



Larne Town Centre Regeneration

Masterplan Report

June 2010



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The masterplan for the regeneration of Larne presents a unique opportunity for the town to shape its future. Through consultations and discussions, research, consideration, and thoughtful design, the masterplan has come into being. It is intended that this document provides the information and guidance necessary to instigate and implement the successful regeneration of Larne's Town Centre.

Larne lies in a particularly strategic position along the Northern Irish coast. Located at the closest point to the Scottish coast, Larne has developed as one of the most historic and strategic ports in Ireland. The port, in combination with good road and rail links has made Larne well-connected. Set midway between Belfast and County Antrim's famous scenic coastal attractions, Larne has become known as the 'Gateway to the Glens and Coast'.

Historically, Larne prospered from both a busy port and a vibrant town centre. While the port has remained commercially buoyant, in more recent times the town centre has suffered from gradual decline. Political instability, weak market conditions, and poor strategic planning have all contributed to this decline. The priority given to economic development has often been at the expense of the quality of the townscape and public realm.

Over the past years the town has been caught in a downward spiral. The construction of the Harbour Highway in the 1970s effectively created a by-pass to the town causing a loss of much of the visitor market. This in turn has led to a reduction in the commercial activity and a lack of inward investment. The development of large convenience stores in neighbouring towns has further compounded the problem by causing retail leakage out of the town. Signs of the decline are evident throughout the town centre in the form of gap sites and empty shop units, and while these signs are by no means widespread, the negative impression that they create can be. Much short term and opportunistic development combined with a lack of inward investment have also been to the detriment of the town's appearance.

An analysis of the town's existing situation has been the starting point in the development of the masterplan. It has helped to identify current challenges that need to be overcome, as well as highlight opportunities for the successful regeneration of the town. The Masterplan's Project Management Team has worked collaboratively to establish strategic objectives in respect of the town's redevelopment, as well as indicative proposals for key sites. This has evolved through consultations, meetings and discussions with the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as the wider community of Larne.

The vision is to increase the vitality and prosperity of the Town Centre through a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to redevelopment and this vision underpins the whole of the masterplan.

Over the next 15 years a number of improvements are planned to take place in the town centre and with their completion the identity and character of the town will be enhanced and in so doing will act as a catalyst for future development. The role of the masterplan has been to identify the best opportunities for the town centre and to develop these as part of an overall phased strategy. It targets the key areas of the Town Core, the Waterfront and Riverdale, proposing a comprehensive programme of renovation and redevelopment.

Despite the many challenges, the town of Larne presents great potential, especially in respect of the two substantial and largely untapped markets that sit right on the doorstep. The first is the tourism market which currently by-passes the town, the second is the local market which currently shops elsewhere. A number of the proposals in the masterplan combine in an attempt to recapture these markets. Provision is made to improve accessibility, increase the facilities on offer and enhance the overall image and identity of the town.

Furthermore, local developers have been carrying out land assembly within the town core to consolidate larger and more developable parcels of land. This provides a great opportunity to attract the much needed multi-nationals into the town. The masterplan seeks to demonstrate the potential of these sites and promote them as part of the wider regeneration strategy.

Other opportunities relate to public developments which focus on bringing life back into some of the town's most historic buildings, the two most notable examples being the proposed refurbishment of the Town Hall and the Market Yard, both of which will contribute hugely to the community facilities on offer. A new Tourist Information Centre will complement these facilities and form the focus for a new tourism 'Gateway Centre' in the Waterfront Area.

Redevelopment in the town centre presents a great opportunity to redress the current under provision of public realm and open space on offer. There is huge scope to make an enhanced public realm an integral part of the redeveloped areas, and moreover improvements to the wider landscape setting of the town will create a much more positive impression of the town as a whole.

The opportunities in the transportation system relate to improving connections. New connections will help to open up the town core and create new connections to the proposed Waterfront and Riverdale quarters. Improved access from the Harbour Highway and reconfiguration of Circular Road are essential for optimising the redevelopment potential of the Waterfront and wider town centre.

