

# Introduction

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Process So Far

The Limerick Regeneration Masterplan was published in October 2008 outlining a strategic vision and framework plan for the future of Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and St. Mary's Park/King's Island. The Masterplan proposed the demolition of all housing, community and retail facilities and their replacement with new, better quality neighbourhoods. Whilst there is support for the original vision set out in the Regeneration Masterplan of 2008, it is acknowledged that it was developed in a different economic climate when there wasn't the current constraints on public finances. In 2010, Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA) commissioned the National Building Agency (NBA), which had not been involved in the original Masterplan process, to examine the vision and framework outlined in the Masterplan and suggest ways in which it may best be implemented given the economic constraints at the time.

The Limerick Regeneration Agencies requested the National Building Agency (NBA) to review the Masterplan prepared for the regeneration areas with a view to setting out the following aims:

- To audit the existing housing stock and advise whether it is possible to retain a certain portion in line with the layouts as contained within the Masterplan;
- To identify possible phasing, decanting and demolition strategies;
- To target specific sites to demonstrate some early phase developments for the long suffering communities.

In 2011, a draft report was prepared by the NBA for each of the regeneration areas setting out a Framework Plan and Implementation Strategy. In June 2012, when the Limerick Regeneration Agencies came to the end of their term of office and the regeneration function was subsumed within Limerick City Council under the Office of Regeneration. The Office of Regeneration has spent the past year re-focussing the regeneration plan, guided by the objectives of the original Masterplan and subsequent draft plans prepared by the NBA with the central aim of achieving balanced sustainable neighbourhoods. The principle of full or large scale demolition has been reassessed with the scale of demolition required to meet the overall objective needing consideration on a house-by-house, area-by-area basis.

## 1.2 Statutory Boundaries of the Regeneration Areas

It is noted that the maps outlining the regeneration boundaries within the Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016 are inconsistent with those maps which formed part of the 2008 amendment to an establishment order (S.I. No.275/276 of 2007) which defined the regeneration areas for the Northside and Southside of Limerick. For the purposes of the Framework Plans outlined in Volume 2 of this LRFIP, the statutory boundaries as well as the focussed study boundaries for each of the regeneration areas are highlighted.

The Limerick City Development Plan clearly states that the "regeneration programme needs to be fluid" and "evolve with circumstances locally, regionally and nationally." Therefore, to implement the framework plans in a flexible and sustainable manner, whilst ensuring compliance with planning policy, it is proposed that the boundaries that were formed as part of the establishment orders (which are larger in land area to those adopted within the Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016) are used within this LRFIP to ensure compliance with the Development Plan and Core Strategy policies.

## 1.3 Aims of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plans (LRFIPs)

The aims of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plans (LRFIPs) are informed by an analysis of the local situation - the problems, the strengths and the opportunities presented for the city. This analysis is outlined in brief in this volume, supported by more detailed analysis of the situation in the Appendices. The aims of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plans are:

1. To improve quality of life and well-being for the communities of the regeneration areas by responding comprehensively to the problems addressed to the needs of people and the places and adopting a sustainable development approach. The strategy addresses the physical, economic, social, community development and community safety dimensions of regeneration.
2. To promote the social and economic inclusion of the regeneration areas into the mainstream life of the city, reducing the divergence between the regeneration areas and median measures for the city as a whole. This means the strategy aims to reduce the social and economic inequalities in the

city. It also aims to improve physical connectivity between the regeneration areas and the city and into the wider region. Opening up access to opportunities for people in the regeneration areas, for instance, in education, training and work, will require harnessing existing resources of the city, including those present in the regeneration areas, and attracting coordinated public and private investment over the next 10 years.

## 1.4 Overview of the Vision and Strategy

The vision and strategy of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plans (LRFIP) are shaped by the analysis of the socio-economic and physical context. The development of the LRFIPs has also been informed by an analysis of the policy context in the key fields of planning, urban design, architecture, environment, social policy and economic policy, taking into account the policy frameworks from EU, through national to local levels. The policy context is reviewed below, in this volume.

