INSPIRED BY
**OMAGH**
THE HEART OF TYRONE

# Omagh Place Shaping Plan 2035

November 2022

Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

**KPMG** **Future** Analytics

# Contents

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# Chapter one
# **Introduction**

# Introduction

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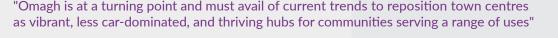
### 1.1 Omagh

Omagh has an attractive and strategic regional location. The proposed A5 will significantly enhance connectivity to Derry/ Londonderry, Belfast and Dublin. While a riverside site led to earlier growth, future opportunities arise from a central position within the new district, proposed improvements to roads and digital connectivity, proximity to the border area, and surrounding natural environment.

The town's attractive urban form including its iconic and highly visible spires, courthouse and vibrant centre provide the backdrop for those engaged in the array of activities and services that Omagh offers, as both the county town of Tyrone and a hub for the Fermanagh and Omagh District.

Omagh, like other town centres nationally and internationally, faces global challenges arising from the Climate Emergency, the changing face of retail and changing working patterns.

Omagh is at a turning point and must avail of current trends to reposition town centres as vibrant, less car-dominated, and thriving hubs for communities serving a range of uses.

Over the next few years, the shift to the Strule Shared Education Campus will mean many more town centre sites will become vacant. These must be considered in tandem with the existing urban context and must contribute to the revitalisation of Omagh.

### 1.2 Purpose

In recent years Omagh has benefited from investment in the town centre, Arts Centre, South West College and riverside walks. This Place-Shaping Plan, commissioned by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, seeks to build on these strong foundations, providing a pragmatic pathway for Omagh's future.

Place Shaping looks at how we can make our communities stronger and more resilient in the future through understanding what we have in terms of assets, i.e. our buildings, our green spaces, our skills & knowledge, our community groups, and our public services.

We want to build on our history, our strategic geographic and economic location, and our tourism potential to secure sustainable social, economic and physical regeneration.

Implementation of this plan over the next 10-15 years will see the continued regeneration and revitalisation of Omagh, leading to a better place, a town where people increasingly choose to live, work, invest and study.
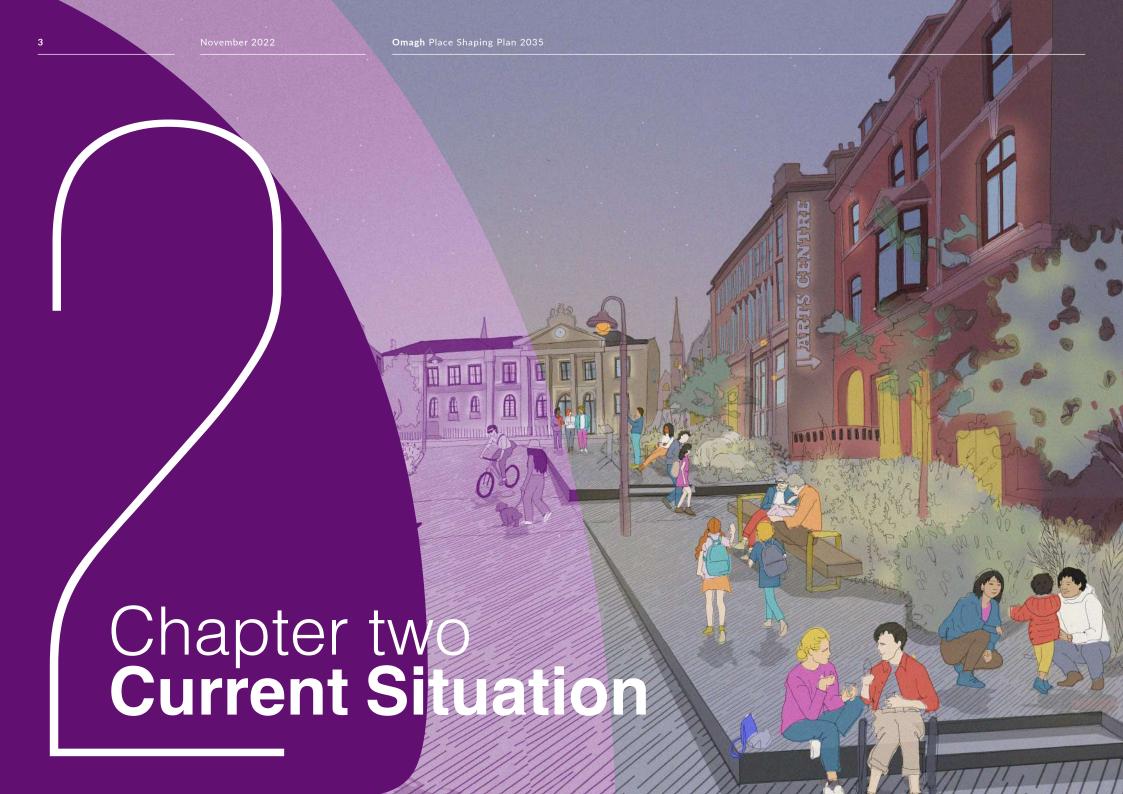
### 1.3 Approach

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, through the Community Planning Partnership; commissioned KPMG Future Analytics in 2022, to develop the Omagh Place Shaping Plan. It was informed by extensive participative engagement, which included public, private, community and education sectors, as well as key statutory and government agencies.

In addition to consideration of the views of stakeholders, extensive baseline analysis was undertaken to provide a sound evidence base upon which to form recommendations.

The Place Shaping Plan considered a range of key local plans; 'Our Community Plan 2030', 'Climate Change & Sustainable Development Strategy 2020-2030', the draft 'Local Development Plan 2030,' as well as previous Masterplans .

The goal for this plan is to inform future decision making to position Omagh as a vibrant town for current and future generations. In doing so, consideration will be given to the town centre and environs; impacts on communities; the connectivity around the town and imaginative identification of new, viable and sustainable opportunities . As such it is an informed guide, with our best ideas for creating the pathway to a more vibrant and prosperous Omagh over the next 15 years.
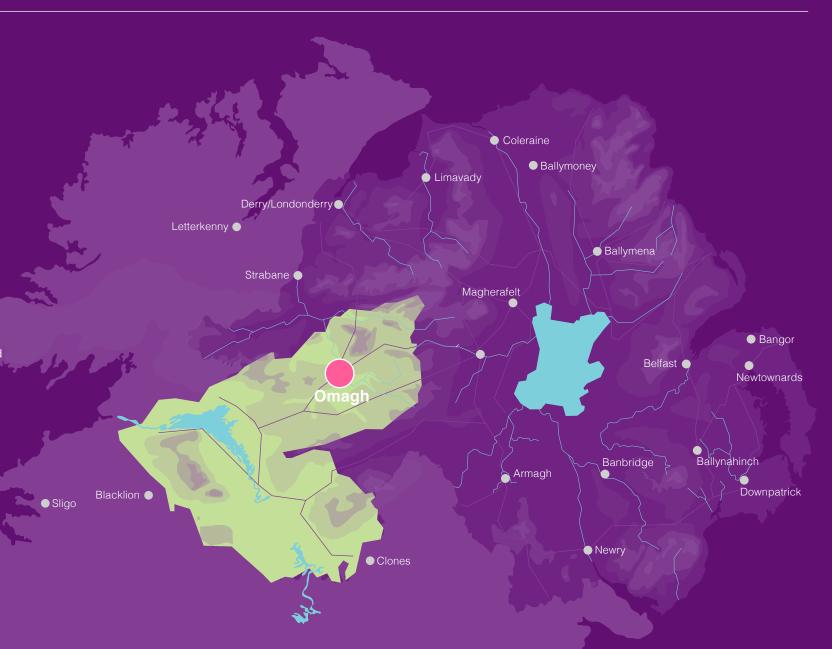
# Chapter two
## **Current Situation**

# Current Situation

## 2.1 Introduction

**A baseline analysis has been undertaken to understand and contextualise the local community, economy and spatial characteristics within Omagh town and more broadly across Fermanagh and Omagh and drawing on lessons from across the island of Ireland.**

This comprehensive review strengthens our understanding of latest performance, dynamics and developments which are of relevance to place-shaping and the sustainable development of the town.

This section provides a high-level summary of a detailed report provided to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and project steering group. The baseline review has been facilitated primarily through desktop-based research, supplemented by consultation activities and field surveys that were undertaken in early 2022.

## 2.2 Geographic Context

Located in the west of Northern Ireland, Omagh lies south of Derry/Londonderry, north-east of Enniskillen and in close proximity to the wild and beautiful Sperrin Mountains range.

**Omagh is strategically positioned within the region**, given its proximity to the border and role within the District. While Omagh is dependent on road-based transport, its location on the key A5 corridor linking Derry/Londonderry and Belfast in the north with Dublin in the south, offers potential to build on the town's role as an employment, service, cultural, and leisure hub. P**lanned upgrade of the A5 is essential** and will enhance this potential, but would also facilitate increased commuting, unless greater opportunities can be provided locally.

**Nearby attractions and amenities include the Ulster American Folk Park** and the award winning Gortin Glen Forest Park, which is just 6 miles from the town, with significant recent investment from the Council in a range of outdoor activities including a destination play park and mountain bike trails. The proximity of these natural and cultural attractions offer considerable untapped potential for Omagh as a tourism hub.

## 2.3 Historic Context

Omagh (An Ómaigh or 'the virgin plain') is thought to have been settled in the 8th Century with the establishment of a monastery, followed later by a Franciscan friary in the 15th Century. Omagh was founded as a town in 1610 and, in 1768, replaced Dungannon as the county town of Tyrone.

The 19th century development of the railway network, a strong agricultural economy, and the commissioning of St Lucia, saw the market town experience a period of growth and prosperity. However, the latter half of the 20th century witnessed the closure of the railways , this loss of connectivity is just one of the contributing factors to downward economic trends which impacted on the town's prosperity and image.

**Omagh has benefited from significant investment in recent years**, including the Strule Arts centre in 2007, upgrade of Omagh Leisure Centre in 2014 including a 25m pool, and the OASIS Plaza in 2015. The establishment of the Fermanagh and **Omagh District Council in 2015 means Omagh, together with Enniskillen, has a key role to play within the District**.
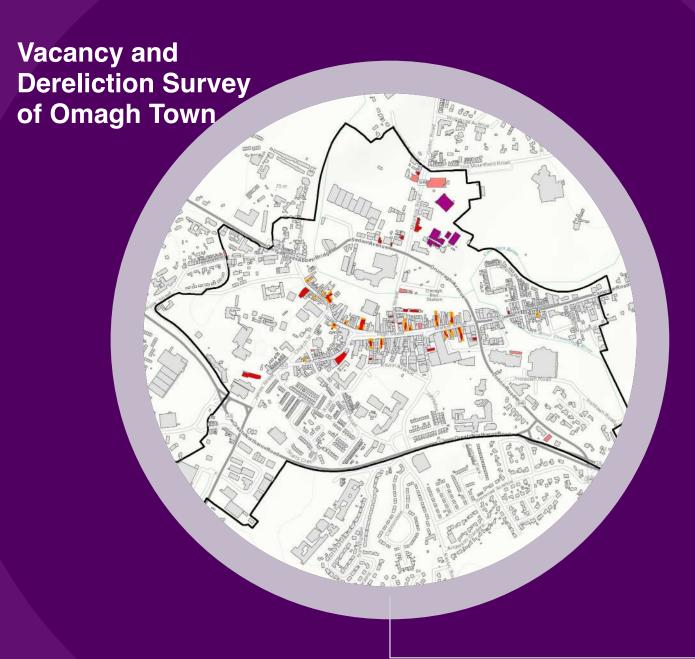
## 2.4 Demographic Profile

Overall analysis of the demographic profile of Omagh town points **to slow population growth with an increasingly ageing population**, with specific areas of deprivation in some parts of the town, particularly Lisanelly. Going forward, the projections indicate a shift towards an older population and smaller households with fewer children across the district.

Yet, **Omagh has strong education provision across the town**. Proportionately, a higher percentage of school leavers achieve strong educational outcomes and flow into higher or further education. In addition, **house prices are generally more affordable**, providing a strong incentive that could be used to attract people of working age with families. There is an identified need for social housing in Omagh and provision for an aging population. It should be noted in terms of the resident population that average wage is lower when compared regionally.

As such, **Omagh needs to build on its offering to working age people** to alleviate the natural long term demographic changes. However, there remains a need to provide services and infrastructure to accommodate the ageing population, vulnerable groups and the most disadvantaged members of the population, considering the particular domains of disadvantage that they experience.

Continued efforts are needed to promote opportunities for leisure and recreation activity and to improve environmental factors contributing to the health and wellbeing of the town's population.

"Overall analysis of the demographic profile of Omagh town points to slow population growth with an increasingly ageing population..."

# Vacancy and Dereliction Survey of Omagh Town



**LEGEND**

- Derelict Buildings
- Second Floor Vacant
- First Floor Vacant
- Ground Floor Vacant
- Other Buildings
- Town Centre Boundary

## 2.5 Spatial Analysis

As with many other large market towns across Northern Ireland and the Republic, **Omagh experiences issues surrounding infrastructure provision** and the movement of people, goods and vehicles within and around the town's built-up footprint.

The town's situation, where the River Strule is formed by the confluence of the Drumragh and Camowen rivers, has influenced its street pattern and form, with topography rising from Campsie and Market Street up to the prominent aspects of the town's churches and nearby St Lucia.

The transformational **Strule Shared Education Campus**, currently at tendering/phased development stage, will involve relocation of five secondary schools, with 4,200 pupils, from the southern and western part of Omagh town centre to the former Lisanelly military barracks in 2026. While the relocation of schools from the town centre creates an opportunity for changing the use of the previously occupied, centrally located sites, **it is essential that town-wide measures are considered and implemented to enable and encourage sustainable access to the Strule Campus.**

**A cluster of highly visible vacant and derelict opportunity sites has also been highlighted as a key issue**. Despite this, these constraints have the potential to provide opportunities regarding the improvement of the town centre, its accessibility and social and economic vibrancy.

## 2.6 Transport and Access

**Omagh suffers from limited connectivity, a lack of access to rail and motorways and infrequent public transport.** However, the town is compact and conducive to both walking and cycling, yet a lack of supporting infrastructure curtails uptake, with low levels of cycling particularly notable. Similarly, **traffic congestion is an issue in the town centre**, with a complex one-way system, exacerbating the problems, as well as the disconnect between Campsie and the rest of town centre.

There is **significant parking available in the town centre**, as indicated on the map on the following page. There is an opportunity for the town to capitalise on its compact nature, increase the provision of cycling and walking infrastructure and promote active mobility. This can contribute to a reduction in traffic congestion, reduction in harmful emissions and healthier outcomes for the entire community.

## 2.7 Economy and Employment

From the analysis, it is clear Omagh is an economic and public sector hub for the wider region. However, when compared to 2011 data, the town has seen a decrease in employee jobs and business numbers. At a district level, employment and economic activity rates are also below the Northern Ireland averages.

As such, **Omagh needs to build on existing clusters**, attract further investment and ensure that opportunities exist to enhance the economy and employment levels.

It is considered that the **majority of the remaining existing zoned industrial land within Omagh is no longer fit for purpos**e, being unsuitable for development due to constraints such as planning histories, flooding, lack of accessibility or constrained by  topography.

With the right investments coupled  with housing that is affordable, **Omagh has an opportunity to attract people to the town** if it can provide clear employment opportunities.

## 2.8 Community Infrastructure

**A wide range of community networks, supports and services are provided for within Omagh.** With regard to Omagh's Community and Voluntary Sector, a small sample of existing services and supports available have been included, in areas such as trust and safety, diversity and inclusion, citizen activity and participation.