Through redevelopment proposals there is the opportunity to enhance the mix of uses increasing residential and business uses within the town centre. This will help breathe life back into the town and establish it as an attractive place to live and work.

The feature common to all these opportunities is the need for high quality urban design. This will help to co-ordinate all the separate proposals into a town centre that looks well ordered and attractive. This will make all the difference in achieving the aspiration of rebranding the town as a destination and not just a gateway. Also opportunities for optimising a sustainable approach should be implemented in each and every proposal to contribute to the establishment of Larne as an Eco-Town.

The masterplan is designed to be a working document with practical applications to assist in every stage of the town's regeneration. In order to ensure this aim is achieved, a clear implementation strategy must be put in place. This will set out the actions necessary to drive the masterplan forward and identify those responsible for carrying out these actions. This requires the establishment of a Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership who will take forward the delivery of the masterplan with the assistance of a number of supporting Project Teams.

The key recommendations to take this masterplan forward are;

- Set up a Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership who will lead and manage overall delivery of the masterplan;
- Establish Project Teams who will be responsible to action and implement individual projects;
- Continue community consultation to ensure an inclusive and transparent process;
- Work in close collaboration with private developers and land owners;
- Prepare more detailed design guidance in respect of key development sites;
- Involve private consultants where specialist skills and knowledge are needed;
- Continually prepare for future proposals through the sourcing of funding, consolidation and acquisition of key sites and collaboration with key stakeholders;
- Regularly monitor and review the masterplan to ensure that it is kept up-to-date and central to the regeneration process.

Ultimately the success of the masterplan will rely on the enthusiasm and commitment of all those involved in its implementation and ongoing evolution. While this is a huge task for any town to undertake, there is no doubt that Larne has enough individuals with the necessary enthusiasm and commitment to collectively drive this masterplan forward.

Introduction

This study was commissioned by the Department for Social Development. The brief was to prepare a masterplan for the regeneration of Larne Town Centre. Preparation of the masterplan was led by AECOM with input from a team of specialists including AECOM design + planning; AECOM transportation; Colin Stutt, economic consultant; Cleaver Fulton and Rankin, legal consultants and Sammon Surveyors, quantity surveyors. It was co-ordinated by a Project Management Team, overseeing the work, comprising officials from the Department for Social Development, Larne Borough Council, DRD Roads Service and DOE Planning Service. It has evolved through collaboration, consultations and discussions with the people and stakeholders of Larne.

In recent years the Department for Social Development has funded a number of similar masterplan projects in towns throughout Northern Ireland. This ongoing investment recognises the need and the importance of the masterplan process in instigating a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of some of the Province's more deprived urban areas.

In 2008 work commenced on the preparation of a masterplan for Larne. A Baseline Report was completed, which contained an economic analysis, urban design analysis, transport assessment, and stakeholder consultation report. Work on the masterplan was put on hold during late 2008 and the first half of 2009 as further evidence was required to support development proposals for the town centre. In September 2009, following the completion of the Retail Capacity Study, the project recommenced and a preferred option for the masterplan was developed in collaboration with the project management team. The draft proposals were presented to Larne Borough Council's Development Committee in October 2009 and there subsequently followed a six week community consultation. Feedback from this consultation period and from Council helped to inform the final proposals now presented. A final draft of the masterplan was presented to Council in February 2010 and endorsed unanimously.

The masterplan has two key functions; firstly, to provide the information and guidance necessary for the regeneration of the town centre; and secondly, to provide the mechanism necessary for the regeneration of the town centre to be implemented. It aims to provide a working document which is clearly structured with readily accessible information that can easily be extracted and applied to specific purposes. These purposes may include promoting key sites to private developers, assisting in funding applications for town centre improvements, informing planning decisions or policy preparation, or marketing the town to potential visitors.

The masterplan is structured into five main sections; Overview, Strategy, Implementation, Phases 1, 2 and 3 - Project Files, and Summary and Recommendations. The content of each section serves a distinct purpose, a description of which is presented below.

