

Draft Shannon Town Centre Masterplan

Prepared for
Clare County Council

November 2021



Rialtas na
hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland

2040

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This report is comprised of ten chapters, each of which covers a separate aspect of this masterplan process.

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

The master planning exercise will look at growth potential, use of derelict and vacant sites within the town centre, development potential of key sites at the entrance points from the road network and will seek to create a vibrant place for people to meet, recreate and connect with their area. It is intended that the Masterplan will enable the delivery of a high-quality town environment through sustainable economic growth catering for an expansion of services, retail and residential demand to meet the growth that the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan and the National Planning Framework have identified for Shannon.

This masterplan was partially funded by the URDF Project Ireland 2040.



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01

Background & Guiding Principles

Background

Guiding future development of Shannon Town Centre

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

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

The report is holistic and addresses a wide range of issues, and as such, BDP has commissioned a multi-specialist team which includes the following:

- BDP - Urban design, planning, architecture, ecology, landscape, sustainability and consultation advice
- Momentum - Movement and transport advice
- Carron and Walsh - Quantity surveying

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

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

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



Need for a Masterplan

What is a Masterplan?

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

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

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

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

Why is a Masterplan important?

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

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

Purpose of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan

The purpose of this Masterplan is to define the focus and locations for economic, spatial, social, cultural, community and commercial development in Shannon Town Centre. It is intended that this plan will unlock the development potential, guiding and stimulating the development of all lands within Shannon Town Centre to maximise the opportunity for the town centre to unlock its potential as a social, cultural, economic, retail and recreational destination of choice.

This Masterplan contains schematic concepts that provide an indicative layout in terms of proposed design elements and uses within the Town Centre area.



Shannon Town Centre Today



02

Shannon: Past, Present and Future

Historic Overview

Innovative thinking; an International Gateway

Shannon holds a unique and special place in the History of Ireland, as virtually all of it has been built in the past sixty years and it is home to Ireland’s only New Town. Despite this relatively short existence, it has become the second largest town in County Clare and is a major driver of the regional economy of Southern County Clare and northern County Limerick and currently has a population over 10,000.

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

In 1947, the Irish Government further strengthened the airport’s position with the creation of the world’s first duty free airport zone, allowing for the transshipment of goods through the airport without customs restrictions. It was this move that sowed the seed for the establishment of the Shannon Free Zone industrial estates, many of whom were linked to the Airport, logistics and aviation industries.

The number of international carriers rose sharply in early years as Shannon became a gateway between Europe and the Americas, as both a destination and also a refuelling and stopping point for many journeys. At this early stage in the Airport’s history, all major airlines of the western world were serving Shannon, including Aerlínte Éireann/Aer Lingus/ Irish International Air Lines, Air France, BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation), KLM, Pam Am (Pan American World Airways), Trans World

Airlines, Trans-Canada Airlines, Aeroflot, Interflug, and others. This allowed for Shannon to be directly connected to major world cities such as Boston, New York, Montreal, Paris, and London, Berlin, and Havana.

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

Shannon, and County Clare in general, was a very rural area at the time and quite remote from industrialised areas of Ireland, such as Dublin, Cork and Belfast. As such, new ways of strategic thinking to protect the investment in the new airport had to be devised. A direct result of this was the creation of the Shannon Free Zone, which was established in 1959, as well as the Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCo) which was incorporated to replace the Industrial Development Authority to promote a focus on industry, tourism and airfreight. As such, the early Shannon was effectively a company town constructed to support industrial development in the environs of the airport.

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



Shannon International - A Transatlantic Hub



Major Airlines advertising Shannon and its connection to North America



The new Shannon Free Zone with worker accommodation

Ireland's only 'New Town'

'It's much more than an Airport, it's an idea'

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

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

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

New housing began to be built adjacent to the free zone the 'Radburn style.' This was a town planning movement which became popular in the United States and United Kingdom and would eventually become known as the 'garden city for the motor age.' New ideas from this movement included creating

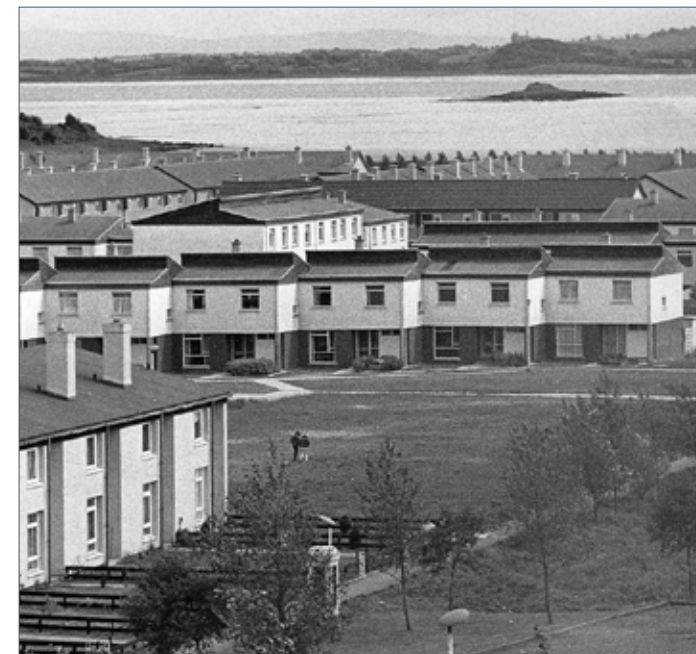
'super blocks' much larger than traditional urban blocks at the time, with corridors of natural green space and wildlife running between them, keeping pedestrians completely separated from vehicles on streets, and adhering to a strict road hierarchy with cul-de-sacs for vehicles leading to front doors and pedestrian connectivity through natural corridors and paved pathways on a separate network linking to back gardens. The long term population projections for the town were envisaged to be in the region of 25,000-35,000 and the plan recommended designating the development of up to 3,000 acres for industry, housing and associated development.

The international airport also had an influence on the residents; among the 150 families then living in the Drumgeely area, fourteen different nationalities were represented which was quite a high figure for such a remote and previously rural part of Ireland. The population also consisted of many returned Irish diaspora who were attracted to Shannon by the availability of jobs and housing. Despite these optimistic statistics, Shannon did not receive the anticipated growth it had expected.

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



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



New neighbourhoods designed in the Radburn style



Only local retail provisions existed until the Town Centre in 1972



The Town Centre under construction circa 1971



The Shopping Street under construction circa 1972

Shannon Town Centre

The Heart of Shannon?

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

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

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

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

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

Today the Shopping Centre is Co. Clare’s largest shopping centre, with fifty shopping outlets, a large amount of parking and free WiFi, it serves the shopping needs of a wide range of customers from the locality of Shannon Town, Shannon Airport, the surrounding industrial estates and beyond.



The Adoration Chapel, opened in 2009



The original ‘Shopping street’ of the Town Centre before it was enclosed



Regional Context

The Ennis-Shannon-Limerick Triangle

The Republic of Ireland is composed of three component parts including the Northern and Western Region, the Eastern and Midland Region and the Southern Region. Each of these parts is governed by a Regional Assembly which functions to guide and implement the specific regional spatial and economic plans.

Shannon is located within the northern part of the Southern Region, which comprises the nine southernmost counties in Ireland, representing over 40% of Ireland’s total landmass and one third of the national population. The vision set within the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) ultimately seeks to build on the region’s strengths and potential to become a more prosperous, sustainable, climate resilient and attractive region. The RSES acknowledges that whilst the region has a number of positive qualities which present opportunities for achieving this vision, it also faces significant challenges including urban sprawl, low density growth and ongoing migration, environmental challenges, household deprivation and exacerbated rural and village decline.

An innovative approach is taken to securing long-term transformational and rejuvenation-focused city growth through Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for the areas of Limerick-Shannon, Cork and Waterford. The RSES identifies the potential role that Shannon could perform as a supporting town function

for the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area. Key National Strategic Outcomes that filter down from the NPF to the regional Limerick-Shannon MASP are the aspirations for compact growth, enhanced regional accessibility, strengthened rural economies and communities, and high quality international connectivity. The intention of the MASP is to act as an economic driver for the wider region. This, coupled with the strengthening of smaller towns and villages surrounding Limerick-Shannon, will help to secure the future growth and stability of the regional area.

Considering a wider spatial context beyond the MASP, given its location almost equidistant between the town of Ennis (20km north) and Limerick City (19km east), Shannon also has the opportunity to play a complementary and connecting role for the mid-west area. The mid-west area is relatively well-served by strategic road and rail access, with the intercity rail providing daily commuter transport between Ennis, Limerick and beyond, and the LAP has also safeguarded an area of Shannon for potential future railway access. Furthermore, whilst the area has traditionally had a strong economic base in manufacturing, industry and transport, Ennis, Shannon and Limerick act as complementary employment centres, providing a wide range of opportunities within the industries of business, retail, administration, innovation and enterprise, education, tourism and agriculture.

These complimentary attributes of the wider regional area from Ennis to Limerick, provide robust foundations upon which to build a stronger vision for the future of Shannon as a supporting, connector town with potential for compact growth.

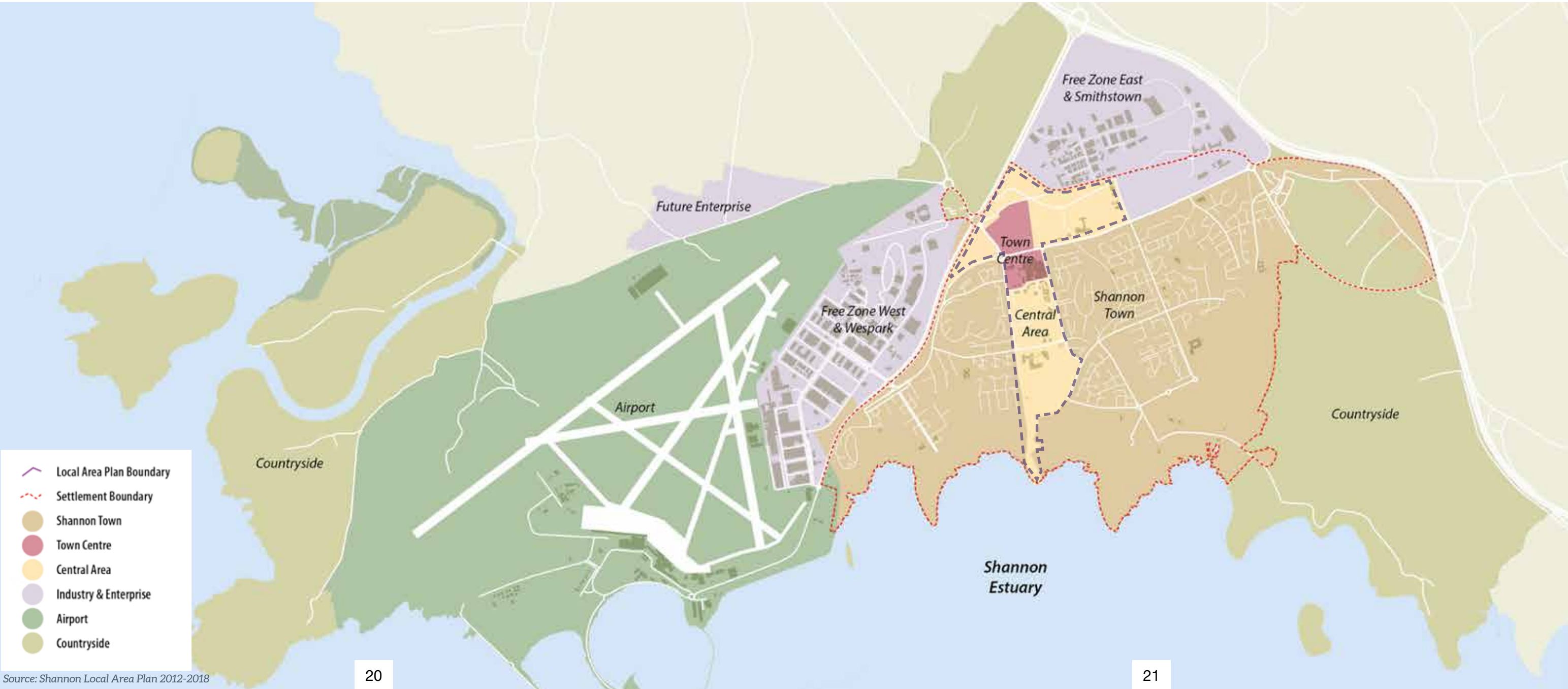


Planning Structure

Shannon Town

The Local Area Plan for Shannon consists of several different zoned areas of development as well as protected countryside and natural habitats. A large portion of land is dedicated to the Airport, and directly adjacent to this is the original Shannon Free Zone which is now known as Free Zone West & Westpark. A second industry and enterprise Free Zone area is located to the east, called Free Zone East

& Smithstown. The rest of the urban area within Shannon are known as the Settlement Area, and this consists of several residential communities plus the Central Area and Town Centre. The Central Area and Town Centre are positioned in a T and bound by major roads within Shannon, with a direct connection to the N19 motorway.



Planning Policy Today

Status of Planning Policy

The Clare County Development Plan 2017- 2023 (as varied) provides current policy for the Shannon Town Centre and the County Clare wider area. The Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (Local Area Plan) was adopted on 8th October 2012 and was renewed in June 2017 for a further five-year period, until September 2022. The Local Area Plan sets out land-use zoning and planning requirements for the town and environs. These two plans alongside the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region adopted in January 2020, form the development plan for the Shannon.

The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan will provide guidance on specific policies within Shannon and will refer to other guidance including National Planning Policy in order to ensure consistency with the planning framework.

There are three tiers of planning policy relevant to the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan site. These are as follows:

National

- National Planning Framework 2040
- National Development Plan 2021-2030

Regional

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (January, 2020)
- Midwest Area Strategic Plan 2012-2030

Local

- Clare County Development Plan 2017- 2023 (March, 2019) (as varied)
- Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (As Amended) (June, 2017)

Site Specific

- Shannon Town Centre Masterplan

Shannon and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (As Amended) (June, 2017)

The Local Area Plan (LAP), sets the vision for Shannon as follows:

‘A town where people want to live and work sustainably and visit because of its strong identity and sense of place, high amenity value and quality of life. A sustainable, low carbon town which continues to be the regional leader for economic development and employment, maximising its strategic location, accessibility and Gateway status’.

The LAP provides a number of strategic goals to achieve this vision including:

- To secure a vibrant and viable town centre;
- To foster a strong identity and sense of place;
- To facilitate community, social, cultural and recreational development;
- To actively pursue a low carbon strategy;
- To protect and enhance the natural and built environment;
- To develop Shannon as a visitor destination; and
- To deliver an integrated and coherent Green Infrastructure Framework, encouraging walking, cycling and recreation.

Shannon Town Centre

Shannon town centre is the central block area of the Local Area Plan, running from the N19 road in the north to the Shannon Estuary in the south.

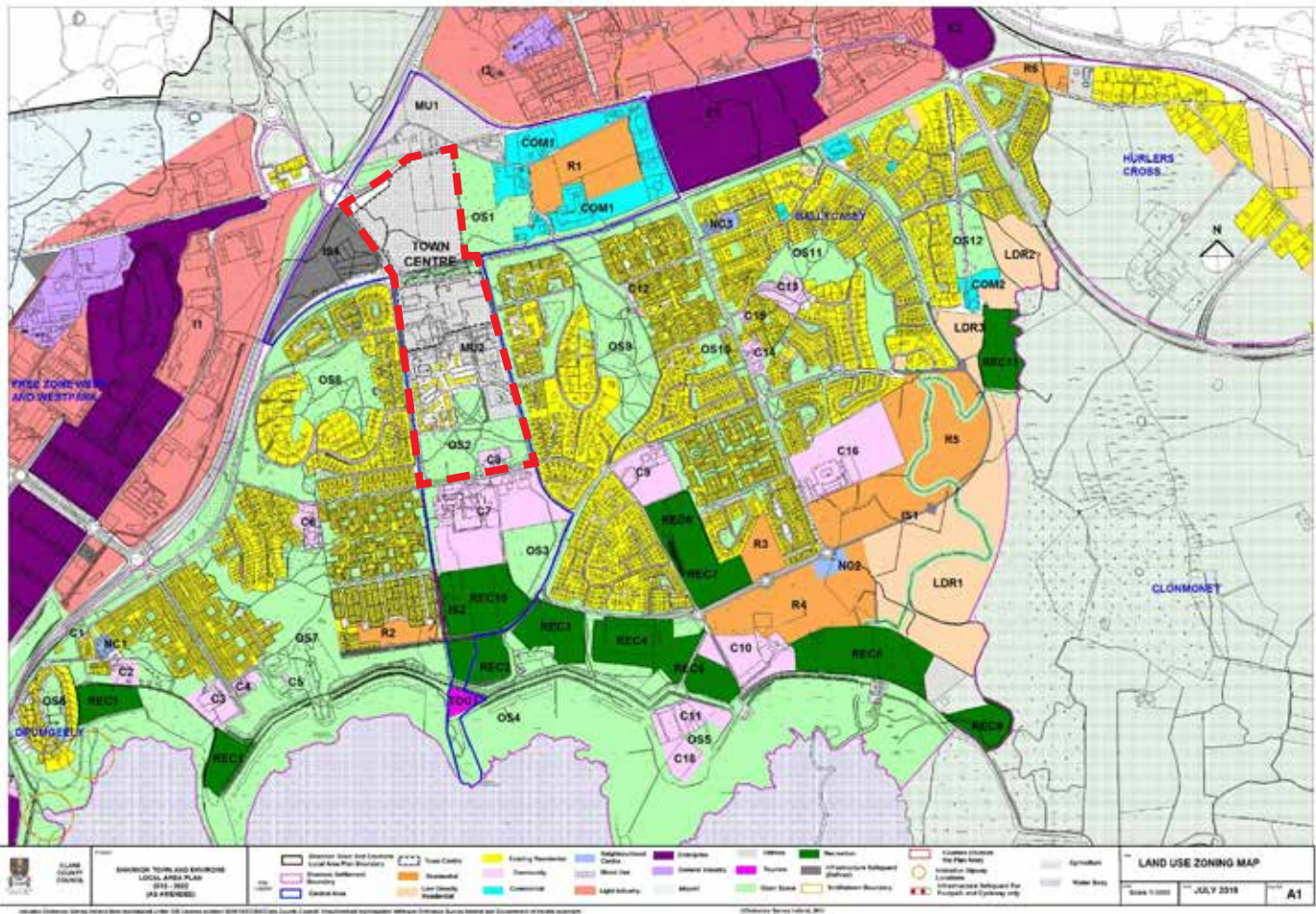
The majority of the town centre masterplan area is designated as such, with the additional following designations covering the town centre masterplan area:

MU2 South of the Town Centre - A 3.94ha mixed use site is located in the south of the area. The local area plan states that the key element of future development on this site will be to maintain its mixed use nature and preserve the link between the town

centre and town park.

OS2 Town Centre Woodland Area – An important space linking the town centre with the school and leisure centre, and also links to the Shannon Estuary. The LAP supports continued existence of this green area, with objective 11.6 seeking to enhance green spaces and wildlife corridors such as these to provide recreational and amenity benefits, space for nature, enhanced biodiversity and to deliver health and quality of life benefits.

C8 – Community Uses – This site is located at the southern boundary of the Masterplan area and accommodates Shannon fire station and town hall. The C8 site is designated as an area for community uses, whereby only developments compatible with their continued community use shall be considered acceptable to the Council.



Planning Policy

Going for Growth

From a review of the planning policy framework influencing the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan, a number of key themes have been identified. These are outlined below:

Going for Growth

The National Planning Framework (NPF) recognises the key role of Shannon International Airport as a travel and enterprise hub with the potential for future growth. It identifies the need to focus on the broader Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area, whilst strengthening the urban cores of the county towns and settlements. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region of Ireland outlines the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Limerick – Shannon. Whilst the nearby Limerick City is the largest urban centre in Ireland’s Mid-West with a population of 94,192 people recorded in the 2016 census, Shannon is the largest metropolitan town in County Clare with a population of 9,729 people. It is noted in the MASP that the daytime population of Shannon is 18,000 with more than 8,700 people working in the Shannon Free Zone in over 160 companies. Shannon also hosts the largest aviation and aerospace cluster in Ireland with more than 65 aviation companies and 2,600 jobs. Policy Objective 3 part (a) of the MASP seeks to support and promote Shannon as a centre for research and development for autonomous vehicles, to complement the town’s role as a world leader in

aviation, aerospace, engineering, manufacturing and distribution.

The RSES confirms that whilst situated 19km apart, Limerick and Shannon are interdependent and provide complementary functions which contribute to a combined strength – a primary economic driver for the Southern Region. Policy Objective 1 of the MASP is to strengthen the role of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area as a primary driver of economic and population growth in the Southern Region, with the compact growth and regeneration of Shannon required in order to support the growth of the wider metropolitan area. Shannon town itself is identified for significant population growth of greater than 30% increase by 2040.

Furthermore, within the Clare County Development Plan (CDP), Shannon is placed second within the eight-tier urban and rural settlement hierarchy, and is designated as part of a Linked Gateway with Limerick. This hierarchy demonstrates that Shannon has further capacity to accommodate growth, to provide connectivity to Limerick, and also between the hub town of Ennis and the smaller surrounding service towns such as Kilrush, to help revitalise the wider County Clare.

It is clear that there is strong policy support for the targeted growth of Shannon, with particular focus on its supporting and connecting role within the wider Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area, and the establishment of Shannon as a centre for the autonomous vehicle industry.

Securing a vibrant and viable town centre

As stated in the LAP, Shannon is designated as a Tier 2 Level 2 major town centre and is therefore recognised as the second largest retailing centre in County Clare. This means it sits beneath Ennis and Limerick in terms of its offer to the public. It is noted that at the time of writing the LAP, there were major redevelopment plans to attract significant new businesses to Shannon and to transform the town centre as a result, however due to the economic climate the proposals were put on hold.

The requirement for further improvements to the physical appearance of the town centre to help attract and retain new businesses and visitors is also identified in the RSES and LAP. Importantly, the LAP states that Shannon town needs a new heart and focus, in order to present it as an attractive destination, to drive continued future development and to assist in supporting sustainable communities.

The LAP notes that whilst the town centre is a key area for redevelopment and expansion, it cannot be considered in isolation and any future development proposals should look to enhance the integration of Shannon town’s central block area which starts at the northern town centre expansion area and stretches as far south as the Shannon Estuary.

The LAP notes that a mixed-use approach to all proposals will be encouraged throughout the town centre with particular emphasis to be placed on growth; increasing the quantity and quality of the retail offer, the development of a night-time economy and developing cultural and entertainment facilities for the community. Development should be an appropriate density and should include an improved public realm with strong pedestrian access links between the existing town centre and lands to the north, with the development frontage along An Bóthar Mór to form a new street in the town centre. Whilst the enhancement of the retail offer is the key aim, the LAP notes that development should seek to promote an environmentally sustainable town centre, maintaining a balance between built and natural environments, and facilitating an improved work/ life balance.

A key aim of the town centre redevelopment is

to provide a unique retail offer attracting both residents and an increased number of visitors and tourists which will allow Shannon to complement nearby Limerick and Ennis. The RSES Strategic Plan for the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area confirms that improved public transport links to Shannon town are required in order to encourage the sustainable economic development of the wider area. Furthermore, a potential rail link route between Shannon International Airport and Shannon town has been safeguarded in the LAP.

As such, the development plan policy provides a strong foundation of support for the regeneration and enhancement of Shannon town centre as a complementary retail destination to the wider County and metropolitan area.

Planning Policy

Key Themes (continued)

Fostering a strong identity and sense of place

Shannon has been considered a connecting town since the formation of Shannon International Airport, the world’s first duty free airport, and Shannon Free Zone which followed in 1959 and was set up to support the airport as a transport hub for transatlantic flights. The town itself was established in the 1960s as a New Town which sought to provide accommodation for the workers of the Free Zone, with Shannon town centre following in 1972. As stated in the LAP, the airport and industrial Free Zone estate were integral to the development of the town, with Shannon effectively constructed as a company town to support the airport and industrial zones as the economic drivers for the area. This history invokes a strong sense of identity for Shannon as a place rooted in connectivity and innovation, however in the years since its inception, the linkages between Shannon town centre, the airport and the Free Zone grew weaker due to changing circumstances. The LAP sets out three key aims to foster this sense of identity and enhance the town’s approach to placemaking and connectivity.

These include:

- To create vibrant places for people that are safe, comfortable, attractive, distinctive, offer variety, provide opportunities for meeting people and offer a pleasing environment in which to spend time;
- To connect places, making them easy to get to and well integrated both physically and visually with their surroundings and accessible by a range of modal types – on foot, bicycle, public transport or by motor vehicle;
- To develop places that strike a balance between the natural and man-made environment and utilise each area’s intrinsic resources – the climate, landform, landscape and ecology – to maximise energy conservation and amenity.

The LAP states that the existing Shannon town centre has no gateway location which allows visitors to recognise the start of the town centre, with views from the three principal approaches comprised of undefined spaces and poor signage, presenting a confusing and unappealing image of the town. Public spaces lack definition, with the town square unanimated due to lack of street level shops and activities, whilst the visual dominance of parked vehicles is unattractive and unwelcoming for pedestrians and cyclists.

The LAP recognises the lack of distinct character within Shannon, and seeks to ameliorate this through the LAP proposed placemaking framework set to enhance the vitality of the town centre. The framework outlines a number of key interventions including: the establishment of a visual landmark at the northern area of the existing town centre to guide visitors; the integration of the proposed northern town centre expansion area with the existing town centre; the enhancement of the town square, creating a new focus for public activity; the inclusion of design measures to provide some screening of parked vehicles to minimise visual impact; the review of key circulation routes within the town centre; improvement of the town park to provide increased outdoor amenity and recreation; and developing the role of nature as a key element in the placemaking process.

