



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick** City  
& County Council

# Design Brief

## Opera Site, Limerick City

APRIL 2018





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# 1.0

## Introduction

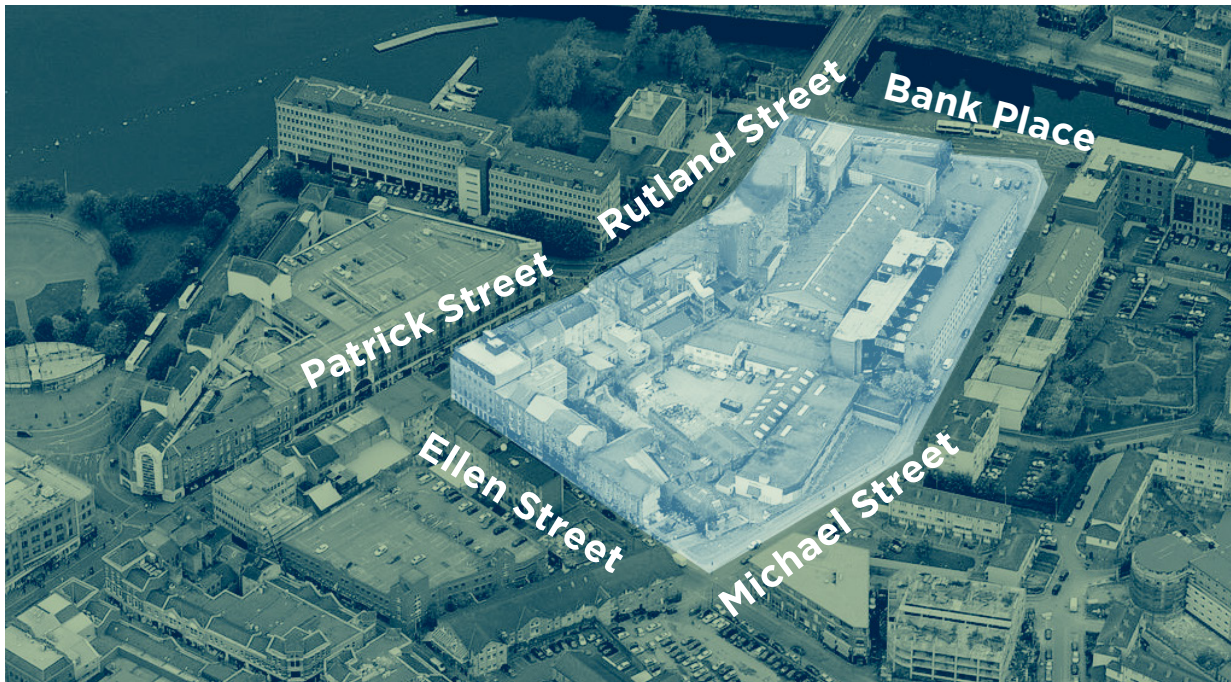






## 1.1 Key Development Site

This Design Brief relates to a brownfield site known as the Opera Site at the heart of Limerick City Centre in the functional area of Limerick City and County Council<sup>1</sup>. The site occupies the majority of a city block bounded to the west by Patrick Street and Rutland Street, to the north by Bank Place, to the east by Michael Street and to the south by Ellen Street.



Site Location Map - The Opera Site

The Opera Site is a highly visible block with easy access from shopping locations on O'Connell Street and Arthur's Quay, by visitors to the Hunt Museum, by office employees at Sarsfield House and by drivers passing through the City Centre.

The overall urban block is largely vacant and underutilised, but has retained a number of active uses, mainly comprising ground floor retail uses and the Granary office building fronting onto Michael Street. There is an urgent need to bring this key site back to full and productive use and make a major contribution to strengthening the City Centre.



Existing streetscape



Area context

<sup>1</sup>Site area extends to street frontages on all sides, including Bank Place to the north.

## 1.2 Design Brief Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this Design Brief is to set out Limerick City & County Council's planning approach to the redevelopment of a prominent brownfield site within the City Centre and to fulfil a requirement of *Limerick 2030: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick (Limerick 2030 Plan)*, adopted as Variation No. 4 of the *Limerick City Development Plan*:

*"Put in place a detailed design brief for the site - defining public access, public realm, height, density, conservation, etc. requirements."*

(Limerick 2030 Plan - Action Point 19e.)

This Design Brief describes the provisions of the *Limerick 2030 Plan* and sets out a list of development parameters for the site having regard to the provisions of that Plan and an appraisal of the sites setting and context. The Brief is intended to help guide the development process and to inspire the highest possible standards, whilst reducing uncertainty and improving efficiency of the planning and development process.

It is envisaged that the conservation, public realm and urban design strategies set out in the Design Brief will further refine planning policy to deliver a business-led mix of uses to ensure that this important new quarter will be a vibrant and successful addition to the City Centre. Its intent is to redress one of the primary structural challenges identified for Limerick City Centre and to develop the Opera Site both as an attraction in its own right and a stimulus to the continued development of the commercial core.

*"The vacant Opera Site represents a significant void in the historic fabric."*

(Limerick 2030 Plan, Section 5.16; City Centre Strengths and Challenges.)



Existing vacant buildings



Interior streets



### 1.3 Site Description and Context

The Opera site comprises an urban block located in Limerick’s historic city centre, situated on the south side of the River Abbey at the confluence with the River Shannon, adjacent to the Hunt Museum and Arthur’s Quay Shopping Centre. The site’s city centre location and proximity to other city centre uses is shown.

-  Opera Site
- 

1. King John’s Castle
- 

2. St. Mary’s Cathedral
- 

3. Barringtons Hospital
- 

4. Hunt Museum
- 

5. Arthur’s Quay Park
- 

6. Milk Market
- 

7. St. John’s Cathedral
- 

8. Limerick School of Art + Design
- 

9. Limerick City Gallery of Art
- 

10. People’s Park
- 

11. Colbert Station
- 

12. Limerick Institute of Technology  
Georges Quay
- 

13. O’Connell Street
- 

14. Potato Market



Location of Opera Site

The site is located at the northern end of Limerick’s Georgian Quarter and its perimeter composed of largely intact Georgian terraces to Ellen St., Patrick St. and Rutland St. There are a number of existing buildings on the site with varying levels of heritage value. These include 4 no. structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures, and a further 8 no. structures which are included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). A number of the existing buildings are currently vacant. Frontage to Bank Place comprises the northern end of the Granary Building, a 1960s building formerly occupied by Cahill May Roberts, and a terrace of three Georgian buildings at 7-9 Bank Place which are currently not part of the development site ownership.



Aerial view of Opera Site



Existing buildings



The interior of the block is also host to Limerick City Library, located in a 3-storey modern extension to the Granary building, and some existing and unused warehousing/workspace buildings at Bogue's Yard and Watch House Lane. A surface car park currently occupies the southeast corner of the site. There are several access points to the site from all of the surrounding streets.

The general surrounding environment is characterised by mixed-use development including retail, offices, leisure, institutional and community facilities, as well as some residential properties.

The Opera Site does not fall within any of the four designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) in Limerick City, but the architectural significance of a number of structures on site is recognised, including those listed on the Record of Protected Structures and others of potential conservation merit, which must be carefully considered in any development proposal for the lands. It is located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential forming the medieval core of the City, but there are no known archaeological features within the site boundary recorded on the Sites and Monuments Register.

### 1.3.1 Historical Context

The Opera Site is located within an area of particular importance to the historical development of Limerick City Centre. The formation of Limerick as a fortress town dates back to the Vikings of the 9th Century and was dominated by the fortifications of Kings Island. Under British rule the medieval character of the town developed and following the granting of a charter 1197 Limerick was declared a city. King John's Castle and Thomond Bridge were constructed in 1210, however it was not until 1760 that Limerick was declared to no longer be a fortress. Following the dismantling of the fortress walls, the city began to expand southwards from its medieval centre and saw the construction of Georges Quay and a new bridge on the site of the current Matthew Bridge.



Patrick Street, Limerick 1902-1904



Rutland Street, Limerick

From the mid-18th Century, the Georgian character of the city began to be established with the development of Newtown Pery to the south, Limerick's Georgian Quarter. Development in this area took the form of a grid plan of equal rectangular plots & length and of a distinctive architectural unity subdivided by spacious streets. This distinctive urban form of the city centre was mapped out by Right Hon Edmund Sexton Pery in 1769 and still defines the city centre to this day.

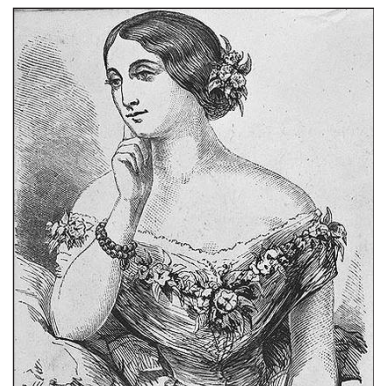


Extract from OS Map 1840

Rutland Street was home to some of the earliest Georgian houses and played an important role in the development of the city, linking the new bridge from Kings Island and the quays to Patrick Street and the network of new streets to the south. The early terraces of Rutland Street and Arthurs Quay influenced the design standards for the development of the centre of the city. Development took the form of terraced blocks constructed in red brick with ornamental frames to the doorways, in-keeping with the Georgian fashion of buildings in Dublin and London. Civic buildings were occasionally imported into the centre of the terrace, such as the former town hall on Rutland Street and warehousing was often incorporated into the overall block structure. Another key feature of development was the distinction between front and rear, with the front of the terrace providing the public face, while the rear functioned as a more private place where servants worked and entered.

These rear semi-private areas (mews) comprised a collection of stables, coach houses and yards that were often connected by narrow lanes (bow ways) which extended through blocks and connected with side streets.

Catherine Hayes was one of the most celebrated opera singers of the 19th Century. She was born at No. 4 Patrick Street in 1825. She had a successful career in international opera and performed at a number of venues across Europe, America, Australia and India. She died in London in 1861.



Catherine Hayes, Soprano

The townscape unity of Georgian Limerick that developed was based on a regular grid of streets running parallel and at right angles to the river and represents a unique example of 18th and 19th century town planning in Ireland that remains largely intact.

## 1.4 Planning Context

### 1.4.1 Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016

The adopted *Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016* sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the City. The duration of that Plan was extended in September 2015<sup>2</sup> and will continue to have effect until the making of a new Development Plan for the amalgamated Limerick City and County Council's.

The statutory Development Plan governing development of the Opera Site is the *Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016*.

### 1.4.2 Limerick 2030: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick (Variation No.4)

The *Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016* incorporates *Limerick 2030: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick (Limerick 2030 Plan)*, which was formerly adopted as Variation No. 4 of the Plan on 26th January 2015.

A central component of the Plan is to achieve the comprehensive redevelopment of the Opera Site and provide “A New Business Offer” for the City, tying into the heart of the City’s shopping offer. The Plan envisages a business-led mixed-use solution for this Site including significant office development and a range of supplementary uses.

The Plan also specifies public realm and permeability requirements for the site and links with other City Centre projects, including the potential to accommodate a relocated Office of Public Works offices at Sarsfield House, which would facilitate the provision of the new linear City Centre Park at Arthur’s Quay.

