

Poleglass, Twinbrook,
Lagmore & Kilwee

COLIN



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



August 2016



COLIN

URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE



The
Executive Office
www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk



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**URBAN
VILLAGES**
Thiving Places



ColinTM



01

INTRODUCTION

1

INTRODUCTION

1

PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This Strategic Framework is intended to provide a reference point for anyone involved in shaping investment decisions or identifying collaborative opportunities in the Colin Urban Village area.

The Framework presents findings from a creative process of analysis and reflection which involved individual members of the community, as well as representatives from local and central government. It provides an analysis of place and is a tool for informing action and investment.

The Framework is intended to be used as a working document so that emerging opportunities can be identified and changing circumstances acknowledged.

It begins by presenting information on what the Urban Villages Initiative is, what it is trying to achieve and how it will work.

Section 2 then sets out the local context and presents key findings under three headings - strengths, symptoms and causes.

Section 3 looks towards the future and sets out Strategic Actions which emerged through the process of engagement, evidence gathering and analysis. These can help to inform future investment plans as well as identifying opportunities for alignment of effort and collaboration around shared outcomes.

Section 4 focuses on delivery. The Executive Office will take forward projects and programmes within its remit, and work with others to progress opportunities for shared delivery of outcomes, in keeping with the approach articulated in the draft Programme for Government Framework.



WHAT IS THE URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE?

1

The Urban Villages Initiative is a key action within the Northern Ireland Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy. It is designed to improve good relations outcomes and to help develop thriving places where there has previously been a history of deprivation and community tension.



Improve the physical environment

Build community capacity

There are three inter-connecting aims:

- to foster positive community identities
- to build community capacity
- to improve the physical environment.

In working towards these aims, a key delivery mechanism will be aligning and influencing investment and finding better ways of 'doing more with what we've got'. The goal is to enable current and future investment to be targeted and delivered in more effective and sustainable ways. In practice this will mean:

- co-ordinating and aligning effort across Government Departments, local Councils and community organisations to deliver good relations outcomes
- identifying and building on what is working because sustainable change requires investment in social (people and communities) and in physical assets
- exploring ways of investing and trying new approaches which stimulate private investment and economic activity.

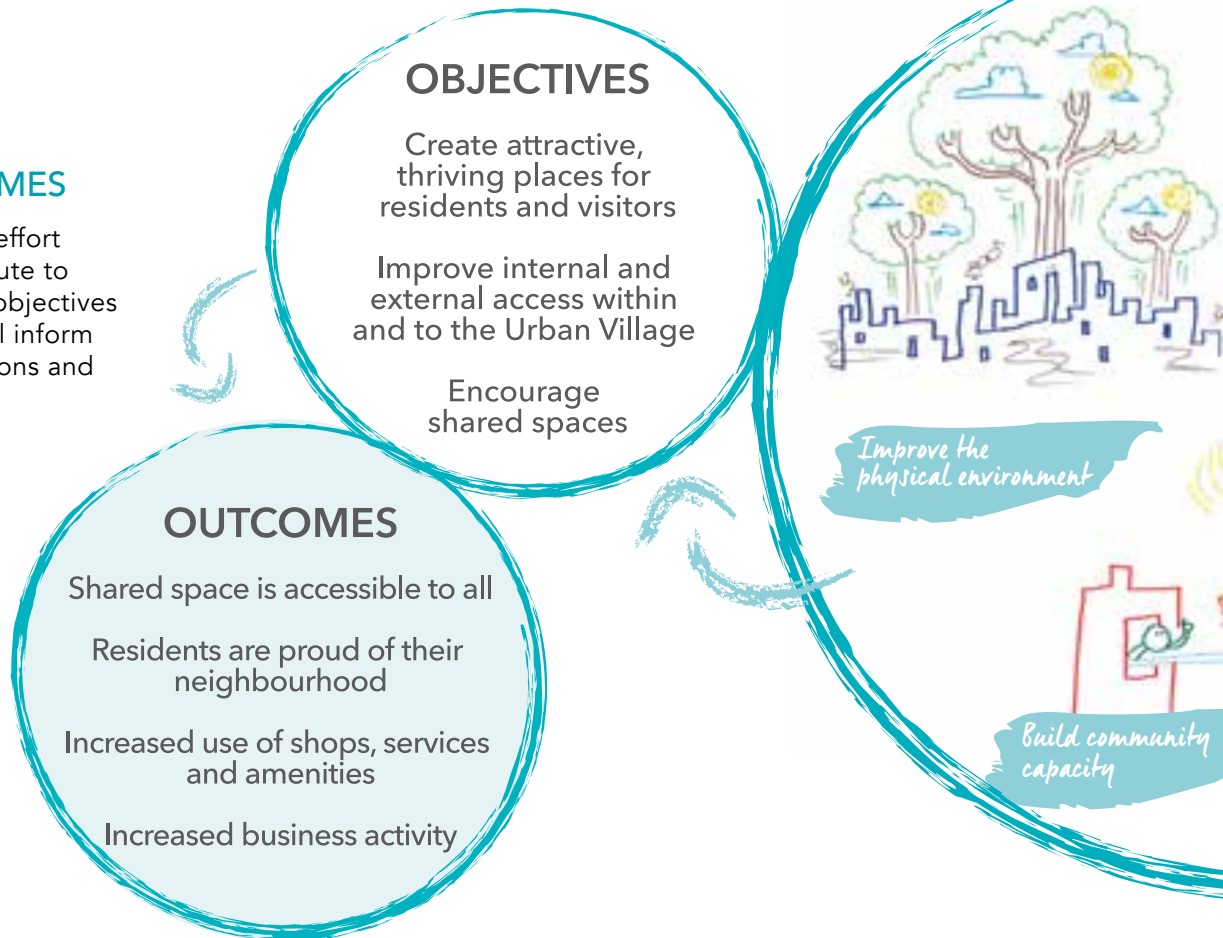


*Foster positive
community identities*



OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

In order to focus effort and set a clear route to delivery, a set of objectives and outcomes will inform investment decisions and actions.



OBJECTIVES

Build trust and relationships
Enhance pride and confidence in Urban Village areas
Create welcoming places where people feel safe and connected, regardless of religious or ethnic background

OUTCOMES

Improved relationships between and within communities
Cultural diversity is celebrated
A community where places and spaces are safe for all
Increased sense of community belonging

OBJECTIVES

Encourage and support communities to express their views and influence what happens in their areas
Enhance the capacity and confidence of communities to work and socialise within and outside their immediate neighbourhoods
Enhance community capacity to participate in local and regional networks and recognise shared needs and priorities

OUTCOMES

Increased use of shared spaces and services
Greater voice and influence
Confident and enterprising community

