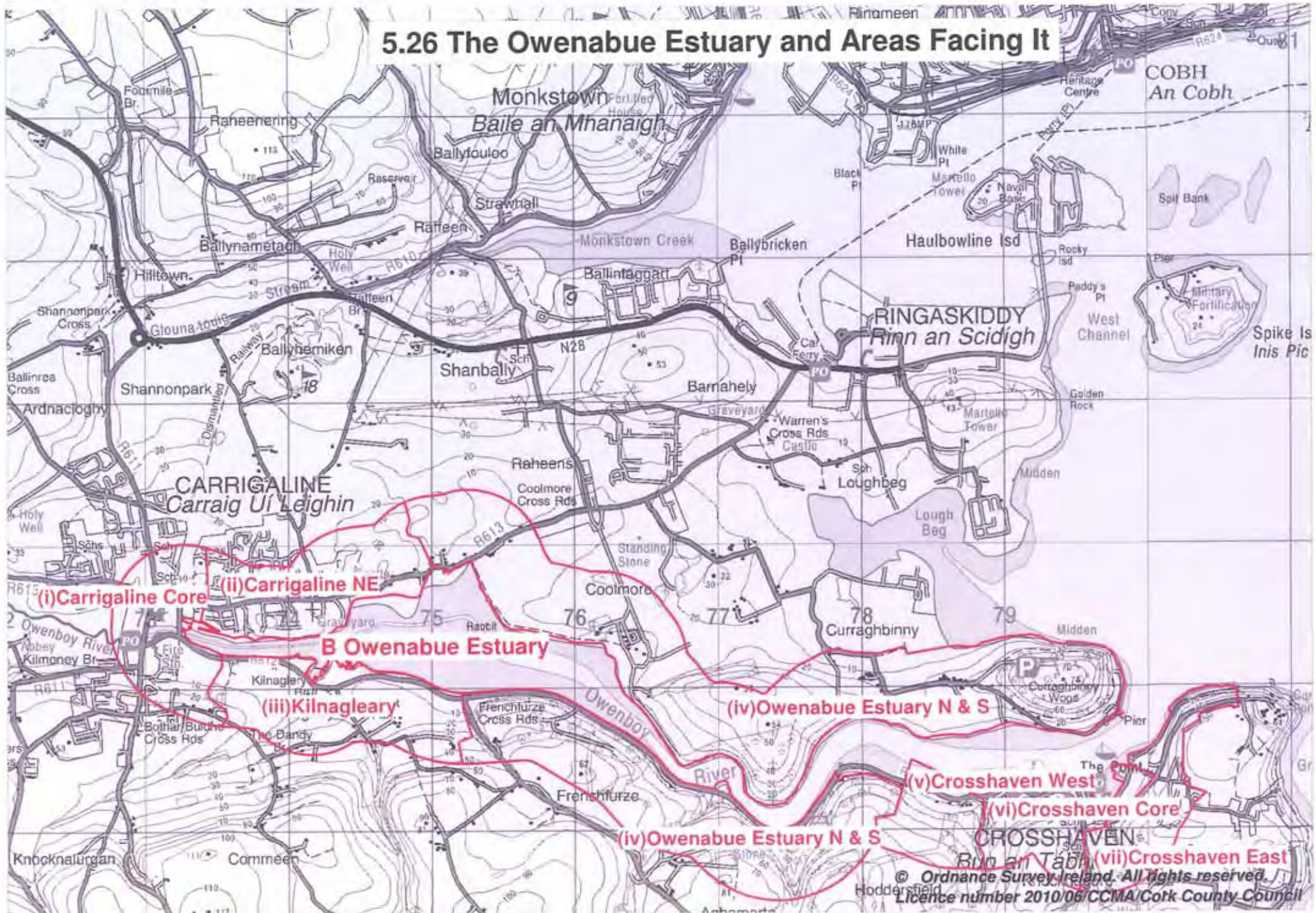


5.26 The Owenabue Estuary and Areas Facing It



B. The Owenabue Estuary and areas facing it

East of Carrigaline, the Owenabue forms a winding 7km long estuary, of varying width (from 100 to 900m). It is generally well sheltered by higher ground, much of it wooded. Because of its sheltered nature, the estuary – and more particularly the part close to Crosshaven – is the main centre for the concentration of moorings and marinas in the harbour. It also has the advantage of being close to the mouth of the Harbour. There are c.450 moorings in Crosshaven area, c.80 of which are at Drake's Pool.

The Owenabue river is largely inter-tidal, and is one of three estuaries which form part of the Cork Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA), site code 004030. Apart from a small area around Drake's Pool, this section of the SPA covers the entire length of the estuary from Carrigaline down to Crosshaven, finishing before the marinas. The upper part of the Owenabue river is also designated an NHA, as the majority of birds congregate here in the winter. The inter-tidal mud flats support a wide variety of wintering waterfowl: the Dunlin, Redshank and Curlew are the most numerous, and the Redshank population are an internationally important species. A roost of up to 2,000 waders use fields near Rabbit Point at high tide. There is a sub sea power cable located close to the causeway on northern side of estuary close to Rabbit Point.

The recreational and amenity value of the estuary gains significance because Carrigaline, which now has a population of c.13,000, is at the head of the estuary, while Crosshaven,

with a much smaller population (c.1,700) but with a well developed marine leisure and seaside role for the wider Cork area, is at its mouth. The growth of Carrigaline from a settlement of less than 1000 people in 1970 has resulted in its physical expansion by around 1km downstream of the original town on the N. side of the estuary, and (if one includes its industrial suburb of Kilnagleary) 2km downstream on the S. side.

