



# Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy A THRIVE heritage-led strategy for Ennis Town Centre



## Screening for Appropriate Assessment

**Prepared By:**



Delichon Ecology



# **Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy Screening for Appropriate Assessment**

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Document Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Prepared by</b>	<b>Checked by</b>	<b>Date</b>
0	12_2025	Screening for Appropriate Assessment	ED	ED	10/03/2025
1	12_2025	Screening for Appropriate Assessment	ED	ED	19/03/2025
2	12_2025	Screening for Appropriate Assessment	ED	ED	10/04/2025



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Delichon Ecology have been commissioned by MB Planning Consultancy / Allies and Morrison and A2 Architects to carry out a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) report for the proposed Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy, Ennis, Co. Clare. The extent of Ennis town centre (land use and zoning objectives) is presented in **Figure 1-1** while the site location is presented in **Figure 1.2**.

This Screening for Appropriate Assessment report has been prepared to provide the competent authority, Clare County Council, with the relevant scientific information to conduct the Appropriate Assessment (AA). This information will allow Clare County Council to determine, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed project, individually or in combination with other plans and projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European site and, where necessary, to ascertain whether or not the proposed project would adversely affect the integrity of a European site.

## 1.1 Statement of Authority

Eamonn Delaney BSc, MSc, MCIEEM, CECOL prepared this Screening for Appropriate Assessment report. Eamonn has seventeen years consultancy experience and has prepared Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statements for various projects, including residential, amenity, renewable energy and transport developments in addition to strategic policy and planning proposals. Eamonn conducted field visits to the strategy area in March 2025. Eamonn's initial years in ecological consultancy involved botanical and habitat surveys for the purposes of EIA, EclA and large scale habitat surveys for local authorities. This included plant species identification and habitat classification in a wide range of rural, urban and peri-urban environments. Eamonn is a member of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) and regularly attends local and regional BSBI field meetings in addition to carrying out recording for the proposed BSBI 2020 Atlas, in north Co. Galway and south Co. Mayo.

Eamonn has extensive experience in the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) role for Flood Relief Schemes, roads and pipeline developments which requires weekly site visits, monitoring of mitigation measures, reviewing contactors method statements in addition to ongoing liaison with site operational staff and the design team. Eamonn has also been involved in the preparation and review of numerous Screening for Appropriate Assessment reports, Natura Impact Statements, Ecological Impact Assessments and Invasive Species Management Plans for a range of project types including roads, water infrastructure, solar farms, wind farms and peatland rehabilitation works. Through his involvement in all of these projects, Eamonn has honed his skills in field based assessments and the subsequent reporting and interpretation of information yielded from desk and field based resources.

Eamonn routinely drafts, reviews and completes AA's for numerous projects. As the project design is developed, Eamonn seeks to influence the project design and refine the AA process to avoid and reduce potential impacts to the habitats and species for which the potentially impacted European site is designated. The outcome ensures that the finalised AA has been developed through an iterative process where the findings of the AA inform and are being informed by the project design throughout.

## 1.2 Legislative Context for Appropriate Assessment

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as "The Habitats Directive", provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of



Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000.

Natura 2000 sites are defined under the Habitats Directive (Article 3) as a coherent European ecological network of special areas of conservation, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. In Ireland, these sites are designated as European Sites and include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), established under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC, as codified by 2009/147/EC) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), established under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC for habitats and species.

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 - 2015 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to adversely affect the integrity of European Sites (Annex 1.1).

Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA):

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish Law relevant to this project includes Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

Natura 2000 sites in Ireland (herein referred to as European sites) that form part of the Natura 2000 network of protected sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated due to their significant ecological importance for species and habitats protected under Annexes I and II respectively of the Habitats Directive, and Special Protected Areas (SPAs), designated for the protection of populations and habitats of bird species protected under the EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/409/EEC). Features for which SACs and SPAs are designated are termed Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests respectively. Collectively, Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests are herein referred to as Qualifying Features.

As the proposed project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Site, Clare County Council as the competent authority, is obliged to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on European Sites.

The staged assessment process undertaken to meet Article 6(3) obligations is described in **Section 2**.

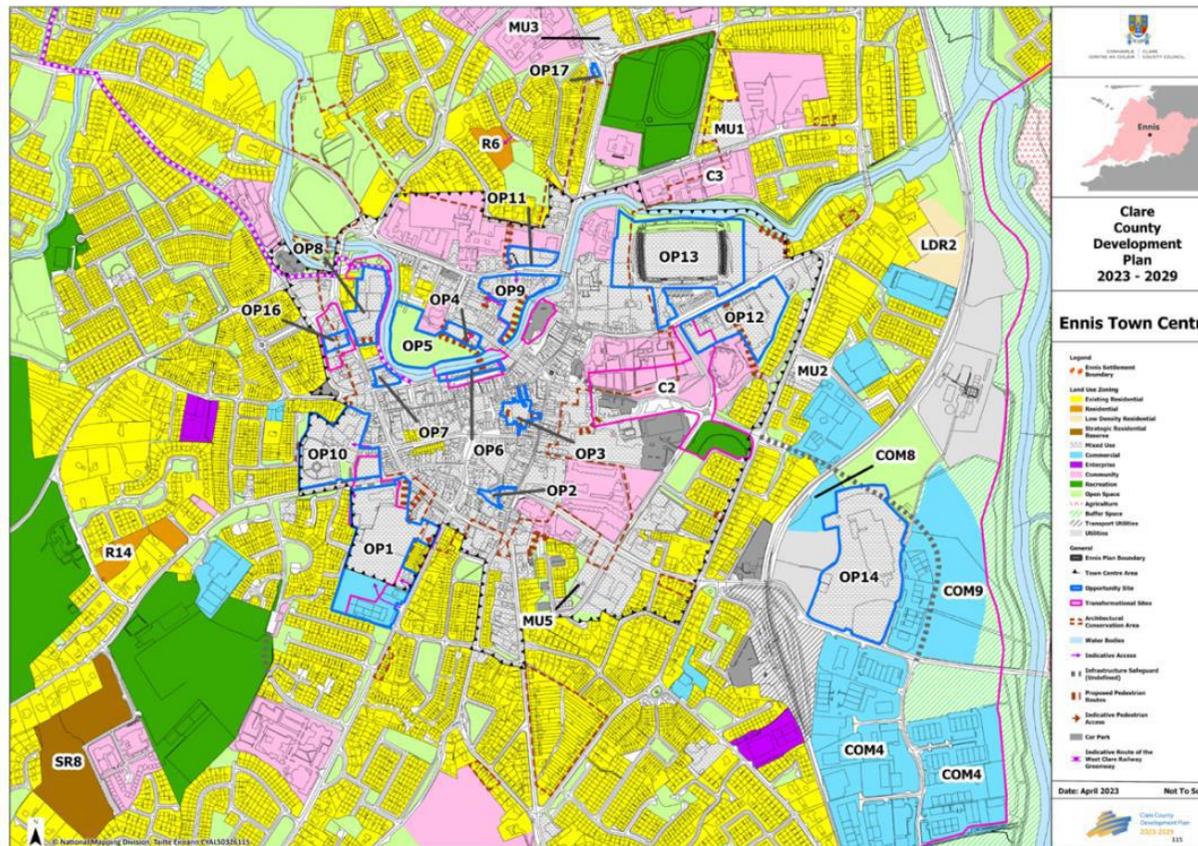


Figure 1-1: Land Use and Zoning Objective Map<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 Volume 3(a) Ennis Municipal District Area Settlements

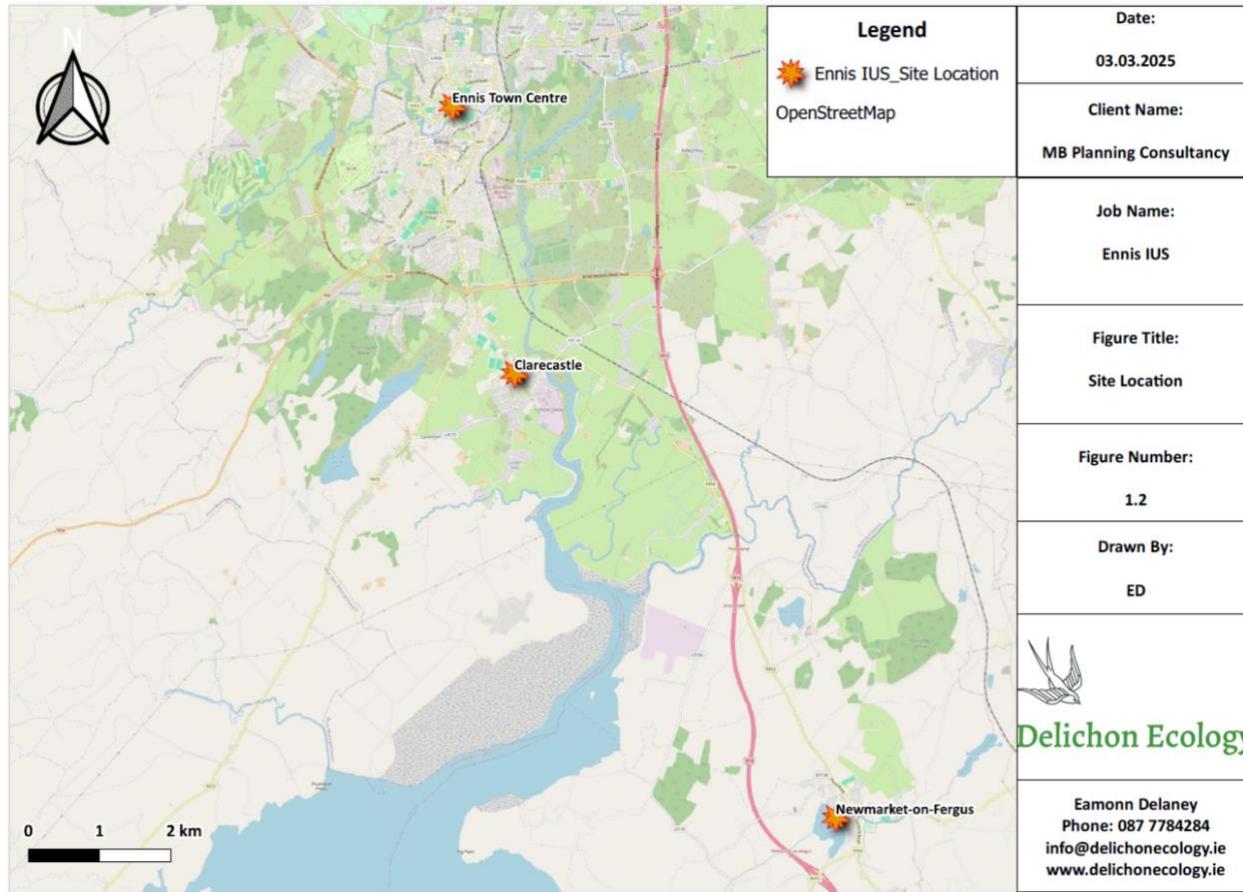


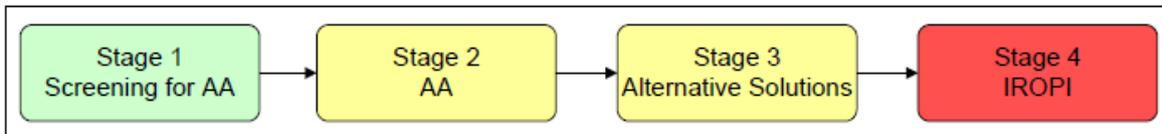
Figure 1-2: Site Location



## 2 METHODOLOGY

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government guidelines (DEHLG, 2009, rev. 2010) outlines the European Commission’s methodological guidance (EC, 2002) promoting a four-stage process to complete the AA, and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

The four stages are summarised diagrammatically in **Figure 2-1**. Stages 1-2 deal with the main requirements for assessment under Article 6(3). Stage 3 may be part of the Article 6(3) Assessment or may be a necessary precursor to Stage 4. Stage 4 is the main derogation step of Article 6(4).



**Figure 2-1: Four Stages of Appropriate Assessment**

### 2.1.1 Stage 1 – Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3):

Whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, and whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening should be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, unless potential impacts clearly can be avoided through the modification or redesign of the plan or project, in which case the screening process is repeated on the altered plan. The greatest level of evidence and justification will be needed in circumstances when the process ends at screening stage on grounds of no impact.

### 2.1.2 Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

The aim of Stage 2 of the AA process is to identify any adverse impacts that the plan or project might have on the integrity of relevant European sites. As part of the assessment, a key consideration is ‘in combination’ effects with other plans or projects. Where adverse impacts are identified, mitigation measures can be proposed that would avoid, reduce or remedy any such negative impacts and the plan or project should then be amended accordingly, thereby avoiding the need to progress to Step 3.

