
Chapter 2: Need for the Proposed Development

Chapter 2

Need for the Proposed Development

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the need for the proposed development in Wexford and provides an overview of the planning policy context under which the proposed development is being progressed. This chapter also presents a description of the context of the site and an overview of the studies that have informed the development of the site. The objectives of the Proposed Development are outlined under a number of headings.

2.2 Need for the Proposed Development

Wexford Town has a rich history and a strong urban form and structure which is influenced by its unique natural setting located on the River Slaney Estuary overlooking Wexford Harbour. The site of the proposed development was formerly home to a mix of industrial and commercial premises, factories and fishing harbour as it developed over time. These employers (e.g. dock yard, iron works, car assemblers, electronics plant) were the biggest employers in Wexford Town at the time and precipitated the establishment of residential areas such as Trinity Street and William Street, to house their workers. However, over the years these enterprises fell away, and the site has fallen into dereliction. Wexford County Council believes that there is a strong case to go full circle with this currently disused site and recreate jobs for the people now living in the area while also providing modern residential units to accommodate new employers / residents of the area.



Plate 2.1 Aerial view of the Trinity Wharf site in 1961

Wexford town itself has suffered from lack of investment and decline in economic activity during the economic downturn and this has manifested itself in a number of ways including urban dereliction and under-utilisation of strategic sites in the town. The proposed Trinity Wharf Development is located in the Electoral District of Wexford Urban No. 2 located on the Southside of Wexford Town. The ED has a Pobal Maps Deprivation score of -11.29 with the average deprivation score for the County at -4.81. This area of Wexford town is considered disadvantaged.

Wexford County Council recognise that the unplanned consequences of the economic downturn need to be addressed in order to deliver on national, regional

and local planning policy objectives and to ensure that Wexford town remains an attractive, vibrant town for its existing and future population. The Trinity Wharf Development will re-create employment opportunities within Trinity Wharf and provide public amenities that will benefit the community in a sustainable way into the future. The development will build on the existing connections which this vibrant community already has with the sea creating a contemporary public realm experience by blending the traditional with the new.

Wexford County Council believe there is a need to create a 21st Century flagship project such as that proposed for Trinity Wharf site, that will form a new high-quality, mixed-use urban quarter and become a catalyst for economic growth and support the wider regeneration and revitalisation of the town. The proposed development will complement the existing town centre and provide an attractive site in the south east region where investors/companies can effortlessly establish themselves in a strategically located, easily accessible and unrivalled cultural and environmental rich setting. The strong community spirit and sense of place that exists within the community will be complemented by the proposed development combining people and place making, in a new urban quarter. This development within the heart of Wexford Town offers sustainable solutions that break the circle of social and spatial polarisation.

The proximity of Trinity Wharf to the many existing employers, services and amenities in the town centre and the attention to place making in both the emerging Economic and Spatial Plan for Wexford Town and the Master plan for Trinity Wharf, allows for a high density of development which maintains human scale and strong character. Trinity Wharf will also stimulate the redevelopment of other underutilised sites and vacant premises in the vicinity, consolidating the pattern of development in the area to help achieve a compact and sustainable urban form.

The marina, hotel, cultural/arts building and high-quality public realm will create a new destination and improve the amenity of residents, workers and visitors to the town centre. They will in combination, complement the office development and add vibrancy and diversity of use. The marina and hotel will further enrich the high-quality tourism and cultural offering in Wexford and will add to the town's high end offerings such as the renowned International Opera Festival. The development is supported with the residential element which will provide much needed modern housing units in the area, rejuvenate this community and reverse trends towards population decline and ensure that the area is always 'alive'.

Wexford County Council recognises that there is an urgent need to do more to promote economic development and physical growth in Wexford and introduce tangible measures to revitalise the towns economy. The innovative and practical proposals put forward as part of the proposed development, have been supported by number of multi-disciplinary studies which have led to the latest iteration of the Trinity Wharf Wexford Masterplan. The proposed developments support the full implementation of this Masterplan and will support the enhancement of the town through the redevelopment of a brownfield site that will reposition Wexford to cater for the changing economic, social and environmental needs of the future.

2.3 Policy Context

A range of European, national, regional and local planning policy documents have been reviewed in order to inform the development of the proposed development. The review established that the proposed development is consistent with planning

policy and supports the sustainable development of Wexford Town. The key policy documents that have informed the development of the proposed development are outlined in the following sections.

2.3.1 European Policy Context

Europe 2020 Strategy

The Europe 2020 Strategy is the EU's agenda for growth and jobs for the current decade. It emphasises smart, sustainable and inclusive growth to improve the competitiveness and productivity of Europe's economy and underpin a sustainable social market economy.

The strategy outlines a number of targets for Europe, including those for employment, education, climate change and energy, and Research and Development. Employment rates for 2020 were set at 75% of people aged 20-64 to be in work. The proposed development through its mixed-use nature will stimulate growth and employment opportunities for the region, providing sustainable opportunities to live and work in a prime location within walking distance of the existing town and developments.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Since 2015, Ireland has been a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which frame national agendas and policies to 2030. The SDGs build on the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and have a broader agenda that applies to all countries. Alignment with the SDGs in areas such as climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, as well as education and health.

2.3.2 National Policy Context

“Project Ireland 2040” National Planning Framework

“Project Ireland 2040” is a long-term, overarching policy initiative covering a range of government activities to 2040. It is comprised of The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2018–2027 (NDP). The latter sets out the programme of public capital investment for the next ten years. The National Planning Framework (NPF) was published in 2018, succeeding the National Spatial Strategy and unlike its predecessor, has a statutory basis. The NPF is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040. The Vision of the NPF is illustrated in Plate 2.1 below which is supported by multi-sectoral objectives.

