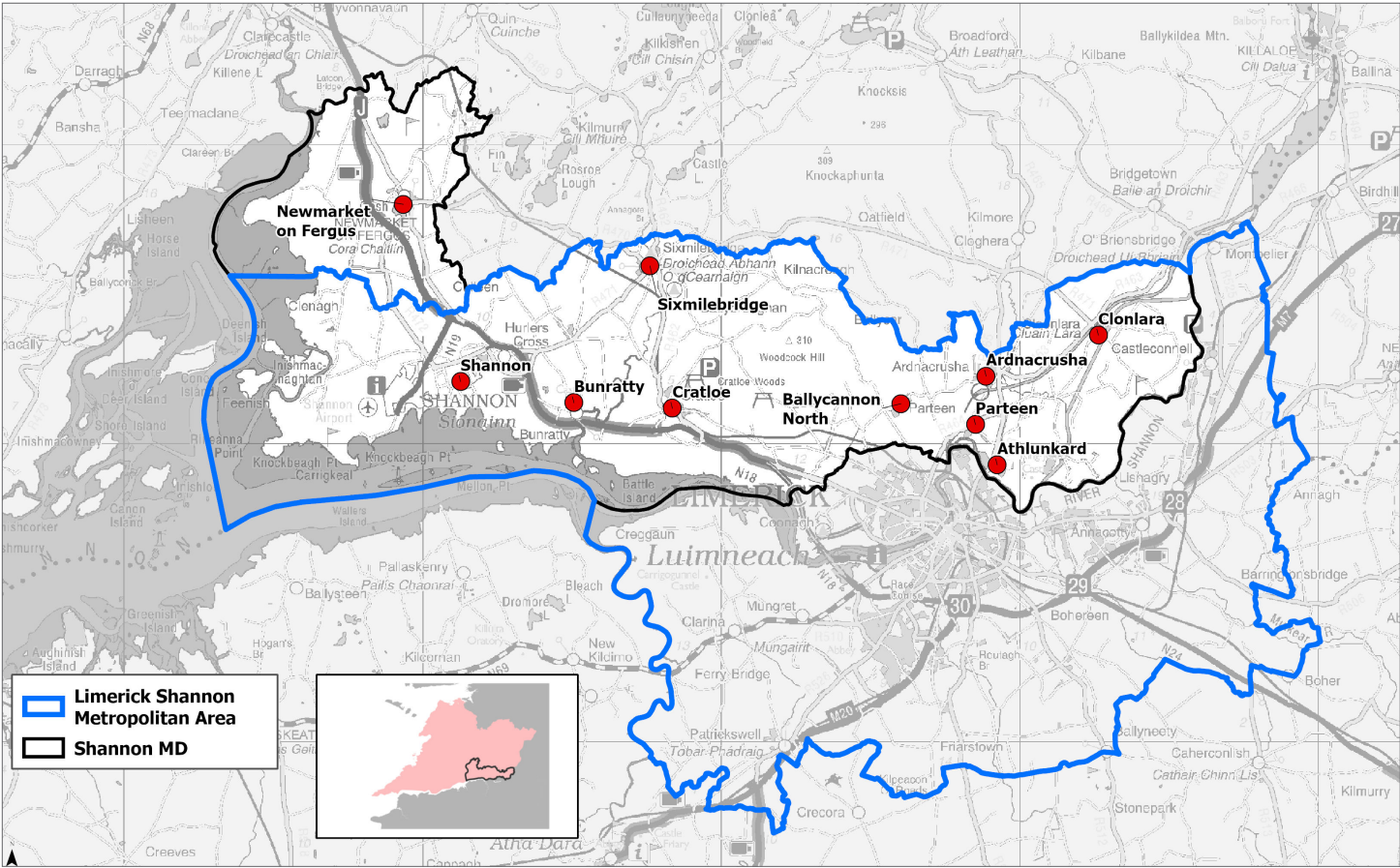
occupies within the mid-west region as a driver of economic activity and acknowledges the unique role that it plays as a centre for economic growth and employment in the mid-west of Ireland. With its economic workforce in five main industrial or enterprise areas in the town's environs (Shannon Free Zone West, West Park, Free Zone East, Smithstown, and Shannon International Airport), it plays a crucial role in the economic development of the Mid-West Region as a whole. The RSES also identifies the strategic position that Shannon occupies as a gateway to the west of Ireland, as a centre of international business and the strong synergies with Limerick City whilst also noting that Shannon International Airport and the industrial park are critical not only to the mid-west, but the country as a whole, therefore a driver of economic activity within the region. Accordingly, Shannon forms part of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area for which a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) has been prepared for within the RSES.



A **Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)** is prepared for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area. The MASP aims to act as an economic driver for the wider region. A key objective of the MASP is to strengthen the role of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area as an international location of scale and a primary driver of economic growth in the Southern Region. It identifies that Shannon due to its

strategic position, is a centre of international business. With the International Airport and the industrial park, Shannon is critical to the country as a whole. It is also acknowledged that there is significant opportunity for Shannon to expand as a globally recognised centre of excellence for software engineering / aviation / logistics talent and in that regard, it recognises and supports Shannon as a centre for research and development for autonomous vehicles that will complement Shannon's role as world leader in aviation and as a centre for manufacturing, engineering, and distribution. Shannon town and environs is therefore central to delivering the ambition for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area's economic development and success.

It is further set out in the MASP that a key policy objective is to transform Shannon into a dynamic, vibrant place to live and to work noting that opportunities exist to create a new image that is fresh and welcoming, that capitalises on the existing strengths and assets of Shannon which should be pursued through placemaking, including improving the quality and sense of place in the town centre. In that regard, it is set out under policy Objective 10 of the Limerick-Shannon MASP to enhance Shannon Town as an attractive residential centre through regeneration, active land management initiatives and to create a sustainable urban design town centre through the preparation of an 'Action Area Plan'. The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan therefore complies with this objective as it strives to be a catalyst to enhance the town centre by enabling town centre living, enhanced public urban space, and improved retail and commercial offer, whilst also seeking to attract new employment, enterprise and educational opportunities on lands to the north of the town centre.





# Planning Policy Today

## County Context



The **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** (as varied) is the primary policy document for planning policy throughout the functional area of Clare County Council. The plan also contains settlement plans for all of the towns and villages in the county, with the exception of Shannon Town.

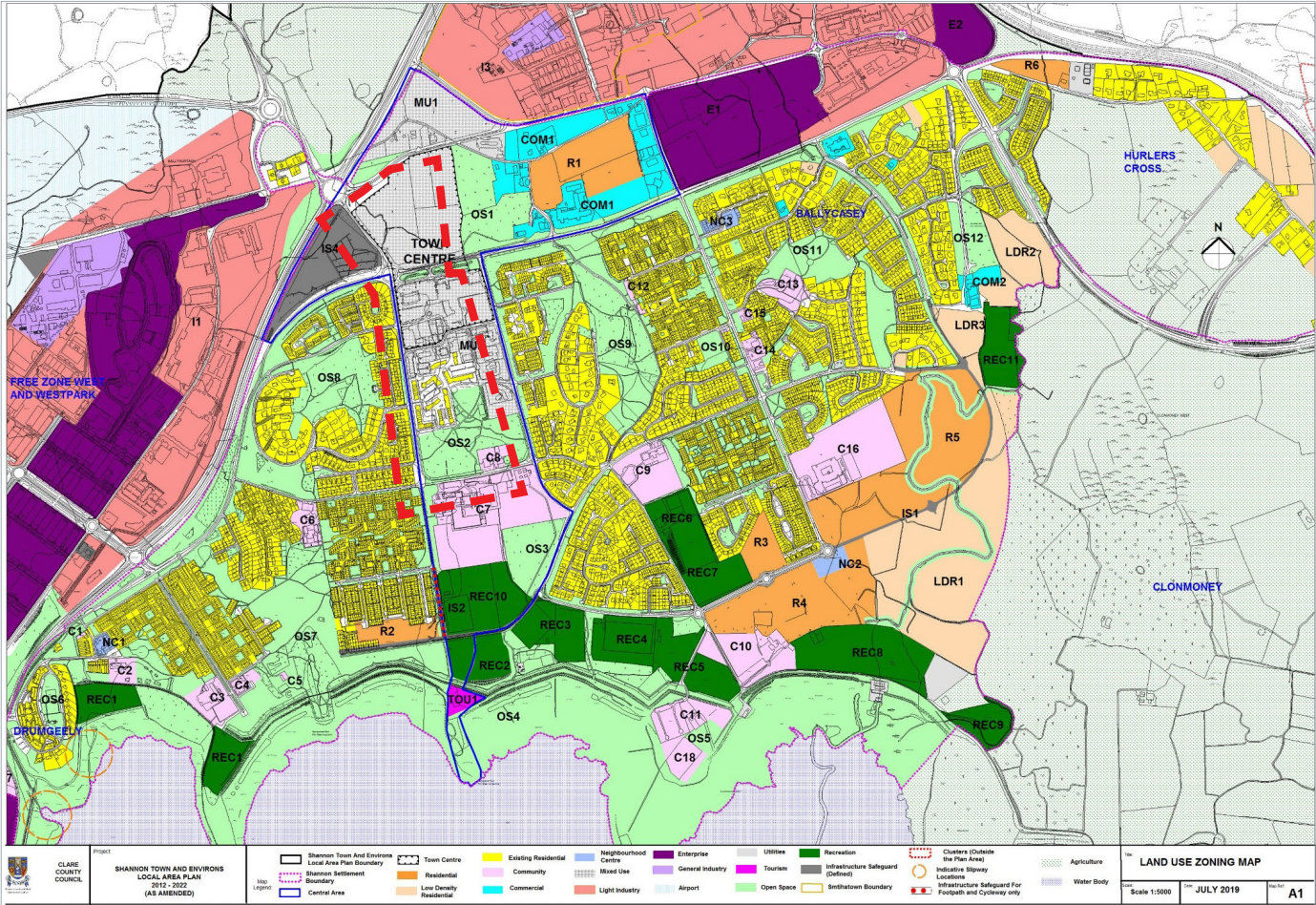
Shannon Town has its own dedicated Local Area Plan; Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (as amended). This sets out the land-use plan for Shannon

Town and its environs through a written statement and accompanying land-use zoning maps.

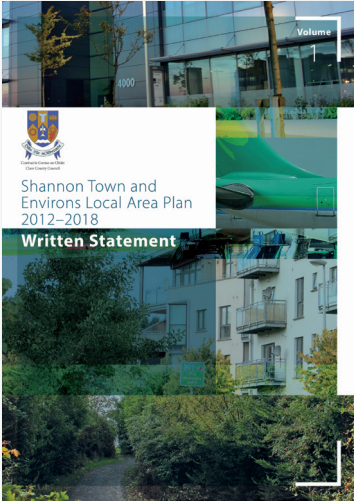
Shannon Town was developed from the 1960's onwards in response to the growth and development of Shannon International Airport and the Shannon Free Zone Industrial Estate. It has evolved and developed as a world leader in aviation, manufacturing and distribution and as a result it occupies a strategic position in the west of Ireland.

The Plan recognises Shannon as an established centre of both foreign direct investment and indigenous enterprise. The economic importance of Shannon Town and environs is reinforced in the Plan by supporting policies and objectives that relate to the aviation sector, the importance of Shannon International Airport and the industrial base located in Shannon Town. It is further acknowledged that Shannon Town has a key role to play as a retail destination as it has many strengths to offer in terms of its designation in the MASP as a Metropolitan town i.e. Limerick – Shannon Metropolitan Area, its sizeable workforce, its resident population and having an international airport and brand name.

In recognition of economic decline in recent years, the Clare County Development Plan supports town and village renewal and regeneration as a necessary requirement to support the consolidation and growth of such settlements. It is an objective of the Plan to deliver a vibrant and viable town centre for Shannon with a range of retail and service facilities. Emphasis is therefore placed on increasing the quantity and quality of retail offer, the development of a night-time economy along with developing cultural and entertainment facilities within the town centre to encourage greater social use and interaction. Therefore, attractive physical environments with a high level of amenity are essential to the quality of life for local residents, and also to ensure that settlements such as Shannon Town remain as attractive locations for new development.







The **Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018** (as varied)<sup>1</sup> sets out the land-use plan for the proper planning and sustainable development of the settlement of Shannon Town and its environs through a written statement and accompanying land-use zoning maps.

The Local Area Plan (LAP) also incorporates the Shannon Town Green Infrastructure Plan which aims to enhance the physical and natural environment in the town and

support the use of sustainable modes of transport and it further sets out a strategy to develop the town as a low carbon residential and business/commerce centre.

Shannon, the second largest town in County Clare, is located on the Shannon Estuary, which forms part of the southern boundary of the County. The population of the town is approximately 10,000 while Shannon has a daytime population of approximately 18,000 people with over 8,700 people working within the Shannon Free Zone in over 160 companies. Shannon has many competitive advantages and existing strengths. It has considerable potential to improve and reinvent itself as a place to live, work, socialise, visit and do business.

The settlement is defined by a number of components: Shannon Town, Shannon Airport, Shannon Free Zone and Smithstown Industrial Estates and agricultural lands

to the east, west and north. Shannon Town was initially developed in the 1960s in response to the growth of Shannon International Airport and the Shannon Free Zone.

It is an objective of the LAP 'to secure a vibrant and viable town centre' and in tandem, 'to foster a strong identify and a sense of place'. Both of these objectives arise out of the need to renew the town centre and reimagine and redevelop the existing public realm. It is therefore a strategic objective of the LAP to develop a distinct shopping core to increase Shannon's attraction and to deliver a vibrant and viable town centre for Shannon with a range of retail, service, recreation, and cultural facilities. In order to do so, the LAP further identifies the need to redefine, improve and expand the town centre to attract new commercial business to the area and to encourage the increased use of the town centre for social and evening/night-time use, and to create an attractive place in which to shop, dine and socialise. Objective 5.5 of the LAP seeks to redefine the town centre through the development of a civic / arts centre within the defined central area of the town. The lands to the north of the R471 are identified as a significant opportunity to expand the town centre to the north of An Bóthar Mór. This is supported in Objective 5.7 of the LAP.

<sup>1</sup> In June 2017, the Elected Members of Clare County Council resolved to defer the making of a new local area plan for Shannon Town and Environs for a five-year period, up to September 2022.



Source: Shannon Local Area Plan 2012-2018



# What's Next for Shannon?

As a New Town, Shannon is entrepreneurial and forward thinking. — What's next?

As with many planned New Towns, Shannon was designed as a purpose-built New Town according to planning, transport engineering and socio-economic doctrines of a certain period. Although Shannon has many competitive economic advantages, its town centre, like many other New Town Centres, struggles with a lack of cultural facilities, a notable absence to a sense of place and character in the town centre.

Shannon Town is a reflection of the town planning ideas and ambitions of its time, as are cities such as Canberra, Stevenage, and Milton Keynes. After several decades, many planned cities become outdated and need to be adjusted to revised social, economic, and demographic conditions.

Most planned New Towns in Europe and North America were planned as 'relief valves' for larger urban metropolises nearby. They were often dormitory, with little economy of their own. Shannon is different in this sense, as it was planned to complement a new international airport and free trade zone. Despite this, its large-scale neighbourhoods, wide streets, vast surface car parks and roundabouts were designed for car based infrastructure. Its deliberate lack of traditional mixed-use streets, defined public spaces, and lively pedestrian environments means that activity is generally limited to the shopping centre, which dominates the town centre.

## How can we reinvent and update a New Town?

While economic factors are always a prevailing condition, integral planning, social sustainability, resilience, inclusion, local culture, and residents' participation are all very necessary in rethinking how a New Town should operate.

There is a need to strive for resiliency and flexibility, for something that can grow in an organic way, is inclusive, and offers a place for its variety of citizens and all of society. The town centre should be socially cohesive yet diverse, cater for pedestrians and bicycles, it should embody sustainability and energy efficiency, and be an exemplar piece of green, smart infrastructure.

The Appendix of this document describes several planned New Towns that share similar attributes with Shannon and have reimagined their town centres in recent years: Milton Keynes and Bracknell in the UK, and Almere, Hoogvliet, and Spijkenisse in the Netherlands.



St Nicholas Quarter, Dundalk, Ireland



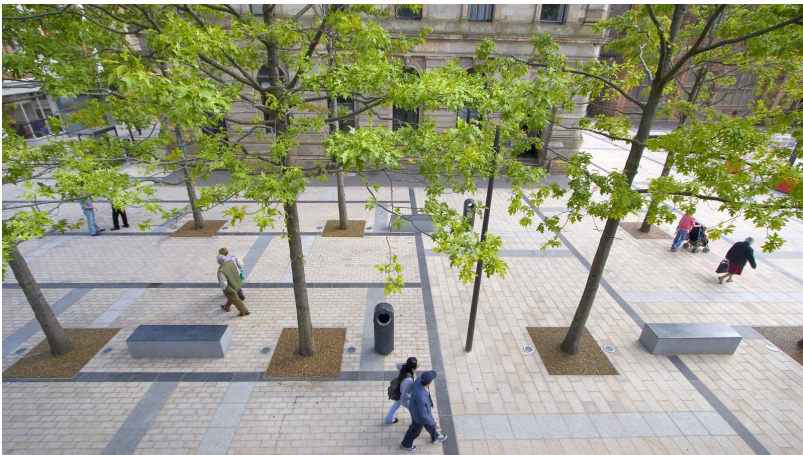
New Planting on Grafton Street, Dublin, Ireland



Almere Town Centre, Netherlands



Almere Town Centre, Netherlands



Derry City Centre



# 03

## Site Analysis

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# Definition of Masterplan area

The proposed masterplan framework area suggests redefining the existing town centre boundary set out by Clare County Council in the Shannon Town and Environs LAP 2021-2018, dividing it into three Focus Areas.

This area is structured around three concentric layers instead of three Focus Areas. Each layer will have a specific set of design and development approaches, key projects, delivery strategies and phasing plans.

The proposed framework layers are: Town Centre Core, Expansion Areas, Wider Framework Boundary.

## Town Centre Core

This includes Focus Areas 1 and 3. Two contrasting spatial conditions: shopping centre, retail, commercial surface car park, restaurant in Focus Area 1 with Focus Area 3 comprising of greenfield lands separated physically and functionally by the R471. Both these areas will be treated as one holistic centre.

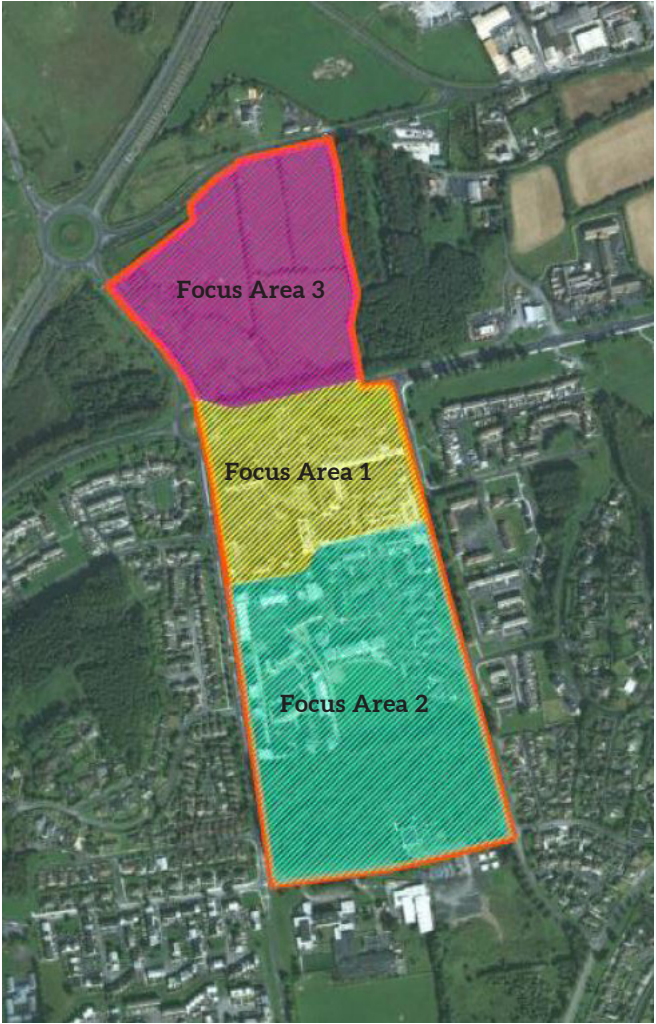
## Expansion Areas

Includes part of Focus Area 2, green fields and partially developed plots adjacent to the town centre core. These areas will form future growth areas, and their design will be intrinsically linked to the Town Centre Core.

## Wider Framework

This is the interface with the primary street grid, road network, and Shannon Estuary. Minor proposals will be made to this area to ensure thoughtful integration with both the Town Centre Core and Expansion Areas.

Following an appraisal and examination of the town centre, it was proposed to expand the study area for the masterplan to include roads and streets linking the town centre with the estuary towards the south, as seen in the diagram highlighted opposite.



Original County Clare Site Boundary showing three Focus Areas





## Character Areas within the Masterplan

The area of the masterplan aligns with the 'central area' and town centre boundary outlined in the Shannon Town and Environs Local Plan (2012-2018). The area of the masterplan also extends to key frontages and boundaries with other existing uses, such as the Shannon Free Zone, Smithstown Industrial Estate or the Shannon Estuary.

An important feature of the masterplan area is that it includes all of the urban blocks in Shannon where the primary use is not residential. These have a variety of urban conditions and uses, ranging from greenfield sites to mixed use environments.

The diagram opposite illustrates how the masterplan area is broken down into smaller urban units that fail to create a coherent, integrated system of linked spaces with a sense of continuity. These include:

- Shopping centre, offices, and residential apartments (1) - Shannon's retail destination and, in effect, the town centre. The block's character is marked by the presence of the shopping centre and large areas of surface car parking. The poor quality of its open spaces and public realm and inward-looking aspect of the retail buildings results in an uninviting and uninspiring urban domain lacking the attributes of a successful and attractive town centre.
- Mixed use block (2) - a mix of residential blocks and offices structured around car parking courts and their related access routes. Streets function primarily as spaces for vehicles, with no pedestrian-oriented public realm.
- Urban park (3) - a recent landscape development that needs time to mature. At present it would benefit from additional elements such as play areas to encourage and support a variety of uses and activities.

- Education, leisure and nature block (4) - most of its area is covered by open spaces (sports fields, wildlife hub), together with education and recreation facilities. At present it is peripheral to the town centre. However, it can be strategic in terms of supporting complementary uses to those at the heart of the town centre and creating a better link with the Shannon Wetlands located to the south of the town centre and the Shannon Estuary.
- North of Bóthar Mór (6 to 8) - the town centre's expansion area, and the space to link it with the employment hubs of the Free Zone and Smithstown.
- Future Development (9) - potential for future development subject to flood risk mitigation - not covered by this masterplan.
- Smithstown Gateway (10) - potential to enhance the main link with Smithstown Industrial Estate.

This brief overview of land use and character areas shows the heterogeneous spatial structure of the study area, and highlights the need for a spatial framework to guide and regulate development to make it a fully functional area.



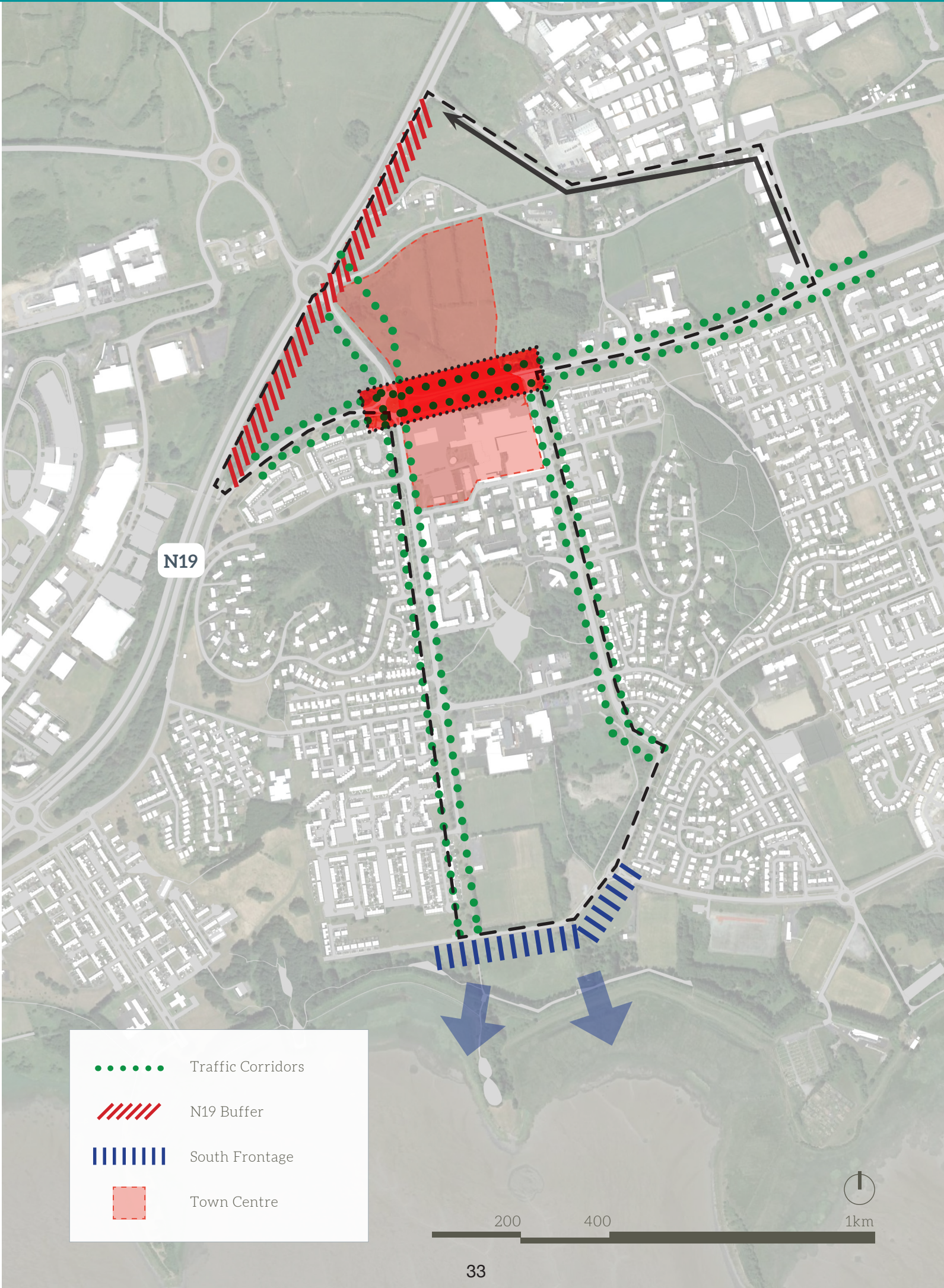


# Study Area Frontages

There are a wide variety of edge conditions both along and within the masterplan boundary. Most external frontages are generally high-capacity traffic corridors, carrying vehicles within Shannon and beyond, but there are also frontages towards the Shannon Estuary Park in the south and to agricultural areas in the north.

The masterplan will take these frontages into account for any new developments and will strengthen connections between existing urban fabric, the estuary, and new proposals. New development and road layouts should blend seamlessly into the existing character of adjacent neighbourhoods of Shannon Town.

Consideration will be taken to ensure the N19 dual carriageway, and the noise and pollution associated with it, do not impact on new development.





## Green Networks

A large portion of the masterplan framework area is either greenfield space, landscaped urban parks, forest lands, or other natural green areas.

The design of Shannon Town allows for large corridors of unbuilt areas to establish a green network and connect these spaces, protecting natural habitats. The masterplan attempts to strengthen these corridors. Establishing a seamless green connection to the Shannon Estuary and the wider River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area will be an important goal of this masterplan, and it is also in line with the Green Infrastructure Framework for Shannon Town, as set out in the Shannon Town and Environs LAP 2012-2018. This will allow for residents and visitors to travel between the town centre and the Shannon Estuary parklands using green corridors, while protecting a sensitive habitat for local birds and wildlife.

This green network, which already exists within Shannon Town, will be complemented and expanded with new development to ensure that an underlying green framework is a critical layer of the masterplan.





# Street Frontages

Active frontages are street frontages where there is active visual engagement between those on the street and those on the ground and upper floors of buildings. This quality is enhanced when the front façade of buildings, including the main entrance, faces and opens towards the street. Ground floors may accommodate uses such as cafés, shops or restaurants. Active frontages can provide informal surveillance opportunities and often improve the vitality and safety of an area. The measures of active frontage may be graded from high to low activity.

The quality of an active streetscape frontage can significantly affect perceptions of the safety, comfort, sociability, and liveliness of a public space. Good-quality active frontages can help create successful public spaces. Continuous street frontages have a minimum of blank walls, servicing areas and gaps between buildings.

Shannon Town Centre has a variety of frontage conditions, including both active and passive streetscapes. Higher-quality active streetscapes exist along the western edge of the shopping centre, while the northern and southern edges are primarily for servicing and access to delivery yards and the multi storey car park. The eastern façade is active but of lower quality.

The remainder of the town centre beyond the shopping centre consists of typical commercial office and residential frontages, with a lack of street definition along certain corridors. There is a wide landscape buffer between the R471 road and the town centre along the north, which gives poor visibility to the town centre.

Improvements and any new development within Shannon Town Centre should aim to improve street frontages and encourage active uses wherever possible.



Restaurant opening to surface car park



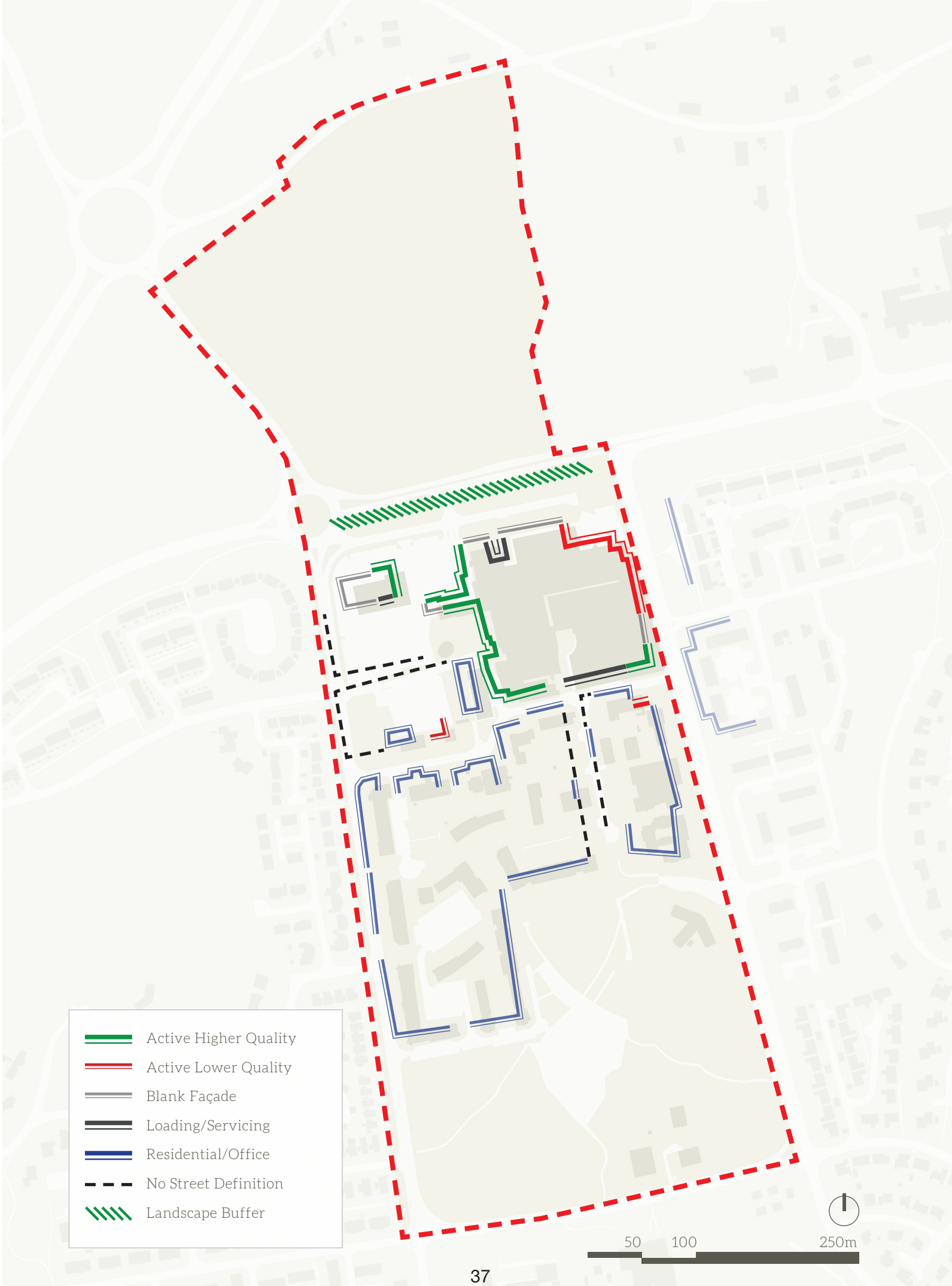
Shannon Town Centre Plaza with retail uses opening onto it



Green buffer along R471 preventing visibility



Blank façade & loading of the shopping centre northern frontage





# Built and Unbuilt Spaces

Figure-ground plans depict the built and unbuilt spaces of a town or city, enabling the reader to quickly visualise the urban fabric, density and street patterns. These drawings can inform connectivity and areas of built-form, and perhaps provide clues or signal an approach to the sensitive expansion of infill of a town centre. This type of map can also visualise a sense of enclosure, which is when building frontages create a feeling of a contained space in an urban environment. These types of places are often where people choose to dwell, and can be some of the livelier places of a town or city.