Policy Objective 3 Part (c) of the RSES MASP for Limerick Shannon also seeks to improve Shannon as an attractive residential location through placemaking and regeneration initiatives, whilst the NPF recognises that the strengthening of the urban cores of the county towns will support the required future growth of Ireland’s Mid-West.

Alongside enhanced placemaking, there is a recognised need to support the existing strong community infrastructure, including amenity and recreation facilities, which the LAP identifies as one of Shannon’s advantages. The RSES MASP for Limerick Shannon states that the Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan and its projects such as the

Shannon Town Park, Estuary Walk and development of other amenity facilities will be supported.

Therefore, the development plan demonstrates strong policy support and recognition of the social, environmental and economic benefits of fostering a sense of identity and enhanced placemaking through considered regeneration.

What's Next for Shannon?

As a New Town, Shannon is Entrepreneurial and Forward Thinking-what's next?

As with many planned New Towns, Shannon was designed as a purpose-built New Town, according to planning doctrines of a certain period. Although Shannon has many competitive economic advantages, its town centre, like many other New Town Centres, struggles with a lack of cultural facilities, its identity and character as an urban place, and suffers from sustained image problems.

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

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

How can we reinvent and update a New Town?

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

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

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



St Nicholas Quarter, Dundalk, Ireland



New Planting on Grafton Street, Dublin, Ireland



Almere Town Centre, Netherlands



Almere Town Centre, Netherlands



Derry City Centre



03

Site Analysis

Character Areas within the Masterplan Study Area

The masterplan Study Area aligns with the Central Area outlined in the Shannon Town and Environs Local Plan (2012-2018). Looking at a wider area that expands beyond the proposed town centre boundary will help to identify potential future growth or regeneration plots. It also extends to key frontages and boundaries with other existing uses such as the Shannon Free Zone, Smithson Industrial Estate or the Shannon Estuary.

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

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

- Shopping centre, offices, and residential apartments (1) - Shannon's retail destination and, in effect, the town centre. The block's character is marked by the presence of the shopping centre and large areas of surface car parking. The poor quality of its open spaces and public realm and inward looking aspect of the retail buildings results in an uninviting and uninspiring urban domain lacking the attributes of a succesful and attractive town centre.
- Mixed use block (2) - A mix of residential blocks and offices structured around car parking courts and their related access routes. Streets function primarily as spaces for vehicles, with no pedestrian-oriented public realm.
- Urban park (3) - A recent landscape development that needs time to mature. At present it would benefit from additional elements such play areas to encourage and support a variety of uses and activities.
- Education, leisure and nature block (4) - Most of its area is covered by open spaces (sports

fields, wildlife hub), together with education and recreation facilities. At present it is peripheral to the town centre. However, it can be strategic in terms of supporting complementary uses to those at the heart of the town centre, and create a better link with the Shannon Estuary.

- North of Bóthar Mór (6 to 8) - The Town Centre's expansion area, and potentially the space to link it with the employment hubs of the Free Zone and Smithstown.
- Future Development (9) - Potential for future development subject to flood risk mitigation - not covered by this Masterplan
- Smithstown Gateway (10) - Potential to enhance the main link with Smithstown Industrial Estate.

The brief overview of character areas indicates the heterogeneous spatial structure of the Study Area, and highlights the need for a spatial framework to guide and regulate development to make it a fully functional area.



Town Centre Core and Expansion Areas

The proposed masterplan framework's study area suggests redefining the initial boundary set out by Clare County Council and broken down into 3 Focus Areas.

The Study Area is structured around three concentric layers instead of three focus areas. Each layer will have a specific set of design and development approaches, key projects, delivery strategies and phasing plans.

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

Town Centre Core

This includes Focus Areas 1 and 3. Two contrasting spatial conditions - Shopping centre, surface car park etc vs greenfield. Key barrier posed by the R471. This will be treated as one holistic centre.

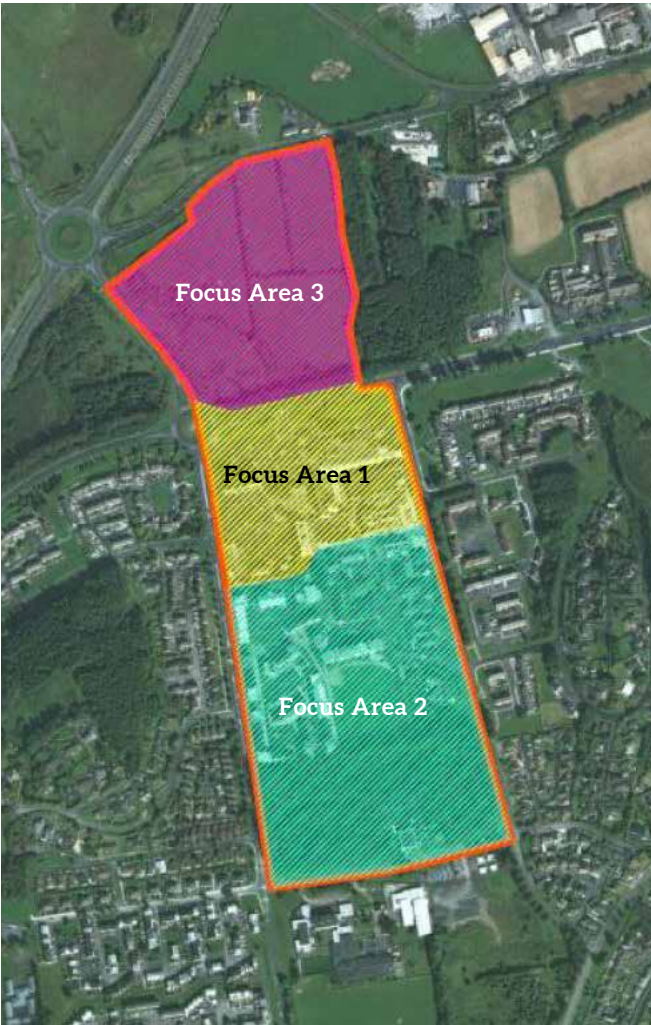
Expansion Areas

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

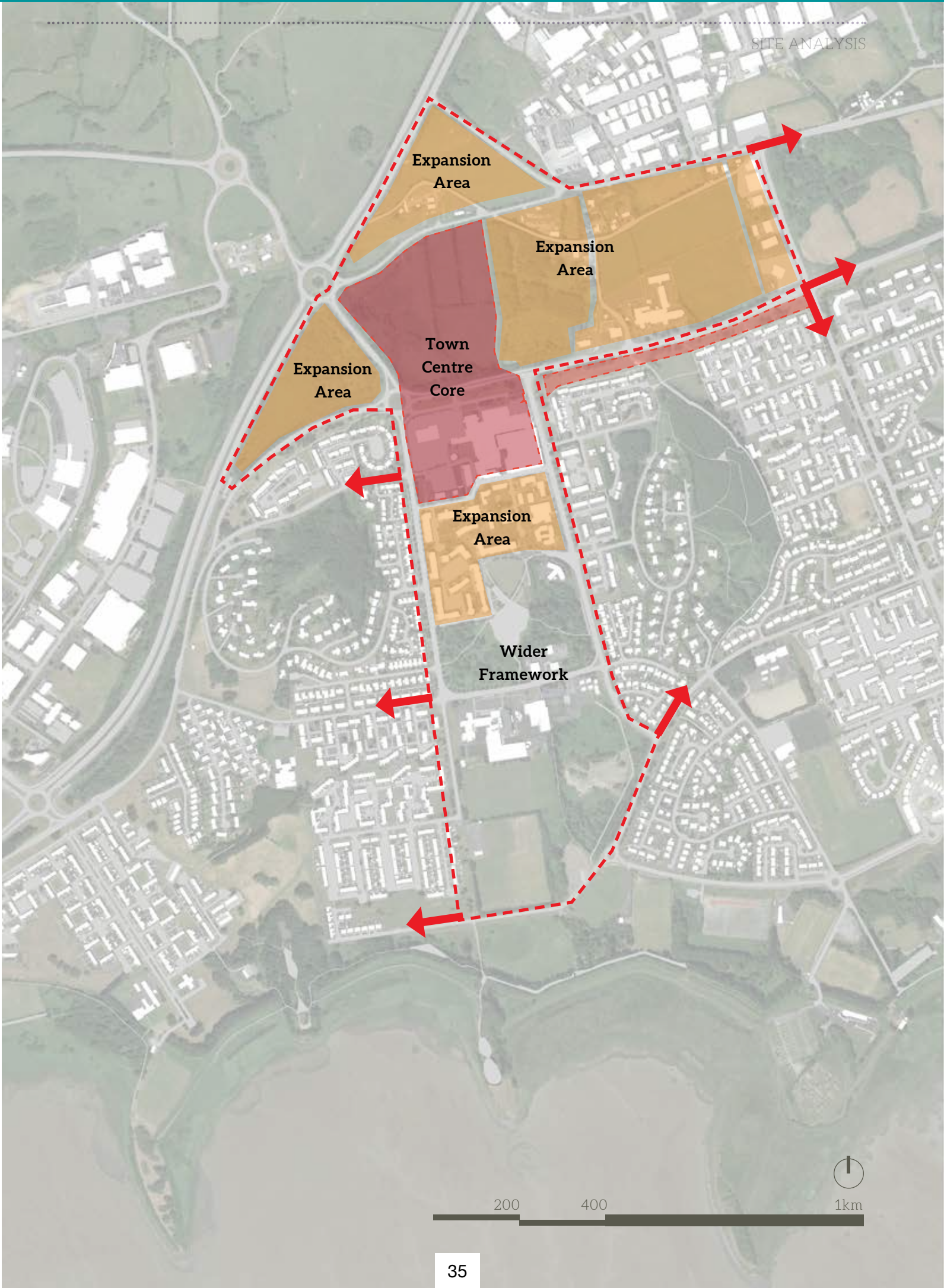
Wider Framework

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

Following an appraisal and examination of the town centre, it was proposed to expand the study area for the Masterplan to include the boulevards linking the Town Centre with the Estuary towards the south, as seen in the diagram opposite.



Original County Clare Site Boundary showing three focus areas

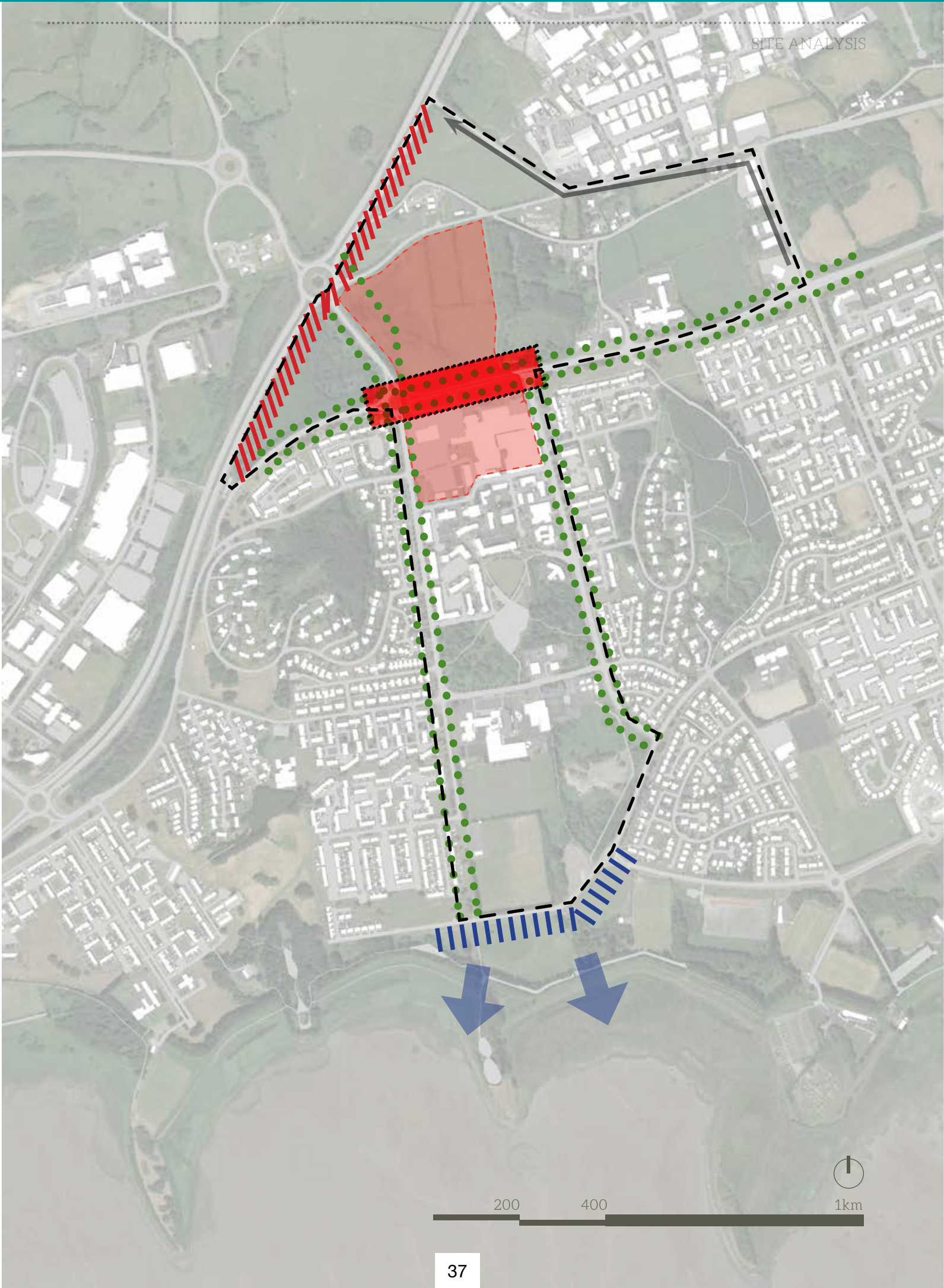


Study Area Frontages

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

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

Special care will be taken to ensure the N16 dual carriageway, and the noise and pollution associated with it, are not impacting new development.



Green Networks

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

The design of Shannon Town allows for large corridors of unbuilt areas to establish a green network and connect these spaces, protecting natural habitats. The masterplan should, wherever possible, attempt to strengthen these corridors. Establishing a seamless green connection to the Estuary park and the wider River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area will be an important goal of this masterplan, and it is also in line with the Green Infrastructure Plan for Shannon Town. This will allow for residents and visitors to travel between the Town Centre and the Estuary Park using green corridors, while protecting a sensitive habitat for local birds and wildlife.

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



Street Frontages

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

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

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

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

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



Restaurant opening to surface car park



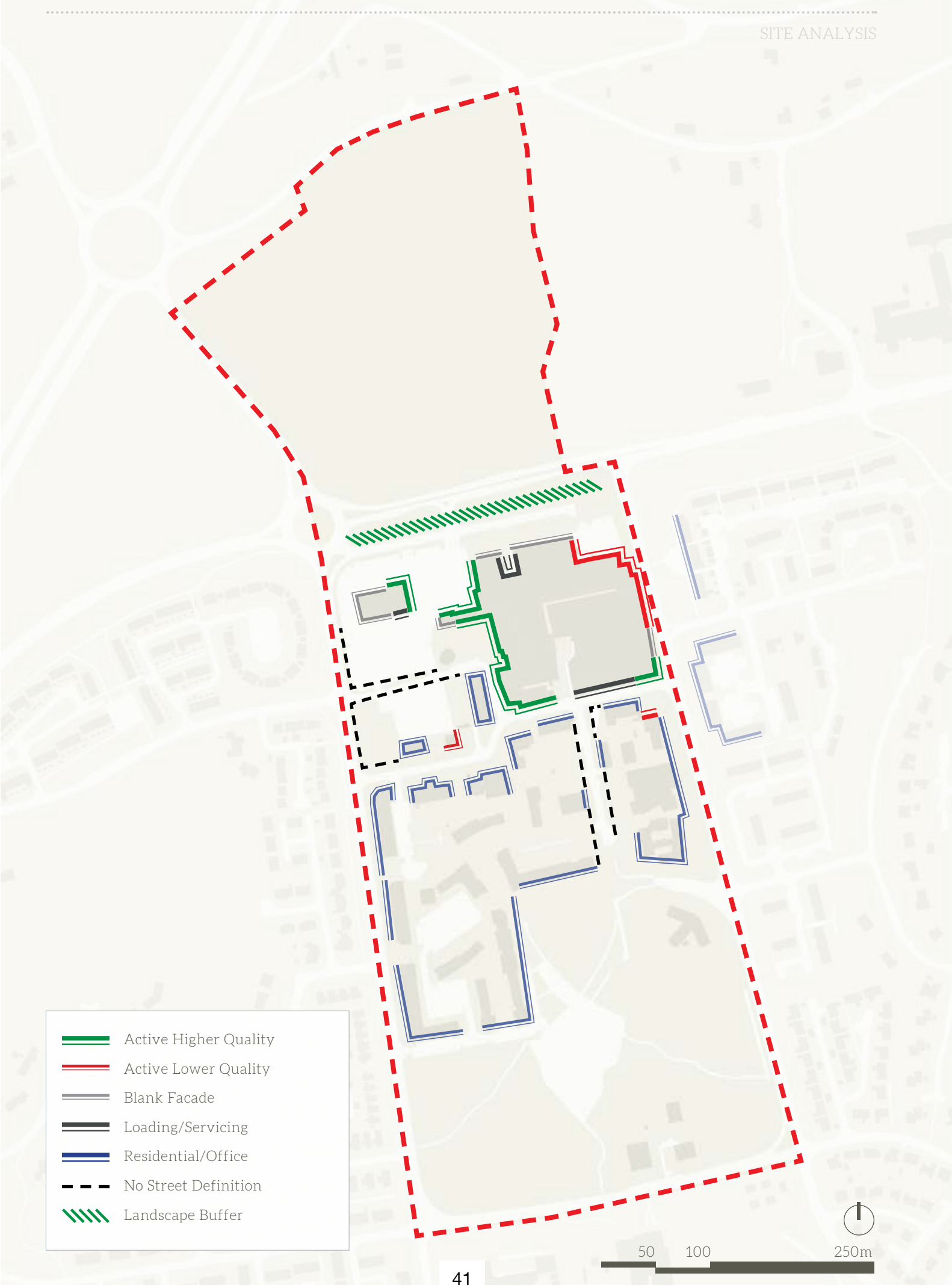
Shannon Town Centre Plaza with retail uses opening onto it



Green buffer along R471 preventing visibility



Blank facade & loading of the Shopping Centre northern frontage



Built and Unbuilt Spaces

Figure-ground plans depict the built and un-built spaces of the city, quickly visualising the urban fabric and the possible density of the city of an urban area. These drawings can inform connectivity and patches of built-form, and perhaps extend speculation on the possibility of improvement and growth. This type of map can also visualise a sense of enclosure, which is when building frontages create a feeling of a contained space within an urban environment. These types of places are often where people choose to dwell, and can be some of the livelier places of a town or city.

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

Limerick



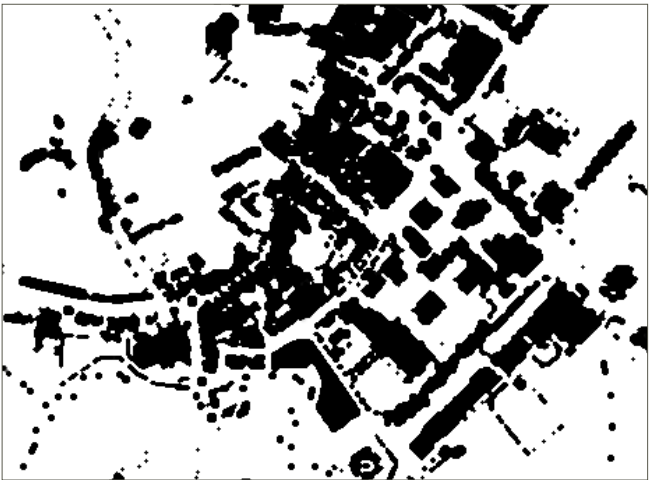
Ennis



Sligo



Letterkenny



Galway



Shannon



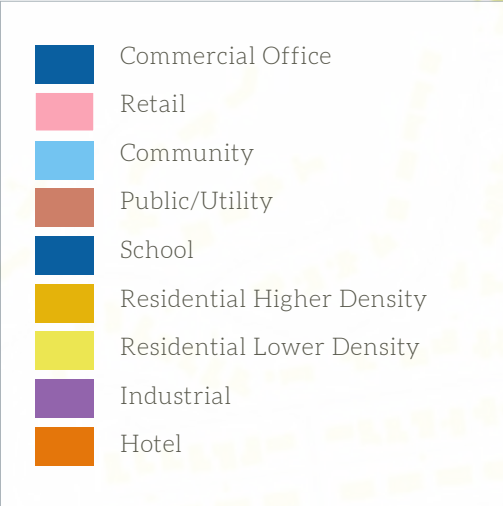
Figure-Ground Plans of Town Centres



50 100 250m

Land Use & Ownership

The majority of land within the study area is in private ownership; including some very large parcels of development. There is a wide variety of uses within the study area, which will help to contribute to ensuring that the town centre remains vibrant and active at all times of day. Despite this, there is scope to further increase the variety of uses on offer, and ensure that existing uses work better together.



Building Heights

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

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



Single Storey Northern Edge of the Shopping Centre



Typical 3-4 Storey Development west of the Shannon Town Park



Six Storey Kincora Apartments



Six storey commercial office building connected to the Shopping Centre



Parking & Access

There is a large amount of car parking available within the town centre, both surface and multi-storey within the shopping centre. The vast amount of surface car parking detracts from the town centre becoming more vibrant and pedestrian friendly. Any future development within the town centre should attempt to minimise this impact and establish pedestrian focused urban spaces.

Approximately 44% of the 85 hectare Central Area of the Shannon Town Centre is dedicated to surface car parking and vehicle access, and if the Multi-storey car park is included, this number raises to 58%.

