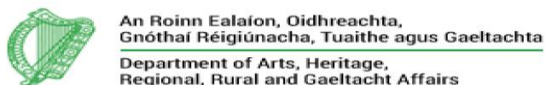


Dr Neil Galway, Jason Martin, Dani  
Sterling, David McSwiggan and  
Killian Whyte

Queen's University Belfast



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**Border Towns Workshop,  
Monaghan, June 2018**

# Better Letterkenny



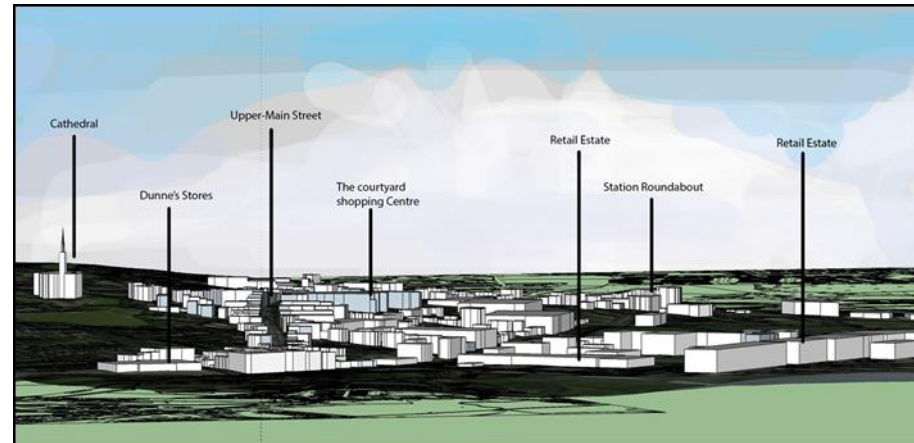
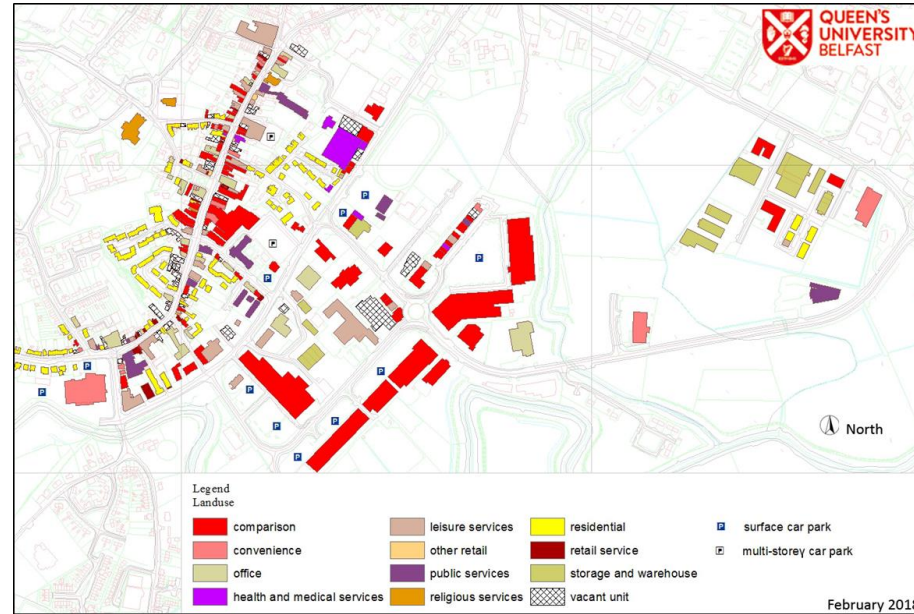
**MSc Planning & Development: Dani Sterling, Catriona Blair, Jason Martin and Killian Whyte**





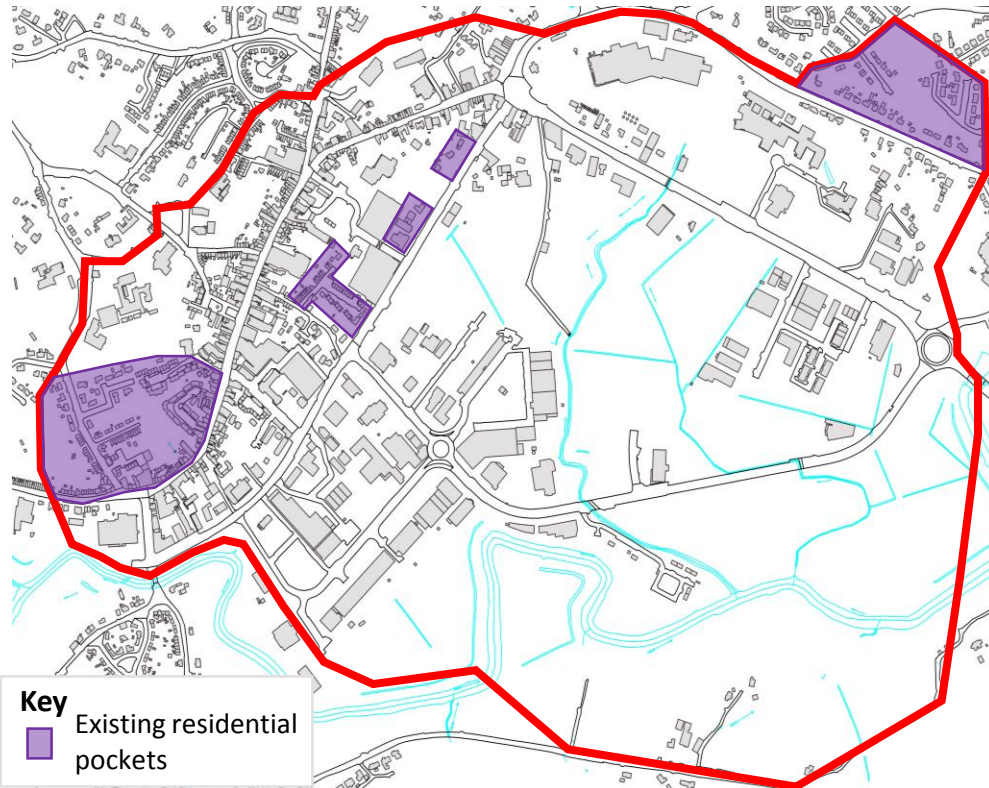
# PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Collaboration with Donegal County Council with generous support from the Heritage Council
- MSc Planning & Development modules:
  - EVP7014 - Design in the Built Environment: Group Urban Design Strategies
  - EVP7018 – Professional Practice Project: Thematic Town Centre Plans
- Field work undertaken in January and February 2018.
- Methodology including Urban design analysis; land use surveys; pedestrian counts; public and retailer questionnaires and interviews with key stakeholders.
- In June, the class presented to Councillors and stakeholders at consultation event for the Letterkenny Town Plan.



# TOWN CENTRE LIVING AND SERVICE PROVISION

- Numerous residential pockets exist within the town centre.
- However, much of the housing in the traditional town centre is characterised by poor quality and substandard properties resulting in vacancy and undesirability



## Service Provision

- Primary and post-primary schools are experiencing oversubscription and are currently insufficient to meet projected population increases.
- The current healthcare provision would be insufficient to service the projected population growth rate of Letterkenny town centre.