Shannon Town Centre is heavily defined by the shopping centre, which is the most prominent use within the masterplan area. There is a vast amount of surface car parking surrounding the shopping centre, and very little street definition beyond the town centre plaza which has a defined frontage on most sides. There are no enclosed streets or traditional 'main street' types of development, like those which can be found in Ennis, Galway, Limerick, or even in smaller settlements comparable to Shannon such as Letterkenny or Sligo.

Limerick



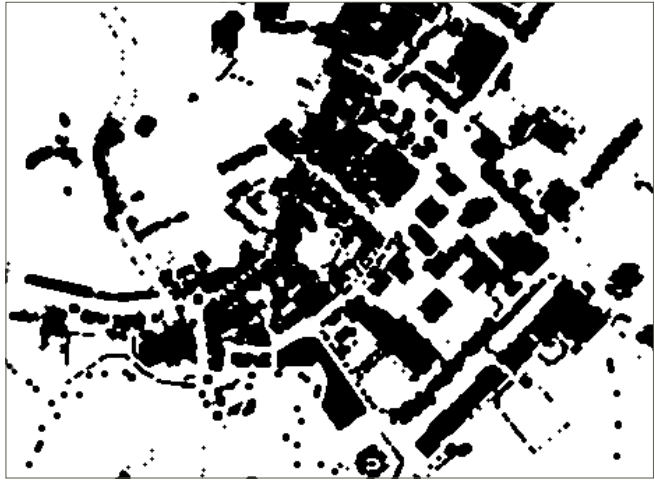
Ennis



Sligo



Letterkenny



Galway



Shannon

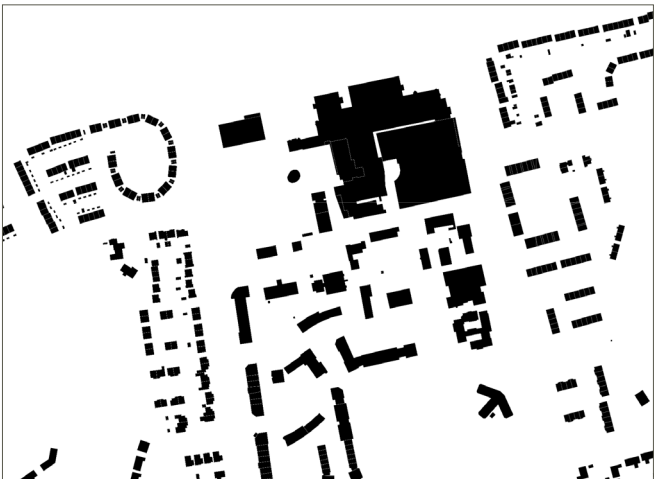


Figure-Ground Plans of town centres



50 100 250m



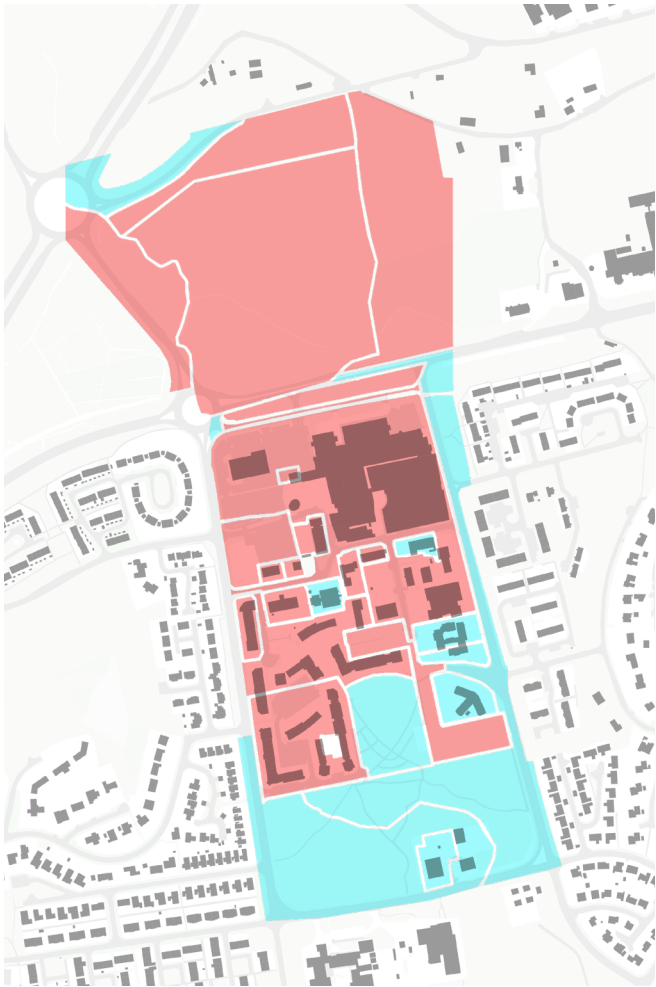
# Land Use and Ownership

The majority of land within the masterplan area is in private ownership, including some very large parcels of development. This is relatively unusual in an Irish town context with no significant land holding in either local authority or public ownership. This presents a key challenge for the implementation of the masterplan and the ability to deliver development.

There is a wide variety of uses in the masterplan area, which will help ensure that the town centre remains vibrant and active at all times of day. Despite this, there is scope to increase the variety of uses on offer and to ensure that existing uses work better together.



Varying Land Ownership parcels within the Masterplan Study Area



Public Ownership  
Private Ownership



- Commercial Office
- Retail
- Community
- Public/Utility
- School
- Residential Higher Density
- Residential Lower Density
- Industrial
- Hotel



## Building Heights

Shannon Town Centre and the surrounding areas primarily consist of single and two storey buildings, with three and four storey buildings located to the south of the town centre. The shopping centre is low rise (one and two storeys) along the northern and western edges, with taller portions along the southern and eastern edges which consist of the multi-storey car park and the Dunnes Stores department store.

Notwithstanding, a significant amount of low-rise buildings in the town centre, Shannon town and its centre has a number of taller buildings which are well integrated into the urban landscape.

There are three taller buildings (five and six storeys) in the study area, one five storey building at the northern edge of the Town Centre Park, one residential rental building, Kincora Apartments, to the west of the shopping centre and a commercial office building in the centre of the shopping centre.



Single storey northern edge of the shopping centre



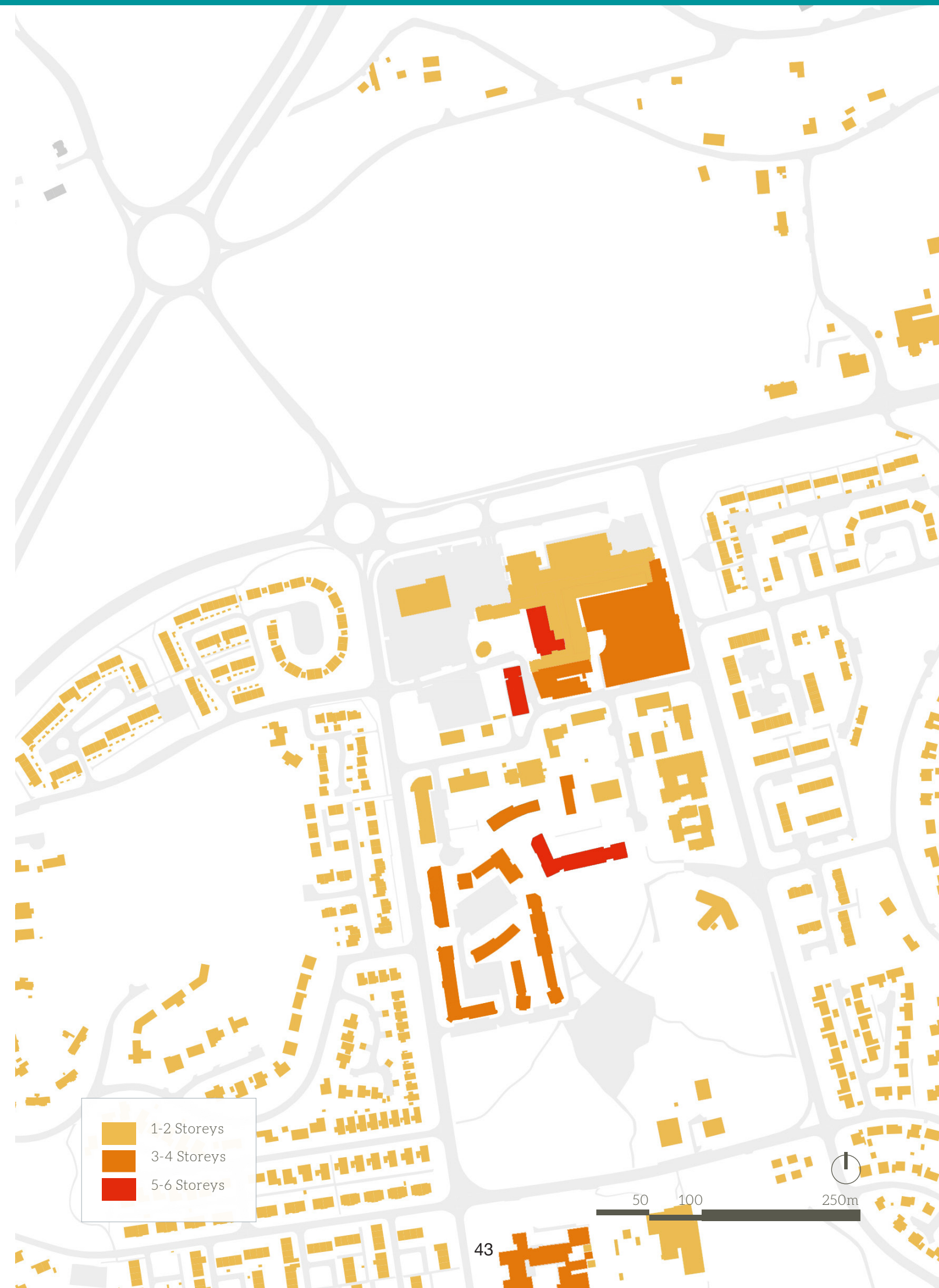
Six storey Kincora Apartments



Typical 3-4 storey development west of the Shannon Town Park



Six storey commercial office building connected to the shopping centre





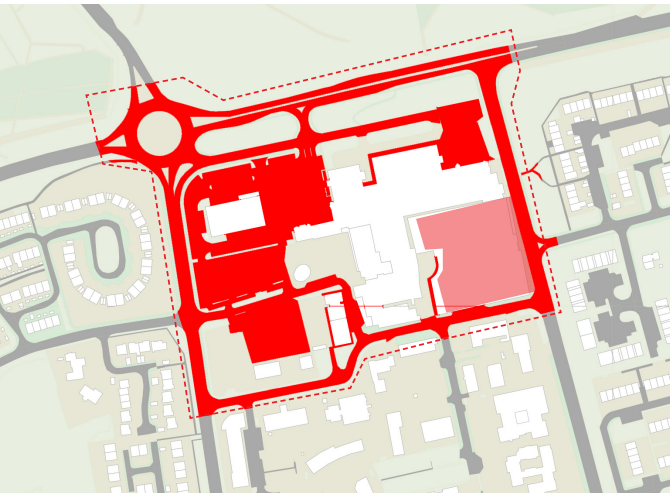
# Parking and Access

There is a large amount of car parking available in the town centre, including both surface and multi-storey in the shopping centre. Around 44% of the 85-hectare Central Area is dedicated to the surface car parking and vehicle access, and this rises to 58%, if the multi-storey car park is included.

The vast amount of surface car parking prevents the town centre from becoming more vibrant and pedestrian friendly. Any future development within the town centre should attempt to minimise this impact and establish pedestrian-focused urban spaces.

## Car Parking Spaces

- 1. Shannon Knights Car Park: 98
- 2. Lidl Car Park: 118
- 3. Car park to front of Oratory: 97
- 4. "The Venue Site" car park: 103
- 5. Dealz car park: 70
- 6. Multi-storey car park: 353 including 41 staff parking spaces



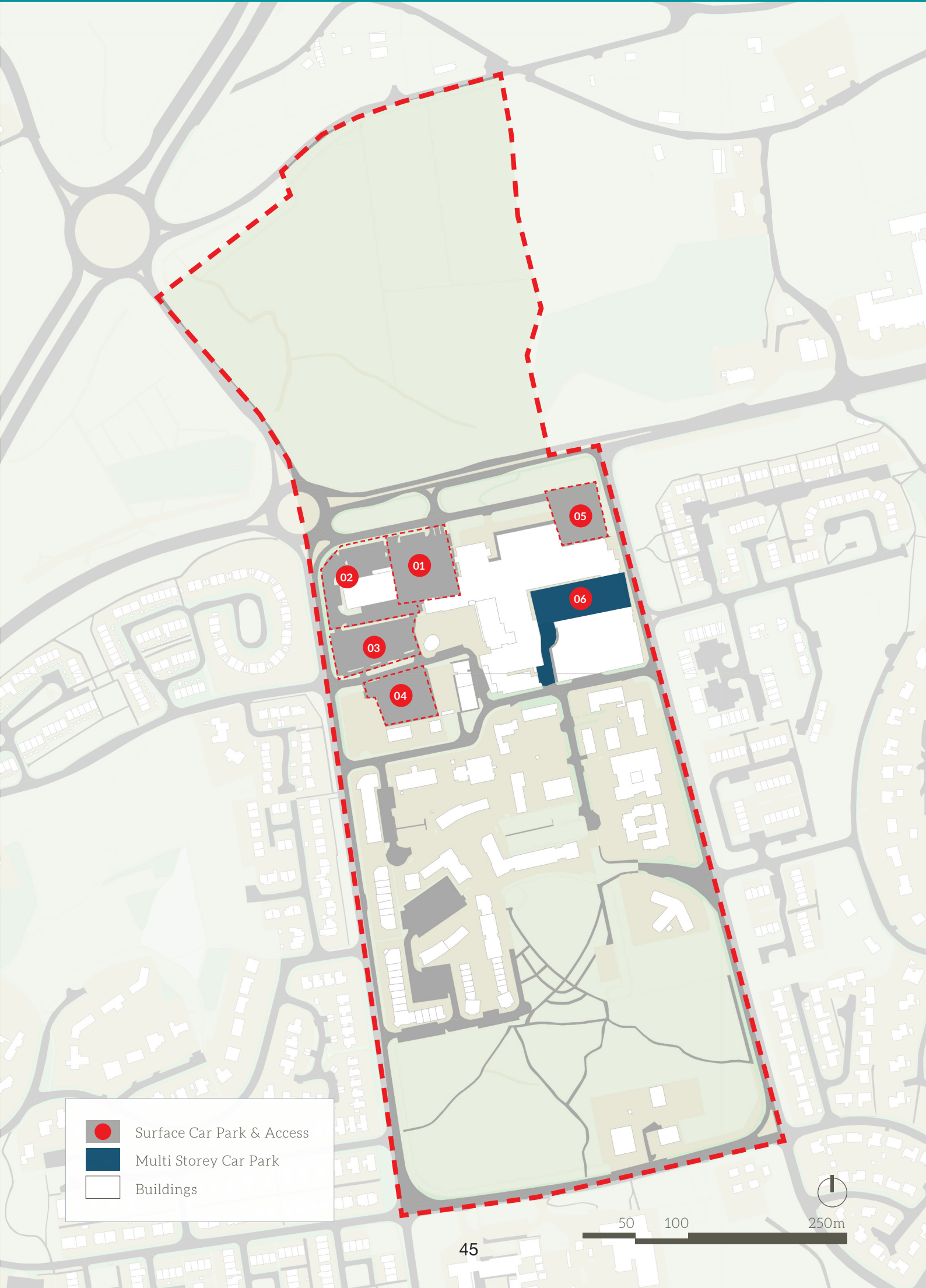
- Ground area dedicated to vehicles
- Multi-storey car park
- Town Centre Central Area



Entrance to multi-storey car park above the shopping centre



Retail surface car parking in the town centre





# Road Sections



1  
Tullyvarraga West Northbound



2  
R471 Eastbound



3  
Tullyvarraga East Southbound



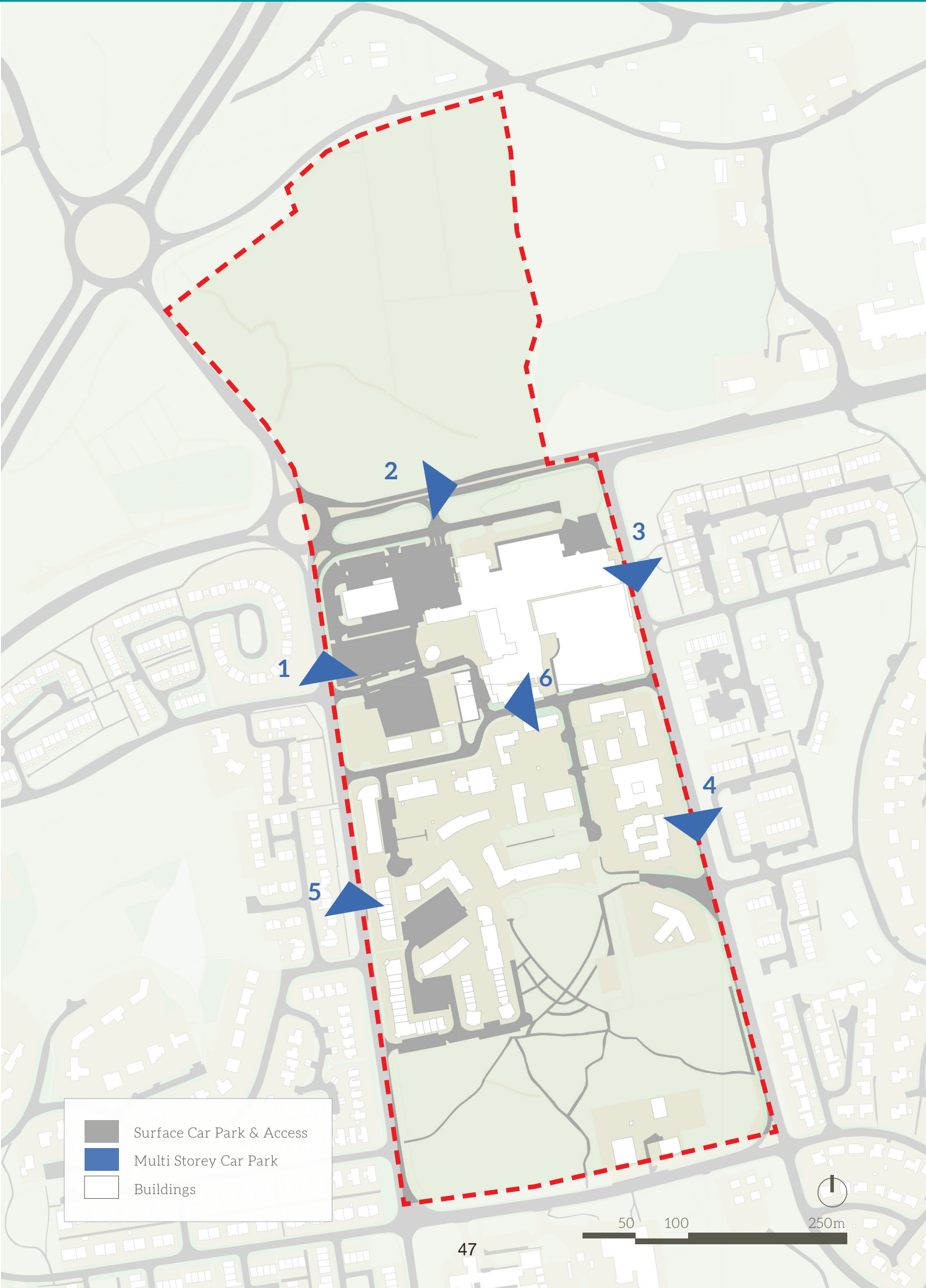
4  
Tullyvarraga East Southbound



5  
Tullyvarraga West Northbound



6  
Shannon Town Centre Westbound





# Movement

## Modal Share and Catchment Areas

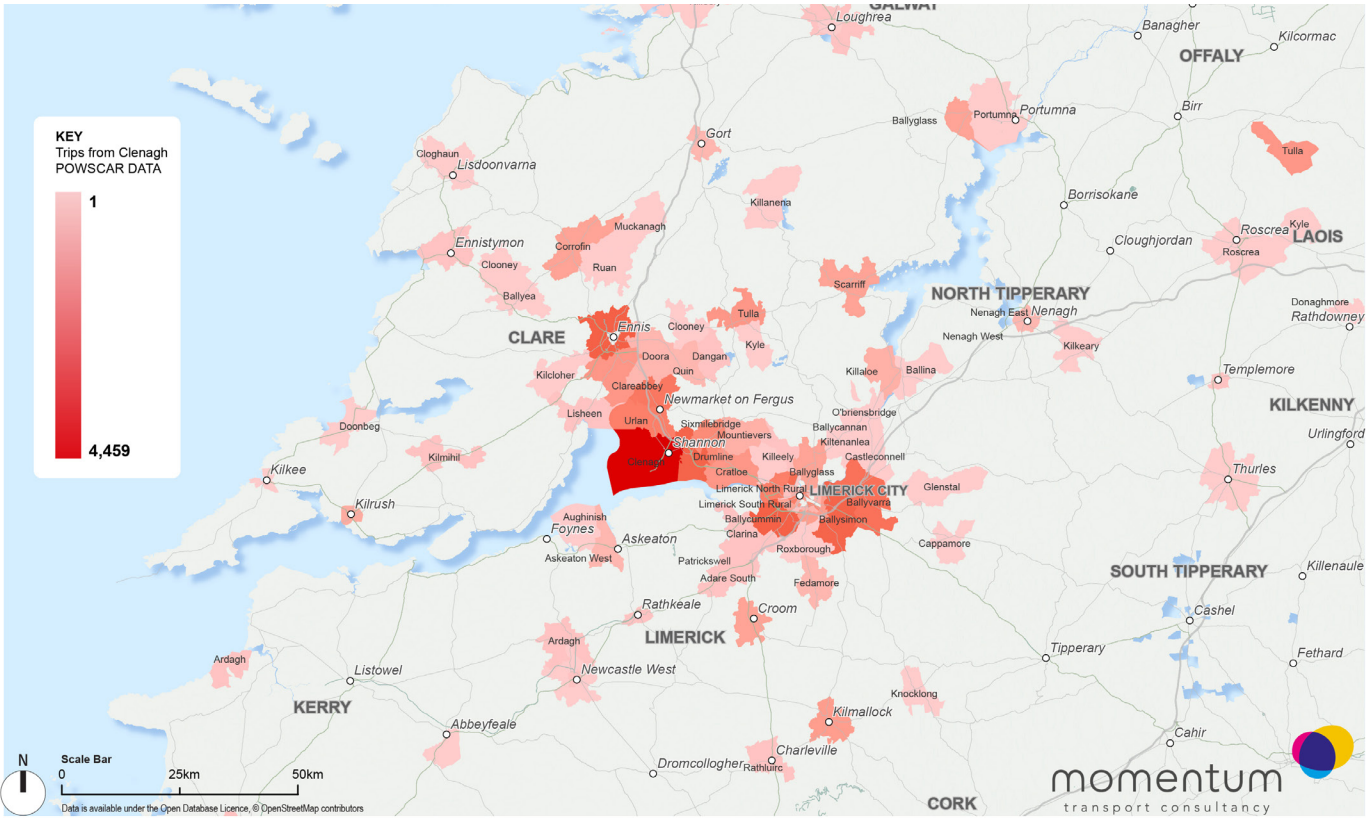
Shannon Town's travel characteristics have been analysed using Census 2016 SAPS data. This analysis shows the town's importance to the wider region, both as a place of work and as a central hub for shopping and services to the wider region.

Car ownership is a key factor in travel pattern behaviour. The level of car ownership in Shannon is high: 18% have no car. 48% have one car and 34% have two or more cars. This indicates the reliance on the private car as a mode of transport for the population of Shannon.

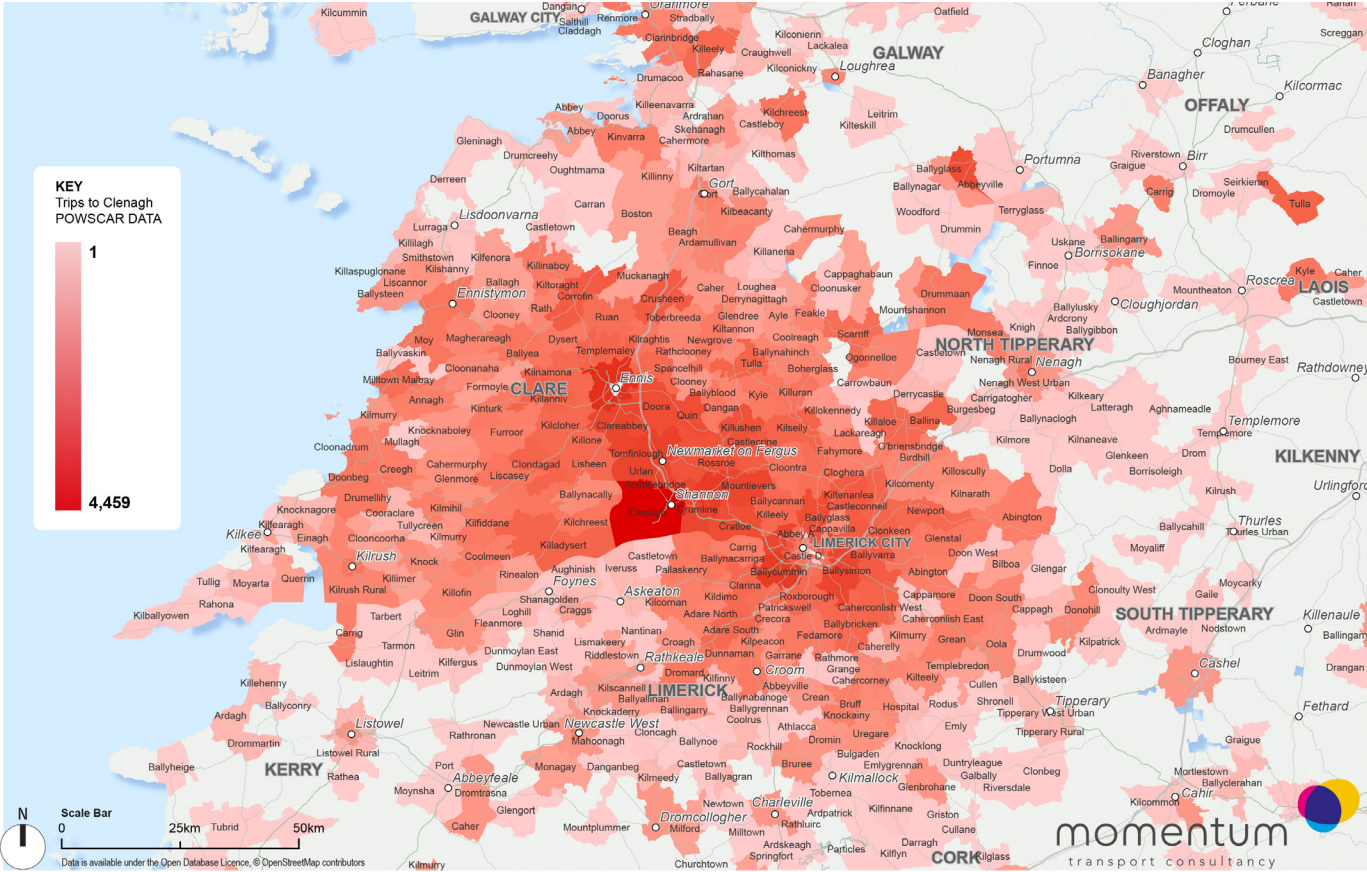
4,459 persons both live and work within Shannon (Electoral Division (ED) Clenagh), accounting for 72% of the total outflow commuters. 1,762 persons live in Shannon but work outside of ED Clenagh, with the second highest number of commuters (728 persons, 12%) travelling to Limerick City and County for work or education. 493 persons (8%) live in Shannon but travel elsewhere in Co. Clare for work or education. The remaining 9% of commuters from ED Clenagh are to other neighbouring counties, including Kerry, Cork, Tipperary and Galway, and fewer than 100 commute to counties further away, including Dublin, Sligo or Mayo.

The two maps opposite show that there is a very high number of people who do not live in Clenagh but work in Clenagh shown by the high number of trips into Clenagh, and that of those who live in Clenagh, very few travel outside to work.

Trips from Clenagh / Shannon Town



Trips to Clenagh / Shannon Town





# Movement

## Road Transport

Shannon Town Centre is well served by existing road connections, reflecting its origin as a planned New Town.

The road network in Shannon Town can be separated into the following three categories:

- National Roads - the N19 national primary road leading to the N18/M18 motorway junction which connects to Ennis and Limerick.
- Regional Roads (R471 and R472) - providing connections between Shannon Town and surrounding areas. R471, An Bóthar Mór, runs directly through the study area acting as the 'Main Street' and connects R472/R471 Roundabout to Ballycasey Roundabout and the N18, which is located 1.5 kilometres to the east of the masterplan area.
- Local roads and local access roads (L3112, L3314, Tullyglass, L3314, Bóthar na Rinne): providing access to the town centre and to local residential developments.

## Traffic Movements

Typical traffic counts for R471 include 9,880 movements per day, 2.0% of which are heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). The L3114 has 5,793 movements per day of which 1.2% HGVs. The L3112 has 5,373 per day of which 1.0% HGVs. The L3314 has 4,003 per day, with 3.0% HGVs.





# Movement

## Bicycle Transport

Shannon Town Centre is well connected with many footways, trails and pedestrian streets covering the area, however permeability within the town centre is poor. The masterplan area does not have many cycling facilities, but some streets provide shared and segregated cycle routes, which exists along the R471 east of L3112 and along the L3314. There are planned improvements to implement cycle lanes on L3114, L3112, and on the sections of the R471 and L3314 that do not currently have cycle lanes.

## Public Transport

Shannon Town Centre is accessible via Bus Éireann routes 343 and 341. The 343 serves several stops in the town and connects with Shannon Airport, Ennis and Limerick. Route 341 bus has one stop approximately 1.5 km from the town centre and connects to Limerick just once a day. Route 343 operates every day but has a different schedule on weekdays and weekends. On weekdays the route from Ennis Bus Station to Limerick Bus Station runs from 06:55 to 23:20, and the route from Limerick Bus Station to Sixmilebridge runs from 05:05 to 23:25. Monday to Friday, there are around 20-25 buses per day in both directions with variable wait times between services. On Saturdays there are approximately 20 buses per day in both directions, and on Sundays there are 10 buses per day in both directions, again with varied wait times.