Car Parking Spaces

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



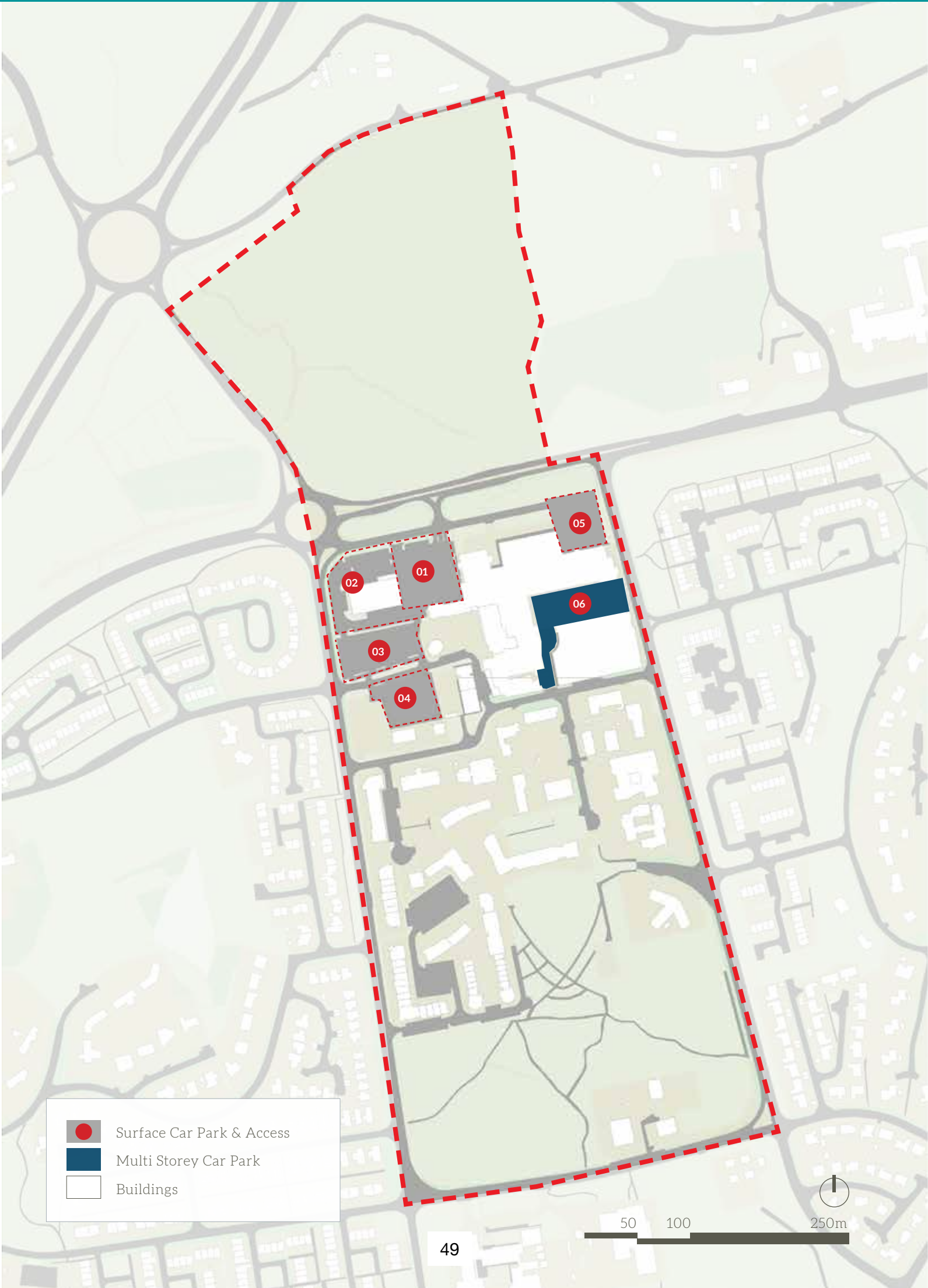
- Ground area dedicated to vehicles
- Multi-storey car park
- Town Centre Central Area



Entrance to Multi-Storey Car Park above the Shopping Centre



Retail Surface Car Parking in the Town Centre



- Surface Car Park & Access
- Multi Storey Car Park
- Buildings

Road Sections



1
Tullyvarraga West Northbound



2
R471 Eastbound



3
Tullyvarraga East Southbound



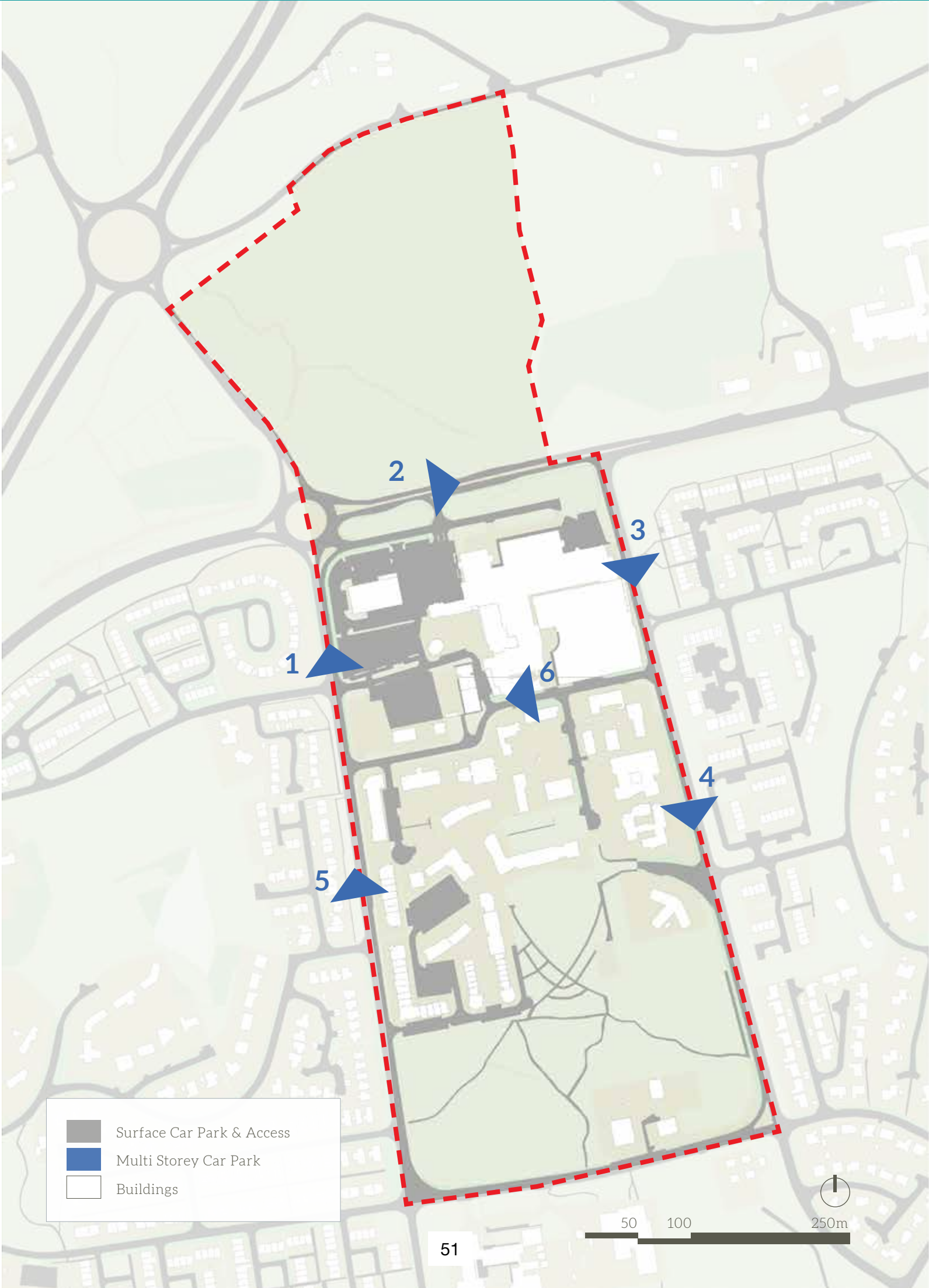
4
Tullyvarraga East Southbound



5
Tullyvarraga West Northbound



6
Shannon Town Centre Westbound



Movement

Modal Share and Catchment Areas

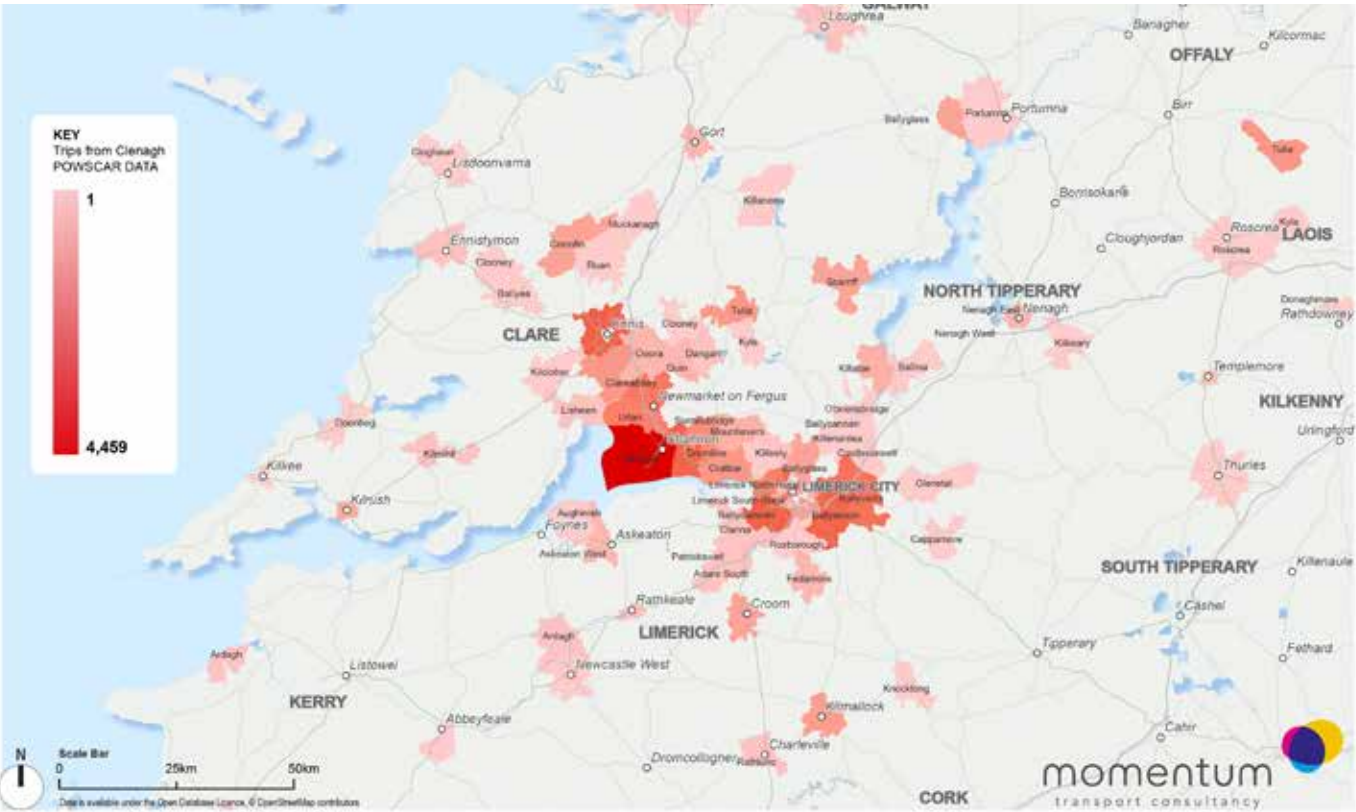
A review of Shannon Town travel characteristics has been undertaken through the analysis of the Census 2016 SAPS data and this shows the importance of Shannon Town to the wider region, as both a place of work and as a central hub for shopping and services to the wider region.

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

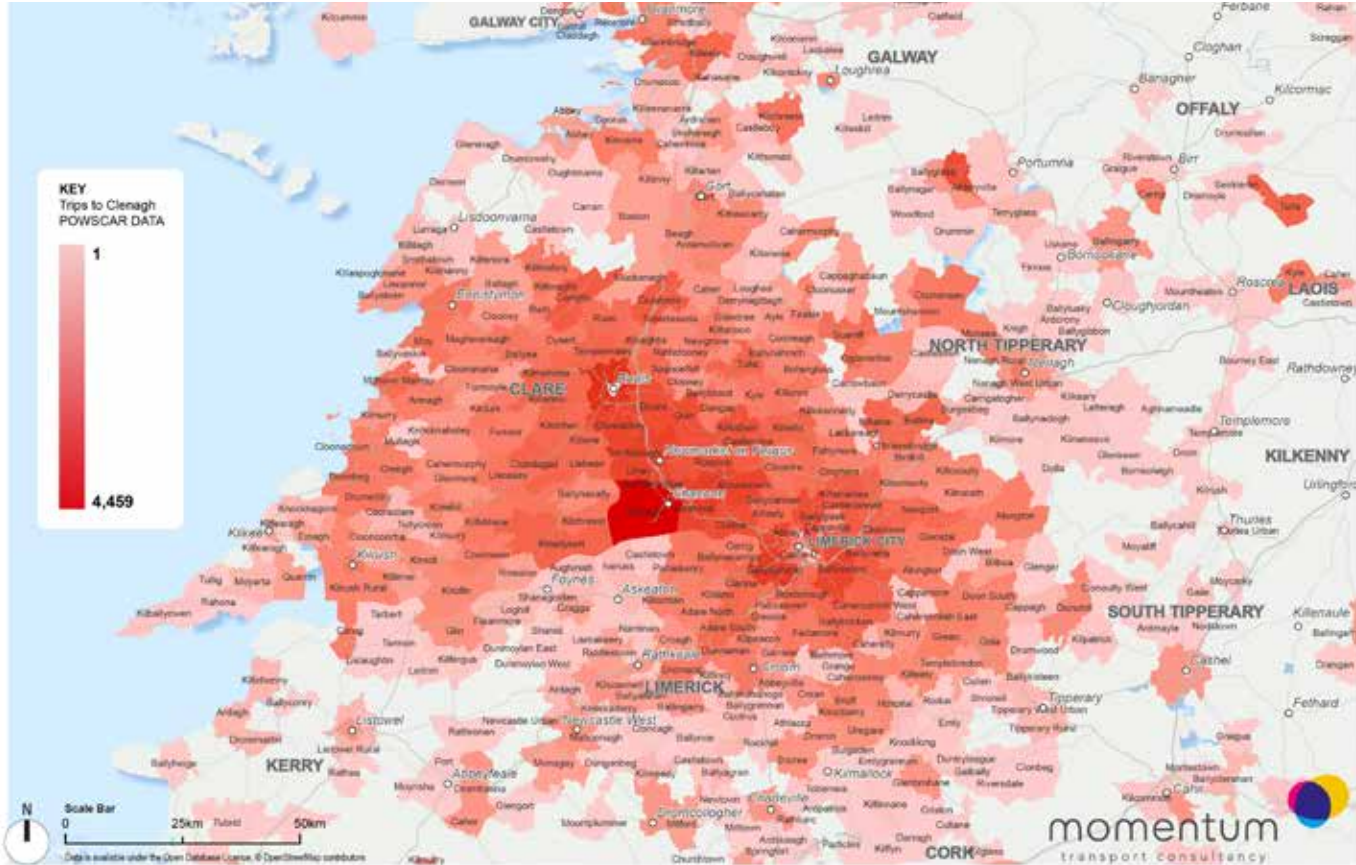
A total of 4,459 persons both live and work within Shannon (Electoral Division (ED) Clenagh), accounting for 72% of the total outflow commuters. A further 1,762 persons live in Shannon, but work outside of ED Clenagh, with the second highest number of commuters (728 persons, 12%) travelling to Limerick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

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

Trips from Clenagh / Shannon Town



Trips to Clenagh / Shannon Town



Movement

Road Transport

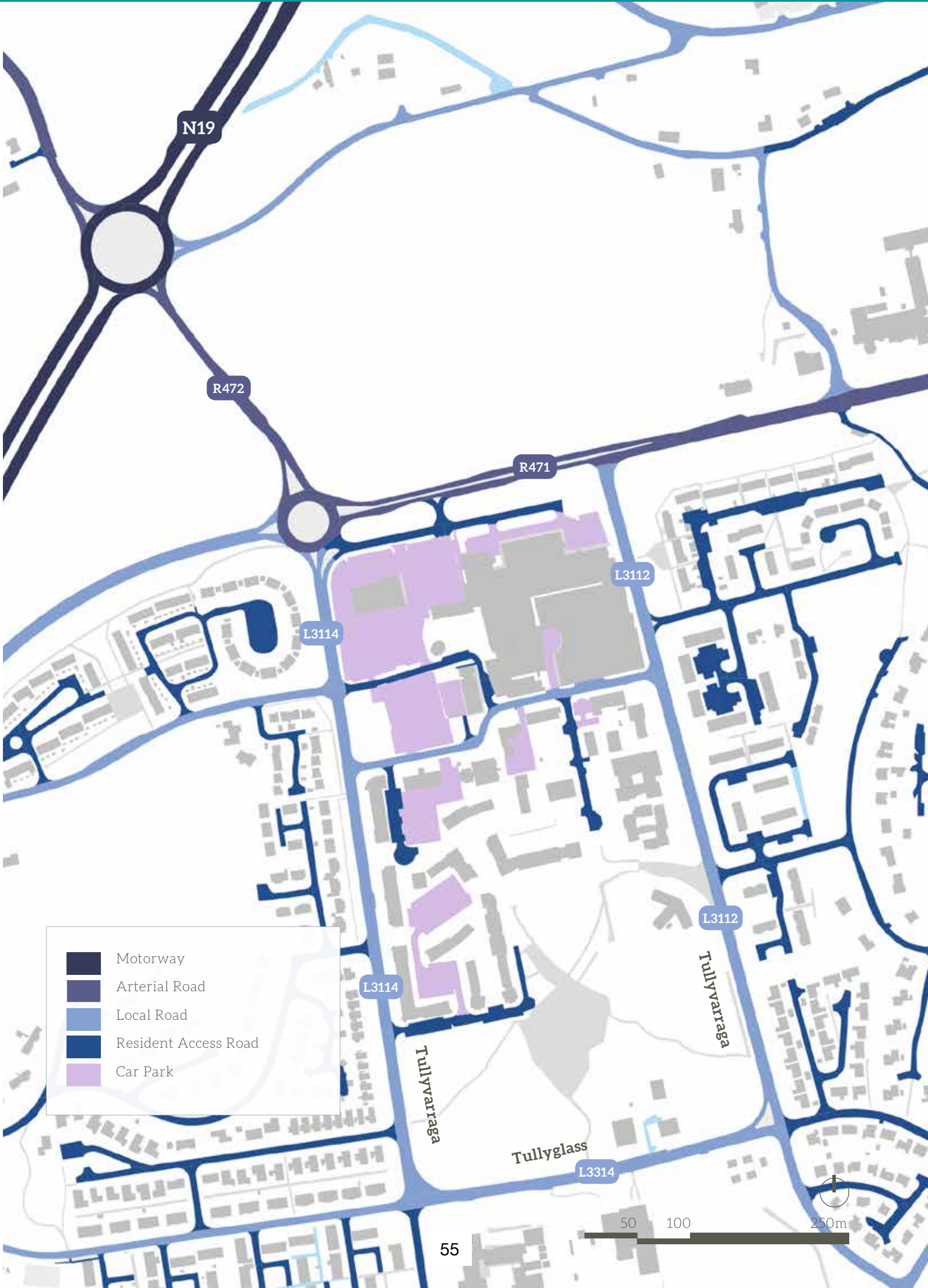
The central area of Shannon Town Centre is well served by existing road connections, which is reflective of its time as a planned new town.

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

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

Traffic Movements

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



Movement

Bicycle Transport

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

Public Transport

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

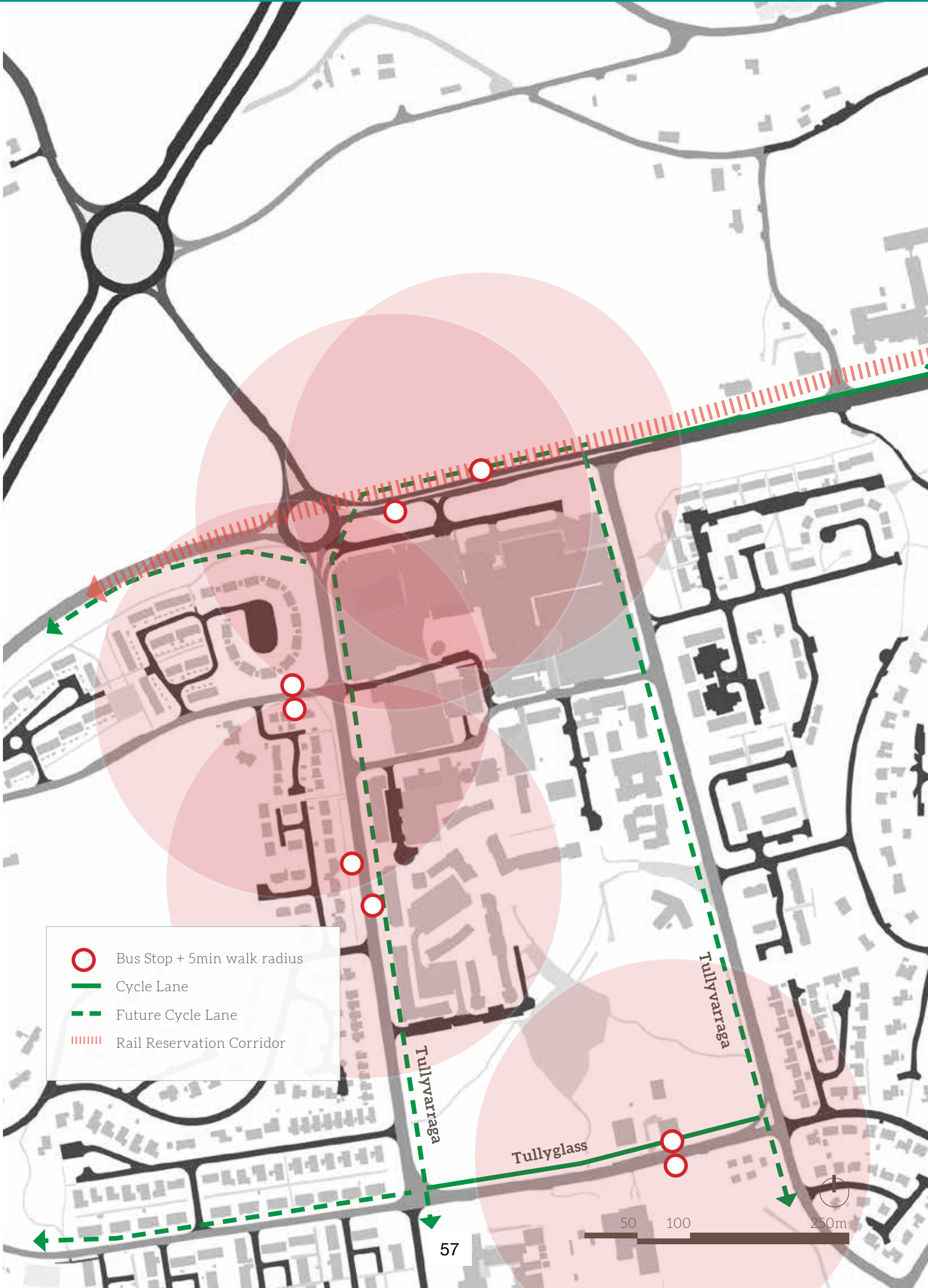
Route 341 only operates once per weekday to accommodate employees working at Shannon Free Zone. Departing from Cappamore, the bus departs at 06:25, and in the other direction, the bus departs from Shannon Free Zone at 16:35 PM.

Shannon is not served by rail, however there is the potential to provide a 10km spur off the Limerick to Ennis railway line. A potential rail corridor was identified in Iarnród Éireann's Shannon Rail Link Feasibility Study (2007) to serve Shannon Airport. This would provide an alternative to road travel and

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

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

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





04

Ecology & Sustainability

Sustainable Development

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

The Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (extended to 2023) sets out a number of strategic goals including:

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

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

Energy and Carbon

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

Sustainable Transport

The town centre is designed to move away from car use, to support use of sustainable modes of transport, mobility and connectivity within the town, as detailed in section 7, Movement and Linkages.

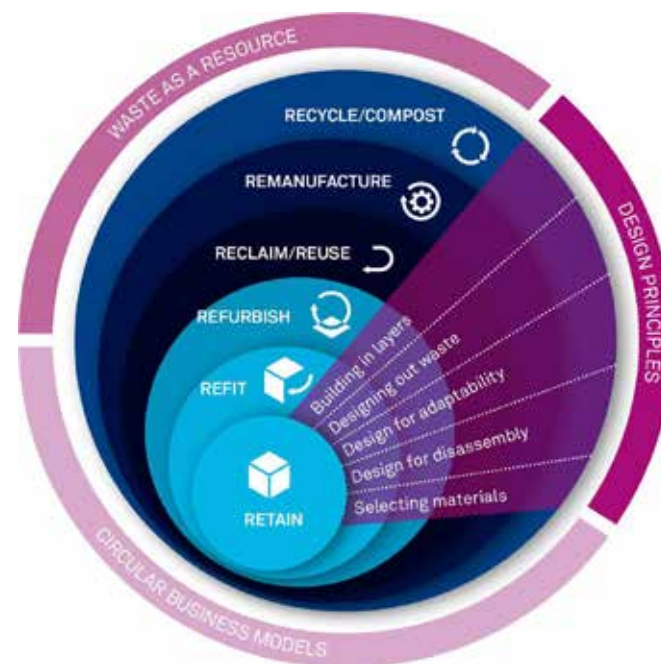
Wellbeing

In addition to enhanced air quality through a reduction in vehicles and increased mobility, a strategy to maximise the benefits of green

infrastructure and connectivity within the town centre will contribute to a wellness-focused approach to planning the town.

Circular Design

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



Climate Change Resilience

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

Flood Risk Assessment

The following pages present fluvial and coastal flood risk maps of the study area.

Although protected from tidal flooding by mounded embankments running between the town and Shannon Estuary and fluvial pumping stations, Shannon Town lies in Flood Risk Zone A. Defences are noted to be in poor condition in places by the Office of Public Works, so ensuring protection is maintained and upgraded is key.

The Shannon Overtopping Analysis carried out by JBA Consulting in 2010 assessed Shannon Estuary defences through analysis of Extreme Still Water Sea Levels (ESWSL) and the modelling of defence overtopping. It concluded that defences predominantly prevent overtopping during extreme events under non-climate change conditions. While flood extents are small and depths shallow in inundated areas, limited overtopping of defences could however lead to structural failure. The effect of climate change on defence overtopping is dramatic, with sea levels predicted to rise 0.55m based on a 100 year time horizon. This could lead to widespread overtopping of defences, which presents extensive flood risk to critical infrastructure.