Key provisions of the *Limerick 2030 Plan* are detailed in Section 2 and provide the appropriate footing for this Design Brief and the establishment of planning parameters for the delivery of the Opera Site.

### 1.4.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Variation No. 4 to the *Limerick City Development Plan 2010 – 2016*, incorporating the *Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan*, was subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) demonstrating how environmental considerations were integrated in the making of that plan.

The subject Design Brief fulfils an objective of that plan and therefore further SEA is not required in respect of this Design Brief.

<sup>2</sup>In accordance with the provisions of section 11A/B of the *Planning and Development Acts, 2000 [as amended]*.

#### 1.4.4 Appropriate Assessment Screening (AA Screening)

Variation No. 4 to the *Limerick City Development Plan 2010 – 2016* was also subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening, which concluded that full Appropriate Assessment was not required as the plan operates within the existing zoning template of the Limerick City Development Plan, which itself had been subject to appropriate assessment.

The subject Design Brief fulfils an objective of the varied Plan and therefore further Appropriate Assessment Screening is not required in respect of this Design Brief. The Opera Site is a brownfield site, which means that any development would not encroach onto Natura 2000 sites. Individual planning applications at the site will require Appropriate Assessment Screening to determine whether the development proposal(s), including consideration of relevant design details and construction methodologies, would be likely to affect the Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other permitted development. This will ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place.

#### 1.4.5 Planning History

The Opera site has an established planning history including a number of permissions relating to individual structures as well as larger-scale permissions relating to the overall site.

In particular, 2 no. significant retail schemes were permitted in 2006 and 2008, providing between circa 28,000 sq m and 42,000 sq m floorspace, principally in retail use.

On review of relevant planning history, it is evident that conservation issues were central to the consideration of both applications, which is similarly reflected in the *Limerick 2030 Plan* to retain important buildings fronting onto Patrick Street and Rutland Street and the Granary Building.

The adopted *Limerick 2030 Plan* provides a change in the statutory planning context from that time and signals a move away from developing this area as a higher order retail core for the region to a business-led mixed-use scheme that will animate this quarter and create a destination within the City Centre, bringing footfall to surrounding streets, public spaces and shops.



2008 Retail Scheme - Proposed Layout





## 2.0

# Limerick 2030 Plan Objectives





## 2.1 Opera Site Objectives

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* sets out a range of provisions for the future development of the Opera Site, which are collated and described in this Design Brief to appropriately inform the development context for the site and site-specific requirements.

## 2.2 Quantum of Development – Buildings

In total, the adopted *Limerick 2030 Plan* envisages a development quantum of circa **45,200 sq m** at the Opera Site including new build and renovated and extended existing structures to be retained.

Of that indicative total, the Plan envisages that **25,000-30,000 sq m** will comprise office floor space, which equates to approximately 55%-66% of the total.

This is broken down as follows in terms of building requirements:

- **10,000 sq m** Innovation Hub providing flexible small business space for businesses ‘graduating’ from incubation facilities at the UL and LIT.
- **10,000 sq m** Public Sector Office (including the relocation of the Revenue Commissioners from Sarsfield House).
- **5,000-10,000 sqm** to be available for letting by the IDA to potential FDI business(es).

In addition, Table 17 of the *Limerick 2030 Plan* (Opera Site Project Summary, copied below) sets out the following floorspace parameters for the site:

- **15,600 sq m** New Build – Office, Higher Education, Retail use;
- **8,400 sq m** Granary Renovation – for Office use; and
- **21,200 sq m** Upper Patrick Street Renovation – for Residential, Office, Higher Education.

Opera Centre	Project	Outcome	Uses	Site Area/ Footprint (sam)	Height / Storeys	Potential Floorspace (sam)
Renovation	Granary	Full Use	Office	2,100	4	8,400
	Upper Patrick Street	Full Use	Resi, Office, Higher Ed	5,300	4	21,200
Development	Main Site	New and Full Use	Office, Higher Ed, Retail	3,900	4	15,600
Public Realm	Interior 'Quad'	Courtyard Respite		3,700		
	Bank Place Square	Stronger Gateway		1,100		
	Mid Block ped. link	New connection		100		
	Ellen Street	High Quality Street		300		
	Patrick Street	High Quality Street		350		
	Michael Street	High Quality Street		250		

*Limerick 2030 Plan* Table 17 - Project Summary

The proposed floor space quantum is based on an average density of 4:1 for developable areas of the site, excluding the internal square and Bank Place. The Design Brief must refine this approach and appropriately direct development within the site to balance delivery of floor space and open space requirements in line with an appraisal of the overall site and its context.



## 2.3 Quantum of Development – Open Spaces

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* lists the following Open Space/ Public Realm requirements<sup>5</sup>:

<b>3,700 sq m</b>	-	Interior Quad
<b>1,100 sq m</b>	-	Bank Place Square
<b>100 sq m</b>	-	Mid-Block pedestrian link
<b>300 sq m</b>	-	Ellen Street high quality street
<b>350 sq m</b>	-	Patrick Street high quality street
<b>250 sq m</b>	-	Michael Street high quality street

## 2.4 Land Use

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* states that the site is not in the prime shopping location, notwithstanding previous plans/proposals to develop the site for primarily retail development. This policy evolution recognises the need for Limerick to position itself in order to best take advantage of economic opportunities and build a stronger local economy through the creation of employment and the attraction of investment.

Instead, the *Limerick 2030 Plan* envisages a **business-led, mixed-use solution** for this Site to animate this Quarter and create a destination within the City Centre. The Plan envisages a business quarter with a mix of:

- Large-scale private and public-sector office accommodation;
- Innovation hub linked with higher education facilities in the City;
- Relocation of the Revenue Commissioners from Sarsfield House;
- Potential higher education accommodation; and
- Supporting retail, leisure and civic/cultural uses.

**Revenue Commissioners:** A proposed development at the Opera Site should seek to facilitate the potential relocation of the Revenue Commissioners, freeing up Sarsfield House for potential provision of a new linear Arthur's Quay City Centre Park.

**Higher Education:** The *Limerick 2030 Plan* contains a number of references seeking agreement on the location and sites for a greater higher education presence in Limerick City Centre, including the Opera Site or in close proximity to the site. Based on discussion between the relevant parties to date, it may not be possible to provide education use as part of the redevelopment of the Opera Site.

**Retail/ Leisure:** Supplementary shopping and leisure can be included at the southern end of the Site. In addition, bars/restaurants should be supported fronting onto Bank Place and any development proposal of the site should also seek to provide active use at ground floor level to animate public streets and, in particular, public spaces.

**Civic/ Cultural:** It is the policy of Limerick City and County Council to require Arts and Culture Infrastructure to be integrated into large scale re/development of key sites in the City Centre area (Arts, Culture, Creativity and Tourism Policy ACT 8). The redevelopment of the Opera Site should seek to include a Civic/ Cultural component as part of any redevelopment of the site.

## 2.5 Public Realm & Permeability

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* seeks to create:

- A new managed public space within the redeveloped Opera Site with strong connections to the network of squares/ plazas across the City (O'Connell Street, Potato Market, King's Island, enhancement of Bank Place, Colbert Station).
- High quality pedestrian-oriented streets;
- A high quality walkable environment around the Opera Site, a key hub between Irish Town and Arthur's Quay, including upgrades to Rutland and Patrick Street, Ellen Street and Michael Street;
- A gateway onto Limerick's shopping core from the north, including streetscape investment that reflects the quality of new buildings along the Opera Site's western frontage.
- Activated streets/ uses to draw pedestrians up from O'Connell Street;
- Stronger pedestrian links to the Hunt Museum and King's Island to the north;
- A new pedestrian connection from Michael Street to Patrick Street crossing a new 'internal' public space that offers a quieter, interior courtyard space for occupiers and visitors;
- A new entrance on the corner of Ellen Street and Patrick Street, opposite Arthur's Quay to draw people into this Site; and
- A high-quality landscape setting for the public space at Bank Place that addresses the Canal and Charlotte's Quay.



## 2.6 Conservation

It is the policy of Limerick City & County Council to protect and retain important heritage buildings within the City and to preserve architectural character.

This Design Brief recognises the buildings of heritage significance located on the proposed development site and their current status as identified in Limerick City & County Council's Development Plan. Any development proposal should be cognisant of the significance of existing building stock, and should include an inventory of buildings on the site and an assessment of their conservation status in order to appropriately inform and guide future development of the site.

## 2.7 Smarter Travel

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* seeks to put pedestrians first throughout the City Centre and promotes the development of wider pavements, wider crossing points, and to remove as much extraneous car traffic from the City Centre as possible.

In particular, the *Limerick 2030 Plan* seeks to adopt the 'smarter travel' principles that have been formulated for the City Centre and any development proposal at the site should seek to align with these principles and reduce reliance on the private car.