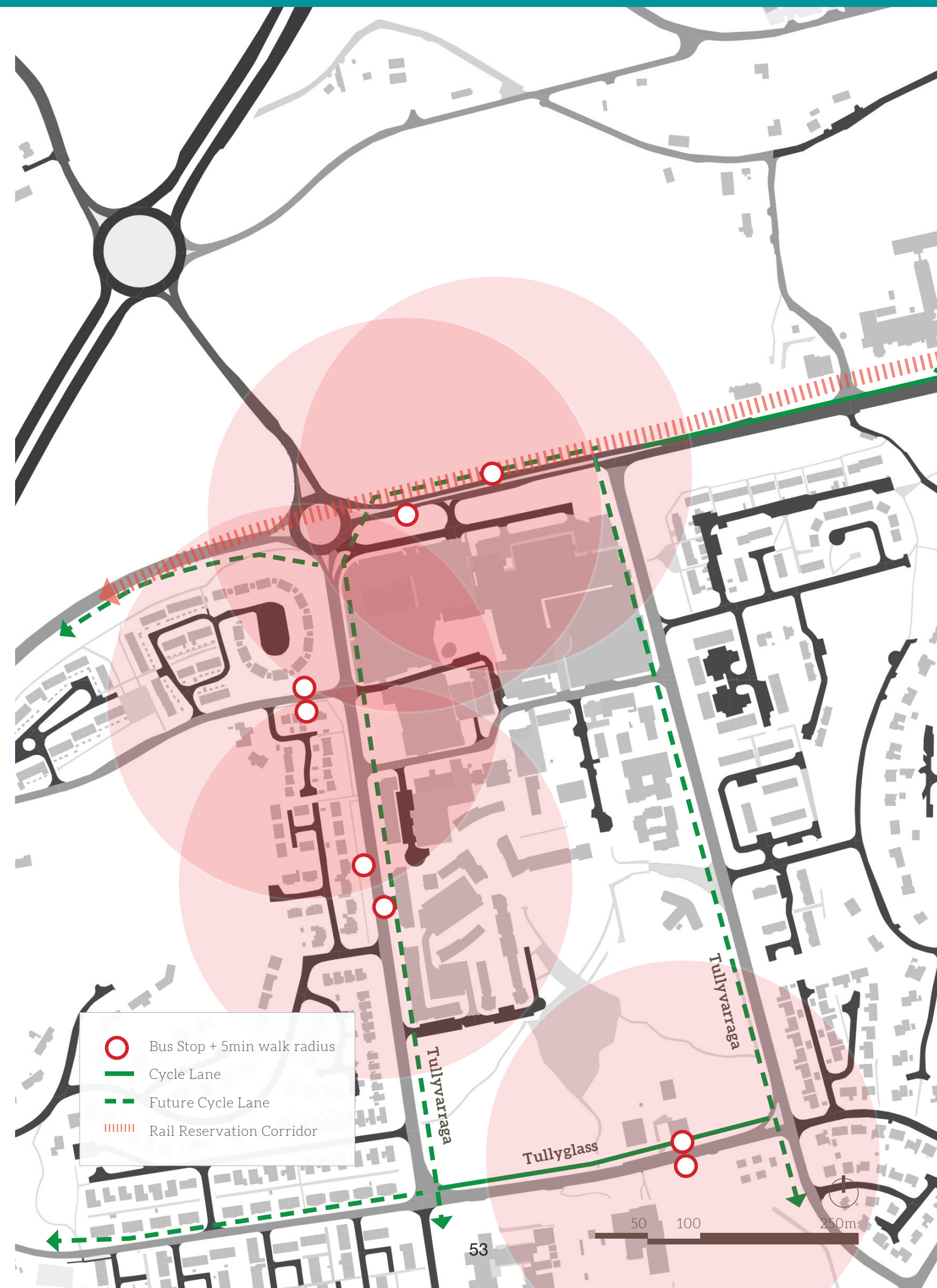
Route 341 operates only once per weekday to accommodate workers at Shannon Free Zone. The bus departs from Cappamore at 06:25, and in the other direction it departs from Shannon Free Zone at 16:35.

Shannon is not served by rail, however there is the potential to provide a 10km spur off the Limerick to Ennis railway line. An infrastructural safeguard is incorporated into the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) along with this objective being endorsed in the Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (as varied). The pursuit of this strategic rail link to serve Shannon Town and Shannon Airport as a spur off the main Ennis-Limerick line remains a high level objective set out in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS).

This would provide an alternative to road travel and would ease congestion on the N18/M18 between Limerick and Ennis. The indicative alignment for the potential Shannon Rail Link Corridor runs along the R471 within Shannon Town Centre.

Recurring themes in current policy guidelines and plans include revitalising towns, creating a well-connected and strong sense of place, integrating land use and transportation, and promoting active travel modes to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of communities.

Shannon Town Centre is well served by the existing road network, but increasing sustainable transport options to cater for existing and future land uses will require improving existing pedestrian and cycle connections and public transport services.







04

# Ecology & Sustainability

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MEET U  
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# Sustainable Development

Local and national policy concerning sustainability has been reviewed to ensure the masterplan is in line with, and has the opportunity to exceed best practice for the design and creation of sustainable communities.

The **Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018** (as veried) sets out a number of strategic goals including:

- Goal 5: to deliver quality housing and sustainable communities;
- Goal 7: to actively pursue a low carbon strategy;
- Goal 10: to deliver an integrated and coherent green infrastructure strategy, encouraging walking, cycling and recreation.

The ambition of this is for the new town centre to go beyond policy requirements, future-proofing the development and creating a scheme that focuses on carbon neutrality, with an aspiration to be carbon-negative and lead the way in circular design.

### Energy and Carbon

Development in Shannon Town is encouraged to follow a passive, fabric first approach. This minimises lifetime carbon emissions and reduces reliance on clean and green technologies. Developing or connecting to future renewable energy networks should be considered, and, in alignment with the County Clare Development Plan and Renewable Energy Strategy, opportunities should be optimised to establish Shannon as a low carbon centre.

### Sustainable Transport

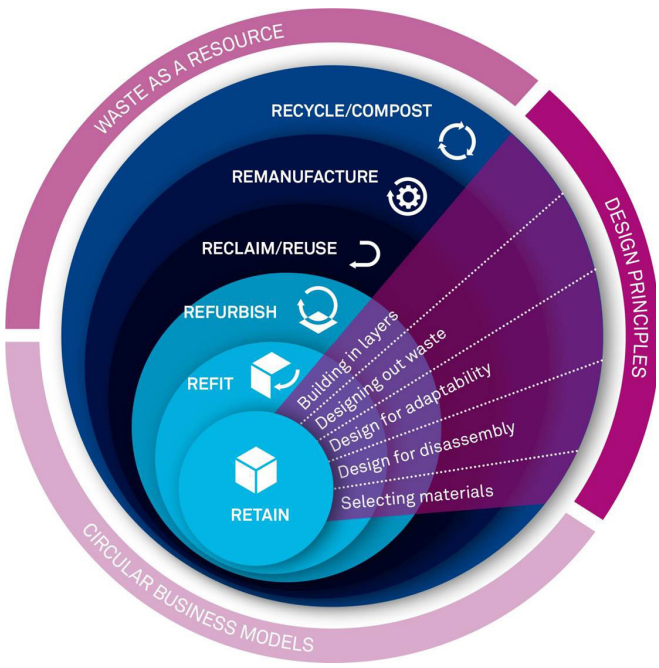
The town centre is designed to move away from private car use, to support use of sustainable modes of transport, mobility, and connectivity in the town.

### Wellbeing

In addition to enhanced air quality through a reduction in vehicles and increased mobility, a strategy to maximise the benefits of green infrastructure and connectivity within the town centre will contribute to improved public health.

### Circular Design

Circular economy principles and Life Cycle Analysis aim to reduce the impact of resource consumption through promotion of natural and bio-based, local materials, designing out waste, pre-fabrication and building in capacity for future adaptability. Appropriate facilities to manage operational waste and minimise waste to landfill should be integrated into developments, and water consumption should be reduced where possible. Demand for potable water should be minimised, before integrating low-flow sanitary fittings, rainwater harvesting, and grey-water recycling systems where viable.



### Climate Change Resilience

In order to future-proof development for resilience and adaptability to the impacts of climate change, including overheating and extreme weather events, capacity or adaptive capacity should be designed into building systems and allowances made for the incorporating of future technologies. For major development, this should include allowances for flood resilience and mitigation of overheating risk based on future weather files.

### SEA & Appropriate Assessment

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, considering all matters relevant, Clare County Council determined that the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is not likely to have a significant effect on any European site(s) within, or adjacent to the study area boundary. Consequently, Appropriate Assessment of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is not required. Taking into account the content of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan, the Screening for Appropriate Assessment and the SEA assessment as outlined in the SEA Screening Report with respect to Schedule 2A 'Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment', it was also determined that SEA is not required in accordance with SEA requirements under: Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers of 27 June 2001 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment; and European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 435 of 2004), as amended.



# Flood Risk Assessment

Shannon Town, its environs and the Airport are protected against the risk of coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding by a network of defences and associated drainage improvements. Much of Shannon consists of low-lying coastal flatlands which are within a Flood Zone protected from tidal flooding by embankments. Although it is protected from tidal flooding by mounded embankments running between the town and Shannon Estuary and also fluvial pumping stations, Shannon Town lies in Flood Risk Zone A. It is important that protection is maintained and upgraded.

Shannon Town has been subject to a number of flood risk assessments, both through the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2022 (as varied), and The Shannon Overtopping Study 2010. The OPW, working in partnership with Clare County Council and other Local Authorities, have completed the Shannon Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study. The Shannon CFRAM Study Area identified Shannon Town & Shannon Airport as an Area of Further Assessment (AFA) and Individual Risk Receptor (IRR) respectively and concluded that a flood relief scheme would be viable and effective for the community. In this regard, the Shannon Flood Relief Scheme is currently at design stage and is anticipated to be in place, prior to the review of the Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2021-2018.

As detailed in the 2016 Shannon Town Strategic Flood Risk Analysis, also carried out by JBA, both existing and future development areas in Shannon Town must be able to manage residual risk from tidal defence breach and pumping-station failure to a high standard, to facilitate further development. This masterplan seeks to support the Local Area Plan in delivering integrated and coherent green infrastructure, whose benefits include flood risk mitigation in the form of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS).

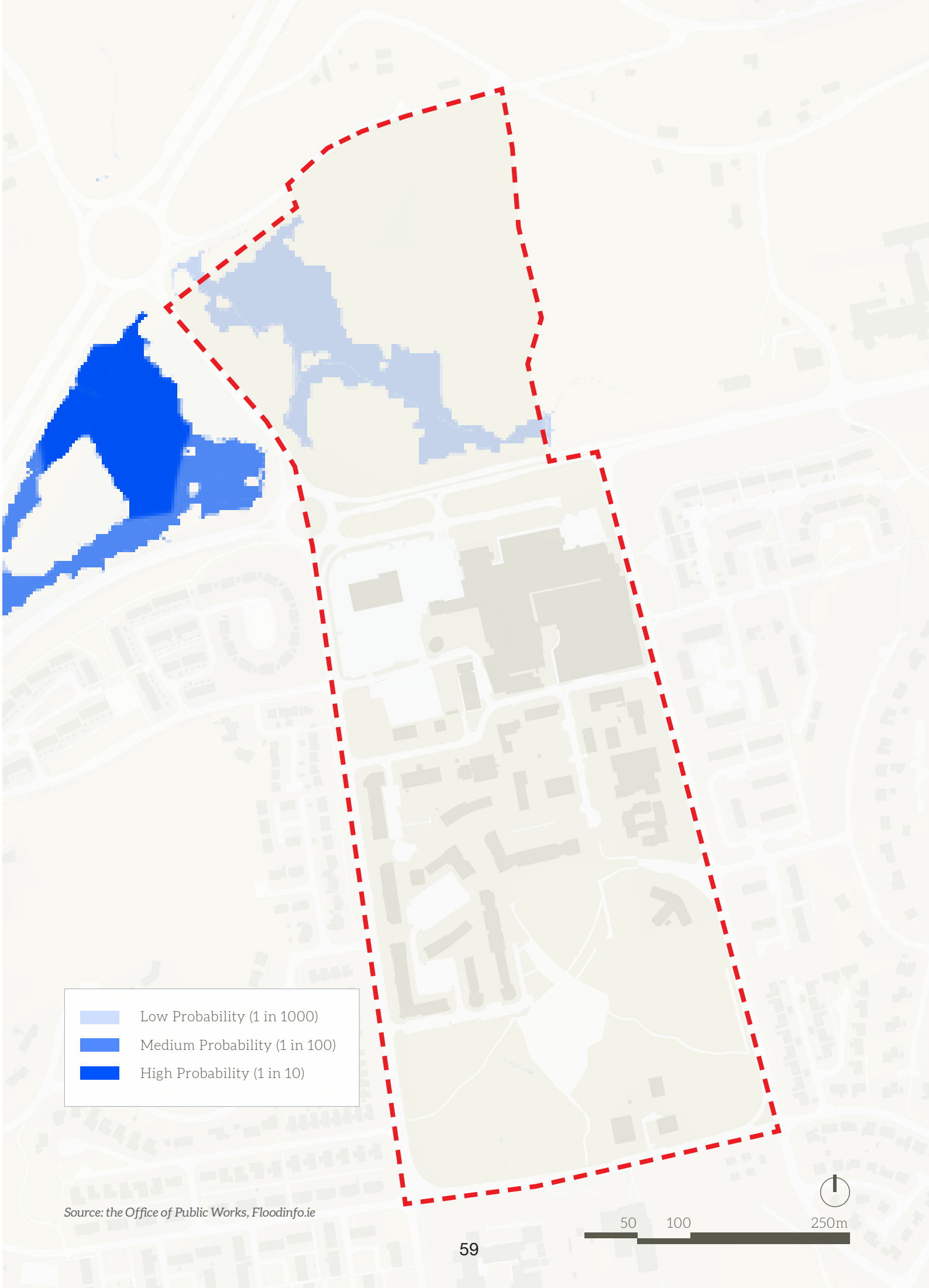
The following presents fluvial and coastal flood risk maps of the masterplan area.

## Fluvial Flooding Risk

Shannon Town Centre is affected by fluvial flood risk on various levels of probability. Fluvial flooding is when land might be flooded by rivers in a moderate flood. This flooding scenario is referred to as the current-day scenario by the OPW and has been generated using methodologies based on historic flood data, without taking any future potential effects of climate change into account.

High-probability flood events have about a one-in-ten chance of occurring or being exceeded in a given year. This is also known as Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 10%. Medium-probability flood events have about one-in-a-hundred chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year, or an AEP of 1%. Low-probability flood events have an indicative one-in-a-thousand chance of occurring or being exceeded in a given year, or an AEP of 0.1%.

Land north of the R471 is currently considered low-risk for flooding, with a probability of one-in-a-thousand flood risk probability per year.





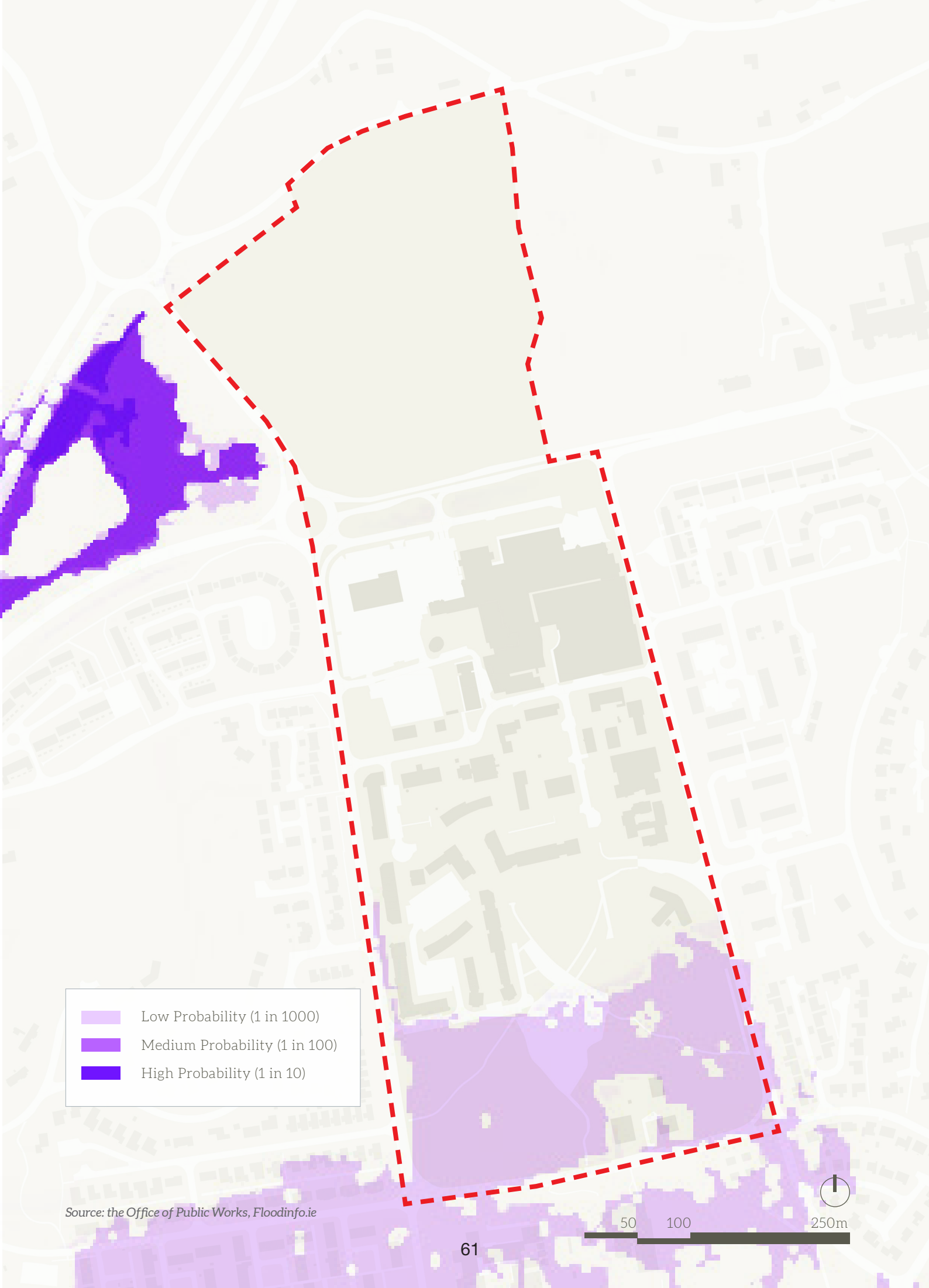
Coastal Flooding Risk

Shannon Town Centre is not directly affected by coastal flooding events.

High-probability flood events have about a one-in-ten chance of occurring or being exceeded in a given year, or an AEP of 10%. Medium-probability flood events have about a one-in-hundred chance of occurring or being exceeded in a given year, or an AEP of 1%. Low-probability flood events have an indicative one-in-thousand chance of occurring or being exceeded in a given year, or an AEP of 0.1%.

Land north of the R471 is currently considered low-risk for flooding, with a one-in-a-thousand coastal-flooding-risk probability per year.

Clare County Council and OPW are currently preparing for works to improve flood-risk embankments for Shannon, which will significantly reduce the coastal flood risk for the town, airport, and wider area.





# Ecology Baseline Study

## Introduction

This section presents an ecology baseline for the study area and immediate surroundings. Originally an expanse of fertile grassland until Shannon Town was established in the 1960s, Shannon has a high amenity green setting, with areas of important natural heritage encompassing woodland, wetlands, grassed areas, wildlife corridors and wildlife hubs.

Following a review of national and local policy alongside a desktop study analysing biodiversity maps and local ecology studies, an ecology baseline was established for part of the study area and immediate surrounding environs. Within the study area, the main features include tree canopies within the Town Centre Woodland Area, the northern section of Shannon Wetlands, open space, estuarine paths and mixed use active space south of the town centre.

The Shannon Estuary, located approximately 1 km to the south of the masterplan area, forms the largest estuarine complex in Ireland. It extends 100 km from Limerick City to Loop Head in County Clare. It is a designated SAC and SPA, protected in the Natura 2000 network under the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directives, respectively. It is one of the most important sites in Ireland for over-wintering wildfowl and waders. This includes Annex 1 species of internationally and nationally important populations of 17 wintering species. It is also an important breeding site for birds in the summer season. The Lower River Shannon SAC includes seven species listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

It was found that the study area has a high bat habitat suitability index and provides suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of common birds. While no evidence of protected mammals has been recorded in the site, it is likely to support a variety of small mammals.

## Policy Summary

Policy considerations and regulations in relation to biodiversity at a national and local level and sites of interest are set out in the Ireland 2040 Our Plan, the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021, Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (as varied), and Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 (as varied) all informed by Appropriate Assessment (AA).

## Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

The Department of Housing Planning and Local Government has prepared the National Planning Framework: Ireland 2040 Our Plan. This sets out a national vision, which is also intended to guide local policy, ensuring a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and green infrastructure.

## National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017–2021

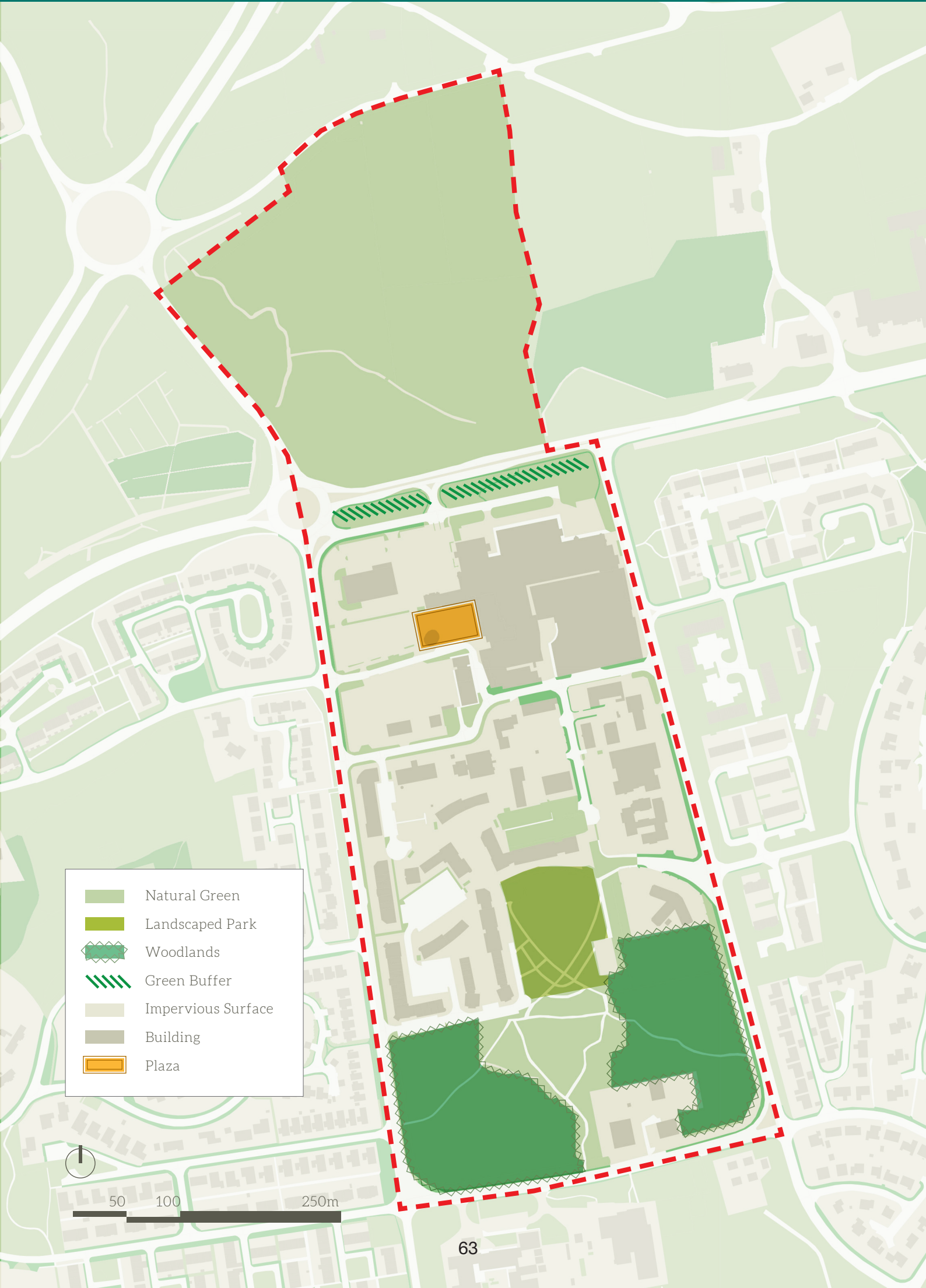
The National Biodiversity Action Plan sets out Ireland’s vision and commitment specifically to biodiversity. This includes ensuring that biodiversity forms part of the decision-making across all sectors; strengthening the knowledge base; increasing awareness and appreciation of biodiversity; conserving and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside and marine environment; expanding and improving management of protected areas and species; and strengthening international governance.

## Clare County Development Plan 2017–2023 (as varied)

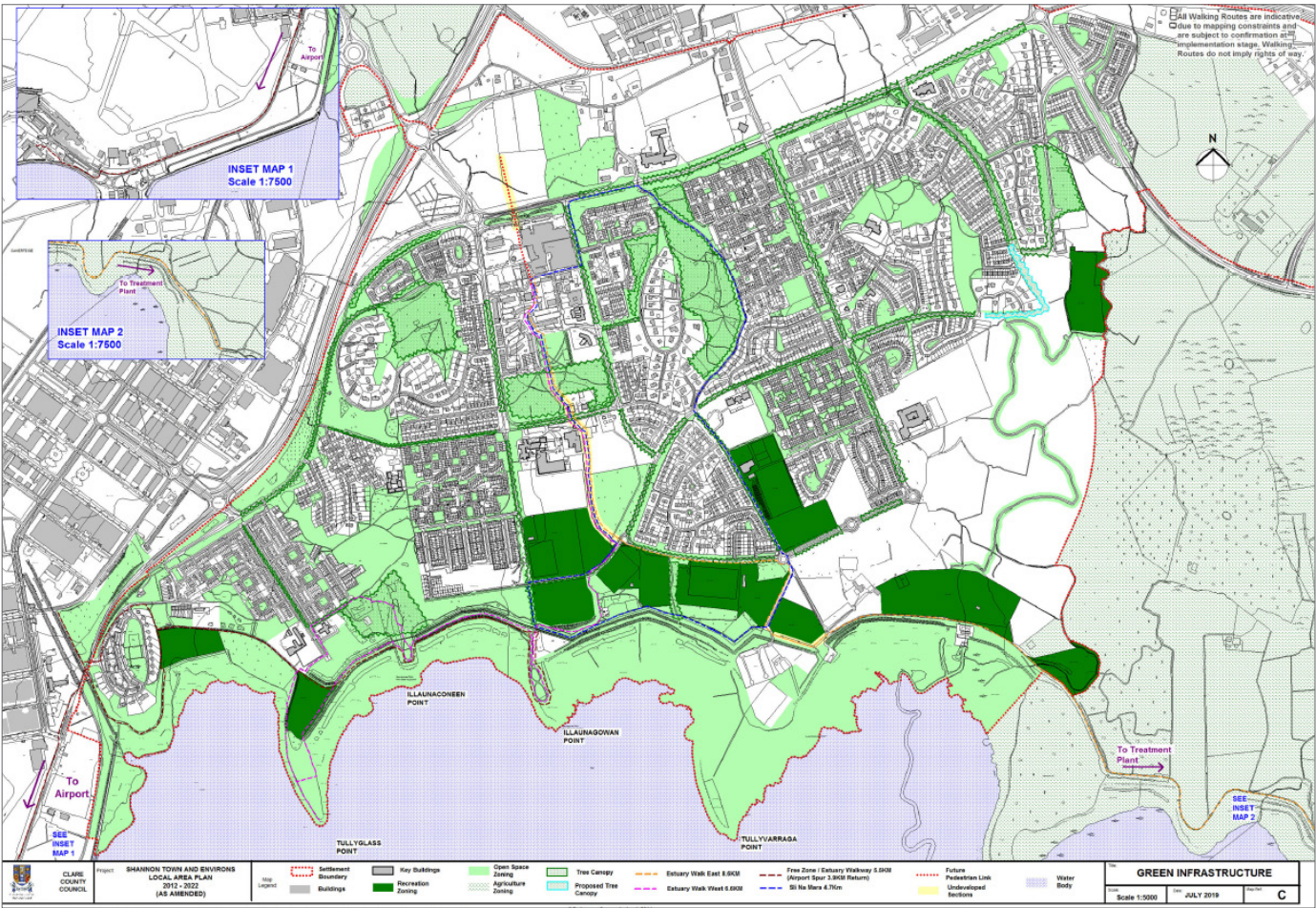
The Clare County Development Plan sets out how Clare County Council will meet its statutory obligations on the conservation and protection of the environment, including natural heritage and species under EU directives and national legislation. It outlines strategic aims around the protection of environmental quality and biodiversity. These should, through the creation of an extensive green infrastructure network, deliver a range of economic and social benefits, including active living, recreation, education, and enhanced wellbeing.

CDP objective 11.2 as set out in the County Development Plan supports the implementation of the inter-jurisdictional Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary, whereby all developments should incorporate the mitigation measures contained in the SIFP to ensure the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

CDP objective 11.2 supports the implementation of the inter-jurisdictional Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary, whereby all developments should incorporate the mitigation measures contained within the SIFP to ensure the integrity of the Natura 2000 Network.







Green Infrastructure Framework for Shannon Town and Environs Map

Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 (as varied)

Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan has been developed in accordance with the objectives set out in the Clare County Development Plan. Implementation of the current Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 has been extended and will remain in effect until a new local area plan is published.

Chapter 9 of the Local Area Plan is focused on the goal to ‘protect and enhance the natural and built environment’ while promoting and developing its cultural, educational and ecotourism potential in a sustainable manner. It describes the amenity space and green setting of Shannon that supports an abundance of wildlife, including woodland, wetlands, grassed areas, wildlife corridors, wildlife hubs, local Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), as described on the following page.

Chapter 11 of the Shannon Town and Environs LAP explores the development of a green infrastructure network for Shannon Town and its environs. The creation and management of multifunctional networks connect walking, cycling, recreation, and space for nature with green corridors and natural ecosystem services. This brings further benefits of assisting with water management and resilience to climate change, including temperature regulation and flood-risk mitigation.

The map above illustrates the Green Infrastructure Framework for Shannon Town and Environs, highlighting its wildlife hubs and corridors for preservation and enhancement – predominantly the tree canopies in the Town Centre Woodland Area, the northern part of Shannon Wetlands, open space, estuary paths, and mixed-use active space south of the town centre.

The Shannon Estuary, 1km south of the masterplan site, forms the largest estuarine complex in Ireland, extending 100km from Limerick City to Loop Head in County Clare. It is a designated SAC and SPA conservation area (as illustrated by the above right hand map, P73), protected in the Natura 2000 network under the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directives, respectively. It is one of the most important sites in Ireland for over-wintering wildfowl and waders. This includes Annex 1 species of internationally and nationally important populations of 17 wintering species (protected under the Birds Directive). It is also an important breeding site for birds in the summer season. The Lower River Shannon SAC includes seven species listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

The masterplan proposes creating further linkage to and around the adjacent Shannon Town Centre, re-activating green spaces and green-field, and emphasising a connection down to the estuary, which is currently cut off by a line of trees.



Protected Sites of Biodiversity: Shannon Estuary SAC and SPA (Biodiversity Maps Ireland)

Ecological Evaluation

An initial ecological baseline evaluation has been carried out consisting of a desktop analysis of available biodiversity maps, a review of the following screening, management plan, and local ecology surveys carried out between 2016 and 2020:

- Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey, May 2016, (EirEco Environmental Consultants).
- Shannon Looped Walk Ecology Survey, December 2017, (Doherty Environmental).
- CCC – Bird Usage Survey Data Shannon – Fergus Estuary, January 2019, (McCarthy Keville O’Sullivan Ltd).
- Slí na Mara Screening Determination, May 2017.

- Tullyvarraga Hill Woodland Management Plan, April 2018, (Nicholas de Jong Associates and Janice Fuller).
- Demonstration Sites for Biodiversity Management Species Record, Shannon Town Wetlands, June 2020, Dr Frances Giaquinto (CEnv MCIEEM) and Phoebe O’Brien (BSc Hons Botany).

These reports incorporate part of, or areas adjacent to the masterplan study area. The evaluation presented is based on best available information. Species and habitats identified here or absent do not mean that others are not present.



Protected sites

The Shannon Estuary forms part of the European designated site network with the Lower River Shannon designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Shannon and River Fergus estuaries designated as a Special Protection Area, and the Fergus Estuary also designated as an Natural Heritage Area (NHA).

Habitat types in study area and environs

Habitat types are defined according to classifications of Irish wildlife habitats in *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* by Julie A. Fossitt.