Table 5.4 Estimated Employment and Population Densities in areas facing the Owenabue Estuary

Area	Population per km ²	Jobs per km ²
Carrigaline (core)	1550	3000
Carrigaline (NE)	1600	100
Kilnagleary	110	1000
Owenabue (N & S)	55	>30
Crosshaven (W)	130	>30
Crosshaven (core)	820	400
Crosshaven (E)	2150	120

Fig. 5.27 The Owenabue Estuary Scenic Routes and Landscape

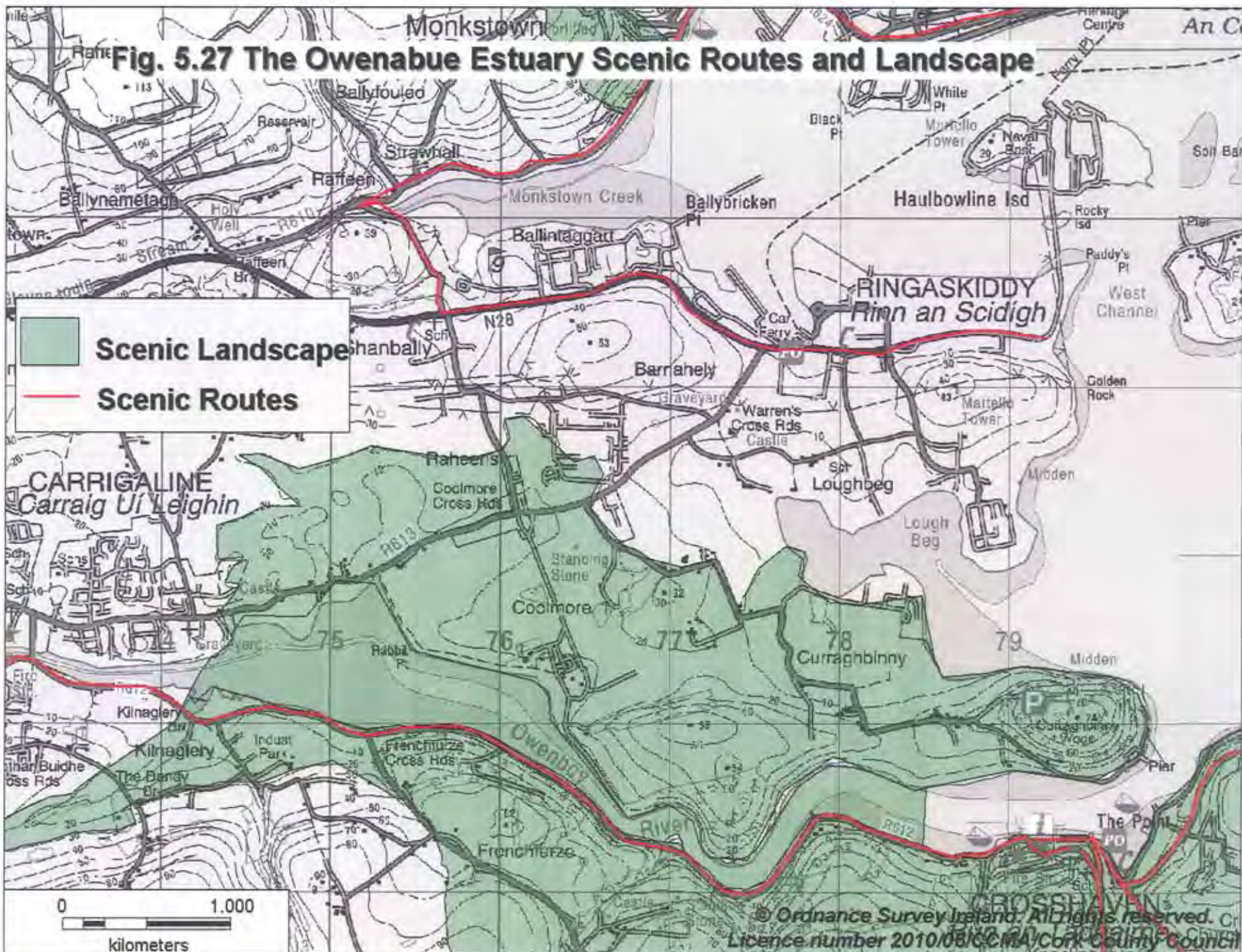
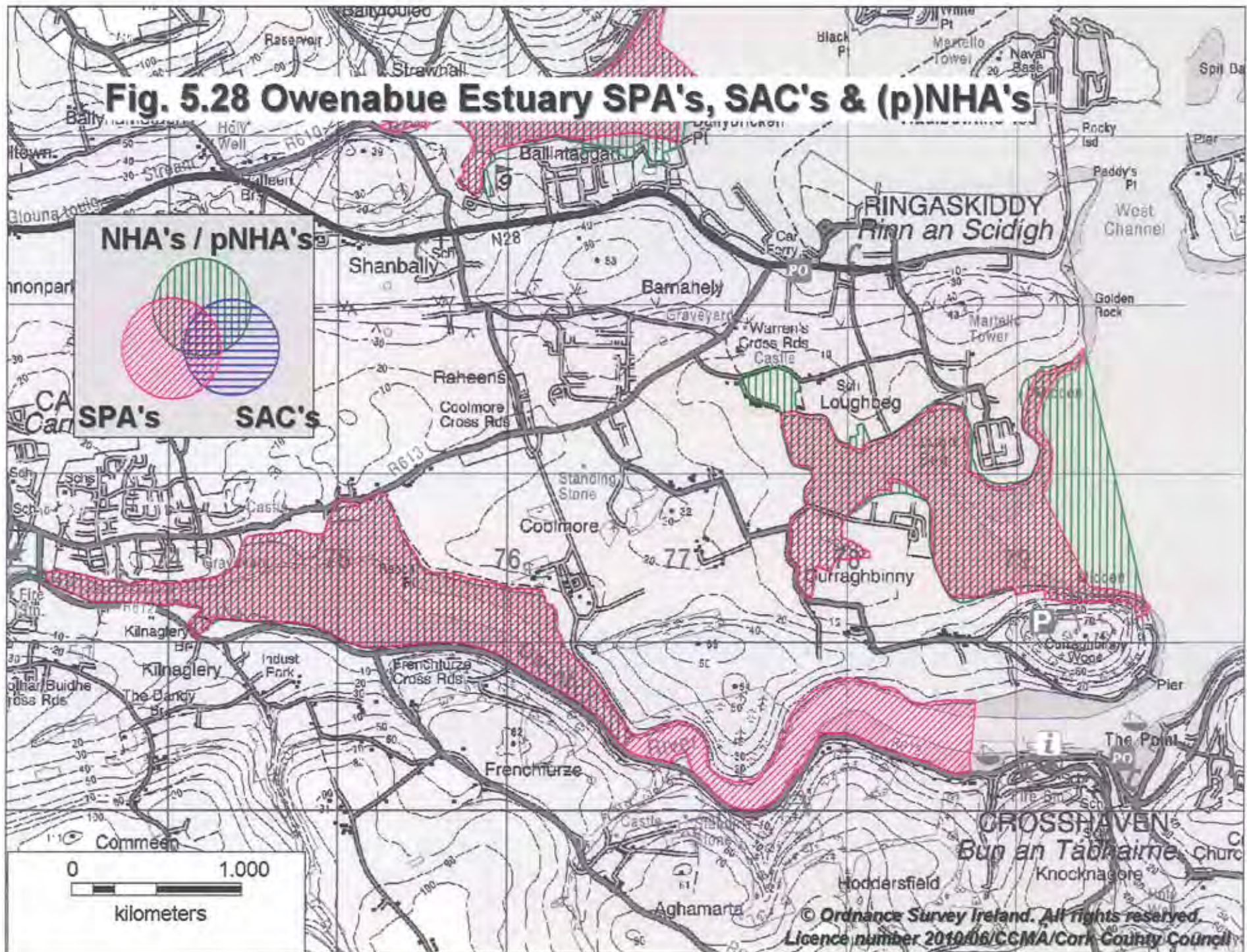