**The Riverside Apartments located between Pearse Road and lower Main Street exemplify the current issue of poor design**



## Respondents' Opinions of Town Centre Living and Green Space

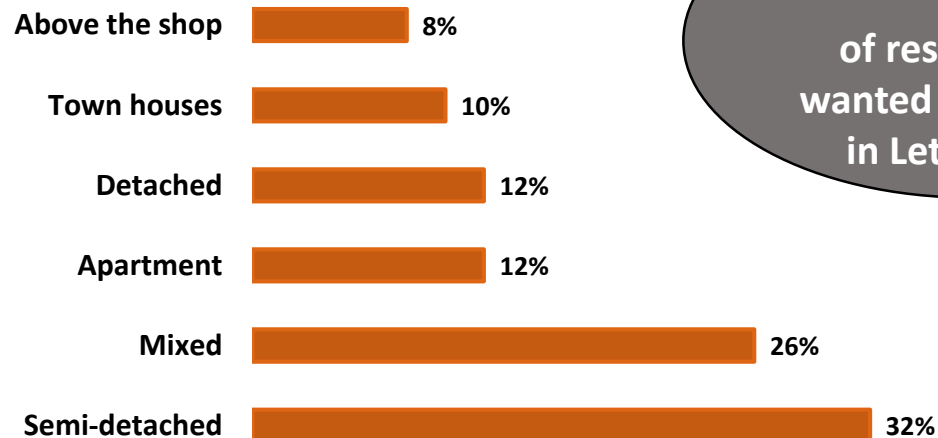
### Housing desirability in Letterkenny Town Centre

**53%** of respondents indicated a desire for more mixed housing developments

**35%** of respondents identified a need for more affordable and social housing

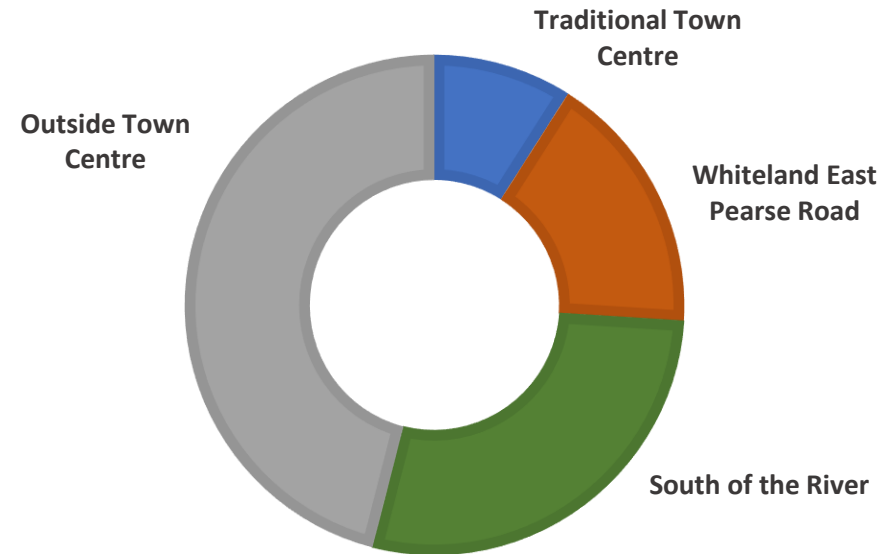


### What type of new housing would you like to see more of?



**32%** of respondents wanted a greenway in Letterkenny

### Where would you like new housing located?



### Importance of green space

**58%** of respondents stated there is currently a lack of green space in the town centre



**51%** of respondents expressed a desire for the incorporation of green space into new housing developments

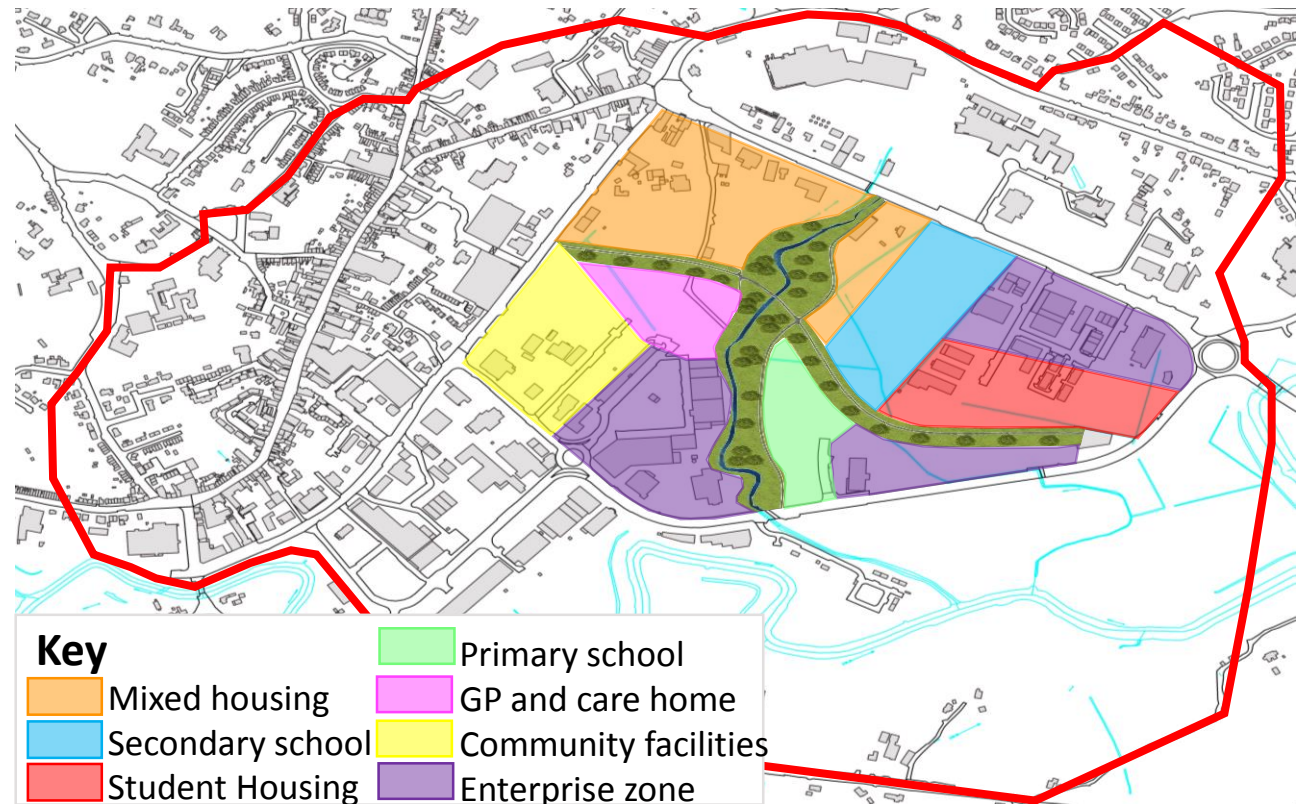
## Town Centre Living Proposal 2

### Mixed-Use Development

- Mixed-use development offers a combination of residential and non-residential units which complement each other, providing urban-style living with walkable communities.

#### Benefits

- Provides greater housing variety and density
- Reduces distances between housing, workplaces, retail businesses and other amenities
- Reduces reliance on the car
- Creates a strong neighbourhood character and sense of place
- Incorporates green, open space
- Promotes a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environment