The map (top right) of the Shannon town study area and beyond highlights the following habitat types present in and around the area:

- GA2 – Amenity Grassland (Improved)
- GS4 – Wet Grassland
- WD1 – (Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland
- WD4 – Conifer Plantation
- WS1 – Scrub

Within the study area, improved amenity grassland has been identified in the north of Shannon Town Park (bottom right). The areas to the west and south of the new lawn are primarily under woodland, and are overall wet and subject to flooding in the winter.

The marsh type understorey varies locally but includes abundant regeneration of sycamore along with occasional hawthorn, blackthorn, willow and briar. The herb layer is also varied dependant on light levels and includes a number of species indicative of a high water table: including the common reed, reed sweet grass, meadowsweet, yellow flag, and creeping bent.

The mixed broadleaved canopy is generally open, dominated by sycamore, with abundant ash, willow and occasional Scots pine and white poplar. Prior to the EirEco Environmental 2016 survey of Shannon Town Park there was some new planting of beech and oak, but also clearance of woodland within the central area that has made way for additional open grassland.

Although not within or directly adjacent to the site, the wooded area of Tullyvarraga Hill, approximately 200m to the east of the study area, was originally planted with conifers in the late 1960s, as the new town at Shannon was being developed. The woodland was clear-felled around 2008, as trees had reached maturity and were becoming hazardous. Replanting with broadleaves (as part of a NeighbourWood Scheme) and natural regeneration in more recent years is helping to restore this nearby site.

A network of pathways extend through Shannon Town Park and the surrounding urban development. These present an opportunity to extend pathways south towards the estuary, drawing people to it and creating linkage between it and the wetlands.

A species survey carried out by Dr Frances Giaquinto (CEnv MCIEEM) and Phoebe O'Brien (BSc Hons Botany) described in the Demonstration Sites for Biodiversity Management Species Record, in May 2020, identified the Bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*) classified as very rare in Webb's Irish Flora and Celery leaved buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), classified as 'unusual'.

Invasive species

While no invasive species listed under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011) were recorded in the Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey, dogwood, white poplar, and sycamore are recorded as being potentially invasive and should be managed by removing saplings to prevent further spread.

Ecological corridors

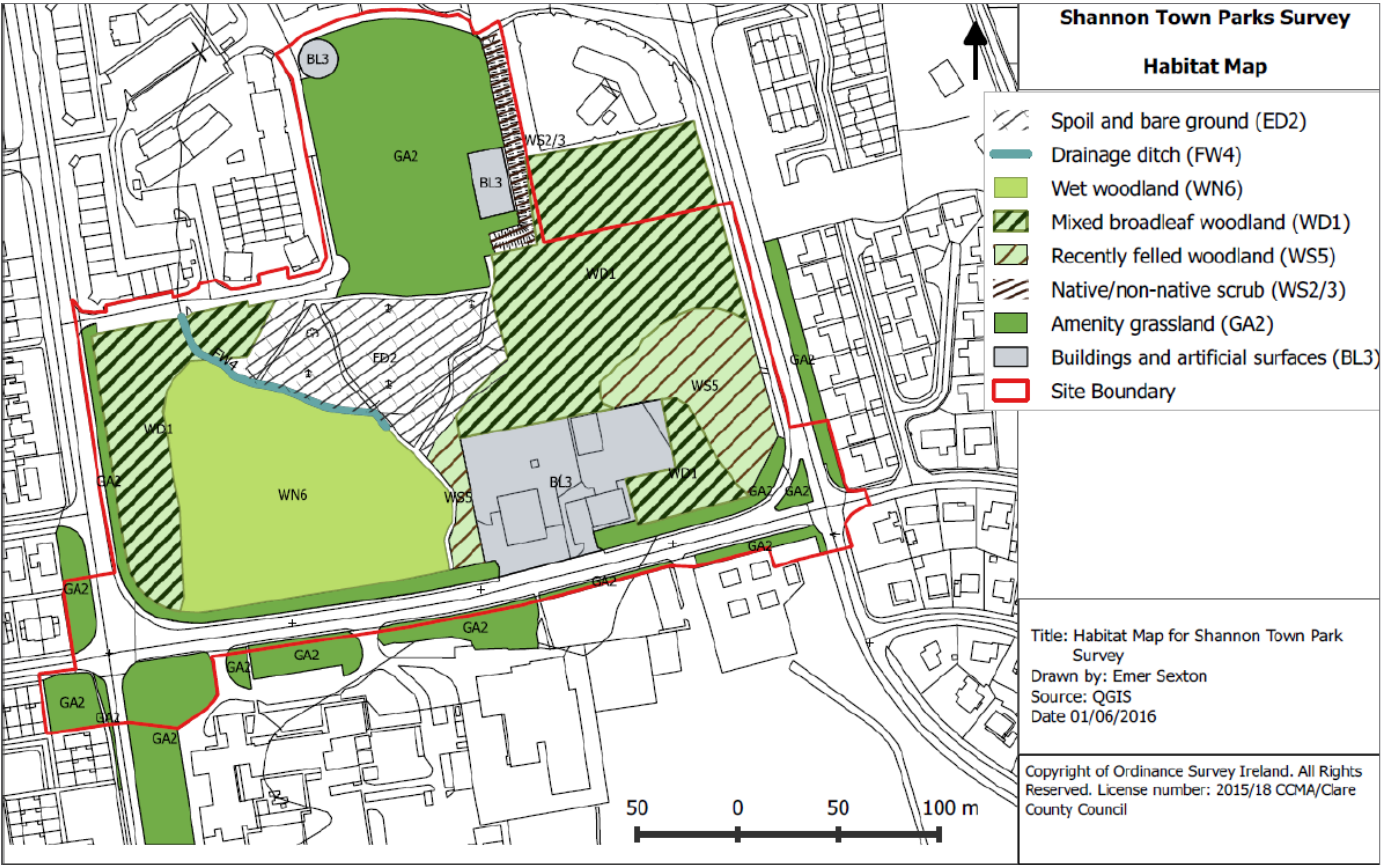
The layout of Shannon Town Centre and immediate environs is characterised by residential development that is interspersed with generous pockets of open space, interconnected by tree lined pedestrian linkages. The area to the west of Coill Mhara and Tullyvarraga Roads, supports a mosaic of wet grassland with scrub and a small area of conifer plantation. The park connects to this area in the southeast corner, where there is a narrow fringe of trees and grassland to the south. This area has connectivity directly to the estuary in the south, which should be maintained as an ecological corridor and enhanced by appropriate planting of woody species to provide cover for fauna in the northern end where it is narrow.

Based on the Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey May 2016, there were no other potential ecological corridors linking to the Shannon Town Park other than on road-side managed lawns or private gardens, which provide potential stepping stones.

The masterplan study proposes creating further linkage to and around the adjacent Shannon Town Centre, reactivating green spaces and green-field areas and emphasising a connection down to the estuary, which is currently cut off by a line of trees.



Surrounding Habitat types (Biodiversity Maps Ireland)



Habitat Map of Shannon Town Park



Bats

Areas suitable for individual bat species are identified in the Bat suitability index GIS map. A ‘core favourable area’ is identified for each species, with areas shown in red having the highest habitat suitability index. The area covering Shannon Town Centre and the masterplan extension zone has a habitat suitability index of 43.44 for all bats (where 1 is the least suitable and 100 the most suitable).

These GIS layers are a research outcome of a study by Lundy et al. (2011) examining the relative importance of landscape and habitat associations across Ireland.

It analysed data contained in the Irish National Bat Database, maintained by Bat Conservation Ireland, and the National Lesser Horseshoe Bat database maintained by National Parks and Wildlife Service. The analysis was carried out for all bat species that commonly occur in Ireland:

- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle
- Nathusius’ pipistrelle
- Leisler’s bat
- Daubenton’s bat
- Natterer’s bat
- Whiskered bat
- Brown long-eared bat
- Lesser horseshoe bat

The *Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey May 2016* assessed trees in the park for their potential as roosting sites for bats. No trees or other features identified in the park that are likely to provide roosting habitat for bats, as most trees were categorised as young to semi-mature, and the few mature trees appeared to lack any cavities or other features suitable for roosts. The clearance of ivy on larger trees had further reduced the potential for bats to utilise vegetation as temporary roost sites, but this may have since changed. The woody vegetation in the park is identified to provide good foraging habitat for bats that may use buildings or other structures in the vicinity of the park for roosting.

South of the study area, automatic bat-activity monitoring undertaken by Doherty Environmental at two locations along the Shannon Looped Walk in October and November 2017 consistently recorded the Common pipistrelle on 22 of the 29 nights of monitoring, although activity levels across the survey period were predominantly low. The Soprano pipistrelle and Brown long-eared bat were also consistently recorded. Activity levels for Daubenton’s were low throughout the survey period.

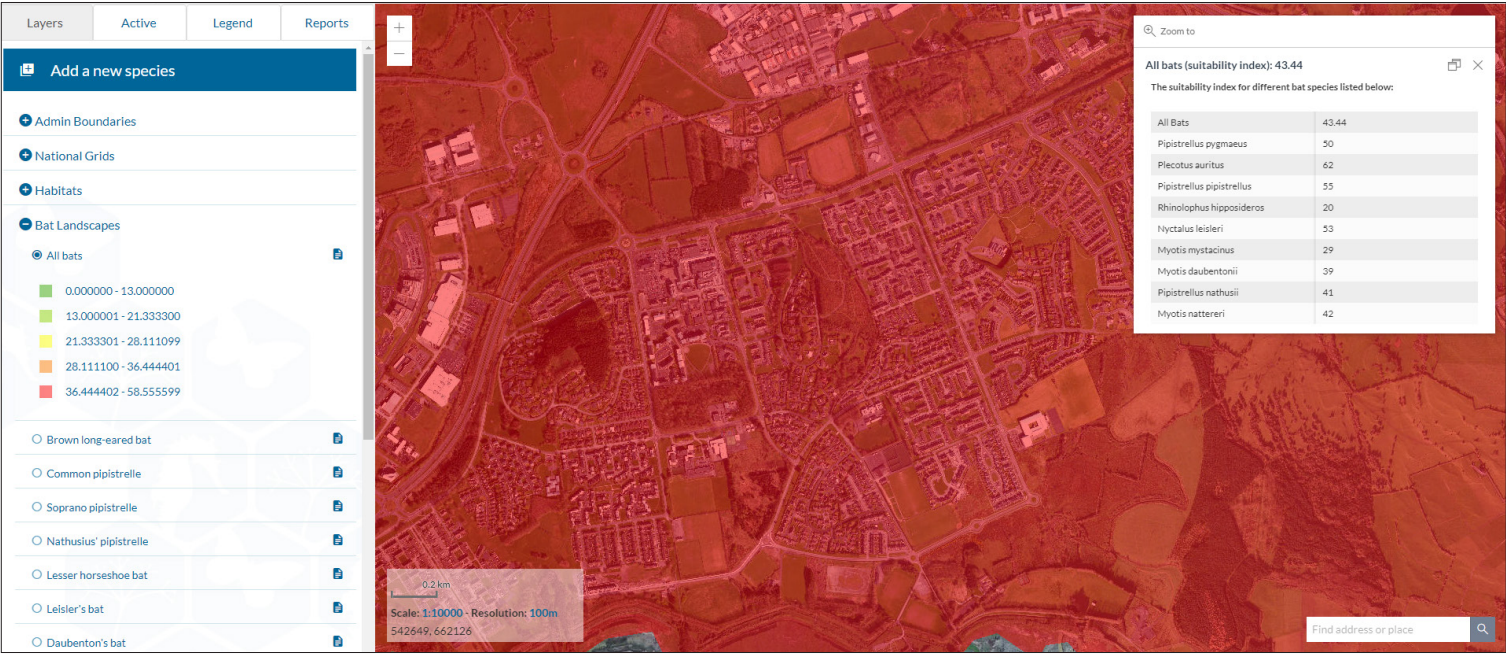
Birds

Special Conservation Interests (SCI) at or near the site are mainly coastal birds. During the 2017 Doherty Environmental Phase 1 Habitat Survey, a range of bird species were seen and heard 1km south of the masterplan site, along the Shannon Looped Walk that runs along the Shannon estuary. Species observed included the cormorant, mute swan, mallard, wigeon, pintail, black-backed gull, lesser black-backed gull, great black-backed gull, redshank, curlew, oystercatcher, shelduck, coot, blackbird, reed bunting, blue tit, chaffinch, gold finch, dunnoek, great tit, jackdaw, magpie, robin, song thrush, starling, wood pigeon and wren.

The 2019 *Bird Usage Survey* by McCarthy Keville O’Sullivan comprises the most comprehensive waterbird survey of the River Shannon and Fergus Estuaries undertaken, with year-round coverage of around 85% of the SPA. The survey included a terrestrial zone extending 500m inland from the shoreline, approximately a further 500m south from the masterplan study area. Although the terrestrial zone is predominantly outside of the SPA, some waders and wildfowl are likely to use it for feeding and roosting.

Internationally important numbers of two SCI species (whooper swan and black-tailed godwit) were recorded, with significant declines in numbers of light-bellied brent goose, shelduck, pintail, scaup, lapwing, bar-tailed godwit, knot, dunlin, compared with the mean annual peak counts from the baseline period of 1995/96-1999/00 used for the SPA designation. These species should be supported as far as possible through the protection of the estuary and its environs, particularly as the estuary is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and flood defences need upgrade and maintenance.

As described in the *Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey 2016*, Shannon Town Park provides suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of common bird species typically associated with the variety of woodland habitats present. These include small passerine species including blackbird, song thrush, mistle thrush, robin, wren, chaffinch, goldcrest, great, blue and long-tailed tit, along with migrant species such as willow warbler, chiffchaff and blackcap. Magpie, grey crow and wood pigeon are also likely to breed, and an abundance of small passerines is likely to attract predators such as sparrow hawk, which may utilise the woodland as a breeding site. The long-eared owl may occasionally forage in the park in search of small mammals, although they are unlikely to breed there due to the high levels of disturbance. There are however potentially suitable nesting sites in the mature trees fringing the estuary to the south. The more open areas of the wet woodland in the south of the park may also draw in occasional foraging snipe in the winter months and possibly woodcock.



Bat suitability index map



Mammals

No evidence of mammals in Shannon Town Park was recorded during the 2016 EirEco Environmental ecological survey, nor was any definitive evidence of protected mammals noted during the Shannon Looped Walk 2017 field surveys. The Shannon Town Park site and immediate surroundings do not contain sufficient habitat to support resident badgers and the high water table throughout makes it unsuitable as a sett location. There are no watercourses in the site or its immediate surrounds that could provide regular foraging for otters. While the partial water-logging of the site during the winter months may attract frogs, and these may in turn attract the occasional foraging otter, the lack of watercourses in the area renders this an unlikely occurrence. Otters are an Annex I listed species under the EU Habitats Directive and a qualifying interest for the nearby Lower River Shannon SAC.

The park is likely to support a variety of small mammals including pygmy shrew, field mouse, bank vole and brown rat. These provide prey for fox and possibly the Irish stoat. The common hedgehog is also likely to occur as the park provides a combination of foraging habitat along with hibernation sites in the denser thickets.

Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan 2013

The Green Infrastructure Plan was commissioned in 2013 and includes a Design Guide for green infrastructure and a design proposal for the Shannon Town Park.

The Plan builds on the Green Infrastructure and Place Making objectives as proposed in the Shannon Town and Environs LAP (2012-2018) and was developed in the strategic context of the Comhar document "Creating Green Infrastructure for Ireland" (August 2010), as well as other best-practice examples of green infrastructure from Ireland and Europe. A key consideration is the creation of common themes and language throughout Shannon Town, with a particular emphasis on connectivity between habitats. This can be achieved by linking up interconnecting green corridors and proposed circulation routes as outlined in the LAP. The proposals aim to strengthen or create wildlife corridors and inter-connection, with the development of an overall theme for reflected in the proposed works.

Key Considerations

In order to maintain and enhance the ecological value of Shannon Town, the following initial measures are advocated following review of site documentation: 2016 Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey, 2017 Shannon Looped Walk Ecology Survey, 2019 Bird Usage Survey, 2017 Sli na Mara Screening Determination and Tullyvarraga Hill Woodland Management Plan 2018:

- Connectivity to the estuary should be retained, including the corridor connecting Shannon Town Park with the area of wet grassland to the south, which should be maintained and enhanced through planting of native willow south of the junction between Tullyglass and Coill Mhara roads.
- Planting of native hedgerow shrubs is recommended to fill any hedgerow gaps and to the edge of fencing.
- Disturbance within remaining areas of woodland should be minimised, including interventions aimed at removal of poor-condition trees, scrub and ivy.
- Natural regeneration should be allowed to occur in the area of cleared woodland in the east of Shannon Town Park. Rapid establishment of willow and ash is expected to have occurred since clearance, and this should be favoured over sycamore.
- The cleared area in the centre of the park, converted to grassland, should be managed as a meadow as opposed to a regularly mown lawn, to provide an opportunity for increasing plant diversity and invertebrate habitat. This area should be sown with an appropriate seed mixture comprised of native species of local provenance.
- There are plans for the Tullyvarraga Hill Woodland to become a natural amenity of high biodiversity value. The Management Plan sets out that the site will link well with other natural amenities in the area including the Boreen walking route, the new Town Park, and the Shannon Looped Walks, to provide an extensive network of trails, green spaces, recreation areas and opportunities for connecting with nature. Opportunities to enhance these connections throughout the Shannon Town Masterplan should be maximised.



Clare County Council - Shannon Town Green Infrastructure Context Plan



# 05

## Consultation

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# Consultation

## Listening and Gathering

Throughout the period in developing this masterplan, a consultation process has taken place with a variety of stakeholders, residents, and members of the wider community. Below is a summary capturing some of the high points of this consultative engagement process.

Public consultation on emerging concepts in the Draft Plan took place from Friday 16th July 2021 until Friday 3rd September 2021 using a web-based portal, as it was the most efficient way to show the masterplan vision to the public.

The web-based portal allowed users to rate some options presented, provide opinions, and complete a questionnaire. They could also send written submissions. To enable access for all to the consultation, Clare County Council also invited direct submissions via the traditional options of email or letter.

The data compiled includes analysis of the questionnaire and survey data and a written summary of individual submissions.

In total, 152 submissions were received, comprising 97 completed online surveys and 55 individual submissions: 31 through the online portal and 24 through post and email.

These comments directly informed the draft and final Masterplan. The following sets out the summary of both consultations phases.

The largest group of respondents (47 in total) were in the 25–44 age category. The next largest group (33) were aged 45–64. There were 11 aged 65+, five aged 18–24, and two aged under 18.

Most respondents (85%) live in Shannon Town, with another 6% within 3 km of it and the remainder living further afield. A total of 39% of respondents visit daily, and 43% visit a couple of times a week.

## Main Issues and Themes from the Public Consultation Process

From a total of 97 responses, 84 respondents had a negative response to the existing Shannon Town Centre environment. The majority of respondents indicated the following, that Shannon Town:

- Has no defined town centre.
- Has no main street.
- Has a very limited retail choice.
- Has no restaurants (but a significant number of fast-food outlets and takeaways).

Some respondents indicated that visitors to Shannon don't know where the town is and that it is perceived as a 'ghost town' with 'no heart' and as a 'place to work and not as a place to visit'.

## Existing Strengths of Shannon Town

Respondents were asked what the best things are about Shannon town. Their responses were categorised into an order of priority:

Amenities, Community, Access, Connectivity, People, Employment, Facilities, Security and Education.

The three best things about Shannon Town were noted to be the amenities on offer, the sense of community, and access in terms of 'everywhere being convenient', i.e., Shannon's location relative to Ennis, Limerick, Galway.

The availability of amenities was rated as one of the best things about Shannon Town. These include the town park, the Points, the estuary / river walk, the open spaces, playgrounds, and sports facilities.

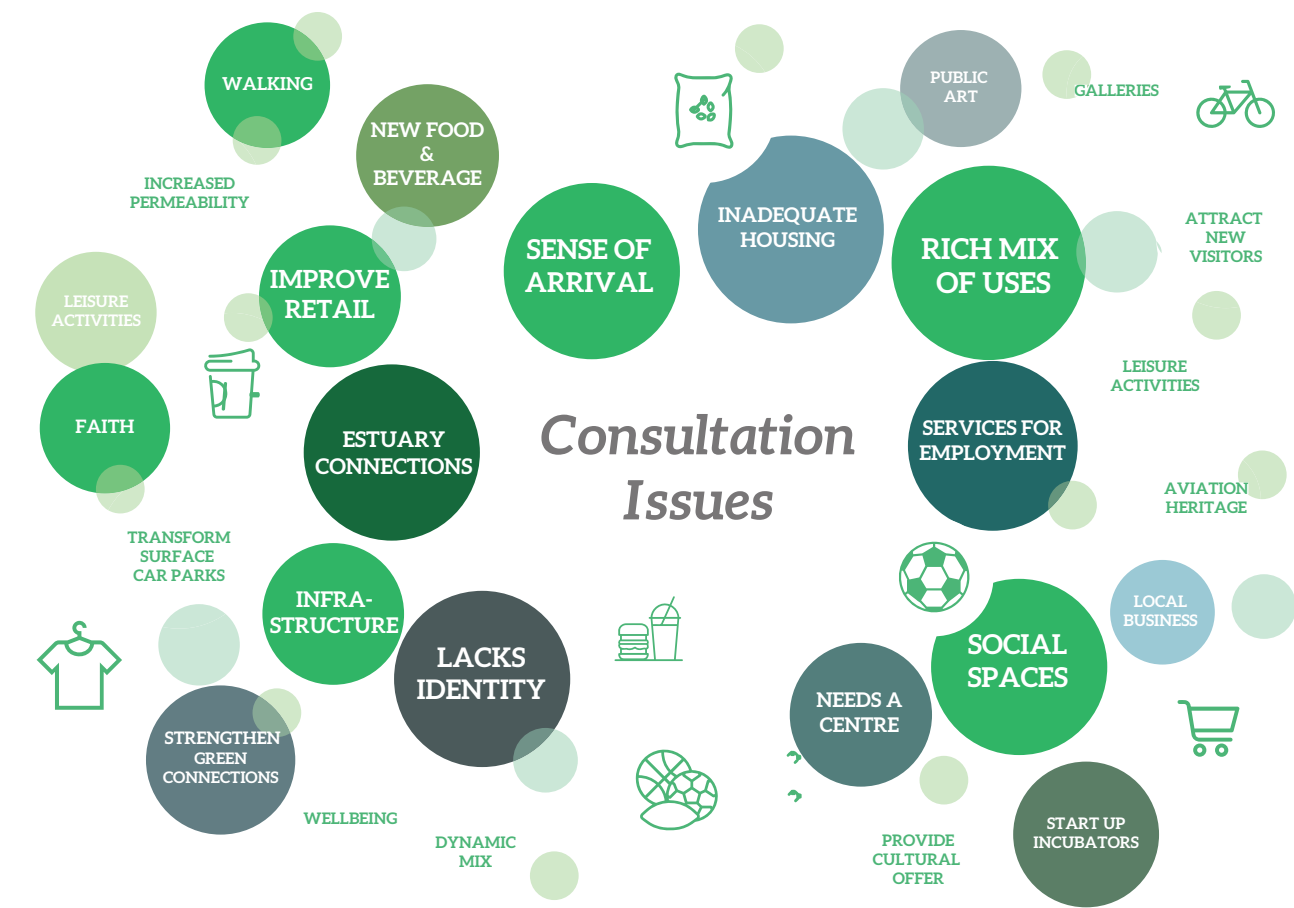
The sense of community and the community spirit was also rated as one of the best things about Shannon Town. One respondent noted 'the legacy of the original community from the 1960s, '70s and '80s and their families'.

## Existing Weaknesses of Shannon Town

Participants highlighted the following as their three least favourite things about Shannon Town;

- Poor retail offer along with high vacant rate of units in the town centre.
- Absence of a main street or a town centre, and no community centre.
- Lack of private housing choice for young people to either rent or buy; the over provision of social housing was also rated as being an issue.

Respondents also indicated the town's lack of activities and facilities, other than sporting facilities, for teenagers and children, and the lack of a 'night life'.





# Aspirations for Improvement

Initial Consultation Feedback  
— July 2021

## Aspirations for an Improved Town Centre

The vision for enhancing Shannon Town Centre, to act as a catalyst for the area where people can live, work, and play, is welcomed by a significant majority and reflects the desire to create not just commercial but also recreational development and the provision of town centre accommodation.

Respondents were asked what is the most important element to focus on for Shannon Town Centre: Spaces for People (enhancing streets and public spaces), Community Hub (creating a focal point for the community), Renewing the Core (creating new commercial and service uses), Connected Town (making the town centre more accessible), or Urban Village (providing more housing in and around the town centre). Support was highest for 'Space for People' and 'Community Hub'.

## How to Improve the Town Centre?

When respondents were asked what they felt the best way to improve the town centre was, the highest response was for redesigning the town centre with new paving and lighting, followed by more outdoor space for cafés and seating, a new and enhanced civic square in the town centre, and more greenery.

## What is Needed Most?

When asked for ideas or comments on how a more attractive and usable civic space could be created for the town centre, a highlighted priority was to create a main street with retail / café / bar / restaurant opportunities. Respondents also expressed a desire for the provision of a civic space that can facilitate more dining choices – cafés, restaurants, outdoor dining – and even a covered civic space.

Retail offer is highlighted in the responses again, with one suggesting to 'split some units for smaller businesses so that business owners can afford it'. The provision of landscaping, trees, green areas, and water features in the town centre, along with well-designed street furniture and more bins was a key theme in many responses. Some said there is a need to provide for age-friendly initiatives in the town centre and a place where senior citizens can meet.

The majority of respondents said there is an absence of retail choice in Shannon Town and that one cannot shop for everything locally. Many provided examples of shops missing from the town centre, with specific references to a shoe shop, cobblers, fish shop, opticians, jewellers, clothes shops for all, with a number specifically highlighting Penneys.



Second to this, many respondents said that restaurants and eateries other than takeaways were lacking in the town, and that there were no outdoor covered seating areas where people could dine or socialise.

The absence of a defined town centre and a main street also featured highly in the responses, and, as a consequence, also absent are a social space and evening entertainment, both outdoor and indoor, to allow people to socialise or dwell in the town centre, creating a night-time atmosphere.

A significant number of respondents also highlighted the need for a community focal point or hub, including a venue for entertainment space.

A significant number said there is “no atmosphere, vibe, identity or a feeling of community” in the existing Shannon Town Centre.

## New Uses and Activities in the Town Centre?

The key issue, reflected in a significant portion of responses, was the absence of a social space, civic plaza, or community focal point and, as one respondent noted, ‘opportunities for the talent of the town to showcase’. Many responses echoed this, indicating that busking and live outdoor music, street culture, outdoor dining, outdoor market or an extension to the current farmers’ market, and atmosphere are what they would most like to see happening. One respondent said they would like to see the bandstand in the new town park used more often.

Having a town centre that is open at night time for social interaction and entertainment rated highly in many responses.

In addition to having more retail choice and restaurants, many also said they would like to see a cultural and community focal point included in the town centre.

## A new Main Street?

While a number of participants indicated that they considered that the main street should be *fully* pedestrianised, the majority of respondents indicated that the main street should be more pedestrian friendly but shared with the car.

Several respondents however said that through-traffic should not be allowed. The majority said that pedestrians should be the main consideration in the town centre, as the current centre, with its car park, already serves cars well.

Others suggested that the new Main Street should include retail, small businesses, and cafés on both sides of the street, child-/age-/disabled-friendly paths, landscaping (flowers, shrubs, not overgrown grass verges), and streets decorated with nice street furniture and seating.

## Community Services & Public Facilities

Respondents said there is a need for a community focal point or hub, followed by services such as a medical centre, youth services, and hang-out area, and a cultural or performance venue. One said, ‘there is no community space apart from the library currently in that area. A multi-purpose centre would draw people towards that area of the town’.

A significant number of respondents highlighted the need for a crèche and for mother and baby feeding and changing facilities in any such community building. A social welfare office, a bigger library, and Shannon Doc (medical centre) were also identified as ‘seriously needed’ in Shannon. A young-adult education college or courses were also highlighted in a number of responses.



# Masterplan Feedback

## Aspects of the Draft Masterplan — November 2021

### Sustainable Transport Modes

The majority of respondents welcomed the approach and focus on sustainable transport in the Draft Masterplan and wanted to see sustainable modes of transport being facilitated, such as cycling, bus, and rail.

Regarding bicycles, respondents want to see more bike-friendly initiatives, including:

- More bicycle lanes (with some citing examples from Germany, Holland).
- Greenways for cycling (to Limerick).
- Bike share schemes (coca-cola).
- Bike repair stations.
- Introduction of more sheltered secure locations to park bikes.

Regarding public transport, respondents want additional bus stops, refurbishment of existing bus shelters, the routes of public buses running through the town, and smaller buses rather than current large ones that are never full. They also would like to see electric buses.

Student respondents highlighted the need for a direct frequent service (not solely Bus Éireann) from Shannon to the third level institutes, particularly University of Limerick.

A number of respondents said that adding a rail link spur from the Galway–Limerick line connecting Shannon Town and Airport to both of those cities, and that connecting the airport and the town by rail from Shannon Airport serving the town and continuing to Sixmilebridge and Limerick, must be a priority for the future of the town, as it will make it a more accessible and climate-adapted place to live, work, and visit.

### Making the R471 more Pedestrian Friendly

Respondents welcomed the proposed improvements and enhancements to the R471 as a way to provide traffic calming, create more of a ‘main street’ look and feel with the new public realm, and provide a new pedestrian street connected to the main square. The addition of on street parking was also shown.

Based on the diagrams showing the reduction in road width and the replacement of the roundabout with controlled traffic lights and more pedestrian-friendly crossings, the predominant responses were that this would be a positive intervention and people were happy with it. One respondent gave the following useful feedback: ‘Segregation of pedestrian and cycleways from moving vehicular traffic by using a parking band would encourage engagement of all in a safe manner.’ Another said, ‘Keep parking away from outside the shops but within walking distance.’

Regarding the type of retail options that the respondents would like to see on the new street, the most common responses included the following:

- A mix of high street, small business, eateries.
- Clothing and shoe shops for all  
– Children & infants, women, men.
- No fast-food / take-aways.
- Crafts, artisan food.
- Homeware goods.
- Cafés, bars, restaurants.
- Book and hobby shops.
- Fashion boutiques.
- Bakery, hardware store, jewellers.

### A New Civic Hub Building

All submissions very much welcomed the proposed One Shannon Hub and accompanying public space. There is overwhelming support for the establishment of a town centre presence by the local authority, combined with a multifunctional civic, community, and enterprise space: 76% of respondents agreed with this.

The majority of respondents consider it most important to provide a building to serve the people of Shannon and create jobs and business opportunities, thus reviving the town centre and boosting Shannon Town’s image as a great place to live, work, and visit.

A significant number of submissions noted the need for a theatre or performance space, and welcome the proposal for the One Shannon Hub to act as a focal point for the town. Many consider that a local government presence within the Hub in the town centre and its multi-functional use as a civic and community hub with a library, theatre, and other community-based services, will be a very positive and desirable intervention for the town centre. The design and prominence of the public square was welcomed, in particular the concept of the ‘Glasshouse’ acting as a seed for emerging start-ups, hot-desking, etc. Merging the library function and other public services is seen as key to the development. However, it was observed that space allocation between civic offices, community spaces, and creative spaces needs to be appropriate to meet all needs and ensure an optimal balance.

Many say that loss of surface car parking is a concern, as it is important for easy access to the town centre. The multi-storey car park is used only as a last resort by many and is empty for the most part.

### The Innovation Campus

The Innovation Campus was welcomed by a significant number of contributors. It was suggested that the campus must complement, build on and integrate with the success of existing and constantly evolving industrial and business parks in Shannon, and that an overall vision for these lands should be developed in the masterplan. A number of submissions centered on the potential to merge further education in particular apprenticeships and continuing professional development with innovation.

It was also suggested that the activities proposed for this area should be more aligned to those that would be expected in a central business district or educational campus, rather than in an industrial zone. The success of this, it was said, will depend on engagement between Clare County Council, the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), and industry and will build on Shannon’s history of innovation. The location of such a Centre of Excellence and an enterprise campus in the town centre would create huge spin-off benefits for the enterprise and commercial core of Shannon town itself.



Town Centre & Civic Square

Many submissions expressed significant support for the proposal of developing the current town square into an improved public space. Many noted that the use of the town square for a weekly farmers’ market has proved to be both attractive and successful with the community and that this should be encouraged going forward.

