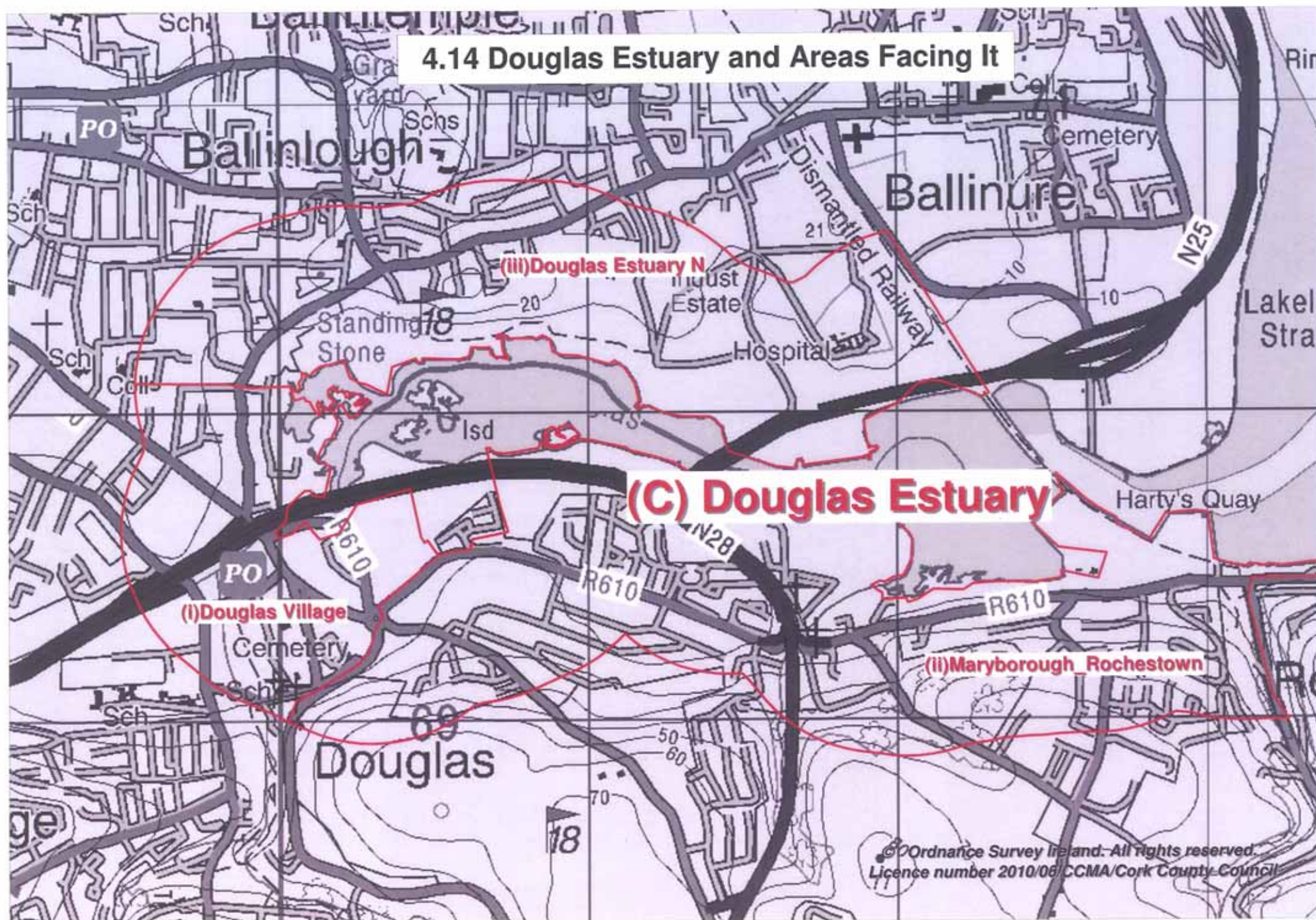


4.14 Douglas Estuary and Areas Facing It



C. The Douglas Estuary

The Douglas Estuary is a large, enclosed tidal channel with a narrow exit under the former Passage rail line bridge to Lough Mahon. A second bridge crossing it midway between its head and its mouth was built in the 1990s to carry the N25, and the associated Bloomfield interchange required significant reclamation on the southern side of the estuary, narrowing it considerably at that point. It is largely uncovered at low tide, and its salt marshes and inter tidal areas support wintering waterfowl in large numbers, some of which are internationally important species, as well as a diversity of other wildlife. It forms part of the Cork Harbour SPA (site code 4030).