Fig. 5.28 Owenabue Estuary SPA's, SAC's & (p)NHA's



NHA's / pNHA's



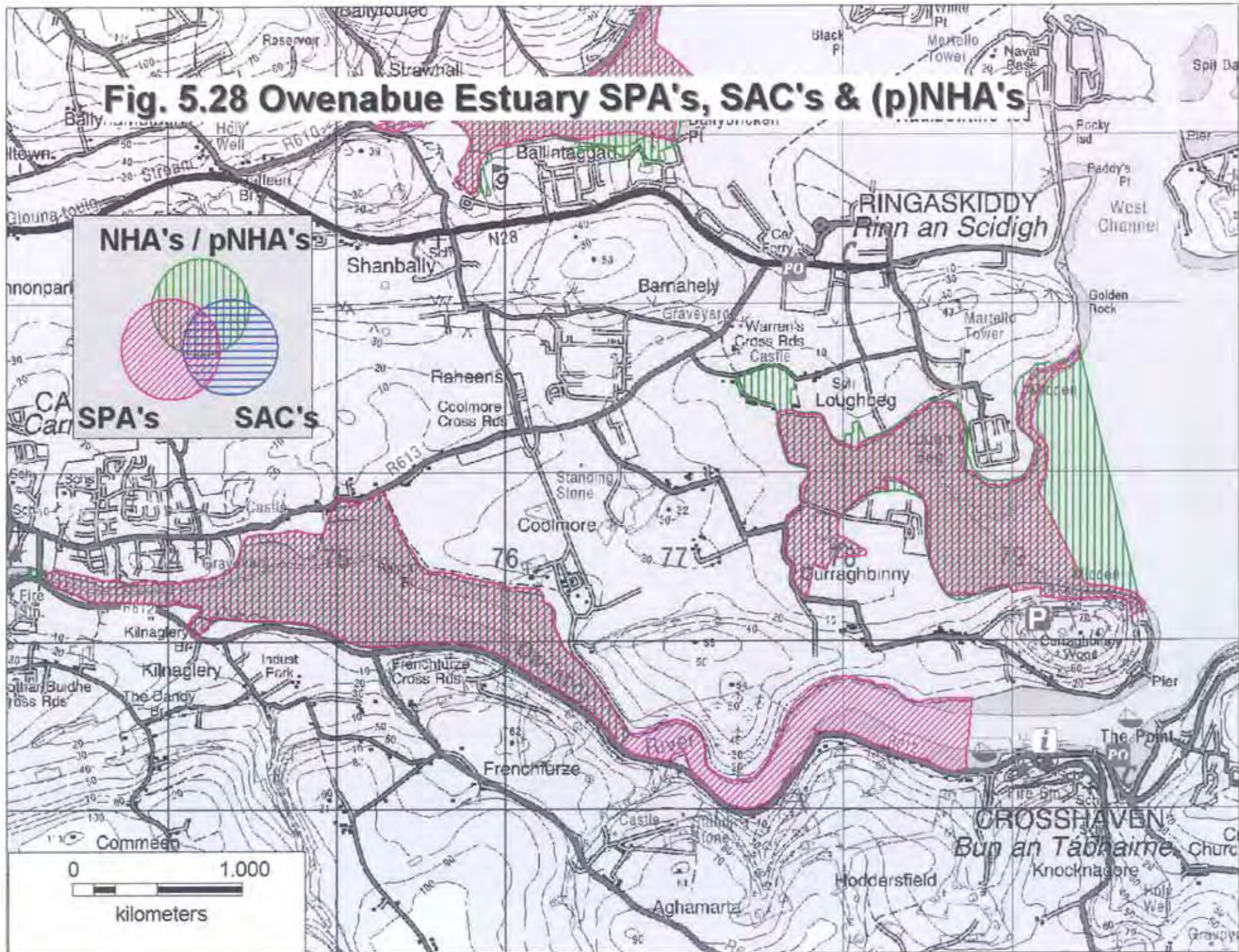
SPA's

SAC's

0 1.000
kilometers

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Fig. 5.28 Owenabue Estuary SPA's, SAC's & (p)NHA's



(i) Carrigaline (core):

Unlike many Harbour settlements, Carrigaline is in the normal position for a coastal town, and has grown up around the lowest bridge over the Owenabue River. This has some disadvantages, as a quite extensive area around Carrigaline Bridge is subject to both fluvial and coastal flooding, and this is expected to become more frequent under the LeeCFrams Mid Range Future Scenario. The Draft LeeCFrams Study ranked Carrigaline 3rd in terms of estimated average annual property damage from flooding, after Cork City and Midleton (which are also mouth of river settlements, subject to both tidal and fluvial flooding). However, the bulk of the property risk in Carrigaline appears to be from tidal or combined flooding, whereas in the City it is from fluvial or combined flooding, while the risk in Midleton is more evenly shared. Tidal flooding risk in Carrigaline affects c.50 commercial buildings, as well as c.75 residential ones, whereas fluvial flooding risk affects mainly residential buildings.