A case study by Shannon Festivals (September 2016, 2017) shows how the town square could be used for a range of daytime and night-time community events and showcases for creative activity. The summer 2021 Muse production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Bualadh Busk events are recent examples of community-driven use of the town park and town centre open area with the support of Shannon M.D. and the Arts Office.

Several submissions stated that the town centre should be a public place with a variety of retail and municipal choices, so that the people of Shannon can shop locally, have leisure facilities for all ages, and access buildings that provide much-needed public facilities, such as a medical centre. A mix of commercial and residential was highlighted in many submissions as a key characteristic of every high and main street of every village, town, and city in Ireland, and some noted that it is residential units that define a main street and hub of a town – not off but on the main street.

Another significant factor highlighted is the hollowing out of city and town centres, i.e., the lack of residents and the ‘ghost town’ effect in the evenings. One submission noted “if we want a really vibrant town centre then we want people living in it to create footfall and a buzz that sustains businesses and that draws people in. People do not want another artificial shop-lined street which becomes empty at close of business.’ Another said, ‘this is what Sky Court has resulted in.’ The point was also made that there are lots of young people, students, and transitory workers who would choose to live in a town centre on a lively street. Some submissions asked that residential units above or beside commercial units on the main street be considered, so as to let people live on the high street and enliven it.

The proposal to provide mixed-use developments concentrated to the south of the proposed high or main street is supported by a number of submissions. They said that a mix of ground-level retail and overhead living space supports the key objective of increasing footfall for both existing and future town-centre activities and that consolidation should occur here before moving to the currently unserviced northern lands.

Car parking and transport

Many submissions raised serious concerns about car parking and bus parking as presented in the draft.

It was stated in several submissions that there is little evidence of surface parking, and as a result concerns were highlighted that public car parking would be confined to multi-storey buildings, with associated parking charges – which, they said, would be strongly rejected by most people in Shannon and would impact on lunchtime trade. A number of submissions recalled that car parking charges were introduced some years ago but led to a drop in footfall, and that the policy was quickly reversed. Detailed parking proposals should therefore be presented in the plan, showing what options will be available for parking cars.

Locals have grown accustomed to free and plentiful surface car parking, but the masterplan eliminates almost all of it, replacing it with multi-storey car parking and a small number of spaces on either side of the proposed main street.

It is submitted that the existing multi-storey car park is unsatisfactory: too small and tight. Though users are not required to pay, the majority choose not to avail of it.

The need for proper provision for commercial parking was also noted, as was parking for the shopping public and visitors to the shopping centre. The proposals as set out would lead to the demise of the centre due to lack of vehicle access and parking, which are vital to the connectivity of a developing Shannon Town.

The Draft Plan supposes a significant shift from private vehicle to pedestrian, cycleway, and public transport uses. In fact, a significant number of submitters welcome this modal shift and seek more focus on pedestrian and cycleway options, though they say that the detail on how and when this will be achieved is not elaborated upon.

Lack of Identity

A number of submissions welcomed the masterplan initiative in considering how the town could generate a genuine heart. They said the existing town centre experience is not positive, that the centre is effectively a shopping centre and that the development of the public realm around the town centre is of poor quality.

Submissions referred to the new Town Park, which was redeveloped at significant cost and opened in November 2019. They expressed desire that the woodland and park trails would be retained and enhanced.

Retail / Commercial / Mixed Use

In addition to the existing supermarkets, several submissions highlight the need for smaller independent shops and businesses and the need to ensure that there are fewer vacant shops in the shopping centre, if more are to open on Bóthar Mór.

Several respondents said that they would like to see a retail anchor in the town centre with Penneys specifically being mentioned.

Several submissions recognised and agreed with the approach to consolidate retail to the south of Bóthar Mór to enable increased the focus on urban design to make Shannon Town Centre visually attractive. Mixed-use development in a consolidated area will increase footfall for existing and future businesses. Consolidation around the new high street should enhance retail offering by facilitating easy customer movement between different units.

Conclusion

The wide variety and diversity of opinions and commentary on this masterplan have been incorporated into the design of the final masterplan, with several changes being made to respond to the public consultation. Acceptance of the final masterplan by all stakeholders was significantly high with all respondents welcoming the plan subject to a number of minor modifications.

All projects in this masterplan will require further consultation work at the next stages of design, when formal planning applications are made. A diverse user group should be established for each project to ensure that a range of voices can be heard to represent the diversity of Shannon, and to ensure that all projects coming forward from this masterplan are of high quality and sensitive to the local context.



# 06

## Masterplan

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# Introduction

The Town Centre Masterplan refers back to Shannon's past whilst planning its future. It takes a cue from the optimism, confidence and inventiveness that drove the development of the new town of the 1960s and 1970s, and looks ahead at the challenge of redefining a town centre in a time of rapid change and significant opportunities. The masterplan has also learned from the present, having been prepared during the Covid-19 pandemic; it has reverberated with the capacity of people to respond to crisis and drive positive change as a collective.

The spatial masterplan is about creating a sense of place and identity that celebrates Shannon's unique character, history and community. Rather than recreating traditional town centres, it proposes a forward-looking approach that brings together all of the Shannons to create an innovative arrangement of spaces for socialisation, innovation, employment, learning, caring and living. The focus is not only on growth, but on a strategic location and mix of uses, the creation of high quality and engaging public spaces, and establishing links with the wider area of Shannon. The proposal is structured around the following key interventions:

**Innovation Campus:** Where previous masterplans have proposed residential-led mixed-use development, this masterplan sees the opportunity to build on Shannon's history of pioneering ideas. It envisages this as a campus of innovation that capitalises on local know-how; manufacturing and production infrastructure; regional, national, and international links; and the 'Shannon brand'. The campus aims to attract innovators, researchers, and industry experts to the heart of the town centre. It aims to be a green campus with an urban frontage that brings together maker spaces, higher level education and training and classrooms, high-tech workshops, co-working environments, and public showrooms to showcase the best of Shannon's outputs. A south-facing urban façade with cafés and social spaces will invigorate Shannon's Main Street as a space for all of Shannon's communities of residents, workers, visitors, and new generations of residents. residents.

**Main Street:** An Irish town centre has, by definition, a main street. The masterplan proposes to create a Shannon-specific one by detuning and redesigning the stretch of the R471 road at the northern edge of the town centre core, Shannon's Main Street is easily accessible, defines a gateway

to the town centre, and creates a link to the land for future development north of the R471. It will be a high-quality public space that prioritises pedestrians but still be open to traffic and public transport. It will have a unique character, with two distinct frontages: to the south, the traditional mix of shops and housing; to the north, spaces for innovation, cafés, and sustainable landscaping. Deliveries to the retail units will be to the rear allowing for high-quality frontage buildings and a separation of vehicular deliveries and pedestrians.

**Retail Core:** The current town centre is characterised by the shopping centre, a Lidl supermarket, fast-food outlet and a large area of surface car park. The masterplan proposal is to consolidate all retail uses around the town centre core and create a compact shopping destination. New anchors at the north eastern and north western corners of the shopping centre will establish a clear retail circuit. Along the frontage to the R471, which is envisaged as Shannon's future Main Street, smaller units for independent retail and services will diversify, complement and reinforce the current offer. As well as enhancing the retail structure, the strategy is a key step to transform the town centre's car-dominated environment to one that prioritises vibrant pedestrian environments.

**One Shannon Hub:** South west of the retail core, three urban blocks help to define a new network of streets and squares. The southernmost block is the site for the One Shannon Hub, a new civic, cultural and community centre that supports a wide range of uses: Clare County Council offices and library council offices, culture and performing arts venue, co-working space, and innovation hub, community hall etc. The multifunctional building will unlock new uses in the town centre, and is designed to work both as an urban block and an extension of the Town Centre Square. With entrances in all of its glass façades, and a variety of all-day and evening uses and programmes, it will act as an inside-out space, a meeting place for Shannon's community and visitors alike. Other potential uses, such as a tourist information centre or a cycle hub, will also link it with the wider area. As an iconic zero-carbon building, it will make a clear statement of the character of Shannon and confidence in its town centre.

## MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

**'New Town' Revived**  
*An updated spatial framework*

**Shannon Firsts**  
*A heritage of innovation*

**One Shannon**  
*Reimagine the collective*

**Living Estuary**  
*Regenerative landscape*

**A Community that Cares**  
*Inclusive, shared, healthy*



# ‘New Town’ Revived

## An updated spatial framework

Shannon is a town of its time. The masterplan drafted by architects Downes, Meades & Robinson, together with planner Frederick Rogerson showcases the main traits of urban planning of the 1960s, with a clear reference to the New Town movement that were being developed at the time. These included designing for a clear segregation between vehicles and pedestrians (characterised by the housing estate layouts designed along Radburn principles), a rational grid of wide streets to accommodate the growing number of privately owned cars, generous green and open spaces for the community, and functional homes with efficient plans that responded to the requirements of the modern household.

Seen from the present perspective, the development strategy defined by the 1962 Outline Development Plan had important laws that explain, at least in part, Shannon’s lack of vibrancy and its failure to enable growth. The town does, however, have a robust and flexible spatial framework. Could the Town Centre Masterplan then be envisaged as a mechanism to upcycle Shannon’s built environment and system of open spaces as a way of ‘completing’ the original plan?

‘As Ireland’s only town to be created from anew in the twentieth century Shannon does not suffer from urban decay or obsolescence in the same manner as an organic town. Rather its disadvantage is based on unexploited potential and having never achieved planned levels of economic and social development.’ <sup>2</sup>

In ‘reviving’ the existing town, the Town Centre Masterplan has reviewed other strategies to refresh its identity and aspirations of its population. The urban grid can be retrofitted to support infrastructure for decarbonisation and zero carbon strategies. Open spaces can be requalified to enhance biodiversity and implement climate change impact mitigation projects. Town centre residential uses can be framed within a wider programme of housing proposals and preservation of ‘contemporary heritage’ such as the Drumgeely Hill apartment blocks and executive houses. Roads can be adapted to new transport modes as part of a new mobility and connectivity plan that redefines links between Shannon, the Free Zones and Shannon Airport.

<sup>2</sup> Integrated Area Plan for Shannon, 1998. P 7.



Aerial view of the Free Zone and Shannon Town. Image from: <https://roundaboutshannon.clareheritage.org/>



# Shannon Firsts

## A heritage of innovation

Shannon's brief history is punctuated by a long list of 'firsts': the first duty free shops in Shannon Airport; the world's first free trade zone; Shannon as the first planned New Town in Ireland; electric underfloor heating in the Drumgeely flats. The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan has clear references that lead the way in implementing an agenda of innovation and pioneering new practices.

The strategic theme of identifying 'Shannon firsts' to drive the transformation of the town centre is not unjustified. Urban environments are increasingly the focus of debate, experimentation and action in response to the opportunities and disruptions brought about by social, economic, technological and environmental change. These urban environments address issues such as climate adaptation, circular economy, demographic change, digital and energy transition, jobs and skills, education, housing provision, culture and heritage, migration, urban poverty, mobility, and sustainable management of primary resources. All are relevant, to a greater or lesser extent, to Shannon Town.

For Shannon, being the first to respond to some of our present day (and future) challenges can help to create a sense of identity, a 'trademark' image. This was true in the early decades of the development of the town, when Shannon was in certain aspects Ireland's most cosmopolitan and international town. More importantly, leading the way in designing and implementing a new urban agenda will make Shannon a more attractive place to live and to visit.

What, then, could be Shannon Town Centre's next set of firsts? Becoming Ireland's first zero carbon town centre? Implementing innovative and sustainable mobility strategies? Designing new social and learning spaces at the heart of the town centre? Thinking of streets and public realm as spaces for people rather than transport corridors? Defining new use mixes and building typologies to reset the established role of the town centre?

Shannon has a wealth of factors to continue its heritage of innovation: manufacturing and industrial base, skills and education, transport infrastructure, regional and national links, environment and landscape. It has all that it needs to succeed and continue to set firsts for Ireland.



*Housing*



*Shannon Airport*



# One Shannon

## Reimagine the collective

The three Shannons (airport, free zone and town) originally grew and developed by the Shannon Estuary as a single entity with a variety of characters. Yet, despite their shared history, it is increasingly difficult to see them as one place.

Shannon Town itself lacks a clear and distinct identity. This can be partly explained by its planned development as a number of housing estates with initially no urban centre. The town centre that was eventually built in the 1970s was little more than a shopping centre, with little to offer as a community hub or distinct sense of place.

The Town Centre Masterplan is an opportunity to change the direction of travel, and imagine a shared vision of the future where the three Shannons capitalise on the potential to establish a unique system of synergies. From this point of view, the masterplan framework and development strategy can consider:

- Creating robust links with and between the Free Zones, Shannon Airport, and Shannon Estuary, with the town centre as a place of confluence of these.
- Providing spaces to support, complement and expand current uses in the Free Zones and Shannon Airport. Many uses that have been traditionally located outside of urban areas are now finding a place in towns and cities and thriving in mixed use environments. Shannon Town Centre can provide these.
- Establishing a gateway to the Shannon Estuary and Clare for tourists and visitors, with Shannon Town as the arrival point and first port of call for those exploring Clare and the wider region of Ireland's west coast.
- Supporting the development of a 15-minute town, with adequate provision and linkages between employment, residential, community, cultural and leisure uses. The town centre can catalyse the drive to create a healthy and caring urban environment.
- Establishing the 'One Shannon' brand to attract new investment and tap into public funding opportunities.





# Living Estuary

## Regenerative landscape

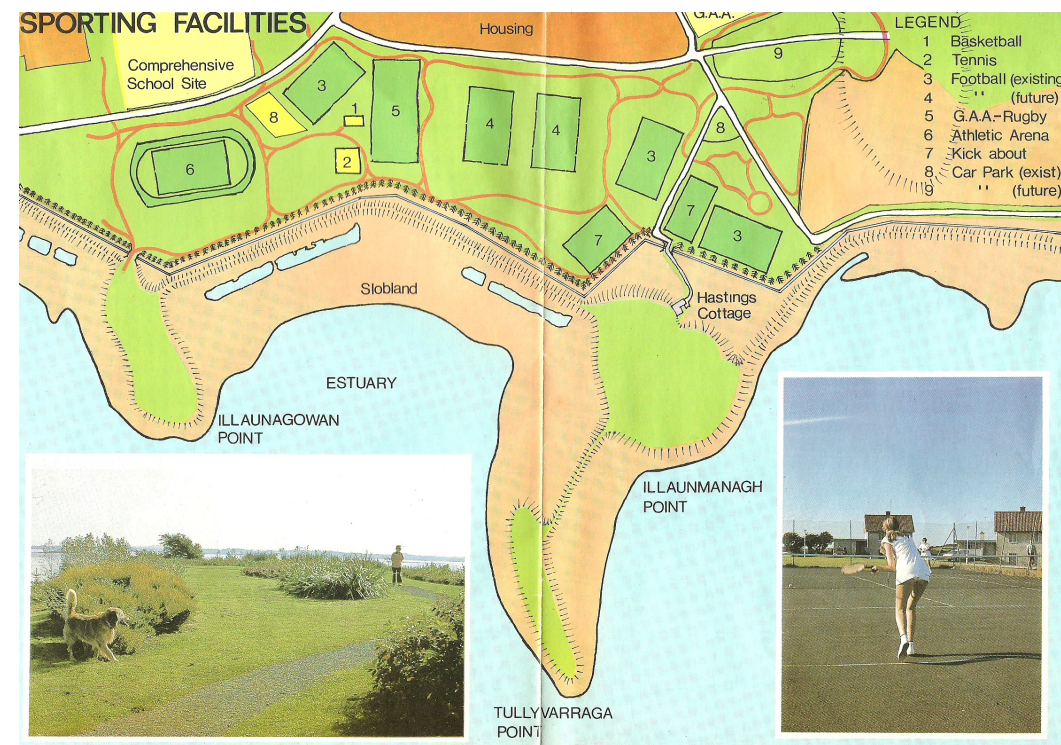
Surprisingly, it was noted from the public consultation process that many of those who work in Shannon or visit it frequently are unaware of how close the town centre is to the River Shannon. And yet the relationship to the Shannon Estuary was a key aspect informing the urban planning and design principles of the original New Town. The first sectors of houses ran from the Airport Road (R471) to the park along the Estuary. The park that runs along the Estuary was one of the main amenity spaces for Shannon. Areas such as Tullyglass Point, Illaunagowan Point, or Illaunaconeen Point were landscaped to create attractive parklands, picnic areas, sporting fields, and children's playing areas that were sensitively integrated with the natural character of a unique location. The development of a Town Centre Masterplan is a chance to review and enhance the relationship between town and estuary.

From an urban design point of view, thinking of the estuary as an integral part of the town centre opens up new ways of envisaging how the urban core relates to the wider environment. Improving pedestrian and cycle links between the

two can, for example, connect the town centre with wider regional tourist routes: the estuary as a green gateway to the town centre.

The estuary can also redefine the relationship between Shannon and Shannon Airport as the site for a new high-end hotel, or even a 'river lounge', an outpost of the terminal with a unique location. Shannon's identity can be strengthened as the gateway to Clare and the West of Ireland for tourists and visitors.

The Shannon Estuary is an essential part of Shannon's identity and will undoubtedly be part of any redevelopment strategy for the town centre. Aspects such as climate-change impact mitigation, health and wellbeing, environmental awareness, and local culture and history cannot be addressed without considering the riverside environment.



Aerial view of the Free Zone and Shannon Town. Image from: <https://roundaboutshannon.clareheritage.org/>





# A Community that Cares

Inclusive, shared, healthy

*“In Shannon the population comes from all over the country, indeed from all over the world. No one group, no single section, imposes its traditions and way of life on the others. Shannon is really a new town with a freedom to develop its own traditions, to establish its own precepts, to set down its own roots that will contain something of value from as many as a dozen different nations.”*<sup>3</sup>

Like many other new towns developed in Europe in the 1960s, Shannon represented an opportunity for many young families to start a new life. Settlers from across Ireland and abroad formed a diverse population attracted by the prospect of jobs and modern homes. What was missing from the outset was adequate social infrastructure. Shannon nevertheless developed a strong sense of community that is still very much alive today, and in many ways has defined the town’s character and identity. The Town Centre Masterplan must strengthen and nurture this, delivering high quality spaces and meaningful places centred around people.

The development of a town centre strategy is an opportunity to reflect on the needs and aspirations of Shannon’s current population. The masterplan must cater for all segments of the community and encourage the creation of places and spaces and an environment to facilitate greater interaction. As a driver for social inclusion, it will need to address a wide range of demographic and social issues. These include providing adequate infrastructure for the older population, including many of Shannon’s original residents, and supporting initiatives to retain the town’s youth and still be able to attract newcomers with new needs and expectations.

<sup>3</sup> Shannon Housing. Shannon Free Airport Development Corporation.

As the roles of town centres are being redefined, the growing recognition of the importance of care and community is helping to drive change. The idea of a town centre as a place to visit for no specific reason other than the chance to run into and engage with other members of the community, or indeed visitors, is becoming increasingly important – particularly after the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Town Centre Masterplan will thus focus on providing spaces for socialisation as a way of redefining Shannon’s identity.

Ultimately, the masterplan must be a collective endeavour that promotes stewardship and a shared ownership of projects. The masterplan area must be open to all initiatives that support Shannon’s very own version of a ‘good life’. In doing so, it will enable the town to attract, nurture, and retain a population of all ages.





# Opportunities and Strengths

There are several opportunities to capitalise on existing built assets and ensure that any future development is complementary to existing development, and creates a sense of place, and promotes vibrancy in the town centre.

Views from the N19 motorway could be harnessed to provide visibility to the town centre, and a new landmark or gateway can be created at the current R471 roundabout to establish a sense of place and a new landmark for the town centre.

The wide streets which exist along the edge of the town centre can be harnessed to ensure that they remain as ecological corridors for wildlife habitat, allowing birds and other local wildlife to move towards the estuary.

New developments to the north of the existing shopping centre should be oriented in a way to easily link back to the shopping centre. New development parcels on existing surface car parks can be considered to help provide a better sense of enclosure and establish new frontage leading into and out from the shopping centre.

## Key Opportunities

- Intensify uses on surface car parking areas adjacent to the large shopping centre.
- Define and create streets leading into and out from the town centre.
- Establish a landmark or gateway feature to give a sense of arrival and establish sense of place.
- Create new development north of R471 which blends seamlessly to development to the south.
- Create a unique bridging structure to allow for easy pedestrian connectivity between the north and south of the R471.
- Promote active frontages wherever possible to bring vitality and life to the town centre.
- Complete the enclosure of the town square to establish a comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Ensure L3114 and L3112 remain as green corridors linking the town centre with the estuary.
- Establish a transit-oriented development-ready design to maximise use of public transport infrastructure.
- Frame new development to give views to Tullyglass Hill and Tullyvarraga Hill and their tree canopies.
- Take advantage of views from the N19 national primary road and allow passerby drivers to see the town centre.
- Ensure better wayfinding and connectivity with Shannon Town Park and community uses in the area.





# Constraints

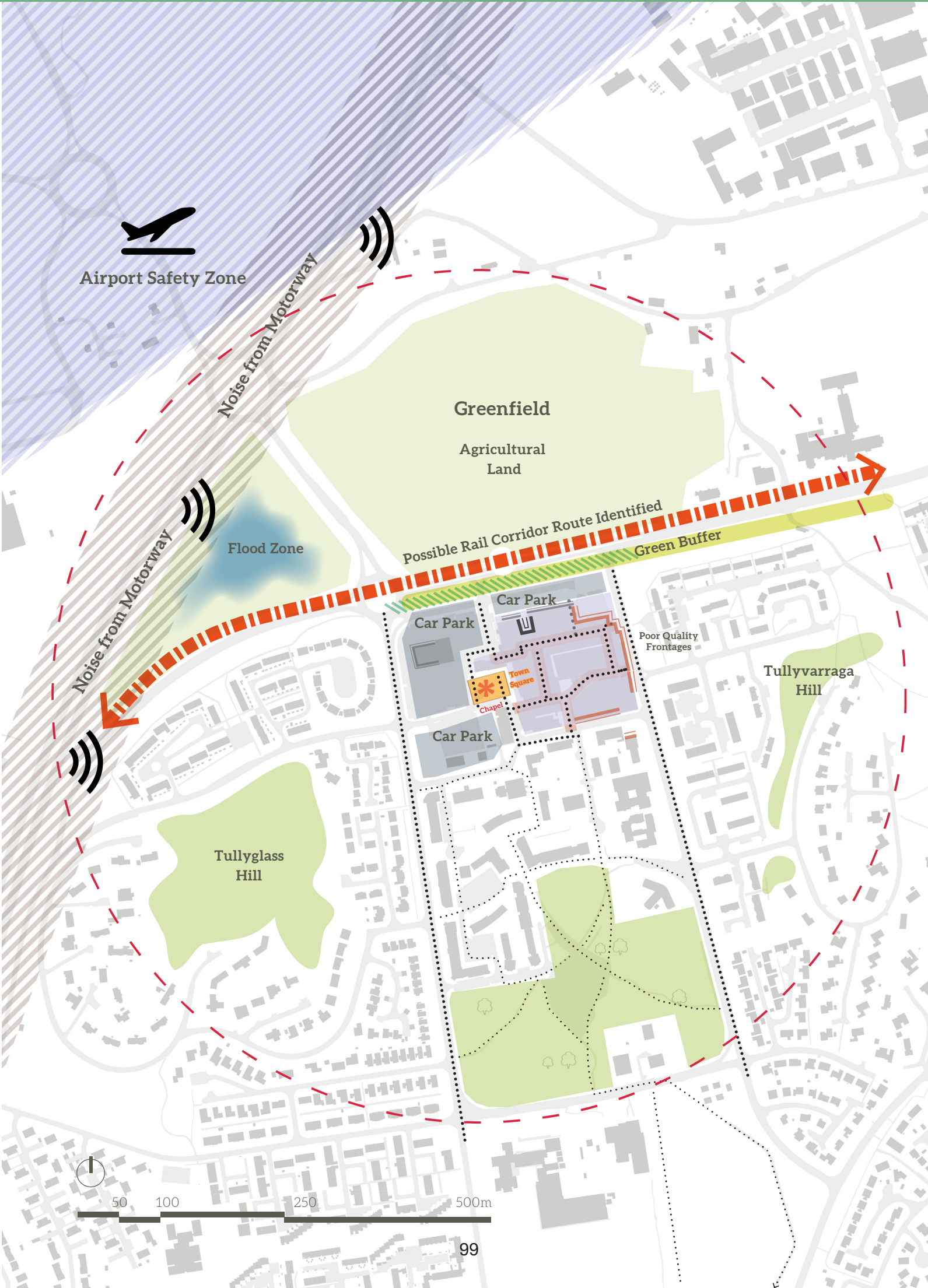
There are several constraints in the study area that must be considered. The Airport Safety Zone does not overlap the study area, but it is less than 200m from the northern edge. This will affect building heights and acceptable uses. Noise from the N19 national road affects any proposed development along its length.

There is a route identified for a future rail corridor that occupies space along the R471 which should be preserved that prevents any development within this area.

There are significant surface car parks that occupy a large portion of the town centre and do not contribute to the public realm. There is an identified flood risk on land to the west of the northern parcel of the study area, which must be assessed before any development may occur.

### Key Constraints

- The busy and traffic heavy nature of R471 which could act as a barrier between the northern and southern areas.
- The large green buffer and rail corridor could split the district and impede on walkability and wayfinding.
- The flood risk zones in the greenfield site to the west of the N19 connection.
- Noise from the motorway.
- Noise or other disturbances from flights overhead as the airport safety zone is approximately 250m from the northern edge of the site.
- Almost total reliance on the private sector to bring forward development proposals.



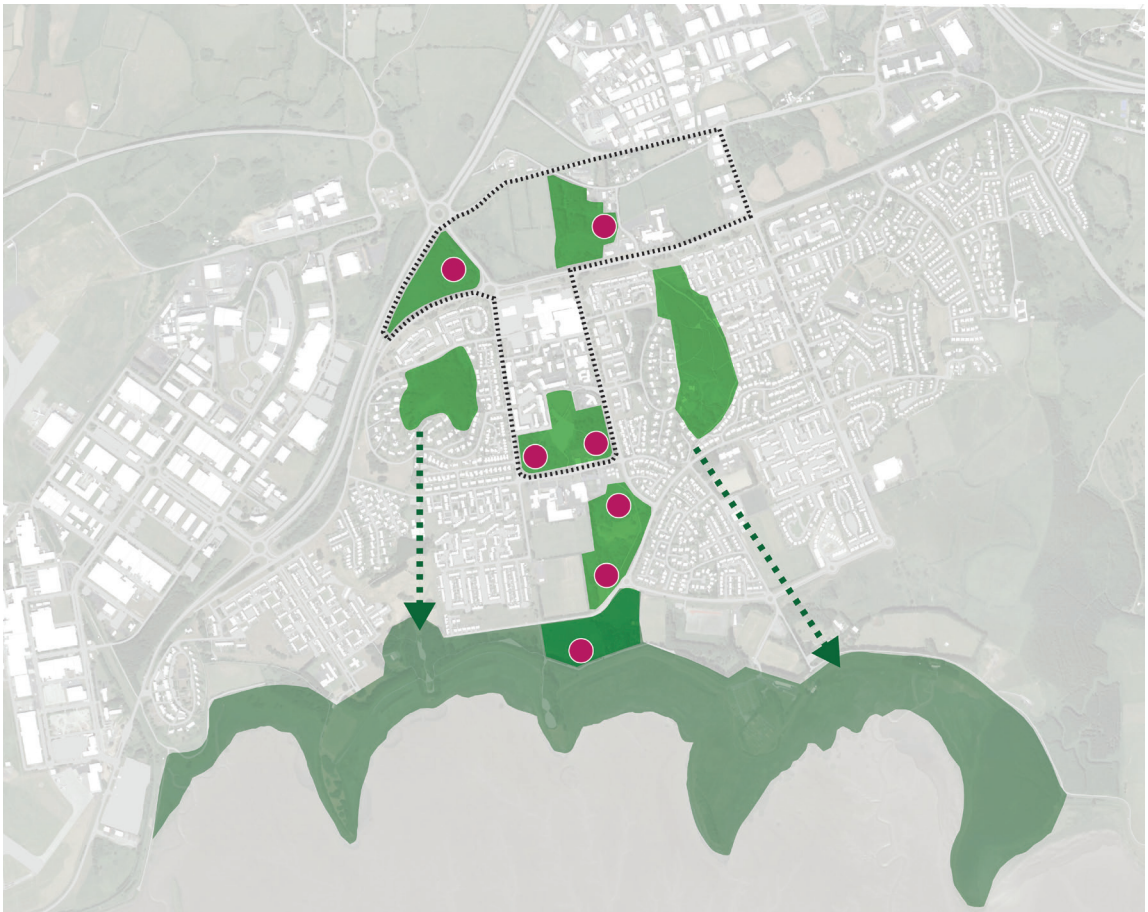


Following consideration of the existing built form of the masterplan area, consideration of economic mobility and placemaking opportunities and the assessment of heritage, environmental and ecological implementation, the following key opportunities, and themes emerge.

# Shannon-wide Strategies

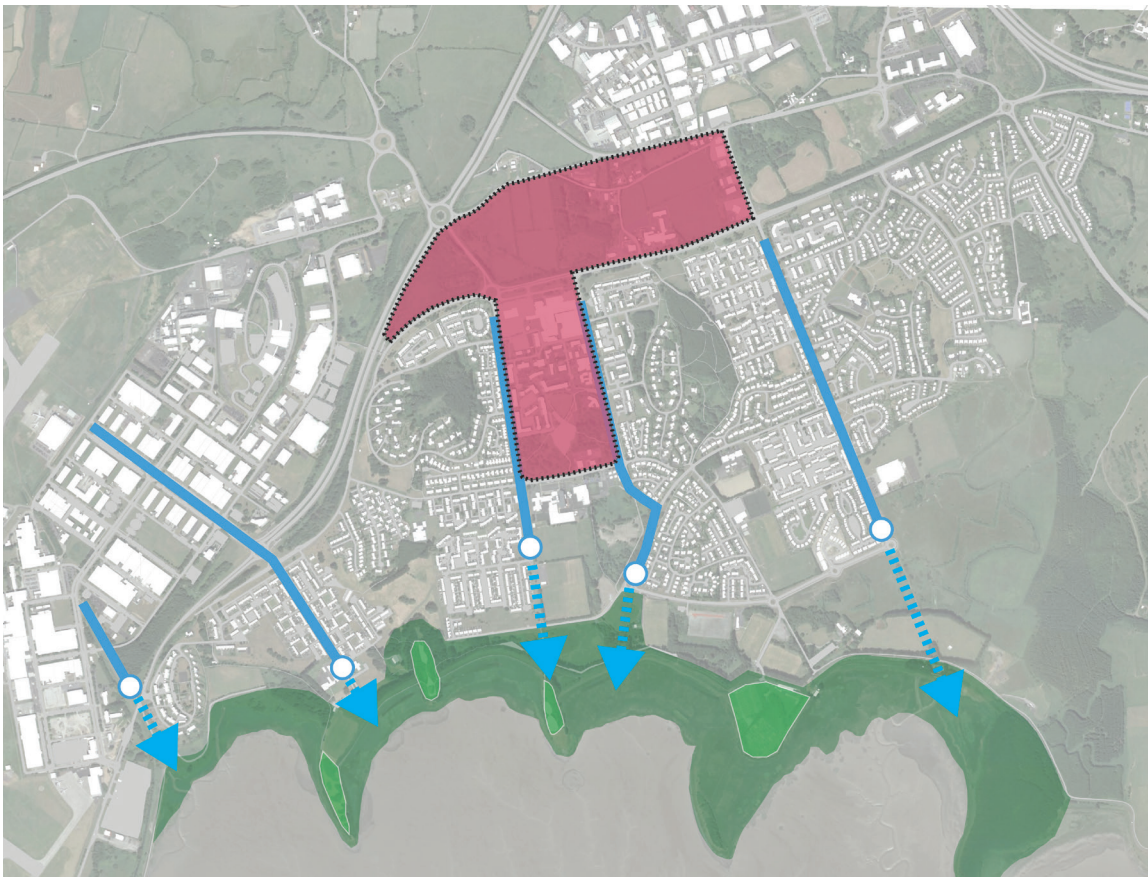
## Green Development Areas

- Requalify existing green spaces with new programmes (leisure, culture, learning, well-being, community) for additional uses and activities within Shannon's network of open spaces.
- Enhance links to the Shannon Estuary.
- Identify opportunities for new uses in low value green areas.
- Develop a programme for greater biodiversity in existing green spaces and future developments in the town centre.



