

ORANMORE

Town Centre Health Check



Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithé
Our Rural
Future



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland





Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

HUB
Planning
People. Places. Planning.




Lár Bailte ar dTús
Town Centre First

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1.2 Methodology

The methodology follows the Heritage Council’s 15-step Collaborative Town Centre Health Check process, which includes desktop audits, public consultation, business consultation and land use audits. The process ensured a structured and inclusive approach, capturing a detailed snapshot of Oranmore’s town centre.

 Disclaimer: Please note that the audits and consultations referenced in this report were conducted in November 2024. This timing may have influenced the observations and outcomes noted, as visitor numbers and activity levels are typically higher in summer months.



Consumer & Business Survey

Two surveys were widely distributed one aimed at gathering public perspectives from residents and visitors and another targeted at local businesses and retailers.



Accessibility Audits

Car parking audits, accessibility audits, desire line analysis and walkability audits were undertaken to provide a comprehensive understanding of movement and connectivity in the area.



Land Use Classification

A land use survey was conducted to assess the town’s land use patterns and vacancy rates, using the GOAD classification system for a colour-coded analysis of land use types and their proportions.



Socio-Economic & Environmental Profiling

A desktop analysis was conducted to examine key social, economic, and environmental data. This was developed in accordance with the CSO Town boundary.



Traffic and Pedestrian Flow Analysis

Traffic and pedestrian counts were conducted to assess movement within and around the town at various times over two days.



SCOT

A strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats (SCOT) analysis was undertaken for Oranmore Town.

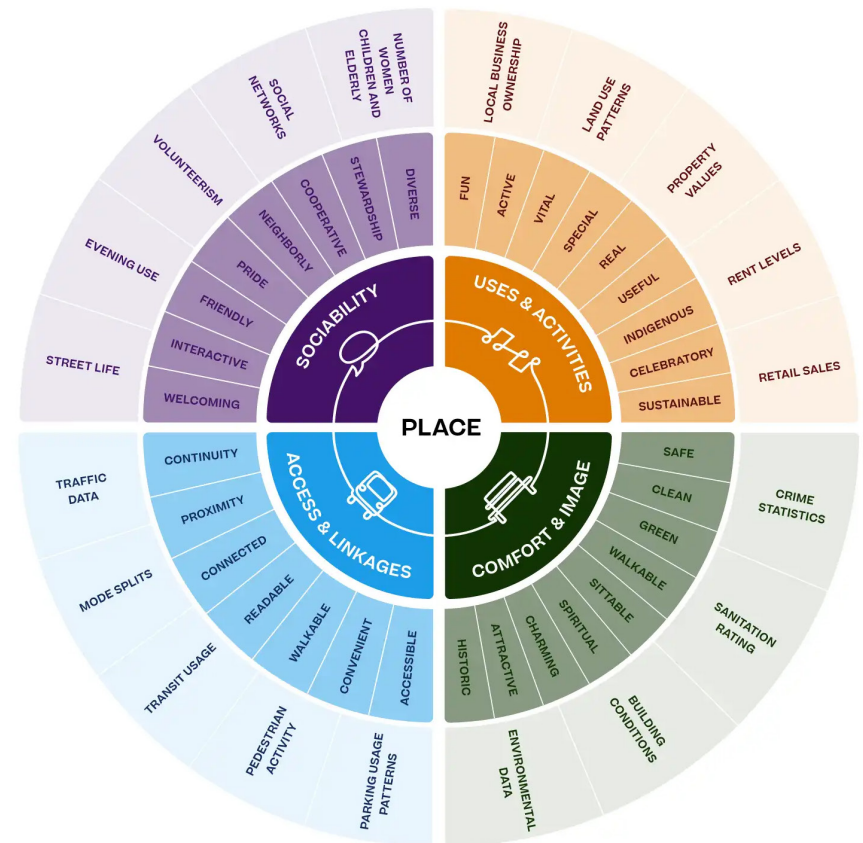
1.3 Report Structure

The report begins with a comprehensive overview of Oranmore Town Centre, starting with 'Introduction and Approach', followed by 'History and Context', 'Community Snapshot' and 'Consultation Snapshot'. These sections provide essential background and an overview of our approach. The body of the report progresses through thematic chapters in accordance with the 'Place Diagram' framework developed by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) (detailed below). It organises key findings into four distinct sections that align with the main categories of the framework: Sociability, Uses and Activities, Comfort and Image, and Access and Linkages. It concludes with a 'SCOT Analysis' that synthesises key findings from consultations, audits, and research, summarising the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The final section, 'Possible Next Steps', builds on the SCOT analysis to suggest actionable strategies.

Placemaking approach

Placemaking is a central theme in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, aligned with broader strategies outlined in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) to enhance quality of life through quality design and strategic public space management. This collaborative process involves the community in creating vibrant, inclusive, and functional public spaces that reflect local identity and cater to specific needs.

Placemaking enhances the vitality of town centres and villages, promoting a sense of belonging and active community engagement. It supports compact growth and enhances well-being by providing diverse and accessible spaces, focusing on elements such as urban design, sustainable travel, and accessibility. This report integrates the 'Place Diagram' framework developed by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), following best practices that foster sustainable and vibrant community-focused urban development.

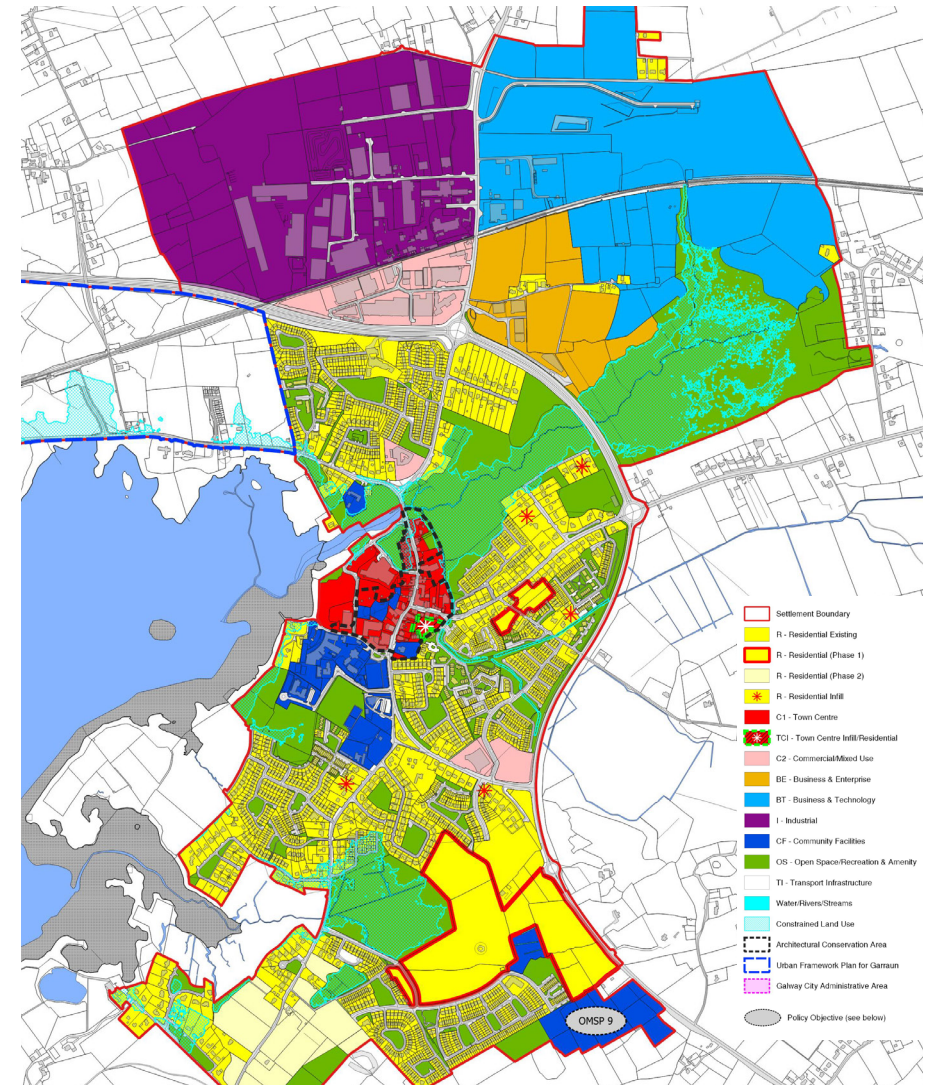


2.0 HISTORY & CONTEXT

Oranmore, located within County Galway, is a growing town just 7 km east of Galway City, positioned on the inner shoreline of Galway Bay. Over recent years the town has expanded significantly while retaining its original village form, with the junction of Main Street and the Old Dublin Road at its core. Oranmore benefits from a mix of commercial activities in the town centre, industrial employment on its northern outskirts, and the scenic and strategic advantages of its coastal location. Its proximity to Galway City, strong transport connections, and desirable living environment have made it a popular residential choice, driving considerable growth. Residential expansion in Oranmore reflects a mix of housing types, including low and medium-density suburban homes and apartments. Most housing is within walking distance of the town centre.

