



LIMERICK DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028

Background Paper
**Community
& Recreation**

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1.0 - Introduction

Community and recreation facilities contribute to quality of life and enhances the liveability and vibrancy of cities, towns, villages throughout the country by providing places and opportunities for all citizens to gather, connect, recreate and celebrate. Limerick City and County has a large amount of community and recreational facilities, some operated by the Local Authority, some by voluntary groups and some by private operators. Limerick has a strong sense of community, be it the close knit neighbourhoods of Limerick City or the rural parishes of County Limerick. Communities play an important role in every aspect of our lives, being part of a community makes us feel that we are part of something greater than ourselves.

Covid – 19 has changed the way the citizens of Limerick use their community and recreational facilities, many facilities have been closed for months as a result of the pandemic. The communities of Limerick have engaged with their local amenities within the immediate vicinity of their homes, have become more aware of the facilities that exists in their own neighbourhoods, embraced nature and accepted the required change. This experience will assist in informing the policies of the new Development Plan.

Limerick also has a strong sporting tradition and Limerick City is well celebrated as the sporting capital of Ireland, from the giants of Munster Rugby, to the Limerick GAA legends, sport is not just about the hero's on the field, but also the world class facilities that exist in Limerick, including Thomond Park, the University of Limerick Sports Arena and Limerick Racecourse. Sport is woven into the City and County, however aside from the main sporting facilities, there are many recreational facilities dotted across the City and County, including clubs, groups and individuals, who are the backbone of these communities.

Recreational facilities and amenities are an integral part of the quality of life infrastructure and contributes significantly to the physical, mental and social health of the population; they are important factors and contribute to the attractiveness of an area, as a location for inward investment and as a desirable destination for a mobile labour market; and they contribute to the tourism market of the place, particularly in the context of activity and adventure holidays.

Planning has a key role to play in shaping the quality of life for cities, towns and communities. The Planning and Development Act 2000 (Amended) requires that the Development Plan, includes objectives for the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population. It also requires objectives to be included for the provision, or facilitation of the provision, of services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities.

This background paper sets out the planning related recreation and community issues that need to be considered as part of the preparation of the proposed Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

Section two sets detail on existing community and recreation facilities in Limerick and provides a series of maps identifying the spread of the facilities across the City and County.

Section three comprises of a review of the strategic policies and guidelines, that are currently in place at a national, regional or local level, which relate in general to recreation and community.

2.0 - Overview of Community and Recreational facilities in Limerick

2.1 – Introduction

As set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF), there is clear evidence that community and recreation forms an integral part of the shaping the future growth and development of the country. The NPF identifies three key components, which are needed to create stronger places: Community, Economy and Environment. Community and Recreation is a theme that is cross cutting and of relevance to the development of all those components. It is important to bear thus in mind, when considering the key issues for making strong communities and for providing facilities and amenities that support these communities.

The NPF identifies that the number of people ages 15 years or younger in 2040 will make up 17% of the anticipated population. This has implications for the provision of facilities and amenities for children and young people, including childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sports ground, with the plan specifying that there is a continued requirement for the provision of children’s play areas in residential developments.

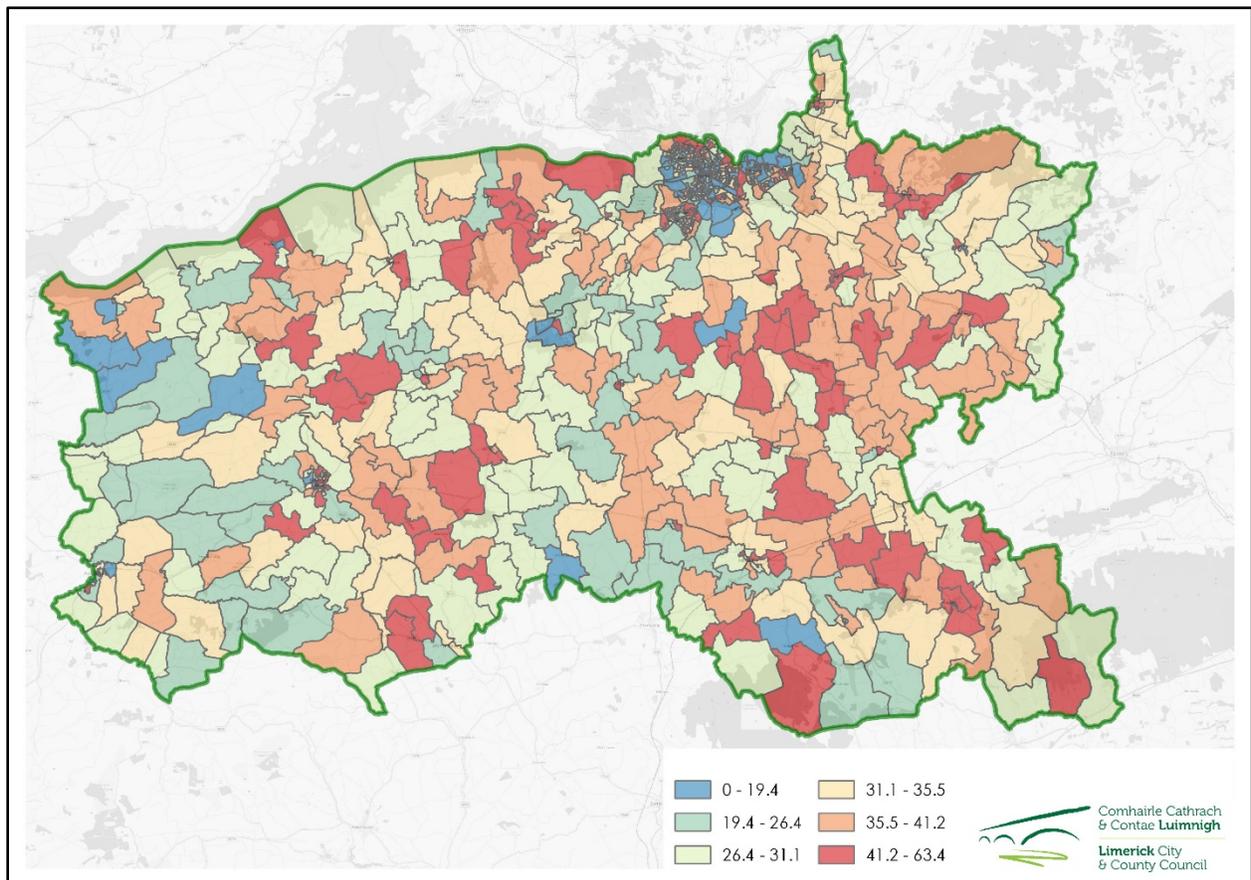


Figure 1 – Youth Dependency by Small Area of Population – Limerick City and County

On the other hand, Census figures from 2016 identify that Limerick has an older person’s dependency ratio, 1% above the national average. With an increasingly elderly population, the

importance of health and active ageing needs to be recognised. This has implications for the provision of services, such as older persons sheltered accommodation, access to health care services and ultimately the availability of burial grounds.