# 3.0

## Site Appraisal

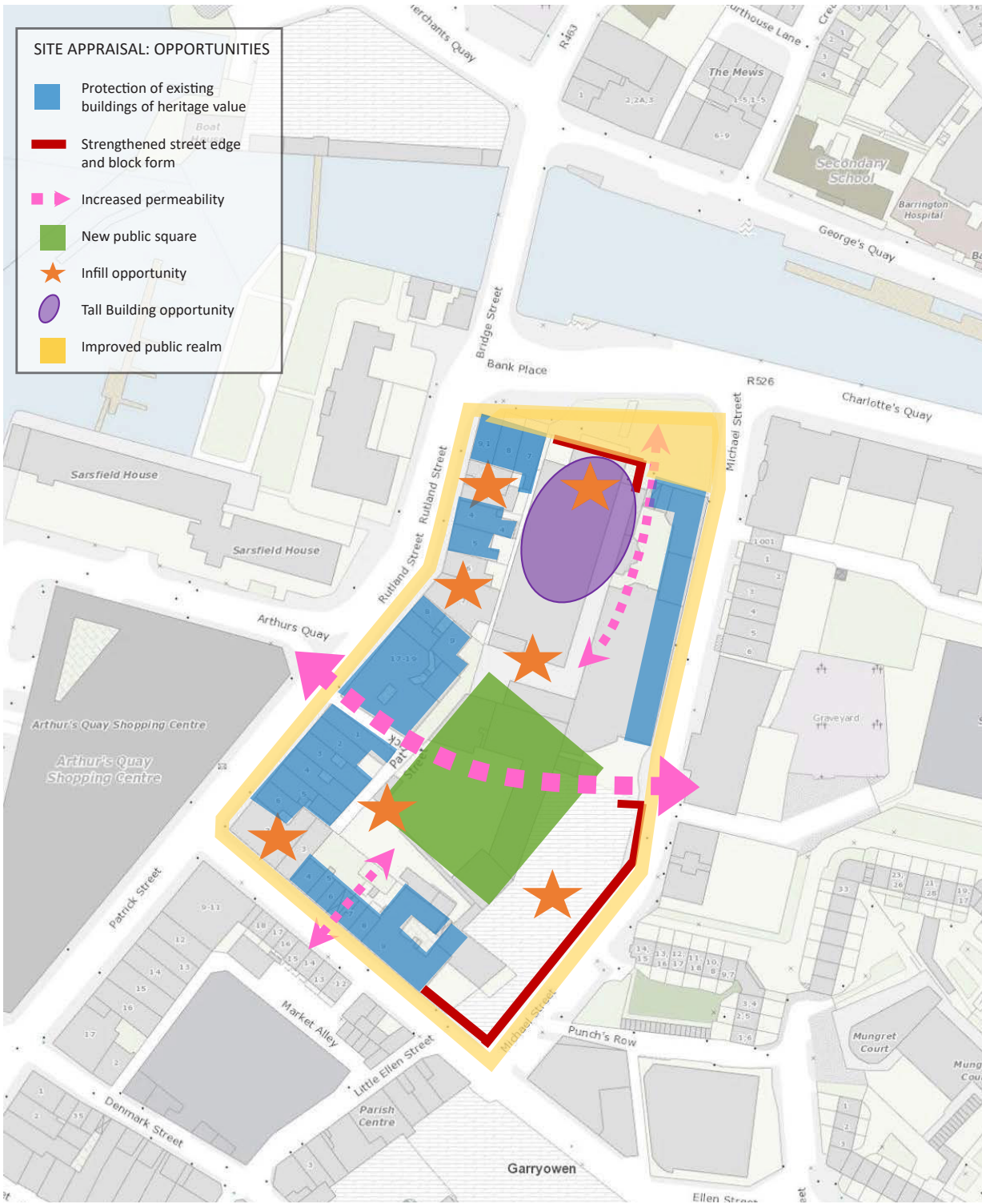






### 3.1 Site Constraints and Opportunities

The Opera Site is a significant urban block at the northern edge of the city core area, on the east side of the main city spine, on the threshold between the Medieval Quarter, the Georgian Quarter and Irish town. This important urban location and rich heritage provides many constraints and exciting opportunities for the development of the site.



Site Appraisal: Opportunities

### 3.1.1 Constraints

- Retention of existing heritage buildings
- Fabric condition of buildings to be retained
- New building height and setback limitations to protect amenity of and impact on retained buildings and surrounding buildings
- Overlooking of adjacent residential properties
- Archaeological zone
- Phasing requirements
- Traffic flow through Bank place and Rutland Street
- 7-9 Bank Place is not in the control of Limerick City & County Council
- Flood risk issues
- Varied site levels and integration of basements, and varied floor levels of existing buildings

### 3.1.2 Opportunities

- Reinstatement of full perimeter street edge
- Protection, renovation and reuse of existing historic buildings
- Removal of poor quality and derelict structures and elimination of vacancy
- Activate ground floor uses and provide a desirable destination
- Enhancement of public realm to perimeter streets
- New public square within the block
- Permeability through the block to provide strengthened connections to Arthur's Quay and waterfront to the west, and to Milk Market and Colbert Station to the east
- Improved public space at Bank Place
- Opportunity for a tall building on the site addressing the Abbey River at Bank Place
- Increase activity on the site with significant new building
- Removal of poor quality structures

## 3.2 Buildings of Heritage Value

The site is located on and between several streets which were first developed in the latter half of the 18th century. As a result, terraced Georgian buildings are currently found to Ellen Street, Patrick Street and Rutland Street. In addition to the terraced houses there is a late-18th century stone granary building on Michael Street and the early-19th century former Town Hall on Rutland Street. There are several modern buildings constructed in the 1980s and early 1990s to replace demolished terraced houses, and a large office and storage building (Cahill May Roberts c.1970s) to Bank Place. To the centre of the site, remains of several large stone warehouses and high stone walls have been incorporated into modern storage buildings. None of the 20th century buildings on the proposed development site are considered to be of architectural significance.

There are a number of buildings of significance, including Protected Structures, in the vicinity of the Opera Site, including the Hunt Museum (former Custom's House), the Court House, St. Mary's Cathedral and St. Michael's Church.

The presence of significant numbers of Georgian terraced red brick houses at the Opera Site has preserved much of the historic streetscape of this area, helping to maintain in particular the immediate setting of the Hunt Museum (former Custom House).



Protected Structures and buildings included on the NIAH

The Opera Site includes four buildings and one doorway which are Protected Structures in the current Development Plan. Eleven structures (which include the five Protected Structures) are also included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage's Interim Survey for Limerick City.

Other existing buildings also have potential architectural, historical or streetscape value. However, the condition of the existing buildings on the site varies, as does the extent of surviving historic fabric to the interiors of these structures. The condition of the existing buildings on the site varies, as does the extent of surviving historic fabric to the interiors of these structures. The individual levels of significance are not necessarily reflected by the building's inclusion on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage's survey which only aims to include a representative selection of buildings in Limerick City and is not based on access to the interiors.

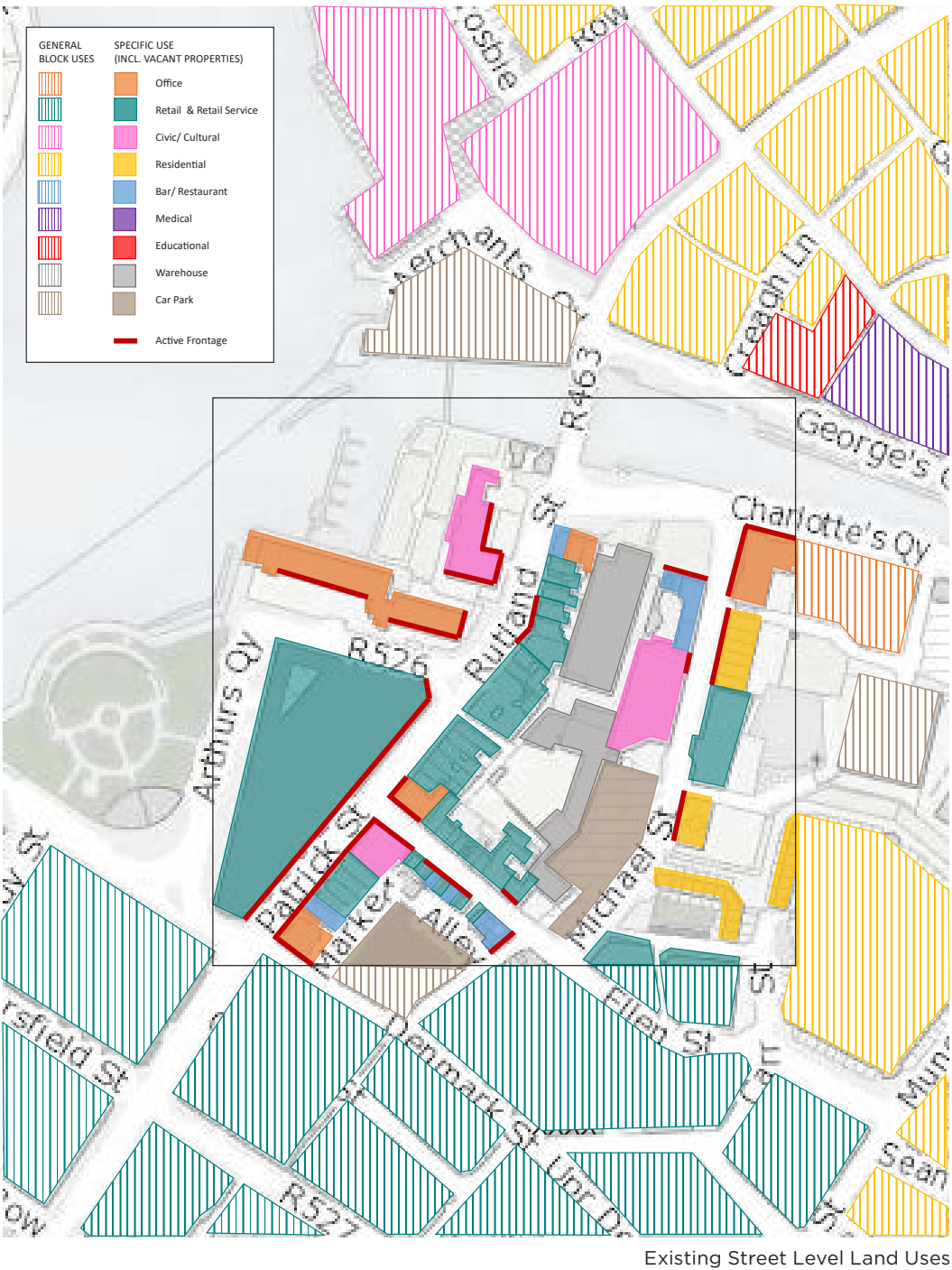
For this reason, prior to the design of a proposed scheme for the development site, a full assessment of the existing buildings should be carried out with a view to determining their individual levels of importance in terms of their architectural, historical and cultural value. This assessment should be based on detailed inspections of the buildings and an evaluation of the surviving historic fabric in each structure. The results of these assessments should inform the design process for the site with regard to the future use and treatment of the historic building stock.



### 3.3 Land Uses

The site, on the northern edge of the city central core, is surrounded by a varied mix and intensity of uses. General city centre mixed use and retail are predominant to the south and west of the site, significant office and cultural use are to the north west and north east of the site, with a mix of office and residential along Michael Street to the east.

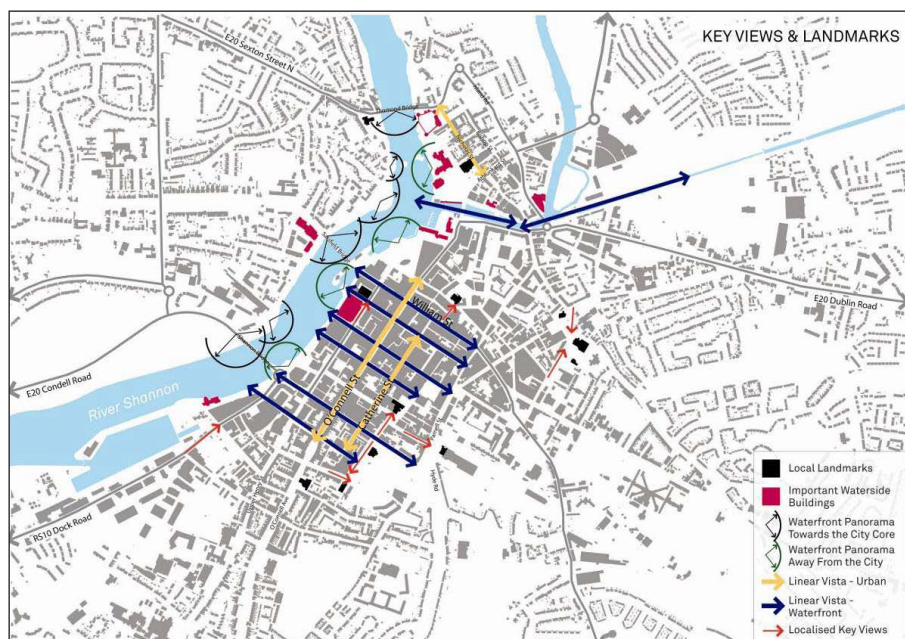
The site has a mixed history with a reflective range of uses, influenced by the nature of structures on site and the character of the surrounding streets. Small retail and non retail service uses, occupy many of the ground level Georgian structures, with infill offices and warehouses within the center of the site, and a vacant plot used for parking to Michael Street.