This stage considers whether the plan or project, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a European site, and includes any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. The proponent of the plan or project will be required to submit a Natura Impact Report, i.e. the report of a targeted professional scientific examination of the plan or project and the relevant European sites, to identify and characterise any possible implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives, taking account of in-



combination effects. This should provide information to enable the public authority to carry out the AA.

The information required in a Natura Impact Report, is outlined in Regulation 42(5) (a) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011) as amended, as follows:

A Natura Impact Report shall, in addition to addressing the issues referred to in the interpretation contained in Regulation 2(1), include such information or data as the public authority considers necessary, and specifies in a notice given under paragraph (3), to enable it to ascertain if the plan or project will affect the integrity of the site.

Where appropriate, a Natura Impact Report shall include, in addition—

- i. the alternative solutions that have been considered and the reasons why they have not been adopted,
- ii. the imperative reasons of overriding public interest that are being relied upon to indicate that the plan or project should proceed notwithstanding that it may adversely affect the integrity of a European site,
- iii. the compensatory measures that are being proposed.

If the assessment is negative, i.e. adverse effects on the integrity of a site cannot be excluded, then the process must proceed to Stage 3, or the plan or project should be abandoned. The competent authority must make a determination to that effect before proceeding to the next stage.

### 2.1.3 Guidance

This Screening for AA report has been prepared with regard to the relevant provisions of the EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC and Ireland's EU (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

The methodology followed for this assessment has had regard to the following guidance and legislation:

- DoEHLG (2009, rev. 2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government;
- European Commission (EC) (2018), Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission;
- EC (2002) Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission;
- EC (2021) Assessment of Plans and Projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;



- EC (2007a) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC – Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the commission. European Commission;
- EC, (2007b), Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission;
- EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission;
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Version 1.1 (September 2019), Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland;
- NPWS (2019). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report;
- NPWS (2019). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report;
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) (2021) Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.
- The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended;
- The Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended;
- The Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended; and
- Recent Irish and European case law on the Habitats Directive.

#### 2.1.4 Information Consulted for this Report

This assessment has been informed by the following sources of data:

- Information on the location, nature and design of the proposed project as provided by the client;
- Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG) online land-use mapping ([www.myplan.ie/en/index.html](http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html));
- Office of Public Works (OPW) National Flood Hazard Mapping website ([www.floodmaps.ie](http://www.floodmaps.ie));
- Review of the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) webmapper <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map>
- Geological Survey of Ireland - National Draft Bedrock Aquifer map;
- Geological Survey of Ireland - Groundwater Database ([www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie));
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) geoportal mapping tool (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>);
- National Parks and Wildlife Service protected site and species information and data (<https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>);
- Spatial data in respect of Article 17 reporting, available online at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/habitat-and-species-data/article-17>.
- Spatial data in respect of Article 12 reporting, available online at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/habitat-and-species-data/article-12-data>.
- National Biodiversity Data Centre ([www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie));
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography ([www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie));



- Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029



## 3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND EUROPEAN SITES

### 3.1 Proposed Ennis Integrated Urban Strategy

THRIVE is a grant scheme aimed at local authorities, implemented under Ireland's ERDF Regional Programmes for 2021-2027. It supports heritage-led regeneration of town centres and the transformation of vacant or derelict heritage buildings through renovation, renewal, and adaptive reuse. The scheme aligns with policies from the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial Economic Strategy.

As part of the THRIVE programme, an Integrated Urban Strategy is being prepared. The Integrated Urban Strategy aims to achieve the following objectives:

- I. Develop an Integrated Urban Strategy under Action 21 of the Ennis 2040 – Economic and Spatial Strategy to showcase Ennis's heritage and architecture, support adaptive reuse of older buildings, and promote a circular economy at the local level.
- II. Embrace the new Bauhaus values of sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion.
- III. Prioritise project proposals that create a pipeline of investment-ready built heritage refurbishment, renovation, and adaptive reuse projects.
- IV. Review vacant buildings in Ennis Town to outline potential uses for investment.
- V. Identify vacant heritage buildings/properties for community use through collaborative stakeholder engagement.
- VI. Conduct economic appraisals of top heritage buildings/properties to develop full business cases for adaptive reuse.
- VII. Engage in a participatory planning process to bring one heritage project through to a full planning process, making it shovel-ready for THRIVE funding application.

The Integrated Urban Strategy identifies critical areas for intervention, prioritises projects that encourage the conservation and adaptive reuse of Ennis' extensive built heritage, and addresses vacancy and dereliction in the town centre.

The Integrated Urban Strategy complements the strategies and proposals outlined in the Ennis 2040 programme. It is in accordance with the Clare County Development Plan 2023-29, which underwent a full Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and a robust level of assessment in consultation with Environmental Authorities. The Strategy has also been developed with the principles of the New European Bauhaus in mind, and focuses on a more local-scale level of intervention, which augments the more strategic planning and regeneration initiatives in these other documents.

The Strategy, as intended by Clare County Council, will realise a common vision for the future direction of the town centre through an accurate assessment of the challenges faced by the town, and a suitable response to these challenges.



The Strategy contains an urban framework informed through overarching vision and themes (**Appendix 1**). The urban framework is comprised of a number of proposed projects and initiatives. These are outlined in **Table 3-1**.

**Table 3-1: Proposed Projects of the Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy**

NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
<b>A. REJUVENATION OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES</b>				
A1	The Cloister “Teach An Phobail”	Bring the building back into use as a multi-use community space (“Teach An Phobail”), including arts studios, classrooms, conference spaces, exhibition and heritage spaces, a tourism space, and a ground-floor café. Provision of a community art wall on the external elevation.	Part VIII application approved, and selected as preferred project for THRIVE funding bid. See Section 18.3 of IUS for further details. By virtue of the Part VIII process, screenings for AA/EIA were undertaken in December 2024.	Short
A2	Former Presbyterian Church	Opportunity to bring this local landmark back into active use. Potential for flexible community (or other town centre) uses for local groups or cultural activities. It is vital to consider the future of the adjacent De Valera Library and other publicly owned properties on Harmony Row, including the former Local Studies Centre and Library Services building. Strong	Consider options alongside adjacent sites and the wider Harmony Row area.	Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		connections exist with adjacent health, community, and education buildings to the north.		
A3	McParland's, Parnell Street, Chapel Lane	Opportunities exist to bring the building back into use. The building's historic context could lend itself to a series of possible uses that relate to the unique architectural character of the building or the town centre itself.	Consider the feasibility of a uses that celebrates the architectural character of the building.	Medium
A4	Ennis Community Centre, Chapel Lane	Already in use as a community building, but there is potential to make more intensive use of the site, including the upper floors. The building should be retained for community use, but the transformative potential of reconfiguration should be considered. Spaces around the building could also be enhanced and linked to wider improvements in the Chapel Lane area.	Liaise with Killaloe Diocese and existing community groups to explore opportunities to enhance the building and introduce other uses. Further feasibility studies are required.	Medium
A5	New Hall Ballroom, Station Road	Consider the long-term potential of the building, either	Further feasibility discussions including	Long



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		strengthened as a retail use or in an alternative community use.	dialogue with building owner / occupant.	
A6	Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) Barracks at The Causeway	Initiatives are underway to expand the current use of the buildings, which will be supported for employment and historic benefits.	Project being developed by OPW.	Short
A7	Former De Valera Library and Clare Local Studies Centre, Harmony Row	Review options for the site and landscape, alongside a holistic consideration of the wider Harmony Row area.	Feasibility study to consider options for the site (in the context of a broader strategy for Harmony Row). Draft proposals are underway for the refurbishment and cultural use of the Manse (the former Local Studies Centre), subject to funding.	Medium
A8	2 Abbey Street, former THREE store	A smaller scale opportunity, but important to prioritise re-use for community use or alternative town centre activity.	Liaison with the owner to understand the potential for short and medium-term interventions to bring the building back into use.	Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
A9	Ashfield House, Sandfield Park	Potential to refurbish house and stables - location likely to favour residential uses or tourism related accommodation.	Project being developed by Ennis 2040 Strategy.	Short
<b>B. ENHANCEMENT OF SPACES AND ROUTES</b>				
B1	Market Square	Consider options for the market. Work with traders, Artisans, Craftspersons. Consider traffic requirements and potential to make additional public realm improvements. Examples of successful markets may be considered as part of any plans to enhance the market area evolve.	Progress options and initial design concepts for the space.	Medium
B2	O'Connell Square	Complete the public realm regeneration project, creating a flexible space large enough to hold small events such as live music, including cafés with outdoor dining and places for people to sit and relax.	Complete the O'Connell Square works as an early phase of implementing the IUS priorities.	Short
B3	Cathedral Plaza	Upgrade of space by cathedral with new surfacing, planting and seating areas.	Complete the Cathedral Plaza works as an early phase of	Short



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
			implementing the IUS priorities.	
B4	Cloister realm public	The Part 8 proposals focus on immediate works to enhance the building which will bring the site back into use as a community destination. It is important to enliven the external spaces in front of the building and to the rear in tandem. It is recommended that engagement is undertaken with local stakeholders and the community to consider public realm enhancements, including an improved relationship with the River Fergus, streetscape upgrades, and a general shift towards a pedestrian-first approach. It is acknowledged that the site has environmental sensitivities, and careful consideration is required in relation to a car parking strategy, vehicular access, lighting and safety. This should be undertaken as part of		Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		broader study for Friary riverside area, in relation to connectivity.		
B5	Bindon Street and Bank Place	Enhance the setting of the Protected Structures on Bindon Street. Opportunities to improve pedestrian linkages and greening on Bindon Street, with improved wayfinding on Bank Place to strengthen the desire line to the town centre.	Progress proposals to initial concept development.	Medium
B6	Harvey's Quay	Public realm enhancements and a riverside connection.	Preparation of public realm concept proposals.	Medium
B7	Link to Cusack Park	Improve the arrival experience at the GAA ground, ensuring the pedestrian experience is safe, with pedestrian crossings and the provision of public transport, to reduce traffic on match days. A pedestrian bridge from Aldi/Cusack Park to the laneway on the west side of CBS School.	Feasibility study to explore options.	Medium
B8	Lane Ways and Bow Ways	The laneways and bow-ways that still exist today remain essential to the pedestrian	Prioritise lane ways and bow ways for interventions and	Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		movement and permeability of the town. All these streets are located within the Architectural Conservation Area (Fig. 1.6 on page 21 of IUS). As part of the Clare County Heritage Plan 2017–2023, a project was identified to revitalise and regenerate the laneways and bow-ways in the medieval core through enhancement measures. Successful examples of laneways from elsewhere (e.g. Kilkenny) may be considered where appropriate	undertake detailed design of public realm improvements.	
B9	Abbey Street Public Realm	Upgrade of street with a range of surface improvements.	Undertake feasibility study and initial design work.	Short
<b>C. IMPROVING GATEWAYS AND KEY VIEWS</b>				
C1	Views to cathedral / train station	Define guidance to protect the key view between the Cathedral and the train and bus station, ensuring that no development obstructs this	Undertake a views study and corridor modelling to define parameters for development sites and	Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		view. This view is important as there is a lack of signage, and thus this landmark view helps guide people into the town.	identify supporting improvements in relation to signage and wayfinding.	
C2	Gateway enhancements	<p>An overarching project to improve the arrival experience in Ennis Town Centre for pedestrians and cyclists, with clear signage and wayfinding for the town centre and key destinations. A range of interventions should be considered at each of the locations: Improved accessibility, lighting, space for pedestrians, street greening, paving maintenance, and materials. Additional pedestrian crossings are also needed in some cases.</p> <p>(C2.1) Club Bridge, Abbey Street, Harmony Row            (C2.2) O'Connell Square            (C2.3) Harvey's Quay (paused for review and re-evaluation)            (C2.4) Market</p>	Preparation of a gateway feasibility study to develop a coordinated approach to wayfinding, signage and the enhancement of key spaces.	Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		(C2.5) Temple Gate (C2.6) Friar's Walk / Causeway Link (C2.7) Francis Street / Causeway Link (C2.8) Station		
<b>D. RIVERSIDE ENHANCEMENTS</b>				
D1	Bindon Street and Bank Place	A series of locations are identified for interventions to enhance visual connections to the River Fergus. These include key locations such as Post Office Field and Ennis Friary / The Cloister. An opportunity also exists to open up St Columba's church and grounds for public use.	Progress study to define landscape and public realm opportunities and concepts.	Medium
D2	Riverside routes	Provide a continuous car-free foot and cycle path along the River Fergus, which includes boardwalks to navigate alongside buildings, and opportunities to explore the richly diverse habitats of wet grassland, scrub, and reed	Undertake a concept study to progress a landscape design strategy for the riverside area to inform detailed design and project delivery.	Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		swamp. Opportunities to improve access to the river to enjoy views, and provide seating where appropriate should be considered. Proposals should not have an impact on flood defences. Consider safety dimensions of any proposals.		
<b>E. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS</b>				
E1	Harmony Row	A comprehensive approach should be taken, considering opportunities in the round to maximise the benefits of interlinked projects alongside strengthened connections with local educational, health, and community activities. Harmony Row also occupies a key location between the Friary Riverside area and Bindon Street / Bank Place. Draft proposals are underway for the refurbishment and cultural use of the Manse (the former Local Studies Centre), subject to funding.	Preparation of a mini-masterplan or planning brief which addresses these opportunities and ties projects together.	Short



