

Downpatrick

Town Centre Masterplan



FINAL REPORT

July 2010



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Image of Historic Downpatrick

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Downpatrick - Town Centre Masterplan

Downpatrick is a town steeped in history, dating back some 15 centuries to the days of early Christianity. Today the majestic cathedral sits proudly on one of the county's many drumlins, as the Town's tightly packed streets meander their way below.

While Downpatrick retains much of its historic charm, like all places it has evolved greatly over time. In the 19th Century, ambitious engineering saw the area's extensive marshland traversed to establish a railway connection and reclaimed to create the new Market Street. The 20th Century saw expanses of housing spread across Downpatrick's hills and a shopping centre built at its heart. And as we conclude the first decade of the 21st Century, Downpatrick has seen construction of a state-of-the-art hospital, making way for redevelopment of its Victorian predecessor. Few would have envisaged the extent of such change, let alone Saint Patrick to whom Downpatrick owes its name.

The Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan was commissioned by the Department for Social Development in 2009, working in close partnership with Down District Council and many fellow stakeholders from the public and private sectors. It was developed through a process of consultation with the people of Downpatrick, generating a public discussion about the future of their town.

What are the qualities of Downpatrick?

What are the issues it currently faces?

What kind of place would you like Downpatrick to be?

How can we realise this vision?

This document represents a shared vision for the future of Downpatrick. It will serve to guide development and investment decisions by the public, private and voluntary sectors in a manner that maximises the regeneration benefits for the Town.

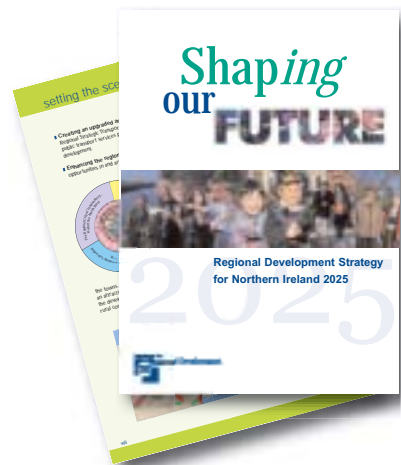
The vision seeks to respect and capitalise upon Downpatrick's immensely rich heritage, while ensuring that appropriate new development can take place to stabilise and enhance the economic sustainability of the Town and make it better equipped to compete with other urban areas.

It is hoped that the Masterplan will be used as material consideration to inform future planning decisions and provide guidance on the growth, development and future needs of Downpatrick.

This report is structured to succinctly convey the findings of the analysis process, the content of the Masterplan proposals and the process by which these can be delivered. Its development was founded on an extensive process of research and consultation, fuller details of which are provided in the accompanying appendix document.

1.2 Project Background

1.2.1 Policy Context



Shaping Our Future, the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland 2025, provides the overarching planning policy context for Northern Ireland. It is therefore a key starting point for this Masterplan.

The RDS recognises the potential for growth in Downpatrick, advocating the development of the Town as a 'counter-magnet to the (Belfast) Metropolitan Area'. More specifically the RDS outlines Downpatrick's potential as becoming a 'main hub' or 'main town' in rural Northern Ireland having a strategic role as a centre of employment and services.



In the positive promotion of the world-wide image of Northern Ireland as an attractive place to visit, the RDS also recognises the role of cultural and subject themes within the country, making specific reference to the protection and enhancement of the St Patrick's theme and its intrinsic ties with the historic Town of Downpatrick. In developing a Regional Strategic Transport Network, along a number of key transport corridors, the RDS identifies the 'Eastern Seaboard Corridor' which facilitates access to the Mourne and St Patrick's Country.

The Ards and Down Area Plan 2015, which is in general conformity with the RDS, proposes a development strategy for Downpatrick which aims to create the conditions for population and employment growth in the Town supplemented by the allocation of sufficient land to meet the projected housing demand over the plan period. Additional elements of the Development Strategy include the provision of a major distributor road as part of the phased release of this housing land and measures to safeguard Downpatrick's environmental quality through the protection of the Town's natural heritage, open spaces and landscape assets as well as the identification of opportunity sites in order to assist in the regeneration of the Town Centre.

1.2.2 Downpatrick Masterplan

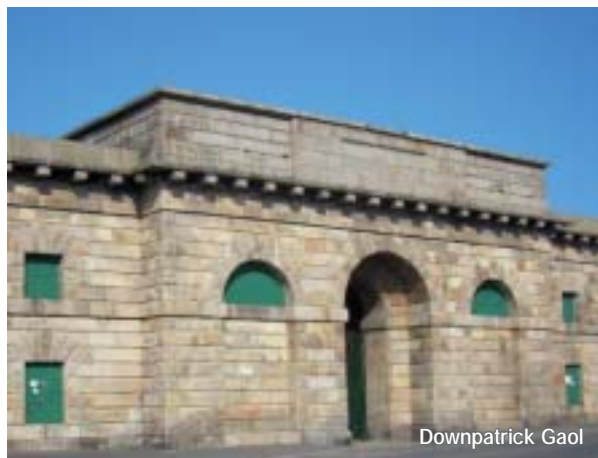
The Masterplan draws on the recommendations included within these policies as well as building upon the range of analytical work undertaken to date in Downpatrick. It therefore represents a common point of reference that will anticipate future challenges, shape areas and identify potential for positive change within Downpatrick up to 2030.

A number of issues that were taken into account in the initial stages of this Masterplan include;

- Examining underutilised and ‘undiscovered’ assets;

- Realising the Town's rich architectural heritage;
- Identifying derelict and poor quality buildings within the Town Centre;
- Understanding the extent, aims and objectives of the major public realm scheme which is presently underway within the Town;
- Assessing the underperforming linkages between the Town Centre and other attractions;
- Managing traffic circulation and car parking.

The Masterplan will provide a vision and rationale to support physical development within Downpatrick in the short and long term and is intended to be flexible and dynamic rather than prescriptive in its nature. Effectively, this is viewed as a live document, which continues to reflect the aims and objectives of statutory authorities, stakeholders and most importantly the people of Downpatrick.



Downpatrick Gaol



English Street



River Quoile

1.3 Masterplan Team

ORGANISATION	ROLE
Department for Social Development	Lead Client
Down District Council	Client
The Paul Hogarth Company	Team Leader, Masterplanning, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture
DTZ Consulting	Planning
CB Richard Ellis	Property
JMP Consulting	Transport Planning & Engineering
Pricewaterhouse Coopers	Economics
Team	Tourism
Cleaver Fulton Rankin	Legal

The Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan was commissioned by the Department for Social Development (DSD) in partnership with Down District Council (DDC). They were supported by an Advisory Group, comprised of key stakeholders who met regularly through the course of the project.

The Consultant Team comprised of The Paul Hogarth Company as Team Leaders supported by DTZ, CB Richard Ellis, JMP, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Cleaver Fulton Rankin and Team Tourism Consulting.

The Paul Hogarth Company led the delivery of the Masterplan co-ordinating team members and providing specialised masterplanning, urban design, regeneration and landscape architecture input.

DTZ provided input to the project in relation to planning, retail capacity, residential, and leisure analysis.

CB Richard Ellis provided strategic advice in relation to property market and land valuations;

JMP provided advice, technical assistance, design and implementation services in relation to transport planning and engineering;

PricewaterhouseCoopers provided an understanding of the socio-economic environment of the Town and its wider regional context;

Cleaver Fulton Rankin provided legal services in relation to planning and land acquisition including compulsory purchase and vesting;

Team Tourism Consulting provided specialist input in the field of destination management, the visitor economy and the role of tourism in regeneration and place shaping programmes.

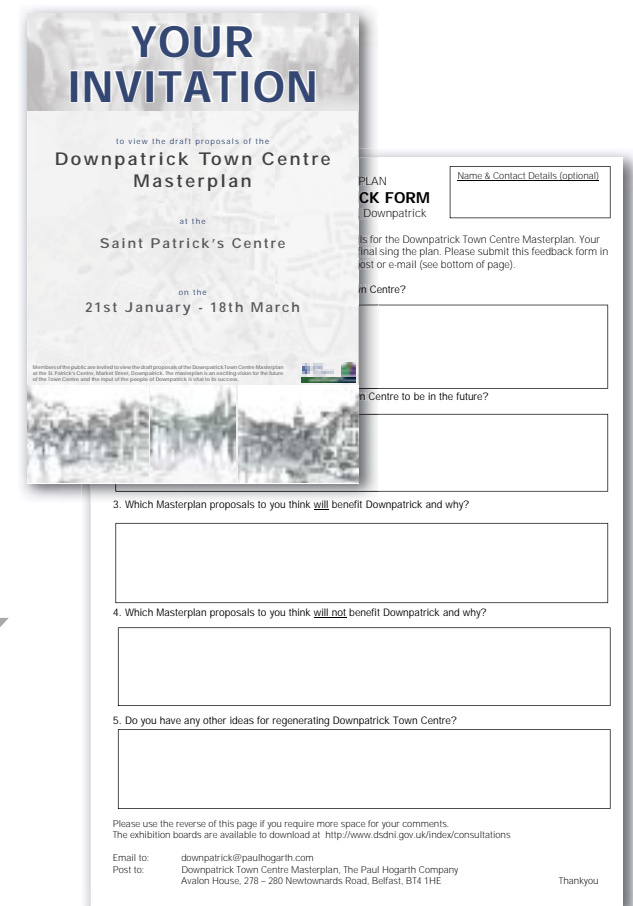
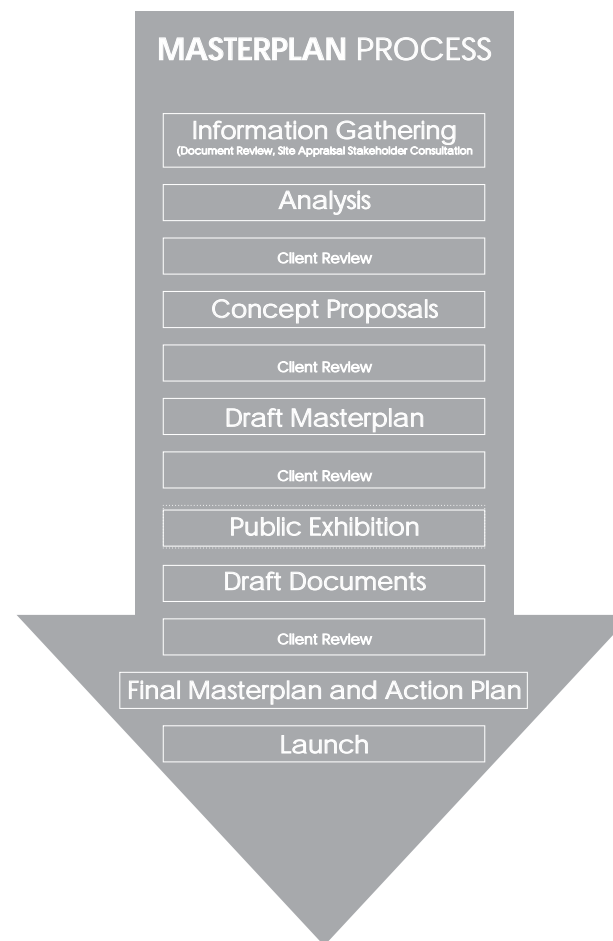


1.4 Methodology

The specific steps undertaken through the course of the Masterplan process are illustrated in the graphic to the right. A more detailed explanation of the methodology, incorporating a background document list and a stakeholder consultee list are included within Appendix 1. A thorough information gathering process was carried out, involving the review of existing plans and reports undertaken for Downpatrick as well as a total of 43 stakeholder consultation meetings. The analysis stage also 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.

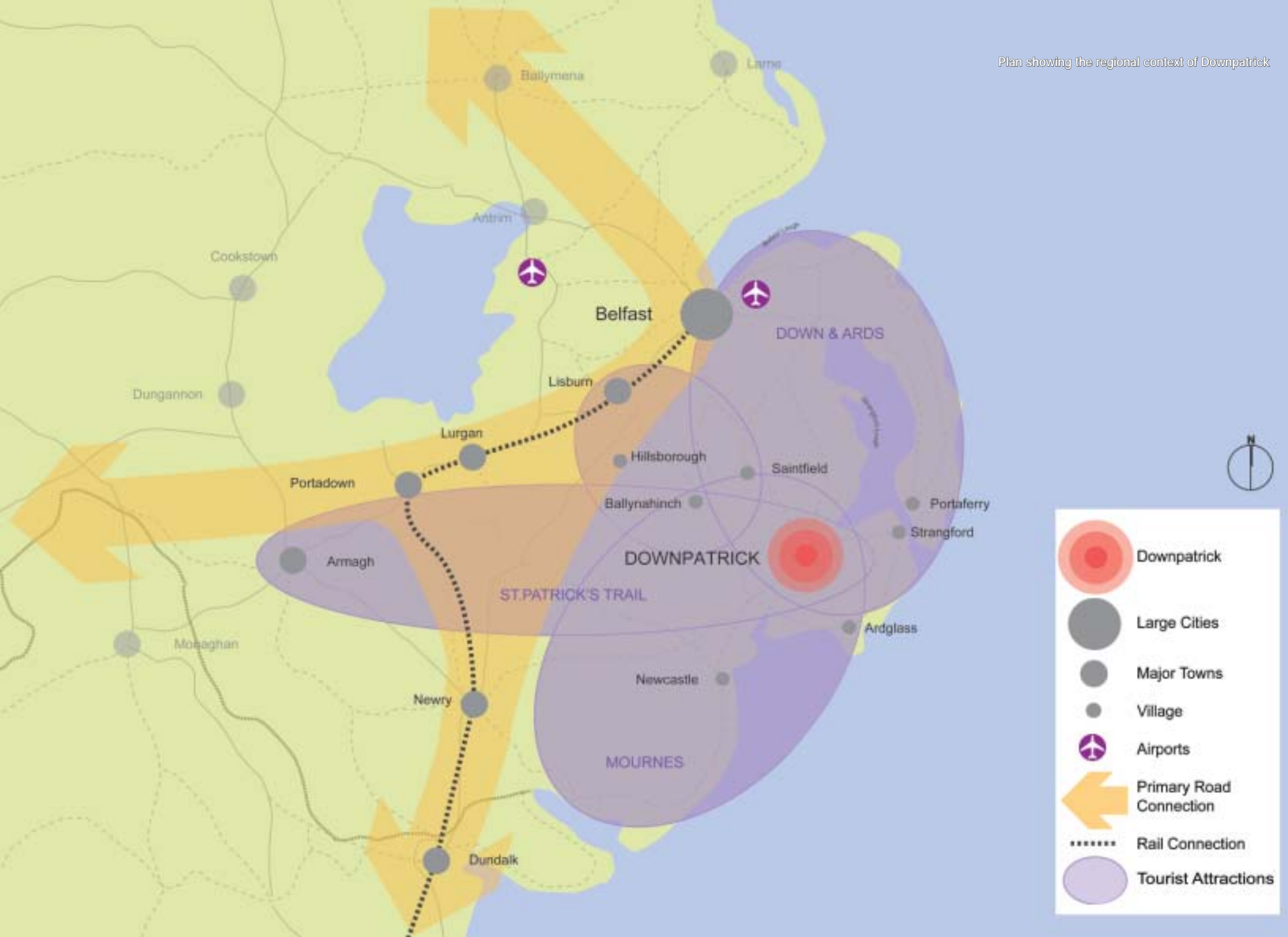
A strong vision and concept with accompanying aims was then developed outlining the key physical, social and economic principles that underpin the future for Downpatrick. This concept then shaped the production of the Masterplan.

From the outset of this project, both the Client and Advisory Group placed importance on the people of Downpatrick playing a role in shaping the Masterplan. In addition to stakeholder consultation meetings, a Public Exhibition took place, during which members of the public were able to review the proposals and submit their comments (see Consultation Report in Appendix 4).



Public exhibition poster and feedback form

Plan showing the regional context of Downpatrick



2 ANALYSIS OF DOWNPATRICK

2.1 Regional Context

Downpatrick is located in the south east of Northern Ireland and lies centrally within County Down. According to the 2001 census, the Town has a population of 10,316 inhabitants making it the largest town in the Lecale area. As a result, Downpatrick serves as the commercial, recreational and administrative centre for the locality and as a hub for the nearby towns and villages. Nearby towns in the area include Ballynahinch (10 miles north east), Saintfield (12 miles north), Strangford (9 miles east), Ardglass (6 miles south east) and Newcastle (14 miles south west).