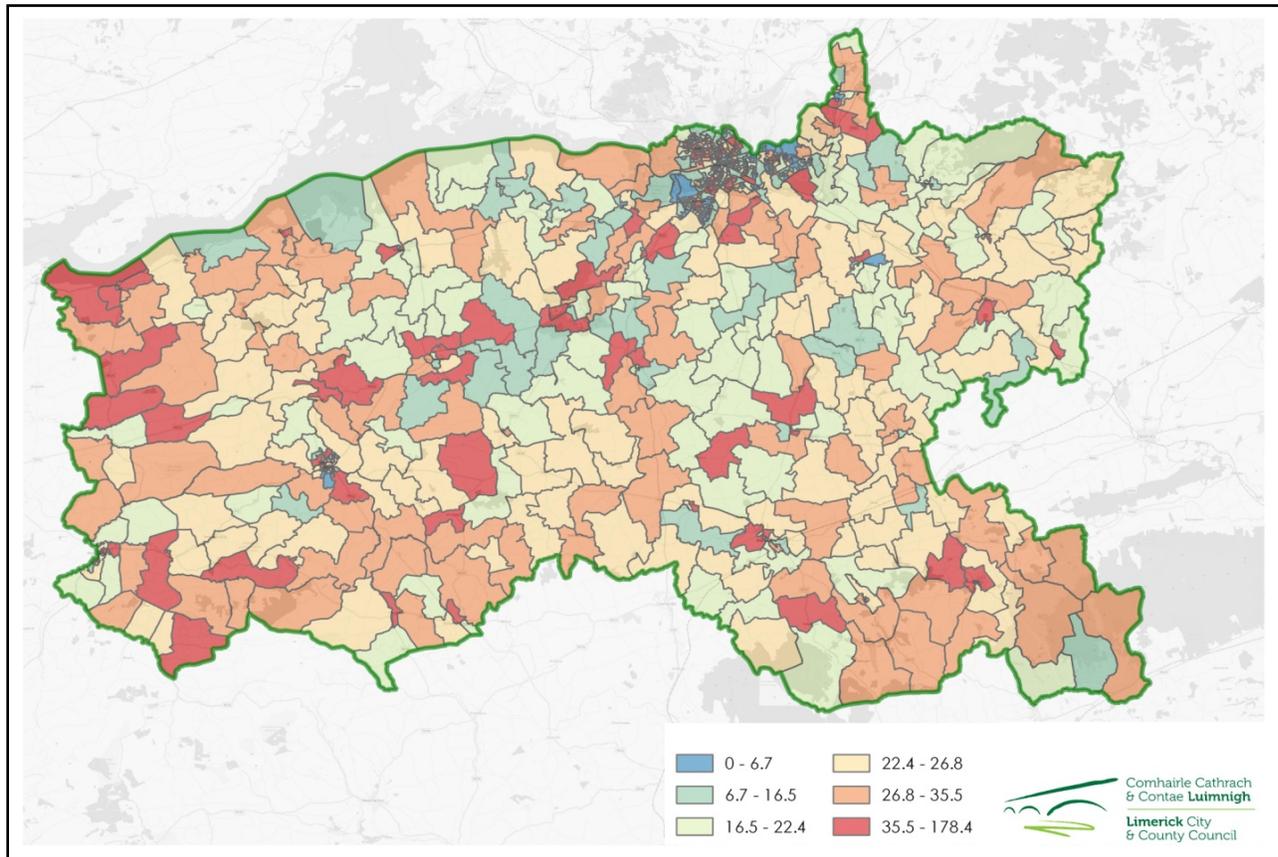


Figure 2 – Old Age Dependency by Small Area of Population – Limerick City and County

Consideration of cultural backgrounds is a key element of the proposed Limerick Development Plan, according to the Census of population 2016, 9.6% of the population of Limerick are non-national and 15% have an ethnic or cultural background. With diversity and multiculturalism come new customs and traditions and the contribution that these communities make to the region are welcomed. It is important that parity of opportunity and improved wellbeing and quality of life for all citizens for all citizens is pioneered.

Emphasis also needs to be placed on planning for all stages of the life cycle, through incorporating the principles of universal design for public transport, housing, social, cultural and recreational facilities. This is a means of ensuring inclusiveness, building strong resilient communities and supporting people to live in their communities for as long as possible.

The following section considers the various community and recreation infrastructure currently within Limerick under various themes.

2.2 – Education

Education, training and lifelong learning are identified as key enablers to the nations success and are central to the building of strong communities. Limerick is well represented in the educational sector with three highly respected educational institutes, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology and Mary Immaculate College and a number of further education institutes spread across the City and County. Twenty eight cities across the world have been awarded UNESCO Learning City Awards and Limerick is one of these Cities. These Cities are defined as ones which mobilise its resources across all sectors to maximise the opportunities for lifelong learning for all its citizens.

Limerick has 134 primary schools, 8 special education schools and 28 secondary schools; it is interesting to note that the number of secondary schools is spread evenly between the City and County. In recent years a number of secondary schools have closed, including St Enda's Community School, Salesians and Scoil Carmel. Equally a number of smaller schools have amalgamated in the County, such as St Ita's College, the Vocational School and St Joseph's Secondary School in Abbeyfeale, to create a larger school. In recent years, a number of new schools have been built in the environs of the City, Gaelscoil Raithin has relocated from temporary accommodation in Dooradoyle to a new purpose built school in Mungret, also Limerick City East Educate Together have relocated from temporary accommodation to Mungret. New schools currently in the planning system include a new Community College for Mungret and a new facility for Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh at Clare Street and a new Educate Together Secondary School at Ballysimon. The preparation of the proposed Development Plan will consider population trends and in consultation with the Department of Education will ensure that adequate lands are zoned at appropriate locations to meet future educational requirements.

