

September 24th, 2021

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting to be held on **Monday, 27th September 2021 at 1:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre.**

Chairperson - Councillor O Hanlon

Deputy Chairperson - Councillor P Brown

Councillor P Byrne

Councillor S Doran

Councillor H Gallagher

Councillor R Howell

Councillor O Magennis

Councillor D Murphy

Councillor B O'Muirí

Councillor H Reilly

Councillor M Savage

Councillor G Sharvin

Councillor D Taylor

Councillor J Tinnelly

Councillor W Walker

Agenda

1.0 Introduction and Apologies

2.0 Declarations of Interest

FOR NOTING Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

3.0 Report from Audit Committee – Governance Review of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| <i>Report from Audit Committee Governance Review of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |
| <i>Appendix 1 - Extract from ASM Report.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |
| <i>Appendix 2 - Extract from ASM Report.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |
| <i>Appendix 3 - Minutes of Audit Committee of 13.9.2021.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

4.0 Belfast Region City Deal Outline Business Cases

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| <i>Belfast Region City Deal Outline Business Cases.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |
|--|---------------------|

5.0 Albert Basin City Park

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) - and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| <i>SPR - Albert Basin Capital Project 27.09.21.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |
| <i>Albert Basin Presentation Tetra Tech.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |
| <i>Albert Basin Proposed Concept Layout.pdf</i> | <i>Not included</i> |
-

6.0 Newry City Centre Regeneration Public Consultation

 <i>Newry City Centre Regeneration Public Consultation.pdf</i>	<i>Page 1</i>
 <i>Appendix 1.pdf</i>	<i>Page 5</i>
 <i>Appendix 2.pdf</i>	<i>Page 21</i>
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 <i>App4 Consultation Briefing PP.PDF</i>	<i>Page 87</i>
 <i>App 5 Online Survey.pdf</i>	<i>Page 104</i>

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Ms Kate Bingham

Cllr Patrick Brown

Cllr Robert Burgess

Cllr Pete Byrne

Mr Gerard Byrne

Mrs Dorinnia Carville

Cllr Charlie Casey

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Dermot Curran

Cllr Laura Devlin

Ms Louise Dillon

Cllr Sean Doran

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Aoife Finnegan

Cllr Hugh Gallagher

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Cllr Valerie Harte

Cllr Roisin Howell

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr Alan Lewis

Mr Michael Lipsett

Mrs Regina Mackin

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Gavin Malone

Cllr Cathy Mason

Mr Johnny Mc Bride

Colette McAteer

Cllr Declan McAteer

Cllr Leeanne McEvoy

Cllr Harold McKee

Patricia McKeever

Cllr Karen McKeivitt

Cllr Andrew McMurray

Catrina Miskelly

Mr Colin Moffett

Cllr Roisin Mulgrew

Cllr Declan Murphy
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Cllr Barra Ó Muirí
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Mr Fearghal O'Connor
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Linda O'Hare
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Cllr Gerry O'Hare
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Cllr Kathryn Owen
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Mr Andy Patterson
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Colin Quinn
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Cllr Henry Reilly
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Ms Alison Robb
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Cllr Michael Savage
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin
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Donna Starkey
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Cllr Gary Stokes
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Sarah Taggart
.....
Cllr David Taylor
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
.....
Cllr John Trainor
.....
Cllr William Walker
.....
Mrs Marie Ward
.....

Report to:	Strategy Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	27 th September 2021
Subject:	Newry City Centre Regeneration Public Consultation
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Mallon, Director Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Adrian Grimshaw – Project Director NCCR

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	For noting only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<p>The Newry City Centre Regeneration Outline Business Case was ratified at November 2020 Full Committee, including the agreed notice of motion to shape an extensive district wide public consultation, as per the amended notice of motion bought before the August 2020 SPR.</p> <p>The agreed and amended notice of motion read, <i>"The Council recognises that society has changed fundamentally since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic and acknowledges the economic challenges our citizens, businesses and ratepayers face in the coming months and years and recognises the need for Council to re-evaluate our capital expenditure priorities. The Council agrees to await the Consultants' Report on the proposed Newry Civic Centre which is to be presented to Council in September 2020; agrees not to go to tender or submit a planning application on this scheme until this report is re-evaluated by Council and the recommendations of that re-evaluation are put to an extensive public consultation."</i></p> <p>The Terms of Reference for the Public Consultation facilitator were approved by the NCCR Programme Board on the 12th November 2020, and thereafter the Programme Board minutes were ratified through SP&R and Full Council.</p> <p>Following a quotation process, the appointment of Otium was agreed by the Programme Board as the approved consultation facilitator. In accordance with the approved Terms of Reference, an online public survey questionnaire, based upon initial key stakeholder workshops, was approved by the NCCR Programme Board, SP&R and ratified by Full Council on March 2021.</p> <p>This public consultation exercise has now concluded, and Otium presented the key findings of the consultation process and recommendations to the Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board on the 23rd September 2021. All Cllrs were invited to attend.</p> <p>The presentation is attached at Appendix 1.</p>

2.0	Key issues
2.1	<p>The online public survey went live on the 8th March 2021 and was open for 12 weeks, closing at 12 noon on the 31st May 2021.</p> <p>The online public survey was supported by the opportunity to register for public consultation workshops and targeted consultation meetings, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Five online public workshops; ○ Five workshops targeting key groups including businesses, young people, and section 75 equality groups; ○ Structured interviews with key stakeholders. <p>1585 online survey responses were received with a total of 6129 free text comments.</p> <p>The responses received during the consultation process have been considered and collated by Otium into a detailed report. This report, subject to approval, will be made publicly available on the Council's website in the coming days.</p>
2.2	<p>The recommendations noted within the report are summarised as follows;</p> <p>Where the report raises concerns, and the need for greater engagement, there is also support for elements of the proposed regeneration.</p> <p>These observations inform a series of recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dialogue continues with the cathedral's leadership relating to parking concerns. 2. Continue to publicise progress with the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park to engender trust that this is proceeding. 3. Develop a robust and transparent communications plan which includes publication of any non-commercially sensitive information which informed the decision-making process and options appraisals to date. 4. Develop a more collaborative approach to the plans for the city centre so that overall progress is not delayed, or investment halted, due to 'competing' interest groups lobbying for their own projects.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	<p>Members are asked to note this report, the findings of the public consultation, the recommendation contained therein and the presentation included in Appendix 1 and the report in Appendix 2.</p>
3.2	<p>Members note that officers will establish a working group to consider the public consultation report in detail and how the Council should respond to the comments and report back to the Programme Board.</p> <p>The working group will include representatives from the Council's Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism Directorate; Community Relations Team (DEA); Planning Team; the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure.</p>

4.0	Resource implications
4.1	None
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	Appendices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix 1: Otium Presentation; Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Public Consultation.• Appendix 2: Report from Otium dated September 2021• Appendix 3: Online Workshop Records• Appendix 4: Consultation Briefing• Appendix 5: Online Survey• Appendix 6: Survey Comments
8.0	Background Documents
	N/A

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Public Consultation

Tony Morrison and Alison Keenan
Otium Leisure Consultancy



Consultant Brief

To give consultees the opportunity to provide views on:

- ▶ Project elements comprising the programme, targeted outcomes and anticipated benefits
- ▶ Project designs and opportunities to facilitate additional outcomes e.g. facilities or events
- ▶ Challenges which may arise in delivery or operation of programme/ projects.



Public Consultation Process

- ▶ Stakeholder workshops (January) 14 attendees from 11 organisations
- ▶ Online Survey (8th March to 31st May) 1585 responses, 6129 comments
- ▶ Consultation Workshops (April and May)
 - Five online public workshops 55 attendees
 - Five workshops targeting key groups 39 attendees
- ▶ Structured Interviews with key stakeholders (June & August)
 - Arts Council for Northern Ireland
 - Department for Infrastructure
 - Hospitality Ulster
 - Invest NI
 - Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry
 - Tourism NI



The Projects within the Regeneration Programme

- New theatre with 200+ seats and Conference facilities. The building will also include a digital innovation hub.
- Paving, seating, lighting and landscaping at Bank Parade including a new riverside square and performance space on the Ross Thompson site
- Paving, seating, landscaping and lighting at Abbey Way, including a new public square
- Relocation of the Council offices and Council chamber to a new build in the city centre which will include desk space for other public sector employees
- Funding to stimulate/ encourage private sector development of additional office space

Also part of the programme but not directly part of the consultation

- A traffic, transport and car parking strategy investigating measures that will promote active and more sustainable travel, and provision of appropriate parking within the city core
- The Albert Basin City Park

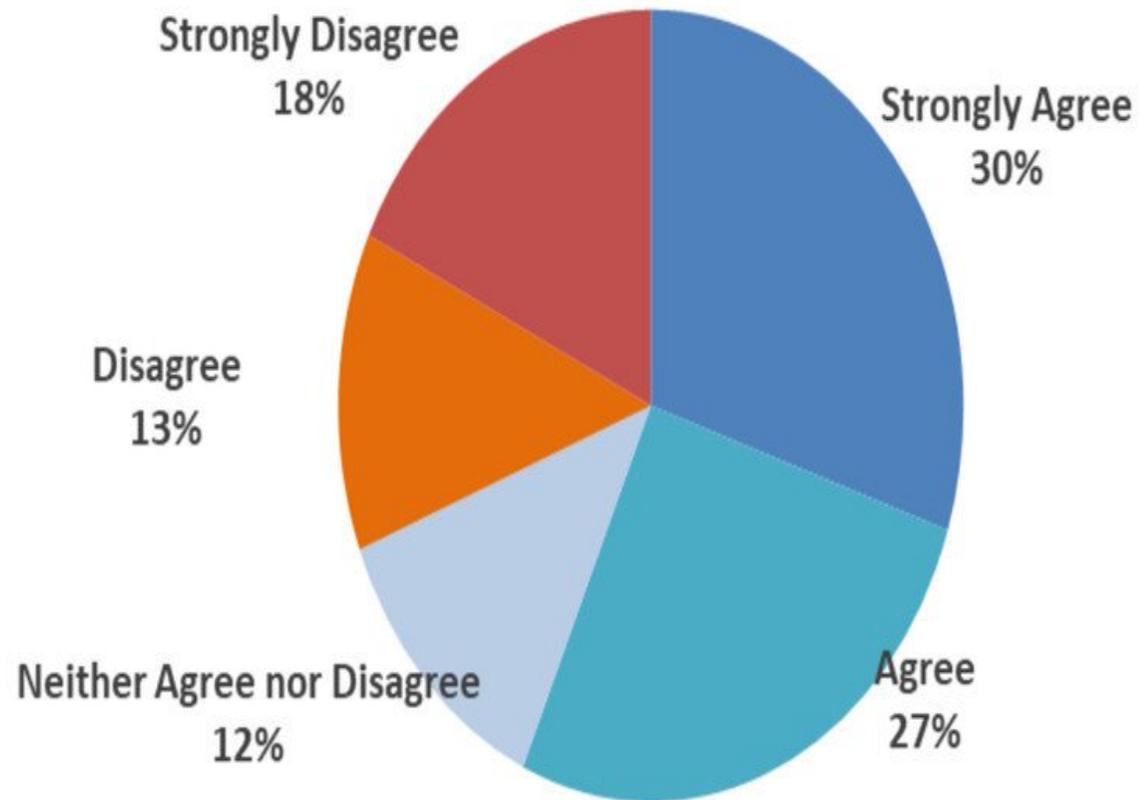
Overall Benefits of the Regeneration Programme

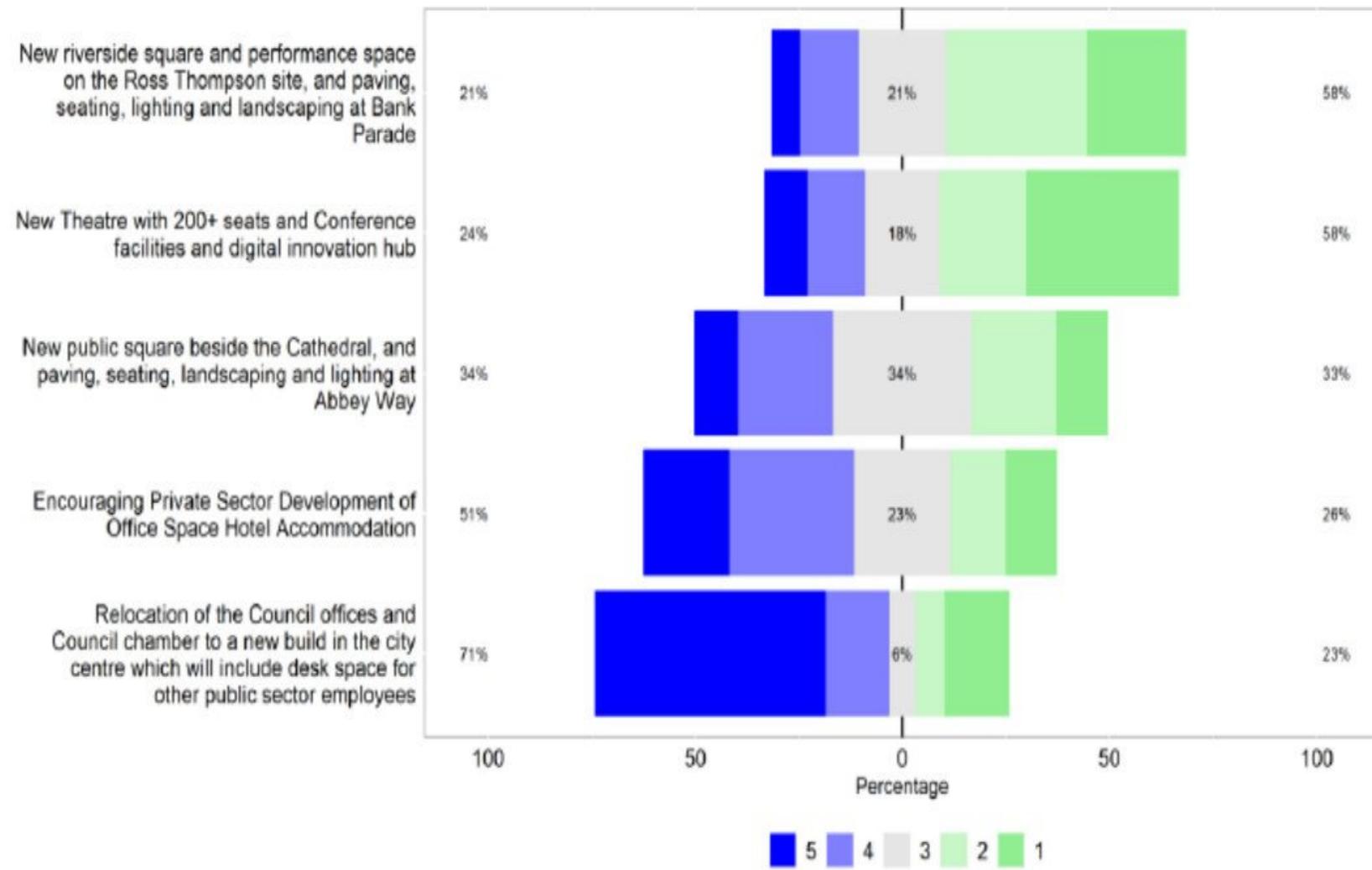
- Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer
- Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience
- Improved local services by creating modern and efficient working environments in the heart of the city
- Improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time
- Creating and sustaining jobs by attracting new public and private sector investment
- Increasing access to arts and culture by creating and enhancing spaces for cultural activities and public performances
- Encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists



In general, do you think that the above projects will contribute to improving the vibrancy of the city centre?

(n=1585)





Prioritisation of Programme Elements (where 1 is top priority and 5 is lowest priority)



Theatre and Conference Facility



Theatre and Conference Facility

Features

- ▶ Importance of inclusion of exhibition space
- ▶ Concerns about auditorium size not being large enough to attract bigger shows or performers
- ▶ Reservations about conferencing facilities displacing business from other local facilities

Comments

- ▶ Acknowledged need to support the arts by some, questioning need for a facility by others
- ▶ Limited appreciation of the benefits of building new over refurbishing existing
- ▶ Acknowledgement of the role a theatre has to play in contributing to a night time economy and footfall in the city centre

Riverside square, landscaping and other improvements - Ross Thompson / Bank Parade

Features

- ▶ Supportive of implementation of flood alleviation measures
- ▶ Acknowledged importance of re-opening of the public path between the river and the canal
- ▶ Reservations about a performance square overlooking the river and canal

Comments

- ▶ Value of improving the aesthetics of public spaces acknowledged but some concern about whether this adds value / increases footfall
- ▶ Some concerns about misappropriation of the space for ASB

Public Square, Landscaping, Paving and Other Improvements at Abbey Way



Public Square, Landscaping, Paving and Other Improvements at Abbey Way

Features

- ▶ Majority of respondents supportive of improved paving, seating lighting and paths
- ▶ Less support for urban square adjacent to the Cathedral
- ▶ Reservations relating to how this can be delivered yet remain sympathetic to the built heritage of the area and ensure connectivity with the city centre

Comments

- ▶ Comments focused on negative impacts over benefits including accessibility of the Cathedral
- ▶ Concerns about potential impact on parking
- ▶ Concerns about potential impact on the cathedral - eg attracting ASB

Civic and Regional Hub

Features

- ▶ Feedback queried need in light of growth of remote working
- ▶ Concerns raised about parking implications
- ▶ Limited support (20%) for flexible offices spaces

Comments

- ▶ Potential release of Monaghan Row for potential Daisy Hill Hospital expansion seen as a positive
- ▶ Some acknowledgement of increased footfall in the city centre which will result
- ▶ Negative comments and perceptions significantly outweigh the positive
- ▶ Focus of responses on perceived negative impact on Cathedral parishioners

Other Elements of the Programme

- ▶ Strong reservations about the office investment fund – concerns about the level of need and the potential return on investment
- ▶ Some support for a budget hotel but caveated with the need for there to be a reason to visit the city
- ▶ Parking and traffic management are a clear priority for those who engaged
- ▶ Albert Basin City Park remains a key concern for many respondents

Some concluding comments

- ▶ Broad support in principle but the challenge is in the detail
- ▶ Value of continued dialogue with stakeholders
- ▶ Importance of a communications and engagement plan
- ▶ Collaboration across projects

Key Recommendations

- ▶ Dialogue with the Cathedral's leadership relating to parking concerns to be continued
- ▶ Continue to publicise progress with the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park to engender trust that this is proceeding
- ▶ Develop a robust and transparent communications plan which includes publication of any non-commercially sensitive information which informed the decision making process and options appraisals to date
- ▶ Develop a more collaborative approach to the plans for the city centre so that overall progress is not delayed, or investment halted, due to 'competing' interest groups lobbying for their own projects

Newry City Centre Regeneration Project

A Public Consultation Exercise

September 2021



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Appendices

1. Online Workshop Records
2. Consultation Briefing PowerPoint
3. Online Survey
4. Survey Open Comments
5. Correspondence

Front cover photograph: *Newry City Centre looking south, showing the Town Hall and the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre (bottom centre), Hill Street (centre) leading to the Cathedral of Saint Patrick and Saint Colman (tower) and St Mary's Church (spire). Albert Basin is at the top of the photograph, left of centre.*

1. Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a consultation exercise looking at Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s proposals to regenerate Newry city centre. Originally intended to be delivered in the early part of 2021, continuing COVID-19 restrictions stalled commencement of the exercise and forced a revised approach to be taken for part of the consultation process, requiring online sessions in place of face-to-face meetings. An online survey and interviews with stakeholder organisations also formed part of the consultation process.

With nearly 1,600 responses to the online survey, including 6,169 open comments across the regeneration project’s several elements, the consultation exercise generated a great deal of interest. The majority of consultees support the proposed regeneration programme and investment in Newry city centre in principle, however, the consultation exercise, and in particular the survey’s open comments, has revealed reservations and concerns. For each of the regeneration project elements the findings are summarised as follows:-

<p>Public Realm at Town Hall and Ross Thompson Site</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for this proposal is strong, with 58% of respondents ranking it as their first (23.8%) or second (34.2%) priority within the regeneration proposals. It is not a stretch to link support for this element with the support for the redevelopment of the theatre complex as the two elements are clearly complementary and mutually beneficial.
<p>Theatre and Conference Facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By a significant margin (more than 10%) this is viewed by respondents as the highest priority project within the regeneration programme. Notwithstanding concerns about the size of the auditorium and the risk of the council competing with local conferencing providers, there is agreement that investment in this project will bring benefits to the city centre.
<p>Public Realm at Cathedral and Abbey Way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst there is no strong sentiment reflected one way or the other about these proposals in terms of their prioritisation (321 people ranked it first or second and 328 ranked it fourth or fifth) there is a strongly negative narrative in other parts of the survey and in the feedback received through workshops.