Faster positive community identities

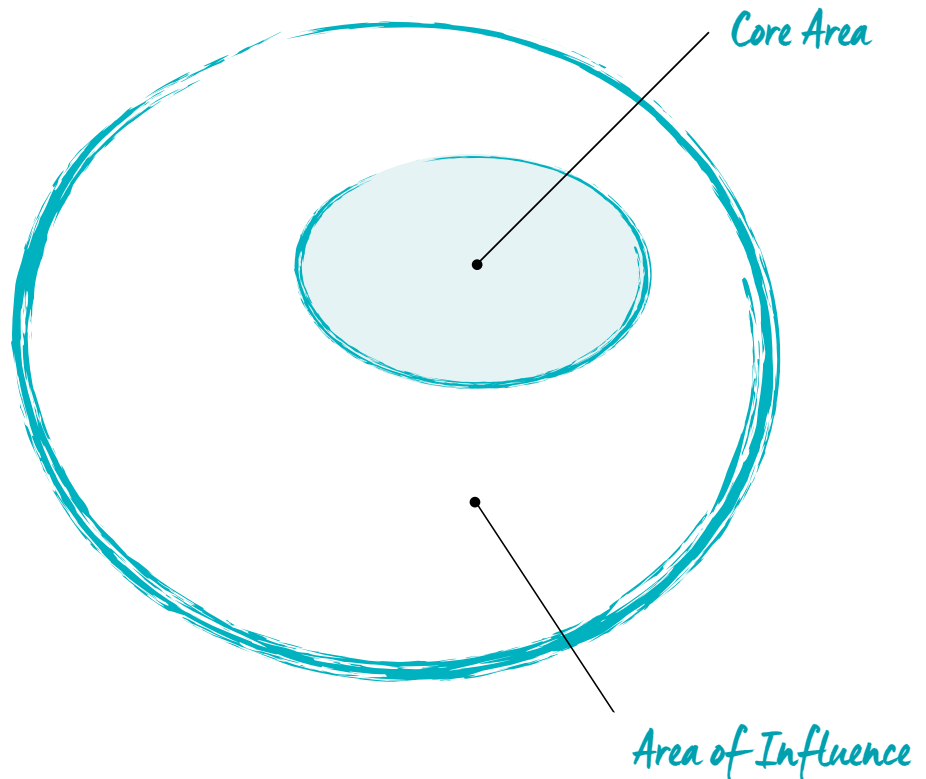


PLACES

Delivery will be focussed on five 'core' areas in:

- Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan (North Belfast)
- Bogside, Fountain and Bishop Street (Derry~Londonderry)
- Colin (West Belfast)
- EastSide (East Belfast)
- Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets (South Belfast)

The core area provides a focal point for action and investment. The concept of a wider area of influence, that is not sharply defined, acknowledges that thriving places require wider connection to both physical and social assets. Investment decisions and actions will be informed by the likely impact on core areas.



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The Strategic Actions in this Framework document are intended to inform discussion about how to best deliver positive outcomes in each place. In order to ensure that expertise is harnessed at a neighbourhood level, local Reference Groups are being developed - to provide a first point of contact and sense-check for project ideas, to build civic stewardship and sustainability around specific interventions and to ensure that delivery is built from shared priorities.

Building the heart

- Community hub
- Civic spaces
- Attracting commerce

Connecting Colin

- Transport network
- Digital infrastructure
- Linking skills and employment opportunities
- Safer routes and gateways

Our people our future

- Building on our strengths
- Youth engagement and understanding
- Educational excellence
- Colin events
- Safer neighbourhoods
- Together we are Colin

Positive spaces

- Youthful spaces
- Meanwhile uses
- Colin's Glens
- Housing design and density

Healthy Colin

- Promoting walking and cycling
- Access to health and fitness
- Mental health and well-being
- Growing spaces
- Activating Colin

INTRODUCING COLIN

1





Colin is located between the city centres of Belfast and Lisburn on the slopes of a mountain. Considered as a suburb of West Belfast and part of Dunmurry, it consists of 4 large residential neighbourhoods to either side of the Stewartstown Road.

Twinbrook – the first neighbourhood constructed here on flat lands to the east of the Stewartstown Road

Kilwee – a smaller neighbourhood focussed along the Old Golf Course Road

Lagmore – the newest area of Colin, reaching up from the Stewartstown Road to Mount Eagles

Poleglass – a large residential neighbourhood to the west of the Stewartstown Road

METHODOLOGY

1

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The process that informed this Strategic Framework began with an in-depth analysis process involving desktop research, site appraisal and extensive stakeholder consultation. This included 1-to-1 meetings, workshops, surveys, focus groups and public events.

The findings from each stage inform this Strategic Framework that is specific to the place and people. It seeks to build on what is working and will continue to progress positive change to bring about real transformation, whilst significantly improving the living environment and area.

A range of issues were explored in more depth. These included, for example, the role of illumination and lighting in

regeneration; children's play spaces; community gardens and allotments; and the role of business associations. This informed the findings and Strategic Actions in parallel with the valuable contributions and participation throughout the process.

Central to the methodology was engagement with the people who live, work and spend time in the area. Between January and March 2016 the Urban Village's team engaged with local people, community groups and wider stakeholders from both the public sector and local business.

Consultation in Colin also built upon the extensive process of public engagement that informed the Town Centre Masterplan.

A commitment to sustained consultation and engagement with all local stakeholders is made for all stages of delivery and as such this is a working document forming the basis for discussion and delivery.



CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Workshop Events

A series of workshops took place in Colin to inform this Framework, building on those that had taken place recently for the compilation of the Town Centre Masterplan. These included two sessions on the theme of connections, one plotting with residents their walking routes and the other a discussion around the proposed Transport Hub and Civic Square.

Three other thematic workshops centred on the Socio-Economic potential of the town centre, how youth engagement could be improved and coordinated and how the digital strategy for Colin can be brought to fruition.

Festival

Creativity Month is a celebration of creativity and the creative industries in Northern Ireland that seeks to stimulate new thinking and collaborations to tackle economic and social challenges.

Through the support of the Urban Villages Initiative, a programme of events took place in Colin during the month of March including workshops, performances and trips.

Opportunities were taken at many events to engage with participants regarding their priorities for the future of Colin.

Community Led Events

A total of six community led events took place in Colin, including those driven by local football and boxing clubs as well as small community organisations.

Surveys

Short questionnaires were used at many of the public events taking place in Colin. These drew out local perceptions on the positives and negatives of Colin, as well as priorities for the future.

Consultation Meetings

Numerous meetings with stakeholders in Colin underpinned the development of this Framework. These included local community groups, political representatives and statutory agencies.



STREET SOCIETY



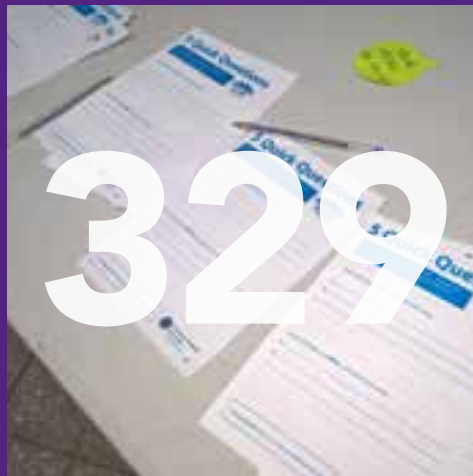
WORKSHOP EVENTS



FESTIVAL



COMMUNITY LED
EVENTS



SURVEY RETURNS



CONSULTATION
MEETINGS

STREET SOCIETY

1

In March 2016 three teams of architecture students from Queen's University Belfast, were based in Colin Glen Trust for a week as part of the Street Society project across all Urban Village Areas. The students, who came from a range of different backgrounds, were drawn from the architecture department's postgraduate and first year undergraduate courses. The project gave them an opportunity to work in a real life situation of developing projects for the local community. The three projects were as follows:

Colin Linkages -

students studied the issue of poor quality physical links between different parts of Colin and were asked to develop a series of proposals to improve them. After site visits and consultation meetings, the team devised a network of small interventions spread across the area, including sculptures, play areas and gardens.

Footprints Women's Centre -

working closely with staff from the centre, students were asked to reimagine interior and external spaces of the women's centre to provide better spaces for counselling and other important activities. The team presented an exciting, yet also pragmatic scheme to transform the centre with contemporary interior design and flexible spaces to allow for different uses.

Meanwhile Town Centre -

plans to build a new town centre in Colin will take many years to complete. Students were therefore invited to explore how through short term uses, the town centre site could be brought to life. The team responded to the brief by designing a temporary town centre constructed using former shipping containers. This would create a hub of contemporary spaces suited to retail, leisure and community uses.







**URBAN
VILLAGES**
Thriving Places





02

COLIN TODAY

2

COLIN TODAY

Colin is comprised of the neighbourhoods of Poleglass, Lagmore, Twinbrook and Kilwee, largely built between the 1960s and 2000s and initially housing populations relocated from inner city areas.