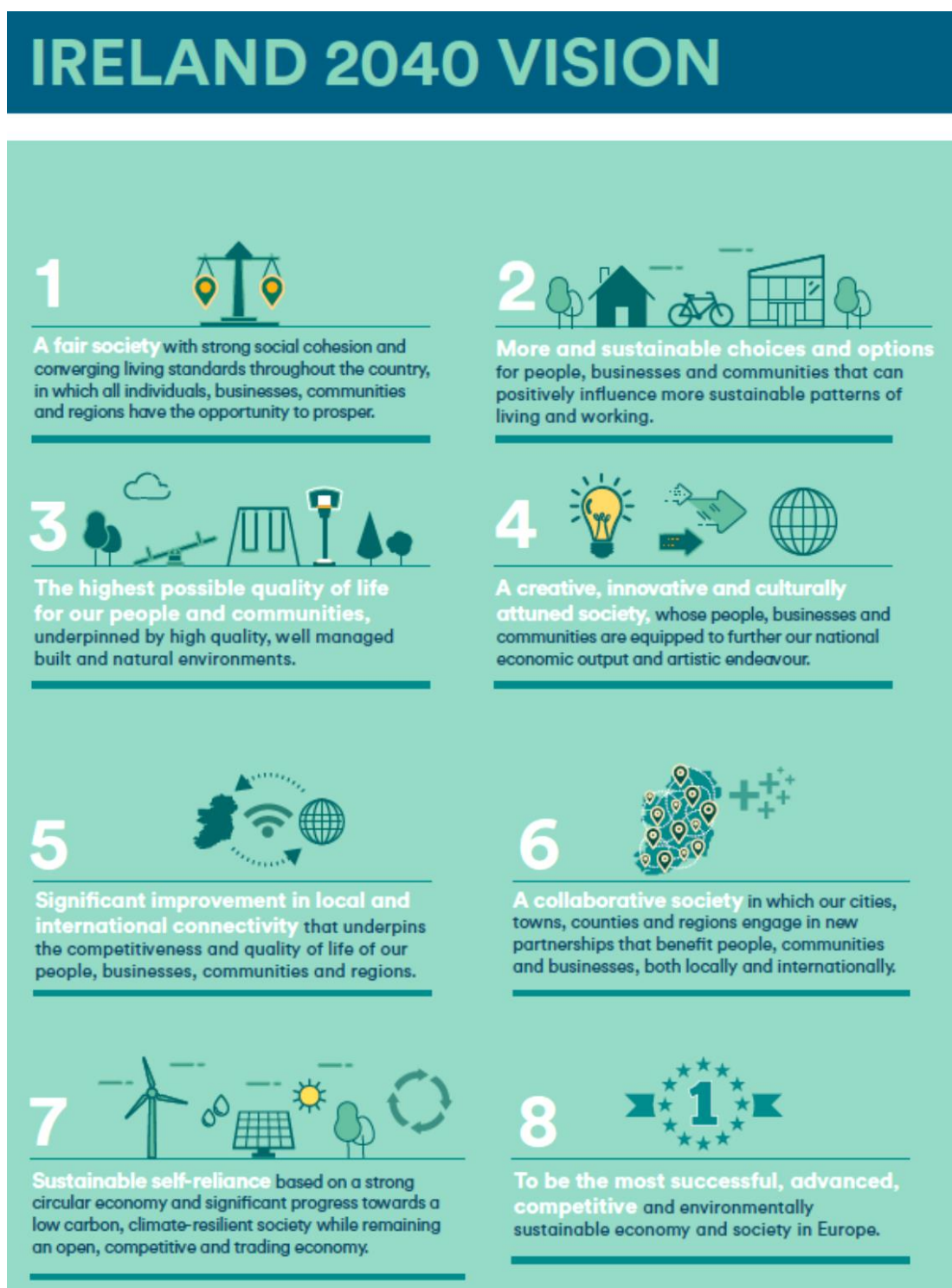


Plate 2.2 National Planning Framework, Ireland 2040 Vision

The ambition of the NPF is to create a single vision and a shared set of goals for every community across the country. These goals are expressed in the Framework as National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) as can be seen in Plate 2.2, and a range of multi-sectoral National Policy Objectives (NPOs). The NDP has also been developed to support the NPF in the delivery of the NSOs, through the Strategic Investment Priorities (SIPs) detailed in Plate 2.2.



Plate 2.3 National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and the Strategic Priorities of the National Development Plan

The NPF calls for a new strategy for managing growth, with emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements. Since its publication major policy and public investment emphasis has been placed on renewing and developing existing settlements, rather than continued unsustainable expansion and sprawl of cities and

towns out into the countryside, at the expense of town centres and smaller villages. The target is for at least 40% of all new housing to be delivered within the existing built up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and/or brownfield sites.

The Trinity Wharf Development aligns with, and will contribute to the implementation of a number of the NSOs (page 139 to include:

NSO No. 1 Compact Growth, through the following criteria:

- *Enable urban infill development which would not otherwise occur;*

The site is a substantial, strategically located, brownfield infill site in an attractive location. It has been an objective of the Council to ensure the redevelopment of this site since 2004 when the site was the subject of a Variation of the Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2002 following the closure of a significant industrial employer on the site. This site has been the subject of a previous planning application for significant development, but its potential has never been realised. It is a complex site with many considerations such as the adjoining SAC/SPA, the Dublin to Rosslare railway line, harbour location and foreshore requirements and has complex ownership and access arrangements. Having regard to the land management and navigation of the consent procedures required, it is clear that the long-term objective to use this site as a catalyst for the regeneration of the area, will not be achieved without the steerage of Wexford County Council and the investment of significant funds to leverage private sector investment.