Grade A Office/Budget Hotel Investment Fund

- Reservations about this element of the proposals stem from concerns about the need for offices in a post-pandemic world alongside a perceived lack of evidence of the need for (or likely development of) grade A offices in Newry, given the lower return on investment they would yield for any developer. Reservations are also articulated about whether it is appropriate for public money to subsidise the private sector in this way or whether market forces should be allowed to drive this element. Support for an additional hotel is stronger but with the caveat of the need for a reason to visit the city preceding the need for accommodation for visitors.

Civic Hub

- More than half (55.8%) of respondents consider this element of the programme to be their lowest priority with strong negative feelings expressed throughout the consultation about the choice of site and perceptions of the impact on the cathedral as well as scepticism about the need for such significant investment in offices for the council.

Respondents to the online survey were asked to prioritise the project elements; figure 1.1 shows the results, enabling a comparison across the elements, where 1 denotes the highest priority and 5 the lowest priority. It's clear that the new theatre and conference facilities are reckoned by the respondents to have the highest priority whilst relocation of the council offices/civic hub is reckoned to have the lowest priority.

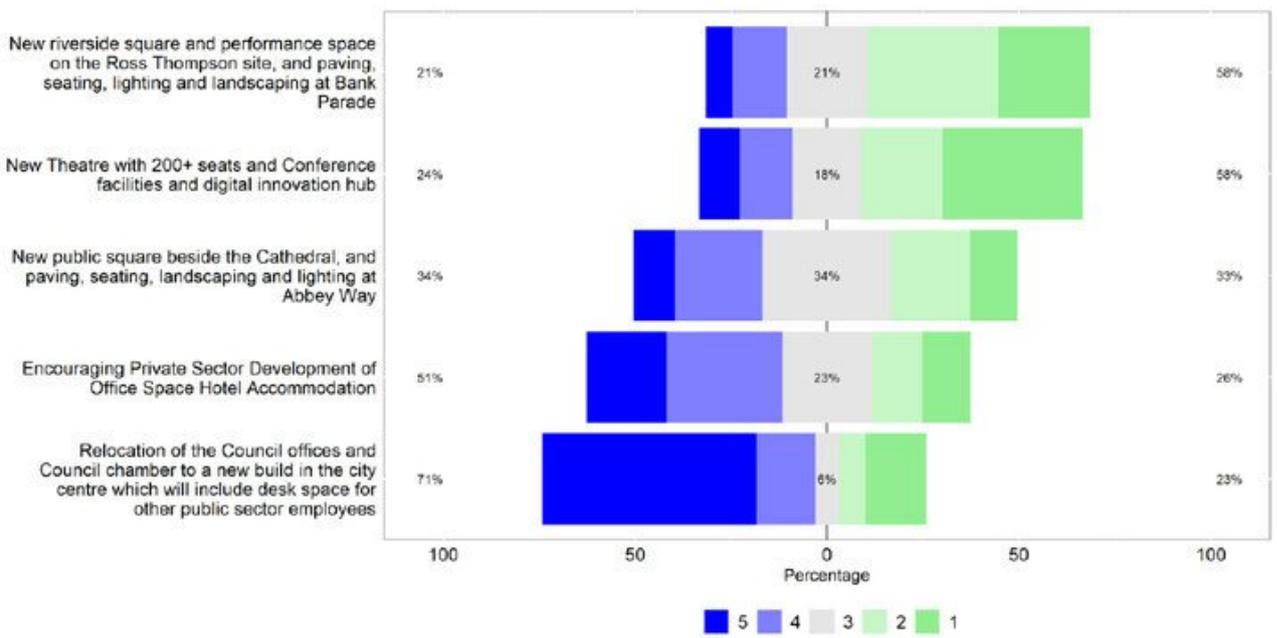


Figure 1.1: Prioritisation of project elements

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Two issues have dominated consultation; (i) perceptions of the project's potential impact on parking at Newry Cathedral, and (ii) Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park. It was explained to consultees that a traffic management strategy will be prepared when COVID-19 restrictions ease, however, in the absence of detailed plans regarding traffic and parking, consultees in general and Newry Cathedral parishioners in particular are concerned about the potential reduction in parking. Regarding the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park project, many consultees felt it should be an integral part of the city centre regeneration project and given top priority.

Where there is support for elements of the proposed regeneration, it risks being crowded out by reservations and concerns, strongly held, about certain physical aspects and about the need, perceived or actual, for greater engagement, greater transparency and dialogue with key stakeholders. It is this observation that informs a series of key recommendations coming out of this consultation exercise.

1. Dialogue with the cathedral's leadership relating to parking concerns to be continued.
2. Continue to publicise progress with the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park to engender trust that this is proceeding.
3. Develop a robust and transparent communications plan which includes publication of any non-commercially sensitive information which informed the decision-making process and options appraisals to date.
4. Develop a more collaborative approach to the plans for the city centre so that overall progress is not delayed, or investment halted, due to 'competing' interest groups lobbying for their own projects.

The consultation exercise can be used to start a process of wider engagement with the public. The open comments received illustrate that many of the objections stem from either a lack of information or misunderstandings, or, indeed, a combination of both. Ongoing engagement has the potential to help address objections whilst it also has the potential to significantly enhance the plans. The appendices to this report show there is a significant amount of positive narrative comment submitted through the survey. These comments include suggestions for changes and identification of ways to be more creative or to add value. This speaks to the ambitions consultees have for the city and the positive contribution that they could bring to the plans going forward.

2. Introduction

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council commissioned Otium Leisure Consultancy to consult with people in the district about the council's proposals for the regeneration of Newry city centre. The task was to deliver an extensive district wide public consultation process to gather feedback on all aspects of the Newry City Centre Regeneration project. The terms of reference states:-

'The council's Corporate Plan 2015-2019 sets out as one of its key actions the delivery of a new Civic Centre. The project has since evolved into a programme of regeneration works, investing directly within the historic core of Newry, to increase vibrancy, footfall and stimulate further investment; the programme includes a Civic Centre and Regional Hub, a Theatre/ Conference facility incorporating a digital innovation hub, public realm, and Grade A office accommodation. Spin off projects in partnership with the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure include the development of a Traffic, Transportation and Car Parking strategy and the Newry Enabling plan.'

An earlier Outline Business Case, which identified a preferred option to support the capital funding commitment by the council, along with the funding request from Belfast Region City Deal, were approved by the council in November 2020; they form the basis for the consultation process undertaken between January and August 2021.

Vision

The council's vision for the regeneration programme is:-

To regenerate Newry city centre, attracting investment and promoting tourism, creating jobs and sustaining our environment.

Project Objectives

- Reinforce Newry as a gateway between North & South
- Contribute to the sensitive regeneration of Newry city centre
- Attract further investment and job creation
- Increase visitors to Newry and animation of the city
- Increase civic pride by modernising the council

The following text was used to introduce the project in the online survey, explaining what it seeks to achieve and the nature of the project elements.

Newry is the district's city, a strategic gateway between Belfast and Dublin. It is a key investment location that can stimulate economic growth and provide new and better employment opportunities for the whole district. The Newry City Centre Regeneration Project aims to create an active city centre, diversifying its offering to attract visitors to an all-day economy, increasing the city's performance and resilience. Shops alone can no longer guarantee healthy high streets. To be relevant - and thereby vibrant - city centres

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now need to offer a mix of uses as well as retail. Uses such as entertainment, leisure, housing, education, community and health facilities, arts and culture, and office space.

For Newry to thrive, the council is developing an investment strategy that balances opportunities and encourages positive growth, focusing on delivering the following benefits:-

- *Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer*
- *Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience.*
- *Improved local services by creating modern and efficient working environments in the heart of the city.*
- *Improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time.*
- *Creating and sustaining jobs by attracting new public and private sector investment*
- *Increasing access to arts and culture by creating and enhancing spaces for cultural activities and public performances.*
- *Encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists.*

These and other benefits will be delivered through a programme of regeneration works investing directly in the historic centre of Newry. Regeneration is a process that aims to reverse social, economic and physical decline. The projects within the programme will work together to increase vibrancy and footfall in the city and to stimulate further investment:-

- *New Theatre with 200+ seats and Conference facilities. Subject to funding, the building will also include a digital innovation hub.*
- *A new riverside square and performance space on the Ross Thompson site, and paving, seating, lighting and landscaping at Bank Parade.*
- *A new public square beside the cathedral, and paving, seating, landscaping and lighting at Abbey Way.*
- *Relocation of the council offices and council chamber to a new build in the city centre which will include desk space for other public sector employees.*
- *Funding to stimulate/ encourage private sector development of additional office space.*
- *Development of a 15 acre city park in the Albert Basin.*
- *A traffic, transport and car parking strategy investigating measures that will promote active and more sustainable travel, and provision of appropriate parking within the city centre.*

Belfast Region City Deal¹

The Newry City Centre Regeneration Project is a project within the Belfast Region City Deal programme which seeks to benefit communities across the region. It's useful to understand the context of the Belfast Region City Deal and how it informs the Newry project. The following is extracted from the Belfast Region City Deal website:-

¹ Source <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastregioncitydeal>

Newry City Centre Regeneration Project – A Public Consultation Exercise

City Deals are bespoke packages of funding and decision-making powers negotiated between central government and local authorities. They're aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and accelerate inclusive economic growth.

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) comprises Belfast City Council, five partner councils (listed below), the region's two universities and four of the region's further education colleges.

- *Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council*
- *Ards and North Down Borough Council*
- *Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council*
- *Mid and East Antrim Borough Council*
- *Newry, Mourne and Down District Council*

The BRCD partners are working with the UK government and the Northern Ireland Executive to develop and deliver the deal.

These partners have worked together intensively since 2017 to secure £1 billion of co-investment. Their shared ambition is to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the region and to deliver thousands of new and better jobs, with pathways and support in place to make them accessible to people from all communities.

The BRCD partners, the NI Departments and the UK Government signed Heads of Terms in March 2019. This confirmed their joint commitment to implement the Belfast Region City Deal. We have now prepared outline business cases for 20 ambitious projects, underpinned by an employability and skills programme.

A successful City Deal is about more than individual areas, it's about working together to ensure that the deal benefits people living in the whole region, connecting them to more and better jobs and opportunities, and attracting further investment to the region.

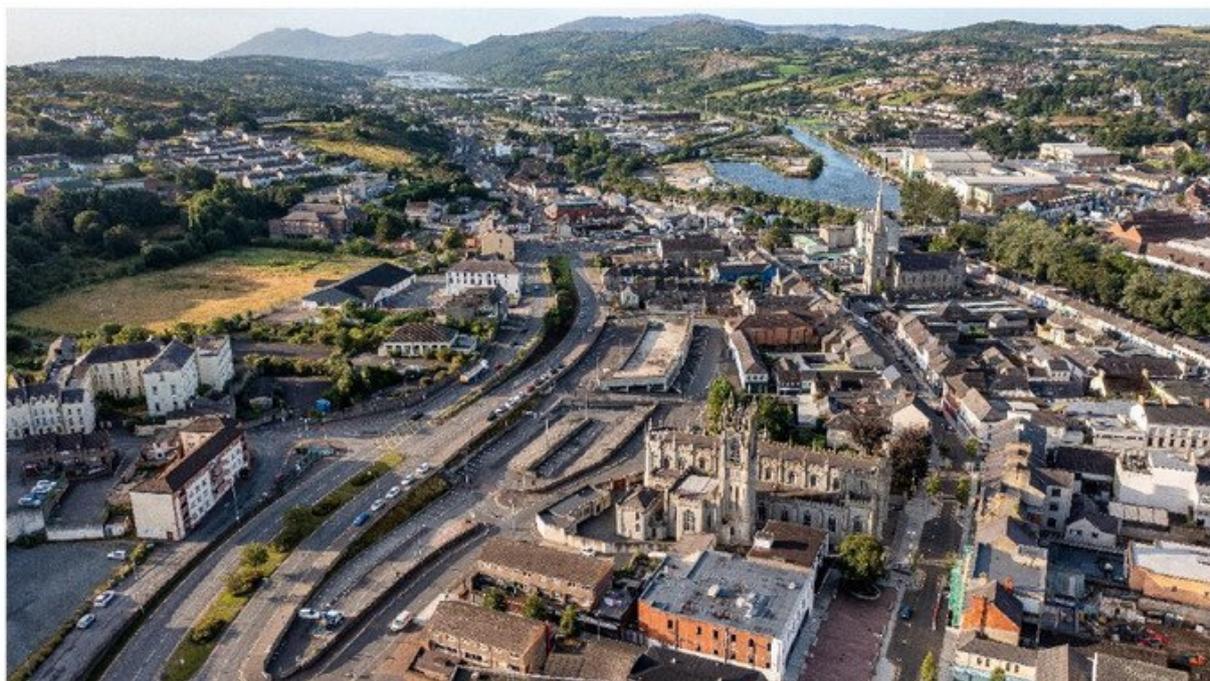
The Belfast Region City Deal will see the UK Government invest £350 million into the Belfast Region, with a further co-investment of upwards of £150 million from Belfast Region City Deal partners. In May 2020 the NI Executive confirmed that it will provide match funding of £350 million towards the Belfast Region City Deal.

All plans have now been examined through the lens of the Covid-19 pandemic, and there is confidence that the delivery of the planned projects will contribute to the region's long-term recovery. It's crucial that we continue to work at pace with all our partners in government and industry to progress a deal that will allow the combined government investment of £850million to start to flow into the region in 2021.

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This investment will help strengthen the region's business offer in growth sectors such as life and health sciences, the digital and creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. It will also support next generation digital capabilities, boost tourism and support the regeneration of the region, underpinned by infrastructure developments and investment in skills to connect people to jobs and services.'



Newry city centre looking south, showing the Cathedral of Saint Patrick and Saint Colman (bottom centre), car parking to the rear (left) of the cathedral and looking beyond to the Albert Basin, Carlingford Lough and the Cooley Mountains.

3. Methodology

Introduction

Otium Leisure Consultancy's approach to this process is underpinned by the Best Practice Principles advocated by The Consultation Institute²:-

- Integrity
- Visibility
- Accessibility
- Transparency
- Disclosure obligations
- Fair Interpretations
- Publication

The consultation exercise, delivered between January and August 2021, comprised the following elements:-

- Two stakeholder engagement workshops were held on 26 January.
- An online survey was available for a 12 week period from 8 March to 31 May.
- 5 online public workshops.
- 5 online targeted workshops were arranged to engage specifically with the following:-
 - City centre businesses (BID members)
 - Newry Cathedral (Committee representatives)
 - Young People (School Councillors)
 - District wide business interests
 - Section 75 groups
- Written submissions were invited.
- A series of key stakeholder organisation telephone interviews.

The proposed regeneration of Newry city centre is an emotive topic and one which engendered wide participation in the consultation exercise as detailed below:-

Stakeholder workshops	14 attendees from 11 organisations
Online Survey	1,585 responses
Public Workshops	55 Attendees
Targeted workshops	39 attendees
Other Submissions	2 written submissions
Stakeholder interviews	6 national organisations

² Source <https://www.consultationinstitute.org/consultation-charter-7-best-practice-principles/>

Stakeholder Workshops

Two stakeholder workshops were held on 26 January to which a range of interest groups were invited. The purpose of the workshops was to help inform the approach which should be taken to the wider public consultation exercise, including identifying key issues and concerns. A total of 11 organisations attended across the two sessions as listed below.

- Newry Association of Local Community & Voluntary Groups
- Newry Chamber of Commerce & Trade
- Newry BID
- Newry Parish / Diocese of Dromore
- BOSCO Youth Drama Group
- Southern Regional College
- Newry & Mourne Co-operative & Enterprise Agency
- Down Enterprise Agency
- Southern Health & Social Care Trust
- Newpoint Players
- Newry Feis

Following a short presentation on the elements of the regeneration programme which were to be the subject of the consultation exercise, the workshop provided opportunity for discussion of the following:-

- The key benefits attributable to the regeneration programme.
- The challenges for a regeneration programme such as that which is proposed.
- Additional considerations which should be factored into the consultation discussions.
- Key groups or organisations with whom it is important to engage in the consultation.

The workshops were a very useful element in framing the issues to be explored both through the online survey and the public workshops. Discussion at the stakeholder's workshops identified a number of key themes:-

- The need for investment in regeneration to be "impactful".
- The imperative nature of the parking/traffic management issue.
- The scepticism about the evidence of need and projected return on investment figures.
- The will of stakeholders to engage in dialogue about the proposals and their concerns/suggestions around them.

Online Survey

The approach to the online survey was presented to, and agreed by, the Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Project Board on 2 February 2021.

The agreed approach was that the survey would:-

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- Address each element of the plan individually
- Focus on the features, the benefits and any concerns
- Ask open questions rather than closed
- Use plain English
- Facilitate comment
- Emphasise the benefit to the city and its residents
- Emphasise the connections between the elements

The draft survey was structured into 4 main sections (one per element of the regeneration programme) so as to include:-

- Artist Impression / Plan of the proposed programme element
- Description of the proposals
- List of features which respondents were asked to rank according to how important it was to them
- List of benefits which respondents were asked to rank according to how important they felt these benefits to be
- Open question: Are there features or benefits which you think are missing and should be added?
- Open question: What concerns, if any, do you have about....?

Three final open questions followed:-

- *'The plan also includes funding to encourage private sector development of office space. In addition, it is hoped the benefits of the regeneration will help stimulate private sector delivery of a budget hotel. Please tell us your views on this.'*
- *'The Newry City Centre Regeneration programme now includes the development of a 15acre city park in the Albert Basin. As extensive consultation on this development was undertaken in 2020, it is not intended that it is revisited here. However, if you have a comment to make in regard to the inclusion of the park as part of the regeneration programme, please tell us.'*
- *'Finally, reflecting on the overall plans for Newry city centre, have you any additional comments you wish to make?'*

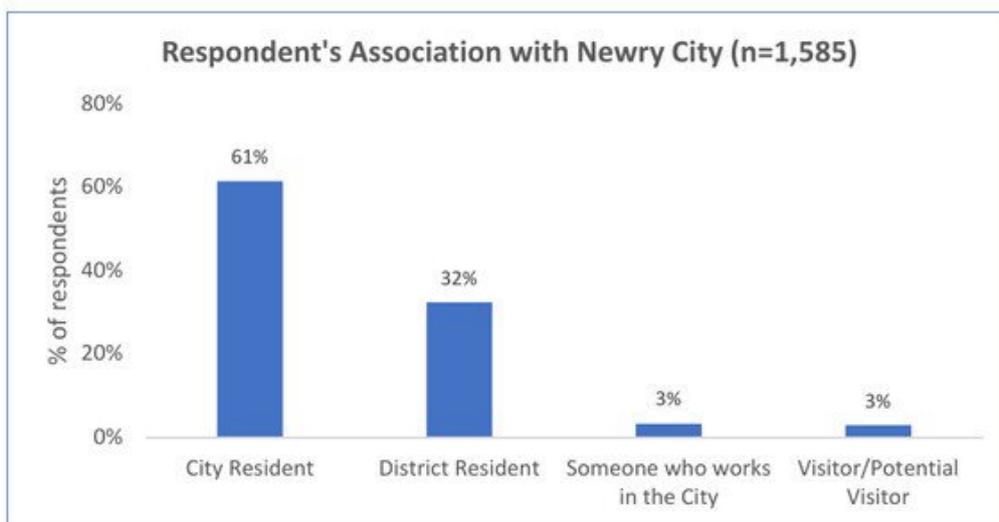
Upon presentation to and discussion with the council's SP&R Committee the survey was amended as follows:-