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		<p>Refurbishment proposals are planned for the refurbishment Bellevue House as office space which is targeted for completion in 2025.</p> <p>It should be noted that the former De Valera Library building is not designated as a Protected Structure.</p>		
E2	Ennis Friary and riverside	Preparation of a coordinated strategy to maximise inter-project benefits relating to the regeneration of the Cloister, enhancements to the tourism offer at Ennis Friary, enhanced access to Cusack Park, extended use of the barracks, and improvements to the public realm adjacent to Club Bridge and the river.	Preparation of a mini-masterplan or planning brief which addresses these opportunities and ties projects together.	Short
E3	Market Place	Consider options for Market. Work with Traders, Artisans, Craftspersons. Consider traffic requirements and potential for additional public realm improvements.	Preparation of public realm and urban design strategy for Market Place and surrounding sites.	Medium
E4	Chapel Lane	The Chapel Lane and Parnell Street area benefits from a		Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		number of linked projects which should be considered in the round. These include the regeneration of McParland's and the expansion of community uses at Ennis Community Centre, alongside opportunities to enhance existing streets, spaces, and laneways. A farmers' market could be considered as a way of bringing life and vitality to the town centre and should be prioritised. Artisanal crafts could be encouraged in vacant units.	Preparation of a mini-masterplan or planning brief which addresses these opportunities and ties projects together.	
<b>F. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS</b>				
F1	Town centre identity	Brand the town centre through a coherent shopfront design strategy, focusing on materials and colours to support the strong identity of Ennis. Progress a study to identify specific pilot projects (ideally coherent, continuous groups of frontages).	Progress shopfront study for the historic core, identifying priority zones for enhancement and distilling overarching guidance to steer materials, architectural detailing and colours.	Medium



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
F2	Invalidate the night economy	Prepare a strategy that establishes a framework for a thriving night-time economy to suit a range of people, including families, providing a safe and vibrant atmosphere while being sensitive to those living in the town centre.	Develop a strategy for the evening and night time incorporating stakeholder involvement.	Medium
F3	Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Cycle strategy	Improve signage and wayfinding for cyclists wishing to cycle from the town centre towards key destinations such as the Cliffs of Moher or the Wild Atlantic Way. Wayfinding signage could include blue direction signs with distance markers and repeater signs for route confirmation at key junctions. Where possible, on roads with fast-moving traffic, cycle lanes should be provided, or alternative low-traffic routes signposted.	Progress study to assess interventions, and concept designs.	Medium
F4	Cycle parking	Increase provision of cycle parking at key gateways and destinations in the town,	Undertake feasibility study to identify locations and progress concept design.	Short



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE
		including a covered bike stand at the train station.		



The Strategy will be a non-statutory plan outlining the potential for key development arrangements for Ennis town centre in a manner that is consistent with the land-use zoning objectives outlined for these lands in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

The proposed measures under the Ennis Town Centre IUS accord with the general and specific objectives and opportunities identified within the Ennis Municipal District; these have been fully assessed within the Natura Impact Report for the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. Where potential for adverse effects were identified during the assessment of the Development Plan, mitigation is specified within this NIR to ensure no potential adverse effects on the integrity of European sites would occur.

### **3.1.1 Planning policy context**

#### **Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework**

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the government’s strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to 2040. The NPF is partnered with the National Development Plan (NDP), which outlines a programme of investment. Regional and local plans must align with shared National Strategic Outcomes of these plans.

#### **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) developed by the Southern Regional Assembly sets out a framework for implementation of the NPF at a regional level. The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region and includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) to guide the future development of the Region’s three main cities and metropolitan areas – Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford.

The RSES identifies Ennis as a Key Town which is well-connected to the Limerick-Shannon MASP, forming a key economic triangle and supports the implementation of Ennis 2040 to set the long-term economic strategy for the county town.

#### **Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

The County Development Plan sets out the overall strategy for the planning and sustainable development of the County over a 6 year period. The strategy aligns with the national and regional framework of strategies, policies and guidelines.

Volume 3a sets out plans and policies for Ennis Municipal District. It states the following:

*“Ennis is a unique and vibrant town and has a proud history and an exciting future to look forward to. Ennis, the ‘Capital’ of County Clare, has a strong community focus, a young and well-educated population, a dynamic business and commercial sector and a thriving tourism sector based on national and international renown for heritage and cultural excellence. It is a great place to live, to visit and to do business.”*

The Development Plan identifies an overall objective of supporting Ennis as *“a self-sustaining, regional economic driver and as a key location for investment choice in the county and the Southern Region,*



*and to support its enhanced development based on its strategic location relative to the cities of Limerick and Galway, Shannon International Airport and the Atlantic Economic Corridor as well as its role as a centre of employment and economic activity".* Other key priorities include: enhancing the public realm and the environment; encouraging enterprise and economic development, integrating green infrastructure, climate change and flooding; and developing of community and social structures in the town centre. The implementation of Ennis 2040 is also identified as a key priority.

The overall vision for Ennis town centre is set out below:

*"A vibrant and culturally rich Ennis area with a revitalised town centre and strong economic growth balanced with enhanced social inclusion, accessibility, sustainable neighbourhoods and a high level of environmental quality, to ensure an excellent quality of life for all."*

The Development Plan identifies a series of Transformational sites and Opportunity Sites. These sites are defined as drivers of change in the settlement area, opening up new lands for development in key locations, regenerating areas that have been at risk of decline, creating employment opportunities and providing new shops and services for local residents.

The Development Plan land use and zoning objective map is presented in Fig 2.1. The Appropriate Assessment process, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment informed the formulation of objectives and land use zoning.

### 3.1.2 Study Area

Ennis, the largest town in Munster and the sixth largest in Ireland, is a designated 'key town' under the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial Economic Strategy. The town centre area is the extent of the Integrated Urban Strategy – see **Figure 3-1**. Ennis is intertwined with the River Fergus which is part of the Lower Shannon Special Protection Area. The river provides scenic views, a focal point for urban regeneration but also flood management challenges. A significant proportion of the town centre is situated in flood zones and strategic investments have mitigated flood risks.

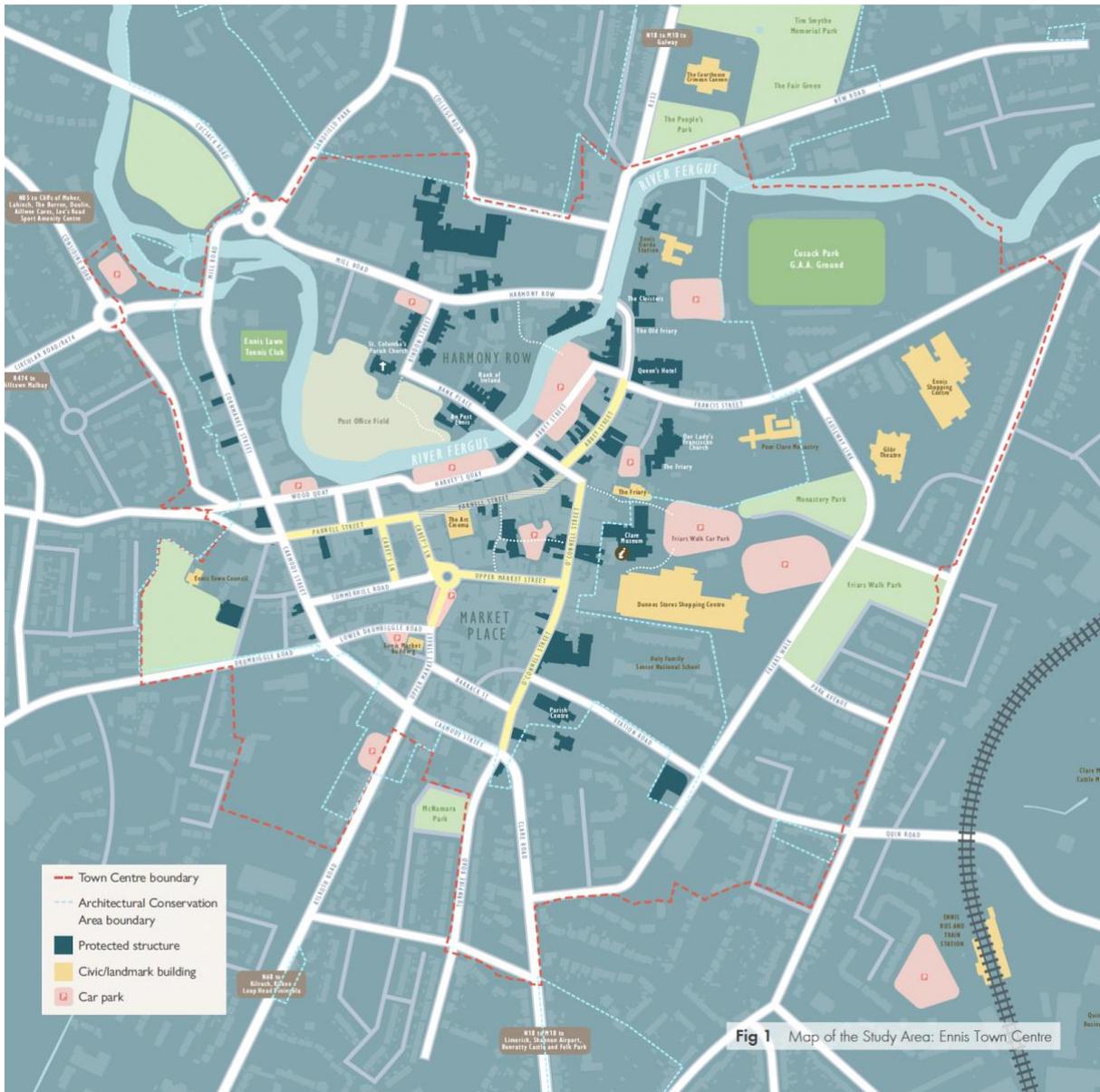


Figure 3-1: Extent of Proposed Ennis Urban Strategy Area<sup>2</sup>

### Ennis 2040 Strategy

Ennis 2040 Strategy defines a comprehensive Economic and Spatial Strategy which sets out a long-term strategy for the sustainable development of Ennis and addresses the measures required to manage economic, infrastructural, environmental and physical challenges, including transportation, demographic and population change, retail vitality and viability, availability of modern office and employment accommodation, environmental considerations and town centre accessibility.

<sup>2</sup> Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy, Allies and Morrison and A2 Architects



The Strategy envisages that the population of Ennis will grow on average by 1.6% per annum to approximately 37,000 people by 2040. The plan proposes the prioritisation of sustainable economic activities by focusing on existing assets and creating a competitive offer unique to Ennis that will deliver an additional 5,000 jobs by 2040.

The Strategy is underpinned by four strategic objectives: SO 1: Location for Investment; SO 2: Ireland’s First Climate Adaptive Town; SO 3: Accessible Place of Quality; SO 4: A ‘10 Minute Town’. It identifies nine transformational projects which form the basis of long-term land activation to 2040. Refer to **Figure 3.2**. At time of writing, it is understood that the Harvey’s Quay and Abbey Riverside proposals are paused for review and re-evaluation. This does not affect the Integrated Urban Strategy.



Figure 3-2: Transformative sites identified in Ennis 2040<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Source: Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy, Allies and Morrison and A2 Architects



## 3.2 European Sites

### 3.2.1 Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

The likely effects of the proposed works on European sites has been appraised using a source-pathway-receptor model, where:

- A 'source' is defined as the individual element of the proposed development that has the potential to impact on a European site, its qualifying features and its conservation objectives;
- A 'pathway' is defined as the means or route by which a source can affect the ecological receptor; and
- A 'receptor' is defined as the Special Conservation Interests of Special Protection Areas (SPA) or Qualifying Interests (QI) of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for which Conservation Objectives have been set for the European sites being screened.

A source-pathway-receptor model is a standard tool used in environmental assessment. In order for an effect to be likely, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism results in no likelihood for the effect to occur. The source-pathway-receptor model was used to identify a list of European sites, and their QIs/SCIs, with potentially links to European site.

### 3.2.2 Likely Significant Effect

The threshold for a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) is treated in the screening exercise as being above a de minimis level. The opinion of the Advocate General in CJEU case C-258/11 outlines:

“the requirement that the effect in question be ‘significant’ exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on a European site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill.”

In this report, therefore, ‘relevant’ European sites are those within the potential Zol of activities associated with the proposed works, where LSE pathways to European sites were identified through the source-pathway-receptor model.

