

4

A Strong Economy



4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to support the growth of employment and enterprise, retail, tourism and the marine economy in Limerick, in a manner, which ensures that economic development does not impact adversely on the environment. The future growth, resilience and competitiveness of Limerick's economy is dependent on a range of factors. Such factors include export-led growth, a diverse sectoral mix, indigenous enterprise and foreign direct investment, innovation, infrastructure, skills/ talent and a high quality of life to attract and retain a future labour supply. This Strong Economy chapter sets out a framework for economic growth, which encompasses a range of key economic sectors across the City and County, in accordance with national, regional and local policies.

4.2 Policy Context

The strong national focus on economic recovery in recent years has filtered through to local government generally and the land-use planning process specifically. For example, the RSES now provides the regional level economic policy to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework, which itself is aligned with the Government's national enterprise policy document *Enterprise 2025- Renewed (2018)*. The Southern Region RSES economic vision is 'to enable sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient growth'.

The RSES sets out guiding principles to identify suitable locations for strategic employment development and recommends that these principles are applied by Local Authorities in the preparation of Development Plans. As the largest urban centre in the Mid-West, the NPF supports ambitious growth targets to enable Limerick City to grow by at least 50% to 2040. The Limerick-Shannon MASP established that Limerick City and Shannon are interdependent, with their complementary functions contributing to a combined strength, that is a key economic driver for the region and Ireland. Limerick Regeneration, the amalgamation of Limerick City and County and the Limerick 2030 initiative have all contributed to enhancing Limerick's growth potential. Working together with, inter alia, Higher Education Institutions, Regional Enterprise Plan and Regional Skill Forum initiatives, Shannon International Airport and the Shannon-Foynes Port Company, there is capacity to build on recent successes and add to the ambitious vision for this Metropolitan Area.

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4.3 Employment Sectors

Census 2016 shows that the largest employer in Limerick City and County is the Professional Services sector with 25% of the workforce employed in the sector, which is higher than the national average of 23.5%. This is followed by Commerce and Trade (21.4%) and Manufacturing (14.9%), which is similar to national trends. The contribution of manufacturing to employment in Limerick City and County is much higher than the national average of 11.4%, highlighting the historical importance of the sector in Limerick. The Transport and Communications sector experienced the largest growth (13.8%) in the City and County since 2011. This was followed by growth in Professional Services (9.9%) and Manufacturing (7%).

4.3.1 Active Enterprises

Data from the CSO's Business Demography show that in 2018, there were 9,437 active enterprises in Limerick City and County. This has increased by 4.9% over the 10 year period since 2008. The three largest economic sectors in Limerick are Construction, Wholesale and Retail Trade and Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities.

The *Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick* has the ambition to create a City Centre that can attract new inward business investment and encourage the formation of new local business by providing high quality, flexible space. The Draft Plan focuses on a range of sectors which will contribute to the future economic

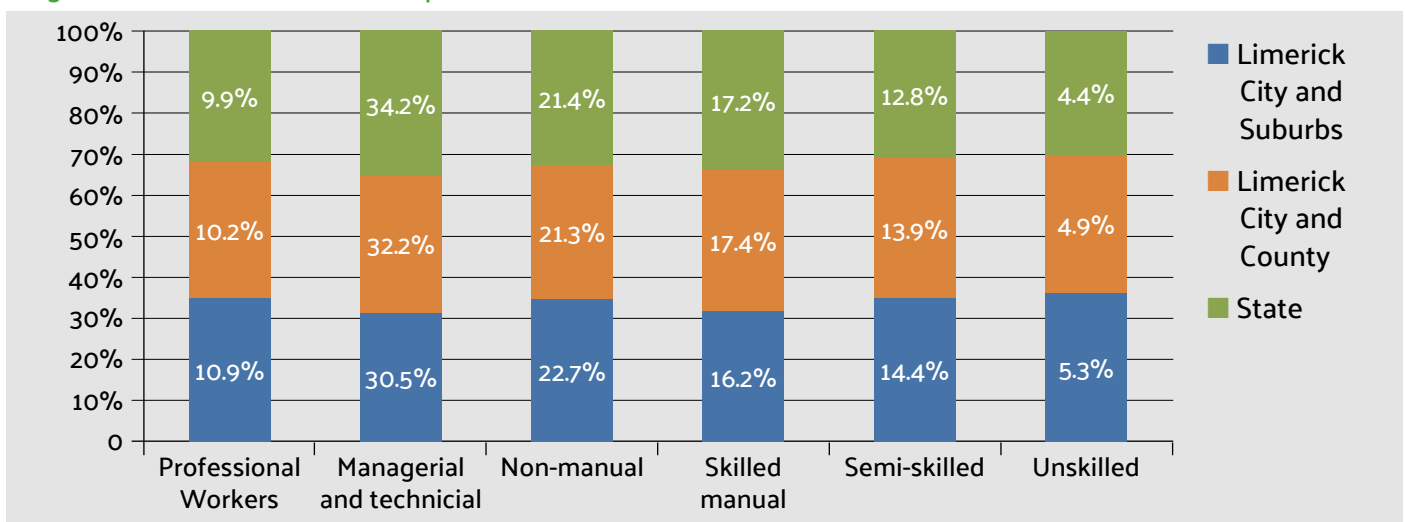
growth of Limerick, including professional services, ICT, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and logistics among others.

4.3.2 Identification of Sufficient Zoned Lands

While population and employment are important indicators of the urban structure, where the jobs are located is also important for giving insight into future growth. The ratio of jobs to residents is indicative of the performance of an area in terms of attracting workers from a wider catchment area. The analysis undertaken as part of the NPF shows that the urban areas in the Southern Region have an average jobs to resident workers ratio of 1.06. Limerick City and Suburbs, Abbeyfeale and Kilmallock all have higher jobs to resident workers rates, which highlights their importance as employment locations and their ability to attract workers from other areas.

The Draft Plan seeks to protect and promote the strategic employment locations identified in the RSES. Chapter 10: Compact Growth and Revitalisation identifies opportunity sites for future development. In line with the Core Strategy, the Draft Plan considers how best to ensure that there are sufficient zoned lands available in appropriate locations, to support the range of future employment needs for Limerick.

Figure 4.1 Socio-Economic Group, Limerick and State 2016



Source: CSO, Census 2016

4.4 Strategy

The success of economic growth in Limerick is intertwined with maintaining and enhancing its attractiveness as a high quality place to live, work and visit. It is this wider package, which includes everything from high quality public transport, availability of housing, education infrastructure, quality place-making and heritage, culture, recreational and community facilities, which will ultimately attract business. In spatial terms, the Limerick employment strategy aims to provide for the expansion of employment through the designation of a range of highly accessible employment locations. The Employment Strategy of this Draft Plan seeks to align strategic employment locations with public transport corridors, increasing the efficiency of land-use, reducing sprawl and minimising carbon footprints and seeks to retain and enhance the important role of employment in Limerick City and Environs and the County's Town Centres.

From a sectoral perspective the Draft Plan aims to support and facilitate the economic development of Limerick across a broad range of sectors, while acknowledging in particular the importance of the knowledge economy. The focus on employment creation is based on consolidating the strong job generation capacity of professional services, ICT, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and logistics technology and knowledge based industries. In addition, the Draft Plan provides for a wide range of employment needs to ensure that people with a diverse range of skill levels can both find and help grow employment opportunities. Furthermore, the Council will seek to work in conjunction with state agencies and the government to support and facilitate education, upskilling and job creation programmes.

Policy ECON P1

Strong Economy

It is a policy of the Council to support the review and implementation of *Limerick 2030 – An Economic and Spatial Plan* to guide the economic, social and physical renaissance of Limerick City Centre and the wider County/Mid-West Region.

Policy ECON P2

Economic Development and Enterprise

It is a policy of the Council to work in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, adjoining Local Authorities, the Regional Assembly and all other relevant agencies to promote, facilitate and enable sustainable enterprise and economic development, in line with the policies and objectives as set out in national, regional and local strategies.

Policy ECON P3

Urban Economy

It is a policy of the Council to:

- a) Promote, facilitate and enable economic development and employment generating activities in Limerick City Centre, at Strategic Employment Locations and other appropriately zoned locations in a sustainable manner.
- b) Facilitate the future sustainable economic development of Limerick City and Environs to optimise the benefits of its strategic location in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area, in accordance with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

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Policy ECON P4**Retail**

It is a policy of the Council to support the sustainable long-term growth of the retail sector, in accordance with the Core and Retail Strategies of the Draft Plan, including the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities* and the accompanying *Retail Design Manual* published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in 2012 and the *Draft Retail Strategy* for the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick in determining planning applications for retail development.

Policy ECON P5**Enterprise and Employment Development Opportunities**

It is a policy of the Council to promote and facilitate opportunities for sectoral development in Limerick, to increase productivity, create employment and to diversify the economy and ensure future economic resilience.

Policy ECON P6**Tourism**

It is a policy of the Council to:

- a) Promote and facilitate the growth of the tourism industry in Limerick and tourism employment opportunities, through the sustainable development of urban and rural visitor attractions, amenities, facilities, festivals and events.
- b) Support the *Limerick Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023*, the *Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick* and the *River Shannon Tourism Masterplan*, which inform the development of tourism in Limerick.

Policy ECON P7**Marine Economy**

It is a policy of the Council to promote, encourage and facilitate the growth and competitiveness of the Marine Economy in Limerick in a sustainable manner, which continues to protect the environment.

In implementing the strategic policies outlined above, this chapter is divided into four sections as follows:

- Section 1: Retail
- Section 2: Enterprise and Employment
- Section 3: Tourism
- Section 4: Marine Economy

**Unless specifically stated the general policies apply to both urban and rural areas.

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Section 1:

Retail

4.5 National and Regional Context

The Draft Plan supports the role of Limerick's City, towns and villages as vibrant centres, which provide a range of services for the community. The retail sector is vital to the economic, social and cultural life of Limerick. According to the Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy, in addition to being a significant employer and economic contributor, the retail sector plays a key role in place-making and creating attractive, liveable environments. The retail sector is central to strong mixed-use commercial cores, throughout the network of settlements and can play a key role in regeneration, vitality and viability of the core area.

