



Omagh

Updated Town Centre Masterplan

The Paul Hogarth Company
for
Omagh District Council

March 2015

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Omagh

Omagh, the bustling county town of Tyrone, has a long established history associated with its strategic riverside location and rural farming economy. Its iconic spires, fine courthouse and gently flowing river represent a vibrant urban centre that continues to provide the focus for commercial, cultural and educational activity in the area.

In recent years, Omagh Town Centre has undergone a transformation, symbolic of that seen across Northern Ireland (NI). An enhanced High Street, improved transport connections and award winning Arts Centre have become the signature of a prosperous and peaceful town centre. Today, Omagh looks set to continue upon that journey with major new opportunities for development and regeneration emerging right in the heart of the town.

1.2 Background

In 2008, with increased developer interest in the town centre and the anticipated release of substantial areas of former army lands, the Department for Social Development (DSD) commissioned The Paul Hogarth Company to prepare a Masterplan for Omagh Town Centre. The Masterplan was published in January 2009 and set out key objectives for the regeneration of Omagh as well as a series of site specific proposals to achieve these objectives.

Since 2009, the economic downturn has impacted considerably on Omagh's public and private sector and whilst town centre regeneration works have continued, many of the proposals outlined in the 2009 Masterplan have remained undelivered.

It is within this context that Omagh District Council commissioned a study to update the 2009 Masterplan. Working collaboratively with the public and private sector, the town's current position has been re-evaluated, while the impact that new opportunities have had on the overall vision for the future has been assessed.

Furthermore, with the imminent transfer of planning powers to the new Councils in April 2015, this updated Masterplan will inform and provide a central resource for the new Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Community Plan and Local Development Plan. As an integrated development strategy, it will help inform future decision making on the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration initiatives in Omagh over the next fifteen to twenty years.



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1.3 Methodology

This updated Masterplan for Omagh Town Centre was prepared by an experienced, multidisciplinary consultant team. Urban Designers and Landscape Architects, The Paul Hogarth Company, led the team and were joined by other consultancies representing the broad range of skills and expertise necessary for town centre regeneration.

Masterplanning The Paul Hogarth Company

Economics RSM McClure Watters

Transportation JMP

Costs WYG

Health Check / Promotion / Tourism
Place Solutions

Planning & Retail Capacity
Strategic Planning

The team was commissioned in October 2014 and undertook a five month programme structured along the following key stages:

- A. Desktop Research
- B. Site Appraisal
- C. Stakeholder Consultation
- D. Concept Development
- E. Draft Masterplan
- F. Public Consultation
- G. Finalised Masterplan and Action Plan



2.0 Omagh in Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the scene of Omagh Town Centre today in relation to its physical and historical context and presents analysis findings on its urban form and socio-economic profile.

2.2 Geography

Omagh is located in the west of NI in the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains where the Camowen and Drumragh rivers meet to form the River Strule.

Omagh (deriving from the Gaelic An Ómaigh) is in some ways a typical Ulster Market Town with its townscape centred around the High Street which runs parallel to the River Strule. Campsie and Market Street occupy the low ground at the confluence of the rivers while High Street sweeps up to the western higher ground of John Street and George Street where the churches dominate the skyline. Castle Street slopes down to Abbey Bridge where the topography rises steeply again to St Lucia which commands a prominent location overlooking the Strule floodplains and out towards the Sperrins.

As identified in the Tyrone and Sperrins Destination Management Plan, Omagh is situated in close proximity to several major visitor destinations, including the Sperrins, Gortin Glen & the Ulster American Folk Park. Considerable scope exists to capitalise on this by targeting niche markets and increasing visitor numbers and dwell time in Omagh town centre.

With the proposed development of the A5 Western Transport Corridor, Omagh will occupy a strategic position within the region and will benefit from enhanced links with Derry, Dublin and Belfast.

Finally, following the reform of local government in NI, consideration must be given to Omagh's position within the new Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area.



2.3 History

The banks of the River Strule were almost certainly settled before Omagh's comparatively recent history which begins as an O'Neill Stronghold with a castle built in the Market Street area in the 1430's. Contemporaries of the O'Neill's, the Franciscan Friars of the third Order Regular constructed a Friary at the top of the town which is now Abbey Street. The names Abbey and Castle Street remain to reference the town's early 15th century history.

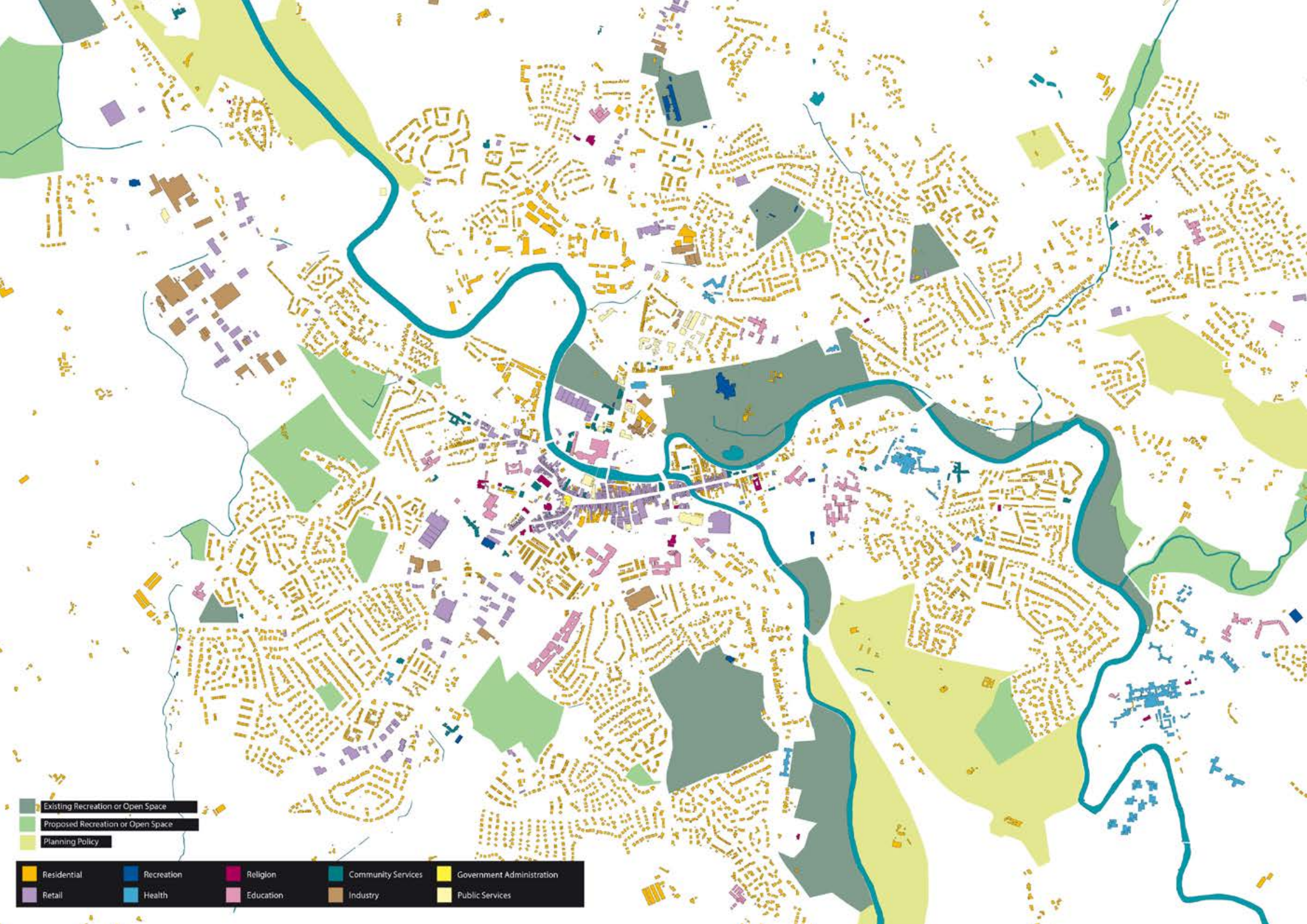
Omagh started to expand during the plantation of Ulster when a fort was built in the area of the Friary. In 1689 the fort was held and then burnt by retreating Jacobites. A second accidental fire in 1742 destroyed all landmarks from before that time apart from King James' bridge.

By 1768 Omagh had assumed the status of County Town and in the early 19th century, Bells Bridge, Campsie Bridge and the courthouse (designed by John Hargrave) were constructed.

The later 19th century saw the construction of churches on the high ground behind the Courthouse. These buildings were strong features in this part of the town and the asymmetric spires of the Sacred Heart (1893-1899 by William Hogue) and the gothic St Columba's Church of Ireland Spire (1870 by J E Rodgers) still dominate Omagh's skyline both in and around the town.

The agricultural nature of the area ensured that Omagh thrived with markets and fairs and the introduction of the railway signalled a time of great growth until its eventual closure in 1965.

Omagh's recent history has been blighted by a bomb explosion in 1998 in the town centre. With thirty-one people killed, this was the single largest loss of life in NI's recent Troubles. However, since then Omagh and its community have been working on recovery and the phase of development that has taken place over the first fifteen years of this century, has transformed the Town. These transformational developments include the Strule Arts Centre, the OASIS (Omagh Accessible Shared Inclusive Space) Plaza and the network of high quality riverside walk and cycle paths.



- Existing Recreation or Open Space
- Proposed Recreation or Open Space
- Planning Policy

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Residential | Recreation | Religion | Community Services | Government Administration |
| Retail | Health | Education | Industry | Public Services |

2.4 Urban Form

Built Form

The existing built form in Omagh has developed around the central spine of High Street, Market Street and Campsie, with High Street remaining the town's principal thoroughfare and commercial centre. A defined area of narrow streets to the rear of the landmark Courthouse are an important quality of central Omagh.

However beyond this central spine the built form becomes more fractured, symptomatic of 20th Century development and the impact of car dominated roads, such as the Great Northern Road (Throughpass), Kevlin Avenue and Drumragh Avenue severs pedestrian movement. Furthermore, the river and associated floodplain and former military sites also restrict pedestrian movement, increasing reliance on the car.

Land Use

Omagh's centre primarily consists of a compact retail dominated core, with some office provision located throughout. A relatively high number of bars and pubs are also centrally located, helping to animate the town centre in the evening.

Housing areas close to the centre remain on Gallows Hill, Johnston Park, Derry Road and Campsie. The needs of these communities must be considered carefully in relation to town centre development, with the quality of linkages to and from them of particular consideration.

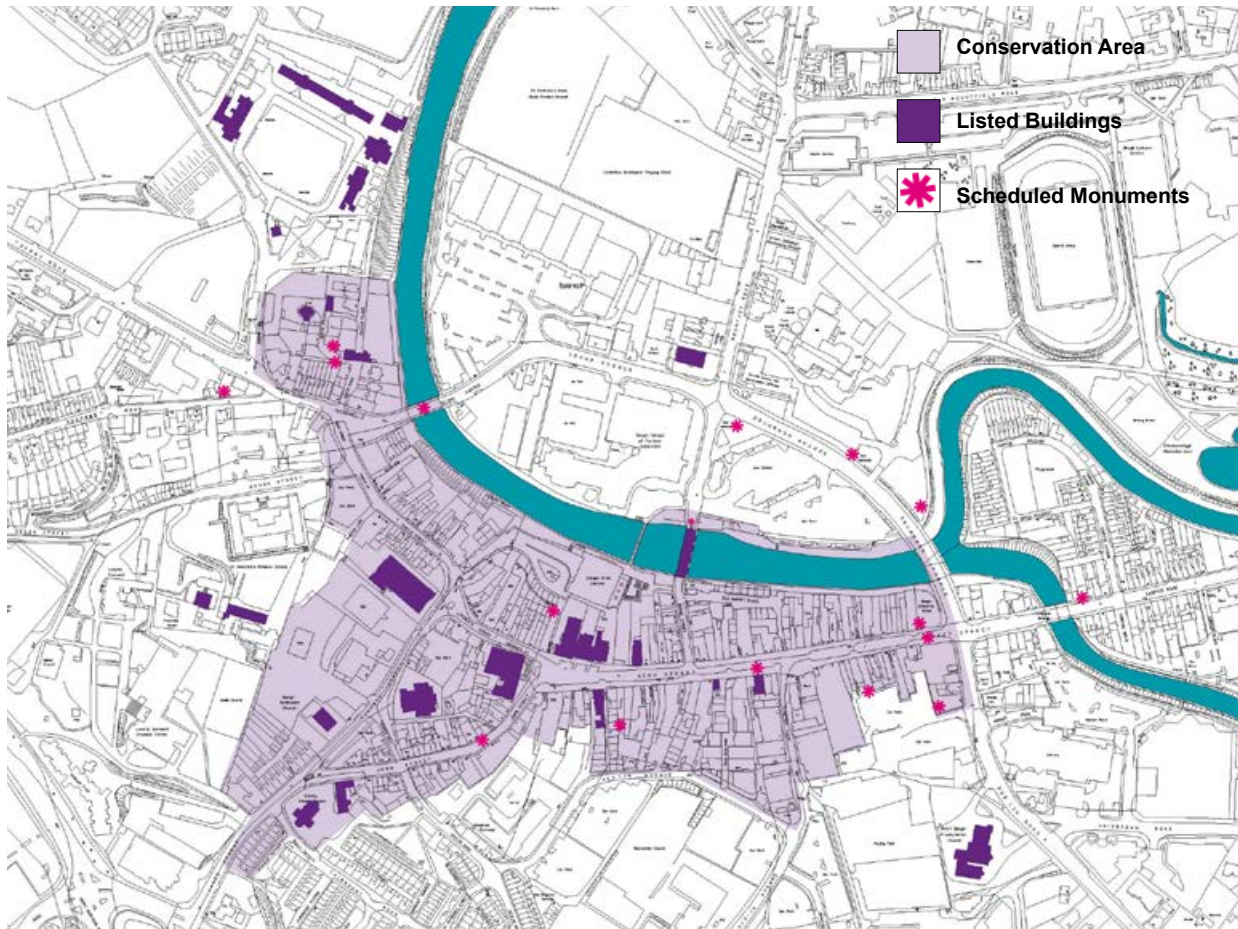
There are several major secondary schools centrally located in the town which contribute to town centre vibrancy. Following the proposed relocation of these schools to the Shared Educational Campus at Lisanelly, the remaining sites will offer significant development potential in the town centre.

Open Space

Omagh has a number of open spaces located in close proximity to the town centre. However, a lack of physical connections between them and the town centre creates a perception of insufficient open space provision.

The rivers are attractive natural features, but currently play a limited role for recreational and leisure purposes. Riverside developments such as the Strule Arts Centre, highlight the potential for Omagh's rivers to play a much greater role in the life of the town.

Investment in Omagh's public realm, particularly along its High Street, has raised the environmental quality of Omagh's town centre, while the OASIS development will contribute to the provision of high quality flexible event space. On the other hand, however, many of the town centre car parks are of a low environmental quality, reflecting a poor image of Omagh to its residents and visitors.



2.4 Urban Form (continued)

Conservation

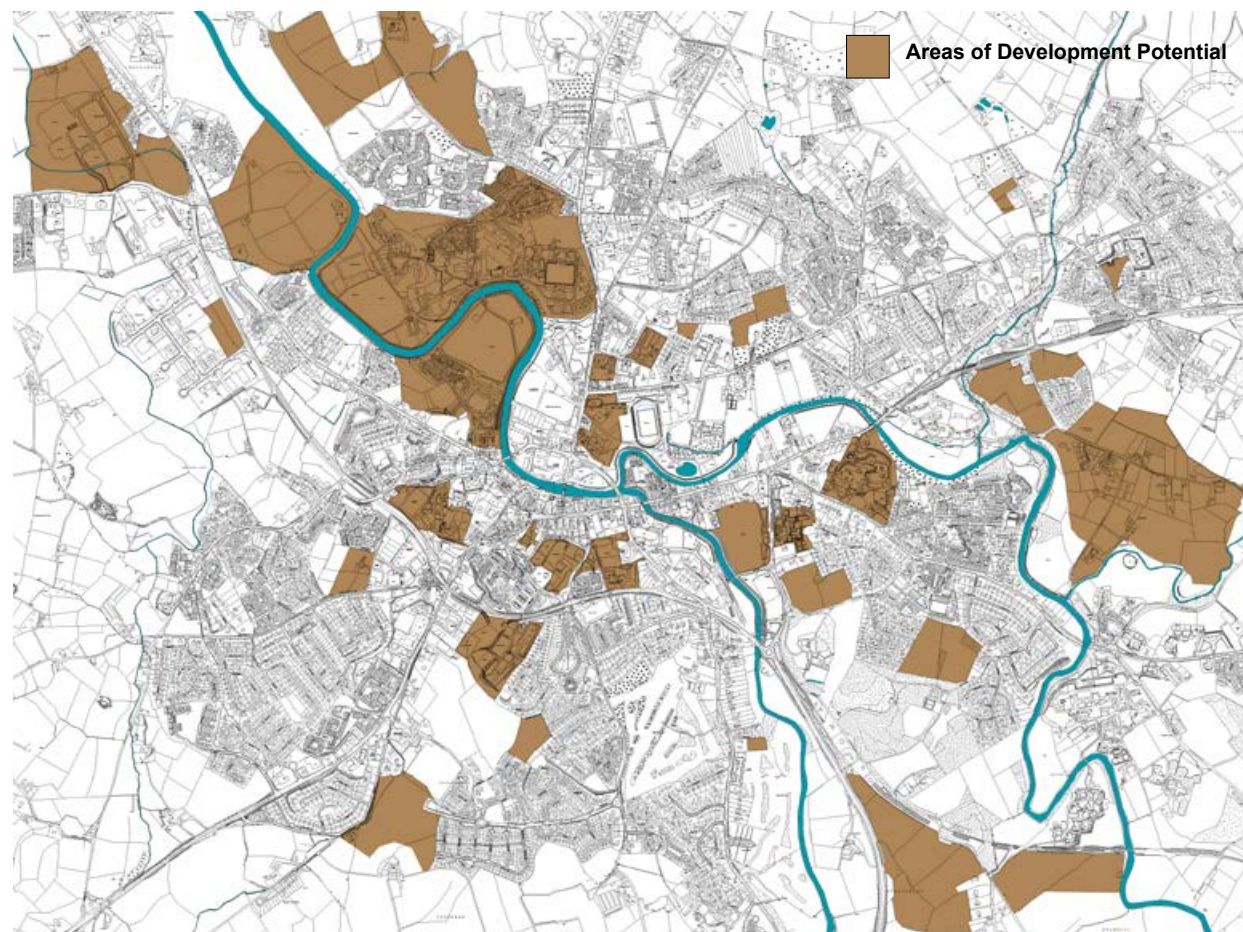
The conservation area is contained within the envelope of the designated town centre, with the River Strule to the north side, Drumragh Avenue and Dublin Road to the east and Kevlin Avenue to the south. A series of listed buildings and scheduled monuments are scattered throughout the town centre, which significantly contribute to the quality and character of this central core.

The Churches Area, situated behind the impressive Courthouse building, has a special architectural quality due to its fine urban character, narrow streets and its elevated location. The quality of this area is further heightened by the landmark church spires which provide impressive views throughout the town centre and dominate the skyline beyond the extents of the town.

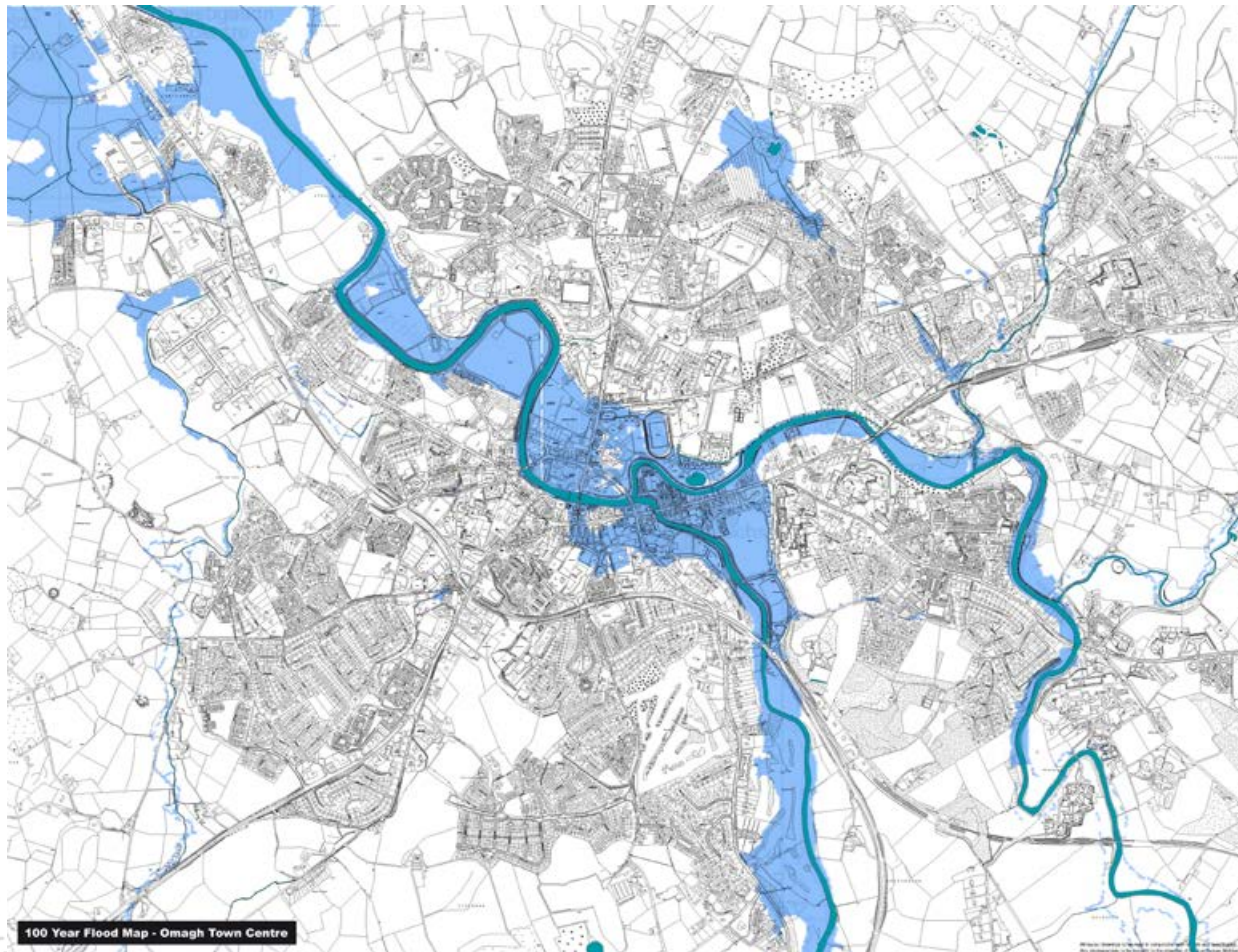
Development Potential

Omagh has a large number of potential development sites within the town centre, illustrated on the adjacent plan, including the former Scott's Mill on Mountjoy Road and several surface level car parks with development potential. The former military sites at St Lucia and Lisanelly in particular offer enormous potential for development.

Furthermore, the relocation of schools to the shared educational campus at Lisanelly, would result in the release of several town centre school sites, thereby providing considerable additional development potential in the town centre.







2.4 Urban Form (continued)

Flooding

As a result of more sophisticated flood modelling techniques, a greatly heightened awareness of the risk of flooding facing Omagh, particularly in the town centre, has emerged.

In order to address this issue, the responsible authorities, particularly Rivers Agency, are investigating strategic flood alleviation measures such as the development of retention ponds and flood defence systems.

The revised Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning and Flood Risk sets out a series of objectives to minimise and manage flood risk. These objectives include:

- preventing development in flood risk areas
- precautionary approach to identify development land
- mitigation measures to manage flooding

2.5 Socio-Economic Profile

This section outlines the socio-economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Omagh Town, which the updated Masterplan must be cognisant of.

Strengths

- The Omagh District Council area has a comparatively younger population than the NI average. This is forecast to grow further over the coming years.
- While the current working age population of 16-65 has a high rate of individuals with no qualifications, the rates of attainment among school leavers in the Omagh District Council area are improving significantly.
- Strong manufacturing sector within the Omagh District Council area.

Weaknesses

- Employment within the Omagh District Council area is overly dependent on the public services of Health and Education.
- The private sector in the Omagh District Council area is overly dependent on the agricultural, construction and retail sectors.
- Average earnings in the Omagh District Council area are low compared to NI, and the UK.
- There is very limited tradition of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) within the Omagh District Council area.
- The Omagh District Council area is experiencing higher levels of unemployment relative to the rest of NI.

Opportunities

- Local Government Reform will see the new Fermanagh and Omagh District Council gain a greater measure of powers relating to planning and economic development.
- The development of the A5/N2 dual carriageway will significantly improve connectivity between Omagh and Dublin & the rest of ROI.
- The lower wage costs in Omagh can be utilised to attract firms seeking to reduce labour costs.
- Potential for alignment between 2 largest sectors (agriculture and manufacturing)

Threats

- Significant levels of deprivation remain in particular pockets of Omagh Town and the wider area.
- The overall NI economy is highly dependent on the public sector. UK-wide austerity measures are likely to present a significant constraint on the growth of the NI economy.
- While the younger emerging workforce is more skilled, with a higher level of qualifications than previously, to a large extent these skills are not matched by the current and emerging employment sectors in the area. This is leading to “Brain Drain” in the District Council area.

Summary

Given Omagh’s high dependence on sectors that have limited growth prospects (i.e. public sector, construction, retail and manufacturing), Omagh and its surrounding area is likely to experience continued challenging economic conditions in the short to medium term.

Consequently, where possible, the Masterplan should promote development of spaces and infrastructure that facilitate:

- opportunities to develop a more diversified (and greater value added) local economy (e.g. through providing for the location of office facilities within the town centre, thereby supporting the growth of the local service sector and contributing to the vitality to the town);
- the maintenance of existing jobs and the attraction of new jobs in sectors where the area has developed long standing skills/ resource (e.g. the public sector);
- significant development of the town’s tourism and hospitality offerings;
- improved accessibility to and attractiveness/ competitiveness of the town centre; and
- development and growth of the area’s agriculture, manufacturing and agri-food sectors.



2.6 Retail Capacity

Omagh is the largest and most central town in the county of Tyrone, with Strabane the nearest comparable provincial town, a thirty-minute drive away, and Derry, the nearest city, a fifty minute drive north.

There are currently 354 businesses throughout the town, with a strong mix of both independent retailers and multinational chains, largely concentrated on High Street, Market Street, and at the Showground's Retail Park.

Retail vacancy rates in Omagh town centre sits below the NI Average of 19%. However, a recent report compiled by the local planning division indicates that, over recent years, town centre vacancy rates have risen, broadly reflecting the difficulties faced by many high street retailers.

In spite of the town's strong retail offer, Omagh still lacks many of the leading retail names that are in comparable provincial towns.

However, at Easter 2015, Primark is scheduled to open a new store which will enhance the retail quality and choice for shoppers. This will help to create linked shopping trips and attract a wider catchment to the town centre.

Analysis of Omagh's retail capacity has been informed by an assessment of population, retail expenditure and a 2013 Town Centre Shopper Survey.

The result of this analysis show that there is a small amount (1,000m2) of expenditure capacity in the catchment area to support comparison retail floorspace over the next 15 years (see table below).

Retail Type	Comparison
Total Available Expenditure 2029	£272,777,742
Estimated Turnover (£/sqm) 2029	£6,276
Sales Floorspace Supported by Expenditure	43461m2
Existing Sales Floorspace 2014	37,521m2
Sales Floorspace Commitments 2014	4,930m2
Total Sales Floorspace 2014	42,451m2
Additional Sales Floorspace needed by 2029	1,010m2

However, in relation to expenditure capacity for convenience retail, analysis indicates that the existing amount of retail floorspace including commitments, far exceeds what the current level of expenditure can support (see table below).

Retail Type	Convenience
Total Available Expenditure 2029	£97,872,565
Estimated Turnover (£/sqm) 2029	£8,494
Sales Floorspace Supported by Expenditure	11,523m2
Existing Sales Floorspace 2014	21,126m2
Sales Floorspace Commitments 2014	9,009m2
Total Sales Floorspace 2014	30,135m2
Additional Sales Floorspace needed by 2029	-18,612m2

Whilst quantitative analysis shows that there is only limited capacity to support further retail development in the catchment area, this does not necessarily mean that further retail development should be prevented. The 2013 Shopper Survey showed that just over one third of those interviewed in Omagh Town Centre had travelled to the town for shopping purposes, which suggests that there is a need to improve the quality of retail development and this is strongly supported in current planning policy and legislation.

2.7 Town Centre Health Check

The Town Centre Health Check was conducted to assess the “vitality” (how busy a town centre is), and “viability” (its capacity to attract ongoing investment for maintenance, improvement and adaptation to changing retail needs) of Omagh town centre.

The main findings from the Health Check are set out under the following headings:

Demographic Profile

- The resident population of the Omagh town centre is estimated to be 16,124 (2011 Census based on wards) which is a decrease of 1,035 people (6.03%) from 2003.
- 60% of the population (6,266 people) aged 16-74 who live in Omagh are economically active, which is slightly lower than the NI average, while 5.43% were unemployed, which is slightly higher than the NI average of 4.96%. These figures mask the areas of high unemployment in the town (Lisanelly - 7.99%).

Town Centre Environment

- The main shopping streets in Omagh are non-pedestrianised, with several having benefited from a public realm refurbishment.
- Modern public space provision is currently limited but will be addressed through the OASIS Plaza.
- A first impressions survey noted that Omagh town centre was extremely litter and graffiti free.
- A survey of buildings and shop fronts in the town centre identified that in the main shopping area there were few empty buildings and general good frontage condition.

Economic Vitality

- Prime retail rents were in the region of £25 - 40 per sq. ft.
- Footfall is strong during the week/term-time due to the schools and college.
- There are only about four retail units vacant in the prime retail area.
- There are currently 354 businesses throughout the town, with the retail sector dominated by Health, Beauty & Pharmacies (66) and Retail Fashion (52).

Office and Commercial

- There are forty-seven businesses in the commercial/business services or professional sector, which represented 37% of the total amount of businesses operating within the town.
- There are a relatively high percentage of small businesses and professional services operating within the town centre boundary. They represent a diverse range of small locally owned businesses operating out of converted residential properties or purpose built office space.
- Omagh has a good level of local service provision such as banks, insurance and community services.

Leisure and Hospitality Offer

- There are sixty-seven businesses in the leisure and hospitality sector. This is dominated by food and drink (62). There is one fitness and leisure outlet, three entertainment venues and one accommodation provider.

Residential

- According to the 2011 Census, there were 6,626 households in Omagh.

Safety

- Crime statistics for Omagh (May 2013 to August 2014) show there were 3,432 recorded crimes.
- 1,507 of these, 44%, were anti-social behaviour.

User Perceptions

- The most common purpose for visiting the area was “work / school in the area” (41%), followed by “shopping/buying something” (38%), “passing through to get elsewhere”, (18%), eating /drinking (15%), using legal services (7%) and health and beauty (4%).
- Just under half of the shoppers coming to the town centre were from the town. The remaining visitors travelled from Fintona (24%), Dromore (12%), Carrickmore (12%), Ballygawley (10%) and Enniskillen (2%).
- Almost half of shoppers (48%) visit the town centre at least once per week. A further 33% visit the area at least once per month with the remaining 19% visiting less than once per month.
- When asked what type of business they intended to visit the most popular Restaurant / Takeaway / Bars with 38%, followed by newsagents (14%), office (solicitors) (14%) and health and beauty / hairdressing (12%).



2.8 Tourism

The initial findings from the Tourism Sectoral Report are as follows:

- The latest 2013 Tourism NI figures which represent the new Fermanagh/Omagh Council estimate hotel bed spaces for the region to be 1,094. However, a significant proportion of these are in the Fermanagh area.
- The 2013 figures also estimate that there are 3,111 B&B, Guesthouse, Guest Accommodation and Self-Catering units within the new Council area. However, again these are predominantly found in Fermanagh.
- The new Council area tourism offering generated £86.3m spend in 2013 and attracted 364,682 trips, which is up 24% on the previous year and represents 9% of the total trips to NI. Almost two thirds of overnight trips can be attributed to the domestic market.

Opportunities for Tourism Growth

The following opportunities for growth will contribute significantly to widening the town's offer and its ability to position itself as a visitor destination. It is vital that the potential for tourism growth is assessed within the overall regeneration aims and objectives identified in the masterplanning process.

- Proximity to the Sperrins is a compelling offer for visitors- heritage based tourism alongside the wider "Tyrone experience".
- Outdoor activities. The positioning of the Sperrins as an area for outdoor activity presents an opportunity for the town to accommodate this market and become an active service and retail centre for this high spending market. An in-depth analysis of the accommodation stock and retail offer should be carried out to identify opportunities for development in these sectors.
- Strule Arts Centre is a unique hub for the development of a vibrant arts scene and interpretation of the area's history and culture. This development has the potential to transform the perception of Omagh as a cultural and historical "hub" and will act as a flagship project to galvanise the future development of tourism in the town. It will clearly position and differentiate Omagh within the wider regional and national tourism offer and link to priority pillars such as Living Legends.
- Ulster American Folk Park. The town centre is only four miles from this key visitor attraction yet, historically, has failed to capitalise on this. The creation of a compelling visitor offer, supported by high quality infrastructure, particularly coach tour and visitor parking provision, visitor services and hospitality offer and driven by branding and marketing would capitalise on this advantage, particularly for the day trip market.
- Position relative to City of Derry and Fermanagh Lakelands. Omagh has a strong geographical advantage as the mid-way point between the city of Derry and the Fermanagh Lakelands. The town needs to improve its infrastructure and service offer and market itself as a stop-off point between these two locations. If the town is able to effectively differentiate its offer from that of the two areas, this role will be further enhanced.
- Riverfront development. The tourism potential afforded by comprehensive and imaginative development of the riverfront would have an immense impact on the town's potential for tourism growth. Current river front development has highlighted the vital importance of harnessing the development in such a way as to link the central core of the town to the river, instead of its current position with its back to the river. The Masterplan could galvanise and provide a platform for these plans to develop.

2.8 Tourism (continued)

Weaknesses inhibiting tourism growth

- No significant visitor accommodation i.e. boutique hotel, youth hostel, guest house provision in the town centre itself. The development of a boutique style hotel, either as part of a comprehensive development of the riverfront or conservation area, of at least 3 star standard would have the best opportunity of success in today's market. There is also a lack of quality 5 star self- catering accommodation. This could be aimed at the outdoor activity market and positioned within the town centre to support hospitality and retail.
- The traffic system is difficult to navigate and confusing to the visitor.
- Orientation and signage to town centre car parking is weak.
- There is a poor sense of arrival at key gateways into the town.
- No critical mass of night time economy facilities that will appeal to visitor market. The cinema complex is located on the edge of the town, which does not offer spin-off benefits for the town centre while the Strule Arts Centre has not attracted many additional services (bars and restaurants) that would typically co-exist with such an attraction. There was also no evidence of joint promotions with the cafés / restaurants, which currently exist in the area.
- Lack of cohesive branding and marketing message will continue to inhibit competitiveness in the market place. It is vital that the opportunities for tourism growth are developed within a wider Place Marketing Strategy for the town centre. They will allow the town to re-position itself and develop the key opportunities such as a cultural and historical hub and enhance its reputation as a key service and retail centre for the region.
- No public/private integrated delivery structures. In order to effectively drive forward opportunities for growth, public and private sector need to effectively work together to package and promote the tourism offer and champion tourism development. Tourism must be effectively integrated with the wider economic development and tourism strategies for the town and the wider region. Tourism delivery structures will need to be addressed through the new Council structures and linked to the review of DETI Tourism Development Strategy for NI.
- No clearly identified visitor markets. Omagh must concentrate on specific target markets as a framework for effective, robust and viable destination marketing, promotion and branding.

2.9 Movement and Transport

Introduction

Transport has a key role to play in the development of Omagh as a thriving town. Accessibility to town centre public car parks and access for walkers and cyclists from the surrounding residential areas, are key priorities to be considered.

Furthermore, the public transport linkage between the town centre and visitor destinations such as Gortin Forest Park and the Ulster American Folk Park are recognised as being a fundamental requirement to the continued vitality of Omagh.

The following points set out the strengths and weaknesses in relation to movement and transport in Omagh.



2.9 Movement and Transport (continued)

Strengths

- The future investment strategy for transport in Omagh has been well defined by the Sub-Regional Transport Plan (S RTP) 2015. As a result of the economic downturn, much of this strategy has still to be implemented. The investment is spread across all transport modes and reflects both the strategic needs of the area and the specific needs of Omagh.
- In terms of demographics, a large number of residents live and work in the Omagh area. However, census data also suggests that there are relatively few trips on foot, bicycle and by public transport. There is therefore, significant potential to promote a greater use of the sustainable modes of transport.
- The residential areas are generally quiet which means there is scope to encourage walking and cycling to the town centre.
- There is a high number of services operating out of the Omagh Bus Centre.
- The recent development of riverside walks and cycle paths has helped to improve the walking and cycling network throughout the town. The east to west link will also benefit from the upgrade of footways on Drumragh Avenue to shared use for pedestrians and cyclists (Transport NI scheme).
- The OASIS project, currently under construction, will provide a high quality civic space above the Drumragh car park. This will improve the pedestrian / cycle links between the lands north of the River Strule and the town centre.
- While the relocation of several schools from the town centre to the proposed Lisanelly Shared Educational Campus will help to reduce town centre traffic congestion, opportunities should be taken to minimise any detrimental impact that this relocation may have on the roads and streets around the proposed campus.
- The Strathroy Link Road is programmed for completion for 2017 / 2018 to coincide with the anticipated opening of the Lisanelly Shared Educational Campus. This link will not only support the Campus, it will provide an alternative route to the B48 Gortin Road for trips to /from the west of Omagh.
- The newly opened Cranny Road provides a link between the B158 Donaghane Road and Drumragh College Roundabout. The road, which includes a cycle path should help to provide some relief to the Swinging Bars Roundabout (A505 / B4).
- Transport NI are in the process of implementing a rolling programme of improvement works, including upgrading the control system at a number of signalised junctions.

Weaknesses

- The limited number of opportunities to cross the River Strule acts as a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists. However, this will be addressed through the provision of the OASIS footbridge.
- Pedestrian and cycle signage is limited within the town.
- Following the relocation of the schools to the proposed Lisanelly Shared Educational Campus, the surrounding roads and streets, including Mountjoy Road, Old Mountfield Road and Strathroy Road will see a considerable rise in vehicular movements. Furthermore, the narrow footway provision on Mountjoy Road will see a significant rise in pedestrian movement.
- The majority of local bus services do not run in the evenings.
- While cycle parking facilities are provided on Market Street / High Street, the absence of cycle links and the level of traffic and town centre activity, will act as a deterrent to cyclists.
- There are significant traffic congestion issues in Omagh, not only on the strategic routes such as the A5 Throughpass, but also within the town centre core. This is caused by significant through traffic movements and the central location of the car parks.
- The timescale for delivery of the A5 Western Transport Corridor is uncertain.
- The high volume of town centre traffic is unwelcoming for pedestrians, with the relatively complicated one-way system understood to be a deterrent to visitors.
- Coach parking is limited and access is difficult due to the one-way system.
- There is currently no financial support for the Kevlin Avenue link (between Dublin Road and Scarffes Entry). This link would provide some much needed relief to Market Street and help to create development opportunities such as cafés and local shops (plus potentially leading to development on the public car parks on Kevlin Avenue).
- There is a significant level of uncertainty regarding a number of potential development sites (Opportunity Omagh, Scott's Mill) and therefore, their associated traffic impact and transport interventions are unknown at this time.
- Although town centre car parks are currently under-utilised, this is the result of congestion making access difficult, they are located within the centre of the town and poorly signposted.



3.0 Consultation Process

3.1 Introduction

Consultation with the people of Omagh and other key stakeholders formed an important part of the Masterplan process. One-to-one meetings and a public exhibition of draft proposals provided the opportunity for many people to shape the plan and its projects. Regular liaison with the Client Team and a consultative group of key stakeholders also ensured that each step of the process was considered in detail. Consultation took the following forms:

3.2 Consultation Process

Steering Group Meetings

The Masterplan Steering Group, comprising of Omagh District Council officials and representatives from various government departments, was set up to review and inform each stage of the Masterplan development. Over the course of the project, elected members were briefed by the Steering Group and kept updated on progress made and emerging findings.

Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

A number of stakeholder engagement meetings were set up with representatives from the public, private and community sectors as well as elected representatives.

The purpose of these meetings was to directly inform local stakeholders of the Masterplan and identify development opportunities and emerging issues that could be addressed through the process.

Town Centre Health Check

A Town Centre Health Check was undertaken to provide a comprehensive summary of the vitality and viability of Omagh town centre.

School Workshops

A workshop was held, in the Strule Arts Centre, with senior pupils from the local secondary schools .

This was held during the early stages of the Masterplan process to gather information on what the young people of Omagh liked and disliked about the town and to discuss ideas on how they would like to see Omagh developed in the future. This aspect of the consultation process proved extremely successful and provided valuable information for the Masterplan to consider.



3.2 Consultation Process (continued)

Public Open Forums

Two public open forums were coordinated during the preparation of the Masterplan.

The first of these was held during the analysis and information gathering stage and provided valuable information on Omagh's strengths as well as issues to address.

The second event was held at the Strule Arts Centre during the eight-week public consultation period. This event was arranged to test the draft proposals and helped to refine the final Masterplan. Considerable enthusiasm, from local people towards the regeneration of their town, was evident at the public events.

Public Consultation Period

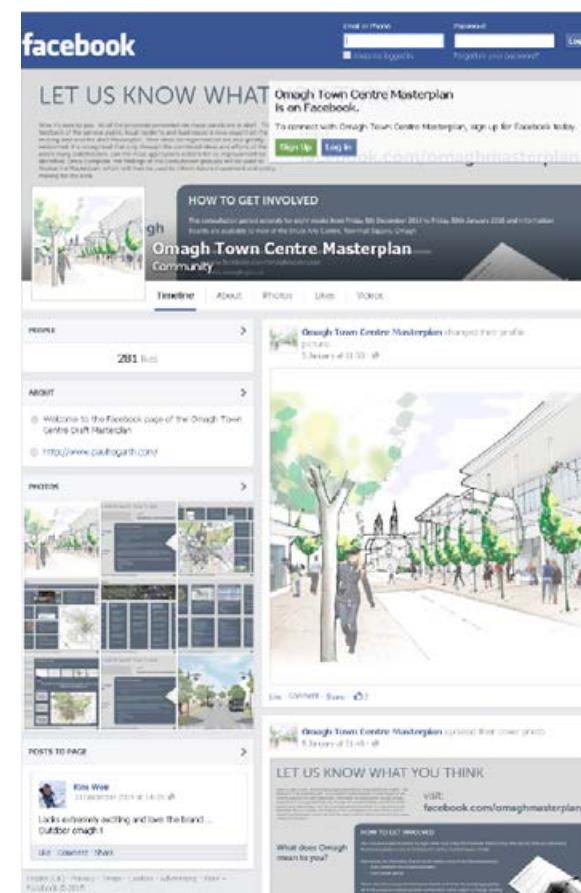
In order to test the draft Masterplan proposals, an eight-week public consultation period was coordinated, extending from 5th December 2014 to 30th January 2015. Exhibition boards were on display at the Strule Arts Centre, while information posters were available at various public facilities throughout the town. In addition, digital copies of the exhibition boards could be viewed online at the following websites:

www.omagh.gov.uk

www.paulhogarth.com

www.facebook.com

Over four hundred consultation responses were received, including one hundred and twenty six completed questionnaires. This feedback heavily informed the final Masterplan and associated proposals. A detailed breakdown of the feedback responses can be found in the Appendix Document.





A word cloud of urban planning and city development concepts. The words are arranged in a layered, overlapping fashion. The most prominent word is 'distinctive', which is the largest and centered. Other large words include 'safe', 'accessible to all', 'city status', and 'identity'. Smaller words like 'economic growth', 'attractive', 'sustainable', 'vibrant', and 'landscape' are scattered around the larger ones. The entire cloud is rendered in white text against a solid gray background.

economic growth identity
safe
attractive
distinctive vibrant
sustainable
accessible to all
city status landscape

4.0 Establishing a Vision for Omagh Town Centre

4.1 Introduction

The findings from the research and analysis process give a clear indication of qualities to be maintained and capitalised upon, as well as issues to be addressed through the Masterplan. Like many urban centres, Omagh faces challenges such as the survival of independent retail alongside high street chains, the successful accommodation of vehicles while maintaining environmental quality and the means by which to prevent its older buildings falling into disrepair. Yet its regional connectivity, physical attributes and tourism potential provide strong foundations upon which to develop a vision for the future.

This section sets out the overarching vision for the future of Omagh Town Centre. The adjacent vision statement and accompanying aims and objectives build upon the work of the previous Masterplan and was compiled through a collaborative stakeholder workshop and consulted upon in draft with the public.

4.2 Shared Vision

‘As a step towards city status, to position and create an identity for Omagh which takes advantage of its natural assets, landscape and new regional context.

‘Outdoor Omagh’ will reflect a quality of life for the local community and visitors and will provide a framework for sustainable economic growth of a vibrant, attractive and distinctive central core.’

4.3 Aims and Objectives

The following set of Aims and Objectives have been established to further define the role of the Omagh Town Centre Masterplan. They set out the key priorities for regeneration in Omagh and provide a checklist against which future regeneration proposals can be measured.

Also developed through consultation and based on the positives identified through analysis, these will hold the key to realising the Shared Vision, setting in place ambitious targets for the town centre to attain.

UNDERPINNING A STRONG AND POSITIVE IDENTITY

- Define a regional and sub-regional role for Omagh
- Strengthen the physical quality of the town centre
- Nurture the distinctive character and role of the various town centre areas
- Reinforce the role of the town centre to its people
- Pursue the Shared Future agenda of safety & accessibility for all
- Reinforce the urban and rural synergy of Omagh

RECONNECTION WITH THE LANDSCAPE

- Maximise the economic benefits of Omagh's natural features
- Take a proactive approach to dealing with the considerable flood threat
- Strengthen physical connections between the urban and rural environment
- Ensure new development does not negatively impact on future generations
- Engender a healthy town and healthy lifestyle

SUSTAINABLE LINKAGES

- Enhance linkages between education and enterprise
- Take advantage of high quality digital connectivity
- Develop a sustainable transport model reducing reliance on cars
- Ensure ease of movement through clear wayfinding signage

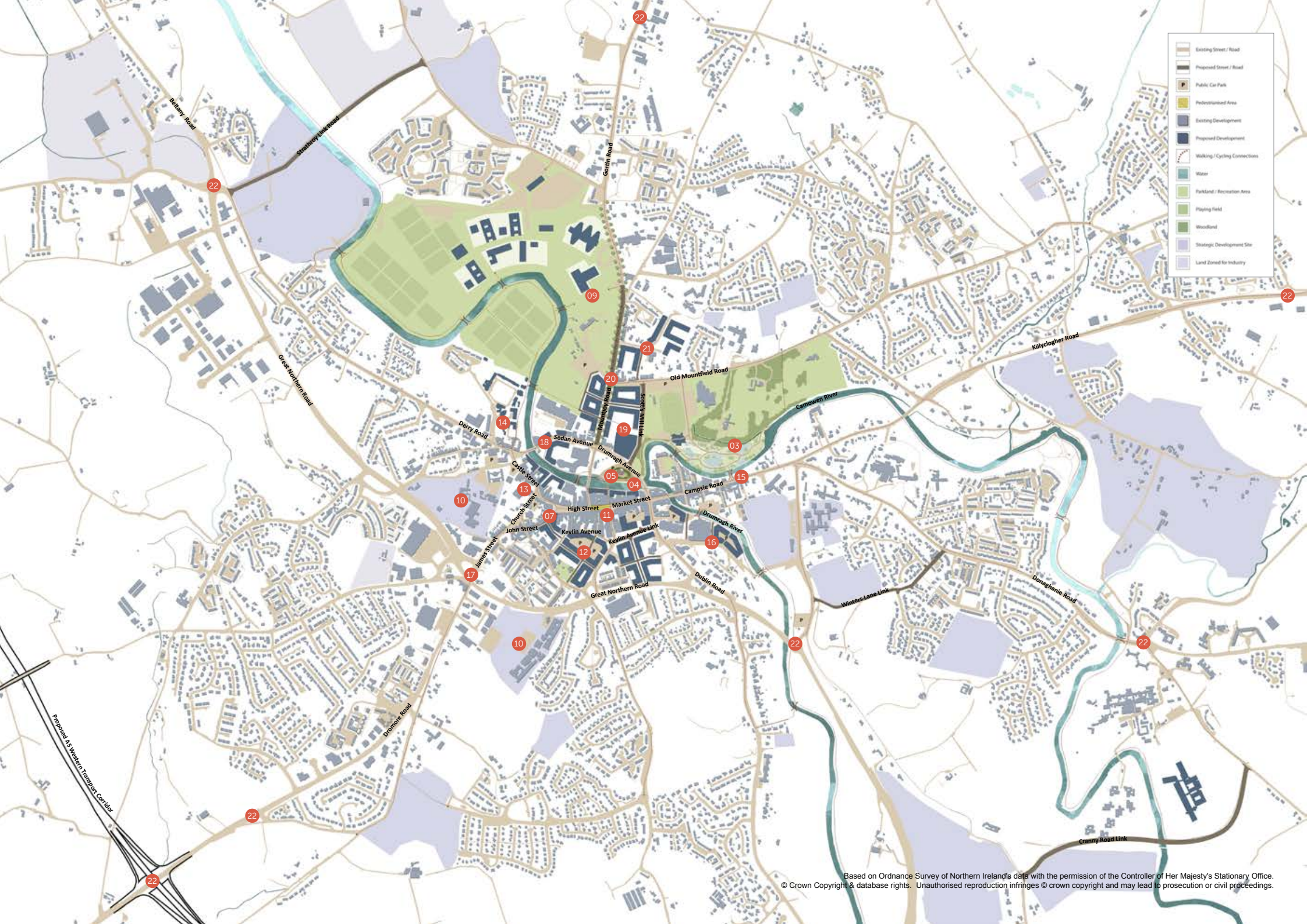
PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING QUALITIES

- Respect, conserve and enhance the existing built fabric
- Identify sustainable new uses for old buildings and spaces
- Support and strengthen town centre retail
- Build upon and develop Omagh's cultural role
- Ensure new developments complement existing features and views
- Support the local business and enterprise base

SUSTAINABLE COORDINATION OF CHANGE

- Use Masterplan to inform the new Local Development Plan and Community Plan
- Prepare development guidelines for opportunity sites
- Phase implementation of development opportunities
- Encourage temporary uses for sites, in the short term
- Positive social and economic rationale for new development





5.0 Omagh Town Centre Masterplan

5.1 Introduction

Building upon the work of the previous Masterplan for Omagh Town Centre, this updated Masterplan provides a spatial framework for development and regeneration, based on the shared aims and objectives. It highlights existing and proposed development opportunities, set within a strengthened network of streets, pathways and urban spaces. This section of the document serves to summarise the twenty-two proposals contained within the Masterplan.

01	Town Brand and Place Marketing Strategy	12	Kevlin Avenue Development Sites
02	Sustainable Transport Planning	13	Establishment of a Cultural Quarter
03	Flood Alleviation	14	St Lucia Barracks Development
04	Riverfront Development	15	Campsie Road Improvements
05	Events Strategy	16	Irishtown Development
06	Town Centre Business Strategy	17	Dromore Road and James Street
07	Public Realm and Town Centre Frontages	18	Sedan Avenue Development
08	Living over the Shops (LOT'S) Strategy	19	Scott's Mill Development
09	Lisanelly Shared Educational Campus	20	Mountjoy Road Development
10	Development Briefs	21	Woodside Avenue Development
11	High Street Pedestrianisation	22	Arrival Points



Town Brand and Place Marketing Strategy

Successful Place Marketing is not just about designing a brand logo or strap line, but is about reaching a consensus among all stakeholders from the public, private and community sectors on the identity, image and competitive position of Omagh town centre as a destination.

It should create a culture of innovation and collaboration across all stakeholders and provide the overarching strategic and delivery framework for future development projects, firmly positioning Place Marketing as an integral part of the regeneration agenda. It will deliver the regeneration aims and objectives, particularly in retaining the unique identity, increasing customer dwell time and creating a sustainable competitive advantage and real potential for economic growth through increased footfall and consumer spend.

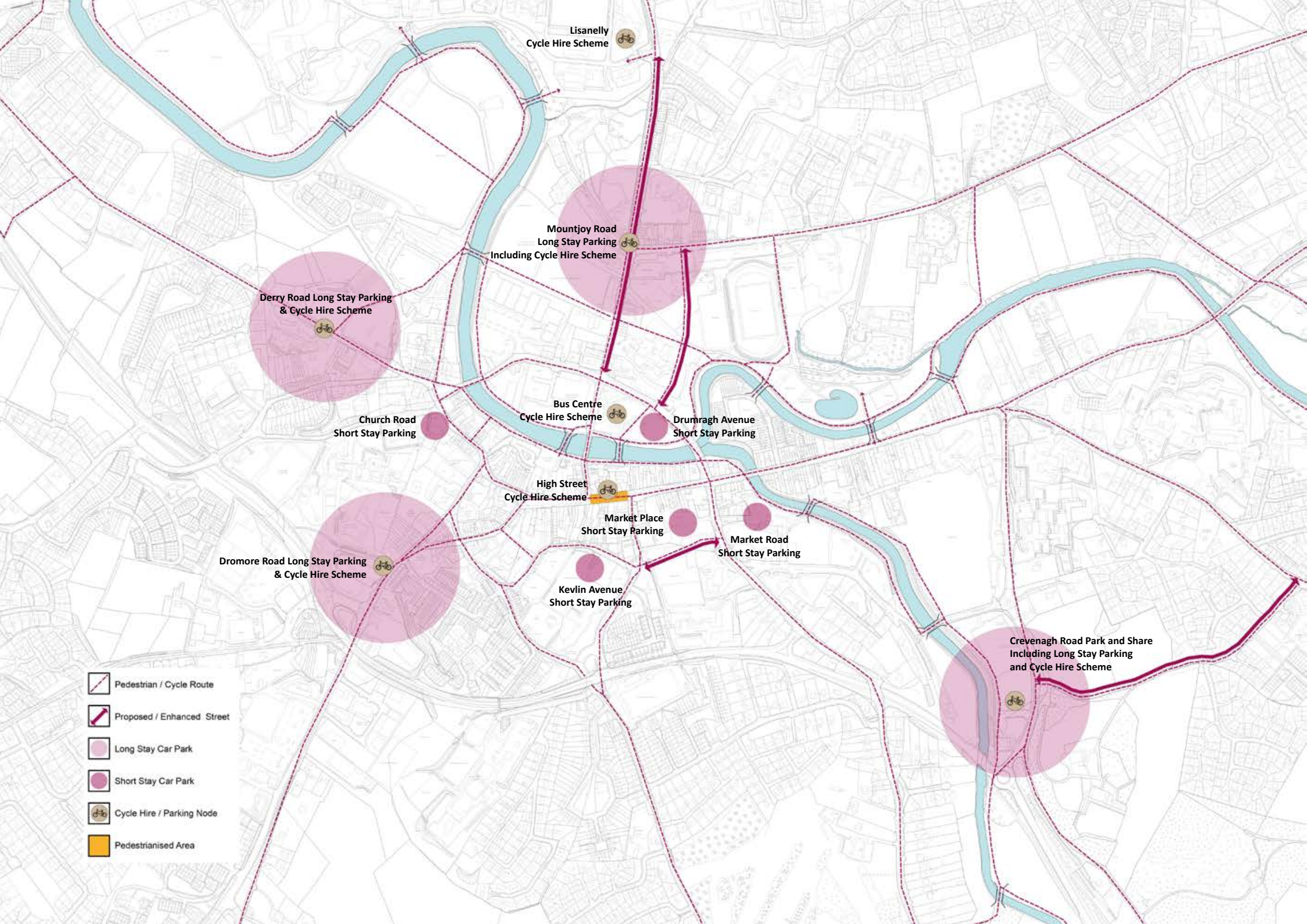
The Masterplan confidently positions the 'Outdoor Omagh' brand, differentiating Omagh from other town and city centres around NI. This brand reflects the importance of the town's relationships, whether ancient or recent, with its landscape setting, the nearby Sperrins, the farming traditions, the rivers and the emerging renewable energy sector.

The proposed brand will define Omagh's distinctive tourism, retail and hospitality provision adding value to related developments and initiatives and generating a greater resonance with other sectors including education, enterprise and healthcare.

Enhancing Omagh's evening economy is a key priority of the Masterplan, and it is proposed that, in conjunction with the 'Outdoor Omagh' brand, a pro-active approach is taken to achieve 'Purple Flag' status for the town centre. This is the "gold standard" for town centres in the evening and at night-time and will help to demonstrate Omagh's quality and promote the town to local, regional and international visitors.

While the Department for Social Development (DSD) and Omagh District Council have had a crucial leadership role in driving the masterplanning process so far, the responsibility for the long term success and sustainability of the Place Marketing Strategy lies with everyone in the town, including local businesses, hospitality providers, young people and local community groups.

The Place Marketing Strategy, contained in the Appendix Document, sets out how all stakeholders can work together to launch and develop a strong brand proposition. It outlines exactly who will do it, how they will do it, what resources they will need and when it needs to be done by. As a result of this collaborative working, the Place Marketing Strategy will play a crucial role in galvanising civic pride, ownership and passion for the place.



Lisanelly
Cycle Hire Scheme

Mountjoy Road
Long Stay Parking
Including Cycle Hire Scheme

Derry Road Long Stay Parking
& Cycle Hire Scheme

Church Road
Short Stay Parking

Bus Centre
Cycle Hire Scheme

Drumragh Avenue
Short Stay Parking

High Street
Cycle Hire Scheme

Market Place
Short Stay Parking

Market Road
Short Stay Parking

Kevlin Avenue
Short Stay Parking

Dromore Road Long Stay Parking
& Cycle Hire Scheme

Crevenagh Road Park and Share
Including Long Stay Parking
and Cycle Hire Scheme

-  Pedestrian / Cycle Route
-  Proposed / Enhanced Street
-  Long Stay Car Park
-  Short Stay Car Park
-  Cycle Hire / Parking Node
-  Pedestrianised Area

Sustainable Transport Planning

This proposal focuses on identifying ways in which reliance on the private car in Omagh can be reduced and walking, cycling and the use of public transport can be encouraged.

When the strengths and weaknesses of the existing transport network are compared with the vision and themes of the Masterplan, the following high level transport interventions have emerged (more details on these interventions can be found within the Appendix Document):

Public Transport

- Review services to tourist destinations such as the Ulster American Folk Park and Gortin Glen
- Consider providing town centre parking/waiting facilities for coaches.
- Operate a number of evening bus services to improve access to the town centre.

Walking and Cycling

- Improved quality and consistency of footway and cycleway provision throughout the town centre.
- Enhanced foot and cycle provision between Lisanelly and the town centre, following the opening of the Shared Educational Campus.
- Continuous walking and cycling links, parallel with the rivers throughout the town.
- Enhanced pedestrian and cycle crossings on the Great Northern Road (Throughpass).
- Provision of off street cycling provision along the route of the National Cycle Network.
- Improve signing for pedestrians and cyclists giving direction and distance to key destinations
- Identify key node points for cycle parking within the Town Centre and at Crevenagh Park & Share;
- Consideration could also be given to implementing a small scale town centre public bike share scheme.
- Continuous off road cycle way between the town and Gortin Lakes, e.g. Great Western Greenway.



Sustainable Transport Planning (continued)

Car Parking

- Provide additional disabled parking facilities
- Enhance parking provision for taxis
- Introduce strategically located long stay parking on the edge of the central core area
- Coordinate a public awareness scheme to promote the use of Crevenagh Road Park and Share
- Improve signing to the town's underutilised off-street car parks
- Improve pedestrian linkages between car parks and the Town Centre
- Investigate concerns regarding long stay parking at Leisure Centre

Road Network

Construction of the A5 Western Transport Corridor will bring significant benefits to Omagh by removing extraneous through traffic from both the town centre and the Throughpass. In conjunction with its development, the Masterplan recommends a review of:

- key traffic approaches to the town to ensure that any emerging "gateways" are appropriately treated
- car park locations and accessibility on the basis of revised travel patterns
- key road sections where relief is likely to be at the greatest level

In addition to construction of the A5 Western Transport Corridor, measures available to improve the road network throughout Omagh include:

- Strathroy Link
- Scott's Mill Link
- Kevlin Avenue Link
- Winter's Lane Link

Personalised Travel Planning

Personal Travel Planning (PTP) encourages people to make more sustainable travel choices. It seeks to overcome the habitual use of the car, enabling more journeys to be made on foot, bike, bus, train or in shared cars. This is achieved through the provision of information, incentives and motivation directly to individuals to help them voluntarily make more informed travel choices. PTP forms an important part of UK national and local transport policy, contributing to the suite of tools promoted under the general heading of Smarter Choices.

A PTP is proposed for Omagh to:

- reduce congestion and reliance on the car;
- encourage a greater use of public transport;
- improve air quality and reduce traffic noise;
- generate more use of local services by residents;
- support sustainable economic growth by reducing peak hour congestion;
- encourage more active lifestyles to address health and well-being issues;

Flood Alleviation

Given the updated understanding of the level of flood risk facing Omagh, an examination of options to improve flood alleviation has already commenced. Proposals arising from this study will be subject to viability and competing priorities for available funding. In considering options for improvement, opportunities to better integrate the town with the river are encouraged through the Masterplan.

One such opportunity that is identified through the Masterplan, involves reconnecting the Camowen River with a part of the floodplain at the under-utilised area of low-lying land around the Boating Lake. This proposal will create a new wetland habitat in the town centre, enhancing the river environment and thereby benefiting local people and attracting visitors to the town.





Riverfront Development

Omagh's rivers are wonderful features for the town that have until recently, played a minimal role. Developments such as the Strule Arts Centre, the South West College, the OASIS Plaza and the riverside walk and cycle paths have highlighted the river's potential as an asset to the town. However, large stretches still remain difficult to access or see from the town centre.

The Masterplan proposes that the Strule, Camowen and Drumragh rivers form an energised river core, linking together all areas of the town centre with new buildings encouraged to front onto this river core. Paths in the town centre should incorporate lighting and be safe and accessible to all. Cantilevered paths are proposed where existing development encroaches onto the rivers edge, such as along the south bank of the Strule River between Bell's Bridge and Strule Bridge.

Properties situated along the banks of the three rivers should be encouraged to turn and front onto the rivers and facilitate access onto the riverside pathways. These properties should have windows and doors overlooking the river to enliven frontage and animate the paths. Once made more accessible and amenable, the town centre riverside area has the potential to attract considerable investment. Areas such as Old Market Place, Campsie and Irishtown could benefit from this investment through public realm improvements and redevelopment works.

In conjunction with the proposed town brand, 'Outdoor Omagh', the rivers will play a central role as an amenity for both local residents and visitors to Omagh and as a place to relax, spend time and play. A regenerated riverside presents the opportunity for encouraging activities along the river such as fishing and canoeing. Facilities providing access for all to these activities are important and should be incorporated as close to the town centre as possible.

Community greenways along the length of the rivers are also proposed, providing enhanced links between Omagh's central core and the wider town. These greenways will provide continuous foot and cycle paths and it is essential that these paths are connected to existing pedestrian routes and community facilities to promote the use of the river as a central movement corridor for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the town. Initial feasibility studies should be conducted to determine land ownership issues.

Ongoing maintenance of the riverside foot and cycle paths is essential to safeguard a high quality public realm throughout the town centre.



Events Strategy

Organised events and festivals are fundamental to embedding cultural activity within a town or city. There are currently key events in Omagh's calendar and opportunities exist to build upon these and introduce new events and festivals based on key assets such as culture, food and art. This would help to attract more people to the town centre, increasing footfall and potential spend.

The Omagh Midsummer Carnival provides opportunities to attract key tourism markets and a reason to visit while the St Patrick's Festival which runs for two weeks in March, links the town to tourism on all Ireland context.

Building upon the annual Benedict Kiely Literary Weekend, which celebrates the verbal arts, scope exists to enhance the arts and literary reputation of Omagh as a major tourism asset. The Masterplan proposes the development of the town's links to Brian Friel, an Omagh native who was one of Ireland's most accomplished playwrights and authors.

In conjunction with the proposed "Outdoor Omagh" brand, opportunities should be taken to utilise Omagh's fine buildings and spaces, including the rivers and tie in with related activities taking place throughout the Sperrins, Gortin Glen and the Folk Park.

The organisation and running of such events should be led by the local community and businesses, with support from the Council and other relevant organisations. Participation with young people, youth organisations and schools should also be pro-actively encouraged.

Town Centre Business Strategy

Building upon Omagh's strong retail base and the innovative work of Omagh Enterprise Company, providing high-spec office accommodation, scope exists to enhance business and enterprise in the town centre, thereby increasing employment and socio-economic activity.

To this end a Town Centre Business Strategy is proposed to evaluate the town's current strengths and determine future opportunities. The Strategy should ensure that the promotion of enterprise and business is holistic and spans from the small business sector through social economy industries into the areas of skills and education. The proposed, "Outdoor Omagh" brand should be used as a mechanism to define and encourage new business and enterprise into the town that currently does not exist.

Opportunities relating to Omagh's enterprise and business sectors include:

- Developing a more diversified local economy.
- Investigating opportunities to introduce Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to stimulate local enterprise and encourage partnership working between the business community and the local authority.
- Maintaining existing jobs and attracting new jobs in sectors where the area has developed long standing skills/resource.
- Developing the town's tourism and hospitality offerings.
- Improving accessibility to a more attractive and competitive town centre.
- Developing and growing Omagh's agriculture, manufacturing and agri-food sectors.

- Encouraging Working Over The Shops (WOTS) to stimulate town centre vibrancy.
- Strengthen partnership working between the local business community, Omagh Enterprise Community and the South Western College

Collaboration between the local business community and the South West College (SWC) is encouraged through the Masterplan, with objectives set out in the SWC Development Plan 2012-15, to grow regional innovation and technology through enhanced partnerships with businesses.

Finally, in order to successfully attract investors into the town centre a proactive approach must be adopted by key agencies, including the Council, INI and the local business community. Finding tenants for vacant properties, restoring derelict buildings and developing new purpose-built facilities, where necessary, are crucial to the delivery of the Masterplan and its objectives.



- Existing Street / Road
- Proposed Street / Road
- Public Car Park
- Pedestrianized Area
- Existing Development
- Proposed Development
- Walking / Cycling Connections
- Water
- Parkland / Recreation Area
- Playing Field
- Woodland
- Strategic Development Site
- Land Zoned for Industry

Public Realm and Town Centre Frontages

High-quality streets and public spaces are recognised as essential components to successful urban environments. While recent public realm works to Market Street and High Street have contributed greatly to improving the public realm of the town, the Masterplan stresses the importance of maintaining the quality of these streets and spaces.

The Masterplan proposes further works, of a similarly high quality, across other town centre streets and spaces, including James Street, Kevlin Avenue, Castle Street, Bridge Street, Old Market Place, Mountjoy Road and St. Lucia. This will help to enhance the pedestrian environment throughout the town centre, encouraging people to spend more time in the town and attracting investment accordingly.

Building frontages in poor condition will be targeted through a frontage improvement scheme.

This will be of direct benefit to owners and business operators, whilst also enhancing the town centre image. A detailed survey of frontages will inform subsequent proposals, which are likely to include works to surface treatments, architectural details and signage.

Retaining the distinctive character of Omagh Town Centre, as defined in the Omagh Conservation Area, is a key priority of the Masterplan. Frontage improvement works should therefore adhere to the design guidelines set out in the Conservation Area report, to ensure that shop front design, material choice, lettering and colours are coordinated for the overall benefit of the town.

Scope exists to introduce temporary improvements to alleviate the blight caused by derelict or vacant properties in high profile locations, until such time that more permanent solutions can be found. In addition, opportunities should be taken to introduce temporary development on vacant land, such as pocket parks or other socially beneficial uses.



Living Over The Shops (LOTS)

Encouraging town centre living emerged as a key objective from the Masterplan Vision and was identified as an important means to create a vibrant town centre.

All new town centre development projects should seek to include an element of residential use. These should be primarily located on upper stories, thereby allowing for ground floor activation with commercial or community uses. Achieving a mix of type and tenure would also help to maintain a diverse town centre population.

Where feasible efforts should also be made to convert upper floors of existing buildings, re-establishing the town centre tradition of 'Living over the Shops'.

Lisanelly Shared Educational Campus

The Lisanelly Shared Educational Campus involves the relocation of five post-primary schools and one special needs school, located throughout Omagh, to the mature parkland setting of the Lisanelly site.

This scheme, which would see this former military barracks site fully re-utilised, presents a unique opportunity for collaboration between schools and the sharing of facilities and school transport which would not be deliverable on an individual basis.

While there are a host of opportunities associated with the development of the Shared Educational Campus, it will be critical to ensure that the redevelopment takes place in a manner that benefits the wider town and district. In this context, the development of the lands must not detrimentally impact the economic vibrancy of the town centre or result in a shifting of focus away from the town centre. Therefore, all opportunities to improve linkages and permeability between the town centre and the Lisanelly site should be seized.



Development Briefs

With the proposed relocation of schools to the Lisanelly site, a number of strategically positioned sites in and around the town centre will be released, opening up significant regeneration opportunities for the town. Given the scale, the appropriate redevelopment of these sites will have a genuinely transformational impact for the town as a whole.

The Masterplan recommends the preparation of detailed development briefs for these sites to inform future development and ensure this complements and benefits both the wider town and the town centre. It will be important to look at these sites holistically, to ensure that the full benefits for the town can be realised. Such opportunities include enhancing the walking and cycling network and accommodating car parking, mixed-use development or public open space.

High Street Pedestrianisation

A high quality environment and experience for pedestrians is essential to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of Omagh town centre as a retail destination. Omagh is in competition with other regional centres as well as internet-based retailing, and therefore it is important to ensure that the town centre is attractive to all users, including visitors and families.

The current conflict between vehicles and pedestrians in the town centre presents obvious issues in terms of both pedestrian safety and the quality of the pedestrian environment. In recent years, significant investment has been made by DSD and Omagh District Council on improving the town centre public realm and building upon these recent improvement works, the Masterplan proposes the introduction of a dedicated pedestrianised area. While further feasibility studies will be required to determine the exact extents of this pedestrianised area, consideration could be given to the section of High Street, from Scarffes Entry to Bridge Street or the area in front of the Courthouse.

In conjunction with the proposed 'Outdoor Omagh' brand the proposed pedestrianised area could be used for events and activities, including a seasonal market, which would help to animate the town centre and compensate for any loss of town centre activity that might occur following the proposed relocation of schools out of the town centre.

As part of the Sustainable Transport Strategy, the detailed operations of this scheme should be investigated, with options to restrict traffic during working hours only or permit access for taxis. Initially, the implementation of the pedestrianised area should be piloted to identify any detrimental impacts on other town centre streets or spaces. Furthermore, the timing and coordination of the delivery of the Kevlin Avenue to Dublin Road link will be key to the successful delivery of this proposal.

Kevlin Avenue Development Sites

The Kevlin Avenue area of Omagh currently provides essential car parking and servicing for the town centre. However, this relatively large space suffers from low environmental quality, being effectively 'round the back' of the town centre. The Masterplan proposes that this area presents an excellent opportunity to complement the High Street by providing new shops, restaurants and bars right in the heart of Omagh.

At the time of writing the Department for Social Development were in the process of completing a detailed study for this site. This study was commissioned to guide future development and investment into the Kevlin Avenue area and ensure that emerging proposals contribute to a high quality environment and maximise the regenerative benefits for Omagh's residents, business sector and visitors. More specifically, the report provides a strategic framework for site delivery, establishing clear parameters in the form of development that is appropriate and in accordance with current planning policies and best urban design practice.



Establishment of a Cultural Quarter

The Churches area dominates the high ground in Omagh with the distinctive skyline of the church spires and a network of narrow streets.

Given the quality of built heritage that exists within this area of the town centre it is proposed that the Masterplan builds upon this unique character, incorporating the former Barracks of St Lucia, and encouraging a cultural part of Omagh to develop, becoming an ideal location for restaurants, specialist retail, tourist attractions and accommodation.

Cultural uses such as small museums and galleries should also be encouraged, benefiting from the rich history and architectural quality of this area, whilst adding increased levels of physical and socio-economic activity. These cultural uses would complement exiting attractions such as the churches themselves, whilst helping to generate increased footfall for cafés, restaurants and bars. A role for small hotels and B&B's also exists in the area.

While some of the most impressive buildings in Omagh are located within this area some of the public realm suffers from a low environmental quality. In conjunction with the proposal, 'Public Realm and Town Centre Frontages', It is proposed that the environmental quality of the streets, laneways and car parks in this area are enhanced to a quality which complements and enhances the area's historic built form and character.

It is important that the current character and charm of the churches area be preserved through the continued conservation of historic buildings. In conjunction with this, scope exists to introduce permanent and temporary lighting installations to help celebrate this rich architecture.

Promotion of the tourism potential of Omagh and in particular the churches area will require the design and delivery of an interpretation strategy. This should include wayfinding information and historical interpretation.



St Lucia Barracks Development

Set within the proposed 'Cultural Quarter' and with its many historic buildings and attractive public spaces, St Lucia has significant potential to become a major leisure, commercial and employment base for Omagh.

Given the size and flexibility of the site, it is ideally suited to accommodate a range of uses, enabling residents and visitors of Omagh to enjoy its fine architecture, public spaces and hilltop setting.



At the time of writing, DSD were in the process of preparing a comprehensive Masterplan for this strategic site, which provides a framework for how the existing historic buildings could be renovated and restored to accommodate a mix of uses, including public administration, high-spec office provision, a museum, a boutique hotel and niche retail. Supporting tourism infrastructure including arts and cultural uses to complement the existing Strule Arts Centre, is also proposed.



These range of uses would be complemented by restoration and public realm improvements to the parade ground and walls which have the potential to become distinctive public spaces and panoramic viewing areas. Such measures would generate considerable pedestrian movement between the town centre and St Lucia, through the churches area.

While St Lucia, occupies a prominent, elevated location, views to this site from the town centre are restricted by overgrown vegetation, surrounding the site. In the short term, remedial works are proposed to thin out this vegetation, thereby opening up views to the site and strengthening the visual relationship between St Lucia and the town centre.

Campsie Road Improvements

Campsie is a distinctive area within Omagh surrounded by the Drumragh and Camowen Rivers. It has a busy shopping street and strong residential community close to the town centre and has significant potential to become further integrated with the rest of the town centre.

The Masterplan proposes a number of sensitive improvements to be developed through a process of community regeneration.

It is proposed that Campsie becomes a more defined community area to its residents and traders and more of a specialist retail area to Omagh and its visitors. High quality, specialist retailers are to be encouraged to bring vibrancy to the area.

Improved traffic control and parking arrangements to the streets and car parks in Campsie would benefit traders, pedestrians, residents and shoppers to ensure further efficient and safe use of the Campsie area.

Improved linkages with the Library and Shopping Centre carpark across the river will reduce reliance on cars and will require bridges that are conveniently located and that feel safe to use.

A network of new paths and footbridges, following the line of the rivers will enhance the connectivity for local residents to the town centre and nearby community facilities. This would also encourage people to walk through the area, supporting its high quality, independent retail offer.

A branding exercise for the area, is also proposed, which should involve local businesses as well as the local community. This should be aimed at engendering a sense of community pride and an interest in regenerating and promoting the Campsie area.

Open space in Campsie Crescent and car parks should be of a high environmental quality that the local community are proud of and which are distinctive in Omagh.

Campsie Street would benefit from a public realm improvement scheme to upgrade paving materials and incorporate lighting and street trees where possible. A programme of shopfront improvements would also help strengthen the quality of this street and ensure that it is a safe and attractive setting for local people and visitors

A number of potential infill sites in Campsie should be viewed as potential assets to the community and should be developed in response to decisions as to what building uses will be both of benefit and appropriate for this community setting.

In conjunction with the earlier proposal, 'Flood Alleviation', and following the outcome of the examination of options, mitigation works may be required in this area to address the considerable flood risk.

Irishtown Development

The Irishtown Road area, located to the south east of the town centre and bounded by the Dublin Road and Drumragh River, provides important town centre car parking as well as retail and education provision. However, this large area feels cut off from the town centre and is dominated by vehicular infrastructure.

The Masterplan proposes improved linkages between this area and Campsie, which would involve a comprehensive upgrade of the existing footpaths and pedestrian bridge. Furthermore, in conjunction with the proposed new street between Kevlin Avenue and Dublin Road, enhanced linkages between this area and the rest of the town centre will emerge.

Where possible new development, which has potential to accommodate business and enterprise, should wrap the large, surface level car parks, providing street frontage onto the existing and proposed network of streets and spaces. New riverside development should be encouraged to address the Drumragh River, thereby contributing to greater animation along the proposed riverside paths.

Dromore Road and James Street

Currently, this approach route suffers from congestion, particularly at its junction with the Great Northern Road (Throughpass). However, this congestion is likely to worsen as analysis has indicated that following construction of the proposed A5 Western Transport Corridor, Dromore Road and James Street are likely to form the main approach route into Omagh. This, in turn, will mean that these streets and associated junctions will experience an increase in traffic flows.

Furthermore, as a result of the increase in traffic flow along this approach route it is likely that an increased demand for parking will emerge, which is already limited in this area of the town centre.

As part of the earlier proposal 'Sustainable Transport Planning', the Masterplan recommends that a study is undertaken to fully understand the implications that an increase in traffic may have on the future operation of this approach route and associated junctions.

Options to address this issue could include road widening, junction upgrades and enhanced pedestrian/cycle crossings. A scoping study should also be undertaken to identify an appropriate location for long and short stay parking facilities along this approach route.

Sedan Avenue Development

The relative compactness of Omagh Town Centre means that it is well suited to walking, with shops and business in close proximity to one another. However, as a result of high levels of vehicular movement and a lack of pedestrian connections, some areas have a severing impact on pedestrian movement.

This is the case with Sedan Avenue. While situated in close proximity to High Street and containing a variety of important town centre facilities including the South Western College and the Showgrounds retail park, this area is dominated by vehicles and suffers from a low environmental quality.

Furthermore, the Showground's retail area has the potential to offer stronger pedestrian links with the riverside and St Lucia. These links have the potential to reduce reliance on cars and encourage shoppers to access and use more of the town centre facilities.

New development fronting onto Sedan Avenue and the River would help to transform this road into a street and would accommodate expansion of the adjacent commercial and educational facilities.



Scott's Mill Development

Development of this large, vacant site offers potential to provide active street frontage onto both Drumragh Avenue and Mountjoy Road, both of which currently lack street frontage and are of a low environmental quality.

Furthermore, in conjunction with the development of this site, the Masterplan supports the establishment of a new street, extending between Drumragh Avenue and Old Mountfield Road. This link would not only open up access to these development lands and help to mitigate the traffic impact from any new development but would provide some relief on the Mountjoy Road, particularly at its junction with Drumragh Avenue.



Mountjoy Road Development

The proposed relocation of schools to the Shared Educational Campus at Lisanelly will establish a new significance for the lands spanning between Lisanelly and the traditional town centre. Consequently, Mountjoy Road will become increasingly important in Omagh's future and will have a key role to play in bridging the area between the town centre and Lisanelly.

The lands that fall within this area include the County Hall and adjacent Scott's Mill site, the Christian Brothers School playing fields, the Grange and the former police station. All of these lands have potential to be put to more beneficial uses, with the Masterplan proposing a mix of civic, commercial, enterprise and residential uses. A series of high quality urban spaces could also be established along the Mountjoy Road, with the Grange, in particular, given its attractive parkland setting and proximity to Lisanelly, representing a key opportunity site.

The Mountjoy Road plays an important role in accommodating vehicular access to the town centre and while this must continue, the Masterplan proposes to transform this arterial route into a street, with an enhanced environmental quality and ability to accommodate the large number of pedestrians and cyclists that will use this link on a daily basis.

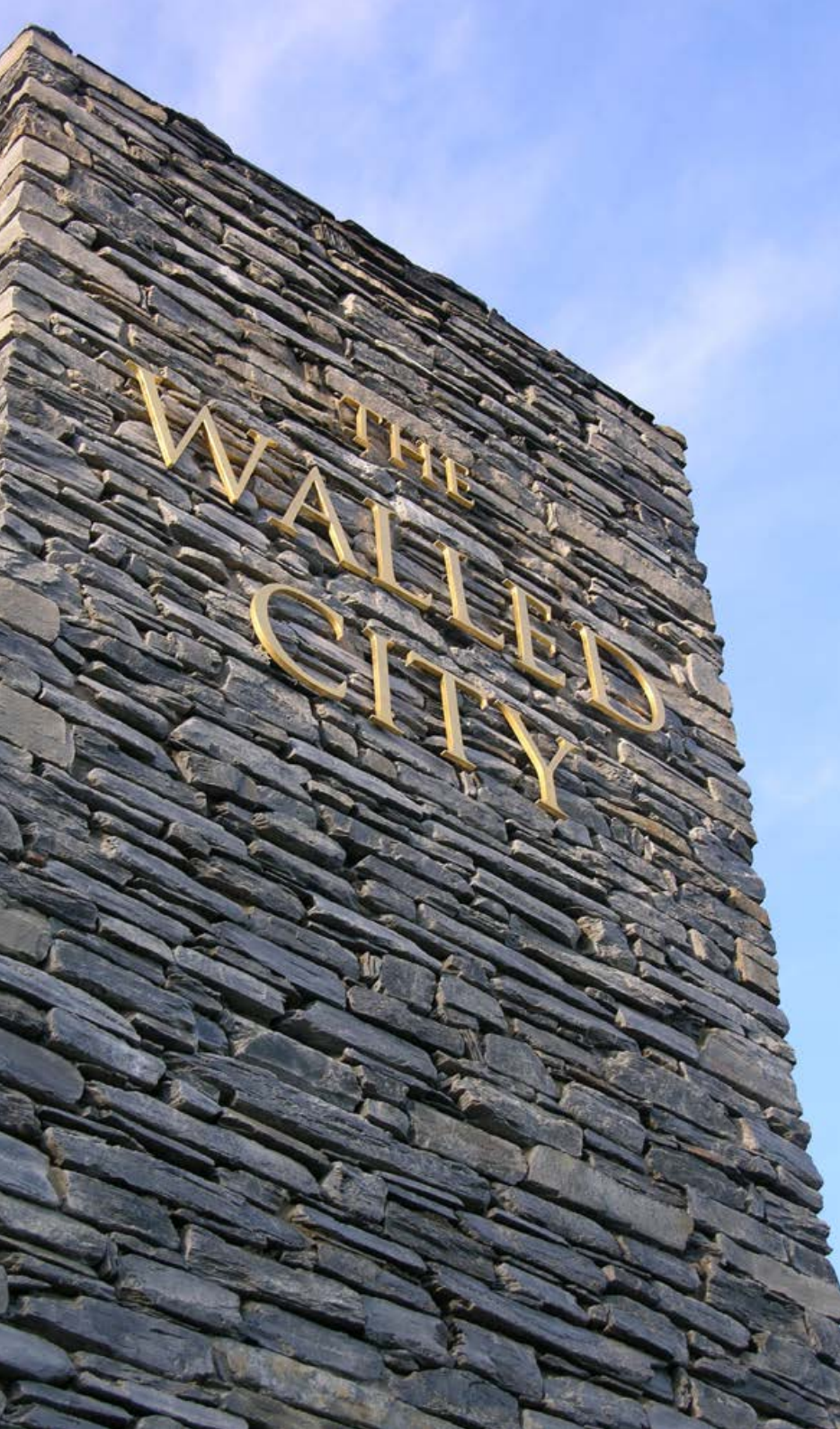
It is proposed that the road is established as a tree lined street, accommodating generous pedestrian footpaths and a dedicated, off-road cycle lane. It is proposed that, where feasible, the existing building line is set back, to facilitate these enhanced linkages, creating a more pedestrian/cycle friendly environment.

Woodside Avenue Development

Given the extent of development land available, following the relocation of the College Training Centre and Rivers Agency offices, the Masterplan proposes comprehensive redevelopment of Woodside Avenue.

Design guidance should be adhered to in order to ensure that a high quality residential environment is established.

Where possible new pedestrian and vehicular links should be encouraged between this area and surrounding streets and spaces.



Arrival Points

At present the arrival experience into Omagh is extremely poor. Enhancement works are proposed at key gateway locations that will convey a positive and welcoming first impression to all those entering Omagh and help to orientate visitors while portraying a positive and progressive image of the town.

Improvements to the roads infrastructure within and around Omagh will have a significant impact on the town's edges in the future, with the position and alignment of the proposed A5 Western Transport Corridor, in particular, redefining Omagh's urban footprint as well as creating new arrival points into the town.

In conjunction with the development of the A5 corridor, opportunities should be taken to install gateway features for the Town at newly developed junctions.

Primary gateways are proposed at major arrival points into the town, such as Derry Road, Crevenagh Road Roundabout, Cookstown Road, Gortin Road and Dromore Road, while secondary welcome points are proposed at minor arrival points into the town, such as Old Dublin Road, Tamlaght Road and Drumnakilly Road.

Enhancements should include gateway markers designed specifically to define entrances in a style fitting to Omagh and reflecting the proposed 'Outdoor Omagh' brand. In addition, the landscape setting of the gateways should be comprehensively improved, which would be likely to include improved boundary treatments, tree planting, floral displays and lighting.

Prior to the delivery of this proposal, a detailed study should be conducted to determine the exact location and style of gateway features to be installed. Consultation with local communities should be central to this study.

The approach to addressing the gateways will vary depending on the specific characteristics and setting of each individual location. In all cases, as with other prominent locations within the town, the highest standards of design must be achieved.



6.0 Delivery of the Masterplan

6.1 Introduction

Key to the success of this updated Masterplan for Omagh Town Centre will be realising its delivery, effectively turning ideas on paper into reality on the ground. This will require the Masterplan process to continue, beyond the launch of this document, so that proposals can be taken forward in pursuit of the shared vision, aims and objectives identified.

6.2 Management

The management of the Omagh Town Centre Masterplan delivery process will require the input of key public sector organisations, with a continued reliance on effective working relationships between these organisations and individuals. It will be important to ensure a consistency of approach, so that regeneration proposals remain uninterrupted by such transition. It is therefore advocated that a Masterplan management group comprising of key stakeholders, including the new Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is established early and maintained throughout the lifespan of the Masterplan.

6.3 Communication and Participation

Beyond the Masterplan management group, a much wider pool of stakeholders from the public, private and community sectors will be critical to successful delivery of the Masterplan. Establishing and maintaining a sense of shared ownership amongst this wide grouping will be key.

It is therefore important that an effective communication strategy is put in place to ensure that all stakeholders are regularly informed of progress and given the opportunity to engage further with its development. Transparent and regular dialogue with the general public should be maintained through a variety of events, local media and Internet sites. Opportunities to celebrate successes of the Town Centre Masterplan should also be sought, engendering a positive attitude to the regeneration of the town. To this extent, a concerted focus on the delivery of key short-term projects is advised.

6.4 Mechanisms for Delivery

A number of mechanisms exist by which the Town Centre Masterplan can be delivered. The parcelling of publicly owned land and preparation of development briefs for major development projects will be an essential tool for areas such as Mountjoy Road and the vacated school sites. This provides the opportunity to clearly steer the direction of development, thus meeting the objectives of the Masterplan

Working partnerships between the local Council, other public sector agencies and private land owners should be established to take forward proposals which involve a range of stakeholders, with the Urban Regeneration Department of the new District Council central to this process. Dialogue and engagement is fundamental to the delivery of the Masterplan, however, where this is not possible, consideration to the use of compulsory purchase powers should be given. The Council and other public sector agencies should also lead on the provision of public realm and other forms of infrastructure, providing the framework into which new development can occur.

6.5 Phasing

As identified through the analysis process the scale of development opportunities in Omagh is substantial. To be sustainable, great care is therefore required to ensure that development is phased over time in relation to prevailing market conditions. For example, following the relocation of schools to the Shared Educational Campus at Lisanelly, the physical and economic impact of developing the remaining sites needs to be fully understood and their release to the market timed appropriately. This will necessitate coordinated management of the Masterplan delivery process.

6.6 Action Plan for Delivery

A central tool for coordinated management of the Masterplan delivery process will be the Action Plan for Delivery. This document sets out projects identified through the Masterplan, along with their Regeneration Priority and timeframe. It also identifies delivery agents necessary for each project, along with other stakeholders whose input is recommended.

The Action Plan provides an important project management tool for delivery of the Masterplan. It will, however, require to be regularly monitored and updated in line with progress and future opportunities for development.

MASTERPLAN PROPOSAL	TIMEFRAME FOR DELIVERY	LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS	STAKEHOLDERS / POTENTIAL FUNDERS
Town Brand and Place Marketing Strategy	S	FODC, DSD	TourismNI, Priv, OCC, Comm
Sustainable Transport Planning	S	FODC, TransportNI	Translink, Sustrans, Comm, Priv
Flood Alleviation	S	RA	FODC, Priv, Comm, NIEA
Riverfront Development	M	FODC, Priv	DSD, SWC, RA
Events Strategy	S	FODC	Comm, DSD, Priv, TourismNI
Town Centre Business Strategy	S	FODC	Priv, OEC, OCC
Public Realm and Town Centre Frontages	S	FODC, DSD	Priv, OCC, NIEA
Living over the Shops (LOTS) Strategy	M	FODC	DSD, Priv, NIEA
Lisanelly Shared Educational Campus	S/M	DE	TransportNI, FODC, Comm, Local Post-Primary Schools
Development Briefs	M	FODC, DSD	DE, Priv, TransportNI
High Street Pedestrianisation	M	TransportNI	FODC, DSD, OCC, Priv, Comm
Kevlin Avenue Development Sites	S/M	DSD, FODC, Priv	TransportNI, Comm
Establishment of a Cultural Quarter	S	FODC	Priv, DSD, OCC, NIEA, TourismNI, Comm
St Lucia Barracks Development	S	DSD, FODC	TransportNI, NIEA, TourismNI, Priv
Campsie Road Improvements	S	DSD, FODC	Priv, OCC, TransportNI
Irishtown Development	L	Priv	FODC, DSD, TransportNI, RA
Dromore Road and James Street	S/M	TransportNI, FODC	DSD, Priv, Comm
Sedan Avenue Development	M	Priv	TransportNI, DSD, FODC, RA
Scott's Mill Development	S	Priv	TransportNI, FODC
Mountjoy Road Development	M	Priv, TransportNI	DE, FODC, Comm
Woodside Avenue Development	M	Priv	TransportNI, FODC, Comm
Arrival Points	S/M	FODC	TransportNI, Priv

Timeframe:

S = Short (1- 5 yrs)
M = Medium (5 - 10 yrs)
L = Long (10 - 15 yrs)

Delivery Agents, Stakeholders & Potential Funders:

Comm Community Groups
DE Department of Education
DSD* Department for Social Development
FODC Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
NIEA Northern Ireland Environment Agency

OCC Omagh Chamber of Commerce
OEC Omagh Enterprise Agency
Priv Private Sector
RA Rivers Agency
SWC South Western College

* Under local government reform urban regeneration and community development powers are expected to transfer from DSD to local Councils on April 2016.



7.0 Conclusions

The future of Omagh and its Town Centre will be significantly influenced by planning and design decisions being made in the present day. The town's vast areas of centrally located development land, the majority of which is under public ownership, presents a once in a life time opportunity for Omagh. The onus now lies with central and local government, together with its partners in the private sector, to take a bold position on how this opportunity can be turned into reality.

This updated Masterplan for Omagh Town Centre sets out how this vision of a sustainable Town Centre can be realised. Based on a thorough process of analysis, it identifies priorities and illustrates opportunities for regeneration and development throughout the centre. Omagh's High Street will be underpinned as the town's principal shopping and leisure area, complemented in time with new development nearby.

Its historic fabric of churches, narrow streets and listed buildings will be conserved and revitalised to become a vibrant part of the town. The proposed Shared Educational Campus at Lisanelly presents a unique opportunity for Omagh, while Campsie will be strengthened as an important town centre community, and the River Strule will play a central role in the life of Omagh as place for recreation and leisure.

Achieving the vision will not be easy, with many challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead. Proactive management, a close working relationship between stakeholders and a genuine ongoing dialogue with residents hold the key to realising a dynamic and prosperous Omagh Town Centre.

Updated Omagh Town Centre Masterplan

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