## 3.3 European Sites within the Project Zone of Influence

This stage of the screening for AA process describes European Sites within the Zone of Influence (Zol) of the proposed project.

Section 3.2.3 of the Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010) states that the approach to Appropriate Assessment screening can be different for different plans and projects depending on the scale of the plan, project or programme and the likely associated effects. The overriding criteria determining whether a European Site will be impacted and potentially consequently effected by a proposal is the distance between proposal and a European Site and whether there are pathways for effect linking the proposal to European Sites.

Both UK (Scott Wilson et al., 2006) and Irish guidance (DoEHLG, 2010) outline that a distance of 15km may suffice as a likely Zone of Impact (Zol) in the case of plans on European Sites and may be sufficient



to cover the geographic extent over which significant ecological effects are likely to occur. However for certain projects, the DoEHLG (2010) guidance recognises that the likely ZOI could be 'much less than 15km, and in some cases less than 100m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects'.

Recent guidance from Office of the Planning Regulator (2021) indicates that the zone of influence for a proposal is the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of a European Site. This guidance indicates that the zone of influence should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework. Using the Source » Pathway » Receptor approach and having regard for the location, the nature of the works, and the small size and scale of the works, it is considered for the purpose of this assessment that the likely ZOI on European Sites is the zone immediately around the proposed strategy area, in addition to any sites with a potential hydrological or hydrogeological connection downstream or overlapping the project and/or with an ecological connection such as an underlying groundwater body or overlapping surfacewater body, where distance would be dependent on the qualifying interests of the site. To that end the following sites are potentially located within the Source» Pathway » Receptor zone of influence of the proposed strategy.

- Lower River Shannon SAC (002165);
- Newhall and Edenvale Complex SAC (002091);
- Poulatadig Cave SAC (000037);
- Ballyallia Lake SAC (000014);
- Toonagh Estate SAC (002247);
- Knockanira House (002318);
- Lough Gash Turlough (000051);
- Dromore Woods and Lough SAC (000032);
- Ballycullinan Lake SAC (000016);
- Ballycullinan, Old Domestic Building SAC (002246);
- Old Farm Buildings Ballymacrogan SAC (002245);
- East Burren Complex SAC (001926);
- Ballyogan Lough SAC (000019);
- Moyree River System SAC (000057);
- Termon Lough SAC (001321);
- Cregg House Stables, Crusheen SAC (002317);
- Old Domestic Building (Keevagh) SAC (002010);
- Corofin Wetlands SPA (004220);
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077); and
- Ballyallia Lough SPA (004041).

The assessment of connectivity between the European Sites and the proposed strategy follows the potential source-pathway-receptor model, which identifies the source of likely significant impacts, if any, the pathway (land, air, hydrological, hydrogeological pathways, etc) along which those impacts may be transferred from the source to the receiving environmental receptors (i.e. European Sites and/or features for which the sites are designated).



Where it is evident that there is no connectivity between the proposed strategy and receptors (i.e. European Sites and/ or features for which the sites are designated), the receptors are excluded from the AA process. Similarly, where connectivity exists between the proposed strategy and receptors but is deemed not to result in likely significant effects to the receptor, the receptor can be screened out (i.e. likely significant effects to receptors excluded; receptor not considered further in AA process).

In contrast to the above, where it is not possible to exclude likely significant effects on the basis of best scientific knowledge, a more detailed scientific assessment of the proposed strategy is required which focuses on the European Sites likely to be affected and the relevant designated feature in question.

The integrity of a European Site (referred to in Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive) is determined based on the Conservation Status of the features (habitats and/ or species) for which SACs and SPAs are designated. The Qualifying Interests (QI) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) for protected sites have been obtained through a review of the Conservation Objectives documents available from the NPWS website [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie).

**Figure 3-3** shows the European Site within the zone of influence of the proposed Integrated Urban Strategy. **Table 3-2** provides details on the distance and connectivity of European Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed Integrated Urban Strategy.



Table 3-2: European Sites within the proposed Integrated Urban Strategy’s potential Zone of Influence

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
002165	Lower River Shannon SAC	1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> 1095 Sea Lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> 1096 Brook Lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> 1099 River Lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> 1106 Atlantic Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> (only in fresh water) 1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1150 *Coastal lagoons 1160 Large shallow inlets and bays 1170 Reefs 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> )	Sections of the proposed strategy area adjoin the River Fergus which is designated as part of the Lower River Shannon SAC.	<p>There is the potential for direct and indirect connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site due to proximity and partial overlap between the strategy area boundary and this European Site.</p> <p>The purpose of the Strategy is to guide the development of the Ennis town centre and immediate surrounds under the objectives as outlined in Volume 3a Ennis Municipal District Settlement Plans of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (which has itself been subject to a full Appropriate Assessment); there will be no works directly arising from the Strategy that have not already been fully assessed as part of this process, and that would result in any significant effects on the features of Qualifying Interest for the SAC. No further assessment is required in relation to the Strategy.</p>

<sup>4</sup>\*Indicates priority Annex I habitats

<sup>5</sup>Indicates the nearest straight-line distance unless otherwise quoted.



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
		<p>1349 Bottlenose Dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i></p> <p>1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i></p> <p>1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</p> <p>3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation</p> <p>6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</p> <p>91E0 *Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</p>		
002091	Newhall and Edenvale Complex SAC	<p>1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i></p> <p>8310 Caves not open to the public</p>	3.3km south-west	<p>There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.</p> <p>The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts</p>



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
				within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.
000037	Poulatadig Cave SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> 8310 Caves not open to the public	3.9km south-west	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites. The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.
000014	Ballyallia Lake SAC	3150 Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation	1.7km north	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed strategy area with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
002247	Toonagh Estate SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	5.4km north-west	<p>There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.</p> <p>The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.</p>
002318	Knockanira House SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	8.7km south-west	<p>There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.</p> <p>The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.</p>



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
000032	Dromore Woods and Lough SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 3150 Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 8240 Limestone pavements	6.0km north / north-east	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.  The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.
000016	Ballycullinan Lake SAC	7210 Calcareous fens with and species of the Caricion davallianae	8.8km north-west	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.
002246	Ballycullinan, Old Domestic Building SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	8.6km north-west	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
				The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.
002245	Old Farm Buildings Ballymacrogan SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	8.7km north / north-west	<p>There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.</p> <p>The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.</p>
001926	East Burren Complex SAC	1065 Marsh Fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> 1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. 3180 Turloughs*	9.5km north-west	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
		3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths 5130 <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands 6130 Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) 6510 Lowland hay meadows ( <i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> ) 7210 Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae* 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)* 7230 Alkaline fens 8240 Limestone pavements* 8310 Caves not open to the public 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)*		The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
000019	Ballyogan Lough SAC	7210 Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae* 8240 Limestone pavements*	11.9km north / north-east	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.
000051	Lough Gash Turlough SAC	3180 Turloughs* 3270 Rivers with muddy banks with <i>Chenopodium rubri</i> p.p. and <i>Bidention</i> p.p. vegetation	10.8km south-east	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.
000057	Moyree River System SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation 7230 Alkaline fens 8240 Limestone pavements 8310 Caves not open to the public	10.4km north / north-east	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.  The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
001321	Termon Lough SAC	3180* Turloughs	20.2km north-east	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.
002317	Cregg House Stables, Crusheen SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	17.8km	<p>There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.</p> <p>The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.</p>
002010	Old Domestic Building (Keevagh) SAC	1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	6.5km south-east	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites.



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
				The Strategy area is located outside of the 2.5km core foraging range of the foraging grounds for the lesser horseshoe bat roosts within the SAC; no potential pathway for direct or indirect significant effects on QI bats associated with this SAC exists.
004220	Corofin Wetlands SPA	Little Grebe ( <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> ) [A004] Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) [A038] Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> ) [A050] Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> ) [A052] Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> ) [A156] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	10.7km north / north-west	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites. Furthermore, the proposed strategy area does not provide suitable foraging or roosting habitat for SCI species for which the SPA has been designated.
004077	River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	A017 Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> breeding + wintering A038 Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> wintering A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> wintering A048 Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> wintering A050 Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> wintering A052 Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> wintering	3.7km south / south-east and 4.9km downstream.	There is the potential for indirect hydrological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site due to proximity to the River Fergus and its potential hydrological connectivity to the lower sections of the River Shannon which is designated as part of this European Site.  The purpose of the Strategy is to guide the development of the Ennis town centre and



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
		A054 Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> wintering A056 Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> wintering A062 Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i> wintering A137 Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> wintering A140 Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> wintering A141 Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> wintering A142 Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> wintering A143 Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> wintering A149 Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i> wintering A156 Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> wintering A157 Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> wintering A160 Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> wintering A162 Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> wintering A164 Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i> wintering A179 Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> wintering A999 Wetlands		<p>immediate surrounds under the objectives as outlined in Volume 3a Ennis Municipal District Settlement Plans of the Clare County Development Plan 2023- 2029 (which has itself been subject to a full Appropriate Assessment); there will be no works directly arising from the Strategy that have not already been fully assessed as part of this process, and that would result in any significant effects on the SCI species of the SPA. No further assessment is required in relation to the Strategy.</p>



Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features / Special Conservation Interest Species <sup>4</sup>	Distance from Study Area <sup>5</sup>	S-P-R Connectivity
004041	Ballyallia Lough SPA	A050 Wigeon <i>Anas Penelope</i> A051 Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> A052 Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> A053 Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> A056 Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> A125 Coot <i>Fulica atra</i> A156 Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> A999 Wetlands	2.4km north / north-west	There is no hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this European Site. There are no environmental vectors linking the proposed works with the surrounding environment and consequently European Sites. Furthermore, the proposed strategy area does not provide suitable foraging or roosting habitat for SCI species for which the SPA has been designated.

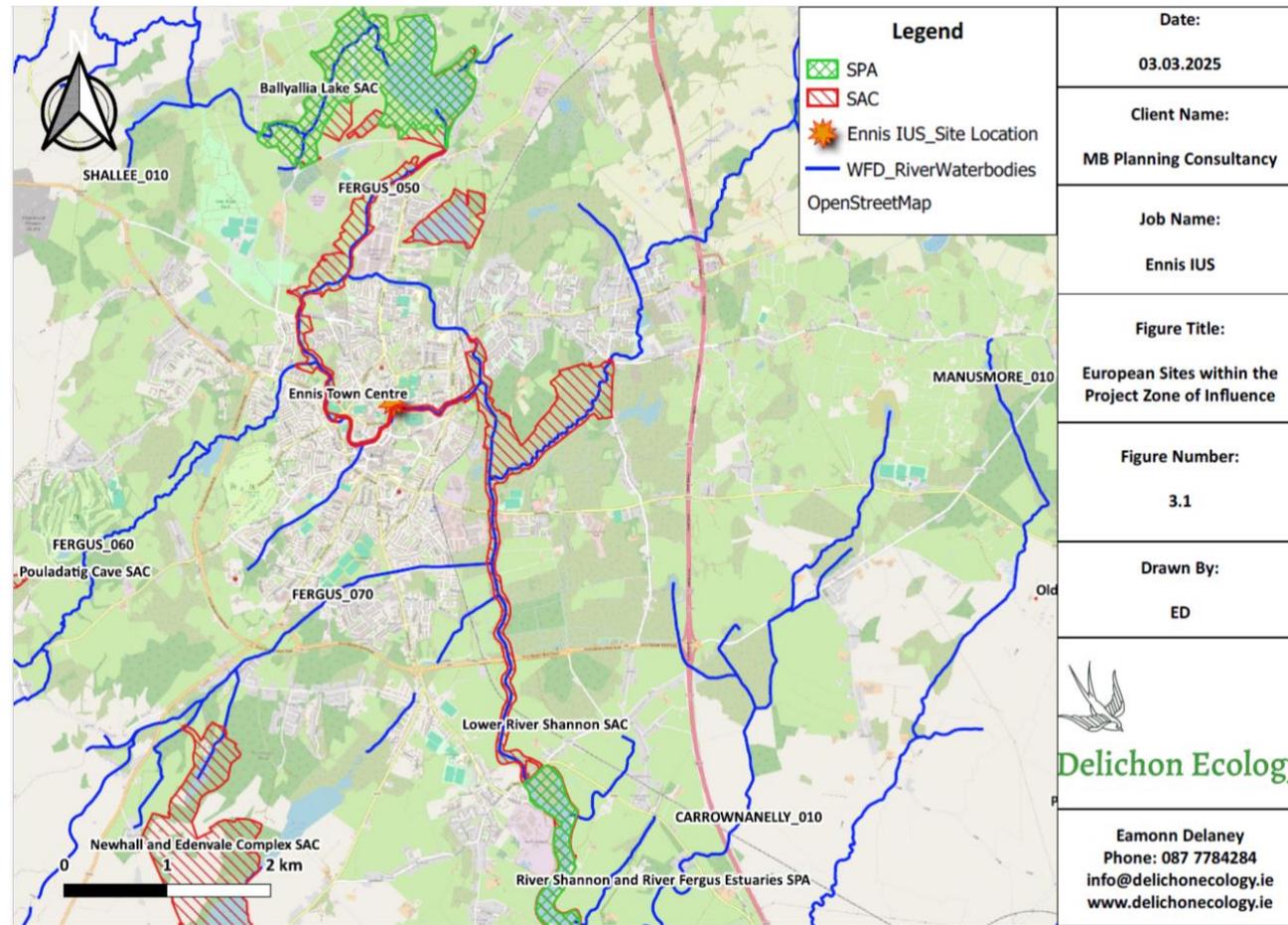


Figure 3-3: European Sites within the potential strategy area Zone of Influence



### 3.3.1 European Site Descriptions

Site descriptions for European Sites within relative proximity are presented below.