The importance of the retail sector is reflected in national and regional planning policy, which seeks to ensure that existing and new retail development is carried out in accordance with the overall principles of proper planning and sustainable development. The strategic framework for a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to retail growth in Limerick and the wider region are set out in:

- *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region;*
- *The Retail Strategy for the Mid-West Region 2010 – 2016;*
- *Draft Retail Strategy for Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick;*
- *The 2012 Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (RPGs), with its companion document, Retail Design Manual.*

4.5.1 Draft Retail Strategy for Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region required the preparation of a Joint Retail strategy for the Metropolitan Area. The Draft Retail Strategy for Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick forms the basis for retail planning as set out in Volume 6 of the Draft Plan. It is an objective of the MASP to support Limerick City Centre in maintaining its dominant retail function in the Mid-West hierarchy. The RSES supports and promotes the continued expansion and enhancement of retail development within the City Centre.

A key aim of the strategy is to ensure that Limerick City fulfils its role at the top of the regional hierarchy as the preferred location for new retail development. The Strategy supports the retail hierarchy and outlines the location, quantity and type of retail required in support of the settlement hierarchy of the Draft Plan. The Strategy identifies any requirements for additional retail floor space, based on population projections and income and having regard to the degree of vacancy in existing retail areas.

The retail hierarchy is set out in the Draft Retail Strategy for Limerick – Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick as set out in Volume 6. The retail hierarchy aligns with the settlement hierarchy of the Draft Plan. The purpose of the retail hierarchy is to indicate the level and form of retailing activity appropriate to the various centres across Limerick, to protect each centre's vitality and viability, while allowing each centre to perform its role within the hierarchy. The hierarchy emphasises the primacy of the City Centre in accordance with the objectives of the MASP.

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Table 4.1a:
The Retail Hierarchy for Limerick

Tier	Level	Location	Status
Tier 1 - City Centre	-	Limerick City Centre	City Centre
Tier 2 - Major Town Centres	-	Newcastle West	Key Service Town
Tier 3 - Town Centres	Level 1	Abbeyfeale	Service Town
	Level 2	Adare	Service Town
		Kilmallock	Service Town
		Rathkeale	Service Town
Tier 4 - Large Villages	Level 1	Castleconnell	Large Villages
		Caherconlish	Large Villages
	Level 2	Askeaton	Large Villages
Tier 5 - Local/Corner Shops	-	Smaller villages/crossroads – rural shops (post offices, creameries, public houses, filling stations, etc.)	Local/Corner Shops

Table 4.1b:
Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Retail Hierarchy

Tier	Level	Location	Status
Tier 1 - City Centre	-	Limerick City Centre	City Centre
Tier 2 - Major Town Centres	Level 1	Dooradoyle (Crescent shopping centre)	District Centre
	Level 2	Caherdavin (Jetland shopping centre)	District Centre
		Shannon (Skycourt shopping centre)	Metropolitan town
		Castletroy	District Centre
		Parkway	District Centre
		Roxboro	District Centre
		Moyross	District Centre

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4.6 Retail in Limerick

4.6.1 Retail in the City Centre and Environs

The retail sector is essential to the vitality of Limerick City Centre. The sector provides goods and services as well as employment and income for the local economy. Retail and services play a key role in place-making and creating attractive livable environments, enabling strong mixed-use urban cores and facilitating regeneration. Unfortunately, the retail sector in Limerick City Centre has been in decline in recent decades, with the sector migrating to the purpose built out of town shopping centres and increasingly to an online platform. The retail and services sector remains however, a significant employer and economic contributor in the Metropolitan Area.

An objective of the Limerick Shannon MASP is to promote the Metropolitan Area as a cohesive area, with the City Centre as the primary location at the heart of the area and region. The City Centre is to be the primary commercial area, supporting a range of retail, tourism, social and cultural activities. Limerick City Centre is to be repositioned at the top of the retail hierarchy, through improving the range and quality of shopping on offer and creating an enhanced customer experience of visiting the City Centre.

The core retail area comprises Thomas Street/Bedford Row, William Street/Sarsfield Street, O'Connell Street/Patrick Street, Cruises Street, Roches Street, Henry Street and Catherine Street. This area is anchored by the Brown Thomas department store and general stores including Dunnes Stores and Penneys, as well as the Tesco supermarket at Arthur's Quay, which is the only purpose built shopping centre in the City Centre.

It is an objective of the Council to support improvements in the range and quality of shopping on offer, in the context of a much improved customer experience of visiting the City Centre as a whole. A contemporary shopping offer with leisure – food, drink and entertainment at the heart of the experience. This can be achieved by improving the shopping experience in the prime shopping area – in the vicinity of Brown Thomas, Penneys, Cruises Street and the Arthur's Quay Shopping Centre. This is the central city location that major multiple retailers would wish to locate in and is the focal point of the shopping quarter of Limerick.

4.6.2 Revitalising City Centre Retail

In accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, the Draft Retail Strategy for Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick will respond to the effects of suburban retail development by re-establishing the importance of Limerick City Centre at the top of the regional retail hierarchy. In this regard, Limerick City Centre is the preferred location for new retail development in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area.

The closure of businesses in the City Centre has resulted in a lack of maintenance of some vacant buildings, with urban decay evident on parts of some streets. It is vital to ensure that the City Centre is suitable to attract and retain retail and other businesses. A sense of place and high quality leisure market is required in the first instance, to allow the development of a more complementary mix of retail uses to follow, including boutique clothing, tech showrooms, local agri-food produce and creative arts and crafts shops.

Fostering mixed-use planning strategies, developing safe attractive and walkable areas with enhanced mobility and security will encourage people to visit the City Centre, build up a loyal customer base and set up businesses. These are cross cutting themes in the Draft Plan.

To successfully build resilience and revitalise a sustainable City Centre, the key themes in the Draft Plan aiming to improve Limerick City's offer and attractiveness include:

1. Ensuring a critical density of residential and workforce population in the City Centre;
2. Ease of mobility, particularly walkability and perceptions of safety;
3. Perception of the attractiveness of retail, commercial and leisure activities in the City Centre;
4. The strength of the City Centre as a destination for work and doing business;

5. The use and quality of public spaces in the City Centre, including the provision of public facilities such as public toilets, drinking water fountains and seating.

The continued progression of the projects in the Limerick 2030 Plan will act as a catalyst towards the revitalisation and regeneration of the City Centre. However, the prioritisation of objectives to increase footfall, dwell time and spend are required. A City Centre Revitalisation Manager has been appointed for the professional management of a citywide public sector led approach to revitalisation of the City Centre and retail sector.

Objective ECON 01 City Centre

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Ensure retail development complies with the Draft Retail Strategy for the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick as set out in Volume 6.
- b) Protect, promote, support and enhance the role of Limerick City Centre as the primary retail centre in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and Mid-West Region, in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.
- c) Enhance the vitality of the City Centre through a mixture of uses, reuse of vacant units, increased residential population and revitalisation. Retail is an integral part of the City's economy complementing its inherent strengths including innovation, enterprise, tourism, culture and services and has an important array of amenities, vibrancy, liveability/quality of life and quality-built environment. Development shall be designed so as to enhance the public realm and creation of a sense of place.

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4.6.3 Environs: Supporting City Centre Retail

The retail centres throughout the Environs of Limerick City serve the retail and service needs of the local population and in the case of the larger centres, the wider Mid-West Region. The success of the shopping centres in the Environs is in contrast to the stagnation and decline of the retail sector in the City Centre. The migration of retail footfall from the City Centre to the suburbs is exacerbated by the increasing trend towards on-line retailing. The successful growth of each out of Town Centre has the potential to adversely impact on the viability and vitality of the City Centre. Therefore, planning applications for out of centre retail units in excess of 1,000m² shall be considered in the context of a Retail Impact Assessment, demonstrating compliance with the capacity for retail floor space, the area requirements and other criteria set out in the Draft Retail Strategy. While the role of the retail centres in the Environs is recognised, these areas should support and compliment the role of the City Centre at the top of the retail hierarchy.

The provision of retail and services in the Environs is essential to ensure the development of sustainable communities and the vitality of the Environs. Choice in retail and services such as pharmacies, medical facilities and food outlets has increased significantly in recent years. Convenience and comparison shopping including retail warehousing is available throughout the Environs. A number of District and Local Centres have developed in tandem with new residential areas.

New retail floor area in the Environs should incorporate the redevelopment of vacant commercial units. The opportunity exists for the out of Town Centres to gradually diversify with a more balanced mix of residential uses and employment spaces alongside the retail and leisure facilities. Such diversification will respect the priority of the City Centre in the Retail Hierarchy, while allowing improved integration with the surrounding land uses.

Objective ECON O2 Limerick Environs Retail

It is an objective of the Council to ensure proposals which would undermine the vitality and viability of Limerick City Centre will not be permitted. The sequential approach to retail development set out in the *Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012* will be enforced, in the interests of supporting the City Centre at the top of the retail hierarchy. Any retail development in the District or Local Centres or Retail Warehousing zone shall comply with the Retail Strategy.

4.6.4 District Centres

The Crescent Shopping Centre in Dooradoyle acts as a Tier 2, Level 1 centre serving as a retail destination at a regional level. There are also a number of other Tier 2, Level 2 District Centres throughout the Environs, including the Jetland Shopping Centre, Castletroy Shopping Centre, Coonagh Shopping Centre, the Parkway Shopping Centre, the Childers Road complex and Roxboro Shopping Centre.

The District Centres should progressively develop as mixed-use urban centres to include residential, supporting services and commercial office components where appropriate. Any proposed retail development in a District Centre shall comply with the specific objectives set out in the Draft Retail Strategy under Volume 6 of the Draft Plan.

Objective ECON O3 District Centres

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Protect and enhance the mix of services and facilities in existing District Centres, which provide for the day-to-day needs of local communities in accordance with the Draft Retail Strategy.
- b) Enable development of the District Centres in accordance with the specific objectives and assessment criteria of the Draft Retail Strategy.