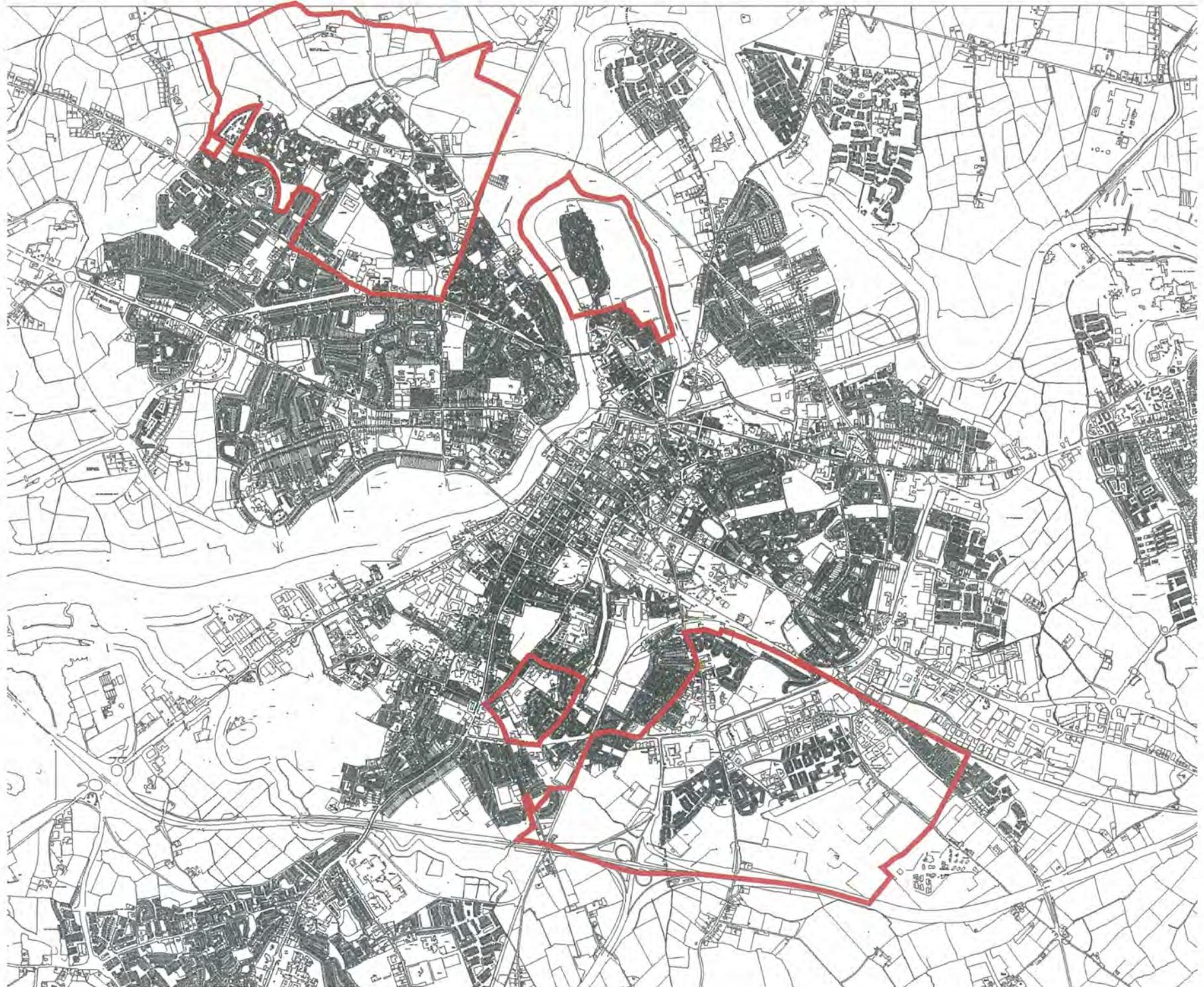
The vision for the regeneration areas is to create:

"Safe and sustainable communities where people of all ages enjoy a good quality of life, a decent home and feel a strong pride of place. Well serviced and attractive neighbourhoods will be fully integrated with the social, economic and cultural life of Limerick."

The strategy for the LRFIPs and the implementation arrangements are based on an integrated territorial development approach. The territorial focus of the LRFIPs is on the regeneration areas not in isolation from, but linked to, the wider economic and spatial strategy for, and cultural life of, Limerick City. This includes a focus on city centre renewal as well as stronger connectivity across the whole metropolitan area and into the region.