Oranmore Town is identified as a Metropolitan Settlement in the current Metropolitan Area Settlement Plan (MASP). As such, future development will focus on sustainable, plan-led growth to create a vibrant metropolitan town.

The town centre, characterised by a linear development pattern along Main Street, includes a range of retail, mixed-use developments, and commercial offerings, with expanded retail activity in recent years. The council plans to promote further sustainable residential and town-centre development, reuse vacant spaces, and enhance connectivity, aligning with national and regional planning frameworks.




Map: Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 - Oranmore Land Use Zoning Map

3.0 COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

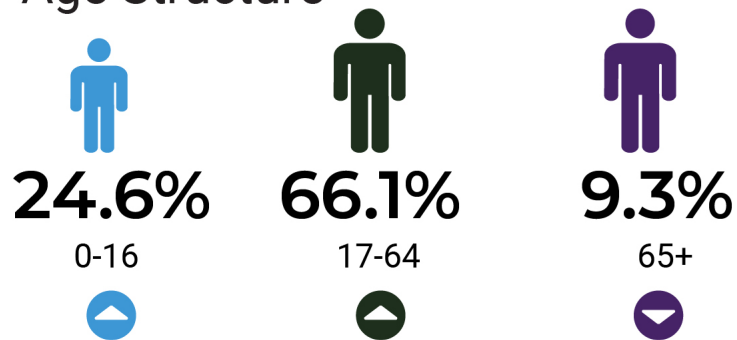
▲ Higher than State ▼ Lower than State — Same as State

Population 2022
5,819

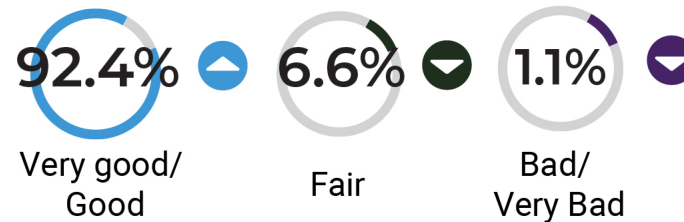
+16.6% ▲
Population
Change
2016-2022

Nationality ▲

2 in 10 people are Non-Irish nationals

Age Structure



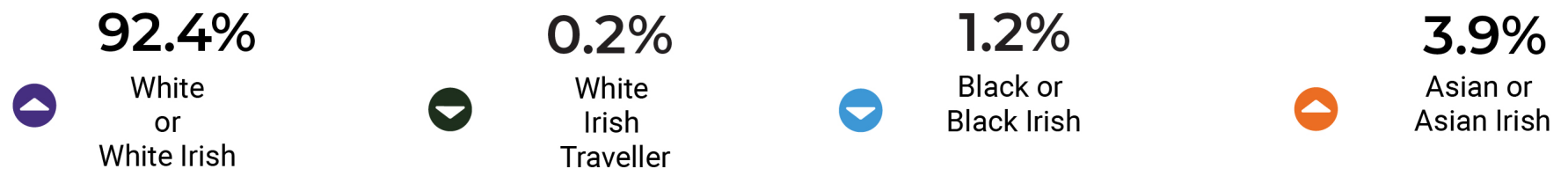
Health



Disability ▼

17.0%
...of the population had
disability of any extent.

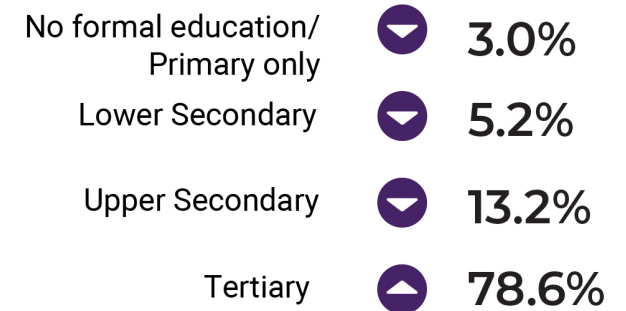
Ethnicity



Economic Status



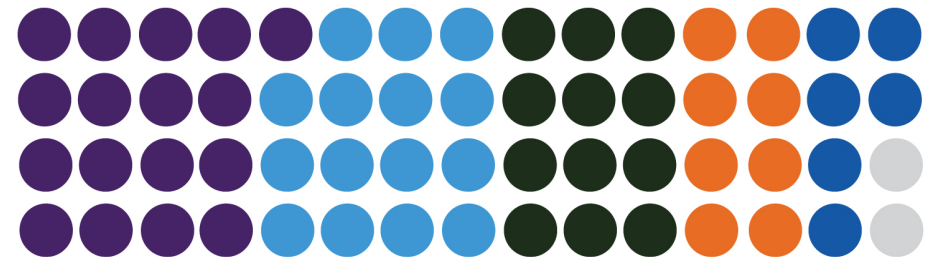
Education Level



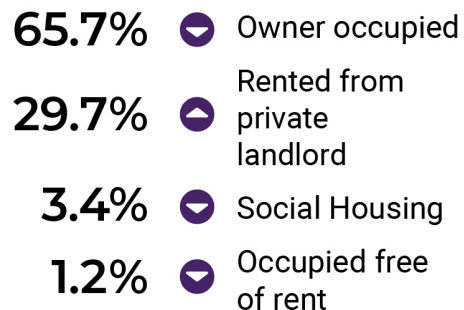
Housing Stock



Household Structure



Tenure Type



4.0 CONSULTATION SNAPSHOT

495+

PUBLIC SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

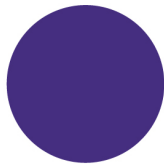
11

BUSINESS SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

4

WALKABILITY
AUDITS

Gender

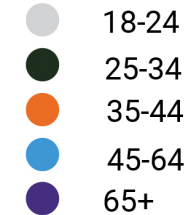
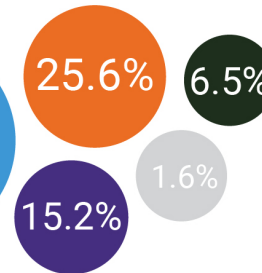
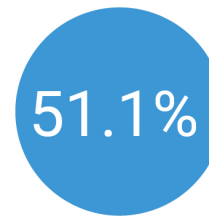


70%
Female

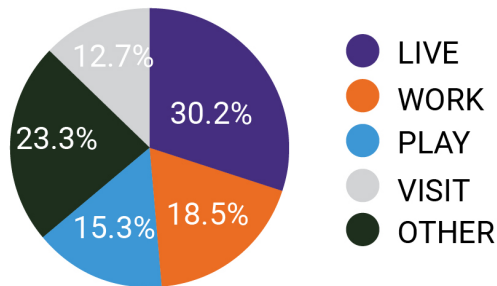


30%
Male

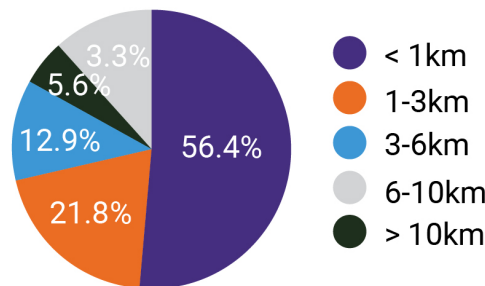
Age



Oranmore is wehere I...



How far do you live from
Oranmore Town Centre?



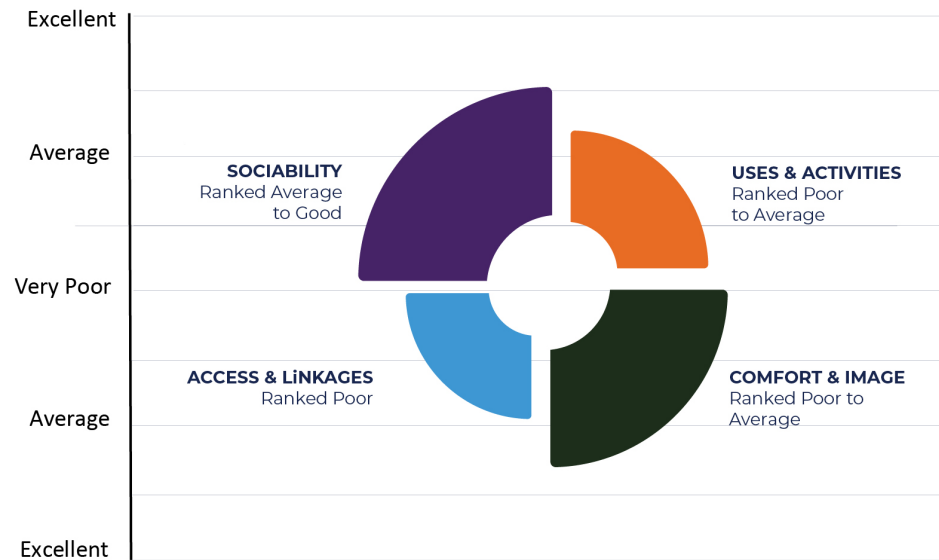
Respondents identified as...