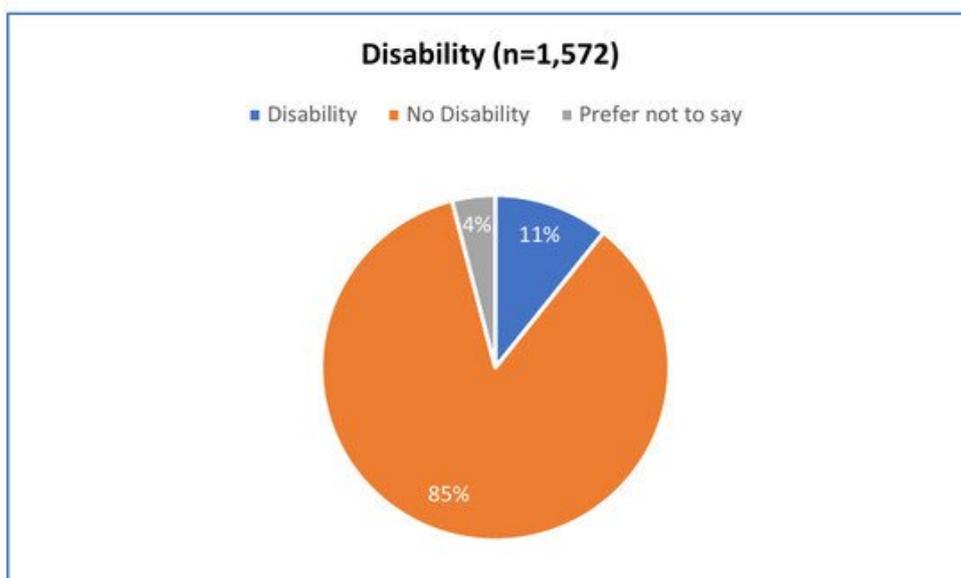
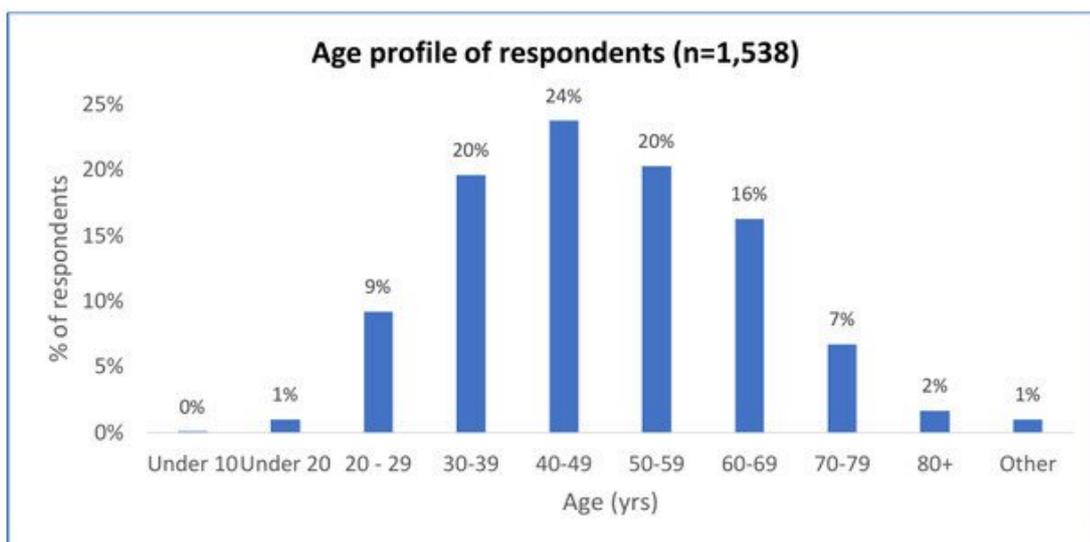
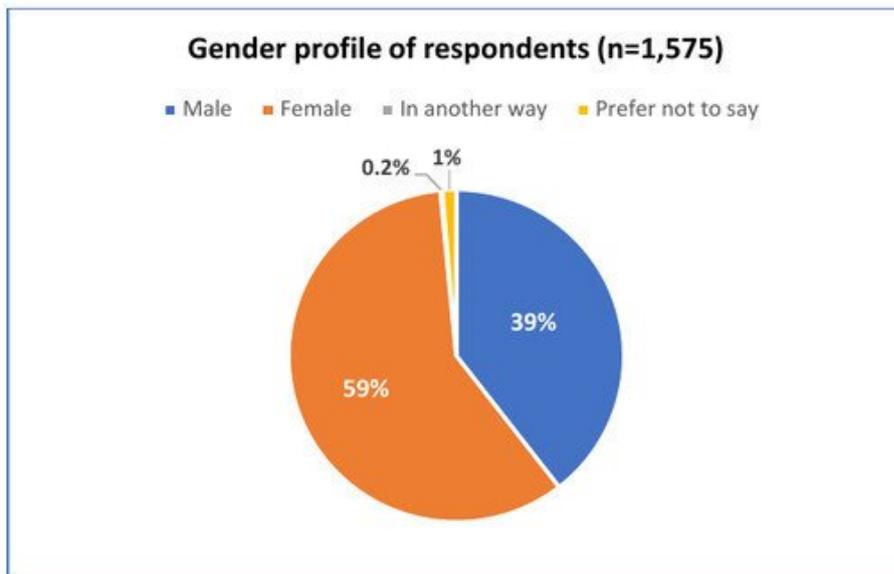
- Rather than ranking features of the developments, respondents were asked to indicate how important they considered them to be on a scale of *not important, somewhat unimportant, neither important nor unimportant, somewhat important, important.*

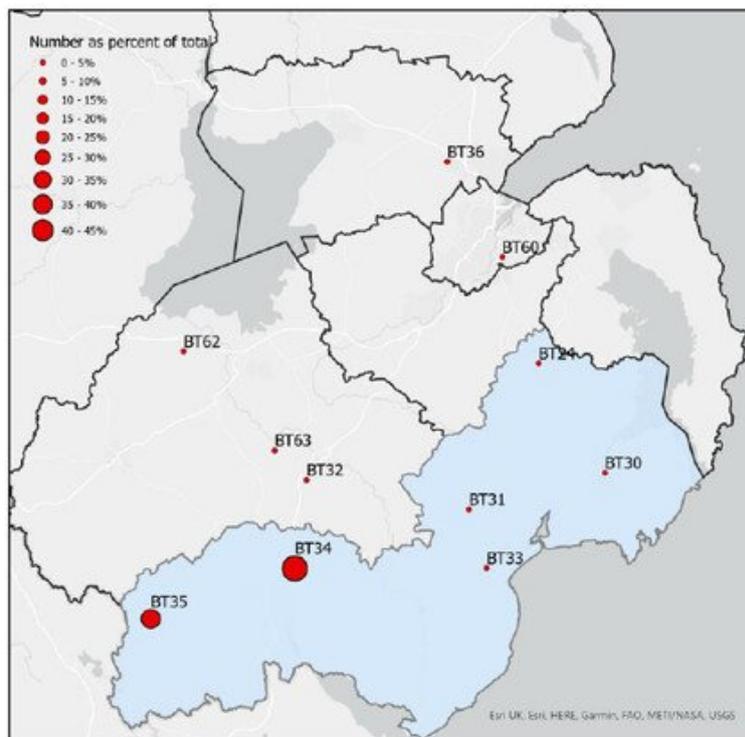
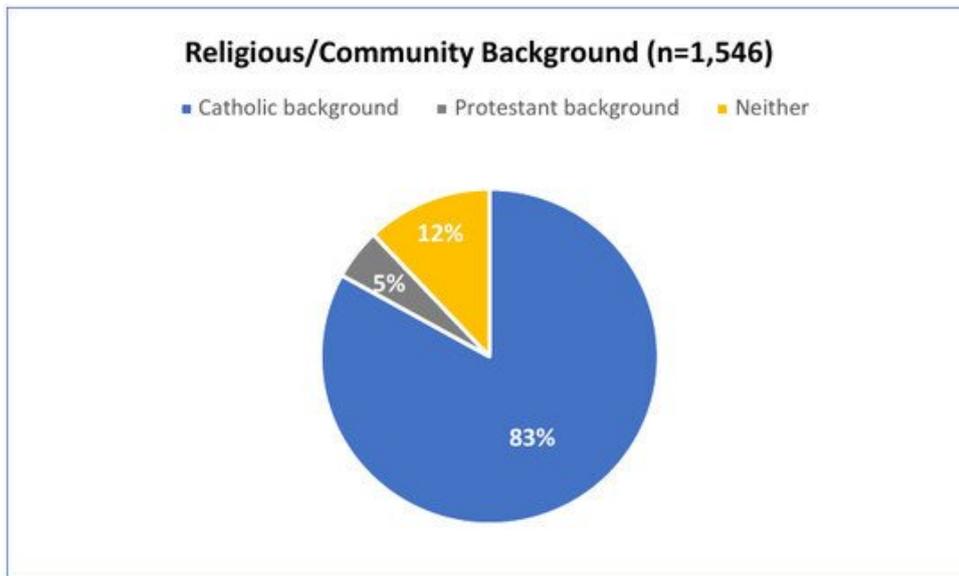
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- Rather than ranking the benefits of the proposals, respondents were asked whether they agreed with the benefits on a scale of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.
- An additional question was added asking respondents to prioritise the programme elements.

The online survey sought to gather the views of residents, business owners and other stakeholders through a range of quantitative and open comment questions. The survey was open from Monday 8 March to Monday 31 May and was promoted through the council website, council social media pages and featured in the local media. The survey received 1,585 responses of which 1,262 were fully completed surveys. The profile of survey respondents is as follows:-







Public and Targeted Workshops

A total of 10 online workshops were delivered, five of which aimed to engage with particular target groups. The aim of the workshops was to discuss the following:-

Question 1: Tell us how you think regenerating the city centre will benefit the city – what problems will it solve?

Question 2: Do you think there is anything missing from the proposals which could or should be included?

Question 3: Do you have any reservations about the proposed programme?

Analysis and Reporting

The online survey's 1,585 responses each included a number of narrative responses. The aim of this type of consultation is to gather the views of the public and to reflect the tone of these views and the concerns raised. In doing so, the consultant and the reader will be aware that those with the strongest objections tend to be the most vocal in any public consultation process, and that these objections should not drown out the less passionately in favour. The analysis and commentary which follows combines the responses from all elements of the consultation process. It includes quantitative analysis of the survey responses and related narrative comment from the open questions, workshops and interviews.

In preparation of this report, Otium Leisure Consultancy is cognisant of the interdependency of all of the elements of the regeneration programme and the importance of considering the programme as a whole whilst presenting the views relating to individual elements of the programme.

All of the comments received in response to the survey and summary notes of each workshop are available in appendices.

4. Key Findings

Headline Findings – Overall Programme

Broadly speaking, the majority of those who engaged with the consultation process are in favour of the proposed regeneration programme and investment in the city centre in principle. Consultees are also broadly in agreement that the proposals will increase the vibrancy of the city centre. However, the consultation process, and in particular the open comments received through the survey³, have identified reservations and concerns about the proposals.

The proposed regeneration programme for Newry city centre has proven an emotive topic and has generated considerable engagement in the consultation process. It is clear from the survey responses and the tone of the public and targeted workshops that strong feelings and opinions exist among residents of the city. The responses to aspects of individual elements of the programme are outlined in the sections which follow.

City Centre Vibrancy

Figure 4.1 shows the response to the question about the project’s overall contribution to the city centre’s vibrancy.

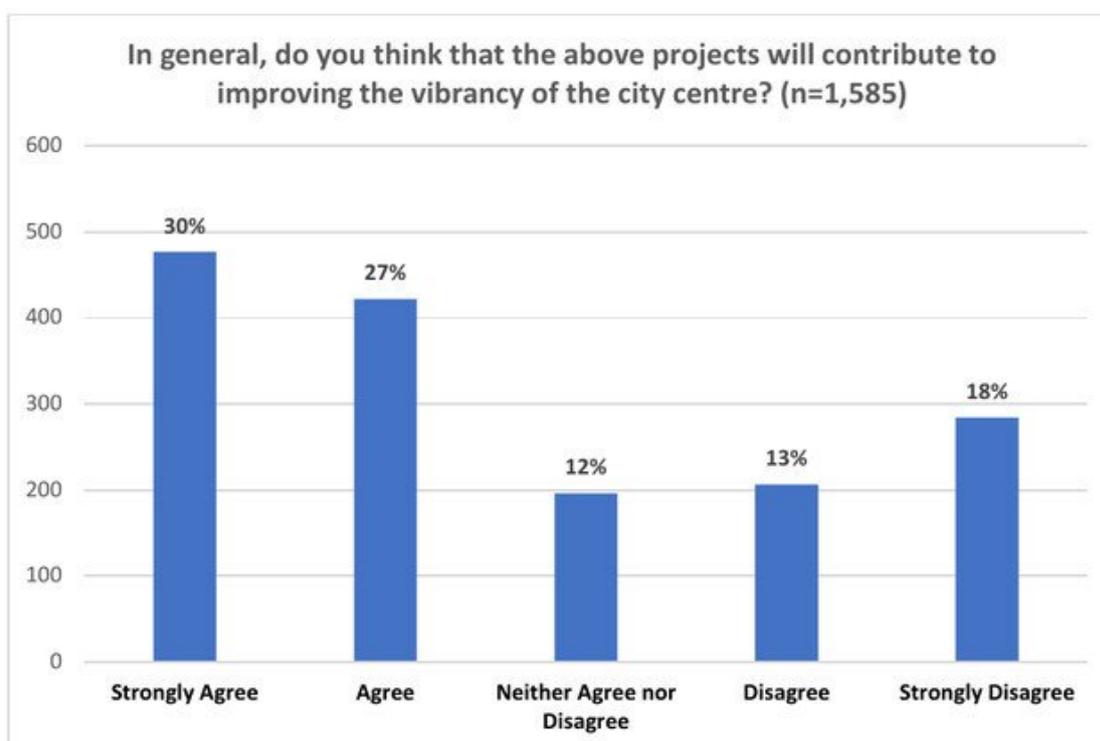


Figure 4.1: City Centre Vibrancy – General Response

³ A total of 6,169 open comments across 12 questions were received through the survey.

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Of the 1,585 responses to this question, 899 (56.7%) either *strongly agree* or *agree* that the proposed projects would contribute to improving vibrancy in the city centre. This contrasts with the 490 respondents (30.9%) who either *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.

Figure 4.2 illustrates that, when looking at the segmented responses to this question, the majority of respondents in each segment either *agree* or *strongly agree* that the proposals will increase the vibrancy of the city centre. Less than a quarter of those who own businesses or work in the city *disagree* or *strongly disagree*, however, it should also be noted that for residents (of either the district or the city) this increases to approximately one third. This speaks to the dilemma for public bodies in a programme such as this where the stakeholder priorities can be so different and where there is a challenge to address the sometimes competing needs and aspirations of, for example, businesses and residents.

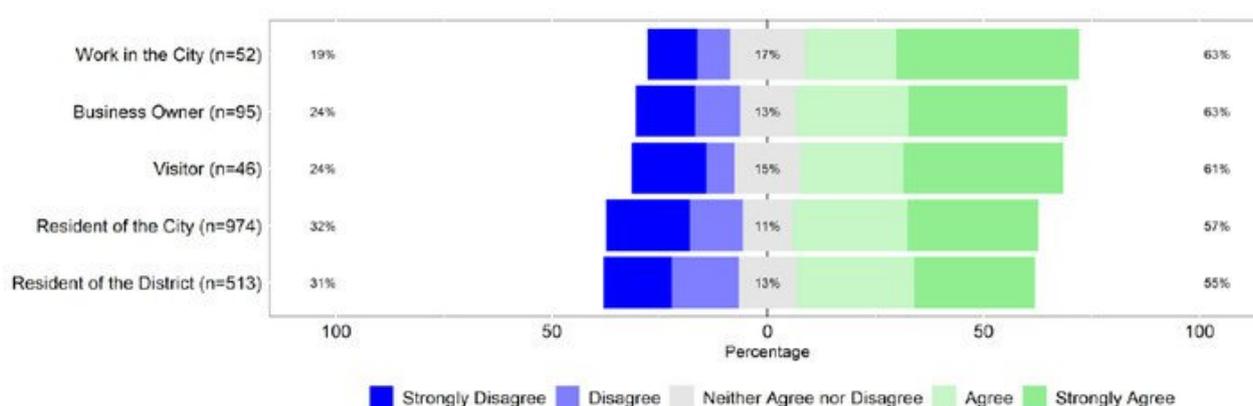


Figure 4.2: City Centre Vibrancy – Segmented Responses

Individual survey responses articulated, often passionately, the hopes and concerns of Newry city residents and stakeholders about the proposals. Key stakeholder groups, including business interests and representatives of Newry Cathedral were at pains to underline their support for investment in the city centre, and their agreement about the need for same, however, both groups have concerns about the investment process. Both groups of advocates emphasise the need for engagement and dialogue with stakeholders and the importance of the council bringing the population of the city with them in this process. To do so requires an ongoing collaborative approach to discuss the proposals, their benefits and the challenges. In this way the council will build not only the physical capital of the city but will also develop the social capital which will remain long after the construction is complete.

[Parking/Traffic Management; Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park](#)

Two issues dominate discussion amongst those respondents – the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park and parking at Newry Cathedral. Both issues are represented by a vocal and articulate lobby, as reflected in the survey responses, and whilst their concerns are strongly put across

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and considered in this report, it is clear that a sizeable proportion of survey respondents have looked at questions through one or other of these lenses. The result is the issue of parking at the cathedral being raised in response to questions about the theatre, and the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park being considered as higher priority for investment than many, or any, of the other regeneration proposals.

'As much as these will benefit the town I feel as a resident the need for more open spaces and a park would be of benefit to mental health.'

'Seems like a good initiative, but all focus should be on Albert Basin Park. First and foremost!'

It is important to note that the city park at the Albert Basin is widely considered to be integral to developing the city centre and was the subject of a public consultation process in 2020 to identify how the park should be developed and what features and elements should be included⁴. The feedback from that consultation process has informed the concept designs for the park. The city centre regeneration proposals pre-date the council progressing the development of the Albert Basin and, as such, funding for the park was not part of the bid to the Belfast Region City Deal. The feedback from consultation for city centre regeneration implies a perception that the regeneration of the city centre and the development of the Albert Basin is an either/or discussion whereas they are in fact complementary, the council's intention being to realise both projects.

The issue of parking and traffic management also dominates the consultation responses, in particular views on the potential impact on parking at the cathedral as a result of the proposals relating to a civic hub and the public realm works to the rear of the cathedral. This was exacerbated by the absence of a traffic management plan and/or a parking strategy during the consultation process; workshop attendees were advised that the data collection required to properly inform a car parking and traffic management strategy could not be undertaken during COVID-19 restrictions and that this was a priority for the council once restrictions eased. In addition to those who raised the issue in the survey and in workshops, and the representations made by the cathedral leadership, several letters were received requesting that the council reconsider proposals that would reduce parking provision at the cathedral. As the largest urban parish in Ireland, Newry Cathedral has extensive support, and as a result, the respondents raising concerns about the impact of the proposed developments on parking for the cathedral and on Hill Street in particular are numerous. That said, the cathedral leadership has clearly articulated its support for investment in the city and its willingness to engage in discussions. It is apparent that perceptions relating to the extent of dialogue between the council and the cathedral's leadership to date has been a factor in the escalation

⁴ *Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park: A Public Consultation Exercise, August 2020. Otium Leisure Consultancy on behalf of Newry, Mourne & Down District Council.*

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of the issue of parking at the cathedral, bringing it to the forefront of objections to the regeneration programme.

Renew v's Rebuild

Another theme within the survey responses was the suggestion to renew, refurbish and/or reinstate existing buildings rather than investing in new build projects. This view was applied equally to the proposed council offices as it was to the theatre/conference facilities. The view was expressed by many that there is a surfeit of vacant premises in Newry city centre, some of which could be brought back into regular use. This theme, more than any other, was where the council was most frequently criticised for lacking imagination and creativity and was perceived to be *'wasting public money'*.

Many of those who engaged with the consultation process struggle to reconcile the cost estimates for the planned investment with the proposals. This is due in part to the absence of detailed plans (and related costs) in the public domain and to the perceived lack of evidence of need for the proposals. The phrases *'waste of money'* and *'not needed'* were used frequently in discussions. This issue relates closely to another concern of consultees – *engagement and transparency*. Amongst the survey respondents there is a strong perception of the council not having engaged fully or properly with the general public and key stakeholders on these proposals

Throughout the consultation, where the proposals are criticised, it is criticism of the detail rather than of the concept. The majority of consultees acknowledge the need for investment in Newry and indeed many have advice and suggestions of ways the planned investment could be more effective, however, the emphasis is on urging the council to invest in the *'right'* things and to invest well. In the absence of data and evidence to the contrary, those who perceive there to be no need for additional office space or a new theatre will continue to oppose the proposals. In the spirit of transparency, the options appraisal undertaken to bring the council to the current plans should be published along with the evidence gathered to inform the appraisals, subject to commercial confidentiality.

Headline Findings by Programme Element

Theatre and Conference Facilities

By a significant margin (more than 10%) this is viewed by respondents as the highest priority project within the regeneration programme. Notwithstanding concerns about the size of the auditorium and the risk of the council competing with local conferencing providers, there is agreement that investment in this project will bring benefits to the city centre.

Public Realm at Town Hall and Ross Thompson Site

Support for this proposal is strong, with 58% of respondents ranking it as their first (23.8%) or second (34.2%) priority within the regeneration proposals. It is not a stretch to link support

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for this element with the support for the redevelopment of the theatre complex as the two elements are clearly complementary and mutually beneficial.

Public Realm at Cathedral and Abbey Way

Whilst there is no strong sentiment reflected one way or the other about these proposals in terms of their prioritisation (321 people ranked it first or second and 328 ranked it fourth or fifth) there is a strongly negative narrative in other parts of the survey and in the feedback received through workshops.