The integrated territorial development approach draws on the Europe 2020 strategic framework of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The aims of the LRFIP include but are broader in scope than economic growth and inclusion. The focus is on improving quality of life. Quality of life covers a wide range of issues including housing, safety, environmental quality, education, transport, jobs,

▼ Location of Regeneration Areas



## 1. Introduction

income, health, community, family life and ageing well. Access to services is a key issue for individuals and families resident in regeneration area. Access to services does not only mean the services are there, but they are delivered in a way that the people who need them can benefit from them.

The Limerick Regeneration LRFIPs place strong emphasis on safety, consolidating efforts in policing and the wider criminal justice system to address problems of crime in the city. Crime has impacted particularly negatively on the regeneration areas, affecting the reputation of those communities and the city as a whole. A further objective here is to change perceptions of Limerick in terms of its association with crime. Tackling the problems affecting the regeneration areas comprehensively (physical, economic, social, crime) offers the best prospects for a vibrant and safe city. Working with communities and other stakeholders, is a key part of the strategy to promote community safety.

The strategy, led by the local authority, involves a multi-sectoral partnership approach and working with the local communities. This is supported by a "whole of government" approach. The preparation of integrated plans and the structures for their delivery represents a change from the past and builds on earlier experiences.

Linked to the amalgamation of Limerick local authorities and local government reform, the local authority has the key role in leading the planning and oversight of implementation of the strategy, working in partnership with local stakeholders and with the support of central government. Local implementation arrangements include a strong focus on governance and the establishment of structures for programme management, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. The Limerick Regeneration Office in the local authority is the overall coordinating and executive structure of the regeneration programme. Effective delivery requires working in partnership with local agencies, the private sector, community and voluntary organisations and involvement of the communities themselves through consultation on the strategy and in the delivery of activities on the ground. The integrated approach to development will allow for thematic concentration on the key issues. This approach can create a critical mass, improve the effectiveness of public investment and have a lasting impact on the problems affecting the regeneration

areas. The social programme, in particular, is structured around a thematic approach. Coordination of mainstream (national, EU), local and philanthropic funds and of public and private investment are critical for efficient investment and in order to achieve sustainable results. In the field of economic development and social inclusion, this can include use of new instruments for financial engineering (e.g., JESSICA fund) supported under the EU Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020.

### 1.5 Summary of The Key Challenges and Opportunities

Drawing on the analysis of the socio-economic and physical contextual conditions, the key challenges and opportunities to be addressed in the regeneration areas and within the reference framework of the wider strategy for the city as a whole are as follows:

#### Social Economic Disadvantage of the City:

- Limerick City has a profile of socio-economic disadvantage. Based on a composite measure of deprivation, the Haase Pratschke Index, Limerick City is the most deprived of the five cities in the State (2011). While the city has been in a relatively more disadvantaged position than other Irish cities for some time, it has suffered a significant loss of jobs in recent years with the current economic recession.

#### The resilience of the city in the face of the economic downturn

- At the same time, in common with other cities in the State, the analysis of change in the spatial pattern of affluence and deprivation over the recent period (2006-2011) shows the resilience of Limerick City in the face of the economic downturn. All five cities in the State have deteriorated to a lesser extent in terms of profile of deprivation / affluence compared with the average situation across the State as a whole.

#### Unemployment and Specific Groups Negatively Affected by Unemployment:

- Levels of unemployment in the city are very high generally. Youth unemployment is at an extremely high level and is higher compared with any other city in the State. Specific problems include young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS) and long-term and inter-generational unemployment. Such deeply embedded structural

unemployment problems are particularly acute in the regeneration areas of the city.

#### Social Exclusion and Poverty, Particularly Concentrated in the Regeneration Areas:

- Social exclusion and poverty including problems in families and child poverty / deprivation is a long-standing problem. These problems particularly affect the regeneration areas and are reflected in: low education in the adult population, early school leaving, poorer attainment in education, lack of work-based skills, unemployment and economic inactivity, welfare dependence, weak family structure, deficits in parenting skills and ill-health.

#### Demographic Issues (Positive and Negative) and Lack of Population Diversity on the Regeneration Estates:

- Demographic trends within the administrative boundaries of the city show negative or weak population growth. This indicates that the city is not a popular residential option. This population trend in the city contrasts with strong population growth in the suburbs and county. Linked to a range of factors including the regeneration process, the loss of population from the regeneration areas has been particularly acute.
- In line with national trends, the city has an ageing population. While parts of the regeneration areas have a significant proportion of the population now in the older age groups, in general, they have a large proportion of the population in younger age cohorts and in the economically active age groups. This represents an important resource.
- The regeneration areas lack population diversity, in terms of social class composition and cultural diversity (e.g., presence of non-national residents). They also have a relatively high proportion of the population who are members of the Traveller community.