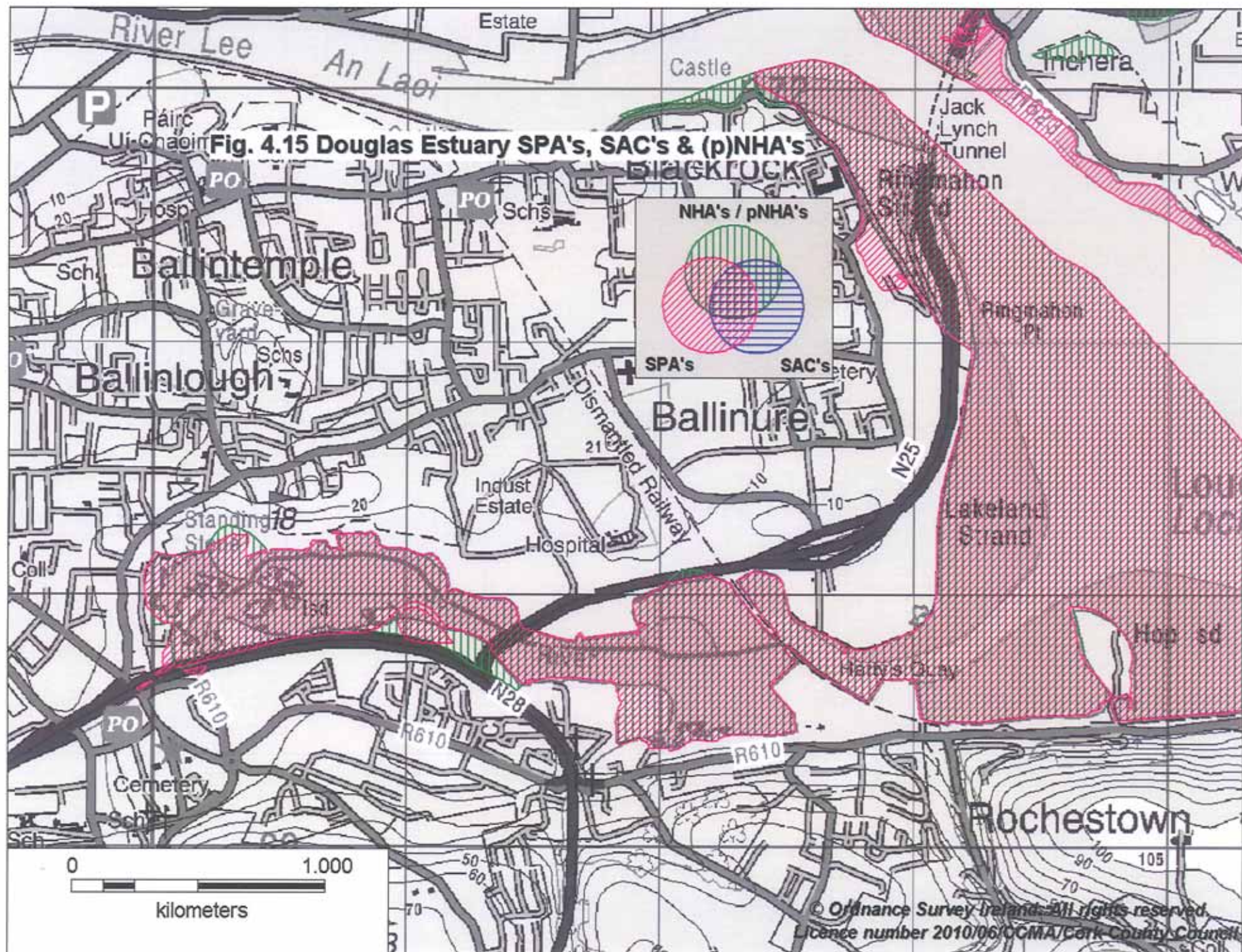
Residential development on the sides of the estuary has been asymmetric, with more on the slopes on the southern side than on the northern side, largely because of the development of the Mahon Golf Course in the early 1980s. This has visual amenity benefits for the surrounding area, in addition to its active recreation role¹. These benefits may have contributed to the upmarket property market status enjoyed by the areas overlooking the estuary.

¹ The 2009 City Development Plan recognises both sides of the estuary as 'secondary green links'. These provide the focus for development of new parks and upgraded landscapes with improved public access.