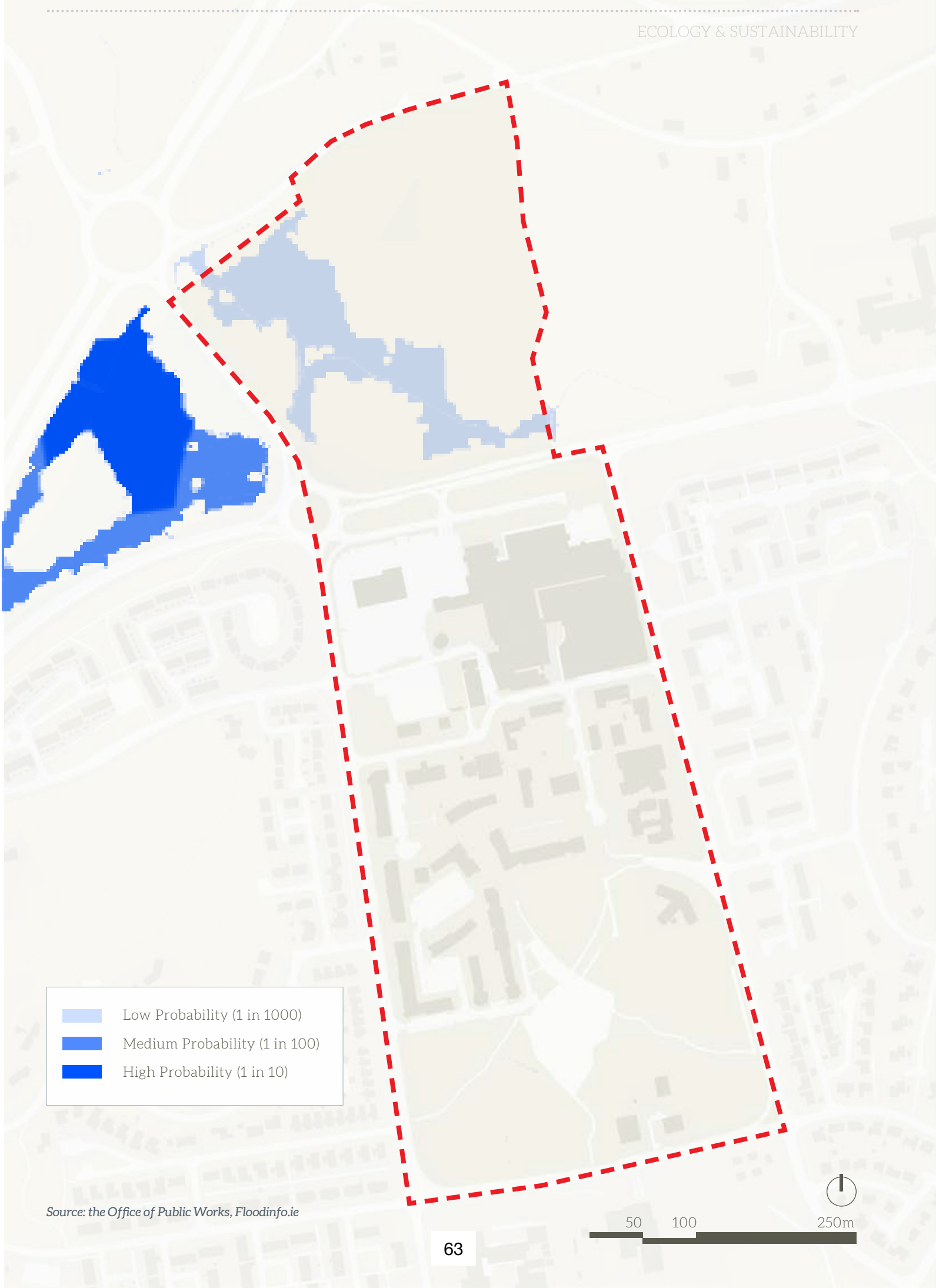
As detailed within the 2016 Shannon Town Strategic Flood Risk Analysis also carried out by JBA, both existing and future development areas in Shannon Town must be able to manage residual risk from tidal defence breach and pumping station failure to a high standard, to facilitate further development. The Masterplan seeks to support the Local Area Plan in delivering integrated and coherent Green Infrastructure, which provides a number of benefits including flood risk mitigation in the form of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Fluvial Flooding Risk Assessment

Shannon Town Centre is affected by fluvial flooding in a variety of probability levels. Fluvial Flooding refers to land that might be flooded by rivers in the event of a moderate flood. This flooding scenario is referred to as the Current Day scenario by The OPW and have been generated using methodologies based on historic flood data without taking any future potential effects of climate change into account.

High Probability flood events have approximately a 1-in-a-10 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 10%. Medium Probability flood events have approximately a 1-in-a-100 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 1%. Low Probability flood events have an indicative 1-in-a-1000 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 0.1%.

Land to the north of the R471 is currently considered low risk for flooding, with a probability of 1 in 1000 year flood risk.



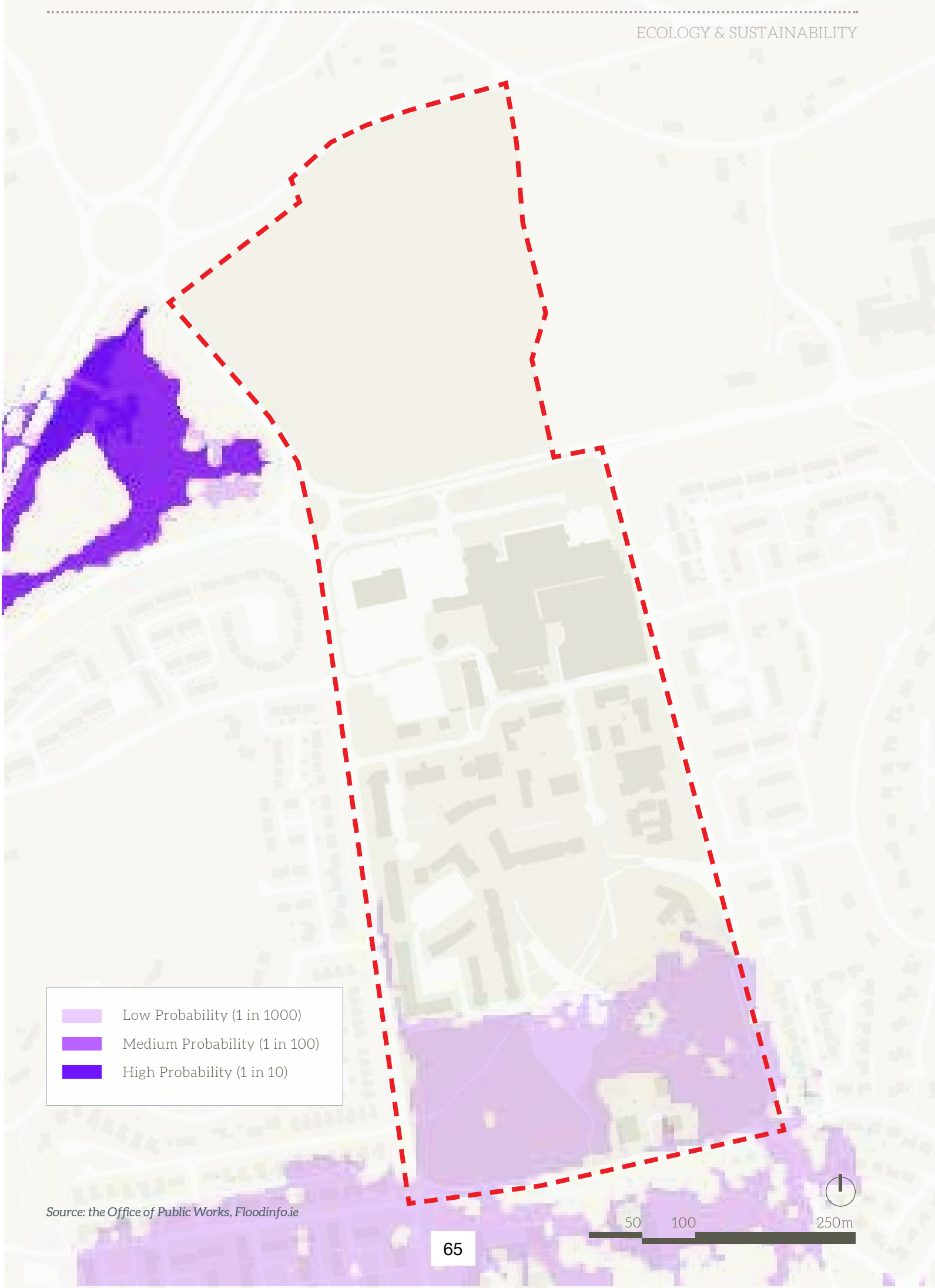
Coastal Flooding Risk Assessment

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

High Probability flood events have approximately a 1-in-a-10 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 10%. Medium Probability flood events have approximately a 1-in-a-100 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 1%. Low Probability flood events have an indicative 1-in-a-1000 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 0.1%.

Land to the north of the R471 is currently considered low risk for flooding, with a probability of 1 in 1000 year coastal flooding risk.

It should be noted that currently Clare County Council and OPW are preparing for works to improve flood risk embankments for Shannon thus significantly reducing coastal flood risk for the town, airport and wider area.



Ecology Baseline Study

Introduction

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

The masterplan proposes to improve Shannon Town Centre and potentially expand over the main road to the north onto a new green site. Within the study area, the main features include tree canopies within the Town Centre Woodland Area, the northern section of Shannon Wetlands, open space, estuarine paths and mixed use active space south of the Town Centre.

An ecology baseline has been established following a review of national and local policy, alongside a desktop study analysing biodiversity maps and local ecology surveys. These were carried out by ecologists between 2016 – 2018 and incorporate part of the study area or adjacent sites. Findings were that although there are no designated areas within the study area, the masterplan site lies 1km north of a designated Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The study area has a high bat habitat suitability index and provides suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of common birds, as detailed on page 94. While there has been no evidence of protected mammals recorded within the site, it is likely to support a variety of small mammals including the common hedgehog, pygmy shrew, field mouse, bank vole and brown rat that provide prey for foxes and possibly the Irish stoat.

Policy summary

Policy considerations and regulations in relation to biodiversity at a national and local level and sites of interest are set out in the Ireland 2040 Our Plan, the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021, Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (as

varied), and Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 (extended to 2023), all informed by Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

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

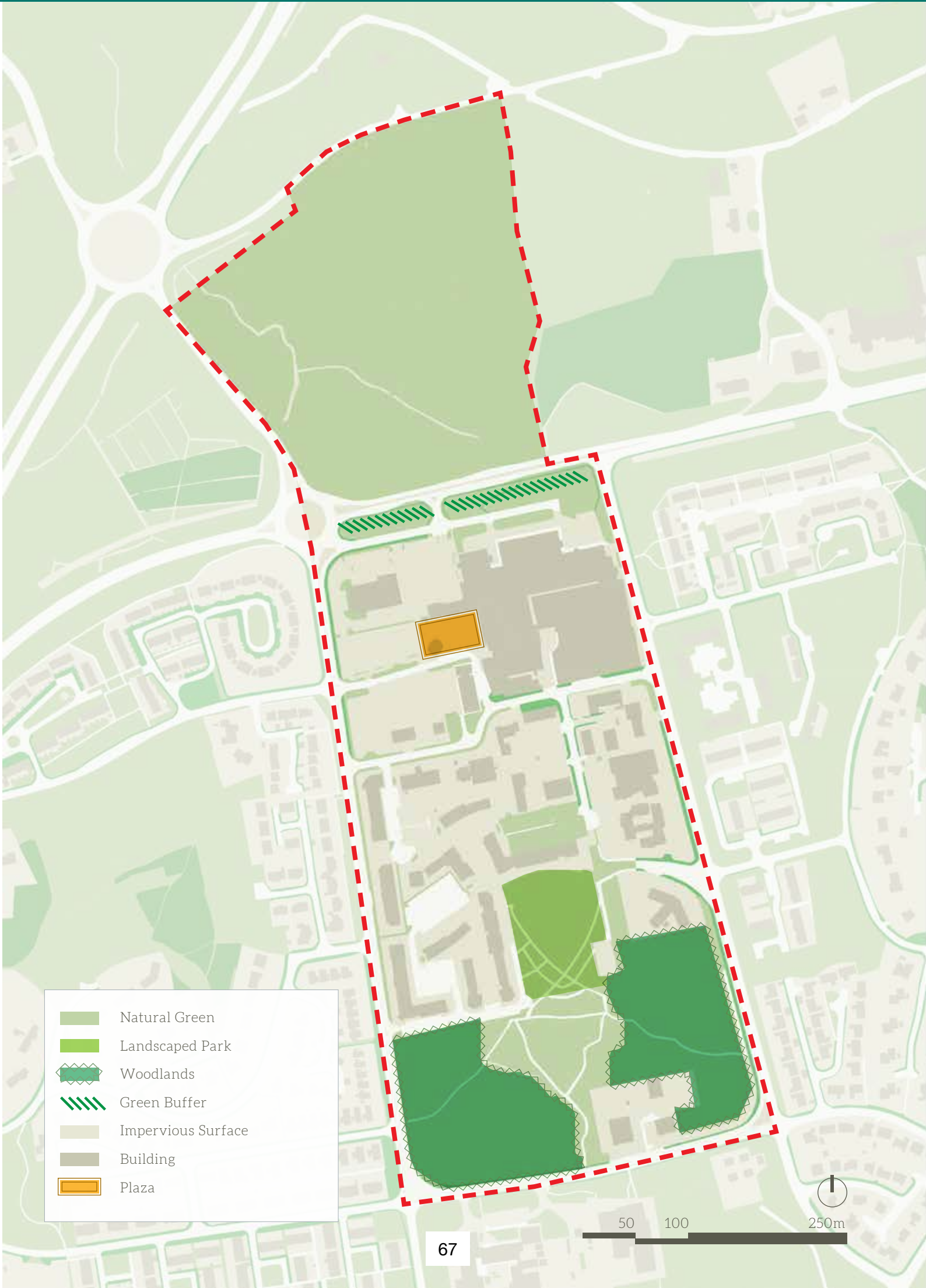
National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021

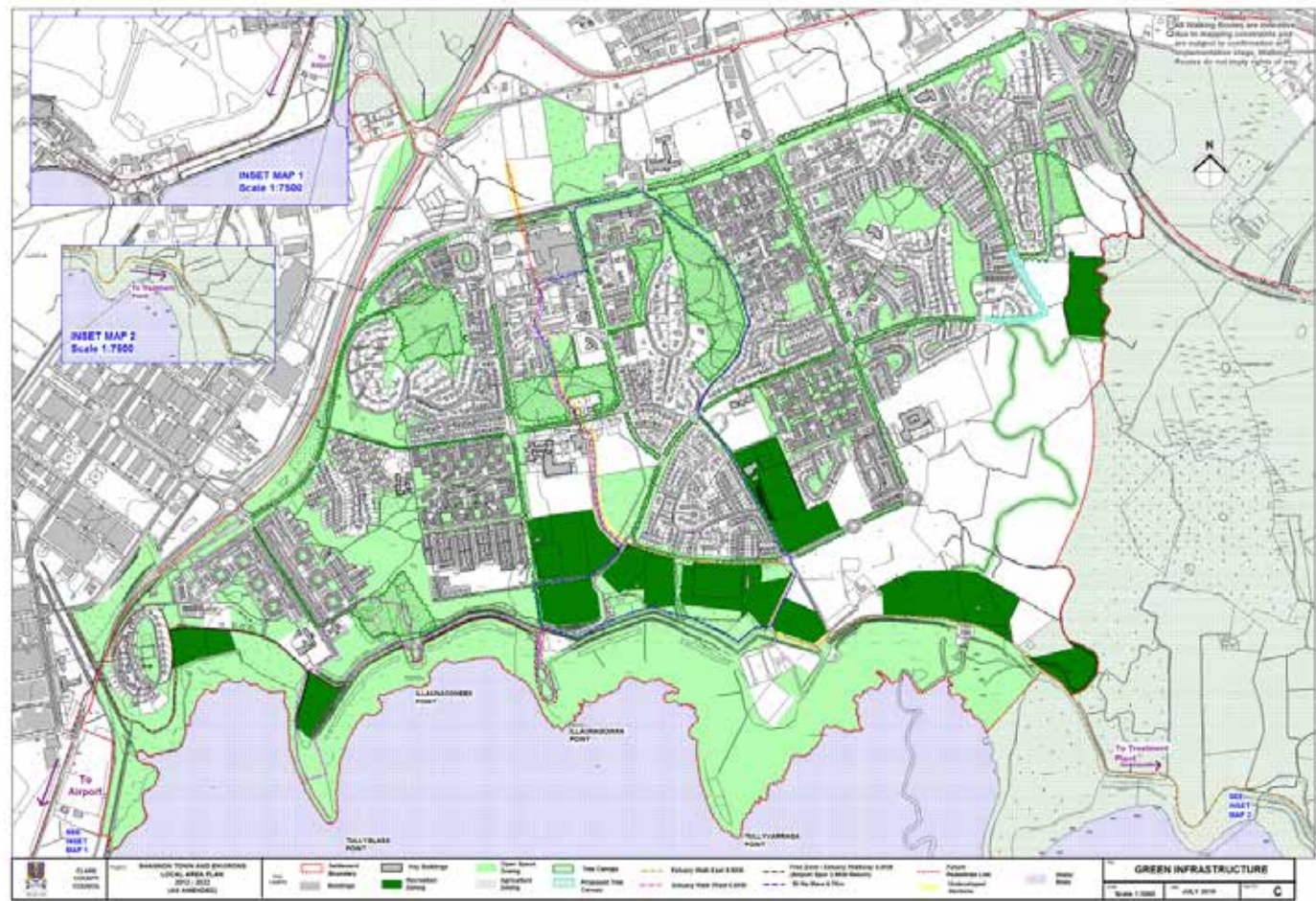
The National Biodiversity Action Plan sets out Ireland’s vision and commitment specifically to biodiversity. This includes ensuring biodiversity forms part of the decision making across all sectors; strengthening the knowledge base; increasing awareness and appreciation of biodiversity; conserving and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

Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (as varied)

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

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





Green Infrastructure Framework for Shannon Town and Environs Map

Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 (local area plan)

Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan has been developed in accordance with the objectives set out in the Clare County Development Plan. Implementation of the current Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 has been extended and will remain in effect until a new local area plan is published in 2023.

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

In line with the National Planning Framework and National Biodiversity Action Plan, chapter 11 explores the development of a green infrastructure network for Shannon Town and its environs. The creation and management of multi-functional networks connect walking, cycling, recreation and space for nature, with green corridors and natural ecosystem services. This brings further benefits of assisting with water management and resilience to climate change, including temperature regulation and flood risk mitigation.

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



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

The Shannon Estuary, 1km south of the masterplan site, forms the largest estuarine complex in Ireland, extending 100km from Limerick City to Loop Head in County Clare. It is a designated SAC and SPA conservation area (as illustrated by the following map), protected within the Natura 2000 network under the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directives respectively. It is one of the most important sites in Ireland for over-wintering wildfowl and waders. This includes Annex 1 species of internationally and nationally important populations of 17 wintering species (protected under the Birds Directive). It is also an important breeding site for birds in the summer season. The Lower River Shannon SAC includes 7 species listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

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

Ecological Evaluation

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

- Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey, May 2016, EirEco Environmental Consultants
- Shannon Looped Walk Ecology Survey, December 2017, Doherty Environmental
- CCC - Bird Usage Survey Data Shannon-Fergus Estuary, January 2019, McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan Ltd.
- Slí na Mara Screening Determination, May 2017
- Tullyvarraga Hill Woodland Management Plan, April 2018, Nicholas de Jong Associates and Janice Fuller

- **Demonstration Sites for Biodiversity Management Species Record, Shannon Town Wetlands, June 2020, Dr Frances Giaquinto (CEnv MCIEEM) and Phoebe O'Brien (BSc Hons Botany)**

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

Protected sites

The biodiversity map (previous page) obtained from Biodiversity Maps Ireland highlights the Shannon Estuary with the Lower River Shannon designated as a SAC, River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries designated as a SPA and Fergus Estuary designated as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA). No designated protected sites exist in the immediate proximity or within the study area.

Habitat types in study area and environs

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

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

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

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

The marsh type understorey varies locally but includes abundant regeneration of sycamore along with occasional hawthorn, blackthorn, willow and

briar. The herb layer is also varied dependant on light levels and includes a number of species indicative of a high water table including the common reed, reed sweet grass, meadowsweet, yellow flag and creeping bent.

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

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

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

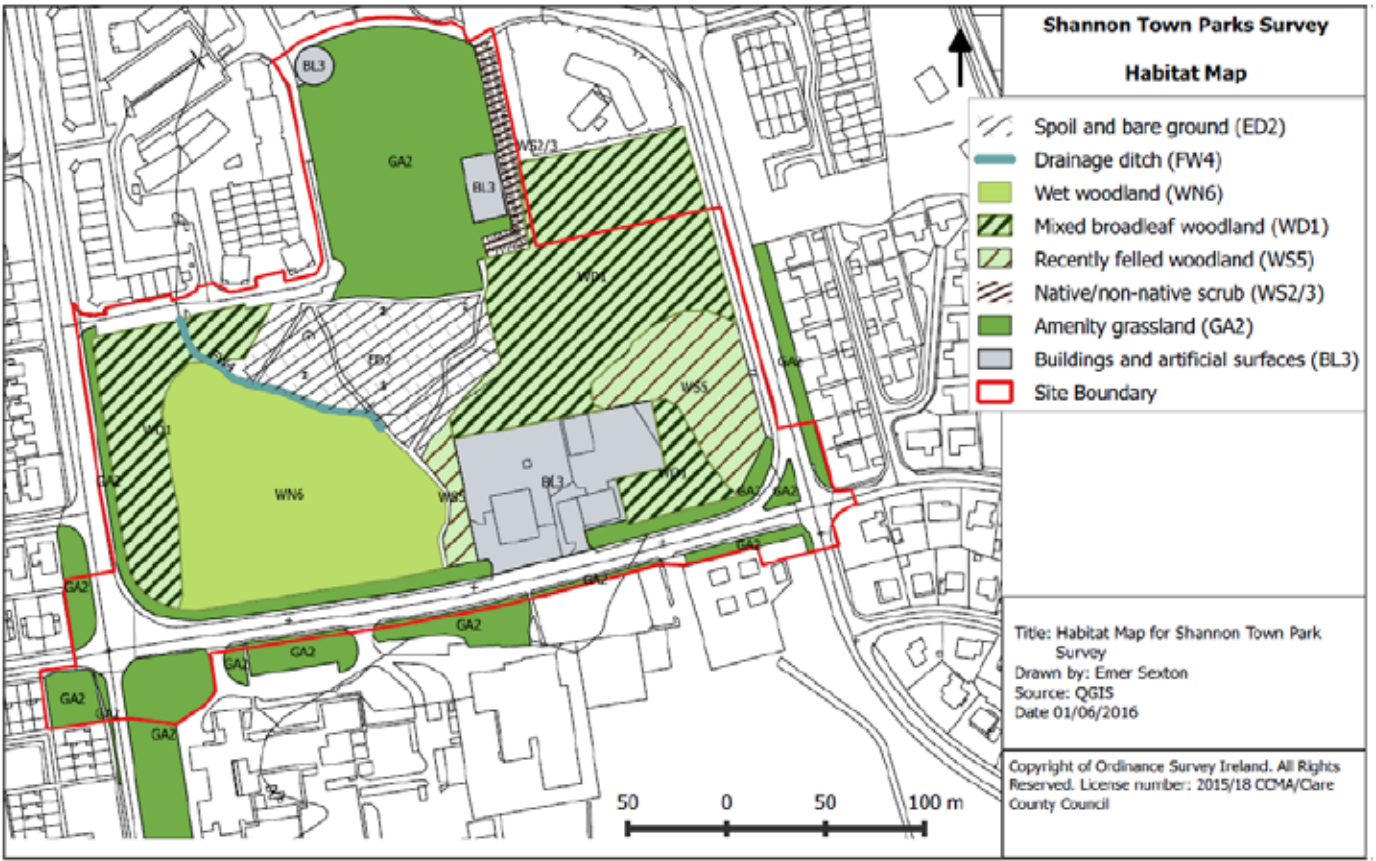
A species survey carried out by Dr Frances Giaquinto (CEnv MCIEEM) and Phoebe O'Brien (BSc Hons Botany) described in the Demonstration Sites for Biodiversity Management Species Record, in May 2020, identified the Bristly ox tongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*) classified as very rare in Webb’s Irish Flora and Celery leaved buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), classified as unusual. The masterplan should encourage the protection of these and other recommendations to come from the management plan when developed. The masterplan also has the potential to incorporate recommendations including integrating educational material for the wetlands, e.g. information boards that help the public to identify species and habitats.

Invasive species

While no invasive species listed under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations



Surrounding Habitat types (Biodiversity Maps Ireland)



Habitat Map of Shannon Town Park

2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011) were recorded in the Shannon Town Park Ecological Survey, dogwood, white poplar and sycamore are recorded as being potentially invasive and should be managed by removing saplings to prevent further spread.

Ecological corridors

The Shannon Town area is primarily built-up with the exception of an area to the west of Coill Mhara and Tullyvarraga Roads, which supports a mosaic of wet grassland with scrub and a small area of conifer plantation. The park connects to this area in the southeast corner where there is a narrow fringe of trees and grassland to the south. This area has connectivity directly to the estuary in the south, which should be maintained as an ecological corridor and enhanced by appropriate planting of woody species to provide cover for fauna in the northern end where it is narrow.

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

Bats

Areas suitable for individual bat species are identified in the Bat suitability index GIS map. For each species,



Bat suitability index map

a 'core favourable area' is identified, with areas shown in red having the highest habitat suitability index. The area covering Shannon town centre and the masterplan extension zone has a habitat suitability index of 43.44 for all bats (where 1 is the least suitable and 100 the most suitable).

These GIS layers are a research outcome of a study by Lundy et al. (2011) examining the relative importance of landscape and habitat associations across Ireland. This analysed data contained in the Irish National Bat Database, maintained by Bat Conservation Ireland, and the National Lesser Horseshoe Bat database maintained by National Parks and Wildlife Service. The analysis was carried out for all bat species that commonly occur in Ireland, namely the:

- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle
- Nathusius' pipistrelle
- Leisler's bat
- Daubenton's bat
- Natterer's bat

- Whiskered bat
- Brown long-eared bat
- Lesser horseshoe bat

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

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

Birds

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

The 2019 Bird Usage Survey by McCarthy Keville

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

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

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

Mammals

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

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

Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan 2013

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

The Plan builds upon the Green Infrastructure and Place Making objectives as proposed in the Shannon Town and Environs LAP (2012-2018) and was developed in the strategic context of the Comhar document "Creating Green Infrastructure for Ireland" (August 2010), as well as other Best Practice examples from Ireland and Europe in relation to Green Infrastructure. One of the key considerations is the creation of common themes and language throughout Shannon Town, with a particular emphasis on connectivity between habitats as can be achieved

by linking up interconnecting green corridors and proposed circulation routes as outlined in the LAP. The proposals aim to strengthen or create wildlife corridors and inter-connection, with the development of an overall theme for reflected in the proposed works.

