

# BRAY TOWN HEALTH CHECK

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Bray.ie



# Table of **CONTENTS**

1. Introduction
- 2 Town Health Check Approach
- 3 Health Check Analysis
- 4 Consultations
- 5 SWOT Analysis
- 6 Actions
- 7 Next Steps

Section 1  
**INTRODUCTION**



# Introduction

The objective of this Town Centre Health Check is to help appreciate the qualities and potential of Bray Town Centre and develop our understanding of how we can work with its many assets to promote community-led socio-economic development and renewal. This plan seeks to identify the qualities of a healthy town we want to achieve in Bray and map out a path that facilitates positive change for the social, economic and environmental ambitions of the community.

## CONTEXT

Wicklow County Council is committed to improving the social and economic conditions of communities throughout the county and recognises that each of the county's towns and villages must provide high quality living, working, education, recreation and cultural opportunities in an attractive environment. Future Analytics Consulting has been appointed by Wicklow County Council (WCC) to undertake a *Town Centre Health Check* for Bray.

This report provides information on the performance of Bray across a variety of indicators, as well as incorporating an assessment of strengths, constraints, opportunities and threats. The data will inform and support future community and socio-economic planning and development of the town by WCC, key stakeholders and the local community, with a view to enhancing the prosperity and vitality of the centre and improving the quality of life for the local community and those working in and visiting Bray.

Consultation with local organisations, business associations and community members have been conducted as part of the process. The analysis of the data obtained from the research and stakeholder consultation process provided the foundations for the formulation of a series of recommendations for the settlement.

## WHAT IS A HEALTHY TOWN?

There is no single model for what may be termed a Healthy Town. They are such varied places, with different origins and characters that may have developed around activities as diverse as tourism, agriculture, industry, health, transport, religion or commerce and retail.

Fundamentally a town has a special meaning for us. We have an attachment to this place and an identity through its character, story and memories reflected in its public places, diverse functions.

We care about our health; and similarly we care about the health of our towns. We are invested in them in so many ways and want to see them, not just exist, but thrive and develop.

Our understanding of its characteristics comes through various lenses which may depend on work background, everyday experiences of the place, age or activities. Therefore, on the one hand it is important to define neutral indicators, but equally to talk to the community and stakeholders to understand Bray through the eyes of people who are there every day. These definitions and themes are developed below.

## WHAT IS A HEALTH CHECK?

A Town Health Check essentially seeks to identify typical indicators that reflect how well a town is doing (or not); things like commercial vacancy, footfall and people's sentiments. Perhaps more importantly, it is an opportunity for the community to come together and engage with each other in a conversation about the town in its many guises. However, if we only use our energy to confirm the problems, is the exercise worthwhile? Therefore, a Health Check is also a bridge between analysis and actions by identifying things we can do to bring about positive change.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL

There has been a growing recognition that town centre health is a vital part of our economy and society that has faced many challenges ranging from out-of-town retailing to ecommerce. Initiatives such as Town Centre Management and Town Teams were



recognised in the 2017 report by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation; **A Framework for Town Centre Renewal.**

It sought to provide a structure to help Local businesses, networks, residents and Local Authorities who make huge efforts to make their town or village a great place to work in, socialise in and live in, in order to create vibrant, thriving town centres. It states:

*With the right supports, a collaborative and structured approach to town centre renewal and the continued passion and dedication of local communities, we can achieve our ambition to create vibrant, thriving town centres to meet the changing needs of Irish society and make Irish cities, towns and villages great places to work in, socialise in and live in.*

The Framework sets out 3 key steps:

1. Stakeholder engagement and Health Check
2. Establish a Town Centre Management Partnership or 'Town Team'
3. Prepare and Implement a Town Centre Plan

The Framework provides useful guidance on approach to Health Checks sets out 4 key qualities of a Healthy Vibrant Town Centre which help us develop the conversation about Bray.

- Attractions
- Amenities
- Accessibility
- Actions

In summary, a Health check;

- Provides an evidence-base on how a town is performing - can be re-examined at a later date to track progress and trends for the town.
- Chronicles the key attributes of a successful town centre
- Examines indicators such commercial vitality and environmental quality.
- Develops an Action Plan and the existing supports for Town Centre Renewal.
- Can be used to apply for funding through various channels such as the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht's Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

### Attractions

Attractions help to define a town's identity and comprise the range and diversity of shopping and other activities which draw in customers and visitors.

### Accessibility

Successful centres need to be easily accessible by the surrounding areas through road and public transport networks. Ease of access within a town between public transport stops, carparks, and key attractions is also essential.

## Key Qualities of a Healthy, Vibrant Town Centre

### Amenities

A healthy town centre needs to be a pleasant place to spend time in. It should be attractive in terms of environmental quality and urban design, it should be safe and it should have a distinct identity or image.

### Actions

Actions and initiatives are needed to ensure the viability of a town centre including delivery of improvement projects, regular cleaning and maintenance and co-ordinated town centre management initiatives to promote the continued improvement of the centre.

Section 2

**TOWN HEALTH  
CHECK APPROACH**



# Town Health Check Approach

Achieving a healthy balance in the economic, societal and cultural functions performed by Bray town centre is crucial to the success of the town and the quality of life available to the local community. The appearance of the town, its public realm, the quality and range of services and amenities, and the general atmosphere on its streets have a direct impact on the economic performance of the town and the health and wellbeing of residents.

The project team undertook extensive background research of Bray, comprising a socio-economic assessment of the study area's demographics, a review of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) maps and aerial photographs, tourism and heritage plans and strategies, and retail and environmental attributes.

FAC has developed a project plan for the preparation of the Bray Town Health Check to ensure that the completed Health Check guides and supports the development needs of the community in Bray through five interlinking stages. The initial stages are designed to establish the administrative

foundation; and consultation, site visit, background data and policy context will form the foundations for the development of the final action plan recommendations. Each stage is vital to the delivery of the whole process and while each stage is outlined individually, all stages are related to each other such that they are not isolated undertakings. The approach is robust and logical, following a similar framework as used by FAC in other similar town and village health checks.

The methodology **5 key stages** which are indicated below:

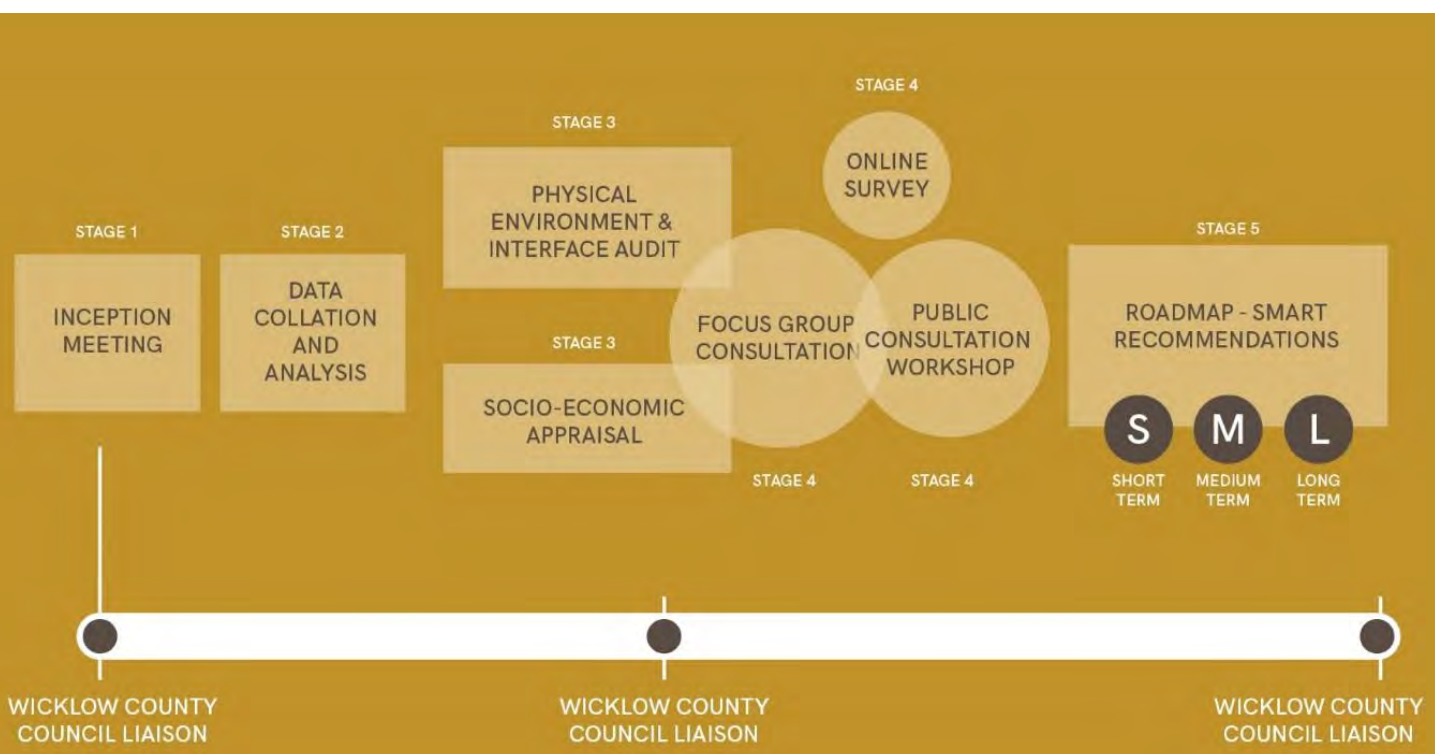


Figure 2.1: The 5-stage methodological approach to undertaking the formulation of the Town Health Check.

As part of the plan process, FAC undertook comprehensive baseline socio-economic research, visits to Bray and community stakeholder consultation, with business and retail representatives, community organisations, voluntary groups and individual residents. The information obtained from the research and stakeholder consultation process provided the foundations for the formulation of a series of recommendations and actions.

A key element of this project is to create a community-led plan that reflects the needs and vision of the local communities within Bray. To do this, community and stakeholder consultation was undertaken to capture local knowledge, ideas and opinions. The objective of the wide scale consultation was to raise awareness within the community about the plan; provide all members of the community, business, retail, voluntary and community organisations the opportunity to participate and contribute to the plan formation and establishing a sense of community stewardship towards the plan, and its strategic actions.

sustained period led by the Council and business community. So in effect it does not 'start from scratch' but builds upon a considerable body of work and investment already undertaken. The Health Check is expected to do more than categorise or classify issues such as vacancy, but also be a creative process that articulates possibilities and pathways to enable positive changes.

It is also clear that the emphasis of the project should be on Bray as a place and an experience that supports a successful and engaging environment at the heart of a successful town in the Dublin region. The "repositioning" of Main Street in its function, experience and amenity was identified as an important theme for the creative aspects of this study.



Figure 2.2. Key attributes of a successful town centre (left) Health Check indicators (right). Source: A Framework for Town Centre renewal.

## STUDY AREA

For the purpose of this study, the core area is considered to be Bray Main Street and the linking streets down to the sea front. This runs from the Main Street/Killarney Road junction in the south to the Dublin Road/Dargle Road junction in the north.

The hinterland or catchment area for town is understood to be the Bray Environs area. It is not this project's intention to develop proposals for the wider study area outside the core, but it is clearly understood that the success of the town is interdependent on its catchment population, businesses and visitors who's support of Bray is integral to the town's commercial success.

Bray Settlement is based on the 2016 CSO settlement boundary, as shown indicated by the dark red outline. The study area of Bray Town Health check is defined by the bright red outline comprising the main town centre and seafront. The 2016 census data is based on 21 small areas of the defined study area as shown in .



Figure 2.3. Study Area of Bray Town Health Check

Section 3  
**HEALTH CHECK  
ANALYSIS**



# Health Check Analysis

The town centre health check is a useful tool in establishing a baseline which, will help to drive town centre development in the future. The town health check collates information on Bray based on a range of indicators to create reliable baseline information, providing a valuable framework for identifying the town's many assets, and identifying where improvements can be made.

The health check element of this plan focuses on the town's physical environment, the occupancy, type and variety of uses in the town, accessibility, the appearance of buildings and other public realm features including shop frontages, signage, lighting, street furniture, planting, as well as local attractions and assets. The Retail Planning Guidelines highlight that viability and vitality are key elements to the enhancement of town centres and a measure of its capacity to attract investment.

*“Vitality is a measure of how active and buoyant a centre is, whilst viability refers to the commercial well-being of a town”*

**The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly designates Bray as a ‘Key Town’.** It highlights Bray is the largest town in County Wicklow, with a population of 32,600 in 2016, and strategically located at the eastern gateway to the County, with access to the N/M11 corridor (including M50), DART/rail line and quality bus service. It is a strong active town that provides higher order services, including tertiary education, health, cultural and leisure facilities and is a major retail and shopping destination, attracting people from the surrounding towns and villages. While many residents commute to Dublin, there is also significant local employment for both its residents and its extensive surrounding catchment. Bray is a visitor and tourism

destination benefitting from its natural setting on the coast with the backdrop of the Wicklow Mountains.

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-22 considers Bray as a Level 1 Metropolitan Consolidation Town with a population target of 40,000 in 2028 and concisely captures the assets and potentials of the settlement as follows:

*...The town should aim to have a concentration of major employment generating investment, particularly in the retail, services and industrial sectors. While the town would be attractive to all forms of industry and investment types, the town should primarily aim to attract high value foreign investment, focusing mainly on ‘people’ based industries at locations with easy access to public transport. Having regard to the limitations for expansion of employment facilities within the town, there is scope for the creation of new facilities at Fassaroe.*

*The town has a role to play in the provision of all forms of higher order services and facilities, including for example high quality secondary and tertiary education services, a small hospital or polyclinic type facility, swimming pool, athletics track, libraries, cultural and leisure facilities. In addition, the town should aim to become a major shopping destination*

*for comparison goods, attracting people from the surrounding towns and villages.*

*The town has the potential to be the most sustainable town in the County – a town which can most easily achieve the vision of ‘walkable’ communities whereby residents have access to local services and facilities including employment, shops, services, schools, playgrounds etc all within walking distance. In addition, all residents in the town have access to a good quality public transport system with local buses and DART services, thereby*

*reducing the dependence of residents on private car use.*

*Bray Seafront and Bray Head draw a significant number of day trippers to the town. Protecting the heritage and amenities of the town is particularly important if it is to continue attracting visitors into the future. There is scope to improve the overall visitor experience through measures such as improving the quality of tourist services and facilities and through measures that could improve the quality of the overall appearance of the town and seafront area, including for example shopfront improvements.*

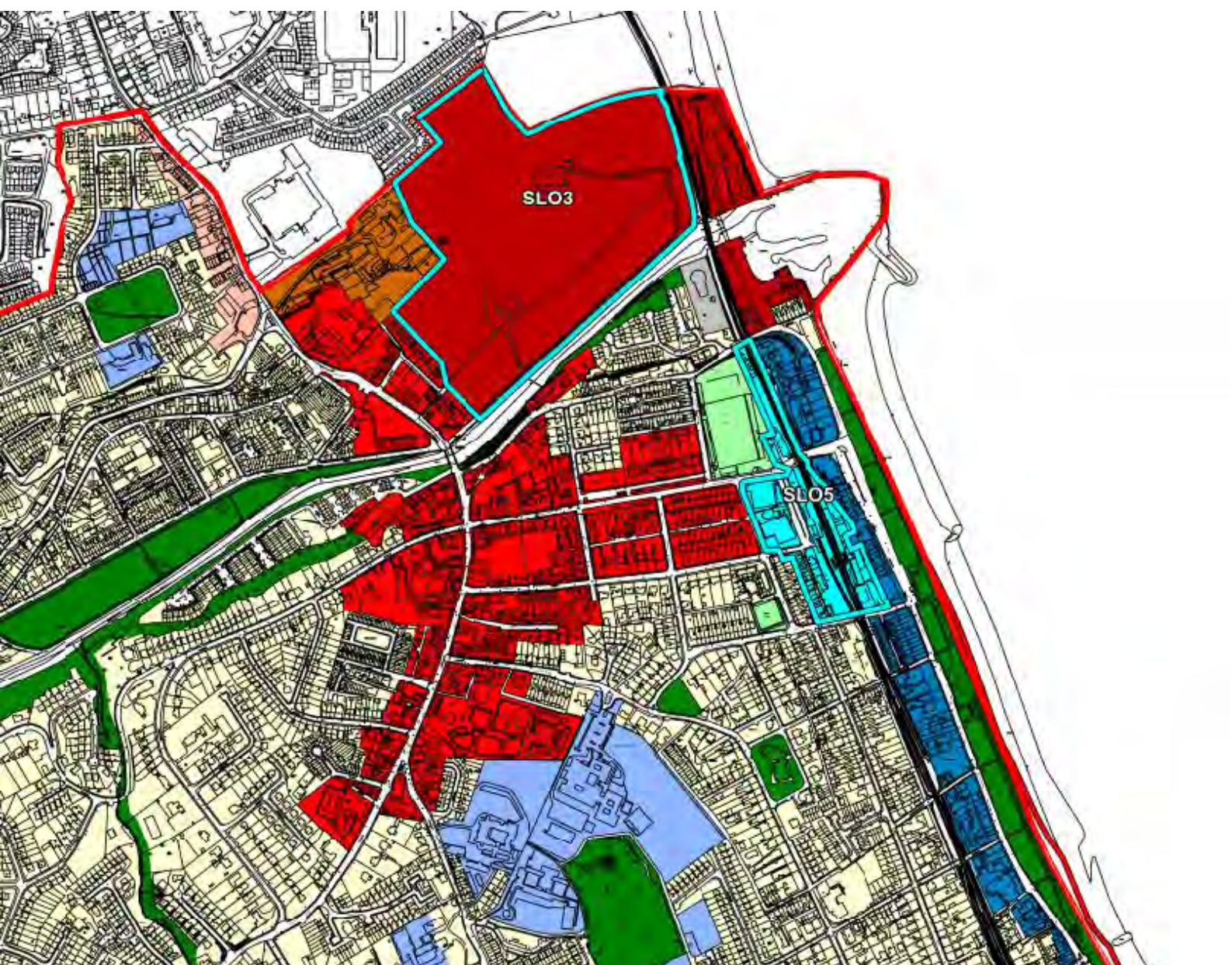


Figure 3.1: The core study area is defined as the Main Street (red), seafront (blue) (Source: Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018 Zoning Map)

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Bray is an enterprising town, recognised as a runner-up at last year’s Bank of Ireland National Enterprise Town Awards. Bray Municipal District Council takes a proactive role in the local economy and engaging with the business community. It supports a wide range of cultural, community projects, social inclusion & diversity initiatives.

Bray is the largest settlement in County Wicklow with 22.8% of the county’s population. The 2016 census results indicate that 5,457 people lived within the study area as defined in . Bray had an average age of 38.3 years, compared to County Dublin (36.3), EMRA (36.0) and State (36.8). The average household size for the study area in 2016 stood at 2.41, which is lower than the state average of 2.7 persons per household.

The age profile pyramid for the study area reveals a high proportion of the population are in the prime working age cohorts (25-64), comprising a total of 60.3%.

The 2016 census shows that a low proportion (30.7%) of the combined population within the dependent years of 0-14 (17.3%) and 65 years old and above (13.4%). The study area had a slightly larger proportion within the dependency years and a slightly larger cohort in the primary working years (Table 3.1). County Wicklow’s dependency rate is marginally above the national average rate, with implications in terms of family resource provisions, healthcare, education, transportation and a range of other service requirements.

*Table 3.1. Population by specific age cohorts of Study Area, Dublin County, EMRA & State 2016 census figures.*

Age	Number of persons Study Area	Percentage (%) Study Area	Percentage (%) Bray Settlement	Percentage (%) Dublin County	Percentage (%) EMRA	Percentage (%) State
<b>0-14</b>	942	17.3%	20.0%	19.3%	21.1%	21.1%
<b>15-64</b>	3,783	69.3%	66.5%	68.5%	66.8%	65.5%
<b>65+</b>	732	13.4%	13.5%	12.2%	12.0%	13.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,457</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Education

In terms of educational attainment, the 2016 census records indicates that 45.4% of the population of Bray Study Area had completed the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 6 (Higher Certificate) or above. The Bray Study Area had a larger proportion of the population which had completed this level of educational attainment compared with the Bray settlement which comprised 41.2% and the State average of 40%.