The Draft Study has put forward the option of providing c.0.9km of permanent flood walls and embankments on the S. bank and c.0.4km on the N. bank., with most being less than 1m high. More detailed analysis is need on the cost benefit ratio associated with this option, and if the results are positive, works are proposed in the period from 2016-21. Adverse effects would be mainly downstream of the town centre, and would involve some visual impact on the Carrigaline-Crosshaven scenic route, and a temporary effect on the SPA during its construction.

The main link between the Main Street and the Harbour is the rise and fall of the tide at Carrigaline Bridge, though there are good views down the estuary from the Relief Road. It seems unlikely that the proposed works will have much effect on the relationship between the town core and the Harbour.

In so far as the Draft Study envisages physical works as means of reducing flood risk, it has opted for the raised barrier approach to flood protection in mouth of river settlements. These have the merit of protecting against both fluvial and tidal flooding, and may also usually be cheaper and easier to justify in economic terms than the alternative of protecting separately from tidal flooding (eg via some form of downstream barrage) and fluvial flooding (eg through upstream retention strategies). The Owenabue is however physically quite well adapted for the latter approach, having a long, narrow and not very deep estuary downstream of Carrigaline, which could provide storage during high tides, and a long narrow catchment area upstream, which is reasonably well provided with natural flood plains and wetlands, whose role could be enhanced. Opportunities might arise west of the town centre to create open spaces with a primarily amenity role but which were also designed to retain floodwaters when necessary. The estuary also enters the Harbour downstream of the most likely location of any barrage constructed to protect the City in the longer term (eg on the W. Passage), and so is likely to remain a self contained unit for flood protection purposes under most possible future scenarios.

The core of the town is based around the original village main street, and this has been developed as the retail and retail

Fig 5.30 Carrigaline Core



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service centre of the town. As a shopping street, the original main street is quite a long one (from north to south), and retail growth has therefore tended to take the form of lateral expansion to the east and west of it, particularly to accommodate larger anchor users (Supervalu, Dunnes, Lidl).

All of these are close to the Owenabue. This pattern seems likely to continue, as blocks W. of the Main Street, on either side of the Owenabue and totalling c.9 ha were zoned in the 2003 County Development Plan for town centre uses, subject to an Action Area Plan or Development Brief. A service access/parallel street to serve this additional development and relieve the main street was also provided for, and plans to realise these aims are at an advanced stage.



Fig 5.31 Carrigaline North East



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(ii) Carrigaline (NE)

The NE of Carrigaline is heavily populated, and – in the medium term – likely to become more so. Around 70% of the population of Carrigaline lived N. of the Owenabue in 2006. While c.70ha was zoned in the 2003 County Development Plan in the valley south of the town, with a view to improving its balance, and some of this has been developed and occupied, in the longer term this may be counterbalanced by further zoning in 2007, for a new neighbourhood of 44 ha which would expand the NE part of the town northwards back towards the Shannon Park roundabout.

In the last two decades, the planned expansion of Carrigaline has been in a northward and southward direction, but not eastward. N. of the Owenabue, this reflects the need to maintain a buffer area between residential areas in Carrigaline and industrially zoned areas to the E. in Ringaskiddy.

The area NE of the town centre was developed from the 1970s onwards, following a neighbourhood plan for the Waterpark area, which included a north-south spine containing open space, schools and other community facilities, on the E. side of the Relief Road. While the intention was more to provide pedestrian links from surrounding housing estates to these community facilities, than to link them to the estuary and town centre, the layout also facilitates the latter to some extent. There is a wood in the centre of this area and E. of the relief road which contains attractive trees but is heavily littered. Its condition may reflect the absence of well maintained through paths which would help discourage abuse.

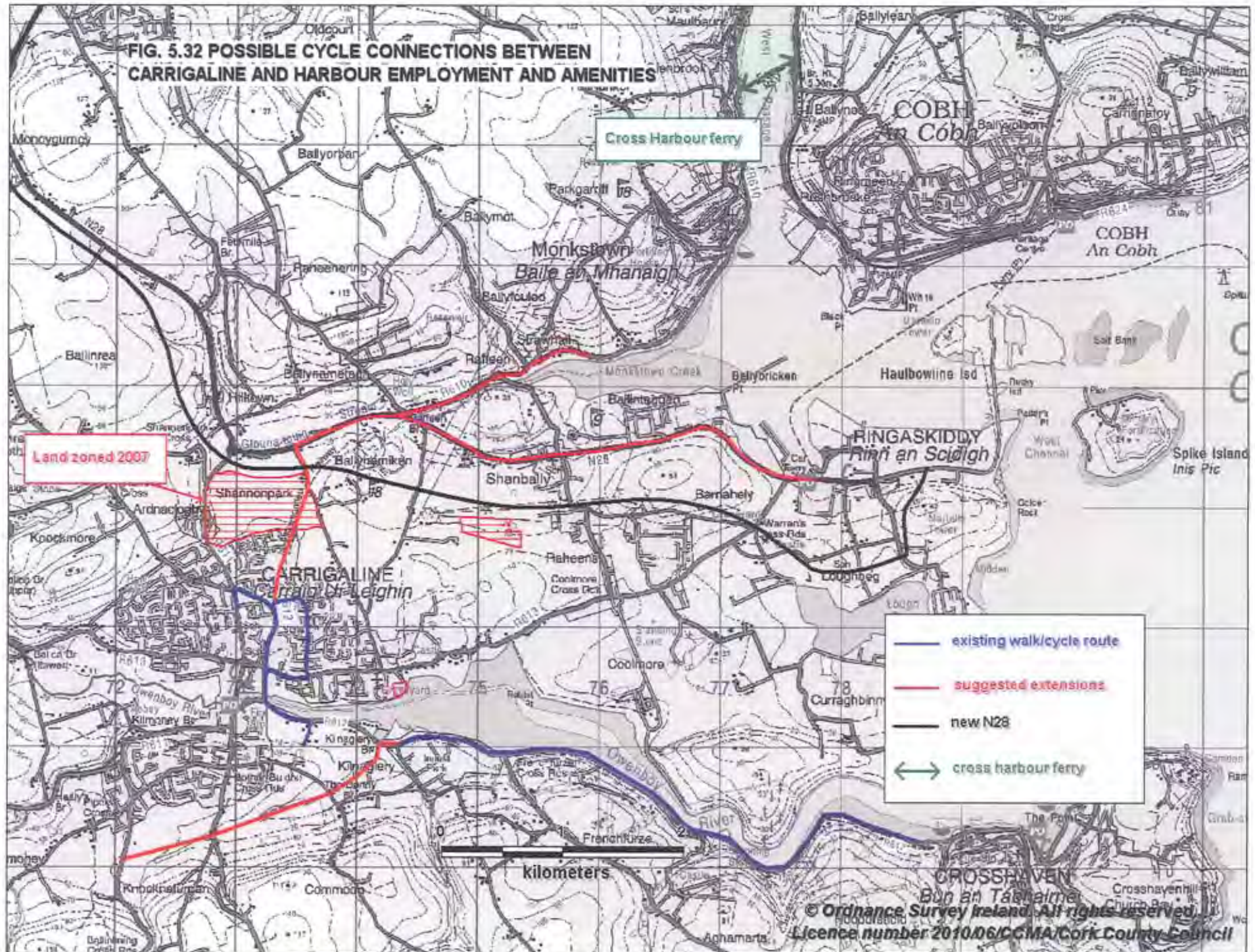
South of the wood, there are well maintained open spaces and a well used playground, with reasonable pedestrian and cycle linkage to nearby housing estates via a path along the northern shore of the estuary, and through a recently constructed cycleway network. These links also give access to the town centre, which is a few hundred metres to the SW.