Located within an hours drive (23 miles) of Belfast, Downpatrick has grown in significance as a commuter town. The Town is connected to Belfast along the A7 Link Corridor but is remote from other Key Link Corridors in Northern Ireland, such as the Belfast to Dublin corridor. Downpatrick serves a large, mainly rural hinterland which has become dependent on the private car to access the Town.

The following key main roads roads converge in Downpatrick:

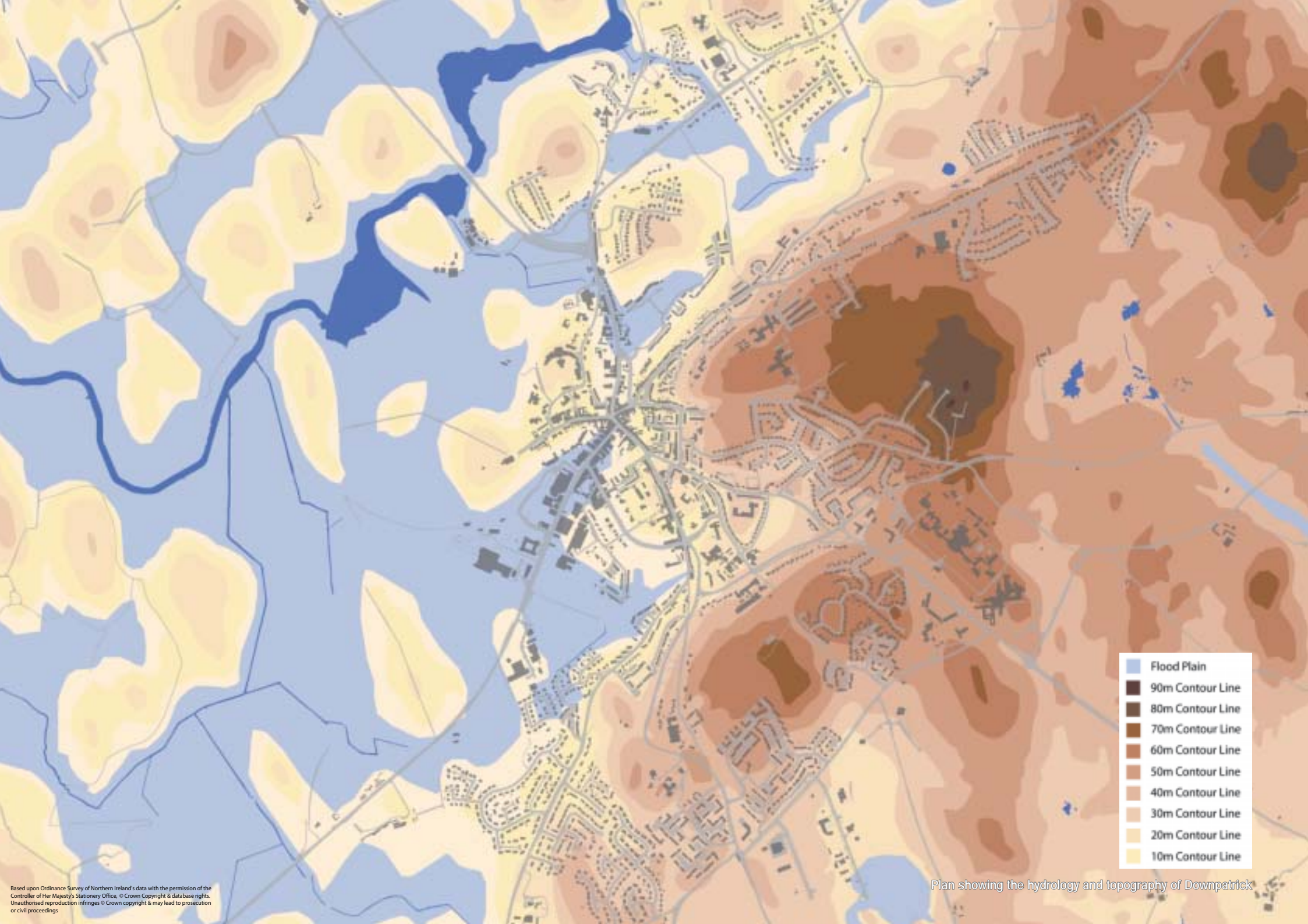
- A7 to Belfast (designated as a link corridor)
- A22 to Comber
- A25/B8 to Newry and Strangford
- B1 to Ardglass

Between 1859 and 1949, Downpatrick was connected to Belfast via a rail link, known as the Belfast and County Down Main Line. In recent years, a short section of the railway line around Downpatrick has been developed into Northern Ireland's only standard gauge heritage railway.

As the plan to the left illustrates, Downpatrick is well situated within a wealth of tourism opportunities. These include the Saint Patrick Trail, Strangford Lough and the Ards Peninsula, the Mourne Mountains and the Market Village network such as Hillsborough and Killyleagh. Potential exists to capitalise more fully on this location

The Masterplan also recognises the importance of the relationship between Downpatrick and Newry. The corridor between these settlements is crucial as it not only carries a significant concentration of public and private sector traffic, but also forms a crucial leg of the route between Downpatrick and Dublin, which draws many tourists to the Town daily.





- Flood Plain
- 90m Contour Line
- 80m Contour Line
- 70m Contour Line
- 60m Contour Line
- 50m Contour Line
- 40m Contour Line
- 30m Contour Line
- 20m Contour Line
- 10m Contour Line

Plan showing the hydrology and topography of Downpatrick

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2.2 Natural Landscape

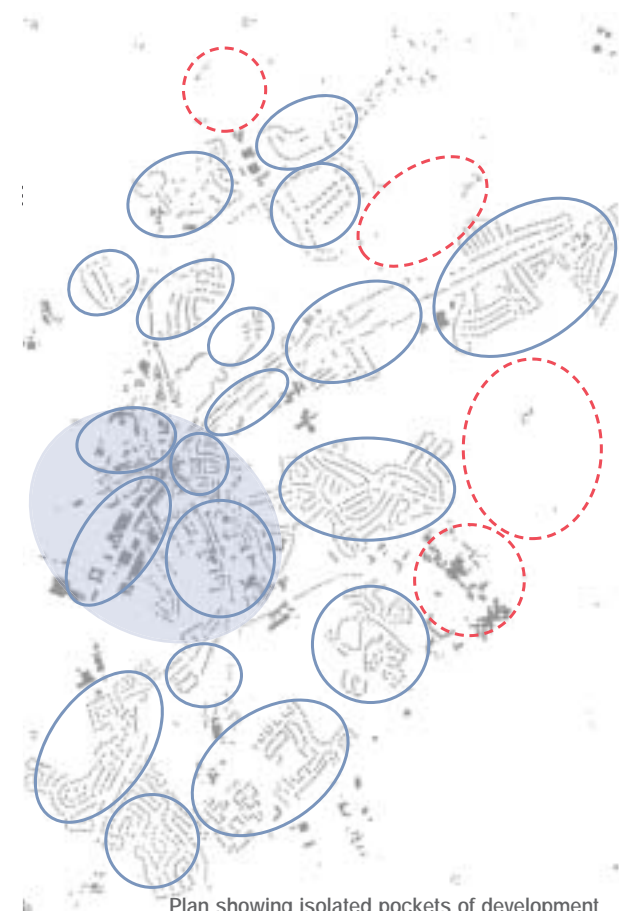
The Lecale Peninsula, stretching between Downpatrick and Dundrum is of significant historical and geographical importance, characterised by the rolling drumlin landscape, Quoile marshland, the Blackstaff River and Strangford Lough. In 1967, the Lecale Peninsula, was designated as the Lecale Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Downpatrick town is located within this picturesque natural landscape and possesses the distinction of being the lowest place on the island of Ireland, with the marsh surrounding the north east of the Town recorded as being 0.4m below sea level. This distinctive natural setting, home to an array of flora and fauna, is characterised by the Quoile Estuary, the Finnebrogue Estate Woodlands and the National Nature Reserve at the Quoile Pondage Basin.

Through analysis, it was found that Downpatrick's unique landscape has and continues to play a major role in how the Town develops. The location of roads and buildings has been constrained by the area's hills and rivers (illustrated in the plan to the left).

The impact of these major topographical and hydrological influences has seen development concentrated along narrow routes, such as Church Street, Irish Street and English Street. This gives Downpatrick it's unique character, but also contributes to the problems of traffic congestion that we see in the Town Centre today.

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 are not well connected to one another. (see plan to the right)



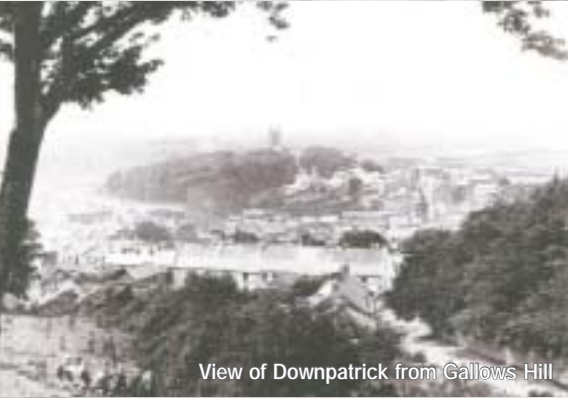
Plan showing isolated pockets of development



Market Street



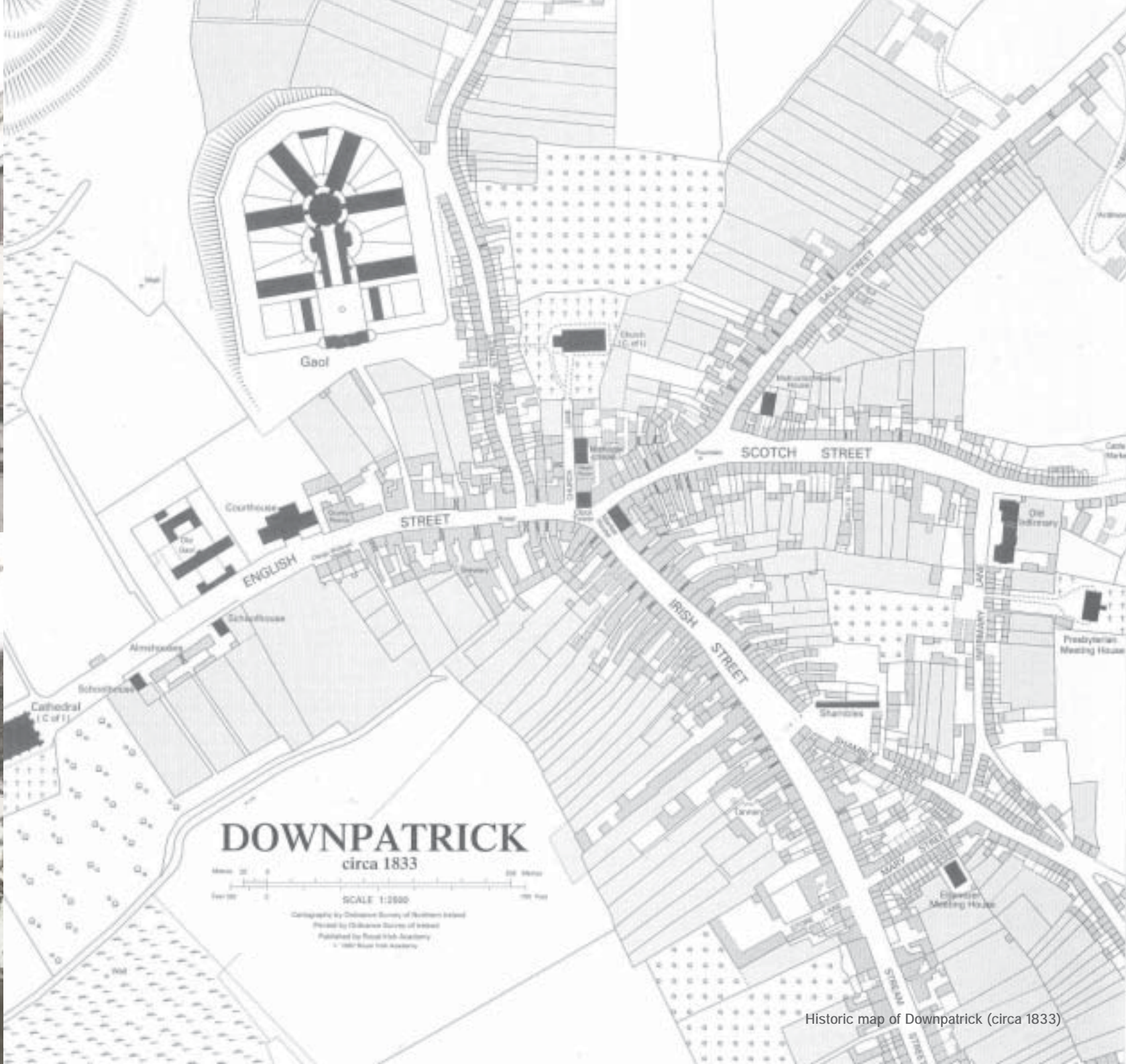
Saul Street



View of Downpatrick from Gallows Hill



Downshire Hospital



Historic map of Downpatrick (circa 1833)

2.3 History and Evolution

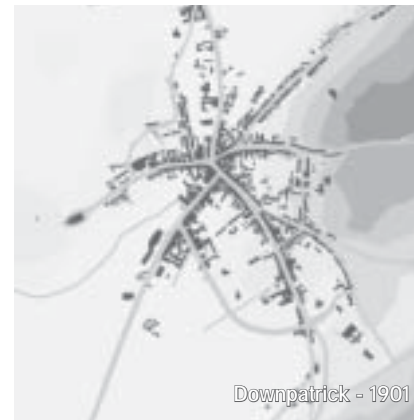
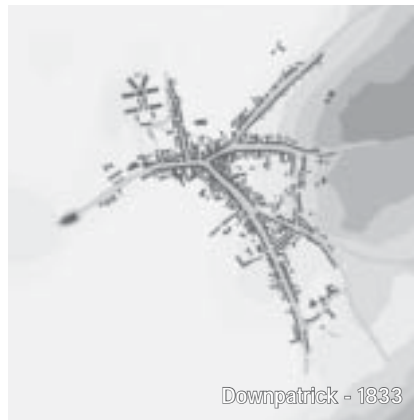
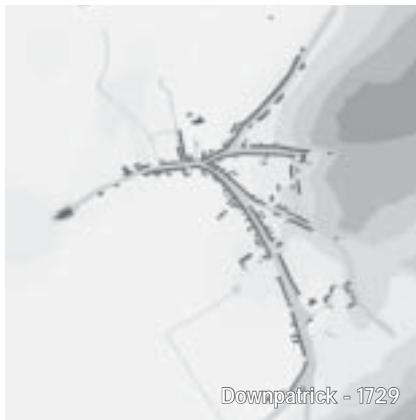
Downpatrick is one of Ireland's most ancient towns, dating back to AD 130 and home to a number of major archaeological sites, including Inch Abbey, the Mound of Down and Cathedral Hill. The Town takes its name from two sources. The first is an ancient dún (fort), which once stood on the hill where Down Cathedral now stands and the second is from the Town's strong connection with 'Saint Patrick', the Patron Saint of Ireland.

Saint Patrick is believed to have been buried within the grounds of Down Cathedral in AD 461. Each year on Saint Patrick's Day (17th March) his grave is a place of pilgrimage. The Saint Patrick Visitor Centre in Downpatrick is purpose-built to tell the story of the Patron Saint.

The series of plans below show the evolution of Downpatrick as a settlement from the 1700's until today.

The plan of 1729 shows four main thoroughfares converging on Downpatrick, namely, English Street, Saul Street, Scotch Street, and Irish Street. With topography limiting expansion of the Town, the early 18th century street plan continued largely unchanged until the mid 1800's when Church Street and Market Street were built (see plan of 1901 below).

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 richness of Downpatrick's history is such that significant potential exists for increased tourism, while making the Town a more attractive place in which to live and work.