Key Findings Consultation

The figures below outline some of the high-level consultation findings in accordance with the four placemaking themes. Further consultation analysis is provided throughout the report.

Public and business survey participants were asked to rate the four placemaking categories from Very Poor to Excellent.



TOP 5 - HIGHEST RANKING ▲

1. Quality and range of cafes, pubs and restaurants
2. Feeling of safety
3. Sense of community
4. Welcoming environment
5. Cleanliness and maintenance

TOP 5 - LOWEST RANKING ▼

1. Traffic
2. Cycle infrastructure
3. Road safety
4. Access for people with additional needs
5. Availability of parking

WE NEED MORE....



WE NEED LESS....



5.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The diagram below outlines the multi-level planning frameworks that guide our approach, ranging from EU and national strategies to regional and local development plans.



6.0 USES AND ACTIVITIES

This section of the report explores Uses and Activities, which refer to how people engage with a place and the opportunities it offers, such as dining, shopping, recreation, cultural events, public spaces, job opportunities, and housing, all of which contribute to economic development, social interaction and community life.

6.1 Consultation Insights

Working Well

Range of amenities

Aspects under this pillar were generally seen as favourable by respondents to the Public Survey, ranking second highest of the four pillars. Consultations highlight Oranmore's role as a strategic commuter town within the Galway Metropolitan Area, supporting diverse residential and commercial activities. Respondents praised the quality and range of shops (52%) and cafes, pubs and restaurants (83%). Despite this, more than a third of respondents called for more retail options in the town (35%). People wanted to see specific shopping options, including fashion stores, butchers, bakers and hardware stores.

Consultation findings

How locals rated the 'Uses and Activities' aspects of Oranmore.



Active business location

Most people reported going to Oranmore to avail of services such as 'Grocery shopping' (98%), 'Going for lunch, tea or coffee' (97%) and 'Going out for dinner or socialising in pubs' (94%). Of the people who felt they had to leave Oranmore to avail of goods or services (70%) reported only having to go as far as Galway City. Mirroring these user perspectives, the majority of business respondents (91%) felt satisfied with their commercial accommodation in Oranmore and 60% reported improved trading conditions over both the last 12 months and last two years.

Areas for Improvement

Cultural attractions

The respondents to the public survey identified local 'Tourist amenities' as well as 'Cultural spaces and venues' as the poorest aspects, identifying many identified the economic potential of tourism in Oranmore as significant. Calls for more community facilities such as a central community meeting space, theatre, youth facilities and arts spaces.

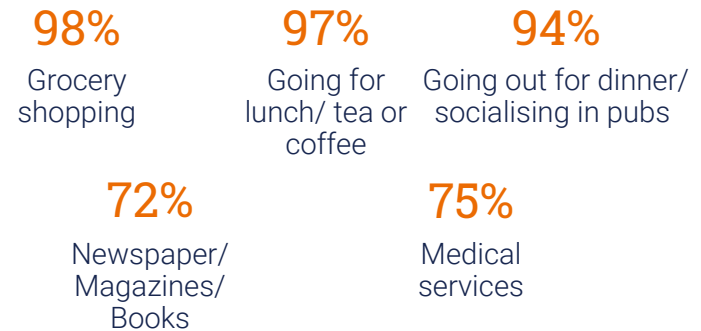
Natural amenities

Despite 'Recreation and sport facilities' rating highly, local walking trails featured as the third lowest aspect under this category. Likewise, more than a third (35%) of respondents rated the natural and green

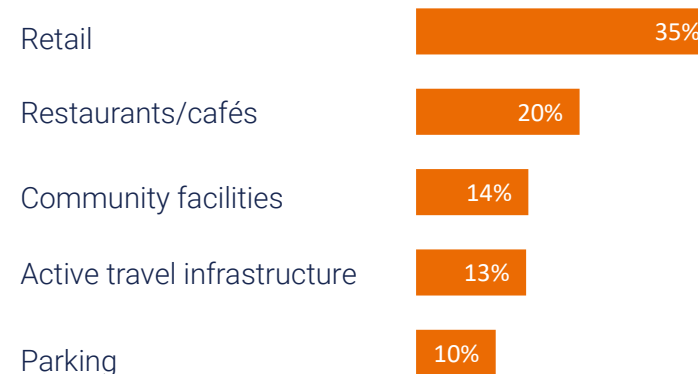
spaces in the town negatively. People wanted to see additional green spaces worked into the town, such as a park, stressing it should be accessible and family friendly.

Consultation findings

Do you go to Oranmore to purchase any of the following goods or services?



Are there any shops, services or amenities missing from Oranmore?



6.2 Land Use Audit

A land use audit for Oranmore was undertaken on the 22nd of November 2024. It involved a team walking the town centre, carrying out a visual inspection from street level and recording the various uses of the ground floors of buildings. These uses were then recorded on a map using the GOAD classification system to ascertain the various ratios of different land use types within the Town Centre.

Most and least common land use types

The analysis revealed that the most common type of land use in the Town Centre was Public Service, accounting for 7,988m² of the ground floor space in the study area, or 24.4% of the total. This was primarily attributed to Oranmore Girls National School, Oranmore Boys National School and Oranmore Library to the southern boundary of the study area. Although slightly beyond the primary study area boundary, they were chosen to be included as they form an integral part of the life and function of the Town Centre. The least common type of land use in the Town Centre was Comparison retail, accounting for 857m² of the ground floor space in the study area, or 2.6% of the total.

Vacancy rates

Vacant or unoccupied buildings (including those unoccupied due to renovations) accounted for 1,410m² of the building footprints in the Town Centre or 4.3% of the overall total. Most of these were concentrated on the north end of Main Street, with a few vacant units scattered across other areas of the Town.

Leisure and retail services

There was a relatively high provision of leisure services within the Town, including cafes, restaurants, pubs and hotels. These accounted for 4,949m² of the ground floor land use or 15.1% of the total. Retail services such as hair and beauty salons, car services and funeral directors were also frequent in the town, accounting for 2,555m² of the ground floor land use, 7.8% of the total.

Convenience and comparison retail

Convenience retail such as supermarkets represented a large percentage of the overall Town Centre land use at 6,326m² or 19.3% of the total, despite there only being three premises recorded under this use. This is attributed to the large Adli and Tesco supermarkets on Castle Road. Conversely, comparison retail, such as clothing and homeware shops, accounted for a much lower overall area at 857m², or 2.6%, despite eight premises being recorded.

Residential

While there were some residential dwellings recorded within the Town Centre, with 24 houses accounting for 3,844m² or 11.7% of the overall land use, the vast majority of housing in the area is concentrated in housing estates to the north, east and south of the Town Centre.

