

Dromahair

Town Centre Health Check



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River Bonet in Dromahair

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the individuals and organisations who assisted in the completion of this project by generously offering their time and expertise with special thanks to the members of the emerging Town Team for Dromahair and staff from Leitrim County Council for their support for this study. This report summarises the analysis completed by students from a number of planning courses from Queen's University Belfast.

Edited by: Aleksandrs Nazjuta, Neil Galway, Valesca von Usslar.

Additional QUB Study Participants: Craig Best, Dervla Blarney, Kurtis McElveen, Kyaw Swar, Lauren Mallon and Hannah McConville.



Some of the participants of the study



Dromahair Main Street

Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive town centre health check for Dromahair, a small town in County Leitrim bordering on the west to County Sligo. The closest towns are Manorhamilton 14 km to the Northeast and Sligo, 20km to the West on the other side of Lough Gill.

Conducted by planning students from Queen's University on 29th-30th August 2024, the study provides a detailed analysis of Dromahair's current condition, encompassing the physical characteristics of the town and the perceptions of local residents. Through this health check, we aim to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities within the town. Understanding the town's context, both in terms of its historical development and its strategic location, is crucial for framing our analysis and summary.

The national and local policy context forms the backdrop against which Dromahair's development prospects are assessed. Our methodology involved a multifaceted approach, including the creation of land use and vacancy maps, footfall and vehicle counts, parking surveys and analysis of the town's public realm. These physical survey methods were supplemented by qualitative insights gathered through questionnaires distributed to local residents online and in-person. The questionnaires were supplemented by a community consultation based around the Place Standard diagram on 29th August in the Depot Community Centre. This feedback from the community provided invaluable perspectives on the community's needs and aspirations.



Cottages on Main Street



Dromahair Town Centre Health Check

Online questionnaire form

First Impressions

Surrounded by stunning natural beauty, Dromahair presents a neat and tidy appearance, though high vacancy rates persist. The presence of mature trees on approaches to Dromahair from both sides gives the town a charming backdrop. The most prominent vacant property is the former Breffni Holiday Village Complex, located at a major access point on the R288 road. However, even the obviously unoccupied buildings on Main Street are well-maintained, indicating the town's readiness for future investment and development.

The town's heritage is evident in the ruins of the last Franciscan Friary founded in Ireland, a National Monument that continues to serve as a graveyard. The walk from the Main Street to the Friary follows the scenic River Bonet, which is popular with walkers and anglers alike. While Dromahair has a few convenience shops and pubs, residents express disappointment at the lack of restaurants, cafes, takeaways or other services, such as banking, are also unavailable. High traffic and disorderly on-street parking adjacent to the grocery stores have been observed along Main Street. The upcoming opening of a new library in the town centre is eagerly anticipated by residents, who are keen to see further improvements and have actively participated in discussions and suggestions.



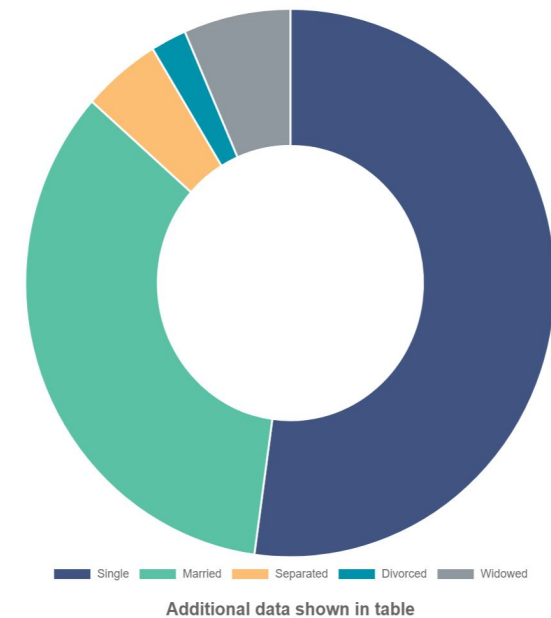
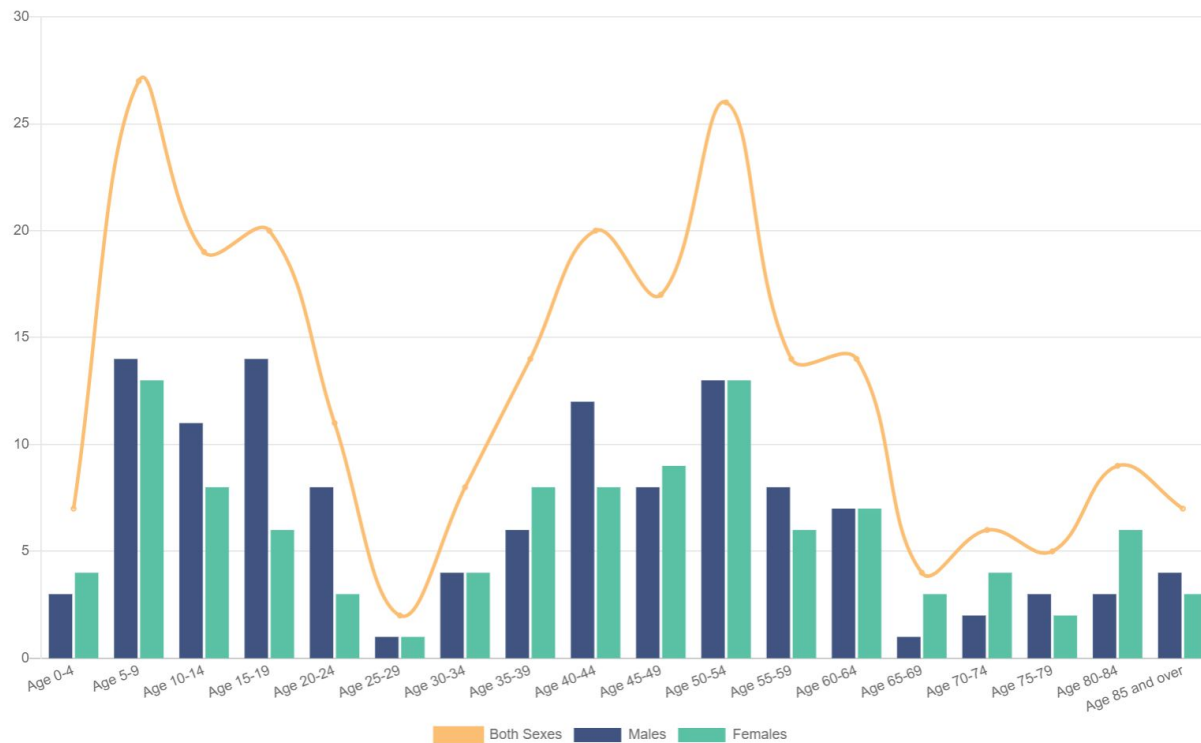
Dromahair Main Street



Creevelea Franciscan Friary ruins

Wider Context

The most recent census data provided by the Central Statistics Office Ireland shows a striking dip in the numbers for the demographic of young professionals. These numbers are noteworthy in their gender distribution as there are twice as many males as females living in Dromahair in those age brackets except 25-29 which has the lowest numbers of all with just 1-2 people. There is a large demographic of children and young adults, and middle-aged people compared to a consistently lower number of elderly residents. 52% of Dromahair residents are single, 34% are married, and the rest were divorced, separated or widowed.



September 15, 2023 11:00:00 UTC

© Central Statistics Office, Ireland
<https://data.cso.ie/table/SAP2022T1T1ASA>

National and Local Policy

National Planning Framework Project Ireland 2040

Dromahair is a rural town in County Leitrim and, therefore, follows the National Planning Framework (NPF) as set out in the *Project Ireland 2040* document. This agenda states the intentions to strengthen the rural fabric and supporting the communities by planning for future growth and development as well as creating jobs. The town may be eligible for funding through the *Town Centre First (TCF)* scheme by the Irish government to improve the liveability and attractiveness of Dromahair.

