

Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy



FINAL REPORT - MAY 2010

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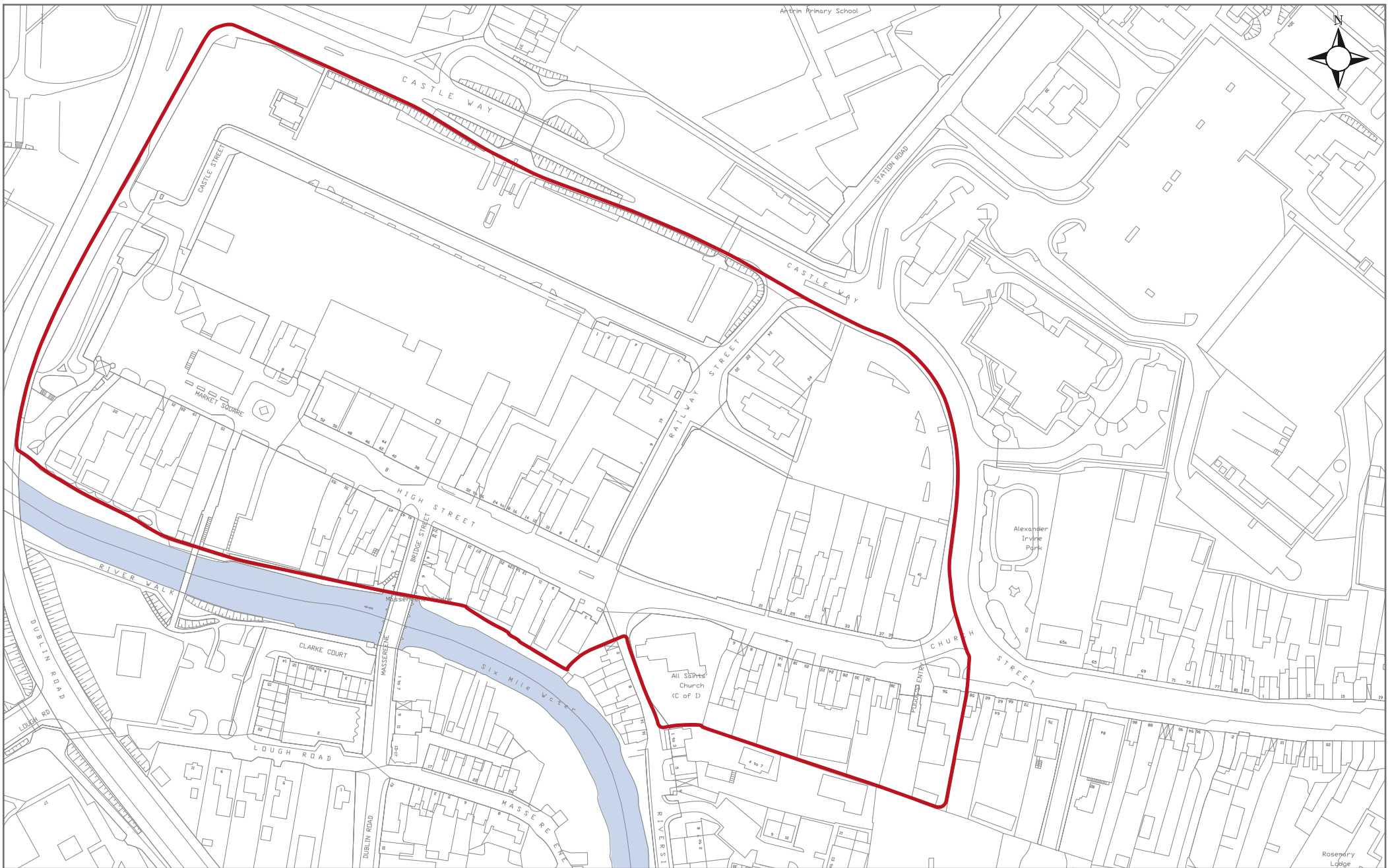
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APPENDIX 1: REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MASTERPLAN

APPENDIX 2: CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Department for Social Development (DSD) commissioned a multi-disciplinary team led by GVA Grimley in 2008, to prepare a Masterplan and Delivery Strategy for Antrim town centre.
- 1.2 The study area, shown in Figure 1, includes the existing retail areas of High Street, Railway Street, Church Street and the Castle Mall shopping centre which has recently been expanded.
- 1.3 The strategy seeks to build upon the previous Masterplan prepared for Antrim Borough Council in 2005. The timing of this Masterplan, and the renewed interest in regenerating the town centre, has been driven by concerns about the weak retail/visitor offer of the town centre, the early success of Junction One (the international outlet centre located on the edge of the town) and new residential development proposed in the town.
- 1.4 Five years on, many of these issues and challenges remain and provide a strong rationale for further intervention in the town centre. This has been reinforced by the recommendations contained within the Antrim, Ballymena and Larne Retail and Commercial Leisure Development Study (2009), which concluded that there was significant headroom for new comparison retail floorspace within the town centre.
- 1.5 The aim of this strategy is to guide the delivery of an appropriately scaled, high quality retail-led scheme to raise the profile of Antrim and substantially improve the town's retail offer. This forms a key priority for DSD's and the Council's aspirations to drive forward the regeneration of Antrim town centre.
- 1.6 With the support of DSD there are high expectations that these aspirations can now come to fruition and deliver a new retail development scheme that will drive forward the regeneration of the town over the next few years.



Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

Figure 1: Study Area Boundary



Purpose of the Report

1.7 The requirements of the study can be broadly broken down into the following 4 key areas:

- **Stage 1:** A Review of the previous Masterplan (see Appendix 1);
- **Stage 2:** Site Analysis and the preparation of options for future development;
- **Stage 3:** Public consultation and selection of a preferred option for future regeneration in consultation with stakeholders; and
- **Stage 4:** The preparation of a Delivery Strategy which outlines how sites can be delivered and the various roles and responsibilities of public and private sector organisations.

1.8 This report presents a revised Masterplan for Antrim town centre which addresses the issues and opportunities facing the area. The analysis considers the merits of a range of alternative options and selects a preferred approach which meets the regeneration objectives for the town centre.

1.9 The Masterplan is accompanied by a development programme and delivery strategy which outlines how the plan can be implemented and the role of both the public and private sector partners.

Structure of Report

1.10 The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2: Analysis of the Area** – provides a brief introduction to the study area and identifies the key opportunities and constraints to development within Antrim town centre;
- **Section 3: Retail Capacity Considerations** – provides a summary of the emerging findings of the retail capacity work undertaken by GVA Grimley;
- **Section 4: Vision, Objectives and Guiding Design Principles** – establishes the key principles that will guide the future development of the town centre;
- **Section 5: Options Development and Appraisal** – presents and assesses three alternative approaches to regeneration. This section also includes a summary of feedback received through the public consultation;

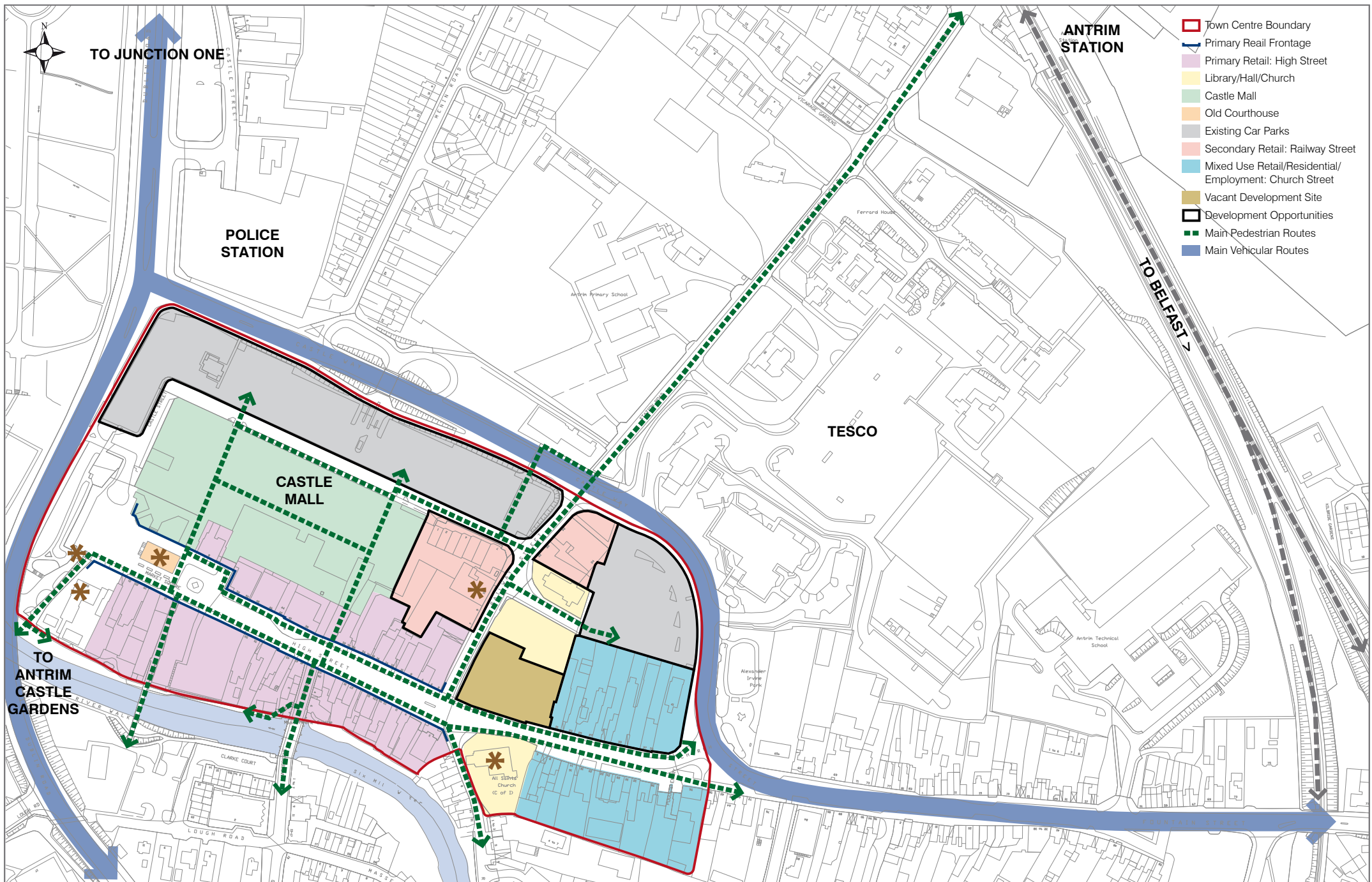
- **Section 6: Masterplan** – identifies the preferred option for regenerating the town centre and sets out key proposals for the major opportunity sites;
- **Section 7: Delivery Strategy and Next Steps** – presents the programme for delivering the Masterplan and the selection of a private sector partner to deliver the scheme.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE AREA

The Study Area

- 2.1 The core study area encompasses the main section of the town centre which is bounded to the west by Dublin Road and to the east by the intersection between Castle Way and Castle Street. The northern boundary is Castle Way and the southern boundary includes The Six Mile Water as far as the riverside and then follows the rear boundaries of properties fronting onto Church Street.
- 2.2 Figure 2 illustrates the key land use, activities and movement within the town centre area. The study also considers the wider area including key transport nodes such as the railway/bus station, major development sites such as Tesco and the Law Courts, key pedestrian and vehicular gateways and routes into/around the town and Castle Gardens, which remain a major under-utilised asset in the town.
- 2.3 GVA Grimley prepared the Stage 1 Report¹ in March 2008 which provided a review of the previous Masterplan prepared for Antrim Borough Council. A key aim of the Stage 1 Report was to test the underlying analysis and rationale for intervention in Antrim town centre.
- 2.4 This included an initial analysis of the area, a review of the land use and land ownership pattern, a site visit and physical appraisal of the area and an assessment of transportation issues. The analysis was based on a number of site visits to Antrim to assess the land use and physical character of the area, a review of background reports and papers provided by DSD and Council officers and feedback from meetings with DSD and Council representatives in Antrim.
- 2.5 A review of the previous Masterplan is provided in Appendix 1. The following paragraphs summarise the findings of the review.

¹ Stage 1 Report: Review of Previous Masterplan



Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

Figure 2: Regeneration Context

Physical Appraisal

Land Use

- 2.6 The townscape analysis points to four principal character areas within Antrim town centre:
- **High Street and Market Square** – the primary retail area and historical heart of the town centre. This includes a mix of traditional shop fronts and larger retail units, refurbished office space and a number of public houses. A number of vacant/redundant buildings also exist along this route;
 - **Railway Street** - an area of secondary retail and leisure uses, civic facilities and surface level car parking. The Ulster Bar Corner, a redundant gap site, creates a negative gateway to Railway Street and the town centre more generally in this location;
 - **Castle Mall and Castle Street** - a 1970s shopping mall with a mix of national and secondary retailers. The mall includes a number of vacant units and relates poorly to the other retail areas;

- **Church Street** – a mixture of low grade commercial and retail premises; churches and areas of vacant and derelict land.

Assets

- 2.7 Antrim has a considerable number of natural and built assets and these are celebrated by the Antrim Heritage Guide. Some of these are also landmark buildings such as the Courthouse, marking the western edge of the High Street and All Saints Church. These are visible and inviting from Dublin Road.
- 2.8 Antrim Castle Walls and the Barbican Gate are stunning features which, despite being divorced from their context by the Dublin Road, could be enhanced and celebrated.
- 2.9 Aside from individual buildings the other major assets are The Six Mile Water and the grounds of Castle Gardens. These are highly attractive features which suffer from a lack of connection with the town centre through physical intervention. There has been investment made in improving the riverside but this needs to be maximised through further improvements to the connection between the town centre and the riverside which at present are very poor.

2.10 In developing the Masterplan for Antrim town centre the aim is to ensure these assets are maximised within future proposals.

Detractors

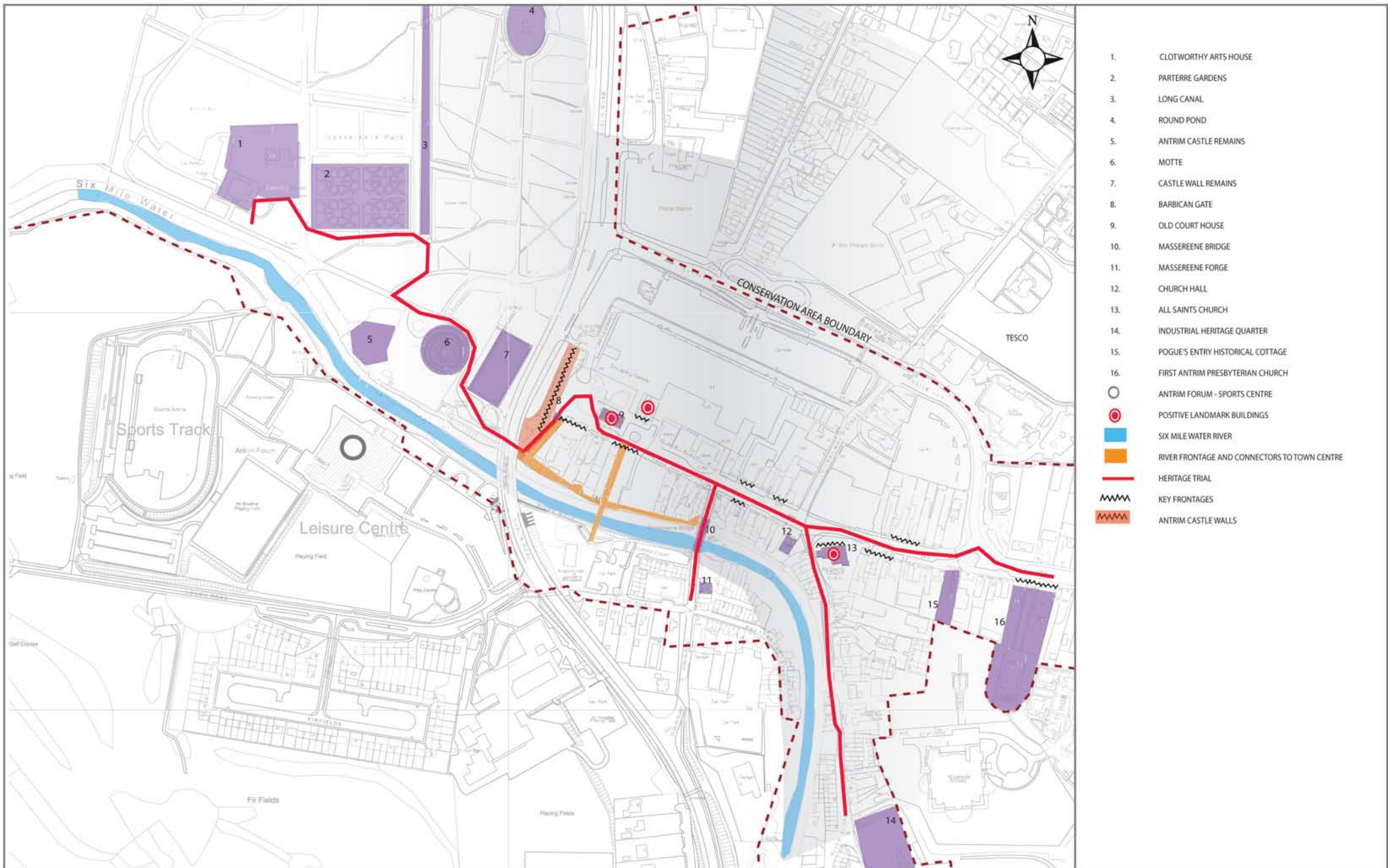
2.11 Although there are a number of important assets with the town centre, Antrim is also characterised by a number of unattractive features which detract from the quality of the environment within the town centre.

2.12 Key detractors include:

- The large police station which, in view of the security requirements, creates an unattractive building located on a main gateway into the town centre;
- An air of neglect, with the frontages of shops and buildings lining the High Street showing signs of dilapidation and poor repair;
- The Castle Mall, which despite being a prominent feature of the town centre, relates poorly to surrounding areas;
- The Ulster Bar Corner, which despite offering a potential development opportunity, has been abandoned for a number of years and underlines an inherent lack of investment;

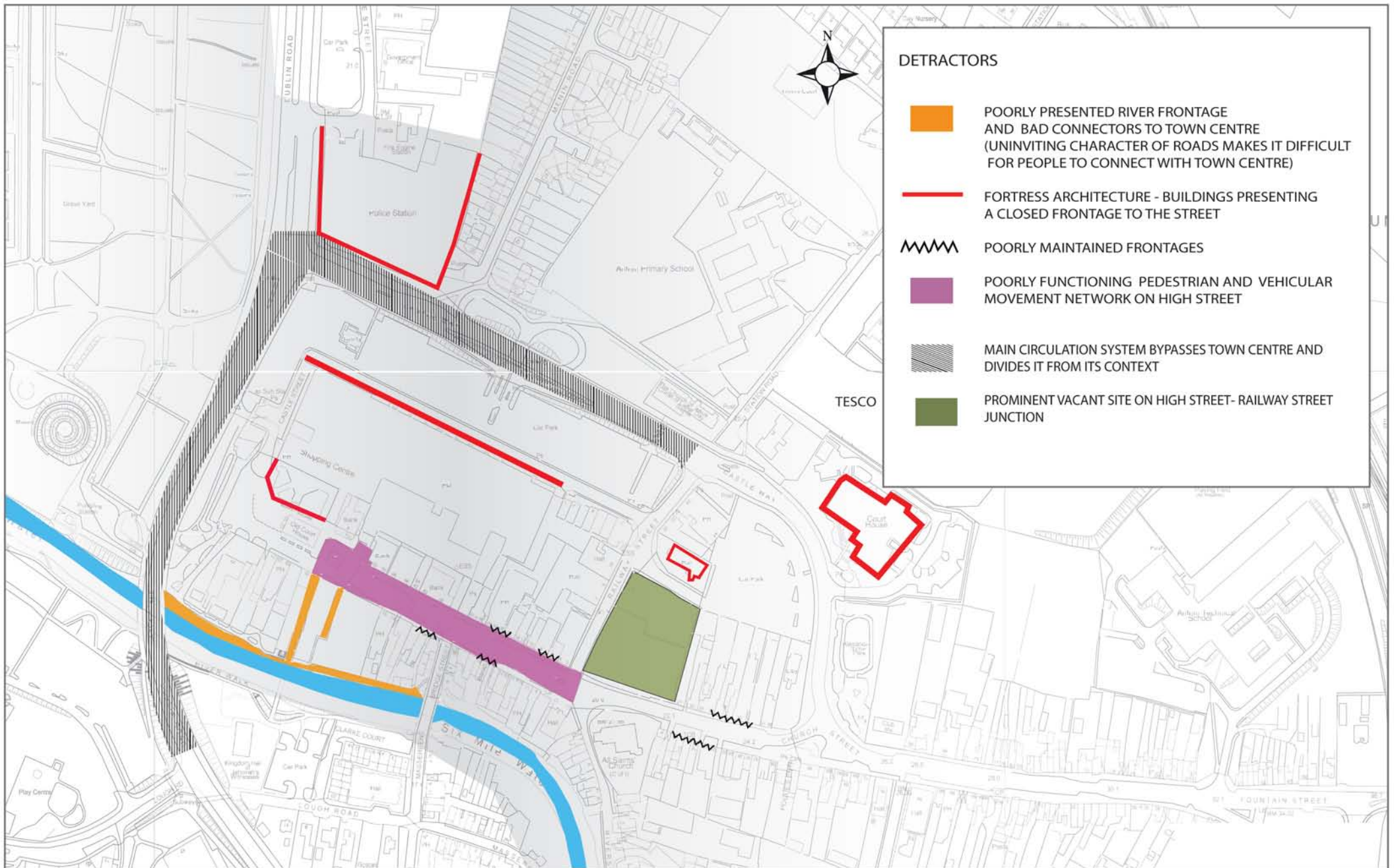
- The existing road network which acts as a barrier and divides Castle Gardens from Market Square and the town centre.

2.13 The assets and detractors within Antrim town centre are illustrated in figures 3 and 4.



Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

Figure 3: Assets



Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

Figure 4: Main Detractors

Access and Movement

2.14 The ease of accessing and using the town centre remains important consideration for the Masterplan. This sub-section summarises the key transportation issues within Antrim town centre under the following four headings:

- Walking and Cycling;
- Public Transport;
- Parking; and
- Highways and Traffic.

Walking and Cycling

2.15 Castle Way forms a significant barrier between the retail core and the railway/bus station. The installation of a controlled crossing point has helped to improve connectivity with the rail/bus station, however there remains scope to improve the existing subway which is considered unattractive and could be perceived as being unsafe by users.

2.16 Addressing the poor town centre pedestrian links to the main attractors and the limited pedestrian crossing opportunities, remains an important priority for the Masterplan.

2.17 In terms of cycling, significant provision has been made in the outer lying locations of the town. However, improvements need to continue to ensure that facilities connect into or provide routes through the retail core. Within the retail core there is also a need to provide a sufficient number of high quality, secure, cycle parking facilities to make cycling more attractive to users and thereby reduce the need for travel by car.

