

AN TAIOSCE LIMERICK

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An Taisce Limerick calls for repurposing of new and old Limerick City landmark buildings to help address the housing crisis

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An Taisce Limerick is calling for a comprehensive statement from both Limerick 2030 DAC, and Limerick City and County Council in relation to the development of city centre residential development.

Seán McIlpatrick, Chair of An Taisce Limerick observed:

“Right at this moment in Cork City centre, there are multiple sites under development to deliver 1300 housing units comprising of one bed, two bed and three bed apartments. Many will be completed within 2026 and all 1300 within 2027.

In Limerick City, there are currently 36 apartments being built at Speaker’s Corner, but there are no other major developments under construction.”

He went on:

“Each of these housing units in Cork will add to the housing supply - important in the middle of a housing crisis. But every city centre home brings benefits far beyond the home itself. Each home adds to the vibrancy of the city centre, provides a ready footfall for city centre businesses and services, and provides a sense of safety with “eyes on the street”. This is what we need – more residential units in our city centre, not underused office blocks on premium city centre land.”

An Taisce Limerick points to the lack of residential development at Limerick 2030’s flagship project at Opera Square – a project that was set to deliver a 14 storey office building, a new city library and a vibrant public realm with restaurants, bars and open entertainment spaces. This was promised to be fully complete by the end of 2025.

An Taisce Limerick believes it’s time to revisit exactly what is being proposed by Limerick 2030, its delivery timeline and that there needs to be a clear statement on why an office block is being prioritised over significant residential units and a necessary public library amenity.

Of particular concern is transparency around the funding of the library and the Georgian properties. In relation to the library, it took a question by Senator Maria

Byrne in the Seanad to bring clarity around the library costs and funding to which Junior Minister Brophy stated in a response

“ In August 2018, the cost of the library was initially estimated to be 27 million.”

The current estimate now stands at 50 million which the council is now seeking funding to cover these costs. Junior Minister Brophy noted that in the National Development Review published in July 2025 the Library project for Limerick was not specifically mentioned, thus raising concerns about the delivery of a much needed Library for a large city.

Darragh Boyce Planning Officer An Taisce Limerick notes the continued decades long dereliction of the Georgian properties of Patrick/Rutland Street and Ellen street including the much loved former Lucky Lamp Public House (Quin's) :

“ The delay in retrofitting the Georgian properties into housing and the lack of clarity around funding and timeframes for delivery is calling into question whether Limerick 2030 DAC and Limerick City and County Council can deliver these vital phases of the opera site,

For context, currently the skyline of Cork city is dominated by 18 tower cranes the majority of which are delivering housing both private and social of up to 1,300 units along with the redevelopment of the Crawford Art Gallery and a post primary school extension; this can be seen in a video on youtube by “Drone Hawk Cork” entitled “Cork is Booming”. This footage brings into focus the shocking disparity between Cork and Limerick with Limerick currently hosting only a handful of tower cranes with two delivering the UHL extension, one for the OPW office block at the Opera Site and just one tower Crane in the city centre delivering housing which is 36 social housing units being delivered by an Approved Housing Body at Speakers corner on Lower Carey’s road.

In targets set by Government for the delivery of “Own Built” social housing by Limerick City And County council the target for 2022 and 2024 was 1,580 units of which a mere 273 were delivered ,

It should also be mentioned that the Georgian buildings which belong to LCCC and are part of the Opera Centre Site, would have attracted Derelict Sites Notices had they been in private hands. These townhouses have been entirely vacant since the summer of 2008 and were the subject of emergency stabilisation works in 2012. Since then no works of any significance have taken place. This swathe of buildings sit on a primary access route to the city centre linking the original historic settlement at King’s Island with the late 18th century Georgian new town. The dilapidated and derelict condition of these 250 year old buildings projects an appalling image to anybody entering the city centre. Particularly visitors and tourists coming from the medieval area. LCCC should set an example and get these buildings back into

habitable condition as a priority, to show by example how their restoration can change the whole tenor of a street, positively. The urgent delivery of housing units particularly in the city centre is even more critical given that recent CSO figures have shown a 19% decrease in residential completions in Q1 2026 compared to the previous year. Marking the third consecutive year where Q1 completions decreased from the previous quarter. Alarmingly this represents a 31% decrease in completions from Q1 2023.

An Taisce Limerick believes there is significant potential in the repurposing of Sarsfield House into residential units, strongly rejecting any suggestion of the demolition of the building. The organisation, which has a prescribed, statutory role as a consultee in the planning process in Ireland, emphasises that the repurposing of Sarsfield House will not only add to Limerick city centre housing stock, but bring an improved vitality to Arthur's Quay Park.

Referencing a recent report that the local authority had commissioned two assessments of the building, the organisation also expressed its concern that any assessment would include a comprehensive calculation of embodied carbon and whole life-cycle emissions that would result from the demolition of Sarsfield House. From September 2025, public bodies must require Whole Life-Cycle Greenhouse Gas Emissions assessments for large-scale public projects. From 1 January 2026, projects in receipt of exchequer funding in excess of €10 million should produce such an assessment.

In June 2023 public consultation began on the Arthurs Quay Framework which included Sarsfield House. In October 2024 the public were asked for submissions on what they would like to see happen. A total of 345 submissions were received. It is now 3 years since the consultation process began and 1.5 years since the public submitted their views. We have yet to see a report with a statistical analysis of what the public's opinions were. The level of public engagement was significant and Limerick City and County Council owe the public a comprehensive update on the future of the Arthurs Quay Framework.

A retrofit of Sarsfield house into housing units could be earmarked for housing key workers like nurses, hospital staff, teachers, guards, hospitality and retail .

Seán McIlfratrick, Chair of An Taisce Limerick, said:

"There is a housing crisis, a complete lack of supply of homes for people that need them. We need to ensure that we are ambitious, in both thought and action, for our city centre. For a city to survive and thrive, it needs a robust city centre population. Sarsfield House should be high on the list of our public buildings to be converted to quality, riverside apartments."

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