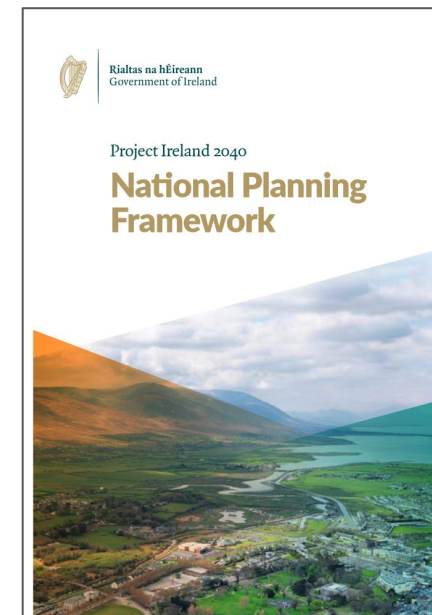
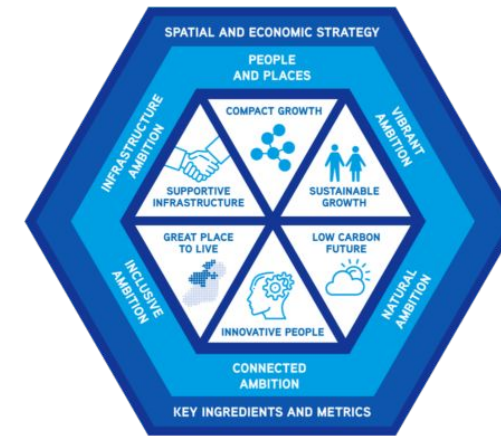
Northern & Western Regional Assembly

Furthermore, County Leitrim is one of the counties which is part of the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) and, therefore, eligible to funding through the joint EU schemes. This assembly supports the NPF and provides the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES) for sustainable development. Effective interregional planning is more crucial than ever as the Covid-19 pandemic showed, and the impacts of climate change will in the future.

Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029

The local development plan states specific strategic economic objectives and action points that will benefit Dromahair such as increasing jobs by supporting initiatives which increase the quality of life such as sports, arts, entertainment and heritage. A clear focus is the connectivity between towns themselves as well nearby attractions. Facilitating transport will increase footfall and economic activity.

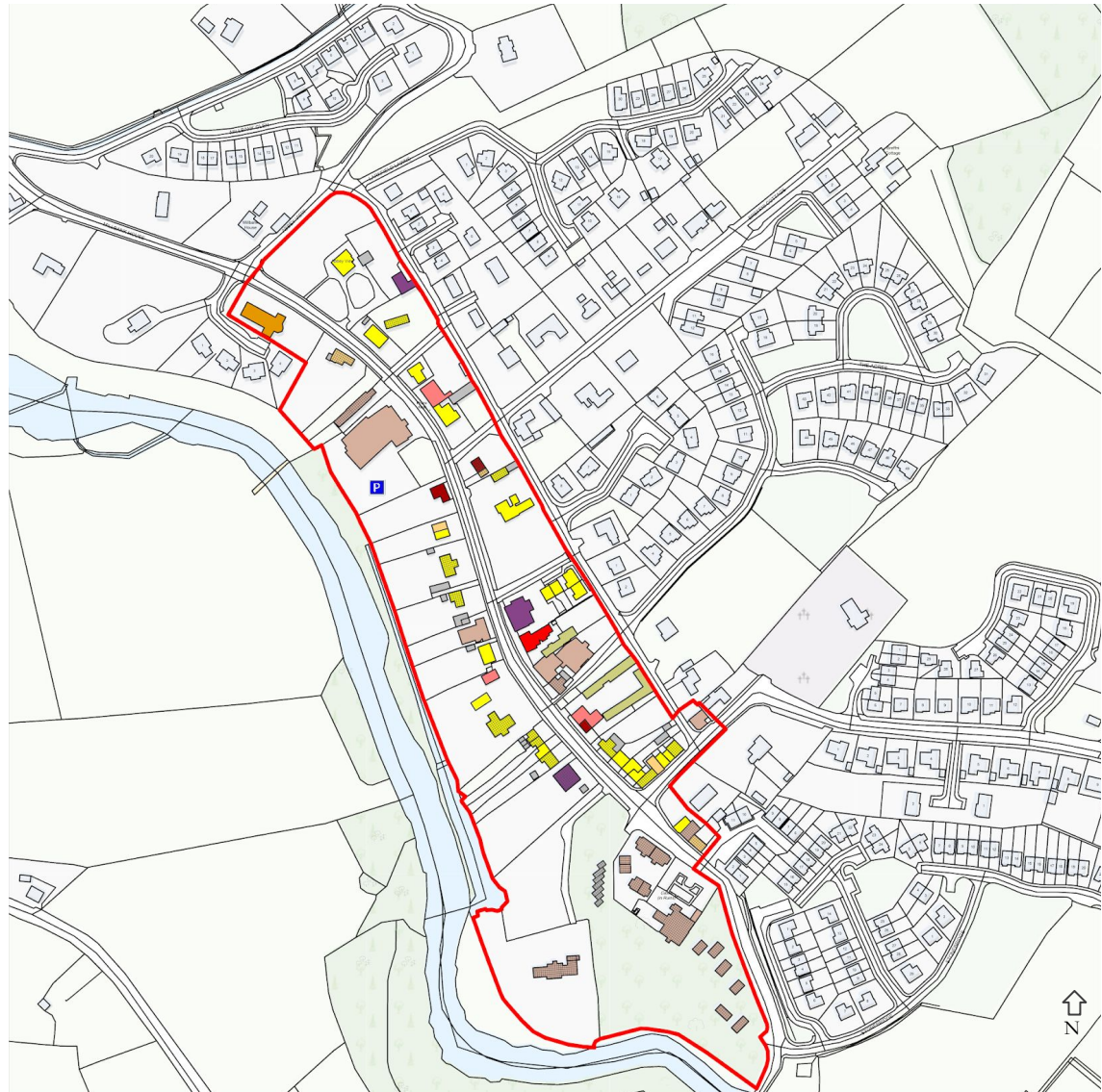
Furthermore, vacant premises will be leased to artists for nominal fees and schemes developed to encourage new businesses to take up empty shops. Another plan included to bring unused housing stock into use for tourist accommodation.



Land Use Map

A land use survey was completed for Dromahair town centre during the study visit on the 29th and 30th of August 2024. This map classifies building uses according to the goods, opportunities, amenities and development (GOAD) classification system into categories listed in the key below. A black cross hatch overlay indicates vacant units.

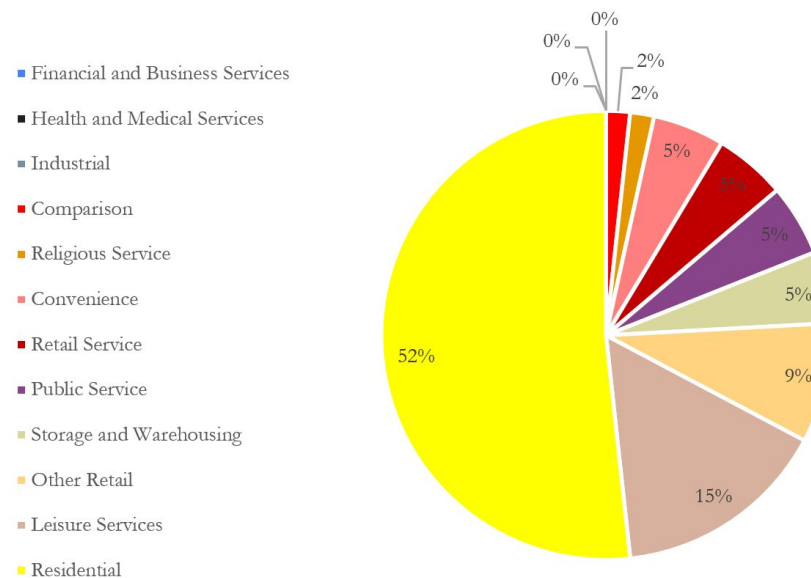
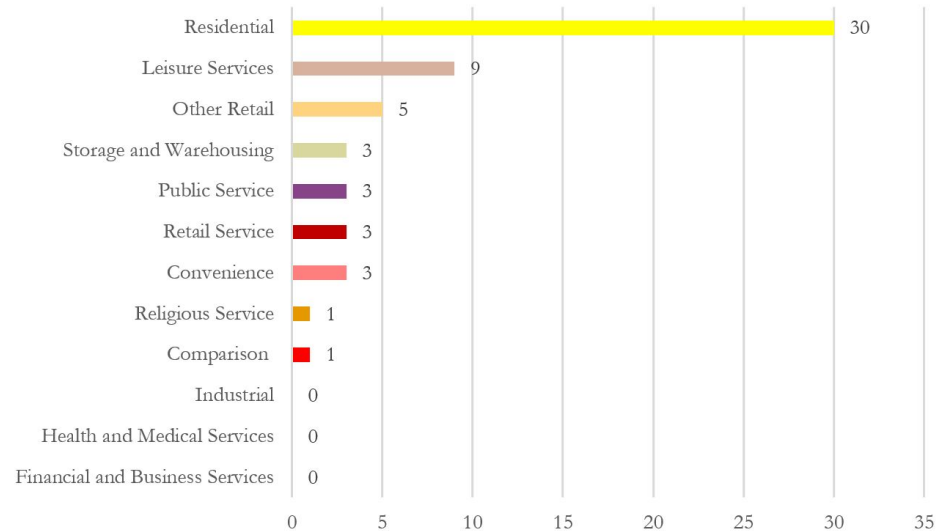
- GOAD Classification:**
- Comparison
 - Convenience
 - Retail Service
 - Other Retail
 - Leisure Services
 - Financial and Business Services
 - Health and Medical Services
 - Public Service
 - Religious Service
 - Industrial
 - Vacant Unit
 - Storage and Warehousing
 - Residential
 - Study Boundary
 - P Car Park - Surface