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- c) Require improvement to the quality of the public realm in any proposals for the Crescent Shopping Centre and the Castletroy Shopping Centre, including hard and soft landscaping.
- d) Promote improved pedestrian accessibility, permeability and safety within any proposed redevelopment works.
- e) Promote the redevelopment of the Roxboro Shopping Centre, enhance the overall appearance and public realm in line with the Draft Retail Strategy for the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick.

4.6.5 Local/Neighbourhood Centres

Local Centres or Neighbourhood Centres are defined in the Retail Guidelines as small groups of shops typically comprising a newsagent, small supermarket/general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population.

There are a number of Local Centres throughout the Environs of Limerick City, providing top-up (products that need replacing between main food shopping trips) and day-to-day shopping and service functions, including takeaway food. Local Centres play an important role in serving the needs of those without access to a car, particularly the elderly and constitute a sustainable provision of retailing, removing the need to travel and reducing levels of congestion.

The Local Authority will support and facilitate expansion of existing Local Centres where significant additional population growth is planned, or where a demonstrable gap in existing provision is identified in accordance with the Draft Retail Strategy. The opportunity exists for centres to gradually diversify, with a more balanced mix of residential uses and employment spaces alongside the retail and leisure facilities. Such diversification will respect the priority of the City Centre in the Retail Hierarchy, while allowing improved integration with the surrounding land uses.

Objective ECON 04

Local/Neighbourhood Centres Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Only consider the enlargement of existing Local/Neighbourhood Centre retail sites where it can be demonstrated that it serves a substantial residential catchment within walking distance of the centre and has a tangible urban renewal benefit for the community. Suitable floor space areas of new convenience food stores in these locations are considered to be up to 1,800m² of net retail space.
- b) Promote the development of new neighbourhood centres at Mungret, Ballysimon and Old Cork Road to serve a growing population within their catchment.
- c) Require all proposed retail developments in Local/Neighbourhood Centres to demonstrate compliance with the floor space capacity requirements set out in the Draft Retail Strategy. A retail impact assessment shall be carried out for all developments in excess of 1,000 m².
- d) Promote improved pedestrian accessibility, permeability and safety within any proposed development works.

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4.6.6 Retailing and Motor Fuel Stations

The size of the shop associated with any motor fuel station should take account of the fact that large shops can attract additional custom, large numbers of cars can cause disruption and the preferred location for retailing is in designated centres.

The Retail Planning Guidelines state that the size of such retail units should not exceed 100m². Therefore, where applications made for retail units associated with a motor fuel station are in excess of 100m² the sequential approach to retail development will apply.

Objective ECON O5

Retailing and Motor Fuel Stations

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the provision of motor fuel station shops of a maximum of 100m² net in designated centres, subject to compliance with all relevant planning criteria including traffic safety, as set out in the Development Management Standards of this Draft Plan.

4.6.7 Retail Warehousing

A retail warehouse is a large single-level retail store specialising in the sale of bulky household goods such as carpets, tiles, furniture, electrical goods and bulky DIY items, predominantly catering for car-borne customers. A retail park generally comprises a number of such warehouses. These are a number of retail parks located in Limerick including the Ennis Road Retail Park, Parkway Retail Park and Childer's Road Retail Park.

The Draft Plan will apply a cautionary approach to additional retail warehousing and will consider carefully any new proposals for additional retail warehouse floor space in terms of potential retail impact both on Limerick City, as well as on established retail warehousing cores. Applications for retail warehousing will be required to demonstrate that the proposal is accessible by public transport and that there is sufficient capacity in the local road network to accommodate the development.

Objective ECON O6

Retail Warehousing

It is an objective of the Council to ensure new retail warehousing floor space does not undermine the vitality and viability of Limerick City Centre. Retail warehousing shall comply with the requirements of the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012* and the *Draft Retail Strategy*.

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4.6.8 Key Town: Newcastle West

The role of the key town of Newcastle West is to strengthen the settlement pattern and act as the main driver of economic development and provider of services within this area of Limerick. The key town will support the development of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and act as a base for high quality transport links to the core in accordance with the RSES. Newcastle West will therefore play a critical role in the development of Limerick and ensure a consolidated spread of growth beyond the cities to the sub-regional level.

Newcastle West has been identified by the RSES as a Key Town and forms part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor, with special potential for economic growth. The RSES identifies the importance of supporting Newcastle West as a strategically located urban centre of significant sub-regional context and highlights that strong sub-regional interdependencies exist between Newcastle West, Listowel, Rathkeale and Abbeyfeale. Such interdependencies provide an opportunity for collaboration and economic growth, including opportunities for partnership projects.

Initiatives of the Atlantic Economic Corridor will support Newcastle West in realising its full potential, enhancing enterprise assets to support job creation, improve competitiveness, attract investment and create future economic growth.

Objective ECON 07 Newcastle West

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Support and promote the role of Newcastle West as a strategic urban centre of significant influence to realise the full potential of the town, including its role as part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor Initiative.
- b) Support the improvement of retail facilities in Newcastle West Town Centre, through the provision of modern shop units and a growth in floor space.
- c) Support opportunities for brownfield redevelopment to support mixed-use sustainable urban development, improve on and enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and increase its competitiveness with other retail destinations.
- d) In areas adjacent/contiguous to the core retail area to support the diversity of non-retail uses at street level contiguous to the core retail area, where such uses attract customers that complement the vitality and viability and bring linked trips to the Town Centre.

4.6.9 County Towns and Villages

Towns and villages are important economic drivers for their surrounding local areas and provide employment opportunities and crucial services for their residents including shops, post offices, Garda stations, petrol stations and small scale employment opportunities. Their functions and services can vary depending on their size, refer to Chapter 3: Settlement and Housing Strategy.

The RSES highlights that sustainable rural communities are dependent on viable and vibrant towns and villages. However, towns and villages in Limerick have faced challenges in relation to building vacancy, declining vibrancy and a loss of services including shops, pubs, post offices and Garda stations. Supporting enterprise and job creation and reversing population decline is crucial.

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In recent years, the Council, through Innovate Limerick, has taken a proactive and innovative approach to the development of enterprise and employment opportunities. This has included the development of enterprise hubs in towns and villages throughout County Limerick, including Rathkeale, Bruree and Broadford. These enterprise centres support start-ups, small businesses and provide facilities for enterprises to expand as they grow their number of employees. They also support local communities and provide a multiplier effect as they generate spend in the local towns and villages.

The retail sector is a key element of the vitality of the towns and villages in County Limerick and provides convenience shopping, either in small supermarkets, comparison shopping or small scale shops in the areas of hardware, pharmacies and clothes shops. It also an important factor in relation to attracting visitors towns and villages in County Limerick. The Local Authority will support and facilitate the development of retail in towns and village centres.

The retail sector is a key rural sector for services, regeneration of town and village centres, for employment creation and enterprise growth. The emphasis is on the need to build up the retailing core of settlements.

Objective ECON 08 **County Towns and Villages**

It is an objective of the Council to strongly support the strengthening of the vitality and viability of town and village centres to enhance economic growth, enterprise and employment opportunities.

4.6.10 Rural Retail

The emphasis of national and regional planning policy is to strengthen the core of town and village settlements for residential and economic growth. The retail sector is key for the sustainable development of services and regeneration of such centres. Retail in rural areas will therefore generally be directed into existing settlements and the development of the countryside for this purpose shall be resisted. However, small scale shops ancillary to a farm holding, selling produce from the farm may be considered, where it can be demonstrated that such use would not impact on the vitality of any settlement.

Objective ECON 09 **Rural Retail**

It is an objective of the Council to direct rural retail to existing town and village settlements. Rural shops that are not functionally or spatially connected to a settlement shall not be considered, except for exceptional circumstances where the development of certain types of retail units in rural areas could be acceptable. Small scale retail units may be considered on a case by case basis and subject to compliance with all relevant Development Management Standards for:

- Retail units which are ancillary to activities arising from farm diversification.
- Retail units which are designed to serve tourist or recreational facilities and are ancillary to the main use.
- Retail units attached to an existing or approved craft workshop.

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4.6.11 Casual Trading

Limerick City and County Council licenses casual traders to sell goods in public areas and designated trading areas. Designated areas include the street traders in the City Centre, Abbeyfeale Main Square and Newcastle West Main Square under the Casual Trading Act and the Casual Trading Bye-laws 1998. An Event Casual Trading Licence is required to sell goods at the vicinity of an event for the day or days an event is taking place and the location is at the discretion of the Gardaí and Local Authority.

The success of the existing casual trading area in Limerick City at the Milk Market and Cruises Street, demonstrates that there is a demand to broaden the location and mix of casual trading within the City. Casual trading is important throughout Limerick, contributing to the local economy, generating vibrancy and vitality and attracting tourists to the settlements. Such markets can enhance the retail offer and complement the existing retail and commercial uses in the settlements.

Objective ECON O10 Casual Trading Areas

It is an objective of the Council to designate sites as Casual Trading Areas in suitable locations where deemed appropriate.

4.6.12 Active Street Frontages

All sites in areas zoned City Centre, Town Centres, District Centres and Neighbourhood Centres may potentially be considered pivotal in creating a sense of vibrancy. The nature of the use of ground floor retail units will be required to reflect this in the design of their frontages, the use of the premises and where feasible, their hours of opening.

Objective ECON O11 Active Street Frontages

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Control the provision of non-retail uses at ground floor level in the principal shopping streets of Limerick City Centre, Town Centres and

District Centres and also within the shopping parades of mixed-use Local/ Neighbourhood Centres.

- b) Encourage the upgrade and refurbishment of existing retail units and the maintenance of original shopfronts, or the reinstatement of traditional shopfronts where poor replacements have been installed, discourage the use of external roller shutters, internally illuminated signs or inappropriate projecting signs.
- c) Prepare Shopfront Design Guidelines, within the lifetime of the Development Plan and ensure implementation of these guidelines on completion.
- d) Promote quality retail design which will be implemented through the development management process due to the dominant visual and use role it plays in a city, town or village streetscape in accordance with the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning (DoECLG, 2012)* and the accompanying *Retail Design Manual*.
- e) Promote the revitalisation and reuse of vacant or derelict properties and shop units. Where viable retail cannot be sustained then alternative uses for the property/unit will be considered.