#### 3.3.1.1 Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165)

This very large site stretches along the Shannon valley from Killaloe in Co. Clare to Loop Head/ Kerry Head, a distance of some 120 km. The site thus encompasses the Shannon, Feale, Mulkear and Fergus estuaries, the freshwater lower reaches of the River Shannon (between Killaloe and Limerick), the freshwater stretches of much of the Feale and Mulkear catchments and the marine area between Loop Head and Kerry Head. This site is of great ecological interest as it contains a high number of habitats and species listed on Annexes I and II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, including the priority habitats lagoon and alluvial woodland, the only known resident population of Bottle-nosed Dolphin in Ireland and all three Irish lamprey species. A good number of Red Data Book species are also present, perhaps most notably the thriving populations of Triangular Club-rush (NPWS, 2013)<sup>6</sup>.

#### 3.3.1.2 River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (Site Code: 004077)

The estuaries of the River Shannon and River Fergus form the largest estuarine complex in Ireland. The site comprises the entire estuarine habitat from Limerick City westwards as far as Doonaha in Co. Clare and Dooneen Point in Co. Kerry. The River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is an internationally important site that supports an assemblage of over 20,000 wintering waterbirds. It holds internationally important populations of four species, i.e. Light-bellied Brent Goose, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit and Redshank. In addition, there are 17 species that have wintering populations of national importance. The site also supports a nationally important breeding population of Cormorant. Of particular note is that three of the species which occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Whooper Swan, Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit. Parts of the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA are Wildfowl Sanctuaries (NPWS, 2015)<sup>7</sup>.

### 3.3.2 Conservation Objectives of European Sites

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain at favourable conservation status areas designated as SAC and SPA. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing; and
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/synopsis/SY002165.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/synopsis/SY004077.pdf>



- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

The integrity of a European site (referred to in Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive) is determined based on the conservation objectives and of the site. The Qualifying Interests (QI) and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) are obtained through a review of the most recently published (web-published or otherwise) Conservation Objective supporting documents and Site-Specific Conservation Objectives documents (where available) for the European site.

### **3.3.2.1 Conservation Objectives of proximal European Sites**

The features of Qualifying Interest for European Sites within the project Zone of Influence are listed in **Table 3-2**. Further details on Conservation Objectives for this European Site are provided below.

#### **Lower River Shannon SAC**

The Site-Specific Conservation Objectives for the Lower River Shannon SAC are provided in the Conservation Objectives document available on the NPWS website, as follows;

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation\\_objectives/CO002165.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002165.pdf)

#### **River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA**

The Site-Specific conservation objectives for River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA are provided in the Conservation Objectives document available on the NPWS website, as follows;

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation\\_objectives/CO004077.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004077.pdf)



## 4 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

### 4.1 Ecological Receptors

#### 4.1.1 Habitats

The findings of the Phase 1 habitat survey are described below.

The proposed strategy area comprises built surfaces associated with Ennis town centre including buildings, roads, adjoining footpaths and car parking areas (BL3)<sup>8</sup>. The study area supports localised areas of amenity grassland (GA2) with localised shrubbery and individual semi-mature trees and treelines.

#### 4.1.2 Evaluation of Habitats

Habitat evaluation within the proposed works and the surrounding area are presented in **Table 4-1** below.

**Table 4-1 - Evaluation of habitats within the proposed works**

Habitat	Evaluation	Evaluation Rationale
Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3)	Negligible	A habitat of poor floristic and biodiversity value, offering very little in terms of ecosystem services to local ecological receptors.
Ornamental non-native shrub (WS3) <sup>9</sup>	Negligible	A habitat of poor floristic and biodiversity value, offering very little in terms of ecosystem services to local ecological receptors.
Amenity grassland (GA2)	Negligible	A habitat of poor floristic and biodiversity value, offering very little in terms of ecosystem services to local ecological receptors.
Treelines (WL2)	Local Importance (Lower Value)	A habitat of local importance for small mammals and birds for refuge and commuting purposes.
Depositing Lowland River (FW2)	International Importance	This habitat includes the main channel of the River Fergus which flows along the northern extent of the strategy area. This riverine habitat is designated as part of the Lower River Shannon SAC.

#### 4.1.3 Birds

Bird species that were seen or heard along the bounds or overflying the study area during the walkover survey were as follows:

- Pied Wagtail
- Woodpigeon
- Rook

<sup>8</sup> Alphanumeric codes follow 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000)

<sup>9</sup> Including standalone trees



- Jackdaw
- Feral Pigeon
- Robin
- Black-headed Gull
- Cormorant
- Herring Gull
- Common Gull

These birds reflect the built up / urban nature of the project footprint and environs. These species use the study area for foraging purposes.

#### 4.1.4 Mammals

Non-volant mammal field surveys at the study area comprised of a thorough walkover of the proposed study area.

No underground mammal dwellings including badger setts or fox dens were encountered during the survey. In addition, no signs of ongoing foraging activity or territory marking (through sprainting, scats etc.) was identified during the site walkover survey. The strategy area adjoins the River Fergus in numerous areas. The River Fergus supports suitable foraging habitat for otter. The adjoining riparian area of the River Fergus primarily comprises built land, riparian flood protection walls and hard surfacing, all of which do not provide optimal breeding habitat for otter. The study area supports buildings and hard standing surfaces, which are largely unsuitable non-volant mammal breeding habitats. The study area may be used as a nocturnal foraging area for mammals, such as fox or local domesticated animals.

#### 4.1.5 Bats

All bats and their roosting sites are legally protected under the EU Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish Law by the Habitats Regulations. With the exception of Lesser Horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), which is an Annex II species, the remainder are classified as Annex IV species. They are also protected under the Wildlife Act (as amended). Across Europe, bats are further protected under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1982), which, in relation to bats, exists to conserve all species and their habitats. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention 1979, enacted 1983) was instigated to protect migrant species across all European boundaries. The Irish government has ratified both of these conventions.

The desk and field-based assessments undertaken of the habitats at the proposed strategy area footprint revealed limited potential for bat roosting features. Paved surfaces and footpaths do not provide suitable habitats for foraging bats and no suitability for roosting bats. A review of the bat 'habitat suitability' index for the site presented on [www.maps.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.maps.biodiversityireland.ie) was undertaken (Lundy *et al.*, 2011). The bat 'habitat suitability' index is the research outcome of a study by (Lundy *et al.* 2011) examining the relative importance of landscape and habitat associations across Ireland for bats. The 'habitat suitability' index ranges from 0 to 100 with 0 being least favourable and 100 most favourable for various bat species. However, it should be noted that the majority of the strategy area, do not support suitable foraging or roosting habitat for bats. The buildings within the strategy footprint may provide suitable roosting habitat for bats. Any works requiring building upgrades or



refurbishments arising from the Integrated Urban Strategy must be consistent and compliant with protective objectives of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

Lesser horseshoe bat is unlikely to occur on site, although the site is located within its current known range and distribution in Ireland (NPWS, 2019c). However, the proposed strategy area does not support suitable foraging habitats for this species; i.e. continuous tree and woodland cover.

#### 4.1.6 Invasive Species

Invasive plant species listed on the Third Schedule of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (as amended) were not identified within the proposed strategy area or its immediate environs. In addition to the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 - Annex 2 (Part 1) list, the NBDC supports a list of 'non-native' invasive alien species classifying the impact and risk posed by non-native species in Ireland as 'high risk' and 'medium risk' together with an additional 'watch list'. However, the NBDC hold records for Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) along the main channel of the River Fergus, upstream of the R474 road crossing and locally in the Drumbiggil area. Projects and initiatives emanating from the proposed initiative will need to be cognisant of invasive species within the study area and the potential to spread or disturb these species.

#### 4.1.7 Surface Watercourses

A review of EPA river routes data (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>) and the findings of the site walkover survey, confirms that the proposed strategy area supports proximity with and overlaps the Fergus\_060 watercourse (IE\_SH\_27F010700). There is the potential for connectivity between the proposed strategy area and this watercourse via potential enhancement projects along the riparian area. The Fergus\_060 watercourse (IE\_SH\_27F010700) watercourse is attributed 'Poor' status by the EPA, under the WFD monitoring programme (2016-2021) and 'At Risk' of not achieving its favourable status under the Water Framework Directive.



**Photos of the Study Area**

Photographs of the proposed strategy area and environs are presented below.



**Image 4.1: Proposed strategy area adjoining Drumbiggil Road**



**Image 4.2: Amenity area to the north of Drumbiggil Road**



**Image 4.3: Existing riverside walk adjoining the River Fergus**



**Image 4.4: River Fergus and Post Office Field in the background**



## 4.2 Flooding

The Flood Info database ([www.floodinfo.ie](http://www.floodinfo.ie)) was also consulted to identify Predictive Flood Risk Areas (PFRA) mapped as part of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme for the study area. Interrogation of the mapping database confirms that parts of the study site and its environs, particularly the River Fergus and its riparian are identified as being of High flood probability of both river flooding and coastal flooding. The Flood Info database holds evidence of historic flood events along the River Fergus near the north-western extent of the study area.

## 4.3 Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) online database<sup>10</sup> was consulted for available edaphic, geological and hydrological information of the site and its environs. The underlying bedrock of the study site is part of the CDBURRAM Aillwee & Maumcaha Members formation which comprise Dinantian pure bedded limestone. The groundwater vulnerability within the majority of the strategy area is classified High 'H' localised areas of Moderate 'M' groundwater vulnerability. The wider environs of the Ennis study area comprise 'X – Rock at or near the surface' and 'Ex – Extreme' groundwater vulnerability. Bedrock aquifer maps published on the GSI website provide a detailed classification of bedrock aquifer types and indicate the bedrock aquifer beneath the site is classified Rkc Regionally Important Aquifer - Karstified (conduit). There are no karst features within the proposed strategy area footprint, however the wider environs of the Ennis study area support karst features to the south, north-west and north.

The study site is located within the 'Ennis' GroundWater Body (GWB) (IE\_SH\_G\_080). This GroundWater Body was classified as having Good Status between 2016 and 2021 and 'At risk' of meeting its objectives under the Water Framework Directive. Groundwater and surfacewater interactions of this GroundWater Body is described as follows:

*'There is an effective hydraulic interconnection between groundwater and surface water in the karst limestone: much of the groundwater will spend at least some time on the surface and vice versa. The Fergus River, for example, although it now has two artificial stretches of channel, at one time did not have a continuous path to the sea. There are a number of sinks and rises along its course and, depending on climatic conditions, at any given site the river water may be recharging the groundwater system or vice versa. Rivers crossing the limestone aquifer have low summer baseflows, and flows are often flashy. The effects of heavy rainfall can be seen in the water quality at Drumcliff Spring within two days and this also highlights the sensitivity of the system. Particular effects of surface water on the groundwater system are seen in the limestone areas adjacent to the Upper Carboniferous Clare Shales. The shales, and overlying sandstone and shale units, are of much lower permeability than the limestones, and most of the effective rainfall runs off in surface water streams to the lower lying limestones. The shaly rocks give rise to highly acidic water that dissolves the carbonate rocks. This has resulted in a ring of swallow holes, sinks and large cave systems at the boundary between the two units where karstification processes are still active today. Surface water flowing off the Namurian rocks in the west and the Devonian Sandstone and Impure limestones in the east are in the zone of contribution to the Drumcliff and Pouladower springs. The surface water sinks into the karst groundwater system and potentially*

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<sup>10</sup> GSI Online database: <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/default.aspx>



*reaches the springs. There are several groundwater-dependent ecosystems within the GWB, including naturally eutrophic loughs, calcareous loughs and alkaline fens, and oligotrophic calcareous turloughs<sup>11</sup>.*

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<sup>11</sup> <https://gsi.geodata.gov.ie/downloads/Groundwater/Reports/GWB/EnnisGWB.pdf>



## 5 SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

This section provides the information required for the competent authority (Clare County Council) to undertake a Screening for AA and determine in view of best scientific knowledge, whether the proposed strategy, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the European site. Specifically, it aims to:

- Provide information on, and assess the potential for the proposed strategy to significantly impact on European sites; and
- Determine whether the proposed strategy, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, are likely to have significant effects on European sites in view of their Conservation Objectives.