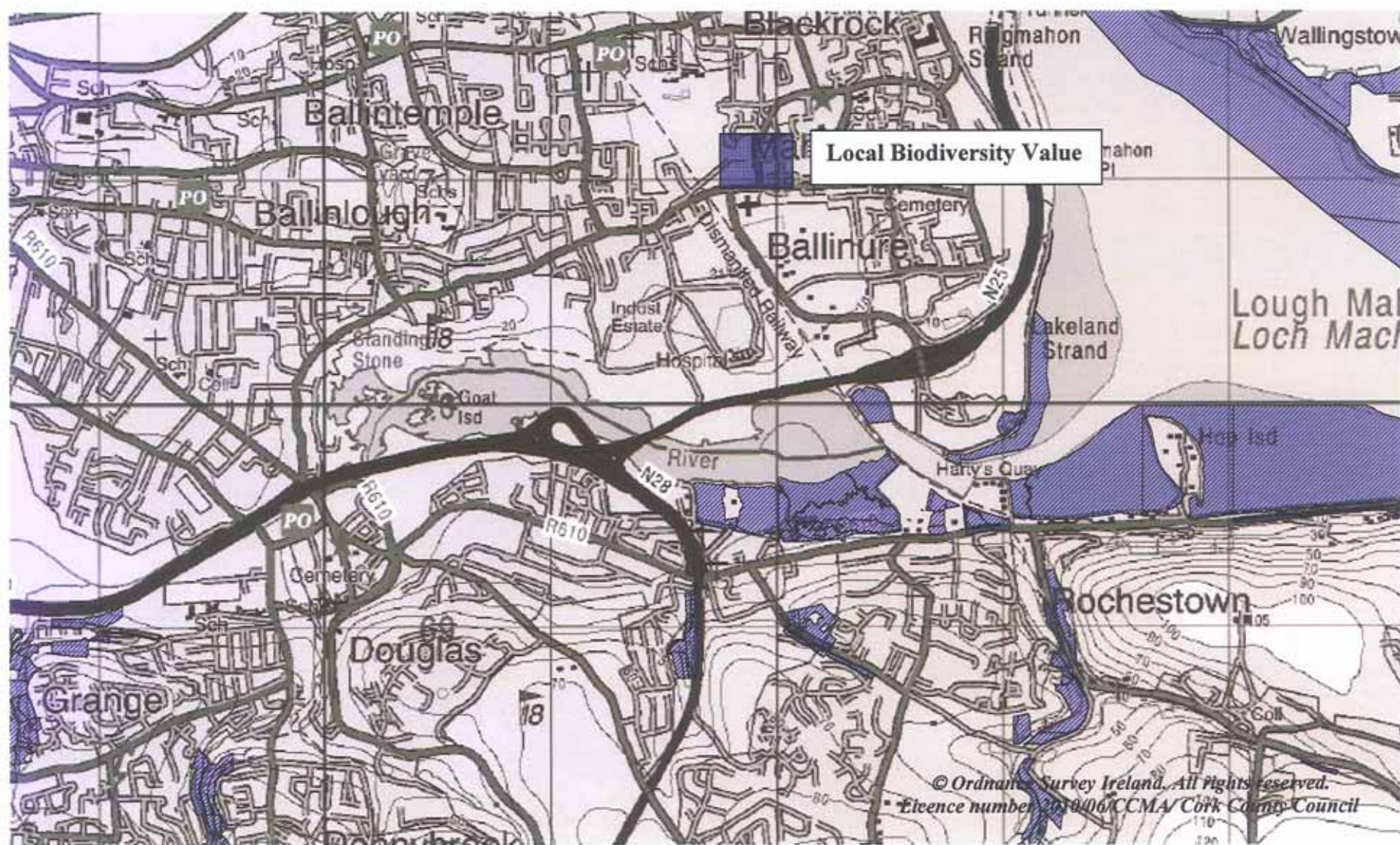
Table 4.3 Estimated Employment and Population Densities in areas overlooking the Douglas Estuary

Area	Population per km ²	Jobs per km ²
Douglas Village	1000	2500
Maryborough/Rochestown	2200	200
Douglas Estuary (N)	1250	700





4.16 Douglas Estuary Areas of Local Biodiversity Value



An aerial photograph of Douglas Village, Ireland, with buildings highlighted in orange. The map shows a dense residential area with a network of streets and green spaces. A large orange building is prominent in the center, and several other orange buildings are scattered throughout the village. The surrounding area is mostly green, indicating fields or parks. A road runs diagonally across the middle of the map.

Fig 4.17 Douglas Village

(i) Douglas Village

Douglas village developed independently of Cork City as a typical river crossing settlement (ie one located at what was the lowest crossing point of a river flowing into the Harbour). Maritime industry - the Donnybrook mills which made sails for the British Navy - contributed to its early growth. Douglas village is designated an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) in the 2009 County Development Plan, partly with a view to preserving the milling history of the area and some of the housing associated with it. A tram link connecting Douglas to the city centre was opened in 1898, promoting development along the Douglas Roads, and converting the village into an outer suburb of the City. The village was a natural centre for a wider suburban area, because of its position astride the only roads crossing the Tramore River east of the Kinsale Road, from which roads radiated outwards northwards into the city, and southwards into rapidly developing housing areas.

As a result, Douglas was the largest suburban retail centre in Cork (until the opening of Mahon Point), and its southward and south eastward growth has resulted in the largest suburban area outside the city boundary. The focal position and success of the village has had a downside, in the form of chronic traffic congestion and its environmental consequences

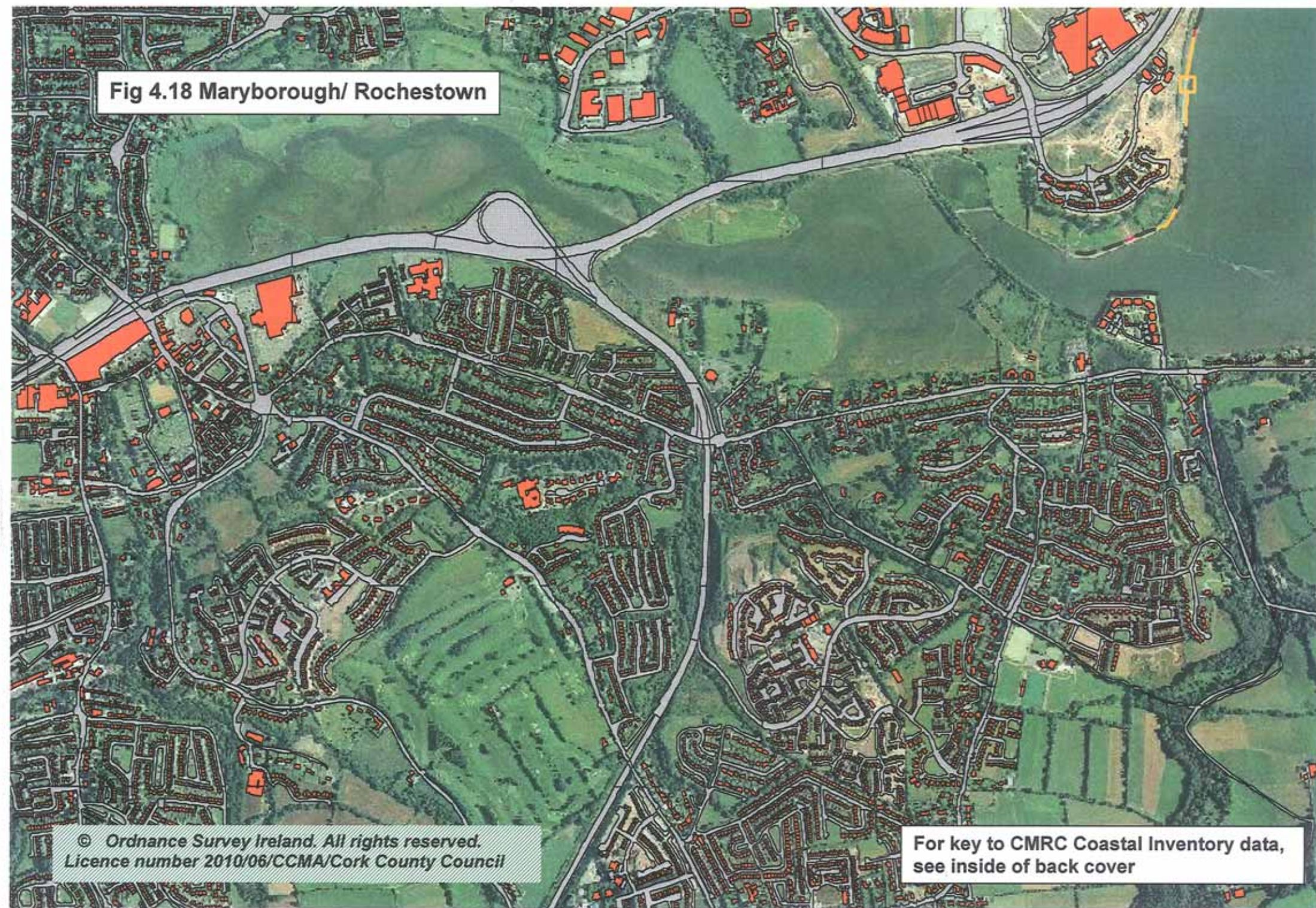
Unlike other settlements which grew up around a lowest crossing point, like Carrigaline or Cork City, the historic and commercial core of Douglas village does not have a clear visual link or relationship with the harbour, despite its position at the head of the Douglas Estuary, though there are some