Schools and education institutes form an integral part of the town centre activity. There are 5 primary schools, 3 post-primary schools, 2 language schools and Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE) located within or adjoining the town centre. 2018/2019 enrolment figures indicate that there are approx..3,100 pupils attending school. BIFE has approx. 1,000 daytime students, 1,000 evening students and 100 staff based in the town centre at its campus on Novara Avenue.

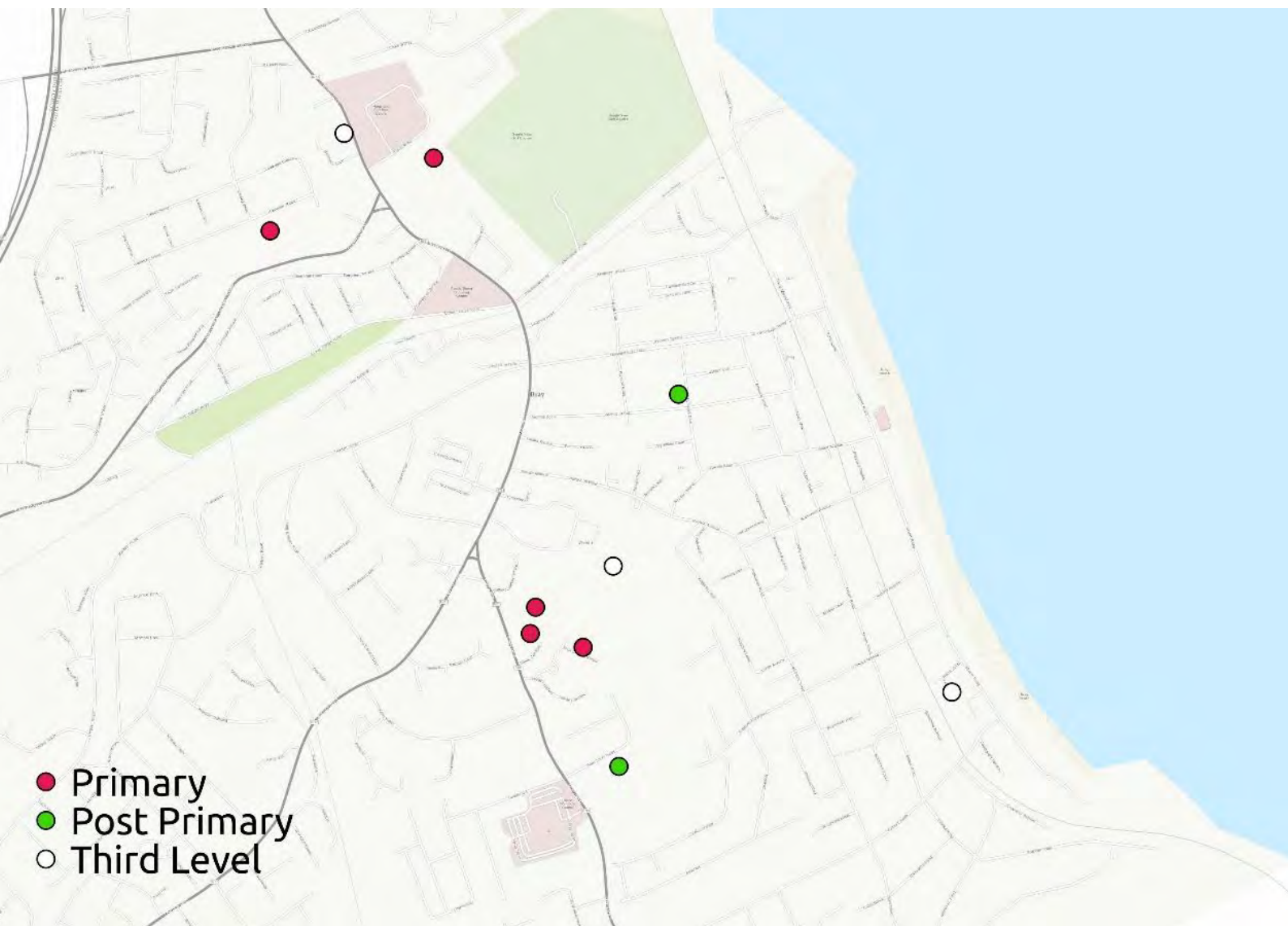


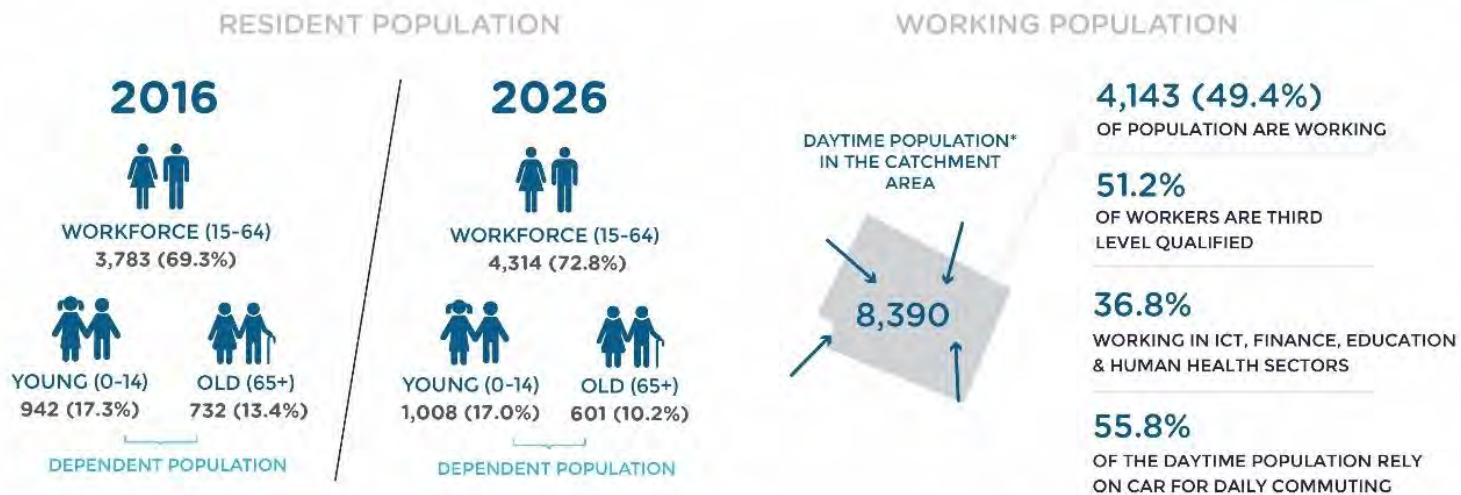
Figure 3.2. Location of education establishments in Bray town centre.

### Employment

The jobs ratio is a good indicator of measuring the sustainability of the County's settlements (full time employment to working age, i.e. in the population range 16-64 years) as full-time employment fosters higher income levels, promotes household formation and increased consumption.

The workforce of the resident population in Bray Study Area is projected to increase by

3.5% by 2026 and an increase of the dependant population which will have an effect on the services and facilities on demand in Bray by 2026. In the State overall 61.4% drove to work in 2016, whereas 55.8% of the daytime population in Bray relied on a car for their daily commuting, which is reflective of the many public transportation options available in the town.



\* Based on an extrapolation of population undertaken by FAC and informed by trends in the change in cohort proportions over the 2011 to 2016 inter-censal period. **The scenario does not account for additional in-bound demand in relation to additional housing availability, quality of stock or other attractions, including employment opportunities.**

\* Daytime population is defined as 1) persons commuting to working in the catchment area and 2) those going to school and all others not working and resident within the catchment.

Figure 3.2: Bray Study Area profile of Resident population according to 2016 census figures and 2026 projections and working population.

The 2016 census recorded that 58.1% of the population (aged 15 years) were at work. Unemployment (having lost or given up previous job) levels in Bray Study Area stood at 7.5% in 2016. These are slightly higher compared to the figures of Bray settlement in regard to people at work at 53.7% and an unemployment rate of 6.7%. 14.8% of the resident population was recorded as retired in the 2016 census which is similar to the 2016 State average of 14.5%.

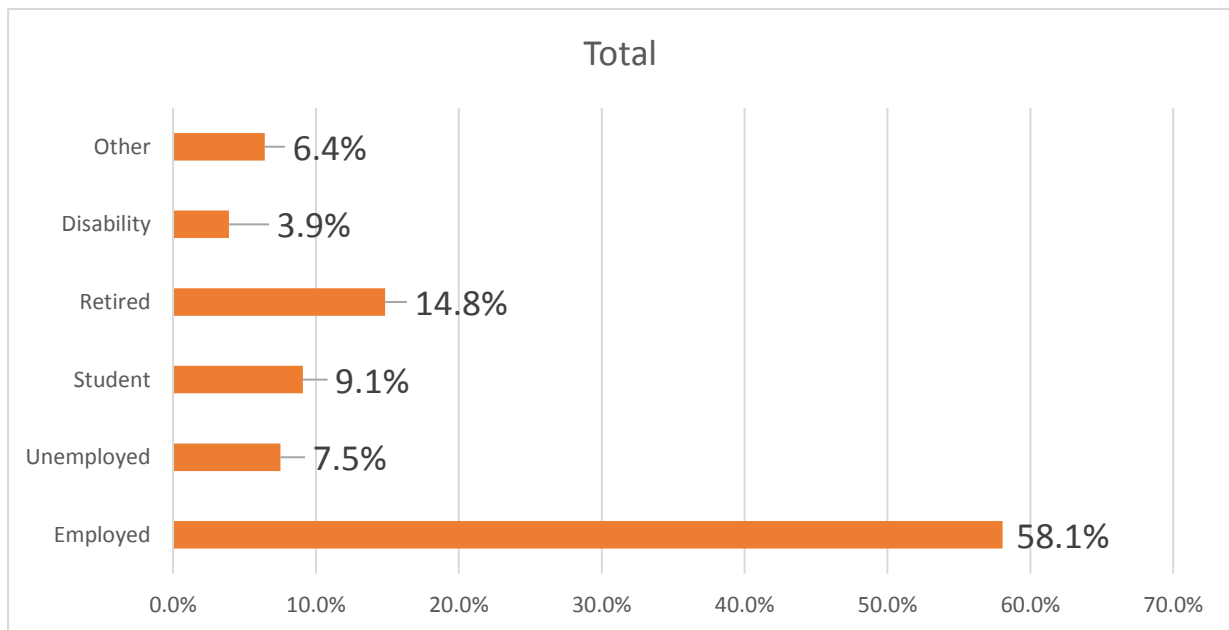


Figure 3.3. Population aged 15 years and over by principal economic status.

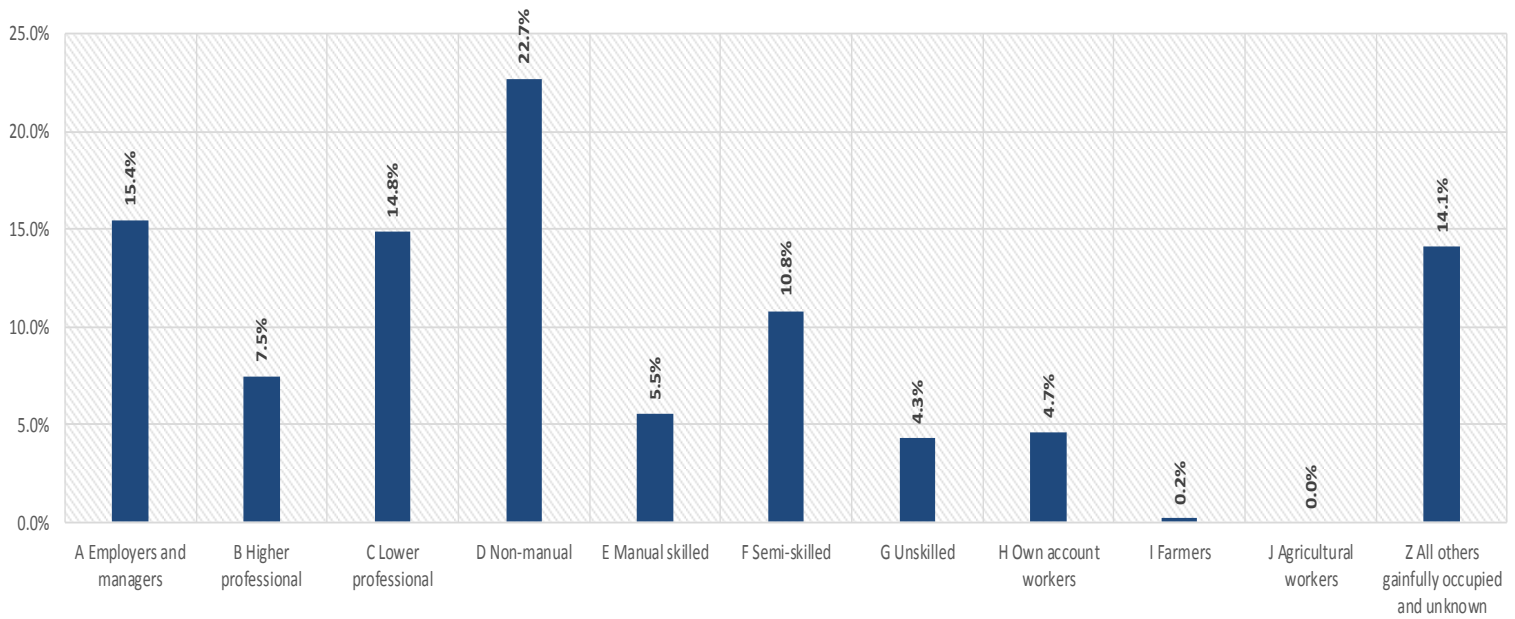


Figure 3.4. Socio-economic group in Bray Study Area.

A review of the socio-economic groups and industrial groups indicates the highest number of residents were working in non-manual sectors (22.7%), followed by 15.4% working as ‘employers and managers’, while 14.8% were ‘lower professionals’ and 10.8% of workers were ‘semi-skilled’ (Figure 3.4). The employment composition by industry, highlights 26.6% of working Bray town study

area residents were employed in ‘Professional Services’ sector, while a further quarter were employed in ‘Commerce and Trade’ related roles. A broad range of roles were held within the Study Area, with the most prevalent role in ‘Professional Occupations’ (18.5%) and the second most frequent role was in ‘Associate Professional and Technical Occupations’ (12.5%).

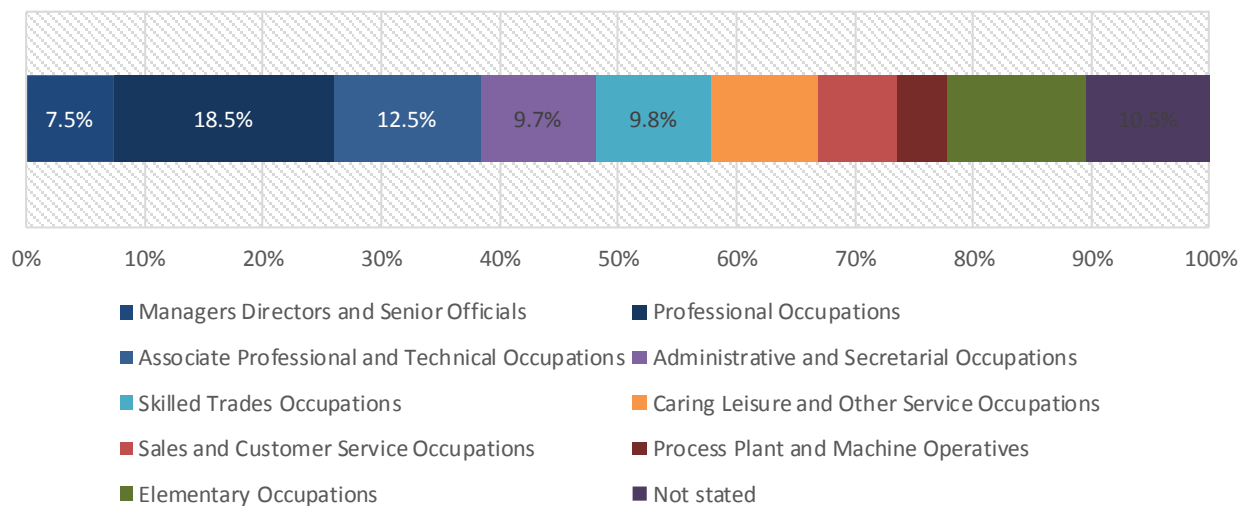
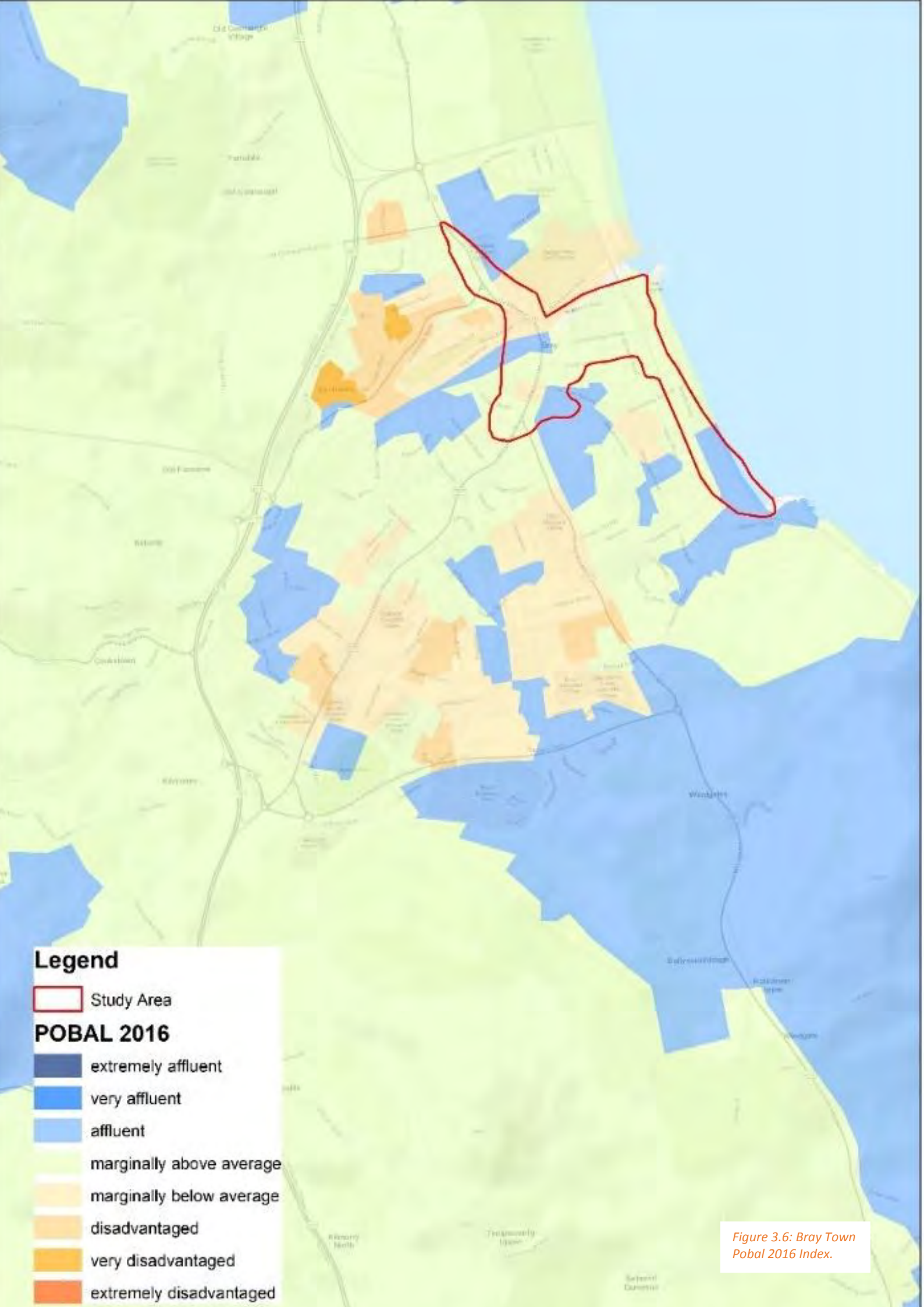



Figure 3.5. Persons at work by occupation in Bray Study Area.

The 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index showed Bray Study Area with a score of 4.87, which is marginally above the average; an improvement in status since 2011 with a score of 2.20.