This screening assessment considers the following elements covered in earlier sections:

1. Description of the plan or project, and local site or plan area characteristics. The description covers the full scope of the proposed plan or project (i.e. site set up, construction and operational and phases).
2. Description of the receiving environment setting of the proposed plan or project and its surrounds.
3. Identification of relevant European sites within the projects the potential zone of influence. A preliminary assessment to determine connectivity between the proposed works and receptors (i.e. European sites and/ or features for which the sites are designated). Where connectivity exists, the receptors in question are brought forward in the screening assessment process.
4. For receptors that exhibit potential connectivity to the proposed work a screening assessment is undertaken to establish whether the plan or project is likely to have a direct, indirect or cumulative effect on receptors based on a consideration of likely impacts (i.e. an assessment of significance of effect).

### 5.1 Examination Likely Significant Effects for the Integrated Urban Strategy for Ennis Town Centre

The Integrated Urban Strategy identifies critical areas for intervention, prioritises projects that encourage the conservation and adaptive reuse of Ennis' extensive built heritage, and addresses vacancy and dereliction in the town centre.

The Integrated Urban Strategy complements the strategies and proposals outlined in the Ennis 2040 programme. It is in accordance with the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, which underwent a full Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment and a robust level of assessment in consultation with Environmental Authorities. The Strategy has also been developed with the principles of the New European Bauhaus in mind, and focuses on a more local-scale level of intervention, which augments the more strategic planning and regeneration initiatives in these other documents.

The purpose of the strategy is to guide the development of Ennis town centre and immediate surrounds under the objectives as outlined in Volume 3A Ennis Municipal District of the Clare County Development Plan (which has itself been subject to a full Appropriate Assessment); there will be no



works directly arising from the strategy, and therefore no potential for any significant effects on the features of Qualifying Interest of European Sites that can result from the adoption of the strategy. No further assessment is required in relation to the proposed strategy. Any future proposed development arising from the strategy must comply with the requirements of the Clare County Development Plan.

The initiatives and projects of the proposed Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy and their correspondence with policies and objectives of the Clare County Development Plan are listed in **Table 5-1**. The findings of Table 5-1 demonstrates that the proposed initiatives of the strategy have a corresponding and supporting policy and objective within the Clare County Plan 2023-2029.

As part of the Screening for AA, in addition to the proposed development, other relevant projects and plans in the area must also be considered at this stage. These plans and projects are considered further in this respect in **Table 5-2** below.

Table 5-1: Review of Proposed Projects of the Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy and Correspondence with CDP Policies & Objectives

NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
<b>A. Rejuvenation of Protected Structures</b>					
A1	The Cloister An Phobail	Bring the building back into use as a multi-use community space (“Teach An Phobail”), including arts studios, classrooms, conference spaces, exhibition and heritage spaces, a tourism space, and a ground-floor café. Provision of a community art wall on the external elevation.	Part VIII application approved, and selected as preferred project for THRIVE funding bid. See Section 18.3 of IUS for further details. By virtue of the Part VIII process, screenings for AA/EIA were undertaken in December 2024.	Short	<b>CDP6.15</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: a) To favourably consider the redevelopment of brownfield sites and disused agricultural or commercial buildings in urban and rural areas for industrial, enterprise or cultural uses subject to normal planning considerations, ensuring that no such developments will adversely affect protected habitats and species;
A2	Former Presbyterian Church	Opportunity to bring this local landmark back into active use. Potential for flexible community (or other town centre) uses for local groups or cultural activities. It is vital to consider the future of the adjacent De Valera Library and other publicly owned properties on Harmony Row, including the former Local Studies Centre and Library Services building. Strong connections exist with adjacent health, community, and education buildings to the north.	Consider options alongside adjacent sites and the wider Harmony Row area.	Medium	
A3	McParland’s, Parnell Street, Chapel Lane	Opportunities exist to bring the building back into use. The building’s historic context could lend itself to a series of possible uses that relate to the unique	Consider the feasibility of a uses that celebrates the architectural character of the building.	Medium	<b>CDP16.2</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council:



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
		architectural character of the building or the town centre itself.			a) To protect, as set out in the Record of Protected Structures, all structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest; and
A4	Ennis Community Centre, Chapel Lane	Already in use as a community building, but there is potential to make more intensive use of the site, including the upper floors. The building should be retained for community use, but the transformative potential of reconfiguration should be considered. Spaces around the building could also be enhanced and linked to wider improvements in the Chapel Lane area.	Liaise with Killaloe Diocese and existing community groups to explore opportunities to enhance the building and introduce other uses. Further feasibility studies are required.	Medium	b) To review the Record of Protected Structures periodically and add structures of special interest as appropriate, including significant elements of industrial, maritime or vernacular heritage and any twentieth century structures of merit.
A5	New Hall Ballroom, Station Road	Consider the long-term potential of the building, either strengthened as a retail use or in an alternative community use.	Further feasibility discussions including dialogue with building owner / occupant.	Long	
A6	Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) Barracks at The Causeway	Initiatives are underway to expand the current use of the buildings, which will be supported for employment and historic benefits.	Project being developed by OPW.	Short	
A7	Former De Valera Library and Clare Local Studies Centre, Harmony Row	Review options for the site and landscape, alongside a holistic consideration of the wider Harmony Row area.	Feasibility study to consider options for the site (in the context of a broader strategy for Harmony Row). Draft proposals are underway for the refurbishment and cultural use of the Manse	Medium	<b>CDP17.1</b> It is an objective of the Development Plan: a) To support the development of the national "Town Centre



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
			(the former Local Studies Centre), subject to funding.		First” principle to aid in the development and coordination of regeneration, revitalisation and growth in vibrancy of our towns and villages.
A8	2 Abbey Street, former THREE store	A smaller scale opportunity, but important to prioritise re-use for community use or alternative town centre activity.	Liaison with the owner to understand the potential for short and medium-term interventions to bring the building back into use.	Medium	
A9	Ashfield House, Sandfield Park	Potential to refurbish house and stables - location likely to favour residential uses or tourism related accommodation.	Project being developed by Ennis 2040 Strategy.	Short	b) To carry out public realm enhancement works as well as retail health checks, vacant site and derelict site surveys and other essential research and analysis to inform the actions required to support town and village centre renewal and development projects across County Clare.
<b>B. Enhancement of Spaces and Routes</b>					
B1	Market	Consider options for the market. Work with traders, Artisans, Craftspersons. Consider traffic requirements and potential to make additional public realm improvements. Examples of successful	Progress options and initial design concepts for the space.	Medium	<b>CDP9.14</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: To improve the visual appearance of towns and



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
		markets may be considered as part of any plans to enhance the market area evolve.			villages, protect their character and maximise their tourism potential by the continuation of environmental and public realm programmes, design management and improvement of identified derelict sites.
B2	O'Connell Square	Complete the public realm regeneration project, creating a flexible space large enough to hold small events such as live music, including cafés with outdoor dining and places for people to sit and relax.	Complete the O'Connell Square works as an early phase of implementing the IUS priorities.	Short	
B3	Cathedral Plaza	Upgrade of space by cathedral with new surfacing, planting and seating areas.	Complete the Cathedral Plaza works as an early phase of implementing the IUS priorities.	Short	
B4	Cloister public realm	The Part 8 proposals focus on immediate works to enhance the building which will bring the site back into use as a community destination. It is important to enliven the external spaces in front of the building and to the rear in tandem. It is recommended that engagement is undertaken with local stakeholders and the community to consider public realm enhancements, including an improved relationship with the River Fergus, streetscape upgrades, and a general shift towards a pedestrian-first approach. It is acknowledged that the site has environmental sensitivities, and careful consideration is required in relation to a car parking strategy, vehicular		Medium	<p><b>CDP16.2</b></p> <p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) To protect, as set out in the Record of Protected Structures, all structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest; and</p> <p>b) To review the Record of Protected Structures periodically and add structures of special</p>



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
		access, lighting and safety. This should be undertaken as part of broader study for Friary riverside area, in relation to connectivity.			interest as appropriate, including significant elements of industrial, maritime or vernacular heritage and any twentieth century structures of merit.
B5	Bindon Street and Bank Place	Enhance the setting of the Protected Structures on Bindon Street. Opportunities to improve pedestrian linkages and greening on Bindon Street, with improved wayfinding on Bank Place to strengthen the desire line to the town centre.	Progress proposals to initial concept development.	Medium	<b>CDP17.1</b>
B6	Harvey's Quay	Public realm enhancements and a riverside connection.	Preparation of public realm concept proposals.	Medium	It is an objective of the Development Plan:
B7	Link to Cusack Park	Improve the arrival experience at the GAA ground, ensuring the pedestrian experience is safe, with pedestrian crossings and the provision of public transport, to reduce traffic on match days. A pedestrian bridge from Aldi/Cusack Park to the laneway on the west side of CBS School.	Feasibility study to explore options.	Medium	a) To support the development of the national "Town Centre First" principle to aid in the development and coordination of regeneration, revitalisation and growth in vibrancy of our towns and villages.
B8	Lane Ways and Bow Ways	The laneways and bow-ways that still exist today remain essential to the pedestrian movement and permeability of the town. All these streets are located within the Architectural Conservation Area (Fig. 1.6 on page 21 of IUS). As part of the Clare County Heritage Plan 2017–2023, a project	Prioritise lane ways and bow ways for interventions and undertake detailed design of public realm improvements.	Medium	b) To carry out public realm enhancement works as well as retail health checks, vacant site



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
		was identified to revitalise and regenerate the laneways and bow-ways in the medieval core through enhancement measures. Successful examples of laneways from elsewhere (e.g. Kilkenny) may be considered where appropriate.			and derelict site surveys and other essential research and analysis to inform the actions required to support town and village centre renewal and development projects across County Clare.
B9	Abbey Street Public Realm	Upgrade of street with a range of surface improvements.	Undertake feasibility study and initial design work.	Short	
<b>C. Improving Gateways and Key Views</b>					
C1	Views to cathedral / train station	Define guidance to protect the key view between the Cathedral and the train and bus station, ensuring that no development obstructs this view. This view is important as there is a lack of signage, and thus this landmark view helps guide people into the town.	Undertake a views study and corridor modelling to define parameters for development sites and identify supporting improvements in relation to signage and wayfinding.	Medium	<p><b>CDP9.3</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: c) To ensure a well-signed and interpreted heritage and landscape;</p> <p><b>CDP9.14</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: To improve the visual appearance of towns and villages, protect their</p>
C2	Gateway enhancements	An overarching project to improve the arrival experience in Ennis Town Centre for pedestrians and cyclists, with clear signage and wayfinding for the town centre and key destinations. A range of interventions	Preparation of a gateway feasibility study to develop a coordinated approach to	Medium	



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
		<p>should be considered at each of the locations: Improved accessibility, lighting, space for pedestrians, street greening, paving maintenance, and materials. Additional pedestrian crossings are also needed in some cases.</p> <p>(C2.1) Club Bridge, Abbey Street, Harmony Row            (C2.2) O’Connell Square            (C2.3) Harvey’s Quay (paused for review and re-evaluation)            (C2.4) Market            (C2.5) Temple Gate            (C2.6) Friar’s Walk / Causeway Link            (C2.7) Francis Street / Causeway Link            (C2.8) Station</p>	<p>wayfinding, signage and the enhancement of key spaces.</p>		<p>character and maximise their tourism potential by the continuation of environmental and public realm programmes, design management and improvement of identified derelict sites.</p> <p><b>CDP 11.25</b>            It is an objective of Clare County Council:            a) To ensure that adequate directional signage is provided throughout the county to facilitate convenient movement and access between settlements and services through the county.</p>
<p><b>D. Riverside Enhancement</b></p>					



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
D1	Bindon Street and Bank Place	A series of locations are identified for interventions to enhance visual connections to the River Fergus. These include key locations such as Post Office Field and Ennis Friary / The Cloister. An opportunity also exists to open up St Columba's church and grounds for public use.	Progress study to define landscape and public realm opportunities and concepts.	Medium	<b>CDP 10.11</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: a) To support the maintenance of existing off-road walking and cycling trails and support investment in the sustainable development of walking and cycling facilities, greenway and blueway corridors within the County and region extending into and between our County's settlements; d) To ensure that any proposed development for off-road walking and cycling are based on rigorous site/route selection studies, take into consideration the safe and adequate provision of access, set-down and parking areas, and where appropriate that natural
D2	Riverside routes	Provide a continuous car-free foot and cycle path along the River Fergus, which includes boardwalks to navigate alongside buildings, and opportunities to explore the richly diverse habitats of wet grassland, scrub, and reed swamp. Opportunities to improve access to the river to enjoy views, and provide seating where appropriate should be considered. Proposals should not have an impact on flood defences. Consider safety dimensions of any proposals.	Undertake a concept study to progress a landscape design strategy for the riverside area to inform detailed design and project delivery.	Medium	