2.4 Conservation and Built Heritage

Downpatrick boasts a very rich heritage, characterised by a wealth of landmark buildings and features, such as the prominent Down Cathedral, the ancient Mound of Down and the picturesque Quoile Bridge. These features along with many others provide the local and visitor alike with a striking entrance to the Town, and a number of attractive vistas throughout.

Many of these important heritage assets are protected by listed status and through designation of the Town Centre as a Conservation Area. The Masterplan builds upon these designations, ensuring that the architectural style and character of the Town is not only maintained but also enhanced through sympathetic and complementary development.

With such a rich history and built heritage, Downpatrick has enormous potential to become one of the leading tourist destinations in the UK and Ireland. However, present analysis would suggest that visitors stay for very short periods of time and do not explore the historic Town, beyond the Cathedral and Saint Patrick Centre. Identifying and unlocking the key assets throughout Downpatrick is a fundamental challenge for the Masterplan.

2.5 Urban Form and Public Realm

The urban form and public realm of Downpatrick is a fundamental part of the Town's character and therefore must be conserved and enhanced through the Masterplan. As a result of the local topography and natural landscape, Downpatrick first evolved on three areas of high ground, namely, English Street, Scotch Street and Irish Street. In the mid 1800's Church Street and Market Street were developed between these areas of high ground, thus creating the radial street network and tight junctions that we find in the Town today.

The historic buildings in Downpatrick are generally three storeys in height, feature pitched roofs, rendered stone and have a consistent rhythm along the building line. These consistent architectural elements and coherent streetscapes contribute to the strong sense of character in Downpatrick. Throughout the Town Centre, however, there are a number of examples of lesser quality architecture, which adversely impact on the streetscape, such as the Blast Wall at the PSNI Station along Irish Street and a number of one storey buildings along Market Street.

Through the Masterplan there is a major opportunity to address the public realm in Downpatrick. The most important public space is Saint Patrick's Square located along Market Street, at the front of the Saint Patrick Centre. Opportunity exists to enhance this Square, making it more inviting for the pedestrian and versatile for events. De Courcey Square is another area of public realm which could be enhanced through a comprehensive redevelopment of the space and adjacent properties. The Grove is another key public space in Downpatrick. With enhanced access and complementary landscaping this area could provide a high quality setting to the Cathedral as well as providing a safe and attractive place for people to enjoy more fully.



2.6 Transportation



Through analysis it has become evident that transportation has a major impact on the historic Town. Vehicular congestion has risen from conflicts between through traffic and local traffic, the historic road layout and poorly located parking provision. Strategic transport measures, improvements to public transport provision and focused measures within the Town Centre need to be implemented to create a balanced environment between the pedestrian, cyclist and motorist.

Throughout Downpatrick, pedestrian and cycling provision is very limited and suffers from traffic congestion, narrow footpaths and a lack of connectivity. Safe, secure and active pedestrian and cycling links are required to improve connectivity and encourage a reduction in car dependency. Analysis has identified that public transport usage in Downpatrick is low, with journey times fluctuating due to congestion and the impact of the historic street pattern. Developing the Town as a major public transport hub must be a key priority.

Perhaps the most evident pressure point in the Town Centre is the junction at which Market Street, Irish Street, English Street and Church Street converge. This congestion has major implications upon the environmental quality, particularly along Scotch Street and De Courcey Square.



As part of the development of the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015, a cost benefit impact assessment for strategic road proposals in Downpatrick was carried out. The report found that the proposal for a Western Bypass would reduce traffic in the centre of Downpatrick but would adversely increase journey distances and negatively impact the surrounding historical landscape. It concluded that the costs for this road proposal were greater than the benefits. In comparison, the performance indices show that the benefits associated with the Eastern Distributor road outweigh the costs. The report noted that the majority of land use zonings from the Area Plan were located to the east of Downpatrick, therefore strengthening the case for the Eastern Distributor to be used as a tool to unlock development lands.

Parking in Downpatrick, is a critical issue that must be addressed. An audit of car parking, undertaken in early 2010, identified a total of 685 Town Centre parking spaces. Irish Street was identified as the most popular, with more than twice the number of vehicles using it than the next busiest at Market Street.

The Masterplan seeks to rationalise this complex array of issues that influence congestion and parking in Downpatrick and develops proposals which enhance the environmental quality and character of the Town.

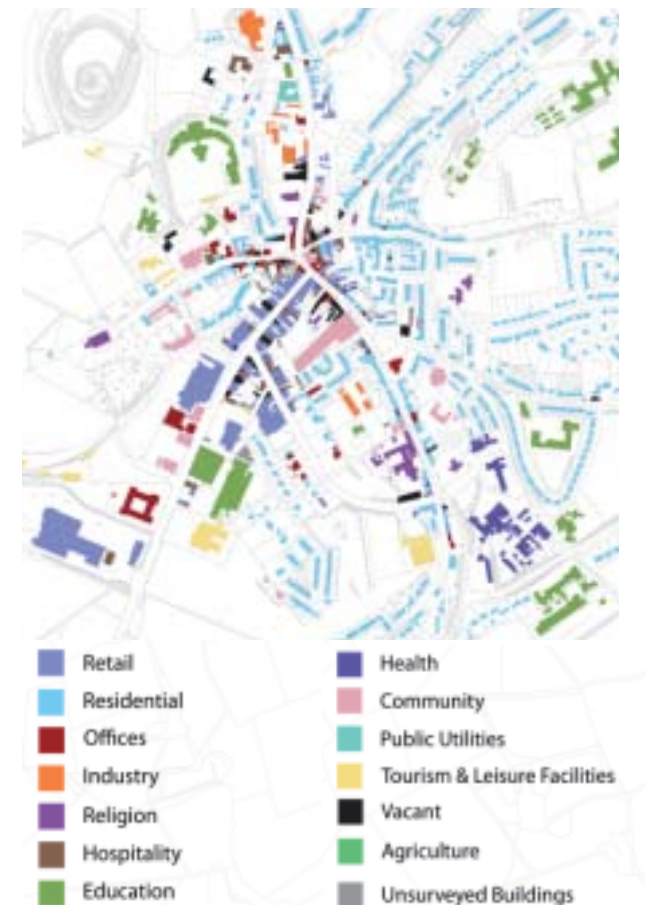
2.7 Economics

At the time of writing the global economy has moved from a period of sustained economic growth to an uncertain immediate future due to the widespread recession. With a 3.5% contraction in the UK economy over 2009, forecasts indicate that the economy will take some time to recover fully. 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.

Within this context the economy of Northern Ireland has left a sustained period of economic growth, resulting in a decline of 3% and an unemployment rise of 14,000. 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.

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 Northern Ireland Tourist Board 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 and retail offer will contribute to an enhanced tourism offering, attracting visitors from further a field and retain them in the Downpatrick area for longer.
- Improving accessibility is vital for Downpatrick, encouraging 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.



Plan showing building uses in Downpatrick Town Centre

2.8 Property



As a result of the current economic climate the number of property transactions in the Northern Ireland market have significantly decreased since 2008.

Within the retail property market, economic conditions deteriorated sharply in 2008, with consumers spending less and this has continued throughout 2009 and into 2010. Forecasts show that more retailers will be ceasing trading throughout the early part of 2010 as a result of the economy. It is important to note that many retailers have benefited considerably from cross-border spending, with the main beneficiaries being large supermarkets.

From a property perspective, many retailers have postponed relocation and expansion plans until economic conditions improve.

In the rental market there has generally been a downward pressure on rents in the retail sector, with pressure on landlords to be more accommodating and deliver reduced rents, more break options and in many cases capital contributions to secure lettings. Considering the imbalance between demand and supply in many locations it is inevitable that rents will decline.



Following the analysis process a current market summary for Downpatrick is set out below;

- Important to retain the historic buildings and streetscape benefits due to the associated unique charm and history
- Major tourist attractions but short dwell time
- Limited retail offer exists
- Significant retail leakage to Belfast, Lisburn and Banbridge for comparison goods etc.
- Retail leakage to Ballynahinch, Newcastle, Belfast, Lisburn and Banbridge for convenience goods.
- Inadequate restaurant provision
- Lack of evening economy
- Limited office market, highly dependent on public sector
- Relatively low employment in financial and business services sector
- Negative impact of traffic congestion

2.9 Analysis Findings

Following an extensive process of analysis, involving desktop research, site visits and consultation with key stakeholders, the Masterplan has developed a comprehensive understanding of the Town's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the analysis process has identified key opportunities for regeneration and development, thereby informing the shared vision, aims and concept plan. A complete series of Analysis Plans can be found in Appendix 2, while detailed Analysis Reports can be found in Appendix 3.

Downpatrick is a town with many fine buildings of significant architectural merit. It's rich history and built heritage forms a very strong identity and character, which should be retained. Substantial potential exists and much more could be done to enhance Downpatrick for both residents and visitors alike. Conserving the Town's character, identifying new opportunities for employment and commerce, underpinning existing assets and enhancing underperforming assets will be key to realising Downpatrick's true potential.

Downpatrick is located off the main strategic transport routes in Northern Ireland however, strategic planning policy recognises that the Town is well placed to become a centre of employment and services for the Lecale area.

In order to fulfil this role, the quality of local and regional transport linkages must be addressed as well as Town Centre congestion and parking issues. In addition, sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport must be enhanced to provide residents and visitors with effective alternatives to using the car.

As identified through the analysis process, Downpatrick's natural landscape has significantly influenced the development pattern of the Town today. The tight street pattern which has evolved, is fundamental to the Town's character and charm but also contributes to the Town Centre congestion. The natural landscape has also resulted in new development taking place in isolated pockets. The Masterplan must enhance connectivity between these areas and the Town Centre. Capitalising upon this rich landscape rather than looking upon it as a constraint will be key to the success of the Masterplan.

There are a number of development opportunity sites within Downpatrick, which require particular attention to enhance the environmental quality of the Town including, de Courcey Square, the Grove and the area of car parking behind the Grove Shopping Centre.

With the current public realm scheme underway, significant improvements along certain Town Centre streets will be realised. In addition to these improvements the Masterplan identifies additional areas which require similar environmental improvements.

All new development requires considerate design to complement the historical elements of Downpatrick and conserve the Town's character. New development should add to the Town's economic growth and promote a diverse range of uses. Continued independent retail will be encouraged along with Town Centre living and an enhanced evening economy. Through the period of the Masterplan the aim will be to increase activity and footfall in Downpatrick Town Centre and enhance the Town's appeal as a place to live work and visit.

3 SHARED VISION, AIMS AND CONCEPT PLAN

3.1 Shared Vision

Having identified the opportunities and issues affecting Downpatrick, the Masterplan presents the following Shared Vision, which sets out an inspirational picture of what Downpatrick can become in the future. This shared vision, developed through consultation with local residents and stakeholders, seeks to benefit all people who live, work and visit the historic Town.

“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.”

3.2 Masterplan Aims

Following on from establishing a Shared Vision for the future of Downpatrick Town Centre, it is necessary to articulate the main aims required to achieve this vision. Based upon the study of Downpatrick's history, character and potential, these five key regeneration aims provide overarching guidance for the Town's future development.

1. Make Downpatrick a Destination



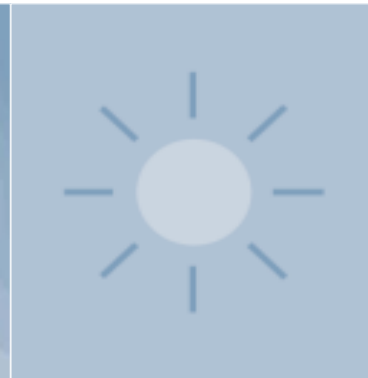
Downpatrick must seek to be a place in which people live, work and play, rather than a commuter or dormitory town. This will involve identifying new opportunities for employment and commerce.

2. Turn Constraints into Opportunities



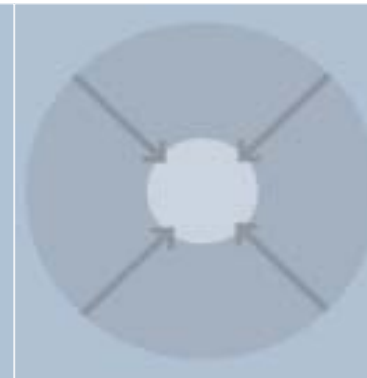
Finding ways to work with and not against Downpatrick's rich landscape and buildings will be key to its success.

3. Realise Environmental Quality



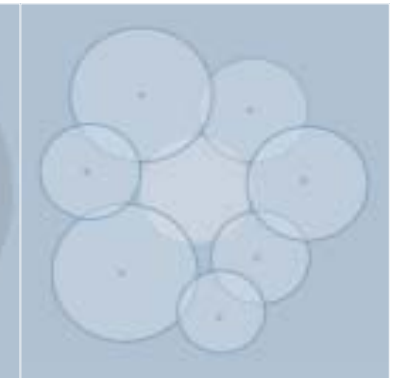
Downpatrick needs to improve many of its buildings and open spaces so that is a safe and attractive place in which to spend time.

4. Integrate Development of 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.

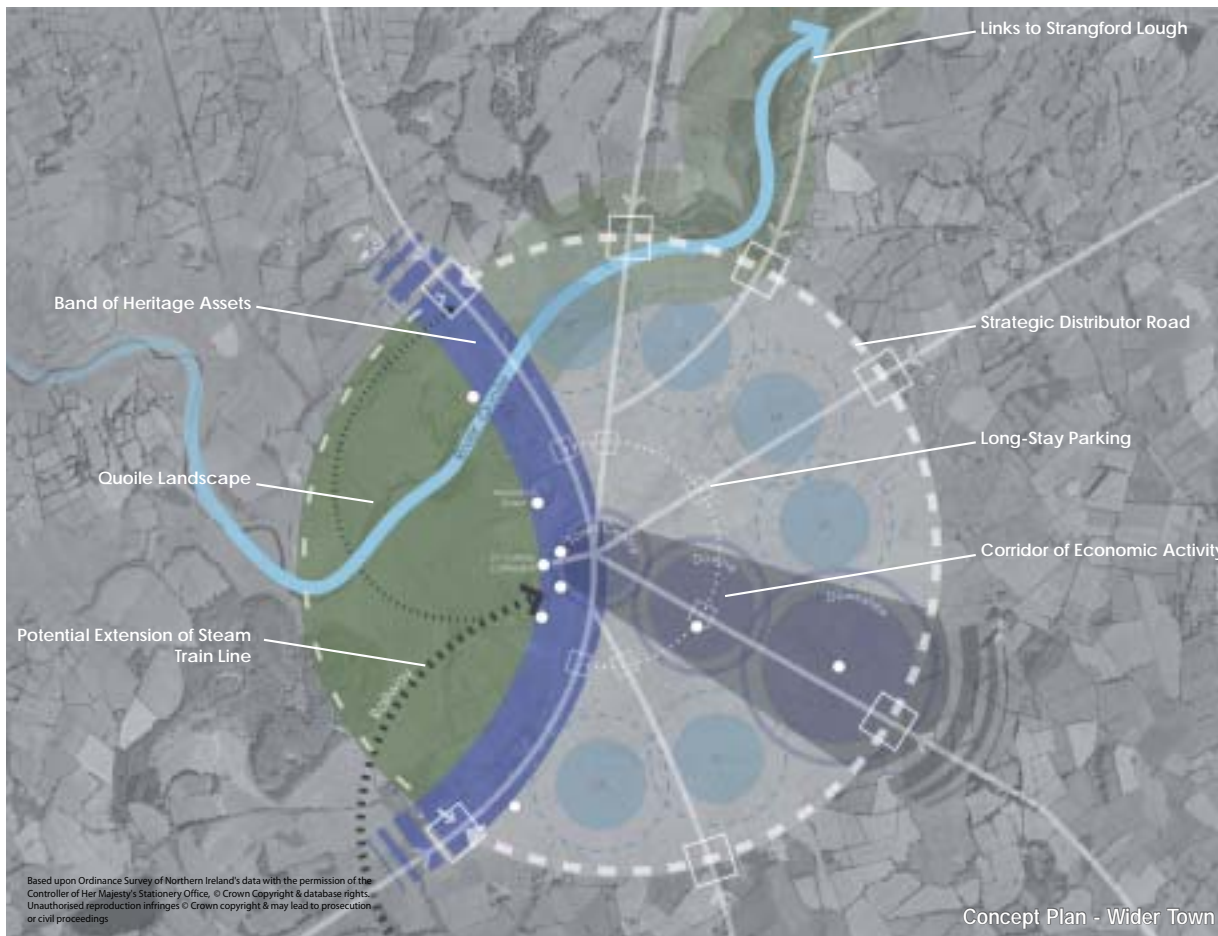
3.3 Concept Plan

3.3.1 Wider Town

In order to realise the Shared Vision and key aims of the Masterplan, a Concept Plan for Downpatrick has been developed. This sets out the fundamental principles which underpin the Masterplan. The concept for Downpatrick is shown over two concept plans which will fit together to form a strategic development framework for the Town.