4.6.13 Night Time Economy

The Council recognises the importance of the night time economy throughout Limerick, which is an important form of economic activity that occurs after 5pm and includes dining, nightlife, arts, music, theatre, entertainment, festivals, events, activities and tourist attractions that are open at night.

Objective ECON O12 Night Time Economy

It is an objective of the Council to support the development of the night time economy throughout Limerick and to prepare a night time strategy and ensure the implementation of this strategy on completion.

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Section 2:

Enterprise and Employment

4.7 Enterprise and Employment

4.7.1 National and Regional Context

The MASP supports Limerick City in becoming a major economic force in the Irish and international economy, a leading centre for commercial investment – both foreign direct investment and indigenous business growth, capitalising on the strengths of the city's higher education institutions and the skills of the workforce. The City Centre will be at the heart of this economic force – attracting retail, leisure, residential, commercial, educational and cultural growth. This growth will benefit all citizens across the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and wider Mid-West Region.

Newcastle West has been identified by the RSES as part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor, with the potential for future economic growth and is presented as a key town in this section. Newcastle West will play a critical role in underpinning the RSES and ensuring a consolidated spread of growth beyond the cities to the sub-regional level and in the Limerick 2030 Plan to complement the future growth of the Metropolitan Area.

The role of the other key towns in County Limerick is to strengthen the settlement pattern and act as the main drivers of economic development and significant providers of services within their respective sub-regions. They support the development of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and act as a base for high quality transport links to the core area of the region.

4.7.2 Strategic Employment Locations Limerick City and Environs

In accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area has capacity for economic growth of a significant scale at Strategic Employment Locations as briefly outlined in this section. The Local Authority is committed to the delivery of a vibrant and compact community where people live close to where they work in Limerick City Centre, which must be prioritised for investment. The strategic employment areas identified, support the objectives for compact growth of the settlement of Limerick City and Environs. These employment areas have potential for expansion and intensification and are linked to a critical mass of skilled workers, served by key infrastructure (water, wastewater, electricity, broadband etc.), with the potential for public and sustainable forms of transport to the City Centre. With an increase of critical mass in the City and Environs, it is envisaged that population and jobs growth will occur in a sustainable manner focusing on clusters and smart specialisation.

Limerick City Centre itself is a key strategic employment location, with significant potential for expansion of existing employment in the retail, commercial services, culture and tourism sectors. The maintenance of the city's existing working port and associated industries will also be supported in the Draft Plan. These lands represent an invaluable asset for the future maritime related economic development of the City Centre. There is also potential for significant development of underutilised City Centre lands within the Docklands area for a major employment and residential quarter.

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Office based employment is vital for the city's economic development. The Local Authority acknowledges that the availability of choice to cater for the various needs of different types of businesses is essential. In this respect, additional lands are required for office space over and above that provided at the Gardens International and proposed in the Opera Site and Cleeves Riverside Quarter developments. It is therefore acknowledged that additional locations may become available and the Local Authority recognises the need to be flexible to accommodate employment opportunities and the aims of revitalising and regenerating Limerick City, for higher density living and higher value jobs during the lifetime of the Draft Plan.

The hospitals at the University Hospital Limerick, the Maternity Hospital and St. John's cater for a regional population of up to half a million people and provide substantial direct and indirect employment for the Mid-West Region. Proposals for the replacement of the standalone Limerick University Maternity Hospital are also underway, in accordance with the Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan 2018-2027.

Elsewhere in the Environs, Raheen Business Park, the National Technology Park and the proposed Northside Business Campus are identified as Strategic Employment Locations under the MASP. These strategic locations offer the capacity to cater for investment that require greenfield or brownfield sites, access to an international airport and third level graduates.

The Local Authority will continue to support investment in and build on the success of the High Tech/Manufacturing zoned lands, which have contributed significantly to the economic growth of Limerick. IDA Ireland's Raheen Business Park serves a number of large multinational companies including Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Analog Devices, Dell, Banta and Stryker Corp. The National Technology Park (NTP) at Plassey, which first opened in 1984 as Ireland's first Science and Technology Park,

is home to 80 organisations including Cook Medical, Vistakon and Gilt. As there is limited undeveloped land available at these locations, the Draft Plan proposes additional zoned land, for high tech/manufacturing uses, adjoining the existing Raheen Industrial Estate.

The Local Authority envisages that the delivery of the Northside Business Campus will be developed on the basis of strong links between and synergies with higher education institutes and various employment agencies. This Business Campus has significant potential for the creation of employment opportunities for the residents of the Regeneration Areas of Moyross, King's Island and the wider community and has the potential to make a significant contribution to the economic development of the north side of Limerick City.

The Higher Education Institutes of University of Limerick (UL), Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and the Limerick Clare Education and Training Board are significant employers in Limerick and have capacity for expansion and further employment creation (Refer to Chapter 9: Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure). LIT has a new campus at Coonagh with state of the art teaching, learning and research facilities and will enable expansion of the places on LIT's engineering courses. UL has purchased the former Dunnes Stores site adjacent to Sarsfield Bridge and has plans for the development of a City Campus, comprising education and student accommodation facilities. The development of a City Campus will contribute significantly to the revitalisation of the economic and residential core of the City Centre.

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The Local Authority supports the on-going operations of the strategic employment zones identified in the MASP, the Draft Plan and any sustainable economic development opportunities on appropriately zoned lands. In this regard, the capacity for employment growth is acknowledged and lands have been zoned to cater for existing and new industry and enterprise and employment related uses. Bus, pedestrian and cycle linkages will connect many of the potential employment areas to the City Centre as identified in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy. The Local Authority will work with local and national employment agencies, Departments and private investors to promote and facilitate continued investment in Limerick City and Environs.

A high standard of design and layout will be required for new industrial and enterprise and employment type developments, including attractive and safe pedestrian and cycle friendly environments, whilst ensuring the functioning of business and industrial locations. All proposed developments will be subject to compliance with all relevant planning criteria set out in the Development Management Standards of this Draft Plan and Section 28 Guidance.

Objective ECON 013

Strategic Employment Locations City and Environs

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Promote, facilitate and enable a diverse range of employment opportunities by facilitating appropriate development, improvement and expansion of enterprise and industry on appropriately zoned lands, accessible by public and sustainable modes of transport, subject to compliance with all relevant Development Management Standards and Section 28 Guidance at Strategic Employment Locations and other appropriately zoned locations in a sustainable manner.

- b) Facilitate and support Limerick City Centre, University Hospital Limerick, Raheen Business Park, the National Technology Park, Higher Education Institutes, Public Hospitals, Dock Road, Northside Business Campus, Opera Centre and Cleaves Site as Strategic Employment Locations, identified in accordance with the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan.
- c) Ensure development on the 'High Tech/Manufacturing' zoned lands to the west of Raheen Business Park shall be subject to the following:
 - Cognisance to the residential amenities of the properties to the north and western side of the site and the adjacent agricultural land;
 - Access to the 'High Tech/Manufacturing' zoned land to the west of the R510 will be limited to the existing roundabout to the east of the site;
 - Applications for development in the low-lying area in the southern section of this zone shall have regard to the attenuation infrastructure and shall include a site specific flood risk assessment, including proposals to mitigate and control the level of run off and attenuation.
- d) Ensure the provision of a minimum 20m landscaped buffer zone between proposed development and adjoining development/lands in Annacotty Business Park, Northside business Park and the 'High Tech/Manufacturing' zoned lands to the west of Raheen Business Park.

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4.7.3 Strategic Employment Locations County Limerick

Sites for enterprise and employment are zoned in the Local Area Plans for the various towns but because of the strategic nature of Annacotty Business Park, the Askeaton Business Park (which is identified as one of the strategic sites in the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary (SIFP)) and Foynes Port, suitable sites are zoned for enterprise use in these locations in the Draft Plan.

Objective ECON O14 Strategic Employment Locations County Limerick

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Safeguard Askeaton industrial park for the accommodation of large establishments of regional importance. The application of appropriate mitigation measures for this zone as detailed in Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary (SIFP), Volume 2, Appendices C and D, the Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report which accompanied the SIFP, will apply for proposed developments within this zone. An overall masterplan for the site outlining the proposed infrastructural provision, including the provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), shall be provided.
- b) Facilitate the sustainable development of Annacotty Business Park, of a scale, phasing and character compatible with surrounding land uses and capacity of the road network. All buildings and associated services shall be contained within this area and a buffer zone of 20 m. in width shall abutt the undeveloped north-western portion of the site and shall be suitably landscaped, to screen development from dwellings on the Clyduff road. An appropriate buffer zone must be considered for any future planning application on these lands in the interests of protecting the residential amenity of the area.