In the centre of the core area is the proposed Colin Town Centre. In 2014 the Department for Social Development with Strategic Investment Board and Colin Neighbourhood Partnership commissioned a Masterplan for a new town centre at Colin.

The project sought to provide much needed facilities for the four surrounding neighbourhoods on lands along the Stewartstown Road.

The Masterplan was compiled through a highly collaborative process of engagement with local stakeholders, including community groups, schools, statutory agencies and elected representatives.

The Masterplan was granted Outline Planning Consent in May 2016. It will be delivered in phases by different parties from the public and private sectors.





1901

Historic maps from the beginning of the 20th century show Colin as a rural location. The Stewartstown Road and Upper Dunmurry Lane are clearly recognisable, as are its natural features of Colin Glen and the 'twin brooks' that meet in modern day Twinbrook. Also visible are several large country houses including Collin House since demolished, and Cloona House, the current home of Colin Neighbourhood Partnership.



1970

By 1970 the beginnings of mass residential development in the Colin area become visible. Growth of the City can be seen in the East with recognisable street patterns of Suffolk and Glengoland, as well as housing emerging at Kilwee. Yet most striking in the maps from this period is the beginning of Twinbrook. Here the street layout of Summerhill Road and Glasvey Drive are in place, along with housing along the Stewartstown Road.

STRENGTHS

The engagement process and analysis identifies many positive aspects and strengths that include people, activities and places which are summarised over the following pages.

2

COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND FRIENDLINESS



LANDSCAPE



ACHIEVEMENTS



ON THE UP




COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND FRIENDLINESS

Colin is a friendly place. This simple observation, reflected in the responses of local questionnaire participants, is an essential foundation of a successful and vibrant community.

Friendliness, care and concern for others are the glue by which families, neighbours, school friends and colleagues are held together.

For many a sense of community is maintained through participation in local organisations, churches and schools.

Supporting existing networks, improving communications and providing further opportunities and places for residents to meet and socialise will therefore be an important way to build on the community spirit so often referred to.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue patterned dress and a bright pink sash, is captured in a dynamic pose with her right arm raised. She is wearing a green bangle on her right wrist and a pearl earring. The background is a blurred crowd of people at an outdoor event, suggesting a community gathering or festival.

Events such as Creativity Month play an important role in the life of Colin, helping to bring the community together and connect residents with service providers and other opportunities.

Outdoor events held near the Dairy Farm Shopping Centre have also helped to animate public spaces, thereby reinforcing the concept of this area becoming a new town centre for Colin.

LANDSCAPE

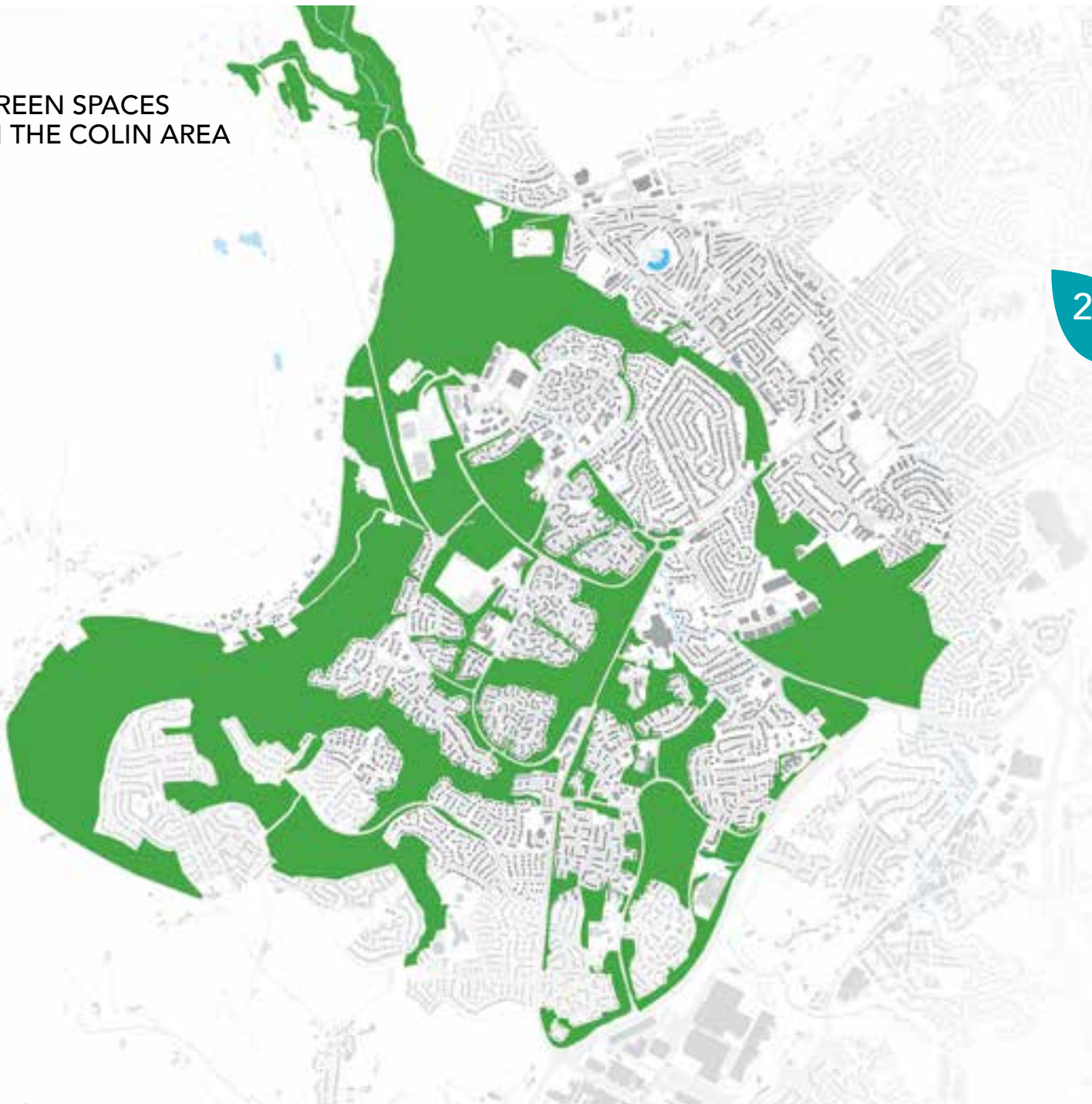
Colin is named after Collin Mountain, a peak of the Belfast Hills. Consequently the hillside landscape of Colin is a considerable strength of the area in an otherwise densely populated city.

A notable feature of Colin is its family of glens. These steep sided wooded ravines traverse Colin in a North West to South East pattern. Home to mature trees and associated wildlife, they are situated within a short walk for the majority of residents.

Another unmissable attribute of the Colin landscape is its views. From Poleglass and Lagmore in particular, panoramic views towards County Down can be found in many locations, with distant sightings of the Mourne Mountains possible on a clear day.

Consideration must be given as to how this landscape can be maximised for the benefit of everyone who lives in Colin.

GREEN SPACES IN THE COLIN AREA



ACHIEVEMENTS

2

The people of Colin have worked for many years to improve their area and help the local community address the challenges associated with multiple deprivation. While there remains much work to be done, achievements are notable and provide a platform upon which to build.

Examples are numerous and include:

Colin Early Intervention Community:

Effective partnership between the community, schools, voluntary and statutory sectors to improve services for local children and families.

Work involves a range of vital activities, including support for first time mothers, schools transition programmes for young adolescents and the Leap of Faith Awards.

Colin Glen:

Investment over the years has seen the asset of Colin Glen become an increasingly popular destination for strolling and adrenaline filled outdoor activities

Sally Gardens:

A new play area and all weather sports pitches opened in Spring 2016 to provide a high quality resource for local residents, schools and sports teams.

Colin Allotments:

Commenced in 2010, the upper reaches of Poleglass are home to one of Belfast's newest allotment sites. Traditional growing plots are joined by educational and catering facilities, making the Colin Allotments a special place for many residents and groups.









ON THE UP

Colin is on the up. Like many places, Colin has faced challenges over the years that have tested its community. Whilst frustration exists regarding the slow pace of change, a number of important signs indicate progression in Colin towards a brighter future.

Holy Evangelist Primary School:

Upon the announcement of a merger between St Marks' and St Luke's Primary Schools in Twinbrook, work is now underway to develop a new primary school.

Brook Activity Centre:

In 2015 Belfast City Council announced a £15m redevelopment project for the Brook Activity Centre in Twinbrook. This presents an exciting opportunity to provide state of the art facilities for everyone in Colin.

Belfast Rapid Transit:

A major new transport connection is currently being built across Belfast. This priority bus corridor will see Colin connected with West, East and Central Belfast like never before.

The new high frequency services are due to commence in 2018. The investment will also see a transport hub and civic square built in Colin Town Centre and a new network of 'feeder' public transport services connecting the hub with Colin's residential neighbourhoods.

SYMPTOMS

2

UNATTRACTIVE
& UNSAFE SPACES



ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
(REAL & PERCEIVED)



ISOLATION



UNATTRACTIVE & UNSAFE SPACES

2

The Colin area is characterised by large green open spaces located between areas of housing. Unfortunately instead of being seen as positive places, many of these are regarded as dangerous problem areas to be avoided, particularly after dark.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly they are often densely vegetated with trees and shrubs. This, combined with low levels of lighting, make them dark and uninviting. Secondly groups of young people and isolated incidents give a few areas a bad reputation.

Thirdly the visual impacts of antisocial behaviour (litter, graffiti, vandalism) make them unattractive and fuel the perception of fear. And finally, for the reasons noted, the spaces are often devoid of people, making them feel less safe than more frequented areas.

This issue is much more than one of aesthetics. Throughout the consultation many residents reported that the green space in Colin often presented them with a barrier, preventing them from using the space or passing through to get to key destinations. This in turn also generates greater use of taxis and cars, which has financial and environmental implications.



ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (REAL & PERCIEVED)

Some residents in Colin report that they contend with regular incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Like other parts of the City, this materialises in large noisy gatherings, public drinking, vandalism and occasional acts of violence. Such activity is often organised via social media, takes place in the evenings (mostly at weekends and holiday periods) and is focussed on a handful of central outdoor locations.

The dynamics of such activity are complex, with gatherings organised on social media and young people travelling some distance to attend.

Perceptions of such behaviour differ across the community. Many local residents feel intimidated by such groupings. Yet for some young people, large outdoor gatherings are a highlight of their social life and many have no interest in becoming involved in trouble.

Addressing real and perceived antisocial behaviour, as well as youth provision more generally, is therefore a vital action for the future of Colin.

2



ISOLATION

2

A feeling of isolation has been cited by a number of residents and by support groups in the Colin area.

This manifests through people being effectively 'trapped' in their home or street.

This can happen for a number of reasons, including a person's own physical and/or mental health and confidence, their access to transport, be it a private car, taxi or bus and their ability to access facilities by foot.

This latter point is impacted by perceptions of safety, with residents repeatedly telling us that they don't feel safe walking through public spaces in Colin particularly after dark.

The issue of isolation is of great concern as it directly affects the well-being of individuals and family groups. It also impacts upon the ability to deliver services, as those in most need are unable to travel to key centres.

Tackling this complex problem must therefore be a priority for the immediate future.





CAUSES

2

POPULATION VS LOW
DENSITY DEVELOPMENT



LACK OF
FACILITIES



POOR URBAN
DESIGN



POPULATION VS LOW DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

2

The population of Colin is comparable to many of Northern Ireland's larger towns, including Carrickfergus, Coleraine and Antrim. Yet its population is spread over a greater physical area than these traditional settlements. This lower urban density gives Colin its suburban appearance of detached and semi detached properties and large open spaces and road ways.

One of the main problems generated by relatively low density development is a lack of population mass to support services and facilities. Therefore many neighbourhood areas struggle to sustain shops, bus services, doctor's surgeries etc.

Consequently residents are required to navigate longer distances to reach such services.



Finally, the environmental impact of such density is a significant issue.

As the 2016 CityZen study of Colin, led by Queen's University Belfast revealed, homes in Colin have a sizeable carbon footprint.







LACK OF FACILITIES

Colin has an approximate population of 25,000. Yet for a settlement of its size, it has relatively few facilities.

In particular, leisure and shopping opportunities are fewer than in comparable locations, as well as an evident lack of local centres of employment.

This means that residents in Colin are required to travel towards Belfast or Lisburn to access key services and employment.

For example, local people have become accustomed to travelling 2 miles to a large supermarket (Kennedy Centre), further to public parks (Wallace Park, Falls Park) and even more to swimming pools in Belfast or Lisburn.

This places further pressure on individuals and families with low incomes and limited accessibility. Establishing local facilities in a sustainable way for Colin will be a necessary task for all.

When much of Colin was built, starting with the construction of Twinbrook in the 1960s through to the early 1990s, a different approach to urban planning and design was prevalent to that of today.

Layouts commonly consisted of large sweeping access roads, lower density housing and large open spaces. A particular system known as the Radburn Layout was employed, whereby houses faced inwards towards one another, with their backs onto public open space.

This model of housing has since been widely criticised as it exposes the rear of properties to public space which can lead to property crime and antisocial behaviour.

In something of a self-perpetuating cycle, problems of crime and antisocial behaviour have understandably resulted in buildings and spaces designed with high security in mind.

Therefore buildings with few windows, high walls and fences are common place in Colin. These have the unfortunate effect of making areas feel less safe than they actually are, as well as presenting an unattractive, unwelcoming environment.

Good urban design and architecture is closely linked to the physical identity of a place and the relationship people have with it. In thinking of great towns and cities, we quickly picture landmark buildings such as churches, libraries and other civic buildings.

Yet, in the large urban area that is Colin, with notable exceptions such as Our Lady Queen of Peace Church and Cloona House, there are very few buildings of architectural design quality.





**URBAN
VILLAGES**
Thriving Places





03

THE FUTURE

3

PRIORITIES FOR COLIN

3

HEALTH AND WELLBEING
TRANSPORT

CRIME AND SAFETY PARKS AND O

HOUSING

SPORTS AND

EMPLOYMENT SOCIAL
EDUCATION ARCHITECTURE/D

TRAINING

**YOUTH
BUSINESS**

ACCESS TO SERVICES

ARTS/MUSIC

ENVIRONMENT

OPEN SPACES AND RECREATION

LIFE GOOD RELATIONS
DEVELOPMENT

3

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The Strategic Actions have been developed through a comprehensive process of information gathering, analysis and extensive engagement with a wide and diverse audience. They seek to build on what is working, highlighting opportunities for sustaining positive change. Each of the Strategic Actions sits within one of five overarching themes and will lead to various projects and/or alignment with other projects.



BUILDING THE HEART



- *Community hub*
- *Civic spaces*
- *Attracting commerce*



CONNECTING COLIN

- *Transport network*
- *Digital infrastructure*
- *Linking skills and employment opportunities*
- *Safer routes and gateways*



OUR PEOPLE OUR FUTURE

- *Building on our strengths*
- *Youth engagement and understanding*
- *Educational excellence*
- *Colin events*
- *Safer neighbourhoods*
- *Together we are Colin*



POSITIVE SPACES



- *Youthful spaces*
- *Meanwhile uses*
- *Colin's Glens*
- *Housing design & density*



HEALTHY COLIN

- *Promoting walking and cycling*
- *Access to health and fitness*
- *Mental health and well-being*
- *Growing spaces*
- *Activating Colin*

BUILDING THE HEART

3

COMMUNITY HUB



ATTRACTING COMMERCE





CIVIC SPACES



COMMUNITY HUB

*Aligning and
improving services in
the heart of Colin.*

Colin lacks a central point of information and service provision that is accessible to everyone from the area.

The Community Hub building will bring together key organisations and services under one roof.

In the meantime, more collaborative work between potential users, statutory and community, is called for.

Everyone in Colin should be aware of the community services, facilities and events on offer to them.

By bringing such information and expertise together, service provision can be better targeted to the right individuals.

This would also create the context for aligning the services provided by different organisations.

ATTRACTING COMMERCE

Improving the shopping offer and experience.

Colin has a number of shops, the vast majority of which are located along the Stewartstown Road and in the Dairy Farm Shopping Centre. Yet for a population its size, Colin has an insufficient quantity, quality and mix of retail.

Furthermore the present shopping centre at Dairy Farm is in need of extensive refurbishment and renewal, adding to a widely held perception that the area has been underinvested in.

Work is therefore required to fully understand the dynamics of retail in Colin so that an assessment can be made on its capacity to support a larger selection of shops.

This would then provide the context for a proactive strategy of attracting retail investment to the area.





CIVIC SPACES

Providing high quality parks, streets and squares in the heart of Colin.

There is an abundance of open space in Colin but a distinct lack of quality civic spaces. These are positive outdoor places that are attractive to look at, easy to access and relevant to people from all walks of life. Three distinctive types of civic space are particularly important for Colin.

Parks - these provide access to fresh air, wildlife and opportunities for play, passive and active recreation. Scope exists to transform some of Colin's undervalued green spaces into vibrant parks. These would make the most of the existing landscape, including glens, rivers and mature trees, whilst connecting as well as possible to adjacent neighbourhoods.

Squares - these provide spaces for events large and small. Colin has a good track record of outdoor events, although they mostly take place in car parks and other spaces. By providing a new civic square in the heart of Colin, an opportunity exists to create a purpose built events space for use by all of the community.

Streets - these often overlooked civic spaces are essential ingredients of successful urban places. Not only do they act as movement routes for people and vehicles, they also provide the setting for buildings and community life. New developments in Colin must focus on creating well designed streets that are active, safe and attractive.

CONNECTING COLIN

3

TRANSPORT NETWORK



DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE





LINKING SKILLS AND
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES



SAFER ROUTES
AND GATEWAYS



TRANSPORT NETWORK

Establishing a regular and reliant public transport network.

3

Good public transport is a vital requirement for Colin, whose population have a generally low level of car ownership, whilst living across a large geographic area.

Provision at present is patchy at best, with limited services to the city centre, black spots with no public transport and few connections between neighbourhoods.

The Belfast Rapid Transit system is a new priority bus network for the City.

The key objectives of Belfast Rapid Transport System are accessibility to health, education and employment opportunities, and the integration of communities across Belfast.



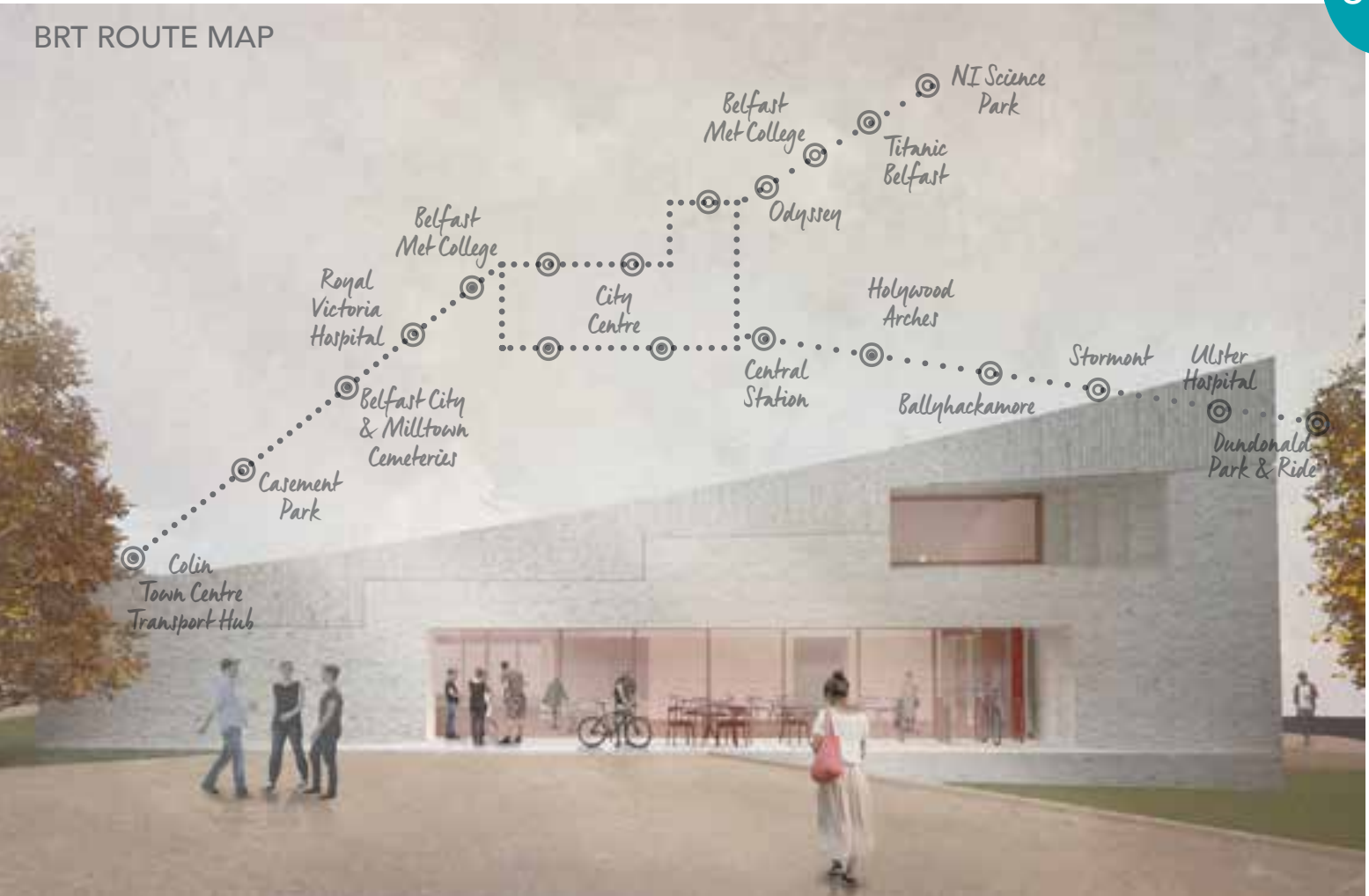
Proposed bus design for Belfast Rapid Transit system.

Due to be operational in 2018, it will connect the east and west of the city with a fleet of modern vehicles running along a dedicated bus corridor. High frequency services will operate 7 days a week.

Colin Town Centre has been identified as an important hub at the end of Belfast Rapid Transit System in the west of the city and a new Transport Hub building with community space will provide a point of interchange in the heart of Colin.

Effective bus and taxi networks are also needed to connect the constituent parts of Colin more effectively. These 'feeder services' will provide regular connections between neighbourhoods, Colin Town Centre and the proposed Transport Hub.

BRT ROUTE MAP



DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Linking residents, organisations and services online.

3

The potential of greater digital connectivity for Colin is to establish a Digital Society, where everyone has access to more effective communication and services.

This would involve further improvements to digital social networks that exist in Colin, sharing information effectively via websites and social media.

Exciting technological developments are taking place in a whole range of areas of relevance to the regeneration of Colin including healthcare, education, transport and crime prevention.

Following the Colin Digital Strategy and in the context of the international Smart City movement, great potential exists to pilot these in Colin.

Furthermore, a more effective digital society can be used to attract business investment in the area, providing training and employment opportunities for local residents.

Equipping Colin for better digital connectivity.

Considerable potential exists to improve digital infrastructure in Colin so to underpin economic investment, improved service provision and access to education.

The Colin Digital Strategy, produced in 2015 as part of the Town Centre Masterplan, proposes five strands of investment in Digital Infrastructure.

Connectivity - install connectivity to the NI high speed fibre optic network and ensuring adequate capacity of business existing and future.

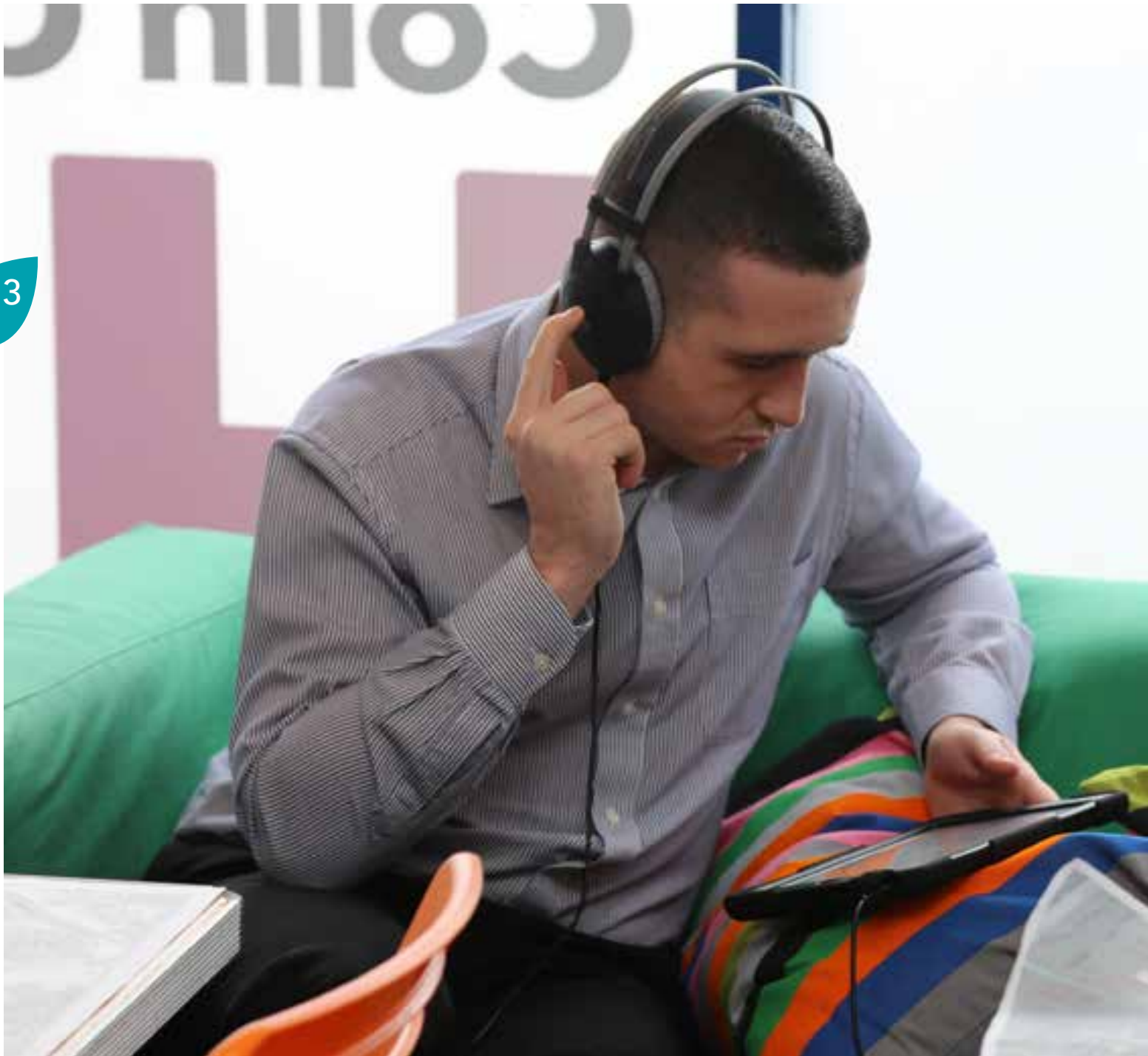
ICT Hub Building - build an ICT Hub to facilitate training, business incubation, access to state of the art technologies and support services.

Smart Buildings - provide a smart building infrastructure that can deliver efficiencies, adapt to meet changing technology solutions and provide technology trialling capabilities.

Smart Spaces - provide free public WIFI to the entire town centre and access to public interest information at strategic positions around Colin.

Intelligent Data - develop an integrated architecture and software environment for all services and systems in Colin, as being piloted elsewhere in the City.





LINKING SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Increasing local levels of employment.

It is vital for Colin that its young population can access opportunities for employment, be they found locally or further a field. Gaining sustained employment can often have a transformational impact on individuals, families and the wider community.

Building on existing programmes, this requires a responsive and strategically coordinated approach that works closely with those looking for employment, potential employers and skills providers.

It must focus on understanding the current and projected needs of each party and importantly, tackling the obstacles faced in linking local residents to job opportunities.





SAFER ROUTES AND GATEWAYS

Securing greatly improved routes for walking between places and spaces.

Walking is an important means of travel for any urban area, particularly for people on low incomes who may not be able to afford alternatives easily.

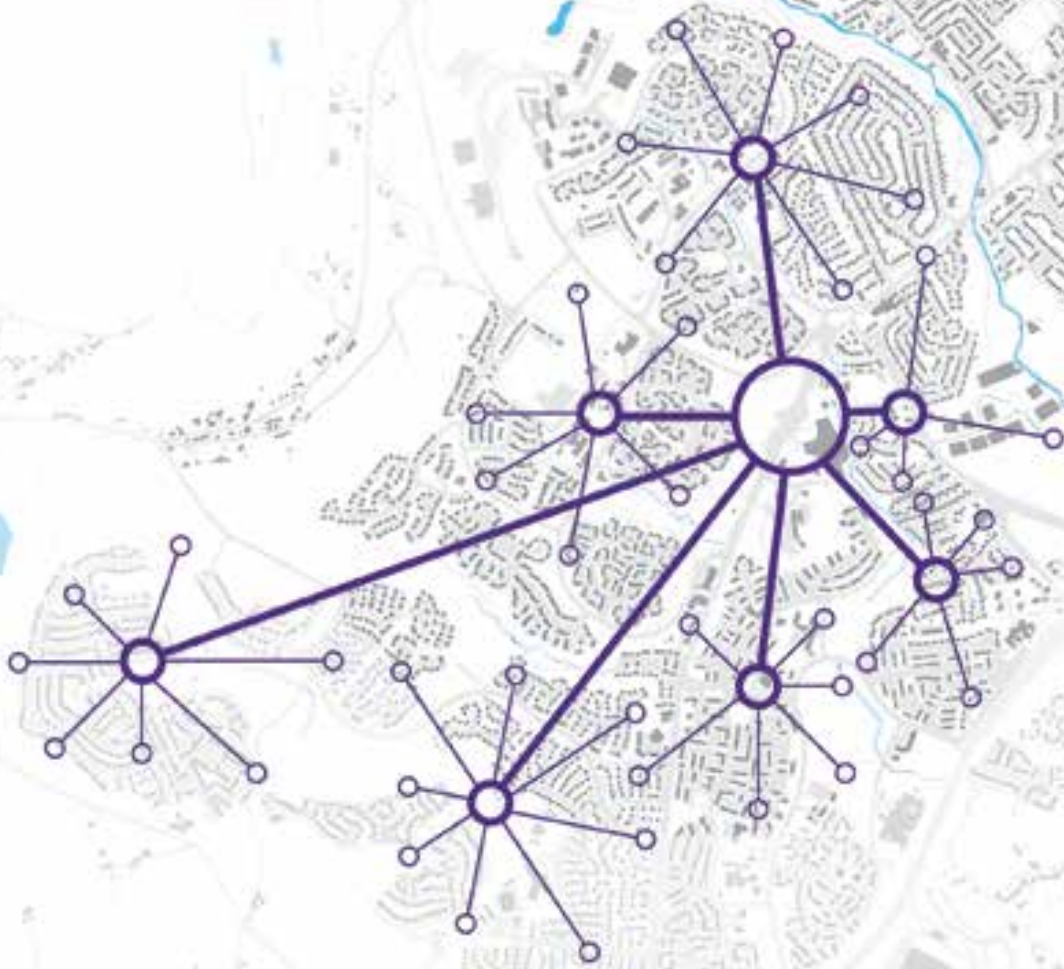
Yet in Colin walking can be difficult due to steep hillsides, long distances, a lack of paths, poor lighting and a general perception of danger, particularly after dark.

A clear network of good quality walking routes would bring substantial benefits to Colin.

They need to be in the right locations linking centres of population with key services and facilities.

Walking routes should be appropriately designed to aid accessibility for all, including those with pushchairs and wheelchairs.

Well-lit paths will be essential, using pedestrian level lighting rather than relying on standard street lighting.



OUR PEOPLE OUR FUTURE

3

BUILDING
ON OUR
STRENGTHS



YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT &
UNDERSTANDING



EDUCATIONAL
EXCELLENCE





COLIN EVENTS



SAFER
NEIGHBOURHOODS



TOGETHER, WE
ARE COLIN



Colin™

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

*Connecting and growing
local skills and capacity
to improve Colin.*

The starting point for Colin is to continue building on its existing strengths and accomplishments. Colin is fortunate to have numerous committed individuals and organisations that work tirelessly at the local level.

Where local initiatives are making a real difference in Colin, every effort is needed to support and develop them as much as possible.

Furthermore, other individuals and groups that share a passion for Colin should be helped to improve their skills and capacity to bring about positive change.

This could include training and mentoring programmes, as well as signposting to further information and assistance.



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & UNDERSTANDING

Improving dialogue & information with young people.

Colin has a young population and encouraging positive activities amongst younger people has been cited as a priority for the area.

A fundamental step in improving youth provision is to sustain and grow positive engagement with young people from across the area and beyond.

Building on good work that takes place at present, a greater mutual understanding can be developed that ascertains the needs, concerns and aspirations of young people in the area.

Engagement should be supported with robust research that helps to further understand prevalent behaviour and attitudes.

Effective engagement and understanding will help provide the context for improving youth provision across Colin.

Continuing strong partnerships between youth providers and statutory agencies will be key to realising this goal.





EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

First class places of learning for all in Colin.

Of fundamental importance to the regeneration of Colin is ensuring access to good education, including primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, as well as access to adult education. Colin is fortunate to have good schools, closely related to their respective communities.

As the young population of Colin continues to grow, so too does the case for new investment in its educational facilities.

A new primary school is currently in the process of being designed at Twinbrook and medium to long term plans for a new secondary school in Colin Town Centre are also under consideration.

In developing new school buildings, an opportunity exists to further improve the way in which they serve the wider population of Colin.

Facilities that can be shared by schools and the public help to maximise the impact of local investment and support the important relationship between schools and their community.

Community education which supports skills development towards job readiness will be key, particularly where this encourages local stewardship and volunteering.



COLIN EVENTS

Sustaining a year round calendar of events keeping Colin vibrant.

Community events have proven a successful means of bringing people together from within Colin and beyond.

They range in scale and focus, from small arts workshops to the annual Colin Fun Day and popular Christmas events.

These activities serve many purposes and multiple benefits to the area, including increasing a local identity and sense of pride; providing people with the opportunity of new experiences and skills; creating the context to share information and make connections, and; bringing fun and activity into the lives of many people.

Increasingly events have taken place in the proposed town centre for Colin, helping to reinforce its role at the heart of the community.

It is important that the annual programme of events in Colin is sustained and developed further.

Broadening their appeal by targeting different age groups, specific neighbourhoods and topics of interest would help to diversify and sustain activity.



3

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

Coordinating a joined up approach to making Colin safer.

Colin has developed an extensive community safety network that operates through strong partnerships and a significant voluntary movement.

This helps to keep areas safe by ensuring swift and effective communication between residents, community organisations and statutory providers, such as the police and social services.

This network is recognised as being an effective tool in keeping Colin safer.

It is important, therefore, that it is sustained and developed to become ever more effective and efficient in preventing crime and antisocial behaviour and improving community relations.

This includes better coordination between partner agencies and continued upskilling of the large voluntary team.



TOGETHER WE ARE COLIN

TOGETHER WE ARE COLIN

*Promoting and
celebrating Colin.*

Colin consists of the neighbourhoods of Twinbrook, Kilwee, Lagmore and Poleglass.

Whilst some are relatively new in the context of Belfast, these neighbourhoods have their own distinct identities and histories associated with them.

The concept of Colin was introduced to help bring these separate areas together around a positive identity that reflects a settlement of this size.

Efforts are now required to further promote this positive identity of Colin, whilst also recognising the richness of its constituent parts.

A contemporary place branding strategy "Together We Are Colin" was created in 2014.

Scope now exists to 'roll out' this branding more comprehensively across the area in the form of signage, street furniture and online material.



POSITIVE SPACES

3

YOUTHFUL SPACES



MEANWHILE USES





3

COLIN'S
GLENS

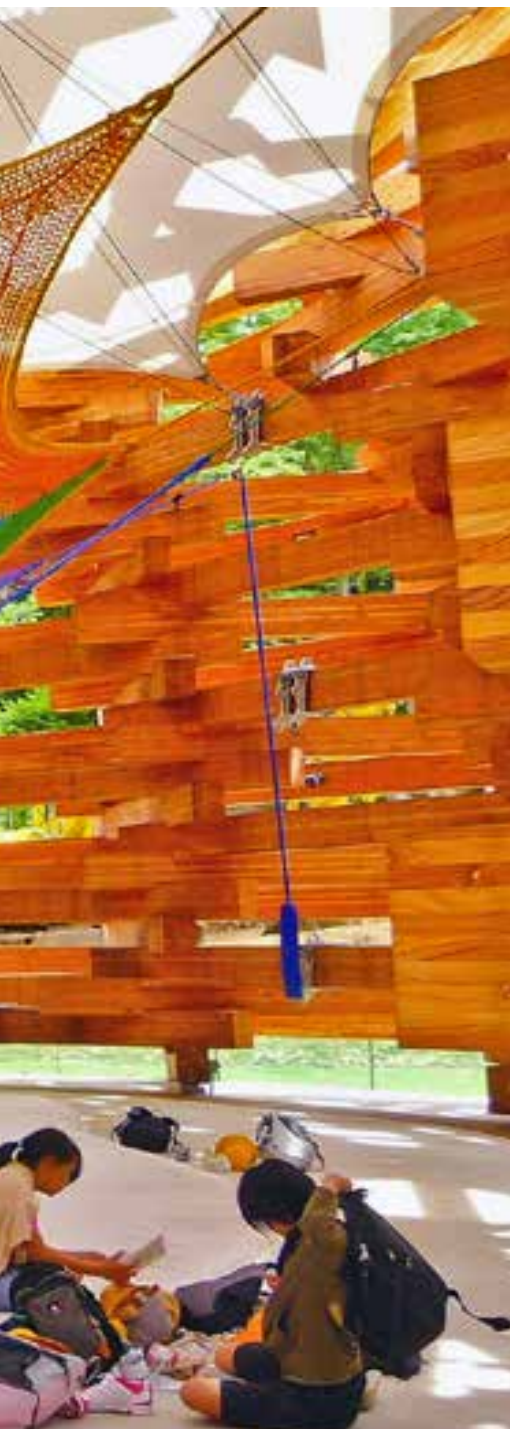


HOUSING DESIGN
& DENSITY





3



YOUTHFUL SPACES

Creating indoor & outdoor spaces where young people are welcome.