#### Weak Base of Economic Activity / Lost Opportunities and Lack of Economic Inclusion in Regeneration Areas:

- Low levels of economic activity and a lack of any significant economic base are particular problems in the regeneration areas. This includes lost opportunities and unrealised potential to develop micro-enterprise and innovate with social and community enterprise in these areas. These could provide important new sources of local employment.



## 1. Introduction

- Poor environmental conditions and key deficiencies in the physical infrastructures, urban design, housing quality and mix in regeneration areas:
- There are problems of poor environmental conditions in the most deprived neighbourhoods. These include dereliction in the housing stock, poor design and quality of open spaces / public realm, lack of community safety and some inadequacies in terms of location of, and access to, community services and facilities. There is a need to re-organise and improve physical provision and access to provision in certain key areas such as education (i.e., the school and broader education infrastructure).
- The low density and dispersed nature of the regeneration areas in tandem with increased distances from facilities and services undermines the provision of commercial facilities and public transport.
- The excessive amount of undeveloped functionless open space within Moyross and Southill detracts from and negatively impacts on the image of the regeneration areas.
- There are deficiencies in the physical and built environment including under-utilised land, buildings and other physical assets (open space). This applies to the city overall and in particular ways in the regeneration areas. In the regeneration areas, the generic deficiencies are combined with a lack of diversity of use in the built / physical environment in terms of mix of residential, commercial, retail, social and community facilities.
- Other specific issues in the regeneration areas are the poor quality of the housing stock in some parts including energy-related inefficiencies, poor ICT infrastructure, poor overall quality of the physical design of estates including design aspects that are not conducive to community safety, poor design to open up access / and fluidity of access within areas and into the city, uniform provision in the types / size of housing units resulting in inefficiencies, poor match to housing needs over the lifecourse and for groups with specific housing needs (e.g., older people, disabled people, people living alone etc.).

### Poor Connectivity from Regeneration Areas into the Economic, Social and Community Life of the City:

- A long-standing problem is that the regeneration areas have been “cut off” physically from the city. There are key deficiencies in access infrastructures

(road connectivity, types of routes, “smart” travel options, public transport) across the urban area. Focusing on regeneration areas, this includes access / ease of movement to, and from, regeneration areas into the city and beyond, and within regeneration areas.

- Difficulties of physical access for residents of regeneration areas are exacerbated by social, cultural and economic barriers (e.g., income). Improved access in all of these areas is necessary to support a greater diversity of participation in the wider social, educational, community and cultural life of the city.

### High Quality Natural Environment and Heritage (Physical and Cultural), Requiring Protection and Enhancement:

- A high quality natural environment is an important resource and this needs to be protected and enhanced. While this applies to the city as a whole, there are specific issues to be addressed in the regeneration areas. These include attention to areas where the natural environment shows vulnerability (e.g., maintaining biodiversity, flooding linked to climate change and adverse weather patterns). Active interventions are also necessary to protect and enhance the natural landscape including the river, the green spaces and vegetation, river banks, wetlands and walkways.
- The city has an important historic physical and cultural heritage (e.g., the Medieval City, Georgian Limerick, traditions in textiles / design) and, increasingly, there are newer expressions of culture in the city (e.g., sport, fashion and design, inter-cultural heritage). There are specific aspects of the cultural heritage and the cultural life of the city that are of particular relevance to the regeneration areas (e.g., the historic heritage of King’s Island).

### Local Resources and Assets that could be Mobilised to Support Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth:

- Significant local resources and capacity in the city that could be harnessed better to promote growth and job creation, impacting positively on the regeneration areas. In particular, there is a strong presence in the city of R&D (third level educational institutions, research bodies, private businesses) and capacity for knowledge transfer to create innovative businesses and high level jobs. The third level educational institutions (University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology) have research capacity and education

programmes at third and fourth levels in areas including information and communication technologies (ICT), science and technology, green energy (sustainable development), design and creative industries, business including financial services, tourism including tourism marketing, hotels and catering and health and social care.