- *Improving 'liveability' and quality of life, enabling greater densities to be achieved;*

The proposed scheme has been designed as a high quality, multi-use scheme with an emphasis on place-making and 'liveability'. The proposed site will be physically integrated with the existing amenities of Wexford's award-winning quay front and attractive town centre through the provision of a waterfront pedestrian and cycle route. The proximity of Trinity Wharf to the many existing employers, services and amenities in the town centre and the attention to place making in both the emerging Economic and Spatial Plan for Wexford Town and the Master plan for Trinity Wharf, facilitate a high density of development which maintains human scale and strong character. The marina, culture and performance building, hotel and new public realm areas will create a new destination and improve the amenity of residents, workers and visitors to the town centre. Trinity Wharf will also stimulate the redevelopment of other under-utilised sites and vacant premises in the vicinity, consolidating the pattern of development in the area to help achieve a compact and sustainable urban form.

- *Encourage Economic Development and Job Creation, by creating conditions to attract internationally mobile investment and opportunities;*

It is envisaged that the proposed development will provide an outstanding flagship HQ for an international company. This location meets the needs of modern, mobile investment, focused on knowledge-based sectors, which seek out high quality urban locations where they can cluster, create synergies and which are within an easy walk of high-quality amenities and have a uniqueness of place providing a high quality of life for employees.

NSO 5 – Sustainable Mobility

The proposed development will support sustainable mobility by improving usage and viability of public transport. It is served by the local town bus service which connects the major residential areas with the town centre and outlying employers to the south of the town. It is located c.15 minutes walk from the train and bus station where services to Rosslare Europort and Dublin (and Enniscorthy, Gorey, Wicklow) can be accessed. The site will also be connected by a waterfront pedestrian/cycle bridge to the town centre to encourage use of green modes.

NSO 6 – A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

The framework wants to achieve sustainable full employment and to bring unemployment rates down to within one percentage point of the national average in all regions. The NSO plans to achieve this through supporting entrepreneurialism and building competitive clusters, sustaining talent and boosting human capital in all regions, and digital and data innovation. The Trinity Wharf Development will provide a competitive cluster of offices, which has potential to provide opportunities for the financial services sector, start-up companies and potential technology-led businesses, with the aim to attract further investment to the region.

NSO 7 – Enhance Amenity and Heritage

Wexford County Council recognises the value of cultural heritage both in its own right and as a contributor to the attractiveness of the town as a place to visit, live, work and invest. The proposed Arts and Cultural building, marina and public realm will build on Wexford's rich heritage assets including; the existing festivals and vibrant arts scene, the architectural, archaeological and natural heritage assets of the town.

NSO 8 – Transition to Low-Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

In addition to achieving the aims of the compact urban form and sustainable mobility Trinity Wharf will be constructed in a low carbon, climate resilient manner to NZEB standard. The development will be subject to rigorous flood risk assessment and climate change proofing.

“Project Ireland 2040” National Development Plan 2018-2027

The National Development Plan was launched by the Government in February 2018 alongside the NPF and sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the new NPF. The NDP demonstrates the Government's commitment to meeting Ireland's infrastructure and investment needs over the next ten years, through a total investment estimated at €116 billion over the period. It also illustrates the commitment to reforming how public investment is planned and delivered.

This will be achieved through a shift to integrated regional investment plans, stronger co-ordination of sectoral strategies and more rigorous selection and appraisal of projects to secure value-for-money. A new funding model for Exchequer funded public investment is being put in place to ensure that resources are allocated to projects and programmes that meet NDP priorities. This includes a number of innovations being introduced in the NDP, including:

- Long-term (10 year) strategic approach to investment, in support of the 10 National Strategic Objectives of the NPF;
- Sustained increase in investment share of national income to meet infrastructural needs;
- All Departments' capital programmes fully funded for 5-year period;

- Longer term key Strategic Investment Priorities funded to completion;
- Establishment of four new funds, with a combined allocation of €4 billion, to be allocated on a competitive basis for projects which meet the criteria of the funds; and,
- Establishment of a new National Regeneration and Development Agency to maximise the potential use of under-utilised land banks in cities and towns.

The fundamental mission and purpose of the NDP is to set out the new configuration for public capital investment over the next ten years to secure the realisation of each of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) as outlined in the NPF. The Strategic Investment Priorities associated with the NSOs are also illustrated in Plate 2.2.

Under NSO No.1 “Compact Growth”, the NDP aims to secure the sustainable growth of more compact urban and rural settlements supported by jobs, houses, services and amenities, rather than continued sprawl and unplanned, uneconomic growth. While the Trinity Wharf Development is not specifically listed as a proposed project, sustainable housing and Urban Regeneration and Development are listed as Main Investment Actions.

A concerted and collaborative approach to secure expanded and accelerated delivery of social housing is a central tenet of the overall approach. Reflecting where the majority of social housing need arises, homes will be primarily located in compact urban locations in cities and towns as required by the NPF.

The €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund will aim to achieve sustainable growth in Ireland's five cities and other large urban centres, by putting in place a centrally managed mechanism to drive collaborative, co-ordinated and complementary packages of investment between Departments, agencies, Local Authorities and other public bodies in pooling their assets and working with local communities and the private sector to transform our cities and towns. The central location of the Trinity Wharf brownfield site and the provisions within the proposed development will help to achieve social housing and sustainable growth within Wexford Town, aiding infill development on a derelict, brownfield site.