Furthermore, given the wide breadth of community infrastructure assets in the town, a **social infrastructure audit** was conducted as part of mapping out Omagh's community infrastructure. The results from this audit recorded a total of 592 individual social infrastructure facilities and amenities within the town's settlement boundary.

# Map of Off-Street Car Parking, Omagh Town Centre

**LEGEND**

🔴 Omagh Town Centre
(Omagh Courthouse)

**Walking time to the Town Centre**

🟦 5 minutes

🟩 10 minutes

**Off-Street Car Parks**

🟣 Free

🟢 Free and CustomerS

🟡 Pay and Display

**Ownership**

⚫ Council-Operated

🟣 Private

**Capacity (No. Spaces)**

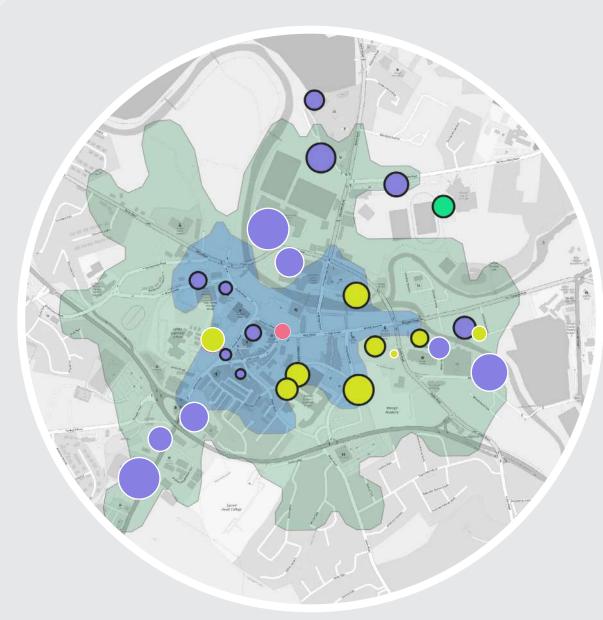⚫ 317

● 300

● 200

• 100

Omagh is well served by parking provision.

# Walking Time from Omagh Town Centre

**LEGEND**

🔴 Omagh Town Centre
(Omagh Courthouse)

**Walking time to the Town Centre**

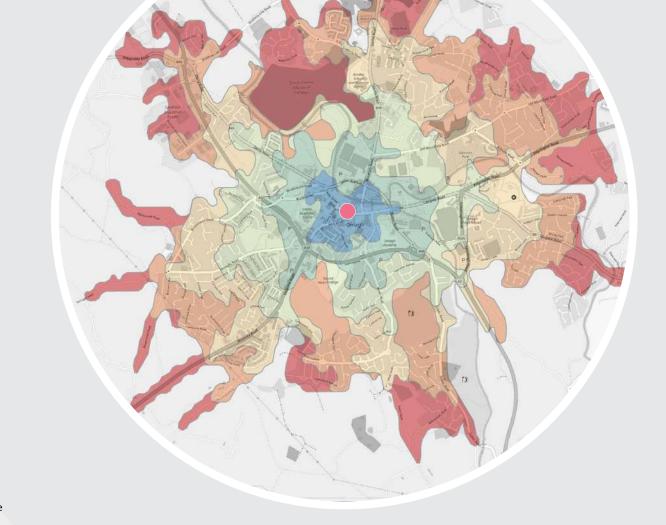🟦 5 minutes

🟩 10 minutes

🟨 15 minutes

🟧 20 minutes

🟧 25 minutes

🟥 30 minutes



Omagh is conducive to walking and cycling, with the majority of the town accessible within 10 minutes.

"The town centre benefits from its strategic positioning at the meeting point of the Drumragh and Camowen rivers, with many of its greenways, parks, gardens and riverside walkways all within a *10-minute walking distance* of Omagh's commercial centre."

### 2.9 Heritage

The town centre benefits from its strategic positioning at the meeting point of the Drumragh and Camowen rivers, with many of its greenways, parks, gardens and riverside walkways all within a 10-minute walking distance of Omagh's commercial centre.

**Due to the architectural merit of Omagh's built heritage,** a significant number of buildings both within the town centre and wider Omagh urban settlement are listed buildings of 'special architectural or historic interest', with parts of the town centre being designated as a Conservation Area.

Today, **Omagh's heritage is underpinned by a strong arts, culture and sporting scene,** excellent educational, learning and sporting institutions, including the home of Tyrone GAA at Healy Park, a colourful and independent retail environment and diverse communities and people with a deep pride and sense of identity with Omagh town and its surrounding landscape.

Source: Fáilte Ireland

## 2.10 Tourism, Leisure and Recreation

**Currently, tourism is not a significant industry for Omagh** - it is not positioned as a key destination town, and lacks both key visitor attractions and a range of accommodation offer. However, there is an opportunity to capitalise on the proximity of the Ulster American Folk Park, the proximity of the Sperrin AONB and the award-winning Gortin Glen Forest Park, as well as the heritage attributes of the town such as the attractive town centre architecture, river frontage, town park and open spaces.

**There are many opportunities which could, with targeted investment, position Omagh for growth,** broadening the offer and helping to position the town as a visitor destination commensurate with its status as a key regional town. Indeed, growing the tourism opportunity in Omagh, for example through an ambitious events programme, while supporting the net zero and climate resilient economy is key to the success of this plan, in that regeneration opportunities can benefit not only tourism, but our environment with increased numbers of visitors and residents alike enjoying access to green space bringing vibrancy and vitality to Omagh and its surrounds.

# Chapter three
# Participative Engagement & Involvement

Source: Fáilte Ireland

# Participative Engagement and Involvement (1)

## 3.1 The Process Outlined

**A focus on participative engagement and involvement of citizens, businesses, community and voluntary sector, public sector organisations and key statutory partners was identified at the beginning of the development of the Plan, as essential.**

Ensuring a collaborative approach, identifying the key themes and priorities at the start of the process and encouraging continuous two-way communication throughout has been paramount. This approach has informed the plan content but also ensured that those who will benefit from the plan, as well as support in its implementation, own it.

This is a shared Plan with its purpose and focus informed by a strong data and intelligence baseline but also incorporating the knowledge of the local people. Its shared ownership creates a space to ensure it is achievable, realistic and beneficial to all contributing to the improved quality of life for all who live, visit or work in the town.

## 3.2 How we did it

To ensure involvement of a wide spectrum of our communities we used a variety of communication tools and methods. These included:

### SOCIAL MEDIA
Utilisation of **Social Media platform** of Community Planning Partners

### COUNCIL WEBSITE
Profiled on **Council Website** – created Place Shaping section

### LOCAL PAPERS
Public Notices in all **local papers**

### RADIO ADVERTS

### DATA BASE
Maximised access to **Contact Data Bases** of Community Planning Partners

### STEERING GROUP
Continuous Engagement with **Steering Group**

### DROP—IN
**Drop-in Sessions** in the town and surrounding areas

### ONLINE SURVEYS
**Online surveys** targeted at key groups inc. Public, Children and Young People, Businesses and Community and Voluntary Sector

### STRATEGIC CONVERSATIONS

**240**

Public surveys received

**17K**

Contact databases of over 17,000 contacts utilised

**40**

Strategic conversations took place

**55**

Over 55 social media posts over a 4-week period with over 50k reach

**29**

Businesses responded to online survey

**28**

Community and Voluntary Sector Place Shaping Champions appointed

**24**

Continuous engagement over 24 weeks

**103**

Children and young people involved

**24**

CVS organisations responded to survey

**20**

University of Ulster students took part in workshop

# Participative Engagement and Involvement (2)

### 3.3 Online survey approach

**An extensive bottom-up approach to a community consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken to capture the views and comments from a wide range of stakeholders associated with Omagh Town.**

To seek the input of community, businesses, community/voluntary sectors, children & young people surveys were issued in February 2022 for a period of four weeks, with 396 responses received. The responses demonstrated the depth of interest and engagement with the perceived issues, solutions to address issues, and possible interventions required. A significant number of strategic conversations were also held.

### 3.4 Survey Summary

Public Survey

## 240 *respondents*

- » Almost half of respondents considered Omagh's greatest asset to be its local natural and environmental landscape

- » The most frequently cited challenges were town centre vacancy rates, employment opportunities and access to services (such as healthcare, education and transport).

- » The top priorities to generate growth in Omagh were to attract more businesses to the area, to provide better connectivity between Omagh and nearby visitor attractions and attract more visitors/tourists and to enhance local services.

- » The top priorities to improve Omagh town centre were provision of accessible, affordable carparking, enhancement of the river frontage, and reduced traffic throughflow.

Business Survey

## 29 *respondents*

- » While many respondents were positive about Omagh's business environment, over a quarter considered Omagh's business environment could be improved significantly for enterprise to be realised.

- » The most frequently cited priorities to help drive economic development in Omagh were to provide the necessary infrastructure for business, to provide enterprise support services and support workforce training/upskilling, and through work with Invest NI to attract foreign direct investment.

- » Respondents considered Omagh's main strength as a place to do business was its growth potential.

CVS Survey

## 24 *respondents*

- » While almost 60% of respondents thought Omagh offered 'some services' for their membership/organisation, over a third of CVS respondents considered that Omagh offered poor services and opportunities to their membership/organisation indicating room for improvement.

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# Participative Engagement and Involvement (3)

## 3.4 Survey Summary (Cont.)

**Student Survey – 78 students**

» **Young people considered that the three biggest challenges, issues or concerns for the future development of Omagh were recreation and leisure opportunities, followed by housing/accommodation availability and employment opportunities. The latter possibly reflected that most respondents considered that Omagh offered some or few employment opportunities, while only a small proportion considered Omagh offered significant employment opportunities.**

**Primary School Children – 25 children**

» **Most travelled to school by car but indicated that a new footpath or cycle path and other road-based improvements would make them want to walk or cycle to school. This desire for active school travel was reinforced by their views on the top three best things about Omagh which were the leisure centre, the playpark and green spaces, and the people.**

## KEY THEMES

## 3.5 Drop-in Events Summary

A series of four drop-in events was held at key venues in Omagh for the public to contribute and provide their views and comments. The four venues were: CKS Community Centre; Hospital Road Community Centre; Strathroy Community Centre; and Strule Arts Centre.

» Attendees highlighted the need for the A5 and an associated reduction in traffic congestion, a need for social housing and a desire for a wider range of leisure facilities and activities for young people.

» Attendees also wanted to see improvements to the public realm and more green spaces, greater exploitation of the River Strule and the surrounding countryside and more employment opportunities.

**Beach Restoration Cohesion, Jobs County-Town Clean-up, Transport Public-realm**



**Cycleways Planting, Housing, Traffic, Play-parks Greenways, WFH Bowling Pedestrianisation**

**Best wee town** 😍

**Trampoline-park Hospitality Walkways Seating Connectivity Countryside**

*Skateboard-park* **Road-crossing Amusement-park Shared-spaces River walk**

**Sports Waterpark Teamwork Cafes, Tourism, A5 Heritage**

# Participative Engagement and Involvement (4)

## 3.6 Steering Group Engagement

KEY THEMES

### INCREASE ECONOMIC GROWTH

More jobs and a wider range of jobs, reverse the brain drain, position Omagh as a spill-over investment region, develop "brand Omagh", exploit WFH

### USE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SW College; new Strule Campus

### IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY

Town and countryside (leisure & tourism); town and river, urban/rural/ synergy; active travel plans

### EXPLOIT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The River frontage, proximity to the Sperrins & Gortin Glens; increase green spaces; promote quality of life aspects

### DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE

A5, hotel accommodation, affordable housing

### BUILD ON STRONG COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Maximise shared spaces, ensure inclusivity, person centered approach - "no one left behind"

# Participative Engagement and Involvement (5)

### 3.7 Strategic Conversations

#### OVERVIEW

**Series of one to one consultations held with approx. 40 consultees ranging from Councillors to key stakeholders in statutory organisations, CVS representatives and local business representatives.**

## KEY THEMES

- » Omagh Town
- » Heritage town
- » Vibrant night-time economy
- » River frontage
- » Urban design
- » Mixed views on pedestrianisation
- » Traffic congestion!
- » Leisure, arts, culture and sports

## ECONOMY

- » Jobs & Employers
- » SMEs and microbusinesses dominate
- » Engineering / manufacturing base and agri-food sector, and growing digital community
- » Broader range of jobs than perceived – vocational / trade skills
- » Work from Home
- » Retain young people

## OPPORTUNITY SITES

- » Large number of sites, vacant for many years
- » Vacant school sites
- » Digital Innovation Centre concept well received

## TOURISM

- » Omagh sits within beautiful countryside
- » Exploit natural assets
- » Omagh undersells itself
- » Gortin Glen has acted as a local catalyst
- » Hotel and food offering
- » Greenways –walking and cycling routes

## SCHOOLS

- » Excellent schools and College
- » Strule Campus offers opportunities
- » Opportunity Sites
- » Large number of sites, vacant for many years
- » Vacant school sites

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- » Lisnamallard as a boutique hotel
- » Arleston House as a café and arts and craft hub
- » Community garden/allotments
- » Hotel
- » Outdoor based youth activities
- » Desire to bring all sites back into use

# Participative Engagement and Involvement (5)

## 3.8 Conclusions

**The engagement produced a wide range of views with several core common themes for Omagh:**

» **A need and desire for more jobs and more varied jobs in Omagh to retain and attract young people.** Hybrid working models plus Omagh's surrounding natural assets offer opportunities for the town. However, there is a **need to develop the supporting infrastructure including the road infrastructure** as well as a tourism infrastructure, while supporting small businesses to grow and expand.

» There are **opportunities to build on Omagh town's strengths** including its night-time economy, its leisure and parks and a corresponding need to address town centre vacancies and the range of vacant sites.

» There is a **need to ensure inclusivity**, and a place shaping plan for all demographics.

"'Towns have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.'"

— JANE JACOBS, The Center for the Living City

TYRONE COUNTY HALL

# 4

# Chapter four
# **Analysis**

# Analysis

## 4.1 SCOT Analysis – key points

| STRENGTHS | OPPORTUNITIES |
|---|---|
| Strategic location along the A5 Western Economic Corridor and is well connected with Derry, Belfast and Dublin | Enhance innovation across leading sectors to increase large businesses within the town and encourage investment and build on existing strengths and clusters around advanced engineering & manufacturing, agri-food, and construction |
| Strong education provision with range of schools at primary and post-primary level, and further and higher education provided through South West College | Opportunities related to vacated school sites within town centre, in particular residential, commercial leisure, tourism and cultural/community facilities |
| Strong sense of community, with historical and cultural sense of place within town and surrounding landscapes and compact town centre | Improve riverside buildings and make further use of river as a natural asset through increased accessibility and permeability |
| Strong entrepreneurial environment: Almost 1 in 5 people are self-employed and 91% of businesses survive their first year | Opportunity to improve accessibility and sustainable forms of transport such as greenways, improved cycling infrastructure, and strengthen and capitalise on local culture through better promotion of events |

| CHALLENGES | THREATS |
|---|---|
| No rail access and lack of access to motorways and dual carriageways | Delay in completing A5 hindering potential for Omagh, and resulting in high levels of traffic passing through the town with impacts on pollution (noise and particulate matter). |
| Traffic congestion exacerbated by complex one-way system in the town centre | Low population growth and decreases in key working age cohorts which may lead to further decline in the town. |
| High levels of deprivation in certain areas of the town | Economic volatility and uncertainty arising from EU Exit will impact a number of sectors and may detract from investment alongside the loss of EU funding |
| Significant gap in achievement for those from disadvantaged backgrounds in relation to income, employment and education | Environmental and health impact resulting from high rate of car use and congestion |

# Chapter five
## **Inspired by Omagh**

Source: Fáilte Ireland

# Inspired by Omagh

## 5.1 The Ambition

**This plan is about shaping a better place to be, for all our people, communities and visitors, positioning Omagh for the future as a more attractive, vibrant, inspirational town. The aim is to increase the resilience of the local community and economy and provide for an enhanced, accessible, inclusive, child-friendly, and healthy urban environment.**

Towns are continually evolving and never complete. Omagh deserves to be reimagined as a vibrant and dynamic place, one that fulfils the potential of the town's history, location and people.