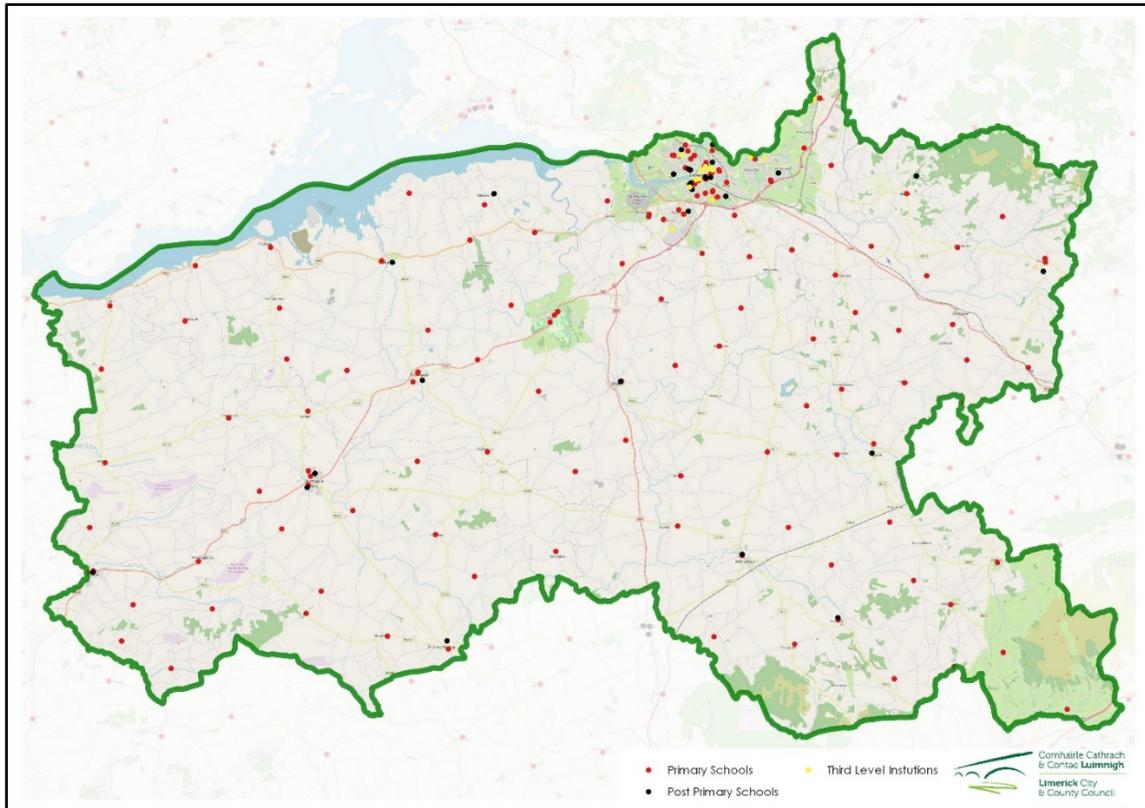


Figure 3 – Primary and Secondary Schools throughout Limerick

Limerick has a large number of childcare providers with 174 registered childcare providers across the City and County. It is anticipated that the number of people aged 15 years and under will continue to increase until the early 2020s. In terms of equity, access to affordable and high quality childcare is identified as an essential requirement. It is seen as crucial both as an educational support for children, but is also a prerequisite for job creation and labour market participation.

2.3 – Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing are the outcome of environmental, economic and social factors. It is recognised that up to 60% of the population’s health is down to factors such as early years education and lifelong learning, employment and working conditions, income and healthy and sustainable places to live, enjoy, work, learn and grow old in – these determine behavioural choices including whether healthier choice can be the easier choice. Therefore creating healthy communities and enhanced quality of life for all requires building a culture of health, where health is integrated into all decision making in all sectors of society.

Limerick City is recognised as a World Health Organisation Healthy City and a member of the National Healthy Cities and Counties Network. Healthy Limerick aims to improve health, wellbeing and quality of life by ensuring all sectors are aware of and collaborate to achieve a healthy society across the county and not just at city level.

The National Planning Framework recognises that future development planning is a determinant of quality of life and recognises that specific health risks can be influenced by spatial planning. Land use zoning decisions and the built environment can have impacts on for example air quality, opportunities for physical activity and social interactions. The NPF places a focus on supporting public health policy, such as Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan and promotes the integration of safe alternatives to the use of the car, by prioritising walking and cycling in both existing and proposed developments.

The health dividend from a strong and effective primary healthcare system, complemented by education programmes is also recognised and Limerick is well served in this regard. Interestingly, CSO data from data from 2016 for Limerick, identifies 56.9% of Limerick citizens classify themselves, as in very good health.

The University Hospital Limerick acts as a teaching hospital and the linkages to the University of Limerick continue to grow. The hospital serves as a wide catchment beyond Limerick and into Clare, Tipperary and parts of Cork and Kerry. At a local level, Limerick is also well served with 34 primary healthcare centres and 4 family resource centres, which provides a local medical service within the community.

Health in all policies (HiAP) is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account, that health implications of decisions seeks synergies and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity. (Helsinki Declaration WHO 2014). Impact of policies on health and wellbeing should be considered an integral part of the new Development Plan. Health needs to be considered from planning policy stage to implementation and beyond.

2.4 – Open Space Provision

The provision of walking and cycling infrastructure is widely recognised as a means to sustain healthy communities and promote quality of life. The concept of a 10 minute city/town is promoted at national level and is seen as a way to create connected communities. It provides us with an understanding of how our neighbourhoods work, so that they be mapped out to compact and permeable settlement forms.

The development of greenways and blueways not only has a huge tourism offer, but also provides a valuable recreational resource to local communities. Potential exists in the development of greenways, such as the Great Southern Greenway, which offers huge potential as a local amenity but also as a tourism product, developing linkages with the north and south Kerry Greenways. Equally access to the River Shannon offers great potential for the development of blueways and affords the potential to develop a world class waterfront along the banks of the River Shannon. Embracing the River Shannon and the network of rivers throughout Limerick should be examined and developing a blueway network should be explored throughout the City and County.

The provision of walkways, cycleways and blueways is constantly evolving and the proposed Limerick Development Plan will continue to recognise and promote the importance of these spaces for the communities they serve.