Section 1 – Overview provides an introduction to the masterplan document. It presents an Executive Summary and Introduction which explain the background to the project and summarise the aims of the masterplan and the structure and content of the report. The current situation is explained through a description of Larne's past and present and the aspirations for the future expressed through the Vision and the aims of the masterplan. Lastly an overview of the implementation process is presented, highlighting the importance of funding and the involvement of stakeholders and community in the process.

Section 2 – Strategy, sets out the strategic approach of the masterplan under the headings of urban design, public realm / open space, transportation, tourism and leisure, retail, residential, business and sustainability. It establishes the key objectives underpinning the masterplan proposals for the whole town centre.

Section 3 – Implementation, presents Action Plans that correspond to the proposals contained in the masterplan. These are broken down into three phases spanning five years each and list all the town centre projects that make up the masterplan, indicating their relative priority, indicative cost and potential means of funding. Information and guidance is then presented in terms of private development, public and grant funding, marketing and promotion, and roles and responsibilities for implementation.

Section 4, 5, 6 – Project Files, presents the separate projects that comprise the overall masterplan, giving written description and graphic illustrations as to how these projects are to be realised. Each project contains a summary of the key information for the implementation of that project. The intention is that these project files can be extracted from the main document and used for specific purposes, whether it's for a funding application, the marketing of a key economic development site, the determination of a planning application, or informing the emerging development plan process.

Section 7 – Summary, states the major findings drawn from the masterplan process, highlighting the key economic, physical and social benefits of the proposals.



Larne owes much of its success to its strategic coastal location; the natural harbour providing the origins of the town, and its development into a port during the industrial revolution providing the catalyst for growth and prosperity. The port gave rise to rail and road connections which further strengthened Larne's strategic role as a centre for industry and commerce, as well as tourism.

Larne has a unique geography. It is set at the tip of the western headland, opposite the eastern headland of Islandmagee. Together these headlands form a narrow channel to Larne Lough; a largely enclosed body of tidal water. The town sits on a partly natural, and partly reclaimed, coastal shelf, from which the land rises up to the hills and ridges. These surround the coast and set it in a basin. Expansive views extend out eastwards across the Irish Sea towards Scotland. Further around the coast, there are many examples of dramatic coastal scenery including the famous Giant's Causeway and Gobbins Path.

The relative shelter and deep water of Larne Lough make it a natural harbour. Thousands of years ago it was used to harbour fishing boats and this gradually led to the establishment of Larne as a fishing village. Fishing was the main industry in the area up until the 18th Century when the harbour developed into a port for trade and emigration.

The town centre itself developed along a tight sequence of streets, each with a strong east to west orientation across the natural north to south fall of the land. These streets were inter-connected by a series of narrow lanes. The central streets developed as the centre of commerce with trade coming from the local working population as well as travelling visitors. The architecture of the town remained basic with only a few notable buildings such as the Town Hall and St. Cedma's Church.

In the latter part of the 19th Century James Chaine promoted the first commercial ferry connections between Scotland and Ireland which facilitated further growth and established Larne as a centre for industrial development. More latterly, the Larne - Stranraer crossing was the first in the world to use drive-on, drive-off cargo boats which significantly improved efficiency.



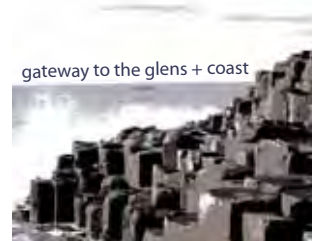
The Chain Memorial



Coat of Arms



Local Heroes

James Chaine
Henry McNeil

gateway to the glens + coast



1914

Clyde Valley Steamer
Gun Running

St. Cedma's Churchyard

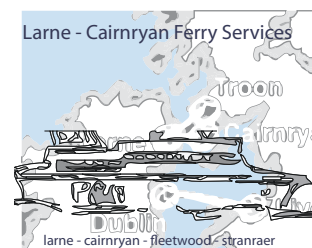
Larne + Sligo are the first
in Ireland to get electric light