Photo 1: Subway under Castle Way from Central Car Park



Public Transport

- 2.18 A key issue at present is that interurban bus services do not service the retail core. Access to the bus and railway station is also difficult as both stations are located approximately 600m from the town centre. Passenger facilities at bus stops throughout the town centre are also limited,
- 2.19 At present the local bus service has to undertake a circuitous route that encounters a number of the congested junctions. This issue will be resolved through the creation of a new bus priority route into the town centre from Dublin Road. There are also plans for the new exchange point for buses in Market Square. These proposed improvements will help to reduce lengthy journey times and make local bus journeys into the town centre more attractive by providing inter-urban services through the retail core.

Parking

- 2.20 The level of illegal parking that previously characterised the town centre has largely been eradicated. On-street parking in the retail core often operates at maximum occupancy.

Photo 2: Car Parking along High Street



- 2.21 There has been a phased introduction of agreed waiting restrictions throughout the town centre including High Street and Church Street. As a result, varying levels of on-street car parking in the town centre currently exist.
- 2.22 In contrast, off-street parking provision is considered to be more than adequate for the town centre with many car parks, including

Central and Railway Street Car Parks, exhibiting varying degrees of occupancy.

Highways and Traffic

- 2.23 The town centre experiences general peak time traffic build up which includes the area from Fountain Street roundabout through to Castle Way signals which is busy during the morning peak period.
- 2.24 Within the town centre itself, the reduction in the extent of the pedestrianised zone has helped to improve circulation. However, competing demands for the limited kerbspace remains. Loading vehicles are also forced to double park in the carriageway of High Street causing obstructions and congestion.

Achievements

- 2.25 Both DSD and Antrim Borough Council are committed to the future regeneration and enhancement of Antrim town centre and significant work to improve the town centre is already underway.
- 2.26 Whilst some of the more fundamental challenges will be addressed through the current Masterplan, a number of other

investments are noteworthy and set the context for future sustainable investment: They include:

- Acquisition of the Ulster Bar Corner to help progress development on this key town centre site;
- The restoration of the oldest Courthouse in Ireland which enhances the heritage attractions of the town centre offering a multi-use auditorium, visitor information office and café/bar facilities;
- The North Eastern Education and Library Board investing £2.2 million on a state of the art 'flagship' public library, which opened in February 2010;
- The restoration of Antrim Castle Gardens (£5.8 million) is underway with substantial grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund;
- Reconfiguration of key streets in the town centre to provide better access to shopping and services;
- Improvements to the public realm on Railway Street and potential funding from DSD to further enhance other key streets with an Environmental Improvement Scheme;

- The Living Over The Shops (LOTS) grant scheme, administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; this initiative seeks to attract people to live in the town centre; and
- Installation of new ambient street and bridge lighting, and a programme of events and promotional activities for the town funded by DSD and Antrim Borough Council.

Photo 3: Railway Street Environmental Improvement Scheme (EIA)



Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)

- 2.27 Whilst it is clear that good progress is being made to physically regenerate the town centre, a number of challenges remain which provide a focus for regeneration and investment activity going forward.
- 2.28 The following presents the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) within Antrim town centre which have been identified through our analysis of the area.

Strengths

- Strong history and heritage e.g. Antrim Castle Walls, the Barbican Gate and Courthouse
- Evidence of recent public sector investment, helping to raise the profile of the town centre
- Strong convenience retail performance - Antrim retains 83% of main food spending.
- Castle Gardens and open space
- Some Independent businesses & local traders
- Proximity to airport and regional rail services
- Strategic location in NI: road network & M²
- Compact town centre: potential to be well defined
- Surrounding parks & amenities
- New housing & population growth, resulting in more disposable income
- Good highway links to the town centre
- Sufficient off-street parking supply – but needs balanced use
- Good local bus service providing access to other urban areas
- Significant cycle provision in outer residential areas

Weaknesses

- Town does not have a 'physical heart'
- Castle Mall first impression is poor: inward looking & separate
- Surface level car parking, vacant retail units and redundant sites a dominant feature within the town centre
- Physical assets suffer from a lack of connection with the town centre
- The existing road network acts as a barrier and divides Castle Gardens from Market Square and the town centre
- The large and unwelcoming police station, creates unattractive gateway into the town centre
- Frontages of shops and buildings lining the High Street showing signs of degradation
- The Castle Mall relates poorly to surrounding areas
- The Ulster Bar Corner has been abandoned for a number of years and underlines an inherent lack of investment
- Dissatisfaction with Antrim town centre as a place to visit
- Deficiencies in the comparison retail offer
- Antrim town centre is fragmented by empty lots and several road junctions
- The public realm in the town centre is of poor quality
- There are a number of large vacant and underused areas
- Distance to the Railway and Bus stations from the town centre
- Difficult walking links to railway and bus station from the retail core
- Cycle network not penetrating the retail core area
- Pressure for on-street parking
- Lack of facilities at bus stops
- Poor quality of linkage between Tesco's and the retail core

Opportunities

- Invest in, reconfigure & upgrade Castle Mall and provide more efficient parking
- Develop Ulster Bar Corner
- Provide more effective signage from Junction One to town centre & elsewhere
- Improve streetscape
- Improve pedestrian linkages to Tesco and beyond to the station
- Introduction of multi storey and 'underground' parking to free up space
- Retention of expenditure from the local retail catchment area
- Improving the connection between the town centre and the riverside
- Enhancing the role and function of Market Square
- Improving external perceptions, and seeking to draw people into the town centre, through new development
- Encourage better use of the riverside frontage and encouraging restaurants and cafes along the edge
- Further expansion of the Castle Mall, including the provision of high quality, flexible retail units and a high quality retail environment.
- Redevelopment of buildings and the spaces between the Castle Mall, Railway Street and High Street
- Revitalise Pedestrian Zone / area
- Scope to environmentally improve Church Street/High Street Corridor
- Review parking restrictions in retail core in light of introduction of DPE.
- Creation of a comprehensive Antrim cycle network, covering both leisure and utility cycling encouraging cycle trips to the town centre
- Introduce high quality walking links to the retail core

Threats

- Lack of competition within the town centre
- Multiple ownerships, with the potential to slow delivery of key projects
- Growth and expansion of the retail offer at Junction One
- Further leakage of expenditure fuelling further decline
- There are no major transportation issues which are considered threats to the town of Antrim. However, potential increased congestion could reduce the attractiveness of the town centre
- Parking issues in the retail core could also be considered a threat unless they are addressed

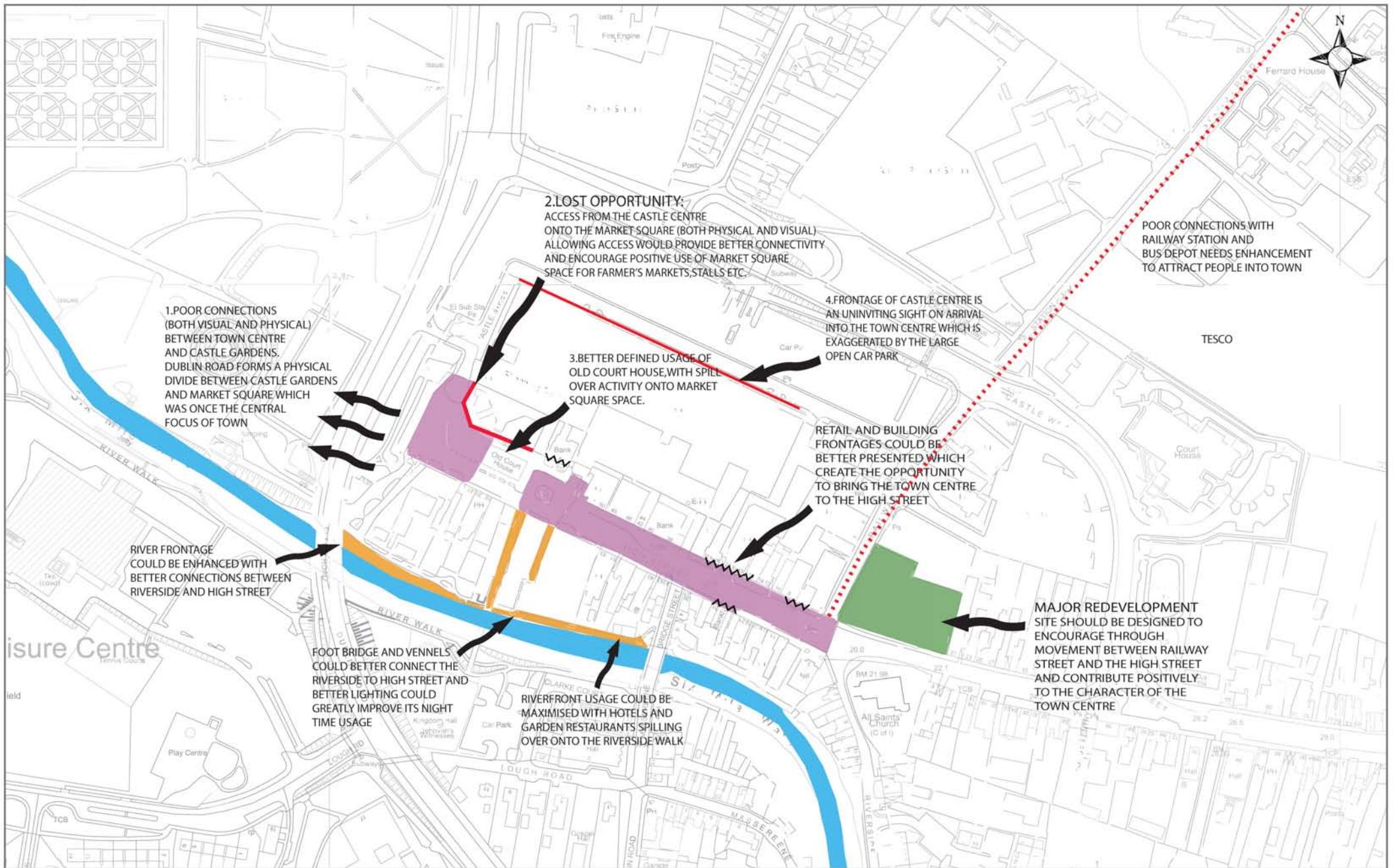
2.29 The key opportunities emerging from this analysis include:

- **Improving perceptions through new development -** Improving external perceptions, and seeking to draw people into the town centre should form an important part of future proposals. Major opportunities include redeveloping the existing Central Car Park and Ulster Bar Corner as part of a comprehensive retail-led regeneration scheme.
- **Improving Market Square -** There is an opportunity to bring Market Square back to life as a focus for the town centre. This will be heavily reliant on the future uses of the Courthouse and how ground floors address the street.
- **Reconnecting the Park -** The relationship between the Castle Gardens and the town centre, what the gardens have to offer and how best to exploit this should also be further explored. In particular, opportunities for better connections between the town centre and the garden will be explored.
- **Activating the Riverside -** The riverside offers a potential opportunity for changing the perception of Antrim by encouraging better use of this attractive frontage and encouraging restaurants and cafes along the edge. Constraints to achieving this include private land ownership and change in levels, but there is a real opportunity to create

something new and unique which could act as a focal point and provide an enhanced pedestrian link under Dublin Road into the Castle Gardens.

- **Improving accessibility into and out of the town centre –** There is potential to build upon recent and planned investment to improve key routes into and out of the town centre. This includes measures to improve the ease of access and use of the town centre.

2.30 These opportunities are presented in figure 5 and have been considered in developing the vision, objectives and guiding design principles for the future regeneration of Antrim (Section 4) and alternative options for development (Section 5).



Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

Figure 5: Opportunities



3. RETAIL CAPACITY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 GVA Grimley was appointed in March 2009 to prepare a Retail and Commercial Leisure Development Study of the Antrim Ballymena and Larne 2016 (ABL) Plan Area. The study was commissioned by a partnership of the Department for Social Development (DSD), Regional Development Office and The Planning Service.

3.2 The aims of the study were to:

- Provide a composite picture of retail and leisure provision within the ABL plan area;
- Identify future capacity for new retail and leisure floor space;
- Complete 'health check' assessment; and
- Provide strategic advice to inform ABL area plan 2016.

3.3 The study was informed by a number of comprehensive surveys comprising:

- **An 'In Centre Shopper Survey'**: to understand the profile of visitors to Antrim, Ballymena and Larne town centres and their perceptions of each centre in terms of its strengths, weaknesses and required improvements;
- **A Household Telephone Survey**: to understand existing shopping and leisure patterns across the ABL plan area and adjoining catchments, to establish the performance of the town centres in terms of their market share and expenditure leakage;
- **A Retailer Business Survey**: to understand existing trading climate, and
- **A 'Health check'**: to understand the vitality and viability of the town centres (diversity of uses, vacancies).

3.4 The results of the full quantitative analysis and qualitative appraisal have been drawn together, along with the identification of competition from planned and proposed improvements in surrounding centres to provide a set of recommendations to enable all stakeholders to proactively plan for future retail development. They key findings are presented below.

Qualitative Assessment

- 3.5 Key messages arising from the 'in-centre shopper survey' include:
- Low dwell times within the town centre; and
 - Dissatisfaction with Antrim town centre as a place to visit.
- 3.6 The main dislikes identified through the survey were a poor range of shops (54.6%), unattractive environment (21.7%) and traffic congestion (14.5%).
- 3.7 Shoppers were asked to comment on potential improvements to the town centre. Increasing the choice of national retailers (47.4%) was the most cited improvement that is needed within Antrim. This was followed by improvement to the local independent retail offer (28.3%), improvements to the shopping facilities (21.7%), and attracting larger retailers (15.8%). Improvements to the town centre environment (pedestrian, street furniture, reduce road congestion) are also seen as a priority.

Quantitative Assessment

- 3.8 A key element of the assessment was a household survey which sought to establish local residents spending patterns for a variety of retail goods, including:
- Main (bulk) food and daily top-up shopping;
 - Comparison shopping; clothing and footwear, personal goods, recreational goods; and
 - Bulky durables; furniture, DIY, large electrical appliances.
- 3.9 A summary of the key findings of this survey is presented below.

Main Food

- 3.10 In terms of main food, the survey found that Antrim retains 83% of main food spending arising within its catchment and that the majority is claimed by Tesco (82%) which also draws trade from Glenavy and Ballyclare.
- 3.11 It is clear that Tesco dominates the market in Antrim. It achieves a turnover of £58.7m, which is nearly £21m above its benchmark and which indicates the potential surplus capacity for main food shopping in Antrim. A new Asda superstore opened at Junction

One in May 2010, which is the largest store of its kind in Northern Ireland.

- 3.12 As a result, the study recommends that there is no requirement for Planning Service to proactively plan for additional convenience retailing within Antrim, but if a proposal was to emerge then normal PPS5 policy tests should apply.
- 3.13 It is recognised that where a qualitative need arises, this will need to be considered in the context of the wider regeneration of the town centre. This aspect is considered in more detail later in the report.

Comparison Retail

- 3.14 In terms of comparison retail, Antrim retains just a 20.9% (£15.2m) market share overall from its own immediate catchment. There are however major variances in performance:
- **Clothing:** Antrim claims 10.5% (£3.5m) of market share; the majority of local residents shop in Ballymena 59% (£19.7m) and Belfast 18.6% (£6.2m);
 - **Personal Goods:** Antrim retains 12.7% (£0.4m) of market share; Ballymena is principal destination 44.3% (£1.4m);

- **Domestic Appliances:** Antrim retains 43% (£4.3m); Ballymena 26.5% (£2.6m); and
- **Recreational Goods:** Antrim claims 7.2% (£1m) market share; Ballymena dominates local resident spend (62.9%/£8.9m).

- 3.15 The study concludes that Antrim performs poorly due to deficiencies in its comparison retail offer. Given this context it is recommended that Antrim seeks to enhance its overall market share performance from 21% towards 50%. Achieving this would generate a significant forward floorspace requirement (c.12, 000 m² gross).

Bulky Goods

- 3.16 The household survey results show that Antrim presently secures 15.6% (£5.1 million) of all bulky goods expenditure arising within the Antrim catchment. This compares favourably in market share terms to the edge of town Junction One scheme, which although includes a Homebase DIY store, but commands only a 10.1% (£3.3 million) market share in comparison.

3.17 Again there are major variances in performance:

- **Furniture:** Antrim claims 12.9% (£1.9m) market share; majority of local residents travel to Ballymena (52.4%/£7.6m);
- **DIY:** Antrim 16.6% (£1.2m) Junction One (including Homebase) 20.5% (£1.5m). Ballymena 39.4% (£2.8m);
- **Major Household:** Antrim 4.9% (£0.1m), Junction One 14.7% (£0.3m), Ballymena 38.4% (£0.7m);
- **Large Electrical:** Antrim 11.4% (£0.7m); Junction One 10.7% (£0.7m), Ballymena (36.5%/£2.3m).

3.18 The study concludes that there is potential to increase Antrim's market share although due to the lack of development sites in the town centre, allied to availability of sites at Junction One for retail warehousing, priority should be on enhancing the comparison retail offer.

Study Recommendations

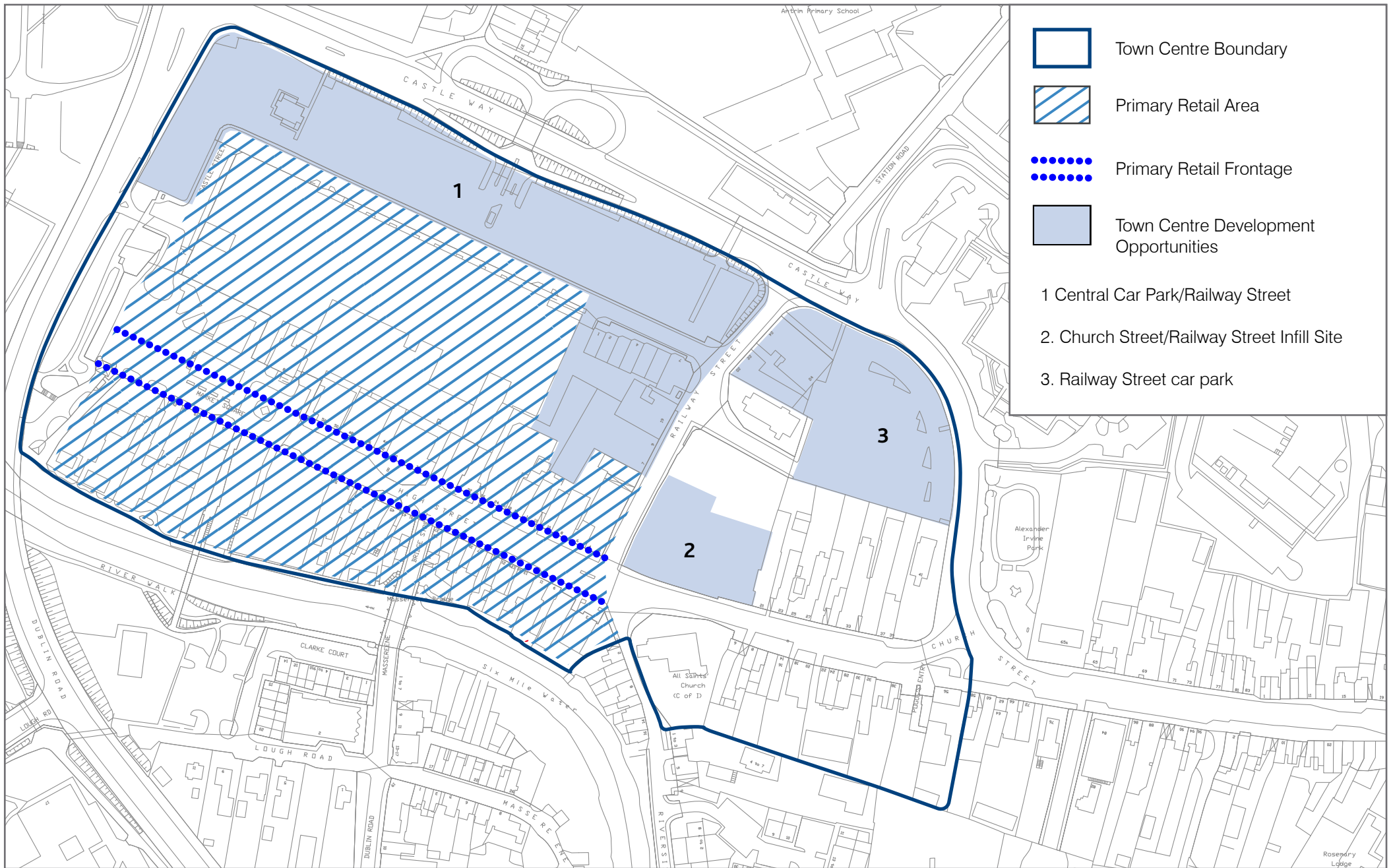
3.19 In conclusion, the study recommends that policy makers proactively plan for additional comparison retail development in Antrim town centre to improve market share performance.





3.20 The study identifies three potential development sites within Antrim town centre on the proposed town centre inset plan (see figure 6) which it recommends should be formally allocated for new development through the ABL Plan. This includes the following:

- **Land to the rear of Castle Mall (Central Car Park)** – allocate for Class A1 comparison retail development; policy should confirm that the site must be subject to a comprehensive, design-led scheme which seeks to better integrate the existing Castle Mall with the town centre and secure improvement to the external elevations of the existing shopping mall, particularly along the prominent Castle Way and Dublin Road. Appropriate replacement car parking provision should be provided on site.
- **Land at Church Street / Railway Street (Ulster Bar Corner)** – allocate for mixed-use development comprising ground floor Class A1 (open) retail development with office or residential uses encouraged on upper floors. Policy should recognise that this is an important short-term development opportunity on a prominent site within the town centre. Any proposal should be of a high design quality and ensure active frontage to both Church Street and Railway Street.

- **Land at Castle Way (Railway Street Car park)** – mixed-use site with opportunities for Class A1 retail use, leisure, residential uses and offices. Any development should be of a high design quality and ensure appropriate replacement car parking provision. The site should be identified as a longer-term opportunity given the potential requirement to maintain existing car parking provision within the town centre whilst the Central Car Park is subject to redevelopment.

3.21 The emerging development options for the town centre will assess the physical capacity of these sites in order to define the appropriate scale of floorspace / uses that could realistically be delivered. These issues are explored further in the next section of the report.



-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Primary Retail Area
-  Primary Retail Frontage
-  Town Centre Development Opportunities

- 1 Central Car Park/Railway Street
- 2 Church Street/Railway Street Infill Site
- 3 Railway Street car park

Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

Figure 6: Proposed Allocations



4. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES

4.1 The vision, objectives and guiding design principles, which should be used to guide the future development of Antrim town centre are presented below.

Vision

4.2 The vision for Antrim set out in the Masterplan is that:

“Antrim will be a strong, well-designed and safe town which can respond positively to new social, economic and market changes. The town centre will be the heart of the community with a diverse mix of retail, business, residential, learning, culture and leisure uses and, together with Junction One, will provide a wide retail offer of independents, multiples and international outlets. The refurbished Courthouse and the restored Castle Gardens will be distinctive cultural and heritage attractions for residents and visitors.”