### 3.4 Existing Building Heights and Massing

To the south of the site the traditional street and building pattern remains largely intact, while to the east the pattern has changed following comprehensive redevelopment programmes of the 1980s. Patrick Street retains its role as the main entry to the city core, linking the medieval quarter of King's Island to the main thoroughfare of O'Connell Street. Secondary streets at right angles to the River Shannon intersect the main route to form the distinctive grid iron pattern. Narrow lanes or bows further sub-divide the grid to provide a network of inter-connected routes that are a distinctive feature of the city centre.

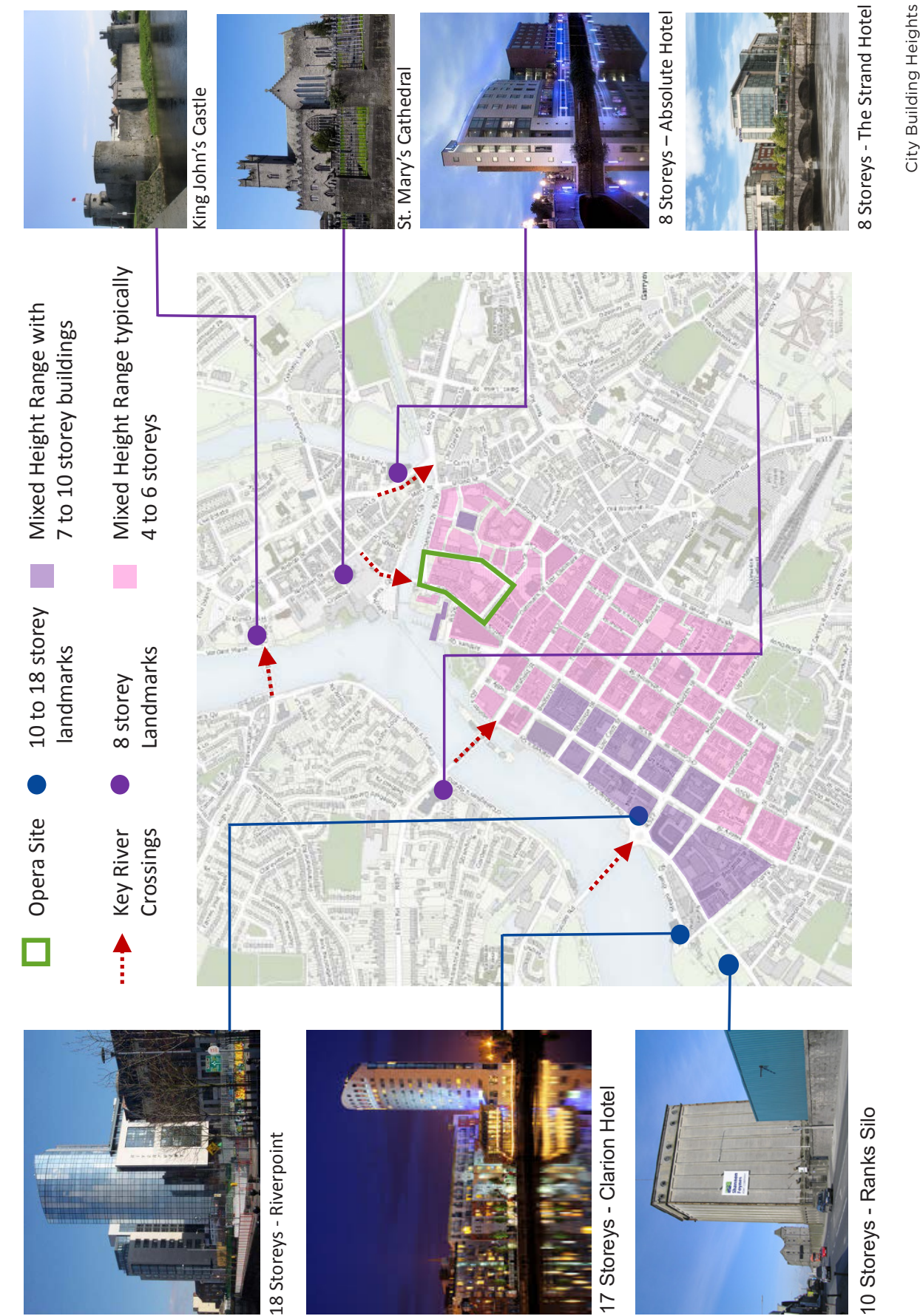
The site itself is characterised by a compact perimeter block form of predominantly 3 to 4 storey buildings and the 4 storey warehouse structure of the Granary building with later library addition. The centre of the site contains single storey warehouses also. Surrounding streets are predominately 4 storey, defined by the historic Georgian structures, with individual buildings varying from this: Sarsfield House is 7 storeys and the former Custom House (Hunt Museum) is 2 to 3 storey. On Michael Street, adjacent offices are 5 storey and residential buildings are 3 to 4 storey. To the north east, Charlotte's Quay is lined with predominantly 4-6 storey buildings and there is a visual relationship to St. Mary's Cathedral on elevated ground across the river to the north.



Limerick 2030 Plan, Figure 15 Key Views & Landmarks.

In the wider city context there is a variety of building heights that can be categorised into 3 broad groups:

- Up to 4-6 storey is the predominant height of buildings in the older city core;
- Taller 5-9 storey newer buildings have developed throughout the city and 5 to 6 storey often integrate within the older core areas, in particular at corner and deeper sites, where setback of upper floors is possible; 7-9 storey buildings are mostly to the western side of O'Connell street and along the riverside edges; and
- Tall buildings (up to 18 storeys) have been developed at important nodal river crossing points, as focal points and city landmarks.





## 3.5 Traffic and Accessibility

### 3.5.1 Road Network

Both Rutland Street and Patrick Street are classified as the Regional Road R445 and provide a distributor function for traffic in the City Centre. Rutland Street consists of a four lane carriageway while Patrick Street consists of two lanes with car parking provided on one side.

Ellen Street and Michael Street both provide two lane carriageways and on street car parking. They provide local connectivity and access to a number of car parks. The site currently accommodates a surface car park which is accessed from Michael Street.

### 3.5.2 Pedestrian and Cyclist Accessibility

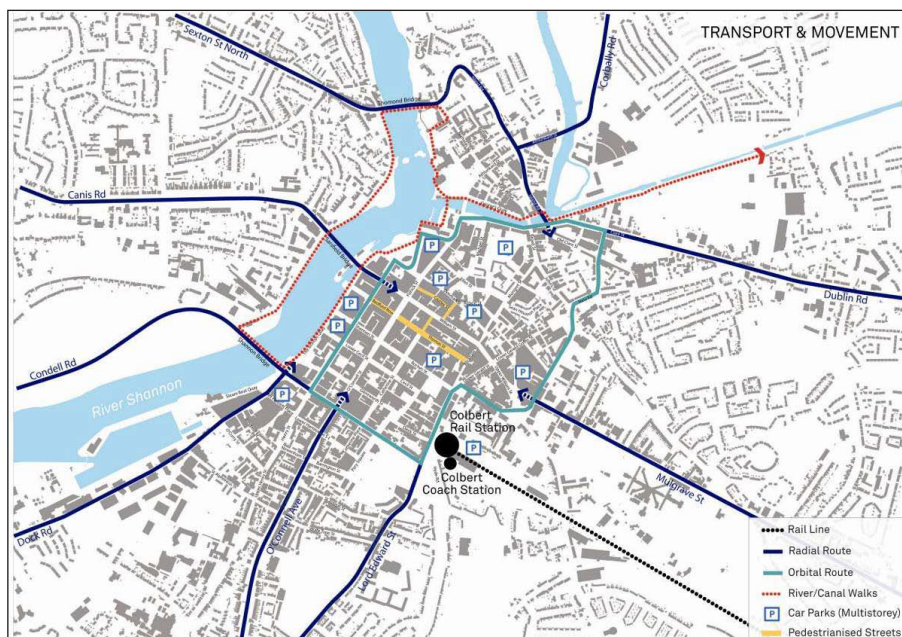
Facilities for pedestrians consist of footways along the road network surrounding the site, some of which are of limited width. A number of laneways provide access to the interior of the site but do not provide permeability by means of through routes.

Cycling facilities include the provision of a public bike hire station at Bank Place, and also at the Milk Market and Arthur's Quay.

### 3.5.3 Public Transport Accessibility

The site is serviced by City and Metropolitan bus services provided by Bus Éireann and Eurobus Limerick. The nearest bus stop is located at Arthurs Quay which also provides an interchange facility with regional and intercity services by Bus Éireann, JJ Kavanagh, Express Way, amongst others.

Limerick (Colbert) Station is located on Parnell Street less than 1km from the Opera Site. Train services provide connectivity with Dublin, Ennis, Galway, Nenagh and Cork via Limerick Junction.

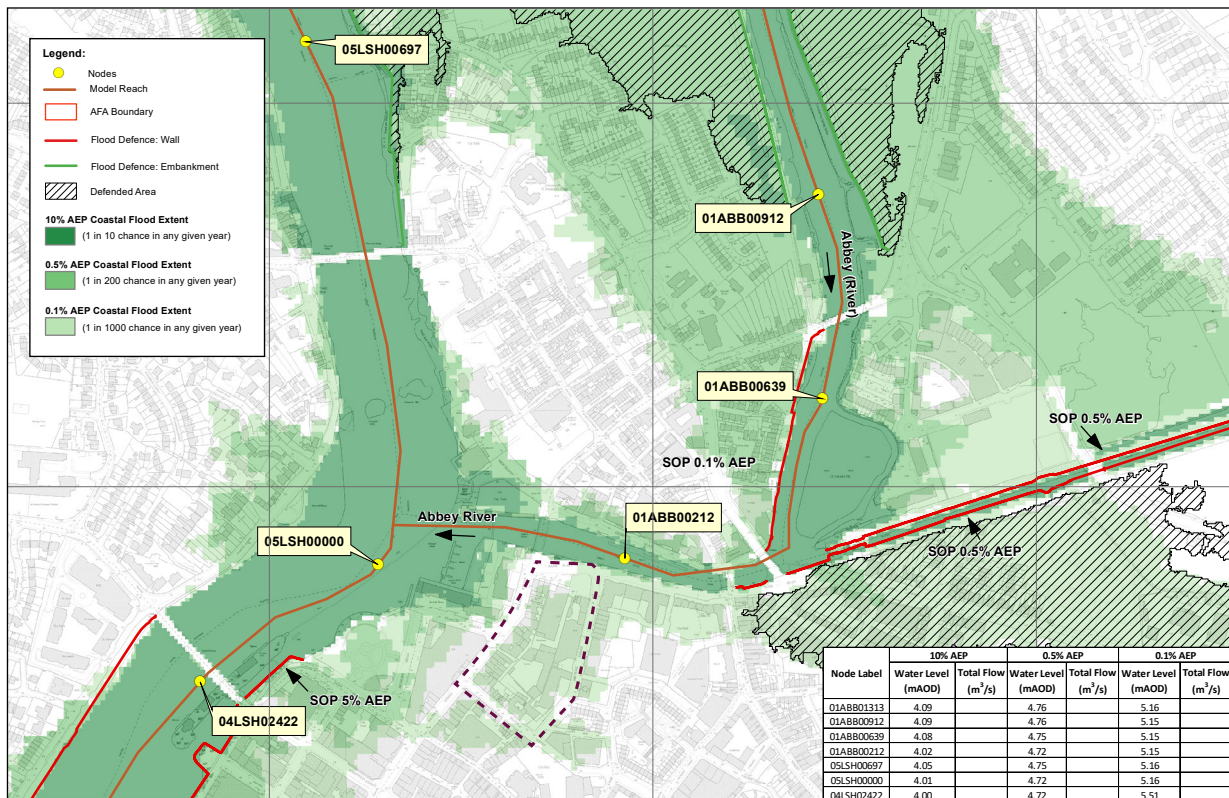


Limerick 2030 Plan, Figure 17 Transport & Movement.