### Legend


 Study Area


### POBAL 2016


 extremely affluent


 very affluent

 affluent

 marginally above average

 marginally below average

 disadvantaged

 very disadvantaged


 extremely disadvantaged

Figure 3.6: Bray Town Pobal 2016 Index.

Of the 3,367 residents in 2016 aged 5 years and over who travel to work, school or college, 23.4% had a journey time of under 15 minutes, while 47.8% of those who travel for work, school or college had a journey time of between 15 minutes and 45 minutes.

Commercial activity is concentrated along the Main Street of the town centre with clusters of activities located along the roads leading down to the seafront. The town has a wide range of retail on offer, however, as identified during the site visit and stakeholder consultation, the town lacks high-end retail, independent shops and larger retail units. The sea front area's commercial activity is characterised by restaurant and pub uses but notably no retail activity.

Major assets in this area include the Sailing Club, Harbour Bar and adjacent Fish Bar, the restaurant Dockyard No. 8 as well as served by other businesses and a gas station. The harbour area has potential to establish itself as a visitor hub capitalising on the well-established services and facilities.

The Bray Economic Think Tank (BETT) Report 2010 highlighted that Bray was significantly underperforming in terms of its retail catchment area and had significant retail leakage to nearby centres such as Dundrum and Carrickmines. While the town has a good diversity of retail provided comprising a number of supermarkets within the commercial core of the town centre many of them within walking distance from the town centre and also have customer parking areas to cater for the wider catchment of Bray.

The Florentine Centre (now Bray Town Centre) development is currently under construction and will include retail, recreation, entertainment and services.

In terms of business parks there are seven IDA client companies in Bray, the IDA business park also hosts a number of successful foreign and Irish owned businesses with an international focus.

## Tourism

Bray.ie, the official tourism and community profile for Bray town, was launched in 2011.

It was part of the Bray Town's Economy Think Tank outputs (an economic forum established in 2009 to create a sense of local pride, community spirit & to promote the Bray Brand).

Bray.ie is a valuable platform to promote Bray as a place to live, work and visit by being actively involved in the community and championing local news, recreational activities, amenities, local authority resources, cultural and community events, tourism initiatives and campaigns.

In 2017, bray.ie was awarded with the 'Best Connected Community' in the Community and Council awards and shortlisted for the same award in 2018 and 2019. The site reached its 1 millionth visitor in May 2019 and up to August 2019 the social media engagement reach was 3.8 million - top-line stats include 1.76m reach on Facebook, 987k impressions on Twitter and 609k impressions on Instagram.

Bray.ie has a long term communication strategy but also continuously monitor and plan changes or updates in advance to ensure that site and its brand message are managed effectively while staying relevant.

Bray.ie's brand message continues to be distributed through partnerships with influencers, creators, tourism/travel partners and media outlets. This collaborative approach has gone from strength to strength in recent years.

The 'Bray Air Display' and 'Summer in Bray' tourism initiatives won silver at the All Ireland Community and Council Awards 2019.

The Bray Air Display is a free family weekend and is renowned as one of Europe's best air displays, was recognised as 'Best Festival / Event Experience (large)' at the prestigious, national Irish Tourism Industry Awards 2017. Thousands attended the two-day flying extravaganza in 2019.

There are several strong tourism destination with the ability to attract visitors to Bray including the Mermaid Art Centre and festivals such as Bray Jazz Festival and the Wicklow Film Festival, showcasing the vibrant cultural life in the area surrounding Bray. These assets can be further enhanced by promoting Bray as a vibrant and innovating town, attracting domestic and international visitors.

A Visitor perception Study of Bray town was undertaken by Rikon on behalf of Bray Town Council (now Bray Municipal District) noted that during the time of the survey the majority of the foreign tourists visited the seafront. While the study was released in 2013, it reflects that the seafront is a major attraction feature and asset when developing Bray town tourism. The survey also shows that a large proportion of the visitors were domestic tourists. 19% of respondents stayed overnight in Bray Town, while a large majority of respondents were foreign visitors. According to the survey, the most popular visitor activity in Bray was the Bray Cliff Walk (42%), followed by Bray SeaLife (27%) and Mermaids Arts Centre (15%).

Other events during the year takes place in the Signal Arts Centre, as well as St Patrick's Festival, LEGO Sea Explorers, Pirates and Mermaids at SeaLife, Cool Planet Experience, a fireworks display and various other activities arranged by historic societies in Bray. There's plenty of live music gigs and events in the many local hotels, restaurants and pubs.

Festivals and events held throughout the year include:

1. Banjo and Bovril Festival
2. Bray Comedy Festival
3. St. Patrick's Festival
4. Bray Jazz Festival
5. Hell & Back
6. Bray Seafront Art & Photography Exhibition
7. Summer Sounds – run over selected Sunday's throughout the summer
8. Wicklow Triathlon Club Aquathon Series
9. Mid Summers Feast at Killruddery
10. Groove Festival
11. Movies by the bandstand
12. Wings Food Fest
13. Seafront Fun Fair
14. Bray Air Display
15. Bray's stunning fireworks display
16. Heritage Week – a celebration of Ireland's culture, history, gardens, and architecture
17. Culture Night
18. Bray Literary Festival
19. Wicklow Film Festival
20. Endeavour Awards
21. Yarn Storytelling Festival
22. Toastie Festival

The development of tourism related to Ireland's Ancient East has the potential to untap opportunities related to the history and heritage of Bray town and to support sustained economic growth and community wellbeing by promoting the heritage, history and environment of Bray.

## Town Character and Environmental Quality

Bray is situated close to the seafront which greatly influences the character of the town, providing it with a large attractive recreational area with views of Bray Head and the sea, which attracts a significant number of visitors. Protecting, enhancing and developing the heritage and amenities of the town in a sustainable manner is particularly important in order to provide a liveable and attractive place to visit and live in.

The established urban core of the town is concentrated on Main Street, Florentine Road and Quinsborough Road which also comprises residential uses and community facilities. Main Street is a busy road with narrow-built houses comprising a mix of traditional shops with some residential uses on top of the shop, some attractive heritage buildings and a number of modern commercial units. In close proximity to Castle Street, at the northern edge of town some more recent commercial development has been undertaken which now hosts several large supermarkets and other services. In the southern part of Main Street lies Bray Civic Centre, a neat group of public administration buildings that offer the streets a formal setting. In summary;

- Bray is a diverse town comprising the harbour area with maritime activities and a the well-know Harbour Bar; the attractive recreational seafront area and the busy commercial town centre includes Main Street, Herbert Road, Quinsborough Street, Florentine Road and Castle Street.
- Bray has an abundance of natural beauty including the sea, the river and the Bray Head Cliffs contributing to the natural environmental assets of the town.
- The buildings in the commercial centre of the town is a large mix of two and three storey buildings with traditional shop fronts with over the shop residential units, some colourful

terraced houses along the Esplanade, grand rows of terraced town house along Quinsborough Road.

- There are few meeting places in the town centre with inviting seating and planting features, however there a number of locations that has the potential to be developed into a park or a square including the area in front of the Church on Main Street, the area surrounding the statue on top of Main Street or the Bray Civic Plaza.
- There are some permeability constraints; notably on Bray Civic Plaza which restricts events and public events to take place here. Main Street could greatly benefit from additional pedestrian crossings in order to improve safety and accessibility.
- Major landscaping works have been undertaken to create the linear park along the norther side of the River Dargle from the Fran O'Toole Bridge all along the Dargle River to Seapoint Court. Features include seating, planting and gravel, providing an attractive route for walking with the possibility to be extended in both directions.
- Street planting and hanging baskets an attractive feature around the town centre including the Edible Bray plantings along Albert Walk lane way, the trees and greenery at the entrance of Bray Library and the flowers and greenery planter on the slope fronting the Cornerstone Church at the Well on Main Street.
- The town is served by a wide range of convenience and comparison goods, but would benefit from a wider range of independent shops and high-end retail units.
- Retail functions are supported by high-quality cafés, restaurants, pubs and some cultural, religious and civic uses.

- The vacancy in town presents opportunities to introduce new commercial, cultural and community in the town centre.
- Bray benefits from a number of quirky narrow streets such as Albert Walk

which hosts a number of cafes, pizzerias and a casino. The Village Gate Arcade off Main Street has small boutique shops, a hardware store, an alteration service and a café.



Figure 3.7: Main Street traffic.



*Figure 3.8: Martello Terrace, Strand Road.*



*Figure 3.9: Terraced three and four storey houses on Strand Road.*



Figure 3.10: The Harbour Bar.



Figure 3.11: View of River Dargle from the south side of the town towards the Super Value store at Castle Street



*Figure 3.12. Albert Walk showing Edible Bray's planting on the left side.*

### Natural Environment and Built Heritage

The setting of Bray with an attractive seafront, blue flag beach and the Bray Head Cliffs are strong natural environment assets for the town, both for the residents of Bray and as a visitor attraction.

The seafront area also displays a large number of attractive terraced town houses, in varied conditions, with some in need of upkeep and repair.

Martello Terrace is perhaps Bray's finest Victorian Terrace and a protected structure and is in a good condition positively contributing to the impression of a town with an interesting history and rich heritage. There are some beautiful heritage buildings such as the Bray Library, the Holy Redeemer Church, Cornerstone Church at the Well.

The Seafront Pavilion scheme is currently at planning stage, and has identified the site, Strand Road, adjacent to the National Sea Life Centre and its immediate environs to have the potential to be developed as a high-quality civic space and as a hub of activity on the waterfront. The proposed development will include widened pedestrian areas, segregated cycling track linking to existing cycle route on both sides of the scheme as well as new seating, trees, planters and public lighting. It is the aim of the scheme to provide a coherent pedestrian and cycling connection between the footpath and cycling tracks on either side of the National Sea Life Centre; to enable people to move easily and comfortably across Strand Road and provide a civic space to host outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes and event.



*Figure 3.13: The recently developed linear park on the northern side of River Dargle.*

The recently developed linear park along the northern side of River Dargle is a great amenity which will benefit the residents in Bray for recreational purposes as well as boosting the overall public realm. There are two children's playgrounds located within Bray Study Area, both located in the south side of the town; one located on Sidmonton Square within a built up area and one situated on the green fronting the sea. These are important facilities to cater for the younger population in the town, however additional facilities for the youth, such as skate park, have been identified during consultation to be considered in order to provide facilities and activities for teenagers.

According to an audit undertaken in 2019, Bray Sailing Club is currently operating at full capacity. Bray Emmet's GAA Club and Bray Bowling show still show some capacity while

Bray Wheelers is currently operating a low capacity. There are potential synergy effects associated to these recreational facilities which to be explored further in terms of promotion, signage and social media presence. The demographics of sports clubs/organisations in Bray indicate to comprise a mix of adult and underage sports and a majority (57%) to be a mix of team and individual sports/physical activities, while the majority of clubs mainly cater for team sports or physical activity only. The most frequent sport on offer in Bray is soccer, followed by Gaelic Football, ladies football, basketball, tennis, badminton and athletics. According to responses to the survey, Bray Skateboarding membership is predicted to increase the most in the next 3-5 years, followed by Enniskerry FC and Bray Emmets GAA Club.

The top three sport/recreational facility needs in Bray where considered to be multi-sport centre, all-weather facilities and swimming pool. A number of respondents noted that a slipway in Bray Harbour would greatly improve the marina related activities in Bray Harbour.

The seafront is heavily used for recreation, including walking the esplanade and promenade, cycling along the upgraded cycle lanes and large green areas for spontaneous sports activities, games and playing. The bandstand is occasionally used for performances and small events. Bray beach is located on the Bray South Promenade, a designated Blue Flag beach and a popular swimming spot for locals and visitors alike.

The People's Park lies north of the river, has a large green area, a childrens playground, several large mature trees and some seating. It was noted during consultation that the park is underutilised due to a perception of it being inaccessible from the town centre.

The Mermaids Art Centre includes an exhibition space, has a stage and screen which regularly hosts a number of talks, dance, theatre and cinema events, as well as the Wicklow Film Festival, which is in its fourth year in 2019. It is also home to the Betelnut Café. Another cultural space is the Signal Arts Centre, located in proximity to the Seafront, promoting and facilitating visual arts, also functioning as an educational and tourism institution, and a part of the cultural and social fabric of Bray community. The 2010 BETT report identified an opportunity to establish a Youth Arts Council in Bray, which has not yet been established, the proposal has the potential to support and facilitate young emerging artists and further development of the arts in Bray. The Archie Bray Foundation for the ceramic arts also offers resident programs for different time periods. Other cultural facilities include Bray Cualann Historic Society, Ardmore Studios, Bray Town Council, Bray Heritage Centre and Bray Tourist Board.

Recreational assets in this area also include the Sailing Club, Bray Shoreline swimming pool and leisure centre, Bray Boxing Club, Bray Bowl Entertainment, Bray Wanderers Football Club and the Sea Life Bray Aquarium.

Common Ground Bray is co-operative, community-based group promoting a mindful and ecological lifestyle. The group organise a number of regular and one-off events and activities including free weekly meditation sessions, a market, Edible Bray community gardens, a repair café and more in the loft of Common Ground Bray in Beverly Studios, off Main Street. The activity of Edible Bray Community Planting Project involves the display of edible plants in public spaces within the town centre, with one planning located along Albert Walk. Other community groups include An Bothán (similar to Men's Shed projects) and Irish Country Women Association Bray Guild.

The proposed East Cost Greenway connecting Wicklow, Newcastle, Kilcoole and Greystones has the potential to generate economic benefits for Bray by attracting tourism to the area, with additional spending in hotels, B&B's, cafes, bars, restaurants, entertainment, recreation etc. The provision of a safe and attractive cycling route has the potential to influence the physical and mental well-being of the residents near the route as well as facilitate an amenity to experience the attractive natural beauty along the route as well as link with the Bray to Greystones cliff walk.

## Public Realm

In terms of the public realm, Bray town has huge potential, with many attractive structures and a rich Victorian heritage within the town centre. However, there are several buildings falling into disrepair and the character of the town centre is heavily influenced by traffic, with particular congestion issues identified along Main Street.

While the sea front offers large spaces for leisure and recreational activities, the main streets of the town centre give a busy and cluttered impression. While there are a number of spaces in the town centre which function as a meeting place (such as outside the Church on Main Street or Bray Civic Centre), it lacks attractive and inviting public spaces. The

landscape strategy identifies a number of nodes in different locations of the town with potential to be developed into small 'pocket' parks by adding street furniture and planting features which could boost the overall appearance and environment in the town.

The landscape strategy identifies the roads linking the sea front area and town centre to improve the connectivity and sense of unity of the town. While some improvements have been undertaken to develop the pedestrian environment, including the upgrade of footpaths and the introduction of hanging flower pots, there is room for additional improvement by adding street furniture, pedestrian crossings and renovating some of the more important structures.

Figure 3.14 Bray Green Space, Links and Pedestrian Routes





Cornerstone Church at the Well

Opportunity Sites for Greening



Unrealized Potential

Opportunity Sites for Greening

Opportunity Sites for Enhancement

Public/Private Open Space

Green Public Open Space

Existing Areas to Sit

Links and Legibility

Local Identity - Garden of Ireland, Dublin Bay, Wicklow Mountains, Glendalough,



Figure 3.15 Opportunity sites for Greening

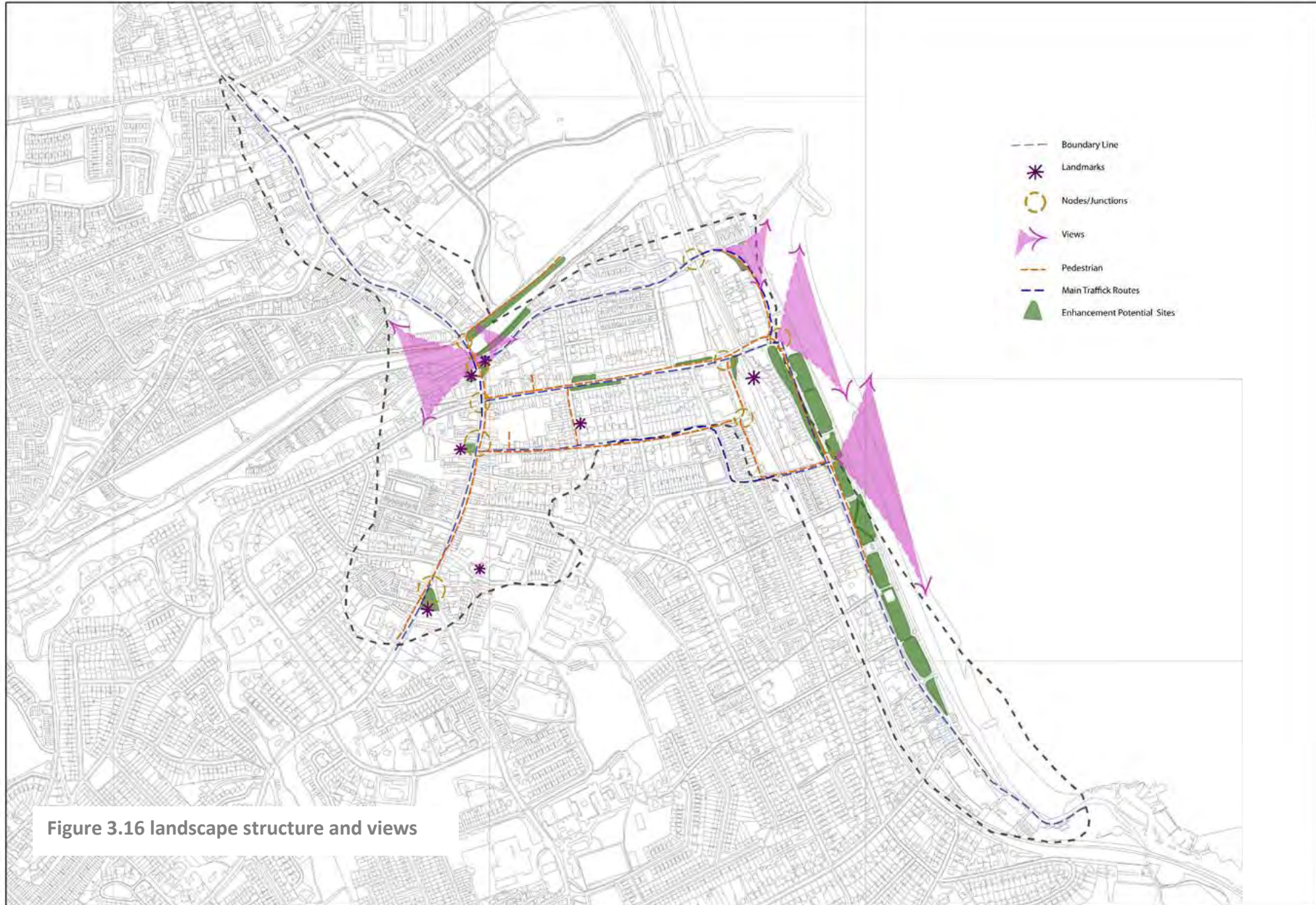


Figure 3.16 landscape structure and views

### RETAIL AND VACANCY

A primary motivation for undertaking this Health Check study is concern for the health and viability of town centre retailing. This is a common throughout the country and was a key factor behind the release of the 2017 report by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation; ***A Framework for Town Centre Renewal.***

The 2010 Rikon for Bray report noted in regard to retail that 80% of respondents did not go shopping during their visit in Bray and the majority of those 20% that did go shopping were domestic visitors. The majority, 38%, said they would not recommend Bray as a shopping/retail destination, while 37% responded that the town was aligned to tourism needs. In terms of retail offerings, the respondents wanted to see more 'Food and Artisan', 'Art and Pottery' and 'High Street' shops as well as 'Art Galleries'. This reflects that existing retail offerings of these types should be encouraged and supported to remain in the town centre and also that there is potential for further business ventures.

Analysis of Geodirectory data<sup>1</sup> shows that Bray has 92 vacant commercial addresses out of a total of 914 commercial addresses – a rate of 10% vacancy for commercial addresses. This can be compared to a national average of approx.. 15%. This detracts from the overall commercial vibrancy of the town centre.

Vacancy is most visual along Main Street with several empty units and a number of derelict buildings showing an urgent need for upkeep. Conversely, many buildings and shop fronts have been recently painted and decorated with hanging signs, plantings and attractive window displays positively contributing to the environmental quality of the town centre.

Vacant sites identified in prime locations with potential include the former Town Fair building, the unit above Bray House and Milton's pharmacy and the Bray Design Centre building behind the Christopher Thompson Memorial Fountain and next to the Royal Hotel and Merrill Leisure Club.

