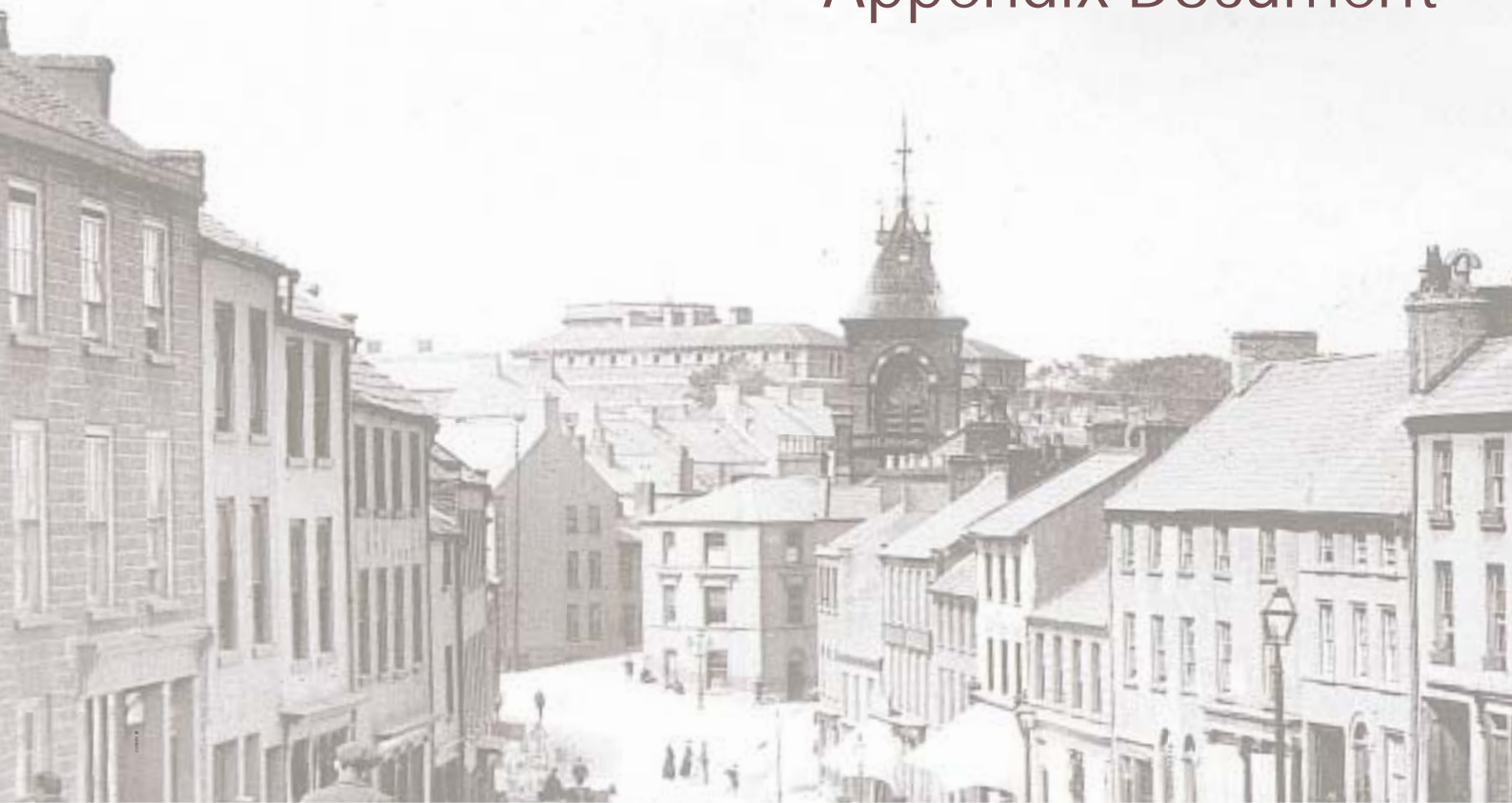


Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan



Appendix Document





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Development**
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1 PROJECT METHODOLOGY REPORT

Methodology – Masterplan Process

The specific steps undertaken through the course of the masterplan process included information gathering (document review and stakeholder consultation), analysis, formulation of concept proposals, production of a draft masterplan, public consultation exhibition and refinement of the final masterplan.

Information Gathering - Document Review & Stakeholder Consultation

During the preparation of the Masterplan, a significant amount of work was carried out in reviewing plans and reports undertaken by various stakeholders and the implications for the Masterplan summarised. The findings and recommendations of these documents, which are listed below, were taken into account in the shaping of the Masterplan.

- Ards and Down Area Plan, Planning Service NI (Apr 2009)
- Down District Council's Final Response to the Area Plan (Mar 2005)
- Downpatrick Conservation Area, DOE NI (Mar 1985)
- Down District Council Development Plan (Scott Wilson – Aug 2006)
- Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Action Plan
- Cultural Development Strategy (Haley Sharpe)
- Location of Public Sector Jobs (Bain)
- NITB, Tourism in NI: A Strategic Framework for Action 2004-2007
- Saint Patrick's Heritage Signature Project: Business Plan (Jan 2009)
- Down in Focus: Economic Profile (Draft Mar 2008)
- Downshire Site Redevelopment, Stage 1 Outline Business Case (Feb 2007)
- The New Downe Hospital, Down Lisburn Trust
- Downpatrick Development Plan, SDLP Vision Paper (Jun 2008)
- Northern Ireland Key Settlement Study (Experian – Oct 2008)
- Business Land Need Study (Oxford Economics – Oct 2008)
- Down Retail Investment Report
- DRD Sub-Regional Transport Plan: Technical Supplement Downpatrick

As part of the information gathering process, a total of 43 separate consultation meetings were held with key stakeholders during the development of the Masterplan. These stakeholders included Down District Council (Councillors and Officers), DSD, Roads Service, Translink, Planning Service, Housing Executive, Health Trust, Education & Library Board, South Eastern Regional College, Chamber of Commerce and the Environment Agency. Items arising during these consultation meetings helped to establish a clear understanding of those pertinent issues that were central to the future of Downpatrick, which then became the cornerstones of the Masterplan. The Masterplan progress was reviewed through regular meetings with an Advisory Group comprising representatives of the two commissioning bodies, namely the Department for Social Development and Down District Council.

A comprehensive list of those consultees that were engaged throughout the duration of this project, are included within Appendix 4.

3.2 Analysis

The urban form analysis stage involved an examination of land and building uses, character zones and historical research, all of which are vital in an historic environment such as Downpatrick. Also at the heart of many potential proposals was the assessment of those listed buildings and scheduled monuments which represented key assets for the town, which were then utilised where possible so as not to constrain future development.

The Project Team acknowledges that circulation is a key issue within the town centre and our analysis included a review of existing transport data consolidated with site validation relative to pedestrian, cycle, public transport, vehicular movement and parking. The existing parking, signage, linkages and transport infrastructure including key road and public transport facilities have been assessed in conjunction with associated development proposed within the masterplan.

3.3 Concept Proposals

The Project Team recognises the anticipated growth within Downpatrick over the next decade and the role the Masterplan plays in providing a framework within which this future growth can be accommodated and managed.

A strong concept and vision statement, with accompanying aims and objectives was then developed articulating the key physical, social and economic principles that underpinned the future for Downpatrick, highlighting the key assets, zoning, approaches, thresholds and overall proposed structure that will capitalise on the strengths and mitigate the things that currently undermine the town.

Details relating to the concept and vision statement can be found within Chapter 3.

3.4 Draft Masterplan

Following on from the concept proposals, the Masterplan then began to emerge and develop in sync with the concept and vision. The primary purpose of the Masterplan is to visually engage the audience while capturing the enthusiasm of the concept and vision.

In keeping with the strong concept and vision statement, the Project Team ensured that the Downpatrick Masterplan;

- Represented a vision that is shared and inclusive, centred on delivering an improved quality of life for residents and an enhanced town centre to visit and in which to invest;
- Was ambitious, yet realistically attainable based upon evidence and supported by an Action Plan founded on proven experience and reference to best-practice exemplars;
- Consolidated the distinctiveness of Downpatrick and the elements that make it special to local people and attractive to visitors and investors;

- Identified the elements of the urban form that should be retained, centred on statutory designations;
- Highlighted potential development opportunities and integrated these within the Masterplan;
- Provided design guidance relating to an appropriate form and character of new development;
- Demonstrated a legible hierarchy of public realm, building on the agreed initial phase of investment and as appropriate influencing future works;
- Articulated clearly the requirements in relation to social provision and economic initiatives, including employment, education, health and community infrastructure;
- Articulated a clear transportation and parking strategy that facilitates the Masterplan objectives, providing ease of access and circulation;
- Developed a promotional strategy for Downpatrick that enhances civic pride and which targets the attraction of new businesses, residents and visitors, and captures the distinctiveness of the vision;

3.5 Public Consultation Exhibition

From the outset of this project, both the Client and Advisory Group placed importance on the people of Downpatrick helping shape the Masterplan as it developed. A Public Consultation Exhibition was conducted for the Draft Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan from Friday 22 January to Friday 19 March 2010 inclusive, during which members of the public were able to review the draft proposals and submit their comments. These comments were then taken into consideration by the Project Team and Advisory Group and fed back into the proposals contained within the Masterplan.

A total of ten colour presentation boards were prepared by the Project Team, presenting the masterplan process, analysis and draft proposals through a range of text, plans and illustrative techniques. Two sets of these presentation boards were displayed concurrently throughout the public consultation period, one at the St Patrick's Centre and the second within the Downpatrick constituency offices of DSD Minister and local MLA Margaret Richie. Digital PDF versions of the consultation boards were also made available to download from the DSD website.

Copies of the presentation boards together with a summary of the feedback responses received during the public consultation exhibition are included within Appendix 4.

3.6 Final Masterplan and Action Plan

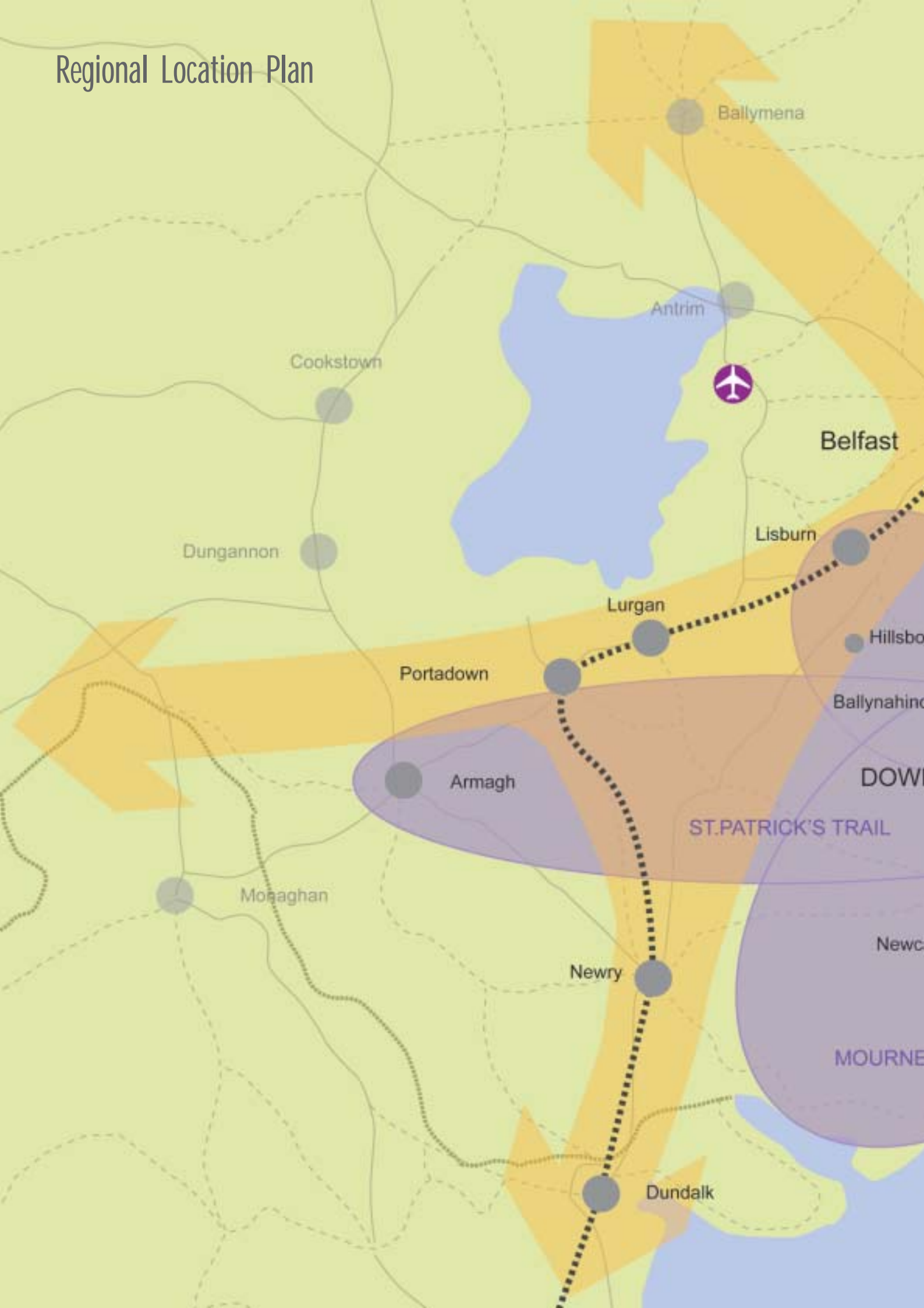
A total of 44 separate consultation responses were submitted by individuals and organisations during the Public Consultation Exhibition, resulting in 91 different topic points. The draft Masterplan was then refined in the context of the identified public consultation topic points as well as a Client review.

This feedback was also factored into the emerging Action Plan, which supports the Masterplan, and spells out the steps that are required to be taken in order to deliver the objectives, including milestones and performance indicators. The Action Plan also describes the initiatives, those who should lead and the relevant partners, and appropriate programmes and phasing.

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Regional Location Plan



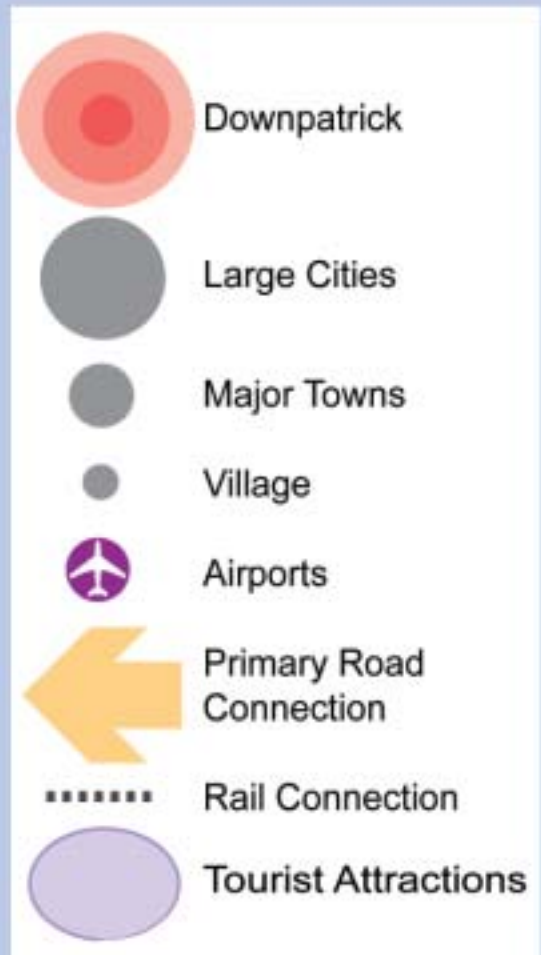


Figure Ground Plan

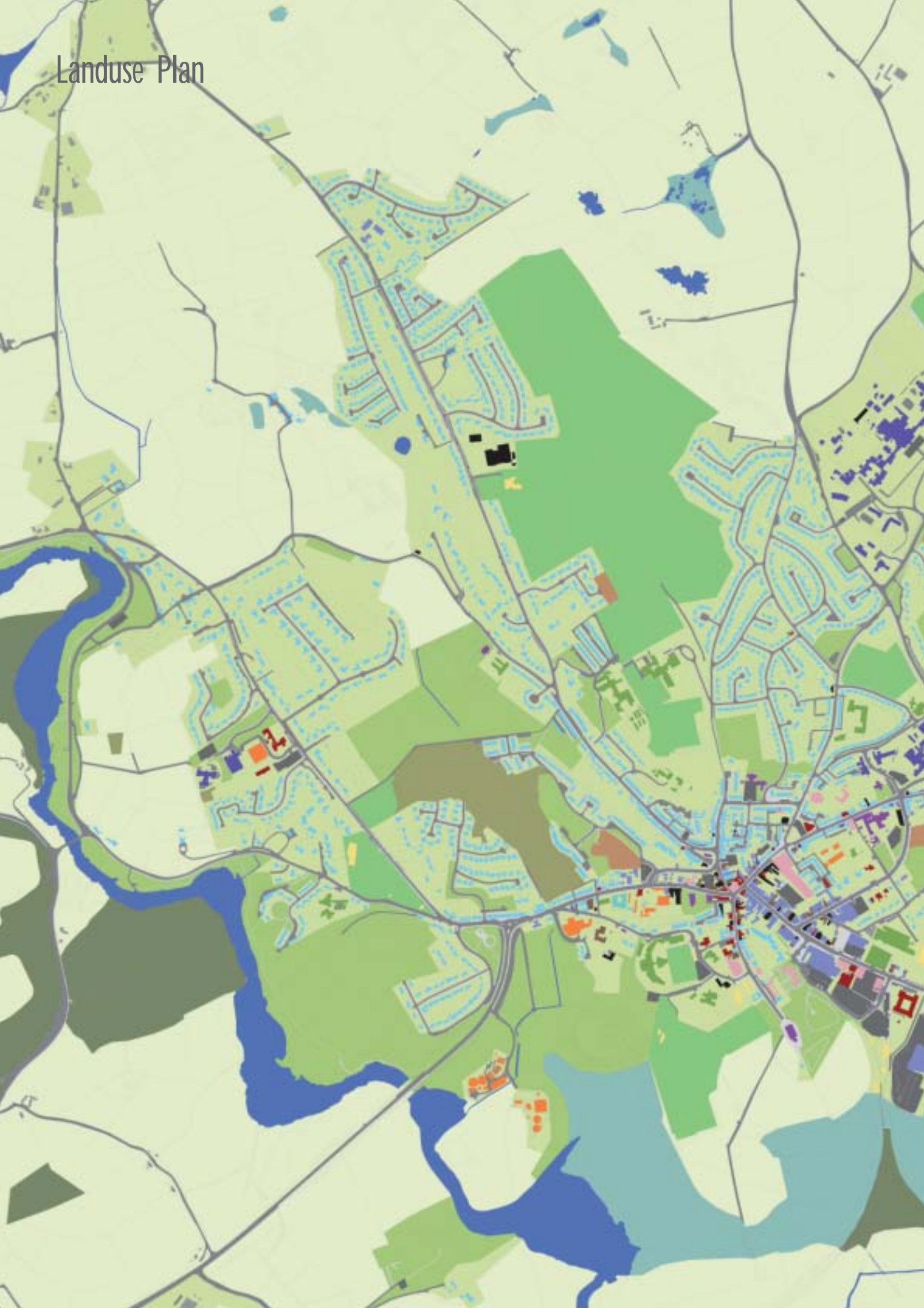




Not to Scale

DRAFT

Landuse Plan



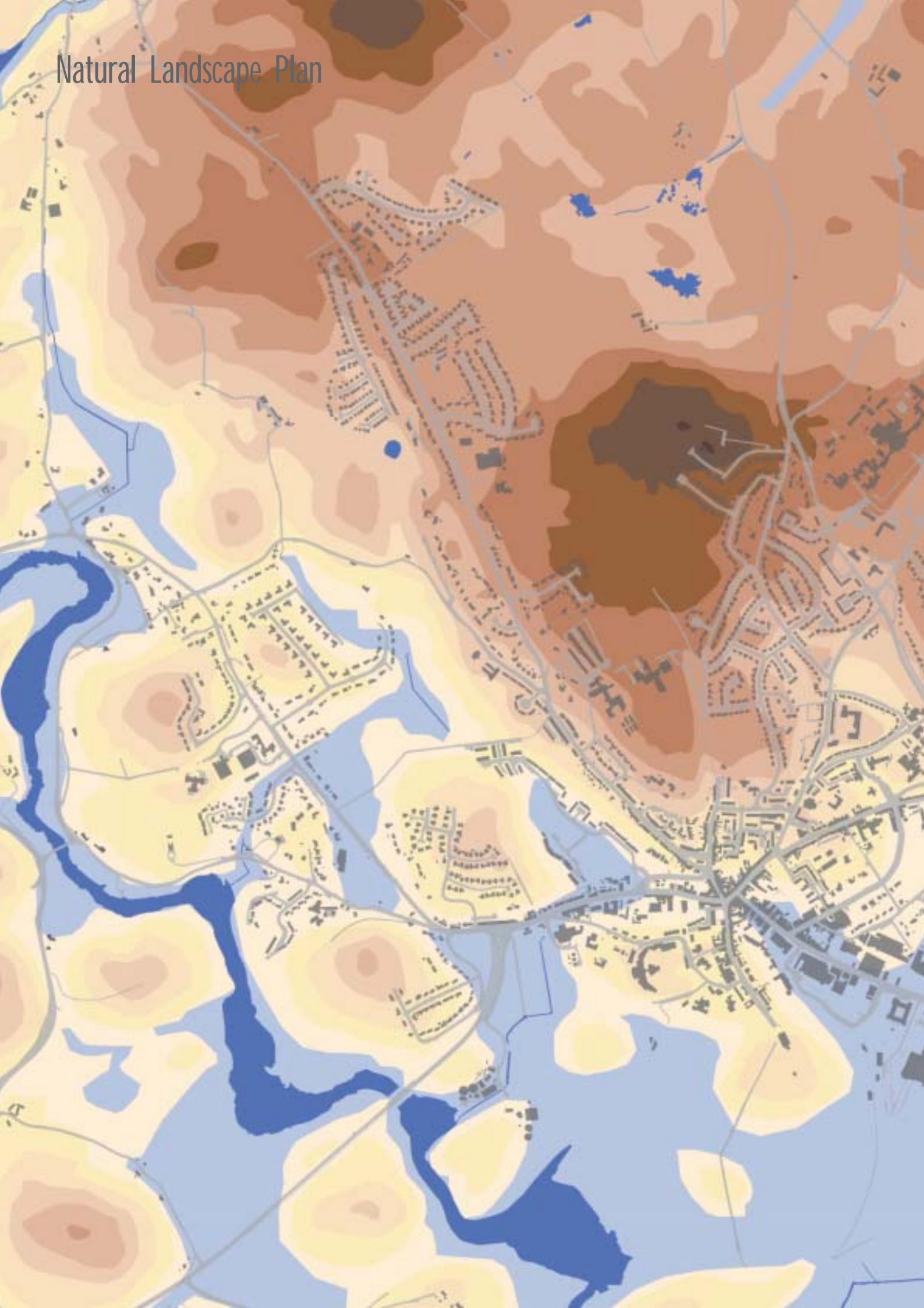
- Open Space Private
- Open Space Public_Soft
- Open Space Public_Hard
- Car Parks_Publicly Accessible
- Roads
- Open Space_Sport and Leisure
- Construction Site
- Wasteland
- Woodland
- Agriculture Land
- Wetland
- Water
- Retail
- Residential
- Offices
- Industry
- Religion
- Hospitality
- Education
- Health
- Community
- Public Utilities
- Tourism & Leisure Facilities
- Vacant
- Agriculture
- Unsurveyed Buildings

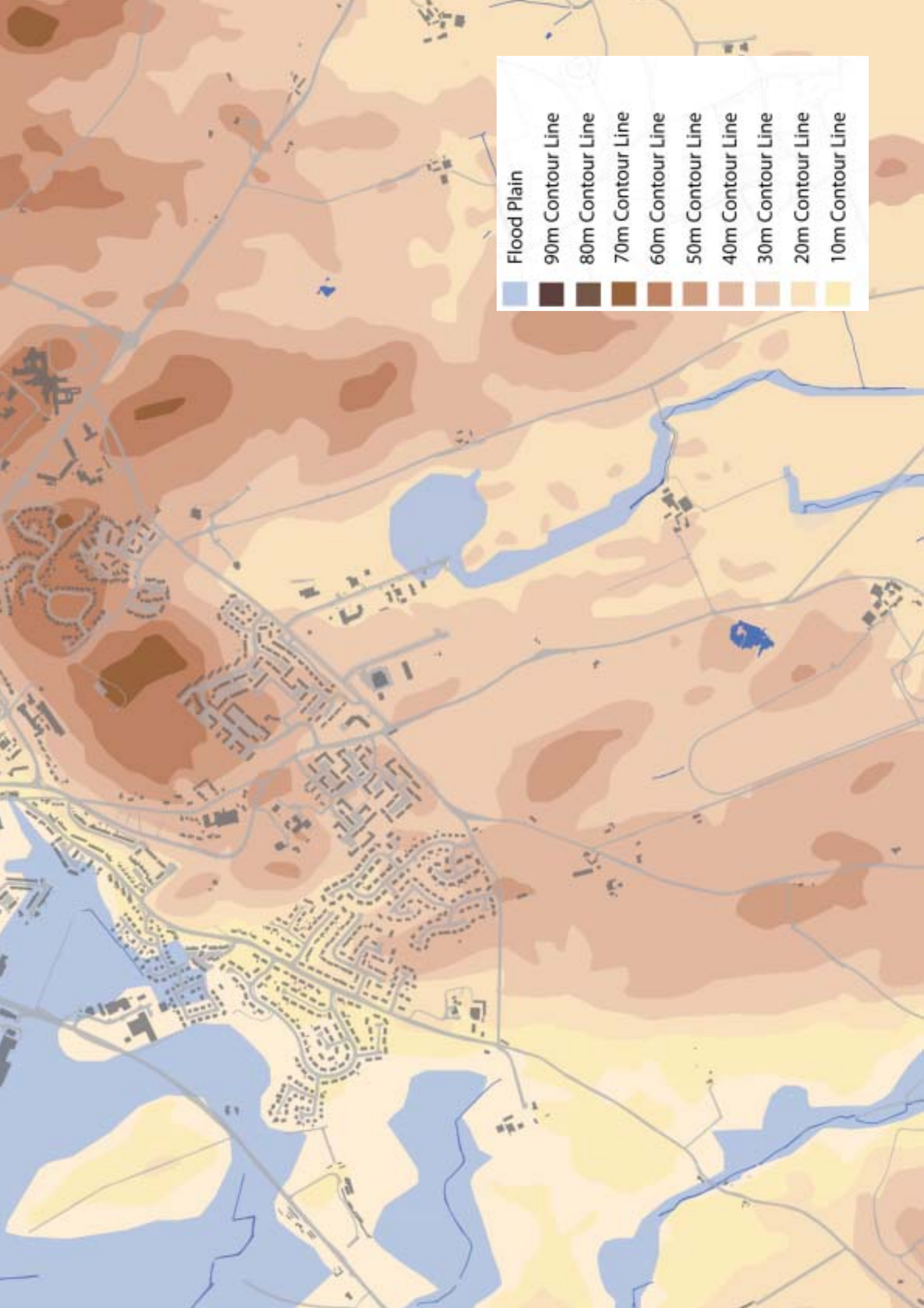


Not to Scale

DRAFT

Natural Landscape Plan





3 ANALYSIS REPORTS



Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan

Planning Policy Position

April 2009



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1. Planning Policy Context

1.1 Purpose of Report

In order to provide the context for the future assessments of development viability and land-use allocation, this Planning Policy Position report establishes a planning framework relevant for the masterplanning of Downpatrick Town Centre. As part of this process relevant planning policies/strategies/legislation are reviewed in addition to various other published data and in-house knowledge and information. These include:

- Shaping our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Draft Planning Policy Statement 5: Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments
- Ards and Down Area Plan 2015

1.2 Context

The planning system in Northern Ireland exists to regulate the development and the use of land in the public interest. National planning policy for Northern Ireland is issued and centrally controlled by the Planning Service, a sub-department of Department for the Environment in Belfast. The Department's functions, in relation to planning, are set out in the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 and the role of the Planning Service is to administer most of these functions in addition to developing, and implementing, Government planning policies and development plans across Northern Ireland.

This section provides an overview of the key policy considerations, which will shape the future development of the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan.

1.3 National Planning Policy

1.3.1 Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025

'Shaping our Future', the Regional Development Strategy 2025 (RDS), sets out the overarching development strategy for Northern Ireland for the next 20 years and provides a framework for the future development of the region. It advocates development that will bring about enhanced economic competitiveness in a sustainable manner and will bring with it the renewal and revitalisation of established towns and villages.

The RDS defined the Spatial Development Strategy 2025 as the tool that would guide and manage the development of Northern Ireland at the strategic level up to 2025. This Spatial

Development Strategy is a framework for the future physical development of Northern Ireland, based on urban hubs and clusters, key and link transport corridors and the main regional gateways of ports and airports.

With particular regards to the role of NI towns and cities in general, the RDS promotes **'sustained urban renaissance'** including the principles of compact cities and towns, high quality urban environment and increased use of neighbourhood resources. Whilst recognising the need to avoid town cramming, the strategy the strategy actively **promotes an increase in urban housing** through support for **reuse of brownfield land, redundant buildings and enhancement of open spaces.**

Within the Spatial Development Strategy, the town of **Downpatrick** is defined as a **Main Hub** location connected by a link corridor to Belfast. These settlements are assessed as having the potential to **develop as growth areas for the concentration of economic activity**, thus balancing the growth of the BMA area. The document therefore states that Main Hub towns such as Downpatrick will be developed as significant locations in Northern Ireland through the promotion of employment, services and cultural/leisure amenities.

It is also prescribed that Main Hub locations will have a prominent role in helping to derive housing numbers at the district level. These towns, along with regional cities, will also be given priority in the determination of Strategic Employment Locations.

The **Town Centres of Main Hubs** such as Downpatrick are assigned important status within the RDS as they are required to provide attractive **locations for retail, service, administrative, leisure and cultural facilities.** Despite this, the RDS recognises that different Main Hubs will experience varying levels of growth in the future. Indeed factors such as strategic location, population, catchment area, employment/infrastructure/service provision and the aesthetic attributes of a town will impact upon its capability to expand.

These themes relating to Main Hubs are summarised as part of the Spatial Development Strategy which states that it will:

“develop the main towns of Antrim, Downpatrick, Larne and Newtownards in the BMA hinterland, together with the neighbouring main towns of Banbridge and Craigavon, to varying degrees depending on their capacity and growth potential, as counter-magnets to the Metropolitan Area”.



The RDS identifies Local Development Guidelines that should be applied to each location. These include:

Identity: Encouraging community participation in the planning process. It also promotes the reinforcement of a sense of place and belonging by maintaining distinctive places throughout local communities and in local landscape character areas, including places of public assembly and community interaction, focal points, landmarks and a continuity of urban and rural traditions.

Vitality: Continuously caring for, restoring and renewing the physical fabric of towns and villages by a strong emphasis on the imaginative re-use of older buildings and the use of previously developed land as a fundamental component of the regeneration process for towns, villages and rural areas.

Proximity: Providing compatible mixed-use developments extending local community choice and opportunity in relation to jobs, commercial facilities and services.

Accessibility: Developing multi-modal systems of urban and rural transport that would enhance accessibility for local communities to the full range of urban activities and meet the needs of people with disabilities. This would be achieved by integrating public transport, cycling and walking with more responsible use of the private car, whilst facilitating the movement of goods.

Amenity: Providing Community Greenways to establish connections with nature and the countryside, and local historic features, for residents in urban and rural areas by maintaining and building up an interlinked pattern of public open spaces, play facilities and landscaped areas, woodlands and wildlife habitats, pedestrian and cycle routes, linking to rivers, canals, coastal and inland waters, as well as respecting the rural setting of towns and villages.

Quality: Fostering an imaginative and resource efficient quality of design that respects existing rural or urban character, local tradition and human scale.

1.3.2 Draft Planning Policy Statement 5 Retailing and Town Centres

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) set out policies on land use and other planning matters and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents are taken into account in the preparation of Development Plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and thus it is appropriate that the Downpatrick masterplan takes into account relevant policies. Whilst the majority of PPS policies will apply to development within Downpatrick town centre, key policies of note include:



PPS 3: Access, Movement and Parking

PPS5: Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure

PPS6: Planning / Archaeology and the Built Heritage & Areas of Townscape Character

PPS12: Housing in Settlements

Of most direct relevance to the Downpatrick town centre masterplan is Draft Planning Policy Statement 51 (PPS 5), Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments. It has been prepared to assist in the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy to guide the future pattern of retailing and commercial functions by **managing future growth and distribution, supporting urban renaissance and achieving balanced communities**. It emphasises the importance of maintaining a healthy town / city centre and sets out policies for retailing and commercial leisure developments in cities, towns, other centres and settlements throughout Northern Ireland. PPS 5 recognises **existing Town Centres as the best location for retail, office and related uses**.

The objective of PPS 5 is to ensure that Town Centres are the preferred location for major comparison shopping and mixed retailing proposals. Government's retail policy set out in PPS 5 is to:

- Enhance the **vitality and viability** of Town Centres;
- **Focus development**, particularly retail development in areas which maximise the benefits for all consumers; and
- Maximise the opportunity to use means of **transport other than the car**.

New development within Town Centres should **minimise visual, functional and physical disruption** and enhance or **create interest, vitality and variety** and the Department of the Environment will **resist unsympathetic development, which is not compatible with the existing townscape**.

As this is a strategic document, it does not make specific reference to specific towns such as Downpatrick but instead advocates best practice that **attracts new and retains established retail development in the first instance within the established Town Centre**.

¹ Available at <http://www.planningni.gov.uk>

1.4 Local Planning Policy

Local planning policy for towns and cities across Northern Ireland is set out in the local Development Plan, which may take the form of area plans, local plans or subject plans. These plans apply the regional policies of the Department at the appropriate local level.

In general, Development Plans inform the public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies of the policy framework and land use proposals that will guide development decisions within their local area. They also provide an essential framework for guiding investment by public, private and community sectors and help harness additional resources through collaboration in tackling problems. Furthermore, they

- Provide confidence for those wishing to develop and those affected by development proposals;
- Establish a framework for positive co-ordination of public policies in joined-up government at both regional and local levels;
- Provide an effective land supply phased and allocated to meet the full range of needs to support the life of the local community and social and economic progress; and
- Establish a process for involvement and ownership by local communities wishing to influence the future development of their area.

All Development Plans are now required to be in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025, detailed above.

1.4.1 Ards and Down Development Plan 2015

The Ards and Down Development Plan 2015 was adopted in 2009 and covers the administrative districts of Ards Borough and Down District. Its stated purpose is to inform the general public, public bodies, developers and other interested parties of the policy framework and land use designations that will be referred to when deciding development decisions. This planning framework broadly complies with the RDS and seeks to achieve its goal of sustainable growth and high quality development.

Within the Plan, Downpatrick is analysed individually and specific Development Strategies are proposed for the town. These are reflected in the individual policies for the town and will be summarised with specific focus to how they impact upon the town centre.

Housing

The plan accepts the RDS strategy that Downpatrick should allow a significant proportion of the District housing requirement to be located within its boundary. This increase in the town's

population is required to support economic activity levels suitable for a Main Hub location, prevent depopulation, and reduce pressures for housing development in the surrounding rural area.

In response to the housing strategy an additional 3100 housing units have been assessed to be required in Downpatrick over the plan period (2010-2025). This has been identified in the plan as covering 141.41ha of proposed housing sites. **The town centre masterplan should therefore ensure the opportunity for a significant provision of services to emerge in the central area that is appropriate for a Main Hub town of the size and population proposed in the plan. The masterplan should also be produced in line with the housing development proposals and their key design considerations as outlined.**

Industry

The development plan designates 19.7ha of industrial land within the settlement boundary including areas zoned in previous plans which are still undeveloped. These sites are proposed in the plan with further information regarding their status. **The masterplan must align with any relevant proposals for industrial land.**

The Business Land Needs Study 2008 aims to help deliver sustainable economic growth through, *“assessing the quantum of land which may be required to ensure that there is generous and a continuous supply of B-space employment land in appropriate locations”*.

As part of this study an economic analysis of recent trends was undertaken in addition to forecasts of a number of employment indicators. An assessment of employment land supply and demand was also attempted. The report concluded that Northern Ireland had a generous provision across all councils of employment land supply to meet the requirement predictions though the reliability of the supply data is poor. In order to arrive at this conclusion a large amount of data was collated relating to Down District:

The 2008 Business Land Needs Study indicates there will be a fall in demand for industrial land in the Down District from 2008-28 of 0.7ha. **As a result the town centre masterplan should not need to allocate additional industrial land and in fact may need to consider whether existing industrial land may have to become available for alternative uses in the future.**

The study also notes that the Down District is forecasted to see an increase in office land demand of 5ha between 2008-28. **The masterplan should reflect a presumption that additional office space should be accommodated within the town centre and not in**



edge of town locations which would be more appropriate for industrial/warehousing uses.

Transportation

The plan states that Downpatrick is located on the A7 route that is part of the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN). Within the town the main road network converges at the town centre where a complicated junction is formed between Market Street, Irish Street, Scotch Street, English Street and Church Street. It is noted that a new bus terminal was opened in June 2005. **The masterplan should acknowledge the connectivity issues affecting Downpatrick and help to derive increased accessibility around and through the town for public and private transport and pedestrians. The masterplan should also acknowledge and integrate with plan policies and road proposals, such as the Irish Street - Saint Patrick's Avenue Link.**

Environment and Conservation

A number of locations in Downpatrick are designated as Local Landscape Policy Areas and are therefore subject to policy CON2 of the plan. In addition, an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest has been designated in the Quoile Valley that includes Cathedral Hill, the Mound of Down and Inch Abbey. **The masterplan must align with any relevant policies protecting the environment and Downpatrick's historic legacy.**

Open Space and Recreation

There are a variety of recreational areas throughout Downpatrick, as listed in the development plan, and these are designated in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 8. In addition there are a number of Proposed Amenity Open Space and Recreation areas which could be developed in the future. **The masterplan must align with any relevant proposals for open space and recreational land.**

Commerce

The development plan notes that commercial growth was limited in Downpatrick town centre during the 1990s due to competition from easily accessible shopping centres. Its situation has improved in recent years with a greater range of town centre uses now present. It is noted that small independent retailers make up the majority of the retail offering while the total amount of floor-space has been extended due to the redevelopment of Grove Shopping Centre, new space on Ballydugan Road and the introduction of various other retail units. A number of



environmental improvements have also benefitted the shopping experience in Downpatrick with schemes undertaken in English Street, Irish Street and Market Street.

Town Centre

The plan notes that Downpatrick Town Centre has poor pedestrian accessibility due to its radial layout, steep streets, historic development and traffic congestion. Despite this the town centre benefits from the historic buildings of the Conservation Area, mixed uses and convenient car parking/bus routes.

The plan continues by stating that vacant property and non-retail uses affect the town centre. **The re-use of vacant upper floors (or those used for storage) for office or residential development will therefore be promoted** where the benefits outweigh any negatives.

Primary Retail Core

A primary retail core is identified in the development plan in order to control development within it to meet specific policy aims and create an attractive shopping environment. Key objectives of these policies include the prevention of shopping uses spreading excessively into established town centre housing areas and the proliferation of office uses at street level in the primary retail core. The following Development Opportunity Sites are listed and described in greater depth in the plan:

- Courtyards to the rear of English Street and Irish Street.
- Frontage to the Car Park at Scotch Street
- Junction of Market Street and Irish Street.
- Site of Police Station, Irish Street.

In terms of town centre housing a number of areas are designated by the plan in accordance with development plan policy.

The masterplan must build on the strengths of previous initiatives while attempting to negate some of the limitations of the town centre, such as pedestrian accessibility. Potential development sites should be incorporated into the masterplan.



1.5 Planning Service Consultation

In addition to a review of the Area Plan, an initial consultation was held with a representative of the Planning Service, Mr Pat Rooney. Some of the key issues highlighted at this stage included:

- There remains a significant stock of undeveloped residential land in the town and this was felt to be primarily due to relatively poor connectivity between that land and main access routes to/from the town.
- The town centre protected housing sites should be reinforced and the general principle of town centre living is encouraged.
- Overall the core town centre has an appropriate balance of uses and enhancement of the visual appearance of the centre, especially Market St, should be a main focus for attention.
- Good examples of recent town centre development include the Irish St residential scheme (opposite PSNI station) which has achieved good quality design and town centre living.
- The issue of traffic and connectivity in the town centre has long been a contentious debate and was a key issue in the Area Plan inquiry.
- There is considered to be an adequate supply of industrial/business land within the town with the recent review of the RDS taking away the need to allocate strategic industrial land.
- Recognition that Area Plan was drafted in 2002, was the subject of Public Inquiry 2005-2007 and thus by the time of Adoption in 2009 is already somewhat out of date.



2. Additional Considerations

In addition to the various planning policies and issues outlined, a number of other recent reports have been commissioned by public agencies and all of which will have future implications for future planning policies and land use considerations.

2.1 Down District Economic Development Strategy: Investing in the Future 2001-06

The report aims to create a strategy to promote economic development in the Down District with a number of economic opportunities and challenges identified. Tourism is seen as the priority opportunity with policies and actions for increasing tourist numbers and revenue outlined. Strategies for the promotion of business, improving the skills base and rural development are also stated within the document.

In terms of the development of the District's towns the report notes that their attractiveness is vital to the local economy. In reference to this, the strategy aims to develop Downpatrick as, ***“an attractive place to work, live and visit; to develop the balanced growth of the town; and to achieve critical mass in population size and correlation between this and local services including a strong retail heart”***. As part of this process the report recommends the appointment of a Town Centre Manager for the district and the integration of planning and economic/tourism strategies.

The report continues by restating that **tourism is the major economic opportunity** for the District and its promotion relies on the **viability of the region's towns as tourist destinations**. Issues affecting this viability include an **effective transport system**, the **restoration and reuse of cultural heritage and architectural assets**, greater public sector interventions, **improved vehicle and parking access**, the creation of **social amenity areas** within towns and new methods of reducing crime. A specific issue regarding Downpatrick is the **small amount of quality hotel capacity** which results in accommodation revenues being dispersed elsewhere although the town itself is attracting visitors through **investing in museum and heritage services**.

The report concludes by stating that a new localism is sought for Down District in order to create a sense of identity for the region and population. It is hoped this will promote local services by, *“creating new local jobs and growing existing businesses”*.

2.2 Down in Focus: Economic Profiling to Promote Retail Investment

The report contains economic profiling information focusing on retailing in Downpatrick and Down as a whole. A wealth of data is provided regarding demographics, the jobs market, competitiveness and economic infrastructure. Through the analysis of this data the report provides a number of conclusions regarding the strengths and weakness of Downpatrick's retail offering and potential.

Demographics: Downpatrick's **population and retail catchment area population are growing** strongly although the absolute level is still small. While planning policies should derive a larger catchment population for Downpatrick this could be threatened by the pull of a regenerated Belfast and the reversal of PPS14. Indeed, while it is beneficial for the retail concentration for **people to live in the town and its retail catchment**, this needs to be accompanied by **job provision and greater activity** in the town.

Wider Economy: Downpatrick has a large proportion of jobs in the **public sector** with the overall jobs market strong in the town centre. **Tourism** is a strong element of the economy while Belfast's renaissance may derive benefits for Downpatrick. Within the town there is capacity to expand the economy and there are currently planned investments **to improve the retail offering**.

Despite these positive aspects the region as a whole has had a weak and relatively small economic base in recent years with a particularly underdeveloped professional services sector. In addition the general Northern Ireland retail economy is not expected to expand and the **high rates of out-commuting** are expected to rise thus exacerbating **retail leakage**.

Purchasing Power: The report concludes that while in Down there are high levels of employment, a large share of professionals, relatively competitive wages, high house prices and a large student population there are also some weaknesses. There are many part-time jobs, most of the wealthier residents are outside the Downpatrick retail catchment and like elsewhere in the UK and Ireland the housing market is 'cooling'.

Retail Offering and Competition: Downpatrick's **retail offering is assessed as comparable** to similar sized towns with a number of new arrivals adding a more youthful element to the provision. There has also been an expansion of the ASDA site and the Grove shopping centre.

Despite this, the retail offering compares unfavourably to surrounding larger centres, there is **little in way of an evening economy** and the offering is not as good for tourists and workers.

Labour Supply and Costs: Wages are amongst the lowest in Northern Ireland though the **labour force is well-qualified**. There is sufficient ‘slack’ in the labour market in and around Downpatrick to absorb new retailers and there is a willingness of residents who commute from the town to work where they live.

Retailer Behaviour and Perceptions: The report suggests that there is demand for specific retailers such as M&S and Tesco’s. Weaknesses in this regard include the fact commuters, car owners and young people shop less frequently in Downpatrick, the town’s **retail catchment is small**, it has a poor rating for key shopping factors and **quality not quantity of retail** is the problem.

Place: There are a number of planned investments to attract shoppers and address design issues which are supported by Down District Council. Despite this the **design** problems still exist and there are high crime levels in the town centre.

2.3 Down in Focus: Profile, Forecast and Competitiveness Report

The report was commissioned to provide an economic and competitiveness profile for Down District Council. Positives ascertained through research included an encouraging demographic profile (with net domestic in-migration), an expanding retailing offering, high resident employment, high levels of start-ups, expansion of higher education facilities and a boost to household wealth from the housing boom (though this situation has changed in recent years).

Economic weaknesses which the masterplan must seek to address include

- poor recent employment performance,
- large proportion of part-time jobs,
- small professional services and retail sectors,
- lack of multi-national firms,
- slow change of use from manufacturing premises to offices,
- poor outlook for the rural economy,
- over-representation of the public sector,
- high levels of skilled workers out-commuting,
- rising economic inactivity levels,
- high levels of crime in Downpatrick,



- poor affordability of housing,
- lack of an evening economy and
- traffic congestion

Future risks which the masterplan should take into account and address where possible include:

- the rise of Belfast in terms of competition for jobs and people,
- loss of public sector jobs through RPA reforms,
- planning reforms making Down less attractive residentially,
- downside retail contraction,
- insufficient tourism infrastructure,
- poor housing affordability affecting the area's demography,
- too little office space,
- continued high levels of out commuting, and
- no strategic body overseeing the regeneration process.

Opportunities for development which the masterplan should seek to maximise include:

- an increase in the housing allocation for the area,
- tourism,
- the creative sector,
- wish of skilled residents to work close to home,
- education and business linkages,
- pipeline developments, and
- the possibility of attracting businesses and skilled workers from Belfast.

2.4 Northern Ireland Key Settlement Study

In 2008 Experian was commissioned to undertake a study of key settlements in Northern Ireland in order to, “*examine the recent performance of the hubs against the drivers of urban economic competitiveness and identify their future roles, having regard to Northern Ireland’s strategic policy context*”. As part of the study Downpatrick was analysed under a number of categories:

Economy and Population

Employment in the Down District grew at a slower rate than the rest of Northern Ireland between 2001 to 2005 - only 0.3% compared to 1.7% for the rest of the country. While jobs in the manufacturing sector fell (-2.2%) employment in the service sector rose at an annual rate of 0.9% between 2001 and 2005.

Population rose by an average of 1.3% from 2001 to 2007 where its total was 69,190. This was an overall increase of 5,040 and produced a greater proportional rise than the Northern Irish average of 0.7% per annum.

Socio-economic demographic analysis revealed that the Mosaic Northern Ireland Group ‘**Better Off Families**’ (“*comfortable families whose main earners commute to well paid, white collar jobs in service industries*”) **are more prevalent in Down than other districts.** ‘**Commuting Country Type**’ is the most common sub-group in this category and are more than **3.5 times more common than the Northern Ireland average.**

There was an increase in households of approximately 2,800 to 25,200 between 2001 and 2006 (2.4% compared to the national average increase of 1.4%). It is estimated that an extra 10,500 housing units will be required in the period 1998 to 2015.

Connectivity

Downpatrick was ranked 16th for overall connectivity, scoring highly on its **closeness to Belfast and the accompanying airports** but **poorly on accessibility to key transport corridors, the railway network and ports.** It was also noted as being the 20th largest retail centre in Northern Ireland.

In terms of travel to work and retail connections:

- Only 43% of people working in Downpatrick were residents.
- Of those commuting out the greatest proportion (25%) worked in the BMA



- 45% of retail spend leaks out of Downpatrick to Newcastle, Newtownards, Lisburn and elsewhere in the BMA.

Skills

Research reveals that 23% of the total working population has a degree while the same percentage has no qualifications – in line with the national average.

Innovation

The report notes that new VAT registrations were 43 per 10,000 population in 2006 compared to the national average of 41 – this meant that Down was ranked 13th out of the rural districts.

Key Strengths and Weaknesses

The report identifies three key strengths of the Downpatrick economy:

- Skills
- Proximity to Belfast
- High population and Households Growth

Three weaknesses are also stated:

- Economic Diversity
- Low Employment Growth
- Connectivity

Future Strategic Role

It is assessed that **Downpatrick is well placed to accommodate a growing share of growth in housing and business** due to its expansion in these areas between 2001 and 2005. Data reveals **strong commuter linkages with the BMA** and the strengthening of this relationship may derive greater investment into the area.

It is also noted that the **tourism industry has the potential for significant growth** in future years and this would have multiple benefits for the Downpatrick economy. Due to its location and historic assets the area should be well marketed and sufficient **infrastructure and accommodation should be developed to support the touristy economy**. It is finally noted that Downpatrick, through **investment in education facilities**, has the chance to play a large role in the skills strategy of the District.



2.5 Conclusions

Analysis of the reports included in this section reveals a number of key themes regarding Downpatrick. From this identification it is possible to make recommendations regarding the formation of the masterplan.

Tourism

Tourism is assessed as “a major economic opportunity” and observers agree that a concerted effort should be made to promote Downpatrick as a tourist destination. In order to help make the town more tourist-friendly progress needs be made in the following areas:

- Accessibility to/from and within Downpatrick
- Investment in cultural assets and tourism infrastructure/services
- Greater amount of hotel capacity and evening economy within the town centre

Growing Economy

Downpatrick has the opportunity to expand its economy in the short to medium term but must try and limit the negative impacts of its current weaknesses (economic diversity, low employment growth, out-commuting) and build upon its strengths (growing population, increasing retail catchment, relatively skilled population). From these conclusions it is therefore possible to state a number of objectives Downpatrick needs to attain.

- A mutually beneficial relationship with Belfast with a reduction in skilled workers commuting to the capital
- Increase in private sector semi-skilled/skilled jobs in Downpatrick through maintained emphasis on education/skills and provision of infrastructure to attract modern business
- A more developed retail offering to attract new investment and people to the area

3. Retail Provision – **DRAFT - FIGURES TO BE VERIFIED**

There is an estimated 353,400 sq ft of retail space in the town centre comprising of approximately 179 units² as outlined in Table 1 below.

Type	Outlets			Floorspace		
	Number of units (D'patrick)	% of Units (D'patrick)	% of units (UK Average)	Number of units (D'patrick)	% of Units (D'patrick)	% of units (UK Average)
Convenience	15	8%	10%	80,000	23%	17%
Comparison	74	41%	44%	143,900	41%	50%
Service	53	30%	34%	65,400	19%	22%
Vacant	36	20%	11%	63,600	18%	10%
Miscellaneous	1	1%	1%	64,100	1%	1%
Total	179			353,400		

It is apparent that compared to the UK average, Downpatrick has significantly higher than average vacancy rates with 20% of units and 18% of floorspace vacant compared to a UK average of just 11% of units and 10% of floorspace. The town also has a slightly lower than average provision of comparison retailing (e.g. clothing, shoes, household etc) with only 41% of retail floorspace compared to an average of 50%. It is these comparison goods that shoppers will travel further to purchase in competitor destinations and this relatively low representation will be directly linked to the provision of major retailing, especially comparison, at nearby competing centres.

When compared with a number of other towns in Northern Ireland, it is again clear that Downpatrick is less well provided for in terms of retail offer. Its comparison retail offer is less than in other market or historic towns such as Armagh or Omagh but greater than Carrickfergus.

Town		Convenience		Comparison		Service		Vacant	
		F'space	% of total space	F'space	% of total space	F'space	% of total space	F'space	% of total space
Armagh	432,300	95,600	22%	193,300	45%	78,400	18%	51,600	12%
Belfast	2.3 m	88,700	4%	1.4m	65%	394,700	17%	303,300	13%
Carrickfergus	285,400	50,600	18%	93,700	33%	64,600	23%	74,600	26%
Downpatrick	353,400	80,000	23%	143,900	41%	65,400	18%	63,600	18%
Omagh	446,000	43,6000	10%	256,300	58%	91,100	20%	51,400	11%

² Sourced from Experian/Goad and based on the GOAD town centre boundary as surveyed at October 2007.

Downpatrick Masterplan

Stage-1 Transport Policy and Context

Report

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APPENDIX A Walking & Cycling Blueprints

1 Introduction

- 1.1 JMP Consultants Limited has prepared this document to inform the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan commissioned to identify a shared vision for taking the town forward by encouraging private development, supporting local trade and enterprise and providing an attractive environment for all.
- 1.2 This report outlines the transportation policy context as it relates to Downpatrick in addition to some preliminary analysis.

Masterplan Objectives

- 1.3 The Department for Social Development Minister, Margaret Ritchie, approved on 12th December 2008 funding for an evaluation of the regeneration potential of Downpatrick Town Centre. The evaluation, as detailed by the Minister, will:
 - Provide an analysis of development opportunities and land use;
 - Provide advice on appropriate transportation, access and parking changes for the town;
 - Establish strategic regeneration objectives; and
 - Identify key town centre sites and the most appropriate form, and timing, of development of those sites.
- 1.4 The objectives for the Masterplan align with wider policies identified for Downpatrick and these are detailed at the outset of the masterplan process.
- 1.5 Transportation contributes to various objectives within the Masterplan; however, those which are specifically transport related are detailed in Table 1.1 below.
- 1.6 These are reproduced from the Department for Social Development brief, the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (Adopted Plan), the Masterplan Team's understanding of both the brief and town centre and the Scope of Work for the masterplan.

Table 1.1 Masterplan Objectives

Main Objective	Sub-objective
<p>Restructuring & Redevelopment: ..promote approaches to design, development, movement and management that is sensitive, practical, achievable & complementary.....</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist in the regeneration of Downpatrick, for example, by extending its town centre boundary and by the identification of a number of development opportunity sites • Accommodate a balance of land uses
<p>Retail & Residential Investment: To promote investment in quality niche retail business which will set Downpatrick apart from its neighbouring competitor locations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision in Market Street and Irish Street and other streets must be improved, strengthened and diversified, creating an increasingly distinctive retail environment for the town. • Addresslocal issues such as the limited local catchment area of the town, accessibility of competitor locations
<p>To develop residential activity in the town centre to offer an attractive choice of property and to strengthen the town as the economic driving force of Down District.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allocate sufficient land in the town to provide for approximately 3100 units over the Area Plan period • protect the heritage and landscapes around the west and north sides of Downpatrick
<p>Arts Culture & Heritage: To build on Downpatrick's rich culture, arts and heritage thereby realising the areas full potential as a captivating tourism destination.....</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote linked visits between the new Visitor Centre, Cathedral, Museum and Railway, generating a 'critical mass' of interest around which other opportunities can be promoted. • Ensure that the experience and sustainable use of locations of interest are not undermined by vehicular and pedestrian circulation.
<p>Improving the Environment & Attracting Visitors: To create a high quality, safe environment...and improve the town centre visitor offer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a legible hierarchy of public realm, building on the agreed initial phase of investment and as appropriate influencing future works.
<p>Access & Movement: To build on the proposed Public Realm scheme to improve access to and within the town centre and make the town more user-friendly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide for a major distributor road..with...release of housing lands to connect the Strangford Road with the Ardglass Road....which could also create an alternative route around the town, avoiding the town centre • Distribution and connections relating to existing parking provision must be robustly addressed to reduce the volume of circulating vehicles and to better meet the needs of visitors, shoppers and local people. • Consider opportunities to mitigate the impact of through traffic. • Articulate a clear transportation strategy, including parking, providing ease of access and circulation.....give consideration to the viability of establishing Link Road connections....
<p>Area Planning: To pro-actively advance the medium-long term planning framework for the area in order to maximise regeneration and development activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting clear delivery mechanisms of funding strategies for the major elements of infrastructure, such as the provision of a Link Road, where options, including forward-funding and developer contributions are evaluated.

2 Downpatrick Transport Network

- 2.1 This section outlines the strategic transport network in and around Downpatrick providing the context for the transport policy review.
- 2.2 Downpatrick is the main administrative and service centre for Down District and provides a wide range of retail facilities. Commercial floorspace in the town has recently expanded with the arrival of a number of new commercial developments including a new shopping centre at Ballydugan Road and other multi-national and regional stores.
- 2.3 The main road network in Downpatrick converges on the Town Centre, at a complex junction of Market Street, Irish Street, Scotch Street, English Street and Church Street. As a result, both Market Street and Irish Street function as local distributors for traffic to and from residential and commercial areas, and as routes for through traffic, in addition to their role as shopping areas.

Strategic Road Network

- 2.4 Downpatrick's location is remote from the main motorway network or Key-Link-Corridors in Northern Ireland as it lies to the east of the main link between Belfast and Dublin. The town is therefore connected to Belfast via a Link Corridor (A road) and not by a Key-Link-Corridor type road.

Local Road Network

- 2.5 Downpatrick serves a large, mainly rural hinterland dependent on the private car for travel to access the town. As mentioned above, a number of roads converge in Downpatrick:
- A25 Newry to Strangford: runs north-south through the town;
 - A7 is the main route to Belfast and it starts in the town (designated as a link corridor);
 - A22 to Comber; and
 - B1 to Ardglass and the south.
- 2.6 The main north-south route through Downpatrick is Class A (Belfast Road, Church Street and Market Street).
- 2.7 Commercial activity in the town centre is focused along Market Street and St Patrick's Avenue, with some activities on parts of Irish Street.
- 2.8 Irish Street and Killough Road link with Market Street at the Irish Street/Market Street junction and both are Class B roads.
- 2.9 In addition, there are a number of C roads in the town centre which act as links between the main routes. Market Street and Irish Street, as a result, function as local traffic distributor roads, in addition to their role as shopping areas.

Walking and Cycling

- 2.10 Pedestrian activity in the town centre is concentrated on Market Street; and sections of Irish Street, English street and St Patrick's Avenue;

- 2.11 Pedestrian activity is also apparent at Stream Street/ Killough Road junction, which serves Downe Hospital.
- 2.12 Pedestrian activity can also be observed around the local schools in town and on routes between the schools and the bus station.
- 2.13 Downpatrick's cycling infrastructure is limited to some tracks on the outskirts of the town which do not extend into the town centre.

Public Transport

- 2.14 There are no formal taxi ranks in Downpatrick and public transport is generally facilitated by local and inter-urban bus services.
- 2.15 The role of Downpatrick as a hub for the surrounding area is no better portrayed than in the extensive network of Principle Bus Services through the bus station. Belfast is the primary destination and is supported by local and hourly Goldliner services and all other major destinations are serviced by less frequent services.
- 2.16 Locally, however, key junctions affecting network operations are the Market Street/ St Patrick's Avenue traffic signals and Market Street/ Irish Street traffic signals. Congestion through this area can lead to significant impacts on buses meeting their timetables.

3 Policy Framework

Introduction

- 3.1 The process of preparing a masterplan for Downpatrick will require taking cognisance of the planning and transport policy framework in Northern Ireland. This section of the report identifies the appropriate elements of policy which, with regard to transportation, will influence the masterplanning process.
- 3.2 The following documents provide the main strategic and policy framework relevant to Downpatrick:
- Planning Policy Statements – With regard to transportation, PPS3 – Transport and Movement, PPS5 – Town Centres and Retailing and PPS13 – Transportation are the principle documents.
 - Shaping Our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 (RDS): This document contains a Spatial Development Strategy and related Strategic Planning Guidelines which aim to provide long-term policy directions, from a strategic and spatial perspective. A key element of the strategy is the emphasis on the development of a modern integrated transport system.
 - Regional Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 (RTS): The RTS identifies strategic transportation investment priorities and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives for the period 2002-2012. The purpose of the RTS is to support the RDS and to make a significant contribution to achieving the longer-term vision for transportation.
 - Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (Adopted Plan 2009): The Plan takes forward the RDS by providing a policy framework and land use proposals that will be used to guide development decisions within the Ards and Down Area over the Plan period.
 - Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (RSTNTP): The RSTNTP consists of proposals for the maintenance, management and development of the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN). The RSTN comprises the complete rail network, five key transport corridors, four link corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network.
 - Sub-Regional Transport Plan (Draft) 2015 and its Technical Supplement for Down District Council: The Sub-Regional Transport Plan completes the coverage of Transport Plans. It contains practical blueprints for the development of sustainable transport networks in main towns and cities and guidance for improvements in the rural areas. It presents a balanced set of proposals for improvements in local transport including walking, cycling, public transport and highway measures which will contribute to an improvement in mobility for all, whilst seeking to minimise adverse environmental impacts.
 - Ferguson McIlveen LLP, “Development Plan for Downpatrick” (2006): The plan sets out a Vision for the future of Downpatrick Town Centre to bring forward ideas for appropriate further physical and environmental improvements to the town that will consolidate the progress made and address ongoing issues.
- 3.3 The implications of the above policies and guidance are outlined within this report.

Planning Policy Statements (PPS)

3.4 The most relevant Planning Policy Statements to the Downpatrick Masterplan process in terms of transportation, as published by the Department of the Environment (DOE) and the Department for Regional Development (DRD) respectively are:

- PPS3 (Revised) Access, Movement and Parking (DOE February 2005);
- PPS5 Town Centres and Retailing;
- PPS13 Transportation and Land Use (DRD February 2005).

PPS3 – Access, Movement and Parking

3.5 PPS3 sets out the Department's planning policies for vehicular and pedestrian access, transport assessment, the protection of transport routes and parking. It forms an important element in the integration of transport and land use planning.

3.6 PPS3 identifies its main objectives as:

- promote road safety, in particular, for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users;
- restrict the number of new accesses and control the level of use of existing accesses onto Protected Routes;
- make efficient use of road space within the context of promoting modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport;
- ensure that new development offers a realistic choice of access by walking, cycling and public transport, recognising that this may be less achievable in some rural areas;
- ensure the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired, are taken into account in relation to accessibility to buildings and parking provision;
- promote the provision of adequate facilities for cyclists in new development;
- promote parking policies that will assist in reducing reliance on the private car and help tackle growing congestion; and
- protect routes required for new transport schemes including disused transport routes with potential for future reuse.

3.7 PPS 3 contains the current regional planning policy in relation to the designated Protected Routes Network, which is to restrict existing accesses onto selected roads. Protected Routes within the Plan area are shown on the relevant Plan Strategy and settlement maps and include the following two routes relevant to Downpatrick:

- A25 Downpatrick – Clough – Castlewellan – A25/B8 junction
- A7 Downpatrick – Crossgar – Saintfield – Carryduff

PPS5 (draft): Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments

- 3.8 The key objective of PPS5 (draft) 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 for Northern Ireland 2025”*.
- 3.9 PPS5 (draft) requires an assessment of the vitality and viability of a town centre, such as Downpatrick by undertaking a town centre “health check”, which includes an assessment of accessibility, “the ease and convenience of means of travel, including the level of public transport services, the availability of car parking, and the provision for disabled people, pedestrians and cyclists”.
- 3.10 It is envisaged that the ‘health check’ will help to inform the wider town centre strategy aimed at addressing issues such as encouraging greater accessibility, particularly for non-car modes.
- 3.11 PPS5 (draft) identifies that, *“Town centre enhancement should seek where possible, to facilitate improved connections between car parks, transport interchanges and the town centre in the interests of pedestrian movement”*. This is clearly applicable to the Downpatrick town centre masterplan.

PPS13 – Transportation and Land Use

- 3.12 PPS13 assists the implementation of the RDS by guiding the integration of transportation and land use particularly in relation to the preparation of development and transport plans for towns such as Downpatrick. Its primary objective as the integration of land use planning and transport by:
- Promoting sustainable transport choices;
 - Promoting accessibility for all; and
 - Reducing the need to travel, especially by private car.
- 3.13 The above objectives are complimented by the following secondary objectives:
- make efficient use of road space within the context of promoting modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport;
 - ensure that new development offers a realistic choice of access by walking, cycling and public transport, recognising that this may be less achievable in some rural areas;
 - ensure the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired are taken into account in relation to accessibility to buildings and parking provision;
 - promote the provision of adequate facilities for cyclists in new development;
 - promote parking policies that will assist in reducing reliance on the private car and help tackle growing congestion; and
 - protect routes required for new transport schemes including disused transport routes with potential for future reuse.
- 3.14 Clearly these overall planning policies are encapsulated in the objectives and sub-objectives indicated in Section 1.

Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025

- 3.15 The RDS contains a Spatial Development Strategy and related Strategic Planning Guidelines which aim to provide long-term policy directions, from a strategic and spatial perspective. A key element of the strategy is the emphasis on the development of a modern integrated transport system.
- 3.16 The RDS provides the overarching framework for development plans and a long term vision for Northern Ireland. Central to the RDS is the principle of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone including future generations by providing a balanced and equitable pattern of sustainable development for the whole of Northern Ireland.
- 3.17 Downpatrick is identified as a main hub located within the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) hinterland, where: *“The main towns of Antrim, Banbridge, Craigavon, Downpatrick, Larne and Newtownards will, to varying degrees depending on their capacity and growth potential, develop as counter-magnets to the Metropolitan Area.”* (page 63).
- 3.18 This principle of acting as a counter magnet significantly contributes to the overall transportation objectives of the plan, seeking to ensure that the Down District’s reliance on Belfast is reduced through the delivery of land-uses in the town that reduce the need to travel.
- ALSO need to emphasise that the counter magnet principle means accommodating more movement into Downpatrick as a destination than out to Belfast.
- 3.19 The role of the St Patrick’s theme and its connection to Downpatrick is also identified under Supporting the Growth of Tourism Policies: ECON 8.1 “Enhance and develop the ‘distinctiveness’ of the Region as a key element of its tourist product”.
- 3.20 The aims of the RDS in relation to Downpatrick are fully reflected in the Masterplanning objectives as are the importance of transport connections.

Regional Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012

- 3.21 The Regional Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 (RTS) was published in July 2002 and it identifies strategic transportation investment priorities, sets out the budgets and types of transportation measures to be implemented and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives for the period 2002-2012. The role of the RTS is to support the RDS and to achieve the longer-term vision for transportation, which is, *“to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy, and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone’s quality of life”* (paragraph 2, page 1).
- 3.22 The RTS includes for major investment in highway and public transport infrastructure. Downpatrick is located on a link corridor to the Eastern Seaboard Key Transport Corridor The investment envisaged in the RTS which will have a direct impact on Downpatrick is _____ and the major refurbishment of the town’s bus station (complete).

THERE are apparently some improvement proposals along the A7 to Belfast but I have been unable to find these. They may be in BMAP (BMTP) if closer to Carryduff. There is a comment to the Downpatrick Council in the RS Report that one of the improvements is now included in the investment proposals.

Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (Adopted 2009)

3.23 The purpose of the Plan is “...to guide development decisions within Ards Borough and Down District over the Plan period 2000 -2015”.

3.24 The objectives of the plan which affect transportation are:

- to facilitate sustainable patterns of growth and development throughout the Plan area in accordance with the sustainability related strategic objectives of the RDS;
- to promote Newtownards and Downpatrick as main towns within Northern Ireland and to strengthen their role as the principal administrative, trade, employment and residential centres within the Plan area;
- to facilitate appropriate development within existing urban areas that will promote urban renaissance, create ease of access to services and community facilities, and to maximise the use of existing infrastructure;
- to facilitate integration between land-use planning and transportation in order to reduce congestion and the need for car journeys and to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, in particular walking and cycling;
- to promote vital and viable town centres.

3.25 The Ards and Down Plan area contains a portion of the RSTN including A7 Belfast-Saintfield-Downpatrick (Link Corridor)

3.26 The town is located on the A7 route linking Belfast, Saintfield, Crossgar and Downpatrick. It is located 35km from Belfast, 16km from Ballynahinch and 19km from Newcastle. It is also the County town and administrative centre of Down District, with an estimated population in 2001 of 10,320. Downpatrick and the whole of Down District is defined in the RDS as part of the Belfast Metropolitan Area “travel-to-work” hinterland.

3.27 Downpatrick is designated for Town Centre, Local Centre, and Primary Retail Core. Development proposals within Town Centres, Primary Retail Cores and Local Centres will be assessed in the context of prevailing regional planning policy and other relevant policies contained in the relevant settlement sections in the Plan

3.28 With regard to transportation, Policy TRAN 1 Planning protection for road schemes indicates that planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the availability of land required for the following road schemes in Downpatrick which were identified on the relevant settlement maps: Strangford Road – Saul Road – Ballyhornan Road – Struell Wells Road – Ardglass Road Link Road, Downpatrick

Land Use – Transport Proposals

3.29 The key land-use and transport proposals that will impact on specific transportation objectives are:

- Belfast Road Business Park – There is a 33.9 hectare, serviced industrial estate on the Belfast Road with 19.83 hectares of remaining developable land.
- Housing - The Plan zones approximately 141.41 hectares of land for additional housing in Downpatrick within the Plan period; these are focussed in the north east of the town. A new distributor road would be formed through these housing proposals. Delivery of the complete route is highly dependent of housing development coming forward including some land which

is deemed to be Phase 2 housing. Therefore, delivery of the route within the plan period is uncertain.

- Proposal DK 17 – The Strangford Road /Saul Road Link which includes the construction of the development road from Rathkeltair Road to Saul Road, the upgrading of the northern section of Rathkeltair Road between Strangford Road and the development road, and the up-grading of the Rathkeltair Road / Strangford Road junction. The road alignment has been identified to ensure maximum integration within the local and wider landscape.
- 3.30 A new bus terminal for Downpatrick was completed and opened in June 2005, which provides a range of enhanced facilities on the existing site at Market Street to meet the needs of bus passengers using services to and from Downpatrick.

Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015

- 3.31 The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (RSTNTP) consists of proposals for the maintenance, management and development of the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN). The RSTN comprises the complete rail network, five key transport corridors, four link corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network, including the A7 (Classed as Link Corridor) linking Downpatrick with the Belfast Metropolitan Area.
- 3.32 While there is some reference to improvement along the A7 corridor, further investigation is required to determine where these proposals are and when investment for these would become available.
- 3.33 Ards and Down Council produced a letter of objection to the plan dated 14th March 2005 in which the council raised a number of concerns about the plan. The letter emphasised that Downpatrick is one of only two towns with main hub status which is not on the key transport network (only on a link corridor).
- 3.34 In particular, the Council raised the following issues:
- The adequacy of roads proposals for Downpatrick especially as they were about getting people out to Belfast whereas Counter Magnets should be about getting in to Downpatrick;
 - The absence of provision for traffic management and car parking in the town centre; and
 - The adequacy of the provisions for environmental improvements and key developments in town.
- 3.35 The RTS identified funding to refurbish and improve access to bus stations in Other Urban Areas covered by the SRTP. Downpatrick bus station was listed as one of these stations.

Sub-Regional Transport Plan (Draft) 2015 and its Technical Supplement for Down District Council:

- 3.36 The plan highlights the current principal problems facing Downpatrick as being:
- Poor pedestrian links to/ from major car parks coupled with inadequate footway provision and crossing facilities in the town centre;
 - Excessive delays at signalised junctions during peak hours and especially at the Irish Street/ Market Street junction; and

- Drivers' preference for on street parking causes illegal parking and traffic congestion.

Proposed Public Transport Improvements

3.37 There are 7 public transport improvement schemes listed in the Sub-regional Transport Plan:

- Improved walk/cycle access to bus/rail station or principal stops
- Refurbishment of bus station
- Improved local bus services
- Bus stop improvement strategy
- Increased parking at bus/rail station
- Taxi stand
- Transport programme for People with Disabilities

Local Bus Network Service Coverage (Subject to review)

3.38 The plan lists four bus routes operating from the Downpatrick Bus Station: 315, 315A, 315B and 315C. A map showing the routes of these local bus services is presented in Figure 3.2.

Development Plan for Downpatrick (Ferguson McIlveen LLP 2006)

3.39 Key issues considered in this development plan include:

- Vehicular access and circulation
- Parking
- Pedestrian access and circulation
- Dereliction and urban blight
- Restoration and preservation of the built heritage
- Commercial regeneration
- Open Space
- Enhancing the opportunities for Tourism
 - Lack of or poor pedestrian connections between key destinations
 - Limited access and parking at certain sites
 - Limited signage and information
 - Undeveloped assets e.g. lookout point at Gallows Hill or The Quoile River and its floodplain.

3.40 The plan then proposed an action plan detailing specific actions with relevant priorities attached to them. The actions were split into: General Actions and Specific Project actions as detailed as detailed below in Tables 3.1 & 3.2 respectively. (Example of proposals for Area 6 – St. Patrick's Grove Area is presented in Figure 3.1)

Table 3.1 General Actions

Ref	General Actions	Comment	Priority H M L
1	Establish Steering Committee	Role and make up to be agreed	H
2	Provide staff/ resources to support/ manage the delivery of the Vision		H
3	Public Realm/ Streetscape Improvements for town centre & alleyways identified in the Vision	Liaise with DSD. Prepare sketch designs/ masterplans & cost estimates /economic appraisal	H
4	Development Sites	Liaison with DSD Planning/ RS & private sector. Prepare Masterplans if appropriate	M
5	Shop Front Improvements Initiative	Investigate possible funding. Develop Design Guide	M
6	Living over Shops Initiative	Application pending	H
7	Townscape Heritage Initiative	Liaison with EHS/ HLF. Identify potential projects	M
8	Visitor Signage & Information	Develop Strategy prepare costs. Identify funding	M
9	Sub-Regional Transportation Plan 2015	Initiate detail discussions with Roads Service regarding projects / implementation etc	H

Table 3.2 Specific Projects

Ref	Specific / Projects	Comments	Comments	Priority H M L
1	The Grove refurbishment	Liaison with EHS/ HLF/ Others	Develop Masterplan & Cost Estimates	H
2	Quoile River Park	Liaison with EHS/ HLF/ Others	Develop Masterplan and Cost Estimates	H
3	Gallows Hill Open Space & Landmark Feature	Liaison with Arts Council/ HLF	Prepare design competition & budget costs	M
4	Belfast Road Gateway/ Entrance to Town	Liaison with DSD	Prepare detail plans & costs (On going)	H
5	Ballydugan Road/ Entrance to Town	Liaison with DSD	Prepare detail plans & costs	M
6	Mount Crescent New Car Park	Liaison with Planning & Roads Service	Develop outline plans & cost estimates	M
7	Cathedral New Car Park	Liaison with Planning & Roads Service	Develop outline plans & cost estimates	M

Figure 3.1 St. Patrick's Grove Proposal (Area 6)



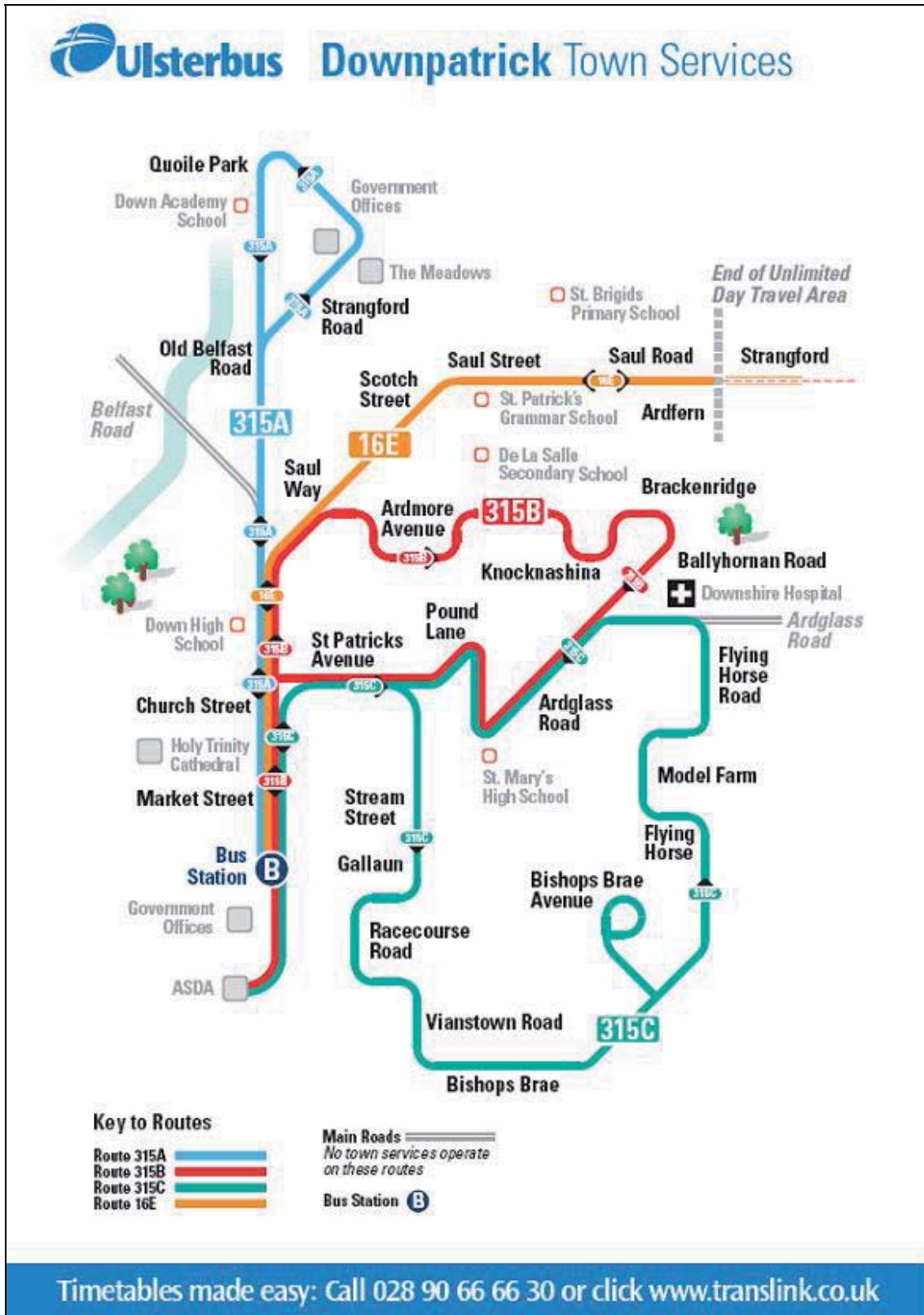
Source: Ferguson McIlveen LLP 2006

Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP):

- 3.41 As highlighted in Chapter 5 – Public Transport of the BMTP: *“The success of the proposed pilot EWAY¹ scheme would dictate the extent, if any, of further development of the rapid transit network. The 2015 Plan identifies three other possible routes, which it is proposed to plan in detail for implementation after the 2015 Plan period.”*
- 3.42 One of these three routes is the *“SuperRoute”* on the Downpatrick Corridor (MTC C) in Belfast. Decisions on the schemes will be subject the normal processes.
- 3.43 It is, however, highly unlikely that the SuperRoute will ever reach Downpatrick as it will terminate at Cairnshill from where local bus connections will radiate. In reality the Cairnshill Park & Ride is the most likely means of Downpatrick residents accessing the SuperRoute.

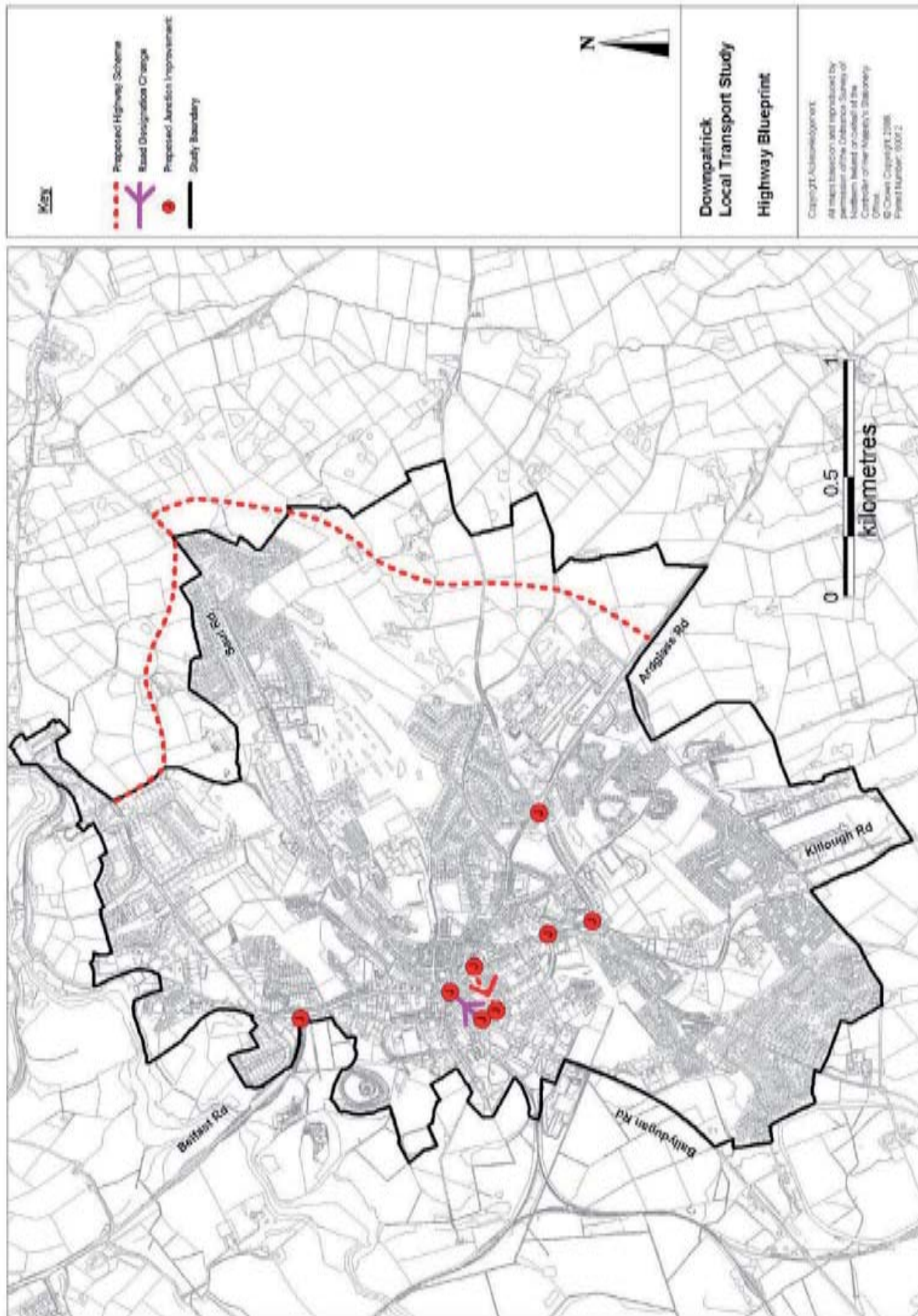
¹ EWAY pilot rapid transit proposal from Belfast City Centre to Hollywood Arches and Dundonald (envisaged within the 2015 plan of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan)

Figure 3.2 Downpatrick Bus Services Routes



Source: Translink

Figure 3.3 Sub-Regional Transport Plan – Transport Proposals in Downpatrick



Sub-Regional Transport Plan (Draft) 2015 – Technical Supplement (Down District Council)

Conclusions

- 3.44 Regional, local and planning policy objectives are all directed towards an integrated transport strategy which considers, in order of priority, walk, cycle, public transport and finally the car. It will be necessary to ensure that in developing a masterplan for Downpatrick that these principles are adopted and translated into the masterplan.
- 3.45 While the focus of the masterplan will be the town centre, the wider accessibility to link with employment, retail, services and tourism catchments will require to be considered. Ards and Down Area Plan proposals direct housing to three areas in Phase 1 of the Housing Plan:
- 24.65 Hectares at The Meadows, Strangford Road
 - 51.63 Hectares between Saul Road and Ballyhornan Road
 - 10.66 Hectares north of Ardenlee Gardens and Saul Road
- 3.46 Phase 2 direct housing to one area of 13.03ha between Ballyhornan Road and Struell Wells Road.
- 3.47 The Down Area Plan 1982-1997 zoned areas of land for industry within Downpatrick and some capacity remained within these areas. Lands zoned in the new Plan for industry include the residue of lands previously zoned and undeveloped at the commencement of preparation of the Plan.
- 3.48 An additional area, located adjoining the existing industrial area at the Flying Horse, has also been identified for industrial development.
- 3.49 The delivery of the Downpatrick new road link proposal will be tightly related and part of the overall delivery of Phase-1 Housing. The link road will be essential to relieving the town centre from through traffic between the coastline and Belfast.
- 3.50 In addition, it is recognised that circulating traffic is a key issue in the town centre and the masterplan analysis will include a review of existing transport data consolidated with site validation relative to pedestrian, cycle, public transport, vehicular movement and parking. The existing parking, signage, linkages and transport infrastructure including key road and public transport facilities will be assessed.

4 Key Transportation Issues

Census Data

- 4.1 Review of the national database 'Census' for Downpatrick (Ward 203) revealed that: 58% of people who live in Downpatrick work in Down, 23% work in Belfast and 79% of people who work in Downpatrick live in Down. A summary of the Census review is provided in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Downpatrick Census Data

District Council Area	Where people who live in Downpatrick Work	Where people who work in Downpatrick live
Down	58%	79%
Belfast	23%	4%
Castlereagh	5%	2%
Lisburn	4%	3%
Ards	2%	4%
Other	8%	8%
Grand Total (All people)	100% (Total of: 3030 people)	100% (Total of: 4264 people)

Source: Census National Database

Downe/ Downshire Hospital Development:

- 4.2 The Downshire Site is located approximately 3/4 mile south east of Downpatrick town centre. The site is approximately 52 acres and comprises approximately 22,450 m² of accommodation including the Grade B1 Listed Downshire Hospital.
- 4.3 This proposal is for a masterplan development of the site with regard to the new Downe Hospital, new Children's Home, PSNI Station, Downpatrick District Council Offices and residential developments.
- 4.4 Down Lisburn Trust/Strategic Investment Board acknowledged in "Stage-1 Outline Business Case for Downshire Site Redevelopment, February 2007" that Roads Service has serious concerns about the capacity of the existing road network and that a Transportation Assessment (TA) would be prepared following agreement with them on the likely effects of the traffic generated by the proposals and the scope of the assessment.
- 4.5 The TA would give Roads Service the necessary reassurance and identify off-site infrastructure improvements and the planning of them. It would include the assessment of existing/future public transport, walking and cycling facilities in addition to vehicle flows to and from the site in relation to the impact on the wider infrastructure.
- 4.6 As presented in their Corporate Finance Report on the "Downshire Site Redevelopment Options Appraisal, February 2007", the trust in completing Stage 2 of the 'Equality and Human Rights Screening Template' stated that:

"physical accessibility in relation to the transport links are being progressed, bus routes will be added to the site and the possibility of residential development, shops and a school all being developed in the immediate area is anticipated to result in further participation/uptake by groups"

- 4.7 Down Lisburn Trust, Down District Council, PSNI and Road Services have held several meetings since January 2006 to discuss the impacts of the proposed development on the existing road infrastructure.
- 4.8 Road Service proposed a number of junction improvements, traffic management measures and capital improvement schemes. The following schemes were identified as priority schemes
- Junction improvements:
 - Ardglass Road/ Ballyhornan Road
 - Ardglass Road/ Killough Road
 - Collins Corner
 - Other improvements:
 - St. Patrick's Avenue/ Vianstown Road (Cinema Link)
 - Town Centre Link Road
 - St. Patrick's Avenue/ Market Street Junction Improvements
 - Town Centre One-way System
- 4.9 The total cost of the schemes was estimated around £3 million. Road Services proposed that Down Lisburn Trust contribute £0.5 million and Down District Council and PSNI contribute £0.4 million – A total of £0.9 million, around 30% of the total cost.

Key Town Centre Transport Issues

- 4.10 Further to investigating the current situation in Downpatrick's town centre and the review of the Development Plan for Downpatrick report by Ferguson McIlveen LLP 2006, a number of key transportation issues have emerged, some of which are longstanding issues that require to be overcome to ensure an effective masterplan can be delivered.

Vehicular access and circulation

- 4.11 Downpatrick is an historic market town connecting from its centre to its hinterland by a series of radial routes. Most local traffic has therefore to converge in the town centre as there are few internal concentric connecting roads. Additional problems:
- Lack of internal link roads between the radial routes to accommodate locally generated traffic
 - Most through traffic has to use Market Street
 - Congestion and excessive delays at key junctions particularly the Irish St/ Market St. junction
 - Historic narrow streets
 - Illegal parking
 - Service vehicles double parking
- 4.12 Discussions with Road Service highlighted that the town currently suffers from congestion with town centre junctions frequently blocking back. The operational performance is particularly sensitive and small changes in traffic can make a difference in network performance. One of the key issues is the historic nature of the road network which does

not cater well for larger vehicles. Negotiating some town centre turning movements can be difficult for large vehicles and can lead to blocking back.

4.13 Road Service also noted that there are several town centre rat run routes used by locals to avoid congestion and commented on the radial routes as follows:

- On-street parking affects traffic capacity at main junctions;
- Some junctions are not used to full effect and appear to have a blocking effect, raising issues over effectiveness. This may partly be due to the lack of coordination with other nearby junctions;
- Pinch points along some routes affecting movement in and out of the town;
- High volume of buses on some routes;
- Right turn movements on main routes delay through traffic; and
- St. Patrick's Avenue was previously considered for use as part of a town centre one way system but it is deemed to be too long a diversion to be effective.

Parking

4.14 The Sub-regional Transport Plan 2015 states that there are 1861 publicly available parking spaces within the town: 889 on street and 972 off street in car parks of different sizes. Yet, while some are regularly full others, even on busy days, are not. There are a number of reasons for this and specific parking issues identified include:

- Peripheral car parks are not conveniently located to destinations as most are far away with few pedestrian links to the town centre;
- Poor Pedestrian links between car parks and destinations (including the town centre);
- The north of the town is not well served with car parks;
- The need to rationalise and improve existing car parks;
- The main car park at The Grove is poorly laid out and confusing;
- Poor access and signage;
- on street parking is detracting from areas of interest, for example the approach to the Cathedral, Opportunities to provide new off street car park facilities should be pursued.
- All day on street parking.
- The possibility of the provision of a Park and Share facility on Belfast Road.

Pedestrian access and circulation

4.15 Downpatrick's historic narrow streets are dominated by vehicles both parked and moving. Wider footpaths are mainly provided in areas that have been recently developed.

4.16 Unlike many similar historic towns, Downpatrick has few connections to the town centre from peripheral car parks are often complicated. To compete with other town centres and out of town shopping centres, Downpatrick must improve accessibility for pedestrians. Provision of pedestrian space requires to be balanced against the need to accommodate vehicular movements. A series of paths and cycleways separate from the road network is also required.

Public Transport

- 4.17 As mentioned before in this report, a new bus terminal for Downpatrick was completed and opened in June 2005, which provides a range of enhanced facilities on the existing site at Market Street to meet the needs of bus passengers using services to and from Downpatrick
- 4.18 Ulsterbus Town Services: 315, 315A, 315B and 315C operate in Downpatrick. Other bus services linking the town with various parts of the region are summarised in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below.

Table 4.2 Ulsterbus Downpatrick Services

Service Number	Serving
Service 14	Downpatrick – Crossgar
Service 15	Downpatrick – Belfast
Service 16A & 16B	Downpatrick – Ballyhornan
Service 16C	Downpatrick – Ballykinlar
Service 16D	Downpatrick – Ballylucas
Service 16E	Downpatrick – Strangford
Service 17	Downpatrick – Newcastle
Service 19	Downpatrick – Ballynahinch
Service 305A	Downpatrick – Newcastle
Service 305A	Downpatrick – Newtownards
Service 406:	Downpatrick – Kilcief - Downpatrick (Lecale Rambler)

Table 4.3 Goldline Express Downpatrick Services

Service Number	Serving
Service 215	Downpatrick - Belfast
Service 240	Downpatrick - Newry
Service 240 / 200	Downpatrick – Dublin / Dublin Airport

- 4.19 Discussions with Translink highlighted some key issue with regard to service operations particularly the level of town centre congestion. Bus manoeuvrability around the key town centre junctions is acceptable until something out of the ordinary occurs, for example, where a bus and other large vehicle meet on a confined section of the network.
- 4.20 Translink noted that a significant volume of traffic is circulating to find an appropriate car parking space and the removal of this traffic would lead to reduced traffic volumes.
- 4.21 Discussions also indicated that the bus service network currently operating in the town is not proving to be financially sustainable. This is as much to do with fare structuring as patronage, despite patronage being very low on some routes. Restructuring of funding provision will make continuing with these services challenging. Therefore, as development emerges in the town, Translink will be seeking to secure funding to support services.
- 4.22 Meanwhile, however, a cycle of declining passenger numbers and infrequent services might continue spiralling where infrequent services would drive passengers away and low

passenger demand making frequent services commercially unviable. If Downpatrick is to achieve its full potential, intervention is urgently needed to break this cycle and kick-start increasing passenger numbers to provide a reliable and attractive service that commuters can depend.

- 4.23 Consideration requires to be given to bus priority measures to improve the throughput of bus movements from the bus station. However, it is recognised that within the historic core area reallocating road space to buses would be challenging.
- 4.24 It is also recognised that the proposed one way system by Road Services could bring benefits to bus operations. One key problem which would remain would be on Edward Street, where bus progression is regularly affected. This is the direct route to the Downshire Hospital site where the possible accumulation of public service facilities will increase public transport demand.

Road Service Schemes

Downpatrick's Western Bypass

- 4.25 As part of the development of the area plan, the effects of a western bypass proposal around Downpatrick were examined by Faber Maunsell in 2005 which included consideration of traffic and environmental impacts in addition to cost benefit analysis.
- 4.26 The final report concluded that the proposal:
- Would reduce traffic in the centre of Downpatrick but overall would slightly increase the vehicle kilometres travelled on the highway network;
 - Would have major adverse impacts on landscape and the heritage of historical sites as the alignment travels through areas of significant archaeological interest; and
 - Has a negative Net Present Value (NPV) where the costs are greater than the benefits (as calculated in COBA10).
- 4.27 In comparison, the performance indices for an eastern link road show that the Strangford Road to Ardglass Road link out performs the western bypass in all the three criteria considered above.
- 4.28 The report also noted that the majority of land use zonings from the Area Plan were located to the east of Downpatrick and development of these areas will depend on the Eastern Link Road. The road would also be beneficial to the Downshire Hospital proposals and associated traffic.
- 4.29 The Road Service Interim Progress Report To Down District Council (Autumn 2008) also included the following completed/planned schemes and those relevant to this study are detailed below.

Traffic and Network Development – Major Works:

- 4.30 **A7 Downpatrick to Belfast Road:** Roads Service confirmed that improvement of the stretch of the A7 between Dorans Rock and Rowallane can be accommodated into their improvement strategy for this route. Options for achieving a satisfactory improvement at this location are being prepared for consideration but Roads Service could not indicate when this scheme will be implemented.

Traffic and Network Development

Traffic Calming

- 4.31 **Saul Street /Saul Road:** This scheme will provide a series of additional road humps/speed cushions from its junction with Scotch Street, including amendments to the existing traffic calming measures. Road Service recently completed an extensive letter drop to all affected residents/ local elected representatives seeking comments and all issues have been addressed to allow the formal consultation process to proceed.

Traffic Management

- **Irish Street / Market Street:** In order to improve traffic progression through the town centre Roads Service was investigating the provision of an additional traffic lane in Irish Street on the approach to Market Street/Church Street. This will require the provision of additional 'no waiting at any time' restrictions at this location with significant and effective enforcement.
- **U6002 Folly Lane:** Folly Lane was stopped-up to through traffic on Friday 29 August 2008 prior to the new school term.
- **Ardglass Road:** Road Service have extended the 30mph speed limit to include the Demesne Housing Development and also extended the 40mph country-bound to include the new Downe Hospital Roundabout.
- **Disabled Bays Provided:** One bay on St Dillon's Avenue and one bay on Ardpatrick Avenue.
- **Disabled Bays Proposed:** (subject passing the necessary legislation without objection): One bay on Ardmeen Green and one bay on Kincora Drive.

Safer Routes to School

- **St Mary's High School, Ardglass Road:** Road Service proposed to provide 'School Patrol' warning signs with 'flashing amber' lights on both approaches to this school as part of their 'Safe Routes to School' initiative.

Sub-Regional Transport Plan (Draft) 2015 Proposed Schemes

- 4.32 The plan sets out a number of blueprint measures including proposals for walking, cycling and highway to relieve transport related problems facing Downpatrick. The Walking and Cycling Blueprints are provided in Appendix A to this report

Walking Blueprint

- 4.33 The walking blueprint would help in making the town centre more accessible for pedestrians. However, the need for developing linkages in the town centre and the potential that alleyways offer in terms of connecting car parks and the bus station to the town centre should also be considered.

Cycling Blueprint

- 4.34 The cycling routes proposed in the blueprint are mainly on the periphery of the town. Further consideration should, however, be given to cycling networks to and from the town centre.

Highway Blueprint

- 4.35 The highways blueprint consists of the following measures (Figure 3.3 above):
- Various junction improvements within the town;

- A new link road between Irish Street and St. Patrick's Avenue parallel to Market Street to ease congestion on the A25 Market Street;
 - Introduction of a one-way system associated with the new link road; and
 - The eastern relief road.
- 4.36 These proposals should, in principle, help relieve the transport related issues referred to earlier in this report. In the short term, however, further measures may need to be considered. Links to Belfast are critical and these could be enhanced through:
- Park And Ride site out the Belfast Road to encourage mode shift;
 - Better management of parking adjacent to bus station to encourage modal shift;
 - SCOOT system in town centre to maximise capacity and prioritise routes to Belfast; and
 - General improvements of the A7.

Summary

- 4.37 Congestion is negatively impacting on the town centre environment, detracting from the assets of the town and hindering Downpatrick's potential to encourage private development, support local trade and enterprise and to provide an attractive environment for all. Congestion arises from conflicts between through traffic and local traffic, constraints imposed by the historic town road layout, servicing of businesses and illegal, dispersed and poorly located parking provision.
- 4.38 Pedestrian and cycling facilities within the town are limited and provision of further roadspace to these sustainable modes require to be balanced against vehicular demands. Public transport provision also suffers from the results of congestion and the historic layout of the town centre can sometimes make manoeuvrability around the town centre for these large vehicles difficult.
- 4.39 Furthermore local bus service provision is not financially sustainable due to low patronage levels and fare issues. The restructuring of funding provision will make continuing with these services challenging. Therefore Translink has highlighted the requirement to seek development funding to sustain services.
- 4.40 Investigation of a western by-pass has found that this option is not viable given it has significant negative environmental impacts and a poor cost to benefit ratio. Therefore the remaining option to remove town centre through trips is an eastern distributor road. However the implementation of this option is anticipated to be long term and funding for the scheme is identified as being from developer contributions.
- 4.41 Other improvements could include the possibility of extending the eastern relief road from both Ardglass and Strangford Roads in the first instance and extending in the longer term to the A7 Belfast Road to the north and the A25 Ballydugan Road to the south. This would assist in reducing unwanted through traffic by avoiding the congested town centre altogether.
- 4.42 However, given the bypass options are long term aspirations consideration requires to be given to implementing other town centre improvements in the short term. These should relate to maximising capacity at junctions, ensuring bus priority measures are included where practicable. A review of the town centre parking strategy could assist in reducing circulating traffic searching for a parking space and inappropriate parking in areas of

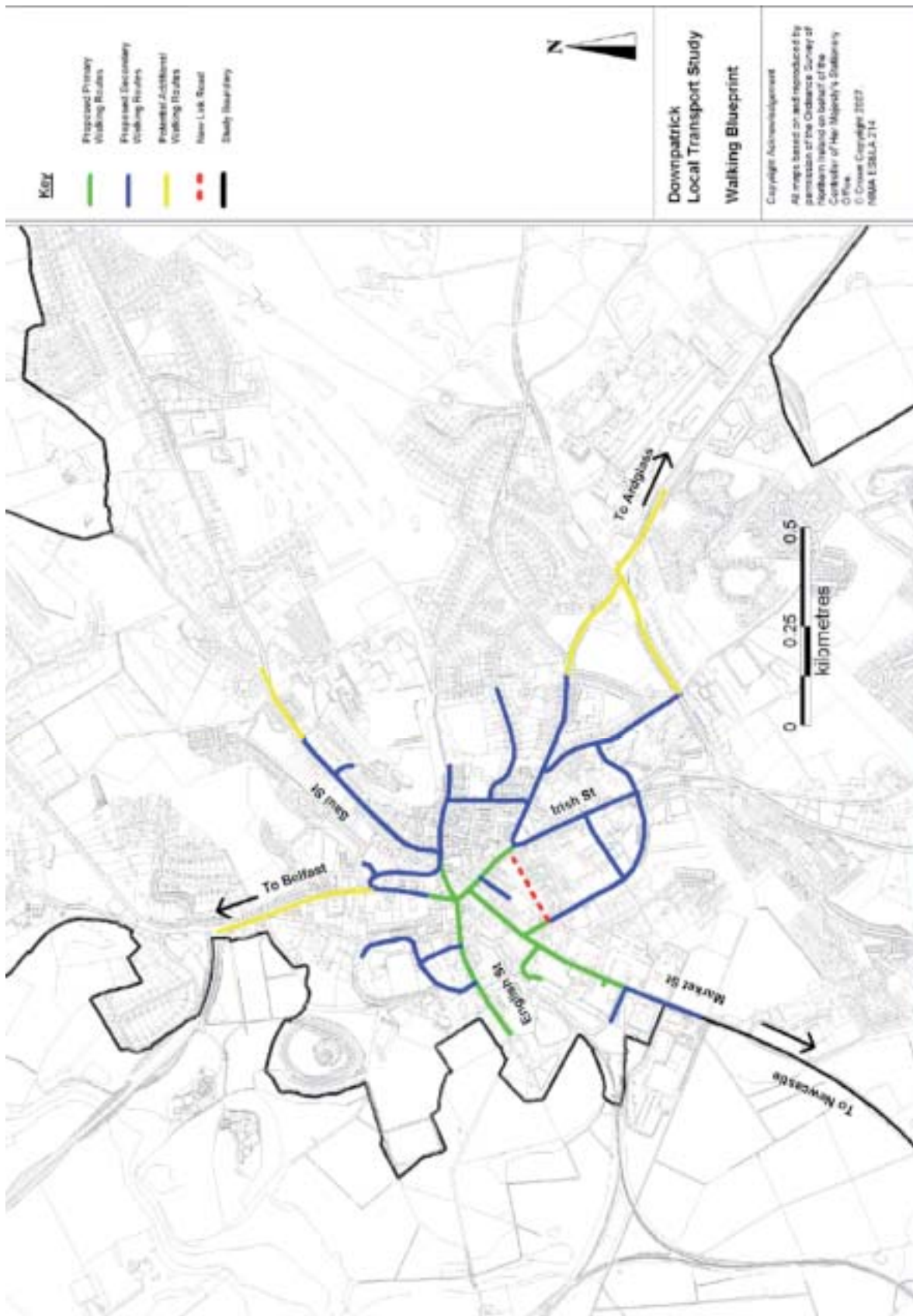
interest. Measures could include improved signage to car parks and signage of pedestrian routes between car parks and key town centre destinations in addition to implementing on-street parking restrictions that are appropriately enforced. Banning HGV through traffic during peak hours, in addition to location and time restrictions on HGVs servicing town centre shops would assist in manoeuvrability (especially for busses) and relieve congestion on the historic narrow roads in the town centre.

- 4.43 It is clear however, that even with the above measures, there are limitations on what can be achieved without the removal of through traffic from the town centre and it is agreed that this will be required in the longer term to ensure Downpatrick to fulfil its potential. The removal of these through trips will allow for roadspace to be reallocated to pedestrians, cyclists and buses. This is key to developing the town centre including complementing public realm improvements, ensuring locations of interest are easily accessible and ensuring the development of a successful retail centre.

Appendix A

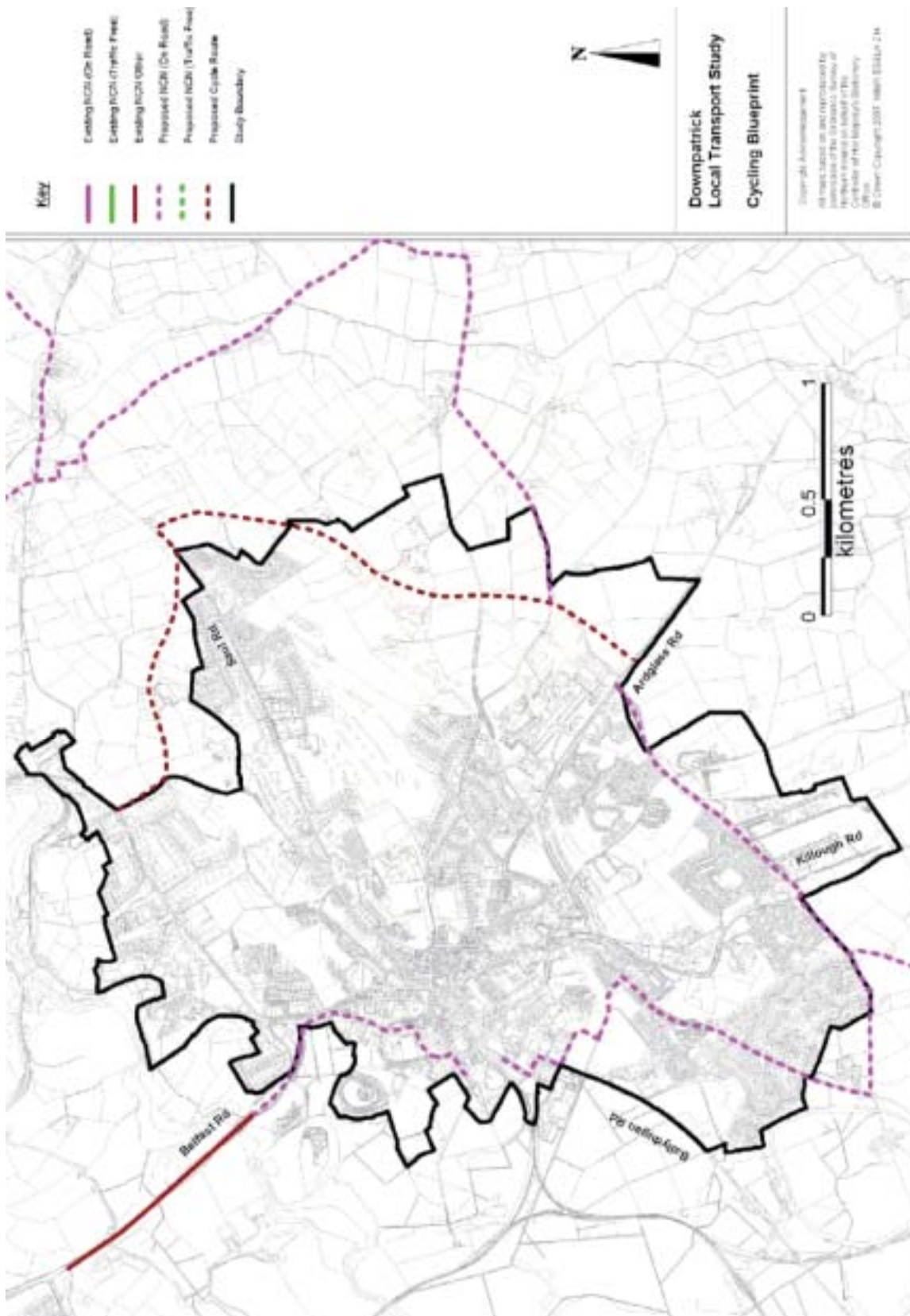
Walking & Cycling Blueprints

Sub-Regional Transport Plan – Walking Blueprint Proposals in Downpatrick



Sub-Regional Transport Plan (Draft) 2015 – Technical Supplement (Down District Council)

Sub-Regional Transport Plan – Cycling Blueprint Proposals in Downpatrick



Sub-Regional Transport Plan (Draft) 2015 – Technical Supplement (Down District Council)

The Paul Hogarth Company

Economic context: Downpatrick

**Evidence in support of Downpatrick Town
Centre Masterplan**

Draft report

April 2009

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1 Economic policy context

Introduction

1.1 This section of the report summarises the economic policy background to the proposed Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan. It highlights the wider economic policy context in which this proposed Masterplan sits. The economic policy background is split between government departments, agencies, and reports produced for Down District Council, The Department for Regional Development and The Department for Social Development. In particular the following policies are discussed:

- Building a Better Future: Programme for Government 2008 to 2011;
- Regional Development Strategy;
- Review of Public Administration;
- Northern Ireland Key Settlement Survey;
- Business Land Need Study;
- The Location of Public Sector Jobs (Bain Report); and
- Down Retail Investment Report.

Building a Better Future: Programme for Government 2008 to 2011

1.2 The Programme for Government (PfG) aims “to build a prosperous, fair and inclusive society, supported by a vibrant and dynamic economy and a rich and sustainable environmental heritage”. It sets out the Government’s strategy to ensure that all parts of the region enjoy sustainable economic and social development. In doing so, it places economic development at the top of the political agenda.

1.3 The PfG is based around a framework of 5 priority areas:

- **Growing a dynamic innovative economy:** the primary focus is to grow the economy, based on the characteristics of high productivity, a highly skilled and flexible workforce and employment growth. As part of this, the PfG identifies the need to
 - improve employment opportunities in rural areas;
 - to grow the private sector (both small and medium sized businesses);
 - support growth in well-paid high skilled jobs; and
 - strengthen the tourism sector.
- **Promote tolerance, inclusion and health and well-being:** in so doing the PfG identifies the need to, amongst other things, regenerate our urban and rural areas, build community capacity and leadership, and remove the barriers to employment;
- **Protect and enhance our environment and natural resources:** this priority identifies

the importance of our built heritage in promoting places to live, work and visit;

- **Invest to build our infrastructure:** Through the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, Government aims to tackle the legacy of underdeveloped infrastructure across the region (including roads, sewerage, hospitals and education);
- **Deliver modern high quality and efficient public services:** the Government is committed to implementing key reform programmes in areas such as health, education, water and planning and eventually local government, which will result in significant changes to both the structure and delivery of public services.

1.4 In addition, the PfG also highlights the importance of better linkages North/South and East/West particularly on infrastructure, trade and business, tourism, agriculture and health service provision.

1.5 As such the PfG offers a comprehensive overview of the key areas to address in achieving a more prosperous dynamic economy for the region. This offers some high level guidelines for local strategy and in this context the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan. For example, any Masterplan should support growth of the private sector by providing the right environment to encourage high value added activity, considering the future changes to the public sector. The Masterplan should look to regenerate the urban economy of Downpatrick Town Centre, while taking advantage of the built heritage, and complementing the surrounding rural areas.

Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025

1.6 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland identifies Downpatrick as a main hub on the Eastern Seaboard corridor to Belfast and defines its role as accommodating growth in terms of housing and business growth to act as counter-magnet to the expansion of the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA).

1.7 Given the relatively fast growth in population and housing experienced between 2001 and 2005, Downpatrick appears to be well placed in fulfilling this role. Examining the data on the characteristics of the people living in Downpatrick and the 2001 census suggest that commuting linkages with the BMA are strong and the role as a part of the BMA hinterland may strengthen over time leading to increased private investment in the area.

1.8 The current Regional Development Strategy is under review and it is expected that there will be some changes when the revised Strategy is published, although indications are the main strands of the RDS will be broadly in line with the current strategy.

Review of Public Administration

1.9 The Review of Public Administration (RPA) was launched by the Northern Ireland Executive in June 2002. It was a comprehensive examination of the arrangements for the administration and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland covering almost 150 bodies, including the 26 district councils, the Health Boards and Trusts, the five Education and Library Boards, and about 100 other organisations.

1.10 The Secretary of State announced the final outcome of the review in two parts: in November 2005 he announced final decisions on the future of local government, Education and Health and Social Service structures; in March 2006 he announced decisions on the remaining public bodies.

1.11 The key reforms for Local Government to come of the review are:

- Proposals to reduce Local Councils from 26 to eleven;
- An independent Boundary Commissioner to decide the exact boundaries of the new councils based on groupings of the existing councils;

- The new councils will have an increased range of powers including: local roads, planning, rural development, planning local bus services, fire and rescue, future European programmes and some housing related functions;
- The councils will also have a statutory duty to lead a community planning process, and there will be a statutory duty on all other agencies to work with the councils;
- Each of the seven new councils will have approximately 60 councillors;
- A system of statutory checks and balances will be developed to ensure there is fair and transparent decision-making within the new councils; and
- A new system of local government finance will be developed.

1.12 The reforms to the educational sector include:

- A new Education and Skills Authority will be established to focus on the operational delivery of educational services. It will also be involved in the strategic planning of the schools' estate and ensuring delivery of the 14 to 19 curriculum;
- The Department of Education will continue to be responsible for education policy and strategy. Some of the operational functions currently performed by the Department of Education will transfer to the new Authority;
- The Authority will bring together all the direct support functions currently undertaken by the Education and Library Boards, CCEA and the Regional Training Unit. It will also have responsibility for front-line and related functions currently undertaken by CCMS, NICIE and CnaG;
- The Authority will be the sole employing authority for teachers and support staff which will result in greater coherence and consistency; and
- A new Education Advisory Forum will be established which will provide a direct link between education sectors and the Department.

1.13 The key reforms to Health, Social Services are listed below:

- There will be a considerably smaller and strategically focused Government Department;
- A single Health and Social Services Authority will replace the existing four Health and Social Services Boards to drive performance management of the 'go-live' date April 2008;
- 7 Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs) within the Health and Social Services Authority; these will map onto the new district councils and will be demand led by patients and driven by GPs and primary care professionals;
- One Patient and Client Council replacing the existing four Health and Social Services Councils; and
- 18 HSS Trusts reduced to 5.

1.14 The remaining 81 public bodies are to be reduced to 54. This will be achieved in the main by merging bodies or transferring complete functions to local government or central government. Many of the remaining bodies will have reduced responsibilities through some of their functions transferring to local government. All of the bodies that remain will be required to work with councils in the community planning process.

1.15 All appointment to public bodies in Northern Ireland will be made on merit. For the future, all Board members will be appointed under the guidelines laid down by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

1.16 The implementation of RPA will be of vital importance to Downpatrick given the importance of public sector jobs in the town and the potential impact this could have for employment if some of these services are moved from Downpatrick.

1.17 So far there has yet to be agreement the reform of local government and education. At the start of April Michael McGimpsey announced a new streamline structure for the health sector. This included the establishment of the new Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, the Patient and Client Council and the Business Services Organisation to replace the existing health and social care bodies. However, the full details of what this will entail have yet to emerge.

Northern Ireland Key Settlement Study

- 1.18 In June 2008, the Department for Regional Development commissioned Experian to carry out a study of the key settlements in Northern Ireland. The Regional Development Strategy 2025 identified sixteen main and five local hubs as comprising Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast Metropolitan Area and Londonderry Urban Area). The aim of the research was to examine the recent performance of the hubs against the drivers of urban economic competitiveness and identify their future roles.
- 1.19 Downpatrick is the urban centre in the District of Down (population 69,190). Downpatrick and surrounding area had an estimated population of 51,890 in 2007 (excluding Newcastle and its surrounding district). Using 2003 data the estimated population for the settlement was 10,320, 16% of District population. Downpatrick is identified by the Regional Development Strategy as a main hub connected by a corridor to Belfast. Employment in the services sector in the District has shown some growth while employment in the manufacturing sector has contracted.
- 1.20 The report found that the consumer profile for Downpatrick was characterised by comfortable families whose main earners commute to well paid, white collar jobs in service industries. This commuting country profile had an index value of 356 relative to Northern Ireland (i.e. over 3.5 times more prevalent than rural Northern Ireland average).
- 1.21 Household growth in Down between 2001 and 2006 has been higher than the NI average at 2.4% compared to 1.4%.
- 1.22 Examining across five indicators of connectivity (drive times to airport, port, city, location on key transport corridor or link corridor and rail linkages), Downpatrick was ranked 16th out of 21 hubs in terms of overall connectivity. Downpatrick scored poorly on its accessibility to key transport corridors, the railway network and ports. However, it scored reasonably highly on its proximity to the city of Belfast and to Belfast's two airports. With a drive time of just over 30 minutes to Belfast, Downpatrick's economy and population is firmly linked to the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA).
- 1.23 Retail linkages are also relatively strong with neighbouring areas; 45% of retail spend leaks out of Downpatrick to Newcastle, Newtownards, Lisburn and elsewhere in the Belfast Metropolitan Area. Downpatrick is the 20th largest retail centre in Northern Ireland.
- 1.24 **Key strengths:** Three key strengths were identified;
- good workforce skills levels, particularly given the rural location and lack of knowledge based private service industry;
 - good connectivity as a result of Downpatrick's tourist attractions and the associated flow of visitors tourism flows; and
 - strong population and household growth in recent years, with Downpatrick accommodating a growing share of the BMA housing market as commuting linkages grow over time.
- 1.25 **Key weaknesses:** Three key weaknesses were identified;
- Low employment growth;
 - Relatively poor connectivity; and
 - Low proportion of employment in knowledge-based private service industry.
- 1.26 **Future strategic role:** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Strategic Framework 2004 to 2007 identifies five 'stand-out' signature projects for the Northern Ireland economy. Two of these, Christian Heritage / Saint Patrick and the Mourne Mountains park area, have direct relevance for Downpatrick and present the hub with a distinctive proposition and opportunity to capture increased tourism flows into the area. Effectively marketing and promoting Downpatrick's tourism assets and ensuring the tourism infrastructure and accommodation exists to attract a broad variety of tourists to the area is essential to success of the tourist

economy. Linking up the tourist proposition with other areas (Newcastle and Newtownards) to ensure consistency and efficiency in approach is also an area possibly needing more consideration.

Business Land Need Study

- 1.27 In October 2008, Oxford Economics produced long term forecasts for the Department for Regional Development, which examined the future potential land use requirements for each of the Local Authority areas in Northern Ireland. The land requirements in the report were derived from the forecast levels of employment for each industry sub sector in detail. The report concluded that employment in Down would contract by 0.3% per annum between 2007 and 2017, but there would be growth in employment of 0.8% per annum between 2017 and 2027.
- 1.28 Table 1.1 show the long run employment growth forecasts for Down.

Table 1.1 Potential Employment growth in Down 2007-2027

Sector	Employment Growth per annum (%), 2007-2027
Business sector	+53%
Financial sector	+27%
Hotels and restaurants	+23%
Utilities	-38%
Agriculture	-34%
Manufacturing	-21%
Total	+2%

- 1.29 The report points out that these forecasts have to be treated with extreme caution because of their long term nature. Over the period 2007 to 2027, employment growth in Northern Ireland as a whole is expected to grow by 13%, driven by 73% increase in the business service sector. The significant disparity between the forecast growth rates for Down and Northern Ireland highlights one of the current economic weakness of the region, the lack of office space to attract investments in business services. Changes to the current structure of the economy in Down are required if these problems are to be overcome.
- 1.30 It is important to note that this report was completed before the extent of the current UK recession was known and therefore its forecasts need to be considered with this in mind.

The Location of Public Sector Jobs (Bain Report)

- 1.31 Downpatrick is not included in the primary sets of 6 towns/cities for the relocation of public sector jobs. They are Derry, Omagh, Coleraine, Newry, Craigavon and Ballymena. However, Downpatrick was mentioned as possible location for future development, but poor infrastructure was hampering this opportunity. If there are improvements in access to Downpatrick then the option of relocating jobs to Downpatrick could be reconsidered, although the overarching intention at this stage is to concentrate on the 6 towns/cities listed above. The report concludes that the longer-term potential of Downpatrick as a relocation centre should be considered in the event of a future wave of relocations, providing their infrastructural and access limitations can be addressed.

Down in Focus Report: Economic Profiling To Promote Retail Investment

1.32 The Down retail study was produced for Down District Council by Oxford Economics in September 2007. The aim of the report was to create an economic profile for Down to promote retail investment in the area. The report considered that there were seven main areas where there were potential opportunities for or threats to the retail sector in Down/Downpatrick.

- **Demographics:** There has been strong population growth in Downpatrick and net migration into the area. Changes to the planning process to encourage development within the Downpatrick catchment area could further strengthen the sector. However, the catchment area is already small and it may not develop sufficiently to gain 'critical mass';
- **Wider Economy:** There is a significant public sector workforce in Downpatrick with relatively well paid and stable jobs. Employment opportunities in Belfast have improved, which is with commuter distance. There is also the potential for complementary investments to retail in shape of a new cinema and a new hotel. While these factors are strengths for the retail in Downpatrick, the fact that Belfast is relatively close is a threat to the local retail sector. The under development of the professional services sector is another weakness in Downpatrick, because those jobs are generally at the higher end of the range of salaries in Northern Ireland;
- **Purchasing power:** employment levels in Downpatrick are relatively high, but there is a high percentage of part time jobs. Also many of the wealthier residents in Down live outside the retail catchment area for Downpatrick;
- **Retail offering and competition:** The retail offering is comparable to other similar sized towns. However, opening hours are not as flexible and the range of the offering is not as wide or as varied as within a short journey. The lack of a developed evening economy also hurts the retail offering;
- **Labour supply and costs:** There is a strong supply of labour that is competitively priced in the NI marketplace;
- **Retail behaviour:** there is strong support to attract a 'brand name' to the town, but within the small catchment area there is willingness for consumers to travel to shopping centres where big name players are located e.g. Marks and Spencer. The lack of entertainment options remains an issue and it means that some shoppers look elsewhere for a combined retail and leisure experience.
- **Place:** the Council provides strong support to the retail sector in Downpatrick, but there are problems with the design of the town centre around congestion, parking and access, which are problems that need to be solved if the town centre is to be successful.

1.33 Again it has to be noted that this report needs to be viewed in light of the current economic recession in the UK and the impact that this will have on the economic profile in Down and on possible investments in the retail sector.

Conclusions

1.34 In conclusion this section has examined the development of a proposed Masterplan for Downpatrick Town Centre in the context of the regional strategies of the key economic development stakeholders, specifically DSD, DETI, DRD and Down District Council. The section has highlighted some of the issues a new Masterplan for Downpatrick Town Centre needs to address to contribute to the achievement of these strategies. In summary the Masterplan should:

- Aim to establish a viable plan for the town centre, which improves the current retail

offering and complements it with a plan to grow the 'evening economy' in Downpatrick. This will provide synergies between these two sectors and will start to change the view that Downpatrick town centre is closed for business in the evening;

- Improving the 'evening economy' will improve the tourism offering, which is already strong given Downpatrick's location near the Mourne Mountains and the Christian Heritage / St Patrick's signature projects. This will enhance the visitor experience which should lead to an increased length of stay by visitors, an increased spend and potentially an increase in the number of visits;
- Improving access to Downpatrick will create more economic opportunities for the community and will encourage more visitors from other parts of Down to come and experience the retail offering in Downpatrick and its evening economy;
- Providing the right environment for the business service sector to grow and engage in high value added activity, and in so doing contribute to the economic growth of the region, providing new opportunities and increased economic activity to local residents.

2 Economic context

Introduction

2.1 This section provides the economic context within which the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan will sit. This section takes the following structure:

- Broader economic context
- Population trends
- Labour market trends
- Employment and sectoral trends
- Conclusions

Broader economic context

2.2 The Global economy has moved from a period of sustained economic growth to an uncertain immediate future due to the widespread recession. The global economy will contract by 0.8% in 2009 as many of the major developed economies move into recession. Forecasts for the UK indicate that the economy will contract by 3.25% in 2009 and will not begin to recover until the latter half of 2010. The sectors most affected include construction, transport, storage & communication and Government services. The continued decline has driven unemployment to its highest level in 11 years with over two million people across the UK now unemployed.

2.3 The economy in Northern Ireland had gone through a long period of economic growth, but PwC forecast the economy to decline by up to 3% in 2009 as NI also suffers under the economic downturn. The claimant count for February 2009 reports the largest annual increase in the number of people unemployed since 1971, with unemployment rising by 14,700 over the full year. Unemployment is forecast to rise by a further 14,000 in 2009. Although this rise is substantial, it is important to note that unemployment in Northern Ireland - currently at 4.2% (or 5.1% on claimant count) - remains relatively low by historical standards. Insert table with key figs UK/NI/Downpatrick.

2.4 Looking forward it is expected that the Northern Ireland economy will improve over the medium to longer term. However, this may be at a slower rate than in the previous decade as the rate of global growth is expected to lower.

2.5 Bank of England interest rates have fallen from 5.75% in December 2007 to 0.5% in March 2009 in an attempt to stimulate the economy. This has been largely ineffectual because the major financial institutions have been reluctant to lend to companies and consumers. Tighter lending criteria has reduced the level of consumer spending and it has also reduced the level of business confidence.

- The value of Sterling relative the Euro and Dollar has fallen by 25-30% compared to peak levels in the past two years. A weaker pound, although detrimental to UK importers, has enhanced the competitiveness of exporters. However, the scale of the impact on the UK exporters is likely to be diluted by falling demand in global markets and rising import costs. In March and April 2009 there were signs that the relatively weak value of Sterling against

the major foreign currencies was starting to have a negative impact on the UK economy as the price of imported goods increased resulting in an unexpected increase in inflation.

2.6 Looking forward, domestic and external demand for goods and services will be lower than they have been in recent years. This is likely to produce a number of challenges to the Northern Ireland economy:

- **Trading:** external demand will be lower over the short-term. Northern Ireland's key export markets, the UK and Republic of Ireland, are forecast to contract in 2009 and 2010, which will challenge local businesses, to maintain their level of exports to these markets and look further a field for new opportunities. The weakening of Sterling against the Euro has helped offset some of the weaker export demand in ROI and other EU countries, but it is now starting to have inflationary impacts as import prices increase. This may only provide temporary relief, because it does not address the fundamental weakness of these economies, particularly ROI;
- **Inward Investment:** with developed economies either in or moving into recession due to the credit crunch and the near collapse of the banking system, foreign firms could reduce their overseas investment activity, especially if these companies come under pressure from domestic governments to stop investing overseas, such as in Northern Ireland. As a result, the region and Downpatrick will likely find that potential new inward investment will be scarce in the next few years;
- **Skills:** it is forecast that developing economies will continue to outgrow developed economies in the next few years as they take advantage of lower costs, faster growing populations, and rising disposable income. The challenge for Northern Ireland and Downpatrick is to compete less on costs, and more on quality. Local business will need to move into high value added activity. In order to achieve this, it will have to rely on higher levels of skills and available labour; and
- **Government spending:** In addition, given the planned slow down in Government spending growth in the UK and Northern Ireland, the economy can no longer rely on the public sector to act as a key driver of the economy. The challenge is to grow the private sector, despite the challenging economic environment highlighted above.
- **Tourism:** Downpatrick is located close to two of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's signature projects for the Northern Ireland economy. These are Christian Heritage / St Patrick and the Mourne Mountains. Effective marketing and promoting of Downpatrick's tourism assets are important opportunities for the town, especially given the favourable exchange rate for visitors from Euroland, while there is also potential for increased number of Northern Ireland of GB visitors due to the economic downturn and the relative unattractiveness of holidays in Euroland this year due to the exchange rate.

2.7 As a result, growth in the local economy is likely to slow over the next few years. However beyond the slow down, there are likely to be a number of sectoral trends:

- **Agriculture:** is likely to contract in employment terms. Given lower real incomes in agriculture in recent years, the sector is likely to continue to decline with an increase in the number of farmers/spouses finding alternative sources of employment to boost the non-farm household income. The Agri food sector, particularly the red meat sector is benefitting from the weak value of Sterling versus the major world currencies. However, the downturn in the international dairy market has left the overall agriculture sector with an uncertain future;
- In **manufacturing**, businesses will need to move away from competing on cost and into higher value added activity. Although this is likely to see a reduction in employment, productivity and turnover should rise. The global downturn will weaken demand for manufacturing output in the short to medium term;
- **Construction:** the construction sector has gone through a period of decline over the past 18 months as the 'credit crunch' and the downturn in the UK economy have significantly slowed house building activity in NI. Output from infrastructure projects also decreased in 2008, but it is anticipated that Government expenditure on infrastructure projects through ISNI will lead to increased infrastructure output, which should help to prop up the sector as a whole. Construction will recover in the medium term due to ISNI and a return of confidence in the

housing sector, but this could take a number of years. The availability of credit from lending institutions will be a key factor in strengthening in the housing sector.

- **Finance and business services:** are likely to grow in NI in the long term. These sectors are currently underdeveloped when compared to the UK or Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland has a significant cost advantage compared to both these locations, which is a major selling point to attract employment in this area. However, it is expected that there will also be ups and downs in these sectors in the short run;
- **Retail:** the retail sector has undergone considerable changes in recent years, with a number of high profile developments. The retail sector in Downpatrick is relatively small and leakages to neighbouring retail centres are high at 45% of retail spend. The current economic downturn in NI and the UK will make the retail market increasingly competitive as the major retailers strive to maintain sales and market share;
- **Public sector:** given the rising population levels, the education and health sectors are likely to continue to grow, albeit at a slower rate compared to recent years. However employment in the public administration sector faces a more uncertain future with the implementation of the Review of Public Administration (RPA), the drive for efficiency savings, and a slow down in public spending. Downpatrick was selected as a second tier location for the possible relocation of government jobs, but this was dependant on improvements in accessibility to the town.

Population trends

- 2.8 Downpatrick is the urban centre for the District of Down and it is estimated that 16% (or 11,100 persons) out of the population of Down of almost 69,200 people live in Downpatrick.
- 2.9 The total population in Down has grown by 18% over the last 16 years to almost 69,200 in 2007, while the working age population has increased by 27% from 33,700 in 1991 to 42,7000 in 2007 . However, over the next 14 years it is expected that this trend will be reversed with the total population level forecast to grow by 16% to over 80,000 people, while the working age population grows by only 8% to 46,000 persons.

Table 2.1: Down population trends and projections (1991 to 2021)

	1997	2007	2021	% change 2007 - 21
Working age population ('000)	36,946	42,722	46,120	+8%
Total population ('000)	62,541	69,188	80,194	+16%

Source: NISRA

- 2.10 If these historical trends continue there could be sectoral specific implications from an ageing population. For example, the 'retail' and 'hotels and restaurants' and health sectors could to experience increased demand this section of the community.
- 2.11 The labour market in Down performs slightly worse than the regional average (Table 2.1). There is a lower proportion of its population aged 16+ economically active compared to the NI average and the rate of people employed was also lower than for NI as a whole. However the claimant count rate for February 2009 in Down was lower than NI average, with only 1,605 people actively looking for work. In 2007 there were 31,000 economically active persons in Downpatrick, with 29,000 people in employment.

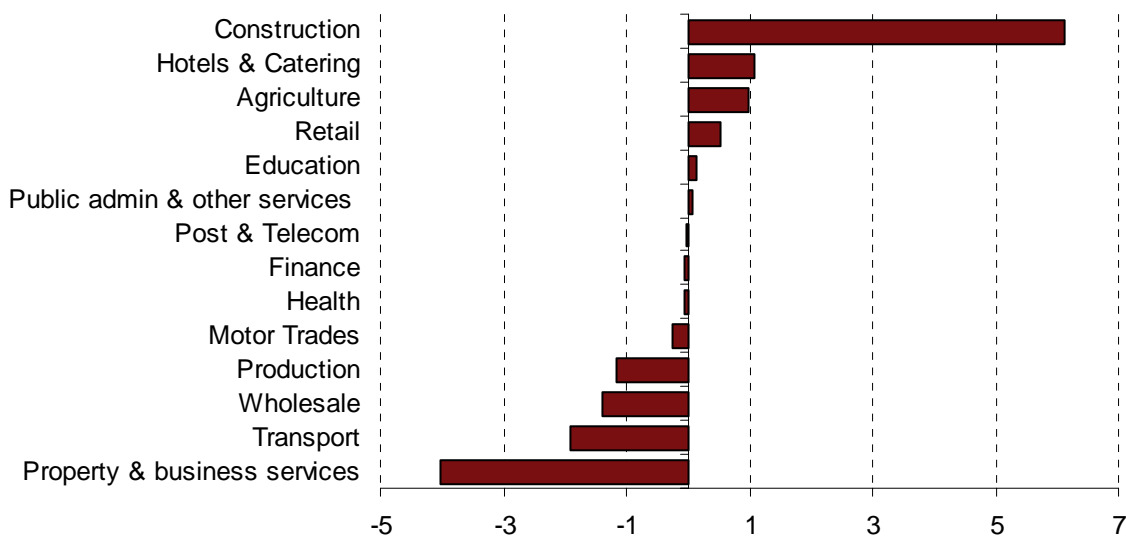
Table 2.2: Selected labour market variables for the population aged 16+, 2007

	Northern Ireland (%)	Down (%)
Economically active	73.4%	72.3%
- Employed	70.3%	67.5%
- Unemployed	4.0%	3.8%
Economically inactive	26.6%	27.7%

Source: DETI / NISRA

2.12 Figure 2.2 provides an analysis of sectoral employment. It shows the percentage point difference between employment in Down and Northern Ireland.

Figure 2.2: Employment by sector – Down versus Northern Ireland 2007



Source: DETI / NISRA

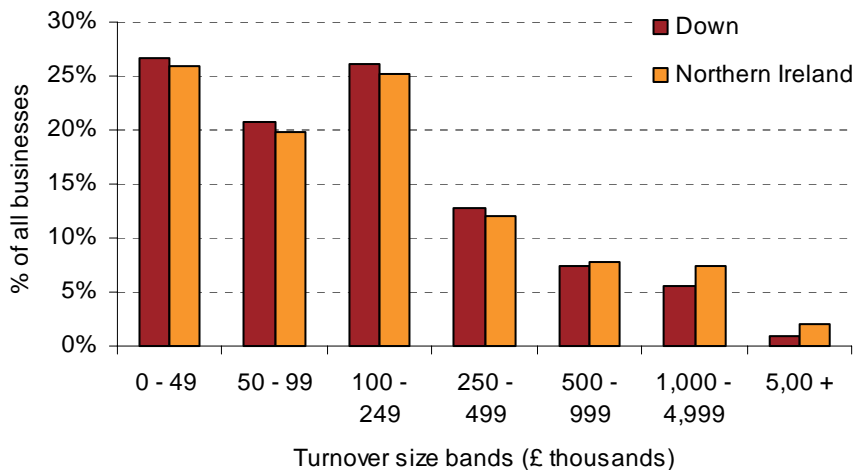
2.13 Down has above average concentration of employment in the construction sector with 22% of employee jobs in this sector. This suggests that the downturn in the NI economy has hurt Down more than other towns and cities across NI. There is also strong dependence on agriculture with 28% of jobs in this sector. Employment in hotels and catering is 1% higher than the NI average, which is much lower than other parts of NI where tourism is an important part of the economy. This indicates that there is scope for Downpatrick to build its tourism offering to increase employment and levels of economic activity.

2.14 Employment in public administration, finance, education, telecoms and health are all on a par with the NI average, but it is significantly underrepresented in the high value added business sector.

2.15 Jobs in the property and business services sectors are 4% lower than the NI average. Improving communication networks could offer an incentive to increase the volume of jobs in the business sector, but this could be hampered by the problems with accessibility and its closeness to alternative locations.

2.16 There were 3,535 VAT registered firms in Down in 2008. Firms in the private sector in Down are slightly smaller than the NI average in terms of employment. Almost 71% of firms in Down employ less than four workers compared to an average of 68% in all firms in NI. This could be due to the lower than average employment levels in Down and marginally lower turnover rates compared to the NI.

Figure 2.3: Business size (2008)



Source: DETI / NISRA

Tourism

2.17 The major tourist attraction in the Down/Downpatrick area in 2006 was Tollymore Forest Park with 145,000 visitors, while in Downpatrick the St Patrick Visitor Centre in Downpatrick had 137,000 visitors in 2006. There is no shortage of accommodation in the Down/Downpatrick area with six hotels, 11 guesthouses, 44 bed and breakfasts and 83 other types of accommodation (mostly self catering homes).

Table 2.2: Tourism in Downpatrick 2005 – 2006

	2005	2006	% change
Trips ('000)	256	239	-7
Nights ('000)	945	905	-4
Spend (£ million)	28	24	-15

Source: NITB

2.18 The remainder of this section provides a detailed commentary on sectoral trends, and their implications for a Downpatrick Town Masterplan.

Table 2.3: sectoral trends and potential implications

Trends	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift from rural and manufacturing working to city centre working: In recent years, employment has declined in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. The manufacturing sector has undergone intense competitive pressure from developing economies such as China, India and the East European accession countries. Meanwhile the agricultural sector has been hit by a mix of falling farm incomes, rising costs of EU requirements and animal health scares. As a result, both have experienced a contraction in employment. At the same time, employment in the private sector has grown by 10%. Developed economies have moved from competing on low value added / low cost activities, to competing on quality and knowledge intensive high value added activities. Sectors such as creative industries, finance and business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downpatrick is still heavily reliant on agriculture as a source of employment. This sector will continue to decline and Downpatrick will need to look to create alternative sources of employment. Manufacturing is not as important to Downpatrick compared to other towns and cities in NI, but any contraction in employment

<p>Sectors such as creative industries, finance and business services have been central to this growth. Typically these sectors are located in city centres, close to colleges / universities and entertainment hubs. This trend has been most acutely witnessed in Belfast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current decline in construction: The NI construction sector grew strongly through most of this decade, but since the summer of 2007 it has experienced a severe contraction in output with a significant rise in the number of building firms going out of business and the number of unemployed construction workers increasing. 	<p>will put pressure on the town to find alternative types of employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downpatrick needs to widen the skills base for workers so that they are not as reliant on one sector for employment, especially when that sector is more prone to boom to bust activity than other sectors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial and business services sector: As noted above, these are key growth sectors for Northern Ireland. Given that Downpatrick is underdeveloped compared to the Northern Ireland average in the business services sector there is scope for an improved offering in terms of employment. • Finance in Downpatrick holds its own compared to NI and it indicates that there is the potential to develop the workforce to take opportunities in the business sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate office accommodation will be required in the town to support any potential future growth of employment in financial and business services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector: Employment in the public sector in Downpatrick was very similar to the NI average and this is expected to remain the case in the coming years. • It is possible that the growing and ageing population will result in an increase in health sector spending, but in the short run it is likely that public sector spending will remain squeezed with little excess cash available. • The review of the relocation of public sector jobs concluded that Downpatrick was potentially a suitable secondary location for relocating public sector jobs, but only if there was an improvement to accessibility in the town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public administration faces an uncertain future and demand for education is likely to fall. An ageing population will lead to increased demand for health services will grow in the future. A tighter public expenditure environment will restrict future employment growth in these sectors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tourism sector: Tourism is important to the economy in Down with estimated turnover of £24 million in 2006. Visitor trips and nights spent in Down decreased in 2006, which suggests that the weather was unpleasant during the peak holiday season, which caused visitors to shorten their stays. • It is vital for Downpatrick to take the opportunity to grow this sector. There are two NI signature tourism projects located in the vicinity, which are major people attractors. Downpatrick needs to develop a range of attractions to encourage these visitors to come to Downpatrick during the day and stay to enjoy the evening economy. • In addition, the growth in population experienced in recent years, may also help to support an expansion in the Hotels and restaurants sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Masterplan needs to provide attractions to compliment the tourism sector. Emphasis should be given to improving the evening economy, which should help the retail and tourism sectors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail: As noted in the previous section, the retail sector in Downpatrick has the potential for improvement and could be an attraction for visitors, if it is carefully marketed and it is in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A town centre Masterplan should help to build the retail offering in the town,

<p>tune with the development of a culture quarter in the town, However, the access problem means that the high rate of retail leakage outside of the town will continue unless this problem can be properly solved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future population trends in the area, combined with the likely growth in tourism could provide increased demand for retail and therefore support further growth in the sector. 	<p>possibly in conjunction with developing tourist attractions in the town.</p>

Conclusion

- 2.19 In conclusion, the Northern Ireland economy is likely to face a period of contraction in the short term, which will have implications for Downpatrick. Over the medium to long term, there are a number of sectors which are likely to experience growth, while more traditional sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture becoming more efficient and
- 2.20 Current and potential future economic trends have a number of implications for Downpatrick:
- A growing and ageing population in Downpatrick means that there could be increased demand for health services over the longer term;
 - The focus on tourism at the regional and local level means that Downpatrick needs to ensure it maximises the benefits from its tourism offering. Connecting the signature project in the Mourne Mountains with the Christian Heritage / St Patrick project is important. This will encourage visitors to the area to stay longer and spend more during their visit, which will maximise the economic benefits for the local economy.
 - Improving the evening economy should help to enhance the retail offering needed to enhance the tourism offering to attract consumers from further a field and to retain them in the Downpatrick area overnight; and
 - Improving accessibility is vital for Downpatrick to encourage more through traffic and passing trade for the town. The lack of accessibility also contributes to the leakage in the retail sector to other surrounding towns.

Appendix A

Down in focus: Economic profile

- 2.21 The Down economic profile produced in March 2008 by Oxford Economics for Down District Council highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy. It looked at competitiveness and it discussed future risks and development opportunities.
- 2.22 The positives of recent performance are listed below. They include:
- Positive demographic changes with net domestic in-migration;
 - Recent retail expansion, although the sector is still under-developed;
 - High employment rate;
 - High levels of enterprise/ start-ups;
 - Expansion of Further Education provision; and
 - Boost to household wealth from housing boom (though a 'cooling' housing market could see some of this wealth eroded).
- 2.23 The report identified a number of economic weaknesses in Down, which are listed below:
- Current imbalance between population growth and job creation, with high dependency on part time work;
 - Small private sector/ over-dependence on public sector;
 - Professional services and retail sectors are underdeveloped;
 - Lack of 'big name' firms;
 - Challenging outlook for rural economy (agriculture and fishing);
 - High level of out-commuting – export of well-skilled residents;
 - Lack of evening economy;
 - Traffic congestion in Downpatrick – there a risk of 'arrested development'; and
 - Crimes levels in Downpatrick.
- 2.24 There is competition between the three main urban centres in Down. Five indicators were used to examine these centres in the report. They were:
- **Economic diversity** – each of Ballynahinch, Downpatrick and Newcastle lack diversity e.g. Downpatrick is over-dependent on public sector. Ballynahinch has highest share of employment in 'at risk' sectors;
 - **Skilled workforce** – resident skills mix across the 3 areas are remarkably similar although Downpatrick has a competitive advantage with largest SERC campus and most diverse course offering;
 - **Connectivity** – Ballynahinch is the most competitive, located closest to Belfast and Lisburn and highest frequency of connecting bus services;
 - **Innovation** – weakness for all with no nearby university and lack of high value added knowledge sectors;

- **Quality of life** – each growing in population terms. Residentially attractive in different ways. Ballynahinch (proximity to Belfast); Downpatrick (family-friendly housing); and Newcastle (natural environment). Each of the three areas therefore still has a number of improvements to make before they become competitive with other urban centres.

2.25 The report gave a number of future risks for Down, including:

- Urban renaissance in Belfast, which creates competition for people and jobs;
- Public sector jobs – there is much to lose under RPA and other reforms;
- Difficult time to attract retail investment, which is not helped by the current economic downturn and increased retail competition from, for example, Victoria Square and The Outlet.
- Is the Tourism infrastructure sufficient to maximise visitor impact?
- There is a lack of provision of office space, which makes it more difficult to attract high-value added services; and
- Down lacks a strategic body for Urban regeneration such as Laganside or ILEX.

2.26 The most significant development opportunities identified are provided below:

- An uplift in the Area Plan housing allocation and the provision of an attractive living environment;
- The Downshire public sector campus to be a model of efficiency for delivery of public services;
- Tourism – 2 of 5 NITB signature projects are located in Down;
- Pipeline developments in retail, hotels, professional services (call centre) and leisure (cinema); and
- Location close to Belfast provides an opportunity to attract businesses if Down can offer competitive rents, suitable accommodation and a skilled workforce.

4 CONSULTATION REPORT

Findings of the Public Consultation Process

1. Introduction

This report serves to summarise the process and findings of the Public Consultation process conducted for the Draft Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan from 22nd January to 19th March 2010.

The aim of this non-statutory plan is to set in place a 15-year vision for the development and physical and socio-economic regeneration of Downpatrick Town Centre. The Masterplan was commissioned in February 2009 by the Department for Social Development (DSD) with Down District Council. It is being prepared by a consultant team, led by The Paul Hogarth Company, who are also the authors of this report.

2. Consultation Process and Methodology

2.1 Background

The consultant team prepared a draft masterplan for Downpatrick Town Centre over a 10-month period. This draft masterplan was based on a process of in-depth survey, analysis and design and involved a total of 43 separate consultation meetings with key stakeholders during its development (see ANNEX i). In addition, the masterplan progress was reviewed through regular meetings with an Advisory Group. A list of Advisory Group members can be found in ANNEX ii.

2.2 Objectives of Consultation

From the outset the client and advisory group placed importance on the people of Downpatrick helping to shape the masterplan as it developed. An eight-week consultation period was held during which members of the public were invited to review the draft proposals and submit their comments. The comments were taken into consideration by the consultant team and advisory group, and where appropriate proposals amended.

2.3 Consultation Period

The Public Consultation period lasted eight weeks, from its launch on Friday 22nd January until Friday 19 March 2010 inclusive (see ANNEX vi for photographs from the Consultation period).

2.4 Planned Consultation Format

2.4.1 A total of ten A1, colour presentation boards were prepared by the consultant team, presenting the masterplan process, analysis and draft proposals through a range of text, plans and illustrative techniques.

2.4.2 One set of the consultation boards was displayed in The Saint Patrick's Centre for the entirety of the public consultation period.

2.4.3 Digital PDF versions of the boards were also made available to download from the DSD website at:
<http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations/consultation-masterplans-dptk>.

2.5 Additional Consultation Activities

2.5.1 500 information leaflets, outlining the draft masterplan and inviting feedback, were distributed throughout the town (ANNEX iii).

2.5.2 Consultation invites were also sent out to Down District Council's database of Section 75 Contacts

2.5.3 100 information packs were distributed to local businesses throughout the town. These packs contained the following items (ANNEX iii):

- explanatory letter explaining the information pack and masterplan process
- information leaflet
- public consultation workshop invitation
- colour printed copies of the exhibition boards
- further explanatory notes accompanying the exhibition boards
- feedback form
- consultation event poster

2.5.4 Two public consultation workshops, open to all members of the public were held on Thursday 25th February from 19.00 – 21.00 and Friday 26th February 11.00 – 13.00. These sessions involved 2-hour workshops with members of the public during which proposals were explained and discussed at length. (see ANNEX iv)

3. Feedback Format and Methodology

3.1 Feedback Forms

A4 Feedback forms were available alongside the exhibition boards at the St. Patricks Centre and on the DSD website. These forms invited members of the public to answer a series of questions and provide comments (See ANNEX iii). The questions were intentionally open in format to encourage respondents to elaborate on their opinions. The provision of a name and contact details were optional requirements of the form.

3.2 Feedback Process

3.2.1 Members of the public were invited to post their completed feedback forms in boxes provided at the St. Patrick's Centre or directly to The Paul Hogarth Company by postal mail or email.

3.2.2 In addition to feedback forms; letters, emails and reports were also submitted and accepted as consultation feedback.

3.3 Processing of Feedback Responses

All submitted public consultation feedback was collated, read, numbered and filed by The Paul Hogarth Company. Key points from each response were recorded on a spreadsheet, with a tally system used to calculate the number of responses per topic (See ANNEX v). The Paul Hogarth Company then summarised these findings by way of this report to the project client and advisory group.

4. Public Consultation Feedback

4.1 Quantity of Feedback

- 4.1.1 A total of 45 separate consultation responses were submitted by individuals and organisations.
- 4.1.3 A digital version of the consultation boards was downloaded a total of 166 times from the DSD website (by 19/03/10).

4.2 Late and / or Rejected Feedback

- 4.2.1 1 response was received after the end date of the Public Consultation Period.
- 4.2.2 None of the responses were rejected for any reason.

4.3 Feedback from Organisations

- 4.3.1 Feedback was received under the name of the following 7 organisations (followed with the type of feedback in brackets)
- Downpatrick and County Down Railway (report)
 - Down Arts Forum (report)
 - Committee on the Administration of Justice (letter)
 - The Big Space (letter)
 - Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (letter)
 - Grove Shopping Centre – H. Doherty (letter)
 - Lecale Conservation (letter)

4.4 Feedback Categories

4.5.1 The list below breaks the feedback down according to the questions set out in the feedback sheet.

What do you like about Downpatrick Town Centre?

- 7 Rich built heritage
- 3 Town History
- 2 Size and layout
- 2 Setting

What do you dislike about Downpatrick Town Centre?

- 16 Traffic congestion
- 10 Lack of quality shops and frontages
- 5 Vacant / derelict buildings
- 3 Lack of parking
- 2 No obvious town centre
- 2 Down Retail Park isolated from town centre
- 2 Litter
- 1 Poor signage
- 1 Vandalism
- 1 Anti-social behaviour
- 1 Lethargic atmosphere
- 1 Lack of eating facilities
- 1 Lack of leisure facilities
- 1 Inaccessible parkland setting
- 1 Poorly maintained buildings

What kind of place would you like Downpatrick Town Centre to be in the future?

- 9 Quality shopping destination
- 7 Pedestrian friendly
- 6 Enhanced tourist destination
- 3 More eating facilities
- 3 More employment opportunities
- 3 Clean
- 3 More sustainable
- 2 More public art
- 2 Better links with Belfast
- 2 Vibrant
- 2 Well maintained streets and buildings
- 1 Safe
- 1 Enhanced lighting
- 1 Fun
- 1 More leisure facilities
- 1 Farmers Market
- 1 Better road network
- 1 More welcoming
- 1 More accessible

Which Masterplan proposals do you think will benefit Downpatrick and why?

- 11 Enhanced new and existing green areas
- 8 Western By-pass
- 6 additional cycle routes and boardwalks
- 6 enhanced historically significant sites
- 6 Eastern Distributor Road
- 5 More pedestrianised areas
- 5 people-mover
- 5 Town centre transport improvements
- 4 higher quality streetscapes
- 4 Opening up entries and laneways
- 4 Car parking
- 3 Enhanced Tourism
- 2 Better links between Down Retail Park and St Patricks Square
- 2 expanding floodplain and widening rivers
- 2 better linkages (along Market St.)
- 1 development of the cultural quarter
- 1 More vibrant town centre
- 1 Enhanced retail environment

Which Masterplan proposals do you think will not benefit Downpatrick and why?

- 12 Implications of western by-pass on railway
- 12 Capitalise upon the existing railway route
- 10 Design and location of multi-storey car parks
- 7 Implications of western by-pass on the environment
- 4 Over-ambitious redevelopment (around the Grove)
- 4 Flooding concerns (associated with developing Dunleath Park)
- 4 Highly contaminated Plank Drain
- 3 Town centre transport proposals would not solve problem
- 2 Too much retail proposed
- 2 Town centre car parks (encourage traffic)
- 1 Major disruption associated with large-scale redevelopment
- 1 Proposals for Downe Hospital site
- 1 Railway Museum Square to confined
- 1 Removal of Public Library on Market Street

Additional Comments Raised

- 5 More information required to accompany boards
- 3 Name the 'Railway Square' 'Dunleath Square'
- 2 A clear implementation strategy is required
- 2 More mention needs to be made of the rich culture
- 1 Contemporary style development should be encouraged
- 1 More facilities for young people required
- 1 Adequate parking must be provided
- 1 Downpatrick needs to be more sustainable
- 1 Engagement of local people is essential
- 1 Strong leadership required to drive the project
- 1 Huge potential to capitalise more fully on race days
- 1 More festivals
- 1 More allotments
- 1 watersports facilities in Killyleagh are underutilised
- 1 Carry out and Equality Impact Assessment
- 1 Report must demonstrate how the proposals have delivered the vision
- 1 Bypass is the only way to alleviate traffic problems
- 1 Address Vandalism
- 1 A comprehensive study to identify need for western by-pass
- 1 New leisure centre / velodrome will bring benefits
- 1 Onus should be placed on property owners to look after their buildings better
- 1 Bold thinking required
- 1 Avoid high-rise development
- 1 sympathetic new development
- 1 Additional planting where possible

4.5.2 The list below breaks the feedback down according to key topic areas, as presented on boards 6 to 10.

Board 06: Transportation

- 16 Address traffic congestion
- 12 Enhance pedestrian friendliness and create more areas for pedestrians
- 12 Implications of western by-pass on railway
- 12 Capitalise upon the existing railway route
- 10 Concerns over design and location of multi storey car parks
- 8 Western By-pass will relieve traffic in town centre
- 7 Implications of western by-pass on the environment
- 7 Eastern Distributor Road will relieve traffic in town centre
- 5 People-mover will bring benefits
- 6 Town centre transport proposals will bring benefits
- 4 Car parking proposals will bring benefits
- 3 Lack of parking
- 3 Town centre transport proposals would not solve problem
- 2 expanding floodplain and widening rivers will bring benefits
- 2 Town centre car parks will encourage traffic
- 1 Better road network required
- 1 Poor signage
- 1 Adequate parking must be provided
- 1 Western bypass is the only way to alleviate traffic problems
- 1 Need for a comprehensive study to identify need for western by-pass
- 1 Reopen the rail link with Belfast
- 1 Pedestrianise Market Street

Board 07: Church St, English St & Irish St

- 6 Enhance historically significant sites
- 1 Develop the cultural quarter
- 1 Address antisocial behaviour around cathedral

Board 08: Quoile River Landscape

- 11 Enhance new and existing green areas
- 6 Create additional cycle routes and boardwalks
- 4 Flooding concerns (associated with developing Dunleath Park)
- 4 Address highly contaminated Plank Drain
- 2 Beautiful Setting
- 1 Inaccessible parkland setting
- 1 Parkland proposals would have a detrimental affect on wildlife and natural habitat.
- 1 Wardens will be required to police the parkland to prevent anti-social behaviour.

Board 09: Market Street

- 10 Lack of quality shops and frontages
- 10 Enhance Downpatrick as a quality shopping destination
- 5 Vacant / derelict buildings
- 4 Open up entries and laneways
- 4 Better links between Down Retail Park and St Patricks Square
- 4 Over-ambitious redevelopment (around the Grove)
- 3 Name the 'Railway Square' 'Dunleath Square'
- 2 better linkages (along Market St.)
- 2 Too much retail proposed
- 1 Major disruption associated with large-scale redevelopment
- 1 Railway Museum Square to confined
- 1 Concern over removal of Public Library on Market Street

Board 10: Saint Patrick's Avenue & Downe Hospital

- 1 Concern regarding proposals for Downe Hospital site

4.6 Responses to frequently asked Questions

While many positive responses were received on the draft masterplan a number of frequently asked questions (FAQ) were raised. A response to these is given below.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS		RESPONSE
RAILWAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the draft masterplan propose replacing the existing Downpatrick Railway line with a new road? Has the draft masterplan considered using the railway as a way to shuttle people in and out of the town centre. Have the extension plans proposed by the Downpatrick and County Down Railway been factored into the draft masterplan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft masterplan proposes three different options for the vicinity of the railway line. A feasibility study including further public consultation will be necessary to determine which if any are most appropriate. These include 1) using the route of the railway for enhanced public transport provision (people mover) 2) constructing a western bypass alongside the railway 3) replacing the railway with a western bypass. Yes, use of existing transport infrastructure for the people mover is under consideration. The 'Future Directions' report on potential expansion of the railway network has been reviewed and the draft masterplan includes track extension and enhancements to the station as an important part of the town's tourist offer. Subsequently, a meeting took place between The Paul Hogarth Company and representatives of the railway to ensure these proposals are fully understood.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS		RESPONSE
RETAIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern retail development requires much larger floorplates than the draft masterplan is proposing. How has the masterplan addressed this? Is the amount of retail proposed in the draft masterplan feasible in a town of Downpatrick's size? The draft masterplan proposes increasing the retail quantity but how has it sought to enhance the retail quality of Downpatrick. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft masterplan recognises that different retailers require differing floor plate areas. The principles outlined in the masterplan encourage smaller, niche retail units close to the town centre, with larger units proposed in the vicinity of the Down Retail Park. The requirement for very large units must be balanced with the impact they can have on the character and environmental quality of the town centre. This is an important consideration and the masterplan team are continuing to assess retail capacity against existing data. It is proposed that over a 15+ year timescale, Downpatrick has significant potential to develop as a retail centre for the region. The Down District Economic Development Strategy aims to develop Downpatrick as: "an attractive place to work, live and visit; to develop the balanced growth of the town; and to achieve critical mass in population size and correlation between this and local services including a strong retail heart". At present the quality of the retail environment is negatively impacted by a lack of modernised units, a generally low quality physical environment and major traffic congestion. The draft masterplan addresses these three major issues to enhance the shopping experience, increase the catchment area and encourage new investment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS		RESPONSE
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the long-stay car parks proposed in the draft masterplan encourage car based traffic in the town centre What will the proposed multi-storey car parks look like and will they adversely impact historic buildings in the area? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The long stay car parks are strategically located at the edge of the town centre to catch traffic before it gets into the town centre The proposed multi-storey car parks are concept drawings but the plan is that these car parks will be set within the curtilage of new development and will form the new development blocks. As proposed car parks will be effectively 'wrapped with development' they will not be exposed onto the streets.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS		RESPONSE
CONGESTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the town centre transport proposals identified within the draft masterplan address congestion in the town centre? What is draft masterplan's position on the Western Bypass? The Eastern Distributor is included in the Down and Ards Area Plan – will this road ever happen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our research using existing data, strongly suggests that the proposed transport options will have a significant impact on traffic congestion. This would include either a Western Bypass or a combination of the other options. Improved public transport and pedestrian routes are also key requirements. The draft masterplan includes the Western Bypass as one of several transportation options for consideration. A further, more detailed feasibility study will be required to identify which, if any of the options are most appropriate. Through the draft Masterplan, the Eastern Distributor Road has been identified as an important piece of infrastructure to access lands zoned for housing. Current policy is that this road will be delivered by the private sector as such housing developments are taken forward.

4.7 Additional Comments

- 4.7.1 Statistics are provided to highlight the issues raised by respondents who participated in the public consultation process. They should not, however be interpreted as a vote on the proposals.
- 4.7.2 Topics / Points raised by less than 10 respondents are not necessarily less important or valid than those that appeared more frequently. All comments received were taken into account.
- 4.7.3 Insufficient information exists to determine the background of respondents and therefore if they are representative of the entire population of Downpatrick
- 4.7.4 The Client and Consultants teams wish to thank all who took time to participate in the public consultation process.

Downpatrick Draft Town Centre Masterplan

Findings of the Public Consultation Process

ANNEX

ANNEX i: List of Stakeholder Consultees.....2

ANNEX ii: Advisory Group Members.....2

ANNEX iii: Information Pack.....4

- (i) Folder including Explanatory Letter
- (ii) Draft Masterplan Information Leaflet
- (iii) Public Consultation Poster
- (iv) Public Exhibition Boards
- (v) Explanatory Notes Accompanying Exhibition Boards
- (vi) Public Consultation Workshop Invitation
- (vii) Feedback Form

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ANNEX v: Topic Area tally list.....32

ANNEX vi: Photographs from Consultation Process36

ANNEX i: List of Stakeholder Consultees

Organisation	Representative	Date / Time
DOE Planning Service	Pat Rooney	Wed 18 th Mar, 2pm
Clanmill Housing	James Wright	Fri 20 th Mar, 11am
DSD / SDLP	Margaret Ritchie MLA	Wed 25 th Mar, 2pm
South Eastern Regional College	David Smith	Thu 2 nd Apr, 10am
SDLP	Eddie McGrady MP	Thu 2 nd Apr, 12noon
NI Housing Executive	Stephen Graham	Mon 6 th Apr, 10am
SE Education & Library Board	Stanton Sloan	Mon 6 th Apr, 12.30pm
Downpatrick Senior Managers	Committee members	Mon 6 th Apr, 2pm
PSNI	Brian Hanna	Tue 7 th Apr, 10.30am
DRD Roads Service	B.Ellison & R.Monaghan	Tue 7 th Apr, 3pm
Osbourne King	Gareth Kempson	Mon 20 th Apr, 2pm
NI Environment Agency	Caroline Maguire	Tue 21 st Apr, 10am
Translink	David Cowan	Thu 23 rd Apr, 10am
Down Arts Forum	Ashley Ray	Mon 27 th Apr, 10am
DDC Neighbourhood Renewal	David Patterson	Mon 27 th Apr, 4pm
Strategic Investment Board	S. Wilson / D. Gilmour	Tue 28 th Apr, 2pm
DDC Economic & Development Committee	Committee members	Wed 29 th Apr, 2pm
Grove Shopping Centre	Harry Doherty	Fri 1 st May, 2pm
SE Health & Social Care Trust / Strategic Investment Board	John Simpson / David Gilmour	Fri 8 th May, 11am
Department for Regional Development	Mike Thompson	Telephone Consultation Mon 18 th May, 11am
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Donal Flanagan	Wed 27 th May, 3.30pm
BDP / Robinson McIlwaine Architects	Helen Harrison et al	Tue 2 nd June, 10am
NI Tourist Board	Stephen Bill	Telephone Consultation Mon 9 th June
Dunleath Estates Colliers CRE	Ronan Boyle Jonathan Miller	Thu 18 th June, 2pm
Sports NI	Nick Harkness	Tue 30 th June, 11am
SDLP	Eddie McGrady MP	Fri 3rd July, 11am
DSD / SDLP	Margaret Ritchie MLA	Fri 3rd July, 2pm
NI Water (McAdam Design)	Norman Annesley	Mon 6th July, 2pm
PSNI	Ross Keyes	Telephone Consultation Thu 20 th Aug, 2.30pm
NI Environment Agency	Caroline Maguire	Fri 21 st Aug, 10am
Grove Shopping Centre	Harry Doherty	Mon 24 th Aug, 10am
Strategic Investment Board	S. Wilson / D. Gilmour	Mon 24 th Aug, 11.30am
DRD Roads Service	B.Ellison & R.Monaghan	Wed 26 th Aug, 11am
Health Estates BDP	Helen Harrison Mike Spence	Wed 26 th Aug, 2.30pm
SDLP	Eddie McGrady MP	Tue 1 st Sept, 2.30pm
Thinking Place	J. Till & P. Anderson	Thu 3 rd Sept, 10.30am
Clanmill Housing	Jan Sloane	Tue 15 th Sept, 3pm
DSD / SDLP	Margaret Ritchie MLA	Wed 16 th Sept, 3.30pm
Councillors	Council Members	Mon 21 st Sept, 4pm
Business Forum	Committee members	Wed 30 th Sept, 6pm
DOE Planning Service	Anne Garvey	Fri 2 nd Oct, 2pm
Grove Shopping Centre	Harry Doherty	Tue 6 th Oct, 11.30am
Downpatrick & County Down Railway	Robert Gardiner	Wed 24 th Feb, 10am
Public Consultation Workshop	General Public	Thu 25 th Feb, 6pm
Public Consultation Workshop	General Public	Fri 26 th Feb, 9am

ANNEX ii: Advisory Group Members

Mrs Una Kelly,	Una's Hair Studio
Mr Ashley Ray,	Down Arts Forum
Mr Stephen Bill,	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Mr Gary Mawhinney,	Translink
Mr Gavin Oakes,	C/o Plus 2 Print
Mr Robert Monaghan,	DRD Roads Service
Mr Colman Magennis,	Down Jewellers
Mr Tom Gibney,	The Wine Barrel
Cllr Peter Craig,	Down District Council
Cllr John Dorris,	Down District Council
Cllr Liam Johnston,	Down District Council
Cllr Cadogan Enright,	Down District Council
Cllr Eamon Mac Con Midhe,	Down District Council
Cllr Dermot Curran,	Down District Council
Cllr Colin McGrath,	Down District Council
Cllr Michael Coogan,	Down District Council
Cllr Edward Rea,	Down District Council
Cllr Patrick Toman,	Down District Council
Cllr William Dick,	Down District Council
Mr John Dumigan,	Clerk and Chief Executive, Down District Council
Ms Sharon O'Connor,	Director of Cultural and Economic Development, Down District Council
Mrs Margaret Quinn,	Project Development Manager, Down District Council

ANNEX iii: Information Pack

- (a) Folder including Explanatory Letter
- (b) Draft Masterplan Information Leaflet
- (c) Public Consultation Poster
- (d) Public Exhibition Boards
- (e) Explanatory Notes Accompanying Exhibition Boards
- (f) Public Consultation Workshop Invitation
- (g) Feedback Form

(a) Folder including Explanatory Letter



INFORMATION PACK

The cover of the 'DOWNPATRICK town centre draft masterplan' information pack. It features a topographic map of the town area, similar to the one above, but with a dark blue rounded rectangle at the bottom containing the title 'DOWNPATRICK town centre draft masterplan' in white text. At the bottom of the cover, there are logos for the Department for Social Development, the DOWNSIDE logo, and the Paul Hogarth Company logo, along with the text 'A team led by: thepaulhogarthcompany'.

“Downpatrick will be rejuvenated as an energetic, vibrant and forward-thinking town in which all its residents can take pride. Its unique historic environment, particularly its early Christian heritage, will be leveraged and complemented by exemplary development, establishing Downpatrick as a special visitor destination. The town and surrounding area will also take advantage of its natural setting. Its buildings, streets and spaces will be attractive, safe and friendly, providing a focus for community life and an attraction to the increasing numbers who visit.”

The above draft shared vision sets out the priorities for the future regeneration of Downpatrick as identified in the Downpatrick Town Centre Draft Masterplan. The draft Masterplan was commissioned by the Department for Social Development in close cooperation with Down District Council. It seeks to target the physical renewal of run down areas within the town centre whilst identifying a strategic approach to realise the full regeneration potential of Downpatrick over the next 10-15 years.

Draft aims were identified as part of the masterplan, which include, making Downpatrick a destination, realising the environmental quality of the town and managing future growth through sustainable neighbourhoods. Strategic proposals seek to improve existing properties and open spaces, encourage comprehensive development that will contribute to the physical, social, economic and environmental regeneration of the town and directly tackle the issues of traffic congestion within the town centre.

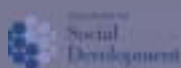
It is now over to you, the stakeholders, to help shape this plan. All proposals are in draft so we are keen to hear what you think. What do you like and dislike about Downpatrick? Do you agree with the draft aims and proposals? Do you have any other suggestions for transforming Downpatrick? This pack and the consultation process have been put in place to ensure that the people of Downpatrick have the opportunity to express their opinions. So, whether you live, visit or work in Downpatrick, we look forward to hearing from you!

Please send any comments you may have via post or e-mail to:

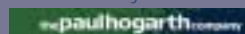
Email: downpatrick@paulhogarth.com

Post: Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan
The Paul Hogarth Company
Avalon House,
278-280 Newtownards Road,
Belfast, BT4 1HE

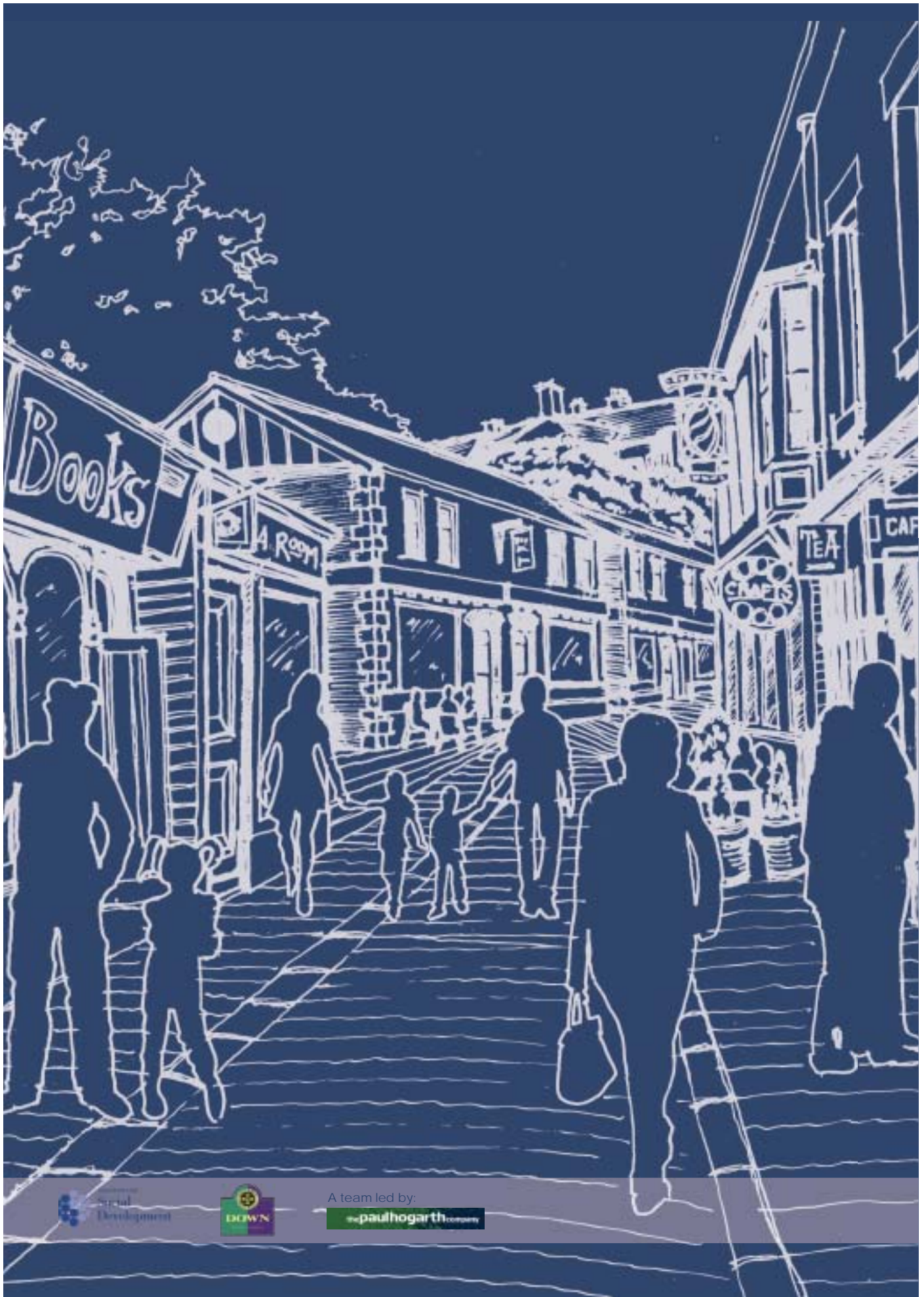
Documents also available to download at:
www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations/consultation-masterplans-dptk



A team led by:





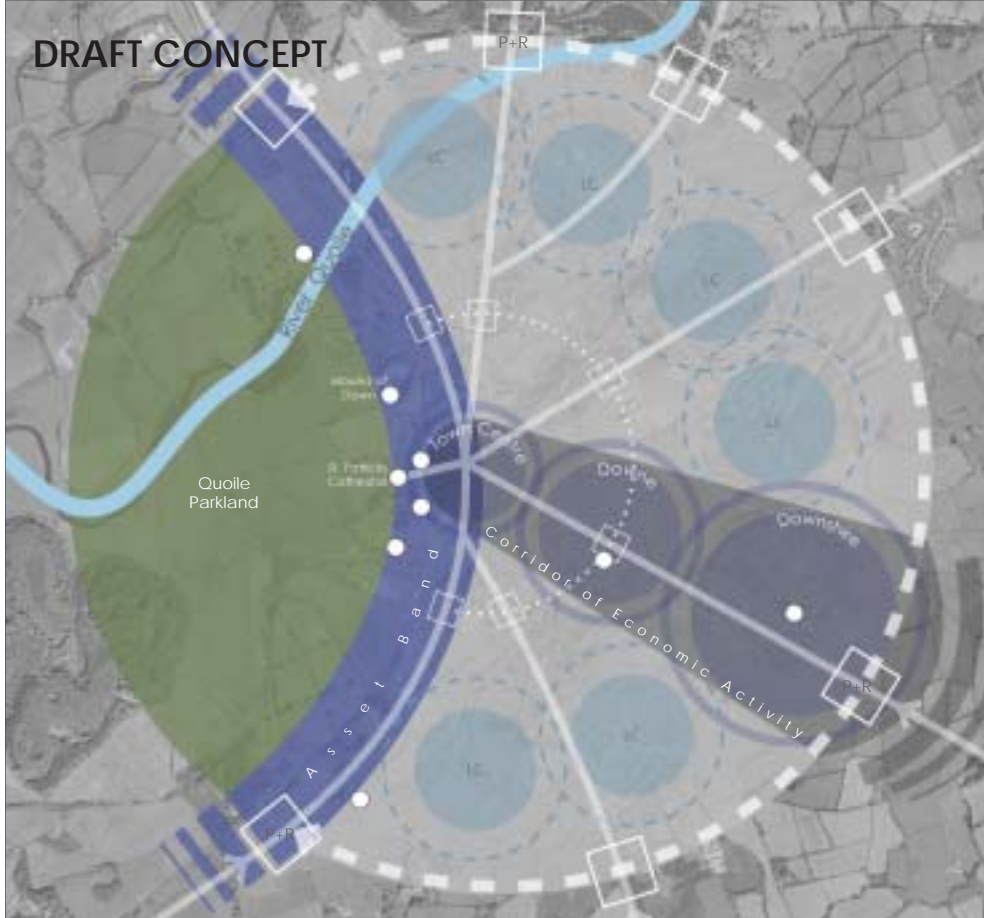


A team led by:
the paulhogarth company

THE DRAFT MASTERPLAN

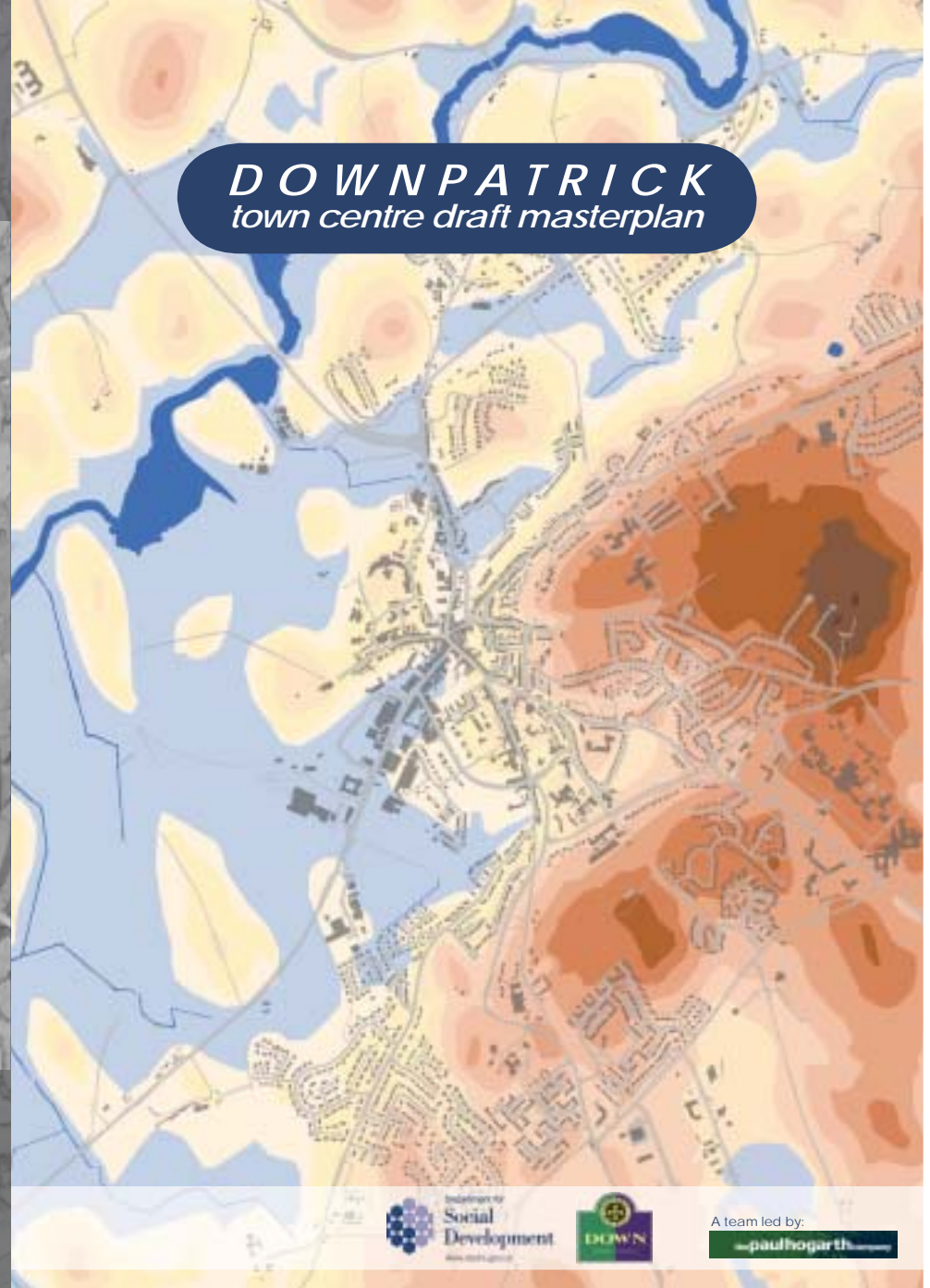
The Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan was commissioned by the Department for Social Development (DSD) in close cooperation with Down District Council. The need was identified for a comprehensive Masterplan to target the physical renewal of run down areas within the town centre whilst identifying a strategic approach to realise the full regeneration potential of the Town as a whole. This leaflet illustrates the draft Vision, Aims and Concept Plan along with the emerging draft masterplan proposals for the future development of Downpatrick.

DRAFT CONCEPT



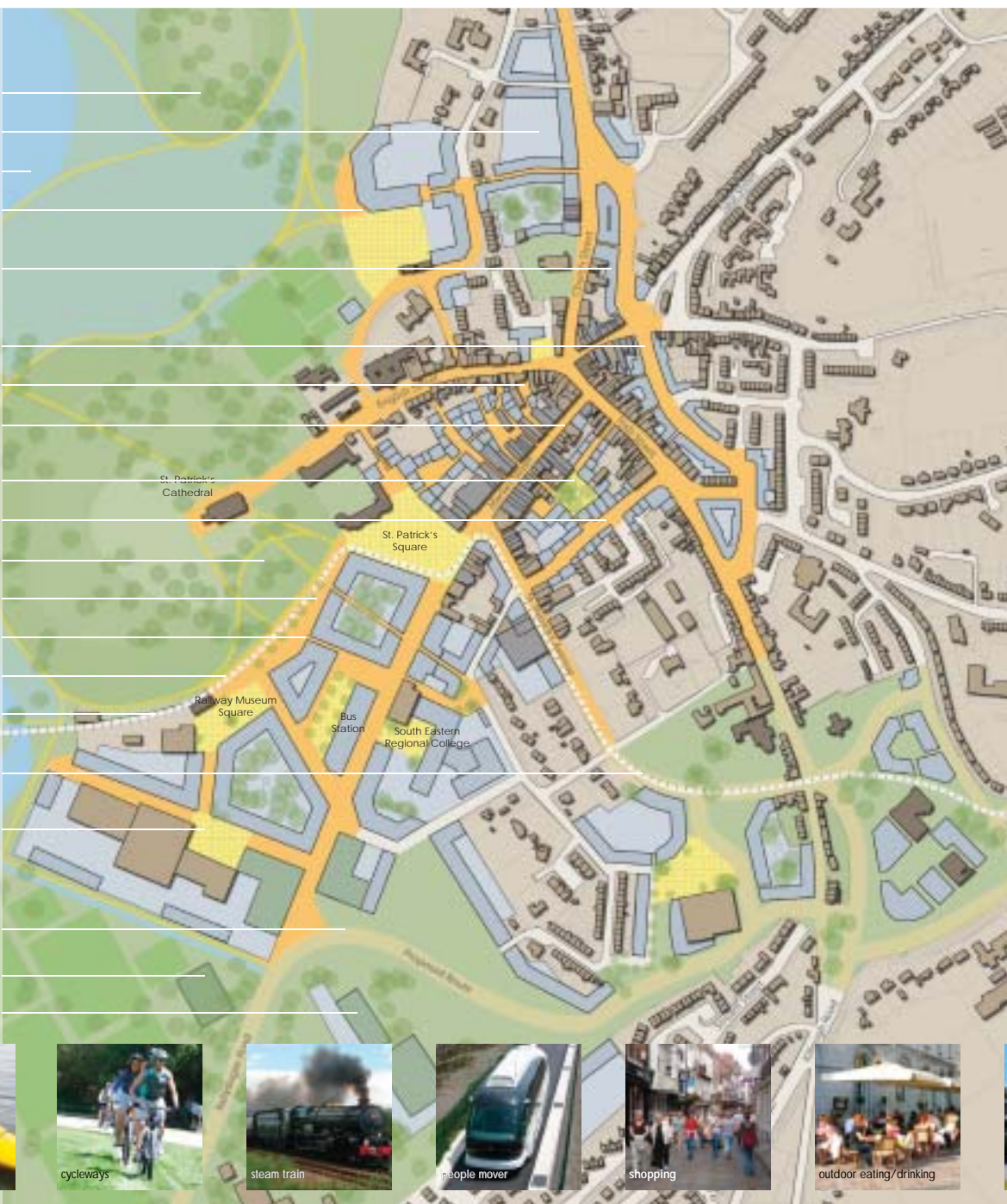
DRAFT VISION

Downpatrick will be rejuvenated as an energetic, vibrant and forward-thinking town in which all its residents can take pride. Its unique historic environment, particularly its early Christian heritage, will be leveraged and complemented by exemplary development, establishing Downpatrick as a special visitor destination. The town and surrounding area will also take advantage of its natural setting. Its buildings, streets and spaces will be attractive, safe and friendly, providing a focus for community life and an attraction to the increasing numbers who visit.



DRAFT MASTERPLAN

- Mound of Down Interpretation & Landscape
- Long Stay Multistorey Car Parking
- Expanded Water Based Activities
- Tourism Hotel & Gateway to Park
- Mixed Use Development
- Extended Saul Street Link
- Reopened Entries
- High Quality Public Realm
- Short Stay Car Parking
- New Street Connection
- Cathedral Access and Setting
- Improved Town Centre Connections
- New Shopping Streets
- Business Park to Town Centre People Mover
- Extended Steam Railway Lines
- Linear Park & People Mover Route
- Integration of Existing Retail with a Network of Streets & Spaces
- New Link Road
- Centre of Sporting Excellence
- Flagship Eco-Retail Park



DRAFT AIMS

- Make Downpatrick a destination
- Turn constraints into opportunities
- Realise environmental quality
- Integrate development of town and region
- Manage growth through sustainable neighbourhoods

FEEDBACK

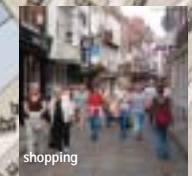
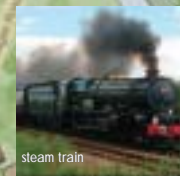
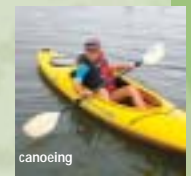
Thank-you for taking the time to study the draft proposals for the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan. Exhibition boards, containing more detailed information on the draft masterplan, are available for the public to view at the St. Patrick's Centre, Downpatrick. Alternatively, you can download them at <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations>.

Your views and suggestions are essential to the process of finalising the plan so please respond with any comments you may have by completing a feedback form (available at the St. Patrick's Centre) or sending us your comments via post or e-mail.

Email: downpatrick@paulhogarth.com

Post: Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan
The Paul Hogarth Company
Avalon House,
278 - 280 Newtownards Road,
Belfast,
BT4 1HE

Thank-you.





YOUR INVITATION

to view the draft proposals of the
**Downpatrick Town Centre
Masterplan**

at the
Saint Patrick's Centre

on the
21st January - 18th March

Members of the public are invited to view the draft proposals of the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan at the St. Patrick's Centre, Market Street, Downpatrick. The masterplan is an exciting vision for the future of the Town Centre and the input of the people of Downpatrick is vital to its success.





St. Patrick's Centre



Down Arts Centre



Former Downe Hospital



Former Gaol



English Street



Welcome to the public exhibition of the Downpatrick Town Centre Draft Masterplan.

The Masterplan, commissioned by the Department for Social Development in partnership with Down District Council, sets out a 15-20 year vision for the future of Downpatrick Town Centre.

It will serve as non-statutory guidance on the sustainable regeneration of the town, of use to both the public and private sectors.

The purpose of this exhibition is to share the draft findings and proposals of the Masterplan with members of the public and to invite feedback to help shape the final plan.

Your input is vital to ensure that this plan represents a shared vision for Downpatrick. We invite you to read the boards and complete a feedback form as provided with this exhibition.

MASTERPLAN PROCESS

Mar '09
Information Gathering
(Document Review, Site Appraisal, Stakeholder Consultation)

Analysis

Client Review

Concept Proposals

Client Review

Draft Masterplan

Client Review

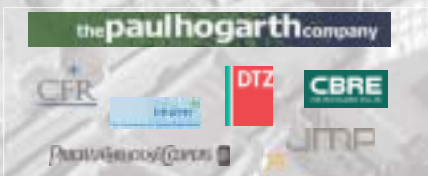
Public Exhibition

Draft Documents

Client Review

Final Masterplan and Action Plan

Launch



INTRODUCTION

01
 DOWNPATRICK
 town centre masterplan
 d r a f t



English St / Scotch St. Junction



Market Street



Saul Street



Downpatrick



Downshire Hospital



View of Irish Street in the 19th Century

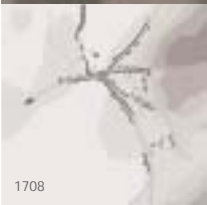


photos courtesy of Northern Ireland Environment Agency

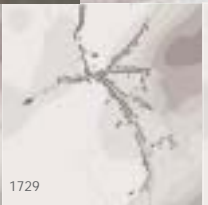
Downpatrick is one of the island's most historic towns and home to a number of significant historical sites and landmarks.

In order to successfully shape future development it is essential that the masterplan fully understands this rich history and how the town has evolved over the years.

Whilst considering the future development of Downpatrick, it will be important to protect and enhance its many historic streets and buildings.



1708



1729



1833



1901



present

Through the masterplan research process, the evolution of the town centre's growth has been mapped. This clearly shows the tight-knit character of development until its 20th Century expansion.

HISTORY & EVOLUTION

02
DRAFT
DOWNPATRICK
town centre masterplan



Down County Museum



Scotch Street



St. Patrick's Cathedral



De Courcy Square



Market Street



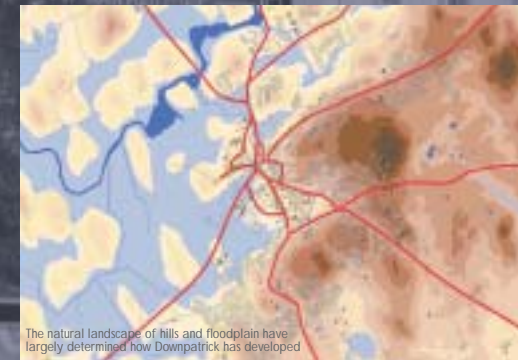
Understanding how Downpatrick functions today is a vital first step in the Masterplan process.

This has been informed through desktop research, site appraisal and stakeholder consultation.

Some of the key findings are as follows;

- Fine Natural Landscape and Built Heritage
- Major Constraints associated with the above
- Evolution of a Congested Development Pattern
- Evolution of Isolated Zones of Development
- Congestion Continues to Fuel a Process of Decentralisation
- Lack of Clarity over the Future Role of the Town Centre

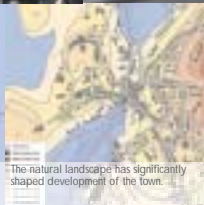
Where do we go from here:
...is status quo an option?



The natural landscape of hills and floodplain have largely determined how Downpatrick has developed



Downpatrick is placed within a rich natural and historic landscape, presenting opportunities for tourism and leisure



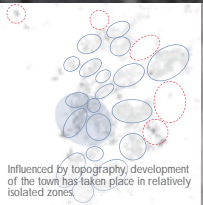
The natural landscape has significantly shaped development of the town



Downpatrick has a diverse mix of uses, set within a compact town centre.



Downpatrick can boast a rich built heritage, protected by the conservation area.



Influenced by topography development of the town has taken place in relatively isolated zones

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

03
DOWNPATRICK
town centre masterplan
draft



What kind of place should Downpatrick Town Centre be?

To begin to address this question a draft vision statement and five masterplan aims have been developed through consultation with local stakeholders.

Draft Shared Vision

“Downpatrick will be rejuvenated as an energetic, vibrant and forward-thinking town in which all its residents can take pride. Its unique historic environment, particularly its early Christian heritage, will be leveraged and complemented by exemplary development, establishing Downpatrick as a special visitor destination. The town and surrounding area will also take advantage of its natural setting. Its buildings, streets and spaces will be attractive, safe and friendly, providing a focus for community life and an attraction to the increasing numbers who visit.”

<p>Aim 1</p> <p>Make Downpatrick a destination</p>	<p>Aim 2</p> <p>Turn constraints into opportunities</p>	<p>Aim 3</p> <p>Realise environmental quality</p>	<p>Aim 4</p> <p>Integrate development of town and region</p>	<p>Aim 5</p> <p>Manage growth through sustainable neighbourhoods</p>
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SHARED VISION & AIMS

04
 DOWNPATRICK
 town centre masterplan
 draft



The draft Masterplan proposes a variety of projects throughout Downpatrick Town Centre.

These include improvements to existing properties and open spaces, as well as new opportunities for development that will contribute to the physical, social and economic regeneration of the town centre.

The key principles behind these draft proposals are set out in the concept plans below;



concept plan: wider town



concept plan: town centre



Area i
church st, english st and irish st (board 17)

Area ii
quille river landscape (board 18)

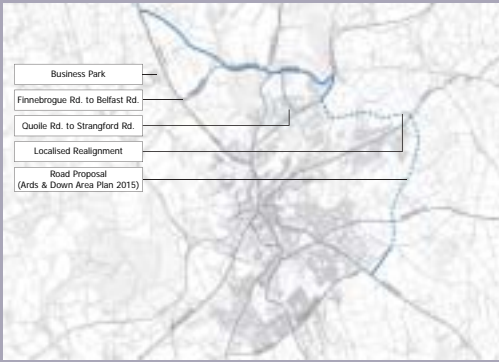
Area iii
market street (board 19)

Area iv
st. patrick's ave. & downe hospital (board 10)

CONCEPT & DRAFT MASTERPLAN

05
DOWPATRICK
town centre masterplan
draft

Eastern Periphery



New roads on the Eastern Periphery, as defined by the Area Plan, would minimise the impact of future housing development on the town centre and by extending links to the Belfast Road, provide some opportunity for traffic to avoid the town centre.

Western Periphery (Options subject to further detailed analysis)



A new link on the Western Periphery, not currently in the Area Plan, could support all vehicles or solely public transport in and out of the town centre. This western proposal could link Down Business Park with the town centre, provide opportunities for traffic to by-pass the town and improve access to the east and south of the town centre. The multi-purpose nature of such a link and any ensuing benefits requires to be considered in further detail. Road links in proximity to the Mound of Down have been considered and discounted through the masterplan process, due to environmental sensitivities and related designations, as well as cost associated with the technical complexities such routes would involve.

Town Centre



Potential new streets that would relieve town centre traffic congestion. Pros and Cons of each outlined below.

A: Church Street to Irish Street



- Pros**
- + reduces traffic on Irish Street / Market Street junction and prime shopping areas
 - + provides new north to east connection
 - + presents opportunity to regenerate area
 - + presents scope to divert heavy vehicles from Market Street

- Cons**
- requires redevelopment of some properties
 - requires complex engineering due to topography
 - does not alleviate the impact of south to north traffic on Irish Street / Market Street junction

B: Irish Street to St. Patrick's Avenue



- Pros**
- + improves traffic flow in the Market Street, Irish Street and St Patrick's Avenue Area.
 - + has relatively low impact on existing buildings
 - + releases opportunities for new mixed use development
 - + provides scope to widen Market St footpaths

- Cons**
- requires redevelopment of some properties
 - retains heavy traffic in central core
 - risks generating more traffic movements due to one way system

C: Ballydugan Road to Killough Road



- Pros**
- + reduces traffic on Market Street / St. Patrick's Avenue Junction
 - + potential to divert heavy vehicles from central core (Market Street)
 - + new south to east connection
 - + releases opportunities for new mixed use development

- Cons**
- requires redevelopment of some properties
 - requires complex engineering due to topography
 - requires relocation of playing fields

As outlined above, potential new streets in Downpatrick Town Centre have pros and cons associated with all of them. We are keen to hear the views of the public on this important matter. How do you think Downpatrick should seek to solve its traffic congestion problem?

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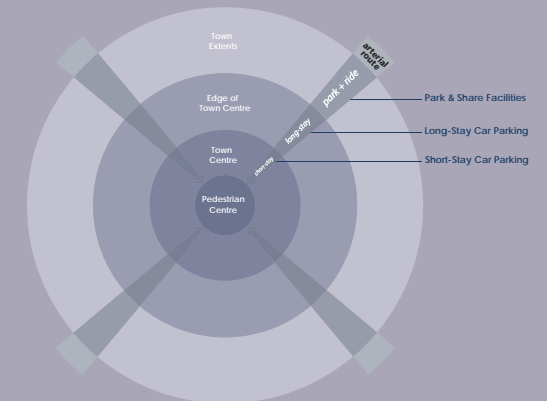
The draft Masterplan seeks to provide a balanced transportation strategy for Downpatrick.

Reducing the impact of traffic congestion in the town centre is crucial to achieving town centre development.

This can be achieved by a process of:

- improving accessibility on foot, by cycle and by public transport
- implementing a parking strategy which intercepts trips before key junctions
- upgrading road infrastructure to maximise the investment in planned road improvements, improve access and provide alternative routes around key town centre junctions

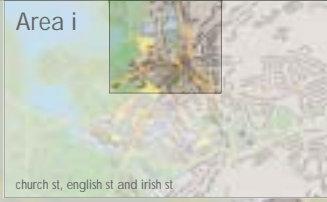
Car Parking Strategy



The Draft Car Parking Strategy for Downpatrick focusses on ordering the location of car parks relevant to their use. Park and Share facilities for travel to the town centre and other destinations, such as Belfast and Newry, would be located on the edge of the town. Long term car parking for those working in the town centre would be located at the edge of town centre. Short term parking for those visiting the town centre to shop would be located centrally. In addition, all proposed residential areas would be served by designated car parking.