One section of the cycleway and footpath now running along the E. side of the relief road would connect with the walking route proposed in the 1996 and 2003 County Development Plans, to run NE along the former Passage rail line. This route has largely been kept clear, through there is a section of old embankment near the N. end of Mulberry Lane which has been walled and fenced off. The additional zoning to the north referred to earlier increases the significance of this route, as the old rail line runs through that area also.

In section A(iv) of this chapter, it was suggested that the next section of this disused rail line – running north from Carrigaline to Monkstown – be converted to a walking and cycling route, with the possibility of also running a cycle lane E. to the employment around Ringaskiddy village, once the existing N28 is replaced by the proposed new road. The two proposals in combination would allow creation of a complete route connecting the centre of Carrigaline with Ringaskiddy and Monkstown.

Residents of housing estates are often reluctant to accept such routes running close to them, because of a fear that they will be abused. The actual risk of this is affected by use and design.

FIG. 5.32 POSSIBLE CYCLE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CARRIGALINE AND HARBOUR EMPLOYMENT AND AMENITIES



Both in the City and the County, walking routes along or connecting to the W. and S. shores of Lough Mahon are well used, partly because they are accessible from densely populated areas. Providing this high level of use can be achieved, such routes have public support, and are not much subject to abuse. The implication for the part of the rail line NE of Carrigaline is that we should aim for quite long routes which will connect residential areas with popular amenities, and that abuse is less likely in these circumstances.

In the design of such routes, it can be helpful for them to be on minor embankments or cuttings, a few feet above or below adjoining streets or open spaces, so that they are to some extent separate from them, and their role in facilitating movement is emphasised, while they remain overlooked. Such level differences may arise naturally, reflecting the original level of the railway, or as a means of minimising gradients for cyclists. It is also desirable that such routes be well lit.

For Carrigaline, the purpose of such measures would be partly to encourage alternatives to travelling to work by car (the 2002 Census showed Carrigaline to be the most car-dependent town in Ireland at that time), and partly to improve links to shoreline amenity areas and villages. North of the Owenabue, the routes suggested on Figure 5.32 would link Carrigaline to Ringaskiddy, and the Harbour shoreline between Rafeen and Monkstown, and also to the town centre and path along the northern shore of the Owenabue estuary¹⁵.

¹⁵ There are plans to extend this latter footpath eastwards in the 2005 and the current (Draft) Local Area Plans

(i) **Kilnagleary**

A similar opportunity arises on the southern side of Carrigaline, where there is permission for c.850 houses along the river which forms the town's S. boundary and flows under the Dandy Bridge, and capacity for perhaps another 400. Each of the permissions incorporates a pedestrian route along the river bank, which was intended by the 2005 Local Area Plan to link up with the coastal walk to Crosshaven at Kilnagleary Bridge. A pedestrian crossing has recently been installed to allow for safe crossing of the Crosshaven Road.

The coastal walk is well established and well used, and connecting the housing areas on the southern side along a stream with attractive hilly countryside on the far side of it would have considerable recreational value. Once fully occupied, the volume of housing built or proposed on the southern side of the town would ensure that that part of the route was also well used.

The Council's Industrial Estate, and the adjoining Pepsi plant, now have worthwhile employment, and creating an attractive pedestrian and cycling route to it would encourage travel by these modes. The maximum distance along this route, from the Kinsale road to Kilnagleary Bridge, is c.2½ km, and there is still worthwhile undeveloped land in the Industrial Estate. The economic development attractions of Carrigaline would be enhanced by being in a position to provide new places of work overlooking the estuary, within easy walking distance of developing housing areas.