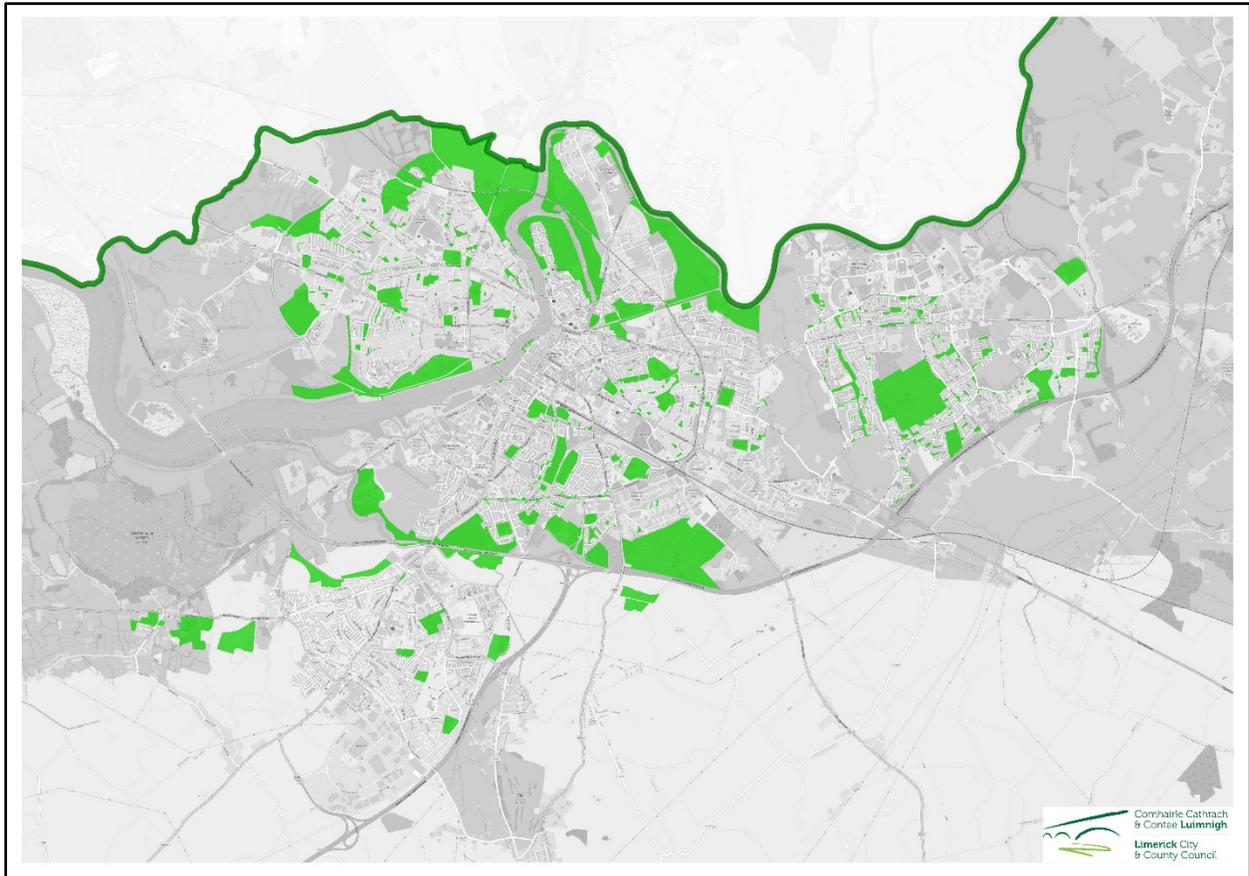


Figure 4 – Lands zoned Open Space in the Limerick City and Environs

2.4.1 – Playgrounds

Play is an essential element of a child’s physical, psychological and emotional development and facilitates social interaction, development and problem solving in a creative and imaginative fashion, play also increases physical activity. Playgrounds are an integral part of the services provided to the public, and allow children the opportunity to play outside and they also contribute to the development of a child friendly community.

The provision of playgrounds, whether by the Council or the local community, should be of the highest standard. Playgrounds should be appropriate to the needs of children and accessible to everyone.

Limerick City and County Council have a number of Local Authority owned play grounds throughout the City and County and support a number of other playground, which are community owned and operated.

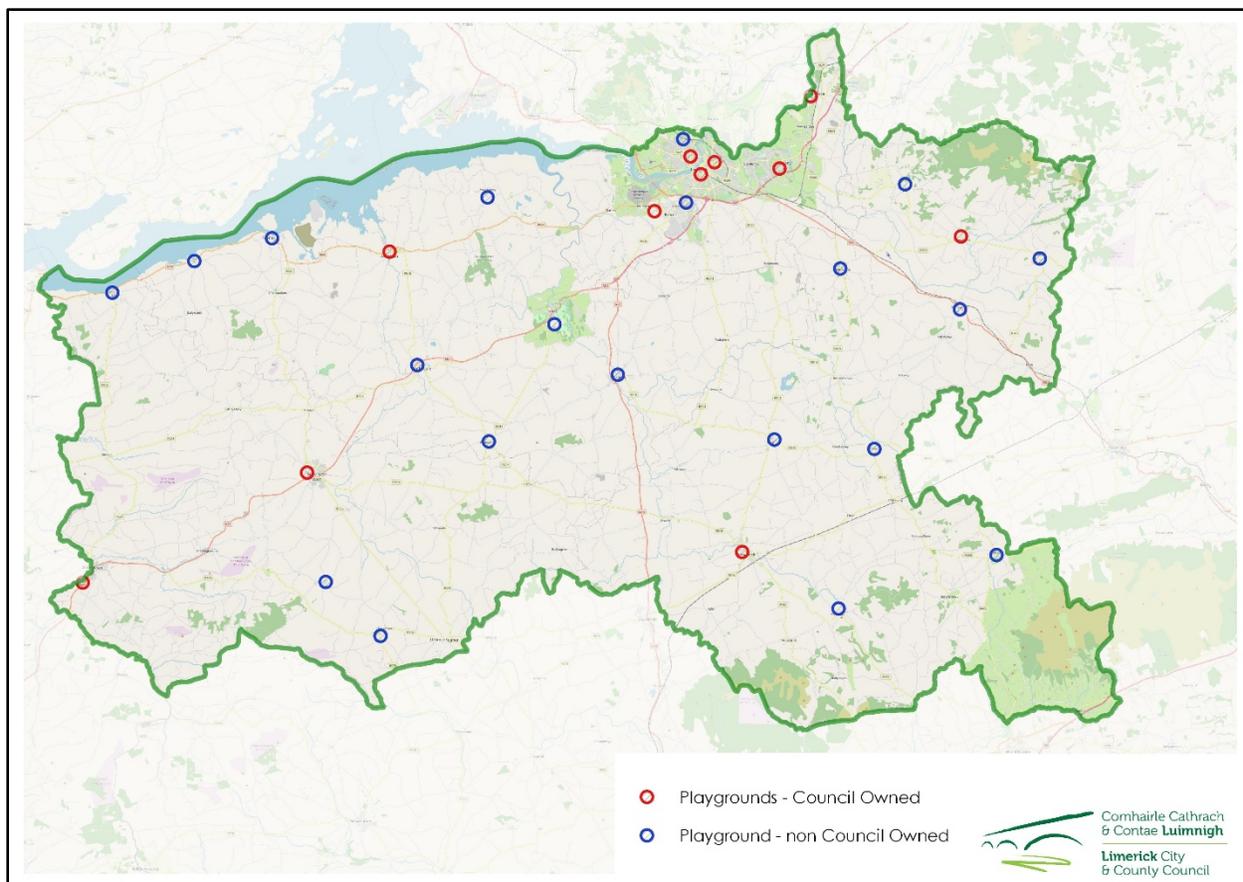


Figure 5 – Playgrounds in Limerick

2.5 – Arts and Culture

Greater recognition and investment in the arts and culture is seen as another way in which an improved quality of life can be delivered for communities. It is recognised that nurturing culture can create great places, change perceptions and engage communities through greater public participation. It is also not an optional extra, but an inherent element in physical, social and economic revitalisation and in the quality of life and personal wellbeing of individuals. Opportunities exist to build on the great wealth of natural and built cultural amenities in the City and County to increase public engagement and stimulate economic development.