1891

electric light bulb



Olderfleet Castle

13th Century - Scottish Invasion

Larne - Cairnryan Ferry Services

larne - cairnryan - fleetwood - stranraer



Brown's Irish Linen Factory

Clover
Twin town, Carolina, USA



^ 1833



^ 1859



^ 1891



^ 1925



^ 1990

Along with the ferry boats, the industrial revolution also arrived in Larne in the latter part of the 19th Century with the establishment of large scale industries such as Brown's Weaving Factory, Aluminium Works, Eccles Dyeworks, Acetylene Works, Picken's Shipbuilding Works and Kane's Engineering Foundry. Larne provided an ideal situation for such industries on account of its coastal location; important both for the export and import of goods and materials, as well the water resource necessary for the industrial processes. Furthermore, the establishment of the rail link to Carrickfergus, and later Belfast, further strengthened Larne's industrial capacity.

In the 19th Century Larne also evolved as a centre for Tourism. It is reputed to be the home of tourism on account of local entrepreneur Henry McNeill being one of the first to set up guided tours, taking visitors for day trips up the coast and into the glens. With the good connections into the town that the ferry, rail and road links brought, combined with the attraction of County Antrim's exceptional coastal scenery, Larne presented an obvious location for tourism. Hotels developed within the town centre, which itself become something of a resort, with local businesses benefitting from the passing trade.

Larne's status as a centre for industry saw it become the first settlement in Northern Ireland to get electric light in 1891. It has since developed as a nationally important centre for energy with Ballylumford Power Station supplying 80% of the Province's power. More recently Larne has become home to a number of international renewable energy companies; namely RES and B9, as well as local business Newmills Hydro Generation Ltd.

Post war decline of the heavy industries had a huge impact on the urban fabric of the town, leaving large scale town centre sites either disused or vacant. Housing came to fill many of these sites while some such as the Old Bleachworks and Howden's Quay still remain vacant today.

While Larne does not have a great collection of historical landmarks, the greatest feature of Larne's history has been the individual characters that have pursued a vision and in so doing brought prosperity to the town. Larne now needs future visionaries to take up this mantle once again.

The historical development of Larne has drawn on the natural resource of the area; the original fishing village and existing port using the natural harbour of Larne Lough and the overseas connections this enabled. This natural resource still exists as one of Larne's greatest assets.

While the Port of Larne remains busy and prosperous, the vitality of the town centre has gradually suffered decline. The reasons for this need to be identified so that the masterplan can work to overcome these issues and bring vitality back to the town centre.

There are number of factors that have contributed to the decline in the vitality and prosperity of the town. It is important to understand what these factors are, how they have affected the situation, and to what extent, if any, the masterplan can act to overcome them. In so doing, the masterplan can start to reverse the downward spiral.

Identity

Larne suffers from a lack of positive identity. The existing features that tend to characterise Larne are the ferry port, the harbour highway, the high rise flats at Riverdale, and the Ballylumford Power Station. There are very few positive features associated with the town, the exceptions being the Chainé Memorial Tower, set on the eastern edge of the headland and Olderfleet Castle, set close to the port. Furthermore, the town often receives a bad press which further compounds the negative identity.

First impressions are all important to the sense of identity. In Larne these occur along the A8 approach where the view is currently dominated by the tower blocks at Riverdale, and along the Harbour Highway where the views lack any distinctive landmark feature that could help to draw visitors into the town. Both these views are characterised by poor quality development and extensive car parking.

Townscape

Larne is a traditional town with a Main Street that is largely intact. In recent times it has suffered physical decline owing to an apparent lack of investment in much of the commercial property, the prioritisation of economic development at the expense of the traditional townscape and the lack of investment in the public realm and open space provision. The Main Street lies introverted from the rest of the town, enclosed by buildings and car parks and with few roads or paths connecting in. It is not visible from any of the major approaches and therefore contributes little to the identity of the town. The more recent developments at the Laharna Retail Park have turned their back on Main Street, instead creating a new town frontage, which fails to present the positive identity that the town requires.