Fig 5.33 Kilnagleary



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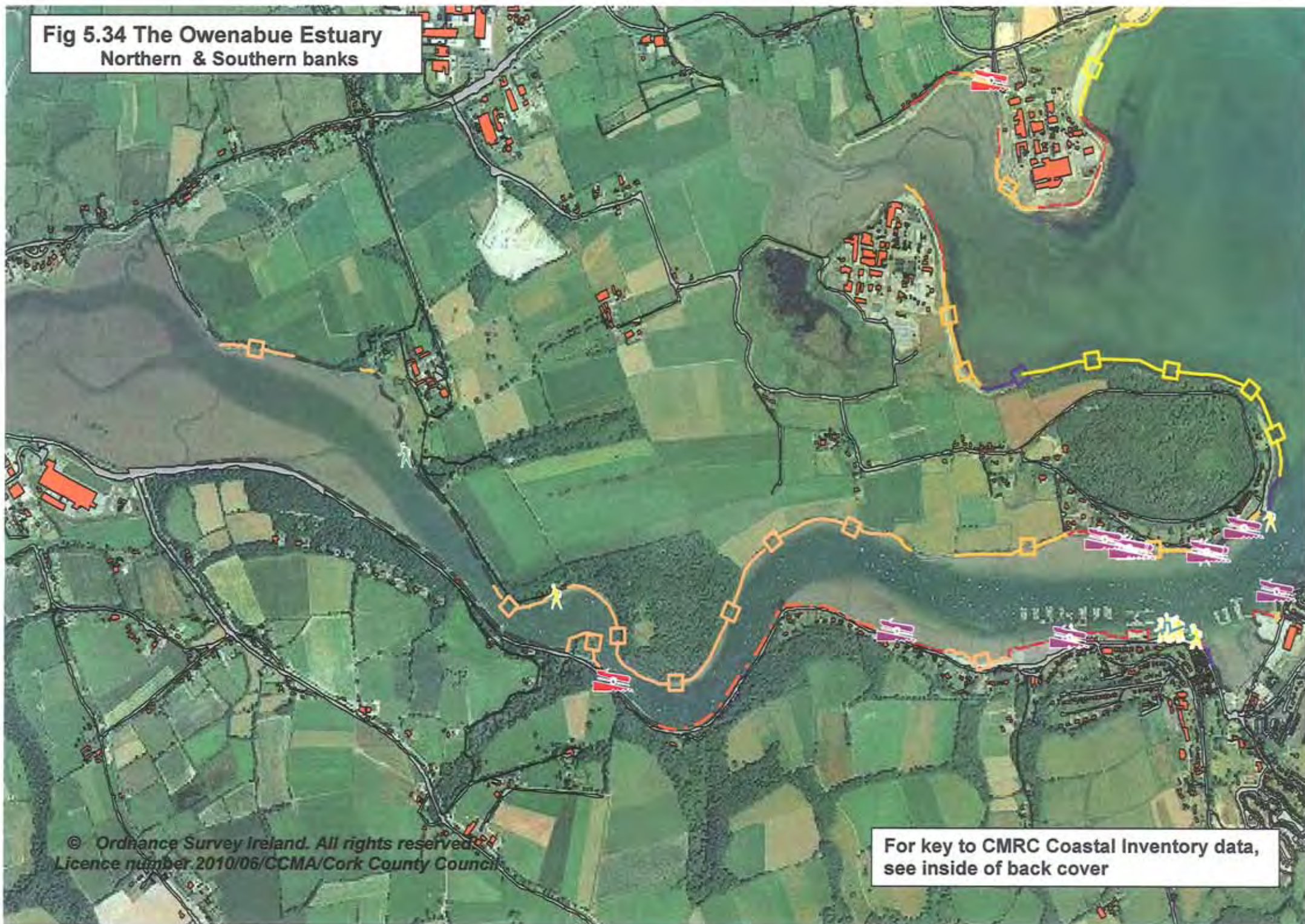
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The route shown in the 2005 LAP between the Dandy Bridge and the Crosshaven road would need to use or run parallel to the private access road to the Lipton Soft Drink plant. Other options may be possible, but need exploration.

The Kilnagleary estate and the Pepsi plant extend the boundary of Carrigaline to the junction between the Crosshaven and Fountainstown roads (Frenchfurze Cross). The steep and wooded nature of the land beyond this makes this crossroads a natural terminus for the town on this side of the estuary.



Fig 5.34 The Owenabue Estuary
Northern & Southern banks



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(ii) The Owenabue Estuary (North and South Banks)

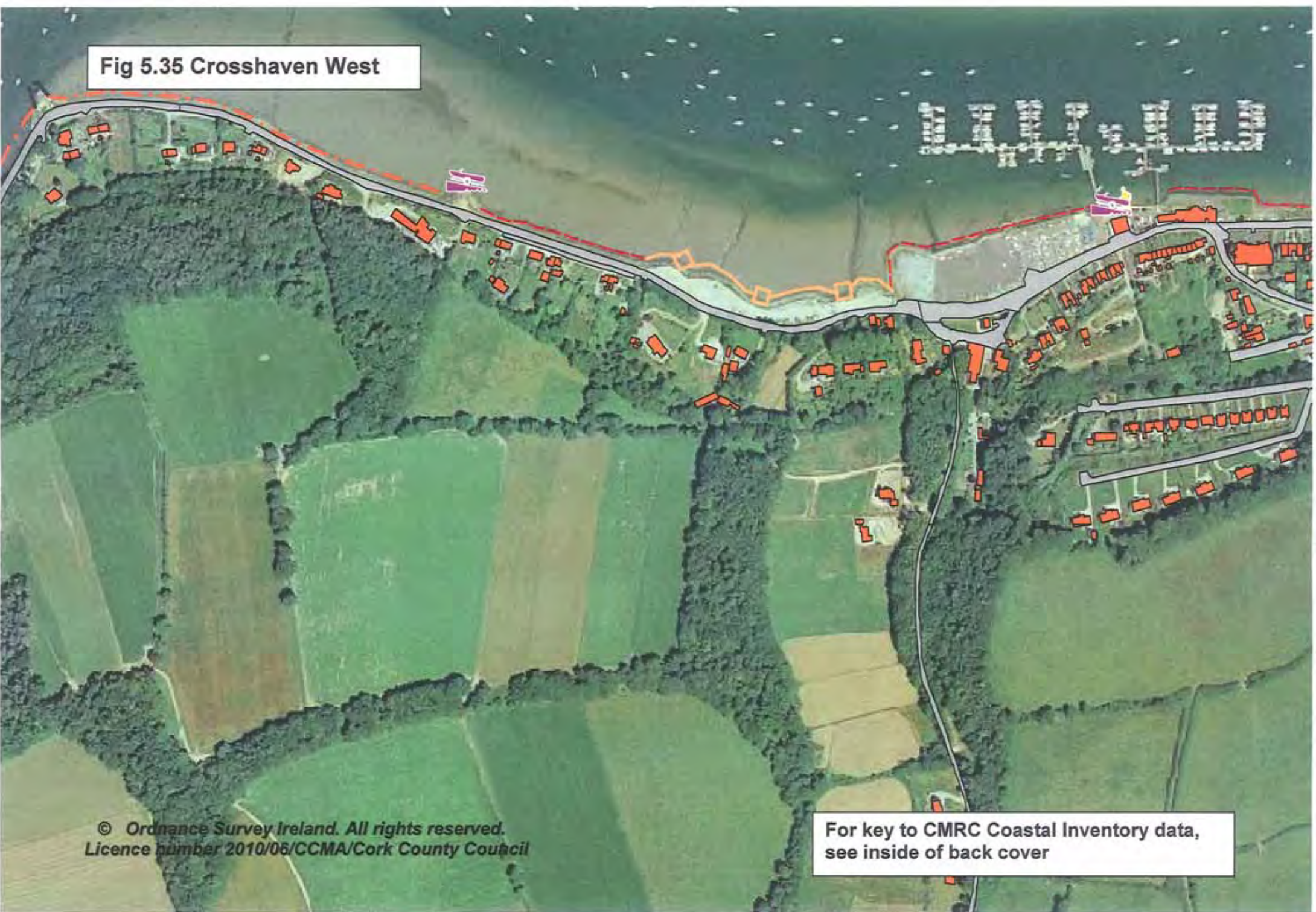
The function of this area is essentially recreational and environmental. Land on either side of the estuary is classified as scenic landscape in the 2009 County Development Plan, and the road from Carriagline to Weaver's Point is designated a scenic route (S58). There are a number of parking areas along the road to serve the well used amenity walk from Carrigaline to Crosshaven following the path of the old railway line. Coolmore house – a large 3 storey Georgian house - is an important feature on the northern shores of the estuary, and is the focus of a landscaped and well wooded demesne. The house is unoccupied since the 1980s but maintained. Built in 1788, its simple rectangular form is a striking feature from the southern side of the estuary. There is a narrow track along much of the shoreline on private land. There is an inter visibility between the estate and lower Carrigaline and also with the industrial estate on the southern side of the estuary.

