

COLIN TOWN CENTRE SUMMARY INFORMATION

The Background

A Consultation process was undertaken in March 2012, to explore public opinion around the draft Development Framework Plan for Colin Town Centre. In 2003, the Department for Social Development (DSD) published the Colin Neighbourhood Strategy and soon after Colin was designated a Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA). Since then the DSD have commissioned a number of specific studies on the Colin area. These reports have collectively and consistently articulated the need for a new town centre in Colin, focusing on the Stewartstown Road.

Colin is a medium density, suburban area, located on the periphery of West Belfast and within the Lisburn City Council local government area. However, this will change in 2015 under the Review of Public Administration (RPA), when the Colin Area will move within Belfast City Council's boundaries. Colin is made up of four major housing areas, namely; Twinbrook, Poleglass, Lagmore and Kilwee; it is a small area that has a growing population of circa 30,000 people.

The unique demographic and deprivation features of the Colin area are:

- *The population falls within the 3% most deprived areas in Northern Ireland*
- *The area has the highest percentage of under 16s across the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs)*
- *In 2009, 66% of the 334 births in the Colin area were to unmarried mothers*
- *42% of 16-19 year olds have no educational qualifications*
- *Unemployment is more than twice the Northern Ireland average*
- *From March 2010 to July 2011 there was a total of 21 deaths by suicide in the Colin area*

Compared with other similar sized communities in Northern Ireland, Colin is severely lacking in leisure, recreational, health, sports and community facilities that would normally be found in an area with Colin's population and demographic profile.

However, there are a significant number of positive aspects to Colin. Individuals, groups and organizations in the area remain optimistic and display a strong sense of social responsibility. The commendable work of the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP), and a number of very hard-working and committed individuals, community groups, businesses and church congregations have made significant positive impact on the area. For example, in Colin, rates of crime are falling dramatically. PSNI statistics for the last four years indicate overall crime rates falling year on year.

The Process

The primary objective of the public consultation exercise was to present to the local community a draft Development Framework Plan, with a view to stimulating debate, eliciting comment and identifying what the community would like to have in its new town centre. The information was collected through questionnaires and supported by an extensive series of focus groups, individual meetings and presentations.

The Proposal

The new town centre proposals provided for a coordinated and integrated regeneration of the area, to revitalize the Stewartstown Road, with the aim to encourage much needed

investment. The Colin Town Centre would create a much-needed heart for the area, a focal point for health, retail, leisure, cultural, educational and socially interactive services and facilities for the benefit of all.

The plans for the new town centre complemented the new Dairy Farm Centre proposals and the recently implemented environmental improvements on the Stewartstown Road, which form an integral part of the Colin Gateway Project.

The Outcomes

The early stages of the Town Centre project involved widespread stakeholder and community consultation on the initial concept, which was very positively received.

People in the Colin community, without exception, reported that they felt neglected and let down badly over the years by empty promises. However, a critical finding of the public consultation process was that there was overwhelming support across Colin for the new town centre site. It was agreed that the proposed neutral, shared space in its central location, created a physical heart for the entire Colin area.

The Public Consultation process has brought about a significant change of emphasis. Modifying the mainly retail-centred plan, to one that instead focuses upon creating a social and physical hub, underpinned by educational, health, community and leisure facilities, in conjunction with a retail scheme.

- *Feedback from the CTC Project Public Consultation questionnaire identified that only 32% of respondents access GP services at the local Stewartstown Road health centre.*
- *97.2% of respondents also identified current recreation provision within Colin as poor.*

The community's desire for a new post primary school has become clear. While St Colm's High School provides outstanding education for its pupils and enjoys the support of the local community, its building is old and needs to be replaced. A new build state of the art post primary school would continue to deliver a superior education, and can also provide shared services and use of facilities outside of school hours for the whole community.

- *Of the 1,312 questionnaires completed as part of an additional St Colm's High School study into the level of local support for a new build post primary school, it was identified that 87% of the population of Colin would support a new post primary school.*
- *Research also identified that a new post primary school would attract a more balanced social mix from each of the areas 4 neighbourhoods, to ensure it would become a school for the entire Colin community.*

The consultation exercise also highlighted the transportation network issues, the lack of physical connectivity in the Colin area and the potential implications of this on the success of the new town centre proposals, if not addressed. Healthcare provision is also a significant component essential to the town centre mix. Both the DHSSPS and the SEHSCT recognise the need to extend their services in the area and have included the Colin Town Centre project within their future capital programme. They intend to build a new enhanced Primary Care Centre that will include a dedicated Children's Clinic as well as a Disability Resource Centre.

Conclusion

The findings that came out of the public consultation process demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Colin community is positively ready for change and that change is needed as soon as possible.

The DSD will lead this regeneration initiative in partnership with CNP, and have underlined their commitment to the delivery of the project by setting aside funding within their 2012/13 and 2013/14 budgets. DSD are committed to supporting the Colin Town Centre project until successful delivery on site. Other departments supporting the initiative via the newly created Colin Town Centre Project Board are listed below.

The public consultation has highlighted the need for the appointment of individuals to support the existing Colin community infrastructure and to help develop a culture of stewardship for the area in advance of the new town centre physical structure being in place.

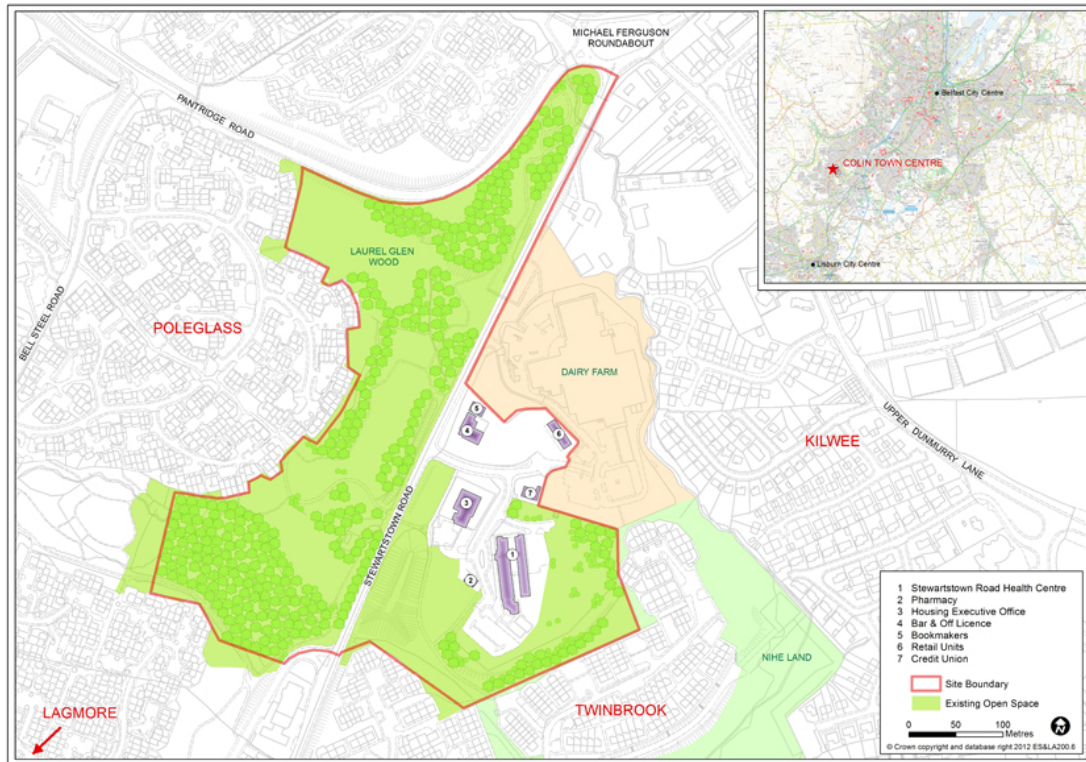
Finally, the revised Development Framework Plan may be subject to further public input. To secure the best chance of success and community buy-in, the effective two-way dialogue that has been established should be maintained. This will not only ensure the transparency and accountability of the project, but also acknowledge the valuable input of the local community.

Colin Town Centre Project Board Representation

Department/ Organisation	Representative/s ¹	Department/ Organisation	Representative/s
Department for Social Development	Jenny Pyper Chris Hughes Mary McCartan Geoff Beattie Deborah Radcliffe	Department for Regional Development	Barney McGahan Ciaran de Burca Heather Bradley
Department of Education	Stephen Creagh Denise Stockman	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	David Thompson
Strategic Investment Board	Brenda Burns Bronagh O'Kane	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Elma Newberry
Lisburn City Council	Paul McCormick	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	Richard Lutton Arthur Scott
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership	Rose Mary Stalker Annie Armstrong	Belfast City Council	Andrew Hassard
West Belfast Partnership Board	Geraldine McAteer	South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	Roisin Coulter Naomi Dunbar
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	John Cole Dr Bernie Stuart	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Gerry Lundy
Department of the Environment	Barbara Elliott	St Colm's High School Board of Governors	Father Pat Sheehan
		HSCB	Martin Kelly

¹ In most circumstances only one representative will attend a Board meeting, however, when issues specific to a Department are being addressed all representatives will attend.

Site Context Plan



Education Led Masterplan