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<sup>1</sup> Geodirectory data, Q2 2019

## Bray Town Centre Health Check



Figure 3.17: Map of main large retail facilities in Bray Study Area and surroundings.



Figure 3.18: Map of the retail and wholesale activities in Bray.

## Bray Town Centre Health Check



Figure 3.19. GeoDirectory data showing top five most frequent commercial activity within Bray Study

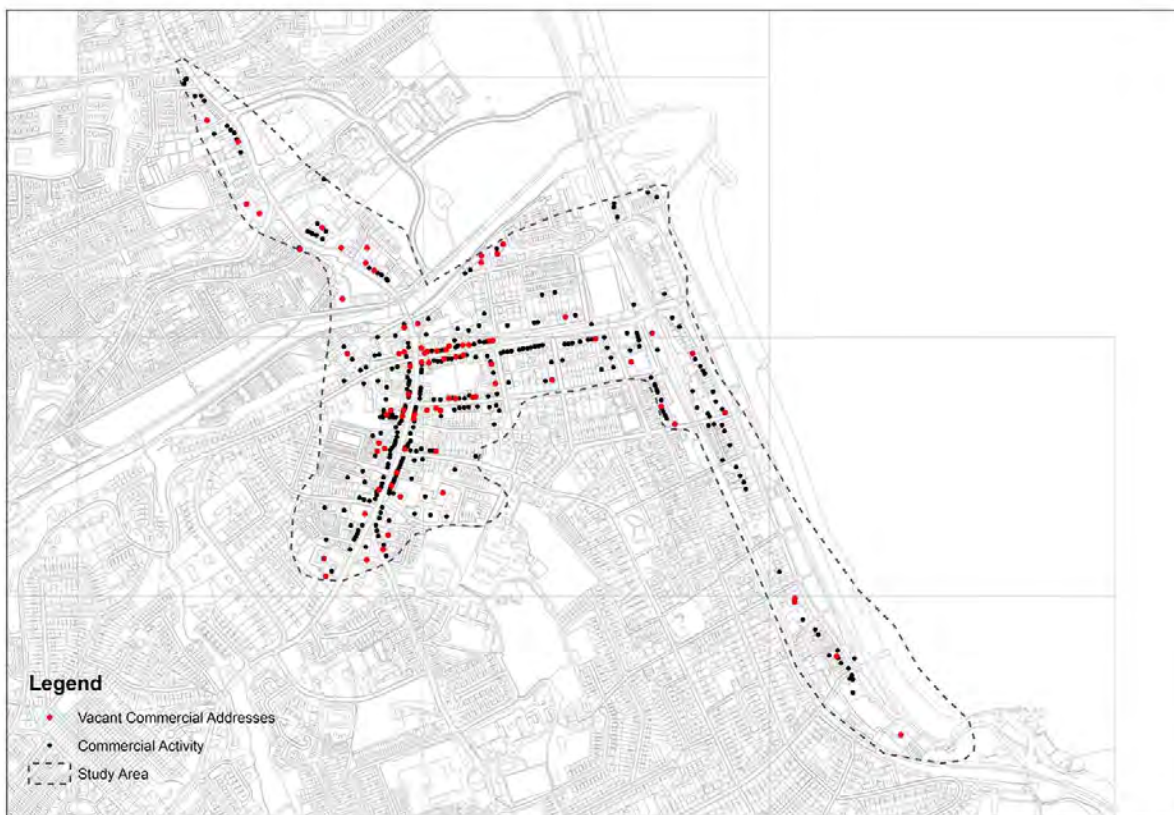


Figure 3.20: Bray Vacant and Occupied Commercial Addresses (2019).

## Bray Town Centre Health Check

Wicklow County Council maintain pedestrian counts at various points throughout the town managed by Nomad consultants). This provides a vital source of the information for the Health Check. It highlights that despite common perceptions, footfall on the Main Street (Quinnsborough Road) is actually just as robust as the sea front.

Our analysis of the retail offer in Bray, highlights that retail vacancy is not as bad as perceived. However, the presentation of the 'front-face' of the town is crucial. There is a wide variation in shop front quality and attractiveness. Many shops have invested in attractive shop fronts and window displays.

Street planting and hanging baskets provide warmth to the overall appearance.

However, there are significant numbers of shop fronts which detract from the good work that has been undertaken. There is a prevalent impression of plastic signage within shop windows; a mixed palette of materials and designs (often low quality). This creates a poor first impression.

This is easier to fix than chronic vacancy or preparing a road scheme, but it **does require consensus from property owners to raise standards and focusing on who the customer is and what the experience that they will buy into.**



Figure 3.21: Visitor Monitoring Report Bray, Co. Wicklow

Bray Town Centre Health Check

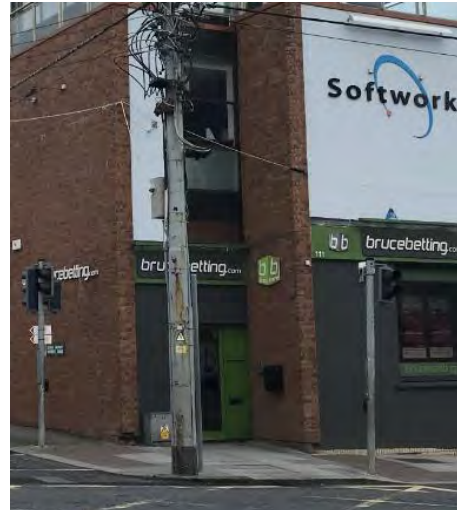


Figure 3.22 Under-performing Shopfronts in the town centre

### Traffic and Parking

Bray is an important transport hub. The DART provides a sustainable, fast and accessible transportation service for visitors and residents commuting to Dublin city. Bus providers service the area with local links as well as connections to Dublin City and other larger settlements in Wicklow.

- Bray has a restricted/Pay Parking system in operation covering, in general, the town centre.
- Bray Town Centre (known as the Florentine Centre) previously functioned as a car park, requiring a new area to be identified to absorb the car parking demand in Bray.
- Large areas in the seafront area provide off-street car parking spaces as well as on-street parking on Strand Road.
- With the exception on Main Street, there is plentiful on-street parking.
- Ad hoc parking was observed in a number of locations, particularly within the commercial core of the town, with a number of vans and private parked on curbs and on cycling lanes.
- The Irish Rail Car park serves both staff and functions as a park-and-ride facility for Dart passengers, with the current capacity of approximately 75 parking spaces.
- The private Bray Bowl underground car park serves local parking demand, including commuter park-and-ride for some Dart passengers, current capacity is 55 parking spaces.
- Herbert Road Car Park is located parallel to Main Street which was extended in 2018 with the additional 50 car parking spaces currently has a total of 250 spaces.
- The Station Forecourt area comprise 8 no. set down spaces utilised mainly for taxis. The Taxi Survey undertaken as part of the Bray Transport Interchange Planning Report (2018) revealed that the majority of the trips were used for drop-offs and that the average dwell time for taxi's was c. 30 minutes.

### Pedestrian and Cycling

The traffic conditions in Bray, including congestion, narrow roads and insufficient cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, comprise a discouraging environment for people of all ages and abilities to cycle.

- The pedestrian environment in the town centre has seen some improvements in terms of surface, flower hangers, some seating and bins, but have great potential to be enhanced further particularly in regard to the implementation of safety features such as pedestrian crossings, accessible curbs, more seating and planting.
- The promenade is an attractive and well-used feature in the town for pedestrians and cyclists and has the potential to be enhanced further.
- Safe bike parking is essential in order to encourage more people to cycle, a facility which is infrequent and sparse in Bray. Bike parking is dotted around the Main Street area, particularly next to the Sea Life building on Strand Road. The town would benefit by introducing Sheffield stands, particularly in the area of the main streets, at the seafront and in the harbour area.
- The rail station forecourt area currently has poor pedestrian accessibility with narrow footpaths and poorly located crossings not adequately facilitating the key desire lines.
- The Station Forecourt is currently lacking infrastructure provisions for cyclists, the proposed Bray Station development includes proposals to improve cyclists permeability and the area would also greatly benefit from secure bike parking to enable people to use the station as an interchange from bike to public transportation and vice versa.
- One of Bray's key walking links include Albert Walk, which provides pedestrian permeability from Bray Station to the residential area south of Albert Avenue.



*Figure 3.23: One bike parking stand in front of the Holy Redeemer Church on Main Street, showing some facades in need of upkeep and directional signage.*

## Signage

Bray town centre's traditional urban structure and street layout however make it walkable, legible and readily understood for orientation. However, the array of advertisement, hanging signs and standing signs outside shopfronts and on footpaths, hanging on the side of buildings in Bray town centre gives a cluttered impression. The physical environment in the town centre appears to be saturated with information, obscuring the visibility of directory signage.

- Groupings of standard local authority signage have been erected at the main entrance points and at junctions.
- Destination signage for tourism and recreational attractions in the town centre are sparse, with examples of such comprising a cluster of signage outside the Holy Redeemer Church. Orientation signage for visitors signage could be erected at the town centre entrance points as well as at the main junctions and crossings.
- There is one map of the Bray Civic Centre, showing the functions of the buildings situated in this area as well as board highlighting the upcoming events and activities in the Mermaid Arts Centre.
- There are no maps of the town centre on display to encourage visitors to explore other areas of the town, including smaller streets, alley ways and hidden away gems. These maps could also include heritage and cultural assets, attractions and all-around activities.
- De-cluttering of advertisements and removing unattractive signage in the town centre would further help visitors orientate themselves in the town centre.

Section 4  
**CONSULTATIONS**



# Consultation

Consultation has taken place with local authority representatives, business and service providers, representatives of community and sporting organisations. A public consultation evening was held which was open to all members of the community to actively contribute to the action plan development process. The actions outlined in this plan reflect the consultation undertaken across a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

Consultation with key stakeholders was held by means of a participatory workshop, which was held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019 in the Royal Hotel, Bray. Participants were contacted by email and phone call. The purpose of the workshop was to give those attending an opportunity to actively contribute to the process and discuss and share ideas on the challenges and future opportunities for Bray. The workshop was instructive in shaping the discussion and providing ideas for actions as well as further public consultations.

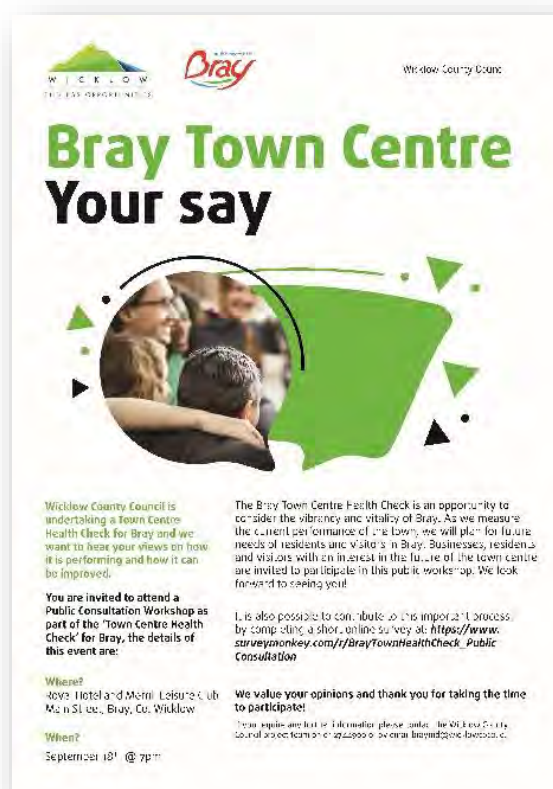
A broader public meeting was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 to discuss the Health Check and the potential of Bray in its totality. The event was broadly advertised by newspaper advert, Bray web page leaflet drop and social media. The event attracted a strong attendance with approx. 100 people participating.

FAC lead an interactive workshop session with the community exploring themes of **Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities and Actions:**

In finding key priorities for Bray, the public consultation workshop has helped to shape the actions of this plan. In addition, the workshops provided a forum for attendees to discuss their mutual interests in Bray and understand the objectives and potential constraints relating to the future development of Bray.

The figure below is an illustration of the discussion prepared in an interactive approach with everyone in the room.

Additional notes from the group discussions, and the points made by participants were collated from the FAC team to incorporate in the analysis and actions of this Health Check.





### Online Survey

As part of the Health Check project a public survey was designed by FAC to solicit public opinion on a wide range of issues regarding the town. The survey was advertised in local press and on flyers. A summary of Survey Results so far is included below. Some 560 responses have been received. The responses are consolidated as follows:

#### MAIN POSITIVE THINGS ABOUT BRAY

- The seafront;
- The location of Bray – at the coast and close to mountains;
- The scenery and natural beauty;
- A strong sense of community;
- Good choice of schools;
- A wide range of amenities on offer in town;
- Good range of places to eat and drink;
- The BIFE;
- The Dart connection and access to Dublin city;
- Several events and happenings in the town; and,
- The rich Victorian heritage.

#### MAIN ISSUES IN BRAY

- Traffic and congestion;
- Poor planning and development;
- Poor visual upkeep of shopfronts and streets;
- Clutter;
- High vacancy on Main Street;
- Anti-social behaviour;
- The neglect, maintenance, traffic and poor planning of Main Street;
- Lack of a wide range of shopping and good quality shopping facilities;
- Lack of responsibility to care for people who are homeless or have an addiction problem;
- School traffic congestion; and
- Parking undermanaged.

#### OPPORTUNITIES IN BRAY

- The development of the Greenway and cycling tourism;
- Grants to support environmentally friendly actions;
- Better promotion and investment in the sports clubs;
- The development of the Florentine Centre;
- Investment and clean-up of Main Street including cleaning of vacant shops;
- Tourism planning, funding and promotion;
- BIFE; invest, expand and increase the number of courses on offer and facilities;
- Directional and Interpretive signage approaching town and in Bray;
- Upgrade BIFE to Institute of Technology
- Attract businesses to town;
- Employment opportunities;
- Traffic management of Main Street;
- Town Shuttle bus;

## Experienced safety in Bray

- 84% of the respondents answering the question, experience Bray as a safe place to live;
- Safety concerns identified in Bray included traffic (43%) or personal safety (34%);
- Other concerns (14%) include safety for cyclists; drinking and anti-social behaviour; low Garda presence; lack of public transportation at night.

## The greatest need for Bray in the next 5 years

- Tackle traffic congestion issues – implement traffic management;
- Development of retail on Main Street;
- Improved public realm;
- Improved public transport options within town;
- Improve car parking facilities, maintenance and development of amenities in town;
- Well designed and affordable housing developments for younger people;
- Higher variety/quality shopping;
- Youth centre, more facilities and activities for the younger population;
- Restoration and upkeep of shops/building on Main Street;
- Sustainable traffic and public transportation on offer in Bray town;
- Investment in BIFE and upgrade to Institute of Technology;
- More social housing and affordable housing;
- Rejuvenation of town centre; public areas and the public realm;
- Accessibility;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Maintenance of streets and public areas, additional bins;

Appendix 1 of this report includes a series of graphs summarising the feedback on the online Survey Monkey.



Figure 4.3 Word cloud analysis of Survey Monkey response on question ‘summarise Bray in 3 words’

Section 5  
**SWOT ANALYSIS**

# 5



# SWOT analysis

Subsequent to the public consultation events and survey response feedback, a SWOT analysis was undertaken which sets out the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats associated with the development of Bray. Socio-economic and demographic profiling, combined with site visits, and stakeholder consultation assisted in the preparation of the SWOT analysis and builds a picture of what is valued and appreciated in the area and where threats and opportunities lie.

The SWOT analysis helps to build a picture of what is unsatisfactory and needs changing, what external threats exist or may arise, and the future opportunities. The SWOT provides

a basis for a vision for the future that stakeholders believe to be both desirable and achievable. Below the SWOTs are outlined under each relevant heading.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scenic setting nestled between Bray Head, Sea front, harbour and river</li> <li>▪ Promenade amenity and destination</li> <li>▪ Traditional town fabric with attractive palette of materials, architecture and spaces</li> <li>▪ Traditional Market town for North Wicklow</li> <li>▪ Part of Dublin Metropolitan area and economy</li> <li>▪ Strong identity</li> <li>▪ Good legible street structure</li> <li>▪ Transport hub (rail and bus) in town centre</li> <li>▪ Town centre businesses and services (restaurants, pubs and shops)</li> <li>▪ Heritage attractions</li> <li>▪ Shop front improvements and street planting</li> <li>▪ Off-street parking</li> <li>▪ Anchor retail shops close to town</li> <li>▪ Schools and Bray Institute of Further Education</li> <li>▪ Community and Diversity</li> <li>▪ Events</li> <li>▪ Strong website and social media presence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access and Congestion</li> <li>▪ Car dominance in town centre</li> <li>▪ Pedestrian environment</li> <li>▪ Vacant properties</li> <li>▪ Retail diversity and anchors</li> <li>▪ Main street retail attractions and footfall</li> <li>▪ Derelict and poor condition of some properties</li> <li>▪ Presentation of shop windows</li> <li>▪ Recreation facilities</li> <li>▪ Capacity of hotel accommodation</li> <li>▪ Image/impression of town is not developed or understood in marketing/branding sense</li> <li>▪ Perception and narrative of town</li> <li>▪ Communications (between business community) is not up to date</li> <li>▪ Public spaces are sparse in town centre</li> <li>▪ There are too many single trip visits to town</li> <li>▪ Undeveloped urban experience</li> <li>▪ Insufficient Entrepreneurial space</li> <li>▪ Inclusiveness of diverse communities in discourse</li> </ul>

Opportunities:	Threats:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enhance public spaces (squares, footpaths etc)</li> <li>▪ Redevelopment of urban plots within the town centre</li> <li>▪ Development of Florentine Centre</li> <li>▪ New Transport Hub</li> <li>▪ Develop network of paths and pedestrian ways that link the parks along the river</li> <li>▪ Calm town centre traffic through speed reduction measures and redirection of through traffic and make it safer and more attractive to walk &amp; cycle</li> <li>▪ Support town centre business and services</li> <li>▪ Promote town centre living</li> <li>▪ Develop cultural attractions</li> <li>▪ Capture passing trade</li> <li>▪ Playgrounds</li> <li>▪ Growth of town as a 'Key Centre' supports high end investment and renewal of town</li> <li>▪ Tourism, amenity</li> <li>▪ Linkages – multi-trip, activities, attractions, shopping</li> <li>▪ 'Re-positioning' of Main Street</li> <li>▪ Appreciation by community of importance of adapting and improving the town centre</li> <li>▪ Town Team has been formed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allowing car dominance to be sustained</li> <li>▪ Safety of streets remains unchanged (pedestrian, children &amp; vulnerable street users)</li> <li>▪ Governance structures are not developed or sustained (town team or public private partnership)</li> <li>▪ Access to opportunities and enterprise is not developed</li> <li>▪ Risk of heritage buildings and fabric of town being allowed to decline through lack of investment and statutory protection</li> <li>▪ Under-investment in infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Suburbanisation and hollowed-out centre</li> <li>▪ Poor presentation of shop fronts</li> <li>▪ Lack of strategy/co-ordination of main street retail</li> <li>▪ Access to services (i.e. health) in accordance with scale of settlement</li> <li>▪ Under-selling of opportunity</li> </ul>

Section 6  
**ACTIONS**



# Actions

A Framework for Town Centre Renewal 2017 emphasises that the development of Actions are key to achieving and implementing Healthy, Vibrant Town Centres. It states:

*Actions and initiatives are needed to ensure the viability of a town centre including delivery of improvement projects, regular cleaning and maintenance and co-ordinated town centre management initiatives to promote the continued improvement of the centre.*

The need for Actions and initiatives was discussed and debated during public consultations. There emerged a clear theme, where stakeholders and community members in Bray greatly cherish the town centre and want to see it thrive, prosper and re-discover its identity as the heart of the town. This means a better retail experience a higher level of expectation of activities and attractions and enhanced capacity for all members of the community to be able to access an attractive town centre environment without being feeling endangered by the dominance of car traffic.

Change can be a challenging process, but the public consultation sessions made it clear that the majority of business, community and residential communities are supportive of positive interventions and innovations.

## Resilience

At the heart of this change process is the concept of resilience. This allows to engage with projects and initiatives in a spirit of adaption, not resistance.

The ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life for all members of the community and place business on sustainable footing to grow and prosper in the years ahead.