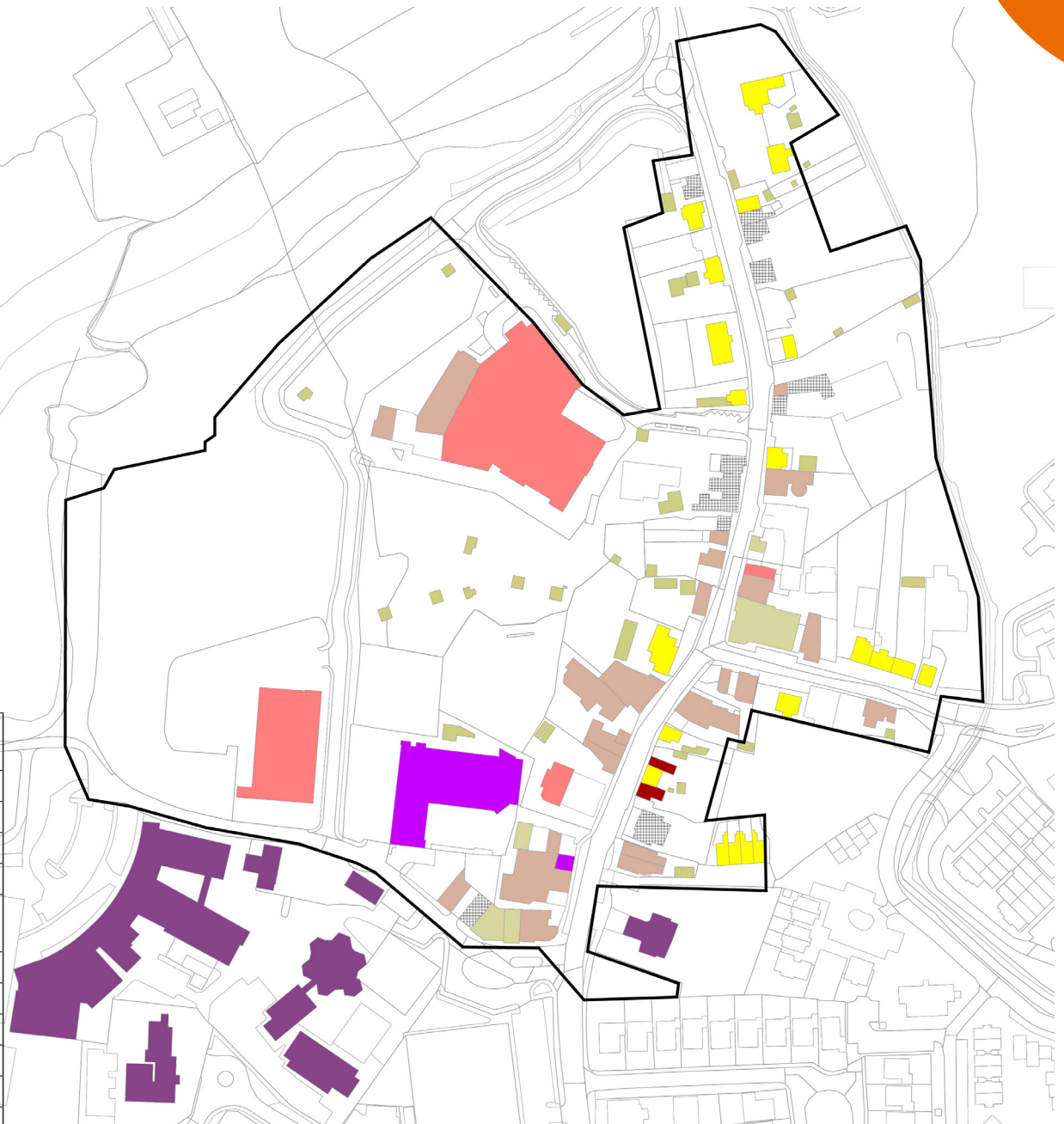
12%
Residential

4%
Vacant properties

22%
Convenience and
comparison retail

15%
Leisure services

Colour Code	Classification	Total area m ²	Percentage of overall
Red	Comparison	857	2.6%
Light Red	Convenience	6,326	19.3%
Dark Red	Retail Service	2,555	7.8%
Brown	Leisure Services	4,949	15.1%
Light Green	Financial and business services	1,108	3.4%
Dark Purple	Health and Medical services	2,115	6.5%
Medium Purple	Public Service	7,989	24.4%
Orange	Religious Service	0.0	0.0%
White	Vacant	1,410	4.3%
Light Green	Storage and Warehousing	1,582	4.8%
Yellow	Residential	3,844	11.7%



6.3 Key socio-economic insights:

Significant growth in housing stock

- The population increased by 16.6% (829 people), reaching a total of 5,819 people. Concurrently, the housing stock grew by 17.0%, with 2,136 units recorded by 2022. This dual growth in population and housing evidently outpaced the broader trends in Galway County, where population growth was 7.8% and housing stock increased by 9.1%, as well as the overall State averages with population at 8.1% and housing at 9.6%.

High proportion of flats and apartments

- Across Oranmore, more than one in five dwellings (22.0%) was a flat or apartment, significantly higher than the equivalent proportions for Galway County (4.5%) and the State (13.0%).

Significant proportion of private rental dwellings

- Private rentals accounted for 29.7% of housing, significantly above the averages for Galway County (14.2%) and the State (18.8%). As would be expected therefore, the proportion of owner occupied dwellings (65.7%) was lower than Galway County (78.8%) and the State (68.9%). However, between 2016 to 2022, Oranmore saw an increase (9.1%) in owner-occupied homes and a decrease in private rentals (8.8%).

Relatively low rent prices compared to the County

- As of 2023, Oranmore's average monthly rent (€1,245.53) was lower than the average for Galway City and County (€1,390.02). This also represented a significant increase in rent (21.7%) between 2018 and 2023.

Smaller household size

- Oranmore's average household size of 2.72 people is notably smaller than both Galway County's average of 2.83 and the State's at 2.79.

Source: CSO

7.0 ACCESS AND LINKAGES

This section of the report examines the vital role of accessibility and connectivity in public spaces. Placemaking emphasises creating engaging, easily accessible areas that encourage frequent visits. Accessibility depends on integration with the surrounding environment, with effective public spaces designed for easy entry and navigation.

7.1 Key consultation insights

Working well

Public transport

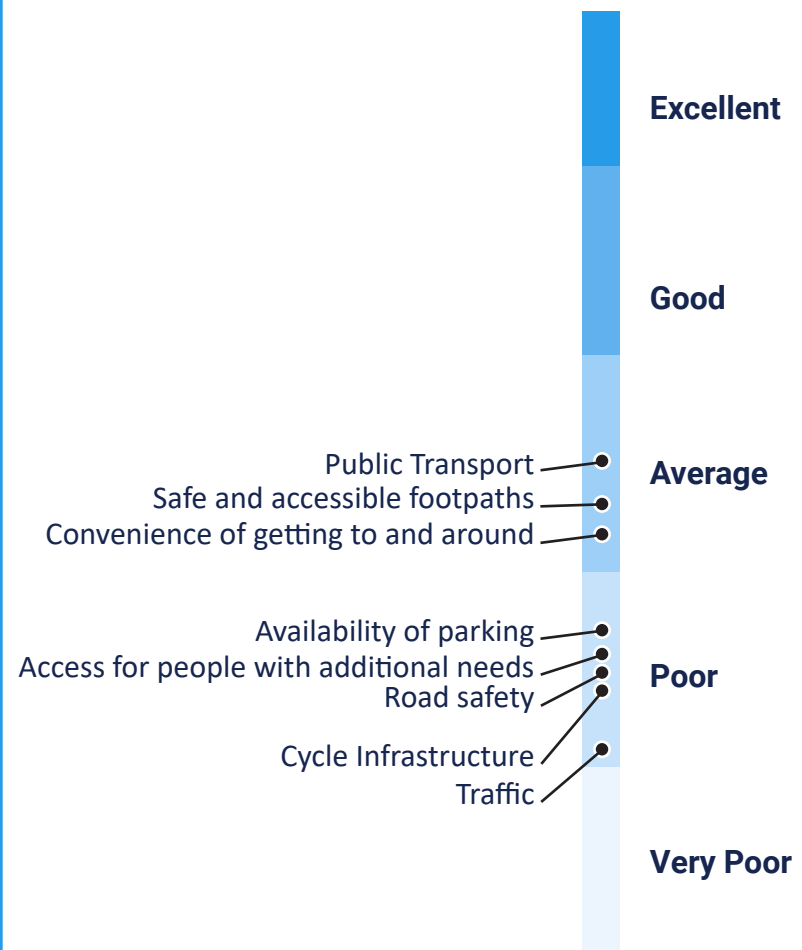
Despite receiving mixed reviews (30% positive and 37% negative) public transport was the highest rated aspect under this theme. This suggests that people were appreciative of the current public transport but wanted to see expansions and improvements. This was reflected in nearly half of respondents suggesting improvements to public transport (47%), including better integration at the train station, expanded bus services, and new park-and-ride facilities to decrease car use.

Convenience and location

Oranmore's strategic location within the Galway Metropolitan Area gives it excellent access to key transport corridors, including the N6

Consultation findings

How locals rated the 'Access and Linkages' aspects of Oranmore.



Dublin-Galway Motorway and the N18 Limerick-Galway route. Many identified the strength of having the Galway-Dublin railway line running through the town, offering rail connectivity and reinforcing Oranmore's position as a key commuter hub. Within this category the highest ranking items were 'Public Transport', 'Safe and accessible footpaths' and 'Getting to and around Oranmore', with each aspects rated as marginally below average. A relatively high proportion of survey respondents (69%) reported that they travelled into Oranmore by foot 'Always' or 'Quite often'.

Areas for improvement

Traffic

Overall, Access and Linkages was rated the lowest of the four pillars. One of the main contributing aspects to this was 'Traffic' which rated as the lowest aspect of all four pillars. Traffic congestion at key junctions, was identified as a particular challenge. In the business survey, 90% of respondents rated traffic as poor or very poor. The development of a one-way system was requested by 41% of public survey respondents, to reduce traffic congestion.

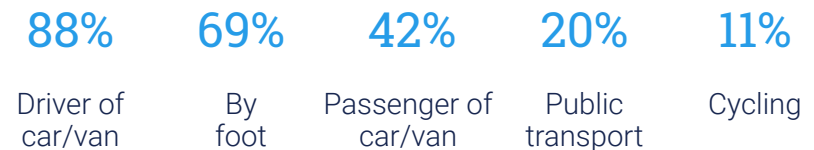
Road safety

Some of the other aspects which were rated low were 'Cycle Infrastructure' and 'Road safety', both of which were considered poor due to the volume of traffic and a perception that current pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is underdeveloped, with gaps in connectivity

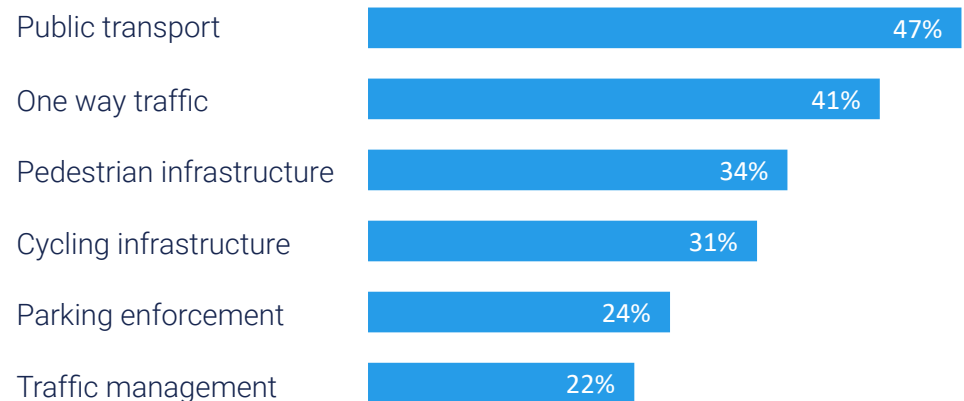
between residential areas, schools, and the town centre. Enhancing footpaths and providing safe, dedicated cycle routes was identified as a priority for improving local accessibility.

