

STRATEGIC
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
SCREENING REPORT OF
THE KINGS ISLAND
WALLED Town
INTEGRATED URBAN
STRATEGY

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1 Introduction

1.1 Requirements for SEA

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans that are prepared for certain specified sectors, including land use of which the Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy is part. The following Regulations transpose this Directive into Irish law:

- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004),
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) and further amended by
- S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011) and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 (as amended) state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. The purpose of this screening report is to determine whether the making and implementation of the Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy will or will not, lead to significant environmental effects for the plan area and if it will require a full Strategic Environment Assessment.

In deciding whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive - which is reproduced in the Schedule 2A to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as inserted by article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

The approach to this screening assessment is to examine the objectives of the Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy against the criteria contained in Schedule 2a of the SEA Regulations. To ensure this screening process is consistent with the statutory land-use requirements of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, the assessment has been undertaken against the Strategic Environmental Objectives of the SEA Environmental Report of the LCCC County Development Plan 2022-2028. Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are used as standards against which the provisions of the urban strategy can be evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and also to inform potential mitigation measures.

An assessment under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive has also been undertaken in conjunction with this SEA Screening report and should be read in tandem with this report.

1.2 Description of the Kings Island Walled Town Enhanced Integrated Urban Strategy



Fig. 1: Showing the location of the Kings Island Walled Town Enhanced Integrated Urban Strategy, superimposed on the existing zoning designations of the Limerick Development Plan. The zoning designations remain unchanged.

The Kings Island Walled Town Enhanced Integrated Urban Strategy identifies a number of projects, key urban spaces, streetscape enhancements, and the role of local public realm in emphasising a sense of identity in King's Island, specifically focusing on Nicholas Street. The goal is to balance brownfield regeneration, with a strong focus on conservation and the adaptive re-use of built heritage stock while addressing vacancy and dereliction while ensuring proper conservation of King's Island's archaeological remains.

1.3 Overview of Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy

The Strategy is based on the zoning template and policies of the existing Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028. These remain unchanged within the strategy, as do the development boundaries that remain the same as those in the plan. The zoning designations, which lie within the area, are as follows:

- City Centre Zoning
- Existing Residential
- New Residential

1.4 Population and Area of the King Island Urban Strategy.

The walled town study area has a population of approximately 800 people. It has an area of 17.361ha. Both are well below the statutory thresholds for the SEA, which are 5000 people and 50km² (DHLG 2022, p.24).

2 Summary of Environmental Baseline

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Biodiversity, flora and fauna

The western boundary of the site is the River Shannon, which is designated at this point (Lower river Shannon SAC site 002165). The Abbey River lies to the south. Much of the area has long been modified, with limited ecological potential. There are no open space designations such as parks within the area. Habitat areas are largely those confined to gardens or over grown elements associated with dereliction, which often comprise areas of ruderal vegetation. One, area close to Castle Lane, is an open space consisting of amenity grassland.

2.3 Population and Human Health

The walled town study area has elements of five small area population (SAPS) statistical areas with a population of approximately 800 persons.

The further development of the framework area will result in:

- Increase in demand for wastewater treatment at the municipal level;
- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and urban landscapes;
- Increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction from the rivers;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality

2.4 Soil

The soil are indicated in the area by both Teagasc and EPA mapping indicate that the soils are urban or made soils. This is consistent with the long urban history of the area.

2.5 Water

The Strategy area is located within the River Shannon Catchment. At this stage in its course, the Shannon is tidal. As such, this is a transitional water body. It is at risk of not meeting its water framework objective of achieving good water quality. Ground water quality is shown as poor in EPA monitoring records for the

Limerick City.



Figure 2: Showing the transitional nature of the Shannon close to Kings Island. The red shading indicates that it is in danger not meeting its WFD objectives.

Bathing waters

There are no designated bathing waters in the area.