## 'Re-positioning'

In 2006 Howard de Walden Estate in London won the Academy of Urbanism's Great Street

Award, on the basis of their concept of 'Re-positioning' the High Street. It remains a strong model for adapting to the challenges all town centres face. Key measures include

- Avoid the street being overrun by fashion chains and supermarkets.
- Base the street's regeneration on attracting small local shops and services.
- Many and varied small shops providing for the community's daily needs
- Anchor land uses (this can range from grocery/deli stores to furniture shops)
- A 'foodie' centre



**Adaption**



**Change**



**Flourishing**



**Not resistance**



**Quality of life**

## Bray Town Centre Health Check

- Not always about highest rent for every unit (i.e. support the old book shop)

They also set out the following markers:

- Liveability (repositioning centres as places to live);
- Town centre activity (repositioning offer, services and activities, anchors, e.g. markets, multi-functional);
- Connectivity (repositioning links, transport accessibility, integration of transport into place, infrastructure); and
- Demographic change (repositioning to meet needs of changing catchment – younger families, older generations).

The centre of gravity in Bray has shifted away from the Main street, towards the Sea front and suburban shopping centres. A central challenge for the town is to re-integrate the Main Street with the town's population and diverse range of activities. This entails looking at the town centre with fresh eyes, understanding its vital role as a high value hub for a prosperous metropolitan town and supporting a positive narrative that stakeholders can buy-into to support investment and initiatives going forward.

This requires a re-orientation around the 'customer' for Bray as a person who wants to engage with this urban environment, for business, recreation, education, amenity and social activities.

### 'Re-orientation'

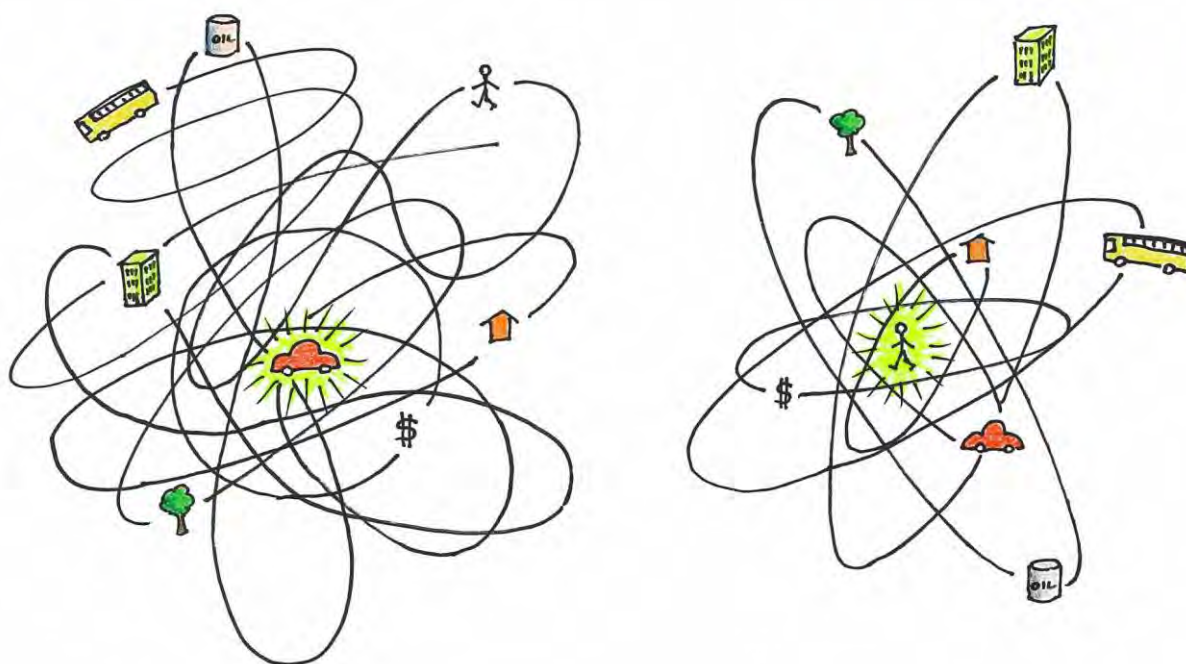


Figure 6.1 Re-orientation of the town around the 'customer' not the car. Source: Learning from Blue Zones, Presentation2 by Dan Burden 17/10/19 Illustration by Ian Lockwood

<sup>2</sup> Building the Healthy City; Inciting the Healthy Choice Healthy Urban Communities People and Planetary Health at a Crossroads by Dan Burden, director of innovation and inspiration

### *Responsibility*

Actions cannot happen without responsibility. The community is integral to all aspects of life in the town. Progressive and dramatic changes to Bray are most likely to succeed if all stakeholders become supporters of change; true champions of resilience.

### *From issues to action*

The Health Check covers a broad analysis of issues and factors that detract from Bray's potential as an urban centre. This plan seeks to address these with a series of actions simply seek:

- To make Bray town centre more accessible and safer to move around;
- Provide a higher quality retail and town centre destination reflecting the town's status as a 'Key Centre' in the Dublin Metropolitan Region; and
- Improving the quality to the town centre environment, making it a better place to visit, work in and spend time for all member of the community.

This Health Check Study recommends the follow actions be pursued encourage a process of positive change for the town centre.



## Bray Town Centre Health Check Actions

Action	Intervention type	Description	Timeframe
1	Organisation	<b>Communication Plan</b> – proactively manage contact lists – regular updates on initiatives and progress through Bray.ie	Short term
	Actions	The objective of this action is to build upon the existing business network and communication structures in Bray to ensure the most effective channels are used to share important news and events. It is important to integrate with the small businesses, community, institutions and larger businesses.	Stakeholders: WCC, Bray Chamber of Commerce (BCoC), community groups
2	Organisation	Encourage the development of a sustainable framework for proactive discussion for public and private sectors, big and small business and institutions in the town	Short term
	Actions	The aim of this action is to organise for success. It is vital that both the private sector and public sectors find a structure or framework to ensure everyone is pulling together in the same direction. There is an opportunity to create a partnership structure or utilise those already existing. The aim of the structure will be to organize around objectives and projects rather than forming an additional grouping if that is not necessary.	Stakeholders: WCC, Bray Chamber of Commerce (BCoC), community groups, business champions
3	Public Realm	Develop Public Realm Strategy to support regular interventions and impactful planting on a roll-out basis	Short to Medium term
	Actions	<p>The objective of this Action is to define a series of ‘shovel ready’ projects which cumulatively will really enhance the quality of life in the town centre and protect spaces for sitting, walking and talking (box planting, benches, street trees). People need zones where they feel safe and protected. The PRS would be an important vehicle for supporting funding submissions.</p> <p>A proactive approach to Public transport and micro-mobility will be at the heart of a PRS.</p> <p><b>Lighting:</b> The public realm plan is an opportunity to identify locations where street lighting can be improved, which can have a dramatic and positive effect on the night-time environment</p> <p><b>Access:</b> The town centre should be user-friendly for all groups in society who may be vulnerable and face challenges due to disabilities, age or perception. If a town is safe for children and aged people it will be good for everybody.</p> <p><b>Playgrounds:</b> Opportunities to support the provision of safe play spaces of children should be identified as part of the PRS</p>	Stakeholders: WCC Community Groups (Tidy Towns)

<b>4</b>	Public Realm	Opportunity for green spaces – enhance small public spaces with pocket park projects	Medium
	Actions	A vital strand of the public realm strategy is to promote and facilitate a continuous process of greening of the town. This study defines particular small spaces in the town that could support an imaginative planting scheme with a major impact. Biodiversity: New landscape measures are an opportunity to proactively promote the incorporation of the principles of biodiversity in the design and environmental qualities of outdoor projects in Bray	Stakeholders: WCC Tidy Towns
<b>5</b>	Public Realm	Pedestrian links from town to sea front – focus on pedestrian environment on 3 east west links to seafront from Main Street	Medium
	Actions	The objective of this action is to improve the linkage between the main Street and Sea Front both through the quality of the links, and support the perception that the central area is highly walkable. This requires pavement improvement and better information on street (i.e. maps, signs, information).	Stakeholders: WCC Tourism stakeholders
<b>6</b>	Public realm / infrastructure	Introduce additional Pedestrian Crossings on Main Street	Short term
	Actions	The aim of this action is to improve the pedestrian environment of Main Street and make it less intimidating for pedestrians to cross the road and engage with shops on the other side of the street.  It is important that streets are safe for all users and the management of parking by the Council’s wardens is a vital part of supporting a better street environment	Stakeholders: WCC
<b>7</b>	Traffic & Mobility	Schools Traffic plan – develop overall strategy in consultation with all institutions to address school based traffic for the town	Short-term
	Actions	The aim of this action is to help everyone move around the town easier and support a more pleasant street in terms of safety and atmosphere, and make walking, cycling and micro-mobility attractive. The Schools Traffic plan is an opportunity for stakeholders to develop ‘safe town centre’ strategy including defining ‘drop and no-drop zones and parking for drop-off/collection.	Stakeholders: WCC NTA An Taisce Schools Parents pupils
<b>8</b>	Traffic & Mobility	School Streets – consider closing sections of streets to traffic during drop-off and pick up times	Short-term
	Actions	As part of Schools Traffic plan identify potential streets around schools which would benefit from temporary no traffic zones during pick up and drop-off times. This measure would improve pedestrian safety, encourage children and students to walk and cycle. This may include a ‘Code of Conduct’ with	Stakeholders: WCC, NTA An Taisce Schools Parents pupils

		school (and parents) and businesses regarding good parking habits and drop-off/pick-up zones.	
<b>9</b>	Traffic & Mobility Actions	Safe routes to school ‘Safe Routes to School’ is an established project by NTA and An Taisce (Green Schools programme) to encourage mobility alternatives to car. This established expertise and experience would support all mobility initiatives	Short-term Stakeholder: WCC, Schools, students, parents, NTA, An Taisce,
<b>10</b>	Traffic & Mobility Actions	Car-free day – annual or quarterly event to experience the town centre without cars Project to allow people to experience the quality and potential of Bray’s streets when quiet and free from traffic. Identify suitable stretches of road where a quiet street could be created once a year as a celebration of Bray’s heritage and other qualities	Short-term WCC, BCoC
<b>11</b>	Education Actions	Support integration and development of Education campus in the town centre as an important anchor This Action seeks to highlight the importance of the location of further education and training with a student body in the heart of Bray. Steps to develop and integrate the campus as an important cultural and economic anchor for the town are fully supported in this study.	Medium Schools, Education Institutes, WCC Landowners
<b>12</b>	Retail Actions	Retail Charter and rental strategy – initiative to bring property owners together to achieve balance of retail uses and attract ‘anchor tenants’ for the town overall The aim of this action is to create confidence for retailers and property owners in the town that Bray is working to a common vision to improve the quality of Bray’s offer reflecting its status as a major town in the Dublin region with a dynamic growing population.	Short term Stakeholders: BCoC, WCC Business Champions Customers
<b>13</b>	Retail Actions	Shop front partnership project -work with all retailers to reduce low quality window signage and improve visibility of fresh produce, quality products and interaction with street frontage Utilising good work has been done on shop front guidelines around the country, the objective of this action is to develop a template of looks and materials that businesses and retailers can work with to improve the front-face of the town. This may include renewing the shop front scheme.	Short term Stakeholders: WCC, BCoC
<b>14</b>	Retail Actions	Encourage and attract Independent retail and small shops This action recognises that with the opening of the Florentine centre with brand retailers, there will be an opportunity for street-facing shops to redefine their offer with a high quality identity and character. Bray could proactively identify and engage	Short term Stakeholders: WCC, BCoC

		independent stores, services and operators who would add to the profile and image of high street retailing & services and have a positive impact on the overall offer.	
<b>15</b>	Infrastructure	Transport Hub – support investment in hub around train station as vital economic and social function for town	Short term
	Actions	This action recognises that Bray is an important transport hub and investment in the area around the DART station is forthcoming. The opportunity for this Health Check is looking at this hub, as the town’s most important access, consider what their first action is on reaching Bray, first impressions and whether transport integration and further journeys are easily understood and visible	Stakeholders:  WCC, BCoC, NTA, Irish Rail, Private travel operators
<b>16</b>	Development and social infrastructure	Potential for Age-Friendly housing close to town core in locations where vacancy and dereliction could be addressed with step-down housing in pedestrian friendly environment close to services and facilities	Medium to Long-term
	Actions	Bray wants to be an age friendly town. New sheltered housing in the town centre is progressing and will be close to services as well as potentially integrating with age friendly public realm. This may also integrate with Slow activities – walking, bowls , fishing etc. which can form a strong part of developing a healthy town across all age groups.	Stakeholders: WCC, HSE, care providers
<b>17</b>	Recreation & Community	Work with sports clubs to identify suitable town centre facilities	Medium term
	Actions	Good quality sport and leisure facilities are an integral to a town’s attractiveness. Visits to gyms and health club can be as much a part of trips to the town centre as retail or services. There will be opportunities to work with new mixed-use developments include public facing leisure facilities	WCC, developers, property owners
<b>18</b>	Social Infrastructure Culture & education	Examine feasibility for Potential for development cultural hub	Long term
	Actions	This action seeks to ensure various groups have good facilities particularly where existing buildings may provide opportunities. This may include teenage facilities such as a café, youth club, culture and active recreation area such as a skate. This may also consider Mental Health needs – mindfulness, yoga classes and art (develop co-ordinated programme among service providers, businesses, schools and voluntary groups).	Stakeholders:  Clubs, Youth groups, HSE, WCC
<b>19</b>	Amenity & Tourism	Develop greenway linkage (East Coast)	Medium to long term

## Bray Town Centre Health Check

	Actions	Co-ordinate any public realm and infrastructure investments/ with strategic projects and support tourist and recreational initiatives.	Stakeholders: WCC Recreation groups (cycling, walking etc)
<b>20</b>	Economy	Support town centre business and services. Develop marketing/PR project on defining the town's profile, network with agencies, council, big business and attractions	Short to Medium Term
	Actions	Identify trends and needs for employers in the town and county generally in consultation with Local Enterprise Office, national employment agencies and training boards. Engage with community network to support unemployed and underemployed people to access skills, education, apprenticeships and economic opportunities	Stakeholders: WCC, BCoC
<b>21</b>	Community Integration	Appreciation of diverse population of Bray and seek opportunities to promote inclusive programmes and initiatives	Short to Medium Term
	Actions	Potentially create events to celebrate Bray's diverse populations. This could include Music, Art, Dance and Food. Also Identify education needs of new population and potential for assisting with night-classes in local facility	Stakeholders: WCC, Community, BCoC

Section 7  
**NEXT STEPS**



# Next Steps

This Town Health Check has helped to generate a creative process to identify ideas and actions that can have a positive and tangible impact on Bray.

We hope the content and ideas expressed in this report inspire businesses and individuals to get involved in bringing the actions into reality, bringing real and tangible changes for Bray.

This means looking at how the ideas and actions can come to fruition, and what the best structure or organisation may be to support its implementation.

## Organising to deliver

There are several established models of town centre organisations that we can look to in order to consider what may be appropriate for the next steps of the Bray Town Health Check. These include BIDs (Business Improvement Districts), Town Centre Managers and Town Teams. These vary between private-sector led, local authority agencies or voluntary community groups.

Bray benefits an established Town Council and local authority office based in the Civic Centre. There is a Chamber of Commerce and also a Town Team initiative has been commenced. Therefore, it is not recommended establishing an additional organisation or committee on top of those existing, when there are sufficient organisations and groups existing. What is fundamental is finding a way for the groups to work together in partnership around strong tasks and actions.

### **Partnership**

The actions in this report cannot be achieved by the public or private sectors on their own.

Real change will only happen when public and private sectors, institutions and small business, sellers and customers all align around the same goals. It is not somebody else's job, but everyone's responsibility.

### **Task Force**

It is recommended that the actions of this study are implemented by Task Forces organised around a theme of change, each led by a 'Champion'. It is envisaged that 3 task forces could be set up immediately to deliver the key actions of this report:

- Town Centre Retail
- Traffic and Mobility Plan for Schools and Town Centre
- Town Centre Environment

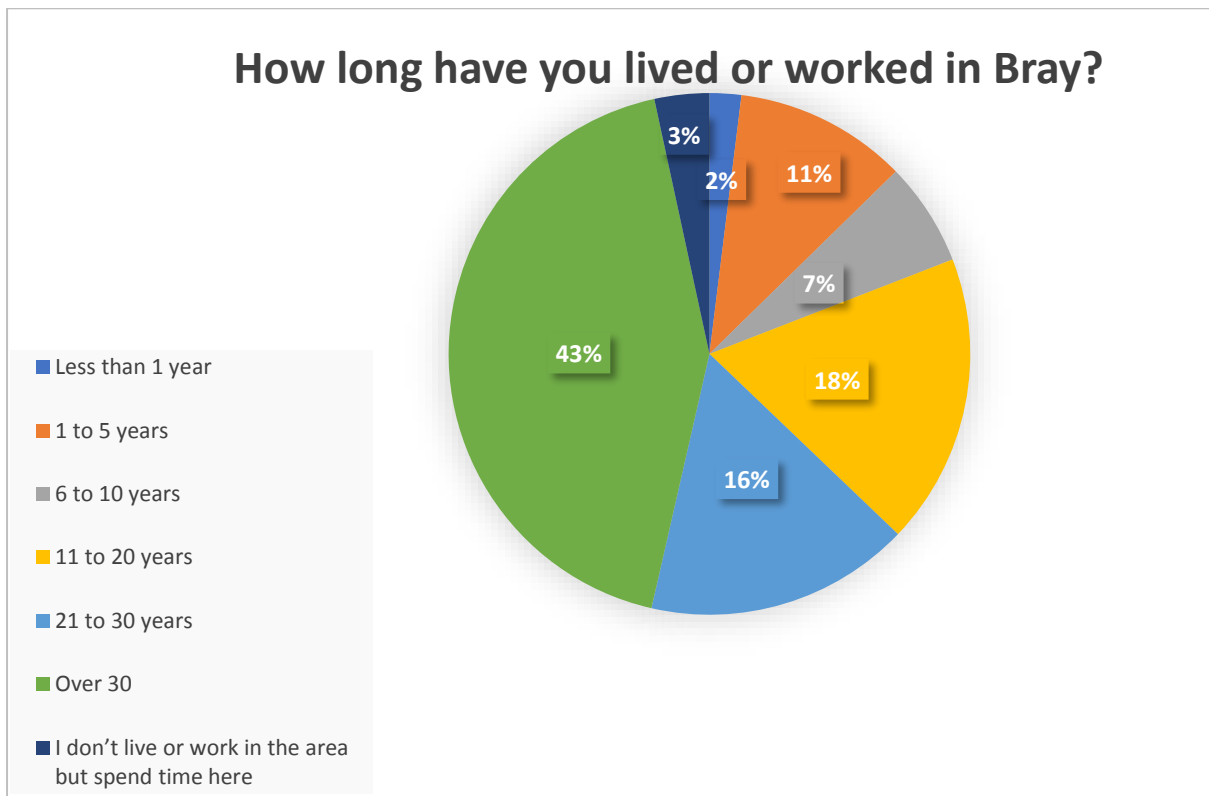
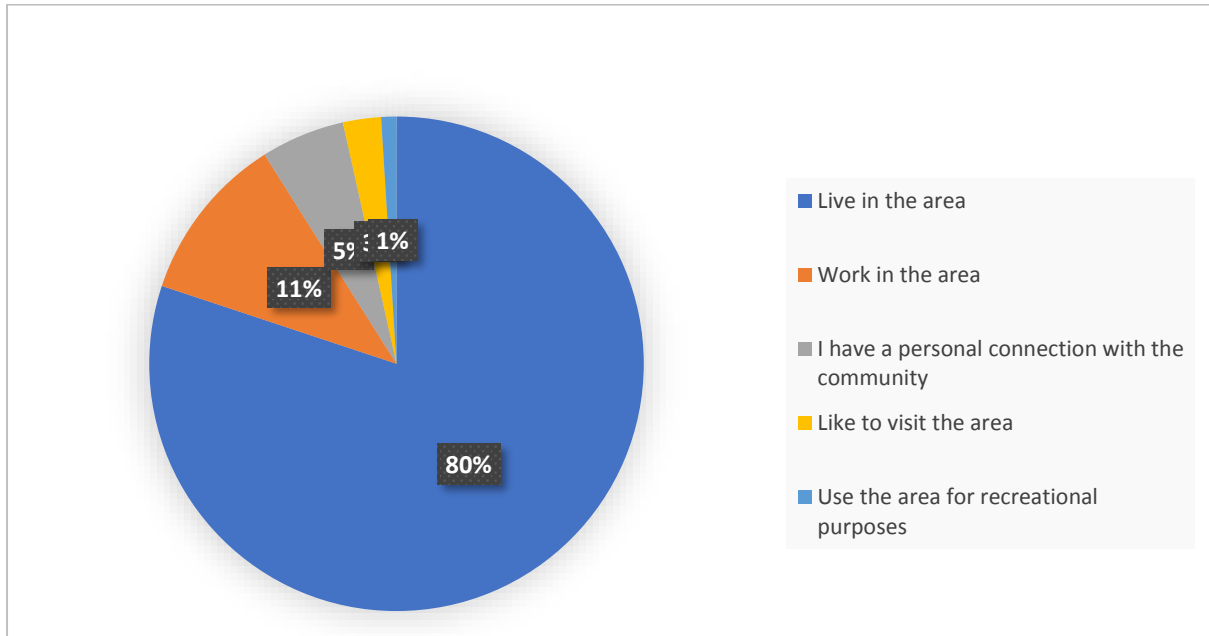
By having limited timeframes, task forces can take on specific projects, knowing that the involvement of the members is finite. This should lead to a more vibrant involvement from communities.