Limerick has a vibrant arts and cultural sector and became Ireland’s first National City of Culture in 2014. The year of City of Culture afforded Limerick an opportunity to showcase and position the City and County as a vibrant, exciting and progressive place to live. The county’s international profile, connections with its communities and sense of itself have all been formed through this upsurge in cultural activity, one that has the potential to soar higher. Through Limerick’s Culture and Creativity Plan 2016, there are significant opportunities for cross departmental and cross organisational collaboration and community partnership.

2.6 – Libraries

Limerick has 18 public libraries, which serve a broad ranging community function and many provide facilities such as PC rooms with access to internet facilities, exhibition space, study facilities, community rooms, craft rooms and sensory rooms. Equally the many community centres throughout the City and County provide a broad range of community services. Limerick City and County Council have received permission as part of the overall redevelopment of the Opera site, to develop a new City Library.

2.7 – Sporting Facilities

Limerick has a strong sporting tradition and a wealth of facilities throughout the City and County, ranging from playing pitches to swimming pools, some are operated and owned by the Local Authority and many are run by clubs or private operators. Many of these clubs have excellent sporting facilities and collaborative approaches must be taken for the provision of new recreational and sporting facilities and support given to the multifunctional use of buildings. Limerick City and County Council are currently in the process of preparing a Sports and Recreation Strategy for Local Authority owned facilities. This will feed into the preparation of the proposed Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

2.8 – Burial Grounds

Limerick is well served with community burial grounds, however as traditions in burial rituals change, new practices such as cremations are becoming increasingly popular. The new Limerick Development Plan will be mindful of meeting the needs of the city and county in this regard in consultation with the relevant Directorate, within the Local Authority. Limerick City and County Council are currently preparing a Burial Ground Strategy, which will outline the future requirements for burial grounds, having considered the population and demographics of the City and County.

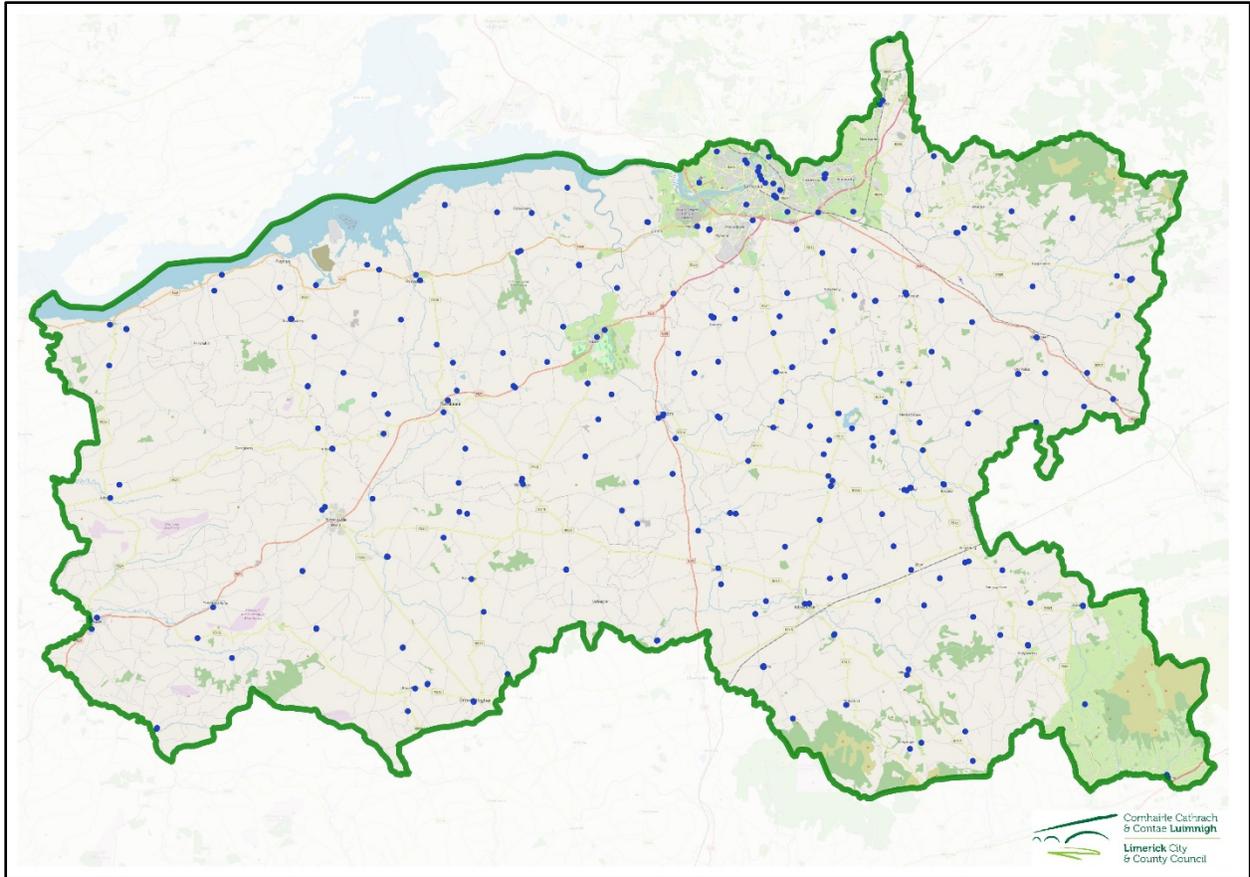


Figure 6 – Location of Burial Grounds in Limerick

3.0 – National, Regional and Local Strategic Policies and Guidelines

3.1 – National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework is the Government’s high level strategic plan for shaping the future development of the country to 2040. The plan anticipated a population increase of over one million people in the country in the period to 2040. The NPF places a focus on a shift towards Ireland’s regions and cities outside of Dublin, by adopting a long term framework that sets out how much Ireland can move away from the current ‘business as usual’ pattern of development in order to achieve ‘regional parity’. The strategy aims to ensure that future population and jobs growth is more geographically aligned.