The FODC Community Plan 2030 sets out our vision for the District, which is of "a welcoming, shared and inclusive Fermanagh and Omagh district, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous, and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed".

Building on this vision, and based on research and collaborative engagement undertaken for this project, a draft ambition for the future of Omagh town centre can be described as:

*"Omagh will become an increasingly vibrant, healthy, attractive and inclusive town. A reimagined and animated green heart for the district, enhanced by progressive regeneration and revitalisation in tandem with enhanced connectivity. Omagh will be a place of choice, inspiring people, communities, visitors and investors to locate and thrive in the heart of Tyrone."*

## 5.2 Key Themes

**To support working towards the realisation of the ambition over the next 10–15-year period six themes have been identified for Omagh, aligned to the population indicators identified in the Fermanagh Omagh Community Plan 2030, and based on the research and engagement undertaken for this plan.**



## These are to create:

### A GREEN HEART

Capitalising on the natural environment including in the town itself and the surrounding countryside

### A BEAUTIFUL PLACE

Reimagining Omagh town centre as a more attractive and animated place

### A CONNECTED PEOPLE AND PLACE

Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment

### AN INCLUSIVE PLACE

Ensuring Omagh is an inclusive place with a prosperous, well educated, and healthy community

### A THRIVING TOWN

Increasing employment opportunities and ensuring supports for existing businesses

### A VIBRANT PLACE

Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town

## 5.3 Actions

**The actions outlined in the next section have been informed by thorough research and extensive engagement with key stakeholders. The goal is to bring tangible and effective change for Omagh.**

Twenty actions have been identified under the six themes. Actions have been considered where they support the overall ambition  and each theme.

Careful consideration has been given to those best ideas which have been recommended under previous plans and strategies and which remain valid in the current context for Omagh, as well as new best ideas to achieve place-shaping aims.

These best ideas are now described in more detail followed by an action plan to show how and when it can be done.

Source: Fáilte Ireland

# Inspired by Omagh

## OMAGH 2035 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

*"Omagh will become an increasingly vibrant, healthy, attractive and inclusive town. A reimagined and animated green heart for the district, enhanced by progressive regeneration and revitalisation in tandem with enhanced connectivity. Omagh will be a place of choice, inspiring people, communities, visitors and investors to locate and thrive in the heart of Tyrone."*

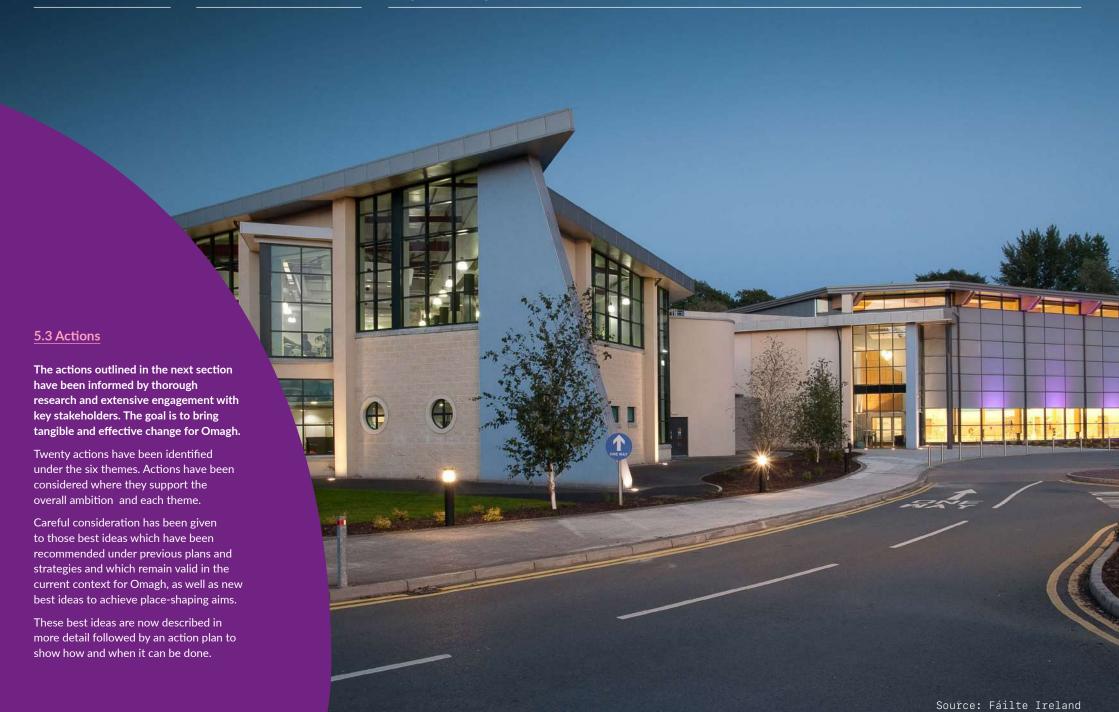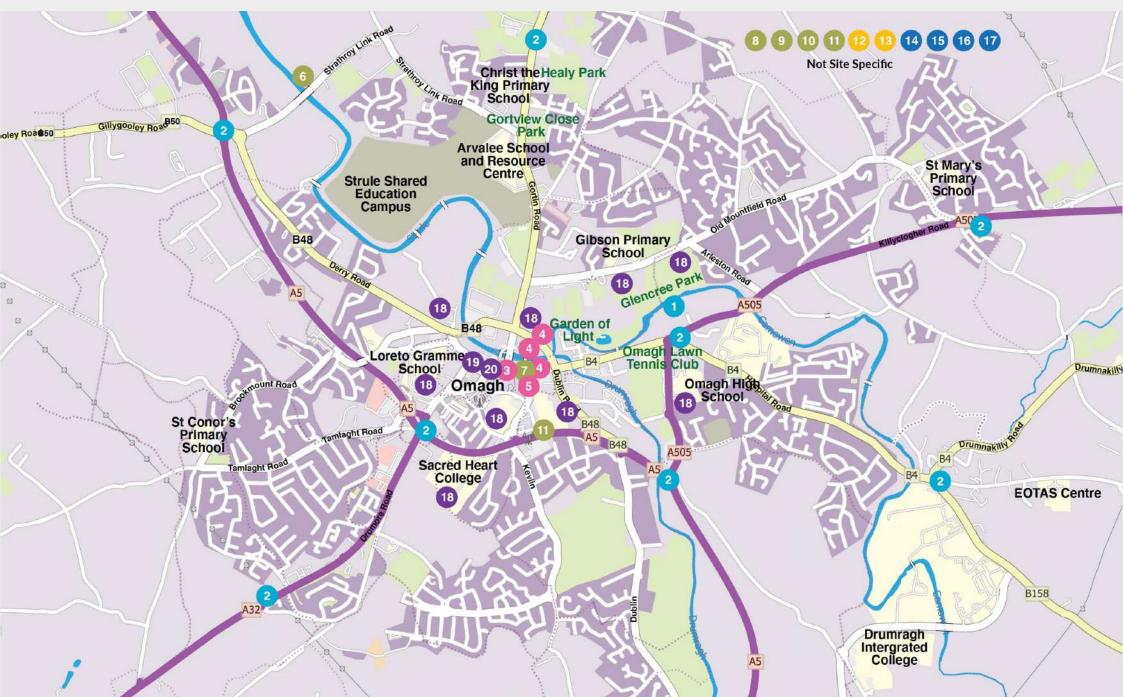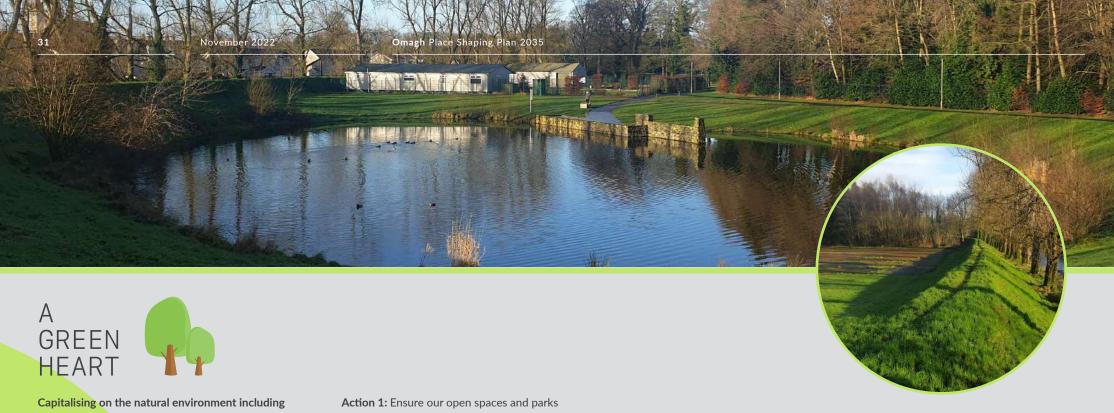| KEY THEMES | 2030 COMMUNITY PLAN POPULATION INDICATORS | ACTIONS |
|---|---|---|
| A Green Heart - Capitalising on the natural environment including in the town itself and the surrounding countryside | 1a   Healthy Life Expectancy<br>1c. Mental Health - low self-efficacy<br>3c   Life satisfaction – people with Disabilities<br>4a. Children who are overweight or obese<br>6a   Carbon Emissions | Action 1: Ensure our open spaces and parks are accessible, sustainable and attractive<br>Action 2: Invest in urban greening infrastructure to promote Omagh as a resilient and sustainable place |
| A Beautiful Place – Reimagining Omagh town centre as a more attractive and animated place | 3b   Cultural identity<br>3c   Life satisfaction – people with Disabilities<br>5a   The number of jobs<br>6a   Carbon Emissions<br>6c   Commercial vacancy rates | Action 3: Work to transform Omagh town centre into a more attractive space for people<br>Action 4: Support the review of shared and reflective spaces to maximise their use and capacity<br>Action 5: Create more attractive places to encourage people to spend longer in the town centre |
| A Connected People & Place - Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment | 1a   Healthy Life Expectancy<br>1c   Mental Health – Low self -efficacy<br>2a   Adult Social Care Outcomes Tool kit<br>3b   Cultural identity<br>3c   Life satisfaction – people with Disabilities<br>4a. Children who are overweight or obese<br>5a   The number of jobs<br>6a   Carbon Emissions | Action 6: Provide improved linkages and access to the natural and cultural attractions surrounding Omagh Town<br>Action 7: Seek to maximise the potential of the River Strule as an asset for the town<br>Action 8: Develop an integrated active travel network<br>Action 9: Develop and implement a Wayfinding Strategy<br>Action 10. Provide affordable, accessible and appropriate car parking in Omagh Town and surrounding area Action 11: Seek completion of A5 Western Transport Corridor to enable a people-first approach to reallocation of town centre road space |
| An Inclusive Place - Ensuring Omagh is an inclusive place with a prosperous, well educated, and healthy community | 1a   Healthy Life Expectancy<br>1c   Mental Health – Low self -efficacy<br>3b   Cultural identity<br>3c   Life satisfaction – people with disabilities | Action 12: Develop and support forums that spark the imagination and listen to the needs of local people and place<br>Action 13: Create places for all, ensuring Omagh is fully inclusive through design and partnership |
| A Thriving Place – Increasing employment opportunities and ensuring supports for existing businesses | 1a   Healthy Life Expectancy<br>1c    Mental Health – Low self -efficacy<br>5a   The number of jobs<br>5b   Economic inactivity<br>5c   Productivity | Action 14: Ensure space to grow by enhancing the enterprise ecosystem within Omagh and the wider District<br>Action 15: Develop and progress Omagh as a smart town to support economic growth<br>Action 16: Capitalise on Omagh's potential through place marketing strategy<br>Action 17: Provide opportunities to put events including food markets, at the centre of social life |
| A Vibrant Place - Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town | 1a    Healthy Life Expectancy<br>5a    The number of jobs<br>5b    Economic inactivity<br>5c    Productivity<br>6a    Carbon Emissions<br>6b    Heritage at Risk | Action 18: Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites<br>Action 19: Work to restore, revive and promote our unique built heritage in the town centre and develop their use and appeal<br>Action 20: Undertake an Omagh Living Over the Shop Pilot Study |

**Omagh Town Actions**

# A GREEN HEART

**Capitalising on the natural environment including in the town itself and the surrounding countryside**

**Action 1:** Ensure our open spaces and parks are accessible, sustainable and attractive

## Best idea 1: Arleston Park Enhancement

**Arleston Park is a very attractive sylvan green space in the heart of Omagh. It provides pedestrian linkages between the north and south of the town, and from east to west. Omagh Leisure Centre is located to the west of the park, while the Camowen River forms the southern boundary. On the northern side of the park lies Arleston House (see Action 18.2) and Lisnamallard House (see Action 18.3).**

It is recommended that an Arleston Park Plan be commissioned to include a phased programme of strategic interventions to enhance the opportunity the park presents, particularly in terms of place-shaping for Omagh.

This plan should consider:

» Clear and welcoming signage including name of the park at key gateways;

» Enhanced and bat-friendly lighting to increase safety perceptions and deter anti-social behaviour, help points;

» Enhancement of the boating lake with circular boardwalk, re-wilding/native planting and seating;

» Walking trail on top of embankment alongside Camowen River,

» Skate park on former tennis courts

» An outdoor events area for events suitable in larger parks

Interventions are proposed for both Arleston House and Lisnamallard House to ensure a viable, accessible and long-term future for both buildings.

This action is linked to the proposed wayfinding strategy (Action 9) to enable provision of orientation, directional and interpretative signage (e.g. biodiversity); and to the proposed events and animation programme (Action 17 with Arleston Park capable of hosting a variety of events such as small music festivals.

The map provided overleaf is a concept map developed by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council for Arleston Park. While recommendations provided here align with this concept map it should be considered an outline concept pending further development as part of an overall strategy for the park.

## Concept Plan for Lisnamallard and Arleston

- Historic Garden Park and Demese
- Potential Linkages/ New Paths
- Minor Tree Loss to open views and pathways

Parking

Boutique Hotel Conversion

Protected Tree Avenue

Allotments

Wildflower Meadow

Parking

Outdoor Educational Play Area

Community Garden/ Allotments

Tea Rooms

Pond Re-wilding Project

Skate Park

# A GREEN HEART

*Capitalising on the natural environment including in the town itself and the surrounding countryside*

**Action 2:** Invest in urban greening infrastructure to promote Omagh as a resilient and sustainable place

This action seeks to position Omagh for a more climate resilient future and enhance the appearance of the town and wider area through targeted green infrastructure investment. Creating more green infrastructure through increased planting of native trees and SuDS will benefit the urban environment, enhance and soften the public realm, promote biodiversity and help improve local air quality.

### Best Idea 1: Native Trees and SuDS

This could include:

» Planting of native trees in the town centre and along the riverside

» SuDS, or Sustainable Drainage Systems such as rain gardens, living walls and swales.
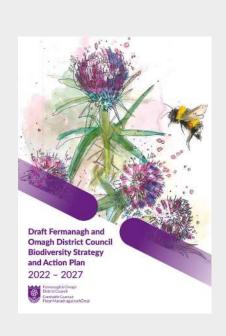
SuDS are a range of water management methods designed to naturally mitigate storm surge overflows and surface runoff in urban environments where urbanisation and development have reduced the availability of permeable, green areas.

The FODC Local Development Plan 2030 (FLD03) requires "All development proposals must, where practicable, include proposals for Sustainable Drainage Systems".