A challenge facing Colin is providing the right kinds of spaces for its young people.

For families with children and younger teens a lack of easily accessible play facilities in Colin is a problem. Good play areas with a range of equipment suited to different age groups provide an invaluable resource for families.

Play areas help to develop vital physical and mental abilities in children, as well as providing a meeting place for neighbours. They must be located within walking distance of residential areas and be sited in appropriate locations with good visibility from surrounding properties.

Furthermore, potential exists for a major new playground in the centre of Colin that attracts visitors from across the region.

For teenagers and young adults, a general lack of spaces in which to spend time poses a real challenge for Colin. Large gatherings of young people in public spaces are a source of tension at present, especially when they result in incidents of antisocial behaviour or worse.

Combined with several Strategic Actions outlined in this Framework, concerted efforts are required to identify and develop spaces and activities that are inclusive for all. These could be outdoor squares or sports zones, as well as indoor cafes and improved youth facilities.



Meanwhile Town Centre

Map



The Meanwhile Town Centre is a vibrant, multi-story residential and commercial development built from repurposed shipping containers. The project, designed by Colin Glen, features a mix of colorful containers in shades of blue, red, green, and yellow, creating a visually striking and playful environment. The building is situated in a central urban location, providing easy access to public transport and local amenities. The development includes a mix of housing types, from small studio apartments to larger family homes, and a ground-floor retail and community space. The project is a prime example of sustainable and creative urban development, demonstrating how repurposed materials can be used to create high-quality, affordable housing in a central city location.

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MEANWHILE USES

Transforming places in the short term with purpose, life and vitality.

The inevitable slow pace of development and physical regeneration can be a source of frustration for people who are required to wait patiently for benefits to be realised.

However, much potential exists in pursuing a proactive strategy of 'meanwhile' uses across Colin. This is when an area of land or a building is brought into use for an agreed temporary period, until such time as more permanent development is forthcoming.

Meanwhile uses could apply to a number of places across Colin.

For example, left over areas of grass could become community gardens. Vacant shops or other premises can be made available to artists or other groups, injecting life back to an area.

3



COLIN'S GLENS

Enhancing the Glens for people and wildlife.

A unique feature of the Colin landscape is a family of five wooded Glens. The largest and most well known of these is Colin Glen, where an outdoor activity centre and outdoor trails have been successfully established, to some extent putting Colin on the map of Belfast as a destination.

The continued development of this resource will be important for the area and wider region.

Colin's other four Glens may not play such a regional role in the City, but are valuable resources for the local area none-the-less.


A process of improving wildlife habitat, access and interpretation in each should be taken forward with local residents as part of strategically planned process. This would also enable the unique features of each glen to be considered, be it in relation to their wildlife habitat, history and suitability for different use.

HOUSING DESIGN & DENSITY

*Planning future mix, density
and design of housing.*

The analysis of Colin's urban environment identified a number of issues that stem back to the original planning and design decisions made by housing developers, both in public and private sector.

It is therefore important that a considered strategy for any new housing developments in Colin is advanced, so to avoid repeating mistakes of the past and looking at how development can rectify them where possible.



Three particular areas of focus are housing mix, development density and design quality.

Sustainable neighbourhoods consist of a mix of different housing sizes and tenures, be they private, social or affordable homes.

By mixing these together in the same location, one can avoid creating enclaves and in turn, the physical and social barriers that can arise between them.

Housing density is another factor for Colin, which as noted earlier in this document is linked to the viability of services, as well as distances between areas.

Fresh thinking may be required in Colin to examine where a higher density of housing (e.g. townhouses or apartments) may be appropriately located to help create critical mass.

Finally, new housing and development in general presents a great opportunity to introduce a much higher quality of architectural design, helping to improve the way Colin looks and lift pride in the area.

HEALTHY COLIN

3

PROMOTING WALKING & CYCLING



MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING



ACCESS TO HEALTH & FITNESS





3

GROWING SPACES



ACTIVATING COLIN



PROMOTING WALKING & CYCLING

Promoting walking and cycling throughout Colin.

3

Through the provision of better routes and open spaces, an excellent opportunity exists to promote walking and cycling as a means of getting around Colin.

This would focus on the many positive benefits this can bring to people in terms of their personal fitness and well-being, and also wider environmental benefits to Colin as a whole, including a reduction in traffic and greater footfall of pedestrians in public areas.

More widely, the abundance of open space in Colin should be linked with an energetic promotion of more active lifestyles. This should be taken forward in partnership with local sports clubs, as well as exploring how new sporting events and opportunities can be introduced to the Colin area.



ACCESS TO HEALTH AND FITNESS

Providing every opportunity for a healthier and fitter life in Colin.

As part of a wider programme to improve levels of health and fitness across Colin, it will be important to ensure good quality facilities are in place.

Concerns exist over the condition of current health and leisure facilities in the area, particularly given the size of the population and generally lower levels of health and well-being indicators.

Investing in healthcare facilities would include the Stewartstown Road Health Centre as well as providing a much better, fit for purpose, day care centre.

Investing in leisure provision will focus on a significant upgrade to that currently offered by the Brook Activity Centre. Belfast City Council have recently agreed a budget of up to £15 million to develop a new state of the art leisure facility for the Colin area.

Opportunities to seek complementarity with other buildings, such as the nearby schools, will be important.

3



MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The wellbeing of all members of the Colin community is central to the future of the area.

Too many residents are facing the challenges of dealing with mental health issues. Local families and the wider community have had to handle high levels of suicide.

These complex problems can be linked to local levels of deprivation and can often result in a feeling of social and physical isolation. It is vital for Colin therefore, that work to improve the mental health and wellbeing of residents is fully supported.

Many Strategic Actions contained in this Framework have an important role to play in bringing people together, providing new opportunities and better facilities.

Continued outreach to those who feel isolated and disconnected from the wider community will be essential to ensure they can benefit from such investment. Such actions must be well coordinated between Colin's various community support groups, as well as with its formal healthcare providers.





GROWING SPACES

Encouraging more gardens and allotments.

The Colin allotments have been widely regarded as a successful investment in the area, introducing many people to benefits and skills of growing natural produce.

Consideration is now needed as to how this success can be underpinned, giving more and more people the opportunity to participate in such activities.

A potential approach could be the creation of smaller 'satellite' gardens elsewhere in Colin and linking these together through a strong network of people and skills.

These could help to give direct opportunity for residents to participate on their doorstep.

It may also be an effective means of giving a sense of ownership to otherwise abandoned open spaces.





ACTIVATING COLIN

Making it easier to get out and about.

Through the provision of better routes and open spaces, an excellent opportunity exists to promote walking and cycling as a means of getting around Colin.

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**URBAN
VILLAGES**
Thriving Places





04

SUPPORTING DELIVERY

4

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

4

STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

The Urban Villages Initiative is a headline action within the Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy. It is led by the Executive Office with the support of senior representatives from other government departments alongside Belfast City Council.

This Strategic Framework is intended to be a useful point of reference for anyone with an interest in the Urban Village areas and a means for identifying opportunities to collaborate around shared Programme for Government outcomes and indicators.

ROUTES TO DELIVERY

Although coordinated by the Executive Office, and overseen by Junior Ministers, capital and revenue investments made directly through the Urban Villages Initiative will be led and managed by organisations that best suit the particular project or programme.

This means that work on parks, public realm projects and other physical interventions is likely to be led by the Council, the Department for Communities, NI Housing Executive or the Department for Infrastructure.

Support will be provided to projects and programmes in keeping with the good relations outcomes of the Urban Villages Initiative. We will draw from the most appropriate delivery partners including central and local government and community and voluntary groups.

Activity more focussed on community capacity building, cultural innovation and positive identities will be delivered by community and voluntary groups to maximise local networks and connections or through central or local government.





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