Key Considerations

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

- Connectivity to the estuary should be retained, including the corridor connecting Shannon Town Park with the area of wet grassland to the south, which should be maintained and enhanced through planting of native willow south of the junction between Tullyglass and Coill Mhara roads.
- Planting of native hedgerow shrubs is recommended to fill any hedgerow gaps and to the edge of fencing.
- Disturbance within remaining areas of woodland should be minimised, including interventions aimed at removal of poor condition trees, scrub and ivy.
- Natural regeneration should be allowed to occur within the area of cleared woodland in the east of Shannon Town Park. Rapid establishment of willow and ash is expected to have occurred since clearance, and this should be favoured over sycamore.
- The cleared area in the centre of the park, converted to grassland, should be managed as a meadow as opposed to a regularly mown lawn, to provide an opportunity for increasing plant diversity and invertebrate habitat. This should be sown with an appropriate seed mixture comprised of native species of local provenance.



Clare County Council - Shannon Town Green Infrastructure Context Plan

- There are plans for the Tullyvarraga Hill Woodland to become a natural amenity of high biodiversity value. The Management Plan sets out that the site will link well with other natural amenities in the area including the Boreen walking route, the new Town Park, and the Shannon Looped Walks, to provide an extensive network of trails, green spaces, recreation areas and opportunities for connecting with nature. Opportunities to enhance these connections throughout the Shannon Town Masterplan should be maximised.



05

Consultation

Consultation

Listening & Gathering

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

Public consultation on emerging concepts in the Draft Plan took place from Friday 16th July 2021 until Friday 3rd September 2021 using a web-based portal as it was the most efficient manner in which to exhibit the Masterplan Vision to the public.

The web-based portal allowed users to rate a number of options presented, provide opinions, completing a questionnaire as well as facilitating individual written submissions. In addition to the web-based portal and in the interests of Access for All to the consultation process, Clare County Council also invited submissions via the traditional email/letter option directly to Clare County Council.

The compilation of the data includes analysis of the questionnaire and survey data as well as a written summary of individual submissions.

In total, 152 submissions were received which comprised of 97 online completed surveys and 55 individual submissions of which 31 submissions were received directly through the online portal and 24 individual written submissions were received by post and email.

These comments have helped to shape this final Draft Masterplan.

The majority of respondents were in the 25-44 age category (47 in total). The next largest group was respondents aged between 45 and 64 (33 in total). Those aged over the age of 65 accounted for 11 responses. Responses from those aged between 18 and 24 (5 in total) and under 18 (2 in total).

85% of respondents live within Shannon Town, with another 6% within 3km of Shannon Town, and the remainder living further afield. 39.% of respondents visit on a daily basis, with 43% visiting a couple of times per week.

Main Issues and Themes from the Public Consultation Process

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

- Has no defined town centre
- There was no main street
- The retail choice was very limited
- There are no restaurants however a significant number of fast food / take-aways.

A number of respondents indicated that visitors to Shannon don't know where the town is and that it is perceived as a "ghost town", has "no heart" and as a "place to work and not as a place to visit".

Existing Strengths of Shannon Town

Respondents were asked what the best things are about Shannnon town, and their responses were categorised into an order of priority:

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

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

The availability of amenities that includes the town park, the Points, the Estuary / river walk, the open spaces, playgrounds and sports facilities were rated as one of the best things about Shannon town.

The sense of community and the community sprit

was also rated as one of the best things about Shannon town with one respondent noting "the legacy of the original community from the 60's, 70's and 80's and their families".

Existing Weaknesses of Shannon Town

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

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

It is also noteworthy that respondents indicated that activities and or facilities, other than sporting facilities, for teenagers and children are very much lacking in the town along with a "night life".



Aspirations for Improvement

Consultation Feedback

Aspirations for an Improved Town Centre

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

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

How to Improve the Town Centre

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

What is Needed Most

When asked for ideas or comments on how a more attractive and usable civic space could be created for the Town Centre, the creation of a main street with retail / café / bar / restaurant opportunities was highlighted as a priority. There was also an expressed desire from respondents for the provision of a civic space for the town centre that can facilitate out more dining choices cafés, restaurants along with outdoor dining and even a covered civic space.

Retail offer is highlighted once again in the responses with one respondent commenting to “split some units for smaller businesses so that businesses owners can afford it”. The provision of landscaping – trees, green areas and water features within the town centre along with well designed street furniture and more bins was also a key theme that came from many responses. A number of respondents indicated that there is a requirement to provide for age friendly initiatives in the town centre and a place where senior citizens can meet.

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



Second to this, many respondents indicated that restaurants and eateries other than take-aways were also lacking in the town and coupled with this, many also indicated that there were no outdoor covered seating areas where people could dine or socialise.

The absence of a defined town centre and no main street was also rated highly in the responses and as a consequence, no social space, evening entertainment outdoor or indoor to allow people to socialise or dwell in the town centre creating a night-time atmosphere.

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

It was also indicated by a significant number of respondents that there is “no atmosphere, vibe, identity or a feeling of community” in the existing Shannon Town Centre.

New Uses and Activities in the Town Centre

The key issue that reflected a significant portion of responses was that there is an absence of a social space / civic plaza / community focal point and as one respondent noted “opportunities for the talent of the town to showcase”. Many responses reflected this statement indicating that busking / live outdoor music, street culture, outdoor dining, outdoor market or extension to current farmers market, atmosphere is what most would like to see happening. Another respondent noted that they would like to see the band stand being used more often.

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

Also in response to this question and in addition to having more retail choice and restaurants, many would like to see a cultural and community focal point included within the town centre.

A New Street

While a number of participants indicated that they considered that the main street should be fully pedestrianised, the majority of respondents indicated that the main street should be more pedestrian

friendly but shared with the car. Several respondents requested that through traffic should not be allowed. However, the majority of respondents indicated that the pedestrian should be the main consideration in the Town Centre as the current town centre is already well serviced for the car with a car park.

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

Community Services & Public Facilities

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

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

Masterplan Feedback

Aspects of the Masterplan

Sustainable Transport Modes

The majority of respondents wanted to see sustainable modes of transport such as cycling, bus and rail transport being facilitated. In terms of bicycles, respondents want to see more bike friendly initiatives including:

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

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

For the student cohort of the respondents, a direct frequent service (not Bus Éireann) from Shannon to the third level institutes particularly UL was highlighted as a necessity.

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

Making the R471 more Pedestrian Friendly

Respondents were shown the proposed improvements to the R471 as a way to slow the traffic down to create more of a Main Street look and feel with the new public realm and generous streets connected to the main square. The addition of on street parking was also shown.

The predominant responses indicated that based on the diagrams showing the reduction in width of the road and the replacement of the roundabout with controlled traffic lights and more pedestrian-friendly crossings that this would be a positive intervention and were happy with it. One respondent provided the following useful feedback “Segregation of pedestrian and cycleways from moving vehicular traffic by using a parking band would encourage engagement of all in a safe manner” and another stating “Keep parking away from outside the shops but within walking distance”.

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

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

A New Civic Hub Building

The proposed One Shannon Hub and the accompanying green space is very much welcomed in the majority of submissions received, There is overwhelming support for the establishment of a Town Centre presence by the Local Authority combined with a multi-functional civic, community and enterprise space. 76% of respondants agreed with this point.

It is evident from the responses that respondents consider that the provision of a building to serve the people of Shannon, create jobs and business opportunities and thus will revive the town centre and boost Shannon Town’s image as a great place to live, work and visit is considered to be most important for the majority of respondents.

A significant number of submissions received noted that there is a need for a theatre / performance space and welcome the proposal for the One Shannon Hub to act as a focal point for the town. Many consider that the presence of Clare County Council in the Hub and the multi-functional use as a civic and community hub with a library, civic theatre, and some other community based services desired for the building. The design and prominence of the public onto the public square was welcome in particular the concept of the ‘Glasshouse’ acting as a seed for emerging start-ups / hot desking etc. The concept of merging the library function and other public services is seen as key to the development. However, an observation is made that space allocation between civic offices, community and creative spaces needs to be appropriate to meet all needs and that there is an optimal balance achieved.

A number of observations note that they question the idea of having an innovation centre located in the One Shannon Hub unless the design is such that there is plenty of space to facilitate it. Furthermore, if there is a proposal to have an Innovation Campus someplace in reasonably close proximity to the Centre of Town it doesn’t make sense for the local authority provided facility to be in a separate location. If properly designed and developed North of the R471 the Civic Centre could become the focal attraction point surrounded by commercial units, retail and food

with pedestrian and “quiet” zones.

However many also note that loss of surface car parking is a concern as it is important for easy access to the town centre. The multi-story is only used as a last resort by many and is empty for the most part.

The Innovation Campus

The Innovation Campus was welcomed by a significant number of contributors. It was suggested that the innovation campus must complement, build on and integrate with the success of existing and constantly evolving industrial and business parks in Shannon and that an overall vision for these lands should be developed within the masterplan.

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

Town Centre & Civic Square

There was significant support expressed in many of the submissions endorsing the proposal of developing the current town square into an improved public space. It is noted by many that the use of the town square for a weekly farmer’s market has proved to be both attractive and successful with the community and that this should be encouraged going forward.

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

Several submissions received outline that the town centre should be a public place with a variety of retail choice so the people of Shannon can shop locally, have facilities for leisure for all ages, and include for buildings that provide much needed public facilities such as a medical centre. A mix of commercial and residential was highlighted in many submissions as a key characteris-tic of every high and main street of every village, town and city in the country and that it is res-idential units that define a main street and hub of a town, not off the main street but on the main street.

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

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

Car Parking & Transport

Serious concerns are raised by many regarding car parking and bus parking as presented in the draft.

It is stated in several submissions that there is little evidence of surface parking and as a result concerns are highlighted that public car parking will be confined to multi-story buildings with associated parking charges and this will strongly be rejected by most people in Shannon. This will impact on lunchtime trade. A number of submissions recall that car parking charges were introduced some years ago but this led to a drop in footfall that the policy was quickly reversed. Therefore detailed parking proposals should be presented in the plan in terms of what alternative will be available for parking cars.

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

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

It is also noted that proper provision for commercial parking needs to be provided as well as for the shopping public and visitors to the shopping centre. The proposals as set out would lead to the demise of the centre due to lack of vehicle access and parking which are vital to the connectivity of a developing Shannon Town.

The Draft Plan supposes a significant movement from vehicle to pedestrian, cycleway and public transport uses, which conversely a significant number of submitters welcome and in fact seek more focus on pedestrian and cycleway. They suggest however that the detail on how and when this will be achieved is not elaborated upon.

Lack of Identity

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

Reference is made to the new Town Park which was redeveloped at significant cost and opened November 2019. Concern is raised that the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan seeks to “re-zone” the woodland and trails of the park for residential development.

A most common view expressed in the many submissions is that there is nothing to attract young people to live in the town.

Retail / Commercial / Mixed Use

In addition to the existing supermarkets, several submissions highlight the need for smaller independent shops and businesses and the need to make sure that there are less vacant shops in the Shopping Centre, if more are to open on Bóthar Mór.

Several submissions noted that they would like to see a retail anchor in the town centre with Pennys specifically being mentioned.

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

Conclusion

The wide variety and diversity of opinions and commentary on this Masterplan has been incorporated into the design, with several changes being made.

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

06

Masterplan

Introduction

The town centre masterplan refers back to Shannon's past whilst anticipating its future. It takes a cue from the optimism, confidence and inventiveness that drove the development of the new town of the 1960s and 1970s, and looks ahead at the challenge of redefining a town centre at a time of rapid change against the background of climate change. The masterplan has also learned from the present. Having been elaborated during the Covid 19 pandemic, it has reverberated with the capacity of people to respond to crisis and drive positive change as a collective.

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

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

One Shannon Hub - West of the retail core, three urban blocks help to define a new network of streets and squares. The southernmost block is the site for the One Shannon Hub, A new civic, cultural and community centre that supports a wide range of uses (council offices, culture and performing arts

venue, co-working space, education and innovation workshop, community hall etc), The multifunctional building will allow to unlock new uses in the town centre, and is designed to work both as an urban block and an extension of the Town Centre Square. With entrances in all of its glass facades, and a variety of all-day and evening uses and programmes, it will act as an inside-out space, a meeting place for Shannon's community and visitors alike. Other potential uses, such as a tourist information centre or a cycle hub, will also link it with the wider area. As an iconic building, it will make a clear statement of the character of Shannon and its town centre.

Main Street - An Irish town centre has, by definition, a main street. The masterplan proposes to create a Shannon-specific one by detuning and redesigning the stretch of the R471 road at the northern edge of the town centre core, Shannon's Main Street is easily accessible, it defines a gateway to the town centre, and creates a link to the land for future development north of the R471. It will be a high quality public space that prioritises pedestrians but still be open to traffic and public transport. And it will have a unique character, with two distinct frontages: to the south, the traditional mix of shops and housing; to the north, spaces for innovation, cafes, and sustainable landscaping.

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

MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

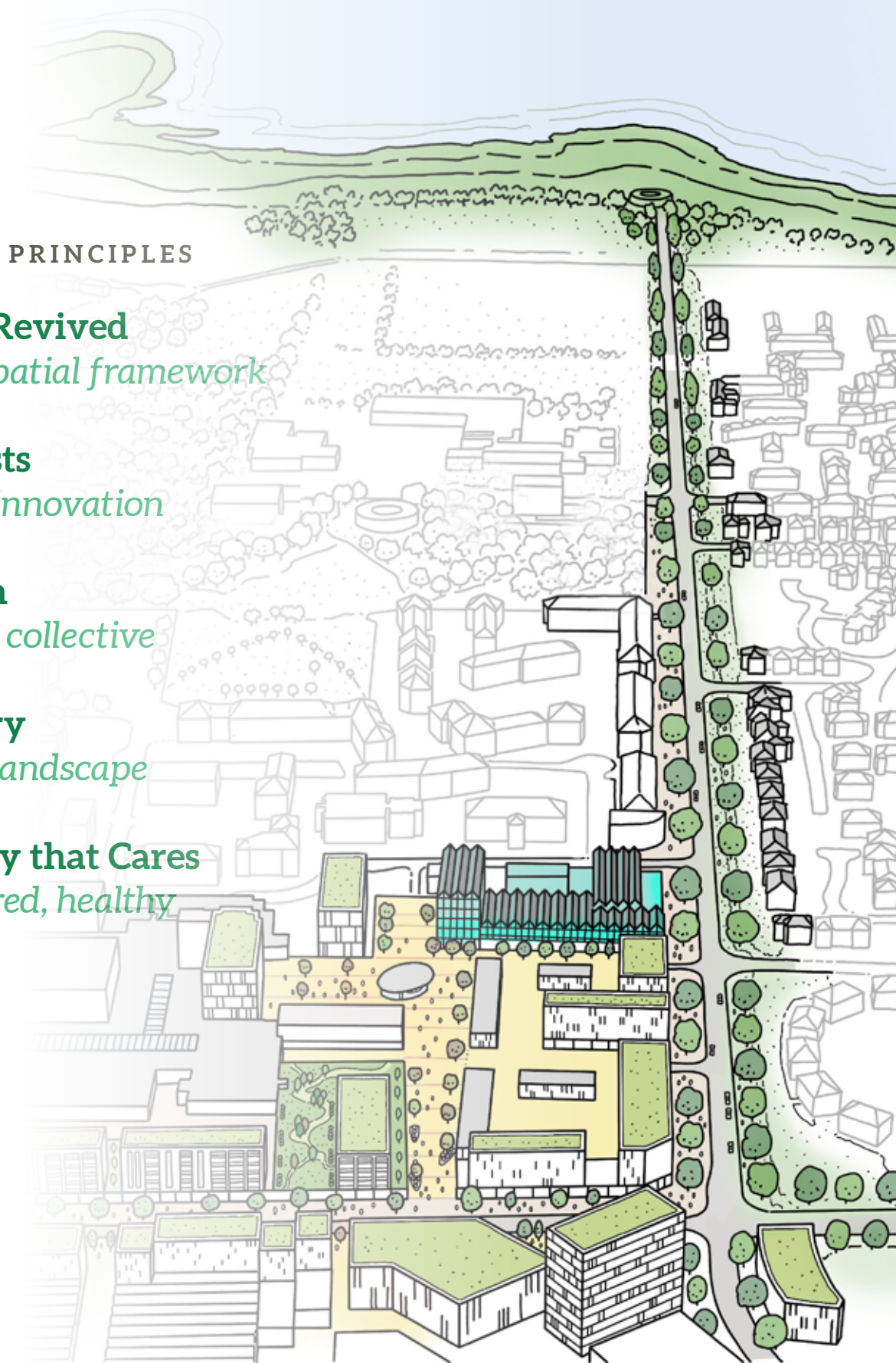
'New Town' Revived
An updated spatial framework

Shannon Firsts
A heritage of innovation

One Shannon
Reimagine the collective

Living Estuary
Regenerative landscape

A Community that Cares
Inclusive, shared, healthy



'New Town' Revived

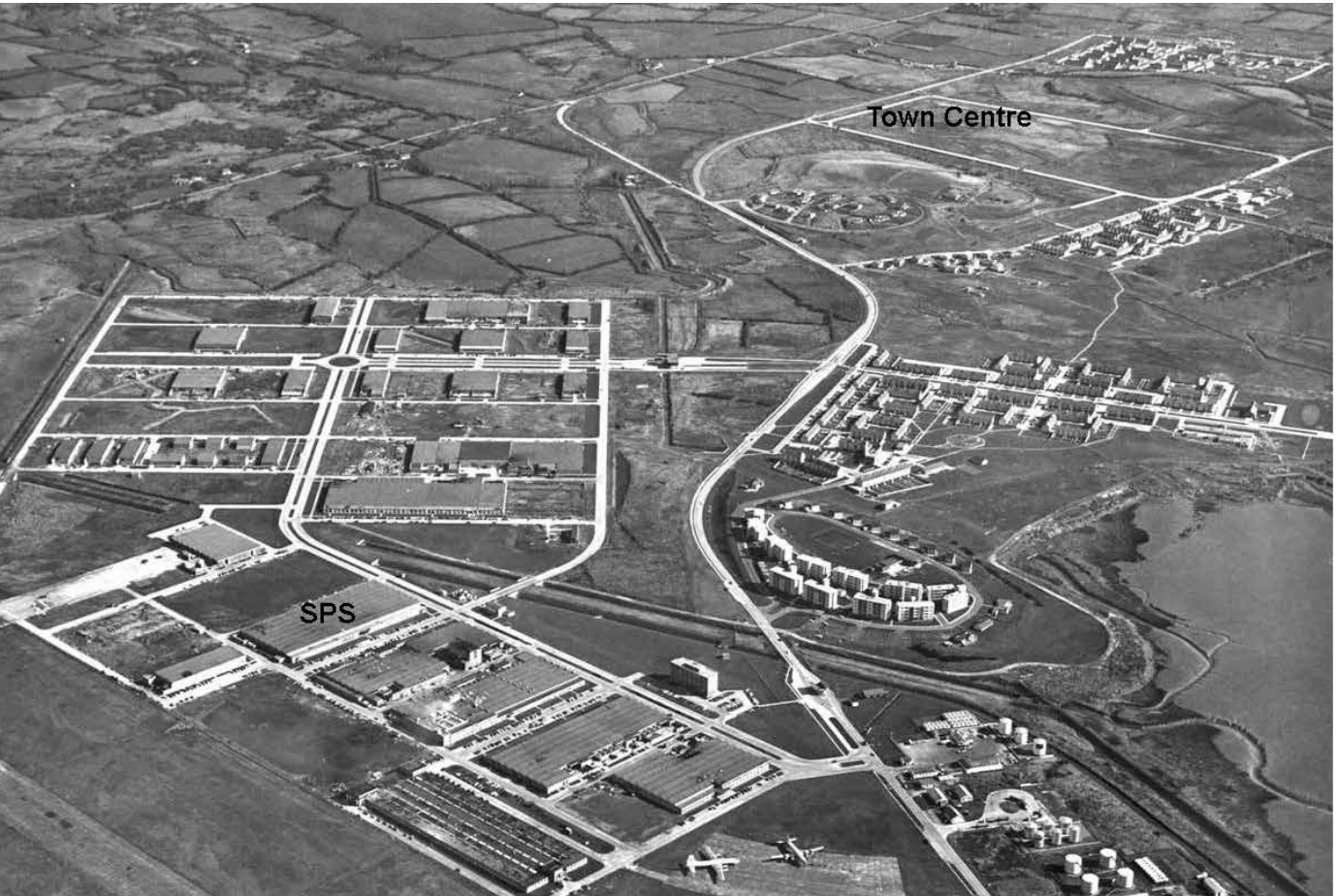
An updated spatial framework

Shannon is a town of its time. The masterplan drafted by architects Downes, Meades & Robinson, together with planner Frederick Rogerson showcases the main traits of urban planning of the 1960's, with a clear reference to the English new towns that were being developed at the time. These included designing for a clear segregation between vehicles and pedestrians (characterised by the housing estate layouts designed along Radburn principles), a rational grid of wide streets to accommodate the growing number of privately owned cars, generous green and open spaces for the community, and functional homes with efficient plans that responded to the requirements of the modern household. Seen from a present perspective, the development strategy defined by the 1962 Outline Development Plan had important flaws that explain, at least in part, Shannon's lack of vibrancy and failure to enable growth. One aspect to note, however, is that the town does have a robust and flexible spatial framework. Could the town centre masterplan then be envisaged as a mechanism to upcycle Shannon's built environment and system of open spaces as a way of 'completing' the original plan?

As Ireland's only town to be created from anew in the twentieth century Shannon does not suffer form urban decay or obsolescence in the same manner as an organic town. Rather its disadvantage is based on unexploited potential and having never achieved planned levels of economic and social development.' 1

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

1 Integrated Area Plan for Shannon, 1998. P 7.



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

Shannon Firsts

A heritage of innovation

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

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

For Shannon, being the first to respond to some of our present day (and future) challenges can help to create a sense of identity, a 'trademark' image. This was true in the early decades of the development of the town, when Shannon was in certain aspects

Ireland's most cosmopolitan and international town. But, more importantly, leading the way in designing and implementing a new urban agenda will inevitably address making Shannon a more livable place.

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

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



One Shannon

Reimagine the collective

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

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

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

- Creating robust links with and between the Free Zones, Shannon Airport, and Shannon Estuary, with the town centre as a place of confluence of these.
- Providing spaces to support, complement and expand current uses in the Free Zones and Shannon Airport. Many uses that have been traditionally located outside of urban areas are now finding a place in towns and cities and thriving in mixed use environments. Shannon Town Centre can provide these.

- Establishing a gateway to the Shannon Estuary and Clare for tourists and visitors. Shannon Town as the arrival point and first port of call for those exploring Clare and the wider region of Ireland's West Coast.
- Supporting the development of a 15 minute town, with adequate provision and linkages between employment, residential, community, cultural and leisure uses. The town centre can catalyse the drive to create a healthy and caring urban environment.
- Establishing the 'One Shannon' brand to attract new investment and tap into public funding opportunities.



Living Estuary

Regenerative landscape

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

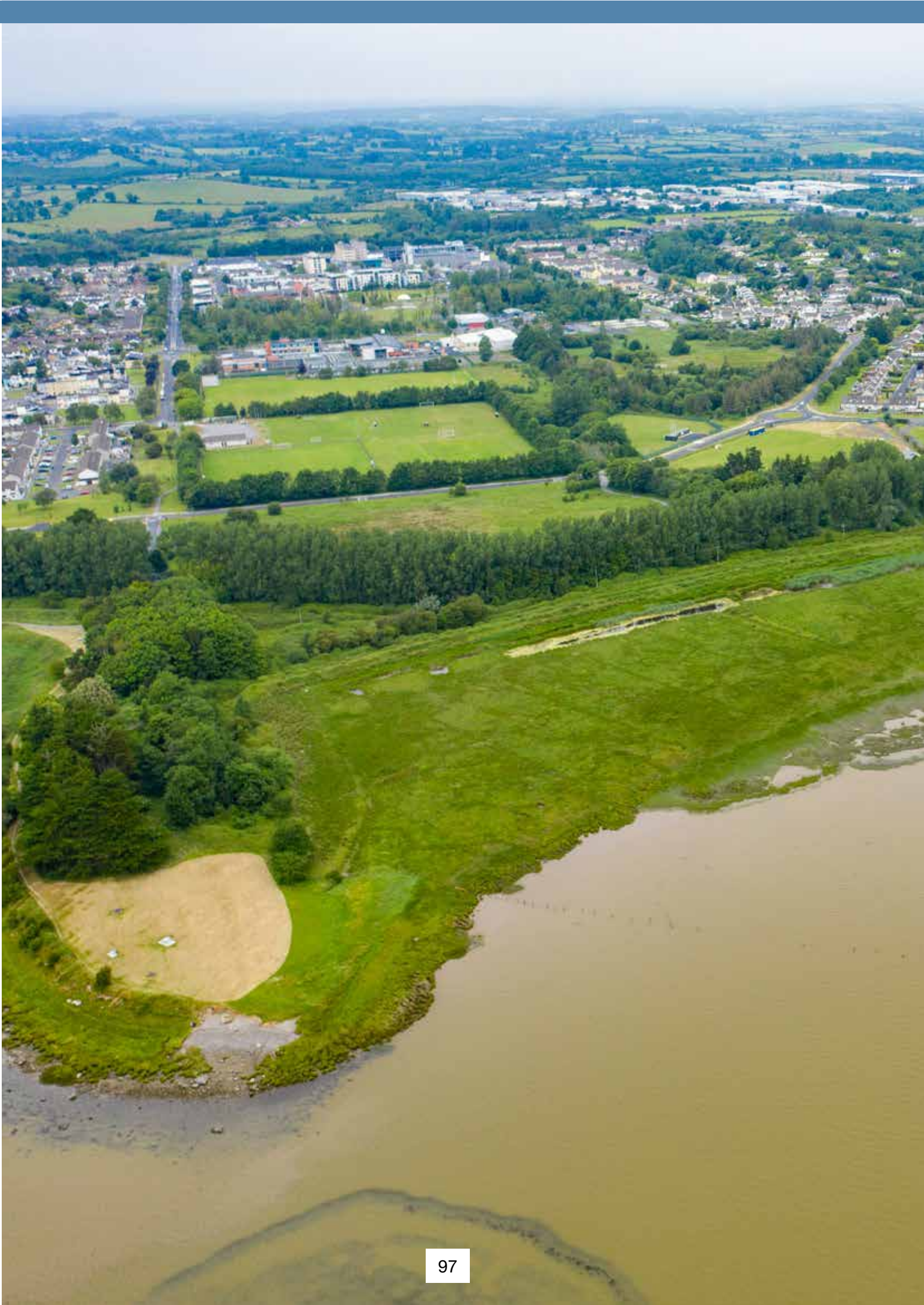
From an urban design point of view, thinking of the estuary as an integral part of the town centre opens up new ways of envisaging how the urban core relates to the wider environment. Improving pedestrian and cycle links between the two can, for example, connect the town centre with wider regional touristic routes. The estuary as a green gateway to the town centre.