### Best Idea 2: Gateway Planting

To provide definition and welcome to the gateways of Omagh it is proposed that new planting is commissioned to accompany new signage. This should include planting for key roundabouts, e.g., Crevenagh Road and Derry Road with sponsorship schemes considered.

Landscaping designs should reflect the character of their settings, with the more rural gateways (key entrances to Omagh such as roundabouts) incorporating wildflowers and native species, while more formal designs, based on pollinator friendly perennials, for the more urban gateways i.e. those closer to the town centre.

**Draft Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027**

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmai

# A BEAUTIFUL PLACE

*Reimagining Omagh town centre as a more attractive and animated place*

**Action 3:** Work to transform Omagh town centre into a more attractive space for people

This significant action will see the heart of Omagh transformed and enhanced into a more attractive, healthy, and vibrant place, encouraging people to stay longer, enabling a more enjoyable experience, encouraging increased town centre footfall and catalysing the evening economy.

All best ideas would be subject to further detailed analysis and consultation.

It is proposed that this would include:

### Best Idea 1: Phased and trial people friendly High Street (Scarffe's Entry to Courthouse) and Bridge Street.

Town centres are changing and increasingly becoming places for people and less dominated by traffic. There is mounting evidence to show that removing traffic results in a more pleasant and healthy environment, which encourages increased footfall, and in turn drives revenue to town centre businesses.

This action, which would be subject to detailed scoping, design and planning would include the closure to traffic of sections of the town centre, with provision to be made for deliveries and for people with disabilities. This would create a more attractive and pedestrian/cycle friendly place.

Well-designed and connected public spaces are known to enhance the physical environment and improve the 'liveability' and sustainability of towns and cities. They provide a communal focal point and a place where residents and visitors alike can congregate for a variety of purposes.

Careful place-making will protect heritage and tourism potential whilst facilitating growth and new uses. Better quality public realm will promote civic confidence and can attract stakeholder investment, thus creating jobs.

Indicative images of how this could enhance High Street and Bridge Street are provided to the right and overleaf, this includes indicative images from Cobh Public Realm Enhancement Plan.

**Interventions are envisaged to include:**

» Re-paving to enable greater accessibility
» Tree-planting and rain-gardens
» Clutter reduction and with enhanced street furniture e.g. seats, bins
» Outdoor retail
» Levelling to provide entertainment platform

A trial period (e.g. 12 weeks) is recommended to coincide with street animation e.g. events and markets, etc. A similar trial was held in Dún Laoghaire town centre in Dublin, with the Council now recommending this approach.

**"If you invite more cars, you get more cars. If you make more streets better for cars you get more traffic. If you make more bicycle infrastructure you get more bicycles. If you invite people to walk more and use public spaces more, you get more life in the city. You get what you invite."**

\- Jan Gehl 'Designing Cities for People, Not Cars' Climate One

## Best Idea 2. Redesign of Drumragh Avenue-Bridge Street-Mountjoy Road junction

In tandem with the above action and applying the same principles of a more people friendly town, it is proposed that the Drumragh Avenue-Bridge Street-Mountjoy Road junction be redesigned to prioritise pedestrians. This in turn should be linked to a wider traffic management appraisal to include detailed junction modelling, and further consultation. An indicative image of how this could enhance the junction is provided overleaf. This approach should then be replicated at the Market Street / Campsie / Drumragh Avenue junction.

## Best Idea 3. Town Centre Lighting Strategy

A town centre lighting strategy, with a focus on feature lighting rather than floodlighting, is proposed. This would highlight key buildings in the town e.g. the Courthouse. This place-making initiative could build upon the principles and case studies identified in "Luminous City - a Lighting Strategy for Belfast" and increase the attractiveness of the town centre.

# A BEAUTIFUL PLACE

*Reimagining Omagh town centre as a more attractive and animated place*

**Action 4:** Support the enhancement of shared and reflective spaces to maximise their use and capacity

## Best idea 1: Oasis Plaza Enhancement

The OASIS Project was designed to enhance links between disparate communities in Omagh Town by providing safe, neutral, shared open spaces that increase opportunities for interaction through work and recreation.

Consultation and engagement undertaken for this plan indicate that there is further scope for the Plaza to fulfil its purpose.

This action envisages an enhancement of the Plaza.**This could include but is not limited to:**

» Making a safe shared space, through improved lighting, barriers to entry for cars at night and motion-activated lighting,

» Urban Greening e.g., more extensive planting and riverside trees.

» Enabling small events and activities suited to the space e.g., food markets.

## Best idea 2: Omagh Memorial Garden Enhancement

Omagh Memorial Garden, with the winning design of 'Constant Light', is a tranquil reflective space highly valued by the community, however it is now in need of sensitive enhancement to improve the serenity of the space, and the perception of safety. The garden includes a tranquil pool surrounded by Silver Birch trees, chosen as they are the first species to grow in disturbed

land. The intention of the design was that large mirrors would track the sun and reflect its light off mirrors in the garden to connect with a monument on Market Street which has a solid glass pillar with a three-dimensional glass heart suspended inside

While the garden remains an attractive space, the intended light feature has not worked in practice for some time, a point noted by several consultees.

It is proposed that consideration be given to removing the large mirrors and their support poles, while retaining the 31 representative mirrors and poles. Enhancement could also consider ways to enhance the tranquillity of this important garden, such as sensory planting and further seating.

# A BEAUTIFUL PLACE

*Reimagining Omagh town centre as a more attractive and animated place*

Cobh, Cork

**Action 5:** Create more attractive places to encourage people to spend longer in the town centre

## Best Idea 1: Liveable laneways

There are a limited number of linkages between Market Street and High Street to the River Strule to the north with key entry points such as Old Market Place benefiting from recent enhancements.

Remaining laneways and backstreets in the town centre should be upgraded to include footpaths, lighting and re-painting. Opportunities should be considered to encourage passive surveillance e.g. through diversifying the range of uses in less used areas, such as restaurants and residential use overhead, with Main Street an example of this.

The aim is to make these laneways attractive, engaging and, where possible, places where people want to live and work, increasing the number of people living in the town centre.

## Best Idea 2: Beautiful buildings - riverside

It is proposed that a coordinated investment scheme be progressed to undertake a coordinated enhancement and repainting of the rear of buildings along the south side of the river between Drumragh Bridge and Bridge Street. The objective, in tandem with the creation of a new riverside walkway (see Action 7), will be to significantly enhance the appearance of Omagh when viewed from the north. The promotion of more active frontages to the river, in addition to painting of buildings will create a more vibrant river frontage, encouraging increased footfall.

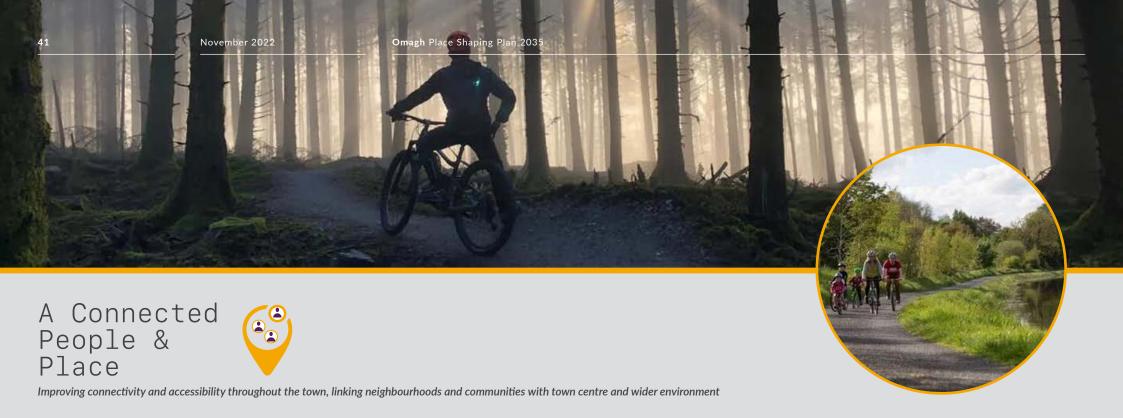## Best Idea 3: Beautiful buildings - town centre design guide

Similar to many other town centres the quality of the current shopfronts does not correspond to the quality of the architecture above. It is proposed that a design guide be developed for Omagh town centre shopfronts (Market Street, High Street, Bridge Street).

It is also recommended that consideration be given to a design guide in tandem with a painting and shopfront improvement design guide. An example being the Shopfront and Main Street Residence Painting and Improvement Grant Scheme for the Fingal county and Design Guidance: Shop fronts and signage in Lisburn Conservation area.

This would build on work completed as part of the DfC Revitalisation Omagh – Shop Front Improvement Schemes. It is recommended that this design guide be an update to the **Omagh Conservation Area** document published in 1993.

# A Connected People & Place

*Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment*

**Action 6:** Provide improved linkages and access to the natural and cultural attractions surrounding Omagh Town

Omagh is surrounded by beautiful countryside and has nearby visitor attractions such as the Ulster-American Folk park and award-winning Gortin Glens Forest Park. Providing linkages to these natural and cultural attractions would not only capitalise on previous public investment in each project, but would provide an additional visitor attraction in Omagh, encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more in the area.

Furthermore, it would reinforce Omagh's role as a hub from which to experience the wider area. Provision of such a facility would also be of benefit to the local community in providing recreational facilities, and even opportunities for new enterprises such as bike hire and cafes.

While the numbers of people engaging in walking and cycling has been increasing for several years, the impact of Covid-19 has resulted in a significant increase in demand for high quality recreational facilities.

## Best Idea 1: Greenway Feasibility Study

It is proposed that a design feasibility study be commissioned to consider:

**Stage 1,** development of 5km Greenway from Omagh to Ulster American Folk Park to provide connection between town and attraction, and for extension to Gortin Glen Forest Park.

**Stage 2, feasibility for Omagh-Strabane Greenway, which is included in *'A Strategic Plan for a Greenway Network'* (DfI 2016)**

**Stage 3,** feasibility for Omagh-Enniskillen Greenway, which is included in 'A Strategic Plan for a Greenway Network' (DfI 2016)

In each case early engagement with landowners would be essential, and any such design would be subject to environmental assessment and planning requirements.

Dublin
Ireland

# A Connected
# People &
# Place

*Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment*

**Action 7:** Seek to maximise the potential of the River Strule as an asset for the town

Many market towns on the island of Ireland have historically had poor relationships with nearby rivers or coastline. Omagh is no different and while several interventions have sought to reverse this disconnect, for example the Strule Arts Centre and OASIS Plaza, there remains much that could be done to enhance the town's relationship with the river.

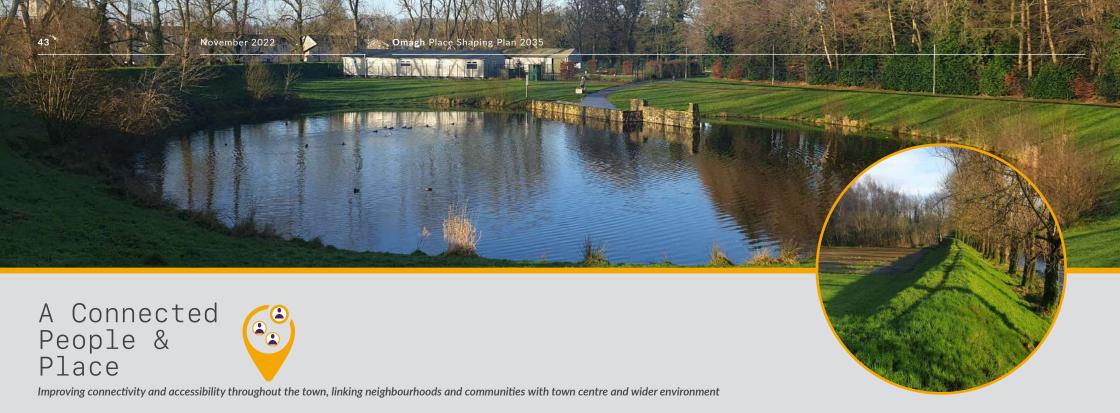## Best Idea 1: River Strule Infrastructure

It is recommended that a major new piece of riverside infrastructure is created; the primary phase of this would be a **riverside walkway** between Drumragh Avenue Bridge and Abbey Bridge on the south side of the Strule River. This would consist of an elevated walkway with the inclusion of a **floating platform** that would enable kayaks and other light watercraft to tie up. This would provide a town centre amenity, a visitor attraction and provide opportunities for recreation enterprise.

The walkway would enable those premises on the north side of Market Street to progressively open to the river. Over time, success would see several restaurants and cafes along this walkway and greater permeability between Market Street and the river, with late afternoon/evening economy potential.

A future phase would see **extension of the riverside walkway** to the east from Drumragh Avenue Bridge to Crevenagh Roundabout.

When completed this would enable a riverside path from Crevanagh Roundabout to the Strule Campus. When combined with Actions 5 and 6, this provides a significant active travel recreation network in Omagh, encouraging people to leave cars behind, reducing pollution and creating a more attractive town centre environment.

It is recommended the walkway be designed to enable safe movement of both pedestrians and cyclists. Development would be subject to necessary planning and environmental requirements.

# A Connected People & Place

*Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment*

**Action 8:** Develop an integrated active travel network

Omagh is a compact town with an attractive river system alongside several parks and green spaces. This network of green and blue corridors, along with arterial routes, will have significant potential to facilitate more sustainable modes of transport to places of work and study as well as enabling recreation and tourism throughout Omagh, thus reducing the need to travel by car.

It is proposed that an Active Travel Plan be produced to develop an integrated active travel network to include radial and orbital segregated/phased cycle network to increase modal share of active travel, with Park & Cycle facilities and a cycle hire scheme available to facilitate car to cycle transfers.
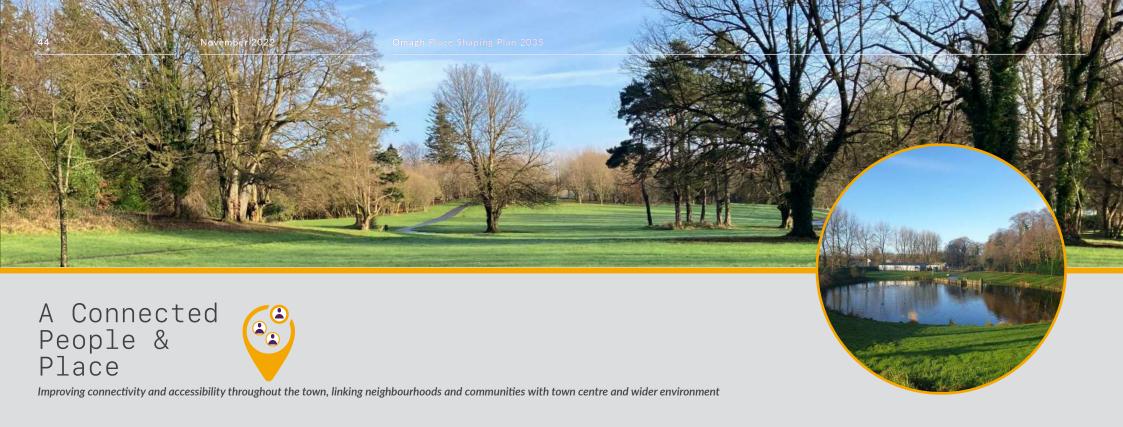
## Best Idea 1: Omagh Cycle Network

While layout of the Omagh Cycle Network should be considered in detail as part of the Active Travel Plan Development, the accompanying map shows a notional alignment of radial and orbital routes which, alongside the riverside trails, would form a comprehensive cycle network.

## Best Idea 2: Park & Cycle Scheme

It is proposed that cycle hire facilities be provided at long-stay car parks outside of the town centre core, with notional locations presented in the accompanying map.