Civic & Regional Hub

More than half (55.8%) of respondents consider this element of the programme to be their lowest priority with strong negative feelings expressed throughout the consultation about the choice of site and its impact on the cathedral as well as scepticism about the need for such significant investment in offices for the council.

Grade A Office /Budget Hotel Investment Fund

Reservations about this element of the proposals stem from concerns about the need for offices in a post-pandemic world alongside a perceived lack of evidence of the need for (or likely development of) grade A offices in Newry, given the lower return on investment they would yield for any developer. Reservations are also articulated about whether it is appropriate for public money to subsidise the private sector in this way or whether market forces should be allowed to drive this element. Support for an additional hotel is stronger but with the caveat of the need for a reason to visit the city preceding the need for accommodation for visitors.

5. Findings by Programme Element

Theatre and Conference Facilities



Newry Town Hall and the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre. The impression (top) shows the proposed new theatre/conference building next to the existing Town Hall; the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre is replaced with this new build.

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For 339 (27.8%) of the 1,219 responses to the question on the prioritisation of the city centre regeneration projects (Q30), the theatre and conference facilities were the number one priority. As well as being asked to consider the relative importance of the different elements of the proposed theatre and conference facilities, consultees were invited to comment on whether there were additional features which should be considered, and to comment on the proposal more generally.

Of the 720 general comments, 249 (34.6%) expressed the view there is *no need* for the proposed theatre and conference facilities development or that it was either *not the priority* or was a *waste of money*. A further 94 respondents suggested that either the current facilities sufficed or that there should be some refurbishment of existing facilities but not on the scale (or at the cost) proposed. A total of 302 (41.9%) comments were positive, or positive with reservations, the reservations including the size of the theatre being too small in terms of audience capacity (39 comments), the inclusion of conference facilities (46 respondents were against this) and recommendations on how the design could be enhanced (29 comments).

In terms of the relative importance of the features currently planned for the theatre and conference facilities, the theatre itself, and inclusion of an exhibition space, are identified by 68% (the theatre) and 61% (exhibition space) of respondents as being *somewhat important* or *important* features of the proposed new theatre and conference facilities as shown in figure 5.1. Bookable spaces and conference facilities have less support at 51% and 47% respectively, showing that the least support relates to the inclusion of conference facilities, with less than half of respondents identifying this as a *somewhat important* or *important* feature.

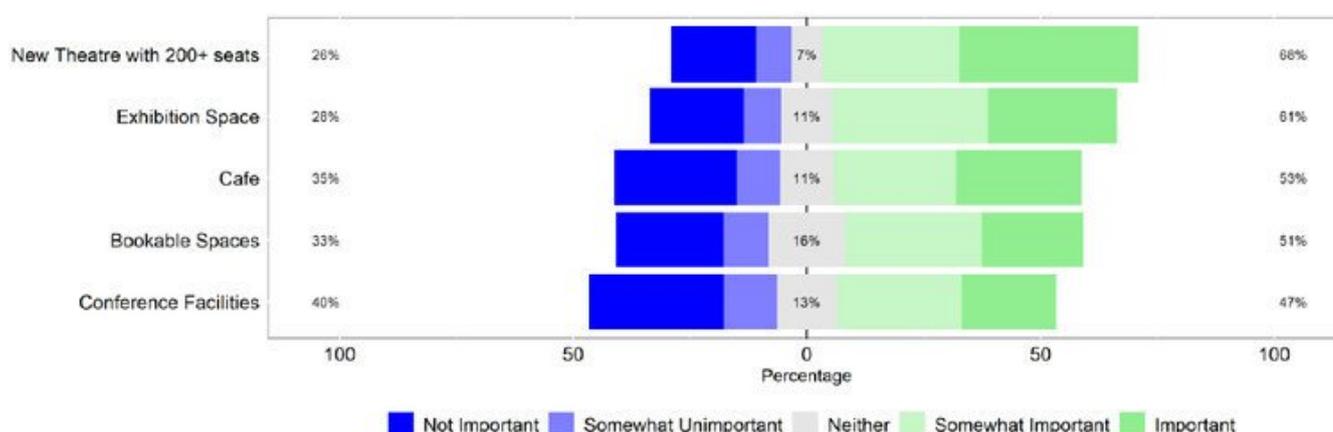


Figure 5.1: Importance of Theatre and Conference Facilities

Figure 5.2 shows there is also broad agreement on the part of respondents that the proposals will yield the benefits presented in the survey with at least 60% respondents *agreeing* or *strongly agreeing* with each of the intended benefits. It is suggested this result demonstrates

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a good understanding amongst the respondents of the importance of arts and cultural activities to the city and the economic and social benefits that can be achieved.

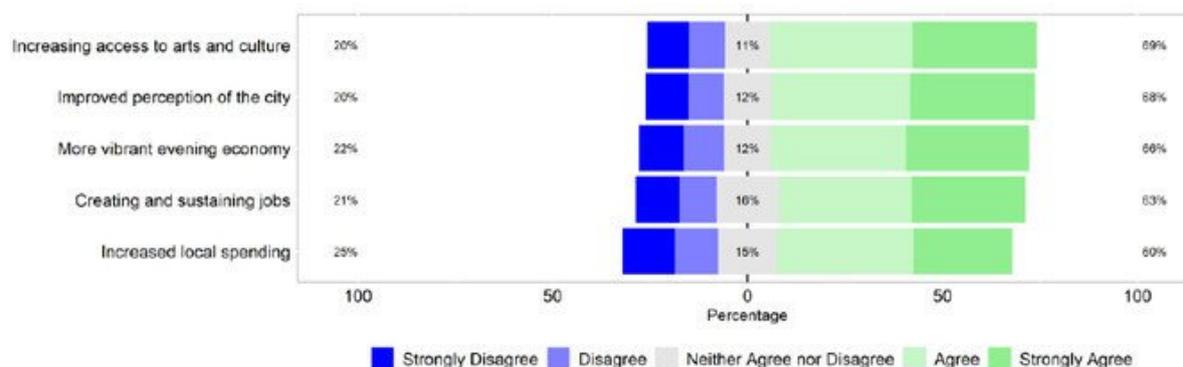


Figure 5.2: Benefits of Theatre and Conference Facilities

In commenting on the proposed development of the theatre and conference, those who were in favour of the development, described it as *'badly needed'* and *'long overdue'*. Comments included:-

- *'These are exciting plans and something which this district needs and deserves.'*
- *'I think that it is about time for Newry's ability to be able to host up to date and relevant stage productions and concerts. It is an area that is extremely lacking and unreflective of a city.'*
- *'We new (sic) a theatre, as it is we have to go to Belfast, Derry, Armagh to see the best shows etc.'*
- *'These facilities may actually propel Newry from a cobbled together large town into a proper cosmopolitan city (already well placed geographically between our 2 largest cities) able to attract visitors\tourists & future investment. In essence, a 21st Century development with World Class attractive metropolitan facilities coupled with a state of the art Park as the green lung within this proper development. NB: 100 years after Partition & its consequences for this area, it is nothing less than what the entire district including South Down & South Armagh deserves.'*
- *'Brilliant we need more focus on the arts and culture here! Glad to see funds being used for a good cause.'*
- *'I feel this could be a great addition to the city centre if executed well. It is an area with plenty of parking and nearby restaurants and bars which would no doubt benefit from a busy and frequently used theatre. With plans to re-populate the city centre with developments in Hill Street, the Old Renault site and Monaghan Street this would accompany plans to increase the level of cultural and leisure facilities in the city greatly.'*
- *'A new theatre would be excellent for Newry's arts and public performances and will also provide a welcomed opportunity for evening entertainment.'*

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However, respondents also had reservations about the proposals, in particular the planned conference facilities. Concerns were expressed about the likely demand for and feasibility of such facilities in a post-pandemic society and also about the appropriateness of the council establishing a facility which would effectively be in competition with local businesses such as hotels.

- *'This proposed facility risks mostly displacing business from existing facilities within Newry.'*
- *'I'm not sure if conference/exhibition facilities would be a high priority within this project as the granite exchange and library both offer these and would be in close proximity to this building. Whilst you say you are creating jobs with this project, you may also be destroying them in other areas of the town.'*

Opinions were also expressed about the need to consider parking in the vicinity of the theatre.

- *'Needed however nowhere in these plans have you allowed for extra car parking . If there are day time events the people will take car parking spaces of shoppers.'*
- *'Fine if you include adequate parking for the people who come from the rural hinterland.'*

For many of those opposed to, or having reservations about the proposals, their reservations were about investing in new facilities when there are existing facilities which are perceived to be underutilised.

- *'Theatre appeals to a limited crowd. If you are not attracting crowds to the facilities you have what difference will new facilities make?'*
- *'We have a town hall & arts centre both of which are under used, why spend money on new premises which in turn will be under used.'*
- *'We have a perfectly good theatre in the town hall which is not used enough. We depend mostly on local productions. Will a new theatre attract shows as does the Market place in Armagh.'*
- *'I don't know much about it but think the money could be used better, up grade the facilities you have (town hall, the hall beside the bank of Ireland etc) and instead of opening new cafes promote the ones already in the area that might be struggling, the hotel can provide areas for conferences, hope you take these suggestions of myself and others on board.'*

A number of consultees commented on the design of the theatre, in particular with regard to the size of the auditorium and how competitive it would be with other theatres.

- *'Is 200 seats enough to compete against rival theatres?'*
- *'200 seats is foolishly small, the current 'theatre' in the Town hall seats 500. The new theatre should have at least this number. It's time the council funded grass roots theatre to the absolute best of their capabilities!'*

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- *The 200+ seater theatre is definitely inadequate for a growing city (Warrenpoint Townhall, for example, accommodates 300+ and is insufficient for a lot of public events - bingo, etc. and many rural communities have access to larger facilities.*

Other design-related comments included calls for the façade of the existing arts centre to be maintained and for accessibility to be a key consideration. A number of additional features were also proposed by consultees:-

- Facilities for Costume & set design would attract new skills.
- There needs to be a Studio / Intimate Performance Space to complement the New Theatre (as in Belfast Waterfront / Island Centre Lisburn / Armagh Theatre - by example).
- Training and break out rooms small auditorium for 50 to 60 people music studio and tv production suite.
- Fly tower, external performance spaces.
- Workshop spaces for artists; will encourage use of other buildings in that area for an 'artist quarter' in the future.
- New state of the art theatre to attract audiences from further afield.
- More space for cultural activities (local meetings etc).
- Craft bar
- Sensory rooms
- A black box and white box on site as well as a fully functional loading bay for get ins/outs. It would also be sensible to link this with a ground floor theatre. Saves lugging set through a building and keeps everything safe.
- Television and radio studios.
- Larger venue that could cater for concerts.
- Bowling Alley
- Consideration should be given to inclusion of a small space suitable for use as a cinema.
- Individual studios to hire for classes, e.g., dance, drama, music etc.
- The brief seems to be exclusive to Performance Arts. Apart from Exhibition space, what other facilities are provided for Visual Arts? Workshop space? Facilities / equipment for 3 dimensional sculptural work, in clay? In wood? In metal? Surely the function of this building is to celebrate and encompass ALL Arts and Crafts in the South Down region?
- Different scaled theatre spaces within the building (not all performances will attract 200 seats). Perhaps using the facade or design to allow for an outdoor amphitheatre performance that would bring the theatre to the street.
- Bookable rooms free of charge for local community Associations.
- Live Music Venue as opposed to generic multipurpose facilities.

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Programming of the venues, once established, is an area of concern for both survey respondents and workshop attendees. Local arts groups feel they have not been engaged in dialogue about a facility which they will seek to utilise. There is concern about the ability of what is perceived as a small (and therefore less attractive) venue being able to draw the types of shows and performances which will boost the night time economy in the city centre.

'... building a new facility and filling it with low grade events will do very little of benefit. There has to be a real focus on what resources are going to be put into devising and managing the programming for the new facility. There should be a new post for someone from creative / content background to manage what is going into the facility, attracting quality programming and holding responsibility for output - this should be an external hire from the world of the arts rather than from local government.'

Comment

Overall, consultees are in support of the proposed development of the theatre and conference facilities although with reservations. The proposed inclusion of conference facilities would benefit from greater clarity on how this will complement rather than compete with existing private sector providers in the city.

Public Realm at Town Hall and Ross Thompson Sites



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For 231 (18.9%) of the 1,219 responses to the question on the prioritisation of the city centre regeneration projects, the public realm works at the Town Hall and Ross Thompson sites were the number one priority. Consultees were also invited to rate the importance of the inclusion of a number of features of the development as detailed in Figure 5.3:-

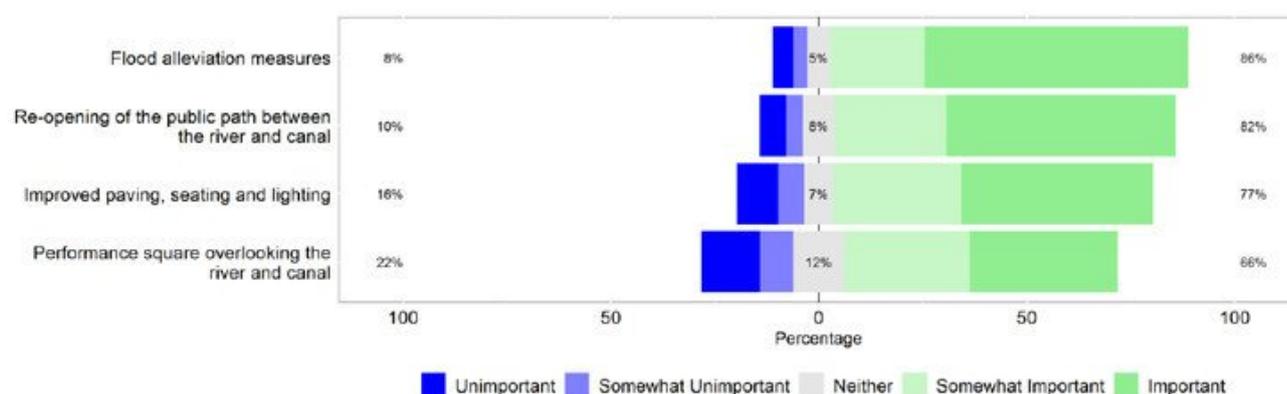


Figure 5.3: Importance of Public Realm Works – Town Hall and Ross Thompson

The inclusion of flood alleviation measures and the reopening of the public path between the river and the canal are both considered *important* by more than 50% of respondents, increasing to above three-quarters of respondents if the ‘*somewhat important*’ responses are also included. There is broad acknowledgement of the importance of paving and landscaping to create a gateway to the city – 77% when the *important* and *somewhat important* responses are combined.

Inclusion of a performance square is less strongly supported, but at the same time less than 25% of respondents indicated they did not think such a feature to be an important inclusion in the development. Some of the reasons provided for this lack of clear endorsement are articulated later in this section.

Figure 5.4 shows that, once again there is strong agreement around the likely benefits of this project with 65% or more respondents *agreeing* or *strongly agreeing* that each of the benefits is likely to be achieved as a result of the proposed development.

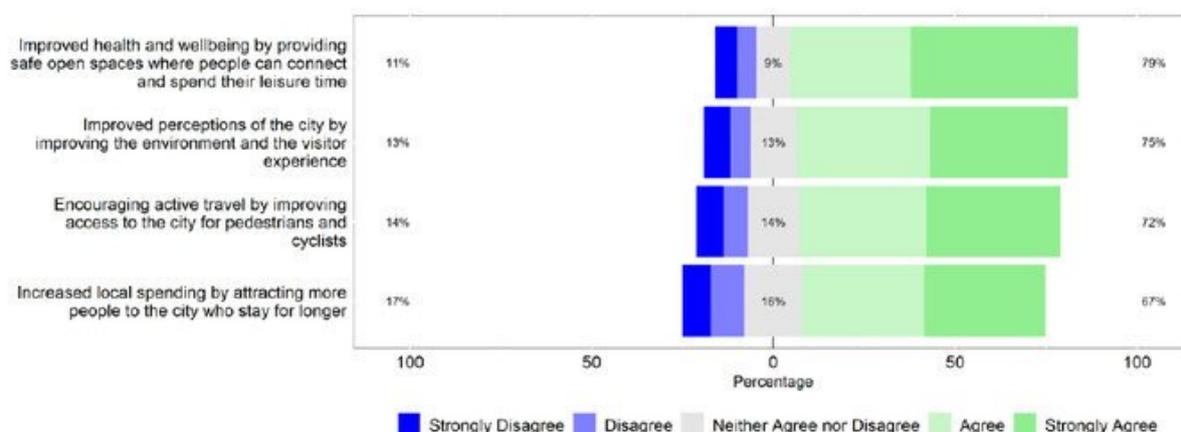


Figure 5.4: Benefits of Town Hall and Ross Thompson Public Realm Works

A total of 479 (30.2%) of all respondents provided additional comments on the proposed public realm works at the theatre, 210 (43.8%) of whom expressed clear support for the proposals. Comments included:-

- *'I strongly support them and feel they will enhance the value and character of the area.'*
- *'Definitely new paving, seating and lighting would be well placed as I know a lot of people have been sitting along the Canal benches during the pandemic as we currently do not have a City Park to spend time in.'*
- *'The proposals will enhance an area of the town which is neglected and disused.'*
- *'I agree with both and think as the Ross Thompson site is already used for circus and festivals in Newry I think this will help those activities and make them easier to set up.'*

There were, however, a small number of reservations about the proposals with safety (21), maintenance (10) and design (4) being the areas of greatest concern. There were also reservations about the proposals which related in the main to the creation of an outdoor performance space and the challenges it will face in the Northern Ireland climate:-

- *'Again, this all seems well on paper, but creating a new outdoor performance space between the Clanrye River and the historic Newry Canal in fact anywhere in NI seems a waste of money with the very unpredictable weather we have in this country.'*
- *'The outdoor performance area wouldn't be a top priority if there is a plan for outdoor performance area at the new Newry City Park at Albert Basin, this is more money that could be focused on increasing the capacity of the new indoor theatre.'*
- *'Outdoor space is a complete waste of money as we simply do not have the weather our weather is wet and cold.'*

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The added value of investment in public realm works was questioned by some respondents but at the same time there was acknowledgement of the value of improving the aesthetics of an otherwise neglected space – *‘these type of projects have never proved to increase footfall or investment but do look nice and help the appearance of the area.’*

There are also concerns among respondents about the management of the space to ensure that it does not attract antisocial behaviour and drug and alcohol abuse.

- *‘I don't believe there is a need for it and actually feel it is somewhere that will encourage antisocial behaviour and street drinkers/drug users to congregate.’*
- *‘Good idea but would need to be well managed to ensure it is not used as an area for drinking as per current use. Would not currently walk here.’*

A total of 56 of these additional comments (11.7%) explicitly opposed the proposals on the basis of there being no need, or not being a priority or being a waste of money.

Discussions with consultees also identified the importance of the connectivity of this proposal to the rest of the city centre. The need to create safe and accessible walking and cycling routes by which to traverse the area was raised.

Comment

Whilst there is general support for the intentions of the proposed public realm works at the Town Hall and Ross Thompson sites, and support in particular for those aspects which make the river and canal more accessible to the public, the concerns raised about how such a site could be misused or its potential value lost to inclement weather are clear.

Public Realm at Cathedral and Abbey Way



The public realm works at the cathedral and Abbey Way achieved the lowest percentage of top priority rankings with just 121 respondents (12.4%) of the 976 responses to this question ranking it their highest priority among the proposed projects. The general comments and specific comments about proposed features of this element of the programme also demonstrate a lack of support for the plans. Of the 273 comments on features, 127 (46.5%) were negative and 123 (45%) expressed reservations; of 553 general comments only 63 (11.4%) were considered to be positive.