The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020

The implementation plan is a direct response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides a whole of government approach to implement the 17 SDGs. The plan identified four strategic priorities to guide implementation:

- Awareness: raise awareness of the SDGs;
- Participation: provide stakeholders opportunities to engage and contribute to follow-up and review processes and further development national implementation of the Goals;
- Support: encourage and support efforts of communities and organisations to contribute towards meeting the SDGs, and foster public participation; and
- Policy alignment: develop alignment of national policy with the SDGs and identify opportunities for policy coherence.

2.3.3 Regional Planning Context

Draft Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) sets out a 12-year strategic development framework for the South East region. The Strategy's aim is to support

the national level 'Project Ireland 2040' and sets out a development framework to guide development in the region. The Southern Region is comprised of 9 counties; Cork, Clare, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford in Munster and from Leinster counties Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford. The region contains one third of the State's population (1.58m) and is the second most populated Regional Assembly area. On final adoption the RSES will replace the RPGs for the respective areas.

The Region boasts a strong network of urban centres with cities (Cork, Limerick and Waterford), and thirteen larger settlements with populations more than 10 thousand people including Wexford Town. Wexford is identified as a 'key town' in the region as illustrated in Plate 2.3 and has a significant zone of influence. According to the 2016 Census, County Wexford had a population of 149,722 persons, of this 20,188 reside in Wexford Town. Between 2006 and 2016 Wexford town and areas close to Gorey witnessed large population increases linked to population growth associated with the Dublin Metropolitan and commuter areas. The Draft SE RSES (2018) population projections for County Wexford indicate that the County will increase from 149,000 persons in 2016 to between 169,000-172,500 to 2031 persons over a 15-year period to 2031.

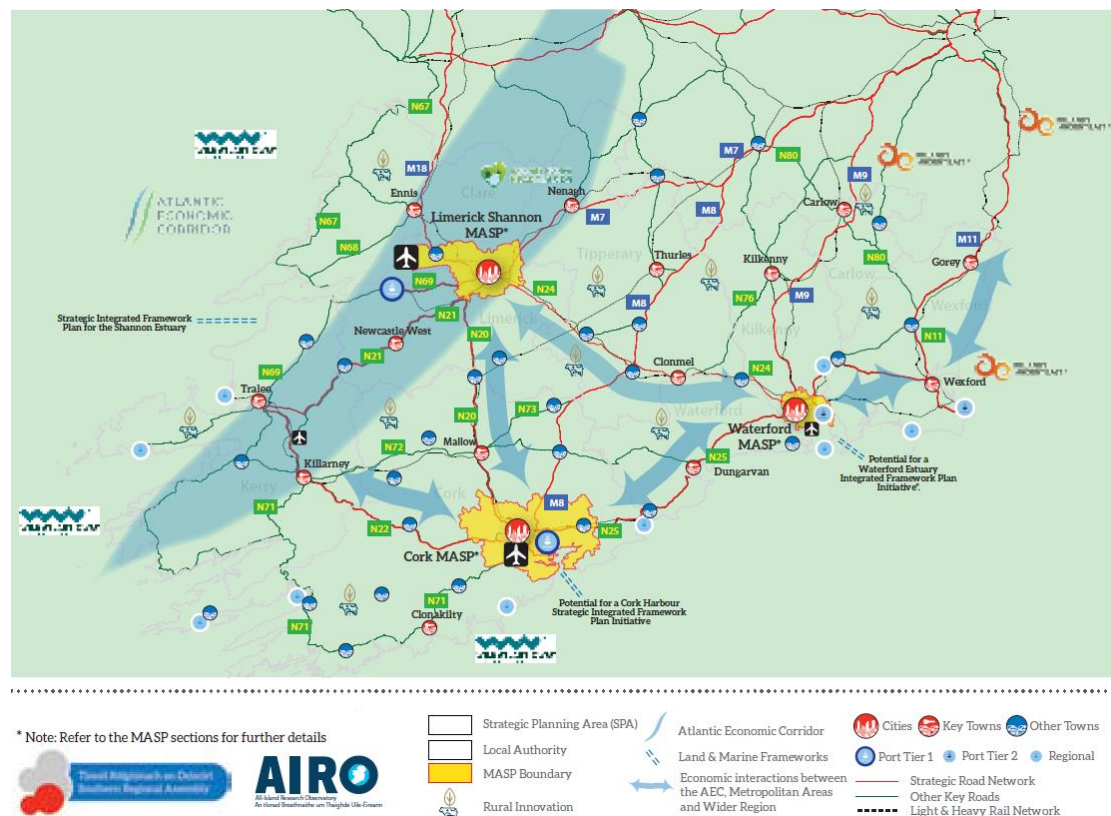


Plate 2.4 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy Map

Wexford is an attractive coastal town and a regional centre for education, retail health and public services. The RSES identifies 6 “**key infrastructure requirements**” to support the development of Wexford Town in the region and includes:

- “*Investment to support development of Trinity Wharf as a Strategic Employment Location;*”

The inclusion of this requirement as part of the RSES illustrates the importance the future development of the Trinity Wharf site has to the future development of the Town and the wider South East region.

Other **key infrastructure requirements** identified in addition to the overarching key towns infrastructure are:

- *“Significant investment in port facilities at Rosslare Europort to accommodate larger RORO ships, improved capacity and facilities for freight handling (including rail freight) and improved amenities and services for passengers at the terminal;*
- *Improving Wexford’s road infrastructure links within the region, in particular from Rosslare and Wexford to Waterford;*
- *Improvements to road connections - M11/M25 from Oilgate to Rosslare, the N30 and N80;*
- *To strengthen ‘steady state’ investment in existing rail infrastructure to ensure its continued renewal and maintenance to high level in order to provide quality levels of safety, service, accessibility and connectivity*
- *the upgrading and development of water supply and additional investment in waste water infrastructure to support the economic development and anticipated growth of Wexford.”*

The various policies in the Strategy are structured under Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs). The RPOs for Wexford Town in set down in Plate 2.4.