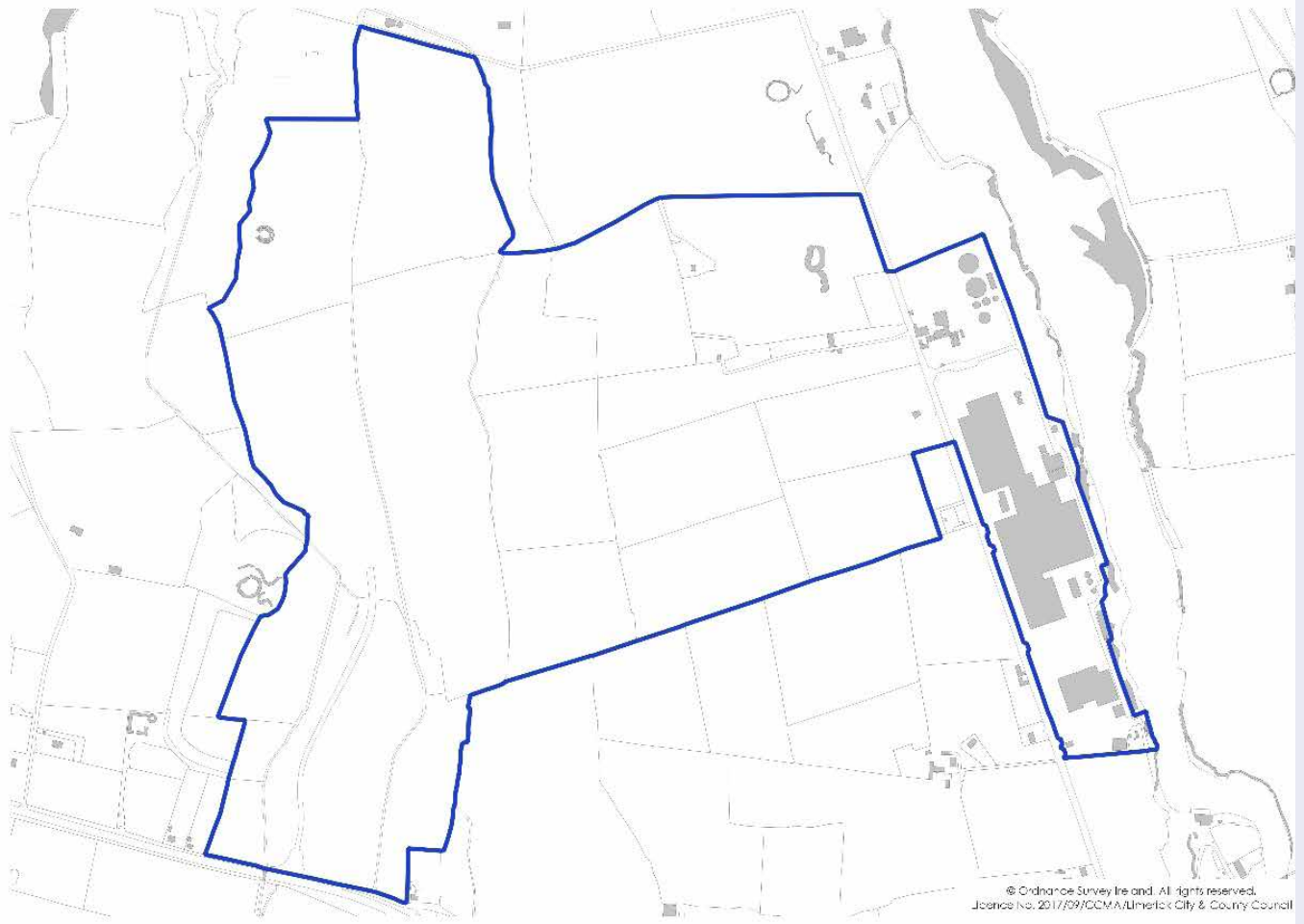
Objective ECON O15 Location of Industry or Enterprise in Brownfield Sites

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate industry or enterprises in brownfield sites with previously established industrial or commercial use, or derelict sites in a commercial, industrial or mixed use area, subject to the following considerations:

- a) The use should be appropriate to the scale and context of the site, taking into account traffic and other impacts on local infrastructure and neighbouring land uses and amenities;
- b) Structures of conservation merit should be re-used and not replaced;
- c) The works are necessary for the proposed economic activity or activities.

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Map 4.1 – Askeaton Industrial Park



Map 4.2 Annacotty Business Park



4.7.4 Knowledge Economy

It is crucial that Limerick is positioned as a competitive knowledge economy which is recognised for its skills base and high tech sector. The knowledge economy is powered by ideas and intellectual capital and is driven by high tech companies. The Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan highlights that the knowledge economy is central to Limerick's long term growth and prosperity. Key factors that drive the knowledge economy include an educated and skilled population, technological infrastructure, foreign direct investment, an environment that encourages technology and entrepreneurship and collaborative public and private research organisations.

Research and Development (R&D) is a crucial component of sustainable employment. The third level institutions in Limerick play a critical role in supporting research and development through their research programmes. There are also a number of organisations throughout Limerick City and County that are involved in innovation and R&D.

Limerick is an UNESCO Learning City and has excellent potential to create a Learning Region which is promoted by the RSES. Encouraging collaboration between higher education institutes, the Regional Skills Fora and the Educational and Training Boards, presents the potential to develop skills and knowledge in areas most exposed to technological disruption. By supporting community and education providers, Limerick City and County can ensure that knowledge and skills are spread to all citizens to help address skills shortages and lifelong learning challenges.

Objective ECON O16 **Knowledge Economy**

It is an objective of the Council to promote the development of knowledge-based enterprise.

4.7.5 Education and Skills

The development of human capital is central to Limerick's economic and social development. A well-educated and skilled workforce is a valuable human resource, which will provide an attraction for inward investment and will promote Limerick as a leader in the knowledge economy. With most city regions now becoming more knowledge intensive, the challenge for Limerick is to ensure that it maintains its position as a front-runner location in the competitive knowledge-based economy. The continuing presence and growth of excellent Further and Higher Education Institutes and research and development nodes in Limerick, will be critical to ensuring success.

Objective ECON O17 **Education and Skills**

It is an objective of the Council to sustain the existing high levels of educational attainment and skilled workforce, to encourage employment generation to maintain this resource within Limerick and to promote the availability of education opportunities to all residents in Limerick City and County.

Objective ECON O18 **Further and Higher Education Institutions**

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Work in conjunction with Further and Higher Education Institutions in the creation and fostering of enterprise through research, innovation and development activities and the commercialisation of such activities.
- b) Support the development of sites where high-tech and high potential start-ups can thrive, in conjunction with Institutes of Technology and Universities, to create collaborative and innovative growth.

4.7.6 Clustering and Innovation

Cultural and creative industries, as a subset of the knowledge economy, are an increasingly important area of economic growth and employment creation. They have been defined as industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property - including areas such as advertising, software, publishing, architecture, music and the visual and performing arts, film, video and photography.

There is potential to develop further clusters of economic activity across various sectors in Limerick. The EY-DKM *Limerick Economic Profiling Report (2018)* highlights that Limerick does not have the same level of clustering of economic activity relative to other cities. The report states that there is potential for further business clustering in Limerick, including potential for Troy Film Studios to spur clusters in film/television and trade sectors in Limerick. Green energy technologies have also been identified as another area of clustering with Limerick Docklands being a test bed for tidal energy technologies.

The Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan states that there is an opportunity to create a City Centre employment cluster, comprising related business sectors for which a City Centre environment would be advantageous, this would include creative businesses. The Council will support the creation of a university/higher education facility or joint UL/LIT/MIC teaching facility in a prominent City Centre location. The economic impact of such a facility could be enhanced through the co-location of associated administrative functions and employment and by locating student accommodation in the City Centre.

Objective ECON O19 **Clustering and Innovation**

It is an objective of the Council to encourage and facilitate the sustainable development and clustering of knowledge-based and high tech industries/businesses at appropriate locations in Limerick.

4.7.7 Tackling Unemployment

The Council recognises that areas of higher unemployment, specifically among the younger population, do not always benefit from a focus on Further and Higher Education, jobs in the IT sector or enterprise and would benefit more by the provision of the above types of training and skill development as well as traditional forms of employment via the public sector. The Council will support and facilitate a policy which will seek to employ skilled trades people to facilitate the employment of apprentices.

Objective ECON O20 **Tackling Unemployment**

It is an objective of the Council to support the work undertaken by the Education and Training Boards, in relation to courses provided under SOLAS and the establishment of Community Training Centres, Local Training Initiatives and Specialist Training Provision in Limerick.

4.7.8 Smart City

Limerick City and County Council has an objective to create a sustainable Smart Limerick City and communities, through the use of digital technologies and embracing new work practices to empower communities, create better services, accelerates sustainable social and economic growth and to improve quality of life for all. In order for this to be achieved, it requires collaboration across communities and agencies. It has the potential to drive major societal and economic benefits by managing population growth, mitigating against urbanisation and increasing competitiveness. The Council recognises that Limerick needs to ensure it is a frontrunner in the Smart Cities in Ireland and Europe.

The Local Authority has been very proactive in recent years in the development of a Smart Economy in Limerick.

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An example of a proposed initiative to develop a smart economy in Limerick is the proposed Atlantic Green Digital Basin, which aims to accelerate sustainable economic growth and the utilisation of new digital technologies. It will develop a new economic corridor - a unique, internationally scaled innovation hub powered by green energy. The Council recognises the potential societal benefits that can be attained through technological advancements and will continue to support the Smart Limerick initiative,

Limerick is also transforming itself into Ireland's first Digital City with the integration of a number of public services, the creation of smart homes, smart buildings, energy districts and smart neighbourhoods.

Objective ECON O21

Smart City

It is an objective of the Council to support the Smart Limerick Initiative, which will allow greater flexibility for Limerick to work with universities, citizens, entrepreneurs and companies, to co-innovate, test and deploy new urban solutions.

4.7.9 Office Development

The main focus for office uses in the City has traditionally been the City Centre Commercial Core Area, where the mix of retail office and general office activities support each other and are essential to the health and vibrancy of the City Centre. As part of the Limerick 2030 Plan, the Limerick Twenty Thirty company has a number of key projects which will facilitate office development in Limerick including the Opera Site and Cleaves Riverside Campus. It is necessary to have a range of locations for offices to provide choice and to cater for the varying needs of different types of businesses.

The Draft Plan recognises the importance of retaining and facilitating additional office accommodation as a key land use, that contributes to the vibrancy and vitality of centres. The Council will support the development of office accommodation in the City Centre, District Centres and Town Centres subject to maintaining a balanced mix of uses in line with their multi-functional role. Applications for office development will be assessed in accordance with relevant Development Management Standards and on the size of the proposal in comparison to the size of the centre, the need to ensure a variety of uses in the centre to fully serve its catchment area and the capacity of the centre to absorb any such proposal. These locations should be well served by existing and/or proposed public transport facilities in line with the principles of sustainable development.

The Council will encourage the conversion of existing office stock, where appropriate, to be more receptive to the changing needs of employers and employees. In this regard, the establishment of high specification 'fourth generation' office accommodation will be especially encouraged. Furthermore, in recognition of changing workplace practices, the Council will support proposals for co-working office accommodation in accordance with the standards set out above and facilitate and promote the uptake of remote working and the development of hub facilities in the City and County.