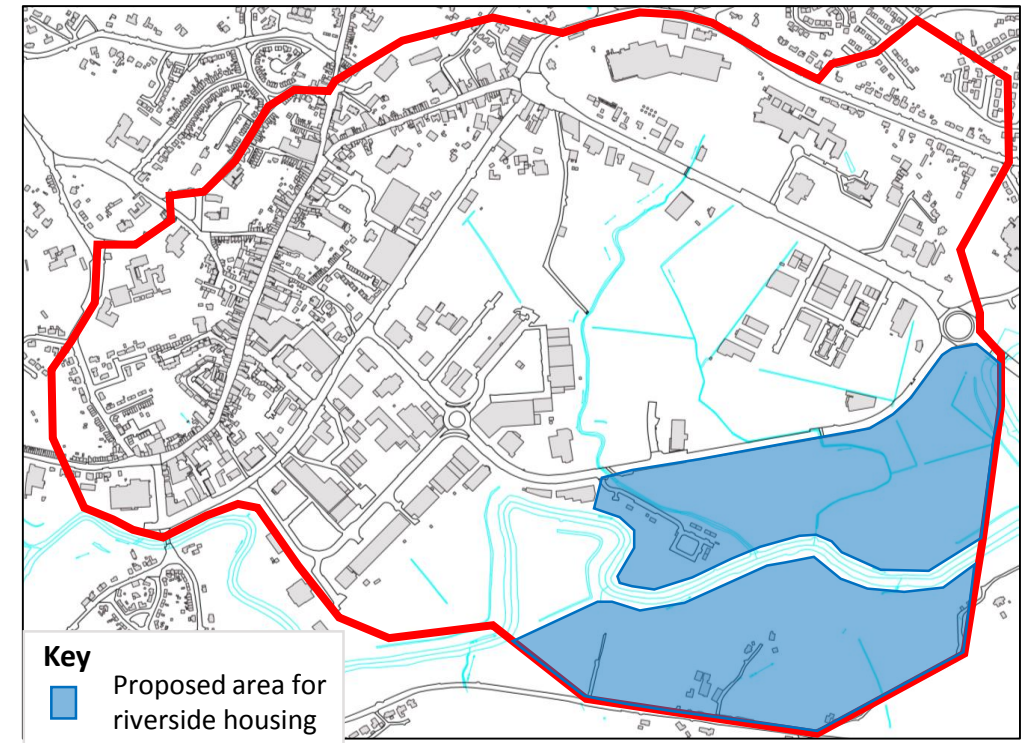
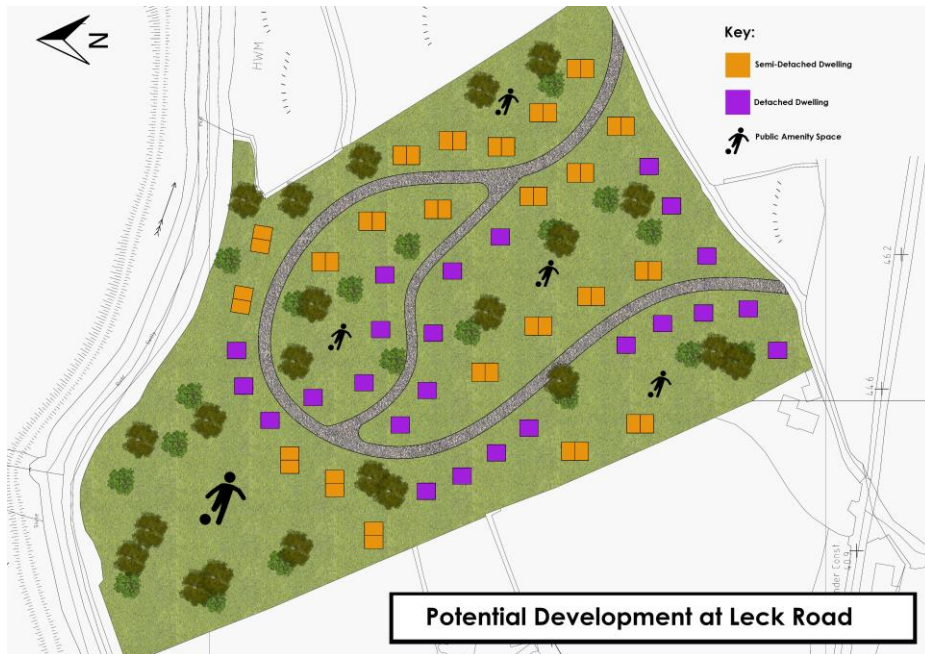
**The provision of high quality, high density sustainable housing ensures the maximum number of housing units available to meet the needs of a growing population and will encourage town centre living.**



## Town Centre Living Proposal 3

### Riverside Housing

- Embracing the River Swilly and providing lower density housing on the whiteland North and South of the river will add to the variety of housing within the town centre, as well as creating an attractive and sustainable environment for residents and visitors.

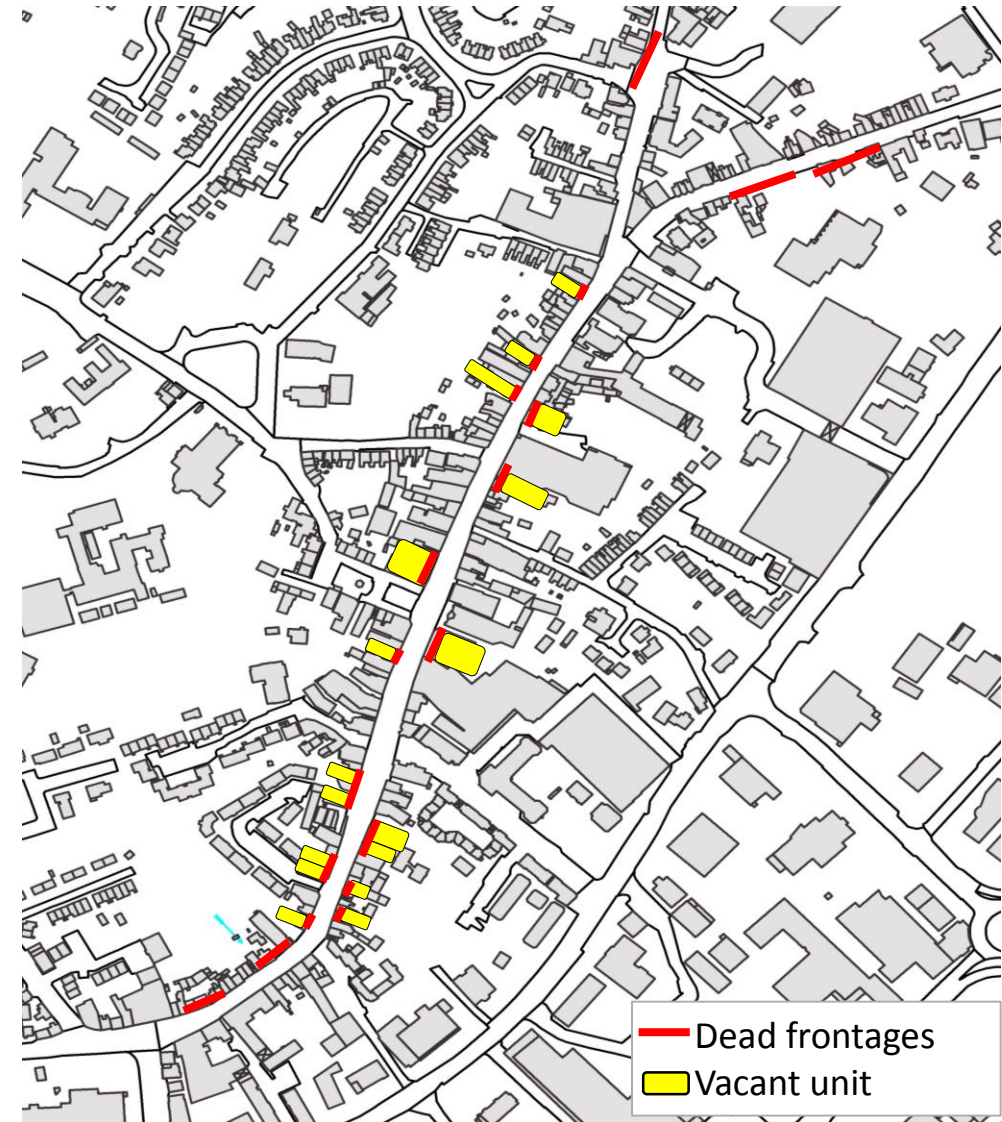




# RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL

## Current situation

- The retail sector is separated into two areas; Main Street and the Retail Park.
  - Main Street is composed of mixture of independently owned businesses, cafes, bars and restaurants.
  - The retail Park is composed of multi-national comparison stores, entertainment services and car dealerships.
- 
- Main Street is currently negatively impacted by vacant units and dead frontages.



Map showing dead frontages and vacant units on Main Street



# BREXIT

## The Impact of Brexit on Trading

**87%** of retailers stated they have noticed a decrease in cross-border trade since the announcement of Brexit

**93%** of retailers believe that Brexit will have a negative impact on their business

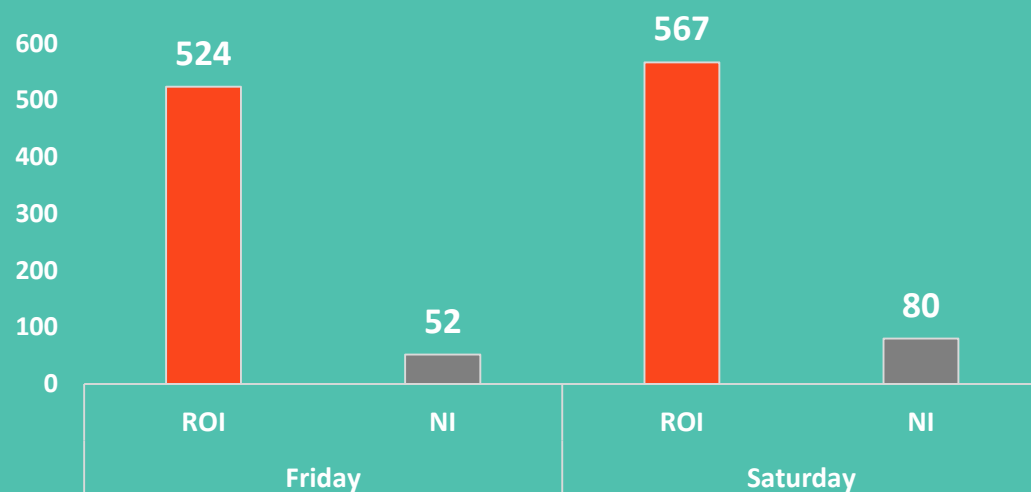
Derry / Strabane and Donegal Paper on Initial Analysis of the Impacts of BREXIT:

*“Peripherality challenges in NW Region will only be compounded by the changes that Brexit will bring.”*

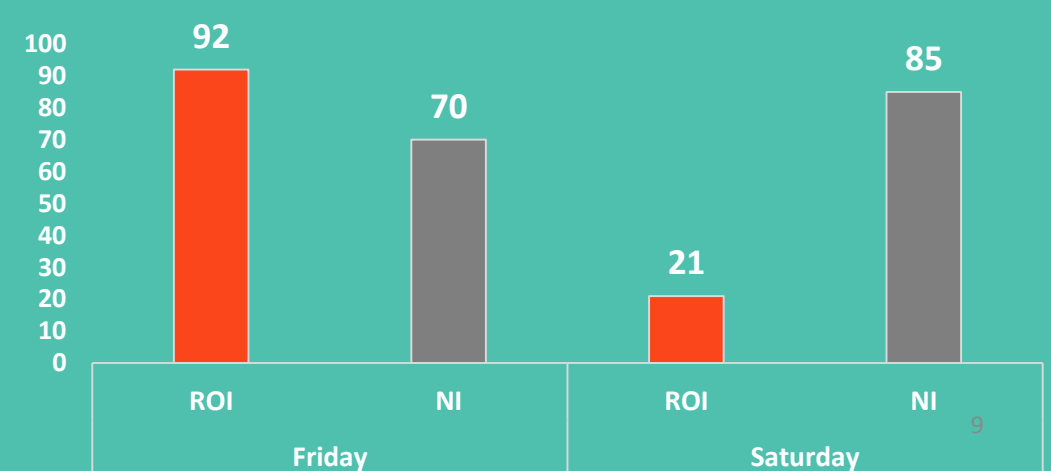
*“The truth about the impact of Brexit is that it is uncertain, beyond the ability of any human being to forecast and almost entirely dependent on how the process will be managed. ‘Don’t know’ is the technically correct answer.”*

**Car registration counts taken from Main Street and the retail park over Friday and Saturday**

Retail Park

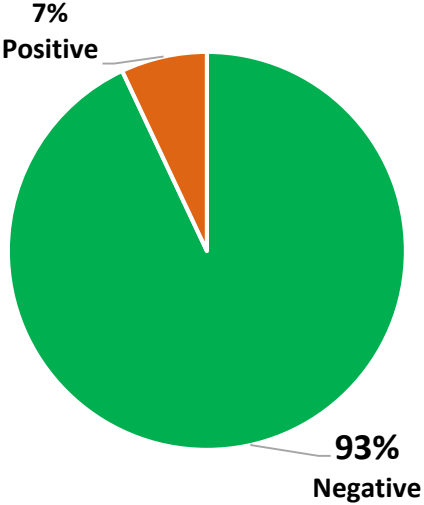


Main Street



Business Owners' and Shoppers' Opinions of the Retail Sector in Letterkenny Town Centre

Impact of Brexit on trading expectations

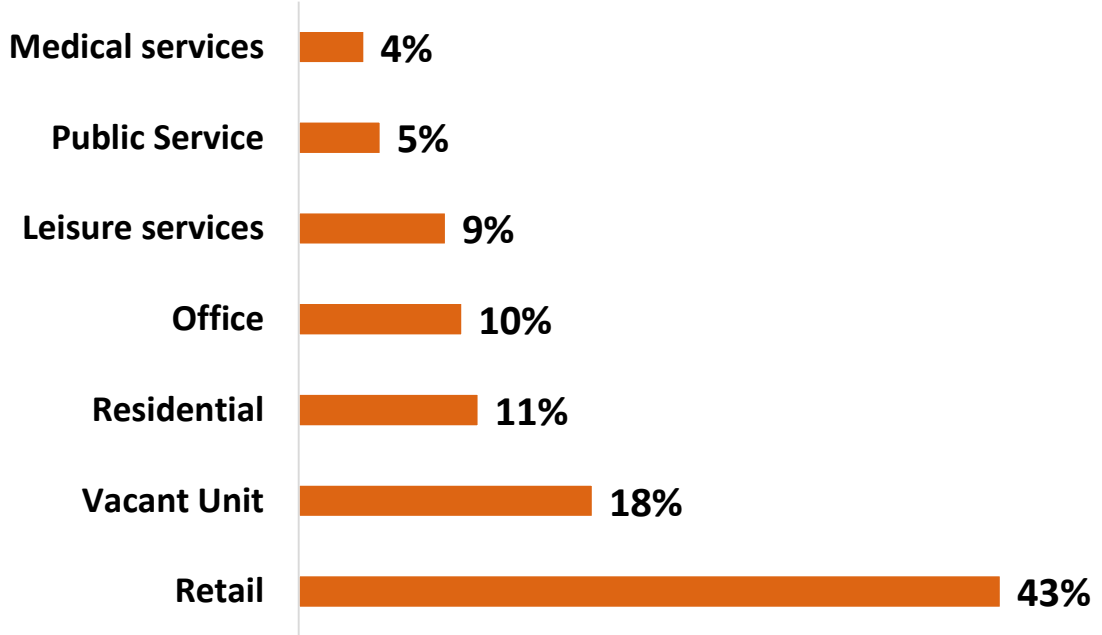


68% of Main Street retailers felt business would suffer if on-street parking was removed...



...However, 61% of shoppers felt they would be more inclined to shop on the Main Street if it was less car dominated.

Ground Floor Land Use on Main Street



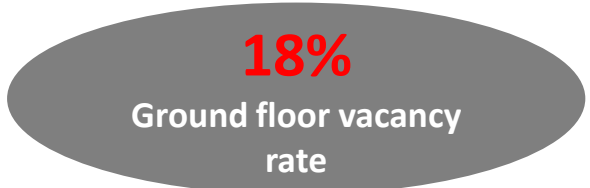
93%

Of shoppers felt a strong disconnection between Main Street and the Retail Park

71%

Of shoppers were more likely to shop at the Retail Park

Main Street vacancy

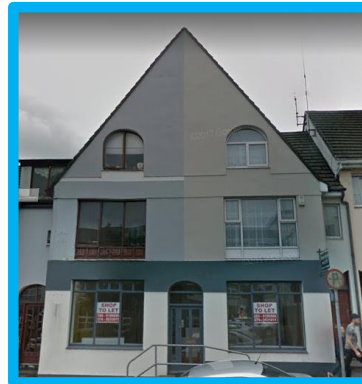
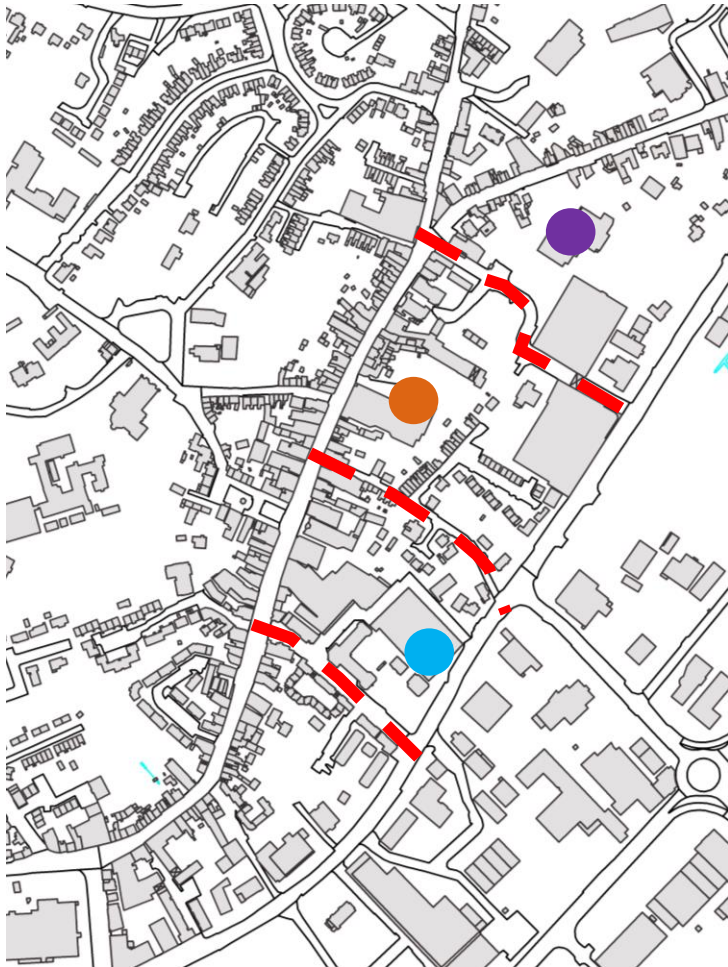