RPO
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Wexford

- a.** To develop supporting industrial, commercial infrastructure and residential development in Wexford Town for the Port function at Rosslare Europort;
- b.** To strengthen ‘steady state’ investment in existing rail infrastructure to ensure its continued renewal and maintenance to high level in order to provide quality levels of safety, service, accessibility and connectivity including improved frequency and journey times;
- c.** to support development of freight rail services and facilities at Rosslare Europort;
- d.** Support development of the Multi-Campus TUSE is a key driver for the economic and social development in the town with a focus on educational attainment and lifelong learning
- e.** It is an objective to support the delivery of the infrastructural requirements identified for Wexford subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments
- f.** To improve the Public Realm and attractiveness of the Town Centre through urban regeneration of key locations
- g.** Transport measures through a Local Transport Plan including retention and expansion of the Town Bus Network and rural transport services into the town.

Plate 2.5 Regional Policy Objective 20 – Wexford Town (Draft South East RSES)

Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region (2010-2022)

The vision of the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the South East Region is “By 2022 the South-East will be recognised as a distinct and cohesive region that is prosperous and competitive, where the benefits of economic success are shared equitably throughout the region and throughout society and which offers a good quality of life in an environment rich in heritage and landscape value.”

The Strategic Goals and objectives set out to achieve this include:

A: To broaden and strengthen the economic base of the region and seeking to achieve greater economic competitiveness and growth with associated social progress by:

A1: Putting in place the conditions where 35,000 new jobs can be created over the next 20 years. Job creation needs to focus on the advanced sectors, the public sector, health and education, retail, tourism, green energy and e-business;

A4: Ensuring that supporting infrastructure such as telecommunications and energy supply networks are available and have sufficient capacity to ensure growth in enterprise activity;

A5: Identifying and developing a small number of first-class business locations with first class infrastructure capable of attracting Foreign Direct Investment and facilitating new indigenous start-ups in advanced sectors in competition with locations nationally and internationally;

A7: Promoting tourism and attracting overseas and domestic visitors through promotion of diverse and well- developed tourism sectors and highlighting the facilities for the business sector.

The proposed development at Trinity Wharf will help achieve the Strategic Goal and objectives through the development of high-class business facilities within a mixed-use development, providing supporting infrastructure and tourist facilities for the business sector, while creating 1,200 new jobs.

The development will also support further objectives under other Strategic goals which call for the development of the main urban centres as “attractive places to live, to work in and do business in” and the promotion of “strategies to prioritise urban regeneration”, “ensuring the provision of a full range of high quality linked and complementary social and recreational facilities to develop and maintain a critical mass”.

The development of the site as ‘mixed-use’ will support the Settlement Strategy, by providing a number of residential units within the development while also locating employment growth and economic development within a main population centre so that they are linked in support of sustainable patterns of development.

The proposed development also closely aligns with the RPG’s Employment & Economic Development Strategy and will support a number of the relevant objectives. The Guiding Principles of this strategy call for:

- the development of Strategic Employment Locations within the region to act as ready-to-go economic gateway sites to the new industry. Targeted investment in the development of Strategic Employment Locations at the Gateways, Hubs and County Towns with first class infrastructure capable of facilitating new indigenous start-ups in advanced sectors and attracting Foreign Direct Investment;
- targeted urban regeneration of key sites;
- business incubation/start up space/units throughout the region to support new businesses;
- regional cultural venues such as theatres/galleries/arts and sports centres;
- a high-quality built environment, including parks, green spaces and other amenities; and
- adequate zoned and serviced land banks for uses such as residential and industrial development.

Section 4.3 of the RPGs focuses on the development of Hubs and County Towns within the south east. The provision of first-class business/technology parks and industrial units that will meet the needs of businesses are outlined as a priority for providing new and expanded enterprises in Kilkenny and Wexford. The provision of first-class infrastructure and facilities in these towns will help the development of 'critical mass' in the region. The Proposed Development will meet a number of the objectives outlined, which will support the development of the Hubs and County Towns, such as first-class office space, business and enterprise support services and improved public realm and public facilities in support of tourism development.

The encouragement of the regeneration of the cities and towns of the region is critical to the continued economic success of inner urban locations. The development of the amenities and recreation potential of the Rivers Barrow, Nore, Suir, Slaney and Blackwater are also presented as significant opportunity for the relevant authorities within the RPGs.

The Regional Planning Guidelines are due to be replaced by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which is currently being developed by the Southern Regional Assembly. The objective of the RSES is to support the implementation of the emerging National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term planning and economic framework which is consistent with the NPF and the economic policies or objectives of the Government. The RSES will provide a long-term regional level strategic planning and economic framework for the Southern Region, and it is envisaged that they will build on the objectives outlined in the RPGs and identify Wexford Town as a Strategic Growth area.

South East Economic Development Strategy (SEEDS) 2013-2023

The objective of the SEEDS is to identify the economic needs of the Southeast identifying key development areas and key sectors identified as growth areas in the region. This ten-year Economic Development Strategy for the Southeast Region, which includes a menu of clear recommendations on what actions and resources are necessary to create employment in the Southeast, also outlines the sectors in which jobs can be created in the region as a whole and in specific counties.