Curraghbinny wood is also on northern side of the estuary, on the peninsula at the end of the estuary opposite Crosshaven. It is managed by Coillte, with full provision for public access, and a network of well defined paths. There are long ranging views of Cobh and Ringaskiddy to the north visible from the approach road to the woods, and an attractive terrace of large Victorian houses in front of the wood and overlooking Crosshaven. The southern side of the estuary is largely undeveloped, with a small pocket of housing set within Kelleher's wood and accessed off the regional road.

The existing walk along the southern shores of the estuary together with walks in Curraghbinny woods have a very high amenity value. The majority of the northern shore is in private hands as a large dairy farm, so the development of amenity walks along the northern shores near Coolmore is unlikely in the near future. The approach road into Crosshaven along the estuary is picturesque and visually very attractive, and development on it would detract from its scenic value.



Fig 5.35 Crosshaven West



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(iii) Crosshaven (west)

At the western entrance to Crosshaven, there is a block of detached housing on the landward side of the road, between the road and the former rail line (which at that point crossed the road and ran on the uphill side of it). Agricultural land, much of it wooded, rises steeply behind the old rail line.

The club house, boat yard marina and car park of the Royal Cork Yacht Club (RCYC) is on the seaward side of the road as it comes into Crosshaven. The club was formed in the early 18th century, making it the oldest yacht club in the world, and was originally based on Haulbowline, where its original club house survives. The RCYC is a major Cork institution whose presence makes Crosshaven a nationally important sailing centre. It hosts the Cork Week regatta in July every 2nd year, and this attracts over 500 boats, with major economic benefits for the Cork area.

The club premises occupy c.½ km of sea frontage, and inevitably create a barrier between the road and the sea. Viewed from the road, road boundary and sea wall treatment is functional but not particularly attractive.

The estuary immediately W. of the RCYC is part of the Cork harbour SPA, and (on the southern side) has extensive mudbanks at low tide due to being on the inside of a curve in the channel. Both factors would make further marina provision in this direction difficult.

Fig 5.36 Crosshaven Core



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(iv) Crosshaven (core)

While some of the settlements facing Cork Harbour have quite limited levels of interaction with it, this cannot be said of Crosshaven. It specialises in recreational boating, and has 80% of the marina spaces, 45% of the moorings, and two thirds of the boatyard storage capacity on Cork Harbour. In so far as critical mass is helpful in encouraging specialist services, Crosshaven has this, with the most obvious such service in the town being Crosshaven boatyard. In recognition of the need to ensure that this use is not 'crowded out' by more lucrative waterfront uses which have less functional need to be there, a marine industrial zoning to include boat repairs has been in place from 1996 onwards.

Hugh Coveney deep water pier is accessed off the Lower road, and can accommodate larger boats, facilitating boat trips outside the Harbour as well as within it. In future, it might also be suitable as the southern terminus of a tourism boat route for the inner harbour. A ferry route between the deep berth over to the pier at Curraghbinny is marked on the 1934 map.

Crosshaven House is a large 3 storey cut stone mid 18th century house, with pediments and side pavilions in the Palladian manner, which has been well restored, and is available for functions, and has been to a varying extent open to the public. It occupies a central position in the village facing the sea. The 1996 County Development Plan proposed environmental improvements on "*an overall plan which recognised the focal position and architectural importance of Crosshaven House*" to the car park which had previously been constructed on

reclaimed land in front of it. In the early 2000s, the County Architect's Department designed and carried out a conversion of the car park into a civic space which had pedestrian, amenity and architectural functions as well as providing car parking

This has greatly improved the public realm within the village, but may also have unintentionally caused a shift in the centre of gravity within the village, towards the eastern side of this space, and away from the traditional focus of the village to the NW, on the Lower Road. Many of the shops on the Lower Road are now vacant.

This is unfortunate in itself, and also because this shopping frontage is the public face of a very interesting, old, dense area within the village, where a number of narrow laneways running up the hill link the Lower, Middle and Upper Roads. This area is currently in reasonable condition, with only a few vacant houses, but it is an area of real heritage value and interest.