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

The Shannon Estuary is an essential part of Shannon's identity and will be, undoubtly, of any regeneration strategy for the Town Centre. Aspects such as climate change impact mitigation, health and wellbeing, environmental awareness, or local culture and history, cannot be adressed without considering the riverside environment.



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



A Community that Cares

Inclusive, shared, healthy

*"In Shannon the population comes from all over the country, indeed from all over the world. No one group, no single section, imposes its traditions and way of life on the others. Shannon is really a new town with a freedom to develop its own traditions, to establish its own precepts, to set down its own roots that will contain something of value from as many as a dozen different nations."*¹

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

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

¹ Shannon Housing. Shannon Free Airport Development Corporation.

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

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



Opportunities & Strengths

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

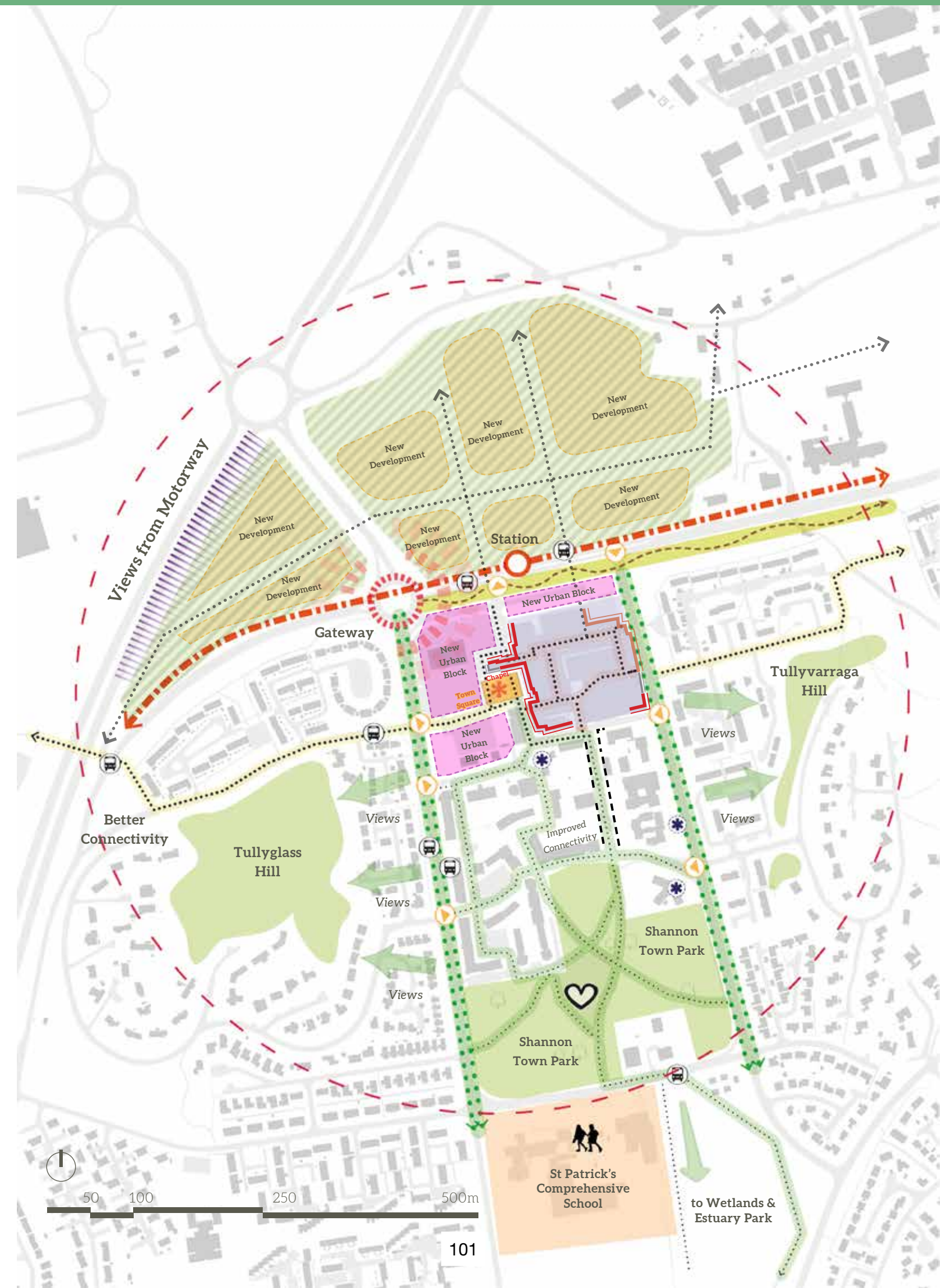
Views from the N19 motorway could be harnessed to provide visibility to the town centre, and a new landmark / gateway can be established at the current R471 roundabout to establish sense of place and a new landmark for the town centre.

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

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

Key Opportunities

- Intensify uses on surface car parking areas adjacent to the large shopping centre
- Define and create streets leading into and out from the town centre
- Establish a landmark or gateway feature to give a sense of arrival and establish sense of place
- Create new development north of R471 which blends seamlessly to development to the south
- Create a unique bridging structure to allow for easy pedestrian connectivity between the north and south of the R471
- Promote active frontages wherever possible to bring vitality and life to the town centre
- Complete the enclosure of the town square to establish a comfortable pedestrian environment
- Ensure LL3114 and L3112 remain as green corridors linking the town centre with the estuary
- Establish a transit-oriented development-ready design to maximise use of public transport infrastructure
- Frame new development to give views to Tullyglass Hill and Tullyvarraga Hill and their tree canopies
- Take advantage of views from the N19 motorway and allow passerby drivers to see the town centre
- Ensure better wayfinding and connectivity with Shannon Town Park and community uses within the area



Constraints

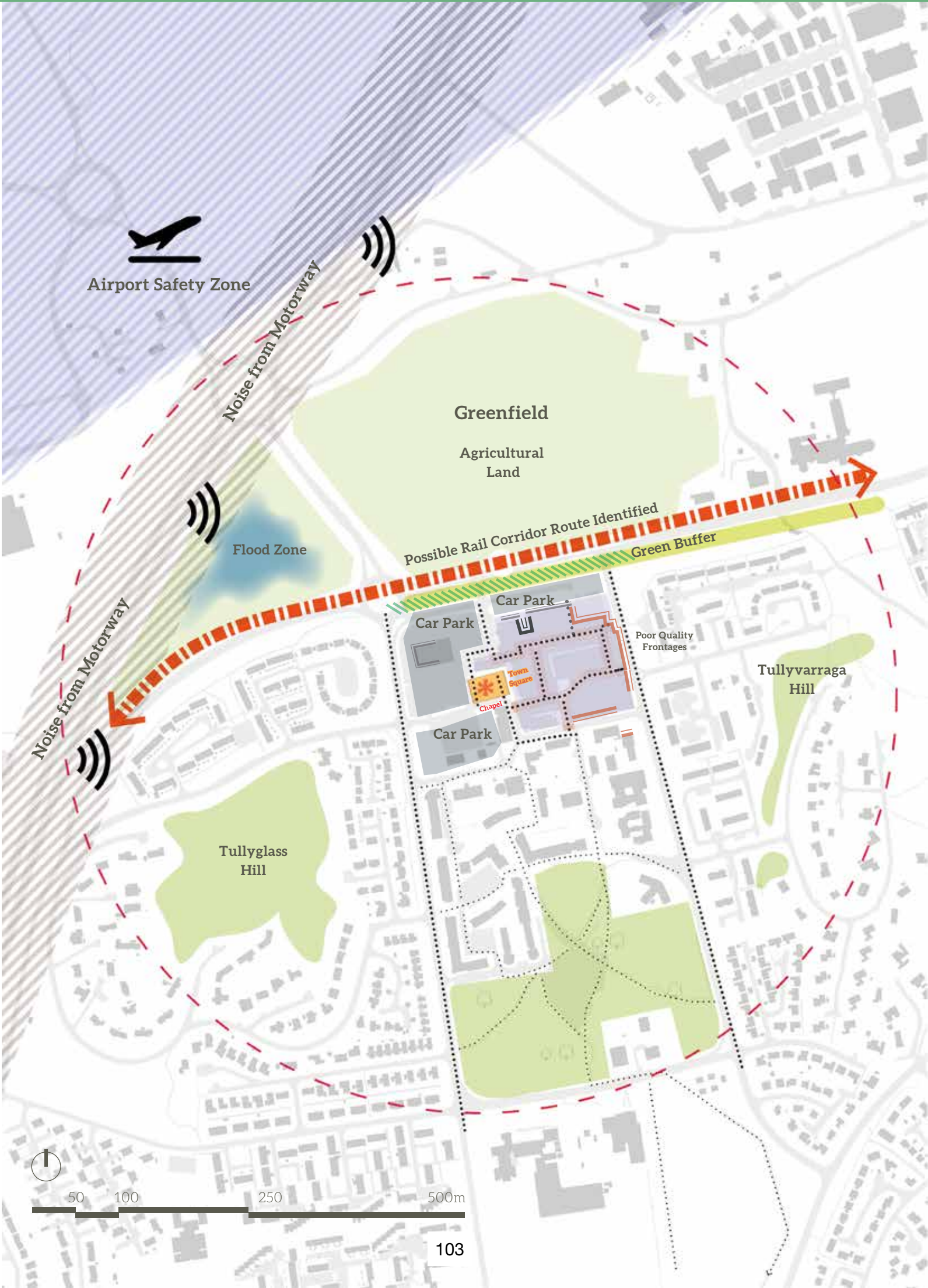
There are several constraints within the study area which must be considered. The Airport Safety Zone does not overlap the study area, however, it is less than 200 metres from the northern edge. This will have an impact on building heights and acceptable uses. Noise from the N19 National Road impacts upon any proposed development along its length.

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

There are significant surface car parks which occupy a large portion of the town centre which do not contribute to the public realm. There are also flooding issues on land to the west of the northern parcel of the study area, which must be mediated before any development may occur.

Key Constraints

- The busy and traffic heavy nature of R471 which could act as a barrier between the northern and southern areas
- The large green buffer and rail corridor could split the district and impede on walkability and wayfinding
- The flood risk zones in the greenfield site to the west of the N16 connection
- Noise from the motorway
- Noise or other disturbances from flights overhead as the airport safety zone is approximately 250m from the northern edge of the site



Shannon-wide Strategies

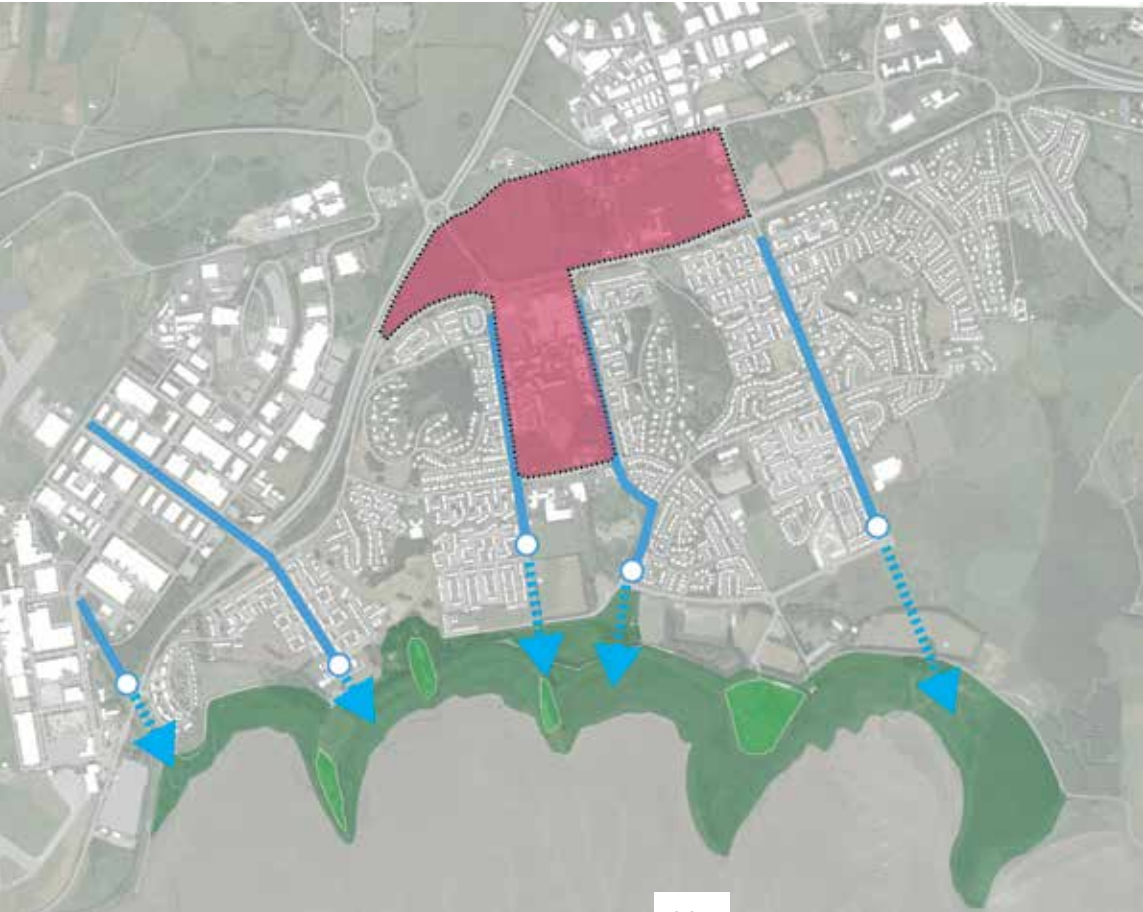
Green Development Areas

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

Shannon-wide Strategies

Estuary Links

- Enhance, restore and complete existing links to the Shannon Estuary.
- Envisage the estuary as a natural extension of the town centre.
- Create new ‘destinations’ in the estuary



Shannon-Wide strategies

Innovation Corridor

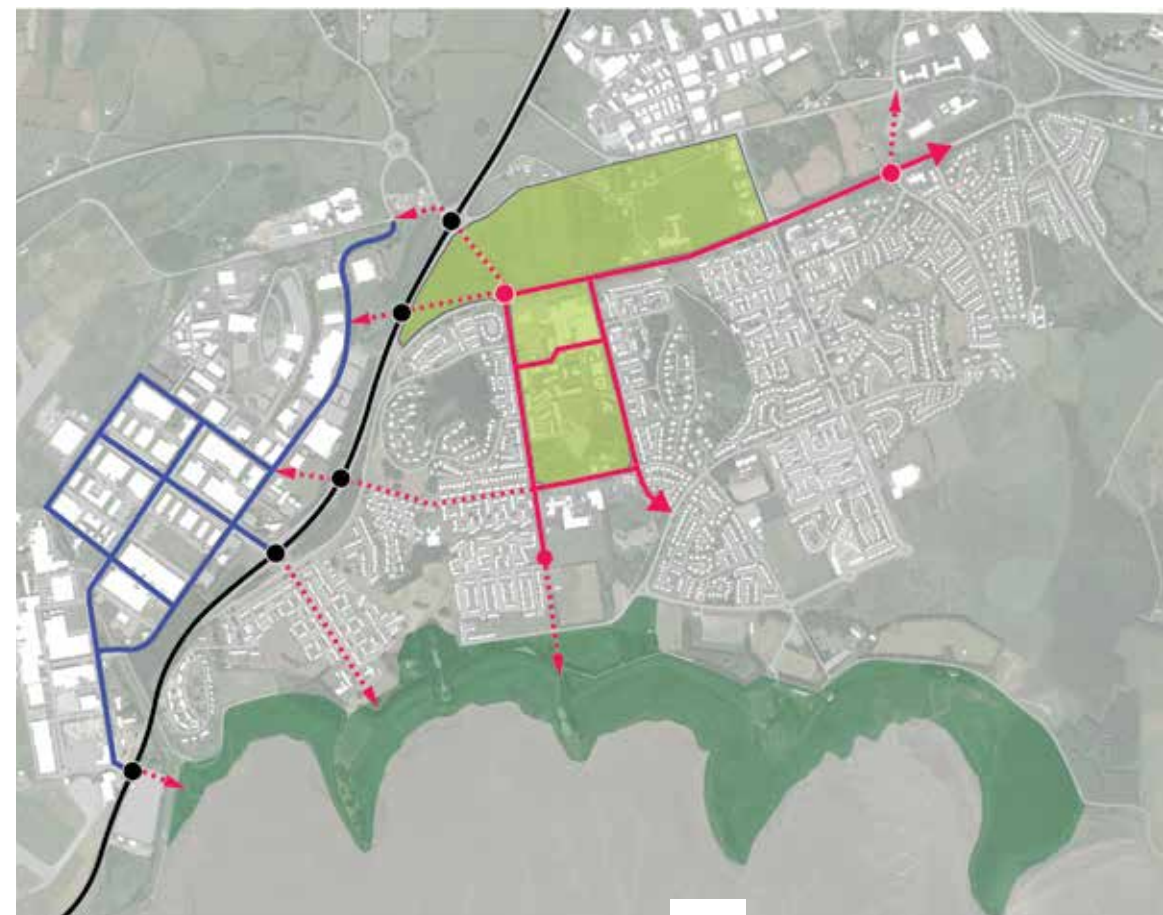
- The R471 links Free Zone East, Free Zone West and the Smithstown Industrial Estate. There is an opportunity to transform the road into an innovation corridor with a frontage that showcases the powress of Shannon's economic hubs.
- Shannon Town Centre as the hub within the corridor
- The Innovation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



Shannon-Wide strategies

Integrated Grids

- The street grids of the Free Zone and Shannon Town were originally designed as integrated systems. A number of the original links have been severed by the N19.
- A refreshed system of integrated grids with enable enhanced connectivity between the town centre, housing estates, employment areas, green spaces, and the Shannon Estuary
- Emphasis on promoting sustainable mobility - pedestrian and cycle routes, and an integrated public transport system.



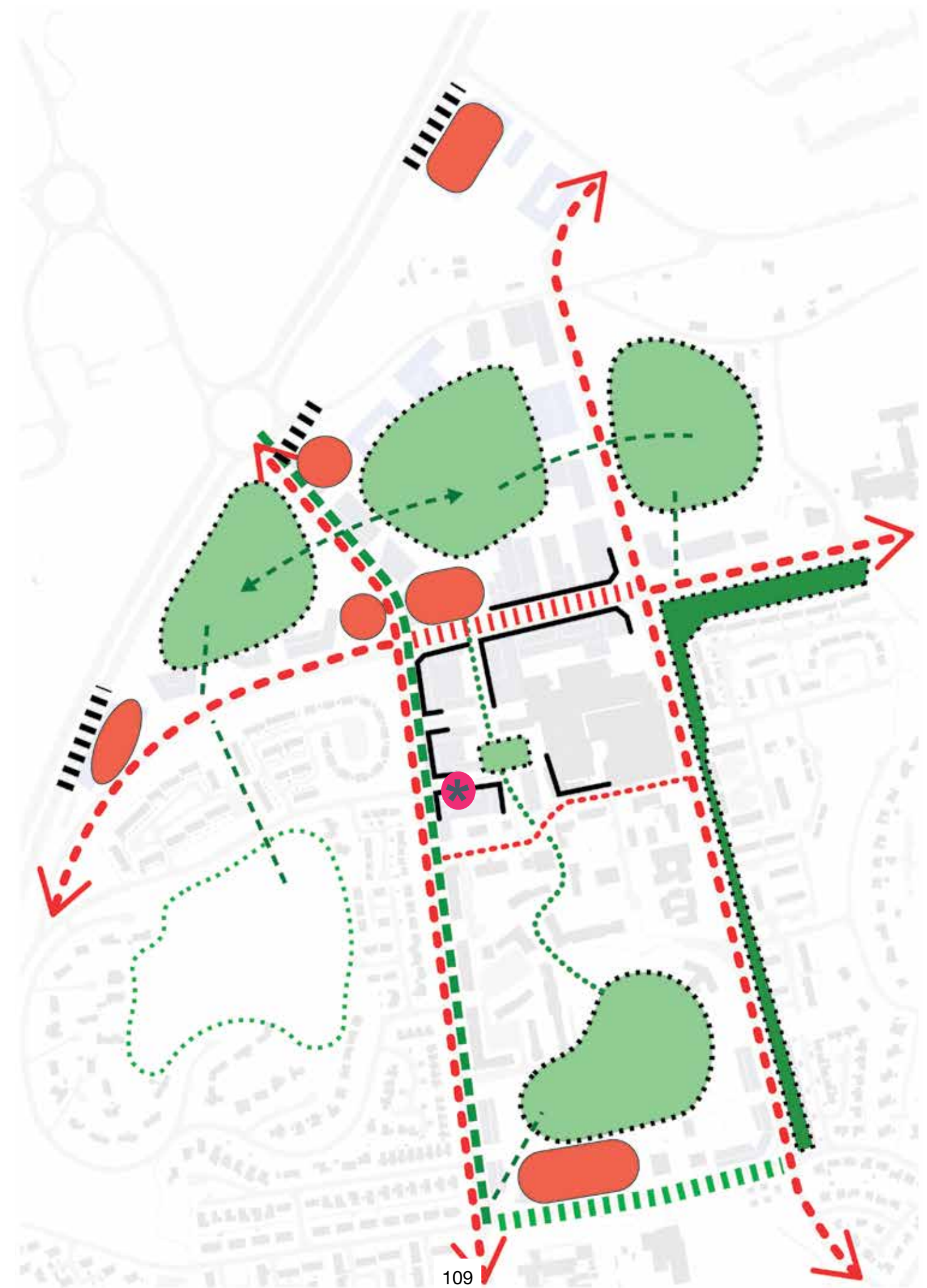
Development Framework - Links, nodes and frontages

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

Existing green areas within Shannon Town Centre shall be retained and preserved as amenities for the community, with the possibility of serving as community and cultural uses.