## Retail and Commercial Proposal

### Vacant Units and Secondary Streets

There is noticeable disconnection between the the two main retail areas due to the unfriendly walking conditions of the town

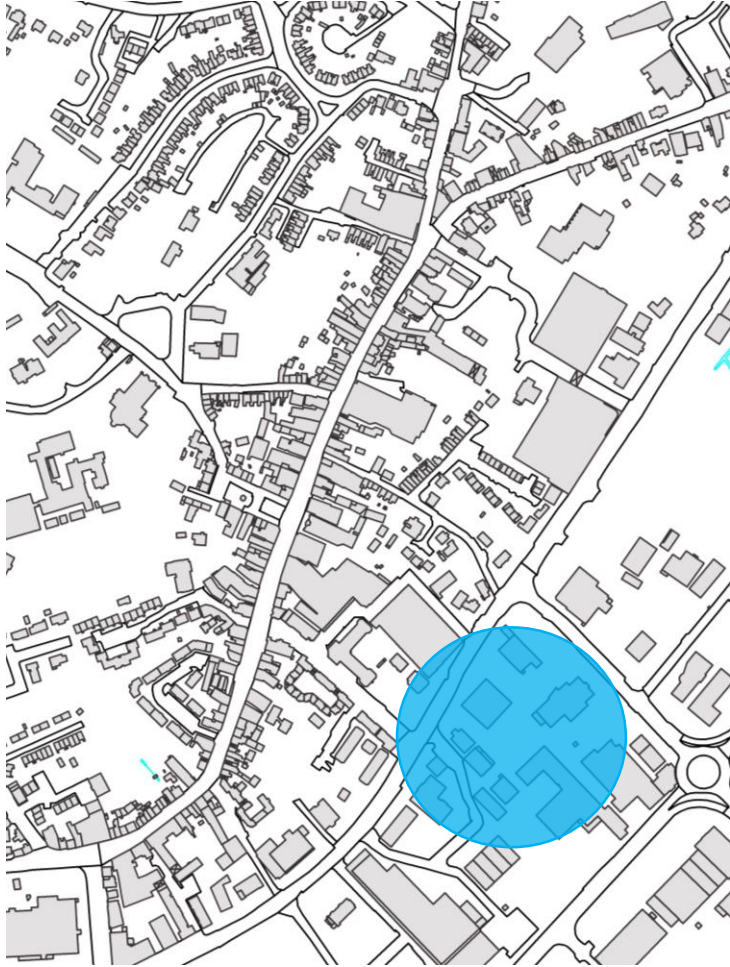


- Opportunity sites for retail development exist along all three secondary streets between Main Street and the Retail Park.
- Secondary streets include Justice Walsh Road, Rosemount Lane and St Oliver Plunket Road.
- Prime locations in the town centre but are currently under utilised and unattractive.



# Retail and Commercial Proposal

## Mixed-Use Development



The economically underperforming site composed of the vacant warehouses on Pearse Road presents a prime opportunity for a mixed-use development where there would be a presumption in favour of retail and commercial at ground floor level, and residential and Grade A office space on upper floors.

### Benefits

- Stimulates variety in the built environment
- Promotes dense, compact and efficient use of land
- Creates walkable and accessible environments





## Respondents' Opinions of the Quality of the Public Realm and Open Space in Letterkenny Town Centre



Just over two-thirds of respondents felt that there was insufficient town centre parking...

However, the majority of respondents demonstrated a lack of knowledge and awareness of existing car parking facilities throughout the town centre

**80%**

of respondents travelled into Letterkenny town centre by car



**58%**

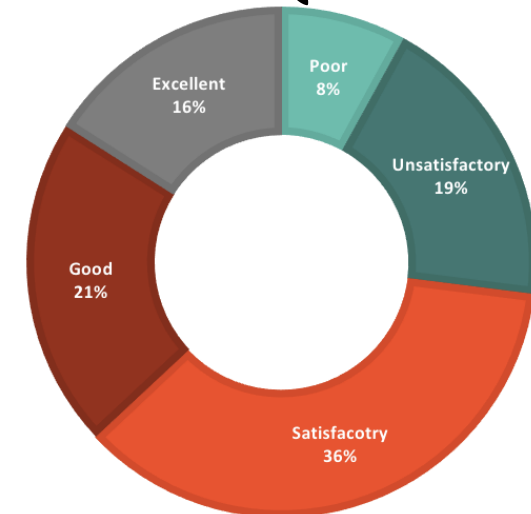
of respondents felt that there was not enough public and outdoor space in the town centre



### How would you rate the quality of Main Street?



### How would you rate the quality of Cathedral Quarter?



## **PUBLIC REALM**

### **Current Situation**

#### **Market Square**

- Observations of the market square revealed that it was an enclosed, inaccessible and claustrophobic.
- The multi-level layout as well as numerous obstructions including the monument, benches and over-grown trees contributed to the under-use of the space.



#### **Cathedral Quarter**

- The historical and cultural significance of the Cathedral Quarter has made it a place of investment, through the grass-roots urban rejuvenation project, which centred around breathing new life into an old and historic local street, Church Lane.
- The undeveloped site on Church Lane, opposite St Eunan's Cathedral, presents a prime opportunity to introduce further revitalisation





# Public Realm

## Market Square Redevelopment

- Redevelopment of the market square would create an open, accessible and reenergised public space which the whole community could enjoy.
- The historical market background could be reinstated, fostering the community ethos to create a heart of the town.

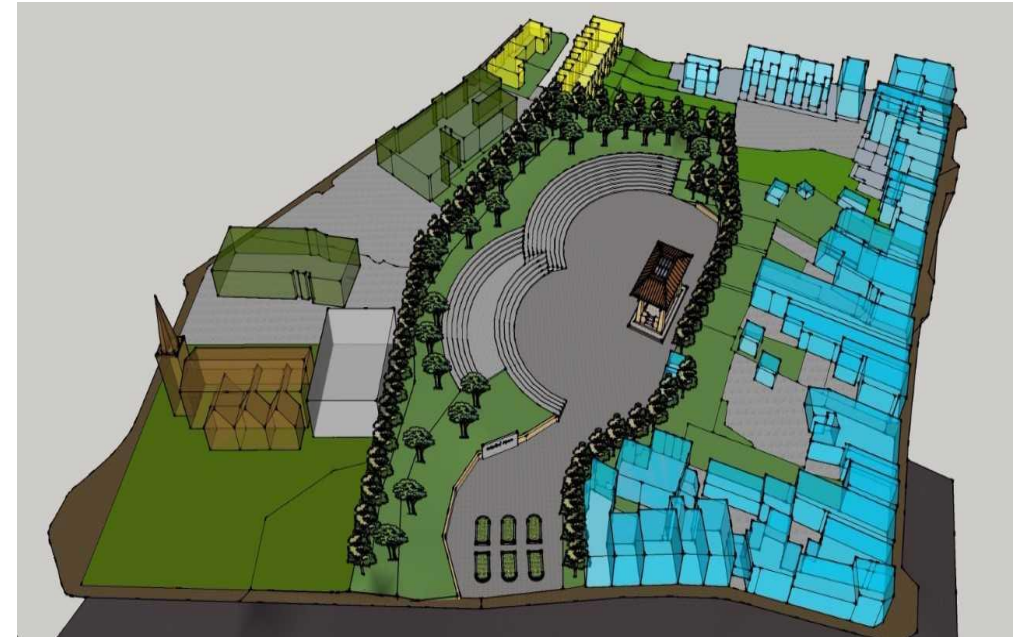




# Public Realm

## Church Lane Gap Site

- Development of the Church Lane gap site could enhance the Cathedral Quarter by providing a user-friendly, functional, versatile open space.
- The design proposal incorporates an amphitheatre which would see the reinstallation of the bandstand from Market Square, maintaining the historical character of Letterkenny