## 3.6 Water and Drainage

### 3.6.1 Flood Risk

The Shannon Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study Fluvial and Pluvial Maps indicate that the subject site is not at risk of flooding from either Fluvial or Pluvial flooding. However, the coastal flood extent from the Shannon CFRAM Study Map dated June 2016 replicated below in figure1 indicates that the proposed development is in Flood Zone B with regard to coastal flooding and is otherwise outside any fluvial or pluvial risk zones.



Extract of the Coastal Flood Extent from the Shannon CFRAM Study Map S2526LIK\_EXCCD\_F1\_24 (June 2016)

### 3.6.2 Existing Surface and Foul Water Systems

The site is currently served by an existing 350mm diameter brickwork culvert combined sewer. This discharges to a 450mm diameter combined sewer in Patrick Street which in turn discharges to an 1800mm diameter interceptor sewer in the Shannon. This ultimately flows to the wastewater treatment facility in Bunlicky.

There is no separate surface water network within or around the proposed development site. The existing un-attenuated site runoff is collected by gullies and discharges to the existing 350mm diameter brickwork combined sewer that runs through the site.

### 3.6.3 Existing Water Supply Network

Irish Water watermains are present on all streets surrounding the site.



## 3.7 Ecology

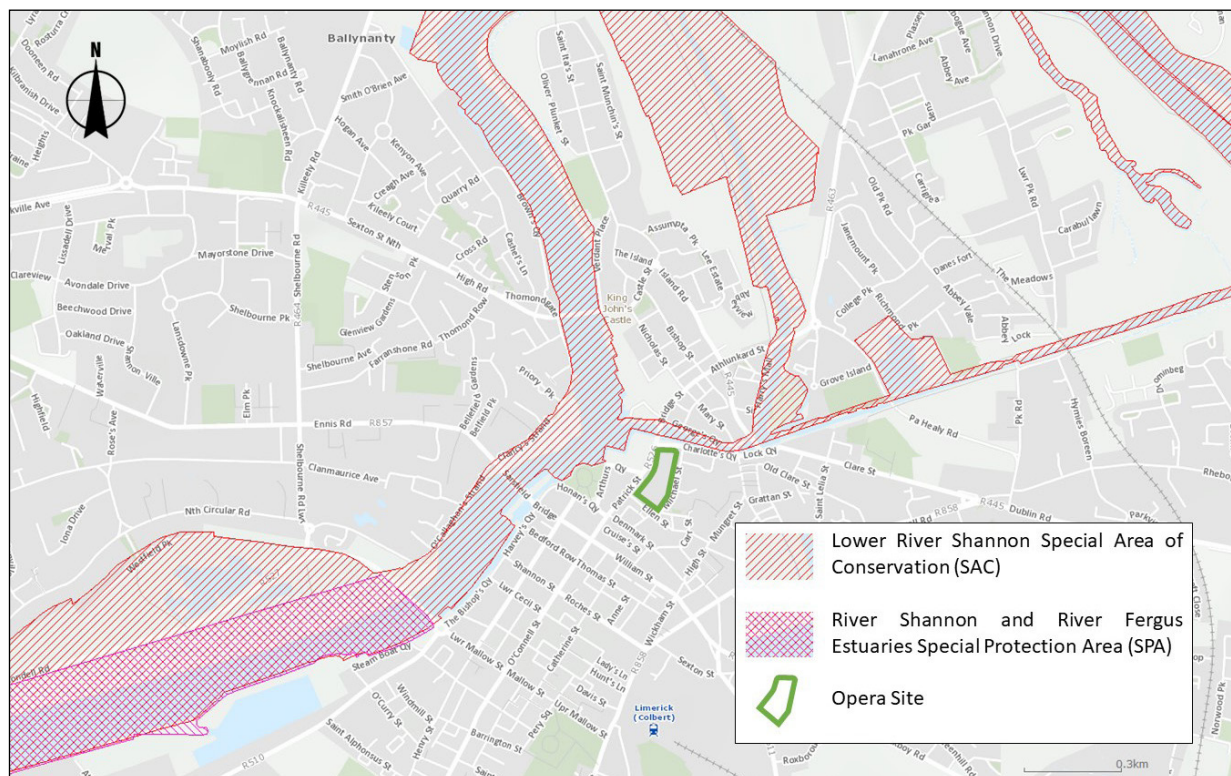
### 3.7.1 Designated sites

The Shannon Estuary, within 50 metres of the Opera Site, is designated as the Lower River Shannon, Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The Shannon Estuary adjacent to the Opera Site is not designated as the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA). The estuary is weakly tidal in this reach, and the SPA is c. 0.7 km downstream of the proposed development at its nearest point. The Shannon Estuary immediately adjacent and downstream of the Opera Site is also designated as the Fergus Estuary and Inner Shannon, North Shore proposed Natural Heritage Area.

There are no surface waters connecting the Opera Site with the Shannon Estuary. The Opera Site offers no potential habitat to any Qualifying Interests of designated sites within the Shannon Estuary or elsewhere.

The Opera Site is chiefly defined by the presence of Georgian buildings and derelict contemporary structures. Significant vegetation is unlikely to occur within such an urban site. However roosting/feeding bats, nesting birds and invasive plant species are potential ecological constraints to development within urban areas. These features are subject to strict legal protection, and the design and development of the Opera Site development must assess the potential presence of these features, and avoid and/or mitigate significant impacts as appropriate.



Designated Areas in vicinity of Opera Site



### 3.8 Archaeological Heritage

The proposed development area is largely located within the zone of archaeological potential for the historic town of Limerick, which is listed as a recorded monument (RMP LI005-017). There are no recorded sub-constraints located within the proposed development area. The nearest monuments comprise the current location of a sheela-na-gig (RMP LI005-017180) and a church and Graveyard (LI005-078001-2), located c. 30m east and 40m west respectively. The proposed development area is located to the west of the medieval walled enclosure of 'Irishtown' and to the south of 'Englishtown'. The line of the medieval town defences for Irishtown lie c. 85-140m to the east of the site (RMP LI005-017010).

No previous programmes of archaeological investigation have been carried out within the site and no features of previously unrecorded archaeological potential have been noted during an inspection of the site. Despite this, the basing site within the zone of archaeological potential for the city and the fact it has been subject to reclamation from an estuarine area, lends archaeological potential to the site.



King John's Castle



# 4.0

## Design Brief







## 4.1 Introduction

The Design Brief seeks to provide a development framework for the future development of the Opera Site, building on the key *Limerick 2030 Plan* provisions for this site (detailed in Section 2) and provisions from the Site Appraisal (detailed in Section 3).

## 4.2 Spatial and Urban Form

### 4.2.1 General

The Development of the Opera site should make a positive contribution to the city fabric, its existing buildings, streets and urban spaces, while maintaining and reinforcing its unique character. It should seek to enhance the public realm through the creation of well defined buildings, which provide activity through new uses whilst consolidating the urban form, and which enclose and address vibrant, inclusive, legible, and safe public spaces, as part of a broader consideration of new public realm opportunities in the city. The development should augment the existing network of streets, lanes and squares in the city to provide a richness and variety of character and citizen experience.

The character of the buildings and public realm should relate to the site context. The internally focused new square should have a distinct and memorable character, in line with its importance in the Limerick cityscape, but should also reflect and celebrate the site's heritage.

### 4.2.2 Conservation and Heritage

The redevelopment of the Opera Site provides an opportunity to upgrade buildings of architectural and heritage significance to contemporary standards, while retaining salvageable historic fabric to be repaired to conservation best practice. Any development proposal for this site should have regard to Building Heritage Policy BHA 11 of the Development Plan which seeks:

*"...positively encourage and facilitate the careful refurbishment of the Structures of Architectural Heritage merit and Protected Structures for sustainable economically viable uses."*

(Policy BHA 11.)

Proposed uses for the historic buildings must be compatible with their historic structures, in order to protect the building's character and ensure viable uses for the future. It is recognised that any reuse of historic buildings will likely necessitate the introduction of new circulation cores or atria to the rear of the buildings to provide alternative means of escape, which would minimise the need for the upgrading of existing building fabric for compliance with current building regulations.

Historic structures and details identified as retaining high levels of historic fabric should be preserved and retained using compatible historic techniques combined with simple, modern, informed repair in order to allow the building to perform as intended.

In other buildings, where less of the historic fabric has survived, greater flexibility and a higher level of new intervention may be considered.

New additions or alterations of the historic structures should comply with Building Heritage Policy BHA.15 of the Development Plan, which states that:

*“Any proposals for alterations or extensions to a Protected Structure should ensure that there is no damage to the special character of the Protected Structure... and that any extensions should be appropriate in terms of architectural design, treatment, character, scale and form...”*

(Policy BHA 15.)

Where the original building is to be integrated by shared access/atria, this should be through the rear with the new connection articulated as a modern element and should minimize the removal of original fabric. Atria/new access should be set back from the rear facades and accessed from a minimum number of bridges that will retain the integrity of the rear elevations allowing them to function as weathered facades with functional windows. Existing openings should be used and new openings should be formed only where absolutely necessary. A gap or a light well between the new build and rear elevation would allow the rear of the historic structure to retain its value, with brickwork and fenestration patterns respected.

The categorisation of the existing buildings on the site with regard to their architectural and heritage value should identify suitable locations for new build development, which include vacant sites and new buildings to replace existing structures not considered of architectural or heritage value. These new buildings require careful design in order to minimise both physical and visual impacts on the historic buildings to be retained on the site. A holistic approach to development will however be adopted and complete preservation/ adaptive re-use may not be appropriate in all cases. In such limited instances, the replacement of certain heritage structures will be acceptable based on the demonstrated value judgement of a competent expert.

The impact of any new structure on the wider context, including other protected structures in the vicinity, must also be considered. The height, scale, massing and choice of materials of any new structure can all have a potential impact on the special character of both individual historic buildings and the wider streetscape. Particular attention should be given to the façade design of infill buildings with street frontage where their location forms part of the wider streetscape.