**5.37 POSSIBLE QUAYSIDE PARKING AREA
ON LOWER ROAD**



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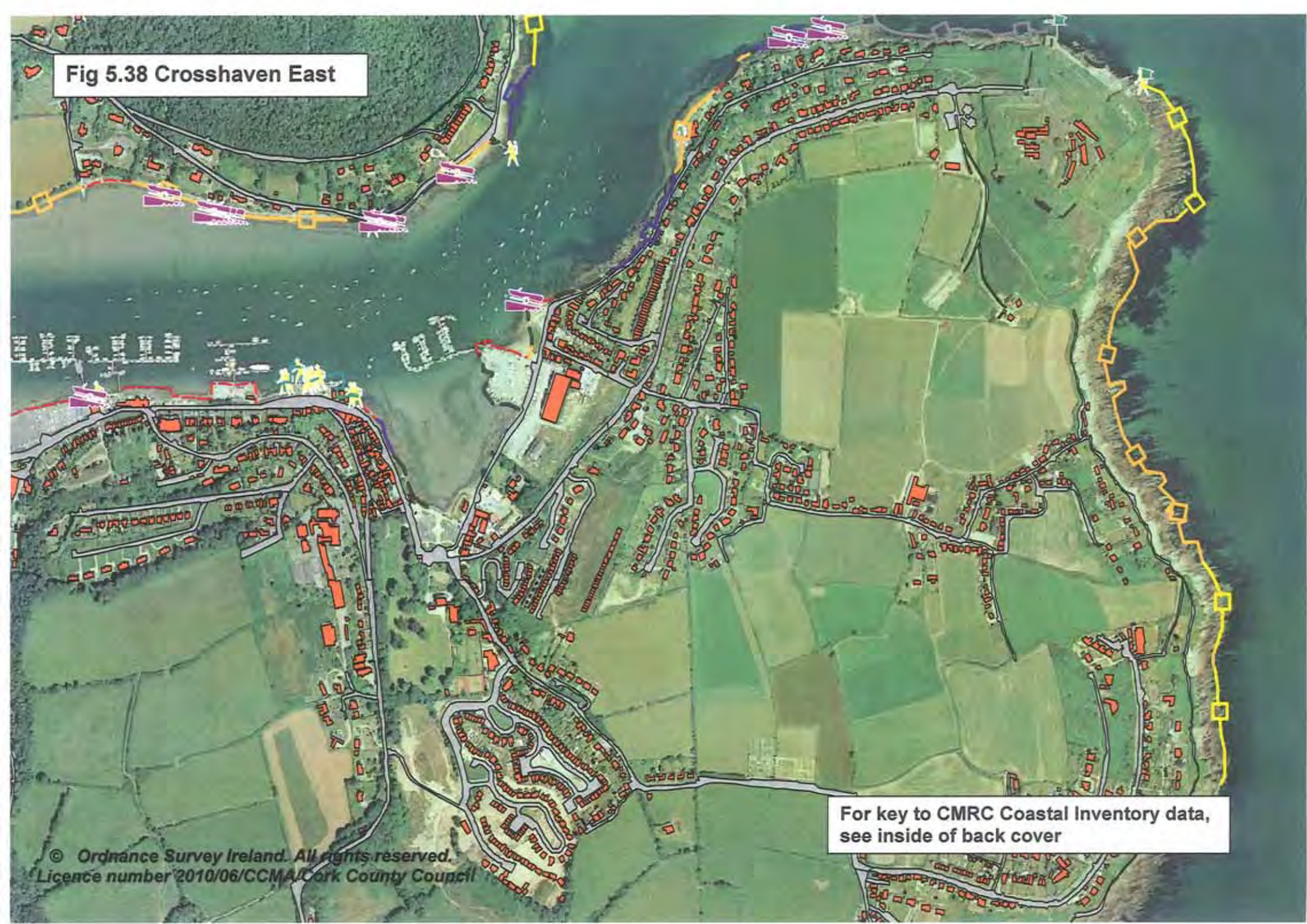
Retail activity on the Lower Road may have suffered because there is very limited parking directly on it, and it is a few minutes walk from the main parking area in front of Crosshaven House. There are some limited measures which might make it easier to stop on the Lower Road, and stimulate renewal there:

- there is an old and badly eroded quay on the seaward side of the Lower Road N of the fish and chip shop, which could perhaps be reconstructed and raised to provide some parking, and perhaps also a sitting out area. While it would not get evening sun because of high ground to the W., it would get sun during the day, and could be an asset to a café type business.
- A short section of the Lower Road near its junction with the Middle Road was remodelled as two parallel roads at different levels. While the lower carriageway is mainly used by eastbound traffic, and the upper one mainly by westbound, a full one-way system is not in place. If one was put in place, it would be easier to accommodate more parallel parking on both roads.

A time limit would need to apply to any parking provided in this manner, otherwise it would not necessarily be available to passing shoppers.



Fig 5.38 Crosshaven East



For key to CMRC Coastal Inventory data, see inside of back cover

Crosshaven (East)

Most of the expansion of Crosshaven in recent decades has happened in the areas E and SE of the town core, with the recent Brightwater development S of Crosshaven House representing a particularly substantial increment. The population of Crosshaven itself was c.1700 in 2006, and some growth in the population of the town increases demand for local services, and should make it easier to resolve the type of vacancy problem referred to above. Too much growth could turn it into a commuter settlement, and upset the balance between its residential and recreational functions. It could also result in development which could affect the attractive mature woodlands inland from the town. CASP envisaged the town together with associated settlements such as Myrtleville gaining around 1,000 population between 2000 and 2020.

If Camden Fort was opened to the public as a normal tourist attraction open at given hours during the summer, access for those without a car will become an issue, though this is not likely to be an immediate problem (see next section). Most buses stop in the centre of the village rather than continuing up to the fort, though some coordination between the opening times at the Fort and bus services in summer might be possible. If the Harbour CAT ferry service was established and had some services continuing to Crosshaven, the disembarkation point would also be in the centre of the village. (Camden had its own pier, but this is now in very poor condition, and would be expensive to reconstruct).

In the absence of other methods of access, visitors without cars would have to walk from the centre of the village, a distance of c. 1¼ km. The perceived distance would be affected by the pleasantness of the route and assurance that one was on the right route. The most attractive route between the centre of the village and Camden Fort is along the Point Road, which overlooks the sea for part of its length, and ends in a paved footpath up the hillside to Camden Road. Some signposting, with confirmation at intervals that it is the right route, and addition of footpaths on the seaward side where practical, would be desirable.