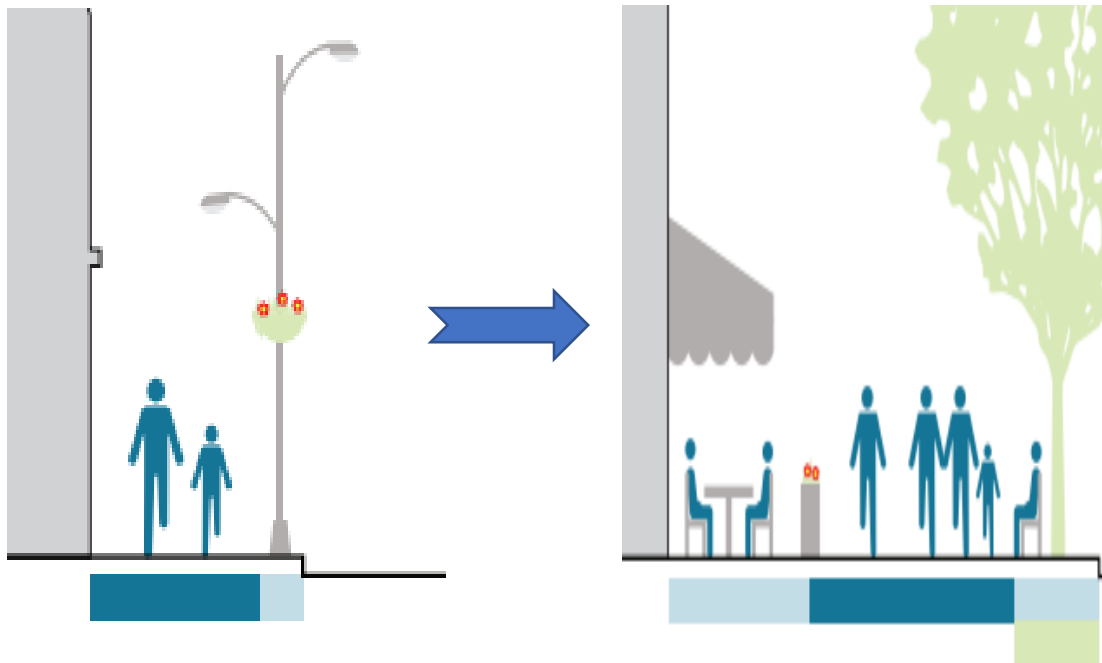


## Public Realm

### Pedestrian vs Car Dominant

There is a perception that there is nowhere to park in Letterkenny, however, the private multi-storey car parks can accommodate over 1,200 cars and are all within a short walk.

- Free car parking in the retail park
- 14 car parks which were underutilised
- 1748 car parking spaces
- Maximum 2 hour stay at on-street parking



The incremental removal of the short stay on-street parking and promotion of existing off street parking within the town centre through well placed directional signage and displaying of parking availability.



Due to the high pedestrian volume observed at the Library junction, the implementation of a pedestrian crossing would be advisable.



## Public Realm

### Possible Parklets on Main Street

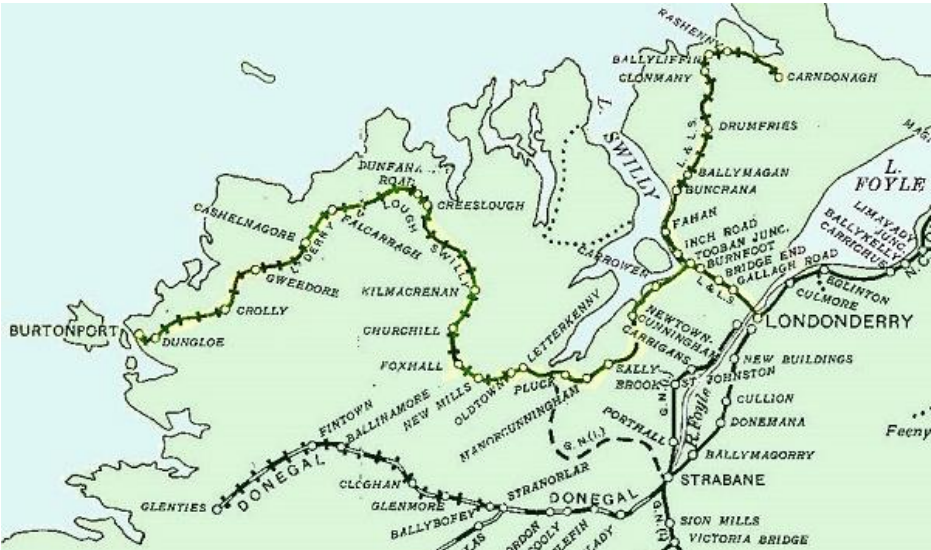
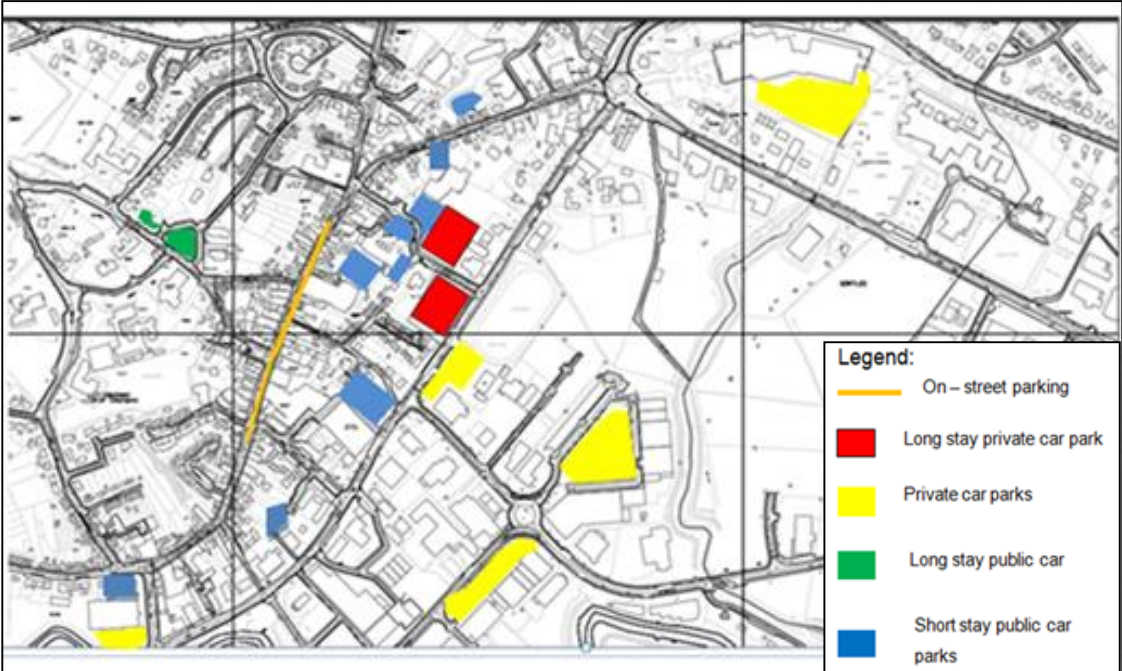
Parklets, which originated in San Francisco, could be used as a way to take back the street in an incremental manner. This temporary form of intervention will be trialled in Belfast in September as part of Better Bedford Street.