### 4.2.3 Positive Urban Design and Architecture

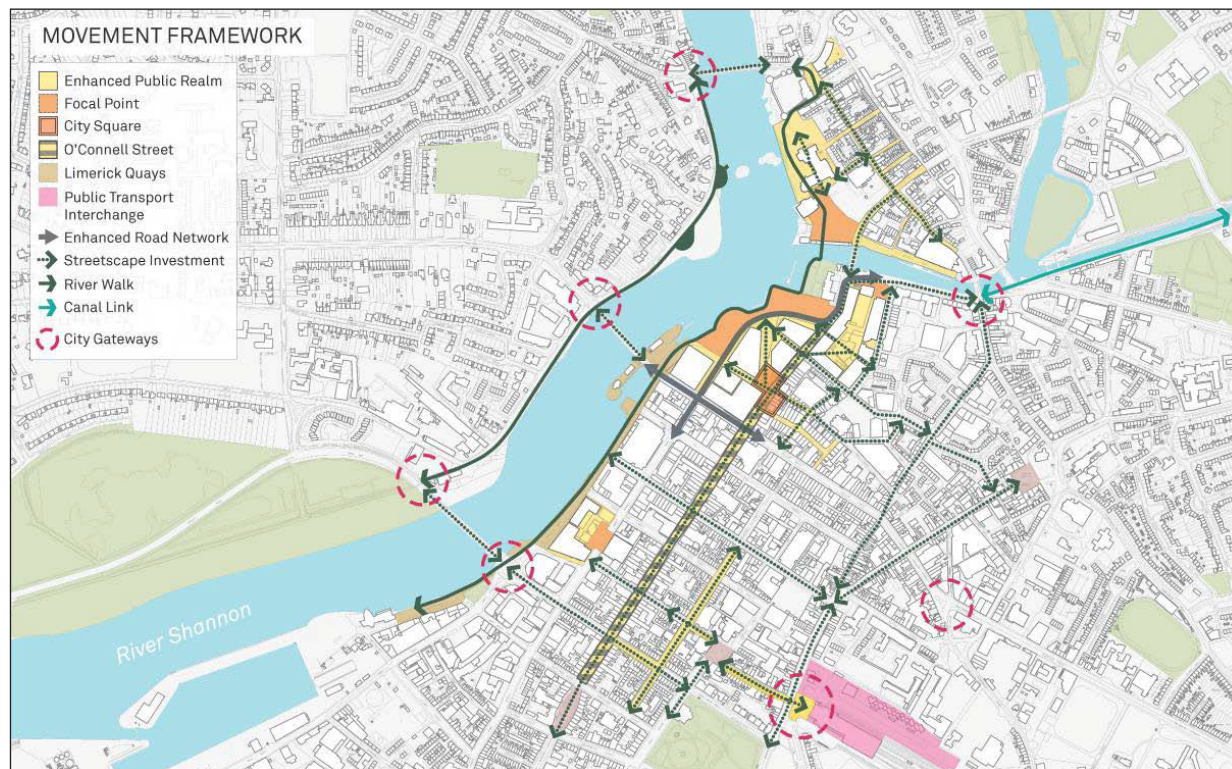
Sustainable urban design should create a high level structure for the Opera site, comprising a cohesive masterplan. The masterplan should reflect and support key urban design principles for Resilient Cities and Neighbourhoods such as:

- Density, diversity, and mix of uses;
- Prioritise walking as preferred mode of travel;
- Connection to public transport;
- Cycling infrastructure;
- Provision of daily living needs within walking distance;
- Active participation of community members at all scales in the development plan; and
- Building types with reduced servicing costs and environmental footprints.

Any planning application for development of the overall Opera Site should include a Masterplan that gives effect to the provisions of this Design Brief and has regard to the provisions of higher level plans and Section 28 guidance.

### 4.2.4 Permeable Urban Grain

The Opera site is a substantial city block, elongated on a north-south axis, with multiple access points to its interior from the surrounding streets. The proposed urban grain should be at a human scale and the length of the block would benefit from greater east-west permeability.



Limerick 2030 Plan, Figure 22 Movement Framework.



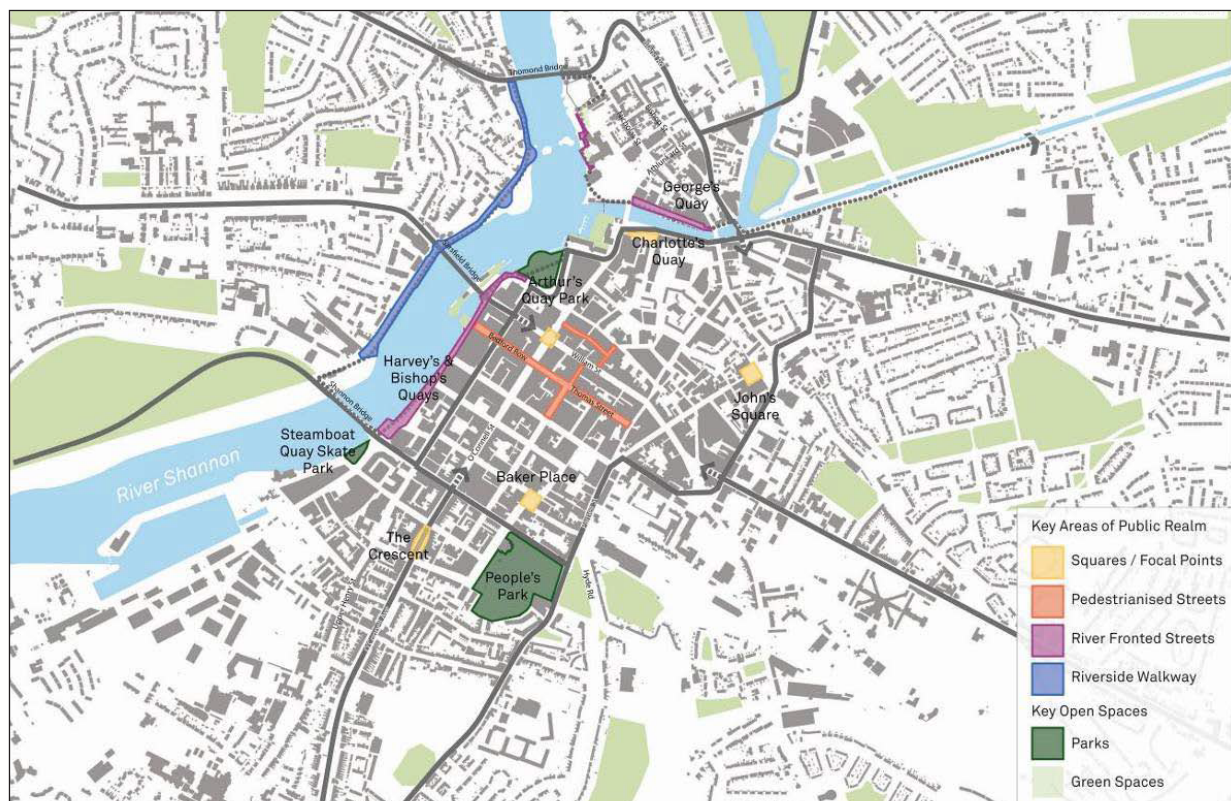
An east-west pedestrian route would provide variety in scale and nature of the urban grain, and build on Limerick's existing network of 'bows' and lanes traversing city blocks. The east-west route should allow a walkable connection between Rutland Street and Arthur's Quay through the Opera Site to Irishtown and the Milk Market area. Consideration should also be given to linking other smaller access points to the site, through to the new public square, to increase intersections and activity such as on Ellen Street.

A new entrance to the site on the corner of Patrick Street and Ellen Street is suggested in the *Limerick 2030 Plan*. In order to maintain the perimeter form and building line of the urban block at this location, extant on the 1840 OS Map, this Design Brief recommends that a mid-block location on Ellen Street may be considered for a pedestrian link or laneway into the site from the south. A suitable location for this lane may be at the existing unused archway at No. 6 Ellen Street. This arrangement would avoid a weakening of the corner of Patrick Street and Ellen Street and would also provide a pedestrian link closer to the junction with the pedestrianised Little Ellen Street to the south of the development site.

Access points into the site should provide visual permeability to improve wayfinding, orientation and invite pedestrians to visit and travel through the site.

#### 4.2.5 Streets and Frontages

The public realm should interface positively with the existing and proposed architecture and offer visual engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floors of buildings. Active frontages should be promoted at street level, and also to optimise the potential dynamic spaces in front of cafes and restaurants. Where possible, the internal square and Bank Place would benefit from the associated animation which 'café culture' use can create.



*Limerick 2030 Plan*, Figure 18 Public Realm & Open Space.

To achieve strong edges and to preserve the character of the historic city streets, it is desirable to retain as much of the existing street frontage as appropriate. Where new infill opportunities are proposed, their design should be considerate of existing building lines. Within the block, a strong and coherent frontage is required to form a suitable backdrop to the size of new square stipulated in the *Limerick 2030 Plan*.

#### 4.2.6 Building Height

For this historic location there is a requirement to balance the need for increased density as a component of sustainable urban design with the impact of development on existing heritage context. The conservation led approach to development suggests that existing building volumes will inform the massing for the block in particular new-build infill development. There is an opportunity for increased height at corner locations, and buildings with larger floor plates can facilitate localised steps in height or set back of upper levels. A general height of 5 to 6 storeys is considered appropriate for new buildings on the site save for the provision of a landmark structure discussed below. There may also be limited potential for additional height, subject to detailed assessment. The height of links or extensions to existing buildings must be assessed in each instance having regard to visual or physical impact on the existing building.



*Limerick 2030 Plan* Figure 26 - View of Opera Site across the Abbey River

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* identifies the Opera Site as a critically important and highly visible city block. In this context, it is appropriate that its redeveloped form would serve as a visual landmark in the city. The *Limerick 2030 Plan* identifies Bank Place as an appropriate opportunity to position a tall building to be a discernible landmark on the northern approach to the city centre at the confluence of the Abbey and Shannon Rivers. The improvement of the historic urban space of Bank Place as an active public space is also an objective of the *Limerick 2030 Plan*. Together, a new tall building and an enhanced Bank Place setting have the potential to landmark the northern edge of the city core, similar to a number of tall buildings that landmark key locations and river crossing points to the southern edge of the city core.

The height of the tall building should be deliberately taller than the typical and mid height range of buildings within the city core of between four and nine storeys. Given the smaller scale of the Abbey River and the proximity of Protected Structures, it would not be appropriate for the tall building to be as tall as the tall buildings on the Shannon Riverside of 17-18 storeys. Therefore the suitable height for a tall building on the Opera Site is likely to be in the range of 12-16 storeys. The final design and height should consider visual and sunlight impacts, slenderness, its impact on the surrounding historic context, and its contribution to the streetscape. The tall building should be cognisant of the building line of the adjacent properties at 7-9 Bank Place and the Granary Building.

#### 4.2.7 Massing

Design for appropriate massing of any proposed development on the Opera Site should be cognisant of daylight and sunlight penetration and shadow projections affecting existing buildings and spaces both within and outside of the city block, in addition to visual impact and the relationship with Protected Structures. The proposed massing to the south of the site should be designed to ensure that there is sufficient light levels for amenity use and also sufficient year-round light to facilitate proposed planting. Any proposed roof gardens or upper level courtyards should enjoy sufficient sunlight for amenity use and plant growth. Potential overshadowing and overlooking of adjacent properties should be minimised in particular to adjacent Residential uses.

