

Physical Analysis of the Study Area

Historical Context

Colin consisted of several traditional township areas which were marked out in plans which date from the 1830s.

1833 Plan

The township areas of Lagmore, Poleglass, and Killeaton are shown; Stewartstown Road, Lagmore Road, Old Colin Road, and Upper Dunmurry Lane are all existing; the area is mainly open countryside although the Colin Glen route is highlighted as a landscape feature; a Corn Mill is shown in the Poleglass area; and a building which is subsequently named Colin House is also shown.

1904 Plan

As the City of Belfast continues to expand the Colin area builds closer links: the great northern railway line from Belfast through Dunmurry is shown; the Village of Dunmurry is taking shape; Lagmore Reservoir has been constructed; several named properties are shown such as Cloona House, Bogstown Farm, Stewartstown House, Lagmore House, Summerhill House, Colin House, and Springbank House; the area around Suffolk has developed and Saint John the Baptist Church, Kilwee Cottage, a Bleach Works with Bleach Green are shown; and the information is more detailed generally showing field boundaries etc. when essential the area is still countryside.

1938 Plan

The area while still rural continues to build links with the city while Dunmurry begins to emerge as the local village centre: the road structure has not changed since 1833; many of the key buildings still remain with the addition of the Dairy Farm; the Colin Golf Course has been established; and Dunmurry has increased to the size of a reasonable village.

1938-1960's

Throughout this period the greater Derriaghy and Dunmurry areas continued to develop. These reflected the post-war development of Belfast City and Lisburn town. The area still reflected an agricultural area serving the expanding city and in particular, the role of the Dairy Farm was a key landmark in the area.

The late sixties brought significant housing developments at Suffolk, Seymour Hill, and the proposed development of the Twinbrook estate.

1960s-1990's

In the late 1960s the main areas of population in the Colin area were the small pockets of housing that had existed in the Dunmurry Lane area. These were followed by the developments at Cloona and Glengoland.

The main public housing development began in the early 1970s with the establishment of Twinbrook. This development was originally planned as a mixed estate combining Protestant and Catholic residents. However, the rise of significant sectarian strife across the city of Belfast resulted in the area becoming identified as Nationalist and Catholic. Subsequently, given the circumstance of the period, Protestants were reluctant to move to the area.

As the 1970s progressed, Twinbrook became the home for many Catholics who migrated from other areas of the city including the lower Falls, Rathcoole, Short Strand, and the New Lodge areas.

The Current Context

Across this area, several key landmarks represented the history and hopes of the Colin Community. St John the Baptist Church of Ireland at Suffolk Road and Stewartstown Road Junction represented the boundary of the Lisburn City Council area and hence the Colin area. Several hundred metres along the Stewartstown Road is the Teeling Roundabout which represented a more modern feature of the Colin area. The roundabout sits at the junction of Dunmurry Lane, the bottom of the Partridge Road, and next to Hazelwood estate.

Further along, the Stewartstown Road is the Colin Centre (former Dairy Farm) which represented previous failed efforts to provide a heart and core for the Colin area. Over the past number of months, there had been significant changes at the centre including its renaming to the Colin Centre, the re-establishment of a supermarket, and the renaming of the Library to the Colin Library. Along the Stewartstown road there was a range of shops and on the Poleglass side of the road where the Health Centre, Northern Ireland Housing Executive Offices, and the Derby House Pub are situated on the Twinbrook side of the road.

Colin in the Broader West Belfast Context

The key access routes to a great degree reflected the historical development of the area. There was a general tendency within the Colin community to look 'down the road', reflecting the fact that the majority of residents in the area have strong links with communities in other parts of West Belfast i.e., Ballymurphy, Turf Lodge, Divis, Clonard, etc. These strong community links played out in the day-to-day activities of the Colin community. It was generally recognised that families still retained registration with GP practices, dentists, schools, and social and leisure clubs which were based in the inner West Belfast area.