Consultation findings

What is your primary mode of travel into Oranmore town?



What would make getting to and around Oranmore easier for you?



7.2 Vehicle Counts

Vehicle counts were carried out to assess the relative levels of traffic and vehicle activity in Oranmore Town Centre at specific times and locations. Counters at each location recorded the number and types of vehicles and their direction of travel (towards or away from the Town Centre). The vehicle counts were conducted in tandem with the pedestrian counts. They were conducted over two days, Friday the 22nd and Saturday the 23rd of November, for three 30-minute periods each day (13:00–13:30, 15:00–15:30, and 17:00–17:30) from four different locations:

- Main Street outside the Library
- Dublin Road outside the Bank
- Castle Road near the all-weather pitch car park
- Bridge on the R338 north of the Town Centre.

Total number of vehicles recorded

The total number of vehicles recorded on the 22nd was 5,882 and the total number recorded on the 23rd was 4,320. This gave a combined total of 10,202 over the two days.

Busiest and quietest location

The busiest single location was the bridge, with 4,129 vehicles recorded over the two days (2,401 on the 22nd and 1,728 on the 23rd). The busiest single counting session was on the bridge from 13:00–13:30 on the 22nd with 956 vehicles recorded (620 travelling towards the Town Centre and 336 moving away from the Town Centre).

The quietest location for vehicles was Castle Road, with 1,091 vehicles recorded over the two days (571 on the 22nd and 520 on the 23rd). The quietest single counting session was on the Castle Road from 17:00–17:30 on the 23rd with 136 vehicles recorded (30 travelling towards the Town Centre and 106 moving away from the Town Centre).

Busiest and quietest count time

The busiest period over the two days was from 15:00–15:30 on the 22nd, with a combined total of 2,059 vehicles recorded, with 1,103 recorded travelling towards the Town Centre, and 956 recorded travelling away from the Town Centre. The quietest periods over the two days was from 17:00–17:30 on the 23rd with a combined total over 1,155 vehicles recorded, with 528 recorded moving towards the Town Centre, and 627 recorded moving away from the Town Centre.

Types of vehicles

The total number of vehicles recorded by type were; Cars: 10,049 (98.50%), Bicycles: 37 (0.36%), Buses: 21 (0.21%), Lorries and Trucks: 95 (0.93%) and Tractors and other machinery: 0 (0.00%). This demonstrates the high use of personal vehicles in or passing through Oranmore Town Centre, with much lower rates of public transport and active travel use.

7.3 Pedestrian Footfall

Pedestrian footfall counts were carried out to assess the relative levels of pedestrian activity in the Town Centre at specific times and at specific locations. Pedestrian counts were conducted over two days, Friday the 22nd and Saturday the 23rd of November, for three 30-minute periods each day (13:00–13:30, 15:00–15:30, and 17:00–17:30). Counting Locations included:

- Main Street outside the Library
- Dublin Road outside the Bank
- Castle Road near the all-weather pitch car park
- Bridge on the R338 north of the Town Centre.

Total number of pedestrians recorded

The total number of pedestrians recorded on the 22nd was 1,259 and and 1,027 on the 23rd of November. This gave a combined total of 2,286 pedestrians recorded over the six times across two days.

Busiest and quietest location

The busiest single location was Main Street, with 962 pedestrians recorded over the two days (502 on the 22nd and 460 on the 23rd). The busiest single counting session was on Main Street from 15:00-15:30 on the 22nd with 262 pedestrians recorded (115 moving towards the Town Centre and 147 moving away from the Town Centre).

The quietest location was the bridge to the north of the Town Centre, with 305 pedestrians recorded over the two days (153 on the 22nd and 152 on the 23rd).

	TIME	Location				DIRECTION	HOURLY TOTAL
		Main Street	Dublin Road	Castle Road	Bridge		
22nd NOVEMBER	13.00-13.30	TOWARDS	179	135	60	620	994
		AWAY	211	202	90	336	839
	15.00-15.30	TOWARDS	339	131	126	507	1103
		AWAY	321	200	100	335	956
	17.00-17.30	TOWARDS	483	109	98	292	982
		AWAY	418	182	97	311	1008
DAILY TOTAL		1951	959	571	2401	5882	
23rd NOVEMBER	13.00-13.30	TOWARDS	237	144	119	342	842
		AWAY	272	150	106	259	787
	15.00-15.30	TOWARDS	263	65	90	301	719
		AWAY	244	183	69	321	817
	17.00-17.30	TOWARDS	156	82	30	260	528
		AWAY	162	114	106	245	627
DAILY TOTAL		1334	738	520	1728	4320	

Difference in direction of travel

Relatively high volumes of vehicles were recorded in the Town Centre with a relatively small difference in the direction of travel (1.31% more vehicles recorded travelling towards the Town Centre). This indicates that a sizeable portion of the vehicles travelling through Oranmore have a destination which is not within the Town Centre and are only passing through.

7.4 Parking Spaces

A car parking audit was undertaken on the 23rd of November. This was done to assess the overall capacity of the Town Centre for cars. The audit involved counting and recording the number and type of car parking spaces available in Oranmore Town Centre. This was then cross-referenced with a similar study that MÓR Action carried out in October 2021.

Public car parking spaces

Public car parking within the Town Centre is available primarily on the Main Street, the Dublin Road and in the car park beside the astroturf pitches on the southern boundary of the study area. These locations have 59, 12 and 64 car parking spaces respectively. There are an additional 28 spaces available outside the study area on the far side of the astroturf pitches. These combine to give a total of 163 public parking spaces in and near the Town Centre.

	TIME	Main Street	Dublin Road	Castle Road	Bridge	DIRECTION	HOURLY TOTAL	
22nd NOVEMBER	13.00-13.30	53	135	43	29	TOWARDS	183	
		88	202	65	29	AWAY	219	
	15.00-15.30	115	131	47	28	TOWARDS	245	
		147	200	48	21	AWAY	256	
	17.00-17.30	55	109	35	22	TOWARDS	170	
		44	182	44	24	AWAY	186	
	DAILY TOTAL		502	959	282	153		1259
23rd NOVEMBER	13.00-13.30	85	37	26	30	TOWARDS	178	
		99	42	39	16	AWAY	196	
	15.00-15.30	95	42	36	35	TOWARDS	208	
		95	35	37	35	AWAY	202	
	17.00-17.30	47	45	19	29	TOWARDS	140	
		39	28	29	7	AWAY	103	
	DAILY TOTAL		460	229	186	152		1027

Public accessible parking spaces

There were six public accessible car parking spaces recorded, three in the astroturf pitches car park, two outside the library on Main Street, and one outside Bank of Ireland on the Dublin Road.

Private/semi-private car parking spaces

There were of 778 private/semi-private car parking spaces in Oranmore. These include areas within the Town Centre that had private / semi-private parking spaces. The breakdown of these parking spaces is as follows:

- Tesco – 390 spaces
- Aldi – 90 spaces
- Oran Point – 155 spaces
- Howley Square (under Bank of Ireland) – 77 spaces
- Under Keane's Pub – 66 spaces

Private parking outside the study area

In addition to these, there are a number of nearby parking areas outside of the study area including; Lidl (219 spaces), Oran Town Centre (185) and Connolly's Pharmacy (6).

EV charging points

There were no EV charging points recorded in the town. The ESB Charge Point data showed the closest were two standard chargers at Oranmore Train Station car park, approximately 1.5km from the Town Centre, this car park has 140 spaces of which eight are accessible.