Objectives for Regeneration

4.3 In support of this vision, the following objectives for regeneration have been identified:

- **Restructuring and Redevelopment:** To build on the town’s history and past strengths to promote approaches to design, development, movement and management that are both practical and achievable, but which will ultimately bring about a restructuring of the town and bring vacant sites and buildings into sustainable use.
- **Retail and Residential Investment:** To promote investment in quality retail, business and residential activity in the town centre to offer an attractive choice of property and to strengthen the town as the economic driving force of the Borough.
- **Arts Culture and Heritage:** To use the arts, culture and the heritage of Antrim to accelerate regeneration of the town centre, generate civic pride among residents and make the town an attractive destination for discerning visitors.
- **Learning and Enterprise:** To promote Antrim as a town committed to widening access to enterprise and learning as a continuous process.

- **Improving the Environment and Attracting Visitors:** To create a high quality clean and safe environment with lively and attractive public places, increase the number of visitors to the town and improve the town centre visitor offer so that it meets and exceeds expectations.
 - **Access and Movement:** To improve access to and within the town centre and make the town more user-friendly by road infrastructure improvements, improved car parking and encouraging alternative modes such as cycling, walking and public transport.
 - **Image and Marketing:** To coordinate the marketing of the town centre to residents in the Borough in partnership with Junction One to encourage greater footfall into the town.
- Strike a balance between heritage improvement and new shopping mall development (design, retail offer, size and sustainability);
 - Prioritise regeneration in core area – High Street and Castle Mall and the adjacent car park site to create prominent retail frontage along Castle Way and Dublin Road;
 - Maximise regeneration opportunities on publicly owned car park sites;
 - Improve permeability and enhance pedestrian flows along Railway Street;
 - Enhance pedestrian links to Castle Gardens and complete pedestrian circuit with link between the High Street and Castle Way; and
 - Replenish car parking space which are lost through redevelopment within proposed development sites.

Development and Design Principles

4.4 In meeting these objectives it will be important that the following development and design principles for the area are adhered to:

- Look for a range of uses to create a sustainable future for the town centre;

5. OPTION DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL

5.1 This section of the report presents an analysis of the alternative options for the development of Antrim town centre. The options are based on a thorough appraisal of key issues and development opportunities within the town centre described in the previous sections.

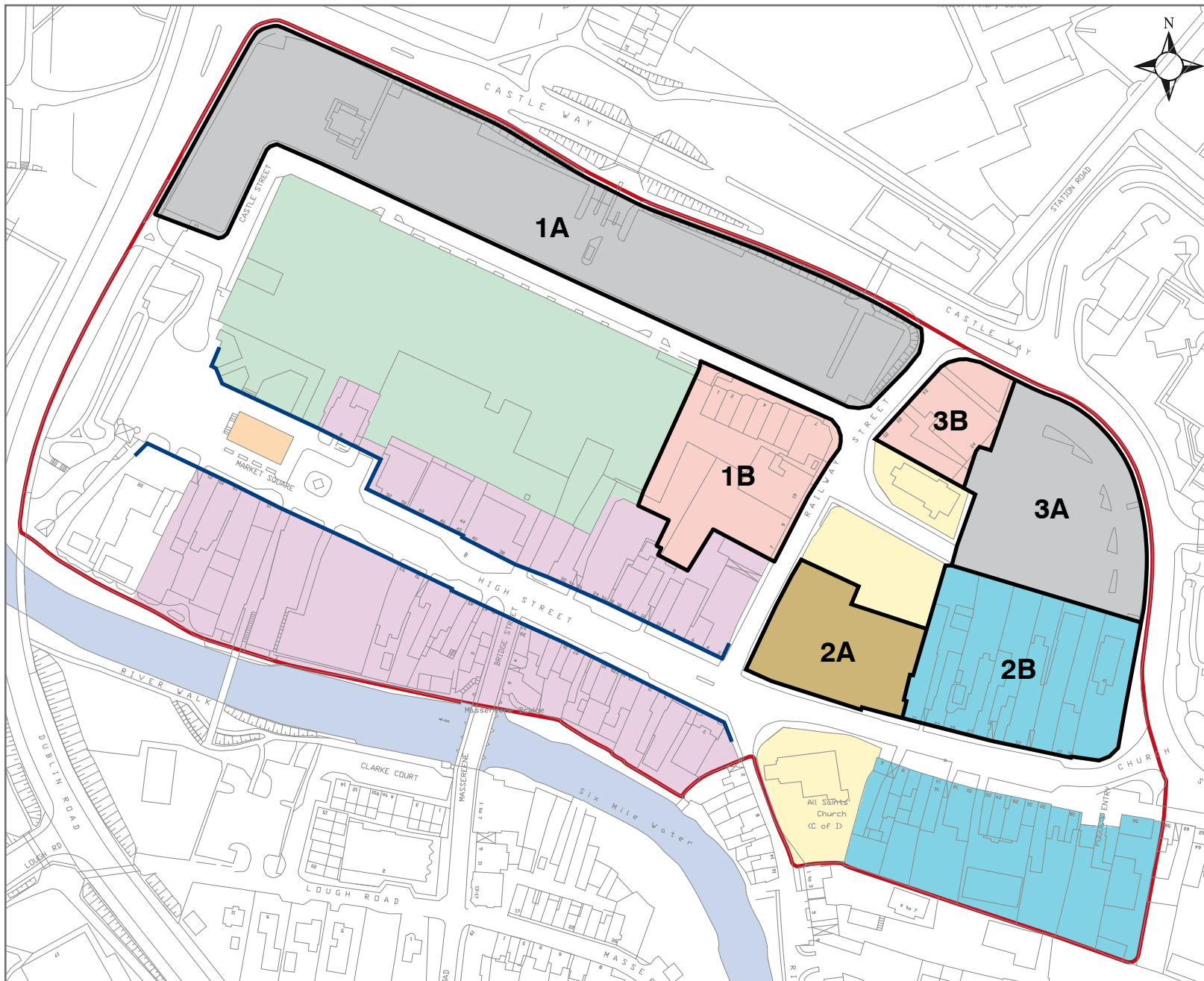
Development Opportunity Areas

5.2 In total 6 key sites / development areas have been identified. The identification of these sites has been informed by both the recommendations of the town centre Retail and Commercial Leisure Development Study completed by GVA Grimley, but also an appreciation of the land use and ownership pattern within the town centre informed by the physical appraisal of the area.

5.3 Figure 7 provides an over-arching framework for the development of options. A summary of the key sites, including land areas, is provided in Table 1. Photographs illustrating the key sites are also provided on the following pages.

Table 1: Opportunity Sites

Development Area	Site number	Site name	Area (m ² /ha)
Central Car Park / Castle Street / Railway Street	1a	Central Car Park	13471m ² / 1.35ha
	1b	Castle Street/Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	3963 m ² / 0.40ha
Church Street	2a	Church Street/Railway Street Infill Site (Ulster Bar Corner)	2749 m ² / 0.27ha
	2b	Church Street/Castle Way Regeneration Opportunity Site	5432 m ² / 0.54ha
Railway Street / Castle Way	3a	Railway Street Car Park	5101 m ² / 0.51ha
	3b	Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	1663 m ² / 0.17ha
TOTAL AREA			3.23ha



- Town Centre Boundary
- Primary Rail Frontage
- Primary Retail: High Street
- Library/Hall/Church
- Castle Mall
- Courthouse
- Existing Car Parks
- Secondary Retail: Railway Street
- Mixed Use Retail/Residential/
Employment: Church Street
- Vacant Development Site
- Development Opportunities

- 1A: Central Car Park
- 1B: Castle Street/Railway Street Opportunity Site
- 2A: Ulster Bar Corner Site
- 2B: Church Street/Castle Way Opportunity Site
- 3A: Railway Street Car Park
- 3B: Castle Way/Railway Street Opportunity Site

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Figure 7: Town Centre Development Opportunities

Photo 4: Central Car Park (Site 1a)



The Central car park is uninviting on arrival into the town centre and is a major opportunity site for a new modern retail led development.

Photo 5: Castle Street Shops (Site 1b)



Low quality retail units located along Castle Street relate poorly to surrounding areas and could be improved.

Photo 6: Ulster Bar Corner (Site 2a)



The Ulster Bar Corner, despite offering a potential development opportunity, has been abandoned for a number of years.

Photo 7: Church Street (Site 2b)



Opportunities exist to improve properties and the public realm along Church Street.

Photo 8: Railway Street Car Park (Site 3a)



Railway Street Car Park offers the potential to be a major development site for further retail and/or Multi Storey Car Parking over the longer term.

Photo 9: Railway Street (Site 3b)



Secondary retail areas along Railway Street relate poorly to the town centre and could be improved.

Developing the Options

- 5.4 Three core options for future retail development in Antrim town centre were prepared, each with a different level of floorspace. The options also considered a range of alternative approaches to design. A series of sub-options were also prepared for key opportunity sites.
- 5.5 In devising the options, consideration was given to the development capacity of sites based on 'low', 'medium' and 'high' growth scenarios as follows:
- **Low Growth:** 11,000 - 13,000 m² of new retail floorspace.
 - **Medium Growth:** 14,000 – 16,000 m² of new retail floorspace.
 - **High Growth:** 17,000 – 20,000 m² of new retail floorspace.
- 5.6 For development on this scale we recognised that plans could be drawn up to show the shops arranged around an 'open street' layout (like the scheme at Junction One) or a 'shopping mall' or 'enclosed' development with internal streets (like the existing Castle Mall development). We also recognised that each option could have either an 'open street' or an 'enclosed' design.
- 5.7 Three plans were subsequently drawn up for the public consultation exercise to illustrate the low growth, medium growth and high growth options. We chose to illustrate the low growth option on a plan with an 'open street' layout and the medium and high growth options on a plan with a 'shopping mall' or 'enclosed development' with internal streets. We explained in the text which accompanied the plans that an 'open street' or an 'enclosed street' layout could equally apply to each of the 3 options and that our plans were illustrative rather than prescriptive in terms of design, with the aim of generating ideas and inviting comments from the community.
- 5.8 A schedule of potential uses by site is presented in Table 2. This is followed by a description of the key features underpinning each option.

Table 2: Schedule of Potential Uses

Site name	Potential Use				
	Retail	Office	Residential	Car Parking	Servicing
1a. Central Car Park	✓	✓		✓	✓
1b. Castle Street /Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	✓				
2a. Ulster Bar Corner	✓	✓		✓	✓
2b. Railway Street /Castle Way Regeneration Opportunity Site	✓	✓	✓		
3a.Railway Street Car Park	✓	✓		✓	✓
3b.Castle Way/Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	✓		✓	✓	

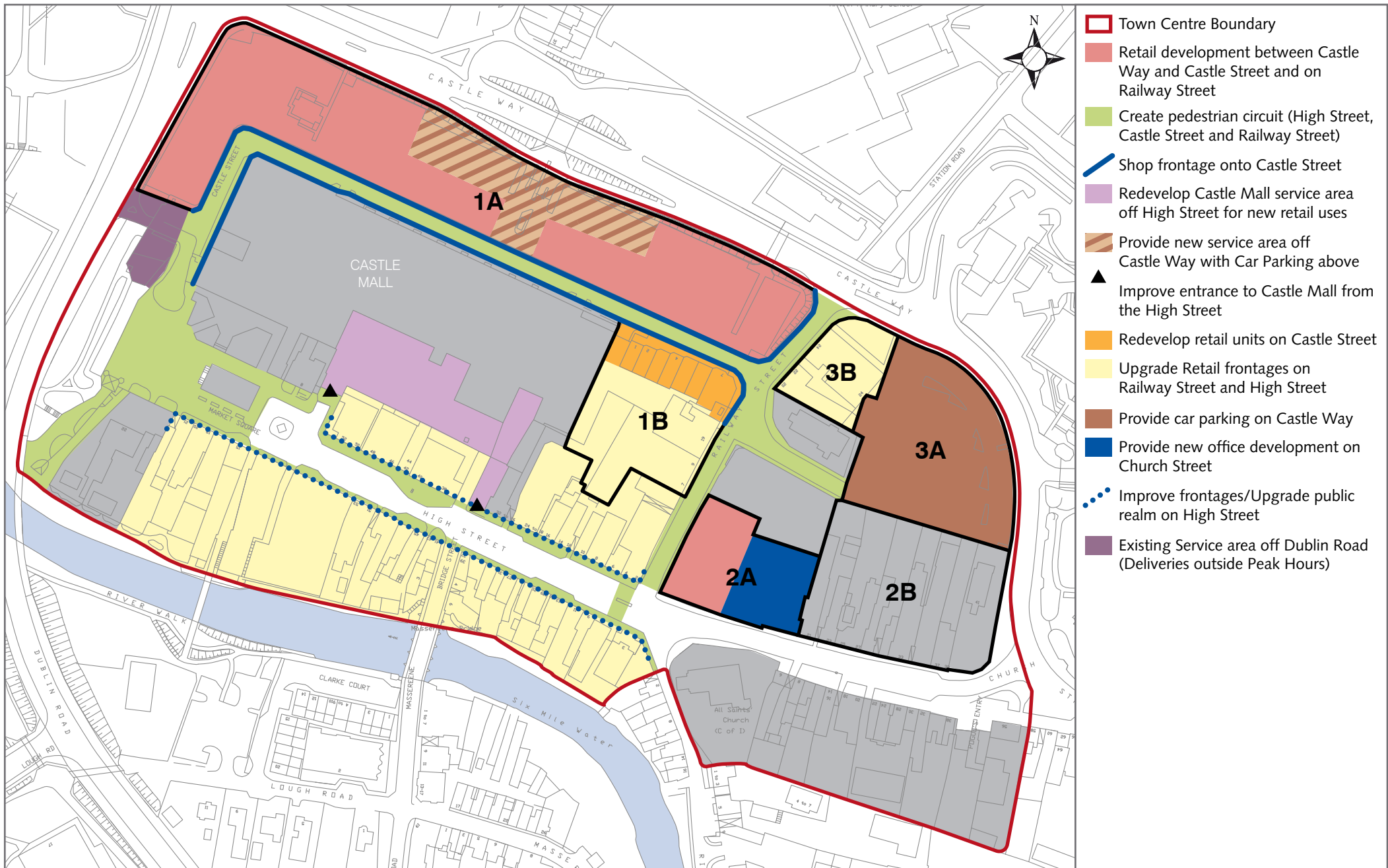
Characteristics of the Alternative Options

Option 1: Low Growth

- 5.9 A 'Low Growth' option for the regeneration of the town centre is presented in figure 8.
- 5.10 This option would provide approximately 12,000 m² new retail floorspace which is broadly in line with the findings of the retail capacity study. Between 2000 m² and 2500 m² of new office floorspace could also be provided.
- 5.11 This option features an additional single storey shopping development on the Central Car Park site (8,000-10,000 m²). Castle Street would provide a major new pedestrianised shopping street between the Castle Mall and the new development, this part of a larger shopping circuit that would include Railway Street and High Street. The existing shopping units along Castle Street would also be redeveloped as part of the scheme providing a further 1000 m² of retail floorspace. The scheme promotes the creation of shopping street which would require the retail units within Castle Mall to be opened up along the southern edge of Castle Street. While Figure 8 illustrates a lane based scheme, it should be noted that this level of development could also be provided in a mall scheme.
- 5.12 Additional retail development would be provided at the junction of High Street and Railway Street (1000 m²), with a new office development scheme provided adjacent to the new retail development on Church Street (Site 2a). This will provide 2,200 m² of office floorspace over two floors.
- 5.13 The remaining frontages along Railway Street and High Street would be upgraded as part of the scheme.
- 5.14 The redeveloped Central Car Park would be serviced from Dublin Road (outside peak hours) and Castle Street. The existing service bay serving the Castle Mall could also be redeveloped for shopping, thereby increasing the retail floorspace area within the Mall development by approximately 2,200 m². Additional multi-storey car parking would be provided by the existing Central Car Park site.
- 5.15 Improvements will also be made to the public realm including better pedestrian access to the Castle Mall from the High Street.

5.16 In summary, this option would provide:

- 8,000-10,000 m² of new retail development on the Central Car Park site (site 1a);
- 1,000 m² of replacement retail development at the junction of Railway Street/Castle Street (site 1b);
- 2,200 m² of additional retail in Castle Mall to replace the existing service area of the High Street;
- 1,000 m² of new retail on the Ulster Bar Corner (site 2a);
and
- 2,200 m² of new office development on Church Street (site 2a).



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Figure 8: Option 1 - High Street/Castle Street/Railway Street Retail Development Scheme (Low Growth)

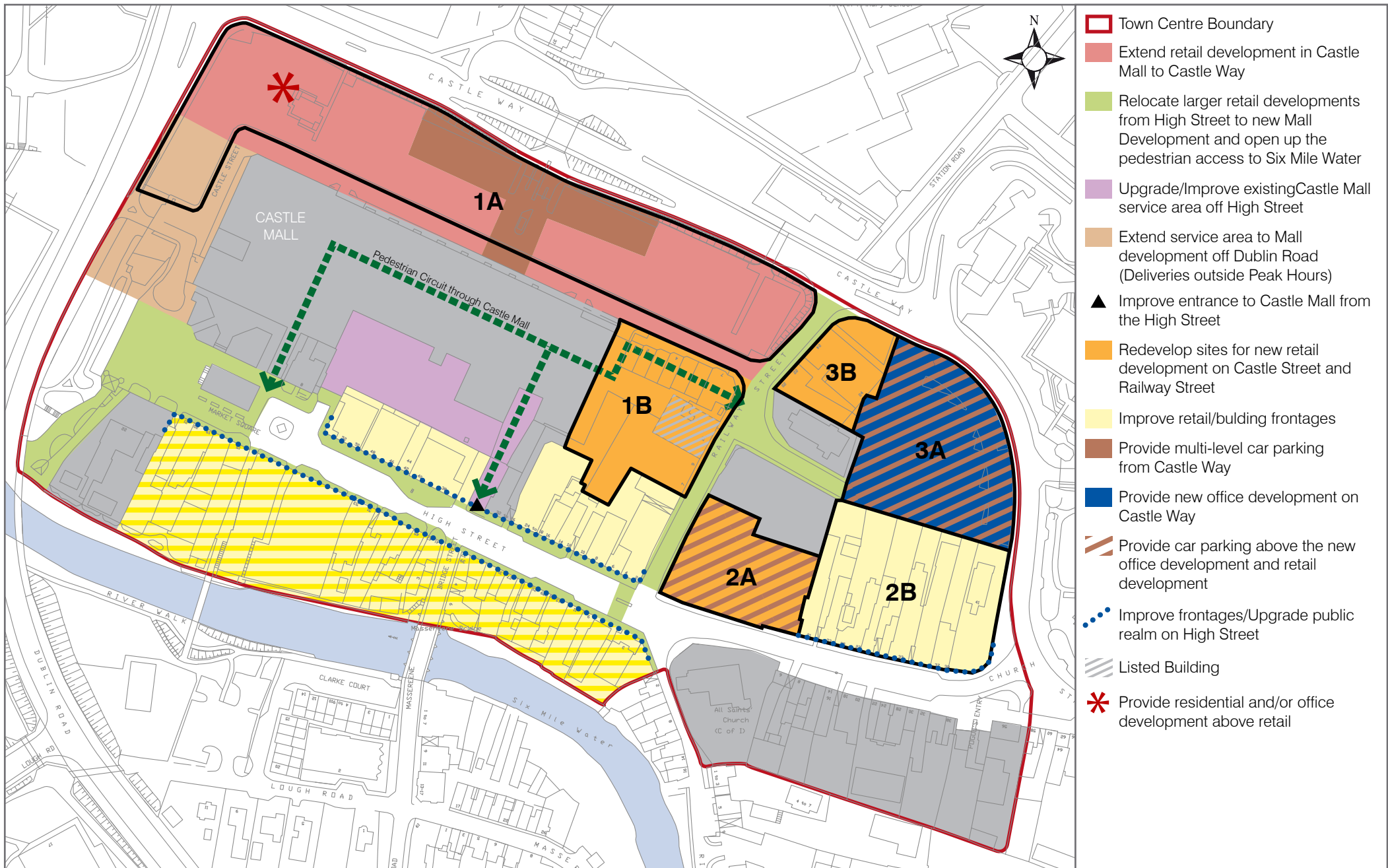


Option 2: Medium Growth

- 5.17 A 'Medium Growth' option for the regeneration of the town centre is presented in Figure 9.
- 5.18 This option would provide between 14,000m² - 16,000 m² new retail floorspace and approximately 8000 m² of new office floorspace.
- 5.19 Figure 9 illustrates a larger shopping mall development (8000-10,000 m²) providing ground floor shops on the Central Car Park site with first floor residential and/or office development along the Dublin Road and Castle Way frontages. It should be noted that this quantum of retail floorspace could also be achieved through a lanes based scheme.
- 5.20 New retail developments are provided along Railway Street and Church Street. More specifically, the existing shopping units along Castle Street and Railway Street would be redeveloped as part of the scheme (3000 m²). Additional retail development would also be provided at the junction of High Street and Railway Street on the Ulster Bar Corner (2,000m²) which will provide a major anchor to the new development. The redevelopment of the existing retail units on the junction of Railway Street and Castle Way would also be progressed as part of the scheme providing a further 1,100 m² of replacement retail floorspace.
- 5.21 A new office development would be provided on the Railway Street car park site (8,000 m²).
- 5.22 Servicing would be provided from Dublin Road (outside peak hours) and the High Street. Multi-storey car parking is provided on Central Car Park site and along Castle Way. Additional car parking would be provided above the proposed office development on the existing Railway Street car park site.
- 5.23 The remaining frontages on the High Street and Church Street would be upgraded as part of the scheme. Improvements will also be made to the public realm including better pedestrian access to the Castle Mall from the High Street.
- 5.24 A new public square could also be provided along the riverside, however the exact location of this square will need to be determined through negotiation with land and property owners.
- 5.25 While Figure 9 illustrates a mall based scheme, it should be noted that this level of development could also be provided in a lanes based scheme.
-

5.26 In summary, this option would provide:

- 8,000-10,000 m² of new retail development on the Central Car Park site (site 1a);
- 3,000 m² of replacement retail development at the junction of Railway Street/Castle Street (site 1b);
- 2,000 m² of new retail on Railway Street (site 2a);
- Up to 8,000 m² of new office development on the Railway Street Car Park Site (site 3a); and
- 1,100 m² of replacement retail development at the junction of Railway Street/Castle Way (site 3b)



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Figure 9: Option 2 - Large Shopping Mall Development Scheme (Medium Growth)

Option 3: High Growth

- 5.27 Figure 10 presents a 'High Growth' option and aspirational vision for the future of Antrim town centre; it seeks to maximise regeneration opportunities for shopping at ground level with upper level development for housing, offices and car parking.
- 5.28 This option would provide between 18,000 m² - 20,000 m² of new retail floorspace.
- 5.29 As with Option 2, this option features a larger shopping mall development with ground floor shops on the Central Car Park site (8,000-10,000 m²). It should be noted that this quantum of retail floorspace could also be achieved through a lanes based scheme.
- 5.30 This option also has first floor residential and/or office development above the entire scheme. It offers strong pedestrian links to and from Railway Street and High Street from the shopping mall.
- 5.31 New retail developments could be provided along Railway Street, Church Street and Castle Way. The existing shopping units along Castle Street and Railway Street would be redeveloped as part of the scheme (3,000 m²). Additional retail development would also be provided at the junction of High Street and Railway Street (2,000 m²) which will provide a major anchor to the new development.
- 5.32 The redevelopment of the existing retail units on the junction of Railway Street and Castle Way would also be progressed as part of the wider redevelopment of the Railway Street Car Park providing up to 5,200 m² of new / replacement retail floorspace.
- 5.33 The remaining frontages on the High Street and Church Street would be upgraded as part of the scheme. Opportunities to better utilize the properties along the High Street would be considered including the remodelling of ground floor units for more efficient retail uses and the re-use/refurbishment of upper floors, particularly for residential and office use. Opportunities to provide office development will also be considered on Church Street.
- 5.34 A larger public square is illustrated along the riverside. This is illustrative and is intended to show the potential of opening up the High Street to the river and is not intended to relate to the boundaries of any specific sites.
- 5.35 A larger public square would be provided along the riverside. Again, for the purposes of the consultation events this was

presented in a more general way without reference to the boundaries of specific sites.