Cycle hire rates should be competitive to town centre parking rates to encourage last-mile cycling as an alternative for long-stay car parking in the town centre core. A station-based cycle hire scheme, with stations across the town, could be considered as an alternative.
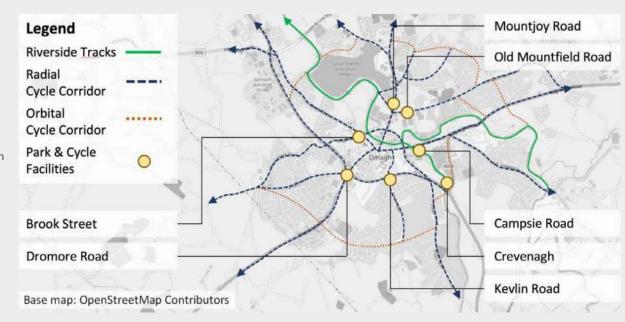
# A Connected People & Place

*Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment*

## Best Idea 3: Walking and Cycling Campaign

A campaign is proposed to promote active and healthy mobility, involving encouraging those studying and working in schools to travel by bike. An effective campaign in Ireland, #andshecycles, particularly targets girls in secondary schools.

## Best Idea 4: Promotion of Bus Service to Ulster American Folk Park

To enhance linkages, it is recommended the existing regular bus service connection between Omagh and the Ulster-American Folk Park be better promoted, along with other town centre bus services.

It is recommended that wayfinding signage be provided along active travel routes, e.g. maps indicating the distance to cycle into the town centre (see Action 9).

**Legend**

- Riverside Tracks ———
- Radial Cycle Corridor – – –
- Orbital Cycle Corridor ·······
- Park & Cycle Facilities ○

Mountjoy Road

Old Mountfield Road

Campsie Road

Crevenagh

Kevlin Road

Brook Street

Dromore Road

Base map: OpenStreetMap Contributors

# A Connected People & Place

*Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment*

**Action 9:** Develop and implement a Wayfinding Strategy

An Omagh wayfinding strategy would include a cohesive approach for orientation, directional and interpretative signage to enhance the legibility of Omagh and encourage increased dwell time by visitors in the town and improve their experience.

Wayfinding means a consistent approach that helps users to navigate a given area and to enhance their understanding and experience of that place.
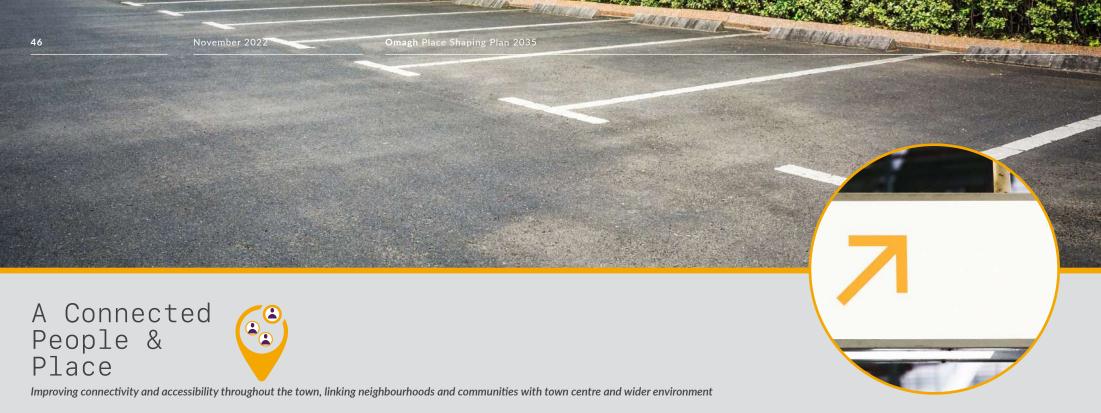
## Best Idea 1: Omagh wayfinding strategy

» **Directional signage** to direct people to points of interest such as Bell's Bridge, Omagh Memorial Garden, Arleston Park

» **Orientation signage** at key visitor touch points to create a sense of welcome, for example Strule Arts Centre, Omagh Bus Station, Market Street, Arleston Park

» **Interpretative signage** on walking and cycling routes to provide information on Omagh's natural, built and cultural heritage. This could include historic walks or nature walks

Walking trail interpretation will tell the Omagh story through interactive signage erected at key locations, to enhance visitor experience and reinforce sense of place for the town.

Effective signage will also encourage the visitor to use Omagh as a base to visit the attractions within twenty minutes of the town centre, creating enough to do in Omagh for more than a one-night stay, and thus improving visitor experience and increasing visitor spend, and thereby benefiting the local economy.

There are opportunities to provide smart signage which can include footfall tracking, push notifications and digital signage where appropriate.

# A Connected People & Place

*Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment*

**Action 10:** Provide affordable, accessible and appropriate car parking in Omagh Town and surrounding area

As a main hub serving a wide rural area, careful balance must be found between prioritising active travel modes in Omagh town centre and ensuring that the area remains accessible from locations further afield. The subject has initially been tackled by the 2017 Fermanagh and Omagh Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan, which identified eight high level actions to address issues such as inconsistent tariffs and long-stay car parking in key locations.

## Best Idea 1:  Review and update Omagh Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan

This is necessary to ensure the plan supports the current ambitions for the Omagh town centre. In particular, the following items should be considered by such review:

**Rationalisation of Parking Charges**: Both paid and free-of-charge car parks are currently available in the town centre core, potentially resulting in increased vehicle roaming and enabling long-stay parking. It

is recommended that consistent tariffs and duration of stay limitations are introduced in the key area bounded by Drumragh Avenue in the north, Brookmount Road to the west, Great Northern Road to the south and Dublin Road to the east, with cheaper or free parking spaces being provided at the edges of this area.

Resident car parking should be considered, with reduced rates applicable e.g. to a single car per household. The applicable tariffs should reflect the prioritisation of walking and cycling in the town centre core (See Action 6).

**Car Parking Relocation/Redevelopment**: The importance of parking to the vitality and viability of the town centre is acknowledged. It is proposed that some of the existing town centre car parks are relocated to less prominent locations and/or redeveloped for more appropriate uses, so that the associated traffic movements are removed from the most sensitive areas and opportunities for further pedestrianisation are opened. In doing so, provision should be made for retaining blue badge spaces near the town centre core. It is recommended that car

parking demand in the key area be managed by increased charges rather than increased capacity. An objective will be to deter long-stay and facilitate those staying 1-2 hours for shopping and leisure.

**Digital Information and In-App Signage**: To further reduce vehicle roaming, it is recommended that a consistent car parking signage strategy be developed and implemented. Digital information signs at the approaches to the town centre could be used, presenting availability of spaces in the nearest parking facilities.

The signs should be designed in such way as to encourage the use of the car parks at the town edge e.g. by showing information on applicable hourly rates and duration of stay restrictions in the town centre. More information could be presented in an interactive format in a dedicated mobile app.

**Campervan Hub**: There has been a significant increase in demand for campervan sites in town centres in recent years. Provision of such infrastructure in conjunction with commercial operators can provide an opportunity to increase town centre footfall.

Düsseldorf

Example of Public Realm Improvements

# A Connected People & Place

*Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment*

**Action 11:** Seek completion of A5 Western Transport Corridor to enable a people-first approach to reallocation of town centre road space

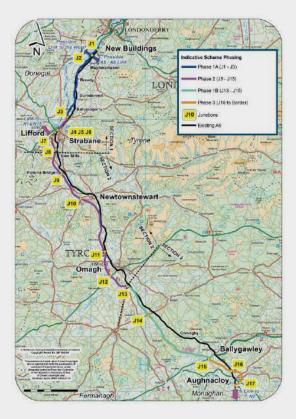### Best idea 1: Seek completion of A5 Western Transport Corridor

The A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC) is one of five key transport corridors identified in the Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland. The proposed 85km A5 would link Derry to the border at Aughnacloy in Co Tyrone. The A5 has been the subject of significant debate and legal challenge since the inception of the process in 2007. Details on the scheme can be found on the **Department for Infrastructure website** and on a dedicated **A5 website**, where an interactive map is provided to illustrate the preferred route.

Completion of this route is essential, not just to reduce town centre traffic flow through Omagh town centre, but as a critical enabler of social and economic growth for the town. Lack of key infrastructure and regional connectivity can be considered a key factor for Omagh's low population growth with regards to key comparator town s such as Dungannon and Armagh. The A5 would be a catalyst for place-shaping in the town in that it would enable remodelling of key roads and improvements to permeability and connectivity between the southern part of Omagh and the town centre.

It is recommended that FODC continue to support and advocate for the completion of the new A5 WTC.

### Best Idea 2: Regional Connectivity

Seek improvements to the wider regional connectivity including the A32 Linking Omagh with Enniskillen and the acute hospital services.



A5 Western Transport
Corridor — preferred route
(Source: www.a5wtc.com)

### Best idea 3: A people first approach to reallocation of town centre road space

To fully utilise the opportunity for a change in traffic patterns created by the delivery of the new A5WTC west of Omagh, it is recommended that key roads are considered for rationalisation and remodelling once the A5 is completed or sooner where appropriate.

For example, completion of the A5WTC would mean the Great Northern Road could be remodelled. This could include road space reallocation to active travel modes (a walking/ cycling trail along the entire length), greening, pedestrian permeability improvements, and traffic calming measures. It is accepted that the Great Northern Road will remain a significant transportation artery through the town and this route will be an enabler in other town centres routes becoming more accessible for active travel modes.

Other key roads that could be considered for increased greening, cycle routes and further pedestrian crossings, include Derry Road, Mountjoy Road and Doogary Road. Linkages for walking and cycling to nearby developments would enhance walkability and cyclability in the town.

It is recommended that design guides be considered for these roads, which could include building height (ideally a consistent form that would guide future planning decisions), setback (to enable provision of cycle lanes and green infrastructure), green infrastructure (to include mature trees and pollinator friendly rain gardens), and street furniture (e.g. lighting, bus stops, bins and signage).

# An Inclusive Place

*Ensuring Omagh is an inclusive place with a prosperous, well educated, vibrant and healthy community*

**Action 12:** Develop and support forums that spark the imagination and listen to the needs of local people and place

Effective place-making is flexible and inclusive and recognises that priorities will change over time. This plan runs to 2035, however priorities for people may differ in coming years. This action recognises that there are many ways to engage people in conversations about their places and about their community.

## Best Idea 1: Giving youth a voice

Capturing the voice of the youth of Omagh, as well as other demographics, is important, with the engagement with schools and other young people for this study providing many valuable insights. **Youth Voice Fermanagh and Omagh** (Youth Voice F&O) was recently launched to give young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who live in the Fermanagh and Omagh area an opportunity to represent the views of their peers across the district and have a say on key local issues.

Further engagement with Age-Friendly Alliance, building on existing good work, can help ensure older residents of Omagh are also provided with a way to engage in decision-making.

## Best Idea 2: Wider citizen engagement

It is recommended that **other models of citizen engagement are considered** to enable the community to continue to have a say in the future of Omagh. Examples of best practice include Citizen lab online communication engagement tools, or citizen's assemblies.

# An Inclusive Place

*Ensuring Omagh is an inclusive place with a prosperous, well educated, vibrant and healthy community*

**Action 13:** Create places for all, ensuring Omagh is fully inclusive through design and partnership

In the interests of creating a more inclusive town, all ages and abilities must be provided for.

In addition, the town centre's topography (different levels and steep hills e.g. leading up to the Courthouse) presents challenges to those with mobility issues and is not easily overcome.

Another key issue is safety and the perception of safety, particularly in the evening. Good design and lighting can help to make places feel safer and be safer.

## Best Idea 1:  More inclusive urban places

Urban design and appropriate street architecture can help improve access and safety; examples include improved lighting, staggered and comfortable seating areas, and consideration of street paving that do not cause issues for those with less ability than others i.e. cobblestones which can cause people to trip and slip. The High Street leading up to the Courthouse was highlighted by consultees as a key area that caused issues.

An Omagh for all approach should also include play parks that cater for younger children and children with disabilities; age friendly car-parking; urban architecture that takes account of, for example, wheelchair users, and older vulnerable people with mobility issues, and confusion (but not necessarily dementia) by providing safe seating areas, for example in Grange park, Arleston Park as well as High Street/Market Street. To ensure Omagh provides for those with autism and dementia, this could include creation of quiet and sensory places as well as engagement with business and community about what dementia is and how to be dementia friendly.

## Best Idea 2:  Providing Housing for All

Creative current and potential future use of opportunity sites to provide mixed use and mixed tenure developments to reflect the emerging needs.

For example, this may reflect the need to provide more one and two bed dwellings to cater for the ageing population and the increase in single person households identified in the baseline analysis undertaken for this plan. The aim is to create a more vibrant town centre by increasing the number of people living there. This includes new buildings but also re-use and adaptation of older ones e.g. living over the shop as outlined in project 20.

# A Thriving Place

*Increasing employment opportunities and ensuring supports for existing businesses*

**Action 14:** Ensure space to grow by enhancing the enterprise ecosystem within Omagh and the wider District

The purpose of Space to Grow is to enhance the enterprise ecosystem within Omagh and the wider District. This is based upon the development of a range of business development sites and supports. The objective will be to incubate businesses to grow and move on from smaller hubs to larger enterprise sites, catalysing employment growth and opportunity. Coupled with this will be the process to identify and support the development of serviced industrial land to support existing and encourage industry to Omagh.

## Best Idea 1: Digital Hubs

'Digital Hubs' are proposed to cater for start-ups and SMEs to enable growth, and social economy businesses; and for employers to invest and locate jobs in Omagh town centre. This is envisaged to include the proposed small business digital hub on the site of the former Omagh Health Centre. This phase has already commenced and is due to be completed in 2025.

It is further proposed that demand analysis and feasibility assessment is undertaken with regards to establishing additional digital hubs in Omagh. An optimal approach would be the repurposing of a vacant building in the town centre or on a derelict site to trigger investment and regeneration in the town centre.

It is understood several buildings, currently in public ownership and use, will become available following implementation of the Connect2 Regional Hubs programme. There may be an opportunity to use such buildings for the purposes of Digital Hubs.

## Best Idea 2: Omagh Business Campus

It is proposed that an outline business case be developed for the development of an Omagh Business Campus on a town centre site. It is envisaged that an optimum location for such a centre would be either the Omagh Academy or the Christian Brothers school site, once the schools have relocated to Strule Shared Education Campus in 2026, and/or the Scott's Mills/Naturelle sites. Provision of such sites would encourage increased town centre footfall.

It is recommended that a separate outline business case be prepared for Digital Hubs and for Omagh Business Campus that would target future funding opportunities.

# A Thriving Place

*Increasing employment opportunities and ensuring supports for existing businesses*

**Action 15:** Develop and progress Omagh as a smart town to support economic growth

This action is focused on the development of Omagh as a smart town.

A smart town can be described as a town that uses data, ICT infrastructure and other smart concepts, including those that are non-technology focussed, to enhance the quality of life for its residents, improve service provision and drive economic growth through enhanced competitiveness and innovation. It can span a number of areas from the economy and transport, to the environment and community.