The Wider Town concept proposes that Downpatrick is developed in a way that makes it easy for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to move around whilst at the same time capitalising fully upon the wealth of assets located within the Town and surrounding landscape. Traffic will be managed by providing car parks at key arrival points and by exploring the potential for alternative routes, including strategic road proposals. In addition, local centres along main arterial routes will minimise local traffic converging on the Town Centre.

A band has been identified within which major heritage assets exist. 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.



3.3.1 Town Centre

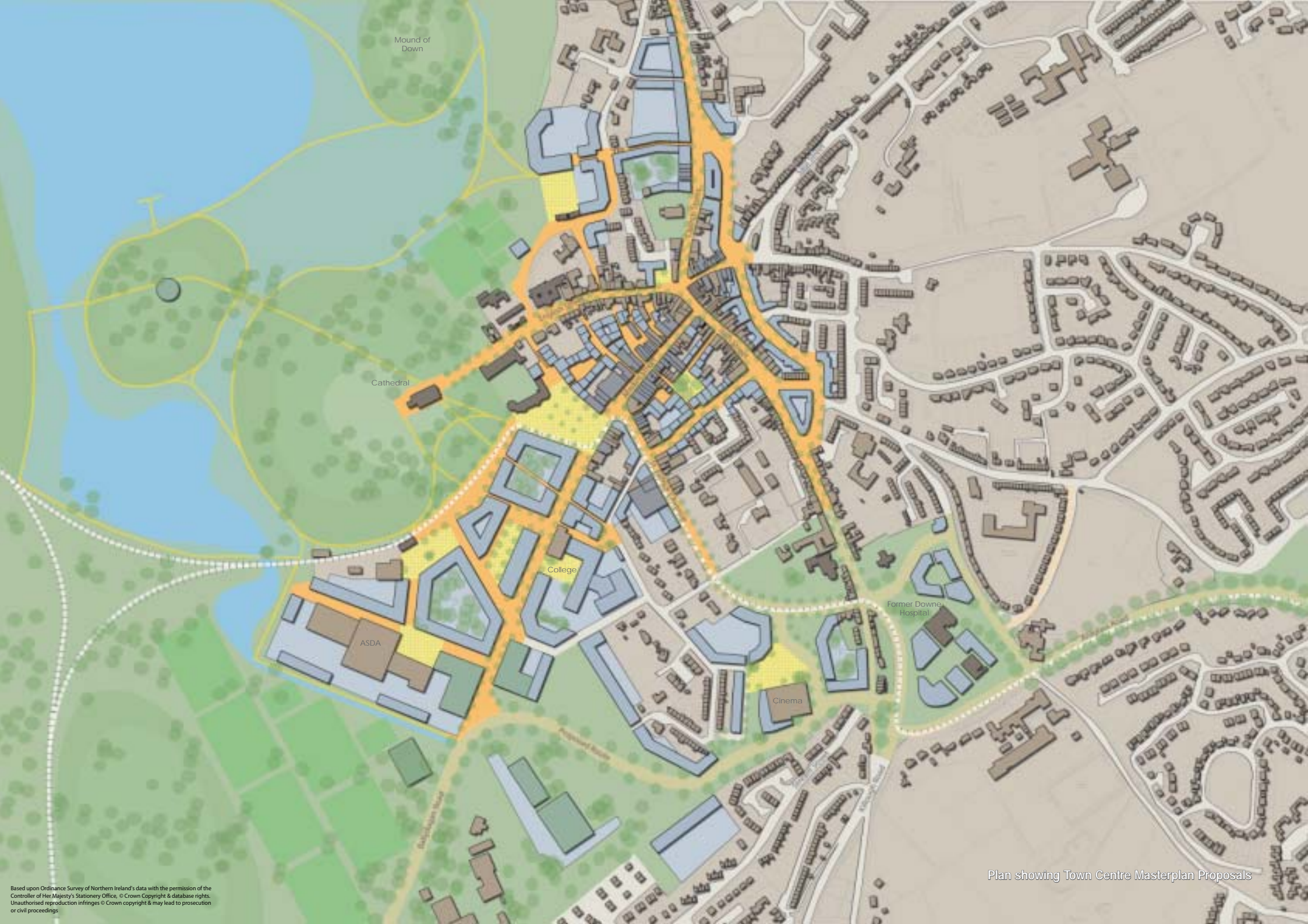
The concept for the Town Centre shows the central core, with nodal points identified as key destinations. The major assets, such as the Cathedral, the Courthouse, English Street, Irish Street and Saint Patrick's Square will be protected and enhanced to conserve the character of the Town.

Culture and Arts will focus along English and Scotch Streets, with retail along Market Street, in the form of small niche retail to the north and larger high street retail to the south. Saint Patrick's Avenue should be strengthened as a Town Centre street with opportunities for office development, therefore making better links with the former hospital sites.

The relationship between the Quoile Landscape and the Town Centre has been identified, with potential to bring this wonderful asset right into the heart of Downpatrick. A people mover route has also been shown as a means to improve the connectivity between the Town Centre and the future employment nodes, namely, the Public Sector Campus at the Downshire site and the Down Business Park to the north of the Town.

Alternative transport links have been identified along with long-stay parking proposals at the edge of the Town Centre in order to address the range of transport issues.





Mound of Down

Cathedral

College

ASDA

Cinema

Former Downe Hospital

Plan showing Town Centre Masterplan Proposals

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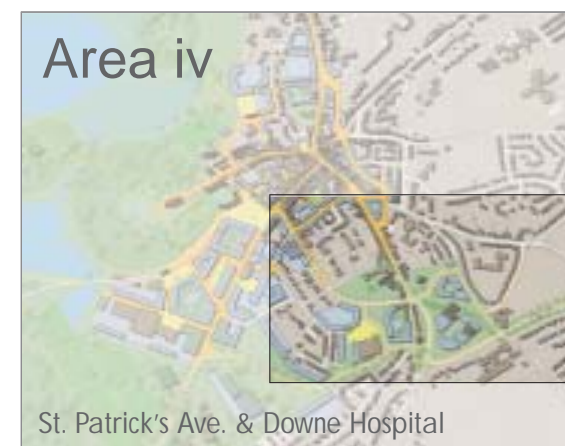
4 MASTERPLAN PROPOSALS

4.1 Introduction

Drawing on the Shared Vision, Aims and Concepts, a Masterplan has been developed for Downpatrick Town Centre. This sets in place a number of key regeneration and development principles:

- Existing buildings and spaces to be improved
- Potential for new development and the location, use and form this should entail
- Connections and movement routes for people, cyclists, cars and public transport
- Open spaces within the Town Centre and on its margins.

The plan has been divided into a number of parts for ease of understanding. Firstly movement routes and transportation are addressed. Then the plan is divided into four distinct areas, enabling a more detailed study of its proposals. **Area i** covers the northern sections of the Town Centre, including Church Street and English Street. **Area ii** covers the west of the Town Centre, focussed on the floodplains of the River Quoile. **Area iii** covers the central retail spine of Market Street, while **Area iv** the east, to include St Patrick's Avenue and the former Downe Hospital Site.



4.2 Movement

4.2.1 Walking and Cycling

Despite Downpatrick's relatively compact size, active travel requires considerable promotion to reduce car usage in the Town Centre. The Masterplan proposes a number of public realm measures in order to encourage and attract pedestrians and cyclists. Strong links must be made with residential areas around the Town Centre to encourage sustainable active travel.

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. Unlike many similar historic Towns, Downpatrick has few connections to the Town Centre from peripheral car parks and routes 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.

Cycle Hire Schemes are becoming increasingly popular throughout European towns and cities. This allows the customer to hire a bike for a short duration at one location and drop it off at another. This would be particularly advantageous when used in conjunction with linking the Downshire and the Business Park to the Town Centre.

The integration of high quality walking and cycling facilities within the Masterplan seeks to encourage a higher proportion of trips to be undertaken by these modes which is firstly consistent with national transport strategy and secondly will go some way to reducing short distance trips through key and congested Town Centre junctions. Additional pedestrian and cycling proposals within the Masterplan include:

- A Linear Park between the Town Centre and the Downshire campus
- St Patrick's Square to English Street Link
- High quality pedestrian signage to improve legibility within the Town Centre
- Linkages from peripheral cycle routes to key Town Centre locations
- Encourage cycling links between the large travel generators outside the Town Centre

More detailed information regarding walking and cycling proposals can be found within the Transport Report in Appendix 5.

4.2.2 Public Transport

To support movement between the proposed public sector campus at the Downshire and the Town Centre a number of options should be considered, including the Cycle Hire Scheme outlined previously and a public People Mover operation. The Masterplan proposes that this people mover take the form of an eco-friendly shuttle bus, potentially electric or hybrid powered. Any people mover scheme will require to be financially viable as well as a more detailed evaluation of options to reflect the level of public transport provision throughout the Town.

The Masterplan also proposes the implementation of a commuter based public transport service along the line of the existing railway. Research shows that this option would be a relatively cost-effective way to connect the Town Centre with the Down Business Park and the Belfast Road. In addition to this the Masterplan has identified that although a rail based option provides a reliable service, a wheel based system would provide the opportunity to leave the track and continue to serve the remainder of Downpatrick through the existing street network or proposed Town Centre people mover route.

Further research is required to evaluate these proposals in order to establish whether there is sufficient demand to operate such services successfully.

4.2.3 Car

Car Parking Strategy

The Masterplan proposes the following Parking Strategy to ensure that in the short, medium and long term there is an appropriate quantum of parking provision to sustain the vibrancy of Downpatrick and any new and emerging developments. In addition, with proposals in place to increase Town Centre living, new development must give provision for Town Centre residents parking. The diagram to the right graphically indicates this Parking Strategy. The key elements of the strategy are listed below (more detailed information can be found within Appendix 5 - Transport Report):

Short stay parking:

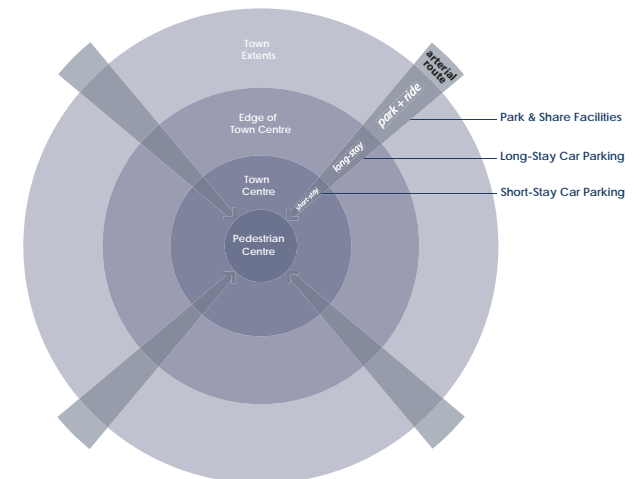
- Should be accommodated in the Town Centre;
- Will be located in current parking areas;
- Should be controlled - either by charging or parking duration restrictions;
- In the short-term a tariff and management structure requires to be developed which ensures that an appropriate number of spaces remain available throughout the day for short-term occupation;
- On street parking in the Town Centre are premium spaces and the management structure must protect these for short stay use to improve Town Centre viability.

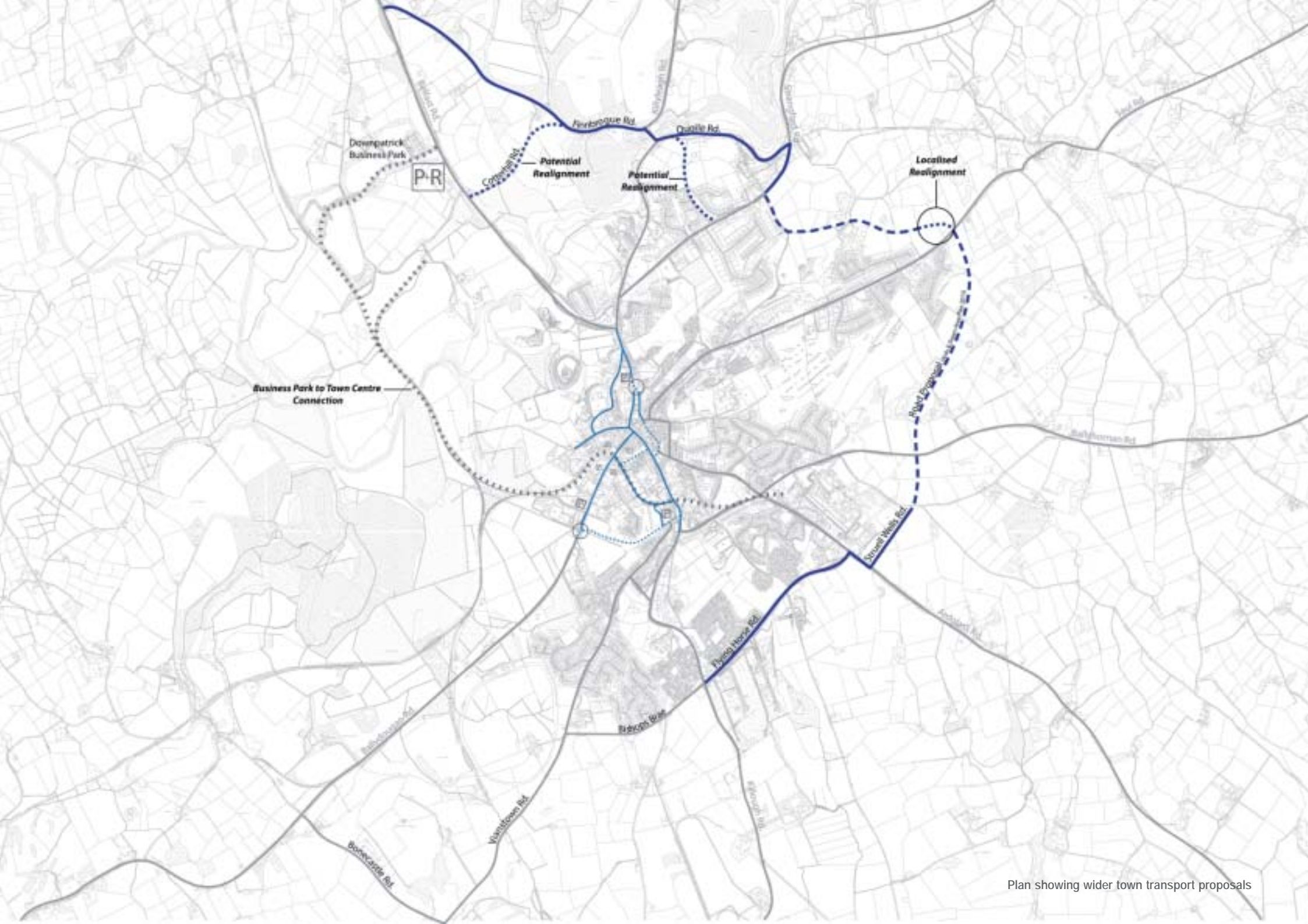
Long Stay Parking

- Should be large easily accessible car parks accommodated on the edge of the Town Centre;
- Possible locations, which accord with the objectives of the Masterplan include Rathkeltair, St Patrick's Avenue and Church Street, providing good access from all parts of the Town.
- Should reflect the benefits of the sustainable transport strategy of the Regional and Sub Regional Transport Strategies which may reduce future parking need.

Park & Share (P&S) / Park & Ride (P&R)

- Consideration should be given to the provision of a P&S, P&R facility on Belfast Road adjacent to the Down Business Park
- To complement the proposed public transport linkages along the western periphery the opportunity to support Park & Ride adjacent to the Town Centre end of the route should be explored.