Land Use Analysis

According to the gathered data, the most common type of property use within the town centre of Dromahair is *residential*, which accounts for 52% of the surveyed properties. It is followed by *leisure services* category which accounts for 15% of the overall surveyed units and is followed by *convenience*, *retail service*, *public service* and *storage and warehousing*, each of which share an equal share of 5%. Lastly, *religious service* and *other retail* are least widespread and account for 2% each. Although there is a health centre in Dromahair, within the town centre study area, there were no establishments providing health and medical services, financial and business services as well as industrial businesses.

The former Breffni Holiday Village Complex was counted as one leisure services unit due to inability to verify the current state of all the buildings, however, even if the 15 properties which are advertised by the real estate agent were included in the calculations, the leisure services category would remain the second most widespread.



Vacancy Map and Analysis

Following the land use survey, the map on this page highlights all of the properties which are known or appeared to be vacant during the survey.

Overall vacancy can be described as widespread and includes properties of both residential and commercial use signalling a diverse opportunity for development. Most of the surveyed vacant buildings retained presentable facades.

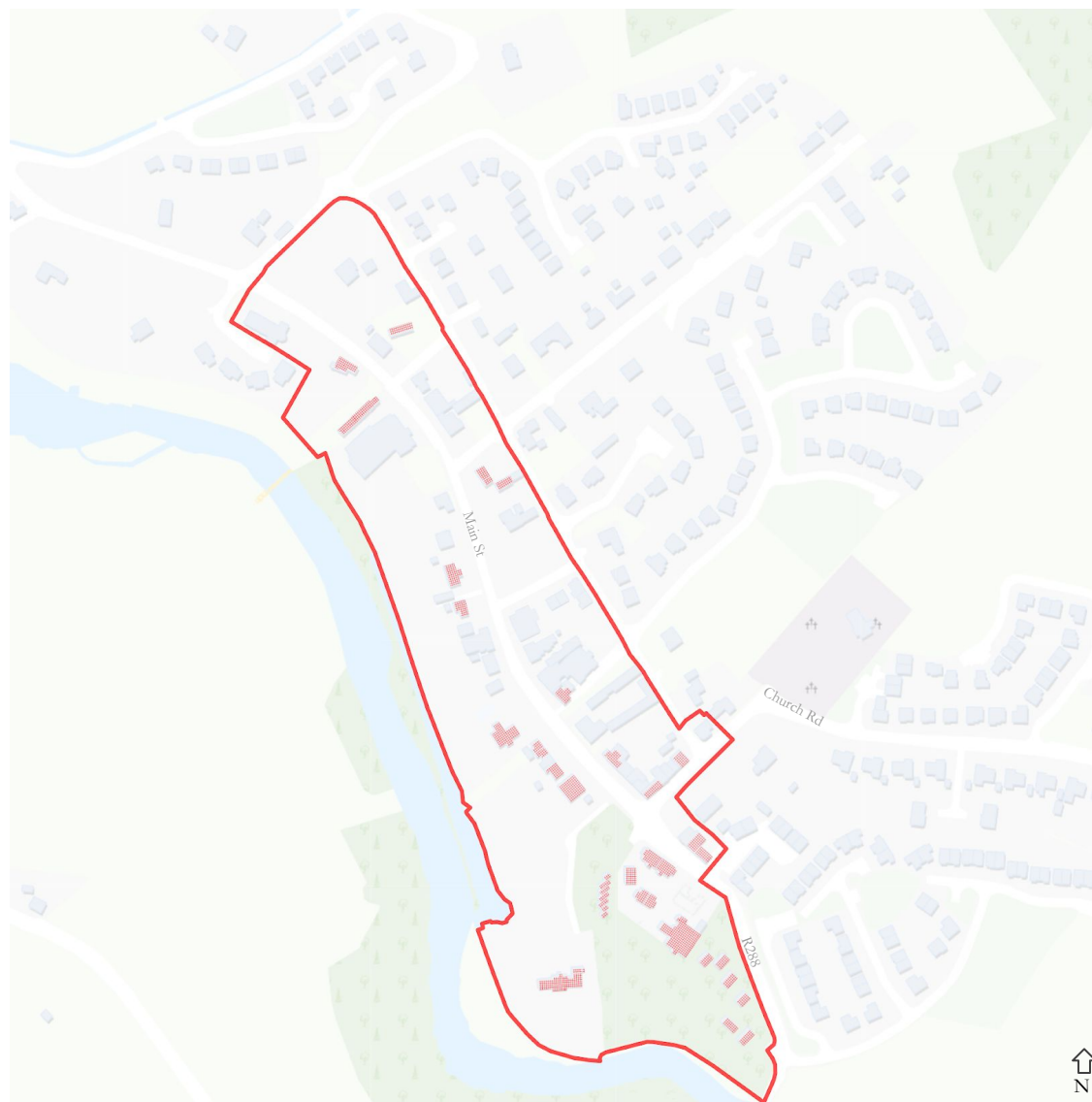
Overall occupancy: 66%

Overall vacancy: 34%

Residential vacancy: 37%

Other vacancy: 32%

The former Breffni Holiday Village Complex, which is currently being advertised for sale should be mentioned as a significant vacant premise due to its overall size and the high number of buildings it consists of. The listing agent states that the 11 main buildings and castle ruins are “in a poor state of repair and in need of total refurbishment” (DM Auctions, 2024). Indeed, the provided photographs show the exterior of the buildings overgrown with weeds, trees and shrubs while no interior photographs were provided. Therefore, for the more accurate assessment of the vacancy in this survey, the entire property was counted as one vacant commercial unit.



Vacancy Observations

While vacant buildings are scattered throughout the town, many do not appear unoccupied at first glance. Most building facades are well-maintained, which contributes to Dromahair's character and overall tidy appearance as well as curbs the visual impact of vacant properties.



A former Michelin guide mentioned Luna restaurant cottage



Tidy commercial vacancy



Commercial vacancy in Dromahair

Vacancy Observations

The former Breffni Holiday Village Complex, as seen in real estate listing agent's photographs, seems to be in poor condition. However, due to the surrounding greenery, much of the complex is hidden from view from the main R288 road.



Photograph of the main entrance to the complex taken during the survey



An aerial photograph of the former Breffni Holiday Village Complex (DM Auctions, 2024)



The former restaurant building (DM Auctions, 2024)



Residential building (DM Auctions, 2024)

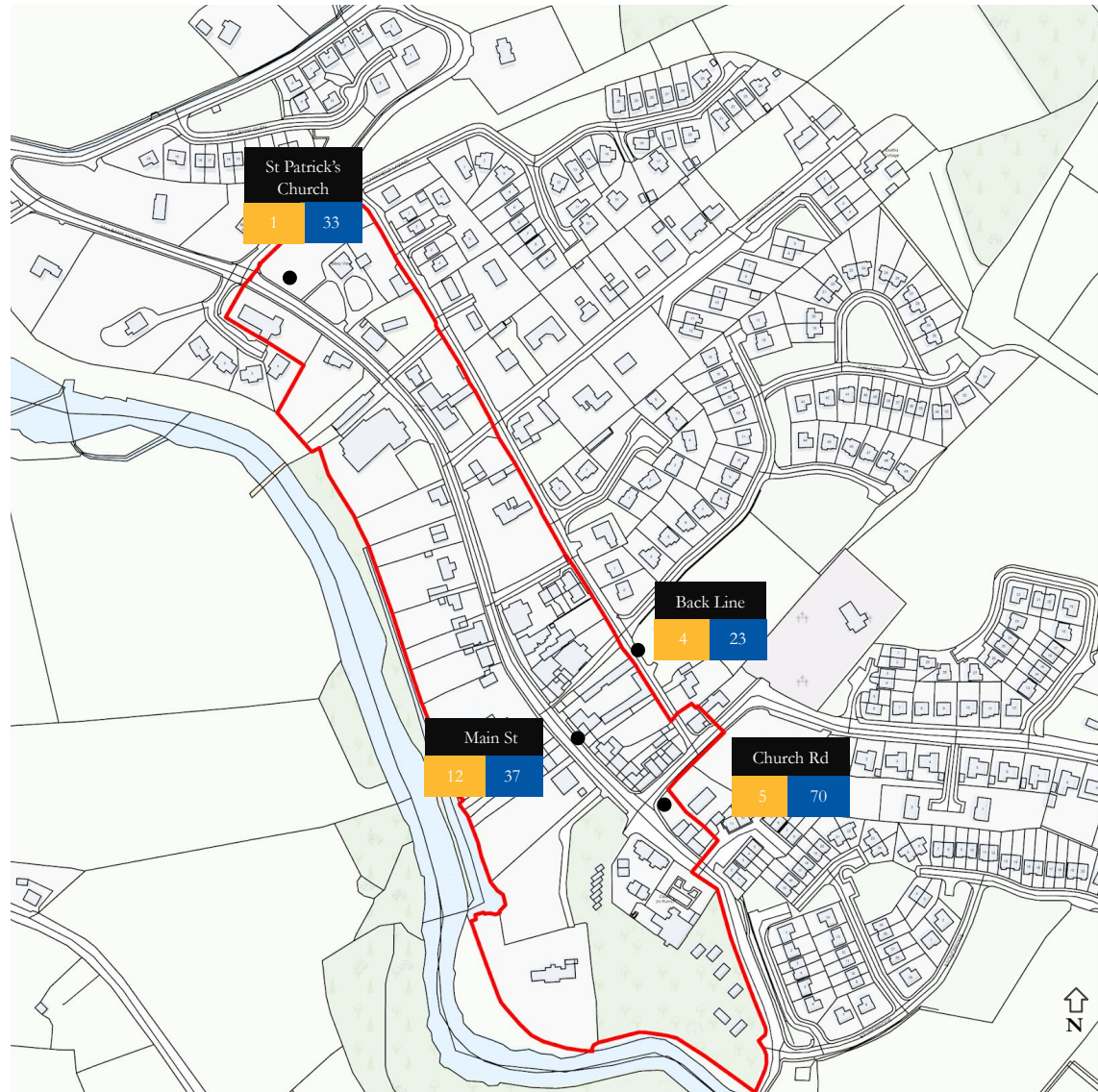
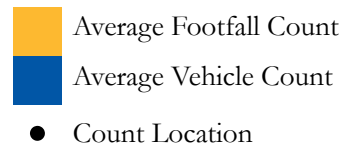
Reference: DM Auctions, 2024. The Lodge Dromahair Leitrim F91 DC03. Available at <https://dmauctions.com/detail/?propertyid=581625>

Footfall and Vehicle Counts

Footfall and vehicle counts were conducted at four locations which were:

- St Patrick's Church,
- Main Street in front of XL Leonard's,
- Back Line,
- Church Road.

There were two 15-minute counts on the 29th and 30th of August 2024. The map shows the combined average values for pedestrians and vehicles, while the full data table and analysis are available on the next page.



Footfall and Vehicle Count Analysis

Main Street recorded the highest pedestrian traffic, while Back Line and Church Road saw significantly fewer pedestrians. The St Patrick's Church location had virtually no pedestrian activity. In terms of vehicular traffic, Church Road saw twice as many vehicles as the other locations. This is likely due to residents passing through on their way to Churchfield and Drumlease Road estates.

Overall, from the combined total of recorded pedestrians and vehicles, over **90%** passed through St Patrick's Church, and Church Road **by car**. Main Street and Back Line had a slightly lower pedestrian to car ratio which stood at 75% and 85%, respectively. This may suggest that generally, the residents of Dromahair prefer to drive into the town centre rather than walk despite limited parking options along Main Street.



Comparatively high vehicular movement in the town centre

Day	Time Interval	Count Location							
		St Patrick's Church		Main St (XL Leonard's)		Back Line		Church Road	
		Pedestrians	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Vehicles
Thursday	13:30 - 13:45	0	21	10	37	1	30	3	67
	15:30 - 15:45	4	46	15	46	6	16	5	78
Friday	12:00 - 12:15	0	37	12	24	6	21	5	72
	13:00 - 13:30	0	29	12	39	3	23	7	64
	Overall Average	1	33	12	37	4	23	5	70
	Travelled by Car, %		97		75		85		93

Desire Lines

Desire lines are informal paths or shortcuts used by pedestrians, often evident as worn trails through grassy areas. One such path connects the Depot Community Centre to the town centre and has been marked with a red line on the map on the right. Despite being a simple path through a field, its long-standing use is clearly evident in the satellite image below which indicates a need for a more formal pedestrian route.

Within the town centre, vehicles currently have priority over pedestrians. The lack of established pedestrian crossings has led to pedestrians waiting to cross Main Street, marked in yellow on the map, or navigating around parked cars on narrow pavements. Concerns about speeding on Main Street and the need for improved traffic management on Back Line, marked in orange, were also raised by the residents during consultations.

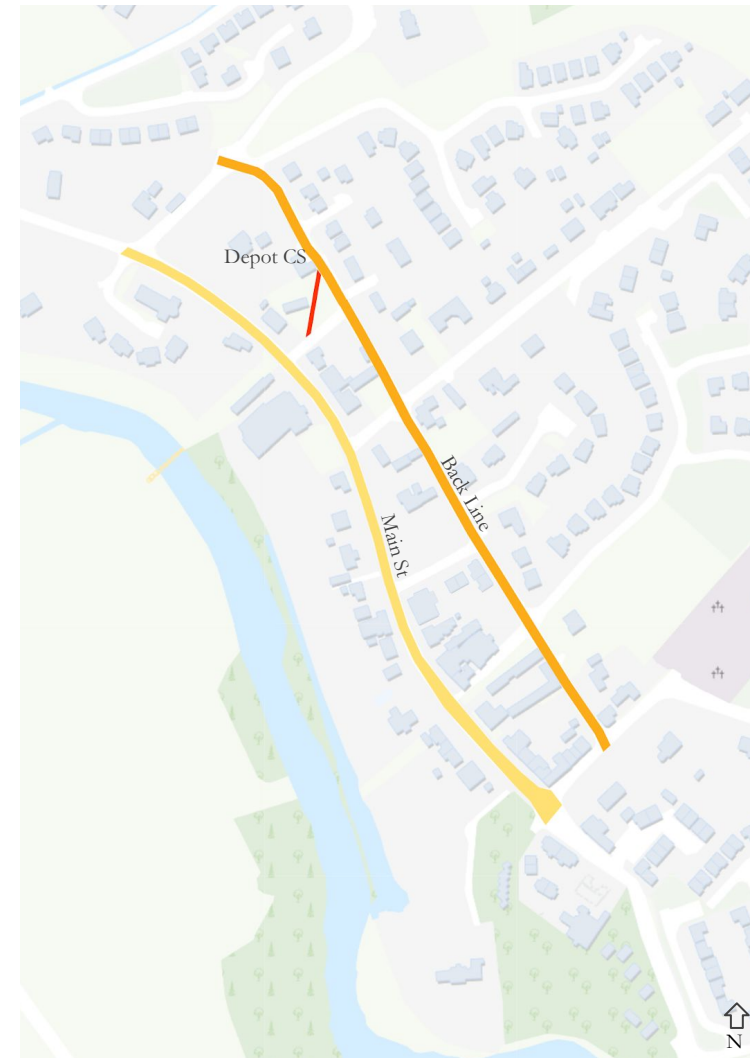
Introducing formal pedestrian crossings on Main Street would significantly enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility. Raised pedestrian crossings could further contribute to slowing traffic, making the town centre a safer environment for pedestrians.



A desire line path from the town centre to the Depot CS observed during the survey



Satellite image of the informal path to the Depot CS (Microsoft Bing, 2024)



Identified areas for pedestrian and traffic optimisation

Car Parking Assessment

Dromahair primarily relies on on-street parking, which is heavily used due to the lack of larger public or private car parks in the town centre. Smaller private car parks, like that one behind the Abbey Manor Hotel, can accommodate a limited number of customer vehicles. Other businesses also operate customer parking spaces rather than car parks in limited numbers, for example in front of Harvey Meats and the XL Leonard's supermarket. A significant number of cars has also been observed parked in front of the former Woodview Inn.

Unfortunately, due to the narrow width of Main Street, cars are parked on the pavements nearest to the busiest shops, primarily the Centra, thus often partially or completely blocking the footpaths as is evident in the photograph below. Despite this, it has been observed that cars also are frequently parked on both sides of Main Street. This raises safety concerns as bigger vehicles such as emergency response, buses and lorries may struggle to pass through. A proposed one-way traffic system revolving around Main Street and Back Line could potentially have a beneficial effect, however, would require significant investment into pedestrian infrastructure establishment on Back Line as it does not have dedicated pavements.

To address these issues, a comprehensive car parking assessment and a new management system are needed to ensure a safer environment for all road users.



Obstructive on-street parking observed on Main Street



Customer car parking spaces

Public Realm

Dromahair offers limited amenities with a few convenience and other stores, pubs and two churches. There is also a post office within one of the convenience stores, however, other services such as banking and tourist accommodation are absent from the town centre. The town's residents would also like to see more dining and café options. The Dromahair overall vacancy rate of 34% indicates significant potential for business and accommodation development.

The town has a small community centre, however, during the consultations, the residents expressed a need for a more inclusive and larger gathering space. A new library is set to open soon and is a positive and welcomed development. It is understood that the former Garda station is set to be converted to childcare facilities, however, the funding allocation for a new project is yet to be finalised. In terms of outdoor meeting places, there appears to be no formalised public square or heart to the town. The residents have also mentioned the lack of outdoor seating, bus shelters and public sanitary amenities. A community building effort has been observed in a way of a community-led seed library which has been set up on Main Street.

The town's overall tidy look and active engagement of the residents suggests Dromahair's openness to further investment and growth.



Seed bank initiative observed on Main Street



Planters on the streets in Dromahair



New library building



Former Garda station

Public Realm

Dromahair's attractive natural setting facilitates recreational open-air activities which the town's residents and visitors can enjoy.

The Creevelea Abbey ruins is one of Dromahair's landmarks and as a national monument, is an attractive place for the visitors to see. Another recreational open-air activity is a 5km circular walking trail which links the Creevelea Abbey to a greenway in place of the former Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties railway (SLNCR), the former Dromahair railway station, and Dromahair town centre. The SLNCR Greenway is a substantial greenway project which aims to create a greenway, for the most part, in place of the former railway in order to provide facilities which enable physical activity in a safe environment accessible by all users, as well as to encourage alternative means of transport. The section of the greenway in Dromahair is the first section to be completed, with planning applications for further sections expected to be submitted in 2025 (SLNCR, 2024). Other sections of the trail could benefit from improvements such as maintenance, updated signposting as well as an introduction of cycling infrastructure along Dromahair's Main Street were pointed out by the residents during the in-person consultations.



Creevelea Abbey ruins

Sligo Way which leads towards the Creevelea Abbey could be better signposted and maintained



Dromahair's walking and cycling trail promotional poster

Reference: SLNCR, 2024. Frequently Asked Questions. Available at: <https://slncr-greenway.com/faqs/>

Questionnaire

The survey was made available in paper and online with 147 participants in total. Of those participants, 65% lived outside town centre leaving 35% who lived inside it. 67% were female, 29% male, 1 non-binary person participated, and the rest preferred not to say. This survey does not reflect the views and opinions of children and young adults as no children participated and only 2% of the 17-24 bracket contributed. Over half of the survey reflects the ages of 40-59, and another 24% senior residents of 60+. The 25–39-year-olds are similarly represented with 22% of the participants.

Dromahair has undergone a lot of change in the last decade with a slight skew towards a positive perception of change with 41% positive (37% felt generally positive about it and 4% predominantly positive) against 38% negative (23% generally negative and 15% predominantly negative) with 17% neutral and 3% were unsure.



Most commonly associated words with Dromahair

Positively Perceived Places

The residents named a lot of places they enjoyed. Most prominently featured were the Community Park (61 replies) the Creevelea Abbey (59 replies) and followed by the Riverbank Restaurant and the Greenway (both 25). Further outdoor spots included the Rock Ard Nahoo Walk, Parkes Castle, the River Walk, and the Valley Estate.

People are very excited for the new library, and it is already becoming a strong community anchor as 13 participants mentioned it despite not having used it yet. The residents value their local hospitality naming O'Rourke's Table, Sue Gowan's tearoom, the Riverbank Restaurant, Stanfords, McGoldricks, Blue Devon and Devaney's pub.

Further positive places include Dromahair Health Centre, the Depot, the local pharmacy, the GAA pitch, XL Leonard's shop, Lough Gill and Centra. St Patrick's Church, St. Phelim's nursing home, Hotel Abbey Manor, the dancing studio, the playground, Siobhan's hairdressers, Staffordshire & Harvey Meats, the Gala shop, Drumlease School and the Seed bank complete the list of mentioned good places..



Riverside walk



Creevelea Abbey



Stanford pub

Places That Could Be Improved

The participants felt that the car parking situation on the main street, particularly at Centra is a key place that needs to be improved as it was mentioned 29 times. The next biggest concern (15 mentions) was the GAA grass pitch which is prone to flooding. On a similar level, 14 residents wished for the reopening of the Garda station and the petrol station (8 replies). Another concern that came up more frequently (11 times) was the derelict buildings that need to be renovated and made habitable.

More individual suggestions included the footpaths between Churchfield and Main Street as well as cycle infrastructure from the nursing home to the town centre. The village square should be converted into a car-free zone and back line traffic calmed with a path introduced. One person recommended the removal of abandoned cars.

Further places that were mentioned are: the petrol pumps, the ghost estates, the Pound house, the Clubhouse, Fowley's Pub, Villiers House, the storage container opposite Blue Devon, Gala, Shamrock, Abbey Hotel, Breffni Cottages, The Lodge, access to the river, Woodview Inn and front space, car parking near pitch, the Blue Devon pub facade, the plot opposite school, Loughlin Cottage, Gilmore's Cottage, the hostel and Stanford's.



Dromahair town centre

Missing Services and Facilities

Dromahair has undergone a few changes in recent times as the local Abbey Manor Hotel was converted into a refugee accommodation and no longer caters for tourist accommodation and local functions. There is currently no tourist accommodations in town, which has led to a marked decrease in touristic activity.

Social infrastructure is a key concern for the residents of Dromahair as they feel they are missing services for marginalised people, a creche, teenage hangout spaces, senior citizen meetups, a community centre, and a remote working hub /coworking space. Dromahair is still in the process of building a new library at the moment. This space has the potential to cater to some of these concerns. This will need to be reevaluated once the library is in use.

The lack of hospitality choices is another important aspect for the residents. Participants wished for more tea rooms, cafes that stay open at night, takeaways and a good Indian restaurant. Furthermore, there is a recognisable lack of activities for residents as they wished for indoor sporting facilities a gym, a skate park, a sauna and a swimming pool, a handball alley, and an arts space.

The town has a healthcare centre, but participants wished for an increased GP service as well as dental service. Further professional services that are missing are a vet and petrol pumps. In terms of public transport, there is currently no night-time service to larger towns such as Sligo. A second bus stop is required to cover the town better as well as bus shelters. One resident noted that Dromahair does not have any EV charging points.

The lack of parking at the shops, particularly next to the Centra was a major concern for many participants. Dromahair does not have a bakery, a petrol station, a weekly market, clothing shops, a farmer's supply shop or a hardware shop according to participants. Several participants were missing an active Garda station and public bins. One person said there was no CCTV for safety, another noted the lack of public toilets. A lack of housing and a wish for the SLNCR Greenway connection to Manorhamilton and further afield were also recorded.



Some of the desired services

Thoughts On Climate Change Adaptation

Many residents of Dromahair had given thoughts on climate change initiatives of various natures.

A theme emerged around reducing waste for example by forming group initiatives for food exchange or a second-hand shop. Water refill stations could reduce the use of plastic bottles, and a local farmers market could source food more locally.

Even the waste that is unavoidable could be managed more sustainably by improved recycling facilities, especially composting. More bins in public spaces could help reduce littering and environmental pollution.

Another cluster of ideas revolved around transport. EV charging points would offer the possibility to switch to vehicles that are cleaner. Better public transport could help end car-dependency. One resident proposed the restoration of the railway service between Sligo and Enniskillen while another wished for access to e-bikes. Currently many residents will use a car for very short distances within town, therefore attractive active travel infrastructure was suggested.. To cut down on travel overall a local remote working hub was proposed.

Affordable renewable energy is an important aspect in the process, Dromahair could potentially generate power from the river.

Residents would also like to see investment in green infrastructure especially to improve biodiversity, for example, more natural verges and pervious surfaces. More innovative approaches to communal green spaces were proposed by planting fruit trees, herbs and edible plants in public spaces and providing allotments.

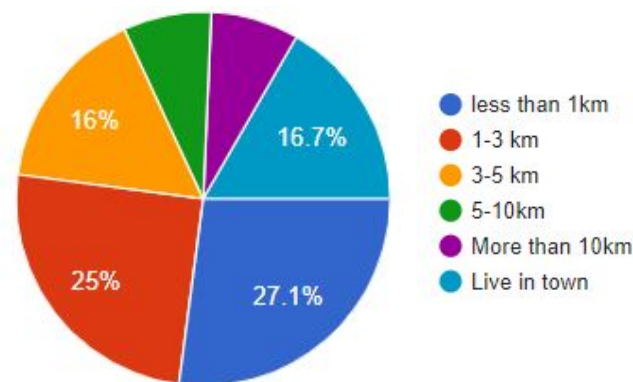


Travel and Mobility

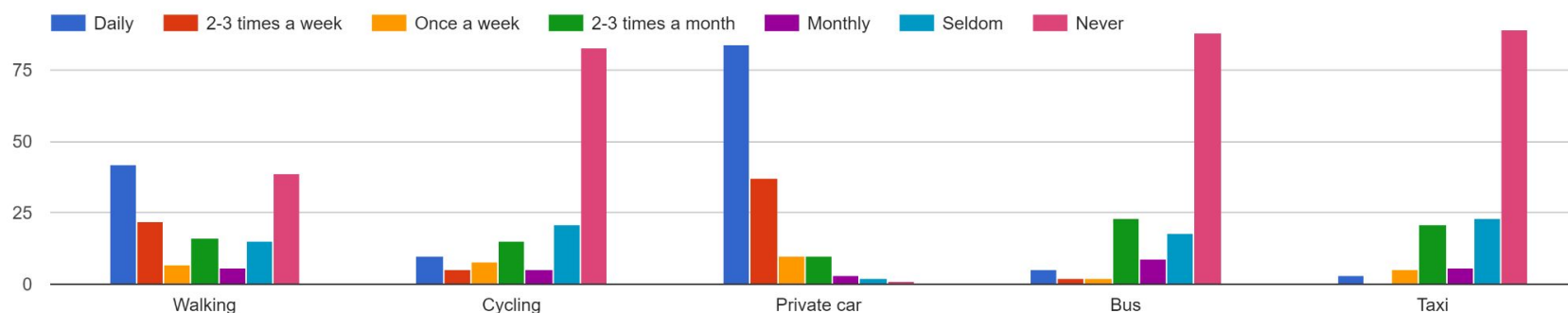
Travel Methods

42 people walk daily, another 22 indicated they walked 2 to 3 times a week. Cycling is very uncommon as a transport method and is only rarely used. The private car is by far the most popular travel method used by 73% of participants (84 daily and 23 two to three times a week). Public transport is used monthly, if at all by participants, bearing in mind that children and teenagers who are more likely to use them are not represented. Taxis are rarely used and not a significant travel method for Dromahair residents. Given that 68.8% of people live less than 3 km from the town centre, there is real potential to increase the proportion using active travel options. 70% of people did not think that people had priority over vehicles in the town centre. 20% were unsure and only 10% thought people had priority. This reinforces concerns in relation to parking and crossing infrastructure mentioned previously.

How far do you have to travel to get to Dromahair?



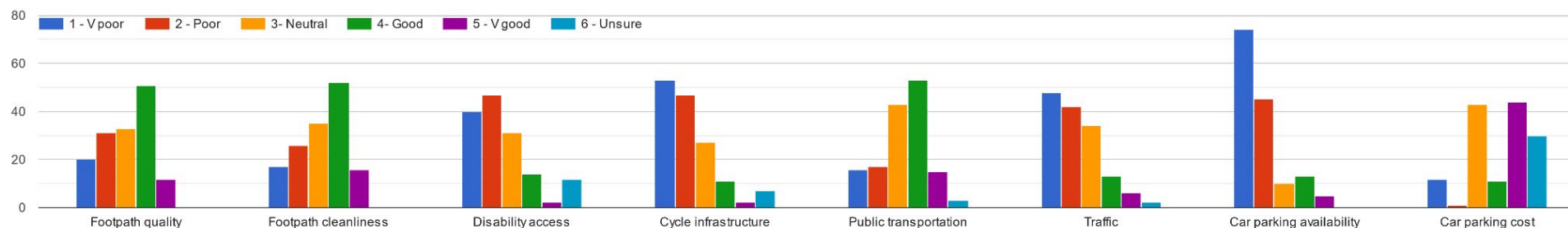
How often do you travel to Dromahair by the following methods?



Mobility Infrastructure Rating

The footpath quality was rated positively by a majority with 63 participants selecting these options compared to 51 who perceived the quality poor and 33 who felt neutral. The footpath cleanliness was similarly rated with a stronger positive tendency. The infrastructure does not seem to be perceived as adequate for disability access, with 60% saying it very poor or poor, 29% were neutral or unsure. Due to the lack of cycling infrastructure over two thirds of residents gave negative reviews. Public transport was rated overall positively with 68 people voting it good or very good. 43 felt neutral about it and 33 negative. However, a large user group of children and teenagers are not very well represented in this survey. Further inquiry into their thoughts would be necessary for a more accurate rating. Traffic overall is perceived negative (62%) or neutral (23%) by a majority of participants. Car parking availability received the worst rating with 80% giving it very poor or poor. There is no parking cost in Dromahair which was rated very good by 31%, while 52% were neutral or unsure. Only a minority though it was very poor.

How good is the following infrastructure in Dromahair for movement and accessibility?



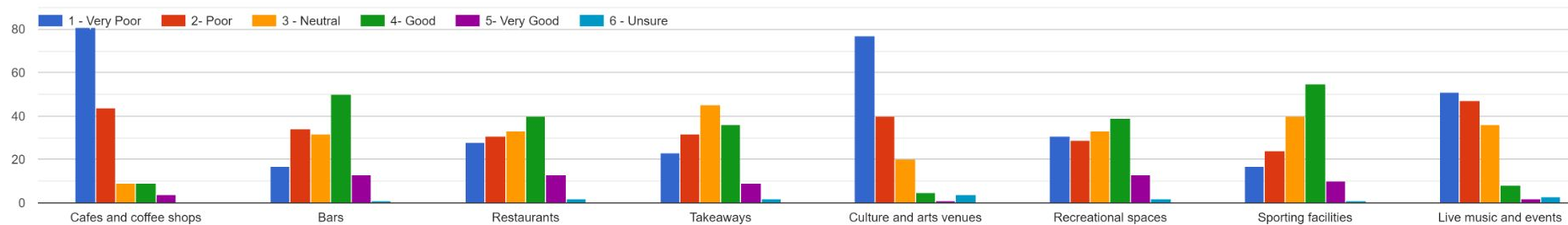
Goods and Services

Only 17% of the participants are not residents and come to Dromahair for other reasons. Most people buy their groceries locally (78%). Almost no one buys electrical goods, furniture or clothing and footwear locally as stores selling these goods are not in the town. Haircuts and beauty services are used locally by a majority (60%) but 40% go elsewhere. Hardware and DIY was divided more equally, but 59% of people would get their supplies from Dromahair. 78% of the participants said they did not use the banking service in a form of an ATM in Dromahair. Professional services are used by a quarter, 75% of people solicit them from outside. Medical services are used mostly locally by 72% of the participants. Newspapers/Magazines/Books are bought locally in Dromahair by 58% of residents.

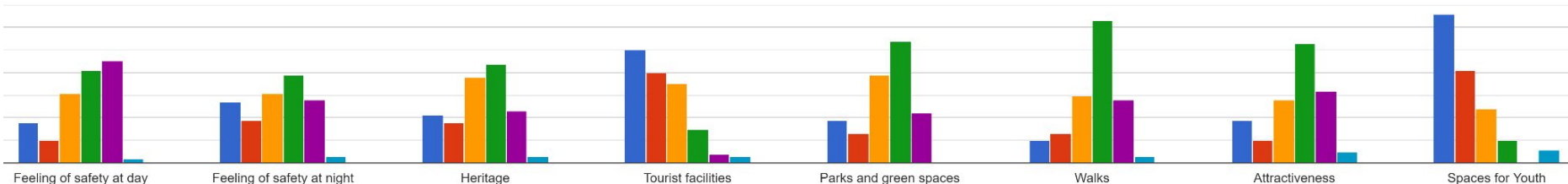
Other popular locations for goods and services are Sligo, Manorhamilton, Enniskillen, Carrick on Shannon, Drumshanbo, or purchased online.

Rating of Facilities and Amenities

The participants rated the cafes and coffee shops very poorly overall (85%) as this type of business is not well catered for in Dromahair. The bars are more popular receiving 43% positive feedback, 23% felt neutral or unsure and 35% gave negative reviews. Dromahair's restaurants received mixed reviews with a negative trend of 40% negative reviews, 24% neutral and 36% positive. The local takeaways received similarly mixed reviews with 37% negative, 32% neutral and 31% positive. Dromahair does not have any culture and arts venue. The participants consequently awarded poor reviews (80%), 16% were neutral or unsure. Recreational spaces received mixed reviews with a negative tendency of 41% and 35% positive reviews. The sporting facilities were rated good and very good by 44%, and an equal 28% felt neutral the other gave poor reviews. Live music and events are rated poorly by 66%, while 27% were neutral or unsure, highlighting potential for opportunity.



The participants of the survey expressed an overall feeling of safety in Dromahair. Especially at day when 59% felt safe or very safe and 19% felt unsafe or very unsafe. At night, the number rises to 31% of participants rating their feeling of safety poor or very poor. 45% feel safe or very safe at night. Heritage was rated negatively by 26%, neutral or unsure by 28% and positive by 46%. The tourist facilities suffer 61% negative and 25% neutral reviews. 52% said the parks and green spaces were good or very good, 22% reviewed them poor or very poor. The walks received more positive feedback at 62% good or very good ratings with only 16% of responses giving negative feedback. Dromahair's attractiveness was rated poor or very poor by 20% of participants, 22% felt neutral or unsure and 56% thought it was good or very good. Spaces for youth are a big concern for Dromahair as 45% said those were very poor, 28% thought they were poor, 20% felt neutral or unsure and 7% said they were good.



Housing and Liveability

The participants of the survey were asked what incentives would improve the liveability in Dromahair. This open question received a wide range of replies with some suggesting there was a degree of fragmentation within the community with some raising concerns about the inclusiveness of existing community groups. There was a strong wish from some for more diversity and inclusivity in the community as well as social cohesion and community spirit. Some replies suggested that outsiders find it difficult to integrate and make local friends due to the lack of social events.

Dromahair's liveability could improve with the creation of a public space and a Main Street reorientated away from through traffic and pavement parking. Active travel infrastructure could allow people to move between facilities and services without a car. Residents are wishing for traffic calming measurements especially on the Back Line as drivers tend to speed there, making it unsafe as there is no footpath. Simultaneously, participants expressed the need for more car parking in the centre of the town.

The participants wanted to see a hotel in town again that caters to local functions as well as tourist accommodation. Cafes and restaurants would also increase the liveability and public life in Dromahair. Some would like to see a gym or sport facilities for exercise. Lastly. Respondents felt that dereliction and vacancy must be tackled to create a more welcoming appearance and sense of place.



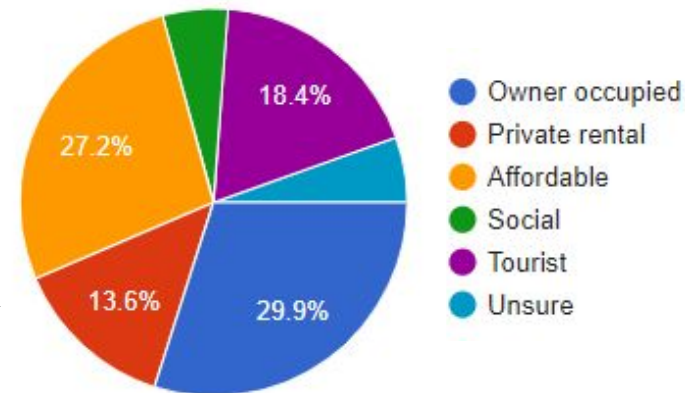
Housing and Liveability

The question in relation to the most needed housing types received a mixed reply with owner occupied being the most popular reply followed by affordable housing. The least popular reply was social housing. The demand for tourist accommodation was also quite high at 18.4% reflecting a wider desire to provide holiday accommodation in a town that was once popular with visitors.

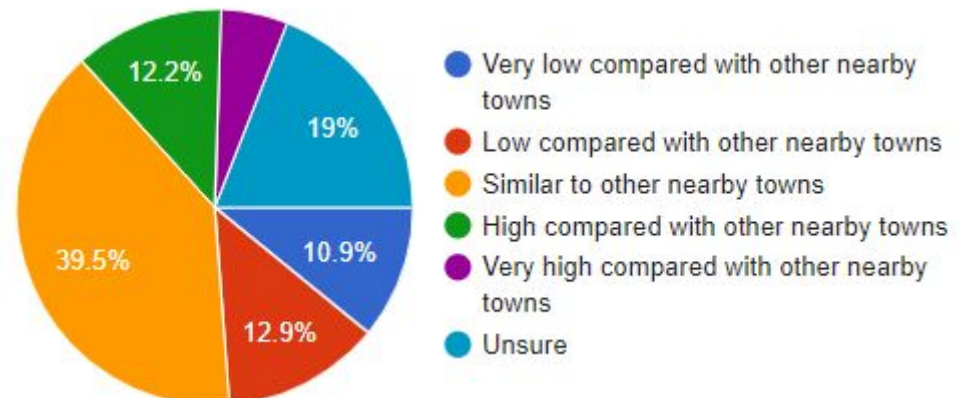
When asked about vacancy rates, the respondents perceived Dromahair to have similar rates to nearby towns (39.5%), whilst 23.8% felt it had lower rates with 17.6% feeling it was higher. A sizeable proportion (19%) admitted to being unsure. The vacancy rate of 34% for Dromahair is notably higher than the figures calculated in Town Centre Health Checks in Manorbhamilton (24.3%), Ballinamore (25%) and Kinlough (6.7%). Whilst these may not have been the reference points for the respondents, it does suggest that the vacancy issue is worse than many residents perceive as many of the vacant premises are residential rather than commercial.



Which housing tenures are most needed in Dromahair?