The task forces could prepare and cost the most desirable projects for when funding becomes available. It is recommended that there is an Annual meeting to for all groups to meet and report on the initiatives.

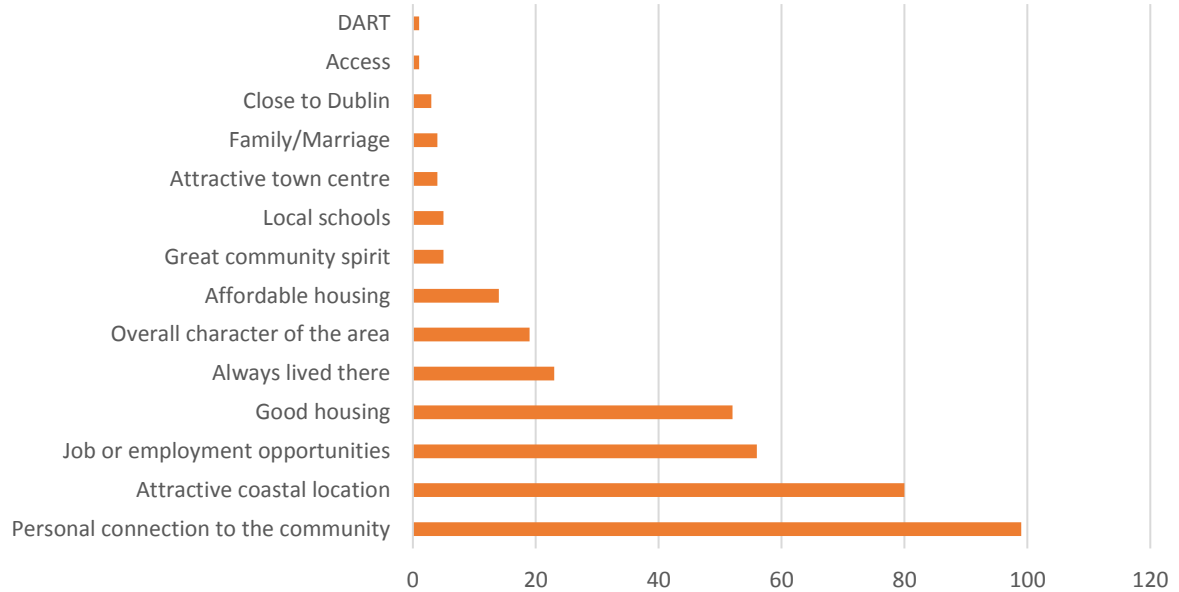
It is recommended that that a 3 year time limit is put on the actions in this plan. A town is never complete and it never stops changing. The challenge is to ensure change is a positive process to make our places better than ever. Our choice is 'business as usual' or 'best in class'. Which will it be?

# Appendix 1

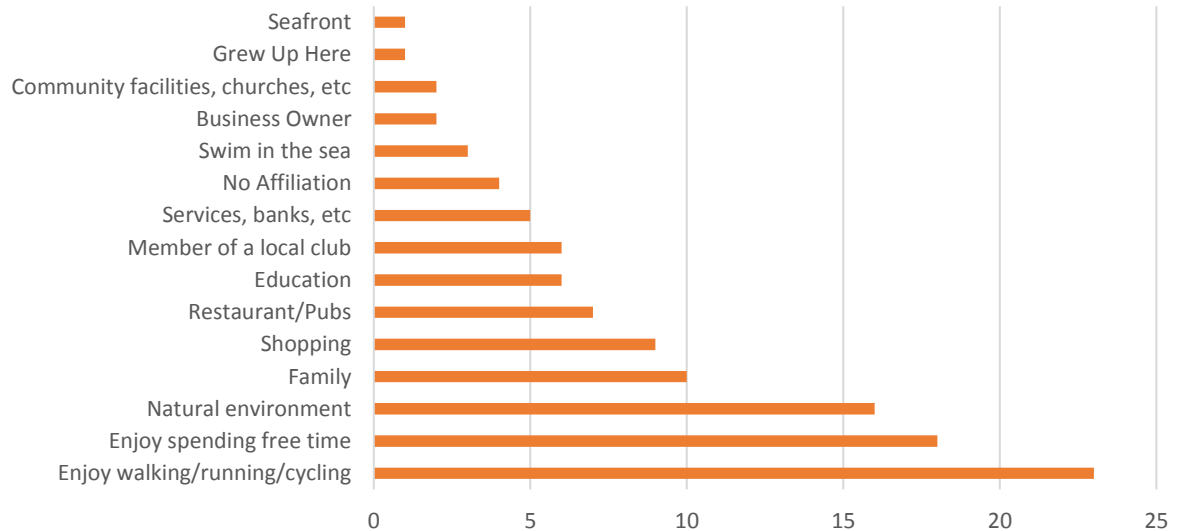
## Feedback from online survey

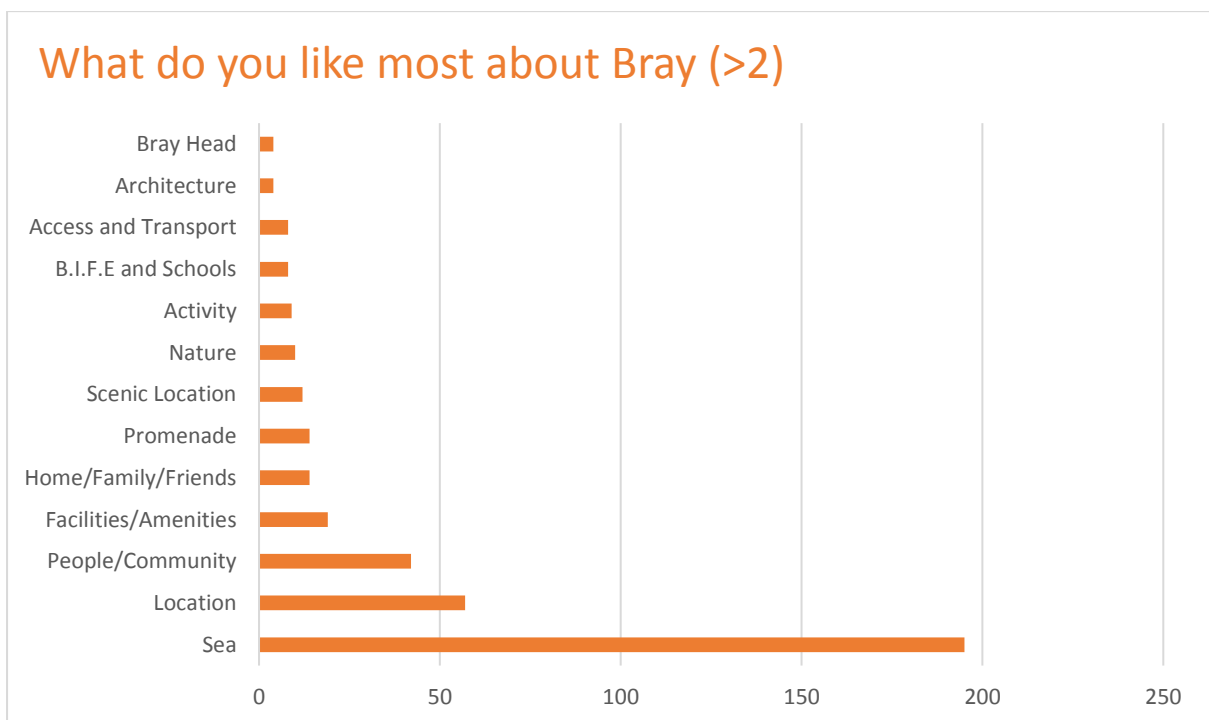
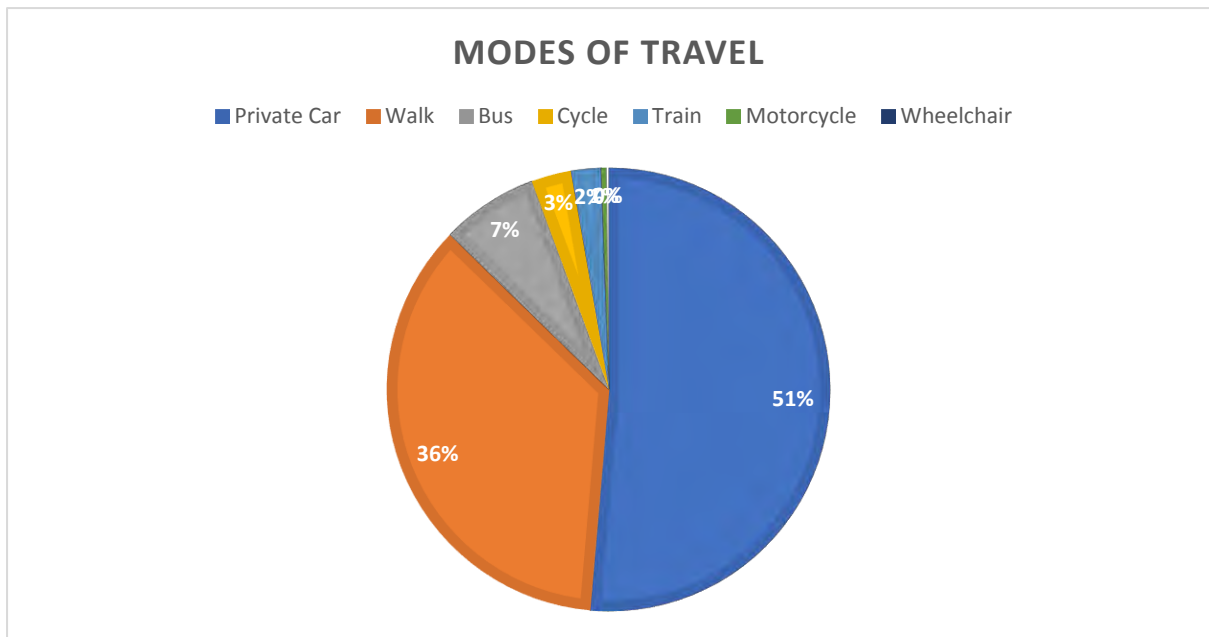


### Reason for Moving to Bray

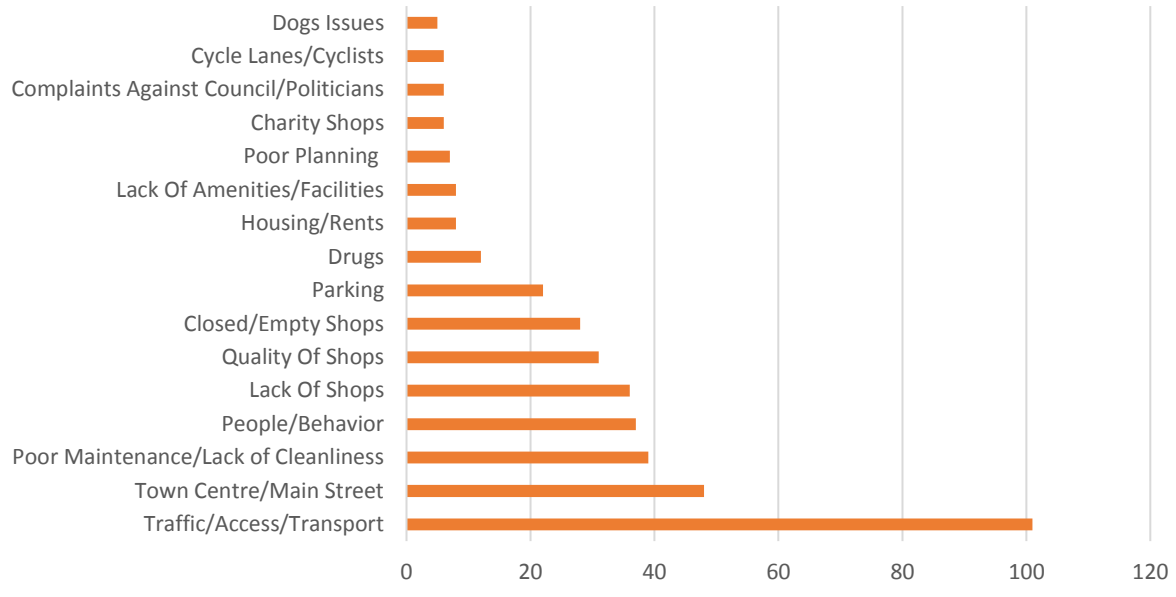


### Reasons for Visiting Bray (excluding living and working)

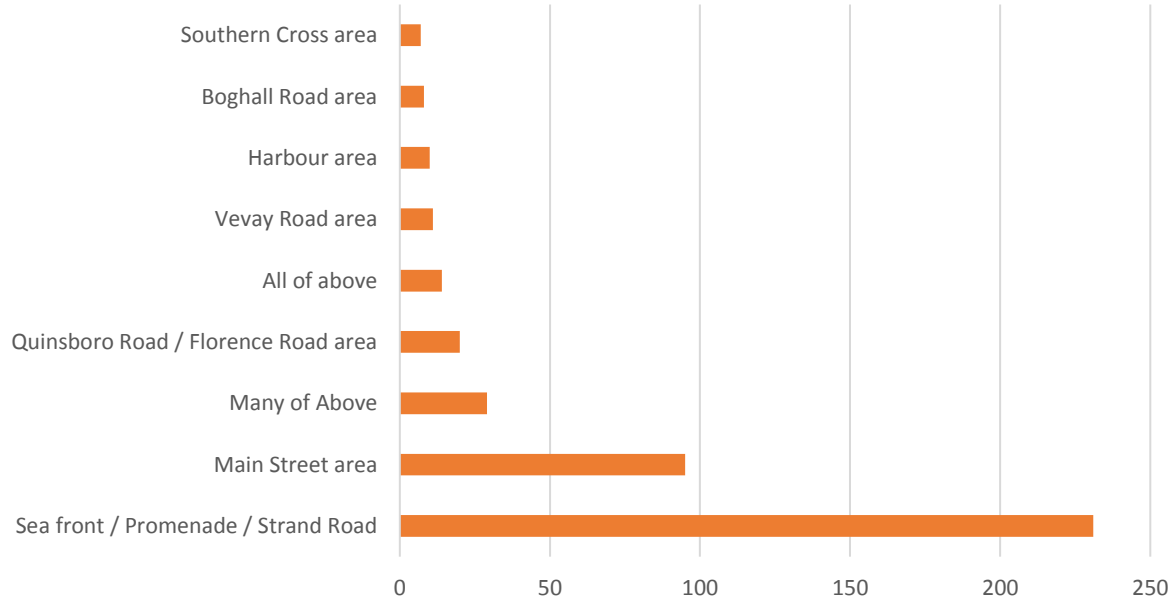




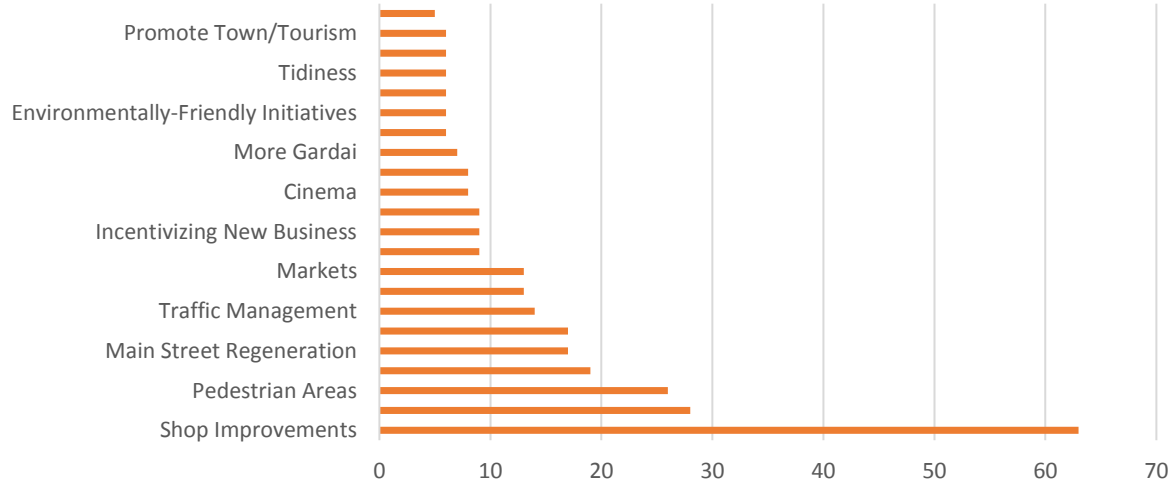
### What do like least about Bray? (>5)



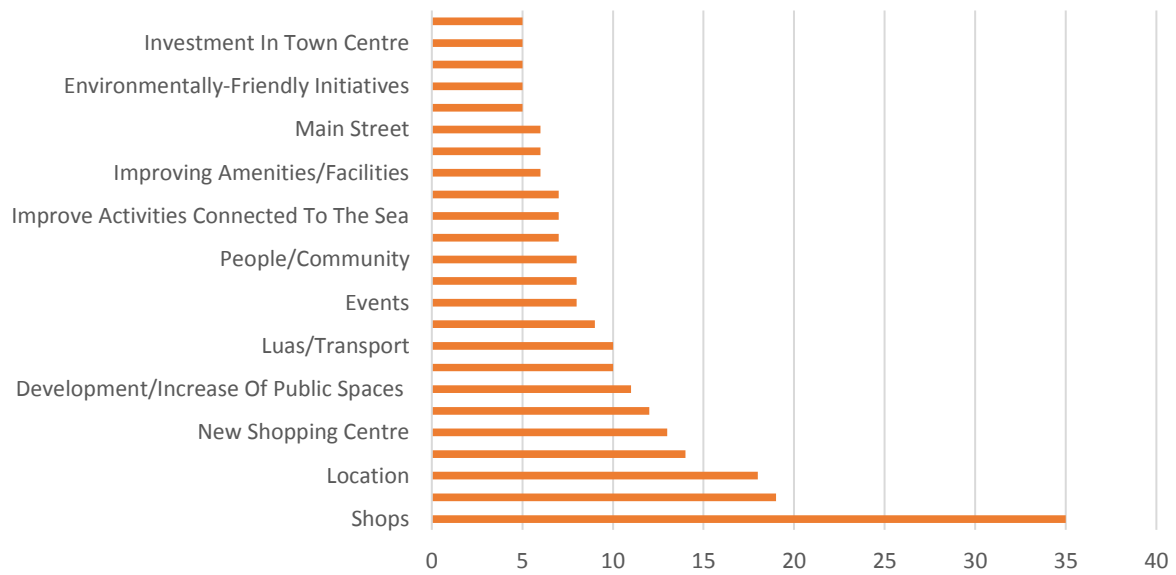
### Where do you normally go in Bray?