Plan showing wider town transport proposals

Wider Town Proposals

The proposal for an Eastern Peripheral Route (see plan to the left) is contained in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 and is strongly linked to the proposals to provide significant residential development to the east of the Town. The route will also aid in delivering effective transport links to the recently developed Downe Hospital and other development at the Downshire Hospital site.

Roads Service commissioned an appraisal of the route (August 2005) which demonstrated that the link road had positive economic benefits. Notwithstanding, there is a key risk that the delivery of the scheme, which is principally the responsibility of Developers, may not occur in the short term, leaving congestion issues in the Town Centre.

The Masterplan proposes two changes to the current Eastern Distributor proposals.

Firstly, an extension of the route to link to the Belfast Road and hence provide an alternative route to and from Belfast, the principal traffic generator. Secondly, a proposed Quoile Road to Strangford Road connection constructed in association with the proposed relocation of the High School to make the route more direct.

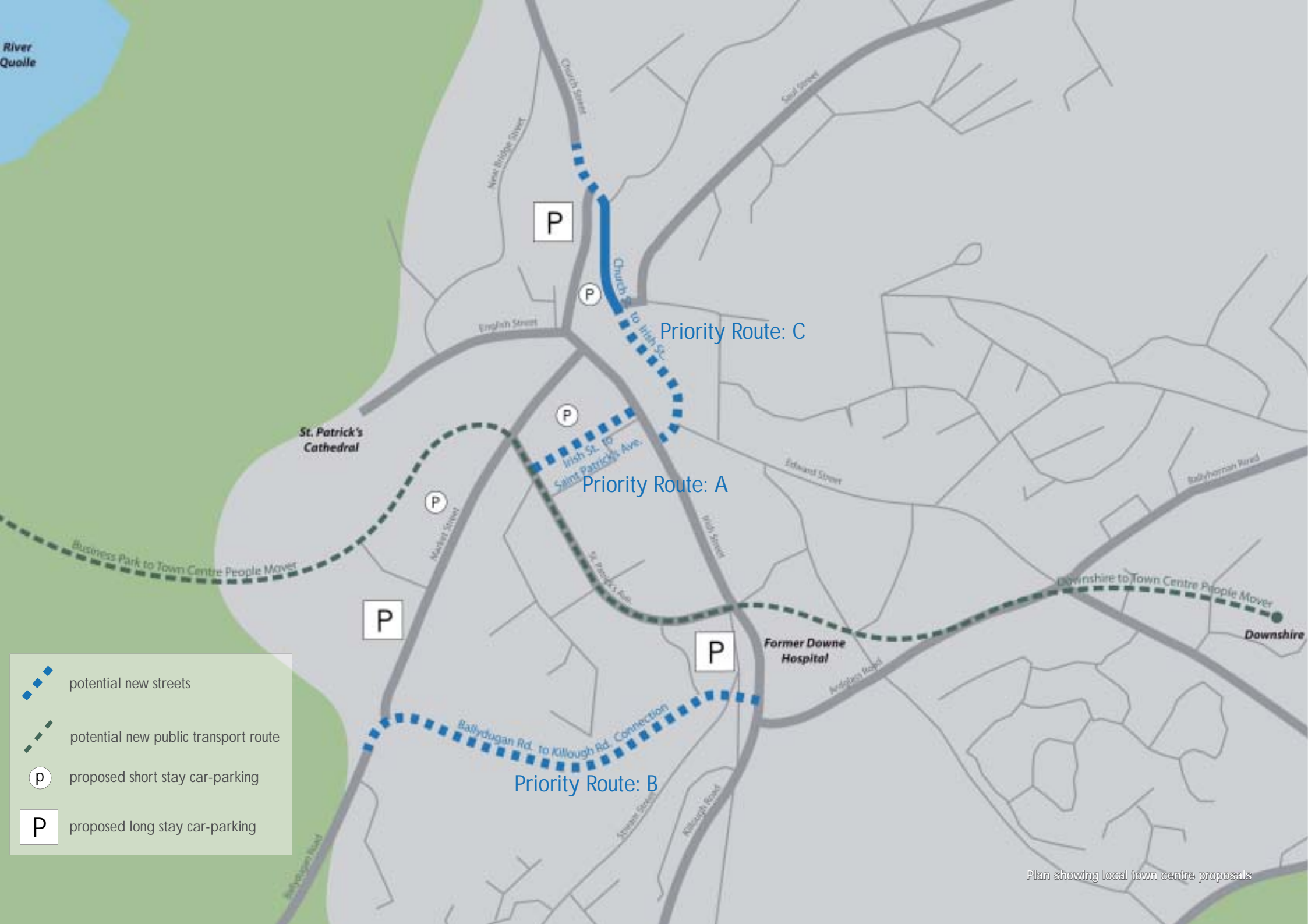
The concept of a Western Peripheral Route providing a by-pass along the western side of Downpatrick has been a long-standing proposal. The Transport Report, found in Appendix 5, provides detailed information on the costs and benefits of such a proposal.





The Report recognises that the proposed route reflects a key movement of vehicles traversing the Town and would significantly reduce traffic through key Town Centre junctions. However, the Report identifies that the delivery of a road-based solution along the Western periphery of Downpatrick, which demonstrates positive benefits would be very difficult.

The implementation of a commuter based public transport service along the line of the existing railway emerges as a potentially cost effective proposal although more research would be required to ascertain whether there is sufficient demand to operate such a service successfully. A rail based public transport alternative would provide an effective service. However, a "wheel" based system would have the opportunity to leave the track and continue to serve the remainder of Downpatrick through the existing street network or proposed Town Centre people mover route.

The Masterplan incorporates a number of strategic transport improvements, which can contribute significantly to supporting development as well as relieving existing congestion. In summary, these strategic transport proposals are:

- The Eastern Distributor Road – The route is clearly important to the future development of the eastern side of Downpatrick. Roads Service should consider how its implementation can be assured if Developer support fails;
- Extension of the Eastern Distributor Road to the north to connect to the Belfast Road, preferably through Cotterhill Road, to link with the Down Business Park and proposed Park and Ride site;
- Rationalisation of the Eastern Distributor Road to provide a Quoile Road / Strangford Road link and improve the by-pass potential of the route;
- Strategic public transport link along the western corridor utilising the existing rail line, extended to Down Business Park to the north and into the Town Centre at the south;
- A review of the vehicle type, whether rail based or a hybrid which can use vrail or road;
- Strategic Park and Ride site located adjacent to Down Business Park on Belfast Road.



-  potential new streets
-  potential new public transport route
-  proposed short stay car-parking
-  proposed long stay car-parking

P

P

P

P

P

P

Priority Route: C

Priority Route: A

Priority Route: B

Town Centre Proposals

One of the primary concerns arising from the public consultation is the issue of vehicular congestion and lack of pedestrian provision in the centre of Downpatrick. In proposing alterations to the infrastructure in the immediate Town Centre area, the Masterplan considers that improvements can be made which would result in a more efficient flow of traffic and more pleasant conditions for pedestrian activity. Three key road schemes have been identified by the Masterplan which will assist in reducing congestion in Downpatrick.

In order of contribution to reducing congestion, the most important is a proposed one-way system in the Town Centre which would maximise the potential of the existing road network. Roads Service have identified the opportunity to construct a new link road through the site of the PSNI Station, between Irish Street and St Patrick's Avenue. With this link in place, it is proposed to introduce a new one-way system through the Town Centre. The Masterplan supports this scheme and recognises that while the proposal will not remove traffic from the Town Centre, it will provide an opportunity to maximise the capacity of the junctions by reducing traffic conflicts.

The second most important scheme is the Ballydugan Road / Killough Road link. The benefits of this are summarised below:

- provides a local by-pass of a critical Town Centre junction, namely the Market Street / St Patrick's Avenue junction and provides an alternative route for traffic not requiring to access the Town Centre;
- would be a local distributor acting as a means of access between local areas;
- provides improved access to the Downshire Hospital and associated development proposals
- would form an access into future development proposed in this area of Downpatrick.

With regard to traffic impact, the new link would provide a 30% reduction of existing traffic through the Market Street / St Patrick's Avenue junction and 35% decrease on the heavily queued Ballydugan Road approach to the junction which could provide significant benefits in the south of the Town Centre and the removal of non-Town Centre traffic from the central road network.

The Saul Street extension is the third-most important and most challenging of the schemes given the likely impacts of implementation. This proposal improves the linkage between Saul Street and Irish Street and gives traffic the opportunity to re-route around the critical Irish Street / Market Street junction.

An assessment of the impact of the proposed Saul Street extension without the one-way system indicated above is an 18% reduction in traffic through the Irish Street / Market Street junction and a 40% reduction in traffic on Irish Street. While these impacts are more localised, they do directly impact on the critical junction in Downpatrick's road network. The balance of costs and benefits will be critical to ensure that the scheme provides good value.

As the solitary approach route to Downpatrick Town Centre from the north, Church Street has a vital role to play in providing visual cues and celebrating the entrance to the Town.

The Masterplan proposes a shuttle link along a corridor between the Town Centre and the Downshire Hospital Site in order to encourage sustainable travel. In this regard it would be recommended for the shuttle to have zero/low emissions at street level (i.e. an electric or low emission vehicle) in order to retain the park as an attractive place for pedestrians and cyclists. Similarly the design of the supporting infrastructure would require to be sensitively designed through these high quality zones.

- Mixed Use Development
- Long Stay Multistorey Car Parking
- Gateway Space
- Hotel and Gateway to Park
- High Quality Public Realm
- New Pedestrian Connections
- DeCourcey Square Redevelopment
- Extended Saul Street Link
- Opportunities for Niche Retail
- Reopened Entries
- High Quality Public Realm
- Short Stay Car Parking
- New Street Connection
- Cathedral Access and Setting



Plan showing Area i - Church Street, English Street, Irish Street

4.3 Church Street, English Street and Irish Street

4.3.1 Church Street Redevelopment

At present, Church Street comprises long stretches of low rise, stand-alone commercial warehousing interspersed by a mix of two and three storey residential terraces. Surface car parking and storage yards located to the front of commercial warehousing, have resulted in a visible fragmentation of frontages along this strategic route. As these properties are set back substantially from Church Street, the rear elevations and banked retaining walls of residential properties to the rear along Church View are also exposed given the substantial level differences between each street.

Opportunities exist along Church Street to promote mixed-use development within perimeter block formations whereby public and private access and ownership are clearly defined. This presents an opportunity to introduce new residential and office development to the area. Three of these perimeter blocks are proposed along the western side of Church Street, between Pillar Well Lane and St. Margaret's Church (Col) including the BT Exchange Building. The large variations in ground levels between Church Street and the elevated Church View to the west, provides ample opportunity to take advantage of these variations in order to construct multi-storey car parks which are then effectively 'hidden' by mixed use development to provide frontage onto the street.



4.3.2 Down High School / County Gaol



Down High School, a controlled co-educational Grammar and Preparatory School at Mount Crescent, occupies the site of the 19th century County Gaol. The existing walls that surround the school site formed part of the original walls of the Gaol and are now listed as is the 1833 Gate Lodge. This school site boasts panoramic views across north-west Downpatrick, overlooking the ruins of Inch Abbey and the adjoining ancient Mound of Down. Works to transform the penitentiary site to an educational establishment commenced in 1931 and Downe High School officially opened its gates to its first 96 pupils in 1933. Enrolment at the Senior School currently stands at 940 pupils, with an additional 150 pupils within the Preparatory Department.

Blocks within the site have been orientated to take advantage of the panoramic views west across the structured landscape to Inch Abbey, the Mound of Down and the River Quoile beyond. New pedestrian connections are also proposed through the site and civic space through to Church View.

An additional development opportunity has also been identified directly opposite the listed Gate Lodge on the site of the existing Downpatrick Social Security Office at the corner of Mount Crescent and Gaol Lane Mews. The main purpose of this proposal is to continue the established building line along Gaol Lane Mews through into Mount Crescent with a building which reflects the scale and character of the redeveloped school site opposite.



Current pressures on space and the need for modernised facilities mean that Down High School may relocate from its current site. In the event that the School relocates, the Masterplan proposes that the vacated site be utilised for a gateway hotel, leisure and mixed-use development as well as accommodating new Primary School buildings. With access via the listed Gate Lodge, the Masterplan proposes that development blocks within the site be centred on a civic space which is open on its western side establishing a new gateway to the Quoile River Park by allowing the adjoining landscape to integrate into the site.

4.3.3 Scotch Street

Scotch Street, formerly known as Barrack Street, represents one of the four main thoroughfares which are shown to converge on a town plan of 1724, the other three being English Street, Scotch (now Saul) Street, and Irish Street. Now closed of vehicular traffic, Scotch Street provides a crucial pedestrian link connecting the residential areas along Saul Street to the centre of the Town.

Unfortunately the historic shift in emphasis of the retail core southwards down Market Street has had a detrimental impact on Scotch Street, and what was once a busy, thriving retail thoroughfare now suffers from a high degree of vacancy rates and elements of dereliction.



Nevertheless the jewel in the crown is the successful Down Arts Centre, located at the junction of Irish Street and Scotch Street, which has become the operational base for arts and culture in Down District. The Masterplan proposes the growth of arts based activities in this part of Downpatrick, with particular emphasis along Scotch Street to affirm this area as the Town's Cultural Quarter.

To capitalise on the growing success of the Down Arts Centre the Masterplan advocates the continuation of arts based uses along Scotch Street, in the form of refurbishment of individual units or where larger footprints are required, the sensitive amalgamation of units internally while retaining the historic frontages externally.



4.3.4 De Courcey Square

De Courcey Square, represents an intimate public space within the heart of the historic core. While the historic gable end of the English Street properties provide an appropriate backdrop to the western side, the northern edge comprises a modern three storey building which is out of scale and character with its historic setting. The Masterplan proposes a new form of development in this location which is not only architecturally sympathetic to its surroundings but of a scale that provides an appropriate sense of enclosure to the square and formalises pedestrian connections to St. Margaret's Church. Given the strategic position of the site within the historic core and at the entrance to English Street, an opportunity exists to commission an architectural competition for the building and civic space.



Conceptual sketch of reopened entries

4.3.5 Laneways, Arcades and Reopened Entries

Within the historic core of the Town Centre and specifically within the area bounded by Market Street and English Street, the urban grain is typically tight comprising long and narrow plot widths with intermittent gaps allowing access to the rear for servicing and car parking. One of the objectives of this Masterplan is to 'reknit' the historic fabric within this area along a network of new laneways, arcades and reopened entries. This framework enables old links to be rediscovered and new ones formalised, promoting north-south connectivity between Market Street and English Street and extending these routes through adjoining blocks where possible.

The smaller plot sizes along these new routes would promote smaller business enterprises and allow opportunities to expand the existing creative sector through the promotion of artist's studios, galleries and crafts industries, which ties in with the Masterplan objectives within the adjoining Scotch Street Cultural Quarter. In addition to the north-south connections, east-west pedestrian linkages would also be developed to ensure the integration of St Patrick's Square within this network.

4.3.6 English Street Public Realm

The Masterplan proposes the extension of Public Realm improvements along the full extent of English Street from its junction with Church Street to its upper point which culminates at the entrance to St Patrick's Cathedral. English Street contains a fine mix of architectural styles along its length, dominated by stretches of two storey Georgian terraces. However this street is also home to the 18th century Gaol which now houses the highly acclaimed Down County Museum and of course Downpatrick Cathedral erected in 1790, which has largely retained much of its original structure.

The public realm works proposed along English Street include streetscape improvements comprising new high quality surface treatment, seating, tree planting and wayfinding signage. These works should seek to enhance the setting of historic buildings and give greater space to pedestrian movement. Improvements to the existing lighting arrangements could also form part of the public realm works in order to contribute to the on-going development of a safe evening and night time environment, particularly given the high concentration of visitor attractions along the upper stretch of the street.