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

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

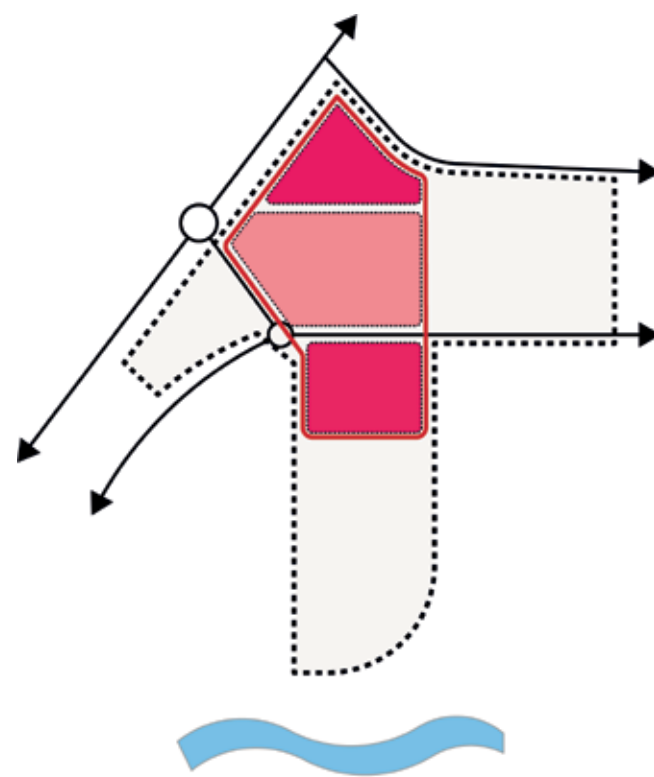


Approach 1

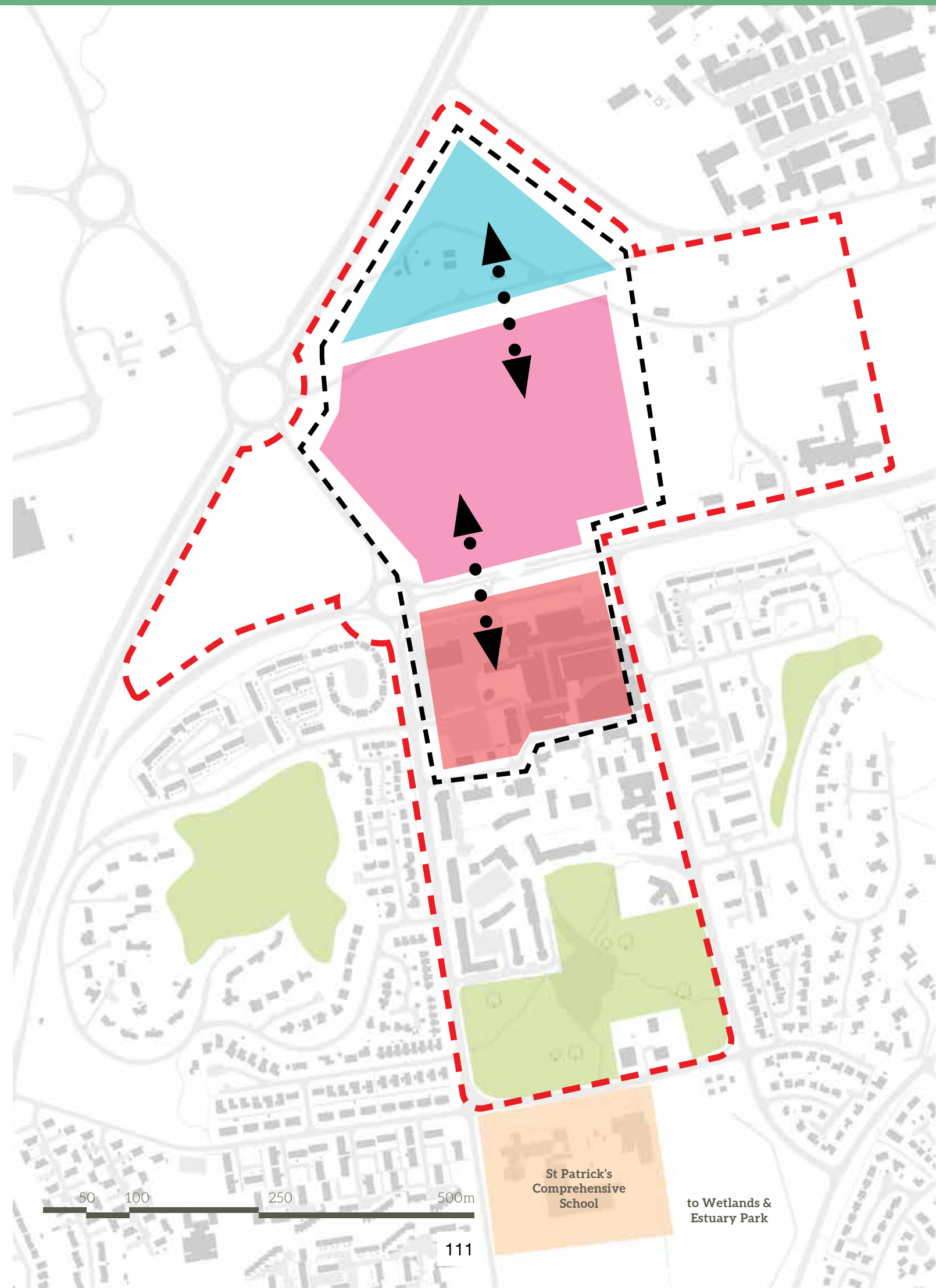
Compound Town Centre

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

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



Compound Town Centre - strategic diagram



Approach 2

2 Differentiated Centres

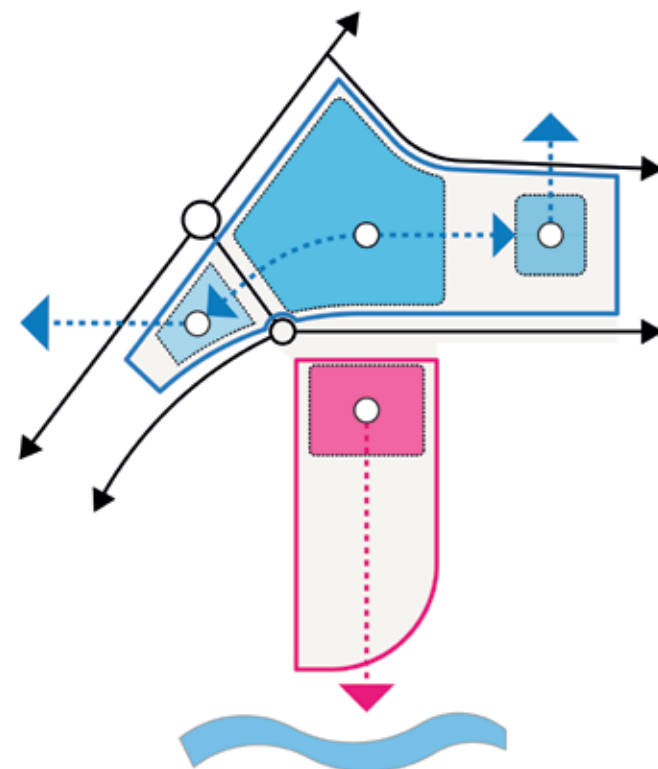
The strategy considers two different masterplans that will capitalise on the specific development opportunities of the combined Focus Areas 1 and 2, and an expanded Focus Area 3. The two distinct town centre hubs will be driven by differentiated yet complementary regeneration strategies. Key design and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

Shannon North - Gateway

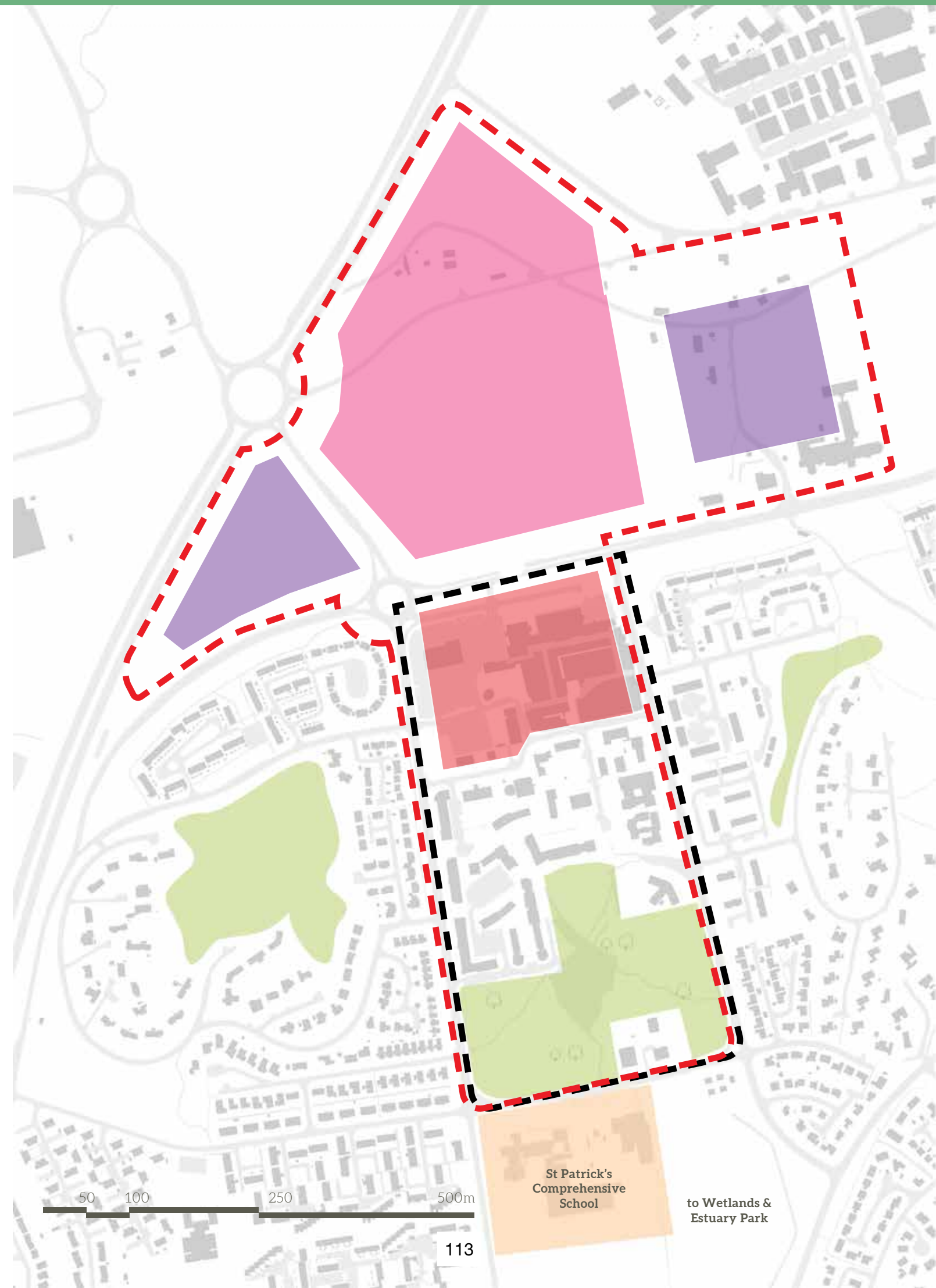
- Creating a regional (or national) centre of excellence and economic hub.
- Developing spaces for a range of innovative and creative economic activities with a focus on research and development, provision of services to Shannon airport, and advanced manufacturing and logistics.
- Establishing direct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

Shannon South - Urban Centre and Destination

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



2 Differentiated Centres - strategic diagram

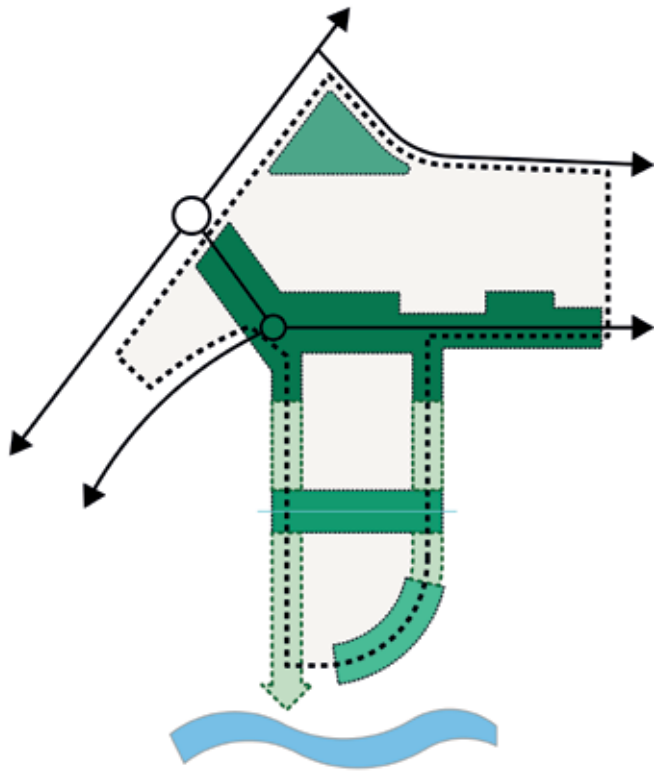


Approach 3

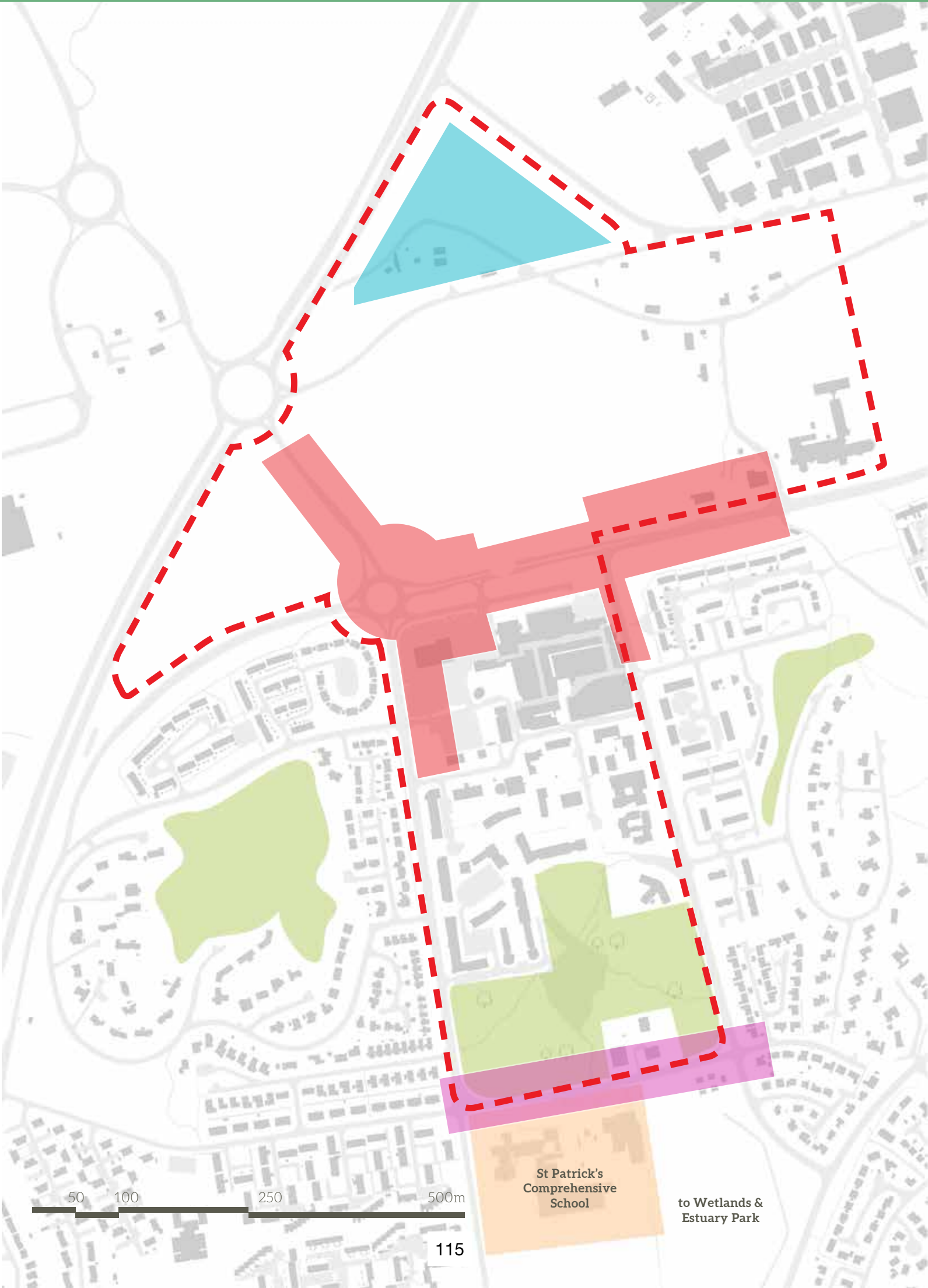
Upcycling the Grid - Urban Frontages

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

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



Upcycling the Grid - strategic diagram

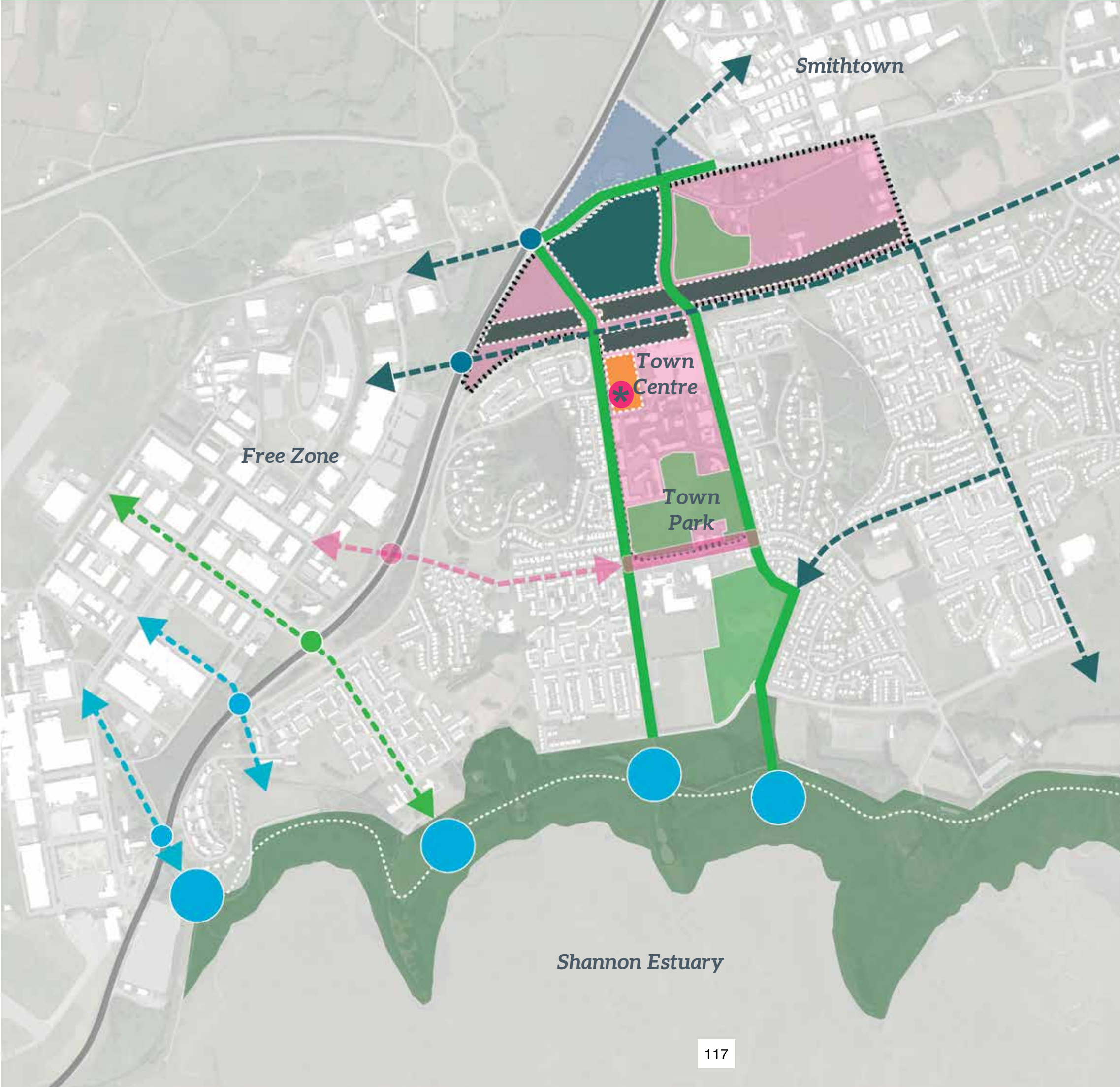


Summary of Development Frameworks

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

An improved Town Centre strengthened by diverse uses, active streets, a revitalised public realm, new connections to the north and improved green connections to the Estuary form the basis of this framework.

- Core intervention area
- Main Street
- High Quality Residential
- Innovation Campus
- Future expansion
- One Shannon Hub



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

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

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

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

A **mixture** of new high-quality residential housing types

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

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

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

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



Artist's Impression on Completed Masterplan



07

Intervention Areas

Illustrative Masterplan

The Masterplan for Shannon Town Centre is comprised of several districts which have potential future land uses, proposed improvements to public realm, and new connections to strengthen connectivity in the Town Centre and throughout Shannon.

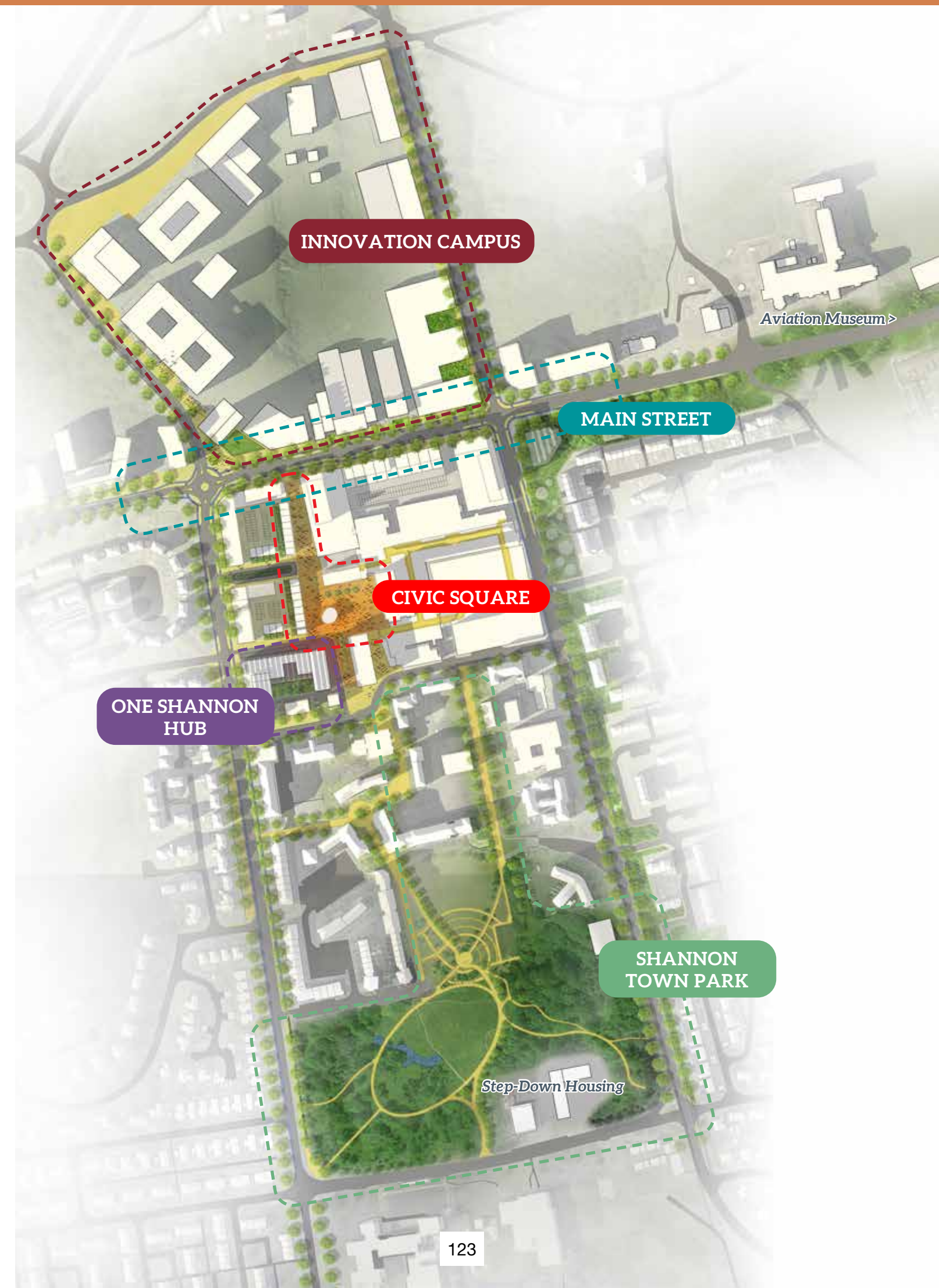
The Innovation Campus is proposed at the northernmost portion of the Masterplan, and places buildings along main roads to define frontages, whilst maintaining a wide and open green space in the centre which could be used as a future park.

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

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

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

The Shannon Town Park will remain as it currently is, as a key amenity for Shannon providing a variety of recreational and cultural opportunities for residents of Shannon. There is potential for Step-Down housing to be located in a redeveloped portion of land adjacent to the current Fire Station.



Innovation Campus

The Masterplan has identified the lands to the North of the Town Centre as potential future growth of the town environs, this represents many opportunities in terms of a transitional link from an urban to a rural context while providing a key amenity for local use.

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

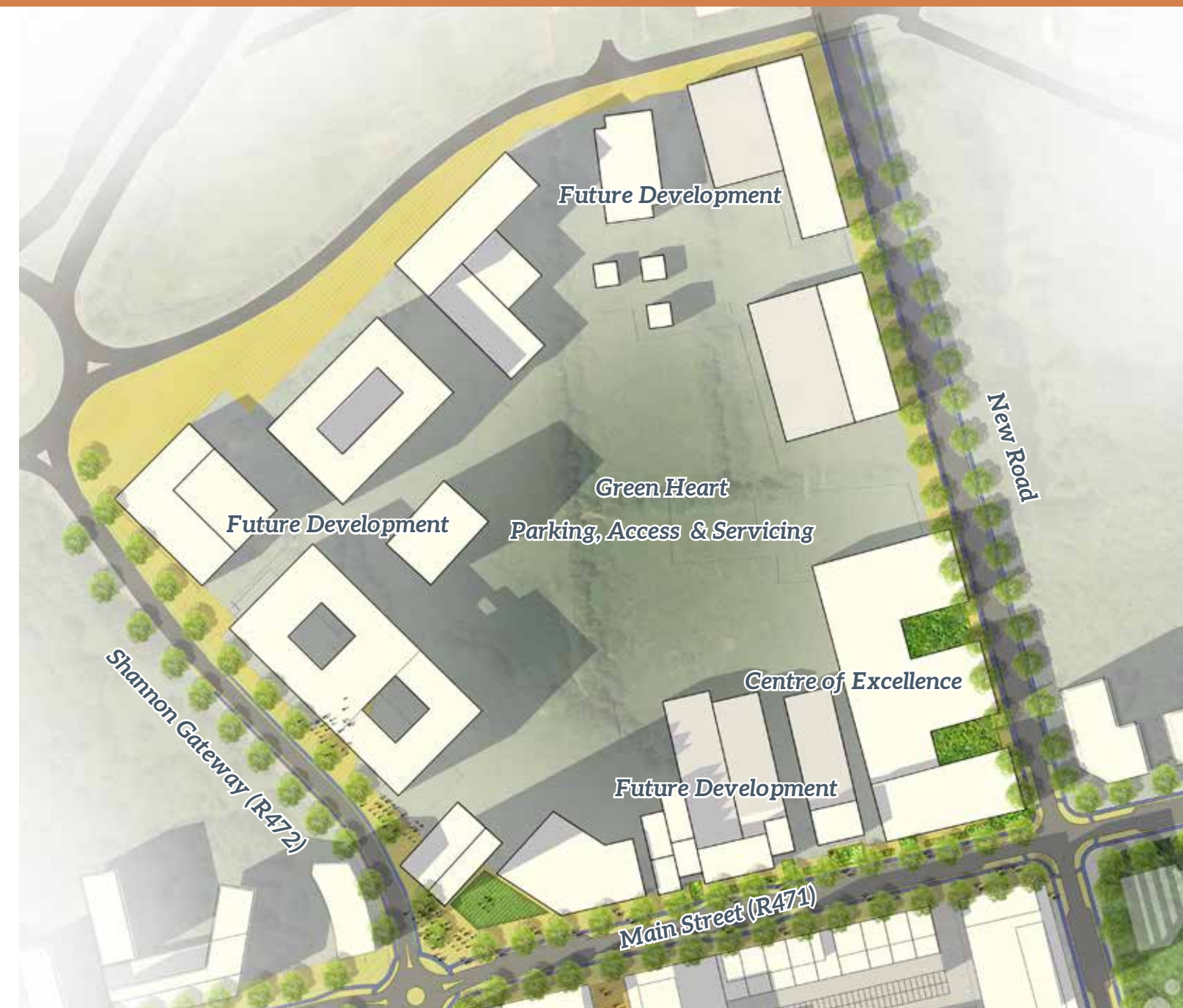
It is important to create a distinctive environment on arrival to Shannon, the area should be developed to create a unique character, reinforced by local identity and promoting development that is sensitive to existing landscape features. This area will become a local amenity with its biodiverse landscape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

A new road link is proposed along the eastern edge of the Innovation Campus, connecting Shannon Town Centre north towards Smithstown Road. Parking and access will be provided from this new road link.