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
					borders/buffers are included as an integral component of the design; e) To complete heritage audits and improve heritage interpretation along walking and cycling routes in the County; g) To ensure that the development of any off-road walking and cycling routes, blueways and peatways is informed by an appropriate level of environmental assessment, including all necessary reports to assess the potential impact on designated European sites and any impacts that may arise from increased visitor pressures; and h) To ensure that all cycle routes adhere to the principles contained within the national policy



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
					<p>document Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future, and the National Cycle Policy Framework or any updated/amended guidance document and that integration between routes is achieved where appropriate.</p> <p>i) To have regard to the Code of Best Practice for National &amp; Regional Greenways in the in the development of greenway corridors within the county.</p> <p><b>CDP17.1</b> It is an objective of the Development Plan: a) To support the development of the national "Town Centre First" principle to aid in the development and coordination of regeneration,</p>



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
					<p>revitalisation and growth in vibrancy of our towns and villages.</p> <p>b) To carry out public realm enhancement works as well as retail health checks, vacant site and derelict site surveys and other essential research and analysis to inform the actions required to support town and village centre renewal and development projects across County Clare.</p>
<b>E. Key Areas for Improvements</b>					
E1	Harmony Row	A comprehensive approach should be taken, considering opportunities in the round to maximise the benefits of interlinked projects alongside strengthened connections with local educational, health, and community activities. Harmony Row also occupies a key location between the Friary Riverside area and Bindon Street / Bank Place.	Preparation of a mini-masterplan or planning brief which addresses these opportunities and ties projects together.	Short	<p><b>CDP9.14</b></p> <p>It is an objective of Clare County Council: To improve the visual appearance of towns and villages, protect their character and maximise their tourism potential by the continuation of</p>



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
		Draft proposals are underway for the refurbishment and cultural use of the Manse (the former Local Studies Centre), subject to funding. Refurbishment proposals are planned for the refurbishment Bellevue House as office space which is targeted for completion in 2025. It should be noted that the former De Valera Library building is not designated as a Protected Structure.			environmental and public realm programmes, design management and improvement of identified derelict sites.  <b>CDP10.9</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: f) To support and facilitate the development of new indoor and outdoor spaces in County Clare that can enable formal and informal community engagement.
E2	Ennis Friary and riverside	Preparation of a coordinated strategy to maximise inter-project benefits relating to the regeneration of the Cloister, enhancements to the tourism offer at Ennis Friary, enhanced access to Cusack Park, extended use of the barracks, and improvements to the public realm adjacent to Club Bridge and the river.	Preparation of a mini-masterplan or planning brief which addresses these opportunities and ties projects together.	Short	<b>CDP16.2</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: a) To protect, as set out in the Record of Protected Structures, all structures, which are of special architectural, historical,
E3	Market	Consider options for Market. Work with Traders, Artisans, Craftspersons. Consider traffic requirements and potential for additional public realm improvements.	Preparation of public realm and urban design strategy for Market Place and surrounding sites.	Medium	
E4	Chapel Lane	The Chapel Lane and Parnell Street area benefits from a number of linked projects which should be considered in the round.	Preparation of a mini-masterplan or planning brief	Medium	



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
		<p>These include the regeneration of McParland's and the expansion of community uses at Ennis Community Centre, alongside opportunities to enhance existing streets, spaces, and laneways. A farmers' market could be considered as a way of bringing life and vitality to the town centre and should be prioritised. Artisanal crafts could be encouraged in vacant units</p>	<p>which addresses these opportunities and ties projects together.</p>		<p>archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest; and</p> <p>b) To review the Record of Protected Structures periodically and add structures of special interest as appropriate, including significant elements of industrial, maritime or vernacular heritage and any twentieth century structures of merit.</p> <p><b>CDP17.1</b> It is an objective of the Development Plan: a) To support the development of the national "Town Centre First" principle to aid in the development and coordination of regeneration,</p>



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
					<p>revitalisation and growth in vibrancy of our towns and villages.</p> <p>b) To carry out public realm enhancement works as well as retail health checks, vacant site and derelict site surveys and other essential research and analysis to inform the actions required to support town and village centre renewal and development projects across County Clare.</p>
<b>F. Areas for Improvements</b>					
F1	Town centre identity	Brand the town centre through a coherent shopfront design strategy, focusing on materials and colours to support the strong identity of Ennis. Progress a study to identify specific pilot projects (ideally coherent, continuous groups of frontages).	Progress shopfront study for the historic core, identifying priority zones for enhancement and distilling overarching guidance to steer materials, architectural detailing and colours.	Medium	<p><b>CDP9.6</b></p> <p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>b) To provide coordinated signage, navigational aids (including digital apps) and information on</p>



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
F2	Invigorate the night time economy	Prepare a strategy that establishes a framework for a thriving night-time economy to suit a range of people, including families, providing a safe and vibrant atmosphere while being sensitive to those living in the town centre.	Develop a strategy for the evening and night time incorporating stakeholder involvement.	Medium	<p>surrounding services, amenities and activities at key points along County Clare’s tourism corridors to raise awareness of services and amenities available in close proximity to these routes, to enhance the overall visitor experience, and to ensure that businesses in the wider area benefit from the increased visitor numbers;</p> <p>e) To work with Fáilte Ireland and other key stakeholders to ensure the sustainable delivery of the Tourism Masterplan for the River Shannon 2020 - 2030;</p> <p>f) To work to develop linkages between the tourism corridors in the County and to the Key Town of Ennis which acts</p>
F3	Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Cycle strategy	Improve signage and wayfinding for cyclists wishing to cycle from the town centre towards key destinations such as the Cliffs of Moher or the Wild Atlantic Way. Wayfinding signage could include blue direction signs with distance markers and repeater signs for route confirmation at key junctions. Where possible, on roads with fast-moving traffic, cycle lanes should be provided, or alternative low-traffic routes signposted.	Progress study to assess interventions, and concept designs.	Medium	
F4	Cycle parking	Increase provision of cycle parking at key gateways and destinations in the town, including a covered bike stand at the train station.	Undertake feasibility study to identify locations and progress concept design.	Short	



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
					<p>as a tourism hub for the County;</p> <p>h) To implement the mitigation measures and recommendations as they apply to the County, in particular for the Cliffs of Moher and Loop Head arising from the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Monitoring Programmes.</p> <p>i) To work with Fáilte Ireland and other tourism stakeholders to support the successful implementation and delivery of Wild Atlantic Way Tourism Plans.</p> <p><b>CDP10.10</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>h) To support the development of cycle-parking facilities at</p>



NUMBER	PROJECT	PROPOSAL	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE	CDP POLICIES & OBJECTIVES
					<p>appropriate locations in all urban areas in the County;</p> <p><b>CDP9.14</b> It is an objective of Clare County Council: To improve the visual appearance of towns and villages, protect their character and maximise their tourism potential by the continuation of environmental and public realm programmes, design management and improvement of identified derelict sites.</p>



Table 5-2: In-combination Effects associated with the proposed development.

Programmes, Plans and Projects	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to the Conservation of the Natura 2000 Network	Potential for In-combination Effects
<p><b>Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029</b></p>	<p><b>CDP15.3 It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b>            a) To afford the highest level of protection to all designated European sites in accordance with the relevant Directives and legislation on such matters;            b) To require all planning applications for development that may have (or cannot rule out) likely significant effects on European Sites in view of the site’s Conservation Objectives, either in isolation or in combination with other plans or projects, to submit a Natura Impact Statement in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended); and            c) To recognise and afford appropriate protection to any new or modified SPAs or SACs that are identified during the lifetime of this Development Plan through the planning application process bearing in mind proposals for development outside of a European site may also have an indirect effect.</p> <p><b>CDP15.4 It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b>            a) To implement Article 6(3) and where necessary 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects likely to impact on European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s); and            b) To have regard to Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 or any updated version.</p> <p><b>CDP15.8 It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b>            a) To ensure the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological networks/corridors of biodiversity value outside of designated sites</p>	<p>The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 provides objectives outlined for the protection of the natural environmental and its component European Sites.</p> <p>Objective 15.3b states that all planning applications for development that may have (or cannot rule out) likely significant effects on European sites in view of the site’s Conservation Objectives, either in isolation or in combination with other plans or projects should be accompanied by Natura Impact Statement in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended);</p> <p>The implementation of this plan and objectives 15.3 and 15.4 will ensure that proposed projects and plans that may have an impact on a European Site be considered for Appropriate Assessment, prior to commencement.</p>



Programmes, Plans and Projects	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to the Conservation of the Natura 2000 Network	Potential for In-combination Effects
	<p>throughout the County and to require an ecological assessment to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species;</p> <p>b) To ensure that available habitat mapping is taken into consideration in any ecological assessment undertaken;</p> <p>c) To complete the Habitat Mapping of the County (in accordance with A Guide to Habitats in Ireland – The Heritage Council 2000) in order to identify and record the natural habitats of the County at a detailed level and afford appropriate protection to areas of importance as required; and</p> <p>d) To implement and monitor the actions as set out in the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan and the National Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>	
<p><b>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032</b></p>	<p>RPO 5.4 Encourage the prioritisation of Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO) for all sites of Conservation Value, designated in EU Directive (i.e. SACs, SPAs) to integrate with the development objectives of this Strategy.</p> <p>RPO 5.5 Ensure efficient and sustainable use of all our natural resources, including inland waterways, peatlands, and forests in a manner which ensures a healthy society a clean environment and there is no net contribution to biodiversity loss arising from development supported in this strategy. Conserve and protect designated areas and natural heritage area. Conserve and protect European sites and their integrity.</p> <p>RPO 5.7 Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the RSES are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate.</p>	<p>Due to the high-level nature of this Plan, it is not possible to determine with confidence the likely impacts or mitigation measures required yet in detail. Any projects that may arise as a result of the RSES will have a project level AA which will assess these in detail and provide suitable mitigation measures where appropriate.</p>
<p><b>River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022 –</b></p>	<p>The Third Cycle Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 Consultation Report has been published. This report presents a summary of the issues raised in the submissions reviewed from the public consultation on the draft River</p>	<p>The implementation of the RBMP seeks compliance with the environmental objectives set under the plan, which will be documented for</p>



Programmes, Plans and Projects	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to the Conservation of the Natura 2000 Network	Potential for In-combination Effects
<p><b>2027</b></p>	<p>Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027. The 3rd cycle of River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for the period of 2022-2027 is currently being prepared by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) in line with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC).</p> <p>Key issues raised as part of the consultation process within the ten most prominent themes are as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Water Quality / Pollution</li> <li>- Agricultural Practices</li> <li>- Public Engagement and Awareness</li> <li>- Local Authority</li> <li>- Level of ambition</li> <li>- Sewage Pollution</li> <li>- Department / Agency</li> <li>- Co-ordination</li> <li>- Funding</li> <li>- Forestry</li> <li>- Peat</li> <li>- Shellfish waters / aquaculture</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul> <p>The SEA and AA processes will continue in parallel to the finalisation of the plan and will be completed prior to adoption of the 3rd cycle plan.</p>	<p>each water body. This includes compliance with the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations S.I. No. 272 of 2009 (as amended). The implementation of the RBMP and achievement or maintenance of environmental objectives which will be set for the receiving water bodies will have a positive impact on water dependent habitats and species within European Sites.</p>
<p><b>Inland Fisheries Ireland Corporate Plan 2021 -2025</b></p>	<p>IFI's Corporate Plan details the Inland Fisheries Ireland's, Vision, Mission and Values across seven strategic objectives for the period 2021 to 2025. Under each of the seven objectives a series of actions required to achieve the objectives are described, with the intended outcomes outlined. The strategic</p>	<p>The implementation and compliance with key environmental issues and objectives of this corporate plan will result in positive in-combination effects to European sites. The</p>



Programmes, Plans and Projects	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to the Conservation of the Natura 2000 Network	Potential for In-combination Effects
	objectives outline where Inland Fisheries Ireland will focus their efforts between 2021 and 2025.	implementation of this corporate plan will have a positive impact for biodiversity of inland fisheries and ecosystems. It will not contribute to in-combination or cumulative negative impacts with the proposed strategy.
<b>Local Planning Applications</b>	A search of Clare County Council’s online planning enquiry database <sup>12</sup> was undertaken to identify other projects and plans consented within the past five years that are proximal or within the proposed strategy area. Numerous applications for commercial developments, residential developments, residential dwelling extensions and associated structures and commercial buildings, warehouses and facilities with granted planning permission were noted within the environs of the study area. These small-scale projects are not likely to cause effects to European sites when considered in combination with the current proposal under examination, either during the construction or operational phase. There is therefore no potential for significant in-combination effects of these developments with the proposed strategy.	Adherence to the policies and objectives of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 ensure that local planning applications and subsequent grant of planning comply with the core strategy of proper planning and sustainability and with the requirements of relevant EU Directives and environmental considerations, there is no potential for adverse in-combination effects on European Sites.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.eplanning.ie/ClareCC/searchtypes>



## 5.2 Screening for AA Conclusion

This report provides the information required for the competent authority (Clare County Council) to undertake Screening for Appropriate Assessment and determine in view of best scientific knowledge, whether the proposed strategy, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.