Accessibility

The most radical change that has taken place in Larne in recent times has been the introduction of the Harbour Highway in the 1970's. This involved the reclamation of an area of mud flats in Larne Lough and the construction of a major dual carriageway and roundabouts to carry traffic directly out of town. The intention was to create a

quicker and more effective link between the port and the A8. While this has been achieved, the Harbour Highway has become a blight to the town centre. Not only does it form an overly dominant and divisive barrier through the town, the current road system makes right turns into the town both difficult and dangerous, and in so doing effectively puts people off from using this junction. This has had a serious effect on trade in the town due to the disconnection it has caused between the port and the town and the subsequent reduction in passing trade.

Industry

While much of the industrial development in the town centre now no longer exists, there is still industry and warehousing associated with the Port, the LEDCOM Enterprise Units and the FG Wilson Factory, the town's biggest employer. The main source of industry in the town relates to the Port of Larne, and while businesses in this location provide an important source of employment, there is a lack of diversity in the employment base of the town.

Retail

In recent years Larne has attracted the interest of the large scale supermarkets. ASDA's application to develop in Redlands was approved in 2009 and work to construct the store will be completed in 2010. The Retail Capacity Study, produced in 2009, has identified the need for large scale retail in the town. Currently Larne suffers from retail leakage with many shoppers travelling to neighbouring towns to do their main food shop. It is anticipated that the location of the ASDA in the town will significantly reduce this leakage. Furthermore it is hoped that because shoppers will no longer need to travel for their main food shop they will do their additional shopping in the town. Currently the links between the ASDA site in Redlands and the town centre are poor for pedestrians and cyclists with no pavements or cycle ways provided along the Harbour Highway.

Further pressure for other large scale retail developments exist within the town centre. The three key sites for these developments are Inver Park, the Co-op site and the Old Bleach Works site, all of which are live applications. As the Retail Capacity Study allows for the provision of one more medium scale store in addition to the approved ASDA store, it is highly unlikely that all these proposed developments can be approved. Regardless of which site eventually gains approval, and in order to offset the potential loss of commerce within the town core, the potential benefits of these sites to the town centre's viability must be maximised.

The existing retail provision in the town centre is characterised by a surplus of shops selling lower quality goods. A shift in the provision to better quality shops and in particular multiple nationals, would help to redress this balance and draw in a more lucrative market.

Tourism and Leisure

While 850,000 passengers still pass through the Port of Larne each year, the number of tourists using the ferry crossing has fallen over the past 15 years on account of cheaper economy air flights. This, in combination with the by-pass effect of the Harbour Highway, has caused a decline in the town's tourism industry over recent years. Currently there are no hotels in the town centre and very few restaurants, cafes and bars. Furthermore, there are no big attractions in the town to draw visitors in.

Larne is often described as the 'Gateway to the Glens and Coast', as it marks the start of the Antrim Coast Road. There is however a lack of visible evidence of this important role as a gateway. While the association with the Glens and Coast is of obvious benefit to local tourism, care has to be taken that the analogy of a gateway does not become detrimental, with the town always being seen as a gateway and never a destination.

Residential

The town centre contains an existing resident population, located mostly around the periphery of the town core and in the flats at Riverdale. The importance of a local population to the vibrancy of the town has been recognised and initiatives to encourage living above shops explored. Town centre living is largely restricted to flats, an option which appears most attractive to the elderly or lower income groups.

While affordable town centre housing needs to be provided there is also the opportunity in Larne to create a new market for accommodation at the upper end of the scale. Although outwith the town centre the proposal for a Marina at the Promenade provides such an opportunity and would attract a whole new market into the town that could have positive benefits for the town centre.

Office

Office and workshop space in Larne town centre tends to accommodate small scale businesses. While the FG Wilson factory and the port act as centres for larger scale international business in contrast the town centre offices tend to service a more local catchment. They are located either in or above shop units. This limited provision also reflects the fact that Larne is perhaps not regarded as an attractive location for establishing a business and ties back to issues of poor identity.