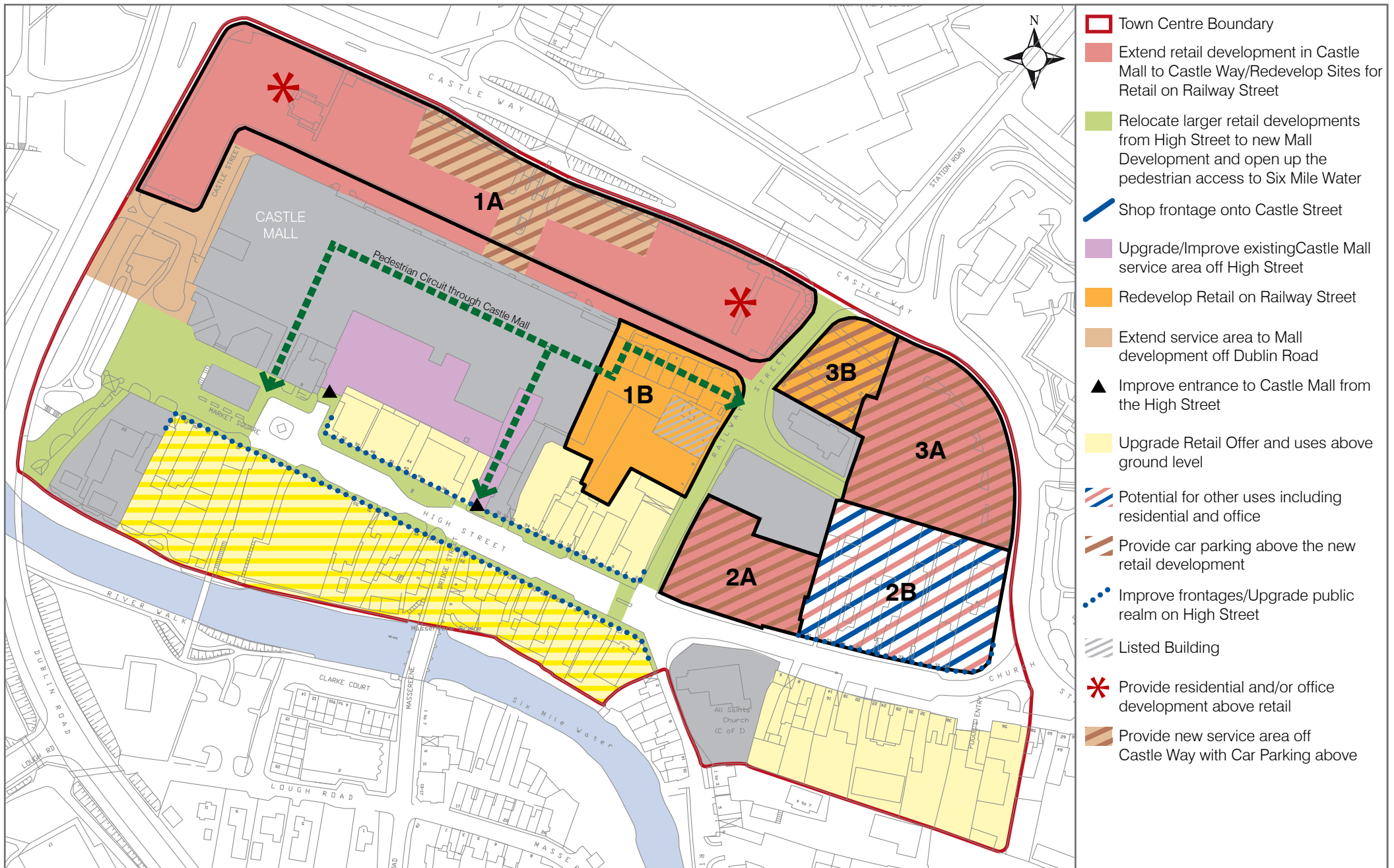
5.36 Servicing could be provided from Dublin Road (outside peak hours), the High Street and Castle Way. Car parking is provided on the Central Car Park site, Railway Street and Castle Way.

5.37 While Figure 10 illustrates a mall based scheme, it should be noted that this level of development could also be provided in a lanes based scheme.

5.38 In summary, this option would provide:

- 8000-10,000 m² of new retail development on the Central car park site (site 1a)
- 3000 m² of replacement retail development at the junction of Railway street/Castle Street (site 1b);
- 2,000 m² of new retail on the Ulster Bar Corner (site 2a);
- 5,200 m² of new / replacement retail development on Castle Way Car Park (site 3a) and existing retail units on the junction of Railway Street and Castle Way (site 3b).

- Up to 8,000 m² of new office floorspace and a number of apartments could also be provided to the upper floors of the new retail development on the Central car park site.



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Figure 10: Option 3: High Street/Castle Street/Railway Street/Castle Way Development Scheme (High Growth)



Summary of Retail Floorspace by Option

5.39 Table 3 presents a summary of the retail floorspace on each site for each of the 'Low', 'Medium' and 'High' Growth Options for Antrim Town Centre.

Table 3: Schedule of retail floorspace by site

Site number	Site name	Area		Approximate Quantum of Retail Floorspace m ²		
		m ²	Hectares	Low	Medium	High
1a	Central Car Park	13,471	1.35	8,000-10,000	8,000-10,000	8,000-10,000
1b	Castle Street/Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	3,963	0.40	1,000	3,000	3,000
2a	Church Street/Railway Street Infill Site (Ulster Bar Corner)	2,749	0.27	1,000	2,000	2,000
2b	Church Street/Castle Way Regeneration Opportunity Site	5,432	0.54			
3a	Railway Street Car Park	5,101	0.51			5,000
3b	Castle Way/Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	1,663	0.17		1,000	
TOTAL		32,379	3.24	10,000-12,000	14,000-16,000	18,000-20,000

Public Consultation Responses

- 5.40 As part of the master planning process a six week period of community consultation was undertaken. This was a critical stage in the process in order to build support for a preferred regeneration option for the town centre. Importantly, it gave the local community the opportunity to meet representatives from the Council, DSD and the consultancy team and to express their views on the future regeneration in the town centre.
- 5.41 The consultation took the form of a public exhibition, launched in the Castle Mall by the Minister for Social Development on 21st October 2009. The purpose of the exhibition was to present work undertaken on the study together with the 3 alternative options for the town centre. The boards also presented examples of what has been achieved through regeneration in other town and cities in the UK, focussing primarily on retail-led development.
- 5.42 Representatives from the project team were on hand to answer questions during the first week of the consultation and a questionnaire was provided for the public to complete.
- 5.43 A total of 126 responses were received and the overall message conveyed in the questionnaires demonstrated a positive response to the regeneration proposals for Antrim.
- 5.44 The following provides a summary of feedback received at the consultation event. A more detailed Consultation Feedback Report is provided at Appendix 2.
- 91.1% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the vision and objectives established for Antrim Town Centre.
 - 92.7% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the regeneration issues identified for Antrim town centre.
 - 89.2% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the draft conclusions and recommendations of the Retail Capacity Study for Antrim
 - 79.3% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the analysis of regeneration opportunities.
 - The medium growth option (87.5%) was the preferred option, although there was also strong support for both the high growth (82.6%) and low growth options (75%).
 - Overall 89% were in favour of the Masterplan providing a strong rationale for intervention within the town centre.

5.45 Improvement to the appearance of the Castle Mall is considered to be a priority with many in favour of a larger and more attractive shopping centre. Other comments / issues highlighted included:

- The need for more leisure time activities (35%);
- The requirement for a better range of shops (23%);
- New development and improved building need to be introduced in the town centre (15%);
- More activities for young people are needed (7%);
- More needs to be done to encourage new businesses to come into Antrim (8%);
- Better road access into and out of the town centre is required (11%);
- Safety and security needs to be improved through the introduction of CCTV in the town and a greater police presence (2%).

5.46 In addition to the feedback received via the questionnaire, the following provides a summary of the feedback received from the manned exhibition and subsequent discussion that took place

with stakeholders. This feedback has been used to inform the appraisal of options presented in the section that follows.

Central Car Park

- The site is seen as the starting point in the town centre for more shops;
- The junction of Dublin Road/Castle Way could provide a major new store (up to 2 floors) and entrance to the new scheme;
- The development must look good in terms of design, colour and quality of materials with no blank walls – window displays and lighting are preferred;
- The development needs a strong identity/design theme;
- A Mall (internal street) is generally preferred to an outdoor shopping street;
- There is support for improvements to the shops on Castle Street;
- Access for cars and/or service vehicles from Dublin Road is supported;
- Car parking next to the new shops is preferred – preferably free parking to attract more visitors;

- There is support for the removal of the existing (unsightly service area off High Street);
- An internal square within the larger shopping mall is preferred; and
- Better access to the High Street should be encouraged.

Railway Street

- Redevelopment of the Ulster Bar Corner is a priority for Antrim town centre;
- The site offers the opportunity to create a large retail store with car parking on top;
- Environmental improvement to Railway Street are supported;
- Redevelop the western frontage for smaller shops to improve the appearance of the street is favoured;
- A new access from the mall onto Railway Street opposite the new Library is seen as important;
- It is important to keep new premises to a single storey on the western frontage in order to respect the character of existing buildings;

- Improve existing buildings at the northern end of Railway Street; and
- Opportunities for new store at junction of Railway Street and Castle Way could be explored over the longer term.

High Street

- Improve the appearance of the shop frontages and make better use of the space above the shops;
- Improve taxi, parking and public transport arrangements;
- Create better pedestrian access to the mall;
- Continue to explore the potential for opening up the riverside area to the High Street – with a square/ open area;
- Improve footpaths/paving and provide more seats and trees.

Railway Street Car Park

- Parking rather than shops is preferred – ‘do we need that many shops?’;
- Office/Housing are not seen as desirable due to limited evidence of market demand.

Evaluation of Options

- 5.47 The following sub-section presents an evaluation of the various options for regeneration within Antrim town centre. This assessment takes on board feedback received from both the community and stakeholders as part of the six week consultation process.
- 5.48 In general it is recognised that a retail-led development scheme in the centre of Antrim will make a significant improvement to the retail offer within the town centre. The Retail Capacity Study has shown a significant net leakage of expenditure from the town centre suggesting that there is considerable potential to capture additional spend by creating a town centre environment which attracts shoppers. The Retail Capacity Study also highlighted that there is significant potential to quantitatively expand the town centre comparison offer going forward. Moreover, actions that seek increase the retention of expenditure will derive significant vitality / viability benefits to the wider town centre and represents a sustainable option, reducing out-journeys made by local Antrim residents to larger centres such as Ballymena.
- 5.49 All of the options offer an improvement not only to the quality of the retail environment, but also the ease of accessing and using

the town centre with improved integrated parking arrangements, an attractive public realm and modern and sizable retail units attractive to prospective national occupiers. It is however possible to draw distinctions on the relative merits and desirability of each. The analysis that follows considers the main proposals for each of the key sites / areas within the town centre.

Redevelopment of the Central Car Park

- 5.50 The Central Car Park presents itself as the largest development opportunity within the town centre and is seen as the starting point for the introduction of new retail development.
- 5.51 The scale and nature of the proposed retail development on this site has therefore been a distinguishing feature of the options presented. The two main options for consideration included:
- The creation of a 1-2 storey shopping development on the Central Car Park site, with a new pedestrianised shopping street created along Castle Street; and
 - A larger shopping mall development providing ground floor shops as an extension to the existing Castle Mall with integrated servicing and/or multi-storey parking facilities.

5.52 A notable benefit of the 'low growth' option is that opening up access around the Castle Mall would create a new pedestrian circuit around the town centre improving, in particular, the relationship between the Castle Mall, Castle Street and High Street. This option also offers the potential to forge stronger pedestrian routes along Railway Street towards Station Road and extend them across Castle Way to enhance connections to Tesco and beyond to Antrim Bus and Railway Station. Over time the existing shopping units at the junction of Railway Street and Castle Street would be redeveloped acting as an additional attractor that would help to achieve this.

5.53 A larger shopping mall development, presented through the medium and high growth options would provide an extension to the Castle Mall and would have the advantage of addressing the current deficit of larger floor plate retail units within the centre. This approach would also offer the opportunity to bring forward a fully integrated development, whilst at the same time addressing the design issues associated with the Mall at present.

Photo 10: View of Castle Mall from Castle Street



5.54 The mall based scheme also considered the potential for introducing residential and/or office development, however it is felt that at the present time the market demand for this type of product within Antrim town centre would not be strong enough to make this a commercially viable and attractive option.

5.55 Critically, both options would facilitate the introduction of larger retail units that would be more attractive to national retailers. The development of the car park for retail would also enhance the

attractiveness of the unsightly exterior of the Castle Mall and create a development that addresses both Castle Way and Dublin Road more positively. For instance, the junction of Dublin Road and Castle Way could provide a major new store and entrance to new scheme.

5.56 However, whilst the creation of pedestrian-friendly streets linked as part of a pedestrian circuit could help improve connectivity within the town centre, feedback from the community has suggested that an internal mall environment would be preferred to a new stand alone development with an external street environment. The main reason for this preference being the climate of Antrim, with shoppers favouring the enclosed environment currently offered by the Castle Mall.

5.57 These design alternatives will need to be explored further at the detailed design stage.

Redevelopment of the Ulster Bar Corner

5.58 In its current form the Ulster Bar Corner marks an undeveloped and unattractive gateway into the town centre.

5.59 All of the options acknowledge that the redevelopment of the site is needed to stimulate long-term confidence. To realise this

ambition DSD has completed the purchase of the site and is committed to producing a development brief for the future development of the site in accordance with the recommendation of this Masterplan.

5.60 With the backing of DSD, there is now an increased impetus to bring forward development of the site. Two main options were therefore considered; they included:

- The development of a mixed use retail and office development; and
- A larger retail development with the potential for parking above.

5.61 Both the mixed use and retail led options would offer the potential to provide a gateway development which complements the investment being made along Railway Street. The provision of additional retail would help to raise the profile of this prominent site and a mixed-use approach would also offer the potential to increase the quantum of commercial office floor space within the town centre. The provision of smaller business units in particular may be attractive to indigenous businesses looking to relocate into newer premises.

Photo 11: Ulster Bar Corner

5.62 Given the major deficiencies in the current retail offer it is recommended that the site should be developed solely for retail purposes. This would provide a major new anchor which would relate positively to the investment in the Castle Mall and act as a catalyst for regeneration, enhancing the profile of Railway Street whilst also providing a greater 'sense of arrival' into the town centre from Church Street.

5.63 The development of a dual purpose facility would also be less practical from a car parking and servicing perspective. Space for new and replacement car parking is a fundamental issue that needs to be fully addressed within the Masterplan. Both the medium and high growth options proposed integrated car parking above the proposed development. Due to access constraints at the rear of the library it is likely that access to this would need to be provided from Church Street reducing the area of the site that could be developed for commercial purposes. The provision of both office and retail at this location would also increase construction costs and create pressure on the amount of floorspace available and the return that could be realised.

5.64 A stand alone retail development would also include the provision of a dedicated service area. This would be favourable in this regard as it would reduce congestion along Railway Street and Church Street. The design and layout of the site should however seek to minimise the impact of any proposed servicing area to avoid replicating the issues associated with the unsightly service area further down High Street at the Castle Mall.

Redevelopment of property along Railway Street

- 5.65 Various options are presented for the remaining retail and commercial properties along Railway Street. These range from small-scale property improvements proposed under the low growth option, up to a more comprehensive redevelopment proposed under the medium and high growth options.
- 5.66 An approach that brings forward the comprehensive redevelopment of the property either side of the listed Protestant Hall alongside the existing retail units along Castle Street is favoured, subject to market demand. Whilst attempts to do so would necessitate a degree of expenditure and fundamental reconfiguration of the site, the gains in terms of revitalising the town centre retail environment could be significant. For instance, the redevelopment of the retail units along Castle Street and property to the rear of these would offer the opportunity to remove a number of poor quality buildings and replace these with higher quality retail environment; this approach would also help to facilitate a larger extension of the Castle Mall. Complementary public realm investment along Railway Street has already been introduced alongside traffic calming measures to improve the pedestrian experience.

Photo 12: Existing property along Railway Street



- 5.67 In contrast, the gains from redeveloping the remaining property at the junction of Railway Street and Castle Street would be less significant. Furthermore the redevelopment of this site could further erode the historical character of Railway Street which would be contrary to the town centres' conservation area status.

Redevelopment of the Railway Street Car Park

- 5.68 Options for the redevelopment of the Railway Street car park (site 3a) included the provision of car parking (low growth), a new office-led development with parking above (medium growth) and a new retail-led development with parking above (high growth).
- 5.69 A requirement for increased parking provision as part of the redevelopment of the Castle Mall is likely to impact on costs and the overall viability of the scheme. Retention and possible expansion of the car parking provision on the existing Railway Street Car Park, alongside the introduction of new Multi-storey car parking as part of the Castle Mall redevelopment is considered to offer the best solution in order to meet the parking standards set by Road Service. In addition, given the sites detachment from the town centre it is doubtful whether the actions proposed under the medium and high growth options would cumulatively amount to the aspiration described in the objectives.
- 5.70 A 'do minimum' approach, which implies a low level of intervention on the car park is therefore proposed. This approach assumes that development would not be undertaken on a

comprehensive basis, however should there be a substantial requirement for additional parking provision within the town centre then this site offers the potential to be developed as a multi-storey car park in the future.

Photo 13: Railway Street Car Park



Upgrading Property on High Street / Church Street

- 5.71 It is important that any new development does not turn its back on High Street. Moreover creating a more active retail core would create a more successful retail environment which could be complemented by environmental improvements, traffic management and the development of new and improved retail premises.
- 5.72 Improvement to High Street offers the potential to complement the retail-led development on the Central Car Park and offer smaller, independent and specialist retailing. Over time, complementary activities could be encouraged. Relevant uses, which would complement activity elsewhere in the town centre, include small business and start-up activity or the conversion of the upper floors of the building for residential use.
- 5.73 The nature of buildings and the spaces between the Castle Mall, Railway Street and High Street will continue to discourage and impede the function of these spaces and attractiveness of the town centre. The most limiting factor at present is the divide between High Street and the Castle Mall.
- 5.74 It would be very difficult to foster a strong and integrated retail core without bringing the Castle Mall development towards High

Street. The current options leave a gap in the built form along High Street, which weakens the scope for comprehensive improvements to the retail core. It is therefore proposed that opportunities to redevelop the service yard entrances bringing the Castle Mall to High Street are included within the preferred option.

Photo 14: Entrance to Castle Mall from High Street



- 5.75 Alongside a new and vibrant shopping environment Antrim needs to offer a variety of services to attract new visitors

including family-friendly restaurants and cafes. Whilst the restoration of the Old Courthouse will breathe new life into Market Square, footfall at the bottom end of High Street remains low.

- 5.76 Antrim also benefits from a number of high quality green spaces yet they remain detached from the town centre. Intervention within the town centre offers an opportunity to improve access and signage to existing areas of open space. In addition there is an opportunity to increase the size and quality of the public realm along High Street to create an attractive environment that encourages pedestrian movement towards Market Square, Dublin Road and beyond to the Castle Gardens.
- 5.77 Opportunities for opening up pedestrian access to Six Mile Water would help to improve pedestrian circulation and linkages in and around the town centre. In doing so it is essential to create a safe and attractive public realm to guide people between the two destinations. This may involve a high quality redevelopment of vacant and under-utilised sites. This would be subject to successful negotiations with property owners along High Street.

Photo 15: Poor quality building frontages on High Street



Option Appraisal

5.78 Each of these component sub-options have been assessed against defined regeneration and design objectives and market/delivery considerations. The evaluation criteria included:

- Contribution to the regeneration of the town centre;
- Creating a scheme of high design quality; and
- Ease of implementation.

5.79 A summary of these key criteria and considerations that will help inform the assessment of options is provided below.

Regeneration of the town centre

5.80 The Retail Capacity Study highlights the importance of increasing the retail component within the town centre in order to increase the town's market share and compete with surrounding centres by providing high quality, flexible retail units and a high quality retail environment.

5.81 There should be a continued focus on the town centre for retailing in comparison goods in order to ensure that the quality and vitality of the retail offer within the town centre are

enhanced. Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that there may be opportunities to consider other uses as part of the overall scheme including the potential for office and residential uses. Consideration has been given in the development of options to these alternative uses and the appropriate scale of retail development as part of the option development process.

5.82 The scale of development and potential benefits for the town centre will therefore be a high priority in the overall assessment options. Critically, future development will need to address current deficiencies whilst at the same time maximise the existing assets of the town centre to create an attractive destination for shoppers, residents, workers and visitors alike.

Importance of good quality design

5.83 The physical appraisal has highlighted the requirement of the scheme to achieve a high quality of design. This will be a 'flagship' project for Antrim and the option appraisal process will include the potential to promote 'high quality design' as one of the key assessment criteria.

Ease of Implementation / Deliverability

- 5.84 Ease of implementation and site assembly will be key appraisal criteria. Over half (1.86ha) of the area identified as being suitable for development is in public ownership and the remaining private land areas to be acquired occupy prominent sites along the Railway Street, High Street and Castle Street frontages. Many of these sites will form an integral part of the land area required for the scheme.
- 5.85 The recommended scheme will need to be acceptable to DSD, DRD, the Council, the developer and other key stakeholders. In addition it is important that the preferred scheme affords the support of the various third party interests. These site assembly issues, which will ultimately impact on the ease of implementation, have been considered as part of the option development process but will need to be addressed as the project moves forward.

Appraisal Summary

- 5.86 A summary of the option appraisal exercise is presented in Table 4.

- 5.87 This Table sets out the impact of each proposal against the above criteria and assigns each a score out of 10 points (maximum contribution).