The NPF sets out ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) or priorities to guide future development. These will be implemented through a further 10 investment priorities. These are detailed in the National Development Plan. The ten NSO’s are identified as follows:

- Compact Growth;
- Enhanced Regional Accessibility;
- Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities;
- High Quality International Connectivity;
- Sustainable Mobility;
- A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills;
- Enhanced Amenities and Heritage;
- Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society;
- Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources;
- Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services.

It could be argued that the area of Community and Recreation is of relevance in all of the 10 NSO’s and further in the 10 National Strategic Investment Priorities, which are given effect through the National Development Plan, clear evidence that community and recreation forms an integral part of shaping the future growth and development of the country to 2040.

The NPF seeks to make our cities, towns and villages, the places where many more people choose to live, work and visit, by 2040. To achieve this, our towns and villages need to be more attractive, liveable places offering a quality of life package that people are willing to choose in the years ahead. The NPF identifies three key components, which are needed to create stronger urban places:

- Community – Urban settlements are important places for trading goods, services and ideas, for information, learning and innovation, as well as for administration, entertainment, healthcare and worship. They offer diversity, choice and opportunity, as well as connectivity and community. These opportunities for greater community interaction and convenient access to a range of services need to be built upon, and negative perceptions of urban living need to be challenged;

- Economy – Employment trends indicate that City regions are increasingly focal point for investment. It is essential that there are a range of quality urban places to attract people to live, work and invest in. This will drive growth, investment and prosperity;
- Environment – Compact sustainable urban growth can help reduce environmental impact by reducing the amount of land take required, utilising existing infrastructure within our settlements, reducing the need to travel for goods and services, thereby improving the viability of public services and encouraging more active lifestyles.

To ensure that there is an appropriate local response which recognises the local context, the Planning Authority need to be mindful when devising policy responses, that appropriate densities are available to support local services, sustainable transport modes are available and promoted and the existing under used or vacant building stock is optimised. The NPF acknowledged the need for a range of strategies to achieve more balanced and sustainable growth and that a tailored approach is needed to best position settlements for their new roles. In particular the NPF highlights the need to:

- Encourage population and employment growth in towns of all sites that are strong employment and services centres, where there is potential for sustainable growth;
- Need to establish new roles and functions for smaller towns urban centres that have experienced decline and enhance their local infrastructure and amenities;
- Facilitate investment in areas where rapid expansion has taken place and there is a deficiency in amenities and services and improve transport links to centres of employment;
- In self – sustaining communities, a renewed emphasis needs to be placed on achieving urban infill/brownfield development.

3.1.1 – Childcare, Education and Lifelong Learning

In terms of equity, access to affordable and high quality childcare is identified as an essential requirement. Education, training and lifelong learning are identified as key enablers to the nation’s success and are central to building strong communities. Access to education is also seen as having a major impact on people’s quality of life. A lack of skills access to jobs and economic prosperity can lead to social exclusion poverty and hinder full participation in civic and political affairs. In the higher education sector Technological Universities are seen to deliver opportunities to the students of that region and by creating institutes of scale, multi campus technological universities will bring economic and social benefits to the local economy and wider society. This can lead to a strengthening role in research and innovation. The NPF recognises that aligning targeted population and employment growth with educational investment will lead to the making of a strong resilient economy and healthy communities.

3.1.2 – Tourism

The role of tourism in the Irish economy is well established and intrinsic links exist between agriculture/land management and tourism. Tourism has the capacity to sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits. The development of greenways and blueways and peatways are all identified in the NPF, as a means to attract visitors to communities and help those communities. The development of internationally recognised brands is seen as a way to promote strategic attractions, like the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East, both of which Limerick forms part of. Incorporating green infrastructure into developments is seen as a key to providing a range of uses, goods, and services, that makes the best use of land, help manage competing demands and can complement other sectors such as tourism and economic development.

3.2 – National Development Plan

The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out investment priorities, which will underpin the implementation of the NPF. The NDP incorporates a long terms strategic approach to public capital investment, to support the achievement of the 10 National Strategic Outcomes contained in the NPF. The plan recognises that the decisions we make on how we use land impacts on almost all aspects of our lives and of our communities. The Plan recognises that many of the investment priorities have benefits either directly or indirectly for communities. The major projects identified in the NDP for Limerick directly related to community and recreation include:

- Limerick Regeneration Programme up to 2023;
- University of Limerick Student Centre;
- Limerick University Maternity Hospital;
- Acute Hospital development – Limerick Ward Block.

In addition to the NPF and the NDP, there are many national policy and strategy documents that support and foster the development of community and recreation across the Country. These include:

- Culture 2025 – A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025;
- Action Plan for Rural Development;
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009;
- Healthy Ireland – Connecting for Life – Ireland's National Strategy;
- Framework for Health and Well Being 2013 – 2025 under the Healthy Irelands Programme
- National Countryside Recreation Strategy;
- A National Positive Ageing Strategy;
- Housing Options for our Ageing Population;
- Ready! Steady! Play! – National Play Policy, 2004;
- Quality Housing for sustainable Communities, 2007;
- National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020;
- Teenspace – National Recreation Policy for Young people 2007;

- Ireland's National Strategy to reduce Suicide;
- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures – National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020;
- National Traveller and Roma Inclusive Strategy 2017 – 2021;
- People, Places and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025 and associated Tourism Action Plans;
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways;
- Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities – a Five year Strategy to support the Community and Voluntary Sectors in Ireland;
- National Policy Framework for Children 2014 – 2020;
- A Roadmap for Social Inclusion – Ambitions, Goals, and Commitments 2019 – 2025;
- Children's First National Guidelines;
- Museum Standards Programme for Ireland;
- A Framework for Collaboration – an agreement between the Arts Councils and the CCMA, 2016;

3.3 – Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The RSES sets out the 12 year strategic development framework for the delivery of the National Planning Framework, within the Southern Region and including a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan, for the Limerick – Shannon Metropolitan Area, which includes Annacotty, Castleconnell, Patrickswell, and Mungret in Limerick.

A key component of the document is to strengthen the settlement structure, across the region, while capitalising on the strength of the 3 Cities and the Metropolitan Areas and of the towns, while seeking to revitalise rural areas. To build a strong, resilient and sustainable region, the RSES identifies 11 key components and enablers of growth and prosperity. To respond to the challenges faced in the region, the following settlement typology has been identified:

- City and Metropolitan Area;
- Key Town – Newcastle West;
- Towns and Villages – to be identified in the Development Plan;
- Rural – to be identified in the Development Plan;
- Networks – to be identified in the Development Plan.