Sustainability

Larne Borough Council has shown a commitment to sustainability through their implementation of a comprehensive recycling programme. Presently there are many more opportunities for the town to improve on sustainability. The Sustainability Strategy in the appendix explores these possibilities in more detail.



1 Arrival at Larne by train.
Poor visual and physical connections into town centre.



8 Existing Lorry Park.
Town frontage dominated by parking.



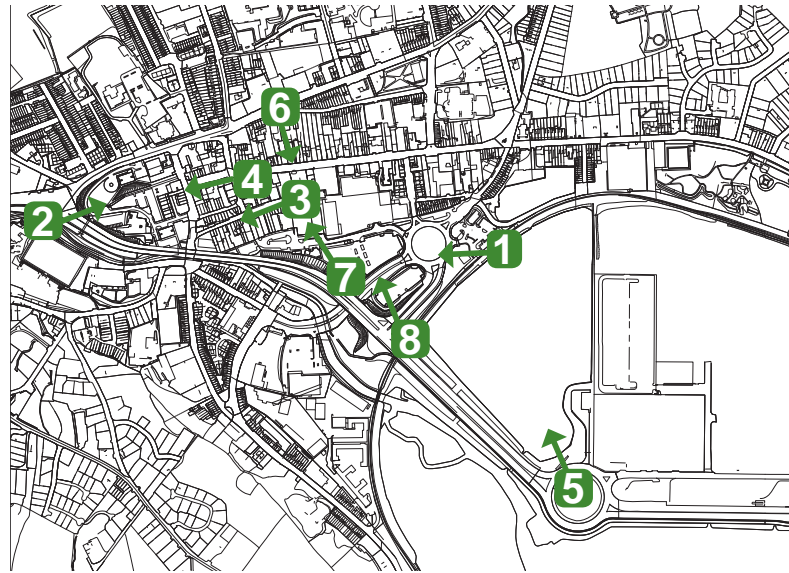
2 Existing view from Riverdale looking east.
Prominent site currently under utilised.



3 Dunluce Street.
Buildings in disrepair creates a negative impression.



4 West end of Main Street.
Strong axis lacking focus.



7 View towards Broadway from Circular Road Car Park. Opportunity for road connection.



6 Main Street gap sites.
Detrimental to town's image.



5 View of Larne from Harbour Highway.
Potential for attractive landscape setting but need for key landmark features in the town.

The vision for Larne's future is to increase the vitality and prosperity of the Town Centre through a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to redevelopment.

The vitality and prosperity of the town is largely dependent on people. The primary objective of the masterplan is therefore to draw people into the town centre. Currently, both the tourist market and the local market are not being captured. This objective therefore holds great potential, with the challenge being for Larne Town Centre to win these markets back.

To win these markets back improvements need to be made; improvements to the identity of the town; improvements to the townscape; improvements to the access into the town; improvements to the facilities and attractions in the town; improvements to the retail provision; and improvements to the overall design of the town.

Identity

Every project in the masterplan has a part to play in improving the identity of the town. Every project should aim to create a positive contribution to the overall identity of the town. There are however some areas that have a greater influence on the identity of the town than others. As described above, most of these relate to their visual prominence in all important views along the main approaches into the town, for example, views into Riverdale from the A8 and views into the Circular Road area from the Harbour Highway. These views are like shop windows into the town. It is critical that the design of these sites maximises the opportunity on offer by presenting high quality design and enticing uses.

There is also a much bigger opportunity for Larne to redefine itself through a strong commitment to sustainability. In so doing Larne can be rebranded as an Eco-Town and benefit from many positive spin-offs including a more positive press.