These links provided a strong sense of belonging and community for residents of Colin who did not have a strong sense of belonging or ownership in the Lisburn City Council area. Therefore, the primary route into Colin for the vast majority of its residents was the Stewartstown, Andersonstown, and Falls road links.

Colin in the Context of the Conflict

It is important to note that in the period from the early 1970s until the ceasefire of 1994, the Colin area was an area totally immersed in the conflict of that period. While physically on the outskirts of nationalist West Belfast, Twinbrook and Poleglass reflected the nationalist and republican aspirations of the inner West Belfast community. Over that period, access into and across the Colin area was subject to the security measures of the time. This situation confirmed the natural affinity and physical movement of the Colin community down Falls Road. This natural tendency was reinforced by the perceived 'chill factor' between the Colin community and the respective local authority i.e., Lisburn City (Borough) Council.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

The recent developments of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan provided a framework for the physical development of the Greater Belfast area and the neighbouring Local Government District. Given that Colin falls within the Lisburn City Council area, the strategy needed to recognise this planning framework.

Colin Neighbourhood Partnership welcomed a Framework that would contribute to enhancing the quality of life of its residents. During the development of the strategy, CNP discussed their plans with Belfast Metropolitan Plan (BMAP). In addition, CNP had made a submission to BMAP outlining their position about developments within the area.

This included the identification of possible neighbourhood centres across the Colin area. CNP were keen to work with those responsible for developing planning frameworks for the area but also requested that the Colin Strategy was recognised as an important reference point for local development.

Physical Analysis

A comprehensive physical analysis of the area had been carried out involving consideration of plan information and a site survey. The following key points should be noted:

- landscape setting of the area, both locally in the form of wooded glens and the surrounding context with views of the Colin Hills and the Belfast Hills was one of the unique selling points of the area;
- the Stewartstown Road is the physical spine of the area but the nature of the road, the typography, and the relationship to the adjacent areas are poor;
- the different neighbourhood areas are very insular in their layout with poor linkages between them;
- the formal Ward boundary between Twinbrook and Kilwee is not reflected in people's view of what constituted the Twinbrook area;
- the Dairy Farm in terms of its general location and the current uses was a focal point in the area but was not physically attractive or popular with the local people; and
- the extent and nature of community facilities were insufficient for an area of this size and population.

The Context

Before outlining the key physical regeneration opportunities which existed in the Colin area, it is important to summarise the context within which the area had developed.

A Series of Neighbourhoods

Colin represented a series of neighbourhoods without a physical centre. The failure of the former Dairy Farm, both commercially and as a centre for community presented a significant challenge to Colin Neighbourhood Partnership.

In recent years, developments along the Stewartstown Road had sought to provide retail and associated services. These investments reflected the fact that this area represented an economic opportunity for the right business idea. Within each of the local Colin neighbourhoods, there was a distinct lack of cohesion and focus in relation to facilities commercial, community, or leisure.

Where facilities were available, for example, the Brook Activity Centre, its location was not easily accessible to groups in Lagmore or indeed Poleglass since there was no transport linkage across the neighbourhoods. Recognising these challenges, there were significant opportunities to sensitively enhance and conserve the natural environment which constituted Colin. Groups were working within Colin who were keen to secure the natural assets while making them more accessible to the local community.

New Links and New Opportunities

With the development of the M1 link at Blacks road, via Golf Course road, many residents wishing to travel into Belfast chose this alternative route. Local traffic could use the Springfield Road as a secondary route around the outer West Belfast area, allowing access to the International Airport, Antrim, and Crumlin areas. In addition, this route was also used by motorists for access to areas such as Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy. To the south, is the McKinstry roundabout traditionally representing a boundary between the local community and the broader Lisburn community.

However, the growth of through traffic and the general easing of community tensions had seen an increase in Colin residents accessing Lisburn City via this route. To the East, the Old Golf Course road provided local access to the facilities of Dunmurry, Finaghy, and the general Lisburn Road area.