Table 4 Summary Assessment of the performance of the Alternative Options

Site / Area	Proposal	Regeneration of the town centre	Improving Design Quality	Deliverability	Total Score	Retain Option (Y/N)	Comments
Central Car Park	Creation of a new shopping development with a new pedestrian shopping street along Castle Street (external)	10	8	7	25	Y	This option has the potential to make a significant contribution to the regeneration of the town centre. The redevelopment of the car park will address current design issues. Opening up access will create a new pedestrian circuit improving the relationship between the Castle Mall, High Street and Railway Street. The site is in public ownership therefore relatively straightforward to deliver (subject to market demand)
	Larger shopping mall development (internal)	10	8	7	25	Y	This option has the potential to make a significant contribution to the regeneration of the town centre. The redevelopment of the car park under an internal mall design would meet community expectations. The site is in public ownership therefore relatively straightforward to deliver (subject to market demand)
	Larger Shopping mall with residential and office above	8	8	2	18	N	Limited market for new build residential within Antrim town centre. Demand for office accommodation also tempered by current market conditions

Site / Area	Proposal	Regeneration of the town centre	Improving Design Quality	Deliverability	Total Score	Retain Option (Y/N)	Comments
Ulster Bar Corner	Mixed use retail and office development	8	8	5	21	N	Capacity for additional retail development evidenced by ABL Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study. Limited market for new build residential within Antrim town centre. Demand for office accommodation also tempered by current market conditions
	Creation of a larger retail development / anchor store	10	8	8	26	Y	Need and capacity for a new substantial retail development within Antrim town centre. Redevelopment of the site would create opportunities to introduce a larger floor plate retail unit on the site. DSD owned site supports early delivery. Redevelopment would address design issues associated with this major gap site in the heart of the town centre
Railway Street Car Park	Redevelopment of Railway Street Car Park	7	5	2	14	N	Site is located on the periphery of the retail core therefore redevelopment of the car park for retail, office and/or residential not critical to the regeneration of the town centre. Removal of car parking may jeopardise the redevelopment of other major town centre sites
	Retention of Railway Street Car Park	9	0	10	19	Y	Retention of the car park will enable development opportunities on other key sites to be realised. Potential for redevelopment could be explored at a later date

Site / Area	Proposal	Regeneration of the town centre	Improving Design Quality	Deliverability	Total Score	Retain Option (Y/N)	Comments
Castle Street / Railway Street	Redevelopment of property along Castle Street / Railway Street (site 1b)	10	10	5	25	Y	Redevelopment of the property along Railway Street and Castle Street is critical to the regeneration of the town centre. Buildings are currently of poor design quality. Deliverability could be constrained by the need to acquire third party interests.
	Improvement of property along Castle Street / Railway Street (site 1b)	5	8	9	22	Y	Improvements would help address current design issues, but would have minimal impact on the overall regeneration of the town centre.
Railway Street / Castle Way	Redevelopment of property along Railway Street (site 3b)	5	7	2	14	N	Potential gains from redeveloping this site are less significant to the regeneration of the town centre. Deliverability could be constrained by the need to acquire third party interests.
	Improvement of property along Railway Street (site 3b)	6	6	9	21	Y	Improvement would be the preferred approach in the short term and would be easier to implement than the redevelopment option
High Street / Church Street	Improvement to property along High Street	7	7	9	23	Y	Creating a more attractive retail core is important for enhancing the quality of the town centre and attracting shoppers. Improvement would complement proposed new build activity on the Central Car Park and Ulster Bar Corner
	Extension of Castle Mall towards High Street	9	9	5	23	Y	Critical for addressing the divide between the Castle Mall and High Street. Delivery would be subject to successful negotiations with the owners of the mall
	Opening up access to Six Mile Water	7	9	2	18	Y	Although this would be difficult to deliver the impact in terms of enhancing the quality of High Street and improving access to the river would be significant

Summary

- 5.88 The issues presented above are all key factors that overtime will reverse the decline of the town centre and respond positively to the design principles and regeneration objectives that this Masterplan is seeking to achieve. There is a risk however that without short-term action the reduced level of confidence evident at present may either discourage inward investment or lower the quality level that the private sector is willing to invest.
- 5.89 The Retail Capacity Study highlights the importance of increasing the retail component within the town centre in order to increase the town's market share and compete with surrounding centres by providing high quality, flexible retail units and a high quality retail environment.
- 5.90 The Retail Capacity Study has also highlighted the importance of the retail component within the regeneration of the town centre in terms of increasing the town's market share, thereby enabling it to compete with surrounding centres by providing high quality, flexible retail units and a high quality retail environment. From a regeneration perspective a medium growth scenario could have the advantage of achieving a more deliverable scheme.
- 5.91 A phased development that involves the partial redevelopment of the Central Car Park alongside the redevelopment of the Ulster Bar Corner is considered to be the best solution. Although site assembly would be needed to deliver a scheme on Railway Street and Castle Street this would be less complex and costly in the short to medium term than trying to negotiate the acquisition of the additional third party interests at the junction of Railway Street and Castle Way. Over the longer term the development of the eastern portion of the car park, together with the redevelopment of the retail properties along Castle Street and Railway Street could be progressed bringing forward additional floorspace to the scheme.
- 5.92 As the acquisition of private land interests would incur additional costs, the recommended approach is one which minimises additional private land acquisition (in the short-medium term) in view of the available publicly owned sites. This approach would meet the objectives of the Masterplan for the town centre, minimise cost and risk and at the same time promote a scheme that is proportionate to the capacity of Antrim town centre to accommodate further expansion of its retail offer.

6. MASTERPLAN

- 6.1 Based on the design and delivery considerations outlined in the previous section, a retail-led regeneration programme is now proposed for Antrim town centre. The development will provide between 12,000-14,000 m² of new retail floorspace focussed on the existing Central Car Park, the Ulster Bar Corner, Railway Street and Castle Street.
- 6.2 Whilst this would take time to deliver the overall impact of the scheme would be to create a more sustainable and proportionate development which integrates with and enhances the retail areas of High Street and Railway Street.

Key Proposals

- 6.3 As shown in Figure 11, the preferred option features a new shopping development providing ground floor shops on the Central Car Park site (site 1a). Additional retail development would also be provided on the Ulster Bar Corner (site 2a), which will provide a major anchor to the new development and help to revitalise High Street and Church Street. Over time, and subject to market demand, the existing shopping units along Castle

Street and Railway Street (site 1b) could also be improved or redeveloped for retail.

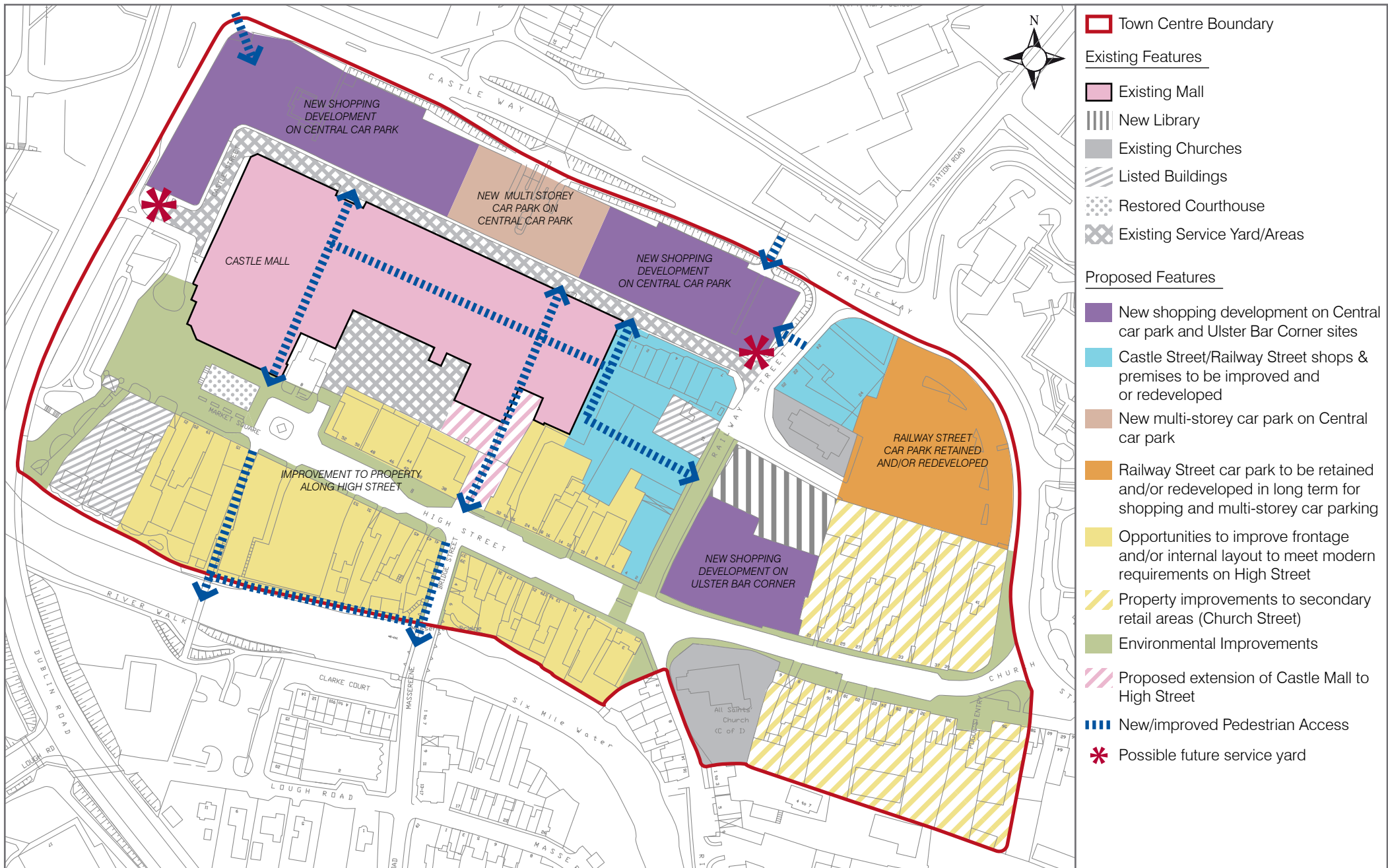
- 6.4 The existing retail units on the junction of Railway Street and Castle Way (site 3b) would be retained and improved rather than redeveloped. The existing Railway Street car park (site 3a) would also be retained for parking and may in the future provide a suitable site for multi-storey car parking.
- 6.5 Additional car parking will be provided on the Central Car Park site as part of a new multi-storey car park. Servicing for the new development could be provided from Dublin Road (outside peak hours) and Castle Way. Potential locations for servicing and the number of spaces required will need to be confirmed through ongoing negotiation with Roads Service.
- 6.6 The remaining frontages on the High Street and Church Street would be upgraded as part of the scheme. Improvements will also be made to the public realm including better pedestrian access to the Castle Mall from the High Street. Moreover, this option would create strong pedestrian links to and from Railway Street and High Street from the shopping mall. This is facilitated by the introduction of new mall entrances along these streets and improvements to the public realm in order to improve the

pedestrian experience and encourage better pedestrian circulation within the town centre.

- 6.7 It is implicit in the above that the quality of public realm throughout the area is both high and consistent. Where development is new the public realm must be designed as an integral component and at the same time as the architecture, but the critical area will be High Street and Railway Street. Similarly, the environment surrounding the Castle Mall will need to be improved. Here a fundamental reconfiguration and upgrade of the Mall and its external spaces will be necessary if the existing spaces are not to undermine the image of the town centre.
- 6.8 Improved pedestrian connectivity will be achieved by the dual means of creating pedestrian-friendly streets and linking them in as part of a pedestrian circuit which runs around the town centre. This will be achieved by forging stronger pedestrian routes along Railway Street towards Station Road and extending them across Castle Way to enhance connections to Tesco and beyond to Antrim Bus and Railway Station.
- 6.9 Opportunities for creating new and improved pedestrian access points need to be fully exploited. This not only includes better access into and out of the Castle Mall, but also from the High Street towards the river. This is likely to involve a high quality

redevelopment of vacant and under-utilised sites. This proposal will be subject to successful negotiations with property owners along High Street and Railway Street.

- 6.10 Intervention within the town centre also offers an opportunity to improve access and signage to the Castle Gardens. In doing so it is essential to create a safe and attractive public realm to guide people to the Gardens from the town centre. The delivery of the Market Square Environmental Improvement Scheme (EIA) will bring significant enhancements and improve the accessibility of the town centre from Dublin Road to help achieve this.
- 6.11 At present the town centre turns its back on the Castle Gardens. Proposals that seek to create stronger frontages along Dublin Road and Castle Way will encourage greater pedestrian footfall, therefore making the gardens more visible to shoppers. In addition, there is an opportunity to increase the size and quality of the public realm along High Street and introduce street trees and new street furniture to create an attractive environment that encourages pedestrian movement towards Dublin Road.
- 6.12 These key proposals are illustrated in Figure 11; this is followed by a more detail description of key projects by site / area.



Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

Figure 11: Key Proposals



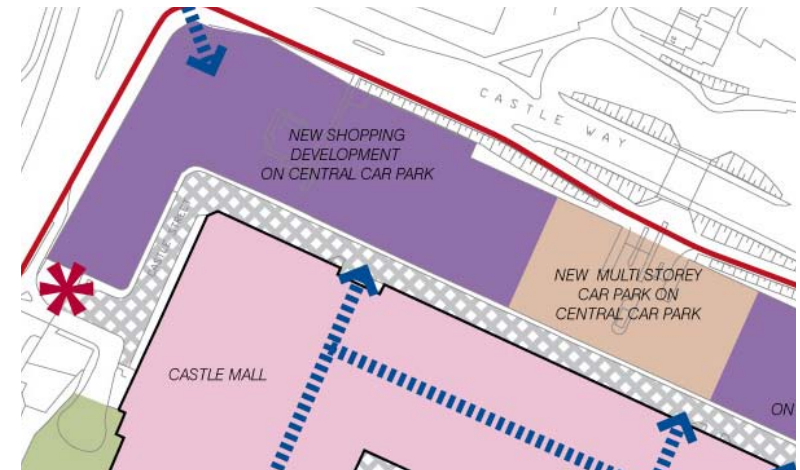
Restructuring and Redevelopment

6.13 This sub-section provides a summary of the key restructuring and redevelopment projects underpinning the Masterplan followed by a detailed description of key projects by site. This is supplemented in section 7 with a more detailed action plan outlining key tasks and responsibility for the delivery of the key aspects of the Masterplan.

6.14 The key projects include:

- Redevelopment of the Central Car Park providing between 8,000-10,000 m² (gross) of new retail floorspace.
- Redevelopment of the Ulster Bar Corner providing approximately 2,000 m² of new retail floorspace.
- Improvement and/or redevelopment of the existing retail areas along Castle Street and Railway Street with the potential to provide an additional 3,000 m² of new retail floorspace.
- Improving access into and out of the Castle Mall in order to make the Mall more outward looking and better integrated into the town centre. Opportunities to extend the Mall towards High Street will be explored with the owners.

Central Car Park



<i>Current Use</i>	<i>Car parking</i>
<i>New Retail Floorspace (Approx)</i>	<i>5500 m² / 59,200 sq ft</i>
<i>Number of Units</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Car Parking Spaces (Approx)</i>	<i>425</i>
<i>Number of storeys</i>	<i>1-2</i>

6.15 Key proposals include:

- The development of 2 new anchor stores west of the Central Car Park; this will be facilitated through the development of the car park and re-provision of non-surplus car parking

spaces in a new Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) as well as providing for the new demand created by the development.

- Improving access from the junction of Dublin Road and Castle Way; this location would provide a major new store and entrance to the new scheme. The scheme would be designed to look out onto Castle Way with enhanced landscaping and public realm to improve the pedestrian environment.
- A new service yard would be provided from Dublin Road, subject to the implementation of junction improvements.

Design Guidance

- 6.16 As the plot is located adjacent to the Castle Mall this enables a significant scale of development to be achieved providing a major new anchor to the town centre retail offer. As the existing car park has a street frontage onto both Dublin Road and Castle Way, the development will need to be of a high quality so as to improve the visual appearance of the town centre.
- 6.17 The development could comprise a 1-2 storey block, with ground floor retail. The size of the units will be an important feature and would be designed to attract a larger anchor retailer and create a more attractive gateway into the town centre from Dublin Road.

6.18 Strong frontages will also be encouraged along Dublin Road and Castle Way to improve pedestrian circulation and the visual appearance of the mall from Castle Way. This will be complemented by attractive landscaping and public realm improvements. A new access point will also be provided as part of the new development to improve access from Dublin Road into the new development.

6.19 A new multi-storey car park is proposed as part of the development; this will be accessed from the existing junction on Castle Way. Although this site is located on the edge of the town centre, it occupies a prominent position on Castle Way. The height of the car park will therefore need to be proportionate to the surrounding retail development.

6.20 It is also important that high quality design as well as the use of screening is introduced in order to reduce the impact of the car park and the proposed new service yard on Dublin Road.

Photo 16: Existing view of Mall from the Dublin Road Junction



Photo 17: Indicative view from Dublin Road after redevelopment



Ulster Bar Corner



<i>Current Uses</i>	<i>Vacant</i>
<i>New Retail Floorspace (Approx)</i>	<i>2000 m² / 21,500 sq ft</i>
<i>Number of Units</i>	<i>1-2</i>
<i>Number of storeys</i>	<i>1-2</i>

6.21 Key proposals include:

- The provision of either 1 new retail anchor, or two medium sized units, providing approximately 2000 m² of new retail floor space.
- Servicing could be provided at the rear of the property or through the provision of loading 2 bays along Church Street.

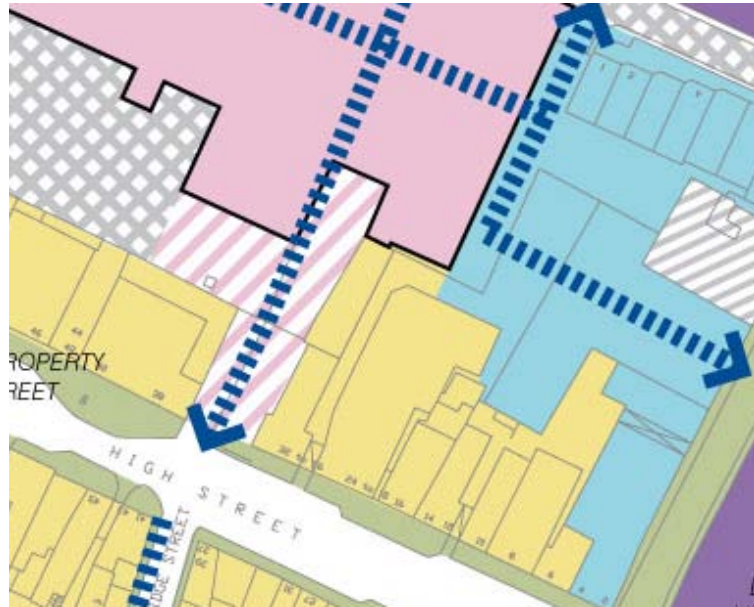
Design Guidance

- 6.22 The development would comprise a 1-2 storey block, with ground floor retail with servicing to the rear. The site offers the potential to provide a single anchor store or a series of medium sized retail units.
- 6.23 This is a highly visible plot and it is important that this building is of a high design standard. As the site is located within a Conservation Area the development must also remain sensitive to its surroundings in terms of the materials used.
- 6.24 The development of retail units on the site offers the opportunity to activate this key movement corridor. The creation of a more attractive pedestrian route along Railway Street towards Station Road, Tesco and Antrim Bus and Railway Stations should also be encouraged.

Photo 18: An indicative view of the new retail development on the Ulster Bar Corner



High Street Mall Extension



Current Uses

New Retail Floorspace (Approx)

Number of Units

Number of storeys

Entrance / Service Yard

400 m² / 4,300 sq ft

Extension to existing

1

6.25 Key proposals include:

- Improving access into the Mall from High Street through the partial development of the High Street Service yard. This will be achieved through an extension to the existing Dunnes Store and the creation of a new pedestrian access;
- Creating a new Mall entrance along High Street. This offers the potential to ensure the development integrates fully with the rest of the town centre, but in particular High Street.

6.26 The Masterplan proposes an extension of the existing Mall towards High Street which would ideally be provided where the existing Dunnes store is located. This would be subject to negotiations with Dunnes. This initiative could also provide an opportunity to introduce an element of smaller scale/independent food retail back into the town centre.

6.27 Improvements to the public realm will also be encouraged to promote movement and improve pedestrian circulation throughout the town centre.

6.28 Options for upgrading and improving the shop frontages on High Street and Church Street will be explored; this would involve working with property owners to deliver selective shop front improvement and facelift work.

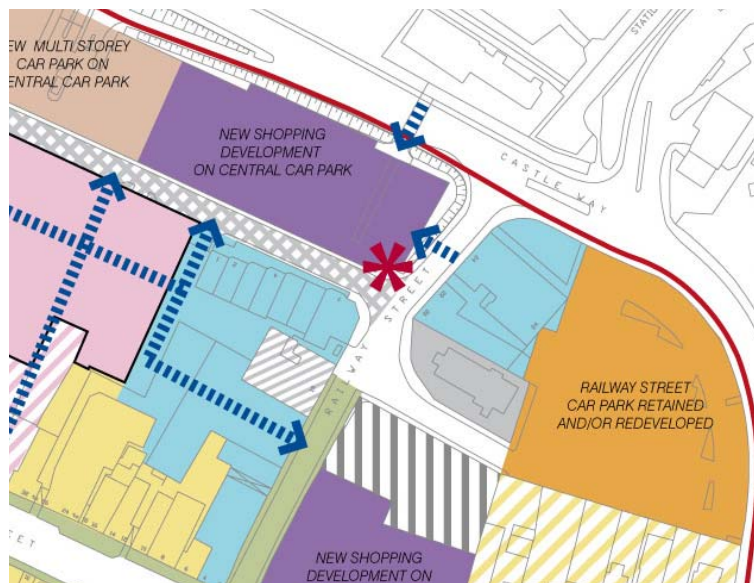
Photo 19: Castle Mall Entrance from High Street



Photo 20: An indicative view of the new Castle Mall entrance



Central Car Park / Railway Street / Castle Street



Current Uses

New Retail Floorspace (Approx)

Number of Units

Number of storeys

Retail, Car Parking and Servicing

Subject to Operational Parking Requirements

Dependent on design

1-2

6.29 Key proposals include:

- Phase 2 redevelopment of the Central Car Park providing opportunities to develop one large anchor store and a series of medium sized retail units. Depending on the configuration of the site there may be an opportunity to provide between 5800 – 6800 m² of new retail / leisure floorspace.
- The potential redevelopment of existing retail units along Castle Street and Railway Street. A larger scale development could be facilitated through the redevelopment of the Castle Street retail units, the service yard and adjacent property along Railway Street.
- Creating a new public square / activity space within the Castle Mall; this could be achieved by the removal of poor quality buildings along Railway Street providing a new pedestrian access into the Mall. This access has been located to the south of the listed building to improve the relationship between the Mall and the Ulster Bar Corner. As part of the scheme it may be necessary to refurbish the remaining retail unit to enhance the attractiveness of this entrance.
- Additional access points from Railway Street would also be provided as part of this redevelopment; this includes the

provision of a new access on the corner anchor store along Railway Street which would make the centre more attractive to pedestrians accessing the town centre from Tesco.