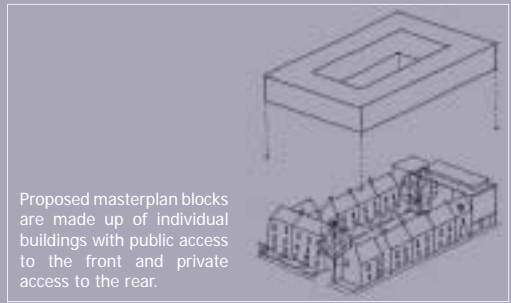


- Mixed Use Development
- Long Stay Multistorey Car Parking
- Gateway Space
- Tourism Hotel and Gateway to Park
- New Pedestrian Connections
- High Quality Public Realm
- Extended Saul Street Link
- DeCoursey Square Redevelopment
- Residential Led Development
- Reopened Entries
- High Quality Public Realm
- Short Stay Car Parking
- New Street Connection
- Cathedral Access and Setting



Encouraging vibrancy and activity throughout the historic core of Downpatrick is essential.

Conserving historic buildings, exploiting the tourism assets and adding sensitive development where appropriate will help to ensure safe, lively and attractive streets and places.



CHURCH ST, ENGLISH ST & IRISH ST

07
DRAFT
DOWNPATRICK
town centre masterplan

Mound of Down Interpretation and Landscape Design

Controlled Flooding of the Quoile

Expanded Water Based Activities

Wildlife and Activity Centre

Improved Town Centre Connections

Network of Wetland Boardwalks

Grove Design and Expansion

Extended Steam Railway Lines

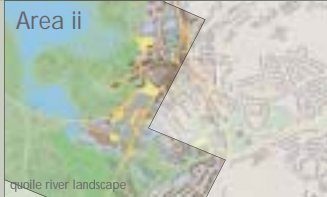
People Mover Route between the Business Park and the Town Centre

Water Features

New Link Road

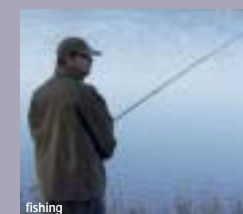
Centre of Sporting Excellence

Flagship Eco-Retail Park



With the rolling drumlin landscape, historic landmarks, the picturesque River Quoile and wild marshland home to an array of flora and fauna, Downpatrick can boast a most beautiful surrounding landscape.

The draft masterplan focuses on sensitively opening up this natural landscape to become part of the town, an amenity for local people and an attraction to visitors. This could be achieved through the establishment of greenways, boardwalks, linear parks, retention ponds and reed beds.



QUOILE RIVER LANDSCAPE

08
DRAFT
DOWNPATRICK
town centre masterplan



Refurbished Units for Niche Retail

Reopened Entries

Short Stay Car Parking

New Street

Enlarged St Patrick's Square

Retail Led Development & Parking

Route of People Mover

Bus Station

Railway Museum Square

South Eastern College

Long Stay Multistorey Car Parking

Integration of Existing Retail with a Network of Streets and Spaces

Gateway Space

Area iii



market street

Supporting economic activity along Market Street is a fundamental part of the draft masterplan.

The town's retail offering will be strengthened to ensure that Downpatrick capitalises on its strategic location as a retail centre for the local district and wider catchment area.

This includes new car parks that will form part of development, so remaining central without compromising the quality of the environment for pedestrians



enhanced streetscape



shopping



outdoor eating/drinking

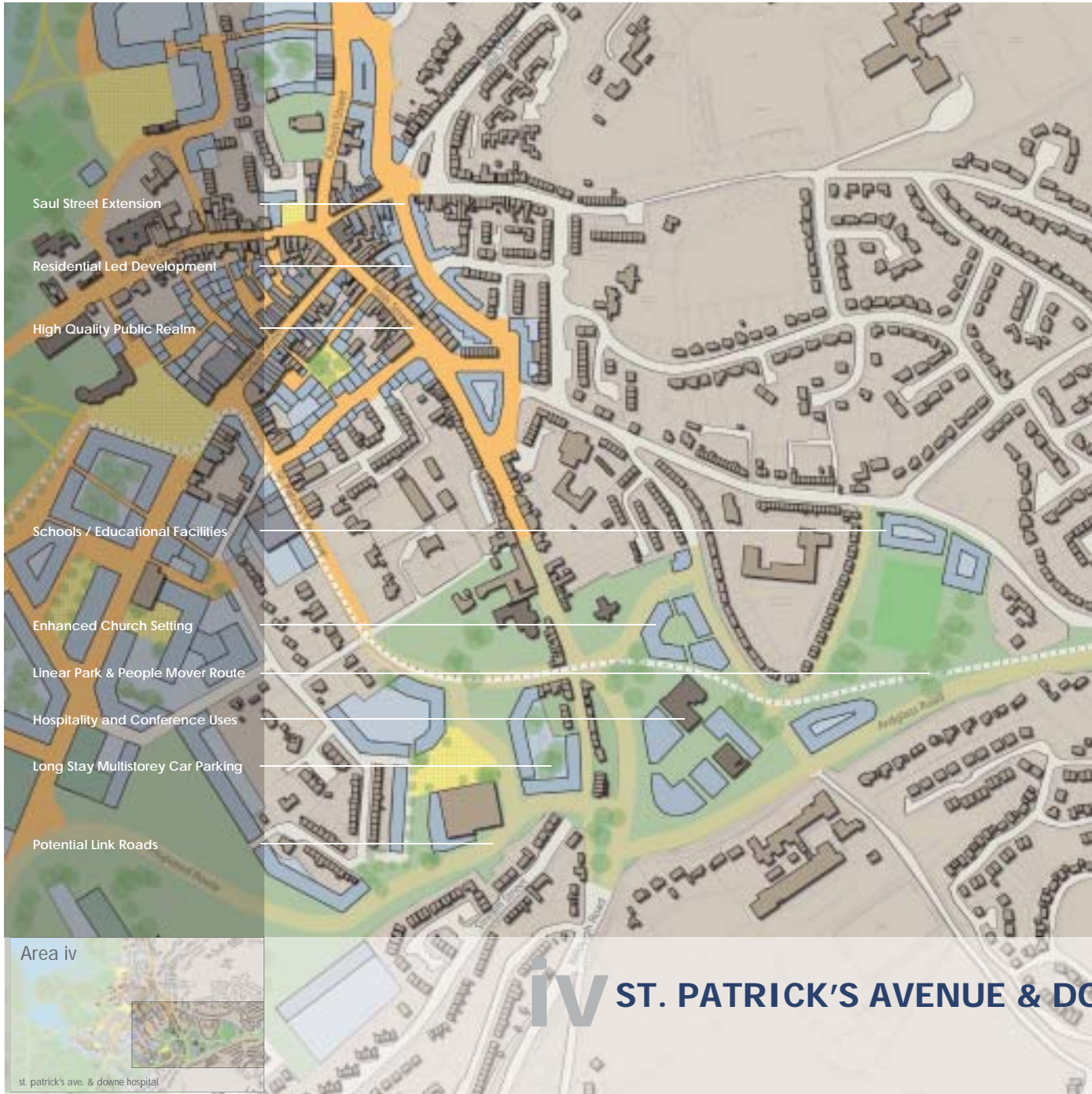
iii

MARKET STREET

09

DOWNPATRICK
town centre masterplan

draft



With the Downshire Site growing in importance as an employment hub, creating high-quality connections with the Town Centre becomes increasingly vital.

The masterplan advocates the establishment of an innovative 'people mover' shuttling between the Town Centre and the Downshire Site.

In this context, new development at the former Downe Hospital site and on St. Patrick's Avenue ensures that this area functions as part of Downpatrick Town Centre.



linear park



pedestrian route

iv ST. PATRICK'S AVENUE & DOWNE HOSPITAL

10
DOWNPATRICK
town centre masterplan
d r a f t

ANNEX iii

(e) Explanatory Notes Accompanying Exhibition Boards

Further Explanatory Notes on the Draft Masterplan for Downpatrick Town Centre

These further explanatory notes are designed to be read in conjunction with the draft masterplan exhibition boards, currently located at the Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick and available online (www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations)

The input of local residents, businesses and other stakeholders in developing the masterplan will be critical to its success. In recognition of this, The Department for Social Development (DSD), Down District Council (DDC) and their partner organisations wish to assist the public with understanding the extensive content of these draft proposals in more detail.

1. Introduction

What kind of place would you like Downpatrick to be in the future?

This is the core question behind development a masterplan for the town centre. It provides a process by which everyone with an interest in Downpatrick can jointly develop a shared vision for the next 15 – 20 years. The masterplan is non-statutory, so will not become a formal part of the planning process. However, it will provide a common point of reference for all stakeholders, including central and local government departments, local businesses, community groups and landowners. It will help to inform investment and policy decisions in a way that achieves the common goal of a more prosperous and attractive town centre for all. By working together in a strategically coordinated manner, the likelihood of success is greatly increased.

It is therefore essential that everyone has a chance to have their say, hence the purpose of this exhibition. What do you like and dislike about Downpatrick? What do you think is needed to improve the town centre? Do you think the draft proposals are appropriate? These and other questions are contained in the feedback sheet provided and we are encouraging as many people as possible to submit their responses. This feedback will then be directly used to revise and finalise the masterplan.

The masterplan is being developed by team of specialist consultants, working on behalf of DSD, DDC and an advisory group of other key stakeholders.

Urban & Landscape Design	The Paul Hogarth Company (lead)
Planning	DTZ
Economics	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
Transportation	JMP
Tourism	TEAM
Property	CBRE
Property Law	Cleaver Fulton Rankin

2. History & Evolution

When thinking about the future of Downpatrick, it is essential to understand the significance of its past. This enables us to ensure that historic buildings and spaces are protected and enhanced, whilst new development takes place in a way that is compatible with the historic town. The board shows some of the historic photographs being used to understand some of the qualities of old Downpatrick and how they can inform us for the future. It also contains a series of plans developed with Northern Ireland Environment Agency, showing the evolution of Downpatrick as a settlement.

3. Analysis & Findings

The consultant team gathered extensive information on Downpatrick through desktop research, site visits and consultation with key stakeholders. All of this information was then analysed to understand the town's strengths and weaknesses - what's working and what's not. Analysis also reveals key opportunities for regeneration and development, thus informing development of the plan.

Downpatrick is a town with many fine buildings, streets and spaces, all of which must form the basis for its future regeneration. This will involve conserving old buildings, sensitively redeveloping derelict and vacant properties and enhancing the streets and parks that connect them together.

Through analysis, it was found that Downpatrick's unique landscape has and continues to play a major role in how the town develops (see plan bottom right). The location of roads and buildings has been constrained by the area's hills and rivers. The impact of these major topographical and hydrological influences has been development concentrated along narrow routes, such as Church Street, Irish Street and English Street. This gives Downpatrick its unique character, but also causes the problems of traffic congestion that we see in the town centre today.

Traffic has been identified as one of the key problems facing Downpatrick and evidence suggests that it deters people from using and investing in the town centre. This poses a dilemma – how do we resolve congestion in the context of so many constraints?

Another result of this landscape influenced development pattern has been areas of new development taking place in isolated pockets (eg "over the hill"), relatively disconnected from the town centre. This results in a town of many parts that aren't necessarily well connected to one another. (see plan bottom centre)

The analysis of these trends leads us to conclude that the town needs a bold, strategic intervention to safeguard its future. In the context of growth already planned for the town, doing nothing does not appear to be an option.

We're keen to hear what you think.

4. Shared Vision and Aims

Having identified the opportunities and the problems with Downpatrick, we need to establish a vision of the future. What kind of place do you the community want to see Downpatrick being in 15 – 20 years time? This board proposes a draft vision statement around which it hoped that all parties can broadly agree. Developed through consultation, this statement will be further revised in response to your feedback.

Board 4 also proposes 5 aims of the draft masterplan. We believe that attaining the following goals will be critical to the future of Downpatrick.

1. **Make Downpatrick a destination** - Downpatrick must seek to be a place in which people live, work and play, rather than a commuter or dormitory town. This will involve identifying new opportunities for employment and commerce.
2. **Turn constraints into opportunities** - Finding ways to work with and not against Downpatrick's rich landscape and buildings will be key to its success.
3. **Realise environmental quality** - Downpatrick needs to improve many of its buildings and open spaces so that is a safe and attractive place in which to spend time.
4. **Integrate development of the town and region** - through strategic design, increased effort is required to connect Downpatrick Town Centre with adjacent neighbourhoods and the wider region.
5. **Manage growth through sustainable neighbourhoods** – new housing must be located in the right place, designed well and connected to the town centre and surrounding areas.

5. Concept & Draft Masterplan

This board introduces the masterplan itself and importantly, the key concepts upon which it is based (see diagrams on right).

The Draft Masterplan proposes that the town be developed in a way that is easy to move around and that makes the most of its town centre and surrounding landscape. Traffic will be managed by providing car parks at key arrival points to the town and exploring the potential for alternative routes. The historic core of Downpatrick will be protected and enhanced, so that its landmarks and attractions can function as well as possible. A corridor of economic development will be developed, consisting of the town centre and the former sites of the Downe and Downshire Hospitals. In addition, the beautiful landscape of the Quoile will be sensitively opened up to become a major resource for wildlife and recreation.

Within the town centre itself, key landmarks such as the cathedral and churches will be protected and enhanced. Culture and Arts will focus along English and Scotch Streets, while retail along Market Street, with small niche retail to the north and larger high street retail to the south. St Patrick's Avenue should be strengthened as a town centre street with opportunities for office development, therefore making better linkages with the cinema and former hospital sites.

On the masterplan itself, areas of potential redevelopment are highlighted by the blue blocks and existing buildings are coloured in brown. The plan shows the potential overall size, shape and use of development, but does not go into detail of its design. Areas of yellow and orange denote streets and spaces that would be subjected to high quality public realm improvement. Proposals are made for land in both public and private ownership, however, as the plan is statutory, they only serve to guide those wishing to develop the sites in question, rather than enforce policy upon them.

From this point, the Masterplan has been divided into 4 areas and is explained in further detail on subsequent boards.

6. Transportation

Before focusing on each area in detail, Board 6 is designed to explain a series of potential solutions to Downpatrick's transportation problems. First and foremost, Downpatrick must be made attractive for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, so to reduce the impact of car travel on the town. One draft proposal is a 'people mover' system linking the Down Business Park, Town Centre and Downshire Hospital. This could be an electric bus or a more rail-based alternative.

Secondly, parking should be managed in an intelligent manner to serve businesses and facilities, whilst also reducing the amount of traffic circulating around the town. The Car Parking Strategy proposes a structured solution involving Park and Ride / Share on the outskirts, Long Term parking on the edge of the town centre (for those working there) and Short Term parking in the centre (for those visiting). Throughout the masterplan we are proposing 'wrapped multi-storey car parks'. These involve car parks hidden behind and beneath buildings, so that numbers are maintained, but streets are not dominated by seas of tarmac.

The Draft Masterplan also proposes a series of potential new roads that would alleviate Downpatrick's problem of traffic congestion. Unfortunately due to reasons identified in analysis, all of the options have pros and cons associated with them. It is therefore vital that the people of Downpatrick understand these options so that informed decisions can be made about appropriate solutions.

On the left, the two maps illustrate roads in the wider area. The Eastern Periphery is a route already identified by the Area Plan. This road would not bypass the town centre, as it is too much of a diversion. However, it would enable access to areas where new housing is planned, thus reducing the impact this would have on the town centre. More detailed work is required to finalise the route of this road in areas such as at the River Quoile.

The other plan on the left illustrates the Western Periphery. For some time people have speculated about the potential for a distributor road or bypass to the west of Downpatrick, connecting the Belfast and Ballyduggan Roads and relieving town centre congestion. Through our research, we believe that such a road would relieve congestion significantly, but that it would have major environmental and cost implications associated with it. The only viable routes identified follow the line of the railway, thus avoiding flooded areas and the Mound of Down. However, this would be very costly to implement due to the engineering involved and affect the setting of the Quoile, Mound of Down and Steam Railway.

The plan in the centre of Board 6 illustrates 3 possible new roads in the town centre. Together these would also have a significant impact on traffic congestion and negate the need for a Western road. However, they also have pros and cons associated with them. Road A would link Church Street to Irish Street. This would circumnavigate the congested upper Market Street area, but require to pass through areas currently occupied by housing. Such an approach would therefore involve redevelopment of new housing in the same area. Road B links Irish Street to St Patrick's Avenue through the area currently occupied by the PSNI station. This would help town centre traffic to move more easily through the town but require relocation of the PSNI station. Road 3 would link the Ballyduggan Road to Killough Road (ASDA to the cinema). This would require relocation of the Dunleath Playing Fields, but would greatly reduce traffic in the Market Street / St Patrick's Avenue area. These three options combined would be significantly less expensive than the Western Periphery, with potential for private sector funding.

Importantly, all of these draft proposals are options for consideration and we're keen to hear your thoughts.

7. Church St, English St and Irish St

Board 7 focuses on the north of the town centre, including the Cathedral, approaches along Church Street and the historic junction at the centre of the town. Proposals include a major new car park on Church Street, shielded by development of offices, houses and apartments. They also include potential for a hotel on the site of the Down High School which is planned for relocation elsewhere in the town. Another key proposal is to open up the historic entries between Market Street and English Street. This would create better connections between these areas and provide new opportunities for shops, restaurants and galleries along the entry ways (see sketch). Also shown on this board is the potential new road from Saul Street to Irish Street, with new replacement housing shown in blue.

8. Quoile River Landscape

Through analysis of the town, the attractiveness and historical / ecological importance of the Quoile River and associated landscape became very apparent. The Draft Masterplan proposes to sensitively open up this landscape, so that it can be improved for wildlife and enjoyed more widely by residents and visitors. Proposals centre on a network of boardwalks linking key destinations such as The Saint Patrick's Centre, Railway Station, Mound of Down and Inch Abbey. Water levels would be managed to control flooding and create wetland habitats. A discreet Wildlife and Activity Centre would provide a focus for visitors wishing to watch wildlife or take part in activities such as cycling and canoeing. And new playing fields would be located near Asda, to allow for a new road and environmentally conscious retail development to the east. Together, we believe that these proposals could create a major local resource and a nationally important tourist offer, right in the heart of Downpatrick.

9. Market Street

Board No 9 focuses on the area around Market Street which has been identified as the area most appropriate for continued retail development. Supporting existing businesses and complementing them with new ones forms the backbone of proposals for this area, strengthening Downpatrick's role as a shopping and tourist destination. To the north, small existing shops should be retained and where necessary, refurbished to be more appropriate in character to the historic town and in function for modern retailing. Opportunities to introduce flats above shops should be sought wherever possible, thus increasing evening and weekend activity in the town centre. The draft masterplan also proposes a major redevelopment of the Grove Shopping Centre to create a first class shopping environment in the heart of Downpatrick. This would include a series of new, people friendly streets and squares, with car parking concealed beneath and behind development. Integrating the bus and train stations are a key part of this proposal, so that they play an increasingly active part in the life of the town centre. One suggestion is to extend the railway line through paving to the St Patrick Centre, so that on special occasions, locomotives could be brought into the heart of the town.

10. St Patrick's Avenue and Downe Hospital

The development of the new Downe Hospital has resulted in major development opportunities at the former Downe Hospital site and at the Downshire. Plans are already progressing to establish a public sector campus at the Downshire, whilst the Health Trust are looking at the potential for mixed used development at the Downe Site. Through the masterplan, we think it is essential to ensure that any development in this area complements rather than competes with the town centre. An emphasis is therefore placed on improving pedestrian, cycling and public transport connections through this area, so "bringing the former hospital sites closer to the town centre". Board 10 shows the concept of a linear park connecting St Patrick's Avenue with the Ardglass Road through the former Downe Hospital site. This route could also potentially accommodate the proposed people mover connecting each of these areas.

(f) Public Consultation Workshop Invitation

Public Consultation **Workshops**

The Draft Masterplan for Downpatrick Town Centre, which sets out a vision for the future regeneration of Downpatrick, will continue to be available for public consultation until 18th March 2010.

The consultants, working on behalf of The Department for Social Development, in conjunction with Down District Council, will hold two Public Consultation Workshops to seek views on the proposals.

The Workshops, both of which are open to all members of the public, will take place in the St. Patrick's Centre, St. Patricks Square, Market Street, Downpatrick on Thursday 25th February 7.00 p.m.- 9.00 p.m. and Friday 26th February 11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Consultants will also be available up to 2.00 p.m. on Friday 26th February to discuss the plans with members of the public

DSD would now welcome comments on the proposed draft masterplan from all interested parties, so to ensure that it accurately reflects the views of local people.

The consultation responses on the draft proposal will be considered by DSD in finalising the Masterplan proposals for Downpatrick Town Centre.

The Consultation Document is available to any member of the public and can be obtained by going to www.dsdni.gov.uk and clicking on the Consultation zone in the main menu or from Down District Council at www.downdc.gov.uk .

(g) Feedback Form

DOWNPATRICK TOWN CENTRE DRAFT MASTERPLAN

PUBLIC CONSULTATION: FEEDBACK FORM

22 January – 19 March 2010, Saint Patrick Centre, Downpatrick

Name & Contact Details (optional)

Thank you for taking the time to view the draft proposals for the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan. Your views and suggestions are essential to the process of finalising the plan. Please submit this feedback form in the box provided at the exhibition venue or send it by post or e-mail (see bottom of page).

1. What do you like and dislike about Downpatrick Town Centre?

2. What kind of place would you like Downpatrick Town Centre to be in the future?

3. Which Masterplan proposals do you think will benefit Downpatrick and why?

4. Which Masterplan proposals do you think will not benefit Downpatrick and why?

5. Do you have any other ideas for regenerating Downpatrick Town Centre?

Please use the reverse of this page if you require more space for your comments.

The exhibition boards are available to download at <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations>

Email to: downpatrick@paulhogarth.com

Post to: Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan, The Paul Hogarth Company
Avalon House, 278 – 280 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1HE

Thankyou

**ANNEX iv: Feedback from Consultation Workshops,
25th and 26th February**

Comments Arising

- The vision aims and concept plan set out very ambitious plans for the future development for Downpatrick. It is essential that the Masterplan is can be realistically delivered.
- Population projections should reflect the ambitions of the Masterplan.
- The draft vision should indicate that the resident and visitor are of equal significance in Downpatrick.
- Church Street, Market Street, St. Patricks Avenue and Irish Street are historically important streets in Downpatrick Town Centre but are almost always choked with static cars.
- It can take up long periods of time to travel the relatively short distance through Downpatrick Town Centre and this has serious implications on attracting investment and visitors to the town.
- Ease of access for pedestrians cyclists and motorists should be part of the Masterplan's ambitions
- Downpatrick lacks a central heart for pedestrians with Market Street particularly offering a low quality environment for the pedestrian.
- ASDA should be better connected to the town centre
- The lack of town centre parking should be addressed.
- Alternative parking for residents should be in place to address the problem of all day parking in the town centre.
- New transports systems should be introduced including the potential for a new one-way system along Market Street and down English Street.
- Sailing could be encouraged on the River Quoile.
- The Quoile landscape proposals are very ambitious but this must not prevent such a beneficial proposal to go ahead.
- NIEA should be involved with any proposals to realise the Quoile River parkland.
- Opening up access to isolated tourist attractions, such as the Mound of Down, is a worthwhile objective of the Masterplan
- The evening economy in Downpatrick could be improved as well as an increased number of facilities for young people.
- The wider region don't recognise that Downpatrick is the County Down and therefore is of significant historical importance.
- Downpatrick needs increased inward investment from both the private and public sectors.
- It is important to focus on the good work going on in Downpatrick and the Masterplan should look seek to celebrate the fact that there is an increasing number of things going on.
- Strong leadership is required to take this Masterplan through to the implementation stage.
- The Masterplan should encourage the growth of cultural facilities throughout Downpatrick, such as the Down Arts Forum.
- Affected householders need to be informed of any development proposals, including new roads.

ANNEX v: Topic Area Tally List

Town Likes

- 7 Rich built heritage
- 3 Town History
- 2 Size and layout
- 2 Setting

Town Dislikes

- 16 Traffic congestion
- 10 Lack of quality shops and frontages
- 5 Vacant / derelict buildings
- 3 Lack of parking
- 2 No obvious town centre
- 2 Down Retail Park isolated from town centre
- 2 Litter
- 1 Poor signage
- 1 Vandalism
- 1 Anti-social behaviour
- 1 Lethargic atmosphere
- 1 Lack of eating facilities
- 1 Lack of leisure facilities
- 1 Inaccessible parkland setting
- 1 Poorly maintained buildings

Aspirations for Downpatrick

- 9 Quality shopping destination
- 7 Pedestrian friendly
- 6 Enhanced tourist destination
- 3 More eating facilities
- 3 More employment opportunities 34
- 3 Clean
- 3 More sustainable
- 2 More public art
- 2 Better links with Belfast
- 2 Vibrant
- 2 Well maintained streets and buildings
- 1 Safe
- 1 Enhanced lighting
- 1 Fun
- 1 More leisure facilities
- 1 Farmers Market
- 1 Better road network
- 1 More welcoming
- 1 More accessible

Masterplan Benefits

- 11 Enhanced new and existing green areas
- 8 Western By-pass
- 6 additional cycle routes and boardwalks
- 6 enhanced historically significant sites
- 6 Eastern Distributor Road
- 5 more pedestrianised areas
- 5 people-mover
- 5 Town centre transport improvements
- 4 higher quality streetscapes
- 4 Opening up entries and laneways
- 4 Car parking
- 3 Enhanced Tourism
- 2 Better links between Down Retail Park and St Patricks Square
- 2 expanding floodplain and widening rivers
- 2 better linkages (along Market St.)
- 1 development of the cultural quarter
- 1 More vibrant town centre
- 1 enhanced retail environment

Masterplan Concerns

- 12 Implications of western by-pass on railway
- 12 Capitalise upon the existing railway route
- 10 Design and location of multi-storey car parks
- 7 Implications of western by-pass on the environment
- 4 Over-ambitious redevelopment (around the Grove)
- 4 Flooding concerns (associated with developing Dunleath Park)
- 4 Highly contaminated Plank Drain
- 3 Town centre transport proposals would not solve problem
- 2 Too much retail proposed
- 2 Town centre car parks (encourage traffic)
- 1 Major disruption associated with large-scale redevelopment
- 1 Proposals for Downe Hospital site
- 1 Railway Museum Square to confined
- 1 Removal of Public Library on Market Street

General Points Raised

- 5 More information required to accompany boards
- 3 Name the 'Railway Square' 'Dunleath Square'
- 2 A clear implementation strategy is required
- 2 More mention needs to be made of the rich culture
- 1 Contemporary style development should be encouraged
- 1 More facilities for young people required
- 1 Adequate parking must be provided
- 1 Downpatrick needs to be more sustainable
- 1 Engagement of local people is essential
- 1 Strong leadership required to drive the project
- 1 Huge potential to capitalise more fully on race days
- 1 More festivals
- 1 More allotments
- 1 watersports facilities in Killyleagh are underutilised
- 1 Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment
- 1 Report must demonstrate how the proposals have delivered the vision
- 1 Bypass is the only way to alleviate traffic problems
- 1 Address Vandalism
- 1 A comprehensive study to identify need for western by-pass
- 1 New leisure centre / velodrome will bring benefits
- 1 Onus should be placed on property owners to look after their buildings better
- 1 Bold thinking required
- 1 Avoid high-rise development
- 1 sympathetic new development
- 1 Additional planting where possible

ANNEX vi: Photographs from Consultation Process



Image from <http://www.downnews.co.uk/latest-news/downpatrick-masterplan-on-display-in-saint-patrick-centre>



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