#### 4.2.8 Site Coverage and Plot Ratio – Indicative Standards

##### Site Coverage

Site coverage is a control for the purpose of preventing the adverse effects of over development, thereby safeguarding sunlight and daylight within or adjoining a proposed layout of buildings. Site coverage is the percentage of the site covered by building structures, excluding the public roads and footpaths.

The indicative standard specified in the Limerick City Development Plan for the City Centre is 80% -100% site coverage. The achievement of such standards is however subject to appropriate site-specific constraints, open space provision, design, amenity standards etc as required to achieve appropriate development of land.

Site coverage of 80%-100% will be appropriate in certain circumstances for individual plots of land, including within the Opera Site, but the *Limerick 2030 Plan* requirements for public open spaces both at Bank Place and in the internal square will account for approximately 26% of the overall site area. Therefore, to accommodate appropriate public realm provision, a lower standard will be acceptable at the Opera Site of approximately 50%-60% site coverage.



Plot Ratio

Plot ratio is a tool to help control the bulk and mass of buildings. It expresses the amount of floor space in relation (proportionally) to the site area, and is determined as follows:

Plot Ratio

=

Gross Floor Area of the Building(s)

Site Area

For the purposes of calculating plot ratio, the overall Opera site area is circa 1.8 hectares comprising the building frontage on all sides and including Bank Place open space.

Having regard to *Limerick 2030 Plan* requirements for delivery of the Opera Site, including new-build, renovation and open space provisions, an indicative plot ratio range of 2.5 to 3.0 will apply to the overall Opera Site. Individual proposals within the overall Opera Site, where required, will be tested against the overall city block area rather than distinct sites where plot ratio may be higher.

4.2.9 Material Palette

Materials used in existing buildings on the site are varied depending on age and building type, and include brick, stone, verically proportioned fenestration, slate roofs and ground floor timber framed shopfronts. Repair and restoration of the existing buildings of heritage value should generally use similar materials. New elements of the development including interventions to existing buildings should be clearly legible as contemporary, as outlined in the Conservation & Heritage Section of this Design Brief. The material palette for new development should complement the existing fabric and could include similar materials detailed in a contemporary manner. Contrasting modern materials can also be considered.

For the design of the public realm, the palette of streetscape paving materials should complement contemporary Limerick schemes, while also relating to site specific issues. In particular, the visually contained new square location, offers the opportunity for a special or unusual hard surface solution, but should cater for occasional (delivery, maintenance, emergency) vehicle loading.



Patrick Street

## 4.3 Land Use and Mix of Uses

The redevelopment of the Opera Site will provide a welcome rejuvenation of the urban block and its surroundings to enliven this part of the city. It is important that suitable support uses, such as small retail and café/restaurant are included, both to serve the expected increase in activity generated by primary uses, and to provide activity and attraction at street level. Public realm improvements should also allow for increased footfall. The mix of supplementary uses at the site should seek to include active uses that both animate the streetscape and provide evening/night and weekend activity.

### 4.3.1 Flexibility and Adaptability

Insofar as possible, new interventions should be minimal, allow for future adaptation and possible removal for flexibility of use with minimal impact on the surviving historic fabric and features. Ground floor retail areas should be designed to facilitate straightforward adaptation by new users to minimise risk of vacancy.

New buildings should have regularly shaped and well proportioned floor plates that can accommodate flexible use and ease of adaptation. The positioning of structural elements, vertical service and circulation cores and entrances, along with floor to floor heights, all contribute to the ability of a building to adapt over its life span. Ground floor heights should be taller than those of upper storeys to present a generous scale at street level with future adaptability.

### 4.3.2 General Land Uses and Areas

The development should house a varied mix of uses, in support of the primary use on the site as envisaged in the *Limerick 2030 Plan*. Conservation and flood risk considerations may also have an influence on the positioning of uses in the site and their appropriateness for the existing buildings.

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* establishes a quantum of 25-30,00 sq.m of office space out of a total potential floorspace of 45,200 sq.m which suggests an indicative 60:40 split between quantum of office and non office uses. The length of the site naturally divides into two zones with the new square as a central fulcrum where they converge. The northern half is closer to existing cultural uses, suggesting cultural uses in support of office use would be appropriate, while the southern zone is closer to the city centre retail area and as such would be more suited to retail, restaurant, cafe, medical, residential and hotel use, in support of office. The mix of supplementary uses at the site should seek to include active uses that both animate the streetscape and provide evening/night and weekend activity.



Potential Use Mix



## 4.4 Transport and Movement

Development of the Opera Site should support the 'Smarter Travel' principles that have been formulated for Limerick City Centre. These principles seek to substantially reduce car use by promoting walking, cycling and public transport as the primary modes of travel.

### 4.4.1 Pedestrians

Development of the Opera Site should support the public realm initiatives underway for the City Centre. These initiatives are focused on supporting urban mobility and enhancing the urban environment. Of particular relevance due to its proximity is the O'Connell Street regeneration scheme which includes the area between the junctions of Denmark Street and Barrington Street.

The development should improve pedestrian connectivity in this area of the City Centre. The design of the new public square and public realm should support pedestrian permeability and connectivity by enhancing existing routes and facilitating natural desire lines, to create a safe and attractive environment where pedestrians are prioritised.

### 4.4.2 Car and Bicycle Parking

The quantum of car parking to be provided should align with support the Limerick 'Smarter Travel' principles, which encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car. This part of Limerick City is well served by existing car parking facilities.

In addition to the widespread on and off-street car parking provision, there is a significant number of multi-storey car parks within close proximity to the site. Occupancy data indicates that these facilities are currently significantly under-utilised. Therefore the development should seek to minimise the number of parking spaces to be included, to avoid the overprovision of parking in the city centre, and help to promote alternative modes of transport. Any car parking proposed should be undergrounded where possible.

The development should provide safe and secure bicycle parking facilities in accordance with the requirements of the *Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016* as a minimum and the provision of associated shower and changing facilities with lockers will be actively encouraged.

## 4.5 Public Realm and Landscape

### 4.5.1 Limerick 2030 Plan

One of the key objectives outlined in the *Limerick 2030 Plan* of particular relevance to urban design is:

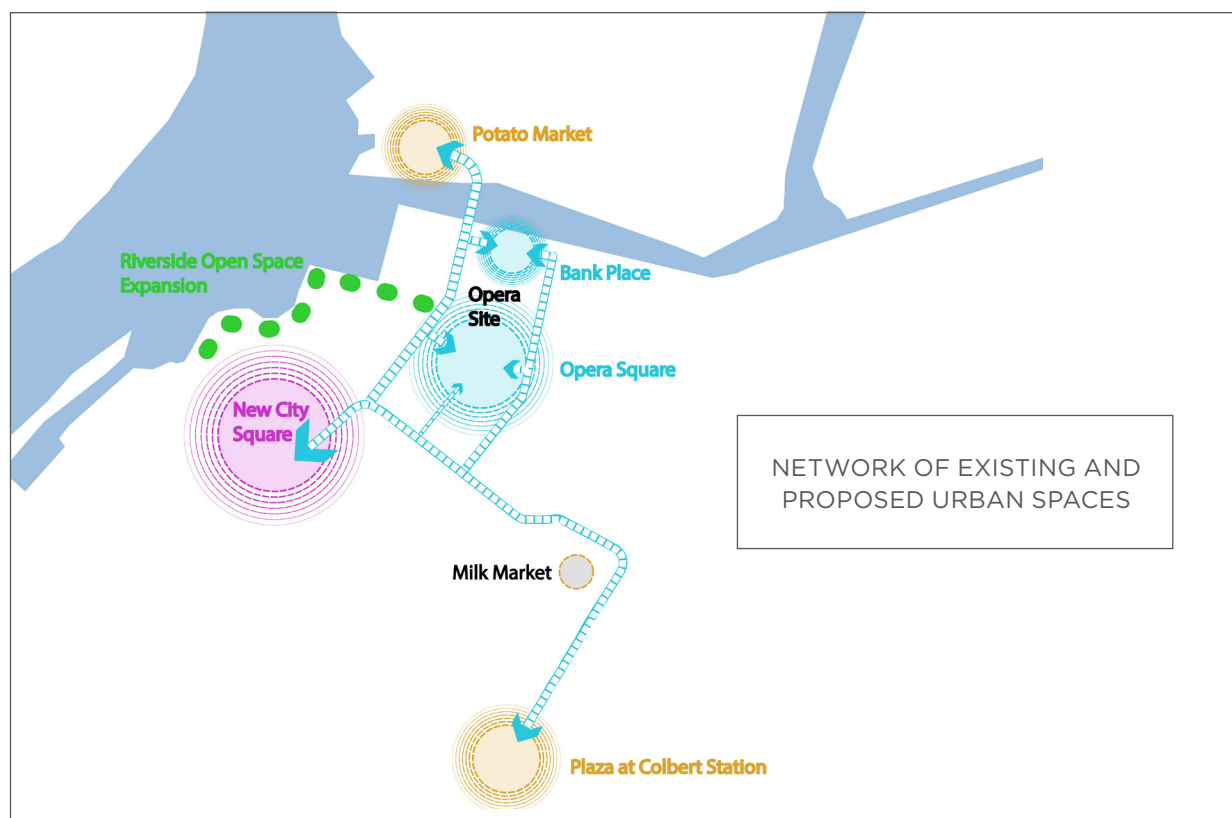
*“To create a high quality and safe urban environment attractive to investors, employers, residents and tourists which generates a sense of pride in the City.”*

(*Limerick 2030 Plan* - Strategy Item 6.6.)

The *Limerick 2030 Plan* emphasises the importance of high quality public realm and requires the redevelopment of the Opera Site to include enhancement of the pavements to its surrounding streets and of Bank Place, and the creation of a new public space within the site. The enhancement of these streetscapes and open spaces, through the selection of materials, aesthetic quality, wayfinding and sculptural opportunities, should offer a lasting contribution to the Opera Site and Limerick City context.

The design of the public realm should be responsive to the nature, scale and function of each area of the site, and respect the heritage value of the site and its context. At a detail design level, materials and elements selected should be responsibly sourced, robustly implemented and easily maintainable.

The design approach to the public realm at the Opera Site should be cognisant of a number of existing and proposed urban spaces and future public realm plans in the city. It should aim to connect with and complement these while maintaining its own distinct character.



## 4.5.2 Public Realm Objectives

The development of the public realm should contribute to a positive and permeable city quarter. The following guidelines set out general and specific objectives for Bank Place, the new internal square and the public realm of the perimeter streets and laneways.

### Bank Place

- This open space should be developed as a gateway to the Opera site.
- Proposed enhancements should relate to the Opera site development and address its Charlotte's Quay context.
- The *Limerick 2030 Plan* defines the footprint as 1100sqm.
- The vision highlights important (waterfront) linear vistas over the adjacent Abbey River.
- The intervention should consider options to reduce the visual prominence of the adjacent carriageway to optimise the pedestrian experience.
- The *Limerick 2030 Plan* also proposes that Bank Place incorporate bars/restaurants.
- It should include robust planting to create a colourful waterside space.