Design Guidance

- 6.30 This development forms a critical part of the town centre regeneration programme and has the potential to substantially increase the critical mass of retail development within Antrim town centre.
- 6.31 Due to the prominent location of this site on Castle Way and Railway Street, this development block creates an important link between Tesco, the Castle Mall and the proposed retail development on the Ulster Bar Corner. The creation of new access points to Castle Way and Railway Street would therefore be encouraged. Improvements to the existing underpass, including enhanced lighting and landscaping would be critical for improving the pedestrian experience and encouraging movement to and from Tesco and Station Road into the new development.
- 6.32 As with the earlier scheme, the development could comprise a 1-2 storey block with ground floor retail. This would help to attract a larger anchor retailer and create a more attractive gateway into the town centre from Tesco and Station Road. The level changes between the existing Central Car Park and Castle Way may allow for a development of up to 3 storeys in height to accommodate servicing with retail above. However, it would be essential that new development at this location complements the massing of adjacent buildings, particularly when integrating modern design and period buildings such as the listed Protestant Hall located along Railway Street.
- 6.33 The integration of a service yard into the development would be important. As with Dublin Road; high quality design as well as the use of screening will be encouraged in order to reduce the impact of the service yard.
- 6.34 Table 5 presents a summary of the key proposals by site.

Photo 21: Visualisation showing the potential development of property along Railway Street and Castle Street



Table 5: Summary of Key Proposals

Site number	Site name	Proposal	Development outputs	
			Potential area of new retail floorspace m ²	Potential number of new units
1a	Central Car Park (phase 1)	Provision of 2 new anchor stores and integrated multi-storey car park from Castle Way	4000-5000	2
1a	Central Car Park (phase 2)	Provision of 1 new anchor store and 2 medium sized units	3000-4000	3
1b	Castle Street/Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	Improvement and/or redevelopment of existing units along Castle Street and Railway Street.	3000 (subject to successful negotiation of private interests)	4 to 6
2a	Ulster Bar Corner	Provision of new retail anchor at the junction of Railway Street and Church Street	2,000	1
2b	Church Street/Castle Way Regeneration Opportunity Site	Improvement	None	None
3a	Railway Street Car Park	Retention	None	None
3b	Castle Way/Railway Street Regeneration Opportunity Site	Improvement	None	None
Other	High Street	Extension of existing Dunnes Store and creation of new entrance to the Castle Mall on High Street	400	None - extension to existing unit

Retail Investment

6.35 The Masterplan acknowledges the need to improve the variety and quality of shops within the town centre through new development and the reconfiguration of existing retail units along High Street and within the Castle Mall; this includes the provision of larger retail units and anchor stores that will be attractive to national retailers. The design of new retail areas, as well as the redesign of existing retail areas is therefore an important consideration. Consideration has been given below to the floorspace requirements of a range of potential tenants with the size of retail units grouped into the 3 broad categories:

- Small Units – ranging in size from 1800 to 3000 sq ft (approx 167m² to 279 m²);
- Medium Units – ranging in size from 3001 sq ft to 10,000 sq ft (approx 280 m² to 930 m²);
- Large Units – ranging in size from 10,001 sq ft upward to 45,000 sq ft for a large anchor (approx 930 m² to 4100 m²).

6.36 Importantly, the final preferred scheme for Antrim will need to be attractive to potential national retailers and underpinned by evidence of market demand. It is therefore recommended that

regular market testing is undertaken to establish the appropriate level of demand.

6.37 The size requirements of potential target tenants are provided in Table 6. These have been grouped into ‘Aspirational’ (Table 6a) and ‘Secondary’ tenants (Table 6b); this distinction is important as the design of the scheme will be contingent on the type of retailers Antrim needs to attract.

Table 6a: Target Tenants (Aspirational List)

Unit Size	Target Tenants (Aspirational List)
Small	Specsavers, Vision Express etc. Beaverbrooks, Goldsmiths etc. Orange, T Mobile, Vodafone etc. Coast, Oasis Game Bodyshop
Medium	WH Smith Top Shop / Top Man JD Sports Bank River Island Monsoon, Accessorize (combined) Zara
Large	Boots (relocation) Next HMV
Anchor	Debenhams M&S H&M

6.38 Whilst the current deficiency of larger floorplate units should be addressed it may be more appropriate to take a targeted approach, catering for a single high profile tenant rather than a range of potential secondary anchor tenants who are more likely to rely on each other for attracting trade into the town centre.

Table 6b: Target Tenants (Secondary List)

Unit Size	Target Tenants (Secondary List)
Small	Quiz Hair Cuttery Gamestation Bodycare Card Factory
Medium	Sport Soccer Poundland Quality Save Peacocks (relocation from High Street) Brantano Blue Inc.
Large	Wilkinson's Argos
Anchor	Penney's (Primark) TJ Hughes TK Maxx

6.39 A schedule of floorspace by unit size is presented in Table 7. This is intended as a guide for what could be provided through a

reconfiguration of the Castle Mall and new development on the major opportunity sites within the town centre.

6.40 The final mix will be dependent on the nature of the scheme and further negotiations with retailers regarding their size requirements. It is recommended that regular market testing is undertaken with prospective occupiers to establish the appropriate level of market demand.

Table 7: Schedule of Floorspace

Category	Approximate Floorspace (m ²)	Potential Number of Units	Category of Shop (by use class)
Small	3,737	20	A1 clothing, personal goods, recreational goods, A2, A3
Medium	5,283	8	A1 clothing, personal goods, recreational goods
Large	12,639	5	A1 – A1 clothing, personal goods, recreational goods including Department Store
Total	21,659	33	
Existing	7,544	26	*The number of new and size of new units will be subject to further discussions with retailers
New	14,115	7*	

Improving the Environment

6.41 Creating a high quality environment with attractive public spaces remains important for attracting visitors into the town centre.

Unwelcoming buildings and poor public realm continue to create unattractive gateways into the town centre. In addition, whilst there has already been investment made in improving the riverside, this needs to be supplemented by further improvements to the connection between the town centre and the river itself.

6.42 Although much has already been achieved, including reconfiguration of key streets in the town centre to provide better access to shops and services, the delivery of a successful Environmental Improvement Scheme along Railway Street and the installation of new ambient street and bridge lighting, there remains scope for further improvement.

6.43 Proposed actions include:

- Delivering Environmental Improvement Schemes along High Street and Church Street in order to create a network of high quality streets, walkways and spaces.

- Creating a multi-functional space at Market Square linked to the newly improved network of streets.
- Improving access to the Six Mile Water River through the redevelopment of key sites along the riverfront. A key early step will be assessing opportunities to acquire vacant, under-utilised or surplus property along High Street that will help to achieve this objective.
- Refurbishing and reconfiguring the existing walkways towards the riverside and Castle Gardens; this will be supported by animating redundant spaces with street furniture and improved lighting.
- Working with PSNI to improve safety and security along existing walkways to encourage better movement and circulation along the riverside and towards the Castle Gardens.
- Delivering environmental improvements at Market Square in order to create a distinctive, attractive gateway and positive first impression for visitors to the town centre.
- Completing the planned investment and restoration works at Castle Gardens. To maximise this investment this will be supported by a dedicated programme of events and

activities to increase usage and the transfer of activity between the Gardens and the town centre.

- Improving legibility and signage within the town centre to reinforce links to the Castle Gardens and the riverside; this will help to make key town centre assets more 'visible' to shoppers.

Image and Marketing

6.44 The Retail Capacity Study has shown a net leakage of expenditure from the town centre suggesting that there is considerable potential to capture additional spend by creating a town centre environment which attracts shoppers and footfall.

6.45 Whilst the redevelopment of a number of key town centre sites will help to achieve this, the effective marketing of Antrim town centre will also continue to play a key role in changing and improving perceptions and in increasing awareness of the town centre's retail and leisure offering.

6.46 Critically, the town centre needs to position itself so that it provides a complementary offer to Junction One. The Council and Junction One have already been collaborating through a variety of initiatives to promote the town centre. A multi-sector

partnership approach to marketing is therefore recommended. This partnership should have a dedicated budget for marketing and promotional activities and combine funding contributions from private and public sources.

6.47 There is also the need to develop a brand identity for Antrim which respond directly to its own unique selling points: its rich culture and heritage, strategic transport links and large scale investment opportunities. Over time, and as development comes forward, Antrim's strong retail offer can be added to the 'marketing mix' and act as a major attractor for the town.

6.48 Proposed actions include:

- Developing public, private and voluntary sector networks to coordinate town centre and Junction One marketing campaigns including the continuation of regular joint promotions and events between town centre businesses and those operating in Junction One.
- Strategic planning and implementation of marketing activity in support of the Masterplan achieved through the delivery of a coordinated events programme.
- Maximising the number of local businesses participating in the Council's 'Shop Local' initiative.

- Promoting opportunities for shopping, leisure, recreation and culture in the town centre. The focus of any additional promotional activity should be targeted in particular at investors, developers and businesses that might potentially relocate to the town centre.

Access and Movement

6.49 The accessibility of the town centre remains an important factor in its future regeneration and development.

6.50 Going forward, facilitating a modal shift in transportation will continue to be an important priority in order to help mitigate the adverse impact of climate change. This however will require cooperation between public, private and community interests to implement change through policy and community projects.

6.51 The Masterplan therefore supports a range of measures that support greater use of public transport, alongside other modes such as walking and cycling.

6.52 Proposed action includes:

- Upgrading the existing subway connecting Station Road with the Central Car Park. Refurbishment, incorporating

improved lighting and security, is proposed in the first instance. Over the longer term, and depending on the nature of the development on the Central Car Park, there may be an opportunity to integrate the subway into the new development or remove it completely. It is recommended that this is addressed when the brief for future development is taken to the market.

- The creation of new and revitalised frontages in the town centre together with the re-use of redundant and under-utilised public spaces would help to improve pedestrian links and increase movement between the main activity points within the town centre.
- Encouraging more cyclists into the town through the provision of high quality, secure, cycle parking facilities.
- Working with Translink to improve inter-urban bus services into and out of the town centre. At present, access to the bus and railway station is also difficult as both stations are located approximately 600m from the town centre. This not only limits the number of inter-urban bus services passing the town centre but also the number of prospective shoppers.

- Delivering the proposed exchange point for buses in Market Square, providing inter-urban services through the retail core.
- Improving bus shelters, seating and timetable information within the town centre.
- Creating a new bus priority route into the town centre from Dublin Road; this will help to reduce lengthy journey times and make the local bus journey into the town centre more attractive to shoppers.

Car Parking

- 6.53 AECOM have considered at some length the parking requirements for the town centre. The conclusion of this work was that the requirements based on DoE parking standards (1 space per 20m² of development) may be too high for Antrim and would take up an inordinate amount of space.
- 6.54 Parking requirements for an initial development of 8000m² have been discussed with DRD Roads Service. It was found that depending on the method used the number of spaces required varied. However, even at the lower end of the range the amount of spare capacity available would not be able to match the displaced demand. Based on this feedback from DRD Roads

Service it is recommended that a multi storey car park should be constructed at the same time as phase 1 development proposals on the Central Car Park. This should be of a sufficient size to accommodate both those car parking spaces displaced (and not deemed to be surplus) as well as providing for the new demand created by the development.

Establishing an appropriate parking ratio for Antrim Town Centre

- 6.55 A subsequent task has been the consideration of a more appropriate parking ratio for Antrim town centre. A ratio of parking spaces per retail floorspace has been calculated based on the existing retail floorspace of 29,270 m² ².
- 6.56 Depending on the scenario examined, a number of parking ratios may be applicable for Antrim. In all cases the ratio is less than the 1 space per 20m² contained in the DoE Parking Standards.
- 6.57 Based on Planning Service Parking Standards of 1 space per 20m² (and not taking into account under occupancy) a retail development of 14,000m² would generate a need for 700 new car parking spaces in Antrim. The development of the Central Car Park would also result in the loss of all 458 spaces, which subject to negotiations with Road Service will need to be

replaced. Under a scenario whereby all car parking spaces are replaced, this would generate a requirement for 1158 spaces within Antrim town centre. By way of comparison, a retail development of 8000m² comprising an initial development on the Central Car Park and Ulster Bar Corner together with an extension to the Dunnes Store would generate a requirement for approximately 400 spaces. In addition, the 278 spaces that would be lost through the partial development of the Central Car Park would also need to be replaced.

6.58 This is excessive given the size of Antrim. AECOM have therefore recommended that a ratio somewhere between 1 space per 40m² and 1 space per 50 m² may be more appropriate for Antrim.

Multi-storey Car Park Requirements

6.59 The potential number of new spaces which would be required in the multi-storey car park has been calculated using these revised ratios. Table 8 details the number of spaces required for an initial development of 8000m² (Castle Mall, Ulster Bar Corner and Dunnes Extension).

Table 8: Car parking ratios and requirements for an initial 8000m² retail development in Antrim Town Centre

	1 per 50m ²	1 per 46m ²	1 per 44m ²	1 per 41m ²
Castle Mall spaces to be replaced	278	278	278	278
Initial development (8000m ²)	160	174	182	195
Total number of new spaces required for Castle Mall Phase 1, Ulster Bar, and Dunnes Extension	438	452	460	473

6.60 A phase 1 development on the Central car park, plus new multi-storey provision, would result in the removal of 278 existing spaces in the Central Car Park which would need to be replaced. On this basis there would be a requirement to provide between 438 and 473 spaces within the MSCP. Approximately 180 spaces would be retained on Central Car Park; these spaces would need to be replaced at a later date when the rest of the scheme comes forward.

6.61 Under a higher growth scenario the car parking requirement would increase. Table 9 outlines the number of spaces required

² Antrim, Ballymena and Larne Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study (2009)

using the range of ratios for a larger scale development of 14,000m².

Table 9: Car parking ratios and requirements for a 14,000m² retail development in Antrim town centre.

	1 per 50m ²	1 per 46m ²	1 per 44m ²	1 per 41m ²
Castle Mall spaces to be replaced	458	458	458	458
All phases (14,000m ²)	280	304	318	341
Total number of new spaces required	738	762	776	799

- 6.62 The number of spaces required for car parking ranges from 738 to 799 spaces, but is significantly less than the 1158 required under current DoE Parking Standards. It should be noted that in all cases this requirement does not take into account spare capacity on existing car park sites which may be capable of absorbing some of the new demand that would be created.
- 6.63 It should be noted that the figures presented above are only indicative with the exact parking requirement for Antrim being

subject to further negotiation and agreement from DRD Roads Service as part of the planning process.

Servicing

- 6.64 An initial assessment of operational parking spaces has been undertaken. This assessment has concluded that a development in the order of 14,000m² is likely to generate a requirement for between 8 – 19 service vehicle parking spaces. Based on previous experience it is considered that the lower range is more appropriate together with the addition of two new service areas which could contain approximately 6 loading bays/compactor locations. It should be noted that a full assessment will need to be undertaken by Roads Service as part of the planning application process.
- 6.65 The first of the service areas would be located at the western side of the of the study area and accessed/egressed off Dublin Road. While a service yard containing approximately 11 bays could be provided off Dublin Road, this would impact on the size of the development that could be constructed on the Central Car Park site.
- 6.66 The location of the second service yard would be contingent on the design of the scheme but could be provided at a suitable

location off Castle Street and accessed/egressed via Railway Street. If the Ulster Bar Corner is to be developed, a separate servicing area specifically for this development would be required. The site is approximately 2069m² (1645m² Gross Lettable Area), therefore, the parking requirements would be 3 spaces based on Planning Service standards and 2 spaces based on dBMAP requirements.

6.67 At this location it is suggested that 2 spaces would be adequate.

6.68 The proposed service areas are for the new development and would be provided in addition to the existing High Street Service yard. It has been assumed that the latter will still be in use as a service yard for the existing development.

6.69 Whilst the integration of two new service yards into the proposed development will be important, this is likely to reduce the overall quantum of new floorspace that could be accommodated within the scheme. Moreover, the proposed service yard at Castle Street/Railway Street could result in a reduction of approximately 1,200 m² in the amount of new retail floorspace provided at this location.

6.70 It should be noted that the figures presented for both car parking and servicing will be subject to further assessment and refinement at the detailed design stage.

Transport Assessment

6.71 The development proposals outlined above indicate a scale of development that Antrim has not accommodated previously. Maintaining vehicle access into and out of the town centre remains an important consideration for this Masterplan. The town centre needs to remain accessible by all modes of transport if it is to continue to be attractive to commercial investors, businesses and visitors to the town.

6.72 DRD Roads Service will therefore require detailed evidence of the traffic impacts of the proposals should the sites outlined above be developed. It is therefore recommended that as detailed designs emerge a full Transport Assessment is conducted to assess the impact of development and ascertain the traffic impacts on the existing road network.

Planning Policy Considerations

6.73 The following provides a summary of the current planning policy position and how the retail development proposals recommended in this Masterplan align with this.

PPS5 – Retail and Town Centres

6.74 PPS 5 was published in June 1996 and sets out the Government's policy objectives for town centre and retail developments.

6.75 In seeking to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, PPS 5 seeks to:

- Focus retail development in locations where proximity of businesses facilitates competition / consumer choice and maximises non-car accessibility to developments;
- Maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector with specific acknowledgement that it is not the role of planning to prevent competition or preserve existing commercial interests; and

- Ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment services and facilities to which people have easy access by a choice of means of transport.

6.76 The policy guidance confirms that shopping uses make a major contribution to the vitality and viability of a town centre and thus should normally be the first choice for major new retail developments in accordance with the 'town centre first' approach. Town centres are also promoted as the principal locations for commercial uses such as offices, leisure and services so as to maximise linked trips within a centre. Residential uses are also recognised as contributing to the vitality and diversity of a town centre, particularly in the evening.

6.77 The proposals for up to 14,000m² (gross) of new retail and leisure floorspace within Antrim are in accordance with PPS5 and the town centre first approach. The proposals offer the potential to significantly enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre by maximising the development potential of under-utilised sites to ensure the availability of a wider range of shops within easy access of local residents.

Draft PPS 5 – Retail, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Development

- 6.78 Draft PPS 5 was published in July 2006 and although the policy has yet to be adopted, it is a material consideration in the preparation of the Masterplan.
- 6.79 The key objective of draft PPS 5 is to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres in a manner consistent with achieving the strategic objectives of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland 2025. This key objective takes precedence over the other objectives identified by draft PPS 5 which includes promoting sustainable development and better quality design, maximising consumer choice and maintaining a hierarchy and network of viable town centres.
- 6.80 Draft PPS 5 maintains the key themes of adopted PPS 5 in terms of promoting future shopping and commercial leisure development within the hierarchy of existing town centres. The primary retail core within town centres is afforded priority for proposals for comparison shopping and mixed retailing, providing it can be demonstrated that such proposals are not of regional significance.
- 6.81 In terms of development control, in addition to maintaining and expanding the principal policy tests (need, sequential compliance etc.) contained in adopted PPS 5, the draft policy in accordance with the RDS identifies Belfast and Londonderry as regional shopping centres where large-scale, regionally significant development of circa 15,000 m² (net) retail floorspace should be primarily focused.
- 6.82 With respect to the role of non-regional town centres, draft PPS 5 policy RRP3 maintains the town centre first approach and actively encourages comparison and mixed retail development in primary retail core areas subject to the scale of development in town centres not being of regional significance.
- 6.83 The provision of approximately 14,000m² (gross) within Antrim would be well below this threshold and therefore in accordance with the draft policy. In addition, a number of key sites within the town centre have been identified as a major town centre development opportunity within the recently published Antrim, Ballymena and Larne Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study (2009). Whilst the development of these sites would result in a larger Primary Retail Area, the impacts are not considered to be detrimental to surrounding centres given the current under performance of Antrim's retail offer.
-

6.84 This proposed use would be acceptable in planning terms, subject to the re-provision of car parking and the development of additional non-operational and operational (servicing) parking to serve the new development.

PPS6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage

6.85 PPS6 centres on the themes of environmental stewardship and sustainability and establishes the main criterion that the Department will employ in assessing all development proposals which affect the archaeological or built heritage. The policy gives specific direction for the protection of all of the following:

- Listed Buildings and the general built heritage;
- Conservation Areas;
- Industrial Heritage;
- Historic Parks; and
- Archaeological Sites.

PPS6 Addendum: Areas of Townscape Character

6.86 The Addendum to PPS 6 sets out the Department's planning policies for demolition of buildings, new development and the control of advertisements in Areas of Townscape Character. It

aims to ensure that development proposals respect the appearance and qualities of each townscape area, and maintain or enhance their distinctive character.

6.87 Antrim town centre forms part of a Conservation Area, which includes a number of period and architecturally important buildings and infrastructure. The development of new buildings within this context must therefore fully respond to the conservation area status. The use of high quality design, build and materials will ensure that new buildings positively contribute to the historic character of the area. This should include the application of high quality modern design in order to achieve the visual indicators of regeneration and high standards of sustainability.

6.88 It is also important that the proposed new development responds appropriately to the scale and massing of the surrounding built form. Variations in height and scale can be catered for within this development, due to the level changes that exist between Castle Way and the rest of the town centre. However, it is essential that new development respects the scale of adjacent buildings, particularly when integrating modern design and period buildings.

Antrim Area Plan (1984 – 2001)

- 6.89 Although adopted in June 1989, the Antrim Area Plan remains the extant development plan for the locality until a new ABL Plan (2016) is adopted. Many area plan policies have, however, been overtaken by the later publication of PPS5, draft PPS 5 and also the Regional Development Strategy.
- 6.90 With respect to retailing and the town centre strategy, the Plan identifies that future retail development will be concentrated within the defined town centre in order to strengthen the dominance of the central shopping area.
- 6.91 In addition to proposing environmental improvements to the town centre, the plan proposes the revitalisation of the Old Town Core centred on Market Square and High Street through several initiatives including infill retail development on available sites.
- 6.92 The redevelopment of the Central Car Park and the provision of infill retail development on the Ulster Bar Corner have the potential to increase the critical mass of retail investment within the town centre boundary and is in accordance with the Antrim Area Plan.

7. DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 This Masterplan provides a fresh strategy and overarching framework for regenerating Antrim town centre. This has been produced in consultation with key stakeholders including businesses and the local community.
- 7.2 The Masterplan provides key information on the level of retail floorspace that Antrim can support together with guidance on the design of the scheme, car parking provision, servicing, phasing and timetable for development.
- 7.3 The aim has been to ensure that the Masterplan is flexible enough to respond to any future changes in market conditions and that it will receive a favourable response from the private sector who will take the Masterplan into the design and development stage. If there is a change in market conditions, prospective developers may wish to see a larger scheme than is currently recommended. Whilst the Masterplan is flexible enough to accommodate this there will need to be sufficient supporting evidence to show that this could be delivered.

