

**University of Limerick**

**Submission to Clare County Council  
with respect to draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

**Introduction:** The University welcomes the opportunity to lodge a submission to the draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

The Development Plan is a vital document in the context of the overall proper planning and sustainable development of the County, setting out as it does a vision for the County while guiding how and where local development will occur in the context of national and regional planning policy and objectives.

**Role of University:** The University notes the following in particular from the draft plan –

- The recognition of the importance of the University, along with other higher educational bodies, to Clare in educational, social, cultural, and economic terms; their role in retaining highly educated and quality young people in the County and in recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce, essential to attracting economic investment and sustaining local communities.
  
- The inclusion of the University of Limerick in the Strategic Aims of the Plan (section 6.1) where particular recognition is made of maximising the returns from the University, among others, as one of the County's '*economic assets*' of the County and where recognition is similarly given to the proposed South Clare/University of Limerick Economic Strategic Development Zone.
  
- The objective at CDP 6.7 to support the continued expansion of existing facilities in the University of Limerick, among other third level educational facilities, and the recognition at 10.17.3 (third level & higher education) that the Clare Campus in its evolution and growth is making a '*significant contribution to higher education, the progression of the knowledge economy and overall economic development of the County*'.
  
- The detailed objectives at CDP 6.8 to support, promote and encourage growth on the Clare Campus.

## University Campus in County Clare

The University welcomes the recognition of the University’s role to date and the fact that the plan includes strategic objectives such that it will continue to be a critical driver of educational, economic, cultural and social performance in the County.

That part of the University’s Campus in County Clare is just over 20 years old but has already contributed significantly to the County since its inception. This part of the campus will in terms of scale, see the key thrust of University development other than for the University’s City Campus in Limerick City for the foreseeable future. To this extent, the provisions of the draft plan relating to the University and the University zone will act as an enabling context and framework for this future development.

The lack of a direct road access into Co. Clare and onwards to Shannon airport and the wider sub region has curtailed the full impact of the development to date. This underlines the huge significance and importance of the Limerick Northern Ring Road (LNDR) to the County and the University which would give enhanced access and educational, social, cultural and economic connectivity.

The early advancement of this route cannot be over-emphasised. It is noted that the route forms part of the core strategy map and is also emphasised at CDP 11.2 and 11.11 (Motorways, National Roads and Strategic Inter-Urban Roads).

Development Plan Objective: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy	
CDP11.1	<p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) To facilitate, support, seek funding for and invest in the infrastructure projects identified in the RSES throughout the lifetime of this Plan; and</p> <p>b) To prioritise investment in and delivery of comprehensive infrastructure packages that address infrastructure deficits and meet growth targets that prioritise the delivery of compact growth and sustainable mobility as per the NPF and RSES objectives.</p>

It is noted that the LNDR is listed as a ‘*key enabler*’ in the Southern Region ‘Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy’ (RSES); as a ‘*key strategic regional priority*’ in the National Road Projects section at RPO 167 and a ‘*key priority*’ in the Limerick MASP section of the same plan and that its ‘*fast-track delivery*’ is a ‘*strategic investment priority*’.

The University supports all objectives listed in the draft Plan to prioritise the route and its early delivery as set out above.

## **South Clare/University of Limerick Economic Strategic Development Zone**

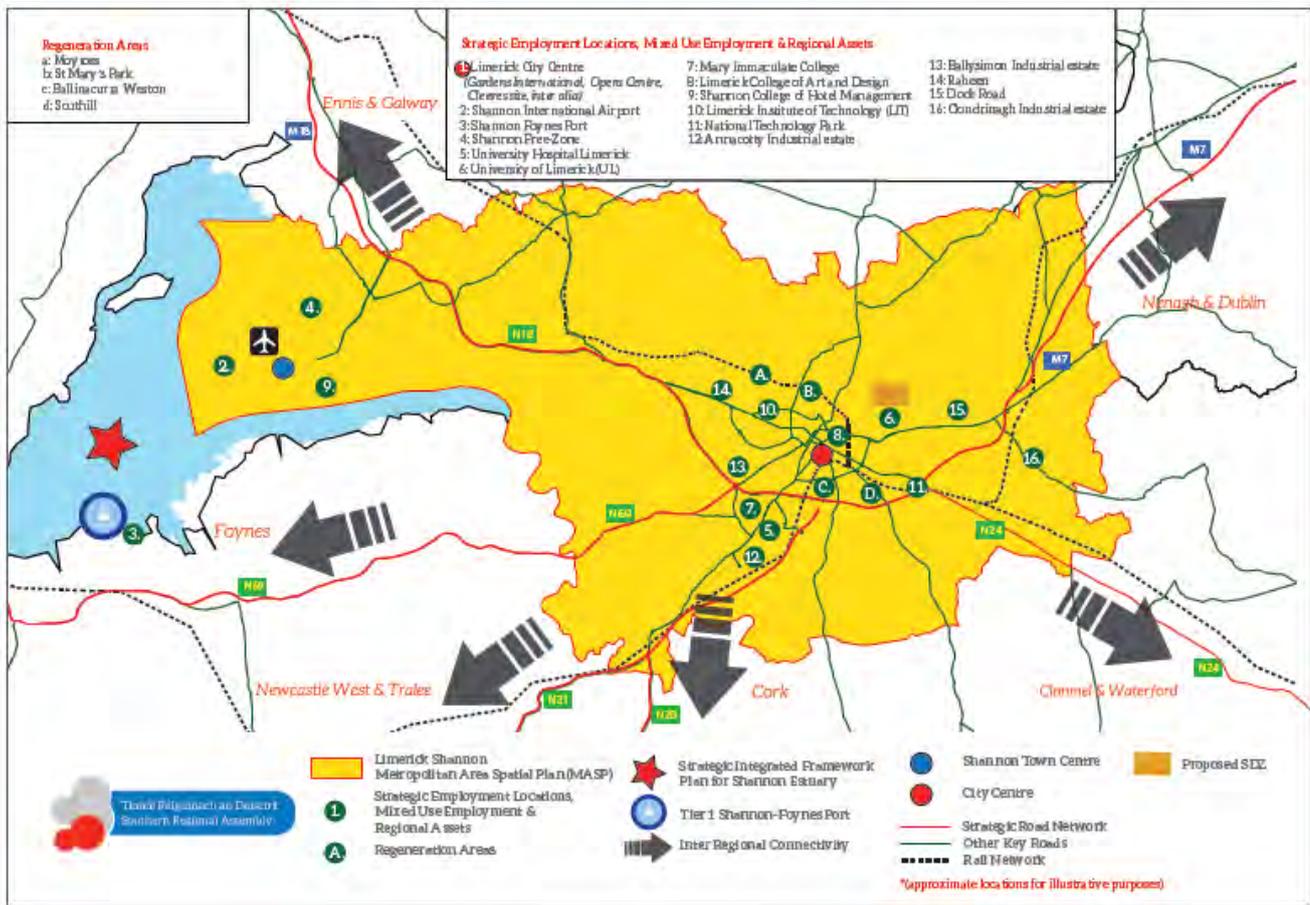
The designation and delivery of the South Clare/University of Limerick Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) will be one of the most significant economic, social and cultural developments to be launched by the RSES and Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 for the MASP area of Limerick/Clare and for the Mid West.

Clare County Council and the University of Limerick have come together to provide a project of national significance that will have far reaching impacts.

The SDZ is supported in the RSES as one of the key locations for employment and enterprise in the MASP area of Limerick – see map from RSES below. The support of an application for the designation of the SDZ and its subsequent development is set out in the RSES at 4.0 ‘*National Enablers*’ for the Limerick MASP area.

The University welcomes the prominence given to the SDZ in the Core Strategy, settlement hierarchy, the linkage with Shannon (CDP 6.6) and at 6.9.1 of the Plan setting out the nature and scale of what is involved.

It is noted that the population allocation in the Core Strategy and settlement hierarchy allows for a figure of 3,500 which is provided for in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government draft guidelines on Core Strategies.



Limerick-Shannon | MASP Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan

**Limerick MASP: Southern Region: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

The University notes in particular the draft Development Plan objective at 6.8 and is supportive of this objective

Development Plan Objective: University of Limerick - Clare Campus Proposed Strategic Development Zone	
CDP6.8	<p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) To secure the designation and subsequent development of the South Clare/University of Limerick Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) on lands including those identified as the University Zone, in accordance with the objectives and provisions of this development plan subject to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and all environmental considerations;</p> <p>b) To support, promote and encourage the further expansion of the University of Limerick campus on the north side of the River Shannon, including hinterland development within the University Zone;</p> <p>c) To work closely with the University of Limerick in realising the vision for the Clare Campus as a world class learning, research and development hub through its development as a world-class centre for the localisation of globalised</p>

	<p>development;</p> <p>d) To improve sustainable mobility to the SDZ and UL campus from County Clare and Limerick City centre;</p> <p>e) To support and promote the future reopening of the Errina Canal as a piece of functioning waterway infrastructure facilitating water-borne access to the Clare Campus, and to support any development proposals the University may have to maximise its strategic position adjacent to the River Shannon, River Blackwater and Errina Canal, including the reinstatement of the riverside walkway;</p> <p>f) To support the future attainment of a strategic rail link including but not limited to the prospect of unmanned light electric rail from the Clare Campus of UL to the Ennis – Limerick rail line; and</p> <p>g) To implement innovative decarbonisation and green infrastructure measures in the SDZ in accordance with the European Green Deal and national policy and legislation.</p>
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The University would draw the Council's particular attention to point e) above regarding the Errina Canal. It is important that any proposal by Irish Water to extract water from the River Shannon would include scrutiny regarding any impact the extraction point would have on the Errina canal proposal of the SDZ. We refer in this regard to extract from CDP 11.28 b) and c) set out below where it is the Council objective –

b) To carefully scrutinise any proposals for the abstraction of water from Lough Derg, either for storage or direct supply outside the County which, due to geographical proximity, may have a significant impact on County Clare taking into account the impacts of climate change and in particular low flow conditions which are now prevalent across the County throughout the year; and  
c) To ensure that any abstraction proposals are in compliance with the environmental requirements of Objective CDP3.1 of this plan.

It might be advisable to include the Errina canal as a specific point in this objective.

The University supports the Council in its wish to develop the SDZ in partnership with the University and is confident that the Council will ensure that the adopted plan will contain all the necessary elements to support its designation, adoption and provision from a Development Plan point of view.