Connections to the south will be improved with the creation of the new 'Main Street' which will be a pedestrian-prioritised refurbishment of the R471 road which currently separates the lands north of the Town Centre from the Town Centre itself.

A smaller and more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly roundabout will connect the R471 to the R472 and onto the N19 Motorway). This will be the new gateway to Shannon for visitors arriving from the Airport or from the N19 Motorway. Landmark architecture should welcome visitors and residents and give a sense of arrival.

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



Key Plan



Manufacturing & Design District, Piedmont, Italy



Jefferson Innovation District, Los Angeles



Artis's Impression of the District

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



Ulster Carpets & Dyehouse Energy Centre, Northern Ireland



Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design, Atlanta



Urban Bloom Innovation District, Shanghai



National College for Rail, Birmingham

Main Street

It is proposed to improve and make the R471 road passing through Shannon Town Centre more pedestrian friendly, and redesign the roundabout linking it with the R472 (connecting to N19). This would allow the road to become a street focusing on pedestrians, cyclists, and enable new retail and service amenities to have a presence to the street. The new, smaller roundabout would serve as a gateway to Shannon Town Centre, and have dedicated cycle lanes for safety.

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

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

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



Chatham Street, Dublin



New Road, Brighton



BMC Street and Square, Bergen, Norway



Key Plan



Stroget, Copenhagen, Denmark



Street Furniture and Paving, Clonakilty



Artis's Impression of the New Street

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



Pembroke Street, Cork

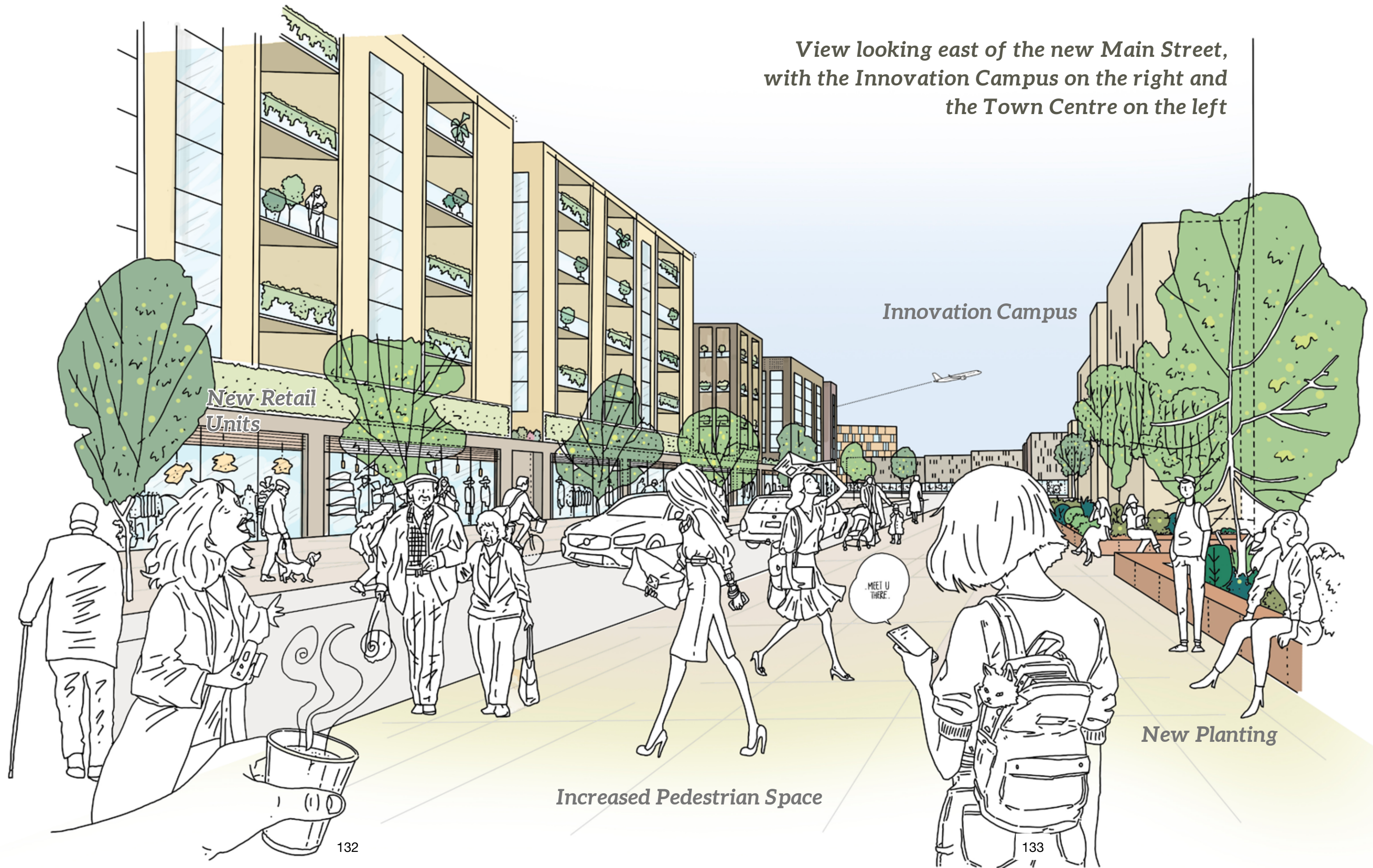


Mariahilferstrasse, Vienna



Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork

*View looking east of the new Main Street,
with the Innovation Campus on the right and
the Town Centre on the left*



New Town Square

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

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

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

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



Derry City Centre Square



Green Square & Library, Sydney



Woolwich Square, London



Key Plan



Derry City Centre Square



Capital Dock, Dublin



Artis's Impression of the Square

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



City Centre Square, Derry



Emmet Square Park, Clonakilty, Cork



Theatre Square, Rotterdam



Informal Seating, Row DTLA, Los Angeles

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

High Quality Housing

High Quality Housing

One Shannon Hub

Chapel

New Town Square

One Shannon Hub

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

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

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



Key Plan



Milton Keynes Shopping Centre



Spijkenisse Public Library - interior view



Spijkenisse Theatre - public square



Library Cultural Centre LexIcon Dun Laoghaire



Bokenberg Library, Spijkenisse, Netherlands



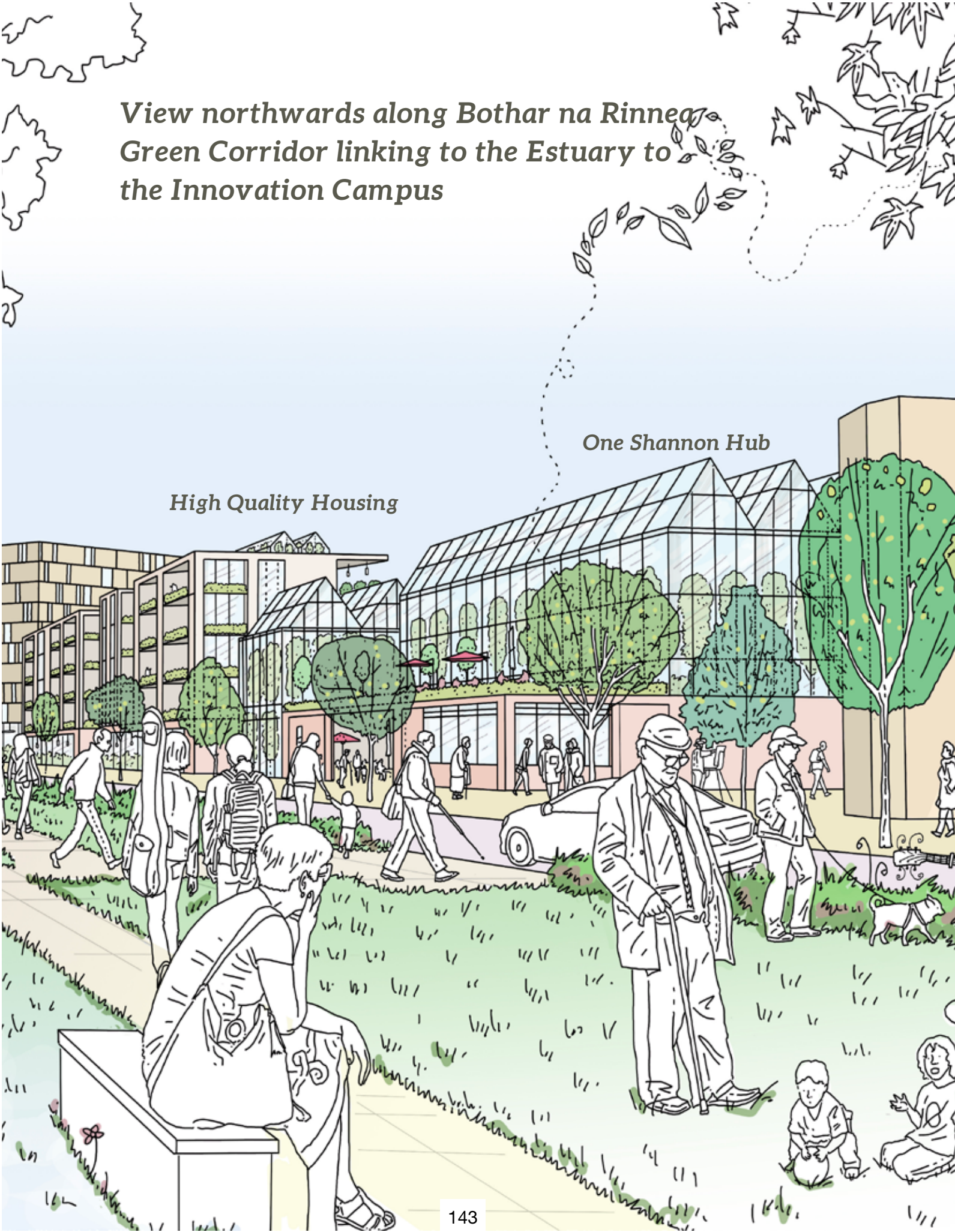
Library and Civic Centre, Athlone



Artis's Impression of the One Shannon Hub

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

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



One Shannon Hub

High Quality Housing

Shannon Town Park

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

The potential for Step-Down housing is proposed on the existing Area Office adjacent to the Fire Station. Development on this shall occur only after an alternative location for the existing Local Authority machinery yard is obtained in Shannon.



Shannon Town Park Today



Potential Step-Down Housing in Shannon Town Park



Signage in the Shannon Town Park



Key Plan



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

Improved Public Realm & Parking Strategy

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

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

This redistribution of vehicles means that car parking will still be possible for visitors to the Town Centre, however, the urban landscape will not be completely dominated by vehicles as it is today.



Grafton Street, Dublin



Clanbrassil Street, Dundalk



Shannon Town Centre Today - Built and Unbuilt Space



Future Shannon Town Centre - Built and Unbuilt Space



Shannon Town Centre Today



Artist's Impression of Future Shannon Town Centre

08

Implementation & Next Steps

Implementation

Implementation Strategy

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

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

The Masterplan developed by Clare County Council sets out key urban design and public realm principles that will underpin a vision for future growth and transformation. Importantly the plan provides an integrated urban development approach underpinned by an economic viability assessment to enable the Local Authority leverage a range of funding opportunities and at EU and National Level eg URDF. In addition the plan provides a clear focus for the delivery of a number of key intervention areas and projects that if implemented will result in a transformational change to the economic, social and cultural development of Shannon as well as to the Built environment and public realm. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the implementation steps to transforming the vision in this Masterplan to project delivery in a plan-led approach.

Chapter 3 of the Masterplan identified the landownership and in particular the absence of lands in the town centre under Local Authority control. In developing a roadmap for implementation, it must be noted that Clare County Council will rely significantly on the ability to leverage development from individual landowners to promote interventions in the town centre in accordance with the objectives of the Masterplan. A key element of implementation however will be the acquisition of key sites by the

Local Authority to harness early development opportunities, further emphasising the commitment by Clare County Council to the implementation of this Masterplan.

The following sets out the implementation stages of the plan:

- Obtain endorsement from key stakeholders.
- Establish a Dedicated Implementation Company eg DAC with the sole focus on driving the implementation of the Masterplan.
- Establish a dedicated project team to manage the detailed design development of the masterplan.
- Design a comprehensive engagement strategy that enables a collaborative approach for the next stages of development of the project.
- Develop a marketing strategy to attract potential investors.
- Enhance collaboration and existing networks between Local Authority, Enterprise, Industry, Shannon Chamber and State Agencies to focus on delivery.
- Deliver early wins, with a focus on enhancement of public realm and open spaces.
- Clare County Council to acquire ownership of strategic enabling sites in the town centre, in particular the site of proposed for the One Shannon Hub.

- Develop a brief and programme for the One Shannon Hub, together with a funding and delivery plan.
- Prepare an Application under URDF and a range of other funding sources for town centre development.
- Develop a public realm framework for the town centre and linkages with Shannon Free Zone (west and east), Smithstown, Shannon Estuary and wider regional destinations.
- Define objectives and principles for a decarbonisation strategy for the town centre.
- Develop a sustainable mobility strategy in liaison with Shannon Airport and Shannon’s employment areas and the owners of the shopping centre
- Enhance pedestrian and cycle connectivity from the town centre to the estuary, estuary greenway (the Shannon Loop), and neighbouring employment areas.
- Develop an urban design guide for future development, with an emphasis on a zero carbon approach.
- Design and implement investment incentives and investigate possibility of utilising the Section 47/48 Contribution scheme for reduced and incentivised such as zero development contributions for town center developments

- Identify opportunities for public funding via the URDF, and prepare applications for projects such as the One Shannon Hub, urban design works, the new road along the eastern edge of the Innovation Campus, or any key enabling works
- Establish a partnership approach to deliver private-sector led housing development in the area
- Design a development strategy for the Innovation Campus. Establish principles for a collaborative approach between Clare County Council and the current owner of the site. CCC in collaboration with landowner, market promote etc this area as the key destination in Shannon for the merging of training and enterprise and innovation
- Seek alternative location in Shannon for Council Machinery yard compound.
- Work in partnership with housing agencies, voluntary sector, older persons network to development proposals for independent living development on site of Shannon MD offices following relocation of offices to town centre.
- Investigate possibility of acquisition by Clare County Council of the new town centre plaza.
- Develop a Brand for Shannon Town Centre

Environmental Assessments

Appropriate Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

Strategic Environmental Assessment

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



09

Appendix

Milton Keynes, UK

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

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

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

The Commission has proposed to underpin the delivery of its vision for an inclusive growth for Milton Keynes with 6 projects:

- **Hub of the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford Arc** - Creating a knowledge intensive cluster and promoting closer collaboration with Cambridge and Oxford.
- **MK:IT** - A new university with a focus on research, practice and life-long learning in partnership with other national and international



MK:IT - proposed university campus

- institutions.
- **Learning 2050** - creating a collaborative framework between secondary schools, parents, businesses and other sources of support to improve accessibility to quality secondary education for all of the city's students.
 - **Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility** - Transport for all, integrating technology, new spaces for sustainable mobility and an improved public transport service.
 - **Renaissance:CMK** - Harnessing investment for high quality projects in the centre, location of MK:IT and integrated city-wide linkages.
 - **The Creative and Cultured City** - Harnessing the creative energy of local residents via cultural and sporting events and festivals.

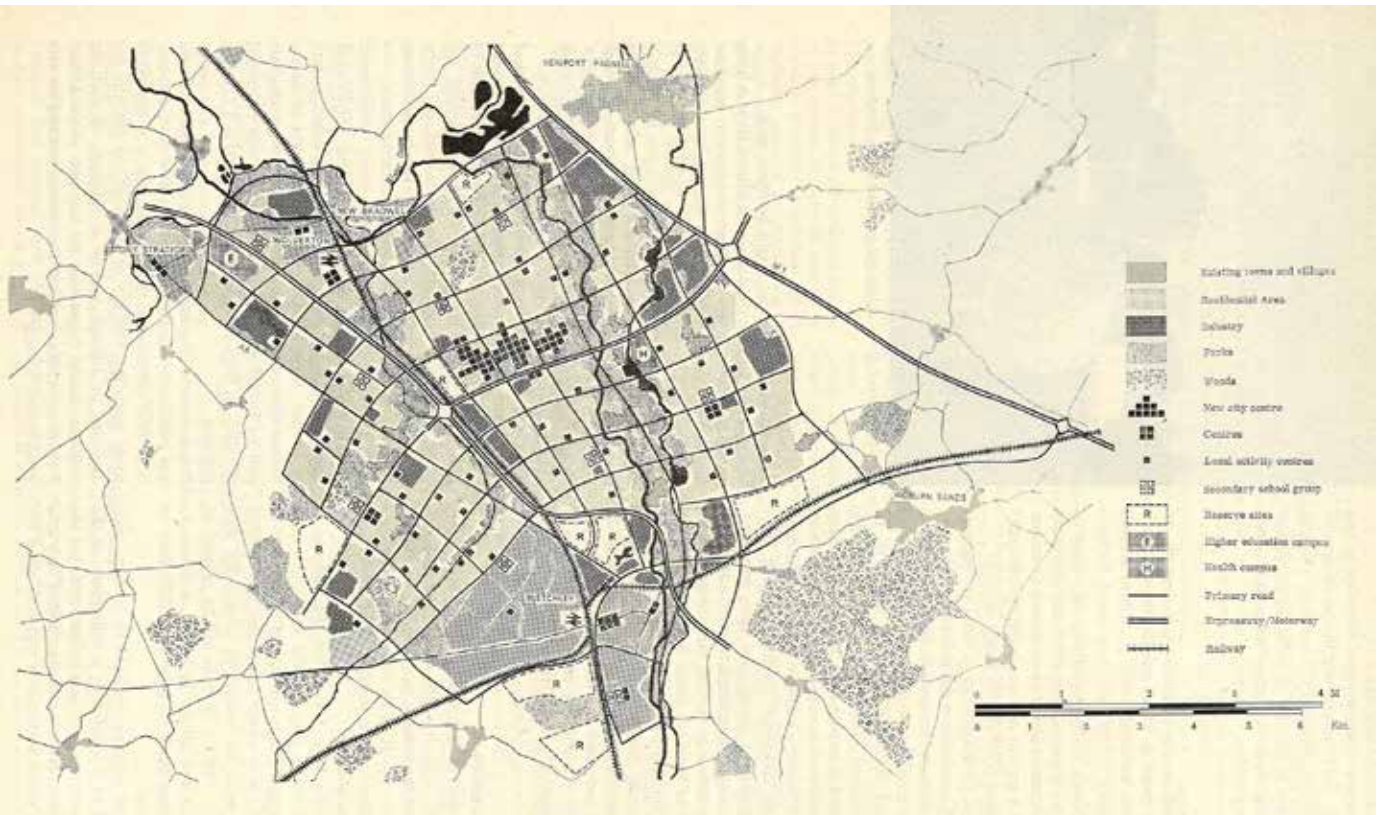
The delivery of these projects will rely on strong commitment and leadership from the Council, setting up a development body, establishing strong partnerships with the private sector, using land value uplifts, and secure support from Central Government via a 'new deal' for regional growth.

Key lessons;

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



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



Milton Keynes masterplan

Bracknell, UK

In the context of history, Bracknell is one of 9 of the original New Towns for the 50's and 60's, a construct of a brave new world following the Second World War. From the energy and excitement of the 50's Bracknell expanded periodically, based loosely on the original masterplan. However development was piece meal, and there were a number of developments and discussions that were harmful to the success of the Town.

By the mid 1990's it was clear that the Town centre was in need of significant redevelopment, streets where overly wide, they lead to underwhelming and uninviting underpasses or elevated walkways, the connections between the north and south of the Town where unimaginably poor. The built fabric was typified by concrete, hard public realm and a stark artificial environment. When the limited number of shops that remained closed at 5pm the Town Centre was dead, there was absolutely no evening economy, no destination for the circa 80,000 people that live in Bracknell. Not only was the town and its stature and reputation decaying, the fragmented ownership prevented comprehensive development and limited cohesive design and architectural themes all affected confidence and community spirit.

Throughout the next 2 decades the landowners and council tried to redevelop the Town centre with various schemes, typically introverted shopping centres, without success. During this protracted period of the promise of redevelopment the buildings deteriorated, shops shut and less people came to the Town Centre.

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

The masterplan that was developed sought to repair the issues of the past with a tried and tested typology based on streets and



spaces, rebelling against the stereotypical internalised mall previously proposed. The result is a softened, naturalised and welcoming environment with generous landscaping and living walls. The scale of transformation is ground breaking, evident with approximately 2/3 of buildings demolished and re-envisioned.

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

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

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



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



The Lexicon. Views of external spaces



Almere, The Netherlands

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

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

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

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



Almere 2030 view



Almere Floriade 2022

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

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



Almere Town Centre. Masterplan



Almere Town Centre. View of outdoor spaces



Almere Town Centre. Centrum



Almere Town Centre. Aerial view

Hoogvliet, Netherlands

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

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

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

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

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

A number of social initiatives, aimed at establishing a new sense of the collective, explored living



Estate Hoogvliet Villa

arrangements that responded to the specific needs of different social groups. This established the basis for future cohousing developments such as the Musicians’ Housing project, where 38 houses are arranged around a central ‘hill’ with a music room for each dwelling.

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

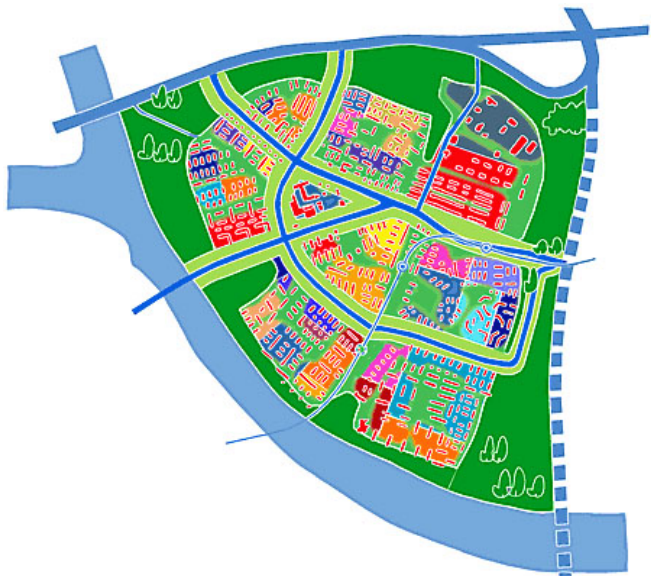
Lastly, a Summer Park, the Estate Hoogvliet, was designed, built and managed by local groups of residents. At its heart, the Villa provides space for a variety of events, festivals and gatherings, creating a place for collective and inclusive coming together.



Estate Hoogvliet Park



Co-housing for musicians



Logica spatial framework



Chill Hill

Spijkenisse, The Netherlands

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

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

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

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

Another key aspect of the town's regeneration strategy has been the upgrade or upcycling of its housing stock, driven by the aim of creating less uniform and more attractive living environments,



Spijkenisse Public Library - interior view



Spijkenisse Theatre - public square

and improving their sustainability by, for example, increasing the energy efficiency of existing and future houses. Some of the earlier housing developments have been demolished and rebuilt by housing associations. For more recent developments, many of which are owner-occupied, the municipality of Nissewaard has triggered "investments in order to make our houses and neighbourhoods more attractive, more sustainable and more suitable for an ageing population."

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



Spijkenisse Public Library - the Book Mountain



Spijkenisse Theatre

Lessons Learned

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



- Use educational institutions and cultural projects as drivers for change.
- Prioritise inclusive development - a masterplan for all.
- Introduce an agenda for zero carbon development and circularity.