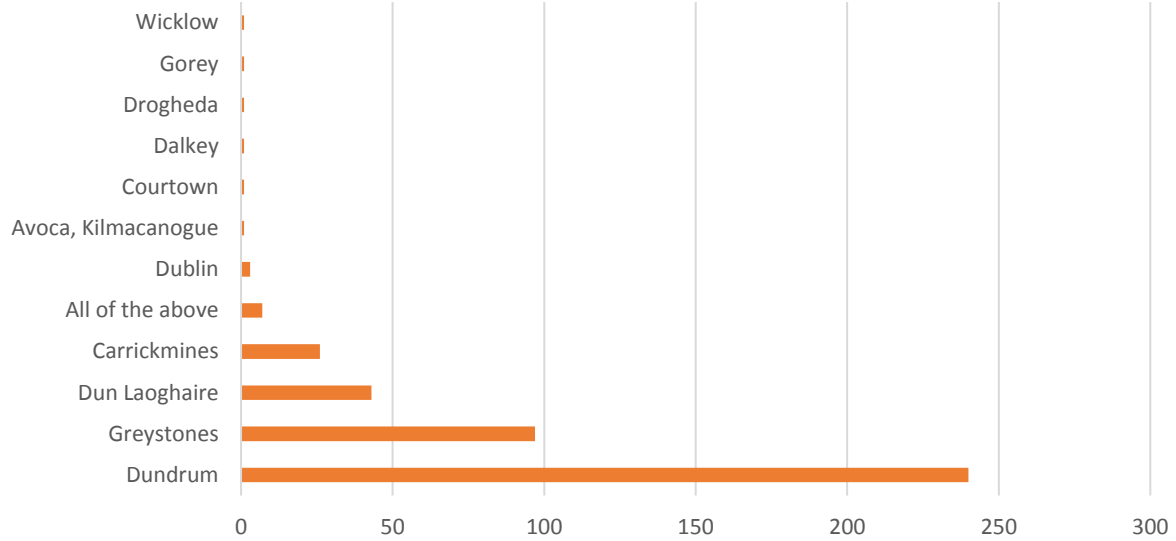
## What are other towns doing that might benefit Bray? (>5)



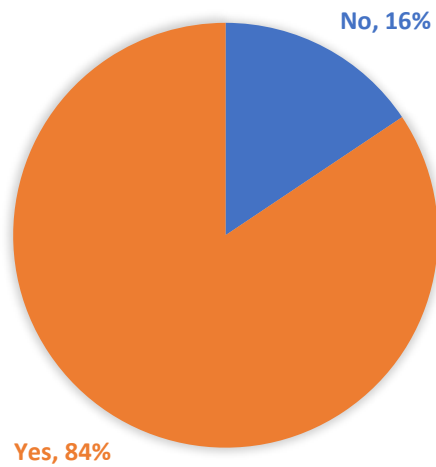
## Opportunities for Bray

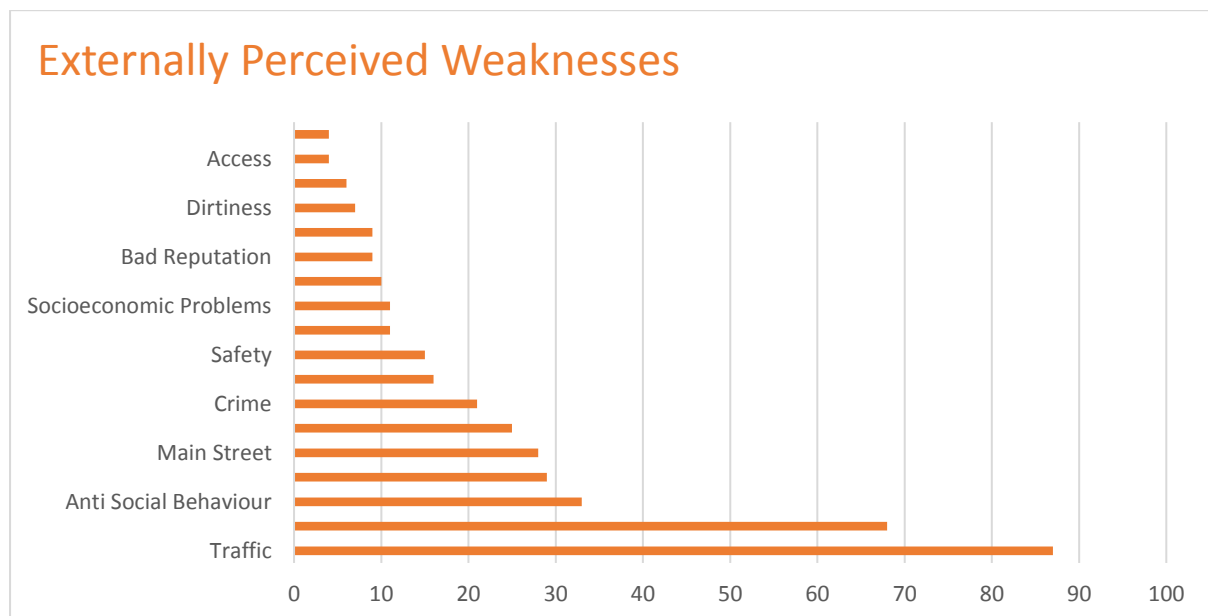
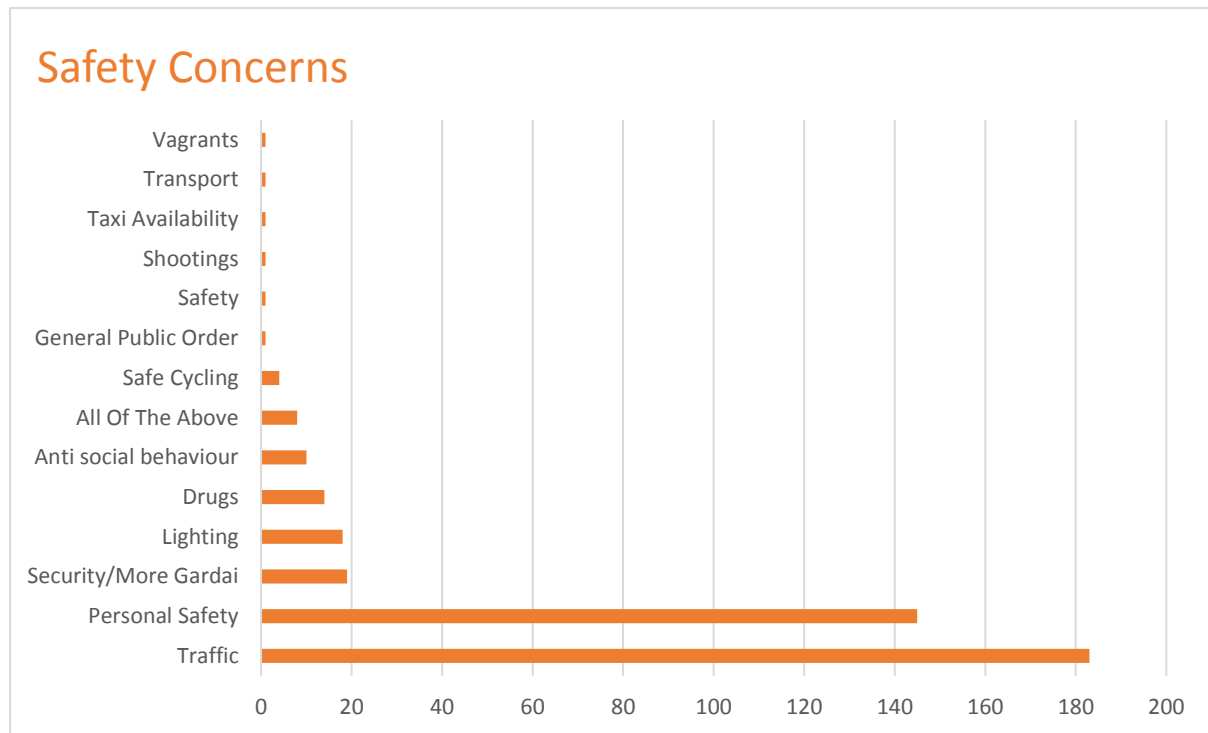