- At third level, there is a strong focus on “access” programmes targeting groups which are under-represented in higher education, including people from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds, disabled people and mature people. These programmes include support activities in local communities and with children in primary and second level schools in the city, including regeneration areas.
- The city also has a developed further education and training and post-Leaving Cert education sector, offering programmes with accreditation from FETAC levels 1-3, (for those with lowest education and available in community-based settings across the city), through 4-5 (for qualification to upper secondary level) and levels 6 and 7, (focused on up-skilling / re-skilling including training in skills identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs).
- The city and region also is the location of successful enterprises in both foreign-owned and indigenous industry sectors including high value added enterprises in manufacturing (e.g., health-related and medical technologies, computers, precision engineering, pharmaceuticals etc.) and advanced business services.

### 1.6 Community Involvement

Local residents have been at the heart of the preparation process of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan which is led by the Office of Regeneration within Limerick City Council.

This regeneration framework has been developed with involvement from the local community and key service providers throughout the regeneration process. The two main approaches to community involvement are outlined as follows:

- The establishment of residents’ committees’ where local residents, representatives of key service providers and community groups meet regularly to discuss the project in detail.
- Public Information Sessions where all residents

from the area were invited to one or more sessions to discuss the proposals for development.

A full report on community and stakeholder consultation undertaken in the development of this plan is attached as an appendix to this document.

### 1.7 External Review

The process for the preparation of the LRFIP also integrated independent reviews to scrutinise the emerging plan proposals and their potential design, delivery, and impact. The reviews involved a study visit, meetings with the Office of Regeneration and subsequent recommendation reports prepared by the external reviewers.

The expert reviewers included the following specialists:

*Professor Peter Wells of Sheffield Hallam University*  
Peter Wells is professor of public policy analysis and evaluation, and director of the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. He has extensive experience of research on urban and regional issues, specifically in project and programme evaluation, community involvement, community economic development, voluntary and community sector, local government, Structural Funds and EU regional policy. Prof. Wells was involved in the National Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities programme as a member of the central data team.

*National Crime Prevention Through Design Office*  
Alan Roughneen is a specialist Crime Prevention Officer (CPO) at the National Crime Prevention Unit (NCPU) in the Garda Headquarters, Harcourt Square, Dublin.

The NCPU's responsibilities include:

- The promotion of crime prevention and reduction
- Research into best practice
- The development of policies and strategies
- Training for CPOs

Reviews took place in November 2012 (*National Crime Prevention Through Design Office*) and in May/June 2013 (*Professor Peter Wells*) when the emerging LRFIP was at an intermediate stage, with sufficient time to respond to recommendations.

### 1.8 Structure Of The Report

The Framework Implementation Plan is structured into the following key volumes:

#### Volume 1: Introduction & Context

Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction

[Presents the background to the project]

2.0 Policy Context

3.0 Baseline Conditions and Analysis

[The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of relevant baseline analyses carried out across the physical, social and economic contexts for the preparation of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (LRFIP)]

4.0 Physical Overview and Analysis

#### Volume 2: Vision & Framework Strategy

1.0 Vision

The section presents the social, economic and physical vision for the regeneration areas supported by strategic objectives for future interventions to reinforce the vision to achieve sustainable communities. These strategic objectives will also inform the Implementation and Delivery Strategy in Volume 3: Implementation and Delivery.

2.0 Framework Strategy

The purpose of this section is to describe the Physical, Economic and Social Framework Strategy for the regeneration areas, reinforcing the vision set out in Volume 2.0, Section 1.0 and identifying site specific guidance for future interventions to be shaped by.

#### Volume 3: Implementation & Delivery

1.0 Implementation and Delivery

An implementation and delivery strategy is presented for the strategies described in Volume 2.0, Section 2.0 setting out how Limerick City Council will deliver and implement change from a physical, economic and social context.

#### Appendices

1. Baseline Conditions and Analysis
2. Statement of Community Involvement
3. Compliance with the Core Strategy of Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016
4. Crime Prevention through Design Statement
5. History of Social Housing in Limerick
6. Existing Situation of Regeneration Estates as at December 31 2012
7. Existing Services Infrastructure
8. Cost and Cash Flow Information

#### Supporting Documentation

1. Draft Natura Impact Report prepared by Openfield
2. Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment prepared by HRA Planning
3. Public Realm and Design Code