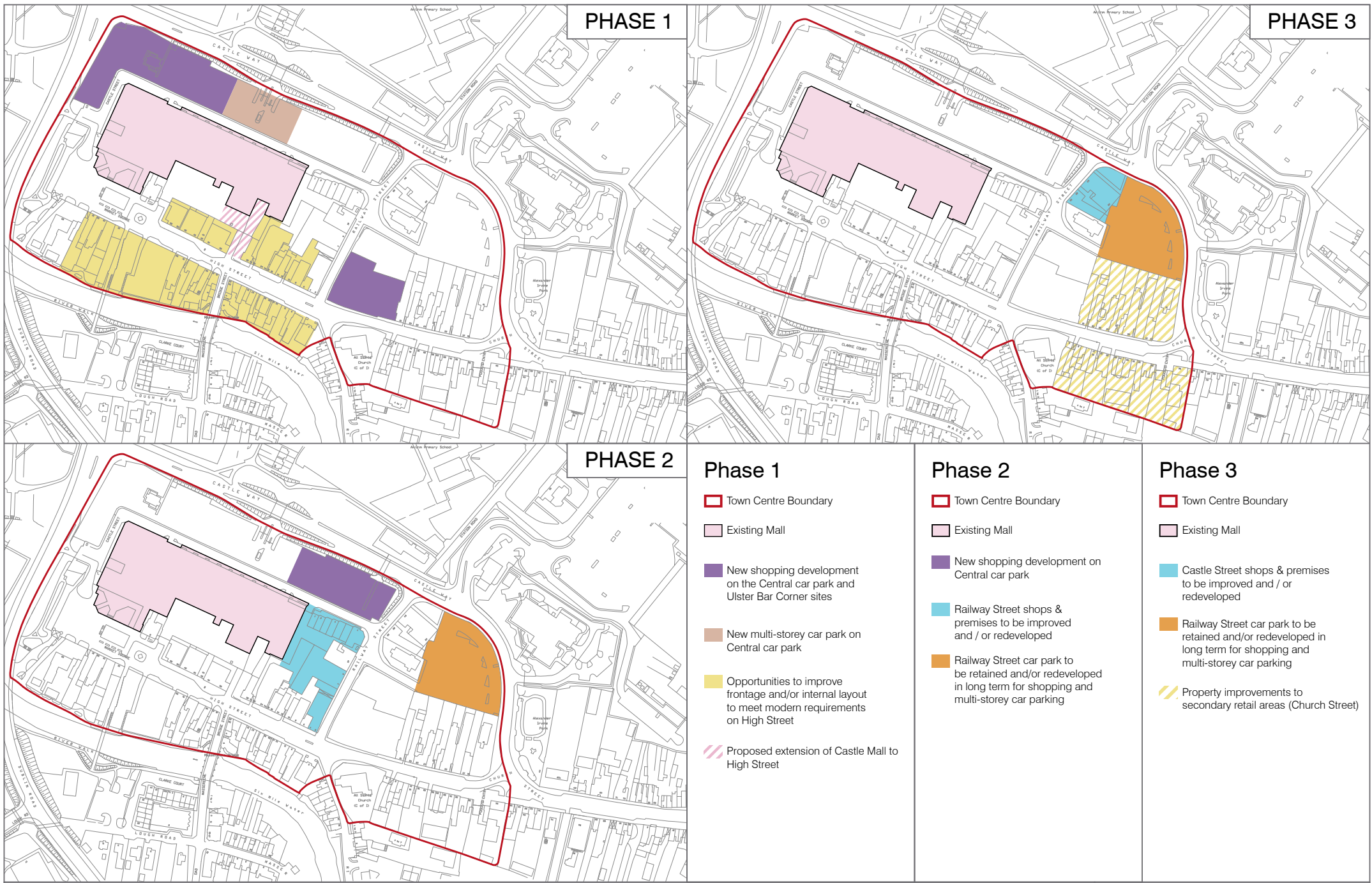
- 7.4 This section presents the delivery strategy for the Masterplan proposals. It focuses in particular on the action that needs to be taken to secure a development partner to deliver the regeneration strategy for Antrim town centre in accordance with the objectives and design principles set out in the Masterplan.

Phasing Plan

- 7.5 The Masterplan lends itself to delivery in the following 3 phases:
- Phase 1 involves bringing forward publicly owned sites identified for redevelopment in the Masterplan. Prioritising the redevelopment of the Central Car Park and the Ulster Bar Corner will enable major new retail developments to be brought forward within a relatively short timescale. Central Car Park is a 'non-surplus' car park, therefore its provision will need to be replaced.
 - A further retail extension on the High Street Service yard would be progressed as part of a phase 1 or a phase 2 development. This would help to improve access and the visual appearance of the Castle Mall from High Street.
 - Phase 3 would be the final phase of development and involve additional retail development on the Central Car

Park site. Subject to market demand this may include the redevelopment of the retail units along Castle Street and Railway Street. This would make a significant contribution to the town centre retail offer, but has been programmed later to allow the phase 1 development enough time to become fully occupied and sustainable.

- 7.6 An illustrative phasing plan is illustrated below. It should be noted that there is some flexibility in the delivery of the Masterplan and further discussion with prospective development partners will be undertaken at the detailed design stage.



Antrim Town Centre Masterplan & Delivery Strategy

Figure 12: Preferred Option - Illustrative Phasing Plan

Development Brief

7.7 A Development Brief should now be prepared for Antrim town centre which incorporates the key findings and recommendations of the Masterplan. The Development Brief should offer the following two key sites to the market for development:

- The Central Car Park site, and
- The Ulster Bar Corner.

7.8 The Masterplan envisages that the Railway Street car park site is retained for car parking purposes and, as such, it is not recommended that this site is offered to the market for future development.

7.9 The Development Brief should emphasise the importance of regenerating Antrim town centre in a comprehensive manner and in this context, prospective developers will be invited to set out their proposals for regeneration on other sites within the town centre including:

- Sites which are currently in private ownership on Railway Street and Castle Street, and

- The opportunities for improving the physical layout and condition of retail premises along High Street;

7.10 It is acknowledged that there are other development briefs where contracting authorities have entered into agreements directly with an adjacent developer where the site which the contracting authority owns is not, by itself, capable of independent development.

7.11 In Antrim town centre it is recognised that both the Central car park and the Ulster Bar Corner are capable of independent development and, in these circumstances, a Development Brief should be brought to the market and advertised under the Regulations to avoid future issues.

7.12 The Development Brief will need to be publicly advertised to meet DSD's own internal guidelines and OGC Guidance.

7.13 Land and Property Services will need to be satisfied that the price offered by interested parties for the development rights on both sites is robust in the current market.

Role and responsibilities

7.14 In the short term, this Masterplan will continue to be managed by the Department for Social Development (DSD) under its statutory responsibility for regeneration in Northern Ireland. Following the Review of Public Administration (RPA), however, the responsibility for delivering regeneration is expected to rest with Antrim Borough Council.

7.15 Delivery of the Masterplan is contingent on a strong partnership working between Antrim Borough Council, DSD and the Department for Regional Development (DRD) Road Service. Each of the partners has ownership interests within the context of the Masterplan, statutory powers and democratic decision making capacities.

7.16 The public sector and its partners will play a pivotal role in delivering the Masterplan. This will involve:

- Providing leadership and acting in an advocacy role for the Masterplan;
- Utilising existing land/assets to facilitate delivery of Masterplan projects;

- Acquiring sites/assets to facilitate comprehensive regeneration;
- Commissioning feasibility, due diligence and professional services in relation to delivery of the Masterplan;
- Implementation of the Masterplan by a Project Team, including co-ordination of funding bids and the administration of these; and
- Ongoing communication, monitoring and evaluation.

7.17 There will also be a need to work closely with the private sector and others looking to invest in the town. The Masterplan proposes a series of new development opportunities which will help address deficiencies in the current retail offer as well as ensuring that it can compete for occupiers, trade and spending power.

7.18 Involvement of the private sector is critical to delivering the Masterplan vision. The private sector has a particular role to play in terms of:

- Embedding the development and design principles of the Masterplan in detailed designs for individual sites;

- Contributions towards the cost of public realm associated with key development sites;
- Addressing all car parking requirements generated by new development; and
- Marketing Antrim town centre as an investment location, alongside public sector partners; and

7.19 In the short term, delivery of the Masterplan proposals should be overseen by the existing Masterplan Steering Group arrangements.

7.20 Over time, DSD and the Antrim Borough Council may wish to explore the potential for strengthening the partnership through representation from the developer community and other key landowners. The Steering Group would continue to represent town centre stakeholders in terms of the delivery of the Masterplan, improved service standards, the maintenance of the public realm and the quality and responsiveness of the street scene, whilst influencing and inputting to the development of town centre marketing and events strategies.

7.21 As with many more traditional town centre management arrangements there may be an expectation that key retailers, developers, landowners and key public sector bodies would

make a financial contribution in support of these efforts to revitalise the town centre.

Action Plan

7.22 The following summarises the short term priorities that are required to take the Masterplan forward into detailed design and delivery.

- Prepare a Development Brief for the future regeneration of Antrim town centre which reflects the key findings of the Masterplan;
- Publish the Development Brief and invite tenders from interested parties for the redevelopment of the Central car park and Ulster Bar Corner together with regeneration of other key sites within the town centre;
- Invite detailed design submissions from interested parties as part of the tender process including a transport and car parking assessment. Discuss and reach an agreement with Roads Service on the provision of car parking and servicing within the town centre.

-
- Undertake initial discussions with key landowners to establish whether they would consider disposing of their interests.
 - Conduct an independent valuation of all assets to be acquired/transferred as part of the regeneration strategy for the town centre, including sites located along Railway Street and Castle Street;
 - Evaluate and select a preferred development Partner for regenerating Antrim town centre in consultation with DSD, Antrim Borough Council, Planning Service, Roads Service and key stakeholders;
 - Exhibit the recommended scheme to the Community.

7.23 This list of actions is supplemented in Table 10 and Table 11 with a more detailed work programme for the individual elements of the Masterplan together with a list of ongoing activities brought forward from the previous Masterplan.

Table 10: Work Programme 2010-2016

SHORT TERM PRIORITIES 2010-2012	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Lead Department / Partners
<u>Restructuring and redevelopment</u>								
Prepare a Development Brief(s) for the Central Car Park and Ulster Bar sites								DSD
Conduct an independent valuation of all public sector assets to be acquired/transferred								DSD / DRD Roads Service / Land and Property Services
Publish the Development Brief(s) and invite tenders from interested parties								DSD
Invite detailed design submissions from interested parties as part of the tender process.								DSD
Discuss and reach an agreement with Roads Service on the provision of car parking and servicing								DSD / DRD Roads Service
Evaluate and select a preferred development Partner								DSD / Antrim Borough Council / DRD Roads Service
Exhibit the recommended scheme to the community								DSD / Antrim Borough Council
Undertake an audit of vacant property and explore opportunities to acquire key sites along the Riverside								DSD / Antrim Borough Council
<u>Retail Investment</u>								
Work with the owners of the Castle Mall to improve mall entrances onto High Street								Antrim Borough Council / Centenary Investments
Work with the owners of the Castle Mall to reconfigure vacant retail units in line with modern space standards								Antrim Borough Council / Centenary Investments
Identify funding and develop strategy to support the delivery of property improvements along High Street								Antrim Borough Council / Private Sector

<u>Environment and Visitors</u>							
Deliver Heritage Lottery Funded scheme for the development and restoration of Antrim Castle Gardens							Antrim Borough Council / Heritage Lottery Fund
Complete the major programme to restore the Old Courthouse in Market Square							Antrim Borough Council
Deliver Environmental Improvement Scheme along Railway Street							DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council / DSD
Deliver Environmental Improvement Scheme along High Street, Church and at Market Square							DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council / DSD
Deliver enhancements to the existing subway at Castle Way / Station Road							DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council / DSD
<u>Access and Movement</u>							
Continue work to improve key pedestrian routes into and out of the town centre							DRD Roads Service
Support the creation a new bus priority route into the town centre from Dublin Road.							DRD Roads Service / Translink / Antrim Borough Council
Progress the proposed bus terminus and associated environmental improvements at Market Square							DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council
Complete identified cycle routes and improved provision for cycle parking.							DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council / Sustrans / Translink
Work with Translink to improve inter-urban bus services into and out of the town centre							Translink / Antrim Borough Council

MEDIUM TERM PRIORITIES 2013-2016	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Lead Department / Partners
Deliver a phase 1 retail development on the Central Car Park Site								Private Sector Partner / DSD / Antrim Borough Council
Deliver a phase 1 retail development on the Ulster Bar Site								Private Sector Partner / DSD / Antrim Borough Council
Progress potential acquisitions of riverside sites through negotiation with key landowners								DSD / Antrim Borough Council
Establish clear urban design guidelines for key riverside sites								Antrim Borough Council / DOE Planning Service
Establish preferred strategy for property along Railway Street and Castle Street								DSD / Antrim Borough Council / Private Sector Partner
Undertake option appraisal for the Railway Street Car Park site								DSD / DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council
Deliver a phase 2 retail development on the Central Car Park site								Private Sector Partner / DSD / Antrim Borough Council

Table 11: Ongoing Actions

Theme	Description	Lead Department / Partners
Restructuring and Redevelopment	Work with property owners to identify additional development sites within Antrim town centre	Antrim Borough Council / DSD / Town Centre Stakeholders
Retail and Residential Investment	Initiate discussions with the owners of the Castle Mall and assess opportunities to reconfigure existing vacant retail units within the mall in line with the modern space standards of national retailers.	Antrim Borough Council / Centenary Investments
	Increase the number of large retail units and anchor stores within the town centre in order to make Antrim Town Centre more attractive to national retailers	DSD / Antrim Borough Council / Private Sector Partner
	Monitor the relative performance of the town centre through regular 'health checks' and market testing	Antrim Borough Council / DOE Planning Service
	Develop town centre management arrangements and the engagement of local traders and businesses in Antrim.	Antrim Borough Council / Town Centre Stakeholders
	Continue to monitor vacancy rates within the town centre and take appropriate action to bring long term vacant units back into sustainable use.	Antrim Borough Council
	Assist independent retailers by providing business development advice to improve product, service, marketing and effectiveness. This includes continuing to work with local traders as part of the Streets Ahead initiative	Antrim Borough Council / Antrim Enterprise Agency Ltd
	Increase the amount and choice of housing in the town centre through the delivery of the LOTS initiative.	Antrim Borough Council / Northern Ireland Housing Executive
	Promote good quality residential use in appropriate sites outside of the retail core using urban design guidelines and development briefs	Antrim Borough Council / DOE Planning Service

Theme	Description	Lead Department / Partner
Arts Culture & Heritage	Continue to work with the Musicians Antrim District Development (MADD) Project, publicans and licensees to develop a programme of events	Antrim Borough Council / Social Economy Agency
	Continue to work with local publicans/licensees, restaurant owners to promote and better manage the evening economy. This includes co-ordinating events, improving quality, reducing alcohol related violence and tackling anti social behaviour.	Antrim Borough Council / Antrim Borough Strategy Partnership / Police Service
Learning & Enterprise	Work with Antrim Enterprise Agency and Invest NI to promote the town centre as a dynamic business location for small business start ups	Antrim Borough Council / Antrim Enterprise Agency Ltd
	Promote a social economy initiative in Antrim based on innovation, citizenship and local knowledge with the aim of creating local enterprises and jobs that have economic and social sustainability.	Social Economy Agency / Antrim Borough Strategy Partnership
Environment & Visitors	Modernise and simplify the public realm treatment to reinforce the visual appearance of the town, make it more legible and make it a more pleasant and comfortable place to spend time in.	Antrim Borough Council / DRD Roads Service
	Explore opportunities to upgrade and improve shop frontages and internal layouts of properties in the town centre.	Antrim Borough Council / DOE Planning Service / Town Centre Stakeholders
	Create a flexible congregating and events space as a focal point and cultural focus for the town.	Antrim Borough Council / DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Strategy Partnership
Access & Movement	Work with DRD Roads Service to ensure an adequate provision of car parking spaces appropriate to the needs of Antrim Town Centre	DSD / DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council
	Continue to improve key desire lines and crossing that presently impedes the free flow of pedestrians moving towards the town centre	DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council
	Reduce the need for car use by offering realistic travel alternatives	Sustans / Translink / DRD Roads Service / Antrim Borough Council

Theme	Description	Lead Department / Partner
Image & Marketing	Establish an Antrim town brand; promote this through the tourism and other networks. Promote the town centre with effective material including leaflets and an updated web site	Antrim Borough Council / Antrim Borough Strategy Partnership / Town Centre Stakeholders / Junction One
	Continue to develop and deliver a coordinated marketing and events programme to raise the profile of Antrim as a key retail, leisure and service centre	Antrim Borough Council / Antrim Borough Strategy Partnership / Town Centre Stakeholders / Junction One
	Continue to maximise the number of local businesses participating in the shop local scheme	Antrim Borough Council / Antrim Borough Strategy Partnership / Town Centre Stakeholders / Junction One



Appendix 1:

Review of Previous Masterplan

March 2008

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 GVA Grimley was commissioned by the Department for Social Development (DSD) to prepare a Masterplan and Delivery Strategy for Antrim Town Centre. The requirements of the study can be broadly broken down into the following 4 key areas:
- A Review of the previous Masterplan (which was undertaken by Willie Miller Urban Design Consultants);
 - Site analysis and the preparation of options for future development;
 - Selection of preferred options for future regeneration in consultation with stakeholders; and
 - The preparation of a Development and Delivery Strategy which outlines how sites can be delivered and the various roles and responsibilities of public and private sector organisations.
- 1.2 The purpose of this short report is to outline the main findings from our review of the previous Masterplan prepared by Willie Miller Urban Design/Douglas Wheeler Associates Consultants.

- 1.3 The Willie Miller Urban Design/Douglas Wheeler Associates team was commissioned in late October 2004 by Antrim Borough Council to prepare the Antrim Town Masterplan. The purpose of the Masterplan was to provide a robust and flexible blueprint for the future development of the town including its adjacent attractions and amenities.
- 1.4 The focus of the study was the town centre and the aim of the study was to improve connections to the surrounding facilities and residential areas. The timing of the commission and the renewed interest in the town centre was driven by concern about the weak retail/visitor offer, the early success of Junction One (the international outlet centre located on the edge of the town) and new residential development proposed in the town.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 The Terms of Reference for the Masterplan Study identified the following objectives:

- To identify derelict, vacant and underused land and buildings;
- To assess development potential and make recommendations for future use or relocation of underused land or buildings;
- To assess the potential for riverside development including using Council owned amenity land;
- To illustrate using how the town can be developed, using ‘graphical layouts’;
- To set out the key actions required by the private and public sectors to deliver the Masterplan;
- To demonstrate how linkages between the core retail area and all adjoining residential areas could be improved;
- To examine the transportation infrastructure and offer proposals for an integrated public/private transport system

that promotes improved accessibility, car parking, traffic management, pedestrian/cycle movement and mitigates pedestrian/vehicle conflict;

- To propose appropriate and sustainable environmental management arrangements; and
- To propose options for implementing the Masterplan.

2.2 It was agreed that the Masterplan should include ‘short’, ‘medium’ and ‘long term’ economic development and community projects as well as physical development and environmental improvement projects within the recommendations.

Structure of the Masterplan Report

2.3 The remainder of the report is structured around the eight chapters of the Masterplan. These are as follows:

- Antrim: The Changing Context
- Town Appraisal
- How Well Does Antrim Perform?
- Antrim: Challenges and Future Scenarios
- Vision: Masterplan and Regeneration Objectives

- Regeneration Action Plan: Summary
- Implementation
- Conclusions Recommendations and Next Steps

3. SECTION 1: ANTRIM - THE CHANGING CONTEXT

3.1 The study considered the wider strategy and policy framework that could have a bearing upon the regeneration and development of the town. The following documents were considered:

- Shaping Our Future: Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for NI 2025;
- The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland;
- Planning Policy Statements;
- The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland;
- Antrim, Ballymena & Larne Area Plan 2016: Issues Paper;
- Antrim District Housing Plan 2004-2005;
- Integrated Local Strategy for Antrim Borough;
- Antrim Borough Council: Corporate Plan 2002-2006.

3.2 The review of relevant policy documents set a clear and positive context for the Masterplan and confirmed that there are a series

of specific policies that support the regeneration of the town centre and the development of Antrim town. Key conclusions included:

- A District Housing Growth Indicator figure of 8,000 units has been allocated to the Borough to cover the period 1998-2015;
- The RDS highlights the importance of promoting the vitality and viability of town centres and supporting an urban renaissance;
- The strategic and local planning policies all focus retail investment in the heart of the town;
- The strategic and local planning policies support regeneration schemes in town centres and promote the re-use of vacant and run down buildings;
- The strategic and local planning policies encourage a mixed use development including more housing in the town centre;

3.3 The report indicated that DSD was considering the Town Centre Living Initiative/Living Over the Shop Pilots with a view to applying the approach to other town centres in Northern Ireland.

- 3.4 The report also noted that the Masterplan would provide an opportunity to shape and influence the Draft Antrim/Ballymena/Larne Area Plan to 2016 as the statutory plan for Antrim.

DSD Town and City Centre Reinvigoration

- 3.5 DSD has established clear priorities for town and city centre regeneration. The Masterplan Report acknowledges that the over-arching goal of the strategy will be the creation of vital and viable town centres. The strategic objectives included:

- Promoting a strategic partnership-based approach to managing town centres;
- Ensuring that town centres are sustainable;
- Creating well-planned, attractive and distinctive town centres;
- Ensuring that town centres are welcoming and inclusive;
- Addressing the legacy of the troubles; and
- Ensuring that each town centre plays a part in securing a prosperous future for Northern Ireland.

Demographic and Socio Economic Profile: Conclusions

- 3.6 The Masterplan report presents a socio-economic profile of Antrim which is based on the 2001 Census. The analysis is summarised below:

- The Borough has a population of around 48,366.
- The town has a population of around 22,100.
- The number of households increased by 21.3% between 1992 and 2002 (NI average 18.2%).
- The average earnings of Antrim residents are 10% higher than those of people who work in Antrim reflecting the significance of commuting out of the Borough.

- 3.7 Compared to the NI 'average' Antrim has:

- A working age employment rate of 77% which was 9.4% higher than NI.
- A higher proportion of residents in elementary and low skilled occupations.

- A lower proportion of residents working in professional occupations.
- A very low proportion of full time students and long term unemployed.
- Relatively few people without qualifications but a relatively high proportion with basic (level 1) qualifications.
- Salaries and wages for people that work in Antrim that were 11.9% below the NI average (for males £356.50/week compared to £392.70/week).
- Total unemployment rate was 2.3% making Antrim the second lowest in NI by Council.
- The population of the Borough increased by 5.1% between 1992 and 2002 (NI average 4.5%).
- The claimant court rate was 2.3% making Antrim the second lowest in NI by Council.
- The population of the Borough increased by 5.1% between 1992 and 2002 (NI average 4.5%).

3.8 This information will be undated using published sources where appropriate, as the GVA Grimley study progresses.

Junction One: International Outlet Shopping Centre

3.9 The Masterplan stated that Junction One opened in Spring 2004 as Northern Ireland's 'first and only outlet shopping centre' and ranked 4th in terms of retail parks in Northern Ireland. The centre included over 50 outlet stores and had surpassed expectations in terms of trading and footfall. Construction work on second phase extension including a budget hotel and fast food/leisure facilities is complete. Proposals for a second hotel and food anchored superstore and adjacent business park are being progressed. In addition the retail warehousing that was developed alongside the initial development had experienced high levels of demand and the majority of the existing units had been agreed.