To progress Omagh towards becoming a smart town, this action focuses on three key concepts based around connectivity, skills and smart infrastructure. These are as follows:

## Best idea 1: Gigabit Omagh – Ultra-fast broadband

Capitalising and building on the investment already made as part of Project Kelvin, it is proposed that ultra-fast broadband be extended throughout the town centre and that the existing and future provision is well promoted to highlight this key asset in Omagh to current and prospective businesses alike.
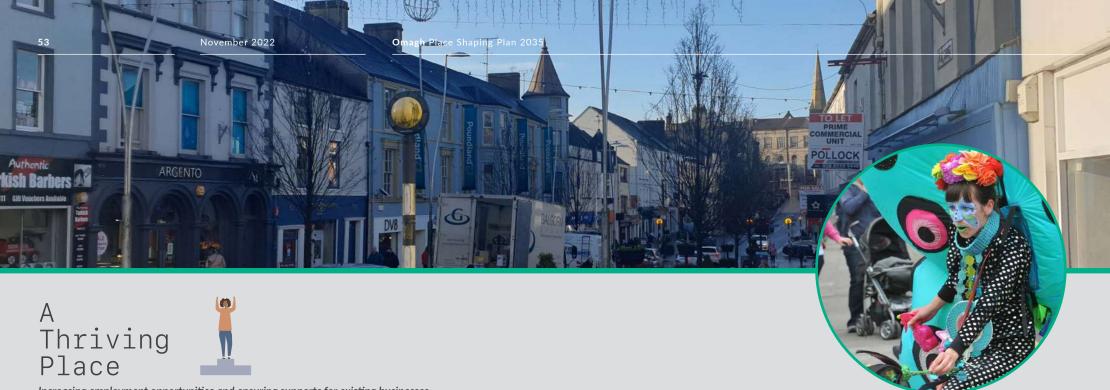
In doing so, there is an opportunity to enhance the business environment, position the town centre as a more desirable place to do business and attract further investment. The planned digital hub located in the former Omagh Health Centre could be a pilot for implementation of ultra-fast broadband.

## Best idea 2: Development of a skills intelligence database

The availability of a skilled and talented workforce is a key area that can contribute to investor decisions. It is also key to supporting existing businesses and the development of an innovative business ecosystem. The development of a skills intelligence database will enable Omagh to identify skill-related strengths which can be used to strengthen the town's value proposition to attract investment in targeted sectors as well as to detect gaps or areas for improvement.

## Best idea 3: Introduction of Smart infrastructure

Many town centres now have a network of sensors installed on existing public infrastructure to collect data in relation to areas such as pollution, footfall and traffic movements. This data can provide valuable insights to inform decision-making to enhance the experience of visitors, workers and residents of the town. It is proposed that a strategic approach is taken to the further development of a network in Omagh with an initial focus around footfall, traffic and parking.

# A Thriving Place

*Increasing employment opportunities and ensuring supports for existing businesses*

**Action 16:** Capitalise on Omagh's potential through place marketing strategy

This action is included in the context of the new Inspired by Omagh place brand, with regards to a Place Marketing Strategy. The aim is to raise the profile of Omagh as a town with a high quality of life, encouraging those living there to stay, and others to relocate to the town. The objective will be to encourage population growth, increase external investment from outside the District and to enhance awareness of Omagh.

## Best idea 1: Inspire-Invest-Innovate Website

It is recommended that an Inspire-Invest-Innovate Fermanagh and Omagh website be developed. This website should be separate to the FODC website and provide information on activities that promote living in, studying in and investing in the District. The Sligo.ie website could be considered an example of good practice.

## Best idea 2: Omagh Place Marketing Strategy

Promotional campaign based on the current 'Inspired by Omagh' brand. This strategy should focus on:

» **Quality of life and reasons for moving to Omagh**, including opportunities to engage with the outdoors, educational opportunities, and affordably priced housing.

» **Tourism and events, including:** Animation programme to capitalise on Strule Arts Centre with new events such as associated Bluegrass Festival events in the town and events in Arleston Park. This should include reference to Fermanagh and Omagh being an event-friendly District and to more sustainable events i.e. 'Greening your Event' principles; Promotions to encourage students and staff into the town centre, Development of a 16hr economy by encouraging cafés and shops to open later (e.g. Omagh is Open), and Targeted marketing e.g. to Mountain-bike clubs in the UK and Ireland.

» **Omagh Investment Prospectus** - the proposed marketing strategy should also focus development of an online Omagh Investment Prospectus designed to provide potential investors with well-presented information on investment opportunities, and locational context for Omagh. This could include Omagh success stories.

Enniskillen Tast Experience

# A Thriving Place

*Increasing employment opportunities and ensuring supports for existing businesses*

**Action 17:** Provide opportunities to put events, including food markets, at the centre of social life

Waterford City Food Market

Events have several inter-related benefits. They enhance a sense of place by animating public spaces. They provide an opportunity for local people to interact with others from the local area and for visitors to meet local people, adding to their experience.

Omagh has a long history as a market town where food has been produced and traded. Food and craft markets provide an opportunity to showcase local products and to stimulate entrepreneurship in this sector of the economy.

### Best idea 1: A Taste of Omagh

This event could provide an opportunity for various agri-businesses and local agriculture producers to showcase their produce. This is envisaged as a town centre market to support a more vibrant town centre.

### Best idea 2: Omagh Farmer's Market

Food animation could also include a pilot/weekly Omagh Farmer's Market (April-Sep) using OASIS Plaza, Arleston Park or a town centre car park. Opening the High Street to people would create an opportunity to host markets and to increase footfall. Existing markets that are located out of the town centre could also be promoted.

### Best Idea 3: Music Festival

Omagh has a long tradition of showbands and country music and work is underway towards delivery of a heritage music trail. Consideration should be given to a major music event in Omagh.

# A Vibrant Place

*Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town*

**Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites - **Best Idea 1**

The town centre of Omagh currently has several large vacant sites and derelict properties. Large sites include the former St. Lucia military site, the former Health Centre site, the former PSNI site, the former Scott's Mills site and the former Naturelle site. While significant vacant buildings include the former First Trust Bank site, and the former Fire Station site.

## Best idea 1: Strategic redevelopment and disposal plan for school sites

It is currently envisaged that the five secondary schools will move to the new Strule Shared Education Campus in 2026.

If a strategic approach is not taken to redevelopment of these sites thereafter there is a risk that their continued vacancy will add to the quantity of vacant land in Omagh and have a severe negative impact upon the town centre in terms of appearance and in confidence.
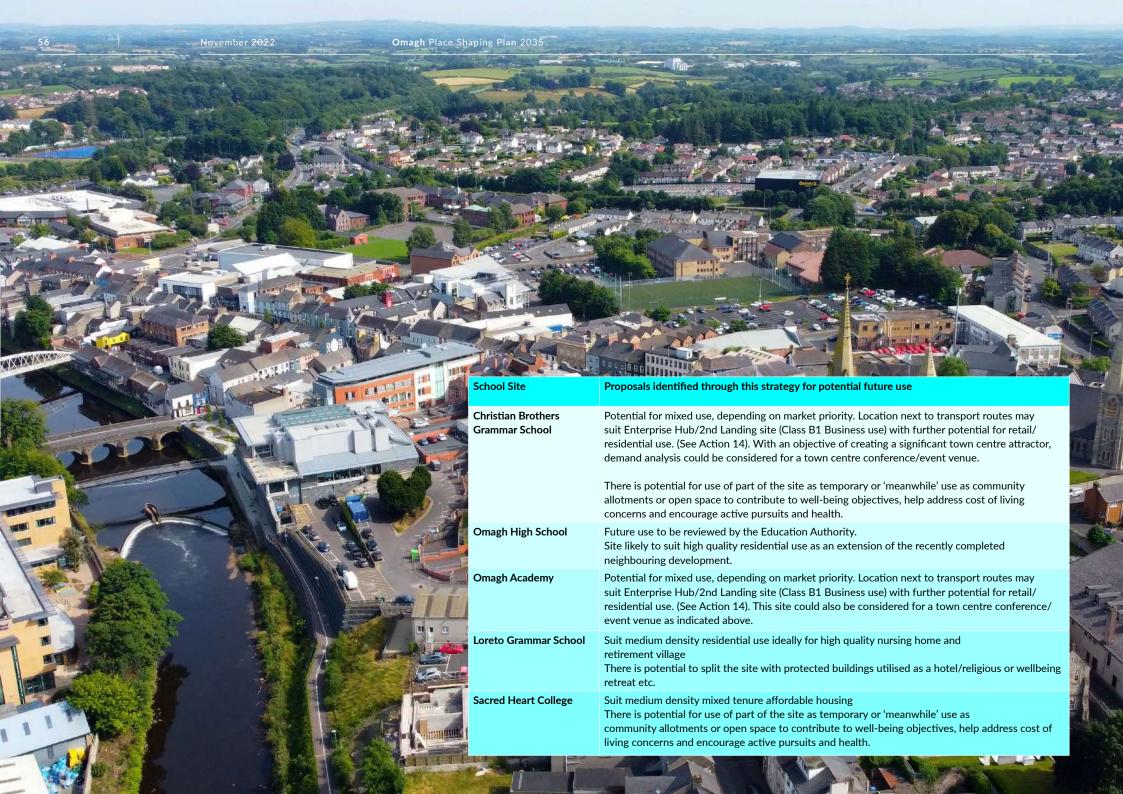
It is therefore essential that a strategic and coordinated approach is taken with regards to the school sites to benefit the town of Omagh.

Several plans have been prepared with regards to the existing secondary school sites in Omagh, each of which has proposed different uses and approaches for the sites, including individual and separate development briefs.

Discussions undertaken for the purposes of this plan have indicated that the optimum approach, following relocation to the Strule Shared Education Campus, would be for a strategic and joint approach to be taken to:

» **Identifying the optimum use for each site**, with proposed optimum uses proposed in the table to the right;

» **Redevelopment of buildings that are no longer required** in accordance with the proposed use;

» **Phased release of each site in accordance with proposed uses** and an overall strategic disposal plan.

It is recommended that a strategic and joint approach for optimum use, redevelopment and release be developed and implemented collaboratively led by a Joint Working Group.

| School Site | Proposals identified through this strategy for potential future use |
|---|---|
| Christian Brothers Grammar School | Potential for mixed use, depending on market priority. Location next to transport routes may suit Enterprise Hub/2nd Landing site (Class B1 Business use) with further potential for retail/residential use. (See Action 14). With an objective of creating a significant town centre attractor, demand analysis could be considered for a town centre conference/event venue. <br><br> There is potential for use of part of the site as temporary or 'meanwhile' use as community allotments or open space to contribute to well-being objectives, help address cost of living concerns and encourage active pursuits and health. |
| Omagh High School | Future use to be reviewed by the Education Authority. <br> Site likely to suit high quality residential use as an extension of the recently completed neighbouring development. |
| Omagh Academy | Potential for mixed use, depending on market priority. Location next to transport routes may suit Enterprise Hub/2nd Landing site (Class B1 Business use) with further potential for retail/residential use. (See Action 14). This site could also be considered for a town centre conference/event venue as indicated above. |
| Loreto Grammar School | Suit medium density residential use ideally for high quality nursing home and retirement village <br> There is potential to split the site with protected buildings utilised as a hotel/religious or wellbeing retreat etc. |
| Sacred Heart College | Suit medium density mixed tenure affordable housing <br> There is potential for use of part of the site as temporary or 'meanwhile' use as community allotments or open space to contribute to well-being objectives, help address cost of living concerns and encourage active pursuits and health. |

# A Vibrant Place



*Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town*

**Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites - **Best Idea 2**

## Best idea 2: Arleston House

Arleston House, which is in the ownership of the Council, occupies a strategic elevated position within Arleston Park and near Mountfield Road. Arleston comprises a house and gardens dating from 1840-1859 and has been a private residence in the past (Harold McCauley, a local businessman) though now is in poor condition.

Several studies and opinion reports have proposed a variety of uses for Arleston House, ranging from a retirement home to residential use to boutique hotels. Similar uses have also been proposed for Lisnamallard House which is discussed in Action 18.3.

With each of the houses, both of heritage value, in Council ownership, there is an opportunity to utilise them for the benefit of the town. However, it is imperative that a decision is taken soon to prevent further deterioration. Clearing of low-quality shrubs and bushes to the south of the house would open a vista to and from the park. Restoration of the house would provide an opportunity for multiple uses.

While there is a town centre first consideration i.e. that hotels should be located in the town centre, each of the buildings is located a short walk from the town centre and this is not thought to preclude use as visitor accommodation in the context of ensuring a viable use for the building.

Key considerations are:

» Retention of public access to a large part of the park, which would mean Arleston House would suit private sector use more so than Lisnamallard;

» Clustering, with Lisnamallard closer to a potential activity cluster, and

» Ensuring an attractive proposition for a potential hotel developer, with Lisnamallard thought to provide a less attractive proposition due to restoration costs.

While a detailed business case is believed to be required, it is

recommended that Fermanagh and Omagh District Council:

» Intervene to stabilise Arleston House and prevent further deterioration,

» Seek expressions of interest from private sector hotel operators to develop the building.

» Consider a public-private partnership venture with a long-term lease for boutique hotel use or sale with funds used to restore Lisnamallard House as a hub for the park

# A Vibrant Place

**Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites - **Best Idea 3**

## Best idea 3: Lisnamallard House

Lisnamallard House, is a listed building thought to date mainly from the early 19th Century and recently vacated by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council who had used the building as offices for the Environmental Health Team since 1997.

The house was once owned by the Scott family who ran Scott's Mill on Mountjoy Road. Within the grounds are remnants of a mill lade which carried the water from the weir on the Camowen to the mills. A beech lined avenue, accessed from the Old Mountfield Road, leads to Lisnamallard.

Lisnamallard House could be of interest to a developer to convert the building to a boutique hotel given its historic interest and attractive surrounding woodland. However this would likely result in a restriction of public access to this area of the park which is not considered the optimum use of the site.

An option may be that Lisnamallard become a visitor hub for Arleston Park operated by the Council, with a café and on-site accommodation.

Key proposed elements include:

» High quality hostel style accommodation which can be offered to youth and school groups. For example this could include outdoor education programmes which in turn would offer opportunities or association     with outdoor activity operators.

» Park café, leased to a private operator with a focus on locally produced food, creating employment opportunities.

» Craft units in the out-buildings creating a visitor attraction and local economic benefit.

» Community use such as yoga, events, forest school etc.

The surrounding woodland has not been managed for many years and would benefit from selective thinning and maintenance. In tandem with the measures proposed in Action 1, it is recommended that the metal fencing to the south of Lisnamallard House be removed. Security measures would likely then be required at the house however it is considered essential that east-west and north-south permeability within Arleston Park be improved.

It is proposed that an outdoor educational play area be created between Lisnamallard House and the Leisure Centre with an emphasis on natural materials. Close to the house it is proposed that a children's disability friendly playpark be developed with emphasis on natural play. Development of a tree top walkway could be considered as a visitor attraction.

Together these measures have the potential to transform Arleston park and provide a vibrant park for the community and visitors to Omagh.

# A Vibrant Place

*Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town*

**Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites - **Best Idea 4**

## Best idea 4. St Lucia

St Lucia was a former British Army Barracks from 1881 to 2007. The Barracks was the main depot for the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, formed from the 27th (Inniskilling) regiment of Foot and the 108th Madras Infantry) Regiment of Foot. In 1928 the barracks also become the depot for the Royal Irish Fusiliers. The barracks closed in 2007 as part of the demilitarisation of Northern Ireland according to the Good Friday Agreement. Over 300,000 soldiers were trained here during World War 2. St Lucia and the role of the British army is part of the past and the heritage of Omagh. In the past the army brought significant employment to Omagh, and the closure of the Barracks had financial impact on the town.

The site consists of the historic former barracks and officers' buildings, along with derelict family accommodation. St Lucia occupies a prominent and elevated position in the town, with many people living in Omagh never having set foot on this part of their town. St Lucia is owned by the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Infrastructure. Both agencies are keen to see a future where the site can provide a positive contribution to the town. Understandably

both wish to see the optimum use and re-purposing of the site with a positive financial and social return. The Council remain committed to seeing a revitalisation of the site. A draft Masterplan was produced for the site by RPS in 2010.

It is proposed the optimum use for St Lucia, given the site form and history, the lack of current need for another government or Council building, or suitability for office or industry, is for high-quality mixed-use development.