The proposed project has been assessed taking into account:

- The nature, size and location of the proposed project and the associated works and possible impacts arising from same;
- The Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs), Conservation Objectives and conservation status of any European Sites within the project zone of influence;
- The potential for likely significant effects arising from the project on any European Sites; and
- The potential for cumulative impacts.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening process considered the potential for likely significant effects which may arise from the proposed Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy.

The closest European Site to the proposed strategy area is the Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165), which partially intersects the strategy area.

The proposed Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy has been screened for Appropriate Assessment as required under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive).

It is considered that, following this initial screening that the Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy will not give rise to any potential for likely significant effects on European Sites, primarily due to its consistency with the objectives and environmental protective objectives contained within the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and associated environmental assessments, which included a full Appropriate Assessment and preparation of a Natura Impact Report. Therefore a full Appropriate Assessment for the Integrated Urban Strategy is not required.

Given that no potential pathway for significant effects on European Sites has been identified, there is no requirement for a full Appropriate Assessment or the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR) for the Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy. It is, therefore, recommended that the competent authority reach a determination that there are no likely potential impacts, whether direct, indirect or cumulative/in-combination, which could give rise to significant effects on the qualifying interests or special conservation interests of any designated European Site, in view of their conservation objectives. Consequently, this strategy does not require Appropriate Assessment and can be screened out.



## **APPENDIX A – VISION & THEMES OF STRATEGY**

# ENNIS TOWN CENTRE INTEGRATED URBAN STRATEGY

## 1 Introduction

Clare County Council commissioned Allies and Morrison and A2 Architects to prepare an Integrated Urban Strategy for Ennis town centre. The Strategy, which includes a vision, key themes and projects, is built upon an in-depth analysis of the town centre and engagement with local people and stakeholders through the THRIVE project.

## 2 Vision

The Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy is founded on the following vision which complements the strategies and proposals set out under the Ennis 2040 programme and Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. It has been developed with the principles of the New European Bauhaus in mind, and focuses on a more local-scale level of intervention, which augments the more strategic planning and regeneration initiatives in these other documents.

*“Ennis town centre has a proud history and unique heritage which will form a cornerstone of the future growth Clare’s ‘capital’ town.*

*The Integrated Urban Strategy establishes a framework of heritage-led opportunities which celebrate and strengthen the town centre’s strong sense of community, and rich creative tradition.*

*These principles and projects are organised under four key pillars relating to the historic environment, local connectivity, the town centre experience and the natural environment and landscape.”*

## 3 Themes

The Integrated Urban Strategy is set out under four key themes: *Historic Ennis, Connected Ennis, Experience Ennis and Green Ennis*. Key challenges are set out for each theme followed by a number of principles which are designed to respond to these challenges. These have informed an overarching urban framework and accompanying projects. **Table 1** details principles and key interventions identified under each theme in the Integrated Urban Strategy.

**Table 1 Principles and key interventions identified under themes in the strategy**

Theme	Principles and Key Interventions
The following principles and key interventions have been identified under the “Historic Ennis” theme. The Urban Framework plan embeds this guidance spatially, including a number of specific projects which are detailed in the project table.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhancement of historic spaces: Improvements to key public spaces and streets to enhance their historic character and identity with a view to strengthening the experience of visiting the town centre. Proposals for streetscape and materials in the Architectural Conservation Area should make reference to Ennis Town Centre Public Realm Design Guide (February 2024).</li><li>• Rejuvenation of Protected Structures: As part of the process of identifying a preferred building for a THRIVE funding bid, a short-list of potential buildings for re-use was created. In some cases these buildings are vacant, but others are</li></ul>

Theme	Principles and Key Interventions
	<p>considered to be under-used with potential for intensification. A range of uses are possible, but, in line with the THRIVE programme, a strong community dimension is envisaged for the majority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key views: Important views highlight places where visual connections to landmarks are prominent, and should be retained.</li> <li>• Gateways: Gateways and landmarks are central in creating a distinctive, memorable and legible public realm.</li> <li>• Character areas: Development and public realm proposals should be encouraged to make a positive contribution to the architectural quality of the character area in which the site is located. Particular reference should be made to materials, textures, details, colour, and, where relevant, street art and shop fronts.</li> <li>• Key areas for enhancement: Three locations have been identified as being “areas for enhancement”. These areas have a cluster of opportunities relating to the renovation of historic buildings alongside the enhancement of streets and spaces. There is merit in adopting a coordinated approach to their improvement, ensuring that positive opportunities are taken to consider inter linkages between individual projects.</li> </ul>
<p>The following principles and key interventions have been identified under the “Connected Ennis” theme. The Urban Framework plan embeds this guidance spatially, including a number of specific projects which are detailed in the project table.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public transport enhancements: A number of strategic movement projects have been identified at the regional scale and are embedded in planning policy / Ennis 2040 initiatives. These include provision of more direct and increased frequency of bus services in the Ennis / Shannon /Limerick corridor and Limerick to Galway corridor. Upgrades to the bus/rail interchange at Ennis and wider enhancements to cycle interchange and bus provision (including real time information) are also identified. A new Town Bus Service is planned for late 2025 with initial Routes planned from Clarecastle to Balleymaley (Route NS1) and Tulla Road to Shanaway Road (NS2). The potential for a third new route will be considered in relation to usage data for NS1 and NS2. Public transport improvements should consider community and business needs and key destinations to support an integrated and safe network, alongside opportunities for improved shelters, signage and information.</li> <li>• Active and accessible travel: Safe and legible cycling and walking connections should be encouraged in the town centre, including the potential for active travel corridors. In addition, opportunities to make improved connections between the town centre and cycle connections towards the Wild Atlantic Way should be prioritised. It is important to design inclusively for visible and invisible disabilities throughout the town centre.</li> </ul>

Theme	Principles and Key Interventions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside connections: Walking routes and linkages to the River Fergus should be enhanced. This opportunity is set out in more detail under the “Green Ennis” theme.</li> <li>• Local walking links: A number of opportunities to enhancing walking routes have been identified. The IUS identifies a series of linkages which will help to enliven historic areas in the town centre, improving routes to key spaces or community / visitor destinations.</li> <li>• Strategic road links: Clare County Development Plan identifies a range of key infrastructure requirements. These include a Northern Inner Relief Road, linking Gort Road to Tulla Road.</li> </ul>
<p>The following principles and key interventions have been identified under the “Experience Ennis” theme. The Urban Framework plan embeds this guidance spatially, including a number of specific projects which are detailed in the project table. Some of these overlap with key interventions identified under the Historic and Connected themes which underlines the holistic nature of the IUS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development opportunities: Ennis 2040 and Clare County Development Plan identify a number of sites with transformative potential. The IUS seeks to prioritise a number of more local scale interventions to complement these strategic projects.</li> <li>• Bringing historic buildings back into use: The Council will work closely with landowners and businesses to bring vacant properties back into active town centre use, particularly where they contribute to the overall vitality of Ennis, by virtue of their locations on key streets or spaces. Of particular importance are vacant historic properties. There is a risk that left unoccupied, these buildings could fall into disrepair or dereliction. With this in mind, a series of priority renovation projects have been identified for community uses (or other town centre activities) in key buildings (e.g. 18 Parnell Street).</li> <li>• Enhancement to streets and spaces: Key streets and spaces have been identified for public realm and connectivity improvements. These have been carefully selected to reflect locations where interventions could have transformative impact on the success of the town centre for shopping, or the visitor economy. Proposals, particularly in the Architectural Character should reference Ennis Town Centre Public Realm Design Guide (February 2024). Opportunities to provide additional playgrounds or children’s facilities should also be considered.</li> <li>• Revealing the River Fergus: The river is a beautiful natural asset, and while it is disconnected from the main retail heart, it forms an attractive east-west route from Cornmarket Street via Abbey Street towards the Friary riverside. The river forms an important threshold for the town centre, and opportunities exist to make it a stronger focus for active travel, and informal relaxation which will add to the overall quality of Ennis. It is also important to highlight the importance of flood protection as part of any initiatives to enhance the setting of the River Fergus.</li> </ul>
<p>The following principles and key interventions have been</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy walking routes: Opportunities exist to rediscover the river as a healthy walking route, alongside improved</li> </ul>

Theme	Principles and Key Interventions
<p>identified under the “Green Ennis” theme. The Urban Framework plan embeds this guidance spatially, including a number of specific projects which are detailed in the project table. Some of these projects draw inspiration from the “Connecting and Co-Creating Ennis” report (Intelligence Unit of the School of Architecture at the University of Limerick).</p>	<p>connections with local streets to establish loops and trails. A number of interventions are required to realise this initiative. These include making the route universally accessible, footpath widening, sensitive lighting, tree planting and making the river visible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating new riverside spaces: Moving along the riverside is currently a disjointed experience which could be strengthened by making targeted interventions to reactivate the riverbank. Interventions include removing vegetation, opening up access, strengthening visual connections, using native species, and establishing clear routes and way-finding. In some cases, safe access points to the river could also be created, to establish new connections to the natural environment.</li> <li>• Prioritise Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure: Consider opportunities to enhance habitats, green the town centre and to integrate drainage and water management through public realm proposals.</li> <li>• Consider Climate response as part of all proposals: Embrace sustainable design practices to address climate change, encompassing both mitigation and adaptation.</li> </ul>

## 4 Urban Framework

An Urban Framework illustrates the principles and interventions identified under each of the four themes. Although some of these spatial moves relate more specifically to a main theme, they frequently overlap, highlighting the cohesive and interdependencies of the Integrated Urban Strategy. A number of projects (and in some cases, sub-projects) have been identified by numbers on the framework plan. These are grouped under a series key headings, which relate to the letter prefixes in the project annotations. The key groupings are listed as follows:

- A. Rejuvenation of Protected Structures
- B. Enhancement of spaces and routes
- C. Improving gateways and key views
- D. Riverside enhancements
- E. Key areas for improvements
- F. Other strategies

**Figure 1** illustrates the Urban Framework and projects are detailed in **Section 3** of the report. The Urban Framework also identifies the Cloister as the preferred building for a THRIVE project bid. Further details are set out in Section 18 of the Integrated Urban Strategy.

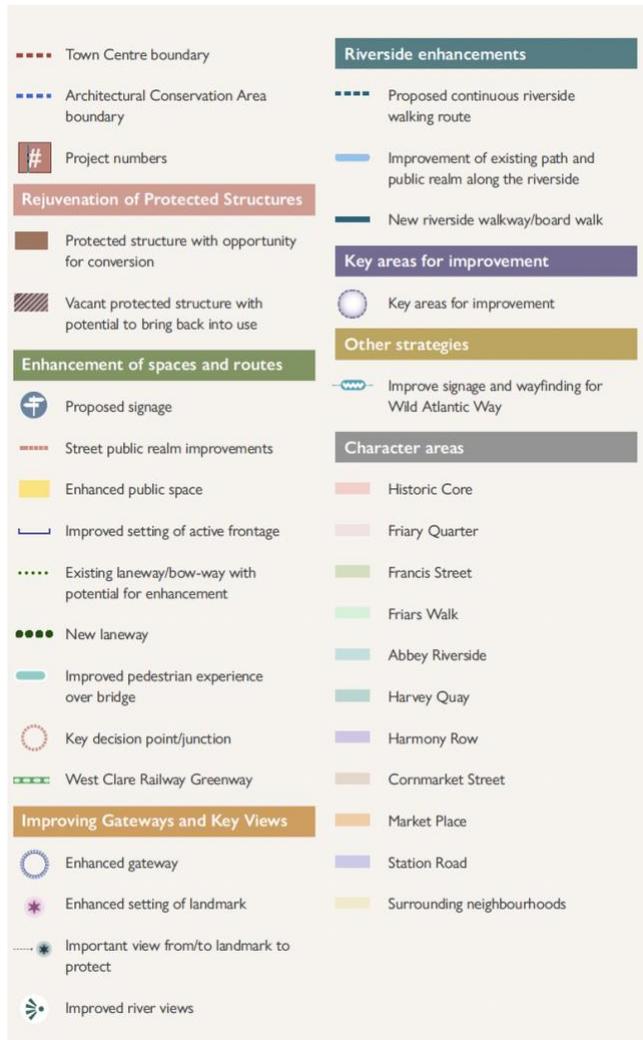


Figure 1 Urban Framework for Ennis Town Centre<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Source: Ennis Town Centre Integrated Urban Strategy, Allies and Morrison and A2 Architects