Objective ECON O22

Office Development

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate significant additional office development in employment and commercial centres. The appropriate locations for office development would generally be on appropriately zoned lands in employment zoned areas, Limerick City Centre, Town Centres and District Centres in accordance with the zoning matrix refer to Chapter 12: Land Use Zoning Strategy.

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4.7.10 Light Industrial and Related Uses

There continues to be a need for a diverse range of employment opportunities in Limerick City and County. Light industrial and related uses are required to provide a diverse range of employment opportunities across Limerick. The general strategy is to retain existing light industrial areas, apart from those areas specifically identified for alternative uses or renewal.

Offices or office based employment will not be permitted in industrial areas, unless they are ancillary to the primary industrial uses.

Limerick has a history in advanced manufacturing, particularly manufacturing in the ICT sector. The Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan highlights that building on the existing skills base and collaboration with research and government is important for advancing the sector and for Limerick to become a leader in ICT innovation, design and production. Innovate Limerick, in partnership with Limerick City and County Council and key industry partners, has developed a proposal for a National Advanced Manufacturing Centre: Limerick and the Mid-West, which aims to be a catalyst for the development of the Irish manufacturing sector. The RSES supports enterprise transitions to Industry 4.0 (the trend of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies) and equipping people with the necessary skills to adjust and adapt to technology changes and disruptions, while creating an enterprise ecosystem that promotes innovation and entrepreneurship in emerging opportunities. This will improve competitiveness and resilience, which are in turn underpinned by skills development, innovation capacity, trade and competition and infrastructure investment.

Objective ECON O23

Light Industrial and Related Uses

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Maintain an adequate supply of light industrial space and employment uses in order to help ensure a diverse range of employment opportunities;
- b) Ensure the sustainable development of manufacturing industries on lands zoned for such purposes subject to normal planning, development and environmental controls and the assessment of the potential impact on such development on adjacent land uses.

4.7.11 Data Centres

Data Centres have become increasingly important for the economic growth of national and regional economies. The Government Statement on *The Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy (2018)* highlights the importance of Data Centres in terms of job creation and significant potential for economic benefit, as they provide a range of services for other sectors. The Data Centre sector is proving to be extremely resilient and the current Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of Data Centres, as they provide the background infrastructure across a range of essential sectors, including manufacturing, healthcare, media and entertainment, financial services, education and retail, all of which are imperative for the future economic growth of Limerick. The *Data Centre Report Europe Q2 2020* states, that as a result of Covid-19, the role of the Data Centre industry has gained greater recognition in terms of keeping people connected and facilitating business continuity. The report highlights that the demand for Data Centres will continue to increase.

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Objective ECON O24**Data Centres**

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Facilitate the development of Data Centres on lands appropriately zoned for such purposes, subject to normal planning, development and environmental controls and the assessment of the potential impact on such development on adjacent land uses.
- b) Promote co-location of data centres with renewable energy sources at appropriate locations subject to proper planning and sustainable development considerations.

4.7.12 Cultural and Creative Industries

Cultural and creative industries, as a subset of the knowledge economy, are an increasingly important area of economic growth and employment creation. They have been defined as industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation, through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property - including areas such as advertising, software, publishing, architecture, music and the visual and performing arts, film, video and photography.

There is a growing movement internationally by cities to become recognised and organised as 'creative cities' and in this respect, the location of Limerick School of Art and Design, Troy Film Studios are significant assets.

Objective ECON O25**Cultural and Creative Industries**

It is an objective of the Council to promote the development of cultural and creative enterprises.

4.7.13 Incubator/Starter Units and Rural Hubs

The availability of adequate incubator space for enterprises in the early stages of development should be part of the enterprise infrastructure in Limerick City and County. The Council, through the Local Enterprise Office, will liaise with the public sector enterprise support agencies, with voluntary community development groups and with business organisations in Limerick to facilitate the provision of suitable premises for such enterprises. In addition, major commercial planning applications located in employment zoned areas, may be required to provide for incubator/starter units within the development.

The Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector is critical to both Ireland's economy and society. Limerick City and County Council will support the SME sector in recovering from financial shocks and adapting successfully to the structural changes accelerated by the pandemic. All Limerick SMEs will be supported by a network of co-working/training/support/click and collect centres right across the county in town locations, each acting as the spokes of a central hub in the City Centre, at the existing Engine building – a new one-stop SME Enterprise Centre in Limerick City.

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The Council recognises the importance of towns and villages in terms of future enterprise creation and facilitating economic development. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of towns and villages for providing employment will undoubtedly increase, as people seek opportunities to relocate to rural areas, either through remote working in enterprise hubs or working from home. Therefore, enterprise hubs will become even more important for supporting employment growth in the future. The Atlantic Economic Corridor group have published the Hubs Network Strategy 2020-2023 which aims to support the growth of hubs in rural areas throughout the AEC Region including Limerick and the Council will support the development of this strategy.

Objective ECON O26 **Enterprise Incubator Units**

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development and growth of incubator/innovation facilities in the City and County, to support the growth and development of SMEs and the creation of a sustainable start-up ecosystem. This will be achieved in conjunction with the Local Enterprise Office and Innovate Limerick, to ensure the long term resilience of SMEs in Limerick.

Objective ECON O27 **Rural Hubs**

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development of remote working/rural working hubs at appropriate locations across the County.

4.7.14 Rural Enterprise and Employment Opportunities

In implementing the objectives below, the Planning Authority will have regard to the provisions of the Government's Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - *Our Rural Future*. The vision of this policy is for a thriving rural Ireland, which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development. The Draft Plan seeks to support employment and careers in rural areas and for Local Authorities to bring forward proposals for the development of a policy on the Night Time Economy, which will support the revitalisation of our rural towns, as well as our larger urban centres and cities, in the post Covid-19 recovery.

Development Management policy provides for the development of rural enterprise, related to the area's amenity potential and many enterprise/employment uses are either 'Open for Consideration' or 'Permitted in Principle' in the rural areas of the County. The Planning Authority will balance the requirement to protect the sensitive nature of the rural area with the requirement to enable enterprise development.

Objective ECON O28 **Rural Development**

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Facilitate the development of acceptable rural enterprises and to minimise pollution from agricultural and industrial sources by means of development management and water pollution legislation.
- b) Encourage the redevelopment of vacant commercial units for enterprise and industry creation including Kantoher Business Park, Castlemahon and other identifiable rural commercial brownfield sites, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.
- c) Promote the development of our rural Towns and Villages as an important focus of restaurant, leisure and evening uses - subject to the safeguarding of surrounding residential amenity and environmental criteria.

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4.7.15 Agriculture

Limerick traditionally has had a very strong agricultural base and agriculture still has an important role to play in its economy. Although this sector has faced fundamental influences that changed its structure and role, it will continue to play a key role as a building block for a strong and diversified rural economy. The Planning Authority will support and facilitate agricultural developments and improvements, subject to consideration of the proposal's likely impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area.

Objective ECON O29

Agricultural Developments

It is an objective of the Council to favourably consider proposals for agricultural development where:

- a) They are appropriate in nature and scale to the area in which they are located;
- b) The proposal is necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding or enterprise;
- c) The development is not visually intrusive in the local landscape and, where the proposal is for a new building(s) and there are no suitable redundant buildings, the proposal is sited adjacent to existing buildings;
- d) The proposal demonstrates that it has taken into account traffic, environmental and amenity considerations and is in accordance with the policies, requirements and guidance contained in this Draft Plan.

Appropriate small-scale on-farm agricultural diversification will play an important role in retaining rural communities. Such proposals will be favourably considered where the scale and nature of the activity is appropriate to the location and the proposal can be satisfactorily integrated into the rural landscape.

Objective ECON O30

Farm Diversification

It is an objective of the Council to favourably consider proposals for farm diversification in the open countryside where the proposal:

- a) Would not negatively affect public health or agricultural operation on neighbouring farms;
- b) Is of a size and scale which is sympathetic to and which does not negatively impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area; and
- c) Demonstrates that it has taken into account traffic, environmental and amenity considerations and is in accordance with the policies, requirements and guidance contained in this Draft Plan. All development in the countryside will be required to respect the appearance and character of the rural landscape.

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4.7.16 Forestry

Forestry is an important renewable resource with a major role to play in sustainable rural development. In addition to the direct benefits, forestry also has an important impact on rural economies through the development of related industries and rural tourism. The main forest amenity areas in Limerick are provided at Currachase, Galteewood, Clare Glens and Ardpatrik.

Objective ECON O31

Support Sustainable Forestry

It is an objective of the Council to support the forestry sector and the development of associated industry on suitable land as identified in the Landscape Characterisation of the County as follows:

- a) In a manner that protects the environment, while ensuring that the diversity and character of the countryside is maintained;
- b) Ensuring that afforestation is not located in a manner that will adversely impact on the amenities of adjacent landowners or adversely affect the maintenance of the public road;
- c) Encouraging the consideration of the visual impact of forestry so that planting conforms to the overall landscape pattern particularly on elevated sites avoiding overall straight lines or regular shapes; and
- d) Encouraging the development of forest parks, viewing areas, parking areas and other tourism related amenities within afforested areas.

4.7.17 Mineral Extraction

It is recognised that the aggregates (stone, sand and gravel) and concrete products industry contribute to economic development and are essential building materials. However, they can give rise to land use and environmental issues which are required to be mitigated and controlled through the planning process.

Objective ECON O32

Mineral Extraction and Environmental Impacts

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Minimise environmental and other impacts of mineral extraction through rigorous application of development management and enforcement requirements for quarry and other developments; and
- b) In particular, to have regard to visual impacts, methods of extraction, noise levels, dust prevention, protection of rivers, lakes and other water sources, impacts on residential and other amenities, impacts on the road network (particularly with regard to making good any damage to roads), road safety, phasing, re-instatement and landscaping of worked sites.

4.7.18 Equine Industry

The Council recognises the importance of the equine industry in Limerick and the positive contribution that the industry makes towards agricultural diversification and rural employment.

Objective ECON O33

Equine Industry

It is an objective of the Council to promote and support the development of the equine industry in Limerick.