4.3.7 Saul Street Extension

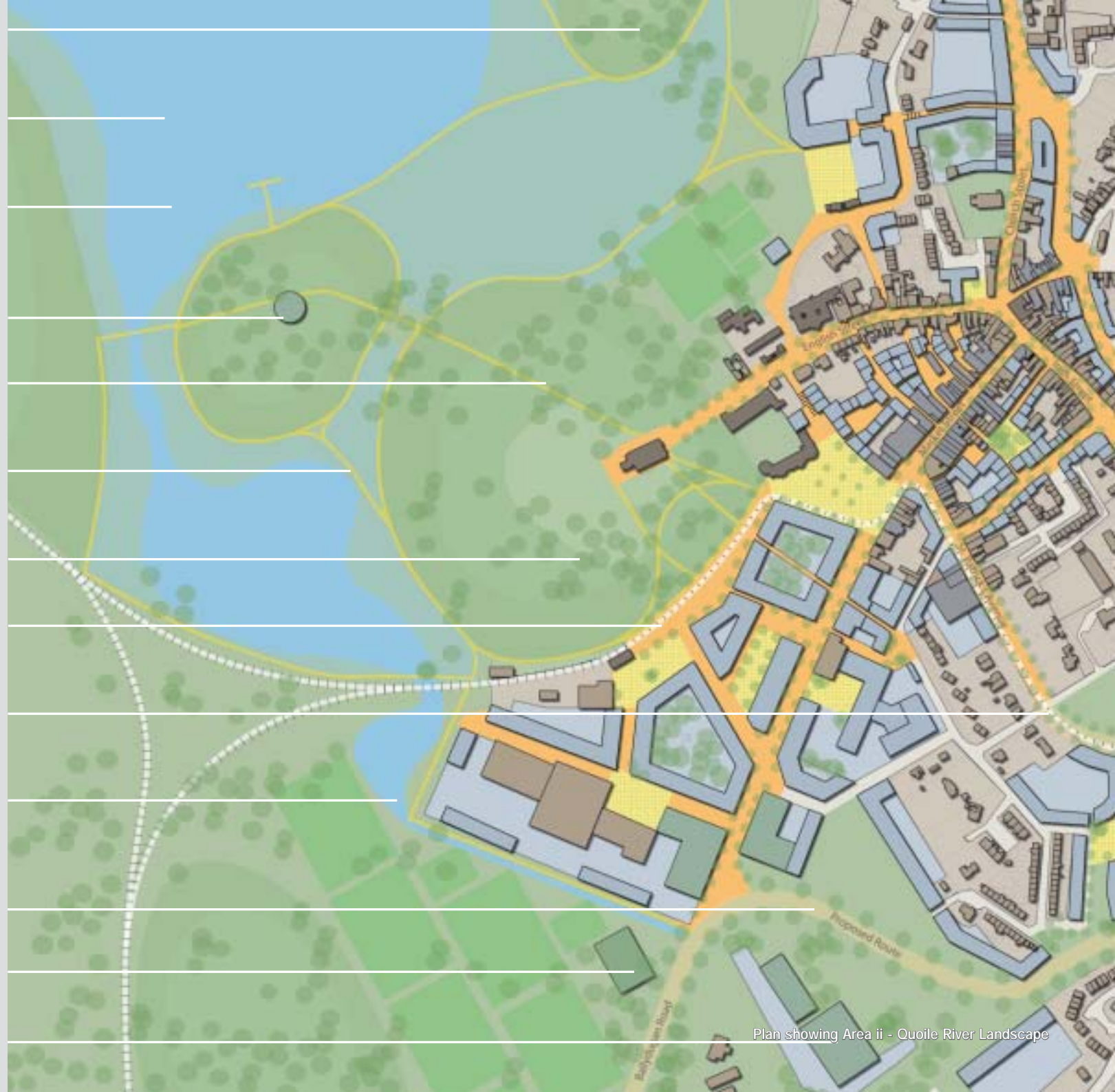
As described in Section 4.2, three potential new Town Centre streets have been identified. This would involve the extension of Saul Street from the Saul Road Car Park southwards to Irish Street, thus relieving the junction of Market and Irish Street. This new street, however, would require the redevelopment of a number of residential and commercial properties.

Should, through further study, this road option be advanced, it must form part of a wider, comprehensive regeneration project for this area. Replacement dwellings would be constructed to form good frontage onto the new road, ensuring that it looked and operated as a street. Buildings would be a mix of 2 and 3 stories, with open space provided for residents. Pedestrian linkage towards Irish Street should also be maintained.



English Street and Saint Patrick's Cathedral

- Mound of Down Interpretation and Landscape Design
- Managed Extension of the Quoile Wetland and Open Water
- 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
- New Generation Eco-Retail Park



Plan showing Area ii - Quoile River Landscape

4.4 Quoile River Landscape

4.4.1 Quoile River Country 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 beautiful surrounding landscape. In order to capitalise upon this major asset the Masterplan presents a series of ambitious proposals to sensitively open up this area so that it can be improved for wildlife and enjoyed more widely by residents and visitors.

Proposals centre on a network of new walking and cycling links between key destinations such as The Saint Patrick's Centre, Railway Station, Mound of Down and Inch Abbey. These proposals include enhancing the setting of these key sites and developing wetlands, boardwalks, greenways and linear parks to integrate the surrounding landscape with the Town Centre.

Creating high quality pedestrian links between the Town Centre and these key destinations will re-establish their natural and historical significance. In turn this will provide excellent opportunities for interpretation and learning as well as creating an amenity for local people and an attraction for visitors.

A Wildlife and Activity Centre, set discreetly within the landscape would provide a focus for local residents and visitors wishing to watch and study wildlife or take part in activities such as cycling and canoeing. Educational opportunities exist, whereby schools could use the centre and associated outdoor classrooms, providing children with opportunities to learn about and enjoy their surrounding environment.

As previously noted, the marshland around Downpatrick lies some 0.4 metres below sea level, making it the lowest lying land in Ireland. Although this provides an excellent natural landscape there are associated flooding risks, which must not be overlooked. A key aim of the Masterplan is to turn constraints into opportunities and therefore, the Masterplan proposes a programme of water management to increase the flood capacity of the River Quoile while also creating new and enhancing existing wetland habitats.

The combination of these proposals presents Downpatrick with a unique opportunity to create a Country Park of national significance, benefitting local people and attracting tourists to explore the area.



4.4.2 Downpatrick & County Down Railway



Downpatrick and County Down Railway Museum



Steam Locomotive

As Northern Ireland's only standard gauge (full-size) heritage railway, the Downpatrick and County Down Railway is a unique asset to Downpatrick and one, which must be protected and enhanced. The Masterplan recognises the importance of this asset and encourages expansion proposals for the railway as identified in the Downpatrick and County Down Railway 'Future Directions' Report. Various line extension proposals and options are outlined in this report, all of which have significant merit.

In order to enhance the visitor offering there are proposals to extend the line to the picturesque hamlet of Ballydugan and the Downpatrick Racecourse, providing sustainable connections between the Town Centre and these key destinations as well as enhancing the unique experience of travelling by steam train.

There are also proposals to extend the line into the Down Business Park. This would provide the opportunity to relocate engineering works and associated 'clutter' to a more appropriate facility, therefore creating a much more pedestrian orientated and visitor friendly location in the Town Centre.

The Masterplan also proposes enhancing the setting of the station and extending the line from the Station Museum to bring locomotives right up to the Saint Patrick's Centre during major event days.

As well as providing an important tourism asset, the transport proposals in the Masterplan identifies the potential that the railway could play as a mode of public transport and a means to reduce traffic congestion in the Town Centre during morning and evening rush hours and on major event days. Line extensions to Down Business Park, the Belfast Road and Downpatrick Racecourse could provide a very useful people mover route between these nodes and the Town Centre, as part of an integrated Park and Ride Strategy.

4.4.3 Centre of Sporting Excellence

As part of the Quoile River Country Park, the Masterplan proposes a Centre of Sporting Excellence located within this enhanced parkland area. This use would provide an appropriate distribution of recreational and leisure uses between the passive leisure associated with the natural landscape of the Quoile River to the active leisure associated with sports facilities.

With plans to redevelop the Downpatrick Leisure Centre imminent and potential plans to locate a National Velodrome in Downpatrick, an excellent opportunity exists to develop a state-of-the-art facility in this location. Such a sporting complex would not only serve as a major local resource but also be of national significance.

With proposals to increase the flood capacity of the Quoile River, and the nearby public transport links, this area is well placed to cater for such a development. Due to the close proximity of the Town Centre, such a development would bring additional spin-off benefits for local shops and businesses.

4.4.4 New Generation Retail Park

The Masterplan recommends the proposal for a highly sustainable Flagship Eco-Retail Park in Dunleath Park, which would be developed at the same time as the proposed link between the Ballydugan Road with the Ardglass Road, as outlined within the Town Centre transport proposals (Section 4.2).

Connecting with the Quoile River Country Park this retail development has an important role to play in blending in sensitively to the surrounding natural landscape. Units within this environmentally conscious retail park would follow highly sustainable practices of building development, incorporate green roofs to enhance biodiversity and minimise visual impact from prominent high points within the Town. Sustainable urban drainage techniques should also be adopted, such as reed bed systems.

With such development various benefits can be achieved, including, meeting the increased retail demand, minimising the visual and environmental impact often associated with this type of land use as well as enhancing the connectivity between the surrounding landscape and the Town Centre.



Conceptual Image of the New Generation Retail Park

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 Building



Plan showing Area iii - Market Street

4.5 Market Street

4.5.1 Market Street Renewal

Market Street is the primary retail corridor within Downpatrick and as such must be supported as much as possible. The street includes those physical elements that are often associated with historic cores such as narrow plot widths, varying eaves lines and narrow passageways providing a secondary public means of access to abutting properties.

The Masterplan acknowledges that there are variations in the retail offering within Downpatrick and this has a direct impact on the scale and design of the built environment. Following the analysis process it was identified that Market Street is made up of three distinct retail character areas.

Along the northern section of Market Street between the junction of Irish Street and Saint Patrick's Square, there is a concentration of small scale independent retail development. Retail units within this area are characterised by narrow plot widths and possess a distinctive richness in the style and variety of shop frontages. The Masterplan recognises the importance of these independently owned retail units to benefit the local economy and to ensure the rich character of the Town is retained.

The second retail character area along Market Street exists from St Patrick's Square to the South Eastern Regional College Campus. This area is made up of multinational chain stores, accommodated within units of larger floorplate sizes. The Grove Shopping Centre is set within this area and is home to a number of these chain stores.

The third retail character area, identified through analysis, spans from the South Eastern Regional College to the Ballydugan Road. This area incorporates Down Retail Park and is made up of large scale retail development to accommodate edge of town retailers.

Through a process of phased works, Market Street requires sensitive renewal to modernise retail units, introduce upper floor uses and enhance the general appearance of the Street. One storey units should be in time replaced by 2 and 3 storey buildings. While comprised of many different privately owned shops, the renewal of Market Street should be coordinated to ensure high quality design, respect of historic integrity and complimentary retail provision.



Market Street



Primary Retail Street

4.5.2 New Street

Presently due to the lack of choice, road users wishing to travel through Downpatrick are directed along one of the three main routes into and out of town, namely Irish Street, Market Street or Church Street, all of which culminate at one junction which can often become grid locked during peak times. This is exacerbated by traffic wishing to access English Street, which also shares this busy junction.

Within the Masterplan a new one-way street is proposed between Irish Street and St Patrick's Avenue, the primary purpose of which is to alleviate traffic congestion within the central core of the Town, around the junction of Church Street, Irish Street and English Street. The introduction of this 'relief' route between Irish Street and St Patrick's Avenue will allow through traffic to circulate more freely around the central core and to a degree avoid conflict with traffic which is moving around the centre. One objective of this new route however, is that it incorporates the design and feel of a street as opposed to a solely 'engineered' road solution. In this regard active frontages are proposed along its length, which comprise narrow plot widths and pedestrian linkages to the rear, in keeping with the historic nature of the urban fabric in this location. Underground, short-stay car parking and intimate public space should also feature in this area.

4.5.3 St. Patrick's Square

St Patrick's Square is located along Market Street close to its junction with St Patrick's Avenue and is bounded along its north-western edge by the St Patrick's Centre, the only permanent exhibition in the world dedicated to Ireland's Patron Saint. Vehicular access is permitted through the square along its southern edge as part of a looped route, enabling access to the Grove Car Park before reconnecting with Market Street at its junction with Ballydugan Road.

In the short term, the Square will be enhanced through the existing public realm works. This will introduce high quality stone surfacing, street furniture and lighting, greatly enhancing this principal public space.

While the existing square does fulfil an important civic role, its functionality is impeded by its present size and layout. In order to build upon the extent of public realm improvement work already undertaken, the Masterplan proposes a second phase to approximately double the Square in size. The main rationale behind increasing the size of the square is largely related to formalising a civic space which is befitting to Downpatrick's status as the administrative centre of Down District, however of equal importance is the potential to open up views west to St Patrick's Cathedral.

By increasing the size of the square and realigning

building footprints along its southern edge, new views are then opened up to St Patrick's Cathedral from Market Street and St Patrick's Avenue elevating its setting as the main focal point within the Town. The realignment of frontages along the southern edge of the square also exposes the side elevation of the St. Patrick's Centre, which now commands the square's western edge thereby reaffirming the Centre's status one of the Town's premier attractions.

It is envisaged that the proposed square would be capable of hosting major festivals and events as well as continuing to provide a robust platform for more regular local events such as weekly markets and craft fairs.

The Masterplan also proposes minor development along the existing pedestrian connection which runs alongside the St Patrick's Centre, connecting the square to the elevated English Street. Where the opportunity exists, small development plots are proposed along this heavily frequented pedestrian route in a similar vein to the style and type of development advocated within the area bounded by Market Street and English Street.

4.5.4 South Eastern Regional College and Environs

The South Eastern Regional College (SERC), a Further Education College, has announced an £80 million investment building programme to be completed by 2011. As part of this programme, SERC is in the process of constructing a new state-of-the-art campus along Market Street just south of St Patrick's Square. The first phase of the building was opened in September 2009 and the second phase is due to be completed by end 2011.

Once completed, the Downpatrick Campus will add approximately 30,500 square metres of floorspace including workshops, central hall, fitness and media suites, general classrooms and car parking facilities. The Masterplan takes on board the building footprints of the proposed SERC campus, ensuring that the layout where possible, is fully integrated into the surrounding network of streets and public open spaces and seeks to encourage the College to interact more fully with Market Street to enhance the street frontage and increase activity. In addition, the Masterplan also proposes a new civic space as part of the college redevelopment.

4.5.5 Market Street Public Realm

The objective of public realm improvements along Market Street, between St Patrick's Square and the Ballydugan Road is to remove excess clutter and improve connectivity in order to sustain the vitality and viability of the street as the primary retail thoroughfare. The Masterplan also advocates a marked shift away from traditional traffic engineering solutions in favour of a more legible and coherent street design that redresses the balance between vehicular and pedestrian movements.

One element which is notably missing from Market Street is absence of any significant form of landscaping along its length. This absence of greenery coupled with long stretches that are devoid of ground floor activity, as is the case further out of Town close to Ballyduggan Road, has resulted in an austere environment along particular sections of Market Street.

The introduction of avenue tree planting would help to reduce the visual dominance of the street and provide an element of shelter and definition to the pedestrian footway. Improvement works should also ensure that any new street furniture and tree planting are aligned so as to improve the pedestrian thoroughfare while threshold treatment will help to define new side streets.





4.5.6 The Grove Retail Quarter

Market Street and the Grove Shopping Centre provide important retail space for Downpatrick. A combination of independent shops and high street stores are located alongside the bus station, library and government offices.

However vacant units, prominent service areas and wide expanses of surface car parking give an evident 'back of house' appearance which detracts from the rich character of the Town Centre and setting of the Grove and Cathedral. The environment is also prone to antisocial behaviour, particularly in the evenings when few cars are parked there.

The Masterplan therefore proposes the comprehensive redevelopment of this area to create a new retail-led, mixed-use quarter in the heart of Downpatrick. Not only does this provide the opportunity to enhance and expand the retail offering within the Town Centre but also improve the quality of the pedestrian environment and connectivity between key destinations such as English Street, the Cathedral and the Railway Museum. It would also provide the opportunity to relocate existing community facilities, office space and to introduce living accommodation above the shops.

Redevelopment proposals for this area look specifically at how these sites can complement existing businesses and encourage active investment into Downpatrick Town Centre. As identified through the analysis process and through the Regional Development Strategy, Downpatrick Town Centre has major potential to act as a retail hub for those living in the Town and the wider population of the Lecale area. Promotion of new development that enhances the retail offering will form the backbone of proposals for the Grove Retail Quarter and strengthen Downpatrick's role as a shopping and tourist destination.