### Bray Town: Competitor

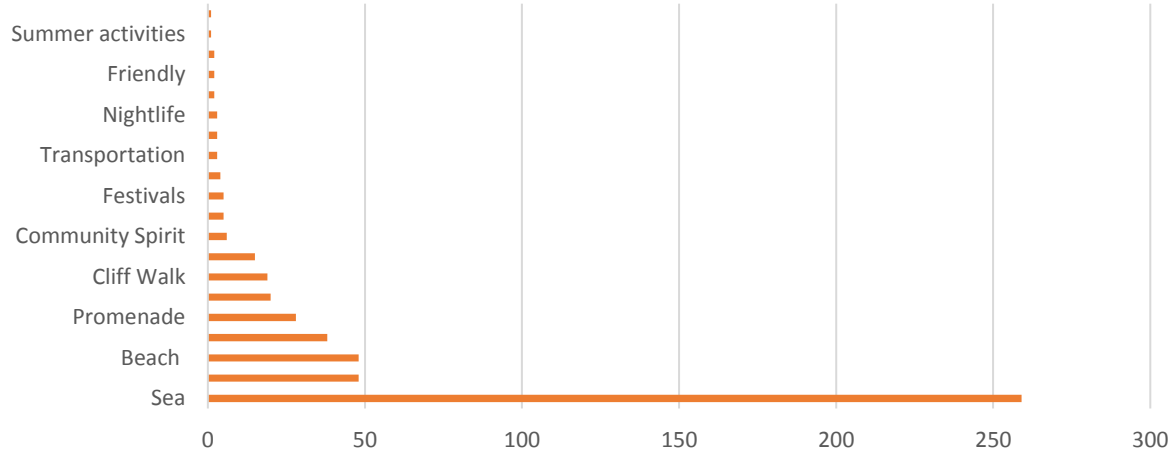


### BRAY: SAFETY

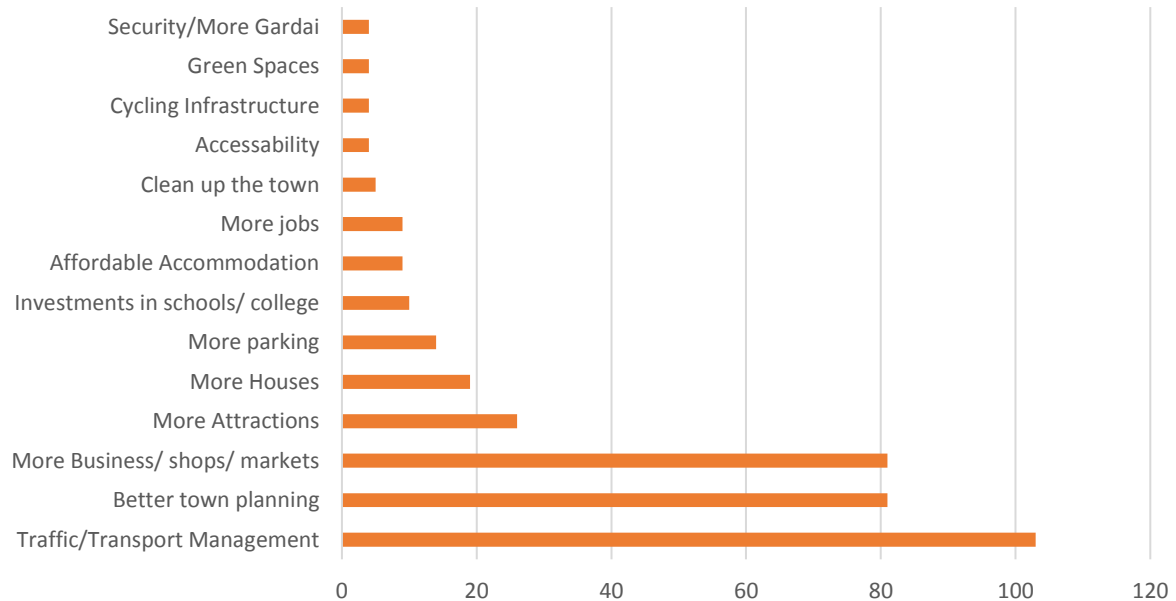


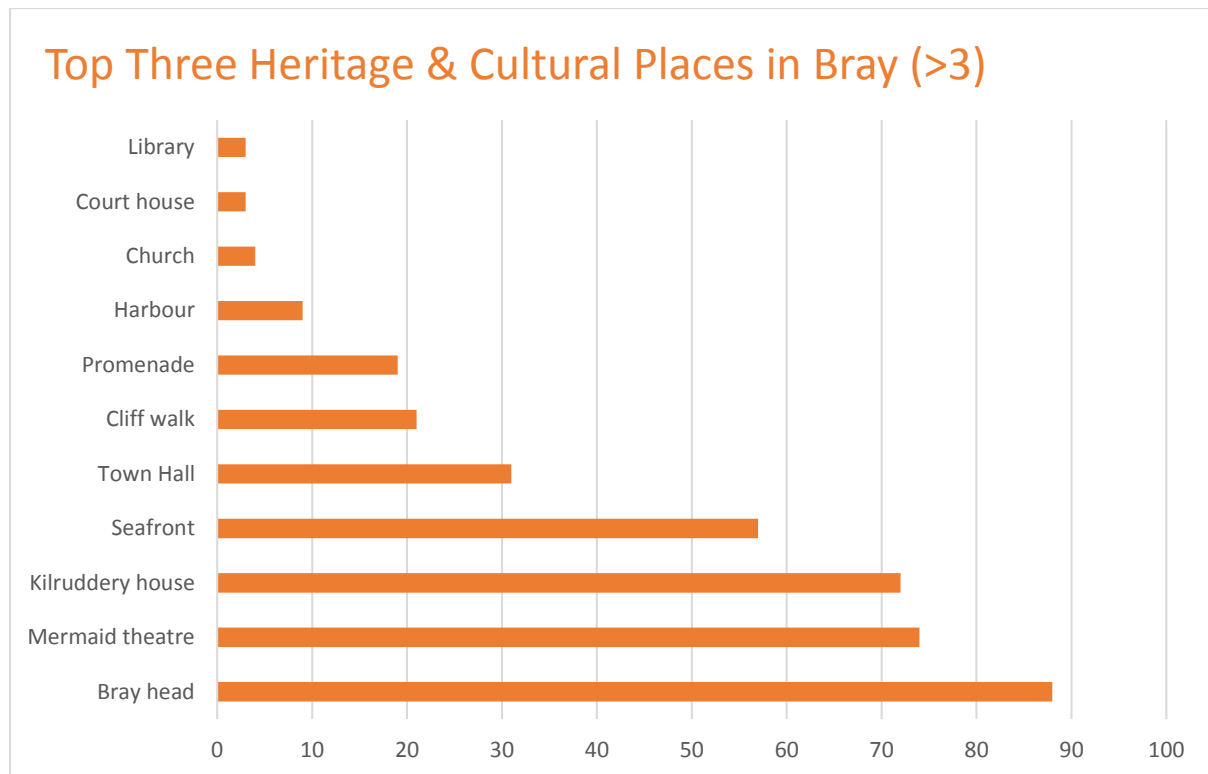


### What do you think people from outside Bray perceive as the town's strengths?

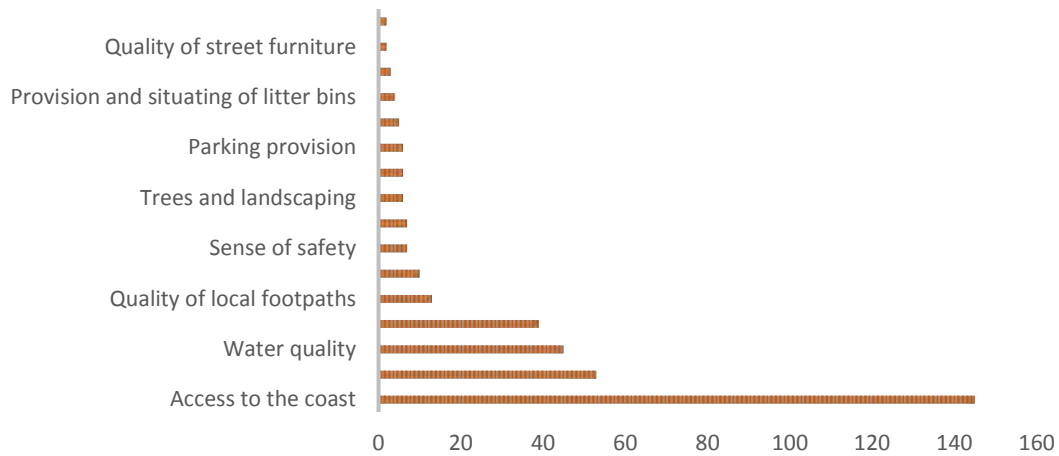


### What do you see as the greatest need for bray in the next 5 years (>3)

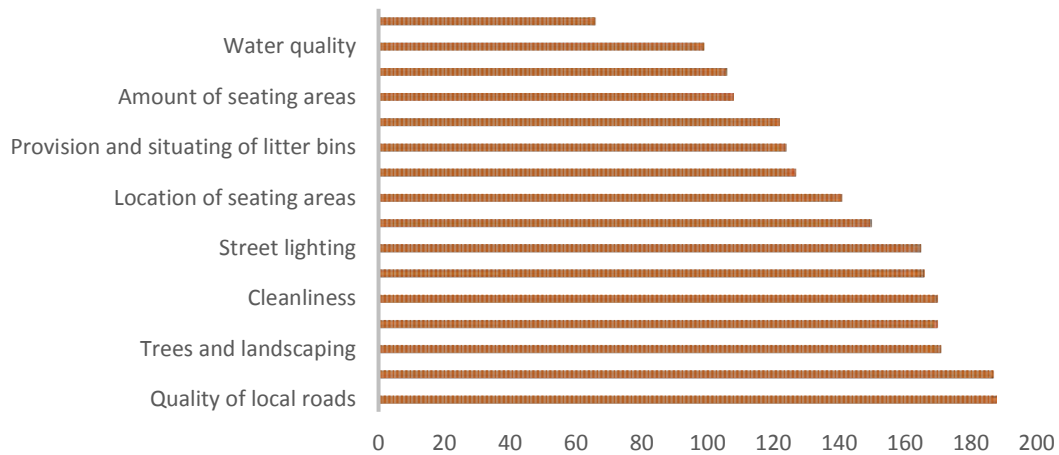




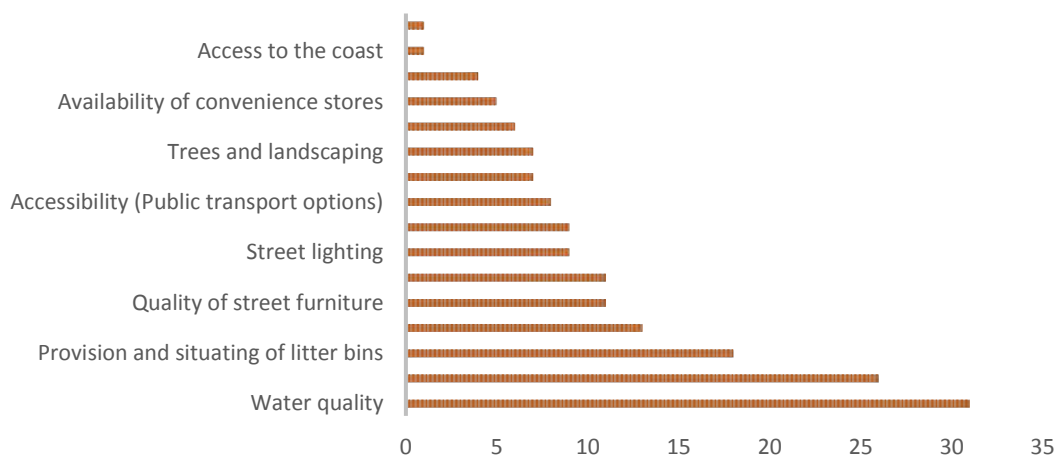
### FEATURE RATING: EXCELLENT



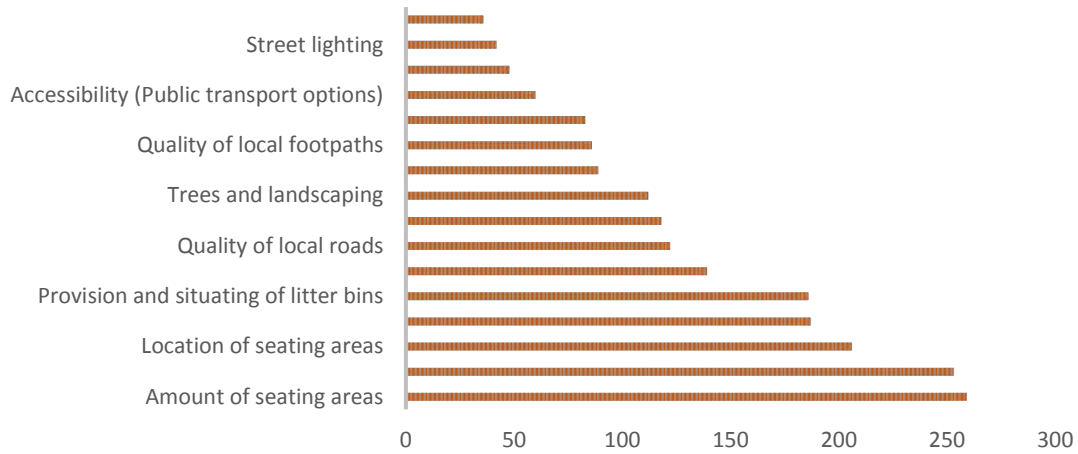
### FEATURE RATING: FAIR



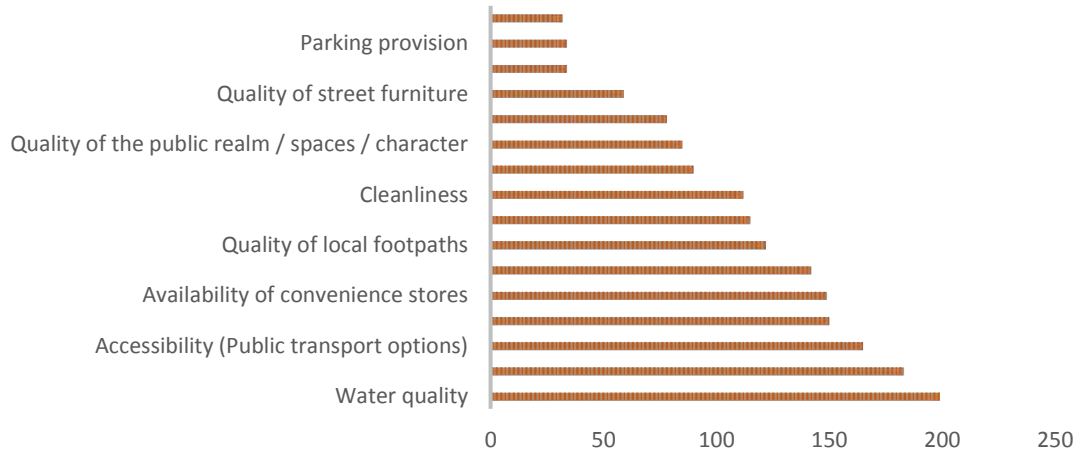
### FEATURE RATING: NO OPINION



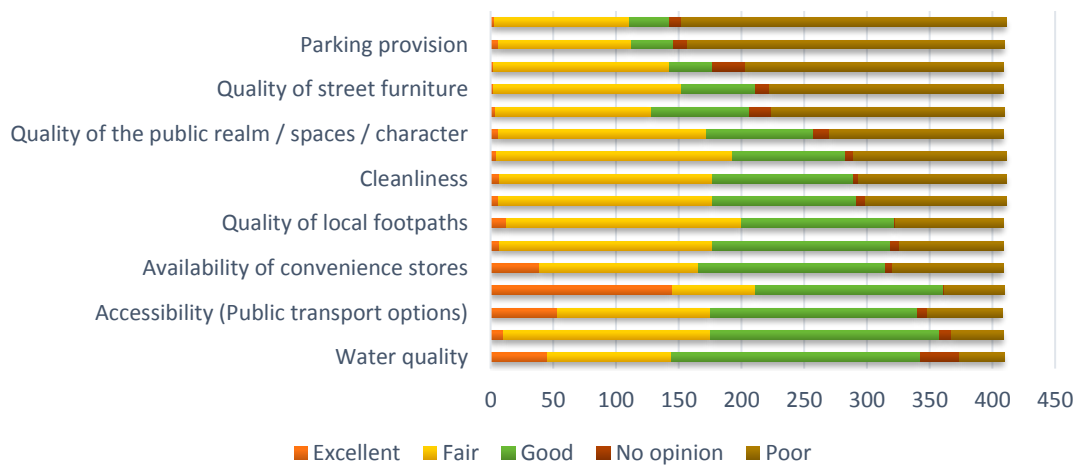
### FEATURE RATING: POOR



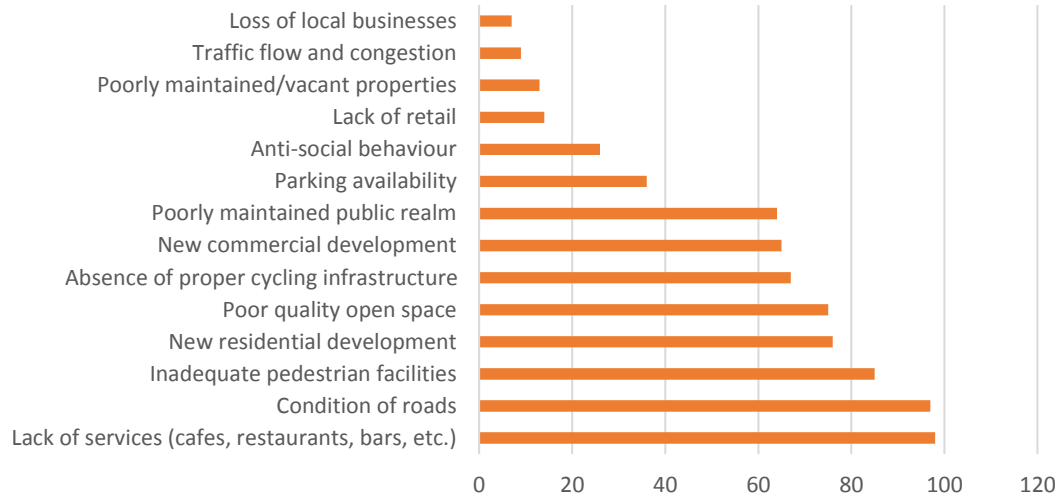
### FEATURE RATING: GOOD



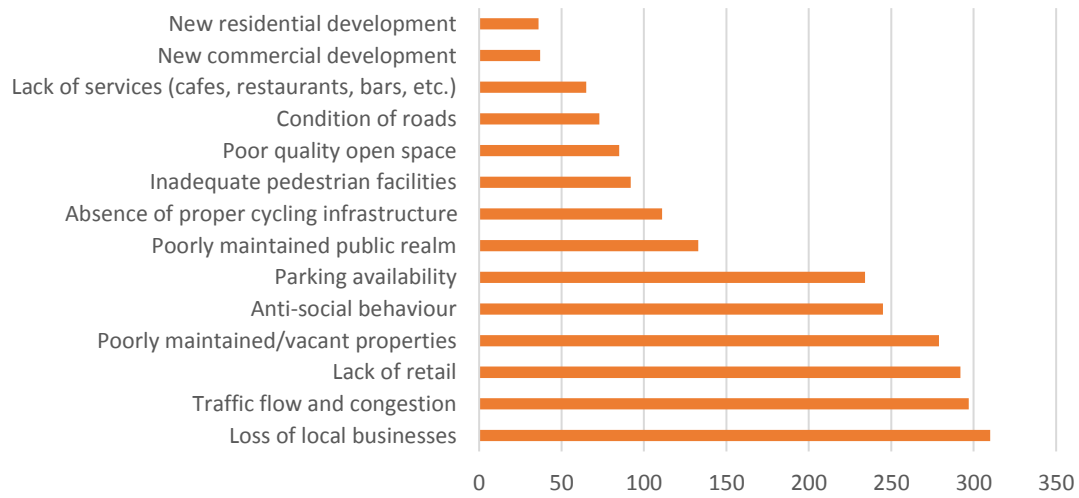
### Bray Town Centre: Feature Rating

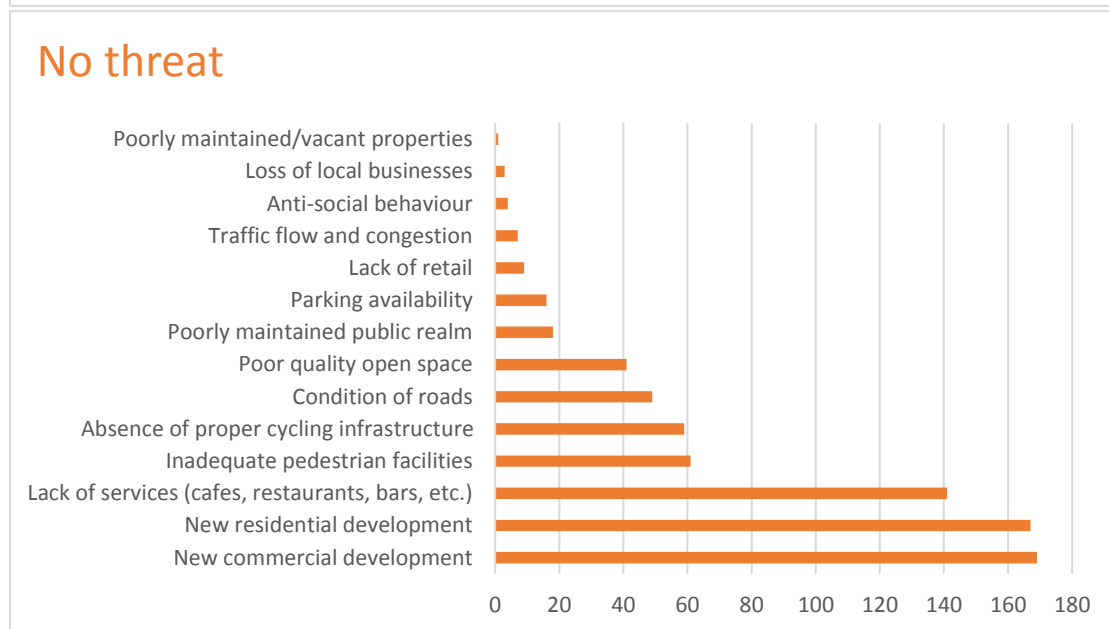
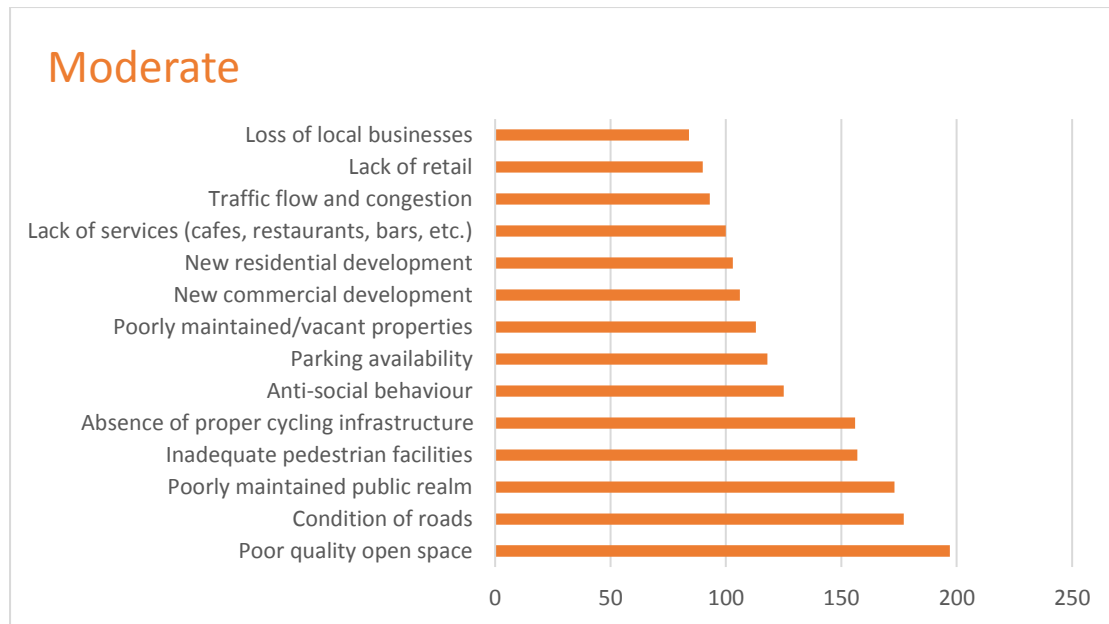


### Insignificant

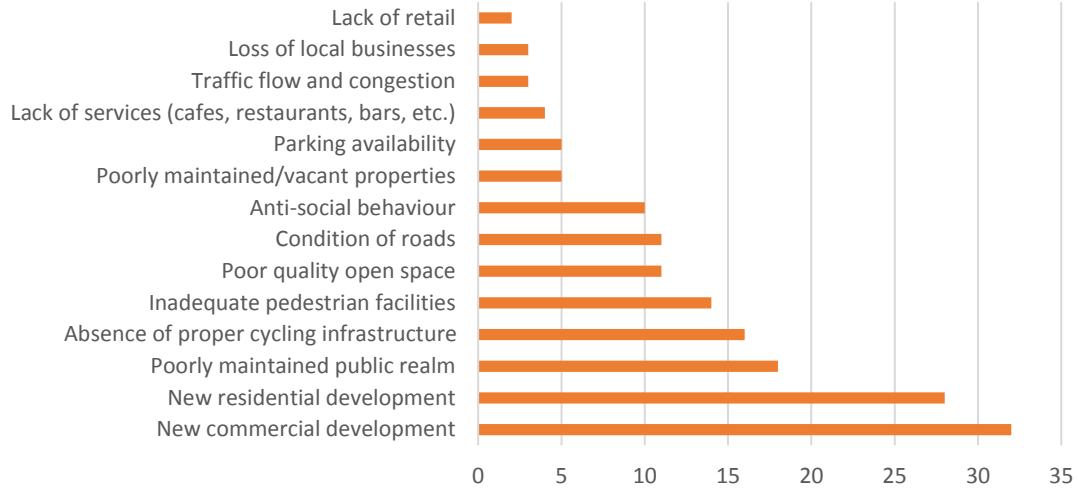


### Major threat

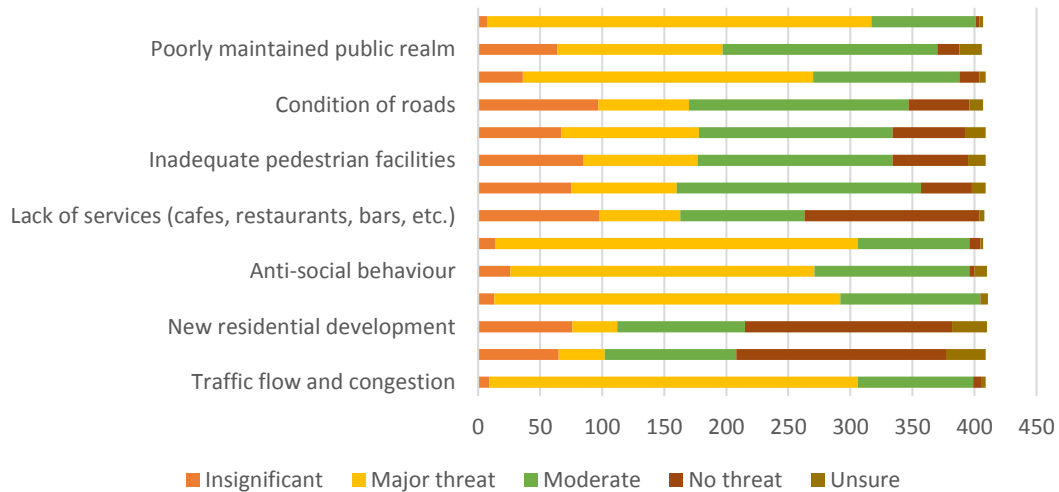




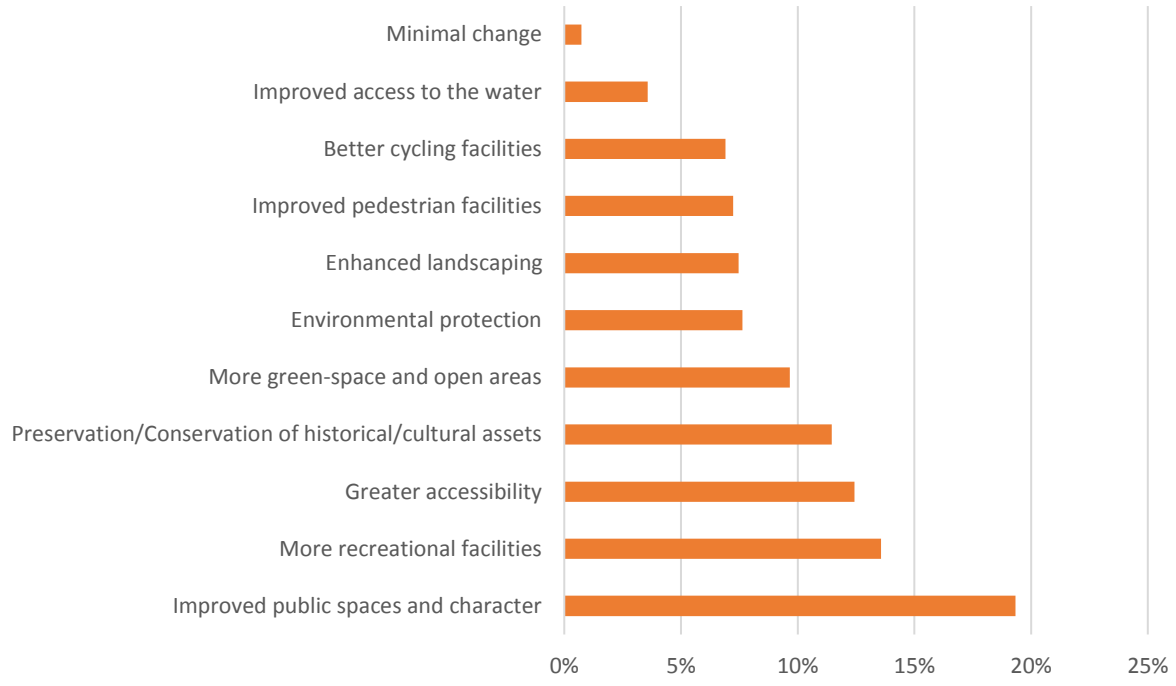
## Unsure



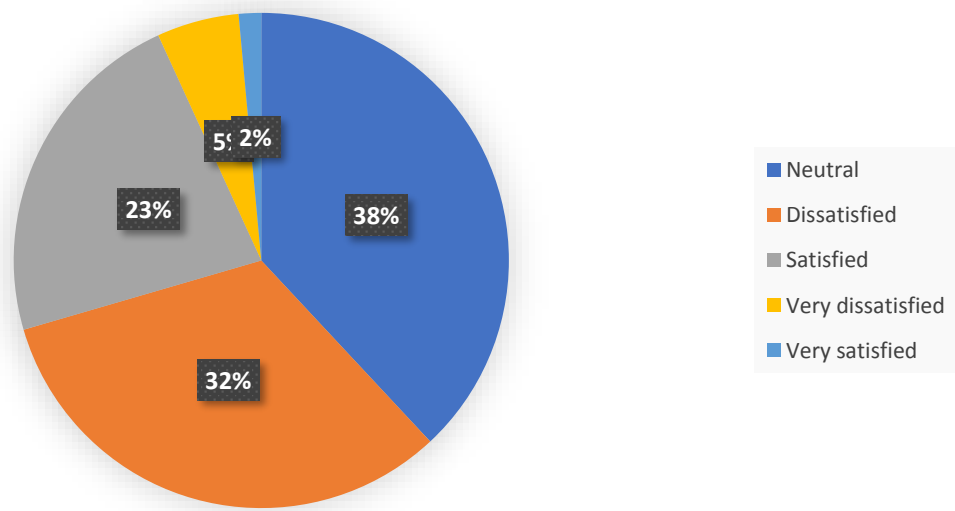
## Bray Town Centre: Threats



### Bray Town Centre Improvement Priorities



### Bray Public Spaces: Satisfaction



# Appendix 2

## Landscape sketch proposals



*Sketch landscape design idea for space in front of Holy Redeemer Church on Main Street  
(credit: Hayley Farrell)*



*Sketch landscape design idea for to improve approach to town at space on Strand Road opposite Martello Terrace (credit: Hayley Farrell)*



*Sketch landscape design idea to reinforce tree planting and improve environment along the sea front (credit: Hayley Farrell)*