

Appendix A: Project Details for Master Plan/Business Case - Maghera Walkways

Step 1 – Project Foundation

Project Inception Meeting – Completed Nov 2021

ORNI convened an inception meeting with relevant representatives from Mid Ulster District Council to provide the opportunity to gain further insight into the vision and objectives of the project and the practicalities of the site.

ORNI understands the study area for this project is adjacent to an ongoing Council project to redevelop the former Maghera High School Site as a new mixed-use Enterprise Centre and Business Park. In addition, ORNI, understands there has been some previous opposition to this proposal due to a demand for a public green space.

Strategic Context - Completed December 2021

ORNI undertook an examination of the strategic context within which the site would operate. As part of this process, a detailed examination of the Plan's contribution to local and national policies was undertaken. This included but was not limited to:

- NI Government / Departmental Strategic aims and policy objectives
- Mid Ulster District Council – Corporate Plan, Community Plan, Outdoor Recreation Strategy, Parks and Play Strategy.

Step 2 – Current Position

It was essential that ORNI understood the current position of the site to identify deficiencies and will begin to develop recommendations to improve the current situation. This will provide the foundation for future steps.

Desk Research – Completed January 2022

ORNI have undertaken desk research of any existing studies and information relating to the site. This included but was not limited to:

- Public vs private land ownership
- Land use / management
- Constraints e.g. it is evident the site falls within a flood risk area
- Statutory designations – Built and Natural Heritage
- Plans for adjoining business park and Maghera Development Framework 2018
- Formal and Informal Recreation via external sources such as Strava Global Heat Maps and specialist activity websites / forums

Fieldwork – Completed January 2022

Informed by the aforementioned desk research, ORNI have undertaken fieldwork to identify and assess:

- Deficiencies in current provision
- Opportunities for development / positive control points
- Access points
- Supporting infrastructure carrying capacity e.g. approach roads, car parking, visitor services
- Current recreation offering e.g. trail network, signage, waymarking, interpretation
- Topography/ Ground Conditions

- Risks – e.g. Invasive species e.g. Japanese knotweed, anti-social behaviour, informal activity, dumping / hazardous material

Consultation – Target Date: February 2022

ORNI will undertake consultation at two levels:

(1) Key agencies and stakeholders

This consultation will further inform the findings from desk research and initial fieldwork. For example, consultation may be required as follows:

- Council staff (and appointed planners) – regarding proposals for the business park
- NED / HED – regarding natural and built heritage designations respectively
- DfI Roads – regarding access roads, new entrances, pedestrian crossing points
- Council Planning Dept – regarding all of above

(2) Assessment of need

The objective of this step is to identify the type and need for intervention at the site. This will ensure that proposed solutions are appropriate for the volume, needs and motivations of those who are most likely to engage with the site. ORNI believes projects of this nature can only be sustainable in the long-term if it is fully embraced by the local community. It is envisaged an indicative list of topics for the survey will include:

- Views on strengths and deficiencies in current position
- Identification of proposed interventions (facilities / activities / initiatives)
- Discussion around the anticipated demand and potential target audiences for proposed facilities and services

Key consultation approach will include one-to-one consultation with Council staff / elected Members, key stakeholders / local community representatives, online public meeting (due to COVID restrictions on gatherings) and an online survey. A summary review will provide the key themes identified through consultation.

Step 3 - Analysis and Initial Findings – Target Date: February 2022

ORNI will analyse the findings from the aforementioned steps and draw of international best practice and emerging trends in outdoor recreation to prepare an initial options presentation. This will include a SWOT analysis, consultation feedback, proposed vision, proposed priority visitor segments and spatial concept plan. The latter is a GIS map(s) outlining the interdependence of the key components e.g. recreation, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, linkages to Maghera town. This presentation and facilitated discussion will allow the Council to provide feedback on the key components prior to ORNI working these up in detail within the development plan.

Step 4 - Concept Development – Target Date: March 2022

Following agreement on initial options, ORNI will undertake further investigations (including further fieldwork and consultation) to undertake a technical assessment of key components envisaged to be (as a minimum) core visitor hub area(s), outdoor recreation activities / trails), educational and social activities, traffic flow and parking.

This will be presented in a detailed Spatial Masterplan (which will demonstrate their interdependence) and be supported by commentary. To inform the preparation of costs, ORNI will avail of extensive database of benchmarked costs gained from previous similar projects. Many of ORNI's costed projects have externally verified by CPD or independent Quantity Surveyors and have been found to be accurate.

Rather than providing distinct 'either or' options, the development plan will include phased options with each phase building upon the other to deliver the vision over a timeline e.g. 3-5 years. Phases / options may include i.e. Do Nothing (Status Quo), Do Minimum, Phase 1, Phase 2 etc. The phases will be presented to provide short, medium and long-term options with benefits and outcomes clearly presented. Each component and therefore phase will be individually costed. Phasing will also be guided by an appraisal of current and forecast external funding opportunities. Recommendation of local business / social economy options to use the site will also be proposed.

Step 5 – Final Report – Target Date: April 2022

Prior to submitting the final draft report, ORNI will deliver a presentation of final recommendations and facilitate discussion. Mid Ulster District Council will be provided the opportunity to further comment on draft reports, and these will be reflected as appropriate in the final report.