## TRANSPORTATION Current Situation

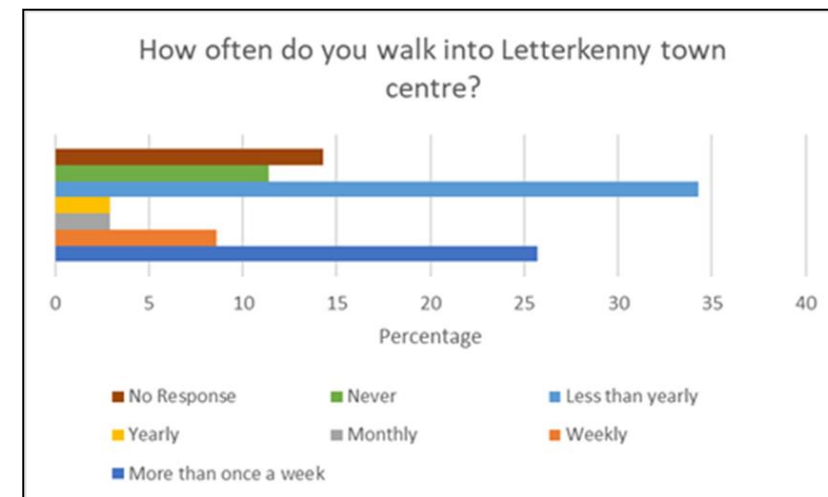
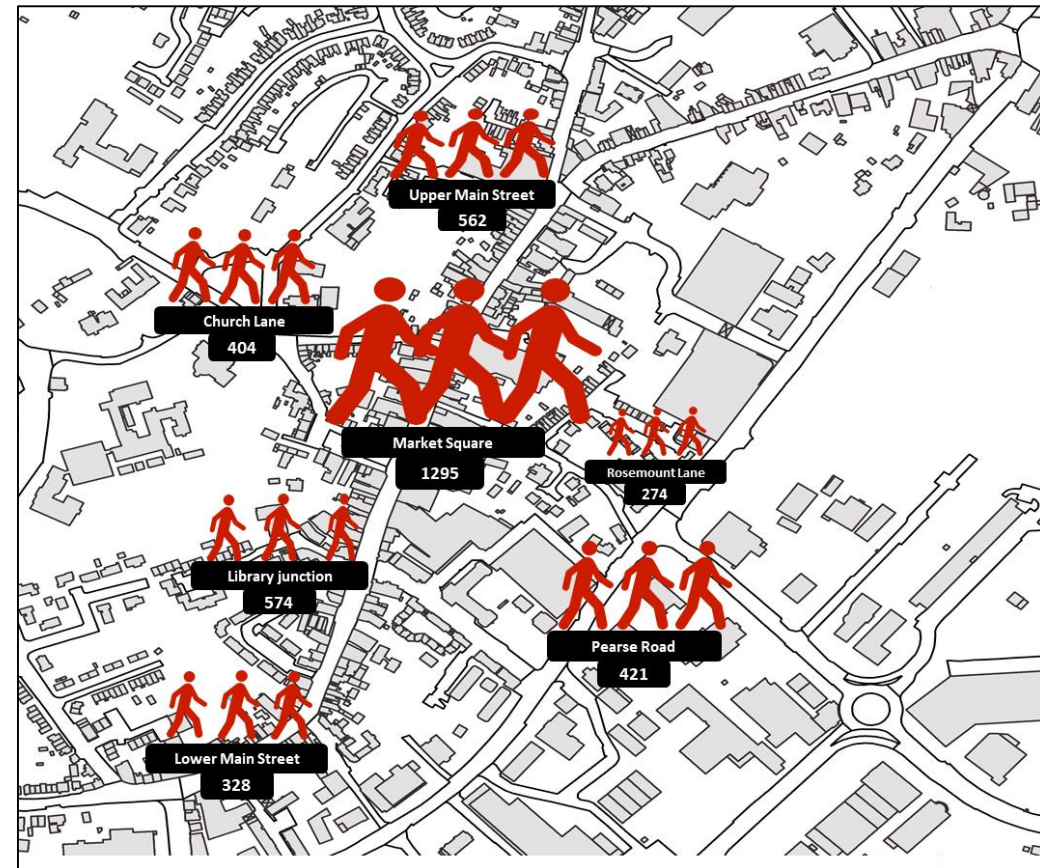
Transportation in Letterkenny is dominated by the private car with congestion problems at peak periods and an oversupply of parking spaces. The public transportation linkage is poor following the closure of the railway line and there is no town bus service making car ownership essential for people in the wider large rural hinterland.





# Transportation Analysis

High levels of footfall were recorded in Market Square with markedly lower levels in the other locations with few pedestrians in the shatter zone between the Main Street and retail parks. Poor quality / non-existent public footpaths sever the Main Street from the 'new town' exacerbating the topographical challenges for the physically impaired with Rosemount Lane having a distinctly rural character.