The Vision outlined stresses that *"for the Southeast to succeed in generating economic growth and creating employment, a sense of shared purpose to create real regional cohesion is a prerequisite"*. The proposed ten-year Economic Development Strategy allows time for new structures to bed in and facilitates long-term planning in terms of allocation of resources and industry development that is necessary to achieve sustainable economic expansion. The development of key strategic sites is also a key proposal within the plan with regard to infrastructural development, in order to compete with other regions and achieve the Southeast's ambitions for economic expansion and job creation.

The Proposed Development will support the Strategy by releasing the potential of the brownfield Trinity Wharf site as a strategic site, with the intension of economic development and job creation within the Southeast.

South East Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017

The South East Action Plan for Jobs (SEAPJ) was developed in 2015 with the objective to facilitate the creation of an additional 25,000 jobs in the region (covers the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford) and to bring the unemployment rate in the region to within 1% of the national average by 2020.

Action 52 of the South East Action Plan for Jobs is the delivery of a Financial Services Hub in Wexford town, led by Wexford County Council. With the impact of BREXIT, a government commitment to 30% growth in the IFS sector coupled with a targeted increase in FDI by 30-40% by 2020 under the IDA Ireland strategy, a town-centred mixed-use development with high quality office buildings, public realm and leisure aspects that will consolidate and build on the financial services offering in Wexford, makes a compelling regional proposition. The development of Trinity Wharf will ensure that quality jobs are targeted, and regional specialisms fostered to achieve sustainable employment growth as envisaged by the Plan. The proposed development aims to create circa 1,200 full time jobs with indirect jobs also being created, all which will contribute to reducing the unemployment rate in the south east region.

2.3.4 Local Planning Context

Wexford County Development Plan (2013 – 2019)

The proposed development will contribute to the Vision, Strategies and Objectives of the County Development Plan (2013-2019). The Vision set out in the Plan is a county which *“offers high quality, sustainable employment opportunities and residential developments”* with *“high quality urban and rural environments supported by excellent sustainable physical and social infrastructure”* and which *“offers visitors a range of high quality experiences”*. The proposed high quality, mixed use development at Trinity Wharf will ensure that this vision is achieved on the site and that the benefits will be spread through the town and County. Trinity Wharf will create employment opportunities and provide public amenities that will benefit the community in a sustainable way into the future.

The Development Plan stresses that *“unemployment in Wexford needs to be dealt with through a co-ordinated economic strategy which capitalises on our assets, supports local entrepreneurship, attracts foreign investment and facilitates development in a sustainable manner”*. The Plan's Economic Development Strategy seeks to harness the economic potential of the County's urban areas, in particular the hub of Wexford Town, and maximise the potential for job creation. The plan also seeks to build on established clusters of high-profile employers and identifies the potential for the development of brownfield sites in urban areas.

Objective ED46

“To consider the re-use/re-development of brownfield sites in town and villages for appropriate economic development proposals subject to the scale of the proposed development and the nature of the proposed process or activity being appropriate to and compatible with the character of the town or village and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards in Chapter 18.”

The Development Plan also notes that tourism plays an important role in the economic development of Wexford. It also recognises the important role that tourism could play in further economic development and the aim to promote and facilitate the tourism role of Wexford, while protecting and improving the quality of the county's tourism products and environmental quality. The Proposed Development will not only create high quality office space for businesses but will provide opportunities for tourism development through the proposed hotel and marina.

Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 (as extended)

The Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan (WTEDP) seeks to provide a vision and direction for the Town in order that it can continue to grow and to provide a

statutory context for guiding development in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town.

The site is zoned as 'Town Centre' under the Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 illustrated in Figure 2.1 (Volume 3 of this EIAR). The proposed Trinity Wharf Development will contribute to the following key aims of this plan (Section 1.4):

Economic Development:

- Facilitate and encourage the development of Wexford as a growth 'Hub' and as a main centre for economic growth in the south east region.

Managing Development Patterns:

- Encourage the location of new strategic economic developments in and around the key centres of growth in order to strengthen the 'Hub' status of the town.

Conserving Environmental Quality:

- Enhance the physical environment of the town through Urban Renewal Schemes and other urban design initiatives.

Urban Renewal:

- Drive the process of regenerating derelict and under-used areas within the town.

Section 4.3 of WTEDP identifies Key Opportunity Sites in the plan area, it states "*are of a scale that they have significant capacity for redevelopment and represent significant opportunities to facilitate enterprise and employment opportunities. In order to encourage the redevelopment of these sites it is essential to create a development momentum sufficient to stimulate market confidence*". It is stated that such market confidence will be achieved by "*the adoption of a plan led approach by identifying such sites and preparing development briefs and urban design frameworks to guide development. Such key opportunity sites include Trinity Wharf*".

Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

The Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) was prepared following a detailed socio-economic analysis of the County and significant stakeholder consultation. The issue of high unemployment in County Wexford has been highlighted as a key concern in the Plan. The development of the Trinity Wharf site as an urban centre, will help achieve the objectives and goals outlined for Wexford in the LECP.

The need to make Wexford an Attractive Destination for Business is included as Objective 4.4 of the LECP and calls for the need to facilitate the provision of the necessary infrastructure and property solutions in supporting industry and employment in the town. The Trinity Wharf Development will assist in meeting this objective, providing 3 different types of office space, fulfilling the site's economic potential and re-balancing development along the Wexford Quays.

The development of Trinity Wharf will assist in the delivery of HLG3 which seeks to "*develop and promote Wexford as a great place to live, work and visit*", HLG4 "*Develop and market County Wexford as an outstanding business for starting, growing and attracting business*" and HLG6 "*Protect and sensitively utilise our natural built and cultural heritage and together with the arts, realise their economic potential*".