Flooding

Largescale flooding events have taken place in 2014 to the north of the Strategy area. In the south west of the of the area, close to city hall, the threat of flooding often arises during high tide events which is dealt with by demountable flood defences. Work is proceeding on permanent flood defence works in the area.

2.6 Air and Climatic Factors

The Climate Change Advisory Council's Annual Review 2019 identifies that the most recent projections demonstrate that, under different assumptions, Ireland will not meet its emissions reduction targets, even with the additional policies and measures included in the National Development Plan. The projections also show that progress on reducing emissions is sensitive to the future path of fuel prices. A significant and sustained rate of emissions reduction of approximately -2.5% per year is required to meet our objectives for 2050. However, it must be noted that additional measures within the recent Climate Action Plan are not included in the analysis to date.

2.6.1 LCCC Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2029

The Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) for LCCC (2024-2029) sets out the following four targets:

- A 50% improvement in the Council's energy efficiency by 2030;
- A 51% reduction in the Council's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030;
- To make Limerick and the Strategy area as a part of Limerick, a climate resilient region, by reducing the impacts of future climate change-related events

- To actively engage and inform citizens on climate change

The main focus of the CCAP is on council activities and properties. In this regard the council building Complex at Merchants quay will be putting in place measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The need for implementation of climate measures is emphasised in the Kings Island Strategy.

2.6.2 Air Quality

The EPA's (2020) Air Quality in Ireland 2019 identifies that:

Air quality in Ireland is generally good but there are localised issues. In the urban context of Limerick and the Strategy area this is often associated with traffic emissions mainly that of Nitrogen Dioxide. Within the Strategy area, local peaks were indicated in the area of Thomond Bridge close to King Johns castle. These are Island Road and Castle Street.

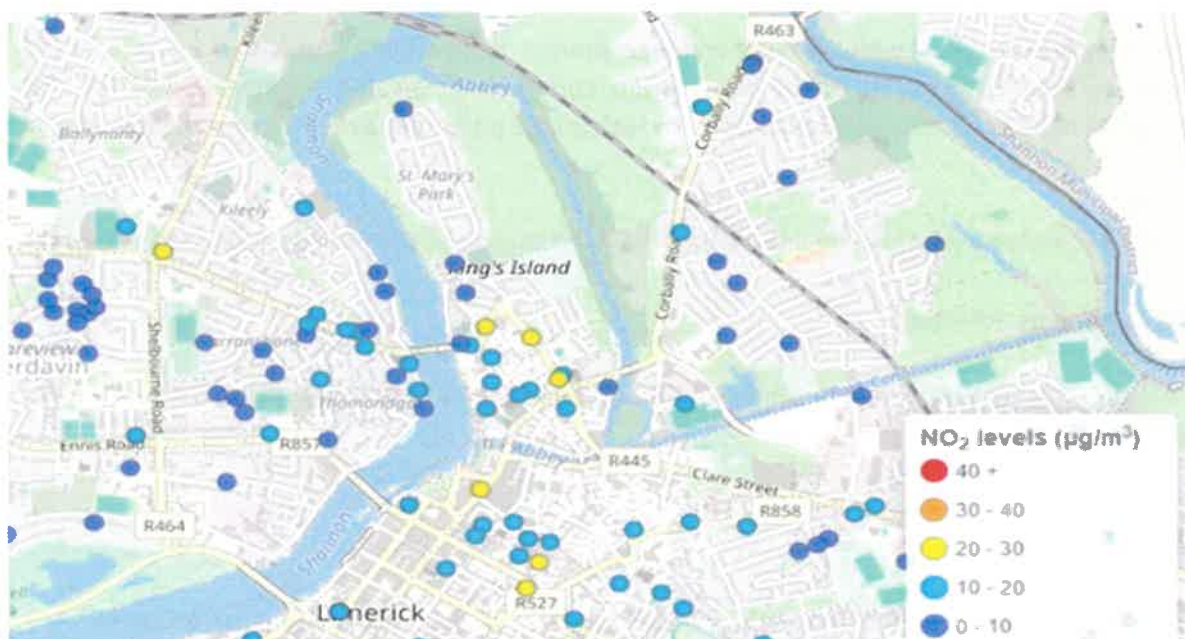


Figure 3: Showing NO₂ emissions figures for Kings Island, these occurring on Island Road and Castle Street, from traffic concentrations in these locations.

2.7 Material Assets

Green Infrastructure

The nearby Shannon and Abbey Rivers, open spaces within the Strategy area promote health and well-being, provide recreational facilities and a range of habitats for various species. The Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy currently in preparation shows the potential for inter connected ecological features. Already in some sites, specific design elements (such as 35-39 Nicholas Street) elements such as suitably planted open space elements and green roofs indicate the potential that individual sites can play in this regard. The proposed Kings Island fosse feature is also worth mentioning, incorporating SuDs measures in open space, while respecting archaeological features.

Land

The Strategy seeks to assist with the reuse and regeneration of brownfield sites within and adjacent to the existing built-up footprint of the area thereby contributing towards sustainable mobility and reducing the need to develop greenfield lands and associated potential adverse environmental effects.

Coastline

There is no coastline within the area of the IUS. The River Shannon does provide access to the estuary.

Renewable Energy Potential

There is currently no land zoned for renewable energy development in the Kings Island Walled Town IUS area.

Transport

The majority of residents within the study area have chosen walking as their primary method for travelling to work/school/college. It is likely that this is due to the proximity to the city centre and the pedestrian footbridges connecting the study area with the city. Access to Nicholas Street is primarily from the crossroad at Bridge Street and Athlunkard Street, with the street divided into two zones: a standard two-way street and a one-way street section between the junctions of Convent Street and St. Francis Place.

As part of sustainable transport initiatives, with the introduction of the proposed CycleConnects routes under the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS), it is expected that cycling in the area will increase, providing a more sustainable and efficient mode of transportation. Island Road and Nicholas Street have been identified as a Feeder Link and Urban Secondary Routes, respectively. These routes connect to Athlunkard Street, which serves as the Urban Primary Route, offering a direct link to the City Centre.

The proposed high frequency bus connects routes are also expected to lead to more efficient bus links to the wider metropolitan area and as a result contribute to more a more sustainable transport links.

Water Services

The capacity register on the Uisce Eireann website indicates that there is capacity available within the metropolitan area. The limited population within the study area, even with expansion is unlikely to cause excess demand.

The capacity register for wastewater also indicates that waste capacity is available in the two urban Waste Water Treatment Plants, Bunlickey and Castletroy. The waste from the framework area will go to Bunlickey. Upgrade works are planned for Bunlickey.

Region	County	Settlement	Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)
S	Limerick	Limerick City and suburbs	Limerick WWTP***
S	Limerick	Limerick City and suburbs	Castletroy WWTP***

Source: Uisce Eireann, accessed on 2nd March 2025.

Waste Management

Waste management is largely by private operators in the area. Central to the Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy, is the idea of reuse of materials, which in the case of the historic environment of the area also means the reuse of archaeological materials in line with the established protocols for their reuse.

Architectural heritage.

The study area is defined by the Walled Medieval Englishtown, featuring a concentration of historical landmarks. Among these are the 13th century King John's Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace from the 1740s, the Alms Houses dating back to 1691, and iconic structures such as the Limerick City Exchange. Central to this area is Nicholas Street, serving as an historic spine that connects many of these sites and stands as a potential focal point for tourist activity in the City. The southern part of this study area features the presence of the Limerick City and County Council Offices along with the Limerick Court House, emphasising the civic importance of King's Island. Extending to the outer core, notable locations include the historic zone of Verdant Place, the former Convent lands, the residential area of the Abbey, and a blend of uses around George's Quay and Abbey Bridge.

2.8 Cultural Heritage

2.8.1 Archaeological Heritage

The Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy area is one of the oldest areas of the city. In the 9th century the Vikings chose King's Island to settle due to the proximity to the River Shannon for trade and defensive purposes. Between c.1100 to 1600 the distinct settlement of Englishtown was established. The street layout developed from the 13th century. The medieval town was defined by stone walls, gates and towers. Englishtown was the location of St. Mary's Cathedral and King John's Castle, which were the main religious and defensive structures. Suburban development began in 1691, establishing expansion beyond the medieval walls. Development and expansion continued and by 1760 much of the medieval walls were demolished, which allowed closer connections between the existing medieval town and early 18th century developments outside.

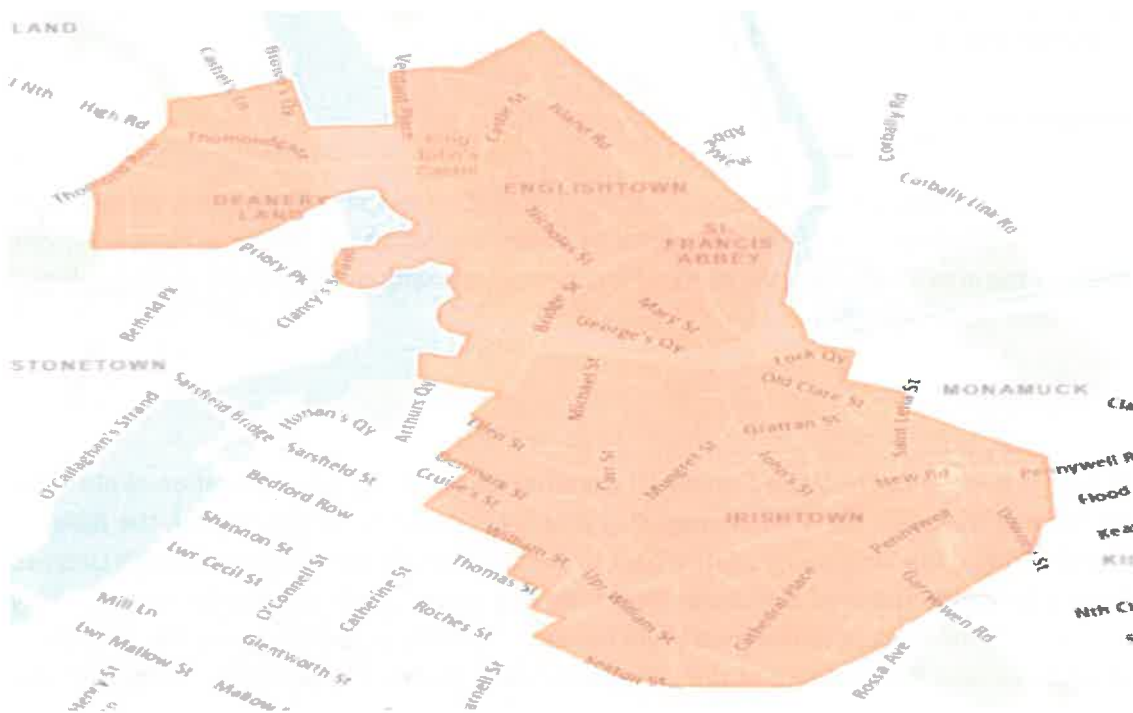


Figure 4: showing the archaeological notification area that includes part of Kings Island.

2.8.2 Architectural Heritage

In the interest of safeguarding the cultural and built heritage, 31 structures have been identified for their contribution to the architectural heritage in the area and have been designated as 'protected structures' under Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000(Amended). These structures are included within the Record of Protected Structures (R.P.S) set out in the Limerick development Plan 2022-2028.

2.9 Key Interactions and inter-relationships

There is ongoing interaction between the various parameters considered by SEA e.g. biodiversity, water quality, soil and geology, cultural heritage and landscape issues. These issues are dealt with individually and in tandem at a planning level and are considered broadly as part of SEA. The Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy aims to protect and where possible enhance each of these features individually and so any potential impact on any of these features arising due to development supported by the strategy will likely be positive.

3 SEA Screening Assessment

3.1 Introduction to Assessment

The following section and table below present the SEA Screening assessment of the Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy against the criteria provided in Schedule 2a of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2001-2011. These provide the basis for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The screening assessment should be read in conjunction with the strategy, which contains supporting baseline documentation and the accompanying Habitats Directive Screening report.

TABLE 2. SEA SCREENING TABLE

Criteria for determining whether the proposed extension of Framework is likely to have significant effects on the environment
<p>1. The characteristics of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:</p> <p><i>The degree to which the Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,</i></p> <p>The Kings Island Walled Town IUS is supported by a set of aims that address many of the issues facing the area and take into account its rich architectural and archaeological heritage.</p> <p>Actions arising from the strategy will comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, and other licensing requirements as appropriate).</p> <p>The strategy identifies priority projects, key urban spaces, streetscape enhancements, and the public realm's role in emphasising a sense of place in King's Island, specifically focusing on Nicholas Street. The goal is to balance brownfield regeneration, with a strong focus on conservation and the adaptive re-use of built heritage stock while addressing vacancy and dereliction and ensuring proper conservation of King's Island's archaeological remains. The aim is to create a lively mixed-use environment supporting both living and working activities. This includes convenient and specialised retail, arts and tourist activities, quality food and beverage outlets, and a variety of visitor experiences. The strategy will align with statutory spatial plans and their development objectives</p>
<p><i>the degree to which the Plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,</i></p> <p>The Kings Island Walled Town IUS is at the bottom of the tier of plans and is intended to inform development activity at project level while reflecting the content of higher tier plans and strategies. Its purpose is to ensure that development addresses the needs of the area and its sensitive historic environment.</p>
<p><i>the relevance of the Plan in the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,</i></p>

As indicated above, the purpose of the strategy is to guide development, through careful selection of appropriate projects and methods in a fashion that will promote brown field development, while at the same time respecting the historic fabric of the area. It is also intended, as was demonstrated in previous Part 8s, to ensure the appropriate reuse of existing material both modern and archaeological.

This document is amongst the first of its type in Limerick, which seeks to draw together the various threads of sustainable development in a sensitive historic setting.

Environmental problems relevant to the Plan

The strategy is designed to address the complexities of development in a sensitive urban landscape, which has a rich archeological and architectural heritage, which is located in a limited spatial area. Through the careful section of individual projects with appropriate recommendations, the strategy hopes to ensure a reversal of dereliction, by promoting development that respects archaeological heritage while integrating with streetscapes around it. In short, the strategy is intended to address the problems of the area, such as dereliction and inappropriate development.

The relevance of the Plan in the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).

The strategy complements EU guidance on sensitive built environments and landscapes. By integrating element such as SuDs and Blue Green Infrastructure it complies with legislation such as Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. It enables clear decision making at project level with regard to the relevant environmental and architectural legislation.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard to:

the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,

The Kings Island Walled Town IUS, uses as its basis the zoning template and policies of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028. When these change, the basis of the strategy will have to change. Development arising from the strategy are likely to be long term in their effects, as they will become part of the built fabric of the area. Their reversibility will be enhanced as they will be designed so that elements of them can be recovered through techniques such as selective demolition in the future.

<i>the cumulative nature of the effects,</i>
The focused nature of the Kings Island Walled Town IUS, should reduce the cumulative nature of effects. By selecting specific projects in the area and guiding development in a fashion that respects the historic fabric of the area, while emphasising the needs of the circular economy, it is considered that the overall effects of development, will occur over time and with the benefit of careful design will be able to integrate into urban landscape.
<i>the trans boundary nature of the effects</i>
None anticipated, the strategy area is part of the wider city area and is itself only 17.3 ha in extent.
<i>the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),</i>
No such risks are identified as arising from the plan. Effects on the public are anticipated to be positive in relation to human health and wellbeing as it aims to enhance the living conditions and services accessible to the population of Kings Island. The strategy also aims to address issues of underuse and dereliction in the area, issues when addressed would add a new vibrancy to the area.
<i>the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).</i>
The area affected is small (17.3 ha) as is the population (c. 800). Both the area and the population are anticipated to benefit from the measures of the Kings Island Walled Town IUS, as it is designed to specifically address the problems facing the area.
<i>the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</i>
<p>a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>The area is one of the oldest areas of the city. Settlement dates from the 9th century when the Vikings chose King's Island to settle due to the proximity to the River Shannon for trade and defensive purposes. Between c.1100 to 1600 the distinct settlement of Englishtown was established. The street layout developed from the 13th century. The medieval town was defined by stone walls, gates and towers. Englishtown was the location of St. Mary's Cathedral and King John's Castle, which were the main religious and defensive structures. Suburban development began in 1691, establishing expansion beyond the medieval walls. Development and expansion continued and by 1760 much of the medieval walls were demolished, which allowed closer connections between the existing medieval town and early 18th century developments outside. There is a comprehensive archaeological and architectural record for the area. The measures in the green blue infrastructure strategy when integrated will help</p>

conserve local ecology.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

In order to proceed, potential projects or proposals arising from the Kings Island Walled Town IUS will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework.

This will ensure that any proposals resulting from the strategy would not exceed environmental standards as they will be informed by the limits in the Limerick Development Plan amongst other guidance at project level.

(c) intensive land-use,

By listing very specific projects and sites and outlining measures for their sensitive development, the Kings Island Walled Town IUS, intends to avoid the problems associated with intensive land use. It is designed specifically to address the issue of dereliction and under use of structures in an area with a rich architectural and archaeological heritage.

(d) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

As outlined above the strategy is designed to minimise effects on sensitive historic urban landscapes by careful selection of projects with detailed guidance on how they would best proceed. As such, by reversing dereliction and preventing further deterioration of historic structures, it is anticipated that the effects on the sensitive urban landscape of the area would be beneficial. A submitted Part 8 for the 35-39 Nicholas Street including the Fireplace site on Nicholas street achieved this through sensitive design, and reuse of existing structures.

A screening statement for this SEA Screening and the following conclusion has been provided:

The Screening of the Kings Island Walled Town IUS, as set out above shows that the strategy will not result in land use activities that have the potential to result in negative impacts to European Sites or local landscapes and environment and the local population.

In light of the findings of this report it is the considered view of the authors of this Screening Report that it can be concluded that the strategy is not likely, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on the environment and population of the area and surrounding areas.

3.2 SEA Screening Determination

Section 9 (1) of the (2004) Regulations (S.I. No. 435) (as amended) states “*subject to sub-article (2), an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes*

(a) *which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, or*”

(b) *which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site.”.*

The Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy identifies a number of projects, key urban spaces, streetscape enhancements, and the role of local public realm in emphasising a sense of identity in King’s Island, specifically focusing on Nicholas Street. The goal is to balance brownfield regeneration, with a strong focus on conservation and the adaptive re-use of built heritage stock while addressing vacancy and dereliction while ensuring proper conservation of King’s Island’s archaeological remains. The area in question is 17.3 ha in extent and has a population of 800. Both figures are subthreshold for SEA purposes.

Therefore, LCCC, informed by the conclusions contained in the attached report, conclude that the Kings Island Walled Town Integrated Urban Strategy does not give rise to significant adverse environmental effects, and does not require full SEA.

Signed: 

Vincent Murray

Director of Services – Planning and Place-making

Date: 14-04-2025