Most importantly, any reconfiguration of this area must be coordinated through the development of a comprehensive masterplan involving all landowners and other key stakeholders. An indicative layout (right) forms part of the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan, the principles of which should be used to inform the development process.

The proposed approach moves away from internal shopping malls and large surface car parks, to create a Town Centre environment of streets and squares. Within this urban structure, modern retail units can be located, along with a mix of other uses. The result would be vibrant and attractive area with increased physical, economic and cultural activity.





Conceptual sketch illustrating how the redeveloped area between the Grove and the Grove Shopping Centre might look

To create such streets the Masterplan advocates a series of perimeter blocks along the western side of Market Street, from St Patrick's Square to Ballyduggan Road. These would range from two to three storeys in height and have active uses at ground floor level (such as shops and restaurants) with office and residential units located on upper floors. Areas for servicing and deliveries would be located to the rear, away from public spaces. Private garden space would also be provided on upper floors on roof decks. This modern interpretation of a traditional town layout helps to retain a level of activity throughout the day, evenings and weekends.

A range of retail unit sizes would be provided to accommodate modern retail needs. Large units must be 'wrapped' with smaller ones to avoid lengths of blank walls and inactive frontage.

The Masterplan recognises that there are a number of other land uses within this area including the Bus Station and Public Library. The Masterplan advocates that an appropriate mix of Town Centre land uses are incorporated within the redeveloped Grove Retail Quarter.

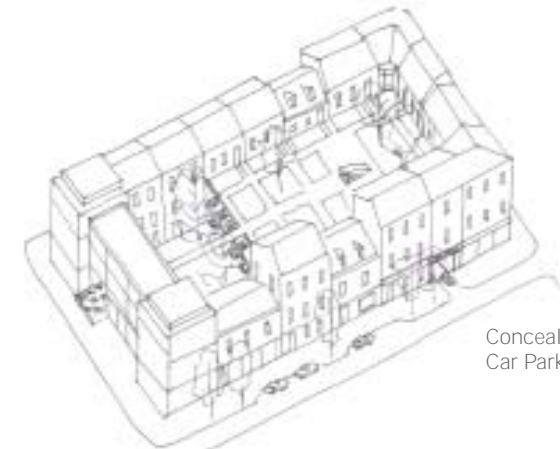
In relation to the Bus Station, the Masterplan proposes that this would remain in this location, but adapted to form a public square. Associated depot and storage facilities would be relocated to another location beyond the Town Centre.

The setting and visibility of the Railway Station would also be greatly improved through the creation of new square in front of the building. This pedestrian space would create more room for visitors to mingle and present opportunities for outdoor seating and events.

A high level of environmental quality can be achieved with the creation of new streets and urban spaces, dominated by people rather than cars. Paved with high quality materials, street furniture and lighting, these pedestrian thoroughfares would provide better connectivity between Market Street, the Grove and Cathedral and English Street. The positioning of such streets should consider views, particularly to and from the Cathedral. Scope also exists to partially cover some streets to provide protection from the elements.

A key priority of the Masterplan in this area is to retain an appropriate number of car parking spaces. In keeping with the Car Parking Strategy, a long-stay, multi-storey car park is proposed on the edge of the Town Centre, while pockets of short stay car parks have been proposed more centrally.

As the car parking strategy suggests long stay and short stay parking will be provided in multistorey form, wrapped within the curtilage of new perimeter blocks. The benefit of this type of arrangement means that car parks and servicing arrangements form an integral part of the block, effectively hidden behind the frontages without compromising the quality of the environment for pedestrians.



Concealed Car Parking



Saul Street Extension

Residential-Led Development

High Quality Public Realm

Schools / Educational Facilities

Enhanced Church Setting

Long Stay Multistorey Car Parking

Mixed Use Development incorporating
Hospitality and Conference Uses

People Mover Route

Potential Link Road

4.6 St. Patrick's Avenue & Downe Hospital

4.6.1 St. Patrick's Avenue

The Masterplan identifies St. Patrick's Avenue as an increasingly important Town Centre street, connecting Market Street and St. Patrick's Square with the mixed use and leisure development associated with the former Downe Hospital site and the new Cinema Complex. St. Patrick's Avenue is also important as it forms a crucial stretch of the proposed people mover route connecting between the Town Centre and the Downshire site.

As well as encouraging the development of the business and commercial sector along this street, the Masterplan also proposes that streetscape improvement works extend along St. Patrick's Avenue, thereby enhancing it as a Town Centre street and encouraging pedestrian activity along it.



4.6.2 St. Patrick's Avenue Gateway

With recent development of the Eclipse Cinema and major future development opportunities associated with the former Downe Hospital Site, this area has become a very important gateway to the Town Centre. In addition, a number of important streets and roads converge at this location, including St. Patrick's Avenue, Irish Street, Killough Road, Pound Lane and Stream Street, making it a key arrival point. The development of this area will become increasingly important as the Downshire Campus develops.

As part of the Town Centre Transport Strategy, the Masterplan proposes a multi-storey car park facility in this location, which would be wrapped within the curtilage of new development.



This would provide long stay parking facilities for motorists arriving into Downpatrick from the converging roads.

Through analysis it was identified that a major issue facing Downpatrick was that the Town suffered from a poor evening and weekend economy. It is important to recognise, however, that with the recent opening of the Eclipse Cinema complex, this has improved but there is still further potential for growth. The Masterplan identifies the opportunity for new leisure development in this area along with a new civic square in front of the Cinema.





Indicative image of Linear Park

4.6.3 Linear Park

Following the relocation of the Downe Hospital to the Downshire Site, major development opportunities at the former Downe Hospital site and the Downshire have resulted. Plans are already progressing to establish a public sector campus at the Downshire, whilst the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust are looking at the potential for mixed-use development at the Downe Site.

The Masterplan emphasises that any development in this area should complement rather than compete with the Town Centre. To achieve this, the Masterplan highlights the importance of improving pedestrian, cycling and public transport connections between the Town Centre, the former Downe Hospital and the Downshire. The Masterplan shows the concept of a linear park connecting the Town Centre with the Downshire site along St. Patrick's Avenue, the former Downe Hospital site and the Ardglass Road. The Masterplan also shows that this route could accommodate a proposed people mover, therefore providing a sustainable transport connection between these areas.



Conceptual Image of Linear Park

4.7 Complementary Strategies

4.7.1 Lighting Strategy



Indicative Image of Lighting

Often overlooked but gaining recognition both locally and internationally, lighting strategies are increasingly becoming a complimentary element within Masterplans, and are particularly relevant to historic Towns such as Downpatrick.

The main objective of the lighting strategy is to formalise a framework which results in an improvement in the quality and design of lighting within Downpatrick's streets and public spaces. Levels of comfort and public safety will be raised by way of a well structured lighting strategy. This will complement both the historical and contemporary components of the Town while subtly picking up on existing themes and colour palettes.

The formulation of core lighting initiatives will help to underpin the strategy and ensure consistency throughout the Masterplan area. These initiatives can range from functional aspects of the proposed lighting scheme such as the role, positioning and energy efficiency to more aesthetic elements such as design, choice of materials and colour scheme.

Successful lighting schemes can emphasise elements within Downpatrick at night that are not obvious to the onlooker by day. Combined with seasonal light shows and events such as 'son et lumiere', lighting can make a major contribution to Downpatrick's performance as a visitor destination.

4.7.2 Frontage Improvement Scheme

The purpose of a Frontage Improvement Scheme is to secure elevational alterations that can introduce a degree of cohesion to the frontages within Downpatrick, picking up on established design themes along key routes. It is envisaged that this scheme would be largely concerned with those frontages along the main 'shopping' streets within the Town, primarily Market Street but would also include sections of Irish Street, Church Street, English Street, Scotch Street and St Patrick's Avenue.

In relation to retail units, a successful shopfront design should complement the building of which it forms part, be it the building's scale, proportion or architectural style. Attractive shopfronts result in a vibrant and distinctive streetscape which ultimately benefits local business and trade. The advocacy of established shopfront design principles should be encouraged throughout, whether it is within an historic or contemporary context. Common design approaches include proportioned glazing sections coupled with detailing such as stallrisers, glazing bars and mullions, all of which help to introduce a vertical emphasis and rhythm typical within traditional shopfront layouts.

This sense of rhythm should also apply to the signage and lighting elements of the frontage. In a similar vein to the frontage itself, proportions are crucial as are materials used and the actual positioning of the sign.

As part of this process, the use of fortified shutters in Downpatrick Town Centre must be greatly reduced due to the negative contribution they make to the evening and weekend environment. Toughened glass and shutters to the inside of the windows should be promoted



Indicative Image of Street Frontage

4.7.3 Signage Interpretation Strategy

Signage plays an important role in the articulation and movement around our towns and cities. These minor elements provide much needed visual cues and assist greatly in the creation of legible urban environments. As a rule, signage generally falls into three broad categories; interpretative, wayfinding and advertising.

Given the historical significance of Downpatrick, interpretative signage will play a key role in communicating the history of Downpatrick, particularly around the core area and along English Street where the concentration of visitor attractions are located. While the primary purpose of interpretative signage is to convey information to the reader, whether it relates to a historical or cultural element of the Town, such signage should also contribute positively in terms of its design, location and purpose. Interpretation should also be provided through public art and other creative means.

Wayfinding signage, at strategic locations throughout the Town, is directional in its nature and provides the reader with contextual information such as where they presently are and where they might visit next along their journey.

The design of such signage tends to remain consistent irrespective of their location, which in itself, contributes to a legible environment while providing the reader with a sense of familiarity. Advertising signage provides the function of directing attention to goods and services at a specific location and tends to be located within the central area in close proximity to the established shopping and office districts.

While a combination of signage from all three categories will always form part of the make-up of our Town Centres, the proliferation of inappropriate forms of signage can have a detrimental effect on the urban environment and needs to be carefully coordinated through the strategy and subsequent monitoring.



Indicative Image of Signage

4.7.4 Living and Working Over the Shops

Living and Working Over the Shops (LOTS and WOTS) are relatively new initiatives based on the traditional concept of greater residential and employment activity within Town Centre locations. In line with National Government Policy, these schemes encourage the conversion of vacant and derelict upper floors of retail and commercial units in Town Centre locations in an effort to see these properties brought back into everyday use for residential or working purposes.

LOTS schemes ensure that our Town Centres are active for longer periods of time extending well into the evening, which in turn provides an additional level of surveillance and heightened levels of safety for inhabitants and visitors. While WOTS schemes may have a limited impact in terms of increasing activity within Town Centre locations during the evenings, this type of working arrangement does present its own benefits. Quite often car dependency is reduced as is the need for parking, given the central location of the work place, while the Town Centres economy is boosted by the spending patterns of the increased workforce.

While 'brownfield' sites are generally utilised in both cases, which in itself promotes sustainable development, consideration should be given to how properties are adapted to suit the purposes of LOTS and WOTS projects. Particular care should be taken in the service needs of such schemes, such as the need for separate access and changes to the frontage, which can have implications on the external appearance of the building or terrace which is heightened in the cases of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.



Indicative image of LOTS / WOTS schemes

4.7.5 Evening Economy

There is a growing trend in the development of frameworks that assist in boosting the 'evening economy' of Town Centres. Differentiation is also being made between the night time economy, which largely relates to the pub and nightclub culture and the evening economy which generally refers to that lull time between workers leaving the Town and residents returning home often covering the period of 6pm through to 9pm

The evening economy of Downpatrick presents opportunities within the restaurant and cafe industries as well as leisure and cultural potential. These activities generally include dining out with moderate levels of drinking and can include cinema, art gallery and museum visits with a substantial target audience comprising professionals, younger people, students, families with children, elderly people and tourists, all of which can have a positive knock on effect of reducing crime and the fear of crime itself.

Councils are increasingly viewing their evening economy as an activity that needs to be expanded and see these initiatives as making a positive contribution to the vitality of their Town Centres both economically and socially. Main themes that are emerging from initiatives throughout the UK are the extension of the hours of normal daytime offer and making the Town Centre location attractive to a wider audience for a longer period of time.



Indicative Image of Evening Economy

4.8 Promotion of Downpatrick

Downpatrick has huge potential – it represents a significant asset within Northern Ireland, and also the whole of Ireland. However, the full potential of Downpatrick is not currently being realised.

Tourism and visitor activity should be the primary driver for rejuvenation of the Town Centre – providing a stimulus to business development (particularly retail, catering, and accommodation). It is a core area where public intervention can make a real difference.

However, tourists and visitors should not be regarded as a homogeneous group – they will have different expectations, knowledge and perceptions of Downpatrick, and different motivations for visiting. Familiarity and proximity to the area will be primary factors in this.

A plethora of different market groups can be identified. In broad terms these can be grouped as follows:

- **Local Residents and Day Visitors** – these will be from the local area or travelling from up to one hour away. They will typically be familiar with Downpatrick and its offer. However, this familiarity of what to do and how to orientate themselves will vary – elements of this group will visit frequently, others may be occasional or first time visitors. This group will be motivated by a variety of factors to avail of Downpatrick – recreational activity (e.g. walking by the Quoile), shopping, heritage related attractions, family days out etc. This group is relatively low spend but high volume and frequency.
- **Leisure staying Visitors** – visitors staying in the immediate area. These will typically be from Northern Ireland (with some from Britain and Republic of Ireland). Length of stay in the area will be relatively short (typically 1 – 3 nights, possibly longer for visitors staying in Newcastle).

This group will generally have some familiarity with Downpatrick but not necessarily detailed knowledge. Motivations to visit could be rest and relaxation (just a short break away from it all), the heritage offer, or just a day out from a holiday base (or a combination of these). This is a potentially high spend group – especially if they are staying in Downpatrick.

- **Touring Visitors** – this group will be touring Northern Ireland (or the whole of Ireland). They will be unlikely to be staying in Downpatrick and instead typically passing through for a few hours. They will be from far afield – Britain, North America, North and West Europe – and will have limited (or no) awareness and knowledge of Downpatrick. St. Patrick will be the principle motivation to visit. This group will be relatively low spend.



The Saint Patrick's Centre

As a destination, Downpatrick's core challenges are a relatively low dwell time and visitor spend – it has the assets to attract visitors but is not maximising their potential impact once they have arrived.

Specific issues are:

- Orientation and visitor management within the Town Centre.
- Product depth – not so much in terms of attractions but more specifically in terms of other facilities – particularly retail and food and drink offers which are weakly developed for visitors.

For tourism to fulfil its economic potential there is a need to create a virtuous circle where Downpatrick is attracting more visitors, which creates the market conditions and stimulates private sector investment in supporting products (like retail and catering), which increases dwell time and spend and so on.

Places have multiple owners. In delivering a 'brand promise' for a place, there needs to be delivery across the totality of the experience. Delivering such a 'brand promise' needs to go beyond simply tourism orientated elements such as attractions and interpretation / orientation (of the type outlined in the Cultural Quarter report).

The concept of the visitor journey is key – it covers all aspects of the experience from pre-arrival, arrival, parking, orientation and experience within the Town. This needs to be predicated on different visitor groups and their different needs and views of the Town.

As a consequence, developments in core attractions and the cultural quarter need to be supported by wider initiatives explicit in the Masterplan – e.g. parking strategy, improvements to St. Patrick's Square, DeCourcey Square redevelopment, connectivity to Downpatrick's wider environment.

Tourism should represent the core area for economic development in Downpatrick - the whole Town has the potential to be a tourist attraction and this should be embraced in a holistic way.



English Street Facade



English Street Facade

5 MASTERPLAN DELIVERY

5.1 Introduction

The value of this Masterplan is predicated on the ability to deliver its proposals. Without action the Town Centre will fail to realise its significant potential and more dangerously, risk socioeconomic decline associated with a lack of investment. It is therefore critical that a clear path to delivery of the Masterplan proposals is mapped out and followed accordingly.

This Masterplan is deliberately ambitious in nature, setting out a bold vision for the future of Downpatrick. Yet many of its projects are relatively small in size, with potential to deliver significant benefits over the short term. Similarly, most of the larger more complex projects can be delivered in phases, thus enabling benefits to be experienced in the short to medium term.