4.7.19 Home Working/E-Working

The Council acknowledges the increasing role and importance of home working/e-working in our economy and its associated benefits, including reduced demand for commuting-related travel and associated carbon emissions, increased work flexibility and improvements in work-life balance. Proposals for use of the home, be it own door units or apartment schemes, as a workplace will be controlled through the development management system in order to ensure that development can be integrated without detriment to the amenities of residential areas.

Objective ECON O34

Home Working/E-Working

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate home-based economic activities where, by virtue of their nature and scale, they can be accommodated without detriment to the amenities of residential areas.

4.7.20 Limerick's Food Sectors

The Agri-Food sector is one of Limerick's most important indigenous industries, playing a vital role in the local economy. Limerick also has a rich heritage of market towns with the potential to revive farmer markets to support local SMEs and food tourism. The Council supports the Department of Rural and Community Development's *Action Plan for Rural Development (APRD)*, which focuses on the continued development of the agri-food sector through implementation of Food Wise 2025.

The Food Strategy for Limerick 2016–2018 is a plan to develop and enhance Limerick's reputation for outstanding food and drink by supporting Limerick's food and drink producers. The Food Strategy aims to encourage, support and develop Limerick's rural and urban food scene through information, education and marketing.

Objective ECON O35

Limerick Food Strategy

It is an objective of the Council to support Limerick's food and drink producers in accordance with the aims/goals established under the Food Strategy for Limerick 2016–2018 and any update thereto.

Section 3:

Tourism

4.8 Tourism and the Economy

Tourism is a proven economic driver, playing a significant role in the overall development of Limerick. The sector is uniquely positioned to contribute strongly to job creation and reversing unemployment in communities throughout Limerick.

As a significant economic activity, Limerick City and County Council in partnership with local and national stakeholders, seeks to increase tourist numbers and support sustainable job creation, through targeted tourism initiatives including the development of new tourism products and leveraging natural and built heritage assets to support tourism across Limerick.

Limerick is strategically positioned in the Mid-West Region with excellent connectivity nationally by rail and road corridors and internationally by its proximity to Shannon International Airport, which has capacity to cater for 4.5 million passengers

per annum. The RSES acknowledges Shannon International Airport as a national and infrastructural driver of tourism growth and as an international gateway to the tourism assets of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area, Mid-West and wider region. Failte Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way Gateway Plan for Limerick is currently in development and provides a focused roadmap to deliver this collective ambition to transform Limerick into a compelling visitor destination and base for exploring the Wild Atlantic Way. In this regard, the MASP aims to ensure collaboration between Local Authorities and tourism agencies.

The *Limerick Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023*, the *Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick* and the *River Shannon Tourism Masterplan*, are key strategic plans which will form the basis for the development of tourism in Limerick.



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4.8.1 Urban Tourism: City Centre and Environs

During the lifespan of the Draft Plan, Limerick will increase the range of day and evening experience options for visitors by working collaboratively to deliver an improved visitor environment. Ongoing public realm improvement works in the City Centre and a new Wayfinding Orientation and Signage Plan will enhance the visitor experience, by introducing and orientating visitors through the City, delivering new and coherent visitor experiences.

The tourism sector in the City Centre has experienced growth in recent years with hotel occupancy rates improving. The café and restaurant sector has also expanded and provide an important source of employment in the City, while the City's Waterfront has seen a notable increase in river activities and engagement. New developments such as the International Rugby Experience, currently under construction, will enhance Limerick's sporting culture and identity. Improvements to existing venues will also be supported to achieve international visitor experience status.

Improved connectivity will see the City positioned as a gateway and base for visitors to the stunning natural and built heritage sites of the county and the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW), offering visitors stress free accessibility and choice of experience.

Critical success factors for the development of Limerick as a WAW Gateway City include:

- Continuous development of new visitor experiences across the day and evening economy;
- The development of the City as a coherent visitor destination through a Wayfinding, Orientation and Signage Plan in 2021;
- The development of new globally significant attractions and activities that provide reasons to visit Limerick;
- Capitalising on the cultural and urban edge of Limerick to build a global tourism positioning;
- Sustained economic success achieved through domestic and international visitor numbers growth, increased dwell time, bed nights and new levels of employment supported through an extended tourism season;
- Maximising the tourism potential of the Medieval Quarter/Nicholas Street, Georgian Quarter and Market Quarter;
- Supporting existing tourist attractions including King John's Castle, Hunt Museum, St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick Museum and the People's Museum of Limerick.

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4.8.2 Rural Tourism

Limerick is fortunate to have a broad geographic spread of visitor experiences across the county from the Munster Vales and Ballyhoura Country in the East, through to Lough Gur and Curragh Chase and on to the Limerick Greenway and Shannon Estuary Way in the west. Our rich tapestry of historical and heritage sites both built and natural, have the potential to animate the stories of this place and its people in an engaging way for our visitors.

Limerick City and County Council works collaboratively with West Limerick Tourism, Munster Vales and Ballyhoura Failte to support the sustainable geographic spread of tourism development across rural Limerick and actively seeks collaboration opportunities for cross promotion and development with neighbouring Local Authorities and national agencies.

The Limerick Greenway's ongoing development and ambition to connect the City with West Limerick, through sustainable travel options will play a key role in the development of tourism amenities and attractions in the area as part of the West Limerick Tourism Strategy. Similarly, Limerick City and County Council will continue to support the objectives of the Munster Vales Strategic Tourism Development Strategy 2020 - 2025.

Adare Manor and Limerick will play host to the Ryder Cup in 2027. Limerick City and County Council will work collaboratively to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure and transport provisions are in place, capitalising on the event to ensure economic and social benefits for the region. Limerick City and County Council continues to work in partnership with Failte Ireland and local stakeholders to maximise the potential of tourism attractions on the Shannon Estuary Way including Glin, Askeaton and the Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum. The Implementation of the WAW Gateway City Plan and development of improved transport links in the area, will optimise the region's potential to increase visitor numbers drawing on the success of the WAW.

Objective ECON O36 Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Support strong growth in the tourism sector in Limerick and to ensure that the economic and societal benefits of tourism are effectively distributed throughout the county, by making vital connections between complementary sites and attractions, by encouraging visitors to move around the county and to enable them to do so with ease.
- b) Support the development of Limerick's capacity for largescale group tourism, through improved transport amenities for bus tours, group tours and cruise ship visitors.
- c) Recognise the heritage value of Limerick's towns and villages such as Adare, Kilmallock and Askeaton and seek opportunities to enhance their tourism potential.
- d) Support and harness the tourism potential of existing rural and heritage site amenities/attractions, including The Clare Glens, Lough Gur, Knockfierna, Munster Vales, Ballyhoura Country, Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, The Shannon Estuary Way, Curragh Chase, Fullers Folly and Adare Heritage Centre, in a way that promotes sustainable tourism.

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- e) Actively develop Limerick as an Events location with the appropriate infrastructure to attract international conferences, sporting, cultural and commercial events, including the development of an International Conference Centre and improved public realm, which supports outdoor performance and events of scale (Refer to Chapter 10: Compact Growth and Revitalisation Section 10.4.2.8).
- f) To adopt a strategic collaborative approach to the delivery of the Ryder Cup in Adare/Limerick in 2027 to leverage the legacy potential of this major event and ensure maximum return on investment for Limerick and the region.
- g) To work with Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to develop the water activity sector in Limerick by exploring the potential for increased accessibility to Limerick's waterways for water based tourism activity (refer also to Chapter 9: Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure and Chapter 11: Development Management Standards).



4.8.3 Limerick Greenway

The Limerick Greenway is a 40km off road walking and cycling route that follows part of the former Limerick to Tralee rail line. It links the market towns of Rathkeale, Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale. Following a major investment in 2020/21, it is now a significant recreational and tourism amenity. The greenway extends to the Kerry/Limerick border where the proposed link to Listowel is scheduled to open in 2022. It is anticipated that the North Kerry Greenway will extend to Tralee/Fenit in the lifetime of the Draft Plan. It is the ambition of Limerick City and County Council to extend the Limerick Greenway to Adare and Patrickswell and develop a wider greenway network. (Refer also to Section 5.3.7 Blue/Green Infrastructure Chapter 5: Environment, Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure).

Objective ECON O37

Limerick Greenway

It is an objective of the Council to support:

- a) The provision of car parking, bike hire and ancillary facilities at suitable locations along the Limerick Greenway.
- b) Extend the Limerick Greenway from Rathkeale to Adare/Patrickswell.
- c) Extend greenway from the University of Limerick to Annacotty.
- d) Develop a greenway from the University of Limerick to Montpelier.
- e) Support the development of the Limerick to Scariff/Tuamgraney Greenway in partnership with Waterways Ireland and Clare County Council.
- f) Examine the potential for a greenway from Patrickswell, Bruree to the Limerick/Cork Border (Charleville).

*** Tourism projects will be required to adhere to adequate environmental and ecological assessment to ensure that they do not cause adverse environmental and ecological effects.*

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4.8.4 Tourism Facilities and Accommodation

There is an often delicate balance to be struck between cultural and natural attractions and associated facilities and amenities designed to cater for various tourist requirements. Tourism facilities should be planned in a sensitive and proactive manner. The framework for planning tourist facilities shall consider the following:

1. Public facilities and amenities of a type and scale incidental to natural, cultural or recreational attractions.
2. Larger scale tourism developments such as hotels, restaurants and holiday homes, which can be located singly or in clusters, these can be located away from the tourist attractions and should generally be located in settlements where services exist and the use of which thereby can support these settlements and reduce pressure on the tourist attractions.
3. Niche tourism and rural based activities which might include pony trekking, paint balling, quad racing. The suitability of their location depends on the requirements of the use, its impact (such as noise and associated traffic) and any special characteristics that the environment has to offer the proposed use.
4. Uses that bring new life to the built and natural heritage, such as the use and restoration of old buildings as guesthouses, museums or as restaurants, expansion of the programme of construction of cycling and walking routes, or by encouraging owners to reinstate historic gardens.