7.5 Walkability Audit

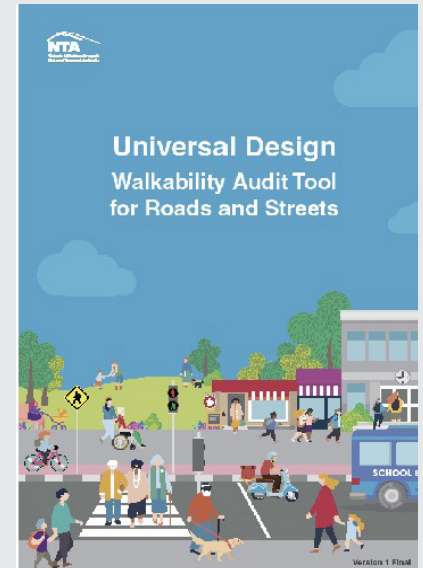
A walkability audit was carried out in Oranmore Town Centre using the Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool which was developed as a collaboration between the National Transport Authority, Age Friendly Ireland, Green-Schools and the National Disability Authority's Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. Universal Design defines walkability as the extent to which the built environment is friendly to the presence of people walking, living, shopping, visiting, engaging or spending time in an area. The audit is intended to be carried out by a wide range of people of various ages and abilities including disability and older people's organisations, advocacy organisations, school travel planners, members of the public and Local Authority officers.

The audit was undertaken on the 22nd of November with four participants, two female and two male ranging with diverse range of ages from 30 to 65, none of which reported mobility difficulties. The audits lasted approximately 45 minutes and covered a predetermined route around the Town Centre covering Main Street, part of the Dublin Road and part of Castle Road. The facilitator questioned participant on various conditions and factors such as footpaths, facilities, road crossings, road-user behaviour, safety, look and feel, the local school and desire lines. A discussion was also held with all participants at the end to record observations and recommendations.

On the 23rd of November, a phone interview also interview took place with two other residents, one of whom was a wheelchair user. The interview involved discussing the same conditions as the walkability audit and recording the interviewee's experiences and opinions on the accessibility of Oranmore Town Centre.

Pedestrian infrastructure, e.g. crossings

Concern was raised due to the lack of pedestrian crossing infrastructure in the Town Centre. There is one set of pedestrian crossing traffic lights opposite the astroturf car park, and while there were no issues reported with them, they are the only designated crossing point, controlled or otherwise, in the Town Centre. This, combined with the high volumes of traffic, makes crossing the road difficult, particularly for more vulnerable road users.



Car parking/road user behaviour

Participants reported that in general road user behaviour was not an issue. It was felt that the majority of drivers passing through the town drive safely and are courteous and accommodating to pedestrians and other road users. The main issue identified regarding vehicles and road users was poor parking practices. High frequencies of vehicles fully or partially parked on the footpaths, as well as larger vehicles hanging over the footpath, were noticed, creating barriers to access and very narrow footpath space in some cases. There were also concerns raised about the illegal use of accessible parking spaces and little to no enforcement of parking laws.

Outside school

School drop-off and collection times were considered the cause of some of the heavier traffic times in the Town Centre, which was somewhat supported by the vehicle count. Some felt that there was a high reliance on personal vehicles for dropping off and collecting children from school, even for students who lived nearby, as heavy traffic was considered a safety issue preventing active travel use.

Desire lines

Desire lines are informal paths created by pedestrians or cyclists as they take the most direct or convenient route between two points, often ignoring designated pathways. They are a concept put forward by many authors and planners such as Jan Gehl and Jane Jacobs.

There is heavy reliance on the use of personal vehicles for people accessing Oranmore Town Centre. This is supported in part by the relatively large volume of traffic recorded during the vehicle count. As a result of this, the majority of identified desire lines resulted from people getting from where they parked their car to where they were going within the Town Centre. Some examples of these desire lines included; Crossing Castle Road from the Astro turf car park to access Main Street, walking and crossing Main Street at various points, crossing the Dublin Road or getting from Castle Road to Main Street. It was noticed that many of these desire lines lacked adequate infrastructure, particularly in relation to pedestrian crossings.

7.6 Key socio-economic insights:

High car ownership

- With 94.0% of households owning a car, this rate is higher than Galway County's 92.1% and significantly above the national average, despite the overall car ownership rate appearing lower at 6.0% for households without a motor vehicle. Additionally, Oranmore has a higher incidence of households owning one or two cars, with 42.2% and 44.7% respectively, surpassing Galway County figures, which stand at 36.6% and 43.1%.

Relatively low usage of public transport

- According to the 2022 Census, 4.8% of Oranmore's workforce utilises public transport services such as buses, minibuses, coaches, or trains. This is higher than the figure for Galway County (2.0%) but lower than the State average (8.5%). For transport to school, the proportion of people using public transport in Oranmore (9.0%) was less than half the averages for Galway County (19.1%) and the State (18.8%).

High proportion of short commutes

- Oranmore has a substantial proportion of its workforce, 36.8%, with a commute duration of less than 15 minutes. This is notably higher than both Galway County (35.1%) and the State (32.9%).

Shorter commute durations

- The commuting trends in Oranmore highlight a preference for shorter commute times. Specifically, 34.1% of commutes fall within the 15 to 30-minute range, a significant proportion that exceeds both Galway County (26.7%) and the State (31.5%).

Significant broadband internet infrastructure

- A significant majority of households in Oranmore (94.9%) had broadband internet. This proportion was considerably above average for both Galway County (80.9%) and the State (86.2%).

Source: CSO

8.0 COMFORT AND IMAGE

This report section explores 'Comfort and Image' within placemaking. It focuses on enhancing public spaces through safety, cleanliness, and amenities like seating, which are crucial for fostering welcoming environments. Public furniture, lighting, and art play key roles in improving both aesthetics and functionality to create vibrant, people-centric spaces.

8.1 Key consultation insights

Working Well

Streetscapes

'Cleanliness and maintenance' (59%) and 'Shopfronts and signage' (45%) received the highest proportions of positive ratings under this pillar. This highlights the appreciation that survey respondents have for the look of the Town Centre and the efforts that go into maintaining it. In the business survey, 82% of respondents reported that they had recently invested in upgrading their business or premises in the last five years. Some examples included shopfront and signage upgrades and external space improvements.

Built heritage

Aspects under this pillar were generally seen as favourable by

Consultation findings

How locals rated the 'Comfort and Image' aspects of Oranmore.



respondents to the Public Survey. Oranmore’s unique town centre character is shaped by a narrow main street, historic buildings, and a combination of vernacular architecture and structures of architectural interest. Consultation indicated the town has a local distinctiveness and strong visual identity, 34% of respondents saw built heritage as a strength of the town. Strengthening the historic streetscape and improving the visual quality of the built environment were highly requested during consultation.

Areas for Improvement

Dereliction

More than half of respondents (55%) identified vacancy and dereliction as an issue in the town, making it the largest challenge identified under this theme. Almost a quarter of respondents (22%) stated that addressing vacancy was the chief way they would improve the look and feel of the town. People suggested incentives and encouragements could help families and businesses move into and repurpose empty properties.

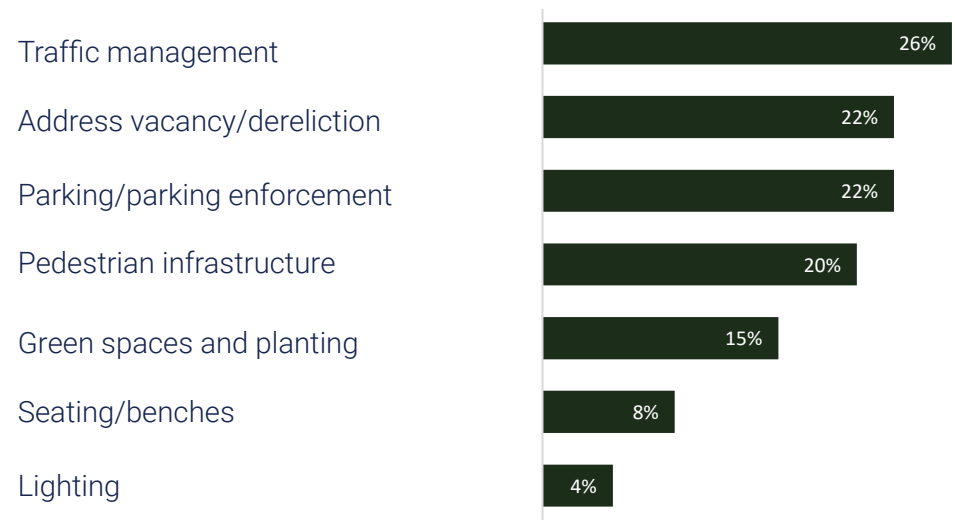
Amenity impacts from traffic and parking

The most requested visual improvements were ‘reduced traffic and increased traffic management,’ noted by 26% of respondents. This reflects respondents’ desire to address traffic and issues to mitigate

their negative impact on the appearance and atmosphere of Oranmore Town Centre. Consultation revealed that the dominance of car parking in the town centre was perceived as detracting from the public realm. Reorganising parking and increased prioritisation of pedestrian and cyclist was requested followed by the request for increased street planting and public furniture.

Consultation findings

What would you like to see done to improve the look and feel of Oranmore?