Consideration could be given to:

» **Visitor accommodation** (hotel, apart-hotel, short-let apartments) within the barracks buildings.

» **High quality private residential development**, which given the strategic location and attractive outlook of the site, is considered to provide the optimum economic return for DfI and MoD.

» Use **of one building within the barracks complex as a heritage interpretation centre** to sensitively tell the history of Omagh as
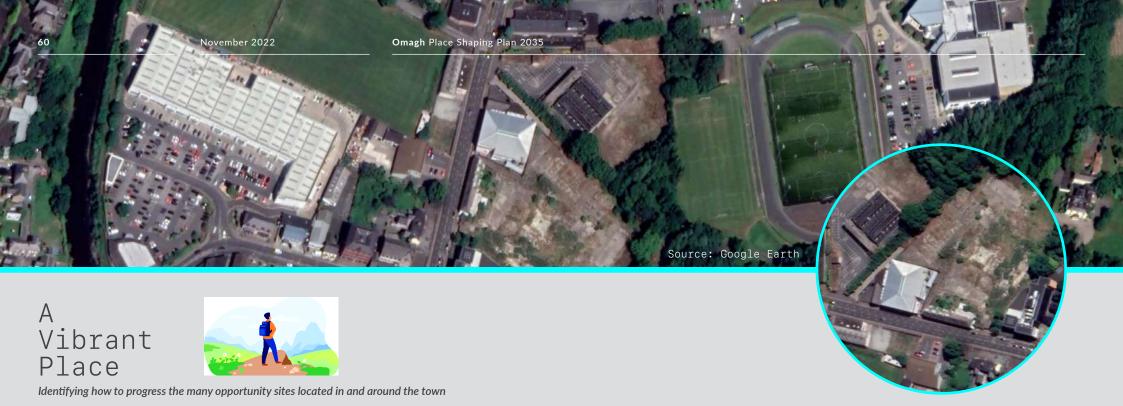
a garrison town. An example of good practice is Collins Barracks in Dublin which uses the stories of people to tell the story of the British army in Dublin. This would be an interesting visitor attraction for Omagh and provide links with the Ulster American Folk Museum.

» **Use of all or part of the buildings as an extension to SW College.** Kickham Barracks in Clonmel is an example of a similar approach.

» **An event space for Omagh**, again Kickham Barracks is an example of similar development.

The section of the site alongside the river to the north are subject to flooding and would suit playing pitches associated with the Strule Education Campus.

Where possible permeability to and within the site should be maximised, to enhance integration with the town. This should include extension of the riverside path through the site.

It is proposed FODC seek to progress activation of the site in mixed use format in collaboration with MOD/DfI.

Source: Google Earth

# A
# Vibrant
# Place

*Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town*

**Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites - **Best Idea 5**

## Best idea 5: Former Scott's Mills

The Scott's Mill site lies between Mountjoy Road and Omagh Leisure Complex. The site hosted a grain mill until 2010 when Fane Valley Group relocated to a new mill on the Doogary West Industrial Estate outside the town. The move safeguarded many jobs and removed over 50 heavy vehicle movements a day from the town centre. While this has benefited Omagh in terms of employment and traffic reduction the large Scott's Mill site has remained vacant since the move.

Fane Valley Group are keen to activate the site subject to an economic return being generated. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council are keen for the site to reach its full potential and to contribute to the future of a more vibrant Omagh.

To provide the greatest economic benefit for Omagh it would be ideal if the site supported uses that enabled increased town centre footfall. Optimum uses could be retail or business.

Given the location of the Scott's Mill site adjacent to the strategic Mountjoy Road it would be beneficial for an attractive building to face the road, in accordance with the design guide proposed in Action 5.

It is recommended that a collaborative Site Masterplan be prepared, and a key consideration should be the promotion of permeability linkages between Mountjoy Road and Arleston Park i.e. walking and cycling routes.

It is further recommended that the approach should include engagement from the owners of the former Naturelle site to include this site within a wider masterplan for these lands.

# A Vibrant Place



*Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town*

**Action 19:** Work to restore, revive and promote our unique built heritage in the town centre and develop their use and appeal

## Best idea: Omagh Courthouse

Omagh Courthouse is a striking and imposing building at the western end of High Street on an elevated position. Designed by John Hargrave in Neoclassical style and completed in 1814, the function of the building as a court of justice was extended to accommodate Tyrone County Council from 1898 until 1962.

Given the prominence and architectural quality of the building it is proposed that there is ongoing engagement with NI Courts and Tribunal Service to explore options to safeguard the built heritage of the courthouse and to enhance the value this brings to the town.

If re-purposing was considered viable then identified uses must be commensurate with the status of the building. The goal would be to provide a purpose for the buildings that would reflect their architectural quality, enable public access, and serve to generate increased footfall for cafes, restaurants and bars in the area.

Uses that might be considered include:

» Quality hotel

» Specialist retail

» Quality restaurant

» Museum

» Gallery

» Music venue

# Cobh Public Realm Enhancement Plan

Urban Realm proposals for Casement Square, Cobh by Cork County Council (Existing and proposed)

Cork County Council (www.cobhpublicrealm.ie)

# A Vibrant Place

*Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town*

**Action 20:** Undertake an Omagh Living Over the Shop Pilot Study

## Best Idea: Living Over the Shop Study

A current characteristic of many towns is for the upper floors to have a significantly higher vacancy rate than the ground floors units. Omagh is no different, during field work in January 2022, a commercial vacancy survey of Omagh town centre was conducted. From the survey, 607 commercial buildings were identified, of which 54 were identified as vacant or derelict (8.9%).

Upper floor vacancy was also assessed. There were estimated to be 18 2nd floor vacancies, 39 first floor vacancies and 42 ground floor vacancies with 54 having some degree of vacancy.

This action will examine opportunity for increasing occupancy of upper floors of town centre buildings to increase residential density in the town centre, particularly on High Street and Market Street.

There has been significant research in this area which can be drawn upon, including High Streets Taskforce, Scotland's Towns Partnership, and the Town Centre Synthesis Study in Ireland.

This action will include identification of appropriate meanwhile use opportunities for existing key vacant buildings and sites, such as community use, pop-up shops, markets, allotments.

**SUPPORTING the UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

1 - NO POVERTY
2 - ZERO HUNGER
3 - GOOD HEALTH & WELLBEING
4 - QUALITY EDUCATION
5 - GENDER EQUALITY
6 - CLEAN WATER & SANITATION
7 - CLEAN & AFFORDABLE ENERGY
8 - DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 - INDUSTRY, INNOVATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
10 - REDUCED INEQUALITY
11 - SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES
12 - RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION
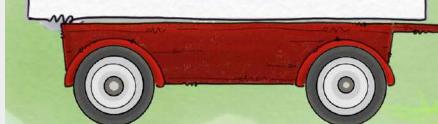13 - CLIMATE ACTION
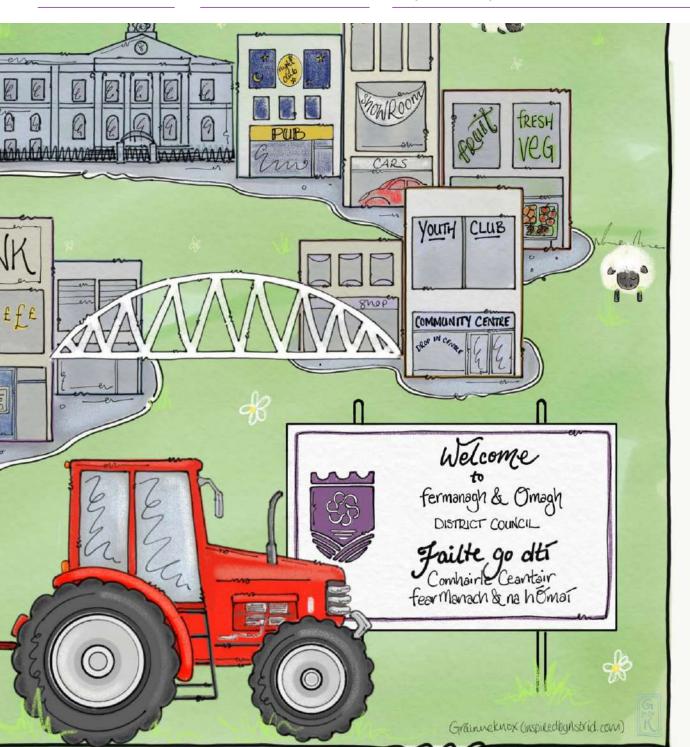14 - LIFE BELOW WATER
15 - LIFE ON WATER
16 - PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17 - PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL

Gráinneknox (InspiredbyAstrid.com)

Chapter six
**Place Shaping
Delivery**

# Place Shaping Delivery

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the roadmap to realise the ambition for place-shaping in Omagh. The aspiration is for all actions to be completed within the lifetime of the plan; however, it is acknowledged that some actions are ongoing, and that many will require a partnership approach to deliver. The actions outlined are ambitious yet achievable. Ensuring adequate resourcing, as well as a focus on internal and external collaboration, is key to the success of the Omagh Place Shaping Plan.

### 6.2 Collaborative Approach

This plan is for the town of Omagh, for those living, working and studying in the town. The goal is to make Omagh a better, more vibrant, more attractive place. Collaboration is essential to enable this ambition to be achieved. While Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will lead implementation of the plan, the roadmap for delivery outlined in the coming pages includes many partners, each of which are deemed to be essential for success.

### 6.3 Review and Monitoring

This plan covers a 12-year period until 2035. Two years ago, we were not aware of the joint Covid-19 and Ukraine crises and there are likely to be many further economic and social changes over the coming years. It is critical that Omagh is positioned for change and becomes more resilient. In turn it is essential that this plan is flexible and takes account of change. For that reason, it is proposed that this be a live document and that a mid-point review is undertaken. This is considered particularly important in the context of the relocation of schools to the Strule Shared Education Campus, proposed for 2026.

### 6.4 Action Plan

The sections outlined on the coming pages identify, for each action and associated best ideas the key support partners, timescales for delivery and suggested key milestones . The impact of each action will be monitored through identified performance  measures.

A timeframe is provided for actions in terms of Short (2023-2024), Medium (2025-2028) and Long (2029-2035).

Abbreviations

FODC: Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

DE: Department of Education

MOD: Ministry of Defence

DfI: Department for Infrastructure

DfC: Department for Communities

DoH: Department of Health

EA: Education Authority NI

SWC: South West College

OEC: Omagh Enterprise Company

INI: Invest NI

WHSCT: Western Health and Social Care Trust

DAERA: Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

| ACTIONS AND BEST IDEAS | LEAD PARTNER(S) | TIMELINE | KEY MILESTONES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A Green Heart** - Capitalising on the natural environment including in the town itself and the surrounding countryside | | | |
| **Action 1:** Ensure our open spaces and parks are accessible, sustainable and attractive<br>**Best idea 1:** Arleston Park Enhancement | FODC<br>DfC | Short – studies<br>Medium - Implement | Arleston Park Landscape strategy commissioned and recommendations implemented |
| **Action 2:** Invest in urban greening infrastructure to promote Omagh as a resilient and sustainable place<br>**Best Idea 1:** Native Trees and SuDS<br>**Best Idea 2:** Gateway Planting | FODC<br>DfC<br>DfI | Ongoing | Key green infrastructure measures implemented and incorporated into new development |
| **A Beautiful Place** – Reimagining Omagh town centre as a more attractive and animated place | | | |
| **Action 3:** Work to transform Omagh town centre into a more attractive and vibrant place<br>**Best Idea 1:** Phased and trial pedestrianisation of High Street (Scarffe's Entry to Courthouse) and Bridge Street.<br>**Best Idea 2:** Redesign of Drumragh Avenue-Bridge Street-Mountjoy Road junction<br>**Best Idea 3:** Town Centre Lighting Strategy | FODC<br>DfI<br>DfC | Short - Trial<br>Medium - Implement | Phased/trial pedestrianisation undertaken followed by implementation<br>Drumragh Avenue-Bridge Street-Mountjoy Road junction redesigned<br>Town Centre Lighting Strategy commissioned and implemented |
| **Action 4:** Support the enhancement of shared and reflective spaces to maximise their use and capacity<br>**Best idea 1:** Oasis Plaza Enhancement<br>**Best idea 2:** Omagh Memorial Garden Enhancement | FODC<br>DfC | Short/Medium | Oasis Plaza Enhancement completed and recommendations implemented<br>Omagh Memorial Garden Enhancement completed and recommendation implemented |
| **Action 5:** Create more attractive places to encourage people to spend longer in the town centre<br>**Best Idea 1:** Liveable laneways<br>**Best Idea 2:** Beautiful buildings - riverside<br>**Best Idea 3:** Beautiful buildings - town centre design guide | FODC<br>DfC | Short/Medium | Progressive laneway enhancement undertaken<br>Riverside town centre buildings repainted<br>Town centre design guide completed |

| ACTIONS AND BEST IDEAS | LEAD PARTNER(S) | TIMELINE | KEY MILESTONES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A Connected People and Place** - Improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the town, linking neighbourhoods and communities with town centre and wider environment | | | |
| **Action 6:** Provide improved linkages and access to the natural and cultural attractions surrounding Omagh Town<br>**Best Idea 1:** Greenway Feasibility Study | FODC<br>Sustrans<br>DfI | Short – studies<br>Medium - Implement | Greenway feasibility studies commissioned and implemented subject to landowner agreement |
| **Action 7:** Seek to maximise the potential of the River Strule as an asset for the town<br>**Best Idea 1:** River Strule Infrastructure | FODC<br>DfI<br>Sustrans<br>Rivers Agency | Short – studies<br>Medium - Implement | Design and Build project commissioned for Omagh Riverside Walkway |
| **Action 8:** Develop an integrated active travel network<br>**Best Idea 1:** Omagh Cycle Network<br>**Best Idea 2:** Park & Cycle Scheme<br>**Best Idea 3:** Walking and Cycling Campaign<br>**Best Idea 4:** Promotion of Bus Service to Ulster American Folk Park | FODC<br>DfI,<br>Sustrans, DoH, DE,<br>EANI, Translink | Short – studies<br>Medium - Implement | Omagh Active Travel Plan commissioned and implemented |
| **Action 9:** Develop and implement a Wayfinding Strategy<br>**Best Idea:** Omagh Wayfinding Strategy | FODC<br>DFC<br>DFI | Short – studies<br>Medium - Implement | Omagh Wayfinding Strategy commissioned and implemented |
| **Action 10:** Provide affordable, accessible and appropriate car parking in Omagh Town and surrounding area<br>**Best Idea 1:** Review and update Omagh Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan<br>»   Rationalisation of Parking Charges<br>»   Car Parking Relocation/Redevelopment<br>»   Digital Information and In-App Signage<br>»   Campervan Hub | FODC<br>DfI | Short | Omagh Car Parks Strategy Review commissioned and implemented |
| **Action 11:** Seek completion of A5 Western Transport Corridor to enable a people-first approach to reallocation of town centre road space<br>**Best idea 1:** Seek completion of A5 Western Transport Corridor<br>**Best Idea 2:** Regional Connectivity<br>**Best idea 3:** A people first approach to reallocation of town centre road space | DfI | Medium-Long | Continued advocacy for implementation of A5WTC<br>Regional connectivity enhancement<br>Key road redesign with people first approach |

| ACTIONS AND BEST IDEAS | LEAD PARTNER(S) | TIMELINE | KEY MILESTONES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **An Inclusive Place -** Ensuring Omagh is an inclusive place with a prosperous, well educated, vibrant and healthy community | | | |
| **Action 12:** Develop and support forums that spark the imagination and listen to the needs of local people and place<br>**Best Idea 1.** Giving youth a voice<br>**Best Idea 2.** Wider citizen engagement | FODC<br>Community Planning Partners<br>CVS Forum | Ongoing | Fermanagh and Omagh Youth Voice and other methods of citizen engagement used to enable input into future place-making discussion |
| **Action 13:** Create places for all, ensuring Omagh is fully inclusive through design and partnership<br>**Best Idea 1:** More inclusive urban design<br>**Best Idea 2:** Providing Housing for All | FODC, DfC<br>CVS Forum<br>NIHE and Housing Associations | Ongoing | Omagh for all approach to inform place-making decisions<br>Mixed use developments enabled to provide for emerging housing needs |
| **A Thriving Place** - Increasing employment opportunities and ensuring supports for existing businesses | | | |
| **Action 14:** Ensure space to grow by enhancing the enterprise ecosystem within Omagh and the wider District<br>**Best Idea 1:** Digital Hubs<br>**Best Idea 2:** Omagh Business Campus | OEC, FODC<br>Invest NI<br>DfE<br>SWC | Short – studies<br>Medium/Long<br>- Implement | Outline business case developed for Digital Hubs and Omagh Business Campus |
| **Action 15:** Develop and progress Omagh as a smart town to support economic growth<br>**Best idea 1:** Gigabit Omagh – Ultra-fast broadband<br>**Best idea 2:** Development of a skills intelligence database<br>**Best idea 3:** Introduction of Smart infrastructure | OEC<br>SWC<br>FODC<br>Invest NI<br>DfE | Short – studies<br>Medium - Implement | Ultrafast broadband usage increased in town centre.<br>Skills intelligence database developed and regularly updated<br>Approach to smart sensor network agreed and roll-out implemented |
| **Action 16:** Capitalise on Omagh's potential through place marketing strategy<br>**Best idea 1:** Inspire-Invest-Innovate Website<br>**Best idea 2:** Omagh Place Marketing Strategy | FODC<br>Invest NI<br>WHSCT<br>OEC | Short-Medium | Inspire-Invest-Innovate Omagh website and marketing strategy commissioned and recommendations implemented |
| **Action 17:** Provide opportunities to put events, including food markets, at the centre of social life<br>**Best idea 1:** A Taste of Omagh<br>**Best idea 2:** Omagh Farmer's Market<br>**Best Idea 3:** Music Festival | FODC, Omagh Chamber, DfC, DAERA, Omagh Community Forum, local businesses, Omagh Town Centre Forum, CVS Forum | Short/Ongoing | Annual Taste of Omagh event organised<br>Monthly Omagh farmers Market organised<br>Omagh Music Festival event organised |

| ACTIONS AND BEST IDEAS | LEAD PARTNER(S) | TIMELINE | KEY MILESTONES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A Vibrant Place -** Identifying how to progress the many opportunity sites located in and around the town | | | |
| **Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites – Best Idea 1<br>**Best idea 1:** Strategic redevelopment and disposal plan for school sites | Joint Working Group<br>FODC, DE, DfI, EANI, School Trustees | Medium-Long | Strategic demolition and disposal plan prepared and implemented |
| **Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites – Best Idea 2<br>**Best idea 2.** Arleston House | FODC | Short-Medium | Intervention to stabilise Arleston House<br>Expressions of interest sought from private sector hotel operators<br>Public-private partnership venture considered |
| **Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites – Best Idea 3<br>**Best idea 3:** Lisnamallard House | FODC | Short-Medium | Lisnamallard House design commissioned and implemented |
| **Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites – Best Idea 4<br>**Best idea 4:** St Lucia | DfI<br>MOD<br>FODC | Medium-Long | St Lucia site activated |
| **Action 18:** Work collaboratively with partner organisations to realise the redevelopment and alternative uses of current and future vacant sites – Best Idea 5<br>**Best idea 5:** Former Scott's Mills | Landowners<br>FODC<br>DfC | Medium-Long | Scott's Mills site activated |
| **Action 19:** Work to restore, revive and promote our unique built heritage in the town centre and develop their use and appeal<br>**Best idea:** Omagh Courthouse | NICTS<br>DoJ<br>FODC<br>DfC | Short | Courthouse Use Analysis completed |
| **Action 20:** Undertake an Omagh Adaptive Re-use Pilot Study<br>**Best idea:** Adaptive Re-Use Study | FODC<br>DfC<br>Property Owners | Ongoing | Adaptive Re-use Pilot Study undertaken |

# Appendix 1: Consultees

KPMG Future Analytics engaged with a wide range of individuals, companies and agencies to inform the preparation of this plan between February and May 2022.

We would like to sincerely thank all of those who engaged in discussion. These conversations provided a wide range of valuable insights which have helped to shape and provide context for recommendations.

| Organisation | Political Party/ Organisation |
|---|---|
| Councillors | Steering Group |
| Chief Executive | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |
| Rural Affairs | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs |
| Director of Transport | Department for Infrastructure |
| Regional Business Manager | Invest Northern Ireland |
| Director of Regional Services | Northern Ireland Housing Executive |
| District Commander Fermanagh & Omagh | Police Service of Northern Ireland |
| Director for Area Planning | Department of Education |
| Vice Chair | South West Age Partnership / Community Voluntary Sector Forum |
| Transport Division | Department for Infrastructure |
| Transport Division | Department for Infrastructure |
| Pathfinder Lead | Western Health & Social Care Trust |
| Regional Manager | Tourism Northern Ireland |
| Shared Education Campus Business Change Manager | Department of Education |
| Chief Executive | Omagh Enterprise Agency |
| Inspector | Police Service of Northern Ireland |
| Lecturer | Ulster University |
| Lecturer | Ulster University |
| Director of Corporate Services and Governance | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |
| Director of Community, Health and Leisure | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |

| Organisation | Political Party/ Organisation |
|---|---|
| Director of Environment and Place | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |
| Director of Regeneration and Planning | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |
| Education Authority | Omagh Academy/Omagh High School |
| Trustee | Loreto Grammer School |
| Trustee | Loreto Grammer School |
| Trustee | Sacred Heart College |
| Head of Faculty | South West College |
| CVS Forum Representative | FOCUS (Forum in Omagh for Community Understanding & Support |
| CVS Forum Representative | Omagh Rural Community Network |
| Senior Business Development Officer | South West College |
| Business Development Officer | South West College |
| Rivers Agency | Department for Infrastructure |
| Active Travel Officer -SW | Sustrans |
| Owner | Silverbirch Hotel |
| Biodiversity Officer | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |
| Director | Ballymore Services NI |
| Land & Property Advisor | Strategic Investment Board |
| Business Development Officer | Omagh Chamber of Commerce |
| Int Marketing Manager | Telestack |
| Business Owner | Nature Trail |
| Business Owner | Software Company |

## Appendix 2: SCOT Analysis Detail

### OMAGH'S STRENGTHS

#### LOCATION

» Strategic location along the A5 Western Economic Corridor and is well connected with Derry, Belfast and Dublin

» Recognised as Main Hub within the NI Regional Development Strategy 2035 and as a Main Town within the FODC Corporate Plan 2020-2024

» Situated on River Strule, providing an attractive riverscape environment

» Close proximity to a beautiful rural landscape including the Sperrin Mountains and Gortin Glen Forest Park, as well as the Ulster American Folk Park

» Areas of the town score highly in relation to living environment, access to services and low levels of crime

» Appealing built environment with attractive heritage buildings on High Street and Market Street

» Attractive green space between Old Mountfield Road and Camowen River

#### EDUCATION & SKILLS

» Strong education provision with range of schools at primary and post-primary level, and further and higher education provided through South West College campus

» High proportion of school leavers entering higher level and further level education in recent years with positive trends in educational achievement

» Strule educational campus will be largest shared campus in Northern Ireland and one of largest in Europe

#### COMMUNITY & SERVICES

» Good services provision and investment in public infrastructure

» Good availability of broadband including through the Project Kelvin fibre-optic cable

» Strong sense of community, with historical and cultural sense of place within town and surrounding landscapes

» Award winning Strule Arts Centre providing contemporary arts venue and conference centre

» Good culture of sport and home to Tyrone GAA, which attracts significant levels of visitors on matchdays

## OMAGH'S STRENGTHS

### ACCESSIBILITY

» Compact town centre with strong potential for walking and cycling

» Significant number of off-street parking spaces within 10 minutes' walk of centre

### ECONOMY

» Clear role as economic, educational and public services hub for wider hinterland

» Strong local business community, diverse range of independent shops and large retailers with little trade leakage

» Strong entrepreneurial environment: Almost 1 in 5 people are self-employed and 91% of businesses survive their first year

» Vibrant night-time economy and purple flag award

» Sectoral strengths and clusters around agri-food/business, advanced engineering and construction, and manufacturing

» Omagh's town centre commercial vacancy rate below NI average

» Omagh selected as location for Northern Ireland Civil Service Connect2 Regional Hub as part of Civil Service's approach to hybrid working

## OMAGH'S CHALLENGES

### ACCESSIBILITY

» No rail access and lack of access to motorways and dual carriageways

» Infrequent and uncompetitive travel times in relation to public transport

» Lack of cycling infrastructure and gaps in footpath provision (including narrow footpaths) curtail uptake of active modes of transport (walking and cycling)

» Traffic congestion exacerbated by complex one-way system in the town centre

» Perception there is not enough car parking despite significant availability of spaces

» Poor signage and linkages for car parks in town centre, coupled with complex one-way system contributes to potential underutilisation of existing car parks

» Lack of permeability along riverside, particularly to connect town centre to Strule Campus

» Majority riverside businesses turning backs to the river

» Linkages with town centre and design of signage in parks could be improved

### COMMUNITY AND POPULATION

» High levels of deprivation in certain areas of the town

» Omagh has slightly lower levels of individuals stating they are in very good or good health and higher levels stating they are in bad or very bad health when compared to NI average (2011 census)

» Significant gap in achievement for those from disadvantaged backgrounds in relation to income, employment and education

» Overall population indicators point to decline in population since 2001, low levels of population growth since 2011 and an increasingly ageing population

» Significant decrease in key working cohort of people aged 16-39 since 2001

## OMAGH'S CHALLENGES

### ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

» Residents of Fermanagh and Omagh District fall below Northern Ireland average for employment and economic activity

» Majority of businesses in Omagh are micro and small enterprises

» Decrease in number of employee jobs and businesses in comparison to 2011

» Lack of significant evening economy despite vibrant night-life in certain parts of the town

» Limited FDI attracted to town and small number of investor visits

» Poor linkage between Omagh and Ulster American Folk Park means town economy does not significantly benefit from visitors to the park

» Lack of significant tourism footfall within town

» Hotel and food offering could be enhanced

» 2020 Retail Needs Assessment found that there was no capacity for additional convenience and comparison goods floorspace in Omagh through to 2030

» Perceived lack of career opportunities leads to migration of younger cohorts.

### EDUCATION AND SKILLS

» Underachievement is evident, with Omagh overall still having a lower level of educational qualification attainment than Northern Ireland average

» Significant gap in educational achievement in those from most disadvantaged backgrounds

# OMAGH'S OPPORTUNITIES

## ECONOMY

» Enhance innovation across leading sectors to increase large businesses within the town and encourage investment within these sectors

» Build on existing strengths and clusters around advanced engineering & manufacturing, agri-food, and construction

» Capitalise on opportunities arising from Northern Ireland's position in relation to EU Exit e.g. cross-border opportunities for agri-food sector

» Encourage economic growth of existing SMEs, encourage SME start-up, and business investment including provision of infrastructure such as enterprise working hubs

» Increase serviced industrial land to attract investment and allow for expansion of existing businesses

» Increase collaboration between industry and academia to increase research and development in Omagh and embrace new technology and approaches

» Capitalise on enhanced education provision through Strule Shared Education Campus, continue to invest infrastructure to support skills development

» Capitalise on accelerated transition to remote/hybrid forms of working

## COMMUNITY

» Deepen collaboration between partner organisations and key stakeholders to ensure maximised service delivery

## OPPORTUNITY SITES

» Significant potential to transform Omagh through identification and implementation of appropriate uses for vacated opportunity sites to shape future growth and prosperity

» Opportunities related to vacated school sites within town centre, in particular residential, commercial leisure, tourism and cultural/community facilities

» Lisnamallard House and Arleston House represent opportunities to further develop accommodation and hospitality offering

» Potential for serviced business sites on existing and future opportunity sites in town centre

## OMAGH'S OPPORTUNITIES

### ACCESSIBILITY & PUBLIC REALM

» Position Omagh as a town with high quality of life based on natural environment

» Improve riverside buildings and make further use of river as a natural asset through increased accessibility and permeability

» Improve public realm through increased greening and street furniture to create an accessible environment contributing to increased footfall

» Potential to improve linkages between town centre and green space between Old Mountfield Road and the Camowen River

» Increase pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to capitalise on compact nature of town, encouraging active transport and reduce traffic congestion.

» Develop stronger links between existing car parks and town centre through better signage and adequate provision for walking.

» Opportunity to rationalise/relocate some car parks further from town centre.

» Review complex one-way system identified as contributing to traffic congestion and improve public transport

» Opportunity for pedestrianisation of part of town centre

» Improve permeability of streets via public realm implementations to 'open' up unsafe side-streets with street lighting and improve pedestrian pathways.

» Improve signage of the town, developing a unique design that personifies the character and heritage of Omagh

### TOURISM

» Potential for tourism to grow particularly within the town

» Improve the marketing of the tourism amenities that Omagh has to offer, such as Sperrin Mountains and the Ulster American Folk Park

» Opportunity to improve accessibility from the town to surrounding tourism amenities such as the Folk Park and Sperrin Mountains via sustainable forms of transport such as greenways, improved cycling infrastructure, and improved pedestrian infrastructure

» Strengthen and capitalise on local culture through better promotion of events and the Strule Arts Centre

## OMAGH'S THREATS

### INFRASTRUCTURE

» Delay in completing A5 hindering potential for Omagh, and resulting in high levels of traffic passing through the town with impacts on pollution (noise and particulate matter).

### COMMUNITY

» Low population growth and decreases in key working age cohorts which may lead to further decline in the town.

» Disadvantaged areas in the town could lead to further deprivation if not adequately addressed.

» Ageing population which may put pressure on healthcare provision and services.

### EU EXIT AND COVID—19

» Economic volatility and uncertainty arising from EU Exit will impact a number of sectors and may detract from investment.

» Staffing shortages resulting from EU Exit could threaten key sectors such as retail, hospitality, manufacturing and agri-foods.

» Loss of access to EU Funding resulting in funding gap in Northern Ireland including in relation to SME supports and unemployment programmes.

» Long-term impact of COVID-19 on local businesses remains uncertain

## OMAGH'S THREATS

### ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

» Low levels of investment and associated lack of employment opportunities within Omagh may lead to further migration of graduates and young people.

» Large public sector employment means the local economy could be significantly impacted by public sector budget cuts

» Online shopping continues to threaten the vitality of the high-street with retail a key sector in Omagh.

» Lower economic activity and employment rates than Northern Ireland average coupled with identified decrease in employee jobs could lead to further economic decline if not addressed.

» Inflation and rising costs will impact a number of sectors and consumer spending

» Automation may lead to job losses in certain sectors

» Limited provision of serviced Industrial Land

### TOWN CENTRE

» Several large sites becoming vacant in the town and risk remaining vacant. If opportunity sites lie vacant for a significant amount of time, it could threaten the vitality and vibrancy of Omagh's town centre.

» Climate change and risk of flooding in town centre, impacting riverside development

» Environmental and health impact resulting from high rate of car use and congestion.

### EDUCATION AND SKILLS

» Lower overall educational attainment than Northern Ireland average threatens ability of Omagh to attract investment despite positive trends. If not addressed, the significant gap in educational achievement for those that are from the most disadvantaged backgrounds may lead to increased levels of deprivation.

» Failure to embrace new technologies and skills could lead to a more uncompetitive workforce.