Townscape

There is great opportunity in relation to the Townscape of the town. The traditional commercial streets remain largely intact and form the historic core of the town. While there is opportunity for infill and repair this will largely conform to the existing scale and form of the street. This presents a distinct and well defined character. Other key sites around the town centre present the opportunity for a new townscape to develop. There is sufficient space and capacity within the town centre to accommodate a number of medium and large scale developments. The design of these sites should establish a new character that sets out a positive message about the town of Larne. There should be a strong relationship between the built form and the public realm. In particular the key sites at Waterfront and Riverdale should be used to good effect.

Accessibility

The Harbour Highway has served to better connect the Port of Larne with the A8 and in so doing has disconnected the town centre. Better access from the Harbour Highway is therefore needed to draw visitors back in to the town centre. Where the current turn off is situated there is the opportunity to create a more effective system with a roundabout. This is only part of the equation and to draw people down into the Circular Road area there needs to be some visual attraction. The poor accessibility from the surrounding town centre into Main Street can also be improved through restructuring the traffic flows and creating better road and pedestrian links.

Signage has an important role to play in improving accessibility throughout the town. Early signage at the port and along the Harbour Highway will help to encourage visitors to stop off. Signage within the town centre will help visitors to navigate their way into the main shopping streets. Well designed signage will assist in rebranding, presenting a new and positive image of the town.

Retail

Retail in Larne will change dramatically over the next couple of years, and the town centre needs to prepare for these changes now. The introduction of the ASDA store at Redlands and potentially one other store in the town centre will redress current issues of retail leakage. This could benefit the town centre if shoppers stay in the town to do their main food shop, and then stay to also do any other shopping. The retail provision in the town will therefore need to complement the provision of the larger stores. Good connections will also be needed to make it convenient for people to move between the two. Although the majority will use private cars, provision must be made for local buses to link the stores with the town centre, especially the ASDA store at Redlands from which pedestrian or cycle connections are inherently difficult.

In order to recapture the retail market the two key changes that need to be made are; firstly, to improve the identity of the town core by sorting out gap sites, derelict buildings and empty shops; and secondly, to establish better retail provision. This is to be achieved through the consolidation of key sites as a means of attracting national multiples as well as establishing a niche market for local independents with the offering of a range of high quality goods.

Tourism and leisure

Larne still holds great potential as a centre for tourism, owing to the large volumes of visitors that pass through the Port each year. In order to capture this market, accessibility into the town needs to be improved, as described above, and a greater provision of tourist facilities. The best location for tourist facilities is in the Waterfront area as it is readily visible from the Harbour Highway approach and currently contains the TIC and parking. The A2 runs through this area and as the main tourism route to the Giant's Causeway, and Coast

and Glens makes this the ideal location for a 'Gateway Centre'. This would encompass the TIC as well as any other leisure and retail facilities to attract the tourism market.