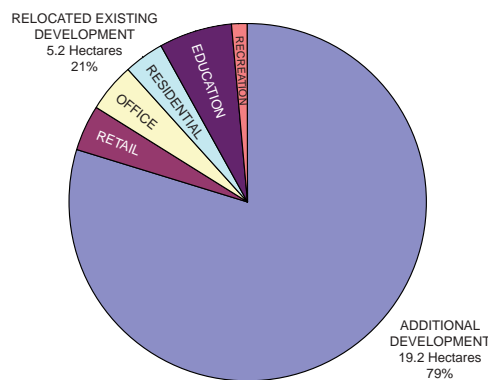
This section summarises the breakdown of proposed development, sets in a place an Action Plan for Delivery and describes some of the key issues involved with taking the Masterplan proposals forward. A more detailed breakdown of Proposed Development can be found in Appendix 6.

5.2 Overview of Proposed Development

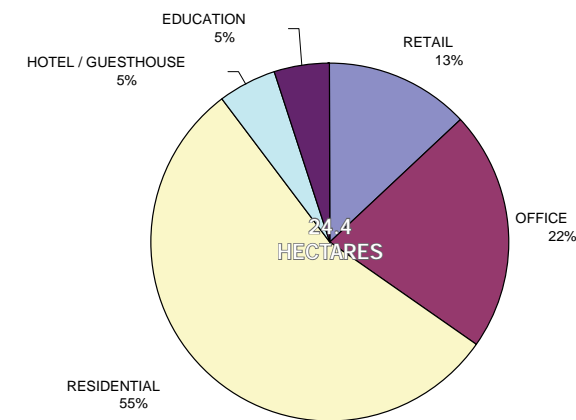
The pie charts below illustrate the breakdown of development proposed by the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan over a timescale of 15 – 20 years. A total of 24.4 hectares of development is proposed, 21% of which would involve the redevelopment and / or relocation of existing uses (pie chart- below left). Of the 24.4 hectares of total proposed development the pie chart (below right) shows 55% is residential, 22% office and 13% retail, followed by smaller quantities of other uses, such as hospitality and education. This reflects the Masterplans objective to ensure the sustainability of the Town Centre through a commitment to mixed-use development.

Notably this includes redressing the balance in favour of increased Town Centre living accommodation.

The phased delivery of this development must be taken forward in the context of prevailing market conditions, so ensuring commercial viability and economic sustainability. Market demand will be influenced positively by the delivery of key masterplan projects that resolve existing issues and unlock potential for greater social and economic activity in the Town Centre.



Pie Chart showing the proportion of Total Proposed Development that is either Additional Development or Relocated Existing Development



Pie Chart showing the Landuse Breakdown of Total Proposed Development

Regeneration Initiative		Description	Priority	Timeframe	Stakeholders	
Church Street, English Street & Scotch Street	A1	Church Street Redevelopment	Mixed use development, to include public car parking	M	L	DSD, DDC, Priv, PS, RS
	A2	Down High School / County Gaol Site	Comprehensive redevelopment to include schools & hotel	H	S	DDC, DSD, DENI, NIEA, Priv, PS
	A3	Scotch St / De Courcey Square	Infill development, refurbishments of properties, LOTS	H	M	DDC, DSD, DCAL, AC, NIEA, Priv, PS
	A4	Laneways and Reopened Entries	Establishment of routes and associated development	H	M	DDC, DSD, DCAL, AC, NIEA, Priv, PS
	A5	English Street Public Realm	High quality public realm, inc paving, furniture & lighting	H	S	NITB, DDC, DSD, NIEA,
	A6	Saul Street Extension	New street and associated mixed use development	M	L	DDC, DSD, RS, NIHE, Priv, PS
Quoile River Landscape	B1	Quoile River Country Park	Landscape management, paths and visitor facilities	H	M	DDC, NIEA, RA, Priv, PS
	B2	Downpatrick & County Down Railway	Line extension, park & ride development, depot relocation	H	M	DCDR, DDC, DSD, NIEA, NITB, PS
	B3	Centre for Sporting Excellence	Leisure centre and associated sports facilities	M	M	DDC, SNI, PS
	B4	Dunleath Eco Retail Park	Road construction and retail development	M	M	Priv, DDC, DSD, Public, PS
Market Street	C1	Market Street Renewal	Infill development, refurbishments of properties, LOTS	H	S	DDC, DSD
	C2	New Street	New street and associated mixed use development	M	M	DDC, DSD, RS, Priv, PS
	C3	St Patrick's Square	High quality public realm and longer term expansion	H	S	DDC, DSD, NITB, Priv
	C4	The Grove Retail Quarter	Retail led mixed use development	H	M	DSD, DDC, RS, Trans, DCDR, Priv, PS
	C5	SE Regional College & Environs	New college facilities and adjacent development	H	S	DENI, DDC, Priv, PS
	C6	Town Centre Public Realm	High quality public realm inc. paving, furniture & lighting	H	S	DDC, DSD, Priv
St Patrick's Avenue & Downe Hospital	D1	St Patrick's Avenue	Mixed use development to improve street frontage	M	M	Priv, DDC, PS
	D2	St Patrick's Avenue Gateway	Mixed use development, public car parking & civic space	M	M	Priv, DDC, DSD, Priv, PS
	D3	Former Downe Hospital	Mixed use development	H	S	SHSCT, DDC, Priv, PS
	D4	Linear Park	Creation of linear park, including public transport	H	M	DDC, SHSCT, DSD, DENI, RS, Trans, Priv
Complementary Strategies	E1	Lighting Strategy	Specialist plan detailing lighting concept, location & spec	H	S	DDC, NIEA
	E2	Frontage Improvements Scheme	Coordinated programme of frontage renewal, inc signs	H	S	DDC, DSD, NIEA, Priv
	E3	Signage & Interpretation Strategy	Coordinated strategy of signage and interpretive art	H	S	DDC, NITB, NIEA
	E4	Living and Working Above the Shops	Programme to increase Town Centre living and working	H	S	DDC, NIEA, Priv, PS
	E5	Evening Economy Strategy	Strategy to support and grow a varied evening economy	H	S	DDC, Priv
	E6	Transportation and Parking Study	Implementation of transport and parking measures	H	S	DDC, DSD, RS, Trans

Key: Priority H = High, M = Medium, L = Low. Timeframe S = Short (1 - 5 yrs), M = Medium (5 - 10 yrs), L = Long (10 - 15 yrs).

 Immediate
 Near Future
 Long Term

Delivery Agents & Stakeholders:

AC = Arts Council, DCAL = Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure, DCDR = Downpatrick and County Down Railway, DDC = Down District Council, DENI = Department of Education Northern Ireland
 DSD = Department for Social Development, NIEA = Northern Ireland Environment Agency, NIHE = Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Trans = Translink, NITB = Northern Ireland Tourist Board,
 Priv = Private Sector, PS = Planning Service, RA = Rivers Agency, RS = Roads Service, SHSCT = Southern Health and Social Services Trust, SNI = Sport Northern Ireland

5.3 Action Plan for Delivery

The Action Plan for Delivery sets out each of the proposed Masterplan projects and provides an indication of priority, timeframe and the organisations that require to be involved in their delivery. This provides a succinct point of reference for all involved with the regeneration and development process and allows for projects to be coordinated in relation to one another.

Importantly, this Action Plan is a live document and should be updated at regular intervals to reflect the impact of completed projects and changes in circumstance. Any new projects should be added to the Action Plan over time, having been designed and developed in line with the Masterplan vision, aims and objectives.

5.4 Short - Term Deliverables

Of the Masterplan proposals a number of key projects have been identified as High Priority for delivery over the Short Term. These are:

A2: Down High School / County Gaol Site

A5: English Street Public Realm

C1: Market Street Renewal

C3: St Patrick's Square

C5: SE Regional College & Environs

C6: Town Centre Public Realm

D3: Former Downe Hospital

In addition, the implementation of complementary strategies (E1 – E6), which include frontage improvements and the Town Centre car parking strategy, are also identified for early delivery.

Together these projects stand to have a catalytic regenerative impact on Downpatrick Town Centre, improving conditions for increased investment and delivery of further proposals. Early work must also commence on the larger, longer-term projects (such as B1 Quoile River Country Park and C4 The Grove Retail Quarter), as their complexity will require a longer process of preparation and development.

5.5 Delivery Mechanisms

Delivery of the Masterplan proposals will involve the use of a number of different mechanisms, depending on the type of project and issues of landownership.

In many instances, smaller projects relate to land under single private ownership and as such, are likely to follow a traditional development route. It is essential, however, that these projects are developed in the context of the Masterplan aims and objectives so to maximise their regenerative contribution to the Town Centre as a whole. The use of formal and informal pre planning discussions and the involvement of local people in the design process are to be encouraged.

For lands in sole public ownership, development must follow established procedure. The use of development briefs provides the opportunity to fully integrate the Masterplan's regeneration objectives in the design of the scheme. Public consultation must also form an integral part of the process and an emphasis on design quality maintained throughout, setting an example of regeneration best practice and raising design quality across the Town Centre.

Many Masterplan projects relate to land in both public and private ownership. These will require the coming together of parties around a development plan, setting out key priorities and maximising regeneration benefits in the process. Land should be packaged through negotiation and tendering where possible. However, should this not be possible, the use of compulsory acquisition powers may be necessitated.

The use of planning gain should also be actively pursued, where conditions can be placed on planning approvals to deliver specific regeneration projects. Such a mechanism can work well for the delivery of public realm and associated infrastructure. Similarly, the public sector should explore the potential of a forward funding model to deliver important infrastructure that in turn unlocks development opportunities.

5.6 Delivery, and Planning Control of Masterplan

Delivery of the Masterplan Vision will require the commitment and co-ordination of many organisations and individuals. This will include Down District Council and Government Departments such as the Department for Social Development, Roads Service, Planning Service and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as well as a wide range of stakeholders and local people.

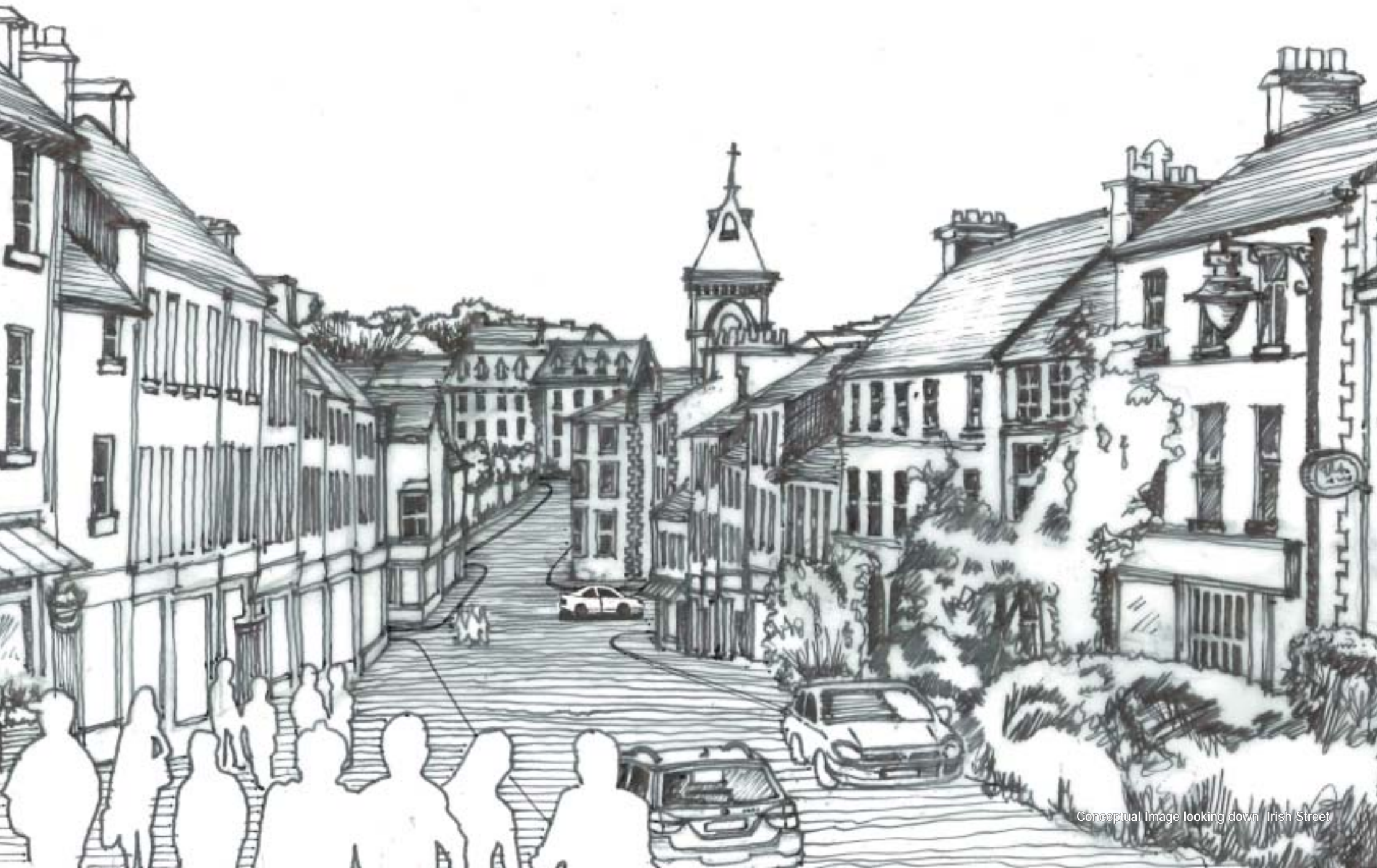
It is recommended that a Masterplan Implementation Team be established to oversee the co-ordinated delivery of projects. The Group should have an appropriate governance structure and breadth of skills which are specifically relevant to the regeneration of the Town. The Group will be responsible for establishing detailed programmes for delivery of the Masterplan, and for evaluating performance against agreed targets.

Working to this body would also be a number of specialised subgroups, who would focus on specific projects and / or particular subject areas.

The transparency of this process and the regular involvement of the people of Downpatrick will be essential to its success. This will require the establishment of effective communications strategies, regular updates on progress and the continuation of well organised and advertised Masterplan events. A number of different communication techniques should be employed to ensure a wide reach to all sections of the community.



Aerial Image of Downpatrick



Conceptual Image looking down Irish Street

6 CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this Masterplan process, a number of simple questions were posed. What are the qualities of Downpatrick? What are the issues it currently faces? What kind of place would we like Downpatrick to be? How can we realise this vision?

Through the course of developing the Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan, answers to these questions have emerged. Downpatrick is blessed with substantial qualities in both its natural and built environment, its rich and fascinating history and in the character of the people who live and work there. Yet it also faces challenges, such as overcoming the impact of cars and heavy vehicles; such as attracting investment into its Town Centre to support employment and economic growth; such as making the most of its rich cultural and historic assets to grow a sustainable visitor economy.

When asked what kind of place they would like Downpatrick to be, the people of the Town were clear. An improved destination for retail and tourism; a place that was safer for people and not so dominated by cars; a Town that is easy to access and free of grid locked congestion; a greener Town with parks and open spaces for the enjoyment of local people.

The Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan has responded to these needs with an ambitious plan for the future. Shopping will be greatly enhanced through a high quality environment and provision for indigenous retailers alongside high street chains. Tourism development will be comprehensively supported through development of Downpatrick's heritage offer as well as wider environmental, transport and retail developments. Roads will be reshaped and alternative transport solutions provided to reduce the impact of vehicles, making it safer for pedestrians and easier to get around. And the environment will be greatly enhanced with the creation of a nationally significant park and comprehensive improvement of Downpatrick's streets and squares.

With work ongoing, including the Public Realm Works along Market Street, the Branding Initiative and Plans to develop a Cultural Quarter, the momentum is in place to realise the Shared Vision for Downpatrick. Arguably, the most crucial question at this point is how this Vision can be realised. An Action Plan for Delivery has been established, with guidance on mechanisms for implementation.

Realisation of this vision will require the concerted efforts of all who care about Downpatrick. Government, both national and local must coordinate their resources and carefully manage the development process. Businesses, landowners and developers must be encouraged to do the right thing and ensure their actions contribute positively to the wider good. And the people of Downpatrick must look to how they can play an active role in shaping their Town.

Realisation of the Town Centre Masterplan Vision will not be easy, with an inevitable requirement of much planning, coordination, resources and hard work. Yet by following this process and striving to attain the vision it has set itself, Downpatrick and its people can look to the future with confidence and pride.