The RSES recognises that the Limerick – Shannon Metropolitan Area has growth potential, having regard to the third level institutes and access to an international airport at Shannon and Shannon Foynes Port facilities, furthermore it notes that for the region to prosper, a strong Limerick City is paramount.

The RSES highlights that for population and economic growth, there is a need for public transport investment, a focus on regeneration, consolidation and infrastructure led growth of the city and suburbs, enhancement of the City Centre as the primary commercial area, existing hierarchy of Metropolitan towns and the metropolitan areas identified for strategic growth.

Economically the strategy focuses on the delivery of smart specialisation and clustering underpinned by a focus on place making for enterprise development.

The provision of walking and cycling infrastructure is identified in the RSES as a means to sustain healthy communities and promote quality of life. Improved quality of life is seen as a means to build and safeguard inclusive communities and crosses all facets of the strategy. The wellbeing of the region is supported in the Strategy and it is recognised that the health dividend from a strong and effective primary healthcare system, complemented by education programmes is of importance in the region.

3.3.1 – Diverse and Inclusive Region

There are many diverse and multicultural communities across the region and the RSES recognises the contribution these communities make to the region. The Strategy aims to prioritise parity of opportunity and improved wellbeing and quality of life for all citizens, while empowering communities to volunteer and become involved in active citizenship. Equal access for all is also central to the strategy and the concept of universal design for public transport, housing, sport cultural and recreational facilities and in public realm is recognised as a key to inclusiveness. With an increasingly elderly population, health and active ageing is recognised and the RSES supports the initiatives promoted in the Smart Ageing and National Positive Ageing Policies and An Garda Síochána Older People Strategy, including proposals to support digital literacy in the elderly.

3.3.2 – Childcare, Education and Lifelong Learning

It is anticipated that as the number of people aged 15 years or under will continue to increase until the early 2020's, this will have implications for how children learn, how they are cared for and the range of recreational facilities, that are required. The RSES supports parity of access to services amenities and opportunities for childcare, education, training and upskilling and lifelong learning across the region. It also recognises the role learning plays in promoting social inclusion, health and sustainable communities and the concept of a learning region is promoted.

3.3.3 – Cultural Heritage and the Arts

RSES identifies the vast cultural diversity that exists across the Southern Region and the importance of supporting and fostering this in the community, is highlighted. Cultural diversity is seen as a means to showcase the region as a whole and a vibrant cultural and creative sector is seen as key enabler for enterprise growth, innovation, regeneration, place making and community development and health and wellbeing.

3.3.4 – Development of Recreational, Sporting facilities, Trails, Walkways, Linear Parks and Greenways/Blueways

The contribution of open space, parks, sporting arenas and facilities on the quality of life is widely recognised. The RSES supports the development of new regional and local scale recreational and sporting facilities, including new stadiums, public parks and green spaces. It encourages Local Authorities, other public bodies and private clubs to work together for the provision of new facilities and to develop cooperative arrangements for the use of private spaces, which are not often readily available to the public. One example of this is the Regional Athletics Hub proposed for Newcastle West.

The development of Greenways across the country has provided both hugely popular and successful in terms of local economy, but also as a health and a community benefit. The RSES continues to promote the contribution of Greenways can provide for the community and the potential for linkages between the Great Southern Greenway and the North and South Kerry Greenways. Other areas such as estuaries, forests and uplands are also highlighted as important natural amenities and key natural and recreational assets for the community. The development of blueways and access to waterways is identified throughout the strategy for its potential to contribute to the area.

Built heritage and archaeology have long played a role in local communities and many act as tourist attractions within communities. The RSES identifies that a key area for long term protection of our built heritage is community involvement through community and educational programmes such as ‘Adopt a Monument’.

The RSES has identified Newcastle West as a key town, and has identified the following potential development with a community and recreation focus:

- Development of the Great Southern Greenway, as a greenway for walking and cycling in Limerick with a potential link to Listowel;
- Development of a regional athletics hub to serve the athletics clubs and schools in the catchment of the town;
- The tourist potential of the town has also been identified and synergies can be built into this in developing connectivity with the Great Southern Greenway.

3.4 – Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy (2013)

The main aim of the Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy was to develop a framework to coordinate the objectives and targets of key stakeholders in a cohesive and integrated plan for the area and to work together in ensuring the provision, management and use of quality facilities and services for everyone, including future generations. Through the strategy, county and city councils and other key stakeholders can work together to determine key recreational priorities for the region and to demonstrate commitment, cooperation and shared vision in developing sport and physical recreational opportunities for all, with an improvement in the health and overall quality of life of those who live and work in the area as well as those who visit it. The strategy, by looking at the range of facilities needed for team and individual sports, at the resources needed for non-sporting forms of physical recreation, at the organisational issues that need to be addressed to ensure that facilities are used to their optimum and at some locational criteria, seeks to provide a resource for policy-makers and decision-makers in the area which will assist in increasing the level of participation in sports and physical recreation, thereby leading to a healthier and happier community.

4.0 – Guidelines relevant to Recreation and Community

Under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (amended), the minister can issue statutory guidelines, which the Planning Authority must consider, when preparing the Development Plan. The following are a list of guidelines, which are relevant to community and recreation developments:

- Development Plan Guidelines (2007);
- Urban Design Manual
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Local Area Plans and the accompanying Manual for Local Area Plans (2013);
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets;
- Provision of schools and the Planning System – Code of Practice for Planning Authorities;
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines;
- Best Practice Guidelines – Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018).

5.0 – Local Policy Context

National policy recognises the importance of community infrastructure and recreation opportunities to a vibrant community. The collective wellbeing of a settlement is correlated with the quality of the environment. Open Spaces can assist the Council and the community achieve the wider objectives for biodiversity, health and wellbeing, place making and identity. Green spaces can contribute to the legibility of settlements and places, assisting ones sense of location, direction and orientation. Open spaces can contribute to the intangible values of a community’s sense of pride, civic activities and engagement and collective ownership.

National planning guidance requires considerations of community facilities and open space, when preparing development plans and assessing planning applications. As a means to prompt these considerations, Limerick City and County Council requires developers of housing developments to submit a Sustainability Statement and Social Infrastructure (SSIA) as part of their planning applications, since the adoption of the Limerick City and County Development Plans in 2010.