The proposed development will also assist in fulfilling Objective 3.3 of the LECP to Making the Living Environment More Attractive. The rejuvenation of this brownfield site will promote the renewal of obsolete area and brownfield sites, reducing dereliction and creating a more attractive environment for Wexford Town. The location of the site within the town environs and within walking distance to Wexford's Quays and Main Street, will enable sustainable development, providing employment and residential areas within Wexford Town, eliminating the need to commute by private car. The Plan contains specific actions to implement the Economic and Spatial Plan for Wexford Town Quays (3.3.14) and to complete the rejuvenation of the Trinity Wharf site (3.3.14) (See Plate 2.5).

Agency/ Organisation	Link to National or Local Plan	Specific Objective	Specific, Time-bound and Measurable Actions	Specific Outcome	Measurable Indicator of Success	Timeframe	Ref. No.
Wexford County Council - Planning	County Development Plan 2013 - 2019	Include policies and objectives on dereliction and vacancy in the County Development Plan and all Local Area Plans	Reduce dereliction, creating a more attractive environment	Attractive and vibrant towns where people want to work, live and visit	Inclusion of measures in County Development Plan and Local Area Plans for Enniscorthy, Gorey, New Ross and Wexford	4 years	3.3.13
Wexford County Council - Planning, Economic Development, Municipal Districts	Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan	Implement a Spatial and Economic Plan for Wexford Town Quays	Wexford Quay rejuvenation project	Attractive and vibrant towns where people want work, live and visit	Completion of the rejuvenation project for the Wexford Quays	2016 - 2020	3.3.14
Wexford County Council - Planning, Economic Development, Municipal Districts	Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan	Explore ways to rejuvenate the South Main Street area including the Trinity Wharf site in Wexford Town	South Main Street and Trinity Wharf site projects	Attractive and vibrant towns where people want work, live and visit	Completion of rejuvenation project	2016 - 2020	3.3.15

Plate 2.6 Sustainable Economic Development Objective 3.3 - Making the Living Environment More Attractive

Wexford Quay Economic Development and Spatial Implementation Plan

The Wexford Quay Economic Development and Spatial Implementation Plan has been prepared by Scott Tallon Walker Architects for Wexford County Council in agreement with the Wexford County Council Planning Department. The Plan is soon to be presented to the Elected Members of Wexford County Council and aims to provide a strategic vision for the revitalisation and regeneration of the Wexford Quays area including the redevelopment of the Trinity Wharf site.

The plan identifies a targeted set of strategic economic activities for revitalising the project area and to stimulate significant sustainable economic activity, employment creation or other desirable consequential development. One of these strategic economic objectives is *“the development of Trinity Wharf as a new signature business district to support the transition of the town towards a higher-value knowledge and leisure economy”*.

A number of Actions and Outcomes are outlined in Table 2.1 for the Trinity Wharf site within the Economic Plan.

Table 2.1 Relevant Actions and Outcomes in the Economic Plan

Actions:	Outcomes:
1. Develop high-tech office space at Trinity Wharf, suited to the financial services, IT and communications sectors.	Establishment of a dynamic new economic hub adjacent to the town centre; deliver better opportunities for 3 rd Level graduates.

Actions:	Outcomes:
2. Provide affordable office/meeting space – for young companies. Particular focus on the creative economy – media, animation, movies, music, software development, game development.	Early initiatives to build momentum and support eventual location of a creative economy hub at Trinity Wharf.
3. Develop quality apartment accommodation at Trinity Wharf to provide living spaces.	Establishment of a dynamic economic hub, adjacent to the town centre.

The Strategic Economic activities identified are focused on the development of Trinity Wharf as a new urban mixed-use business quarter within walking distance of the town centre, and the focus on the Crescent as the town's centre-piece with active uses around. Spatial elements of the plan call for improved pedestrian areas along the quays and to address the severance between the waterfront and the town created by both the railway and vehicular traffic, extending to Trinity Wharf. Providing good quality direct connectivity with the rest of the town centre along the waterfront with Paul Quay will be critical to maximising the economic potential of both Trinity Wharf and the Crescent.

Development of Trinity Wharf on a planned basis as a flexible serviced urban business quarter and as an extension of the town centre southwards is a development objective of the Spatial Plan. The Trinity Wharf site was acquired by Wexford Co. Council to attract investment and stimulate economic development in Wexford. Trinity Wharf is outlined as the essential first step in giving competitive advantage over its neighbours in relation to positioning Wexford as an attractive location for business.

2.4 Existing Environment

2.4.1 Existing Brownfield Site

The existing site at Trinity Wharf comprises approximately 3.6 ha of disused brownfield site at the southern end of Wexford Quays. The site consists of reclaimed land that extends into Wexford Harbour and was reclaimed with the northern part reclaimed around 1832 initially as a dockyard area and then extended south-eastwards through the late 1800s and early 1900s.



Plate 2.7 Existing Trinity Wharf Brownfield Site

The northern section of the site had a range of uses over the years, changing from a dockyard to a market, and then to a bacon processing plant (Clover Meats), which closed in the late 1980s leaving the site vacant. The southern part of the site was developed as an ironworks which operated from 1911- 1964, following which it was used as a car assembly plant until the early 1980s, and then for manufacturing electronic components (Wexford Electronix) until 2001. The site has been derelict since and was acquired by Wexford County Council in 2015. The site is now partly overgrown with some remnants of demolished structures. The Dublin to Rosslare railway line runs adjacent to the site and is currently running as a live railway with passenger trains travelling to Rosslare Harbour. The current access to the site is from Trinity Street across the Dublin to Rosslare railway line at the northern end of the site.