Objective ECON O38

Tourism Facilities and Environmentally Sensitive Areas

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that tourism facilities, are not located or designed where they would be significantly detrimental to environmentally sensitive areas, such as designated ecological areas, areas of archaeological potential or historic landscapes either existing or which may arise in the future, as a result of any surveys.

Objective ECON O39

Facilities and Amenities incidental to Tourist and Recreational Attractions and Scenic Views

It is an objective of the Council to consider public facilities and amenities of a type and scale that are incidental to tourist attractions and associated services shall be permitted where they would:

- a) Allow these attractions to be enjoyed and accessed by the public;
- b) Cater for basic needs of the public, incidental to the enjoyment of these attractions;
- c) Help to protect sensitive features through information and by appropriate management;
- d) Be adequately serviced and managed;
- e) Be inclusive to all members of the community. Applications must be accompanied by a management plan and justified by reference to a coherent, evidence based tourism and recreational strategy applicable to the area. Such development should not impair the capacity of the road network.

Objective ECON O40

Location of Tourism Accommodation

It is an objective of the Council to

- a) Ensure that holiday home developments should be concentrated within existing towns, villages and settlements, where they can best support the provision of services and minimise the impact on the open landscape. Such developments should respect the existing fabric of the settlement, both in scale and design.
- b) Proposals to reinstate, conserve and/or renovate existing, vacant, derelict or disused buildings for holiday accommodation in both urban and rural areas, will be considered subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

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Section 4:

Marine Economy

4.9 Shannon Estuary - Limerick Docklands and Foynes

The marine economy is vital for Limerick's future economic development, with considerable potential for expansion through strengthening established resources and diversification into new areas. The marine economy is identified as an emerging sector in the RSES (Objective RPO76). The Shannon Estuary, its ports and future development are a significant economic driver and transport corridor in the region. With the presence of Shannon Foynes Port and Limerick's location on the Shannon Estuary, Limerick is ideally placed to enhance economic growth through the sustainable use of its marine resource.

The potential of the Shannon Estuary is given recognition in the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary (SIFP), which is a land and marine based framework plan to guide the future development and management of the Shannon Estuary. It aims to transform the Shannon Estuary into an international economic hub. The SIFP identified an additional 1,200 ha. for marine related development across 9 no. strategic development locations and proposes building on existing industry connectivity and synergy, as well as the existing infrastructure, to create a more sustainable and attractive network for further investment (see SIFP in Volume 6).

Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), which is an important economic stimulus and growth point in Limerick, is responsible for Limerick's Port activities both at Limerick Docklands and Foynes. It is a port of national and international significance. SFPC has set out its 30-year masterplan *Vision 2041* which aims to double port throughput to 20m tonnes per annum over the plan period.

In order to facilitate this growth, capacity enhancements are required within and external to the port, including:

- Ongoing expansion of jetty infrastructure (€47m);
- Reinstatement of Limerick to Foynes Rail line (€45m);
- Upgrade of Limerick to Foynes road network (€450m);
- New deep-water berth at Foynes Island (€175m).

Limerick City and County Council recognises the importance of the Docklands Framework Strategy. The Limerick Docklands Plan aims to grow existing commercial activity at Shannon Foynes Port Company at Ted Russell Docks.

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The Local Authority recognises that it is crucial for the full potential of the Shannon Estuary, one of Limerick's natural assets to be realised. It is important to encourage existing and new industries around the Estuary to spread the economic impact of these throughout Limerick, generating local employment and providing a more diverse employment base. Careful consideration is required to ensure that harnessing economic growth and development opportunities within the Estuary does not place undue restriction, pressure or impact on some of the area's most precious resources.

Fishing and mariculture have an important role to play in the future development of the Estuary, as these activities can help play a role in promoting the economic prosperity in the Estuary area. This can be in terms of direct employment in enterprises and indirect employment in processing and retail outlets. A considerable range of different fishing activities take place within the Shannon Estuary, providing an important commercial enterprise, employment source and recreational amenity for the local communities within the Estuary.

Objective ECON 041 **Marine Economy**

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Encourage, facilitate and promote the Shannon Estuary's economic growth potential and promote marine related industrial development, while ensuring that the environment and natural resources of the area are protected, managed and enhanced.
- b) Facilitate and encourage the environmentally sustainable development of maritime industries at appropriate locations within the Shannon Estuary.

Objective ECON 042

Strategic Integrated Framework Plan

It is an objective of the Council to support and facilitate the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary.

Objective ECON 043

Safeguard Strategic Development locations along the Estuary

It is an objective of the Council to safeguard the Strategic Development Locations at Foynes Port, Foynes Island and Aughinish Island for the sustainable growth and development of marine related industry and industrial development at Askeaton. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with regional and national priorities and the SEA Directive, Birds and Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, Shellfish Waters Directive, Floods Directive and EIA Directive. Buffer zones shall be incorporated into proposals for developments where necessary to preserve potentially valuable habitats, for example, areas of estuary, shallow bays and inlets, mudflats, lagoon, salt marsh and woodland habitat, which occur at or surrounding these Strategic Development Locations. The extent of such buffer distances shall be established in consultation with relevant statutory bodies. Detailed botanical, faunal and ornithological surveys should be undertaken in relation to proposed developments at these Strategic Development Locations, to fully consider the potential effects of the development and inform how to best avoid significant ecological effects.

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Objective ECON O44**Shannon Foynes Port**

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Support the expansion of the Port at Foynes and promote the economic and industrial development of the Shannon Estuary as a strategic transport, energy and logistics Hub, serving Limerick and the wider region by utilising naturally occurring deep water characteristics and by identifying and safeguarding existing and future strategic transportation links, subject to fulfilling the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the conservation objectives of the Lower River Shannon SAC site.
- b) Promote and support Shannon Foynes Port Company's Masterplan *Vision 2041*.

4.9.1 Offshore Renewable Energy

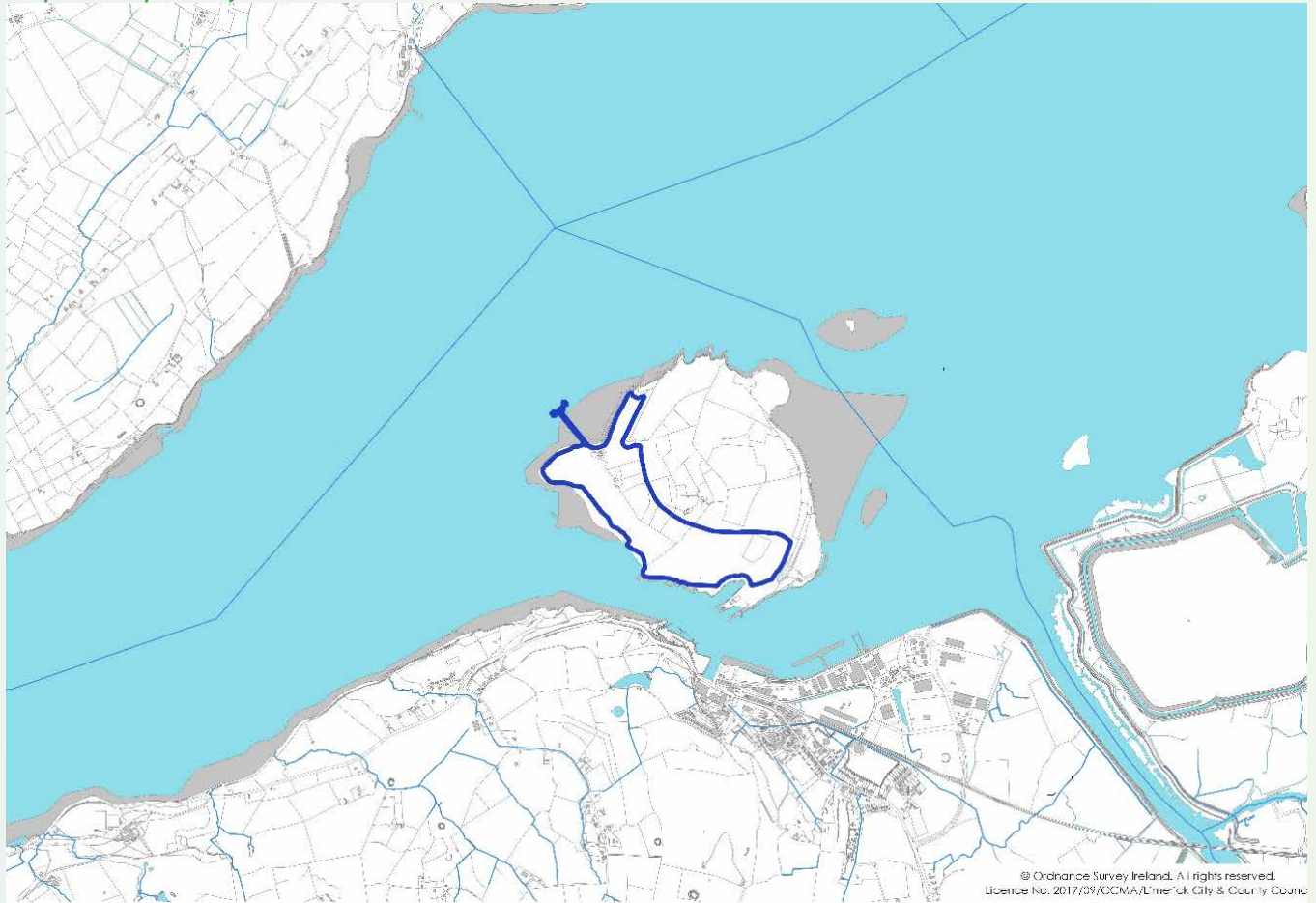
The Council supports the *Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED)* published in 2014 by the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources, in the progressive development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy potential and will cooperate with state and semi-state agencies in relation to the implementation of projects in the Shannon Estuary. Refer also to Chapter 8: Climate Action, Flood Risk and Transition to Low Carbon Economy.

Objective ECON O45**Offshore Renewable Energy**

It is an objective of the Council to support in conjunction with other relevant agencies, wind energy initiatives, both on-shore and offshore and wave energy, when these are undertaken in an environmentally acceptable manner.

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Map 4.3 Map of Foynes Island



Map 4.4 Map of Aughinish