harbour views from higher residential areas. This reflects the small size of the Tramore River, the position of the village centre only marginally above sea level, and the marshland areas found along the relevant sections of shoreline.

As a result, while Douglas Village faces numerous planning issues, most of them are not directly related to its position on the Harbour, though it has clearly had a considerable indirect effect on the road network. Construction of the Southern Ring Road in the 1990s has created an additional barrier and noise source between the village and the estuary, which would largely preclude reconnection between the village and estuary.

Douglas is however prone to fluvial and tidal flooding as a result of its location at the head of the Tramore River. In Douglas village centre fluvial flooding starts at 2% AEP with a smaller pocket at risk of a 1% AEP event. This includes part of Church Street and West Douglas Street. Future fluvial flood risk is greater than tidal risk, but sea level rise would reduce the capacity of the channel and so result in more extensive fluvial flooding which starts at a 4% AEP event.

Fig 4.18 Maryborough/ Rochestown



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

(ii) Maryborough/Rochestown

These suburbs have developed as extensions of Douglas downstream from the village along the southern shore of the Douglas Estuary. At this stage most land within them which overlooks the Douglas Estuary has been developed, and their recent expansion has been primarily inland, in a southward direction. Consequently, scope for further development in their coastal sections is largely limited to infill projects.

While largely residential, the area contains two substantial hotels. Both were built around existing large houses in well wooded grounds, though the loss of trees around the Rochestown Park Hotel as a result of a series of extensions has left it rather exposed to the adjoining N25.

Because of the sloping nature of the ground south of the Rochestown Road, many of the housing areas there enjoy attractive views over the estuary. While they are on a predominantly north facing slope, parts of which are around 1 in 5, the steepest areas are rarely near the bottom of the slope, and the relatively recent low density nature of most of the housing also helps avoid undue loss of sunlight.

The land N. of the Rochestown Road is relatively level, and the N25 between Douglas village and the Bloomfield interchange is a visual and movement barrier between the water and adjacent housing estates (and their associated open spaces). On the estuary side of the road, land between shoreline and the N25 has become difficult to access, though this may have some advantages from a wildlife habitat viewpoint, as SPA and

pNHA designation includes the inaccessible land or wetland above the HWM.

East of the Bloomfield interchange, the N25 crosses to the north of the estuary, and there is public access to footpaths running across the old rail bridge to Mahon, and west along the old rail line to Passage. There is also a substantial area of parkland around Bloomfield House overlooking the estuary. This is attractive and well maintained zoned (private) open space, and the area east of Bloomfield House is also part of the SPA and pNHA.





Fig 4.19 Douglas Estuary

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(iii) Douglas Estuary North

On the northern side of the estuary, there is a mix of residential, industrial and open space uses. Almost all land adjoining the shoreline is open space, with the Mahon Golf course accounting for most of it. Douglas Tennis Club is a second significant recreational use, at the western end. The 2009 City Development Plan recognises the landscape value of the shoreline and undeveloped slopes behind it, by designating most of it as an area of high landscape value, and zoning the parkland around the Sacred Heart Convent (Bessborough) for landscape preservation. The original Bessborough House is an architecturally important eighteenth century house, and a protected structure.

Behind this extensive area of open space, there is a substantial, mature, relatively upmarket area of suburban housing, and (at the eastern end) the Mahon Industrial Estate also adjoins the golf course. Attraction of industries to the Industrial Estate was facilitated by its relatively attractive setting in the depressed conditions of the 1980s. While some of the industries of that vintage have now reached the end of their lifespan, resulting in some currently vacant buildings, prospects for reuse of those buildings by high quality users should be reasonably good.