In recent times the term green infrastructure is considered more appropriate, when looking at open space provision. The concept is defined as looking at the totality of open space in an area, and the opportunities to develop a connected system of parks, green wedges, green corridors and green spaces. The connectivity of open space is considered important to address wider sustainable transport/movement goals and biodiversity principles of the movement of flora, fauna, pollinators and insects. Connected open space can also contribute to a more active and healthy lifestyle providing opportunities to cycle and walk/run at ease and with comfort and safe from traffic.

5.1 – Limerick Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2021

In accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Council adopted a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) in 2016. The plan sets out, for a six year period, the objective and actions to promote and support economic development and local community development in Limerick, by the Council in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The LECP is required to be consistent with the Core Strategy and objectives of the Development Plan and national and regional policy on economic and community development.

The role of Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) and the Public Participation Network in communities is recognised and seen as a means to ensure that policy is meaningful for local communities.

The main function of an LCDC is to prepare, implement and monitor the community elements of the six-year local economic and community plan. It must consider the economic elements of the plan in order to enhance co-ordination with the community elements and ultimately integrate the two elements. They also have a general role in seeking to ensure effectiveness, consistency, co-ordination and avoidance of duplication between the various elements of local authority activities in the community.

A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups around the country.

5.2 – Limerick Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024

Limerick City and County Council's Corporate Plan is a strategic framework for actions over a five year period and is a central component of business architecture, linking policy, organisational activity, governance, performance and actions. The Corporate Plan Aims and Objectives will be aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The Plan places an emphasis on community development and collaboration and sees Town and Village Renewal as a means to revitalise and rejuvenate communities. Development and support of community plays a central role in the document and is supported in the Local Authority with a Community Development Directorate which governs the following sections- Urban & Rural Community Development - Tourism, Culture & Arts -Libraries, Gallery & Museum - Limerick Sports Partnership - Property & Community Facilities

Central to the document is the enhancement of quality of life for all citizens of the City and County through:

- Building our towns and villages as nuclei for communities,
- Providing safe facilities and public spaces that are fully accessible to all of the community,
- Promoting community participation and engagement so that communities can play an active role in determining how their communities develop,
- Supporting the development of recreation, community and cultural facilities and services,
- Work in partnership with organisations and groups providing services in the community to make sure that a person centered approach to delivering services is consistently delivered by Limerick City and County Council and our partners
- Co-ordinate, manage and oversee the implementation of Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) Programmes.
- Support communities to maximise the opportunities available to them to enhance their areas and sense of place including supporting access to funding opportunities for community projects.
- Engage with our communities, Government Agencies and private partners in developing a City and County Development Plan that will guide the future growth and development of Limerick.
- Lead and enable an integrated approach in the development of communities across Limerick by supporting education and learning, health and wellbeing, ageing well, support for families and youth at risk through community participation, empowerment and civic engagement.
- Promote individual and community well-being through the delivery of the Creative Ireland Programme and Limerick Cultural Strategy: A Framework 2016-2030 at a local level.

5.3 – Limerick Cultural Strategy A Framework 2016 – 2030

This strategy aims to grow Limerick's cultural capacity by retaining and attracting creative practitioners to live and work in Limerick, to place culture at the heart of the economic growth and regeneration of Limerick, to engage citizens through involvement in culture and to increase and support the role of the creative industries in Limerick.

5.4 – Limerick Age-Friendly Strategy 2015 – 2022

The first Age Friendly strategy for Limerick gives commitments to improving key areas of infrastructure, services, information and overall social response to older people's issues in Limerick.

5.5 – Limerick City Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (as extended)

The City Development Plan looks at Community and Recreation in a number of different chapters in the Plan but specifically in chapter 8 entitled Social and Community and The Arts, Culture, Creativity and Tourism is considered in chapter 9. It is clear that the issues are given much consideration in the plan and the cross cutting nature of both requires their inclusion in many of the chapters. For example the issue of walking and cycling is dealt with in Chapter 5: Transport, where it is a policy of the Council to prioritise safe facilities for pedestrians and cyclist through the City. A number of measures are included to facilitate this including cycle lanes, secured bike parking areas and controlled crossing locations. Regeneration forms a chapter of the Plan and recognises the necessity for social and economic infrastructure to support the needs of the community. It is the vision for the Regeneration areas to create safe and sustainable communities with a good quality of life for people of all ages and to create neighbourhoods which are fully integrated with the social, economic and cultural life of Limerick.

Further the introduction to the Plan identifies the vision of the plan as one where Limerick City continues to grow as the centre of economic, social and cultural development for the Mid-West Region and Goal 2 seeks to "*promote social inclusion and to facilitate equality of access to employment, education, transport, suitable housing, social and cultural activities, whether by direct provision (eg social housing) or by facilitating others to provide the services (eg education)*".

5.6 – Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (as extended)

Chapter 6 of the County Development Plan deals with Community and Recreation. The guiding principles of the chapter are based on creating sustainable and balanced communities, strengthening the settlements, providing co-ordinated facilities and services and retaining existing services and facilities. Similar to the City Development Plan and because community building is impacted by how planning takes place, recreation and community is a cross cutting issue in the County Plan. For example, Chapter 5 Economic Development includes objectives in relation to tourism location and facilities development while Chapter 7 Environment and Heritage contains objectives on protected scenic views and prospects and Chapter 8 Transport and Infrastructure on the provision of cycle and pedestrian facilities.

It is likely that the review of both plans will continue to see Community and Recreation issues appear in many of the chapters of the new document.

In addition to the documents above and specifically the City and County Development Plans there are many local policy and strategy documents that support and foster the development of community and recreation across the county.

Further local level policy documents of significance include:

- Limerick City Council Sports and Recreation Plan 2010 – 2019;
- County Limerick Recreation Strategy and Action Plan 2010 – 2012;
- Healthy Limerick programme launched in 2017;
- Limerick Children and Young Person’s Services Committee Plan;
- Limerick’s Heritage Plan;
- Limerick Regeneration Framework Plan(2014);
- Rural Development Programme 2014-2020
- Local Children and Young People’s Plans (CYPSC)
- Limerick Tourism Development Strategy 2019 - 2023
- Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (2014)
- Review of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (2016)
- Limerick Regeneration Design and Public Realm Code (2015)
- Limerick Sports Partnership Strategy

6.0 – Conclusion

It is clear that community and recreation facilities form an integral part of shaping future growth and development nationwide. This is recognised across the strategic national and regional documentation pertaining to growth and planning. Community and recreation plays a vital role in community building and resilience, inclusiveness, economic growth and health and wellbeing. It is important to bear this in mind when considering the key issues for making strong communities and for providing facilities and amenities that support these communities. The new Limerick Development Plan will place a focus on providing the critical mass to sustain and build communities. This in turn will lead to increased demand for Community and Recreation facilities across Limerick.