Do you think vacancy rates in Dromahair are:

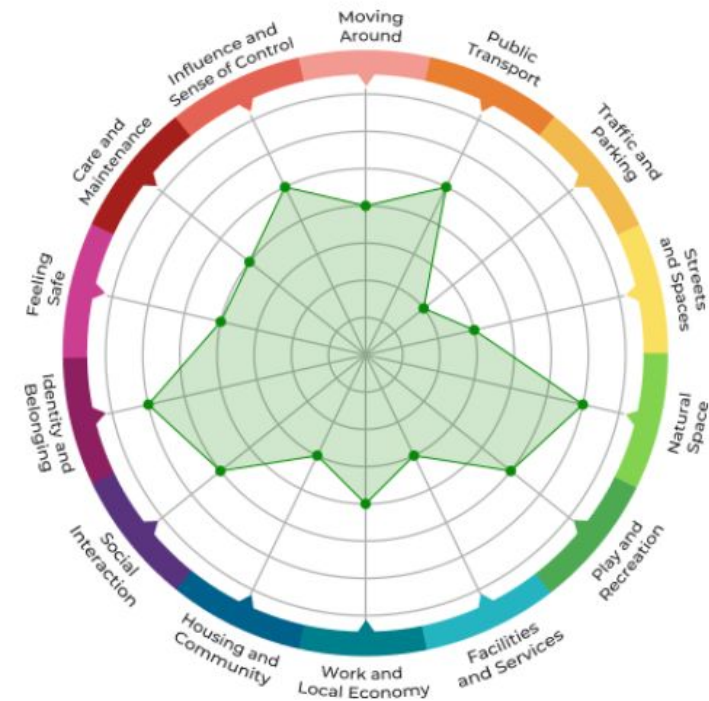


Place Standard Consultation

To complement the questionnaires, an open consultation event was organised in the Depot Community Centre on the afternoon of 29th August. This event allowed residents to informally discuss their feelings about Dromahair with the Scottish Government's Place Standard Tool being utilised to start the wide-ranging conversations that followed. It is based on getting people to score their place from 1 (lots of room for improvement) to 7 (very little room for improvement) against 14 criteria.

The Place Standard consultation is summarised in the diagram to the right, which averages the scores taken for the consultations against the 14 criteria. Those who attended were heavily involved in the community sector within Dromahair and the conversations supported the detail from the questionnaire data.

The strongest scores were for the sense of community and access to green space with a high score also given for play and recreation albeit with aspirations to improve the sports facilities. The lowest score was given for traffic and parking with consultees feeling that the blockages on Main Street at the Centra store was one of the major challenges facing the town. The potential to revisit previous proposals for a one-way gyratory system encompassing Main Street and the Back Line were raised as an opportunity by some. The high rate of vacancy on Main Street was the other major concern raised. Whilst many praised the new library development, they stressed the importance of the former Garda station being re-used for childcare and / or other facilities and for tourist accommodation to be re-established within the town. Residents felt strongly that the development of the Breffni Holiday Homes site will be crucial to the fortunes of Dromahair as it offers a real opportunity to improve access to the River Bonet and to provide accommodation or an attraction to enhance the town's vibrancy. The commuter nature of the town and the lack of local employment opportunities was another issue raised by attendees.



In-person consultation in the Depot Community Centre

Conclusion

SCOT Diagram

This report concludes with a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) analysis, which summarises key findings from questionnaire responses, drop-in consultations, field surveys, and other feedback. The analysis is organised into four sections, each of which highlights the most significant observations.

STRENGTHS

- Active community
- Tranquil atmosphere
- Natural beauty
- Creevelea Abbey – national monument

CHALLENGES

- Limited amenities and services
- Lack of traffic management
- Accessibility issues
- Absence of cycling infrastructure
- Loss of tourism

OPPORTUNITIES

- Heritage tourism
- Outdoor recreation
- Vacant building reuse
- Youth activity space

THREATS

- Competition from other towns
- Uncertain economic development

Conclusion

Strengths

Dromahair is a picturesque town renowned for its natural beauty and abundant outdoor recreational possibilities.

- **Active community:** Dromahair has a vibrant and engaged community as is evident by the high rates of participation in both the online questionnaire and in-person consultation. The Depot community centre is also actively utilised despite its compact size. A community-led seed bank on Main Street is another example of community participation.
- **Natural beauty:** Dromahair is surrounded by outstanding natural beauty. The River Bonet adds to the town's charming character, but access and signposting could be improved.
- **Tranquil atmosphere:** The town's size and scenic landscape setting facilitate a peaceful and slower pace of life. Residents generally feel safe during the day.
- **Creevelea Abbey – a national monument:** The ruins of the Creevelea Abbey which is the last Franciscan Friary founded in Ireland, are located in Dromahair.



Picturesque woodland surroundings of Dromahair

Conclusion

Challenges

- **Limited amenities and services:** While there are some shops and leisure services in Dromahair, many essential amenities and services are not available.
- **Lack of traffic management:** Dromahair would benefit from an introduction of better traffic management as well as car parking. Disorderly car parking along Main Street creates obstructions for other drivers and pedestrians which can lead to potentially dangerous situations in particular when emergency response vehicle struggle to pass through.
- **Accessibility issues:** In conjunction with better traffic management, accessibility improvements could be made to make the town more inclusive. These could entail pavement repairs and obstruction removals, dropped kerbs in designated road crossing locations and others.
- **Absence of cycling infrastructure:** Despite the advertised Abbey - SLNCR Greenway loop, there is no cyclist infrastructure in place within Dromahair town centre. A gradual introduction of such infrastructure would make cycling safer, as well as encourage alternative ways of transportation.
- **Loss of tourism:** Even though the Breffni Holiday Village Complex has been closed for years, the town still receives visitors. However, with no tourist accommodation, limited dining options and challenging infrastructure, the town may experience difficulties with attracting visitors.



Possibilities for a better traffic management system and pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure improvements



Observed during the study visit, obstructions on pavements on Mains Street and the lack of dedicated pavements of Back Line

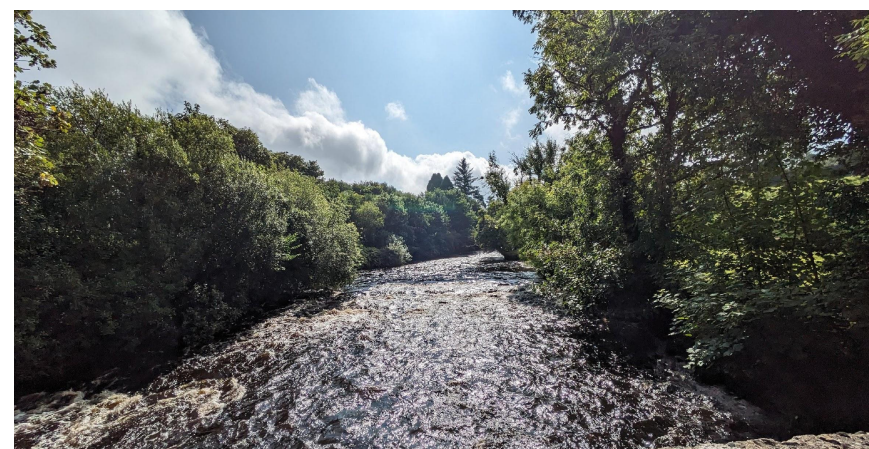
Conclusion

Opportunities

- **Heritage tourism:** Creevelea Abbey is a national monument which may attract visitors to Dromahair thus contributing to the local economy.
- **Outdoor recreation:** Dromahair's natural setting offers attractive open-air recreation which is already being advertised by the Abbey - SLNCR Greenway loop walk. Other opportunities including better maintained riverside walk could further promote active recreation in Dromahair.
- **Vacant building reuse:** High vacancy rates offer flexible possibilities for building reuse. The former Garda station is one such example which is reported to be transformed into a community space in the foreseeable future. Other commercial and residential buildings could also be repurposed in order to bring more residents to Dromahair and thus attract economic activity and investment.
- **Youth activity space:** From the questionnaire responses and during the in-person consultations, the residents have expressed their concern about the lack of dedicated youth spaces in Dromahair by rating them as very poor.



A banner advertising the Wild Atlantic Loop which features Dromahair



Outdoor recreation opportunities in Dromahair by the river Bonet

Conclusion

Threats

- **Competition from other towns:** While almost all of the questionnaire respondents stated that they purchase their groceries in Dromahair, such categories of goods as clothing, footwear, DIY supplies, appliances and furnishings are mostly exclusively purchased elsewhere. The respondents also said that they use banking and professional services outside Dromahair. Most common destinations for these from the questionnaire responses were Sligo, Manorhamilton, Enniskillen, Carrick on Shannon and Drumshanbo. This sheds some light on the current state of competition from the neighbouring towns.
- **Uncertain economic development:** Limited employment opportunities coupled with high dereliction rates may encourage young people to move from Dromahair elsewhere in order to secure employment.



Businesses on Main Street