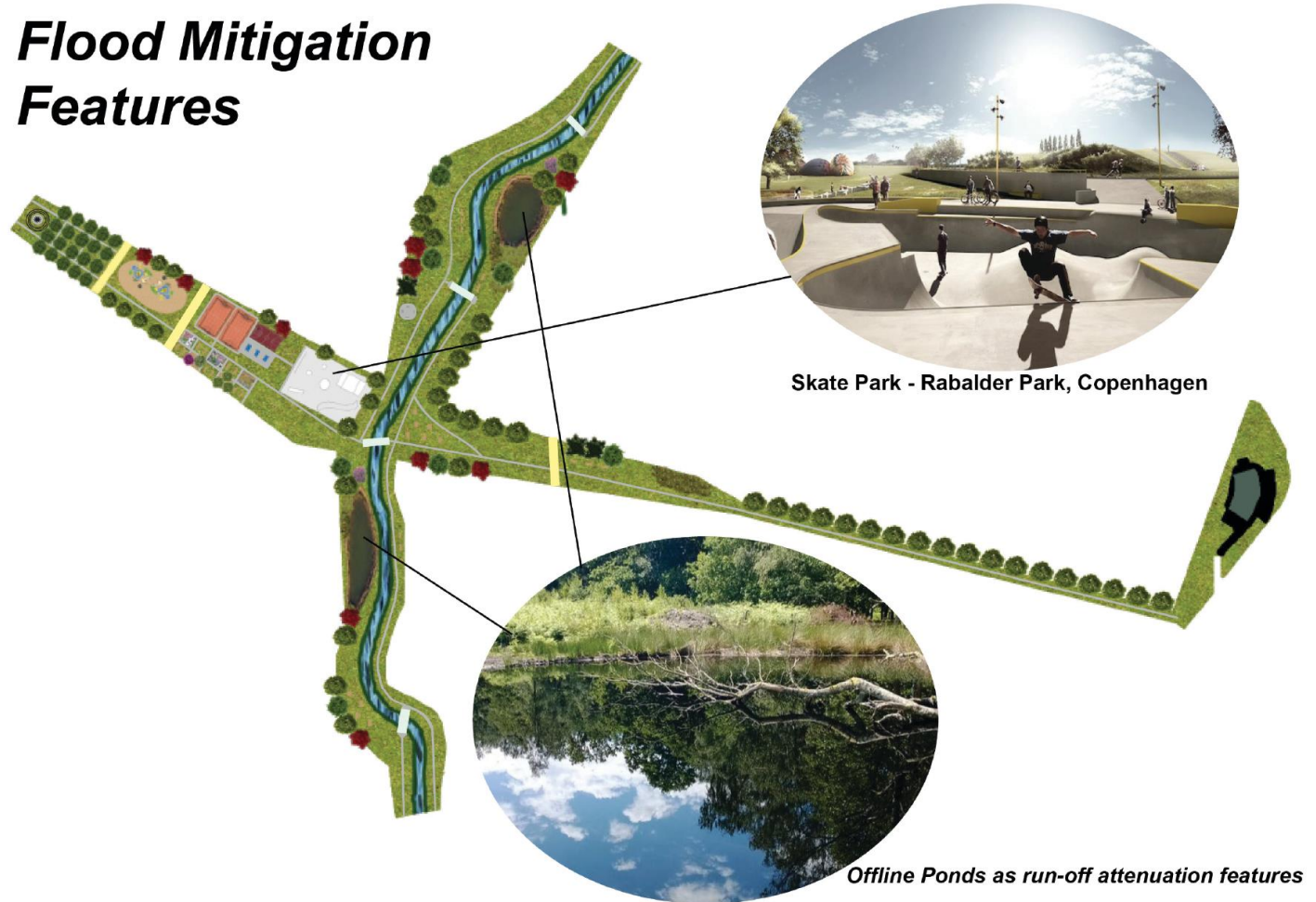
# Transportation

## Suilleach Greenway

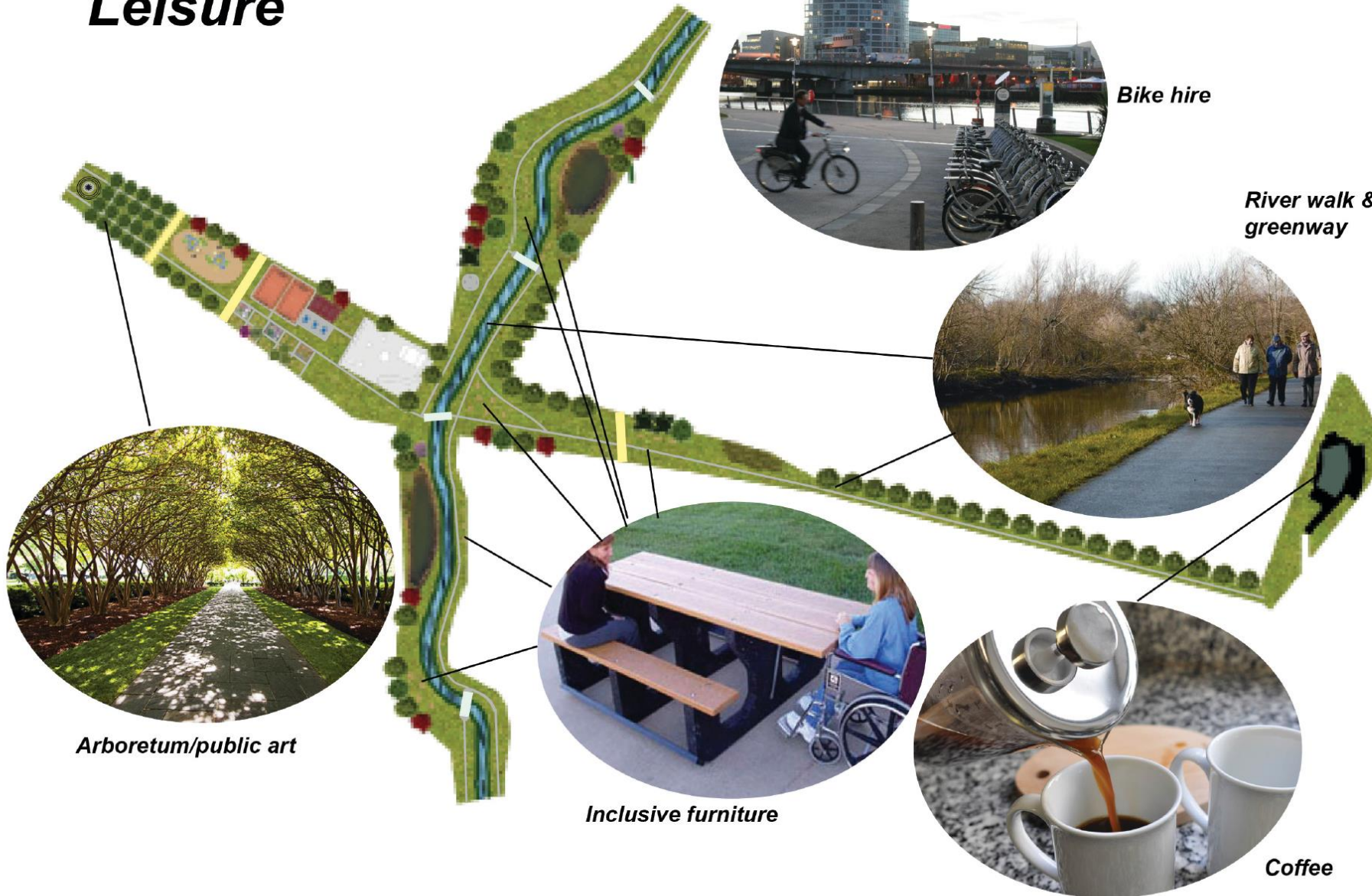
To meet intended growth targets, Letterkenny requires the type of environmental improvements and community facilities that would attract people to live in the town centre. Drawing upon local legend, the Suilleach Greenway would offer high-quality pedestrian linkages and embrace the river.



### ***Flood Mitigation Features***

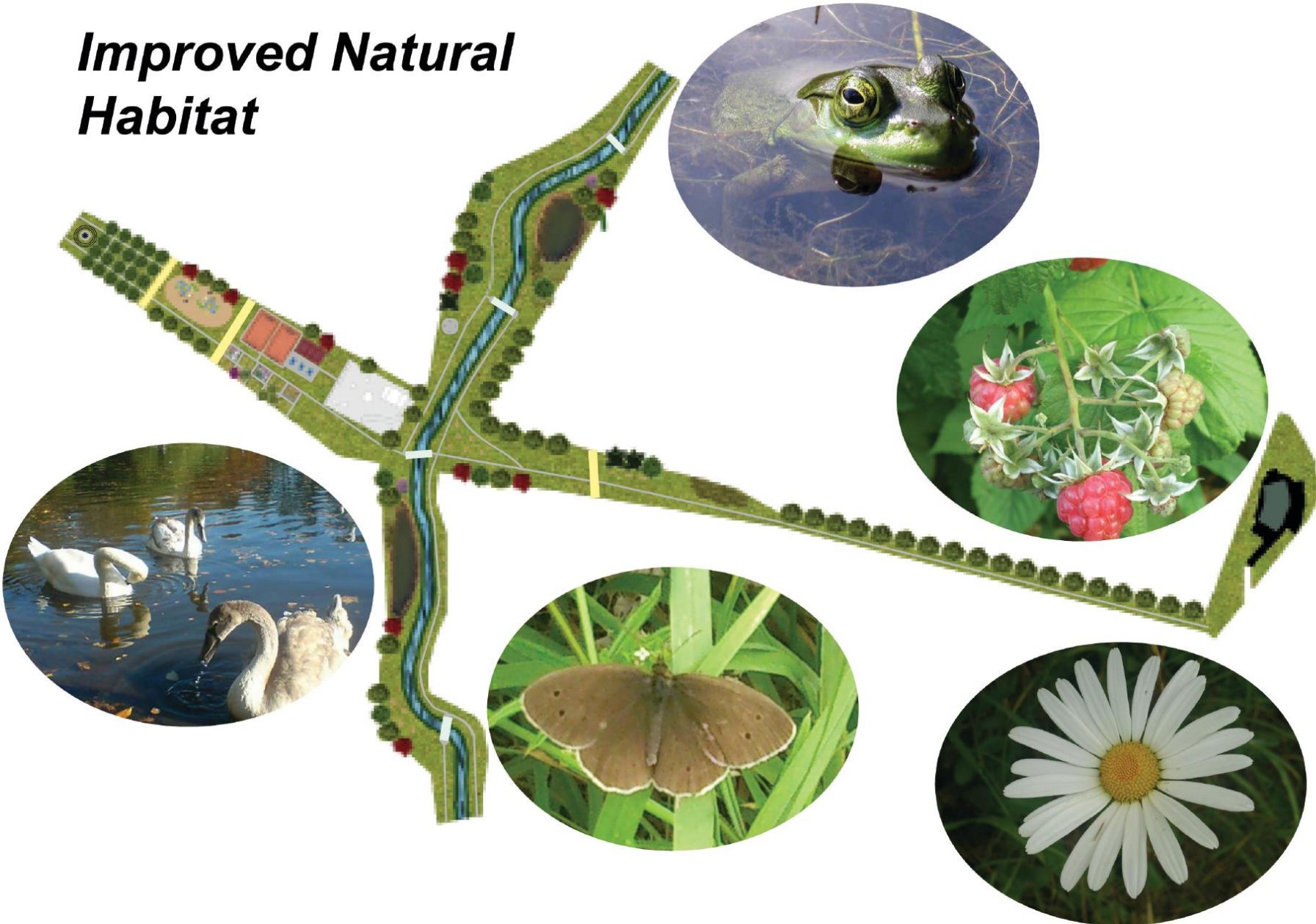


# ***Leisure***

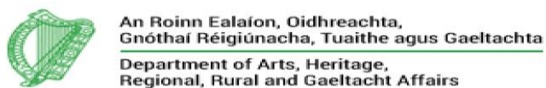




# ***Improved Natural Habitat***



# Any questions?



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