8.2 Natural Heritage and Conservation

Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)

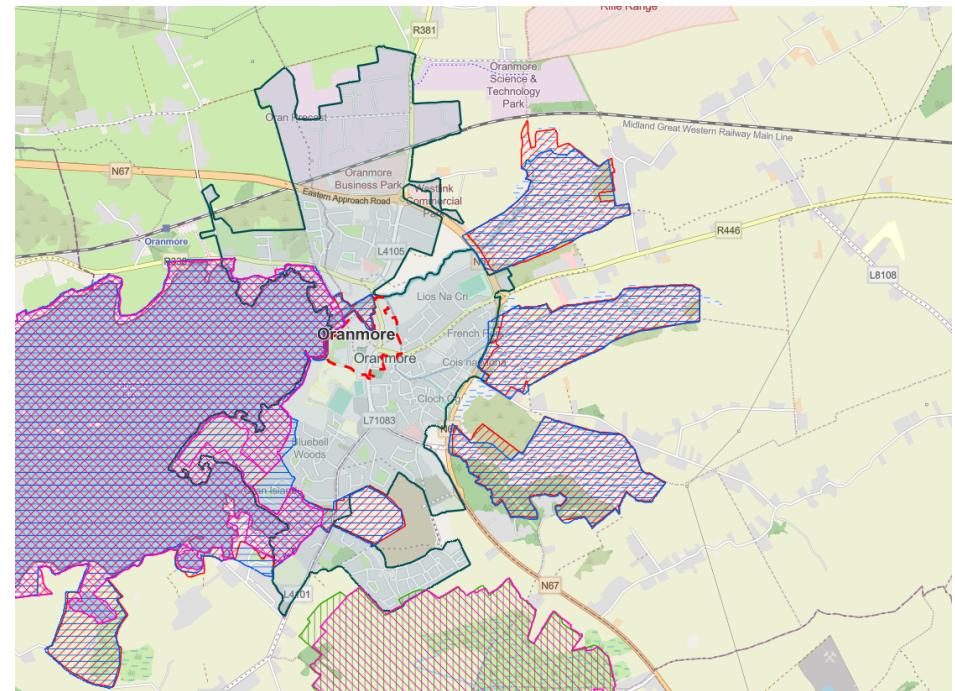
This is an area considered important for the habitats present or which holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. The Cregganna Marsh NHA is located to the south of Oranmore. Additionally, the Galway Bay Complex, consisting of the bay to the west and three areas of marshland to the east of town, is a proposed NHA.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. The Galway Bay Complex is currently an SAC, supporting protected species, including freshwater and marine otters, as well as harbour seals. The area includes diverse SAC habitats such as tidal mudflats, Atlantic salt meadows, potential Atlantic/ Mediterranean salt meadows, juniper scrub, and lake habitats.

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

SPAs are specific areas that are designated for the protection of threatened bird species. The inner Galway Bay SPA is home to more than 21 EU designated protected species and the Cregganna Marsh SPA is a protection area for Greenland White-fronted Goose.



8.3 Environmental Quality

Data from the EPA provides insights into the environmental quality and levels of air, water and noise pollution local to Oranmore.

Air

The Air Quality Index for Health range from 1 (good air quality) to 10 (very poor air quality), Oranmore's nearest air monitoring station, Briarhill, has a rating of 2 meaning good air quality.

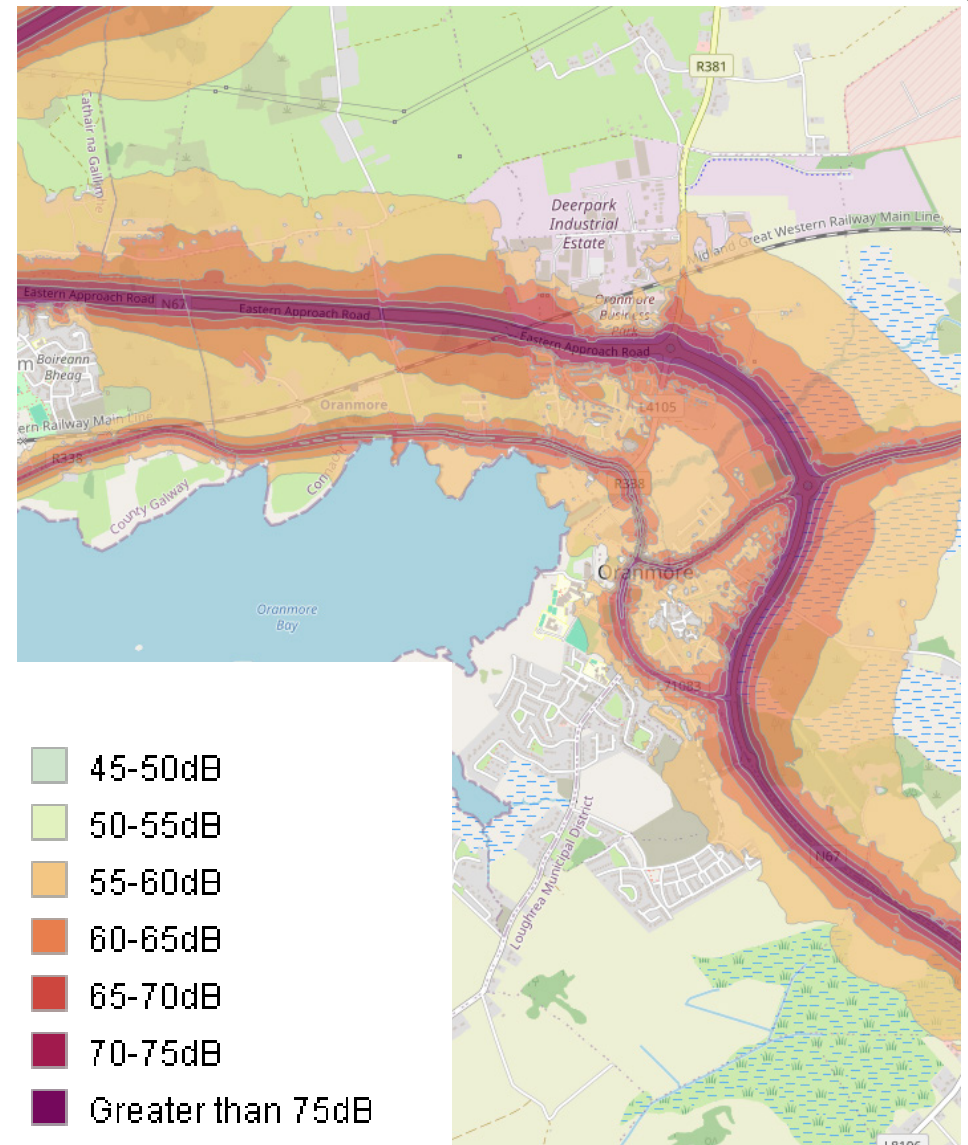
However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies most of Oranmore town as a high-radon area, with approximately 1 in 5 homes likely to have elevated radon levels.

Water

Oranmore bay was classified as an unpolluted transitional water area, across to the most recent reporting period of 2018-2020.

Noise

The map shows noise level data for Oranmore from 2022. The N67 and areas of the R338 have noise levels exceeding 75 dB, however, most of the town is covered by areas of 55-65 dB.



8.4 Key socio-economic insights:

Increasing crime rate

- In 2023, Oranmore Station had the 3rd highest number of crimes reported in the Galway Division. Within Oranmore Station, the most common crimes were theft and related offences (240), followed by assaults, harassments and related offences (71) and public order and other social code offences (65). Oranmore Station showed a 29.3% increase in the number of crimes recorded between 2022 (463) and 2023 (594). Despite this increase, 'Feeling of Safety' still ranked highly with an overall rating of 'Good' within the community survey.

Very low vacancy rate

- Across Oranmore, the proportion of vacant dwellings was only 4.9%, less than half the proportion for Galway County (10.7%) and below average for the State (7.7%). Additionally, Oranmore saw a sharp decrease in vacancy rate (-3.7%) between 2016 and 2022, compared to only -1.6% in across Galway County.

Highly skilled and educated population

- Oranmore's residents are highly educated and skilled, with 24.8% holding an honours bachelor degree or professional qualification, and 23.3% possessing a postgraduate diploma or degree, surpassing both Galway County (13.8% and 11.8%) and the State (14.2% and 12.0%). Reflecting this educational attainment, 45.3% of Oranmore's workforce is engaged in managerial and technical roles, and 18.7% in professional occupations, both figures exceeding the averages for Galway County (37.7% and 11.7%) and the State (36.8% and 11.1%).

Lower commercial and residential vacancy compared to the County

- Oranmore had a residential vacancy rate of just 4.9%, which is markedly lower than both Galway County (10.7%) and the State (7.7%). Furthermore, 91.6% of dwellings are occupied, surpassing occupancy rates in Galway County (82.8%) and the State (87.4%). In 2020, Oranmore recorded 12.2% commercial vacancy rate, which was lower than Galway County (13.4%), but higher than the State (11.4%).

Source: CSO

9.0 SOCIABILITY

This section focuses on sociability, a vital yet challenging quality to cultivate. Successful Towns should be places to gather, meet friends, interact with fellow community members, and visitors. Successful placemaking endeavours to create environments that foster these interactions, enhancing the communal and inclusive nature of public areas.

9.1 Key consultation insights

Working Well

Strong community spirit and sense of place

Sociability was rated as the highest overall pillar of the four. The highest-rated aspects of this were 'Feeling of safety', 'Sense of community' and 'Welcoming environment' which all ranked as good. These also ranked as three of the top four aspects overall. Consultation identified that the town has a strong community spirit, where residents take pride in fostering a friendly atmosphere that makes Oranmore a welcoming and inclusive place. Its vibrant social scene, highlighted by pubs, restaurants, and festivals, further enhances the town's sense of place and appeal for both residents and visitors alike.

Consultation findings

How locals rated 'Sociability' aspects of Oranmore.



Areas for Improvement

Communication

Survey participants identified a few key challenges to socialising in Oranmore. The need for increased advertisement and communication of local clubs, groups, and events was identified by 42% of participants as a barrier to participating, with some participants noting particular challenges for those not on social media.

Community facilities

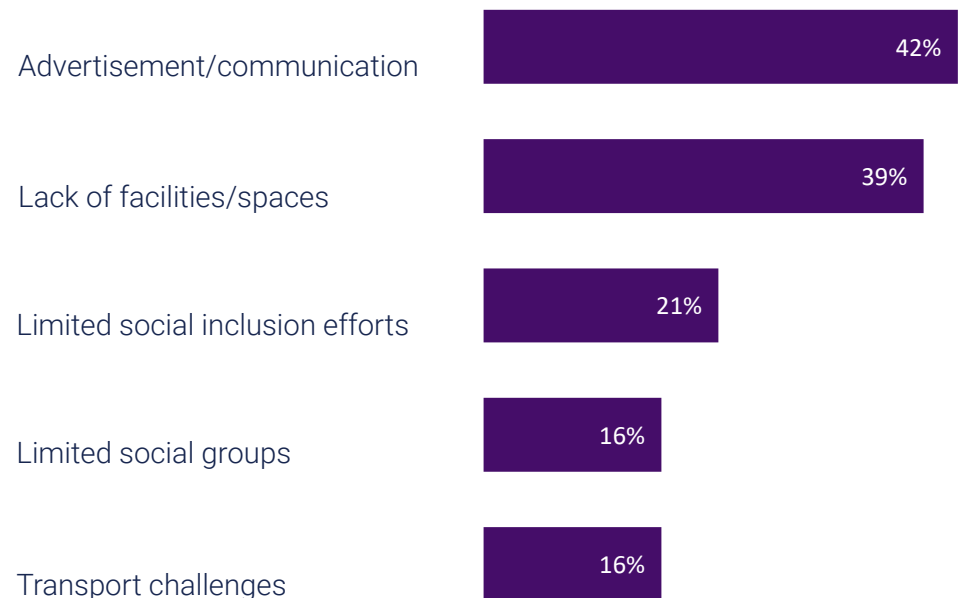
The lack of available and affordable community facilities was identified by 39% of respondents and 21% identified that increased social inclusion efforts would be welcome, particularly for new communities and residents, young people, and older adults. Addressing this challenge requires continued investment in multi-purpose community spaces that cater to a diverse range of needs to meet the needs of Oranmore's growing population. Such investments would not only enhance community well-being but also foster greater social cohesion and inclusivity. There is also a perceived need for increased clubs, groups and events that are not sport focused.

Consultation findings

The best thing about Oranmore...



Top 5 barriers to sociability in Oranmore.



9.2 Key socio-economic insights:

Significant population growth

- Between 2016 and 2022, Oranmore experienced a significant population growth of 16.6%, equivalent to an addition of 829 people. This growth rate was notably higher than that of Galway County (7.8%), and the State (8.1%).

Young population

- The age distribution in Oranmore showed younger age groups compared to Galway County and the State. There was a higher proportion of young children (0-4 years) and a strong representation of the young workforce (25-34 years and 35-49 years)

High prevalence of couple-led families with children

- In 2022, Oranmore's family structure was characterised by a high proportion of couple-led families, with 82.7% comprising couples with children, surpassing Galway County (80.0%) and the State (75.2%). Conversely, the area had lower rates of lone parent families, with 14.6% headed by lone mothers and 2.7% by lone fathers, compared to 16.7% and 3.3% in Galway County, and 21.1% and 3.8% in the State, respectively.

High ethnic diversity

- Oranmore had a notably high proportion of residents from ethnic backgrounds other than White Irish (22.4%) compared to Galway County (12.8%) and the State (18.4%). In particular, the proportions of people who identified as Asian or Asian Irish (3.9%) or Other ethnicity (2.3%) were higher than Galway County (1.6% and 1.4%) and the State (3.5% and 2.1%). Interestingly, Oranmore had a high proportion of Polish nationals (4.0%), more than twice the averages for Galway County (1.6%) and the State (1.9%). This was reflected in a higher proportion of Polish speakers (27.5%) compared to both Galway County (22.5%) and the State (16.5%).

High health levels

- The proportion of people in Oranmore who reported good or very good health (92.4%) was high compared to both Galway County (89.3%) and the State (88.9%). As of 2022, Oranmore (17.0%) had a lower disability rate compared to both Galway County (20.0%) and the State (21.5%).

Source: CSO

Strengths

- Situated within the Galway Metropolitan Area, Oranmore benefits from excellent connectivity via major road networks (N6, N18), a train station, and its proximity to Galway City
- A strong sense of community pride, with residents valuing the town's friendly atmosphere and cultural vibrancy
- Good access to public services, education and sports and recreation facilities
- The town boasts archaeological, architectural, and natural heritage, including Oranmore Castle, coastal views, and nearby recreational opportunities
- Good range and quality of local shops, personal services and hospitality businesses with relatively low ground floor vacancy rate
- High uptake of active travel and driver behaviour is generally considered courteous
- Oranmore serves as a commercial and retail hub with opportunities for business and enterprise expansion
- Cleanliness, maintenance and visual amenity of the town rated highly
- Relatively high perception of community safety

Challenges

- Significant vehicle traffic in the town centre, combined with a dominance of car parking, hinder the town's accessibility and public realm appeal
- Proportionally low rates of comparison retail
- Current footpaths and cycling routes limit active travel options, discouraging pedestrian and cyclist use and result in high dependency on personal vehicle use
- Road safety identified as an area of growing concern
- Delivering community, leisure, and recreational facilities inline with population growth
- Balancing the growth of the town while protecting its built, cultural, and natural heritage, including areas with environmental designations
- No recorded EV charging points in Town Centre and limited number of accessible car parking spaces in Town Centre
- Limited availability of tourist amenities and cultural spaces
- Footpaths are considered narrow with poor surfaces in some parts and poor parking practices often create difficulties for the pedestrian environment

Opportunities

- Continue to tackle vacancy and dereliction in the Town Centre
- Traffic management plans and schemes
- Explore ways to encourage greater uptake of active and public transport usage such as greater variety and frequency of public transport options, widening and maintenance of footpaths, pedestrian crossings and improved cycle infrastructure
- Reorganise parking, improve streetscapes, and create attractive civic spaces to enhance sociability and visitor experience
- Capitalise on heritage assets and coastal location to expand the tourism sector, promoting local attractions like Oranmore Castle and eco-tourism
- Enhancing Oranmore's role as a centre for industry, technology, and innovation while fostering local businesses to protect the vibrancy of the town centre
- Potential for further tourism development in promoting local heritage and outdoor recreational opportunities
- Protect and enhance existing environmental quality and biodiversity conditions and reduce flood risks

11.0 POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

This report summarises the key findings derived from the 15-step process developed as part of the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme, initiated by the Heritage Council and its partners. The baseline data and findings from this Town Centre Health Check will serve as a vital resource to inform and guide plans, strategies, and interventions for the revitalisation and future development of town centres.

This Town Centre Health Check provides a evidence-based framework to build on strengths, address challenges, unlock funding opportunities, and guide sustainable development, opportunities may include:

- **Town Centre First Plan:** The data collected through the Health Check process provides a strong foundation for the development of Town Centre First Plan. These plans are created collaboratively by Local Authorities and Community Town Teams, offering tailored, evidence-based strategies. The plans establish a vision for the town, identify specific projects, and prioritise actions to address key issues highlighted in the Health Check findings.
- **Place based strategies:** The findings may guide strategies across traffic and transport, arts, heritage and cultural, climate action and biodiversity, economic development and tourism. Plans will prioritise enhancing the public realm, and promoting strategic planning and place-making to create vibrant, sustainable town centres.
- **Access to Funding:** The evidence provided by the Health Checks strengthens applications for targeted funding streams such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), Town and Village Renewal Scheme. These funds among others enable transformative projects, including building refurbishments, public realm improvements, and infrastructure upgrades, ensuring resources are directed to where they are needed most.
- **Implementation of Projects:** The Health Check findings may enable the identification, design, and implementation of priority projects such as: repurposing vacant properties, public realm improvements, active transport network improvements, access and connectivity projects.
- **Monitoring and Review:** The baseline data established by this Health Check allows for ongoing monitoring of progress against the goals outlined. Future Health Checks can be conducted to evaluate the impact of interventions, track changes, and refine plans to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with community needs.