## Estuary Links

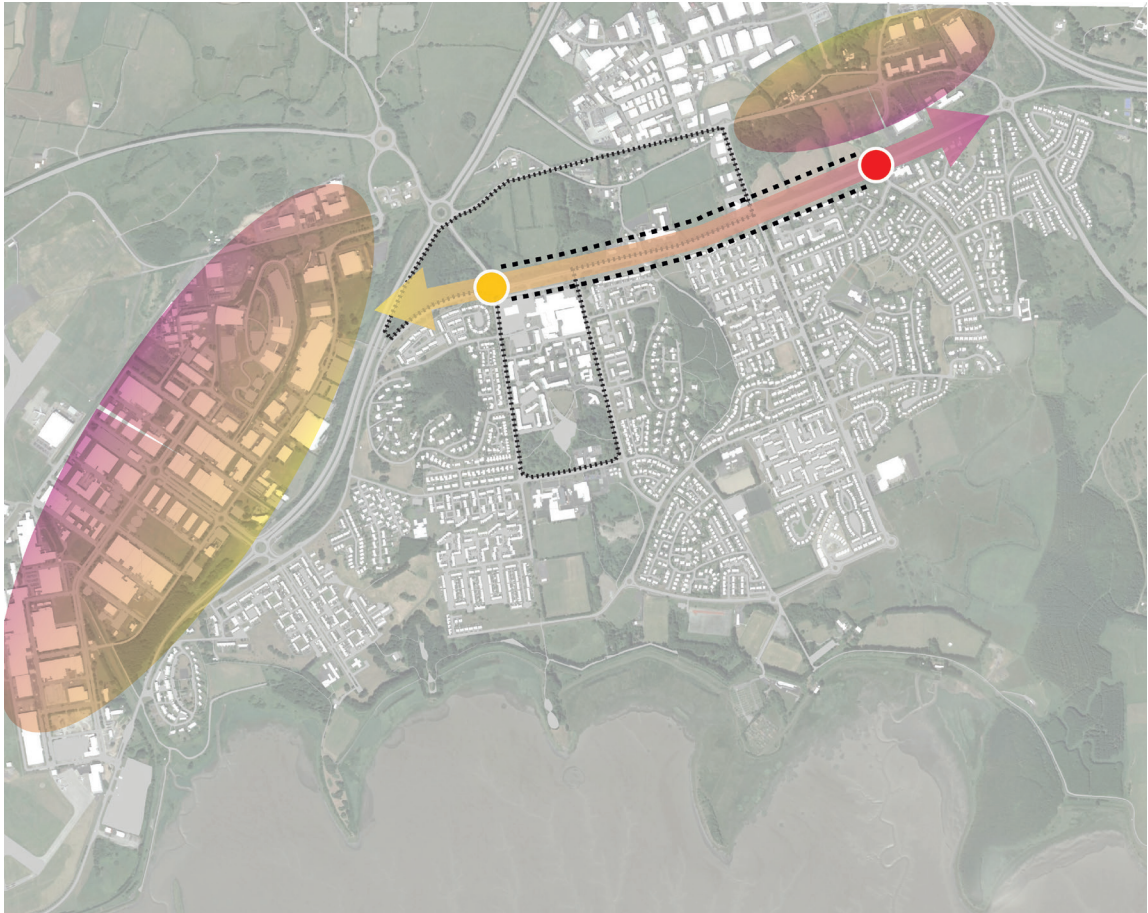
- Enhance, restore and complete existing links to the Shannon Estuary.
- Envisage the estuary as a natural extension of the town centre.
- Create new 'destinations' in the estuary.
- Investigate possibilities to link up wider areas outside the town e.g. Bunratty, along the estuary and waterways.





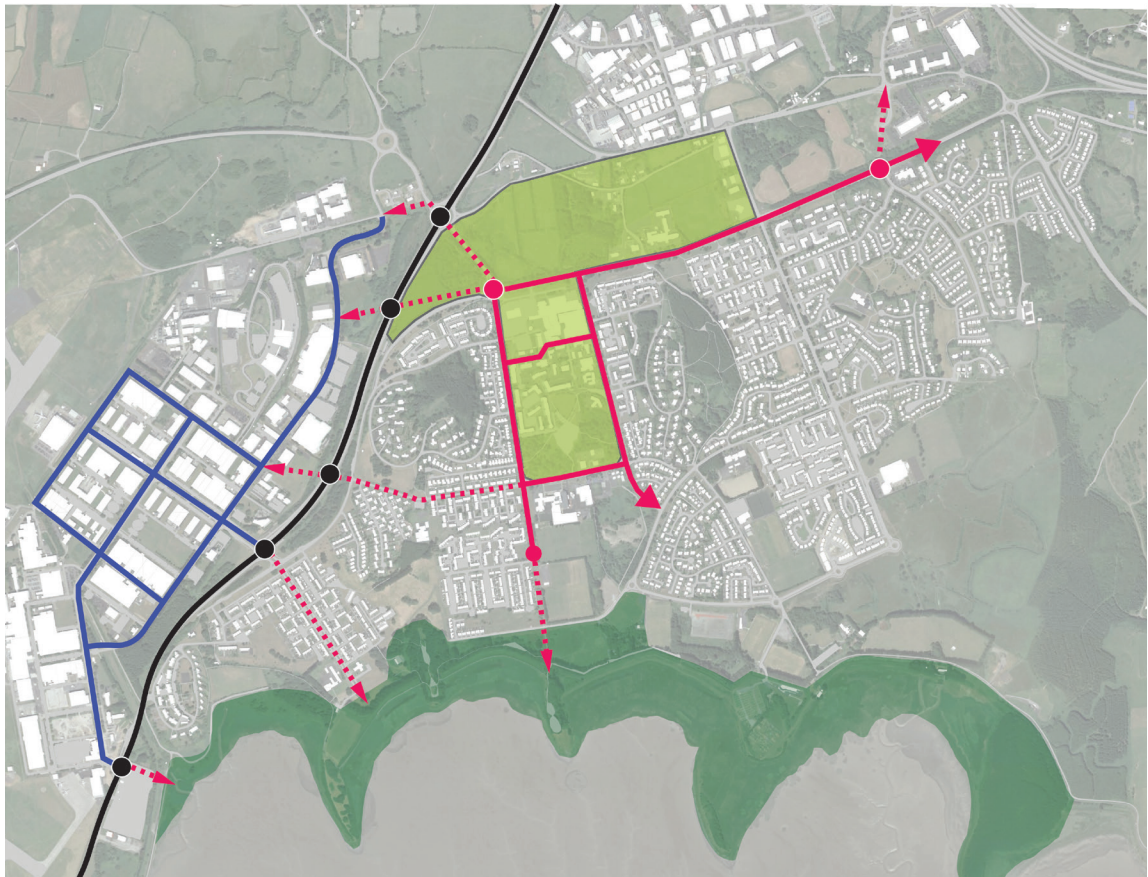
# Innovation Corridor

- The R471 links Free Zone East, Free Zone West and the Smithstown Industrial Estate. There is an opportunity to transform the road into an innovation corridor with a frontage that showcases the prowess of Shannon's economic hubs.
- Shannon Town Centre as the hub within the corridor.
- The Innovation Corridor can guide and inform integrated growth and development strategies that bring together the town centre and employment areas.
- Redefinition of future investment opportunities around the hub.



# Integrated Grids

- The street grids of the Free Zone and Shannon Town were originally designed as integrated systems. A number of the original links have been severed by the N19.
- A refreshed system of integrated grids which enable enhanced connectivity between the town centre, housing estates, employment areas, green spaces, and the Shannon Estuary.
- Emphasis on promoting sustainable mobility - pedestrian and cycle routes, and an integrated public transport system.
- Additional connection north of the main street to serve to open up lands for development to the north of the main street, whilst also providing alternative routes to / from N19 enabling traffic volumes to be reduced on main street. This will encourage an enhanced pedestrian / cycling environment in the town centre, and will encourage greater connectivity north and south across the new main street.





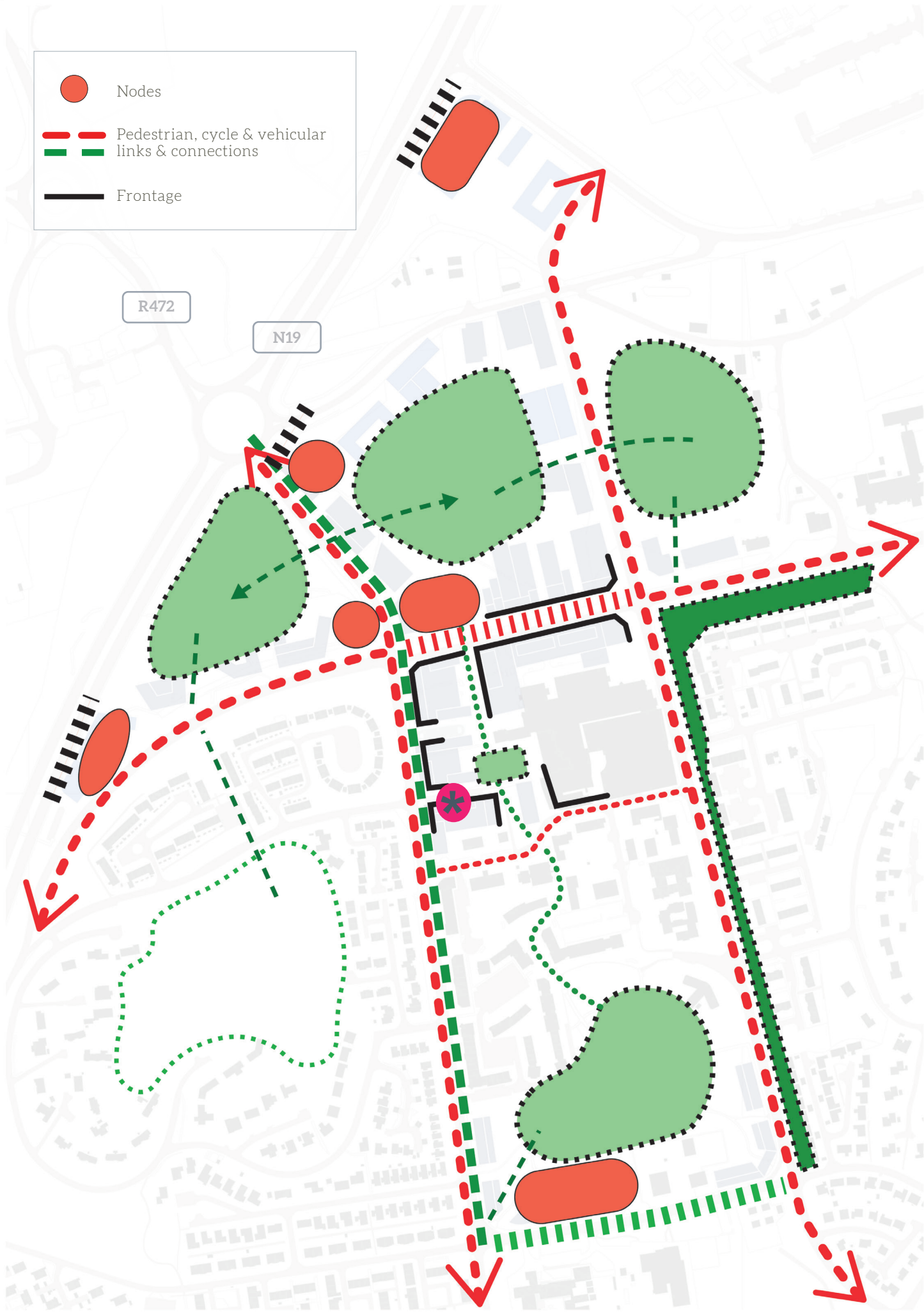
# Development Framework - Links, Nodes and Frontages

Roads in Shannon Town Centre have the potential to be redesigned as green corridors, linking the town centre with the estuary in a more comprehensive way. Pedestrian links and new cycle lanes would help to strengthen this connection. These connections will also serve as biodiversity corridors.

Existing green areas within Shannon Town Centre shall be retained and preserved as amenities for the community, and may serve community and cultural uses.

New, active frontages will bring the High Street and Estuary Connections to life, giving Shannon an urban street frontage which many other Irish towns have in their centres which Shannon lacks.

The R472 will serve as a Gateway to Shannon from the N19, and be visible from the motorway, letting visitors know they have arrived.





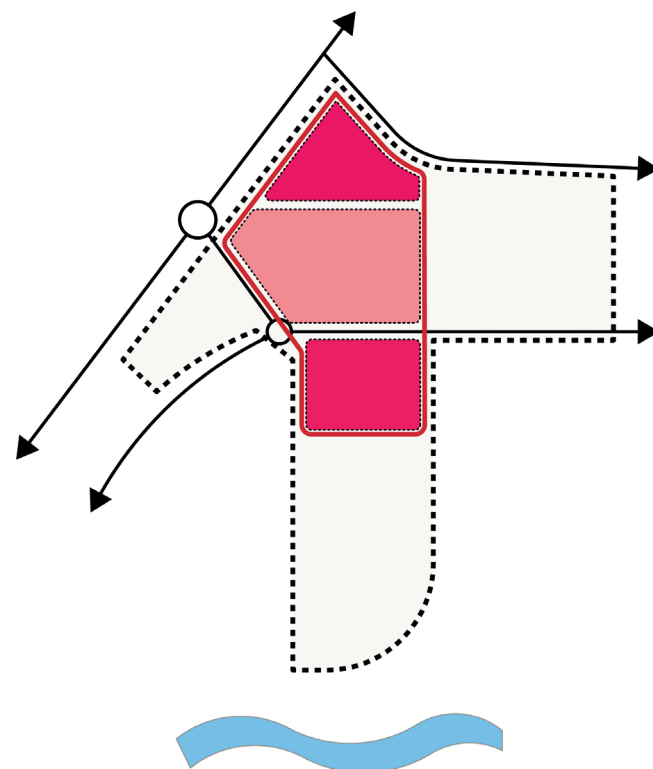
Having reviewed the emerging themes and opportunities, the masterplanning process identified approaches which are set out below.

## Approach 1

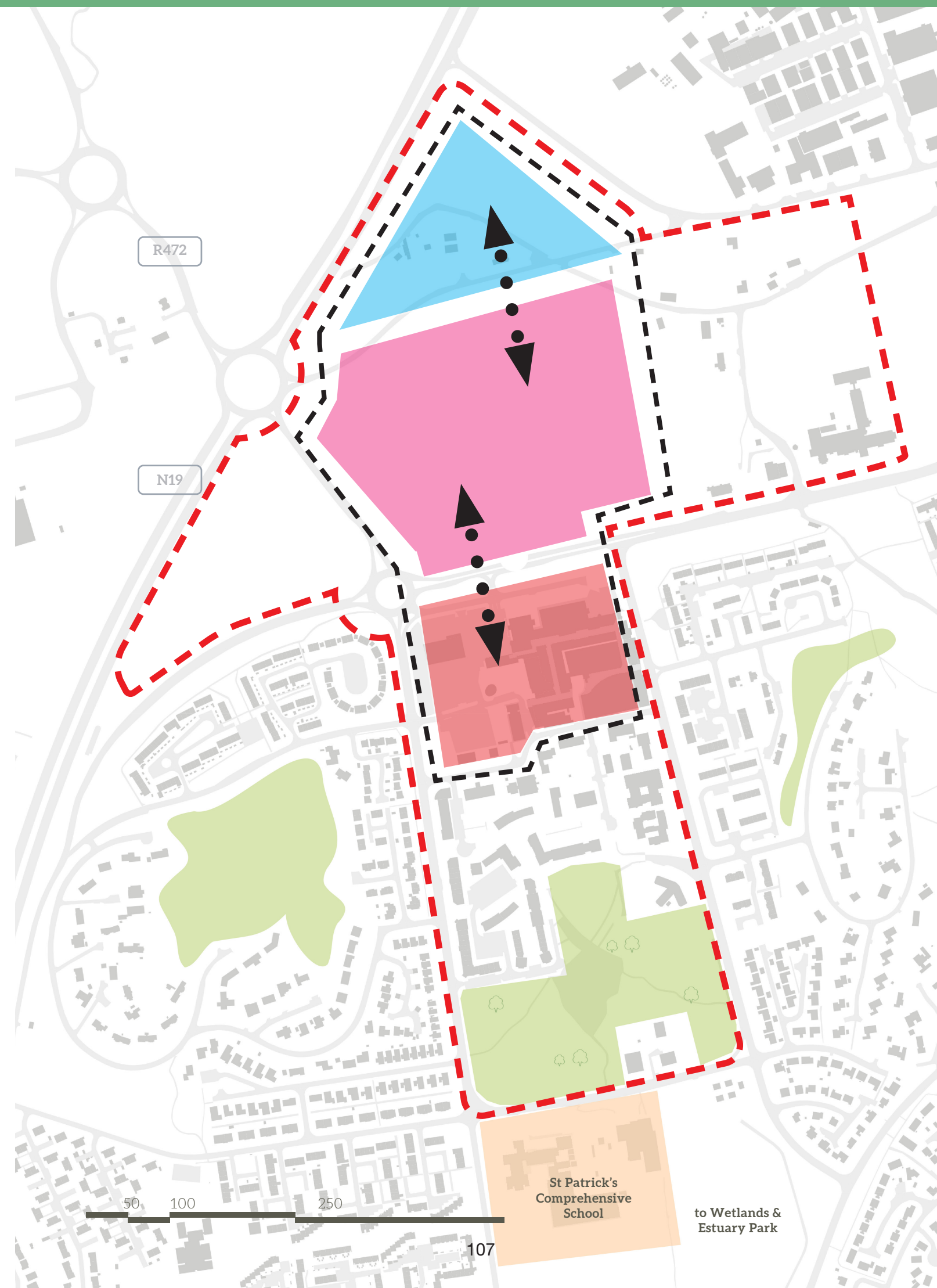
### Compound Town Centre

This approach is based on expanding the existing shopping centre to create a larger urban hub with a greater mix of uses, improved accessibility and visibility, and closer links with the Smithstown Industrial Estate. The main design strategies would be:

- Extending the town centre boundary northwards as far as Smithstown Road, enabling closer and more direct links with neighbouring employment hubs (Free Zone and Smithstown Industrial Estate) and their future growth areas.
- Maximising frontages to the wider road network and thus visibility from key transport corridors such as the N19.
- Creating 3 distinct hubs with complementary uses as pieces of a new cohesive and functioning town centre.
- Southern Hub - redevelopment of the shopping centre block around a new public realm framework and a mix of retail, leisure, cultural and community uses.
- Central Hub - new urban campus with a mix of innovative research and productive spaces, education institution and residential elements.
- Northern Hub - high density commercial cluster providing office spaces, hotel and conferencing facilities.
- Defining a distinctive urban centre with the use of urban and architectural design parameters.
- Setting up a clearly defined development area to focus investment and create certainty for developers.
- Designing a spatial framework that can accommodate different hub-specific delivery mechanisms.



Compound Town Centre - strategic diagram





## Approach 2

### 2 Differentiated Centres

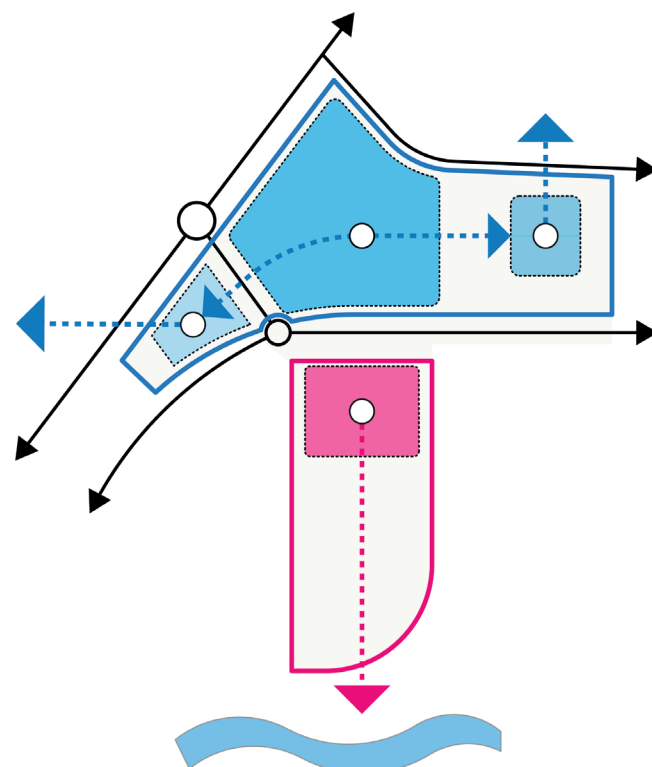
The strategy considers two different interventions that will capitalise on the specific development opportunities of the combined Focus Areas 1 and 2, and an expanded Focus Area 3. The two distinct town centre hubs will be driven by differentiated yet complementary regeneration strategies. Key design and planning principles include:

#### Shannon North - Gateway

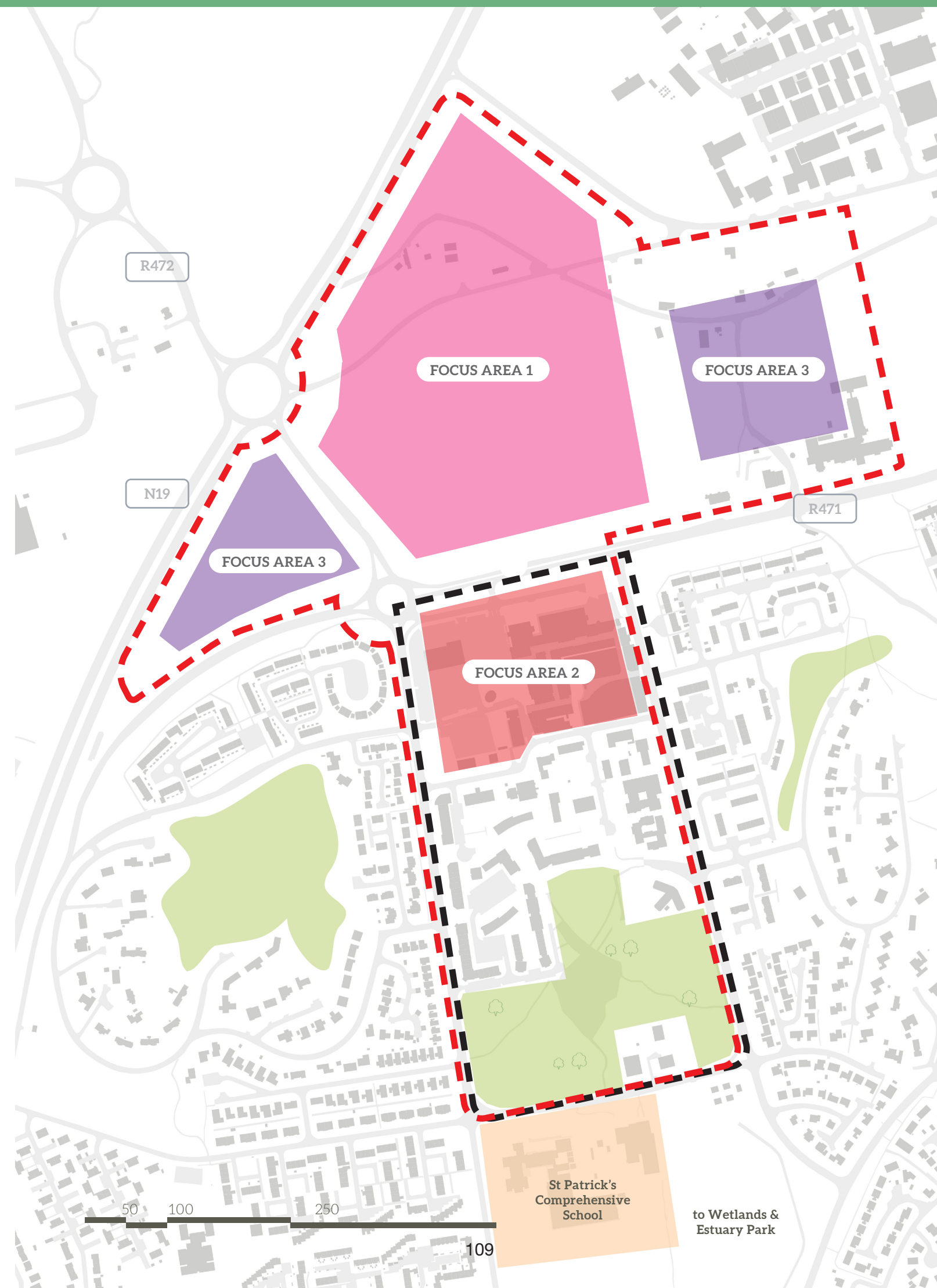
- Creating a regional (or national) centre of excellence and economic hub.
- Developing spaces for a range of innovative and creative economic activities with a focus on research and development, provision of services to Shannon airport, and advanced manufacturing and logistics.
- Establishing direct links with the Free Zone and Smithstown, and adjacent development areas.
- Connecting the Free Zone and Smithstown, and setting up new synergies between existing economic and productive activities.
- Defining a unique gateway to 'Destination Shannon' (airport, Free Zone, town centre, estuary area etc).

#### Shannon South - Urban Centre and Destination

- Redeveloping the shopping centre block as both a mixed use leisure, retail and cultural destination and meeting place for Shannon's community.
- Envisaging a zero carbon development that integrates cradle to cradle and circularity principles in its design, construction, and management.
- Identifying 'satellite interventions' that link up to establish an attractive link between the town centre and the Shannon estuary.



2 Differentiated Centres - strategic diagram



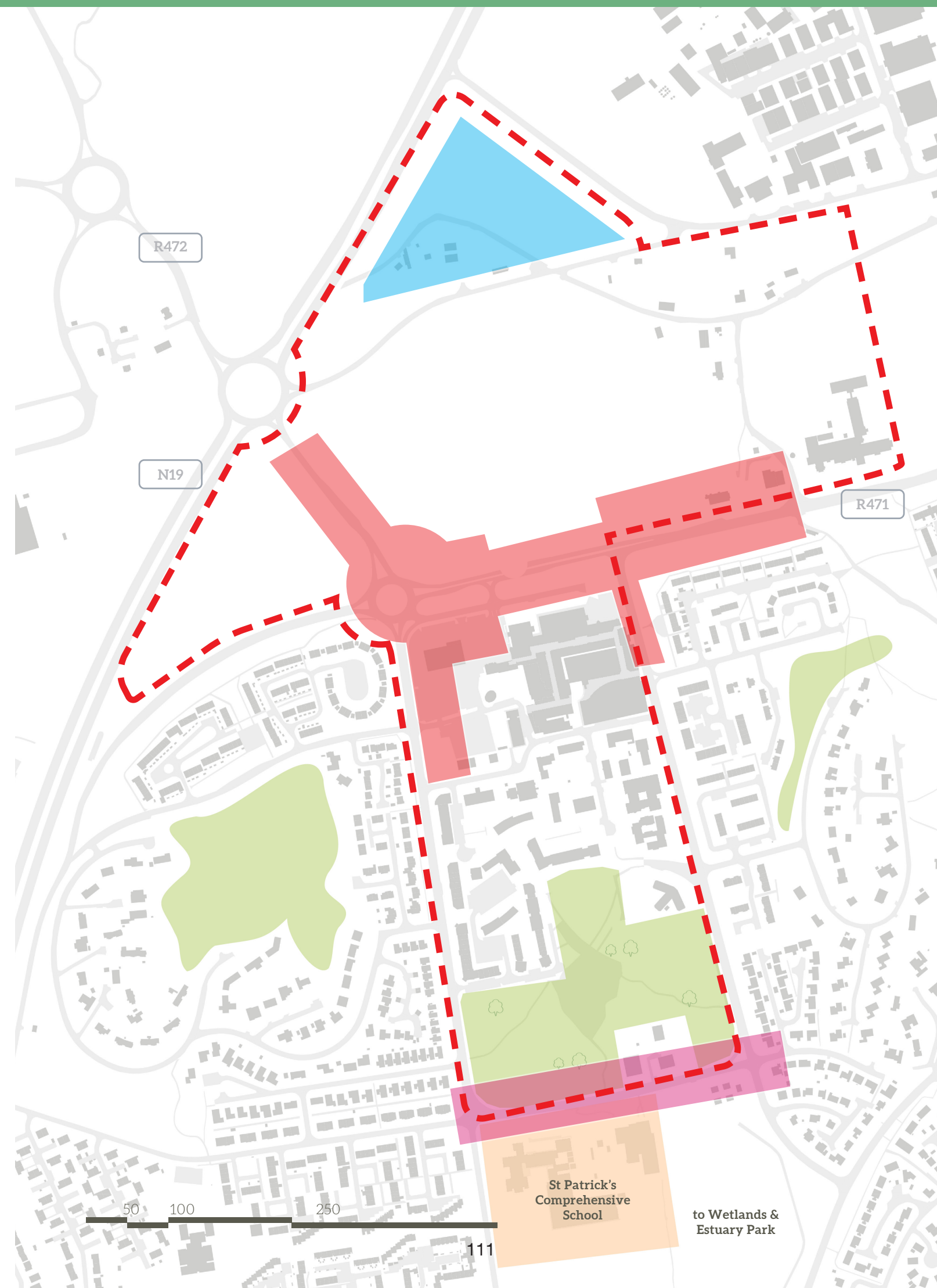
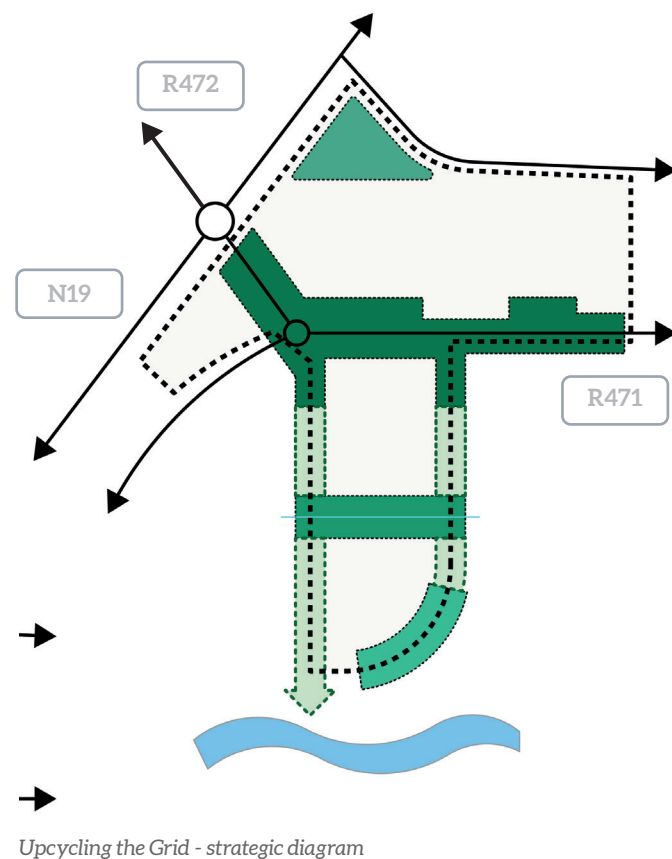


## Approach 3

### Upcycling the Grid – Urban Frontages

This approach turns its attention to Shannon's grid of streets and their generous open spaces. It explores the potential to locate and link projects within these long corridors and focus development along key frontages. As the strategic diagrams illustrate, this would structure the transformation of the town centre study area on a series of urban strips:

- The R471 and R472 access road designed as Shannon's 'green mile'. An upcycled road that is transformed into a modern high street linking existing residential neighbourhoods and future development sites.
- Smithstown gateway - development of the triangular site bounded by the N19 and Smithstown Road.
- Tullyglass - new community spaces with a focus on supporting activities for Shannon's younger inhabitants.
- Shannon Wetlands - new facilities to activate the use of the Riverside Park.
- Bóthar na Rinne - green corridor linking the town centre with Shannon Estuary.





## Summary of Development Frameworks

Interaction between the Shannon Town Centre and the wider areas frames the rationale for choosing the final masterplan framework, which is discussed in the following pages.

Forming the basis of this framework is an improved town centre, strengthened by diverse uses, active streets, a revitalised public realm, new connections to the north, and improved green connections to the estuary.





Below are the Key Highlights of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan with the main goals and objectives for future development and growth.

An **Innovation Campus** to showcase the Best of Shannon

A new **Main Street** and improved **green boulevards** linking to the estuary

An expanded and reinvigorated green **Town Square area**

A **mixture** of new high-quality residential homes

A more **varied retail** offer, showcasing **local products** and services

A new **'One Shannon' community, civic and cultural hub**

**New amenities** and **better connections** to the new Town Park & Shannon Estuary to support healthy lifestyles

A **refreshed identity** for Shannon rooted in its history of innovation, enterprise and connectivity with nature



Artist's Impression on Completed Masterplan



07

# Intervention Areas

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## Illustrative Masterplan

The Masterplan for Shannon Town Centre comprises several integrated areas with potential future land uses, proposed improvements to public realm, and new connections to strengthen connectivity in the Town Centre and throughout Shannon.

The Innovation Campus is proposed at the northern-most portion of the Masterplan, and places buildings along main roads to define frontages, whilst maintaining a wide and open green space in the centre which could be used for recreational and amenity uses.

The R471 is proposed to be made more human-scaled, with active street frontages running along its length, and a wider pedestrian area. The street would serve as a focal point and gateway into Shannon Town.

The Civic Square will link the future Innovation Campus in the north with the existing shopping centre, Town Square, and areas to the south. This will be a car-free zone which will allow for open air markets, festivals, and other spaces to take place and give Shannon a central heart.

The One Shannon Hub building is proposed in the south-west corner of the Civic Square, bringing constant life and activity to the town centre. This building will be a place where multiple uses coexist, showcasing performing arts, community services, co-working spaces, education, training, facilities for local businesses, exhibition, culture, and above all a meeting place for residents of Shannon.

The Shannon Town Park will remain as it currently is, as a key amenity for Shannon providing a variety of recreational and cultural opportunities for residents of Shannon. There is potential for step-down housing to be developed on a redeveloped site of the existing local authority offices, following the relocation of the offices to the One Shannon Hub in the town centre.





## Innovation Campus

The masterplan has identified the lands to the north of the town centre as potential future growth of the town environs. This represents many opportunities in terms of a transitional link from an urban to a rural context while providing a key amenity for local use.

Shannon has always had a history of innovation at a range of locations from the airport to the free zones, and this innovation campus will become a centre to continue that innovation supported by a hotel or apart-hotel and new workers located in the town centre. This will create a vibrant town centre and a valuable linkage between industry and the town centre, tying all of the Shannons together.

The proposal is to establish an Innovation Campus to the north of the town centre presenting a mechanism not just to enhance Shannon's 'innovative' reputation, but to create a laboratory to perpetuate this innovativeness. County Clare has a highly skilled and well-educated workforce making it an attractive location for new business development. The knowledge economy is recognised as a critical driver of economic success and Shannon continues to be at the heart of innovation in the mid-west.

This site provides a significant offering to leverage linkages between further and higher education and existing and future employment at a location in the town centre. This may be achieved either through placing a third-level institution on-site or through generating satellite linkages thereby facilitating the establishment of an innovation lab. The site, which can accommodate a significant number of students (1,500) and future workers (1,000) within an Innovation Campus, will greatly assist Shannon Town Centre in terms of providing footfall, vitality and life with activity during the day and evening.

It is important to create a distinctive environment on arrival to Shannon, the area should be developed to create a unique character, reinforced by local identity and promoting development that is sensitive to existing landscape features. This area will become a local amenity with its biodiverse landscape and will put local movement before traffic, creating an area that promotes walking and cycling by allowing easy access and movement through the northern area.

A new road link is proposed along the eastern edge of the Innovation Campus, connecting Shannon Town Centre north towards Smithstown Road. Parking and access will be provided from this new road link. The Innovation Campus and new road will build on the emerging technology in Shannon's Future Mobility Campus Ireland and create the new innovation campus to cater for autonomous vehicles and technology.

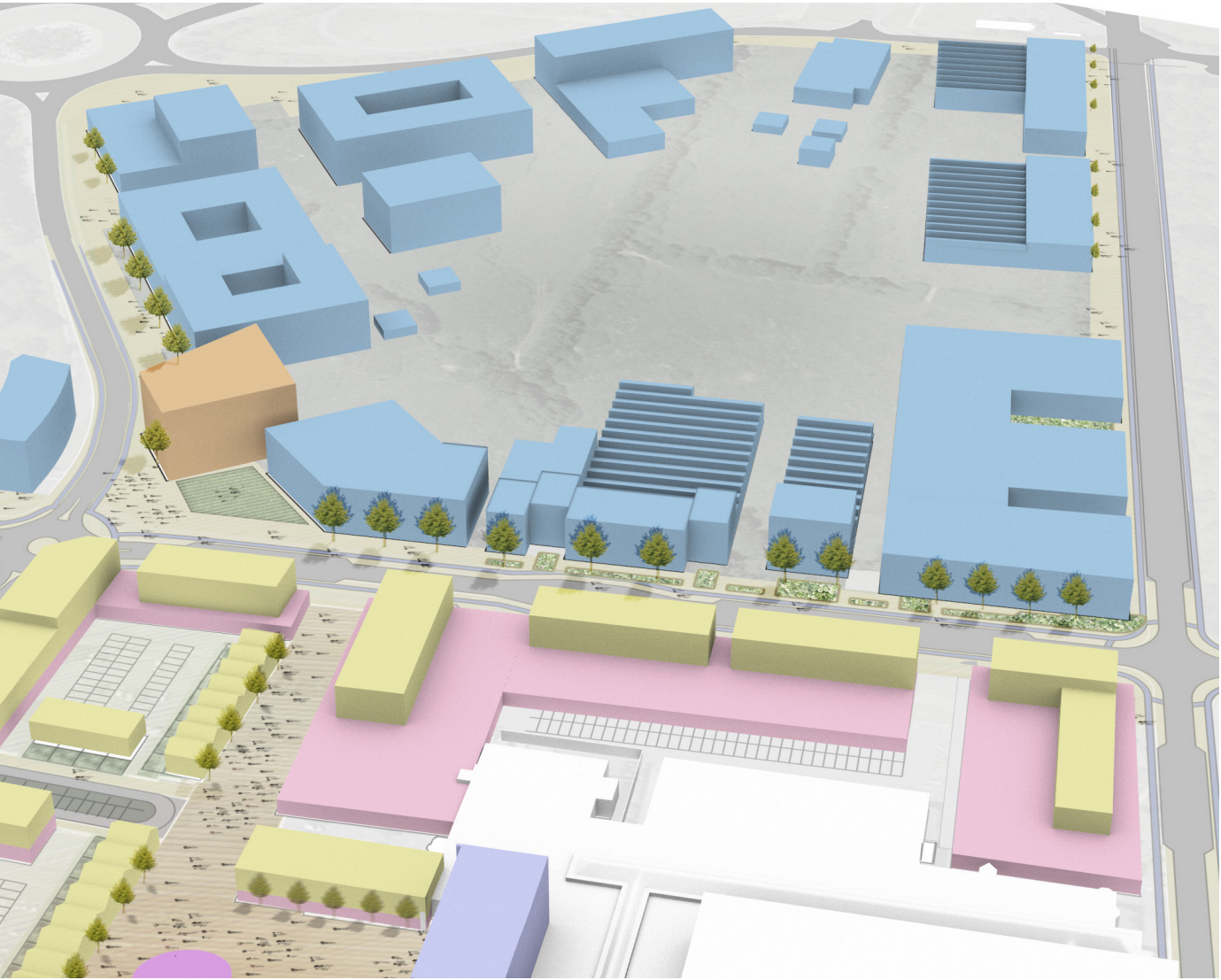
Connections to the south will be improved with the creation of the new 'Main Street' which will be a pedestrian prioritised refurbishment of the R471 road which currently separates the lands north of the town centre from the town centre itself. A smaller and more pedestrian and cyclist friendly roundabout will connect the R471 to the R472 and on to the N19 motorway. This will be the new gateway to Shannon for visitors arriving from the airport or from the N19. Landmark architecture should welcome visitors and residents and give a sense of arrival.

Ancillary small-scale shops e.g. newsagents, sandwich bar, café etc and above ground floor residential along the northern street frontage, developed in conjunction with or after the primary requirements of the innovation campus and educational requirements will add vibrancy to the main street. Supermarkets and other larger retail units will be directed to the southern street frontage.

Having a large quantity of new workers in the Innovation Campus will be a huge help for supporting Shannon Town Centre, providing vitality and life with activity during the day and evenings.







Artist's Impression of the District

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| High Quality Housing | Hotel / Apart-hotel |
| Retail / Service     | Office              |
| Innovation Campus    | Community           |



Ulster Carpets & Dyehouse Energy Centre, Northern Ireland



Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design, Atlanta



Urban Bloom Innovation District, Shanghai



National College for Rail, Birmingham



## Main Street

It is proposed to improve and make the R471 road passing through Shannon Town Centre more pedestrian friendly, and redesign the roundabout linking it with the R472 (connecting to N19). This would allow the road to become a street focusing on pedestrians, cyclists, and enable new retail and service amenities to have a presence to the street. The redesigned roundabout will serve as a gateway to Shannon Town Centre, and have dedicated cycle lanes for safety, creating a safer pedestrian and cycle environment, whilst also facilitating traffic at appropriate volumes and reduced speed.

It is envisaged that this new 'Main Street' will be an innovative take on the traditional main street of Irish towns, and will contribute to a sense of place for Shannon, where people come first. The Main Street will bring together local and independent retail, bars and restaurants, spaces for enterprise, showrooms and in general an 'urban front door' to the Innovation Campus. Large scale retail / supermarket will be encouraged to locate in the new town square and southern main street frontage.



Key Plan

The relocated Lidl from the current location in the town centre will help to contribute to having active frontages on both sides of the street. The street will be a place of confluence for the '3 Shannons': airport, Free Zone and Shannon Town. It will be a space that prioritises pedestrians and is designed as high quality public realm, including urban greening, sustainable urban drainage and amenity spaces for all ages.

The street will also bridge the Innovation Campus with the town centre, whilst providing for existing vehicular traffic to use the street and the redesigned Gateway Roundabout.



Chatham Street, Dublin



New Road, Brighton



BMC Street and Square, Bergen, Norway

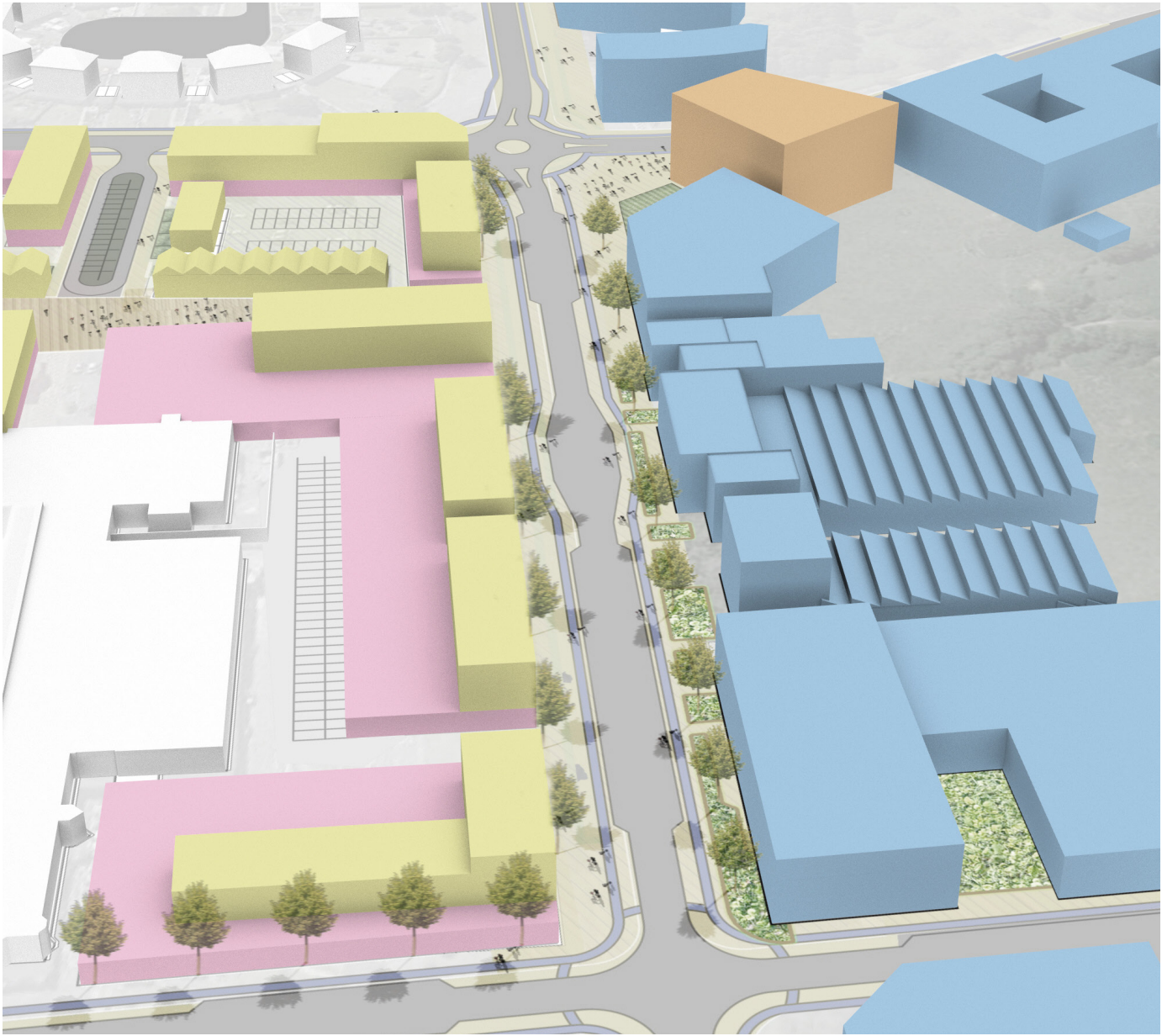


Stroget, Copenhagen, Denmark



Street Furniture and Paving, Clonakilty





Artist's Impression of the New Street

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| High Quality Housing | Hotel / Apart-hotel |
| Retail / Service     | Office              |
| Innovation Campus    | Community           |



Pembroke Street, Cork

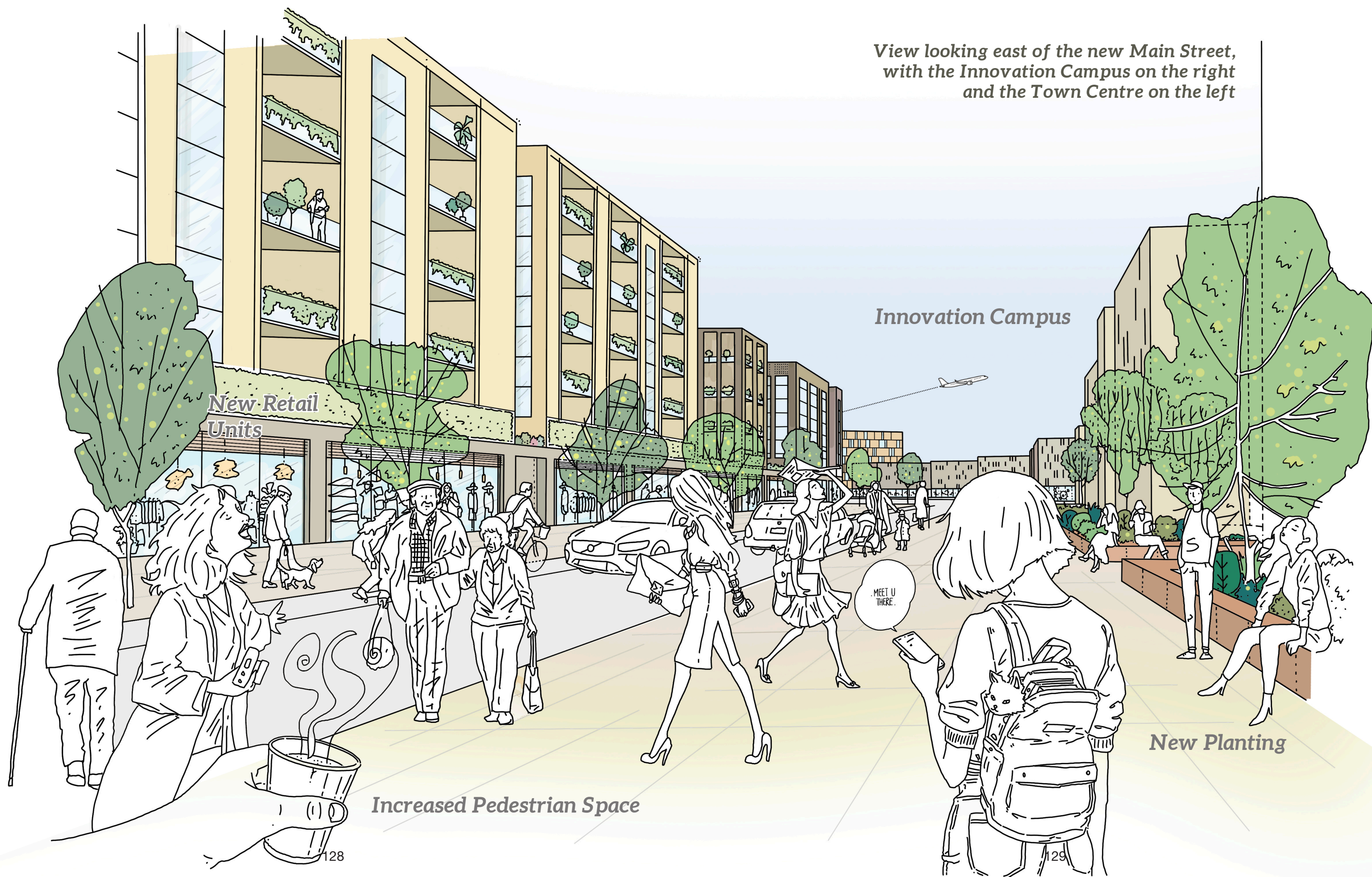


Mariahilferstrasse, Vienna



Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork







## New Town Square

Shannon Town Square will underpin a new identity for the town centre as a focal point for the community. The space will be given over to pedestrians and will be able to host a variety of events, celebrations and community functions.

The Town Square will expand on the existing square with its Adoration Chapel, but with new urban furniture and lighting to support prolonged use throughout the year. It will have a direct link to the proposed One Shannon Hub, and will support its community uses.

It is important that the future landscape and public realm design of the Square prioritises people and pedestrian activity, but is flexible to allow for markets, pop-up retail, event spaces, and other ancillary uses which will complement the existing retail in the shopping centre.

The existing Adoration Chapel will remain as a focal point in the square, and new trees and landscape will help to soften the hard surface. Street furniture and shading devices should be incorporated into the design to allow for all-weather use of the space.

The reuse of the Phoenix House for accommodation or other commercial uses is encouraged so as to provide or enable footfall and a range of uses in the town centre. Active and vibrant uses shall be encouraged at ground floor level. Its use as student accommodation could further support the proposition of Shannon Town Centre and the Innovation Centre as a focal point for education / higher education in the region.



Key Plan



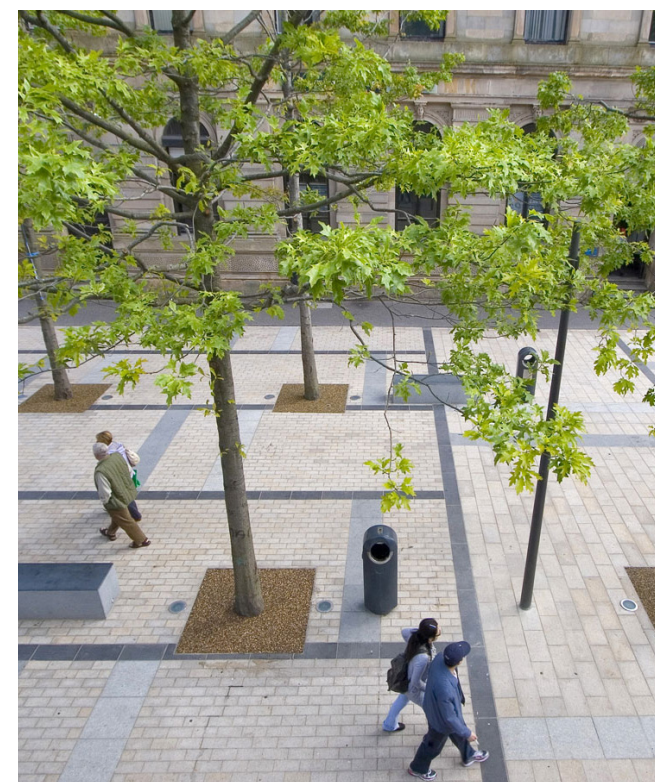
Derry City Centre Square



Green Square & Library, Sydney



Woolwich Square, London



Derry City Centre Square



Capital Dock, Dublin





Artist's Impression of the Square

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| High Quality Housing | Hotel / Apart-hotel |
| Retail / Service     | Office              |
| Innovation Campus    | Community           |



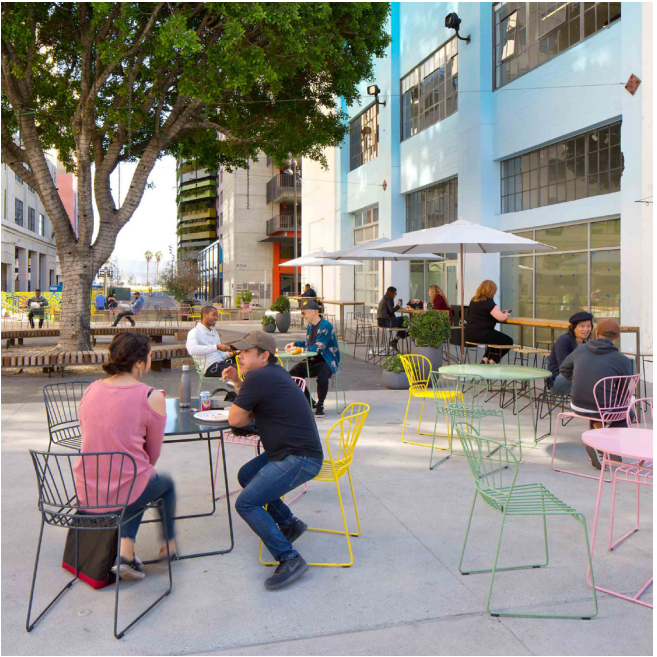
City Centre Square, Derry



Emmet Square Park, Clonakilty, Cork



Theatre Square, Rotterdam



Informal Seating, ROW DTLA, Los Angeles



*View looking south from the Main Street  
towards the New Town Square and One  
Shannon Hub*

*High Quality  
Homes*

*High Quality Homes*

*One Shannon Hub*

*Chapel*

*New Town Square*



## One Shannon Hub

The One Shannon Hub will be a place where multiple uses coexist to create new synergies and ensure activity throughout the day and night.

It is proposed to create a new building which will combine the Town Hall, a performing arts venue (Estuary Hall), a flexible 'greenhouse' and a garden. This 3 in 1 approach merges community, cultural and civic uses, with Council offices relocated to the heart of the town. The flexible 'greenhouse' will be for a variety of uses that include co-working, education and training, facilities for local businesses, exhibitions, culture etc. Above all, it is a meeting space for the local community – a place for all to be co-designed by the residents of Shannon. This would be located to the east of the Estuary Boulevard, directly southwest of the existing Town Square.

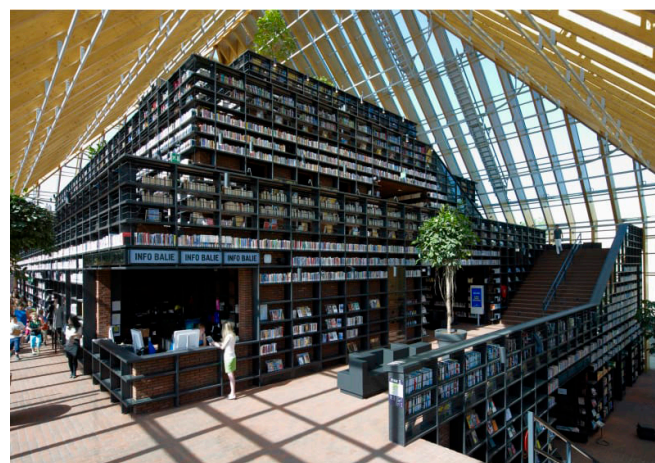
A key objective is the acquisition of the site by the local authority for its development, taking into public ownership the town square and Slí na Carra. The One Shannon Hub and Clare County Council Offices, library, and Civic Hub will be developed on lands owned by the local authority. Car parking will be relocated around the centre of Shannon Town.



Key Plan



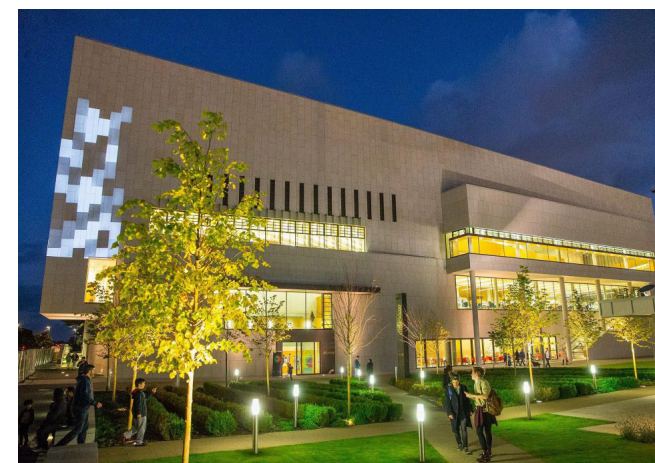
Milton Keynes Shopping Centre



Spijkenisse Public Library - interior view



Spijkenisse Theatre - public square



Library Cultural Centre LexIcon Dun Laoghaire

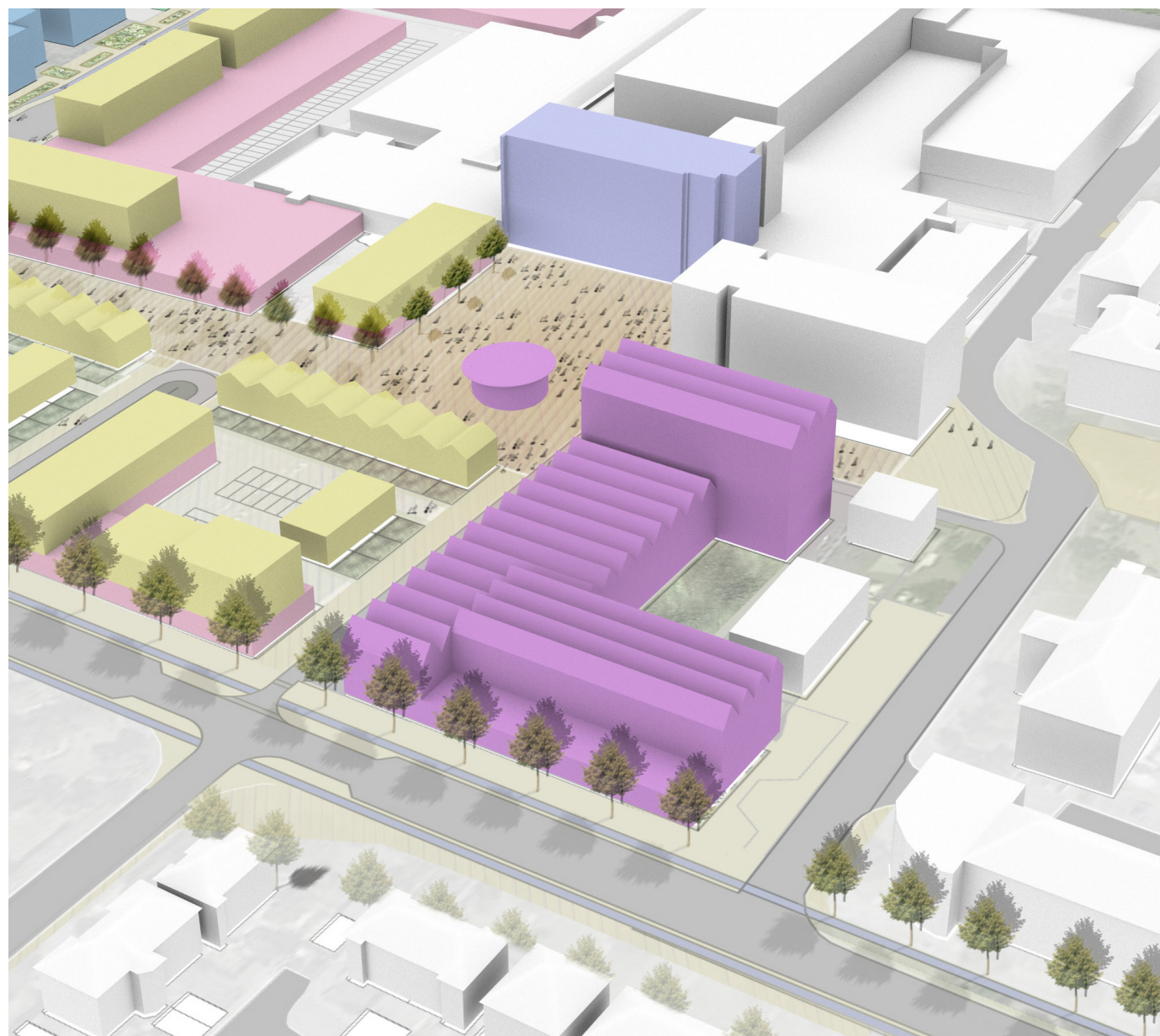


Bokenberg Library, Spijkenisse, Netherlands



Library and Civic Centre, Athlone



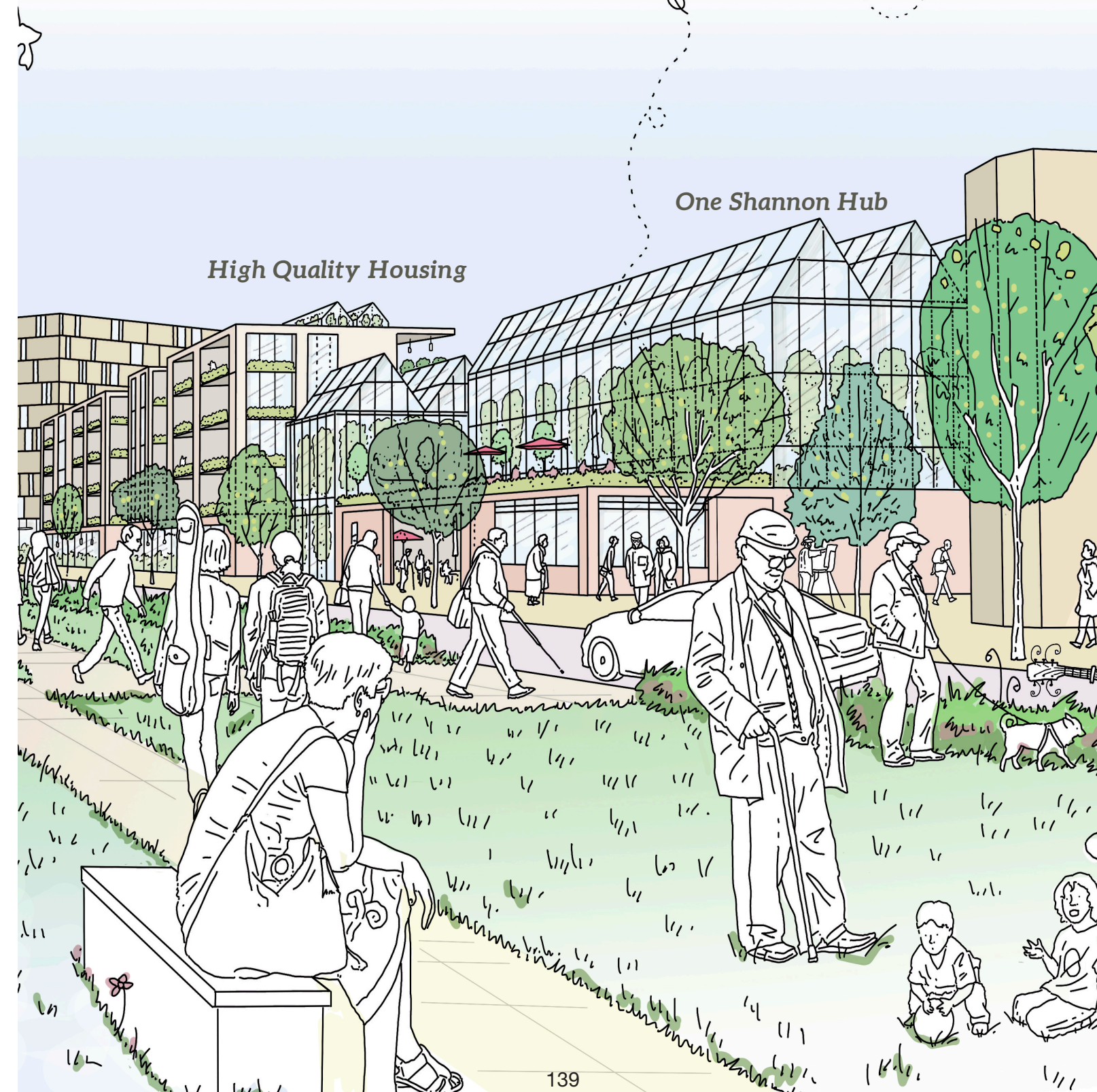


Artist's Impression of the One Shannon Hub

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> High-Quality Homes | <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Hotel / Apart-hotel |
| <span style="color: pink;">■</span> Retail / Service     | <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Office                |
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Innovation Campus    | <span style="color: magenta;">■</span> Community          |



**View northwards along Bóthar na Rinne  
Green Corridor linking to the Estuary  
to the Innovation Campus**





# Step-Down Housing in Shannon Town Park

The Shannon Town Park was designed to contribute to the recreational amenities of Shannon Town and the revitalisation, regeneration and improvement of the urban environment in the urban centre of Shannon. The park design has been informed by extensive public consultation and has created linkages with other key amenity areas in the wider area including the Shannon Estuary Embankments cycle and footpath and the Shannon Wetlands Restoration Project.

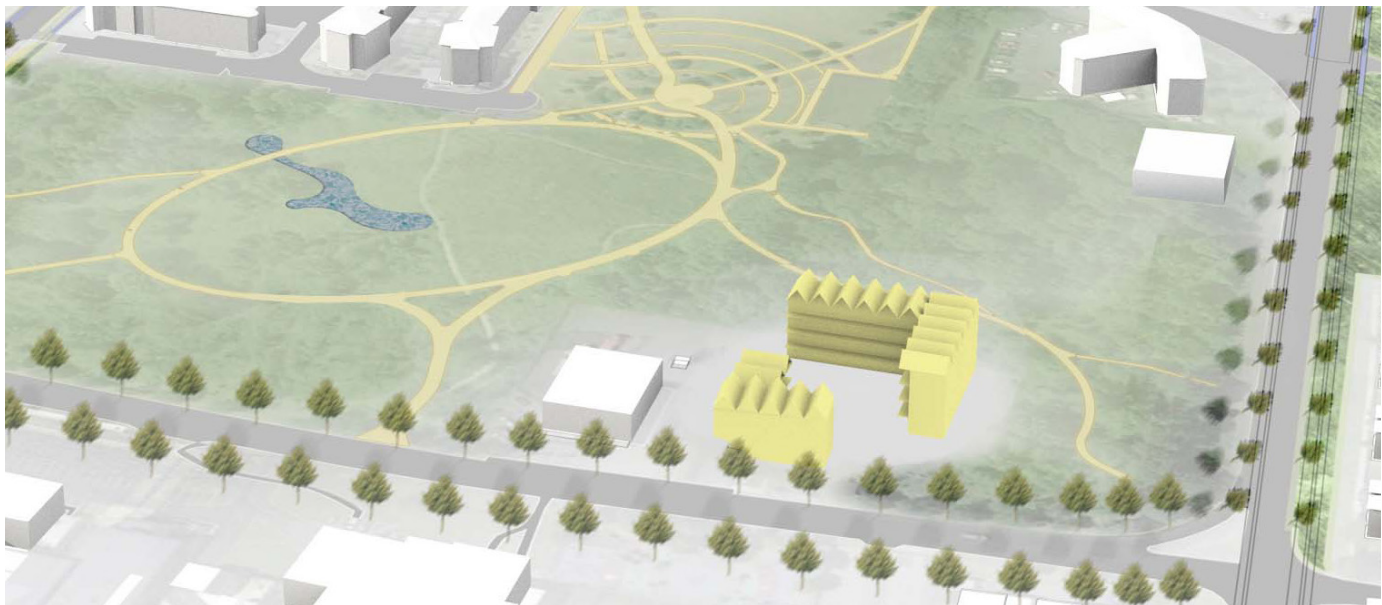
The potential for step-down housing is proposed on the existing Area Office site adjacent to the fire station, following the relocation of the offices into the town centre. Step down housing will ensure a mix of housing tenure on a pleasant town centre site overlooking the park. Development on this shall occur only after obtaining an alternative location for the existing local authority machinery yard in Shannon.



Key Plan



Example of Step-Down Housing



Artist's Impression of the Park showing potential Step-Down Housing



# Improved Public Realm and Parking Strategy

This masterplan proposes to improve the public realm substantially within Shannon Town Centre by placing pedestrians and cyclists above vehicles and creating an enhanced streetscape which is active and dynamic where car parking is moved from the core and repositioned outside the centre.

A comprehensive Transport Technical Report has been commissioned, which shows how it is possible to remove the large surface car parks from the centre of Shannon today and reposition them elsewhere in the town centre, including on-street parking, which will create a more urban, pedestrian-friendly, and human-scaled environment typical of other Irish towns and cities.

This redistribution of vehicles means that car parking will still be possible for visitors to the town centre, but the urban landscape will not be completely dominated by vehicles as it is today. It is important to note that any future redevelopment of the town centre area carried out will be done so whilst having regard to existing businesses within the vicinity.

A full car parking strategy was completed to support the masterplan.



Grafton Street, Dublin



Clanbrassil Street, Dundalk



Shannon Town Centre Today - Built and Unbuilt Space



Future Shannon Town Centre - Built and Unbuilt Space



Shannon Town Centre Today



Artist's Impression of Future Shannon Town Centre



08

# Implementation, Delivery & Next Steps

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# Implementation

## Implementation Strategy

The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is a spatial framework for the regeneration and enhancement of Shannon’s town centre. The spatial framework has been elaborated through engagement with the community, key stakeholders, including land owners, local businesses, investors, the Shannon Chamber of Commerce, and Elected Members. An initial draft was published for public consultation in summer 2021.

Feedback from these has been invaluable in shaping the aims, objectives and principles of the masterplan framework. Delivering a plan will now require all stakeholders to assume ownership of the masterplan as a shared vision for Shannon Town Centre.

The masterplan developed by Clare County Council sets out key urban design public realm principles that will underpin a vision for future growth and transformation. Importantly, the plan provides an integrated urban development approach underpinned by an economic viability assessment to enable the local authority leverage a range of funding opportunities at EU and national level, e.g., Urban Re-generation Development Fund (URDF). In addition, the plan provides a clear focus for the delivery of a number of key intervention areas and projects which, if implemented, will transform the economic, social and cultural development of Shannon and the built environment and public realm. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the implementation steps to transforming the vision in this masterplan to project delivery in a plan-led approach.

Chapter 3 identified the landownership, in particular the absence of lands in the town centre under local authority control. In developing a roadmap for implementation, Clare County Council will rely significantly on the ability to leverage development from individual landowners to promote interventions in the town centre in accordance with the masterplan’s objectives. A key element will be the local authority’s acquisition of key sites to harness early development opportunities, further emphasising Clare County Council’s commitment to implementing this masterplan.

## The following sets out the implementation stages of the plan:

- Consult and engage with key stakeholders and interests, and obtain endorsement.
- Establish a Dedicated Implementation Company, e.g., DAC, or other delivery vehicle with a sole focus on driving the implementation of the masterplan.
- Establish a dedicated project team to manage the detailed design development of the masterplan.
- Design a comprehensive engagement strategy that enables a collaborative approach for the next stages of developing the project.
- Develop a marketing strategy to attract potential investors.
- Enhance collaboration and existing networks between local authority, enterprise, industry, Shannon Chamber and state agencies to focus on delivery.
- Deliver early wins, with a focus on enhancement of public realm and open spaces.
- Clare County Council to acquire ownership of strategic enabling sites in the town centre, in particular the site proposed for the One Shannon Hub.
- Develop a detailed design brief for the One Shannon Hub, together with a plan for funding and delivery.
- Prepare an application under URDF and a range of other funding sources for developing town centre.
- Develop a public realm framework for the town centre and linkages with Shannon Free Zone (west and east), Smithstown, Shannon Estuary, and wider regional destinations.
- Define objectives and principles for a decarbonisation strategy for the town centre.

- Develop a sustainable mobility strategy in liaison with Shannon Airport and Shannon’s employment areas and the owners of the shopping centre.
- Enhance pedestrian and cycle connectivity from the town centre to the estuary, estuary greenway (the Shannon Loop), and neighbouring employment areas.
- Develop an urban design guide for future development, with an emphasis on a zero-carbon approach.
- Design and implement investment incentives and investigate possibility of utilising the Section 48 Development Contribution Scheme such as zero development contributions for town centre developments.
- Identify opportunities for public funding via the URDF, and prepare applications for projects such as the One Shannon Hub, urban design works, the new road along the eastern edge of the Innovation Campus, or any key enabling works.
- Establish a partnership approach to deliver private-sector led housing development in the area.
- Design a development strategy for the Innovation Campus. Establish principles for a collaborative approach between Clare County Council and the current owner of the site. Clare County Council in collaboration with the landowner, will market and promote these town centre lands as the key destination in Shannon for the merging of training, enterprise and innovation. Seek alternative location in Shannon for Council Machinery yard compound.
- Work in partnership with housing agencies, voluntary sector, older person’s network to develop proposals for independent living on the site of Shannon MD offices, following the relocation of offices to the town centre.
- Investigate possibility of acquisition by Clare County Council of the new town centre plaza.
- Develop a brand for Shannon Town Centre.



# Environmental Assessments

## Appropriate Assessment

Pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan has been assessed with regards to the potential for significant effects in relation to any European site and therefore warrants the undertaking of Appropriate Assessment.

In carrying out this screening, the Council has considered the relevant matters specified under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), including:

- Existing Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) and associated Environmental Assessments as contained in Volume 10, AA Natura Impact Report and Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report.
- Specifically, Volume 3b, Shannon Municipal District of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied).
- Existing Shannon Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (as varied).

As the masterplan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Site, and following the undertaking of Screening for Appropriate Assessment it has been determined that there is no potential to affect the integrity of any European Site(s). Consequently, it has being determined that Appropriate Assessment of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is not required. This process has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements under: European Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora; and European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

In conclusion, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, considering all matters relevant, it has been determined that the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is not likely to have a significant effect on any European site(s) within, or adjacent to the study area boundary.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment

An SEA Screening Report with respect to Schedule 2A 'Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment' was prepared by Clare County Council with respect to the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan. It determined that SEA is not required under Directive 2001/42/ EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers of 27 June 2001 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment; and European communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 435 of 2004), as amended. The SEA assessment took into consideration the findings contained with the Screening for Appropriate Assessment.





# 09

## Appendix

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# Milton Keynes, UK

Milton Keynes was one of the last and arguably more important New Towns built under the 1946 New Towns Act. Developed in the 1970’s to relieve housing demand pressure in London, its unique location, equidistant from London, Birmingham, Oxford and Cambridge, has provided it with an excellent geographic and economic advantage.

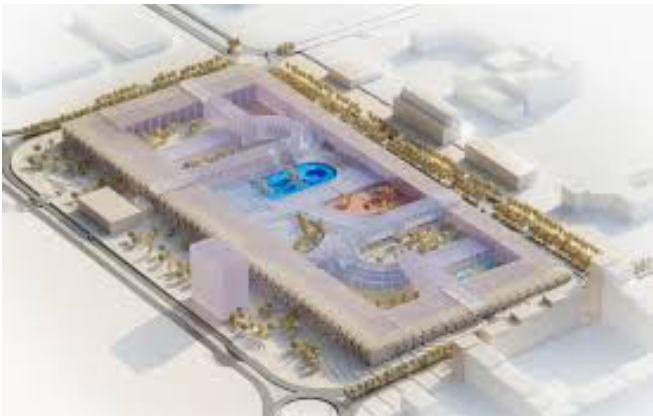
The ‘Plan for Milton Keynes’, published in 1970 by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, envisaged a flexible framework that allowed for a large degree of freedom in the more detailed design of residential neighbourhoods and economic hubs. The urban grid set up a spatial system that could adapt to future requirements whilst not imposing a pre-defined urban image. The principle of overlapping catchment areas was envisaged to avoid creating inward-looking neighbourhoods and encourage the use of different local centres (both existing historic towns and villages and new hubs, including Milton Keynes Central).

Milton Keynes, over the past decades, has been successful in attracting residents and businesses. It has sustained high levels of economic growth and has seen its population grow well beyond the original objective of 250,000 people. A new Local Plan (Plan:MK), currently in consultation, will guide the city’s growth up to 500,000 people. Informed by recommendations from the MK2050 Futures Commission, Plan:MK will also have to respond to emerging issues such as fast demographic change, multiple deprivations of part of its population, retention of young talent, and new funding and investment to upgrade its infrastructure.

The Commission has proposed to underpin the delivery of its vision for an inclusive growth for Milton Keynes with six projects:

**Hub of the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford Arc**  
Creating a knowledge intensive cluster and promoting closer collaboration with Cambridge and Oxford.

**MK:IT** — A new university with a focus on research, practice and life-long learning in partnership with other national and international institutions.



MK:IT - proposed university campus

**Learning 2050** — creating a collaborative framework between secondary schools, parents, businesses and other sources of support to improve accessibility to quality secondary education for all of the city’s students.

**Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility** — Transport for all, integrating technology, new spaces for sustainable mobility, and an improved public transport service.

**Renaissance:CMK** — Harnessing investment for high quality projects in the centre, location of MK:IT, and integrated city-wide linkages.

**The Creative and Cultured City** — Harnessing the creative energy of local residents via cultural and sporting events and festivals.

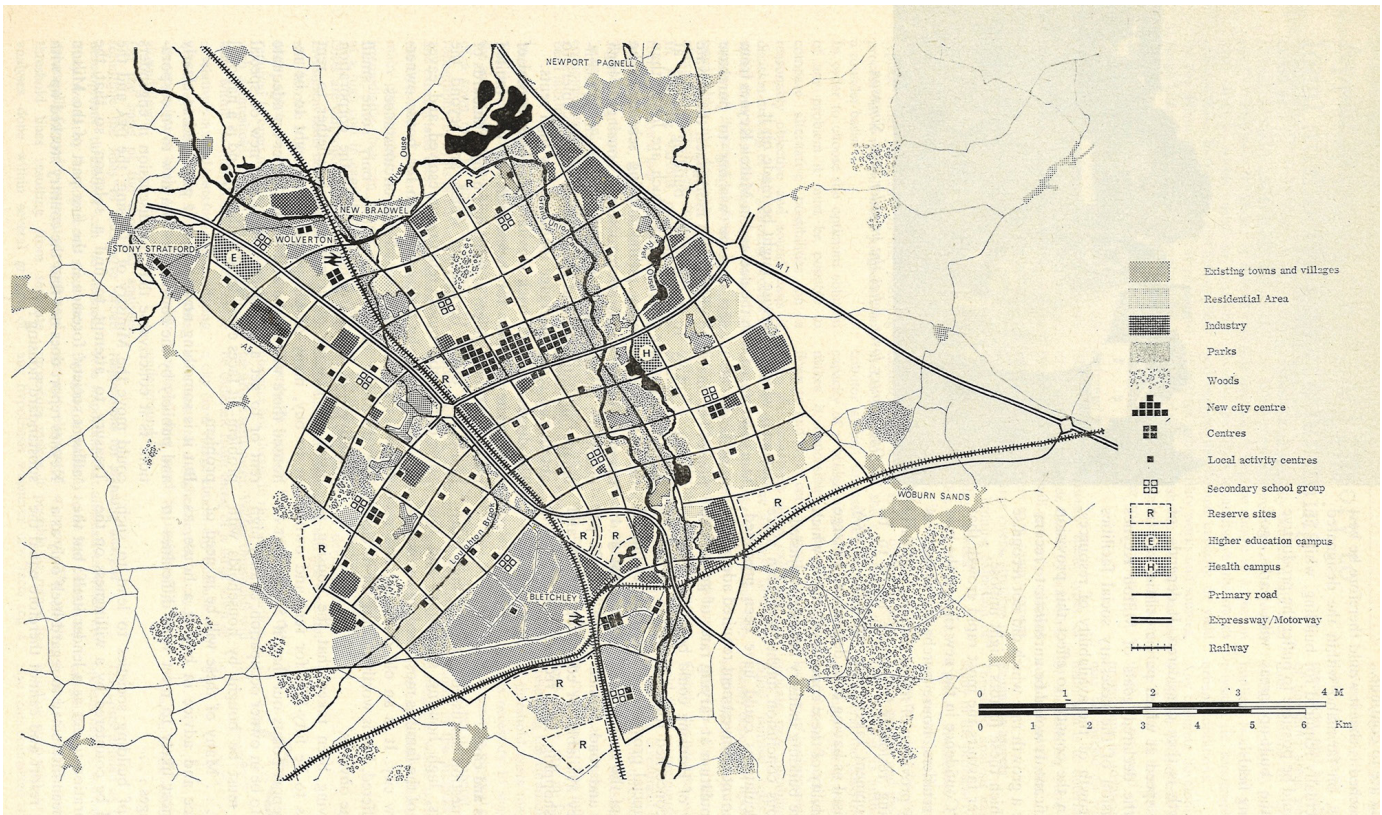
Delivering these projects will rely on strong commitment and leadership from the council, setting up a development body, establishing strong partnerships with the private sector, using land value uplifts, and secure support from Central Government via a ‘new deal’ for regional growth.

Key lessons:

- Reinforcing the city’s regional role to anchor economic growth.
- New educational institutions and cultural projects as drivers for change.
- Focus on inclusive development.



Aerial view of Milton Keynes illustrating the city’s urban grid



Milton Keynes masterplan



## Bracknell, UK

Bracknell is one of the original nine New Towns of the 1950s and 1960s, a construct of a brave new world following the Second World War. From the energy and excitement of the 1950s, Bracknell expanded periodically, based loosely on the original masterplan. However, development was piecemeal, and some developments and discussions were harmful to the town's success.

By the mid 1990s, it was clear that Bracknell town centre needed significant redevelopment. Streets were too wide and led to underwhelming and uninviting underpasses or elevated walkways, and the connections between the north and south of the town were extremely poor. The built fabric was typified by concrete, a hard public realm, and a stark, artificial environment. When the limited number of remaining shops closed at 5 p.m., the town centre was dead: there was absolutely no evening economy, and no destination for the circa 80,000 people that lived in Bracknell. Not only were the town and its stature and reputation decaying, but the fragmented ownership prevented comprehensive development, and the limited cohesive design and architectural themes all affected confidence and community spirit.

Over the next two decades, the landowners and council tried to redevelop the town centre with various schemes, typically introverted shopping centres, without success. During this protracted period of the promise of redevelopment, the buildings deteriorated, shops shut, and fewer people came to the town centre.

In 2007, Bracknell Regeneration Partnership – a joint venture between Legal & General and Schroders, along with Bracknell Forest Council – embarked on a redevelopment programme for the Northern Retail Quarter and Charles Square.

The masterplan that was developed sought to repair the problems of the past with a tried-and-tested typology based on streets and spaces, rebelling against the stereotypical internalised mall that had previously been proposed. The result was a softened, naturalised, and welcoming environment with generous landscaping and living walls. The scale of transformation was ground-breaking, with around two thirds of buildings demolished and re-envisioned.



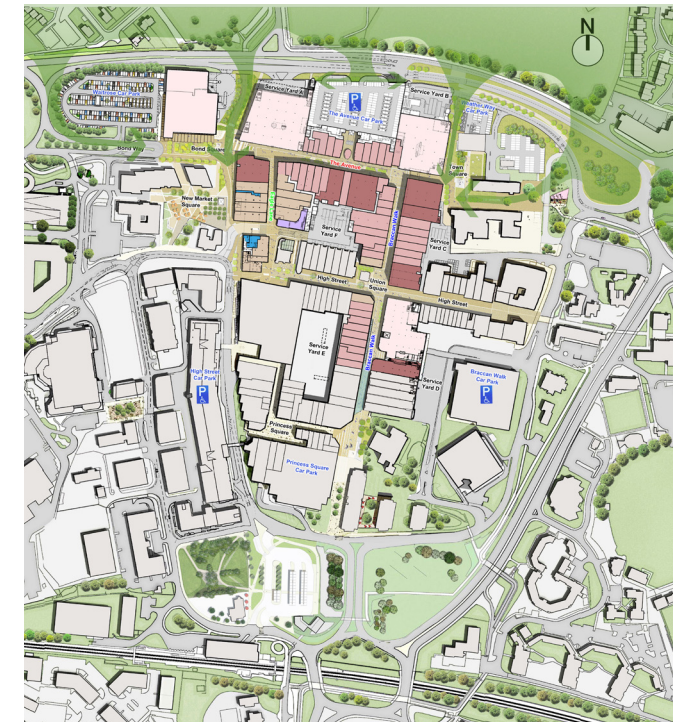
Through the variety of building design, street character, and improved sightlines, the town centre is now highly permeable and inherently legible. The Lexicon has genuine credentials as a 'powerhouse' retail destination in the region as an integrated town centre with real destinations and connectivity. It is a wonderful place to spend time. Perceptions are changed forever; the greening concept that seeks to emphasise and introduce the surrounding forest and green landscapes in the Lexicon contrast with the harsh environment of Bracknell before.

The Lexicon is a next-generation shopping and leisure destination that forms part of Bracknell's large-scale regeneration scheme. It brings to the area new department stores, retail units, restaurants, a 10-screen cinema, 92 apartments, civic squares, open streets, and soft green landscaped spaces. These are all connected in a pedestrian-friendly environment.

A key concept for the scheme and public realm design has been 'the greening of Bracknell'. It is the first post-war New Town to be comprehensively demolished and rebuilt. As a result, Bracknell's existing character has been transformed.



The Lexicon. Original layout (left) and proposed masterplan (right)



The Lexicon. Views of external spaces





# Almere, The Netherlands

Almere is one of Europe’s largest new towns, and currently the fastest growing municipality in the Netherlands. Built on reclaimed land to the northeast of Amsterdam (Southern Flevoland) during the early 1970s, it was planned in response to housing shortages in the Western Region of the Netherlands. Located near Amsterdam and Schiphol Airport, it was originally envisaged as a series of suburban housing clusters with a common town centre (Almere Stad).

The municipality of Almere is reimagining its future growth and transformation. The current population of 175,000 inhabitants is expected to grow to 300,000 under the Almere 2030 Masterplan. An innovative planning approach, based on cradle-to-cradle principles, is guided by the Almere Principles to structure an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable growth strategy. A key aspect of the strategy is the drive to change established relationships between citizens and governments, providing mechanisms for a more active involvement of the former in decision making. As a ‘laboratory for deregulation’, Almere will focus on a process-driven approach that can learn from and adapt to changing conditions.

Almere’s town centre, originally planned for a population of around 80,000 with a generally low income, provided around 40,000 m² of retail. In 1999, OMA drew up a masterplan to invigorate it, focusing on the development of two sites: a new business hub with 130,000 m² of office space adjacent to the train station, and a mixed-use cluster located between the Town Hall and the Weerwater. The two developments created a recognisable urban form with a marked contrast with the low density of the old town centre.

The proposed extension for the town centre will be developed across the Weerwater. Its starting point will be the World Horticultural Exhibition Floriade 2022, which has been planned as a flexible framework that will structure the transition into an innovative urban landscape that integrates a rich range of natural environments.



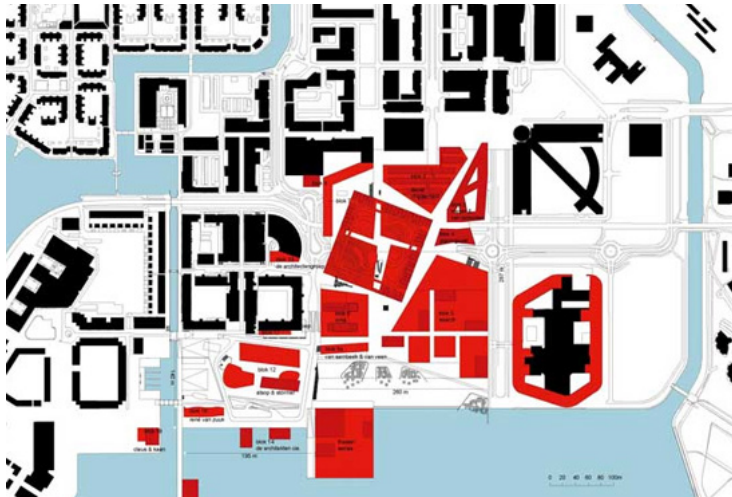
Almere 2030 view



Almere Floriade 2022

Key design principles that can be used as a reference for Shannon Town Centre include:

- Providing a range of diversified facilities and functions in proximity to each other to create a ‘complete’ urban environment. Using the reference of medieval cities, the urban design combines a range of uses, spaces and typologies that allow to support day and evening uses.
- Creating an organic structure of spaces with continually changing vistas.
- Using a rich palette of materials that contrast with the generalised use of brick in the neighbouring housing developments.
- Segregating cars from pedestrians, combining excellent accessibility with a compact network of car-free spaces.
- Capitalising on the waterfront location to develop key cultural uses and high end residential towers.
- Using the masterplan to coordinate the collaborative work between the municipality, investors, developers and other stakeholders.



Almere Town Centre — Masterplan



Almere Town Centre — View of outdoor spaces



Almere Town Centre — Centrum



Almere Town Centre — Aerial view



# Hoogvliet, The Netherlands

Hoogvliet, originally a small village located south of Rotterdam, was designed as a ‘nucleus of growth’ that would provide adequate housing for the large labour force needed by the expanding Port of Rotterdam. Driven by functional planning principles, the masterplan was structured around neighbourhood units with a generous provision of green and open spaces.

The project had, however, important flaws that eventually stopped it from becoming an autonomous new town. Its housing stock had little variety and had been poorly designed, it lacked commercial, social and cultural facilities, and the easy access to Rotterdam meant there was no demand for many town centre amenities.

During the 1970’s and 1980’s Hoogvliet underwent important demographic shifts as many of the original, more affluent inhabitants started to leave, whilst a large number of immigrants (primarily from the Dutch Antilles) occupied the vacant houses. By the 1990’s many of its neighbourhoods had deteriorated and suffered acute social problems.

A new urban regeneration programme restructured much of the town’s original layout. Hoogvliet’s transformation was primarily driven and delivered by private developers, with an approach that erased many of the principles of the post-war planning ideals of the original plan. The creation of a new tabula rasa was questioned by planners and architects, leading to the establishment of the International Building Exhibition (IBE) Rotterdam-Hoogvliet in 2001, with WiMBY! (Welcome into My Backyard!) as its leading theme.

WiMBY! proposed a different approach to the urban renewal of post war new towns. A new planning manual, Logica, emphasised the need for a participative and collaborative project that recognised and worked with Hoogvliet’s positive qualities. Four urban devices identified key structures that were the basis for a new spatial model that was discussed and negotiated by a range of stakeholders.

A number of social initiatives, aimed at establishing a new sense of the collective, explored living arrangements that responded to the specific needs of different social groups. This established the basis for future co-housing developments such as the Musicians’ Housing project, where 38 houses are arranged around a central ‘hill’ with a music room for each dwelling.



Estate Hoogvliet Villa

The ‘School Parasites’ project invited designers to create multi-use structures to compensate for the local school’s shortage of spaces that do not fit as standard classrooms. WiMBY! also planned the construction of a new education campus adjacent to the metro station where 3 secondary schools will share high quality facilities and create an academic and socially focused community catalyst.

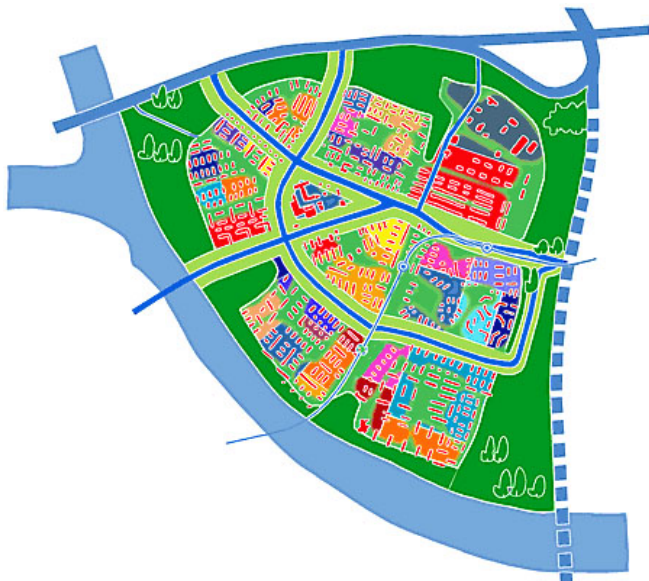
Lastly, a Summer Park, the Estate Hoogvliet, was designed, built and managed by local groups of residents. At its heart, the Villa provides space for a variety of events, festivals and gatherings, creating a place for collective and inclusive coming together.



Estate Hoogvliet Park



Co-housing for musicians



Logica spatial framework



Chill Hill



## Spijkenisse, The Netherlands

Spijkenisse, located southwest of Rotterdam in the Rhine-Meuse delta, grew rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s as a dormitory town for Rotterdammers working in the city's expanding port. Its status as a growth town (groeikern) underpinned the construction of large low density residential developments, resulting in a monotonous suburban landscape of single family houses. Spijkenisse's town centre was built in the early 1980s as a mono-functional structure which lacked many social facilities. It soon became an unattractive, characterless place that did not meet the standards of users and visitors.

Since the early 2000's the transformation of the town centre has been a key element of Spijkenisse's regeneration strategy. Investment has focused on improving its social and cultural infrastructures, and on enhancing the quality of its urban spaces and public realm. A new library and theatre, with a distinctive and unique architectural design, have created a refreshed image and urban identity. More importantly, they have reflected the vision of transforming the town centre into Spijkenisse's 'living room'. These cultural centres also provide spaces for locals to meet and actively take part in developing plans for the future development of the community.

The regeneration of the town centre has also been made possible by the creation of a business investment zone, where landlords and businesses pay a local tax to support collective goals of enhancing, promoting and making the area safer.

The town centre has had an important role in creating a sense of identity and local culture. This has helped to respond to the challenge, in common to other new towns in Europe, to attract and retain talent (both new residents and inhabitants who have grown and lived in Spijkenisse). The new library and theatre have, for example, contributed to not only grow the cultural offer, but also nurture local pride and an attachment to the town.

Another key aspect of the town's regeneration strategy has been the upgrade or upcycling of its housing stock, driven by the aim of creating less uniform and more attractive living environments, and improving their sustainability by, for example, increasing the energy efficiency of existing and future houses. Some of the earlier housing developments have been demolished and rebuilt by housing



*Spijkenisse Public Library - interior view*



*Spijkenisse Theatre - public square*

associations. For more recent developments, many of which are owner-occupied, the municipality of Nissewaard has triggered "investments in order to make our houses and neighbourhoods more attractive, more sustainable and more suitable for an ageing population."

Finally, the municipal government of Nissewaard has, as part of the 'At Home in the Neighbourhood' programme, developed a more inclusive approach in carrying its responsibilities regarding youth, health care, participation and social care.



*Spijkenisse Public Library - the Book Mountain*



*Spijkenisse Theatre*



# Lessons Learned

- Understand the town’s centre current and potential role to anchor economic growth within the wider regional context.
- Create a multifunctional centre that provides a wide range of services, facilities and functions that will attract visitors from a variety of catchment areas.
- Develop a flexible framework that can adapt to changing conditions and future proof the delivery of the masterplan.
- Structure the masterplan around key projects, including early wins to create an initial momentum for delivery and implementation.
- Establish robust partnerships between all levels of public administration and involve local businesses, landowners and other stakeholders in implementing long term regeneration strategies.
- Explore innovative spatial arrangements and architectural proposals.
- Create a more attractive and distinct environment that will foster a sense of pride for local residents.
- Acknowledge the importance of identity, heritage and sense of the collective.
- Design a rich sequence of urban spaces to animate visitors’ experience and create a setting for a variety of events throughout the year.
- Design a robust spatial framework of open spaces and high quality public realm.
- Identify and use ‘hidden positives’ of the existing town to inform innovative regeneration strategies.
- Encourage local resident groups to take ownership of design and management aspects of the masterplan as part of a collaborative process.



- Activate urban spaces with the use of small scale architectural projects.
- Use educational institutions and cultural projects as drivers for change.
- Prioritise inclusive development - a masterplan for all.
- Introduce an agenda for zero carbon development and circularity.







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CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL



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