### New Internal Square

- The proposed Square should be a flexible courtyard space which relates positively to the existing and proposed buildings.
- The enclosed space will create a different form of Limerick City open space and offer respite from the wider cityscape.
- This courtyard space should have a strong visual identity, to create a new distinct city space.
- The *Limerick 2030 Plan* allows 3700sqm for this 'Interior Quad' space.
- Lanes/alleys should flow through this space.
- The majority of the space should comprise hardscape to encourage creative and flexible use of the site.
- Mobile furniture may facilitate daily café culture and 'pop-up' infrastructure can provide for events, such as outdoor cinema or markets.
- A limited amount of fixed seating/seating wall should be considered for inclusion.
- A complementary palette of street furniture should be chosen to visually unify the scheme.
- In association with hard/soft landscape design measures, detailed consideration of the function and use of open spaces/public realm will be required, including the feasibility of active recreation facilities.



**Patrick Street/Rutland Street**

- This is the primary streetscape, due to its function as part of the key city spine corridor along O'Connell Street and northwards to King's Island.
- In addition, its Georgian architectural character, relationship with the nearby Hunt Museum and proximity to the proposed future 'City Square' collectively contribute to its public realm significance.
- The enhancements should encourage improved public realm and pedestrian provision within the city core.
- Proposals should interface positively and use the complementary design language to the new O'Connell Street proposals.
- The design should create a quality streetscape with pedestrian priority.
- A new 'lane' access should link to the new internal square.

**Ellen Street**

- The enhancements of the streetscape around the site core should be fully incorporated with and facilitate permeability through the Opera site masterplan.
- Ellen Street public realm should strengthen and promote its small scale retail character.
- The proposed streetscape should be high quality and improve the pedestrian experience.
- Ellen Street footpath (adjacent to the Opera Site) should be widened to reduce car dominance, improve pedestrian experience and offer opportunity for planting
- A new 'lane' in place of the corner access, should link to the new internal square in place of the corner access. Having regard to the urban grain and to preserve the character of street frontages, this access should be provided at the existing alley on Ellen Street in place of the 'corner access' stated in the *Limerick 2030 Plan*.

**Michael Street**

- Proposals for Michael Street should consider the nearby residences.
- The design should create a quality streetscape with increased pedestrian priority.
- A new 'lane'/access should link to the new internal square.

**4.5.3 View Corridors**

A visual assessment of the proposed design for the redevelopment of the site should include representative viewpoints of close, middle and long distance views.

## 4.6 Environment

### 4.6.1 Flood Risk Assessment, Water and Drainage

#### Flood Risk

Development of the Opera Site should consider any flood risk and incorporate any required mitigation measures in the detail design. The design should comply with Limerick City & County Council's Policy WS.8 Flood Protection and Policy WS.9 Flood Risk, and with The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's *The Planning System & Flood Risk Management –Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009*.

The design proposals should demonstrate that any flood risk arising from the proposal will be successfully managed with the minimum environmental effect to ensure that the site can be developed and occupied safely and should comply with the relevant Building Regulations with respect to finished floor levels.

The design of all new development should ensure that the flood risk to surrounding properties is not increased as a result of the development.

#### Surface Water Design

A new dedicated surface water drainage network should be provided and its design should comply with the policy requirements of Limerick City & County Council's *Policy WS.6 Surface Water Management* and *Policy WS.7 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)*. Surface runoff from any basement car parking areas should pass through an oil interceptor prior to discharge to the surface water network.

#### Foul Water Design

The proposed foul sewers should be designed in accordance with the Building Regulations, the principles and methods set out in The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's *Recommendations for Site Development Works* and the foul loading rates contained within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Waste Water Manual *Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels*. Irish Water should be consulted with regard to network upgrades to accommodate future demand and consolidate the resilience of the local network.

All food production areas that may generate grease, fats, oils should discharge through a grease trap to prevent maintenance issues during the operation phase of the development.

#### Water Supply

The water supply network should comply with guidance in The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's *Recommendations for Site Development Works* and the requirements of Limerick City & County Council/Irish Water. Irish Water should be consulted with regard to network upgrades to accommodate future demand and consolidate the resilience of the local network.

Each building should be served by an individual service connection from the existing water mains. Fire fighting water supplies and fire hydrants should be provided as required in accordance with the Building Regulations and the requirement of Limerick City & County Council's Fire Department.

#### 4.6.2 Sustainability

The design of the buildings and public realm in the redevelopment of the Opera Site should be highly sustainable, with a holistic approach to substantially reducing the energy demands and carbon emissions, arising from fossil fuel use, from the proposed Opera Site. The use of resources, including materials, water and energy should be considered, along with air quality and waste, during the project's construction and operational stages. Passive strategies and avoidance of impacts should be prioritised in lieu of active strategies and mitigation measures.

Best practice sustainability accreditation methodologies, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and BREEAM, provide measurable assessment of the design, and may be employed to guide the design to ensure that holistic and appropriate strategies adopted.

Energy conservation and use shall comply with Part L of the Building Regulations and should exceed minimum standards where appropriate and cost effective. It is anticipated that this will require compliance with the recent amendment to Part L of the Building Regulations, Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard. This standard will also apply to works, or buildings in which a material alteration or change of use or major renovation takes place, where the work, material alteration or the change of use commences or takes place, as the case may be, on or after 1st January 2019. The application of these standard to existing buildings will require careful consideration. Full implementation will not always be appropriate, or necessary, and any works carried out should comply with the standards of best conservation practice in order to protect the character of the building and ensure a healthier building in terms of building breathability and air quality.

#### 4.6.3 Ecology

The legal framework underpinning the protection of sites and species subject to European and national level, is supported by numerous recent policies published at national and county scales. Most recently, policy objectives of the National Biodiversity Plan 2017-2021 and the Limerick Heritage Plan 2017-2030 stipulate the requirement to protect and where appropriate enhance habitats, including those of protected species such as bats and nesting birds. Construction of the Opera Site must ensure protection of water quality in the River Shannon through pollution control measures specified within a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP); while operational mitigation must include appropriate attenuation and water treatment facilities within the surface water drainage design. The design of the drainage systems should incorporate appropriate mitigation measures in their design.

A CEMP should be developed during the design stage, with consultation with Limerick City & County Council, to ensure that construction related risks and mitigation strategies are identified and inform the detail design. Ecological desktop studies and on site surveys should be completed during the design process to inform the CEMP. The CEMP should also identify pre-construction and ongoing survey requirements during the construction phases.



#### 4.6.4 Waste Management

Appropriate waste management is an objective of the *Limerick 2030 Plan*, including the minimisation of the quantity of waste, and in particular the elimination of waste disposed of to landfill. The Southern Region Waste Management Plan seeks a reuse and recycling target of 70% for construction and demolition waste material (excluding soil and stones).

The design of the development and choice of materials should be cognisant of best practice principles of waste management. Waste management in the operation of the buildings should provide facilities for the safe collection and segregation of wastes. Waste receptors, where provided in the public realm, should provide for waste segregation where space allows and is appropriate.

The CEMP should also consider waste management during the construction phase of the project. The Waste Management Plan should establish a system for the management of wastes in accordance with the Waste Management Hierarchy, with waste prevention and minimisation as the first priority to disposal as a last resort in managing wastes, as follows:

- Prevention;
- Minimisation;
- Reuse;
- Recycling; and
- Disposal.

#### 4.6.5 Environmental Impact Assessment

As the Opera Site area, including Bank Place (approximately 1.8 ha) is below 2.0 hectares, an EIA is not a mandatory requirement for a planning application at this site.

Nevertheless, all future applications on the sites will be screened to determine whether or not sub-threshold Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

All proposals should in any event include detailed assessment of all key environmental variables to ensure that appropriate mitigation is included in the design and that there are no significant residual impacts arising.

# 5.0

## Summary of Design Brief Provisions – Key Development Parameters







This Design Brief has been prepared in response to the requirements of Limerick 2030: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick, 2015, adopted as Variation No. 4 of the (extended) Limerick City Development Plan, 2010-2016.

It provides a framework for the future development of the Opera Site, subject to permission for development, to provide a primarily office-based scheme complimented by a range of other uses, including inter alia retail/ commercial, educational, civic/cultural, hotel, restaurant/bars and residential uses.

The Design Brief provides for the following:

1. Fulfil the requirements of the *Limerick 2030 Plan* and assist in the achievement of a comprehensive redevelopment of the Opera Site to serve as a guide to the economic, social and physical renaissance of Limerick City Centre.
2. Support the appropriate redevelopment of the Site including sensitive re-use, restoration and repair of buildings that are of conservation value in line with best conservation practice, whilst enabling and maximising the significant new build opportunity.
3. Encourage a variety of supplementary land uses in association with the business-led mixed-use solution for this Site and to improve the City Block's vibrancy by creating an attractive urban environment with active street frontages.
4. Provide an appropriate quantum of development at the site that achieves, as a minimum, the 45,200 sq m floorspace envisaged in the *Limerick 2030 Plan* to provide adequate capacity and facilitate rejuvenation of the Opera Site and adjoining areas.
5. Provide an appropriate quantum of open spaces within and around the site that achieves, as a minimum, the footprint envisaged in the *Limerick 2030 Plan*, including inter alia, a 3,700 sq m internal square with a strong visual identity and permeable linkages, a stronger gateway at Bank Place (1,100 sq m) and high-quality surrounding streets to provide a safe, animated and inviting public realm that optimises the pedestrian experience and linkages with surrounding areas.
6. Provide a new landmark development to the north at Bank Place in the range of 12-16 storeys demarcating the important nodal river crossing point to the City core from Kings Island. Other new-build structures in the indicative range of 5-6 storeys, with limited opportunity for additional height subject to detailed assessment, will integrate within the older 4-storey street frontage and achieve appropriate scale and massing for this City Centre site whilst respecting buildings of conservation value and achieving open space requirements.
7. Provide a lower Site Coverage standard of approximately 50%-60% at the Opera Site to accommodate appropriate public realm provision whilst development will be subject to a Plot Ratio range of 2.5-3.0 to achieve appropriate scale and massing for this City Centre Site.
8. Promote high quality architectural design for all new developments in the Opera Site while respecting the receiving environment as per best practice guidance.

9. Promote viable development in accordance with the principle of proper planning and sustainable development of the Opera Site.

A Planning Application for development of the overall Opera Site shall include, as a minimum, the following documentation requirements:

- Masterplan that appropriately interprets and delivers the development parameters set out in this Design Brief;
- Landscaping Plan setting out the design, layout and consideration of active use of the open spaces for recreational use that is appropriate having regard to the proposed use and urban context;
- Urban Design Statement and Conservation Statement;
- Structural assessment of existing structures, particularly where demolition is proposed;
- Sub-threshold Environmental Impact Assessment/ Environmental Impact Assessment Screening;
- Appropriate Assessment/ Appropriate Assessment Screening;
- Traffic Impact Assessment and Mobility Management Plan;
- Visual Impact Assessment, including photomontages and a 3D Model of the scheme;
- Flood Impact Assessment; and
- Archaeological Assessment.

The provisions of this Design Brief will provide for a plan-led development that achieves an appropriate form and type of development that both delivers the vision for the Opera Site and maximises its contribution to the City Core whilst minimising the risk of adverse impacts on the site and its context.







Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick** City  
& County Council

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