3.10 The Masterplan stated that Junction One is particularly busy at weekends with 45% of visitors concentrated during that period. Surveys had indicated that Junction One customers live throughout Northern Ireland, 50 % of customers lived within a 27 minutes drive time and 90% lived within 66 minutes. Junction One also had an affluent visitor profile with 36% more 'wealthy achievers' and 16% 'more comfortably off' households than the general household profile.

4. SECTION 2: TOWN APPRAISAL

4.1 The Report presented information on the regional and local development context for development with plans illustrating the key land uses, transportation, development opportunity sites and the challenges facing the town centre.

4.2 The Report highlighted the historical assets of the Antrim Castle Grounds and Gardens, the proximity of Lough Neagh, the Six Mile Water and the layout and quality of many of the town's buildings ensured that there is much that is positive and can be built on. However, the Masterplan stated that the majority of the work carried out in the 1960s aimed at restructuring the town for a different size and purpose had proved to be damaging and required significant intervention if the town was to achieve more than just a temporary repair.

4.3 Some of the issues and targets for physical intervention highlighted in the Masterplan included the following:

- Devising a genuine mixed use town centre with a blend of residential, business, cultural, retail and educational uses;

- Securing the retention of historic buildings in the central area;
- Creating a more symbiotic relationship with the Six Mile Water;
- Breaking down the impact of roads on the centre;
- Utilising extensive parking areas for development use; and
- Creating a higher quality public realm.

5. SECTION 3: HOW WELL DOES ANTRIM PERFORM?

- 5.1 This chapter reviewed Antrim's recent performance with an analysis of the property market, business interviews, tourism market analysis and recent independent market research.
- 5.2 The report noted that Antrim town had benefited from substantial investment in the retail sector over the past 12 months. The High Street within the town centre was dominated by local independent retailers, financial institutions, and a small number of national retailers. The existing stock of vacant units within the town centre did not meet retailer requirements due to the lack of shop depth and servicing provision, which had to be carried out from the front entrances.
- 5.3 The business interviews confirmed that Antrim town centre operated as a local/district centre with regular customers using the mainly local independent retailers, normally spending less than £25. The interviews highlighted a genuine interest in business development advice and in particular networking with other town centre businesses.
- 5.4 The tourism review showed that Antrim town had been off the typical visitors' radar for some time but that Junction One provided some new opportunities. Junction One also had an affluent visitor profile with 36% more 'wealthy achievers' and 16% more comfortably off households than the general household profile. Antrim town centre was considered to be 'confusing' and 'disappointing' for the visitor with little 'sense of place'. Orientation and navigation were considered difficult and there was no sense of arrival or welcome.
- 5.5 The 5 main problems identified in the market research in Antrim were felt to be:
- Lack of independent retailers;
 - Poor retail offering;
 - Castle Centre poor first impression;
 - Vacant and/or derelict properties; and
 - Appearance of the town generally.

6. SECTION 4 ANTRIM: CHALLENGES AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

6.1 Two Strategic Visioning Workshops were held to firstly identify the strengths and weaknesses of Antrim, secondly to discuss how the town should respond and what Antrim could be like in 2020.

6.2 The eight key challenges for Antrim that have been identified from the analysis, consultations and workshops are:

- The need to restructure and redevelop the town centre using clear urban design principles;
- The need to invest in retail and residential activity;
- The opportunity to use the arts and the cultural heritage of Antrim to help drive regeneration;
- The opportunity to use learning and enterprise to ensure that Antrim was a much more competitive place in the future;
- The need to invest in environmental improvements;

- The need to make the town more pedestrian friendly and improve traffic circulation and access;
- The need to market the town more effectively using the Antrim brand; and
- To deliver the Masterplan as part of a targeted integrated regeneration strategy.

6.3 The WMUD/DWA team used the conclusions from the workshops to help shape a vision for Antrim and test the principles of the Masterplan and the emerging programmes and projects that formed the core of a Regeneration Action Plan.

6.4 These challenges will be revisited at the stakeholder consultation which is due to be held on this study. Our initial view is that the challenges will remain broadly the same but we will ensure that the view of the market is reflected in the analysis.

7. SECTION 5: VISION - MASTERPLAN AND REGENERATION OBJECTIVES

Vision for Antrim

- 7.1 The vision for Antrim in 2020 builds on the outcome of the delivery Workshops that were held in February in Antrim:

“Antrim will be a strong, well-designed and safe town which can respond positively to new social, economic and market changes. The town centre will be the heart of the community with a diverse mix of retail, business, residential, learning, culture and leisure uses and, together with Junction One, will provide a wide retail offer of independents, multiples and international outlets. The refurbished Court House and the restored Castle Gardens will be distinctive cultural and heritage attractions for residents and visitors.”

Regeneration Objectives for Antrim

- 7.2 The following outlines the objectives that are set out for Antrim.

Restructuring & Redevelopment

- 7.3 To build on the town's history and past strengths to promote approaches to design, development, movement and management that are both practical and achievable, but which will ultimately bring about a restructuring of the town and bring vacant sites and buildings into sustainable use.

Retail & Residential Investment

- 7.4 To promote investment in quality retail, business and residential activity in the town centre to offer an attractive choice of property and to strengthen the town as the economic driving force of the Borough.

Arts Culture & Heritage

- 7.5 To use the arts, culture and the heritage of Antrim to accelerate regeneration of the town centre, generate civic pride among residents and make the town an attractive day trip destination for discerning visitors.

Learning & Enterprise

- 7.6 To promote Antrim as a town committed to enterprise and learning as a continuous process.

Improving the Environment & Attracting Visitors

- 7.7 To create a high quality clean and safe environment with lively and attractive public places, increase the number of visitors to the town and improve the town centre visitor offer so that it meets and exceeds expectations.

Access & Movement

- 7.8 To improve access to and within the town centre and make the town more user-friendly by road infrastructure improvements, improved car parking and encouraging alternative modes such as cycling, walking and public transport.

Image & Marketing

- 7.9 To coordinate the marketing of the town centre to residents in the Borough and with Junction One as part of a day trip destination.

8. SECTION 6: REGENERATION ACTION PLAN

8.1 The projects at the rear of the document will require updating. The Masterplan study is now two and a half years old and some of the market interest indicated within it will have changed, and other opportunities have come on stream as well as external factors for change such as the expansion of Junction One.

8.2 Project templates and indicative budgets are outlined in the Masterplan report. A summary of the key projects is provided in the table below.

8.3 Delivery of these projects will need to be monitored and updated. The underlying analysis and rationale for intervention in Antrim town centre also needs to be tested. This will be achieved in the revised Masterplan by:

- undertaking a detailed site visit and physical appraisal of the area;
- reviewing of the land use / land ownership; and

- re-assessing physical and transportation issues in light of recent improvements.

Objective & Programme	Description
1. Restructuring & Development	
1.1 Castle Centre Reconfiguration	Investigate the opportunities to make the Castle Centre more outward looking and better integrated in the town centre
1.2 Ulster Bar Corner	Establish clear urban design guidelines for the Ulster Bar Corner site and accelerate high quality appropriate development
1.3 Former Phillips Garage: Opportunity Site	Establish clear urban design guidelines for the Former Phillips Garage Site and accelerate high quality appropriate development
1.4 New Retail/Business: Opportunity Sites	Promote a series of serviced retail and business site in the town centre
1.5 Riverside Opportunity Sites	Establish clear urban design guidelines for the Riverside sites an accelerate high quality appropriate development
2. Retail & Residential Investment	
2.1 Improve Quality/Variety of Shops	Increase retail spend both locally and from visitors and reduce the leakage of spending to neighbouring centres by actively promoting the town centre to investors, developers and occupiers
2.2 Independent Retailers Initiative	Assist independent retailers by providing business development advice to improve product, service, marketing and effectiveness
2.3 Town Centre Living: Above Shops	Promote the significant private sector opportunities and increase the amount and choice of housing in the town centre with an NI Housing Executive supported initiative
2.4 Town Centre Residential Opportunity Sites	Promote good quality residential use in appropriate sites in the town using urban design guidelines and development briefs

Objective & Programme	Description
3. Arts Culture & Heritage	
3.1 Castle Gardens	Submit a comprehensive bid to Heritage Lottery Fund for the development & restoration of Antrim Castle Gardens under their Urban Parks Programme as first step
3.2 Court House: arts & mixed use	Submit a Stage 2 capital funding application (economic appraisal & detailed design) to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for a Courthouse development scheme incorporating arts-based facilities as a first step
3.3 Venues: Improvement & Promotion	Working with publicans/licensees to actively coordinate and promote events in pubs and clubs with the active support of MADD
3.4 Musicians Antrim District Development (MADD) Project Relocated	MADD have evolved into one of NI's largest and most active musicians collectives and are emerging as a community business involved in music tuition /training, resource facilities, rehearsal space, gig venue arrangers, recording studio and instruments and equipment hire. They have outgrown their current space in the outbuildings at Clotworthy and need to be relocated into the town centre.
3.5 Evening/Night Economy Group	Establish a group of local publicans/licensees, restaurant owners to promote and better manage the evening economy. This includes co-ordinating events, improving quality, reducing alcohol related violence and tackling anti social behaviour.
4. Learning & Enterprise	
4.1 Open Learning Centre/Library	Promote an open accessible town centre based lifelong learning centre, providing opportunities for up-skilling, vocational and enterprise training which is open in the evenings and at weekends and responds to community needs.
4.2 Enterprise Initiative	Working with Antrim Enterprise Agency and Invest NI to promote the town centre as a dynamic business location for small business start ups
4.3 Social Economy	Promote a social economy initiative in Antrim based on innovation, citizenship and local knowledge with the aim of creating local enterprises and jobs that have economic and social sustainability.

Objective & Programme	Description
5. Environment & Visitors	
5.1 Improved Streetscape	Modernise and simplify the public realm treatment to reinforce the visual appearance of the town, make it more legible and make it a more pleasant and comfortable place to spend time in.
5.2 Buildings & Shop fronts Improvements	Upgrade shop fronts and ensuring the productive use of all buildings to create reinforce the impression of a lived in and cherished town centre environment.
5.3 Events Space	Create a flexible congregating and events space as a focal point and cultural focus for the town.
5.4 Landmark lighting	Light key built and natural features either side of Dublin Road to enhance the impact of key town landmarks and develop a strong and positive identity for the town.
6. Access & Movement	
6.1 Castle Way Zebra Crossing	Improve key desire lines and crossing that presently impedes the free flow of pedestrians moving towards the town centre from the north and east
6.2 Bus movements from Station Road to Castle Way	Investigate with Translink opportunities for allowing bus movements only from Station Road to Castle Way via a bus gate.
6.3 Cycling	Complete identified cycle routes and improved provision for cycle parking.
6.4 Town Centre Vehicle Circulation	Investigate opportunities for vehicle circulation through High Street/Market Square, integrating with proposals for Castle Centre.
6.5 Part pedestrianisation of Railway street	Investigate potential for the pedestrianisation of Railway Street.
6.6 Church Street/Castle Way junction improvements	Investigate potential to modify junction to reinstate spatial dominance and continuity of the High Street/Church Street axis.

Objective & Programme	Description
7. Image & Marketing	
7.1 Brand & Promote Antrim	Establish an Antrim town brand; promote this through the tourism and other networks. Promote the town centre with effective material including leaflets and an updated web site
7.2 Events & Activities Programme: Families	Commit to developing a three year programme of events and festivals with the aim to bring fun, excitement and image enhancement. Could include regular Farmers/French markets
7.3 Shop Local	Use a shop local initiative offering savings and promotions for regular shoppers, actively target new residents
7.4 Town Centre & Junction One	Establish a series of regular joint promotions and events between town centre businesses and with Junction One

9. SECTION 7: IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 The Implementation section of the report recommended that the key partners namely Antrim Borough Council, businesses and community representatives and key members of the Steering Group to sign a five year partnership agreement. This agreement would:

- Commit all parties to the principles of Antrim Town Masterplan and regeneration action plan;
- Establish a partnership board serviced by the Project Coordinator;
- Establish a base for the Project Coordinator in Antrim town centre;
- Establish a consultative forum to ensure effective and meaningful local community, youth and business involvement.

9.2 The implementation section also highlighted the following four key sites:

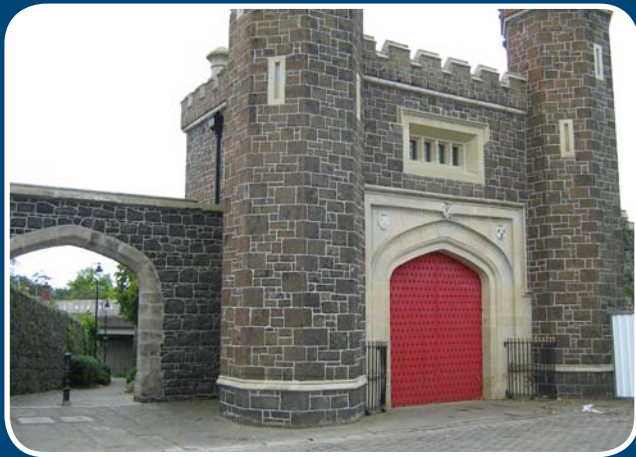
- Ulster Bar Corner;

- Castle Centre;
- Existing Car park; and
- Riverside Residential.

9.3 One of the key points to note from the soft market testing exercise conducted in the Masterplan is that Antrim did not hold the confidence of developers from outside the Borough or for those who have not already invested in the Borough.

9.4 For those that had invested, the Masterplan stated that there was a strong belief that significant development opportunities remained and that subject to the Antrim Town Masterplan being adopted and appropriate planning there would be investment in key sites within the town.

Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy



Public Consultation Feedback Report

December 2009

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APPENDIX 2: CONSULTATION BOARDS

APPENDIX 3: CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 GVA Grimley was commissioned in 2008 by the Department for Social Development (DSD) to prepare a Masterplan and Delivery Strategy for Antrim Town Centre.
- 1.2 The requirements of the study can be broadly broken down into the following 4 key areas:
- **Stage 1:** A Review of the previous Masterplan;
 - **Stage 2:** Site Analysis and the preparation of options for future development;
 - **Stage 3:** Public Consultation Selection of Preferred Options for future regeneration in consultation with stakeholders; and
 - **Stage 4:** The preparation of a Development and Delivery Strategy which outlines how sites can be delivered and the various roles and responsibilities of public and private sector organisations.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the key findings from the stage 3 public consultation exercise. This includes the results of the questionnaire and feedback received

from the manned events. This will enable DSD and the Project Management Group to move forward to the next phase in the Masterplan process to identify a preferred option and to examine how this can this can best be delivered. A final Masterplan will then be completed based on the agreed preferred option.

2. APPROACH TO CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

2.1 DSD has produced guidelines which set out the key elements of the consultation process for town centre schemes. These guidelines have been adopted for the production of the Antrim Town Centre Masterplan to ensure that everyone with an interest in the town centre has access to the Masterplanning process, and is provided with meaningful opportunities to express their views which may influence the future development of the town.

2.2 In line with these guidelines, there has been consultation and engagement at various levels. These include:

- **Project Management Group** – the preparation of the Masterplan has been overseen by a Project Management Group comprising representatives from DSD, Antrim Borough Council, DOE Planning Service, DRD Road Service and the consultancy teams. This group is responsible for managing the overall Masterplan process and signs off the various stages of the Masterplan work.

- **Project Steering / Advisory Group** – the Antrim Town Masterplan Steering Group was formed in 2006 to consider actions put forward in original proposals for the whole town and acts as a sounding board for the proposals emerging from the Masterplan for the town centre. This group is larger and made up of a wider group of representatives from both the public and private sectors including DSD, Antrim Borough Council Officers and Councillors, DOE Planning Service, DRD Road Service, Police Service (PSNI), Antrim Towns Development Company (ATDC) and other business representatives, the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB), Translink, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Junction One, Centenary Investments and the Castle Mall.
- **Stakeholder Engagement** – this is a key stage of the information gathering and option development processes. In taking forward the Masterplan, GVA Grimley have undertaken an extensive stakeholder consultation programme, culminating in a half day workshop to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to consider and provide feedback on the emerging preferred option(s), development principles and proposed phasing plan. Other activities included:

- One to one meetings – A series of individual meetings were held to consider the views of other potential interested parties including church representatives, the local business community, as well as land and property owners.
- Council members – a presentation was made to the Development Committee of Antrim Borough Council prior to the public consultation on the draft Masterplan proposals and members were invited to attend the half day workshop.
- **Public Consultation** – seeking the views and comments from those within an interest in the town is an important part of the master planning process in that it ensures all relevant issues have been taken into account. In preparing the Antrim Town Centre Masterplan a six week period of public consultation was undertaken when the draft options were prepared. This took the form of a public exhibition located and was manned for the first week. Over the course of the six week period, which ran from 21st October until the 2nd December, the exhibition boards were displayed in the following locations:
 - The Castle Mall;

- Antrim Forum;
- Antrim Civic Centre; and
- Tesco.

2.3 The consultation boards were accompanied by a questionnaire to capture the views and comments of residents, businesses and other key town centre stakeholders. This consultation material was also accessible on the DSD website.

2.4 The consultation boards were accompanied by a questionnaire to capture the views and comments of residents, businesses and other key town centre stakeholders. This consultation material was also accessible on the DSD website (www.dsdni.gov.uk) and Antrim Borough Council website (www.antrim.gov.uk) and email responses were also facilitated.

A list of the main participants engaged in the Antrim Masterplan Steering and stakeholder group meetings is listed at Appendix 1

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

3.1 Public consultation on the Masterplan options was launched by the Minister for Social Development on 21st October 2009. The purpose of the exhibition, which ended on 2nd December 2009, was to present work undertaken on the study to date alongside 3 emerging options for the town centre. A copy of the consultation boards and questionnaire are attached at appendices 2 and 3.

1.1 The following provides a summary of feedback received on the emerging proposals:

Questionnaire Results

- 91.1% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the vision and objectives established for Antrim Town Centre – Board 1;
- 92.7% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the regeneration issues identified for Antrim Town Centre – Board 2;

- 89.2% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the draft conclusions and recommendations of the Retail Capacity Study for Antrim – Board 2;
- 79.3% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed with the analysis of regeneration opportunities – Board 3;
- The medium growth option (87.5%) was the preferred option, although there was also strong support for both the high growth (82.6%) and low growth options (75%) – Boards 4, 5 and 6;
- Overall 89% were in favour of the Masterplan providing a strong rationale for future intervention within the town centre.

3.2 Other key issues highlighted through the questionnaire included:

- the need for more leisure time activities – cinema, coffee shops, restaurants etc;
- the requirement for a better range of shops, new development and improved buildings within the town centre;
- the need to provide more activities for young people;
- the need to offer incentives to encourage new businesses to come into Antrim;

- the need to provide better road access into and out of the town centre; and
- the need to improve safety and security through the introduction of CCTV and a greater police presence

Qualitative Feedback

3.3 As highlighted above, the public exhibition was manned for the first week with representatives of the consultancy team and Antrim Borough Council on hand to discuss the proposed options.

3.4 In addition to the feedback received via the questionnaire, the following provides a summary of the feedback received from the manned exhibition:

Castle Mall Car Park

- The Castle Mall Car Park is seen as the starting point in the Town Centre for more shops.
- The junction of Dublin Road/Castle Way could provide a major new store (up to 2 floors) and entrance to new scheme.

- The development must look good in terms of design, colour and quality of materials with no blank walls – window displays and lighting are preferred.
- The development needs a strong identity/design theme.
- A Mall (internal street) is generally preferred to an outdoor shopping street.
- There is support for improvements to the shops on Castle Street.
- Access for cars and/or service vehicles from Dublin Road is supported.
- Car parking next to the new shops is preferred. This would preferably be free parking to attract more visitors.
- An internal square within the larger shopping Mall is preferred.
- Better access to the High Street should be encouraged.

Railway Street

- Redevelopment of the Ulster Corner Bar site is a priority for Antrim town Centre.

- The site offers the opportunity to create a large retail store with car parking on top.
- Environmental improvements to Railway Street are supported.
- Redeveloping the western frontage to improve the appearance of the street was favoured.
- A new access from the Mall onto Railway Street opposite new Library was seen as important.
- It is important to keep new development to a single storey on the western frontage in order to respect character of the existing buildings;
- Improving existing buildings at the northern end of Railway Street was favoured.
- Opportunity for new store at junction of Railway Street and Castle Way.

High Street

- There is support for the removal of the existing unsightly service area off High street.
- Improve the appearance of the shop frontages was favoured.

- It is important to make better use of the space above the shops.
- Try to upgrade the shops to make them suitable for modern use.
- Improve taxi, parking and public transport arrangements.
- Create better pedestrian access to the Mall.
- Continue to explore the potential for opening up the riverside area to the High Street – with a square/ open area.
- Improve footpaths/paving and provide more seats and trees.

Castle Way Car Park

- Parking rather than shops preferred – ‘do we need that many shops’.
- Office/Housing not seen as a good idea as shops were seen as the priority.

4. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

4.1 The following provides a summary of the key issues that will inform the preparation of a preferred option for Antrim Town Centre.

- There is strong support for the development of a larger and more attractive shopping centre development.
 - The Castle Mall Car Park and Ulster Bar Corner site are seen as the starting points in the town centre for more shops.
 - It is important that the design of the new building respects the character of existing buildings.
 - Improvement to the appearance of the Castle Mall is considered to be a priority. This includes providing better access into the Mall from High Street and Railway Street.
 - The pricing of car parking is considered to be important. Any new car parking provision should be reasonably priced to encourage shoppers into the town.
- There was general agreement that Railway Street should be retained for car parking with scope for further expansion of parking provision on this site in the future
 - There was support for continuing to explore the potential for opening up the riverside area to the High Street – with a square/ open area.
 - Environmental improvements and property improvements are supported on Railway Street, High Street and Church Street.
 - It is important that High Street is included within any proposals to ensure the Masterplan is a fully integrated strategy for Antrim.

APPENDIX 1: STAKEHOLDER LIST

The following table provides a summary of the main participants engaged in the Antrim Masterplan Steering and Stakeholder Group Meetings

Name	Organisation
Walter Hutchinson	Department for Social Development (DSD)
Paul Kelly	Antrim Borough Council (ABC)
Karen Brown	ABC
Geraldine Girvan	ABC
Alastair Law	ABC
David McCammick	ABC
Jacqueline Coulter	ABC
Clr David Ford	ABC
Clr Drew Ritchie	ABC
Clr Stephen Nicholl	ABC
Clr Thomas Burns	ABC
Clr Danny Kinahan	ABC
Heather McSparren	Planning Service
Mervyn Orr	DRD Road Service
Stephen Fullerton	DRD Road Service
Jackson Minford	DRD Road Service
William Cameron	DSD
Martin Lundy	Translink
Linda Clarke	North East Education and Library Board (NEELB)
Helen Poston	NEELB
Patsy Smyth	Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
Valerie McLernon	Junction One
Jim Delargy	Antrim Towns Development Company (ATDC)
Alan Neill	Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)
Trevor Lindsay	PSNI

Name	Organisation
Theresa Murray	Castle Mall
Linda Black	Centenary Investments

APPENDIX 2: CONSULTATION BOARDS

APPENDIX 3: CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE