

The Masterplan was developed using a two-step consultation process.

Step One.

Step one was the production of a Situation Analysis Report and SWOT analysis, which analysed the current situation in Donegal Town under several headings and identified the needs of a significant number of key stakeholders.

Step Two.

Step two was an extensive and widespread public consultation process carried out using an online and in person communication methodology. This brought together the needs, aspirations and comments of over 470 individuals from all age demographics, from businesses to tourists, residents, students and young people.

Step Two consultation included the following:

01

Consultation Sessions on the Diamond

In person public consultation sessions on the Diamond on 2 consecutive Saturdays in September 2021.

02

An Online Survey

An online survey was developed using Survey Monkey and shared extensively on several websites and social media platforms.

03

Voice of the Child

To ensure the 'voice of the child' was heard, two consultation sessions were carried out in person with junior and senior Foróige groups in Donegal Town.

04

Fáilte Ireland

Consultation was also carried out with representatives from Fáilte Ireland to ensure the Masterplan is on track from a tourism perspective.

05

EU URBACT Network Engagement

The URBACT Programme is an EU European Territorial Cooperation programme aiming to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. URBACT allows cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies. The Playful Paradigm is an URBACT network that promotes inclusion, intergenerational solidarity, SDGs, resilience, healthy lifestyles. The URBACT network of contacts were also consulted in the development of the Masterplan.

The Masterplan was informed by information, guidance and case studies from the EU funded URBACT Playful Paradigm project and the URBACT National Practice Transfer Initiative Playful Towns in which Donegal County Council is a partner. A field trip to Cork took place in September 2021 to examine the public realm interventions that have been delivered very successfully there in the last number of years.

06

Research

Evidence based research was conducted on public realm usage, walkable towns, culture & heritage preservation, play and the night time economy. A Review of national and regional policies was carried out. The team analysed other Masterplans, which have been effectively implemented and produced Nationally and Internationally.

07

Steering Group Meetings

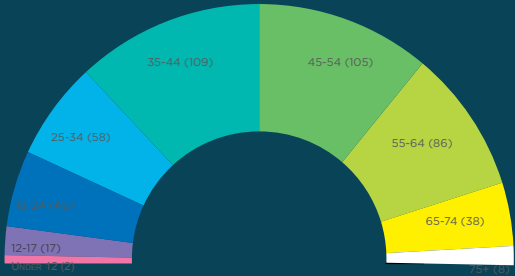
The steering group from Donegal County Council met with the design team on several occasions to assist in developing the brief and to ensure that proposals were broadly in keeping with the strategies of the County Development Plan. These meetings provided the opportunity to discuss real and challenging site-specific issues. Areas such as Architectural Conservation and Cultural enhancement/provision of the proposals were further encouraged and supported by the team. This collaborative process enhanced and improved the scope and character of the Masterplan.

08

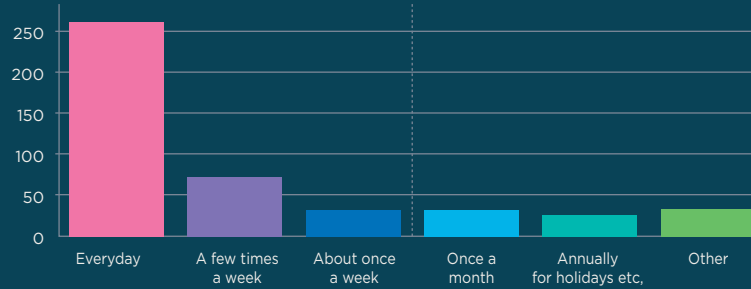
Engagement with Elected Members

The Design team and steering group met with Donegal MD elected members to present the Masterplan. Through this process the Design team were alerted to some additional specific concerns that were then addressed. With their voices representing the Public's interest, this allowed an insight in to how they might respond to the proposals in advance of the wider public consultation.