The footprint of the proposed development also requires the development of a section of vacant, brownfield site between Trinity Street and the Dublin to Rosslare Railway line which was also used for industry in the past and is currently owned by Wexford County Council. This area will form the new access point into the Trinity Wharf site directly from Trinity Street. There is currently no junction on Trinity Street to service the existing access to Trinity Wharf. Alterations to the existing road layout on Trinity Street will be required to accommodate a signalised junction into the Trinity Wharf site via a new access south of McMahon's Hardware. Paul Quay carpark is an existing carpark to the north of the site along the quay front which is also owned by Wexford County Council. Modifications will be required to this carpark also to accommodate the tie-in of a boardwalk proposed as part of the proposed development.

2.4.2 Existing Economic Status of Wexford Town

County Wexford is home to 3.1% of the population of the State or 149,722 persons in 2016. Wexford is the County Town and identified in the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy as the 'Key town' both the County and in the South East Region. Wexford Town is home to 20,188 people and its population has increased by 27% between 1996 and 2016.

According to 2016 Census results, Wexford Town had a 58.5% labour force participation rate or 9,602 persons¹. 2016 Census reports the unemployment rate in County Wexford was 16.6% (11,478 persons out of a labour force of 69,237). The national average unemployment rate was 12.9%. In 2016, County Wexford had the fifth highest rate of unemployment in the country with 4.5% of those are on the Live Register.

In 2016 Census, Wexford Town had 25% at work in the 'Commerce and Trade' industry, 23% were at work in both the 'professional services' and 'other' industries, respectively. 10% were working in the 'manufacturing' industry, only 5% were at work in the 'Building and Construction' and 1% at work in the 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' industry. Census 2016. In contrast County Wexford has a higher than average dependency on the traditional industrial sectors when compared with the State average, i.e. the 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' industry 7.5%, 'Building and Construction' (6.9%) and 'Manufacturing Industries' (12%) are all higher than the equivalent State average (AIRO, 2018). These figures indicate that the population employed in these industries in Wexford Town most likely reside in other settlements or in Wexford Towns' rural hinterland.

Wexford Town has been successful in the past in attracting international companies, however the lack of investment in recent years is believed to be partly because of the absence of suitable property solutions to meet investors' expectations. It is therefore essential to make available a range of suitable options for companies considering Wexford as a location. However, modern business trends are rapidly changing with the accelerating technological shift to innovative knowledge-based sectors. These businesses are attracted to high quality urban locations where they can cluster, create synergies, where people can interact and think creatively, with an easy walk to high quality amenities, uniqueness of place, and a broad range of town centre uses all providing a high quality of life for employees.

The development of Trinity Wharf will improve the unemployment rate within Wexford Town, creating approx. 1,200 full time jobs, while regenerating the greater area, bringing business and tourism opportunities. The development will enhance the greater Trinity area, creating an attractive urban quarter which is connected to the Town Centre and which will attract investment in the area.

2.5 Objectives of the Proposed Development

Wexford County Council's vision for Trinity Wharf is for a development which will:

- Act as a catalyst for economic growth and socio-economic development by providing employment space of regional scale to attract high profile, high quality employers;
- Drive the regeneration of the wider urban area by providing a vibrant, diverse, multi-use quarter of outstanding place quality;

¹ AIRO. 2018. *Socio-Economic Profile 1: Employment, Industry and Occupation*

- Consolidate the spatial development of Wexford Town to allow for more compact and sustainable growth through redevelopment of a strategically located brownfield, backlands site.

The development of Trinity Wharf as a mixed-use urban quarter is an essential step in positioning Wexford as a regionally attractive location for business, particularly financial services into the future. The proposed development seeks to implement the Trinity Wharf Masterplan and execute the individual projects recommended by the Economic Development and Spatial Implementation Plan in a planned and co-ordinated manner.

The primary objective of the Proposed Development is to provide economic development and employment opportunities within a town centre location to contribute to a number of planning and economic policies at National, Regional and Local levels as described above.

The high-level objectives of the proposed development include the following elements:

- 3 No. Advanced Technology/Office Buildings
- Corporate HQ building;
- Public Realm works including provision for an Arts / Cultural / Performance Building and /or Space;
- Hotel with approx. 120-150 bedrooms;
- Residential apartment building;
- Small scale retail;
- Multi-story Carpark
- Boardwalk link with Paul Quay; and
- Marina Development.

The objectives of the proposed development are as follows:

Economy

- Re-develop the Trinity Wharf site which was formerly home to some of Wexford's largest employers (see plate 2.1 above) and to restore it to a centre of employment within the town centre;
- Create a major business quarter which attracts high-end financial services, software development and technology companies;
- Provide high-quality offices and business space for local, national and international investment;
- Provide a hub for start-up companies in emerging new economic sectors;
- Create a modern urban quarter which will lead to over 1,500 people working and/or living at Trinity Wharf within the next 5-10 years;

Safety

- Improve safety on the site, by remediating an existing derelict brownfield site, addressing existing contamination, reinforcing the sea wall, protecting against climate change and opening up these lands for public use;

Environment

- Create a sustainable mixed-use development with the aim of protecting environmentally sensitive sites;

Accessibility & Social Inclusion

- Provide an access to the site across the Dublin to Rosslare Railway Line;
- Provide a high-quality boardwalk / cycleway from the Trinity Wharf site to Paul's Quay; and

Integration

- Provide a mix of economic, residential and tourism uses within the site, creating a social cohesive and sustainable development with smart, high quality public realm for all to enjoy.