Opinion regarding the relative importance features of the proposed public realm schemes at the cathedral and Abbey Way is slightly more ambiguous than other aspects of the proposed regeneration programme. Whilst more than 50% of respondents believe that improved landscaping, lighting, etc, and improved paths and links between Abbey Way and the city centre are either *somewhat important* or *important*, less than 50% (45.4%) responded in positive terms about a new urban square. Figure 5.5 presents the results:-

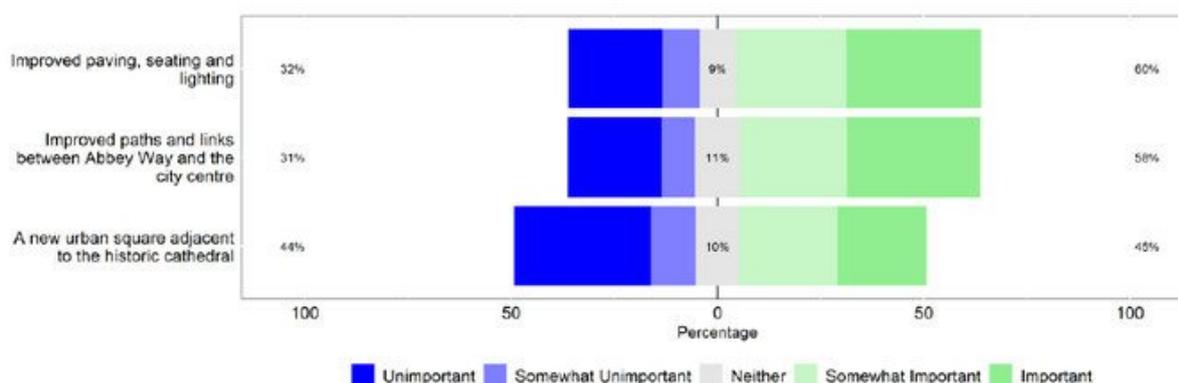


Figure 5.5: Importance of Public Realm Works – Cathedral and Abbey Way

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Just over half of all respondents (53.1%) *agree or strongly agree* that the proposals will yield the benefits outlined as shown in Figure 5.6:-

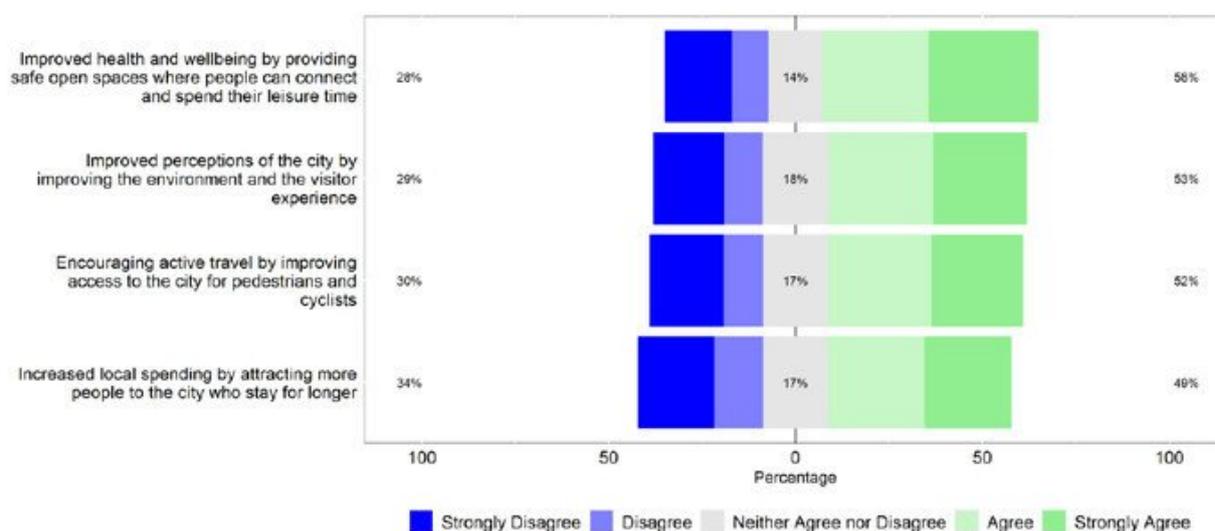


Figure 5.6: Benefits of Cathedral and Abbey Way Public Realm Works

A total of 553 people (34.9%) commented on the proposed public realm works at the cathedral, with positive comments including:-

- *'This too will add to the overall look of the city and enhance the visitor's experience.'*
- *'Excellent. I feel this part of the town has become so tired and business especially in this area has suffered greatly. This is the old centre of the city and it would be such a boost to see it regenerated.'*
- *'I think this will make a massive improvement and help improve footfall in the Hill Street area. Opening up the cathedral garden and linking it to further public amenity space is great idea. I was dismayed to see media report that interests associated with the cathedral are seeking to block it on the basis that it undermines the position of the cathedral - it actually does the opposite. I'd like to see proposals on improving the streetscape on the opposite side of the cathedral (area behind the Corn Dolly) which is completely grim.'*

However, a not inconsiderable number of respondents to this question have reservations about or objections to these proposals, including:-

- Accessibility and access to Hill Street.
- The added value of the proposals and the extent to which they would contribute to the regeneration of the city.
- The need for improved linkages with the rest of the city centre.
- The need for improvements to be sympathetic to the built heritage of the city.

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- The need for appropriate maintenance and management to prevent the space being used for antisocial behaviour or drugs/alcohol misuse.

The negative comments can be broadly categorised as follows:-

A total of 70 respondents were of the opinion that *there is no need for the proposed works and they would be a waste of money*. A further 31 respondents felt this project should not be the priority at this time, 13 of whom explicitly stated that the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park should be the priority. Concern is expressed by 53 respondents about the effect of the proposals on the cathedral, demonstrated as follows:-

- *'I feel that accessibility to the cathedral will be greatly reduced for parishioners. With an increasingly older population this would cause problems for many local people.'*
- *'It would be a tragedy to cut the car park of the cathedral. The faithful need to be able to attend services, and without enough carpark spaces, how can they reasonably be expected to attend the services in the city?'*

The impact of these proposals on parking generally is by far the greatest reason for objections (144) to this element of the regeneration proposals, as it is considered that the removal of parking spaces at the cathedral will impact not just users of the cathedral but also shoppers and visitors to Hill Street and the city.

- *'Should this project go ahead, it will result in a dramatic reduction in parking which will have a negative impact upon workers, shoppers and parishioners in the town. The location is likely to have a disproportionate impact upon Catholic worshippers attending the cathedral. I believe this represents an equality issue which should be taken into account by the Planning Service. Workers will also have to find alternative locations to park their cars in a town, where at peak times, parking spaces are already scarce. The reduction in car parking space will also reduce footfall and appears counterintuitive to the Council's stated ambition of regenerating the town. A reduction in commercial rates and a relaxation of licensing would have a greater impact in my view.'*

A number of consultees articulated ways in which some of the issues / reservations about this element of the programme could be mitigated.

- *'A new square isn't necessarily a priority here because there is one the other side of the cathedral. Open the top end of Hill Street to people walking, rolling and cycling only and you have your new public square! Connecting the streets perpendicular to Hill Street behind the cathedral would do wonders to transforming cathedral quarter. Also identify sites for infill development to complete any street edges around here!'*
- *'I think the main concern relates to parking for visitors to the cathedral & for shoppers on Hill Street. I would suggest (1) that there is a review of the costs to park*

in the area (2) that the present North Street car park is developed into a multi story car park with easy access - foot bridge or moving footpath - from there, over the dual carriage way to Hill Street (3) I would also promote more park & ride - like at Dublin Airport - on the main routes into Newry. The car is parked & a free shuttle electric bus leaving every 5 minutes for example, transfers people from the car park into Newry. This way cars are kept out of the city which will benefit the ecology / environment. '

- *'The area needs improving but not in this way. Who wants to sit looking at the back of the cathedral or the squalid townscape between a dual carriageway and road serving Mill Street, across to the rear of Supervalu? Improve pedestrian links at surface across from High Street by removing that tunnel. The road and tunnel are a barrier to pedestrian movement and not safe for anyone, let alone females walking alone. Your focus is wrong and misdirected egotism.'*
- *'I think the street O'Hagan Street should be included in this upgrade and pedestrianise it. Dolce vita could have outdoor space for eating this would be a huge attraction to Newry.'*
- *'Restore Newry - put people living in Newry.'*
- *'Including residential options within the space to prevent it being antisocial.'*
- *'Need to relook at whole city centre. It's so awkward to get around with so many buildings in poor state. Need to work to encourage businesses in. Think of antisocial behaviour these paving and seating areas could lead to.'*
- *'Similar to last proposal, I think these schemes should not be by the same. Somewhat mediocre architects. Break up the public external squares to allow smaller practices a chance to give something back to their city. Even the benches or lights would be a project for a small firm starting.'*
- *'This proposed project could be a great way to encourage active travel to our city. However, connecting our city, revising our approach to green commuting and transforming our city in light of the macro-political contexts, this project would only work my increased pedestrianisation of roads in the city centre presently accessible to vehicles. Personally, I believe this project is counterproductive unless there is more pedestrianisation to all of Hill Street, Town Hall, and the Quayside area. This would certainly improve how we look especially if we are to house employees in the public sector. I am pleased Finance Minister Conor Murphy MLA has committed to a new hub in the near future for the NICS. However, we cannot build a radical green and forward looking Newry fit to cope with the present challenges in dribs and drabs. With this, I do believe that green space particularly around public sector offices will invite more people to stay/invest/spend in our city economy. But, I do appreciate there are arguments that this should not be prioritised above other issues such as Albert Basin park. I will acknowledge I have never accessed the present Council buildings. I will always welcome investment in projects like this is they are to improve local governance and public trust in these institutions. However, whether this is a pressing priority or not is something I cannot comment on in comparison to our Parks and Recreation services which require urgent addressing.'*

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- *'This should be seen as part of a journey of education (which would take some years to be fully embraced and used by the public) - it would be only when the City Centre would have a fully vibrant 'Evening Economy' that higher numbers of members of the public would make use of this space on a frequent basis.'*
- *'Trees/urban communal gardens/apple trees eg for anyone to eat etc. Lighting again for safety by with eco credentials.'*

Comments

The prevailing sentiment in the survey comments is opposition to this element of the proposals however a lot of this negativity stems from lack of information and understanding about the plans to address the parking issues which the current proposals will create. In not presenting adequate information about parking provision to consultees, the assumption is one of a detrimental effect on the cathedral and its parishioners, and this assumption influences views on the wider proposals. The commentary in the survey also gives a sense that the cathedral, its leaders and its parishioners feel they have not been adequately or appropriately engaged with in the development of the proposals. An open dialogue between the council and the cathedral leadership team has the potential to considerably assist in addressing the reservations and objections posed by parishioners who responded to the survey.

Council Offices and Civic Hub



Of the 1,013 respondents addressing the question about council offices and the civic hub, 160 respondents (15.8%) ranked these facilities as their highest priority among the proposed projects whilst 566 respondents (55.8%) ranked it lowest of the five proposals. Of the 773 general comments received 77% were negative with a further 11% expressing reservations.

The majority of the negative comments focused on the need for new offices with 213 questioning the need, priority or value for money of the investment. A further 106 responses

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were concerned about the choice of location for the civic hub. These concerns related to both the fact that it is a proposed city centre location and the perceived impact such a development might have on the cathedral and its surroundings.

Other arguments put forward in opposition to the proposals included the growth in remote working and its impact on the need for office space (42 comments) and the availability of other existing sites which could be refurbished, or the council buildings in Downpatrick (89) which would serve the required purposes.

Parking is also raised as a concern, both in the question about features of the project and in general comments, with three different perspectives coming forward: (i) whether the current proposals provide adequate parking for the council staff who will be based there; (ii) the impact on the availability of parking in the vicinity of the cathedral to facilitate mass goers; and (iii) the potential effect of changes to parking availability on retail outlets in nearby Hill Street.

It was also noted that concerns about the potential impact on the cathedral of these proposals include not only the parking implications, but the appropriateness of having a civil wedding venue in such close proximity to the cathedral and the possible detrimental effect on the general ambiance of the cathedral should the area become busier.

Figure 5.7 illustrates that the prevailing view among survey respondents is one which perceives there to be little to no importance in building new flexible office spaces for council staff and civil servants or a new council chamber. The majority view is that all of the proposed features are *unimportant* or *somewhat unimportant*. These views are reflected in the comments on the proposal which raise a number of reservations and objections.

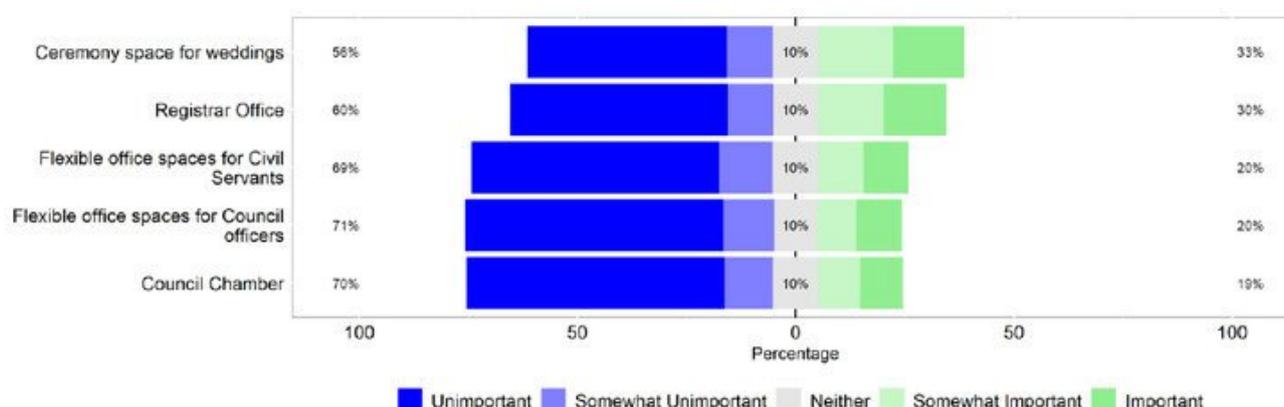


Figure 5.7: Importance of Council Offices and Civic Hub

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By contrast to the other proposals which are part of the city centre regeneration programme, the anticipated benefits of the proposals are challenged by the survey respondents, with around half of respondents *disagreeing* or *strongly disagreeing*, as demonstrated in Figure 5.8.

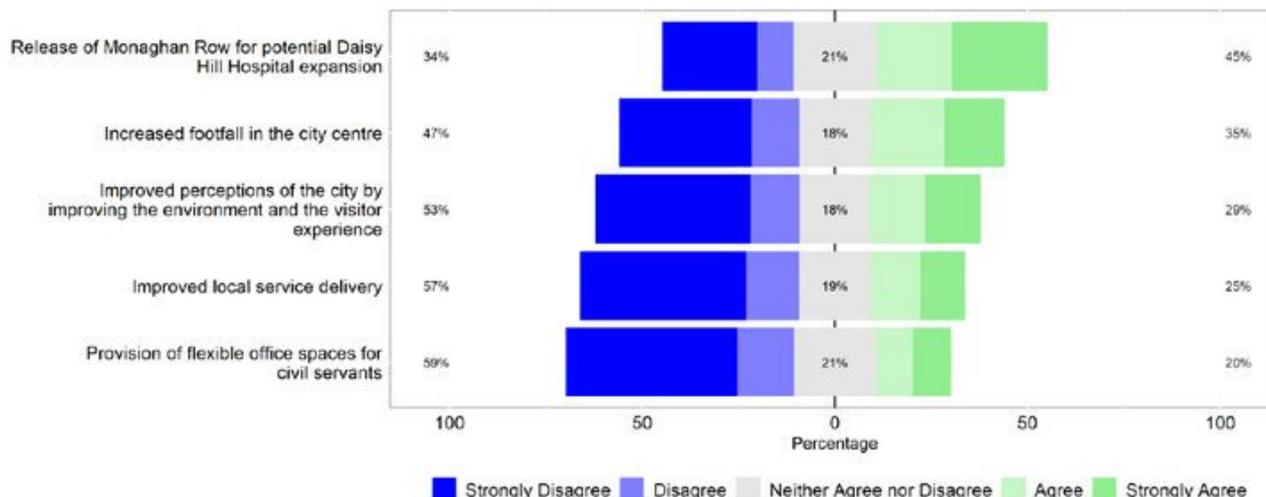


Figure 5.8: Benefits of Council Offices and Civic Hub

Where there is support for the relocation of the council offices, this is often conditional upon the benefit to Daisy Hill hospital being realised through the release of the council offices at Monaghan Row. This link is important, as going forward, the general public should be made aware of any developments, positive or negative in this regard.

A total of 773 respondents provided comment on the proposed civic hub, of which 65 (8.4%) comments were explicitly supportive of the proposals, including the following:-

- *'This is a really important strategic investment for the long term future of the city and the district. Recent reports calling for council to move away from this scheme and instead look to the private sector to provide accommodation for council officials are worrying. This is a terrible idea - short term fluctuations in the office accommodation market are irrelevant to this question. On a related matter, more should be made of the opportunity presented to the hospital by this development. The future of Daisy Hill is more secure if it has the opportunity to grow. In this context, the Southern Trust should learn from the North West and be more ambitious in terms of potential North / South co-operation. Unlocking the space at O'Hagan House is key to Daisy Hill growth.'*
- *'Modern office accommodation that is flexible for the public sector is really important in the 21st century and particularly where it could encourage jobs to Newry and reduce the need to travel to Belfast.'*
- *'Monaghan Row isn't fit for purpose for Council and Daisy Hill badly needs the space. It is very important this happens.'*

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However, it should be noted that 13 (20%) of these positive comments are premised upon the benefit to Daisy Hill.

- *'I would ONLY support this if I 100% knew that the current Council offices would be used by the hospital. If not, then I do not support this. What is so wrong with the current offices that you feel the need to build new offices?? If it ain't broke then don't fix it. Waste of taxpayers money!!'*
- *'I have no opinion on whether the council needs new offices or not, I don't work there... If they do then this is a fantastic opportunity to remove this car park desert from the city and open up the cathedral quarter as the centre of the city. A development in this location would transformed cathedral quarter and set it on the path for private investment for the next few decades... But only if done right! The development must be designed with good urbanism principles! We do not want a bohemoth building surrounded by car parks! Human scaled streets with active frontages and prioritise human mobility over vehicles! The dual carriageway is a blight on the city that cuts the city in two. This project could be the beginning of opening the city up again and linking it together. It is so important to see this not as an office block alongside a dual carriageway, but as an extension of the city centre, and it should be designed as one or more city blocks divided by streets with active fronts and a place people feel safe walking through into the city centre.'*

Negative comments about these proposals dominated this section of the survey. A sample of these comments and those expressing reservations about the proposals is provided below:-

- *'This will greatly enhance the city centre however it is essential that there is no loss of car parking and that workable solutions are put in place to address any removal of the current car parking in this area of Newry.'*
- *'Increasing yet more office space in the city centre - offices that will serve people from the surrounding countryside whilst at the same time reducing available car parking facilities seems ill thought out.'*
- *'I do not believe this is a good location for the council building. I agree that the Monaghan row building should be sold for use by hospital and that attracting civil servants to the Newry area would be fantastic but the new office should be in an out of town location with plenty of space and parking and remove some of the city centre congestion. There is very little money put back into the economy from staff at lunchtime. This is a very poor choice of location.'*
- *'I think this is fabulous. I just think it is in completely the wrong place. I think it is being shoe horned into this site which has limited capacity and limited appeal. I don't think it is important for the Council offices to be in the city centre. I think the Council offices would be much better situated out at Carnbane where there is room to park, walk and expand if required. This facility will be outgrown before it opens.'*
- *'Realise Council offices aren't fit for purpose but believe project has been managed badly from an engagement perspective and that should have been more'*

transparency on the journey. Parking MUST be addressed. Welcome regeneration and investment but no evidence of economic benefit attaching to this.'

- *'I like the idea of improving the footfall in the city centre and the obvious economic benefits that come along with it. I do question if a parking issue will arise down the line given that this isn't the only proposal involving office spaces in the city centre however as mentioned previously this could work really well in a repopulated city centre.'*
- *'Irrespective of a detailed document becoming available and setting out the proposed new Civic Hub / Council Offices, it is becoming increasingly obvious from media coverage / public comments that the proposed location is entirely wrong and not welcomed. To all intents and purposes to proceed with this Project on this site would be a major mistake. It would be seen as being Foolheartedly and flying in the face of Public Opinion. That there is a need to relocate away from the existing Council Offices is without argument and the additional space that could be acquired by the Health Trust for expansion of Daisy Hill Hospital Admin / Trust Departments would be of major benefit. The choice of location, as per the proposal, is absolutely wrong given the removal (and forced relocation) of existing Car Parking Facilities - plus the negative impact a modern building would have on the aesthetics of the City Landmark and Internationally renowned Newry Cathedral. An alternative site is required which would deliver all the desired outcomes with the backing and support of the Public.'*
- *'There is little benefit of the Council offices being relocated to there. Civic pride is more likely to be given in the arts and culture space proposed at the Town Hall. Office space such as Council offices often includes a number of dead facades which essentially mean there is a large blot on the landscape. If this was to function as a civic centre there should be more consideration of a customer hub which includes parking. There is already outstanding Council facilities provided at the Downshire Civic Centre. In the last year there has been a greater onus on home working and more office space is likely to just lie empty. For visiting stakeholders it would be preferable for there to be free onsite parking available and from the plans I can see there is no consideration in this regard. The existing facilities at Greenbank are the ideal location for this type of centre.'*
- *'Why do we need new council offices in the centre of the town? Are council workers really going to greatly help footfall and business in the town. This is not the type of business required in the town centre. They could be anywhere, especially now with greater emphasis on working remotely. Could this not be out of town or use the perfectly good, relatively new building in Downpatrick? This is an outrageously unnecessary expense. Spend it on the park (Albert Basin), the theatre and the public realm space at Ross Thompsons.'*

Comment

Given the current economic environment, and the prevailing concerns about society's gradual emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is perhaps not surprising that investment in public

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sector offices does not attract the support of a general public which does not perceive the investment as adding value. Much of the negative sentiment could be addressed through providing more information about the proposals to the wider public, such as the current conditions of the three council office sites from which it is proposed to relocate staff, the options explored and discounted in terms of location, and the extent to which the potential growth in remote working has been factored into the design.

The need to share a parking and traffic management strategy at an early stage has been articulated in regard to other elements of the regeneration programme and is particularly pertinent in regard this proposal.

Other Elements of the Regeneration Project

Office and Accommodation Investment Fund

There were 797 comments on the proposed £3million fund to stimulate private sector development of grade A office accommodation and hotel accommodation in the city centre.

Of the 197 comments which were explicitly about the office accommodation, 181 (91.9%) were negative and a further 12 had reservations. The focus of the objections can be broadly categorised as; the increase in home working will reduce the need for office space (70 comments); there is no evidence of need (41 comments); there are vacant offices or premises which could be refurbished for this purpose (38 comments).

Of the 173 comments referring explicitly to an additional hotel in the city, 45 (26.0%) respondents believed there was no need, but 79 (45.7%) respondents believed it would be a good thing for the city. Questions were raised about the idea of a 'budget' hotel with concern about who the target market might be and whether Newry has sufficient attractions to appeal to visitors to stay overnight in the city.

A total of 141 respondents are generally supportive of the fund and 165 respondents are in opposition. The roots of the opposition lie in a perceived lack of need for the fund (39) and considering it to be either a *waste of money* (17 comments), *not the priority* (16 comments) or *inappropriate use of rates/public money*.

Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park

A total of 884 comments were received in relation to the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park of which 843 (95.3%) of these comments were in favour of the development of the park, echoing and underlining the support for this development which was demonstrated in the consultation process in 2020, Many consultees consider this development to be a higher priority than any of the other proposals in the city centre regeneration programme, and indeed argue for the reallocation of funds from the regeneration programme to the building of the park.

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However, a small number (20) of respondents have a different view, describing it as *'an unnecessary burden on ratepayers now and in the future'* and querying whether it would be safe and used. Some respondents suggest that locating the civic hub and additional car parking in the Albert Basin would be a better use of this resource.

Parking and Traffic Management

The issue of parking dominated all elements of the consultation process and was raised in relation to every element in the proposed regeneration programme as well as generally. Consultees were frustrated that the issues of parking and traffic management, and a strategy to address them were not a core element of both the regeneration programme and the consultation process. It was acknowledged that the data collection process required to properly inform a car parking and traffic management strategy could not be undertaken during COVID-19 restrictions, but at the same time, consultees, and in particular business stakeholders, were of the view that evidence exists already, for example, within the business case supporting the southern relief road proposals.

The issue of parking is further exacerbated by the proposals for the new civic hub beside Newry Cathedral which will result in a reduction in parking in the area immediately adjacent to the cathedral. This element of the proposal has generated robust objections and as a result the issue permeates its way into comments on other regeneration programme elements. Concerns about parking are not without foundation, however, it is suggested the council prioritise the development and publication of a parking and traffic management strategy in order to address concerns and help to prevent the issue delaying the wider regeneration programme.

Final Comments

The majority of the 691 people who responded to the final 'any other comments' question took the opportunity to reiterate the issue which concerned them most, including:-

- 38 comments pointed to the need for engagement and transparency
- 76 comments related to parking and traffic management
- 47 respondents reiterated their objection to the civic hub and the public realm works at the cathedral
- 226 respondents reiterated the need for the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park.

However, 95 respondents took the opportunity to articulate how the regeneration programme is and should be more than just the building proposals. Comments can be broadly grouped in the following themes:-

- The need to address the poor image of other buildings in the city centre
- Cleanliness, maintenance and bins
- Safety issues, particularly for women

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- Considering increasing the pedestrianisation of the city centre
- The importance of the canal to the city centre
- The importance of the built heritage of the city centre and the need to retain it
- Support for other businesses including retailers
- Transport links including public transport and active travel
- Avoiding creating opportunities for anti-social behaviour
- Greenery
- Developing an offer, including a nighttime economy, which is attractive to visitors

6. Stakeholder Interviews & Correspondence

Introduction

A number of key national organisations with an interest in the Newry City Regeneration Project were contacted and interviewed. The organisations interviewed were:-

- Tourism NI
- Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Hospitality Ulster
- Arts Council for Northern Ireland
- Invest NI
- Department for Infrastructure (by correspondence)

The interviewees, all senior officers within their respective organisations, were sent information on the project to help their understanding and inform discussion. All those interviewed are aware of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) project and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's involvement in it; BRCD comprises the six councils of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Ards and North Down, Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Mid and East Antrim, Newry, Mourne and Down. Working alongside government and further and higher education, BRCD focuses on innovation and digital technology, transport, tourism, infrastructure, employability & skills. The Newry City Centre Regeneration project embraces all these elements. In addition to these interviews correspondence was received from Newry BID and from Newry 2020 during the course of the consultation process. Correspondence was also received from the Newpoint Players, the cathedral (in the form of a pro-forma letter signed by 27 parishioners) and several individuals; all correspondence is presented in the appendices.

These interviews and correspondence demonstrate the importance of continuing to involve stakeholder organisations and agencies as the project moves forward. Each stakeholder brings a different perspective to the project, yet all have similar objectives of creating places that are attractive to live in and do business in, and the promotion of education and skills development for the modern era.

Tourism NI

Tourism NI is the national development agency for the development and marketing of tourism in Northern Ireland. On the marketing side it has recently packaged visitor experiences in 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' which presents experiential options for domestic and international tourists. Brand ambassadors help to deliver the experiences, such as 'Whiskey on the Rocks', a guided tour on the North Coast taking in Bushmills Distillery and local fare.

On the development side, Tourism NI supports the industry with funding programmes; its revenue funding programmes disburse approximately £1million annually, including events

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such as the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival and the Maid of the Mournes event. In past years its capital funding programme has assisted projects such as the Mourne Coastal Route, the Titanic project, St Patrick's Trail.

Comment/Discussion

Newry city is not considered a tourist destination in the same way as Belfast or Derry/Londonderry which offer attractions such as the Titanic Quarter, Cathedral Quarter, the MAC (Belfast), Derry's Walls, etc. Instead Newry offers a rural and scenic setting with visitor attractions and destinations in locations beyond the city including the Mournes, Carlingford, Castlewellan Forest, Newcastle, Rostrevor. Newry city's reputation is mostly as a commercial and shopping city.

Tourism NI supports the need for infrastructural improvements in Newry city to enhance the city's appeal. Newry is well positioned on the main cross border route, however, it needs events and activities to animate spaces and buildings. In terms of buildings, can existing buildings of historic significance be converted to 'character' hotels and accommodation, both authentic and appealing? The city needs a unique selling point (USP); look at events elsewhere and seek to create experiences for the domestic and incoming tourists, eg:-

- Food & drink vendors along the canal, perhaps with a food festival.
- Music. Newry is well known for traditional music – it has hosted the County Down Fleadh Cheoil. Could Newry bid to host the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil?
- Historic walking tours, taking in Bagnall's Castle, Newry Cathedral, local pubs, music, etc.
- Choral festivals, such as the Derry International Choral Festival which has grown in popularity since its launch in 2013, using local venues including churches.

The interviewee's view is that the proposed theatre, at 200 seat (approx.) capacity with conference facilities will mostly attract local amateur dramatics companies rather than touring companies. The conference space should be flexible to allow for events. Ideally, the theatre should have a resident theatre company to be able to assist in the technical side of productions. The theatre should also have a good quality food & drinks outlet operating normal business hours to ensure it is used as widely as possible.

To summarise, event and activity programming is key to the success of any town centre, both during the day and in the evenings. Tourists buy experiences; some experiences exist such as the appreciation of historic buildings, however, even these need to be promoted in tours. Experiences, such as music and scenic areas, also need to be promoted and, in some cases, created.

NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NI Chamber) is *'a customer-focused, quality assured, business support organisation which enables members to grow both locally and internationally and drive the development of the economy. It has a large membership of over 1,000 businesses from sole traders to large multi-nationals, totalling more than 100,000 employees.'*

Comment/Discussion

Economic development is important to Newry city given its proximity to the border with Ireland. There is a good deal of cross-border activity, not least in people living in Newry and working across the border and vice versa. The North-South corridor is essential for frictionless movement of goods and people. The UK leaving the European Union has resulted in foreign nationals leaving jobs in Newry (and across Northern Ireland) to work across the border; this has created a skills shortage in cities like Newry in a range of industries. In this regard Newry may have suffered more than other cities and towns given its border proximity. Capital investment in Newry city centre may help to mitigate this, especially in hospitality and retail sectors. However, immigration and visa policies have a part to play in facilitating movement back into Northern Ireland.

NI Chamber supports the principle of city centre investment as it helps to breed a vibrant economy. The project needs to look at existing infrastructure which is a mix of car parks, retail, business, etc. Being able to access the proposed facilities/venues is important – car access/parking, park 'n ride, pedestrianisation, etc. It's important that events and activities can be readily accessed. The regeneration project ties in with arts and cultural activities; facilities on their own don't work without pro-active and creative programming. NI Chamber makes the point that city centre development cannot be planned without considering the issues of climatization, green energy, sustainability, healthy living, etc. All public projects of this nature must be fully integrated.

NI Chamber is of the opinion that the changes to the working/office environment brought about by COVID-19 are here to stay to a greater or lesser extent. Greater flexibility in working arrangements – where and when – are being demanded by employees. With the loss of workforce this year it's an employees market at the moment. The perceived benefits of having the council offices and other offices in the city centre should not be overstated, ie, not all workers will venture into city centre coffee shops, cafes, retail outlets, etc during breaks.

NI Chamber feels the theatre capacity – approximately 200 – will seriously constrain the theatre's ability to promote a vibrant arts and conference programme. Might the theatre become a white elephant? If social distancing becomes the norm, even in a reduced way, performance and conference/exhibition spaces will need to be bigger, not smaller.

Hospitality Ulster

Hospitality Ulster represents the hospitality industry in Northern Ireland, where the hospitality industry ‘sustains 60,000 jobs and has a higher contribution to GDP than agriculture.’ Its role is to advocate on behalf of the industry with government on a wide range of issues, for example, during the COVID-19 lockdown it has lobbied for greater relaxation of restrictions.

Comment/Discussion

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic towns and cities have to re-build differently, with a greater focus on working and living in city centres. Leisure and hospitality is a key driver in city centre regeneration and it must be recognised that hospitality sells experiences. City centres should offer a mix of activities, embracing commercial, health services (eg, medical centres), social services (eg, retirement homes), leisure and more. The concept is to create an *ecosystem* of offerings that are attractive to families. Ikea stores are a good example of a family day out, presenting a retail experience alongside food, creche, soft play, meeting points, etc.

Thinking of the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park, it has to fully integrate with the city centre to make it feel part of the city, supplementing and complementing the city centre offering, with outlets for crafts, food & drinks, things to do. In this way the City Park can be an integral part of the city centre ecosystem.

The night-time economy in city centres is market-driven. A night-time economy can only be achieved on a scale that reflects the local demographic; most towns cannot support a night-time economy, however, Newry’s demographic and its location may support a growth in its night-time economy; a good daytime hospitality scene will morph into a busy night-time economy if the demographic supports it. The city centre regeneration project should ensure buildings and services are of a high quality, and family-friendly where appropriate. Offers need to be attractive to people finishing work to encourage them to stay in the city centre; in this regard a busy theatre programme and restaurants/cafes remaining open are essential. The council should consider what sort of shops it wants to encourage in the city centre and even pump prime new ideas that build on existing quality. For example, a successful string of butchers shops in north Antrim is set to exploit their reputation for quality products and service by opening a first floor restaurant in one of their shops – quality supports diversification.

Hospitality Ulster is of the opinion that remote/flexible working has a role in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is definitely a place for office spaces in a city centre but perhaps not in the conventional ‘*this is my desk/office*’ way, rather that many staff will *book* a desk for certain days, with other staff booking the same desk on other days. This approach will help inform the number of staff that will be *in the office* on any given day and, therefore, the capacity needed for an office development. However, it’s too early to be clear how large office-based organisations will approach the post-COVID-19 era in terms of working

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arrangements. In considering city centre office accommodation, the council should not compete with the local hospitality sector, neither should they offer free parking for staff. Hospitality Ulster emphasises that city centre rates don't take into account the value of the retail operation; this should be addressed.

Arts Council for Northern Ireland

The Arts Council NI *'is the development agency for the arts in NI; we are the main support for artists and arts organisations, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through exchequer and lottery funds.'*

Comment/Discussion

The proposal for the theatre, with approximately 200 seats mainly allows for small-scale performances. It's very important to have a vibrant theatre *culture*, meaning that the facility must be extensively programmed, attractive to those who perform and those who view performances. Programming must create an appetite for live theatre and cater for a broad range of interests, from classical to popular and all ages. Small theatres, such as the one proposed for Newry, will serve local drama groups very well. It's essential that the theatre complements the programme in the adjacent Town Hall (capacity 460 seats). The proposed theatre can create an arts hub for performance, exhibitions, education and training.

Programming is the key to the success of the arts hub. The adjacent facilities must work together to present performances, exhibitions, classes (music, art, drama, etc). They must find out what people in the Newry area want and need in terms of the arts. This requires professional and experienced arts personnel to research and understand what's currently on offer across the area and identify gaps and opportunities. Building the theatre and simply responding to booking requests would be very wasteful of the arts facilities and the opportunity to create an arts hub. It's worth having a look at other theatres and arts centres, such as the Island Arts Centre (Lisburn), the Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre (Armagh), the Riverside Theatre (Coleraine), the Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre (Limavady) and others to get a sense of how theatres can promote the arts on all levels.

The theatre/arts hub should be fully accessible by the community and be regarded as part of city life. It should link with schools, colleges and community groups; the opportunity for training in the technical side of the arts is considerable.

Invest NI

This interview was with Invest NIs Regional Manager (Southern Region). The Southern Region office is in Drumalane Mill in Newry. Invest NI supports business start-ups, both incoming (foreign) and domestic businesses. It works with councils, chambers of trade, community planning, local economic development forums, etc. Its interest is in business which

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contributes to/adds value to the economy, eg, engineering, export, knowledge based industries such as ICT, financial services, call centre services, job promotion, innovation.

Comment/Discussion

Invest NI is supportive of any initiative that will help to stimulate the economy. Newry city centre has issues with roads, parking and general vehicle congestion, exacerbated by lorries travelling to/from Warrenpoint Port through the city to/from the Newry Bypass. City centres have to be vibrant and they benefit from having knowledge-based (office-type) businesses, employing people who may make use of city centre retail and hospitality outlets during the working day and after work. City centres have to be attractive and animated places in order to attract people and businesses; this is achieved, in part, through public realm works that make city centres as green and pleasant as possible. Industrial estates are not the right place for knowledge-based businesses.

Newry has attracted some knowledge-based businesses to Grade A-type office accommodation including Stat Sports, PKF-FPM Accountants, Invest NI, First Derivatives and Crash Services. However, in a recent Invest NI scheme there were no applications from the private sector for Grade A office accommodation in Newry city – Newry is well served by hot desk/flexi space office accommodation, eg, Granite House, operated commercially by the private sector, which leads to a view that the private sector should be allowed to continue driving this way of working forward. There is an opinion that the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to future growth in this market although it's perhaps too early to accurately forecast this trend, eg, will people just continue working from home? Invest NI's best guess is that around 60% of previously used desk/office space will be needed in the future as people and businesses mix and match office and non-office working.

Businesses looking for city-based locations look for three elements; (i) people (with appropriate skills); (ii) Grade A office accommodation; (iii) a cost-competitive environment. Offices need to be upmarket and fully serviced with SMART connections. However, the new model for knowledge-based businesses could be a central office hub for a small number of staff serving a much larger cohort of staff spread across the country.

Department for Infrastructure

DfI's Transport Planning and Modelling Unit responded to the consultant's request, providing the recently published 'Local Transport Study' (LTS) for the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area. The study, which includes significant components relating to Newry city is part of a suite of transport plans being produced by DfI for the period 2020-2035. The purpose of the LTS is to '*set out an objective evidence-based assessment in relation to current and future transport issues.*' It presents illustrative measures for active travel, public transport and roads. The following key points relate to the city centre regeneration project:-

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- Newry has a total of 4,490 public parking spaces, of which 3,267 are off-street comprising 879 free and 2,388 pay. Of the 1,223 on-street parking spaces, 792 are free and 431 pay. A total of 501 on-street spaces have day time restrictions and 678 are unrestricted. The LTS reports that *'the publicly owned car parks are distributed throughout the town centre and can be readily accessed from the radial routes. Public parking arranged at the edge of town convenient to the key radial routes could reduce traffic congestion at the key junctions and encourage onward travel by walking and cycling.'*
- The LTS advises that, in the context of the 'New Approach' all council areas should be developed in such a way that residents have non-driving options to access key services. All modes of transport are expected to play their part moving forward. So, for example, public transport will focus on getting people to/from urban centres whilst active travel will look at options for short journeys that help reduce the use of cars. The New Approach is seen to contribute to a range of regional and local strategies.

Interestingly one of the objectives within LTS is to *'to deliver high quality public realm in Newry (and other towns within the district) with reduced vehicle dominance, to make towns attractive places to live and work and to improve safety for active travel modes.'* This objective presents opportunities for partner working between the council and DfI. Transport options coming out of the LTS pertaining to town/city centres include:-

- Town centre parking strategies that reduce circulating traffic searching for parking spaces and provide for demand for long and short stay parking at locations that reduce town centre congestion.
- Priority to be given to pedestrians in moving to and around town centre streets.

It's clear that DfI's Local Transport Study is a precursor to the preparation of a Newry city centre strategy for transport, including parking, travelling to/from the city centre, pedestrian movement. It would be expected that DfI will liaise closely with the council in the preparation of this strategy.

Newry BID

Newry BID engaged in a consultation workshop for local businesses; BID members requested that a formal response to the consultation process be submitted by Newry BID. The key points from their letter are summarised as follows:-

- There is universal support for the regeneration of Newry city centre across Newry BID members. Newry BID recognises the need for fit for purpose council offices and to make Newry a more attractive city to visit, not least by developing the evening/night-time economy.

- Whilst noting that a traffic management strategy has been delayed by COVID-19 restrictions, and further noting concern that this delay may impact on the regeneration programme moving forward, Newry BID expresses concern, previously documented, regards the *'removal and loss of over 250 car parking spaces with no plans for their replacement.'*
- The proposed public realm works are welcomed, however, Newry BID members place on record *'the need to prioritise Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park as the jewel in the crown of the regeneration proposals in line with many other cities who are publicly endorsing and prioritising comparable Parklands and Greenway projects.'*
- Again, whilst welcoming the proposed redevelopment of the arts centre, concern is expressed that the theatre's seating capacity, at 260 seats, will *'result in the economic advantages the BID membership is expecting Newry to gain from a £15 million investment not being realised.'*

Newry BID poses a series of questions to the council, covering parking; the civic centre; the arts/conference centre; capital and revenue costs. The members' feedback is summed up by stating *'a desire to see investment in Newry and that the investment is aligned with the consultation process.'*

Newry 2020

Newry 2020 is a *'grassroots voluntary community organisation, established in early 2014, with the goal of making Newry a better place for residents and visitors.'* Newry 2020 is a key stakeholder, on behalf of the Newry community, in the Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park project, evidenced in the community consultation exercise and design proposals it put forward for the park in 2014/2015. Correspondence from Newry 2020 briefly addresses points relating to the survey, the intention being to make a fuller response at a later stage. The points are summarised as follows:-

- The City Park must be the NUMBER ONE PRIORITY.
- A greenway linking the park to the city centre between the river and the canal is a *must*.
- Priorities and budgets for the project elements benefiting from the Belfast Region City Deal should be reviewed to ensure they reflect the community's needs.
- Transparency in the council's decision-making process relating to the project *'is crucial.'*

Other Correspondence

Several other items of correspondence in relation to the city centre regeneration project were received. The Newpoint Players letter requested an extension to the consultation period; a

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pro-forma letter, signed by 27 cathedral parishioners asked that *'the new council offices be relocated to a more suitable site, so that the cathedral parishioners have a parking area near the cathedral.'* The remaining letters variously expressed concern with; the potential loss of parking at the cathedral; Albert Basin 15 Acre City Park being a priority; the proposals for the theatre; traffic management.