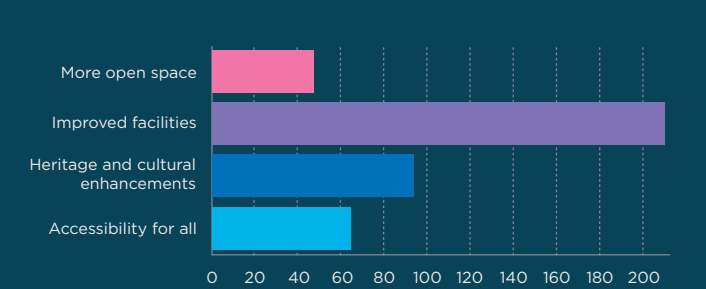
What is your age?



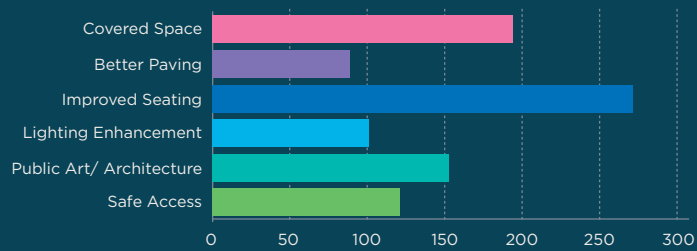
How often do you visit Donegal Town?



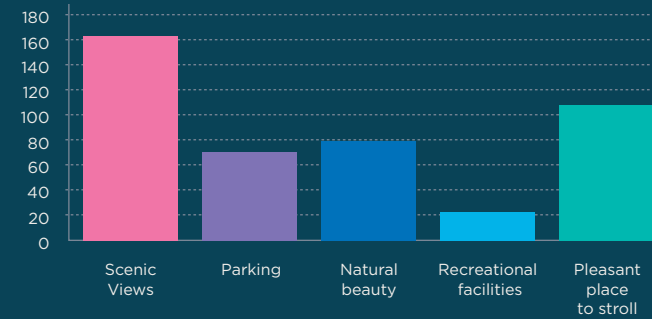
What do you like about the Diamond in Donegal Town?



What are your aspirations for the Diamond into the future?



What are the most positive or unique aspects of the Pier area?



470 people responded to the Online and in person consultation sessions. While a broad cross range of ages got involved 60% were between 35 and 64 years of age and 56% of respondents visit Donegal Town daily. Most responses were centred on the following issues or observations.

The majority of responses were centred on the following issues or observations;

The Diamond

1. Lack of parking or poor parking
2. Insufficient or poorly considered seating
3. Lack of covered space for inclement days
4. Over-run of motorbikes on certain days
5. Cold surfaces and insufficient soft landscaping

The Pier

1. Motorhome Parking
2. Reduction in natural amenity caused by too much parking
3. Inadequate facilities for various marine activity groups

Positive/important suggestions were addressed for;

The Diamond

1. Improved Seating
2. Covered Space
3. Public Art Architecture
4. Safe Crossings
5. Lighting
6. Parking

The Pier

1. Scenic Views
2. Improved walking experience
3. Celebrating natural beauty
4. Celebrating heritage and culture
5. Provide for marine facilities
6. Provide Toilet facilities.

Taking on board the feedback and responses from the consultation process, the following must be considered:

01

The Diamond is a key infrastructure for the Town with a vibrant range of businesses and services located around it, but which are physically and conceptually separated from it.

02

Road safety is a concern in this area, the volume of traffic and poor parking behaviour/facilities creates substantial congestion, discouraging people from this heart of the Town.

03

Culture and Heritage, Donegal Diamond area is an ACA (Architectural Conservation Area) , and contains some of the richest Architectural Heritage examples found in the County with wonderful vistas towards the Donegal Church Steeple to the West, the Round Tower at the Chapel to the North and the Pier area to the South. Further facilities and opportunities to respect and celebrate these cultural assets should be considered.

04

Donegal Town is a key Tourist destination, as it is the Gateway to the County from the South and East from Northern Ireland. The existing vibrant, high quality, and characterful experiences in terms of Donegal being a Food destination, Tweed Manufacture, Quality Hotels, water sport and Leisure, Golf, Hillwalking etc., will all benefit from a comfortable welcoming Initial experience of the Town.

05

Facilities for Children, Elderly, youths are lacking in the centre of the Town and at the Pier. Seating/playing opportunities are few. Wayfinding and looping of facilities has not yet been achieved successfully so that opportunities are being missed to keep people in the Town and enjoying the environment around them.

What makes a good Public Realm?

A good quality public realm is key to positive user experience and interaction which in turn encourages return visits.

Community value and identity radiate from a good quality public realm, as such they are places where people will choose to spend their time.

A good public realm is both inviting and inclusive; providing scope for a variety of events and activities such as public art exhibitions, community based activities, temporary interventions, greening of a space through the strategic use of landscaping and the inclusion of creative lighting schemes.

The built heritage of an area is showcased by a good quality public realm. As such well maintained building fronts are an important aspect of the public realm.

Environmental

Greater awareness and appreciation of surroundings: Well cared for and thoughtfully designed spaces help to foster an individual's and a community's greater awareness and appreciation of surroundings.

More walking/cycling: A built environment that encourages more walking/cycling has a direct benefit on people's health

Social

Reduced social isolation: Quality materials can reduce incidences of injury. Good amenities, such as seating and toilets, encourage usage of public spaces.

Increased feelings of ownership and belonging: Individuals who feel they can go and enjoy their local social spaces will find a greater sense of trust and ownership with a location. Having a sense of ownership encourages a stronger sense of belonging and helps to create a sense of place.

Function

Increased autonomy: A user's ability to easily navigate a space either through good design, lighting or signage can contribute to their ability to function and to feel good.

Increased feeling of control over local decision making.

Comfort

Increased feeling of safety: Feeling safe and secure in a social public space can play a large role in an individual's ability to function and feel good in that locality.

Reduced frustration/stress: Well maintained roads and pavements can play a vital role in enabling an individual to function within their daily routine.

The Diamond functions as a civic space and is used by the community extensively. The Diamond has always been a very important public feature in our Urban realm and proposals here serve only to evolve, freshen, soften and make more accommodating this vital public space.

The streets around the Diamond and linking to the Pier or Bank walk have prioritised the car movement over pedestrians (as have most other Towns in the Country). However, much can be achieved in improving the circulation experience and the materials/features that residents and visitors alike will experience as they move around our Town. Quality landscaping, hardwearing natural (local) materials and surfaces as well as characterful works of Art and play can enhance the experience for all. According to the Social Space: Impact Map Good quality public realm will give:

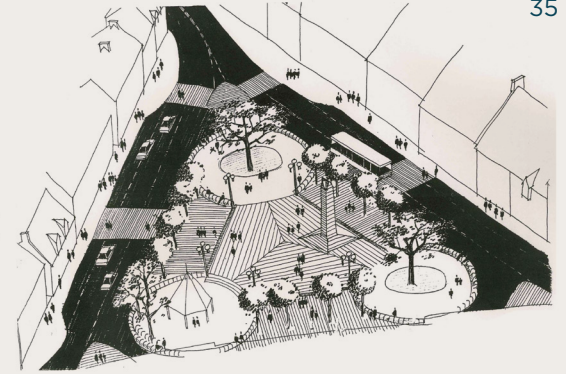
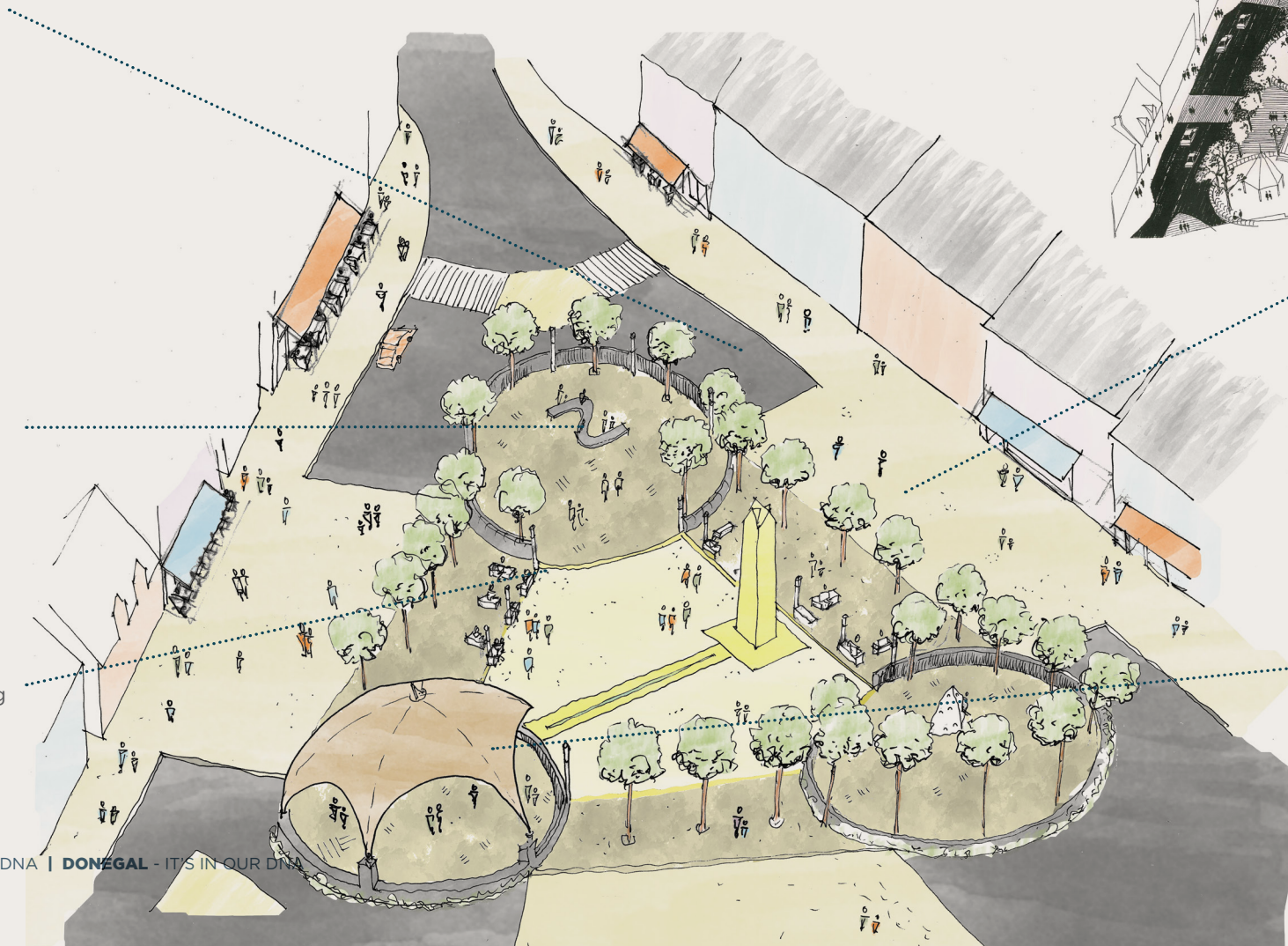
The proposals for the Diamond and Pier areas incorporate specific design thinking to achieve the above objectives, e.g., traffic and parking management and material specification which will visually link the interventions. Donegal County Council has successfully applied to the Outdoor Public Space Scheme under the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for funding to enhance the Diamond. The Masterplan details the proposals for this new enhanced intervention on the Diamond.



Reduce road width around the Diamond, increase pavement depths around the Diamond to make the heart of the Town universally accessible. Allow businesses to expand their outside space using carefully curated design approaches.

Refresh and reinvigorate the Diamond surfaces and materials, provide additional seating utilising elements of play and fun.

Enhance existing lighting on the Diamond giving a warm atmosphere and safety for all users.



Discourage vehicles parking on the Diamond and relocate Bus Parking to the front of the Old Quay.

Prioritise pedestrians over vehicle movements. Provide parking alternatives outside the zones of pedestrian priority.

Provide a large canopy cover to allow for informal and formal gathering regardless of the weather.