7. Equality Impact and Rural Proofing

Equality of Opportunity, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public bodies in Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:-

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependents and persons without

In addition, The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 imposes a statutory duty on public bodies to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services.

Survey respondents were asked; *'If you feel there are equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs implications associated with the Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme, please tell us more.'* It should be noted that this question does not go as far in exploring the potential implications as either an equality impact assessment or a rural proofing exercise might do. However, the responses do point to aspects of the plans which merit further attention from an equality perspective. A workshop specifically targeting representative regional groups for each of the Section 75 categories listed above was organised as part of the consultation process, however, those organisations which wished to comment chose to respond to the online survey in lieu of attending the workshop.

A total of 262 respondents addressed this question, of which 39 responded *no, none or not applicable*. The majority of comments were general in nature and did not relate to specific Section 75 categories or to the implications of these proposals for rural residents. Worthy of note however is the fact that among these more general comments there is a call for better engagement to reinvigorate relationships between stakeholders such as local businesses and the council, and the fact that almost 10% of respondents (24) felt the proposals would lead to an increase in cross border travel and trade.

Section 75

A total of 12 responses felt there was a potential adverse impact related to age. In the main these comments were about older people and related to the removal of parking at the cathedral which is used by this age group to access services at the cathedral and the city centre. However, reference was also made to meeting the needs of children and young people through the proposals.

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A total of 10 responses identified concerns about an adverse impact on the basis of religion, again related to the proposed reduction in parking availability at the cathedral and the impact of this on people's ability to worship.

One respondent raised concerns about the impact of a reduction in parking availability on those with young dependents and a further two respondents were concerned about the impact on those with a disability.

Rural Needs

There were 30 comments about the implications for rural residents which related to the need for access to parking (7 comments), the accessibility of the city to rural residents (7 comments) and the need to invest in towns and villages as well as the city centre (16 comments).

More generally, but relating to addressing rural need, 23 people (10% of the responses to this question) raised concern about the equality implications of such sizeable investment in Newry which is not matched elsewhere in the more rural areas of the district.

An important point raised in relation rural residents is about public transport and its limitations in accessing Newry. Where rural residents do not have access to public transport on a frequent basis their journey to the city will be by car thereby requiring access to adequate parking.

END OF DOCUMENT

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

Thursday 13 May 2021

	<p>Regeneration is a good idea but is this regeneration? Would like to see 2012 plan inc Greenway – turn to face green spaces. Albert Basin must be kept viable for boats & yachts into Basin.</p>
	<p>Good idea – ribbon of the canal through to Portadown and through the city makes any water activities very difficult. Need to animate the canal. Extend the park through the town. These projects are the ‘anchor tenants’. Traffic strategy is very important. North Street Flats car parking is ugly area.</p> <p>Specific interest with new theatre – must have access for staging, etc. Need link between Town Hall & Arts Centre. How does 200+ seater theatre compare to others – seems small – 200+ is very small. Won’t put us on the circuit for bigger productions. A theatre experience ending at 10.00pm/10.30pm needs car parking nearby, especially with Town Hall & Arts Centre working together. Air quality monitor blocks view of Any though of weir further down the river to raise water level.</p> <p>Number of private hotel proposals in recent years. Look to re-purpose link from 1st Derivatives (ex HE offices) to create 2nd Greenway.</p> <p>No recognition of the two waterways resource.</p>
	<p>Traffic and congestion is a particular challenge. Need to ‘green’ the city. The programme is a ‘headline’ programme that hopes for spin-off.</p> <p>Any consideration of existing offices in city? – they’re not up to standard. Need a scheme to encourage imp. Any consideration of moving across the river to use both sides of the river?</p> <p>Will the project enliven the city for residents? What will there be for parking in the city?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town Hall holds 420/450 but productions still not coming to the town. We envisaged 540/550 seats. ▪ Toners Hotel has got planning permission on Hill Street. ▪ Issues with Cathedral garden – removing 300 parking spaces. ▪ Weir – Dfl says it’s too expensive – why could council not? ▪ This is driven by need for council offices – followed by theatre and public spaces. ▪ More questions than answers. Parking needs to be close to theatre. ▪ Spent £1.13m already but consultation should have been 5 years ago. ▪ Transparency is non-existent. Haven’t dealt with public until now. ▪ These ideas have been here for many years. Council is driving to get this across the line. ▪ Belfast City Deal plans <i>can</i> be adjusted. ▪ Already have a Conference Centre(s) ▪ Increased football doesn’t necessarily increase spend, eg, public offices will not increase spend.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new council offices site is not ideal.

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

Wednesday 14 April 2021

	Surprised that traffic strategy is not coming until later
	Traffic strategy should not be separate from this consultation, ie, capital projects must be integrated with traffic/parking scheme.
	Put up the maps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is council going back to having 2 council chambers, one in Downpatrick, on in Newry. Why is there a need for a Council Chamber in Newry? ▪ Canal – oldest built canal in Ireland. Tom assumed canal would have been fully re-opened – need to remove low concrete bridges. Why has this not been looked at? Can't even canoe below concrete bridges.
	Counter-intuitive to have separate traffic consultation. should be included in main consultation. Shouldn't remove multi-storey beside cathedral.
	No of parking spaces should be retained or increased.
	2 x public realm projects should be one.
	All bits are inter-dependent.
	The programme is ensuring that the Albert Basin City Park will not be needed.
	Complete lack of trust in the council – where was consultation on need for each element inc need for office space. Need to reconsider whole thing. COVID has changed need.
	Dec 14 – old council decided they needed a new council building on site of multi-storey. Nov 17 – 23 sites → 4 → back of Cathedral.
	£25m for council building £14.7m in Theatre/£11m Civic Centre – Council funds Plus 8m City Deal Clarification on funding? (Alison gave clarification on pots of money) Is Monaghan Row definitely not fit for purpose? Has it been considered to re-build on existing site. The square is beside the civic hub not the Cathedral. Council has to contend with perception on its performance.
	Council has to show funding to get City Deal funding.
	Good thing to have civil service in Newry. Clarity on plans to extend Daisy Hill to make it better. Clarity on parts of private sector investing in office space right now, eg, All State, PW Santander. What negotiations have taken place?

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

	Has any civil service dept indicated interest?
	Yes – commitment to regional hubs
	Council needs to be clear about health services intention
	Hospital extension is being used as a stick to beat this forward.
	If Daisy Hill extends into Monaghan Row, great. Needs work on restoring existing old buildings in centre of town, ie, heritage and built environment.
	Plan B (if civic centre doesn't work out) may include refurbishing existing buildings. Council has looked at a weir – Rivers Agency holding it up due to expense.
	Part of our heritage is our nature, eg, nature corridors. Can it be connected to the Towpath? Newry's Biodiversity Action Plan – don't hear much about it. Environmental impacts needs to be assessed.
	Need to look at environmental impact on each element. The 2 public realms – still at a disadvantage as we don't have a traffic plan. Need to look at large scale pedestrianisation.
	No evidence that Green Space will increase footfall For a 5 year project Need multi-storey for 700/800 cars at £16m to replace lost spaces. Need to look at parking first! Council under pressure because of City Deal timeline. Proper theatre will ignite a night-time economy. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City Park 2. Theatre There are solutions – eg, cathedral car park could be multi-use for events.
	When will consultation on traffic take place.

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Thursday 22 April 2021

	Why is City Park not part of this consultation?
	City Park is not part of business case for city centre.
	Survey does include the park so it's contradictory to include the park in the survey. What decisions can be affected by this consultation?
	People are frustrated that the City Park has been 'parked' in the face of discussions about more office space.
	Where is Outline BC for us to view?
	Parking doesn't work. Meter-based parking for on-street is restrictive.
	Newry has controlled no parking zone. Looking to get this changed under Section 75.
	Where will council/civil service people park?
	Seems that council building will be first then parking. Council has ignored solutions of strategically placed multi-storey parking over decades. This consultation has ignored people's views. Trying to bot on consultation to pre-determined approach.
	Hill Street should be for families. Make it more accessible for everyone – creative places. Hill Street is presently a car park!
	There are no cycle paths in the city – even on Warrenpoint Road cycle paths are not maintained.
	Council was warned in 2016 not to put council offices where they are going to go. This is not the people's plan.
	Theatre originally an 'innovation' but now no connection with Town Hall. Was to be 400/500, now just 200+. It won't change the programme esp as Armagh has more seats. It's a disappointment.
	Access link to theatre is very poor.
	It won't reinvigorate that end of town.
	200+ seats is really not big enough. Need to be able to compete with Armagh, Newtownabbey, etc. Need to have a restaurant in the theatre. Needs a fly tower.
	It won't expand the audience.

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	Original plan was for 700 seats. It's down to money. The 2 things that people want are the park and the theatre.
	Can the council offices not be re-designed?
	Will there be less need for offices in the future? Why do council offices have to be in middle of town.
	Council does not need new offices – it's vanity!
	Why block up Newry with more traffic by council staff?
	Council offices are not regenerate so no City Deal funding.
	No focus on the history. Offices do not fit in the package.
	Removal of car parking spaces don't fit either.
	Built heritage is interesting.
	Lived here for 4 years – hope to bring artists to Newry (America, etc). Many beautiful buildings – some being pulled down. Tourists don't want to come to a city with no history. Easiest place to start is the Market.
	So many buildings are empty – what about rates relief for start-ups. Need to put people in the buildings.
	So expensive to pay rates in city centre. I'm an artist and have to work from home.
	History and heritage is a major issue – council isn't listening <i>even</i> recent attempts to close down Ship Canal. Use a historic building for new council building.
	Good example – Ballybot House – of old buildings.
	Council will say they have been transparent but their communication is very poor. Waterway could be used much better. Need outdoor covered performance areas.
	There is Plan B for offices. Cafes & restaurants would love to set out tables and chairs but red tape prevents.
	Support idea to use offices at Newry market as a creative hub.
	We need a way to get through red tape for small local businesses – artisanal. What are plans for electric plug-in cars?
	Questions need for a budget hotel? Should aim higher than a 'budget' hotel. Newry lacks nice restaurants. A nice hotel would bring that.

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

	Big issue is <i>rates</i> – too expensive for small businesses.
	Off with their heads! Idea of Greenway through the town is missing – connectivity between the river and the canal.

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

Thursday 27 April 2021

	<p>£15m on office space Why not through PFI Public realm schemes to link to Albert Basin No. joined Which takes precedent?</p>
	<p>If you support Albert Basin Civic hub – very positive development – major asset Contributing to day-time economy Don't agree with need for car park behind cathedral. Anchors employment Support idea of civil service hub Link through to Hill St very good Theatre – design & spec needs to accommodate touring companies, eg, gear, lifts, etc. Shouldn't be driven by capacity? Mac, Lyric, Gate, Abbey</p>
	<p>Previous City Centre Manager Cost, ROI – on theatre?, sustainability Support evening economy Re-purpose city centre What is ROInvest on theatre? Implication for rates How recent & relevant are plans for office accommodation for Council and Civil Service Sensible & sustainable Smarter decisions</p>
	<p>Everyone supports regeneration Needs larger capacity in theatre Support relocation of council offices but site is not correct site How long will we have to wait? Not less than 5 years Cathedral being treated with contempt * frustration with time factor Solutions to deliver in less time Backed wrong horse in BCD – 10 Shouldn't remove parking from the city Run a Plan B</p>
	<p>Priorities are up the left. Of all the developments what will benefit people quickly? Albert Basin City Park</p>
	<p>Don't lose City Deal money</p>
	<p>Wrong site for council offices</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theatre – was 300+ now 200+. Seems a lot of money for very little extra capacity. Should be more. ▪ City Centre linkage. Greenway to Canal. ▪ Abbey Way public realm – not convinced of location – beside busy & noisy road.

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who is talking from the Trust. Daisy Hill likely to move elsewhere ▪ What level are those 2004 + 2011 Master Plan ▪ Car park at North St Flats – council building there?
	<p>(member of Newry Cathedral) Proud of expertise in the town through this discussion. * Cathedral is not against (in favour of the project’s intention but not siting of council offices) the project. Parking is an issue close to cathedral – needed for big cathedral events Use of Rose Park for access to Cathedral is good. * Ugly town centre * Lack of joined up thinking and clear connections esp with City Park What impact will new residential home have – how will needs of residents be accommodated. * need more holistic picture Cathedral has an architectural heritage to be protected. Spiritual & cultural heritage important Preserve, conserve, uphold Process is not collaborative. Not inclusive enough</p>
	<p>Belfast-based civil servant. Would not use this office when in Newry – would still work from home. Location of car park beside Cathedral is wrong for young mother.</p>
	<p>No-one in council is tying in all the projects 2004 Master Plan says it all</p>
	<p>Newry Canal is biggest city resource.</p>
	<p>This is being imposed – lack of consultation Must be done properly</p>
	<p>Canal is a local jewel We don’t know about connectivity</p>

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Tuesday 13 April 2021 (BID members)

If park is displaced, it will be replaced
Issue of parking – abysmal
There is no parking plan at the minute – nothing down on paper. 318/450 spaces. Major loss of parking – nothing to replace it at moment.
Parking has been kicked about for years for city centre.
Currently 550 seats, down to 200 – disappointed.
To see so few seats Be clear about total seating Should be 350/400 plus Theatre space should be comparable to Armagh Should be future-proofed
Not a public consultation. Only heard recently. No solid information on which to consult until very recently. This is to try to paper-over consultation – cynical – to try to get support for City Deal. We are coming here tonight with little preparation. We can't give an informed response. Why are we building offices?
We understand there has been consultation – City Deal signed 2019. People do not feel well enough informed.
Spent 18 months trying to get evidence of consultation, but got nothing. It isn't clear that public have enough information.
No evidence 186 engagements but no consultations. Hasn't been choice of sites/options.
Why is office space being promoted? Abundance of office space not let in city centre. What about housing? Only being promoted by Newry BID. Nothing about evening vibrancy or city centre housing or restaurants/bars/night time activity. Need to have people in the city centre. Town dies at 6.00pm.
Information coming from Council is misleading – only £8m from City Deal. Perception is that City Deal is paying for a lot more than £8 million. Should be upfront about council's inputs financially.
Foreign Direct Investment 1. Profits go out of town 2. Council has kept us in the dark.

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

No need for Conference Facilities – hotels, etc already.
North Street flats/area – decision made without
Has the plan taken on the post-COVID era, ie, <i>shopping and night-time economy</i> essential. Why is it necessary to bring council offices into centre.
Picture of people living and shopping in town centre as in the past. Newry doesn't have amenities.
Focusing on more people in city centre – need something worthwhile to do – need to consult with arts groups about what size of halls etc is needed. Need a purpose to come into city centre. Most good city centres have independent shops. How do we encourage people to use city centre throughout the day?
Nov 17 – 1,000 seater/700 minimum by previous CEO What has happened to theatre numbers? Need 400-600 to make it worth promoters while. Theatre was to have been catalyst, eg, Hole in the Wall Gang everywhere but Newry. Sept 19 – talked about 500.
Lack of consultation, lack of information. Idea of
Council is about to sign up to City Deal which will determine city centre. Have to make city centre a nice place.
Need to make city centre an experience, eg, theatre, shops, restaurants. Don't? eg, idea of weir fell – Lagan Weir worked!
Don't need council offices in city centre Parking is horrendous – parking no 1! No consultation to date.
World won't rely on office spaces much. Not enough in city to appeal to people. Use waterways much more Agree with need for parking
Agree with David's points.
Will there be a resume of this evening. Opray Amuire – no connection
No economic impact assessment on loss of parking. Certain councillors want to drive this through. No one has knocked on Hill Street doors and asked. There will be no choice. CBRE consultation views have not been taken on board.
How do you ensure Newry is developed into a city of the region? What will we have to celebrate 20 yrs of Newry as a city (May 2022). Everyone supports a vision to develop the area. Should design short, medium, long term.

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City Deal – 5m → open spaces (beside dual carriageway in unattractive part of Newry). 3m → offices

2nd area – roar of traffic

Better places to spend £5 million

3. Theatre
4. Public spaces

Worry is opportunity is being missed. First derivatives were going to fund apartments on top floors. Planning needs to be more creative.

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Newry Cathedral

Thursday 22 April 2021

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can't separate traffic strategy from the Regeneration project. Should be in tandem <i>or</i> in advance. 2. Lack of concrete <i>fact</i> – hope, eg, on people coming to. No <i>facts</i> to back up need for Grad A office space post-COVID. Need, demand should be post-COVID-19 – not factual. Information presented as facts is red herrings, not facts. Adjectives – hope, potential. Removal of parking space is a serious concern.
	Lack of feedback from council is concerning even back to 2011 plan talking about parking. Are there more detailed plans/visualisations.
	The dream is exciting but not at the expense of the cathedral. Need to know there is a definite plan for parking. Parishioners not anti-regeneration but not at expense of cathedral.
	Cathedral wants to see regeneration of the city centre – economic, environment, people. More people using city centre means more people dropping into cathedral. These plans are about 6 years old. Commercial office developers won't invest. Need night-time economy – look first at 1 st floor housing in centre – space for public space best located in City Park – behind cathedral is not the right location. Haven't seen enough detail. Church owns the space behind the cathedral. Balance needs to be about people.
	Loss of parking is very serious. Palpable anger at council. 200 yrs old in 2029. Council should look elsewhere for council offices. Have had 3 meetings with council.
	Hill St trader and member of Parish Council. Since March 2020 in my area 4 small businesses have closed. How have the 230 public sector staff been assessed for parking. Is a cycling lane proposed for Hill Street – if so this would lose more parking space. Council's answer to parking is vague in yesterday's paper. Where would parking be relocated?
	Thanks for the opportunity. Parish Council is behind the regeneration. Nothing about cultural heritage in objectives. One can't examine these proposals without wider proposals, eg, housing developments in the city – needs to be responsible development of residential accommodation to prevent 'sink' housing. Council needs to do some thinking on housing. Need to think about complementarity of projects – take on board climate and culture in design. What cultural shift does the Council anticipate to prevent anti-social behaviour. Not always a happy collaboration between cathedral and nearby proposals. We have only been given vague aspirations. We must secure access of worshippers to the cathedral. Very dangerous to travel into and around Newry on a bike. COVID and Brexit require careful consideration. Newry Cathedral Parish is biggest urban parish in Ireland. Need to move from consultation to collaboration to seek consensus. We need more detail.

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

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	Council building would hide the cathedral coming from the south – where is environmental impact assessment? One of biggest issues is parking during day, eg, funerals – no needs analysis done on parking needs in Hill Street. Shouldn't look at projects in isolation. No proper needs analysis done on open space.
	When did the council ever ask cathedral – what is your need? Elected members and officers should be here at this meeting.
	Council hasn't addressed parking concerns.
	Council should be here.
	Great deal of frustration that concerns over parking.
	Council has spent over £1million on this with no consultation until now. This is a watershed moment for the council. Otium is here by default not by design. Lack of respect.
	Otium should read the Newry Reporter.
	We want to see Newry cityscape coming into modern era. Loads of plans for city improvements but nothing delivered. Council in 2011 – enabling cathedral to have garden as a place of worship. Need proper involvement of the people.
	We welcome the opportunity to improve the condition of Newry. Vision is wonderful but so many imponderables and unanswered questions. The elements are not being connected. Engagement with council to date is unsatisfactory. Big message – we would like to get to a point where we can sup???
	Council requested that meetings with cathedral would be kept confidential.
	Don't lose sight of spiritual aspect of cathedral and the need for faith and history. Cathedral feels slighted (Diocese of Dromore).
	Appraise needs of the church and every bit of the jigsaw.
	Moving forward openness and transparency are key elements.

Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Public Consultation

Tony Morrison and Alison Keenan
Otium Leisure Consultancy



Introduction

- ▶ Newry Mourne and Down District Council has commissioned Otium Leisure Consultancy to consult with people in the district about its proposals for regeneration of Newry City Centre.
- ▶ Newry is the district's city, a strategic gateway between Belfast and Dublin. It is a key investment location to stimulate economic growth and provide new and better employment opportunities.
- ▶ The city centre regeneration programme aims to create an active city centre and to attract visitors to an all day economy.
- ▶ Shops alone cannot guarantee a healthy high street. To be relevant, city centres need to offer a mix of uses such as entertainment, housing, leisure, arts and culture and office spaces.
- ▶ The planned regeneration programme represents an overall investment in the city centre of £34m - £26m from the Council and £8m from Belfast Region City Deal



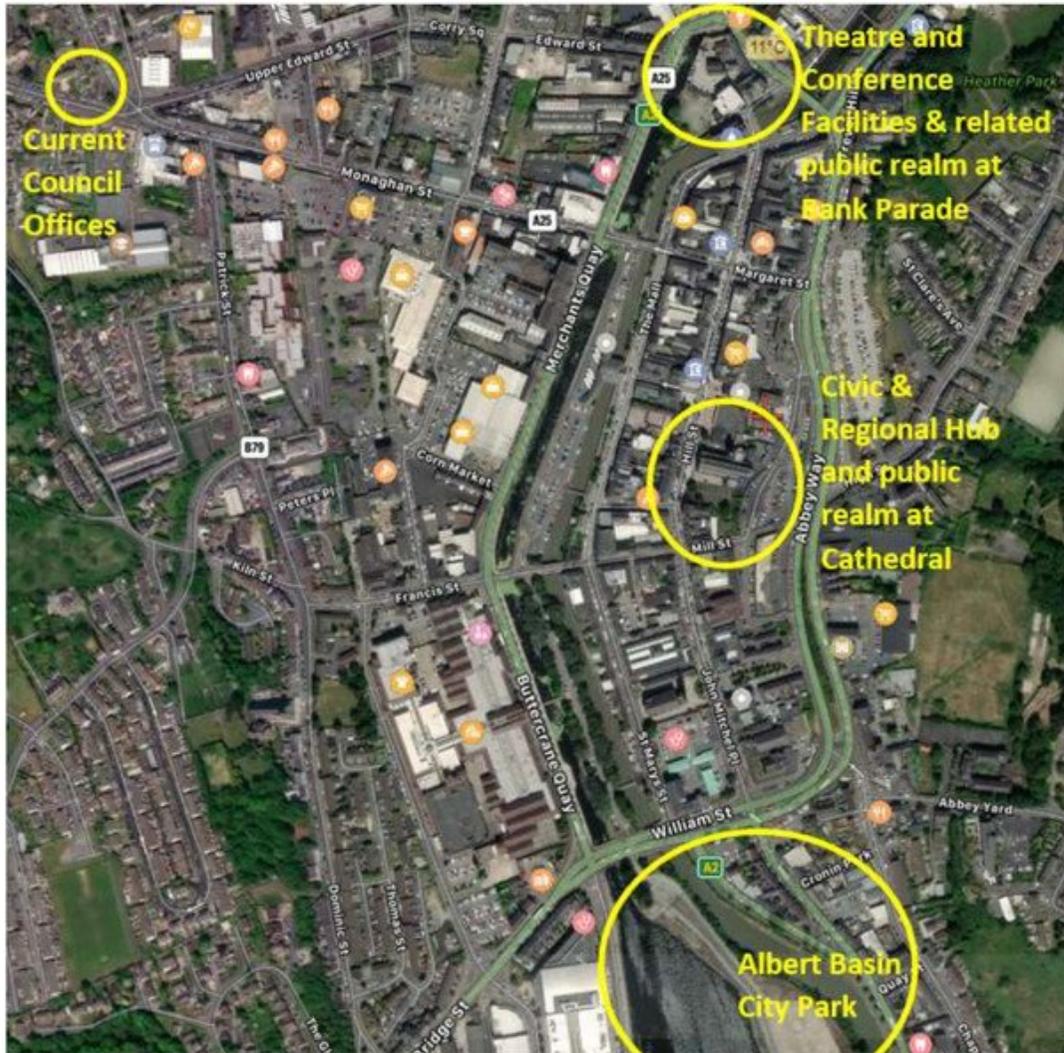
The Projects within the Regeneration Programme

- New theatre with 200+ seats and Conference facilities. The building will also include a digital innovation hub.
- Paving, seating, lighting and landscaping at Bank Parade including a new riverside square and performance space on the Ross Thompson site
- Paving, seating, landscaping and lighting at Abbey Way, including a new public square
- Relocation of the Council offices and Council chamber to a new build in the city centre which will include desk space for other public sector employees
- Funding to stimulate/ encourage private sector development of additional office space

Also part of the programme but not currently being consulted upon

- A traffic, transport and car parking strategy investigating measures that will promote active and more sustainable travel, and provision of appropriate parking within the city core
- The Albert Basin City Park

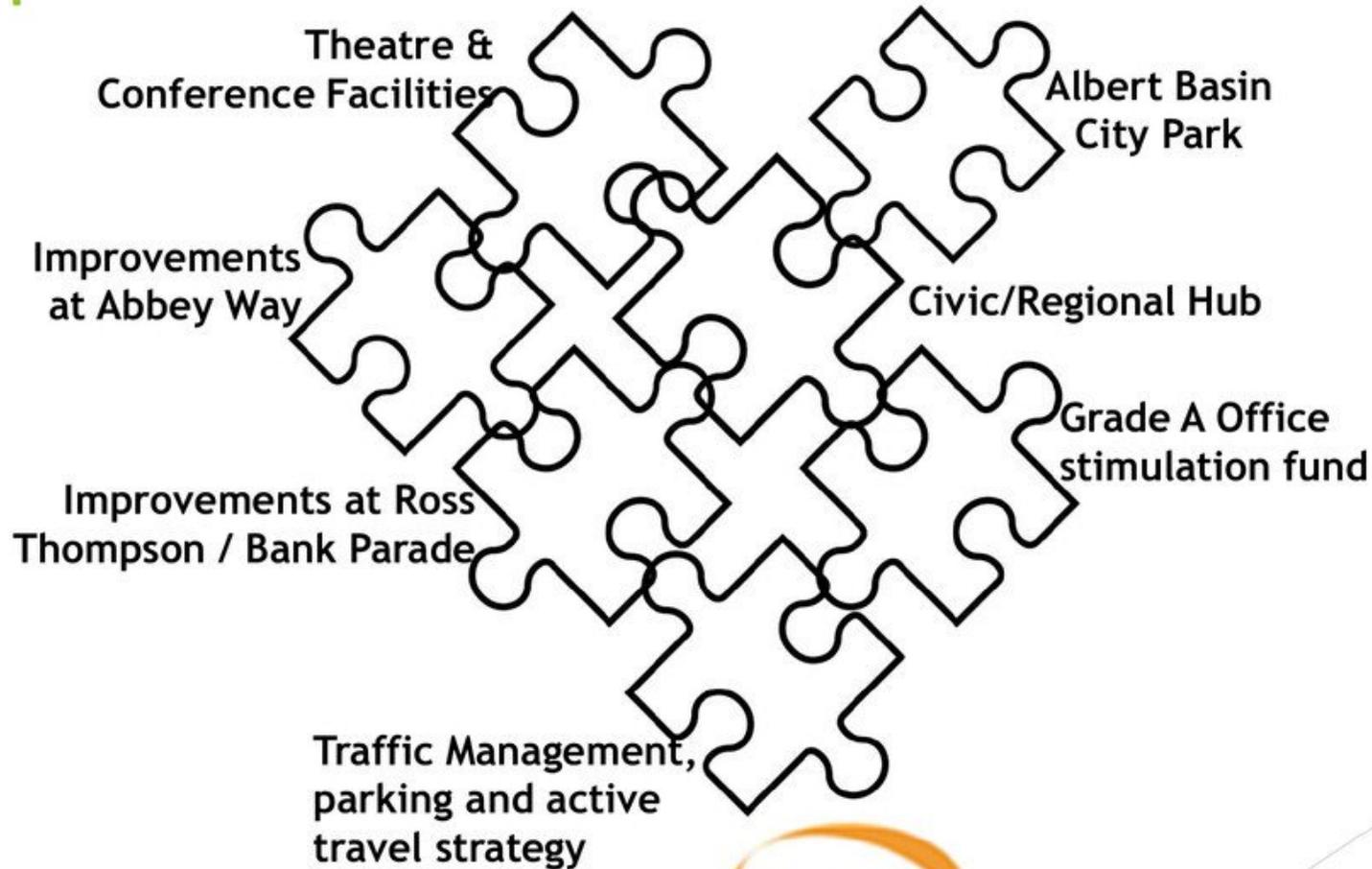




Location of the Building Projects



Separate But Connected...



What is the Belfast Region City Deal

- ▶ City Deals are packages of funding and decision-making powers negotiated between central government and local authorities.
- ▶ The Belfast Region City Deal includes 6 Northern Ireland Councils - Antrim and Newtownabbey, Ards and North Down, Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Mid and East Antrim, Newry Mourne and Down - as well as Queens and Ulster University
- ▶ City deals include a package of investment by the UK Treasury (via the Department for Communities), local Councils and the private sector.
- ▶ The Belfast Region City Deal is focused on: Innovation and Digital Development, Tourism-led regeneration, Infrastructure and Employability and Skills
- ▶ More information is available at:
https://www.newrymouredown.org/media/uploads/city_deal_may_2019.pdf



Overall Benefits of the Regeneration Programme

- Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer
- Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience
- Improved local services by creating modern and efficient working environments in the heart of the city
- Improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time
- Creating and sustaining jobs by attracting new public and private sector investment
- Increasing access to arts and culture by creating and enhancing spaces for cultural activities and public performances
- Encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists



Theatre and Conference Facility



A new theatre and performance space next to the existing town hall with 200+ seats, rehearsal/dressing rooms and conference facilities.

The building will include a café and digital innovation hub with facilities to create digitally enhanced performances and design.

Theatre and Conference Facility

Features

- ▶ New theatre with 200+ seats
- ▶ Conference facilities
- ▶ Bookable spaces
- ▶ Café
- ▶ Exhibition Space

Cost

- ▶ Projected £14.7m

Benefits

- ▶ Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer
- ▶ More vibrant evening economy
- ▶ Increasing access to arts and culture by creating and enhancing spaces for cultural activity and public performances
- ▶ Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and visitor experience
- ▶ Creating and sustaining jobs by attracting new public and private sector investment



Riverside square, landscaping and other improvements - Ross Thompson / Bank Parade



Improving the arrival into Newry city centre, enhancing the setting of the Grade 2 listed Town Hall, and creating a new outdoor performance space between the Clanrye River and the Newry Canal.

Riverside square, landscaping and other improvements - Ross Thompson / Bank Parade

Features

- ▶ Improved paving, seating and lighting creating a “gateway” to the city
- ▶ Performance square overlooking the river and canal
- ▶ Flood alleviation measures
- ▶ Re-opening of the public path between the river and the canal

Projected Cost

- ▶ £2.5m

Benefits

- ▶ Encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists
- ▶ Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and visitor experience
- ▶ Improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time
- ▶ Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer



Public Square, Landscaping, Paving and Other Improvements at Abbey Way



Creation of a new public space adjacent to the new Civic and Regional Hub and improving links between the centre and the east of the city

Public Square, Landscaping, Paving and Other Improvements at Abbey Way

Features

- ▶ A new urban square adjacent to the historic cathedral
- ▶ Improved paving, seating and lighting
- ▶ Improved paths and links between Abbey Way and the city centre

Projected Cost

- ▶ £2.5m

Benefits

- ▶ Encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists
- ▶ Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and visitor experience
- ▶ Improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time
- ▶ Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer



Civic and Regional Hub



Relocation of the Council Chamber, wedding chamber and offices from Monaghan Row to a more accessible location in the city centre.

The facility will include office space for other public sector employees.

Civic and Regional Hub

Features

- ▶ Flexible office spaces for Council officers
- ▶ Flexible office spaces for Civil Servants
- ▶ Council Chamber
- ▶ Registrar Office
- ▶ Ceremony space for weddings

Projected Cost

- ▶ £11.09m

Benefits

- ▶ Improved local service delivery by creating modern and efficient working environments in the heart of the city
- ▶ Release of Monaghan Row for potential Daisy Hill Hospital expansion
- ▶ Increased footfall in the city centre
- ▶ Provision of flexible office spaces for civil servants
- ▶ Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and visitor experience



- ▶ The plan also includes £3m of funding from the City Deal to encourage private sector development of office space. In addition, it is hoped the benefits of the regeneration will help stimulate private sector delivery of a budget hotel.
- ▶ The programme will be accompanied by a traffic, transport and car parking strategy investigating measures that will promote active and more sustainable travel, and provision of appropriate parking within the city core which meets demand. *Due to the pandemic and its affect on traffic and parking levels, it is not possible to accurately assess and project levels of demand at present. This study and strategy will be progressed when lockdown restrictions have eased sufficiently to provide an accurate picture.*
- ▶ The Newry City Centre Regeneration programme also includes the development of a 15 acre city park in the Albert Basin. As extensive consultation on this development, its benefits, and the features it should include, was undertaken in 2020 and the project is being progressed to design stage.

Workshop Questions

- ▶ **Question 1:** Tell us how you think regenerating the city centre will benefit the city – what difference will it make?
- ▶ **Question 2:** Do you think there is anything missing from the proposals which could or should be included?
- ▶ **Question 3:** Do you have any reservations about the proposed programme of works?



Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme

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Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has commissioned Otium Leisure Consultancy to consult with people in the district about its proposals for the regeneration of Newry City Centre. The following survey will take around 15 minutes to complete and will ask your views about the different projects which make up the regeneration programme.

In addition to completing the survey you may also wish to attend one of the online workshops which will take place during the consultation period. If you are interested, please register by clicking the link provided at the end of the survey and selecting a suitable date and time.

More information about the planned regeneration programme is available on the Council website <https://www.newrymournedown.org/newry-regeneration> or by contacting info@nmandd.org

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council takes the confidentiality of personal data seriously and is committed to protecting your privacy. Our [privacy notice](#) explains how we collect, use and disclose information that you provide to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Image Credit: scenicireland.com/ Christopher Hill Photographic / Alamy Stock Photo

Introduction

Newry is the district's city, a strategic gateway between Belfast and Dublin. It is a key investment location that can stimulate economic growth and provide new and better employment opportunities for the whole district.

The Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme aims to create an active city centre, diversifying its offer to attract visitors to an all-day economy, increasing the city's performance and resilience.

Shops alone can no longer guarantee healthy high streets. To be relevant - and thereby vibrant - city centres now need to offer a mix of uses as well as retail. Uses such as entertainment, leisure, housing, education, community and health facilities, arts and culture, and office space.

For Newry to thrive, the Council is developing an investment strategy that balances opportunities and encourages positive growth, focusing on delivering the following benefits:

- increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer
- improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience
- improved local services by creating modern and efficient working environments in the heart of the city
- improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time
- creating and sustaining jobs by attracting new public and private sector investment
- increasing access to arts and culture by creating and enhancing spaces for cultural activities and public performances
- encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists.

These and other benefits will be delivered through a programme of regeneration works investing directly in the historic centre of Newry. Regeneration is a process that aims to reverse social, economic and physical decline. The planned regeneration programme has seven related projects, which added together represent an investment of £34m, in addition to funding of the Albert Basin City Park and private sector investment. The seven related projects will work together to increase vibrancy and footfall and to stimulate further investment:

- new Theatre with 200+ seats and Conference facilities. Subject to funding, the building will also include a digital innovation hub
- a new riverside square and performance space on the Ross Thompson site, and paving, seating, lighting and landscaping at Bank Parade
- a new public square beside the Cathedral, and paving, seating, landscaping and lighting at Abbey Way
- relocation of the Council offices and Council chamber to a new build in the city centre which will include desk space for other public sector employees
- funding to stimulate/ encourage private sector development of additional office space
- development of a 15 acre city park in the Albert Basin
- a traffic, transport and car parking strategy investigating measures that will promote active and more sustainable travel, and provision of appropriate parking within the city centre.

* 1. In this survey, we will seek your views on the features, benefits and challenges of a number of aspects of the programme. However, initially we would like to know if, in general, you think that the above projects will contribute to improving the vibrancy of the city centre?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

We would like to know about the people who are responding to this questionnaire. Please complete the information below so that we have a clearer understanding of who has been consulted.

* 2. Are you completing this questionnaire as (please choose only 1)

- A resident of Newry city?
- A resident of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (but not Newry City)?
- Someone who works in Newry City but doesn't live there?
- Someone who has visited / intends to visit the city?

* 3. Do you (please choose only 1)

- Work in Newry City?
- Own a business in Newry City?
- Neither of the above?

* 4. Please provide your postcode

5. How do you usually travel to or around the city?

- Walk
- Cycle
- Drive
- Public Transport
- Other (please specify)

6. What age were you on your last birthday?

7. Do you identify as

- Male?
- Female?
- In another way?
- Prefer not to say

8. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9. Please tell us your community background

- I am a member of the Roman Catholic community
- I am a member of the Protestant community
- I am a member of neither the Protestant nor Roman Catholic communities

10. How would you describe your ethnicity?

Theatre and Conference Facility

A new theatre and performance space next to the existing town hall with 200+ seats, rehearsal/dressing rooms and conference facilities. The building will also include a café and (subject to funding) a digital innovation hub with facilities to create digitally enhanced performances and design. This building forms part of Council's funding bid to the Belfast Region City Deal budgeted at £14.7m.

11. This project will include the following features. Please rank them in order of how important you view each feature to be.

	Not Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
New Theatre with 200+ seats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conference Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bookable Spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cafe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibition Space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the benefits listed below will result from this project.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More vibrant evening economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing access to arts and culture by creating and enhancing spaces for cultural activities and public performances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating and sustaining jobs by attracting new public and private sector investment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Are there features or benefits missing which you think should be included?

14. What comments, if any, do you have about the proposed new theatre and conference facilities?

Riverside square, landscaping, paving and other improvements on Ross Thompson site and Bank Parade

Improving the arrival into Newry city centre, enhancing the setting of the Grade 2 listed Town Hall, and creating a new outdoor performance space between the Clanrye River and the historic Newry Canal. This element of the regeneration programme will be funded by the Belfast Region City Deal budgeted at £2.5m.

15. This project will include the following features. Please rank them in order of how important you view each feature to be.

	Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat important	Important
Improved paving, seating and lighting creating a "gateway" to the city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performance square overlooking the river and canal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flood alleviation measures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Re-opening of the public path between the river and canal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the benefits listed below will result from this project.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Are there features or benefits missing which you think should be included?

18. What comments, if any, do you have about the proposed new riverside square and performance space on the Ross Thompson site, and paving, seating, lighting and landscaping at Bank Parade?

Public Square, Landscaping, Paving and Other Improvements at Abbey Way

Creation of a new high quality public space for residents and visitors adjacent to the Civic Hub/Council Offices. The new public space will create new views to the historic Newry Cathedral and gardens and improve links between the centre and the east of the city. This element of the regeneration programme will be funded by the Belfast Region City Deal budgeted at £2.5m.

19. This project will include the following features. Please rank them in order of how important you view each feature to be.

	Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
A new urban square adjacent to the historic cathedral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved paving, seating and lighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved paths and links between Abbey Way and the city centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the benefits listed below will result from this project.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Encouraging active travel by improving access to the city for pedestrians and cyclists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved health and wellbeing by providing safe open spaces where people can connect and spend their leisure time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased local spending by attracting more people to the city who stay for longer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Are there features or benefits missing which you think should be included?

22. What comments, if any, do you have about the proposed new public square by the Cathedral, and paving, seating, landscaping and lighting at Abbey Way?

Civic Hub/Council Offices

Relocation of the Council chamber, wedding chamber and offices from Monaghan Row to a more accessible location in the city centre. The facility will frame the new public square and include office space for other public sector employees. This building forms part of Council's funding bid to the Belfast Region City Deal budgeted at £11.09m.

23. This project will include the following features. Please rank them in order of how important you view each feature to be.

	Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Flexible office spaces for Council officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexible office spaces for Civil Servants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Council Chamber	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Registrar Office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ceremony space for weddings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the benefits listed below will result from this project.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Improved local service delivery by creating modern and efficient working environments in the heart of the city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Release of Monaghan Row for potential Daisy Hill Hospital expansion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased footfall in the city centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provision of flexible office spaces for civil servants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved perceptions of the city by improving the environment and the visitor experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Are there features or benefits missing which you think should be included?

26. What comments, if any, do you have about the proposed relocation of the Council offices?

Other elements of the City Centre Regeneration Programme

27. The programme also includes a £3m fund to encourage private sector development of office space. In addition, it is hoped the benefits of the regeneration programme will help stimulate private sector delivery of a budget hotel.

Please tell us your views on this

28. The Newry City Centre Regeneration programme now includes the development of a 15 acre city park in the Albert Basin. Extensive consultation on this development was undertaken in 2020, therefore it is not the focus of the current consultation exercise.

However, if you have a comment to make in regard to the inclusion of the park as part of the regeneration programme, please tell us:

In Conclusion

29. If you feel there are equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs implications associated with the Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme, please tell us more

30. Please rank these projects in order of preference from 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest). Please note you will only be able to select each ranking once.

	1	2	3	4	5
New Theatre with 200+ seats and Conference facilities and digital innovation hub.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New riverside square and performance space on the Ross Thompson site, and paving, seating, lighting and landscaping at Bank Parade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New public square beside the Cathedral, and paving, seating, landscaping and lighting at Abbey Way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relocation of the Council offices and Council chamber to a new build in the city centre which will include desk space for other public sector employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging Private Sector Development of Office Space / Hotel Accommodation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. Finally, reflecting on the overall plans for Newry city centre, have you any additional comments you wish to make?