Residential

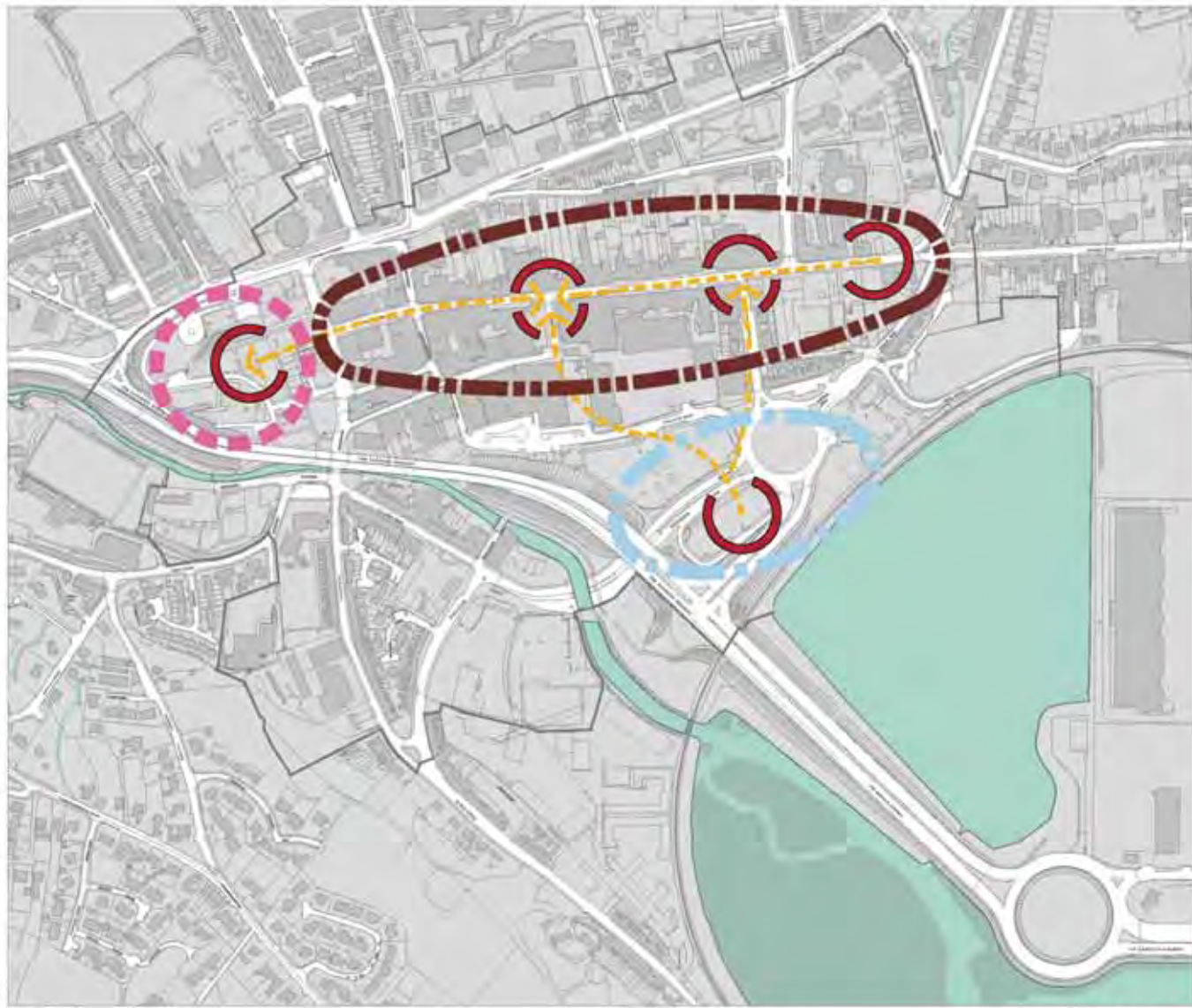
A resident population is essential to the vibrancy and success of the town centre. It helps to generate activity, support local businesses and encourage a night time economy. It also creates a more sustainable model in which people are no longer reliant on their cars, high density living is designed to be more energy efficient and the regeneration of brown field sites prevents the continuation of urban sprawl. Town centre living is actively encouraged through the masterplan proposals. Best provision should be made to accommodate a range of markets so that there is flexibility in choice and a mix of social groups. While the majority of the new residential will be apartments, these should be designed to accommodate a range of sizes to suit single people as well as families.

Office

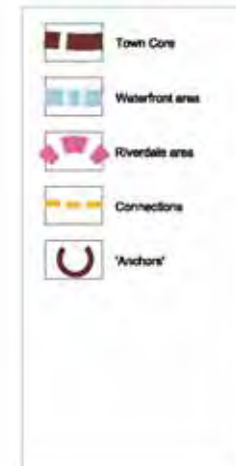
Offices and businesses are important to the overall mix of uses being encouraged within the town centre. While it is difficult to predict the potential demand for such uses, buildings should be designed with flexibility so that units can be adapted for office use. It is hoped that an improvement in the identity and image of the town will make the start up or relocation of a business in the town a more viable proposition. Small enclaves of offices associated with a particular feature such as a new public plaza or views over Larne Lagoon may provide the selling point that businesses would like to be associated with. While demand for office space is not anticipated to be so great to merit whole office developments, it will be important to integrate into the mix to encourage a greater diversification of business and employment in the town.

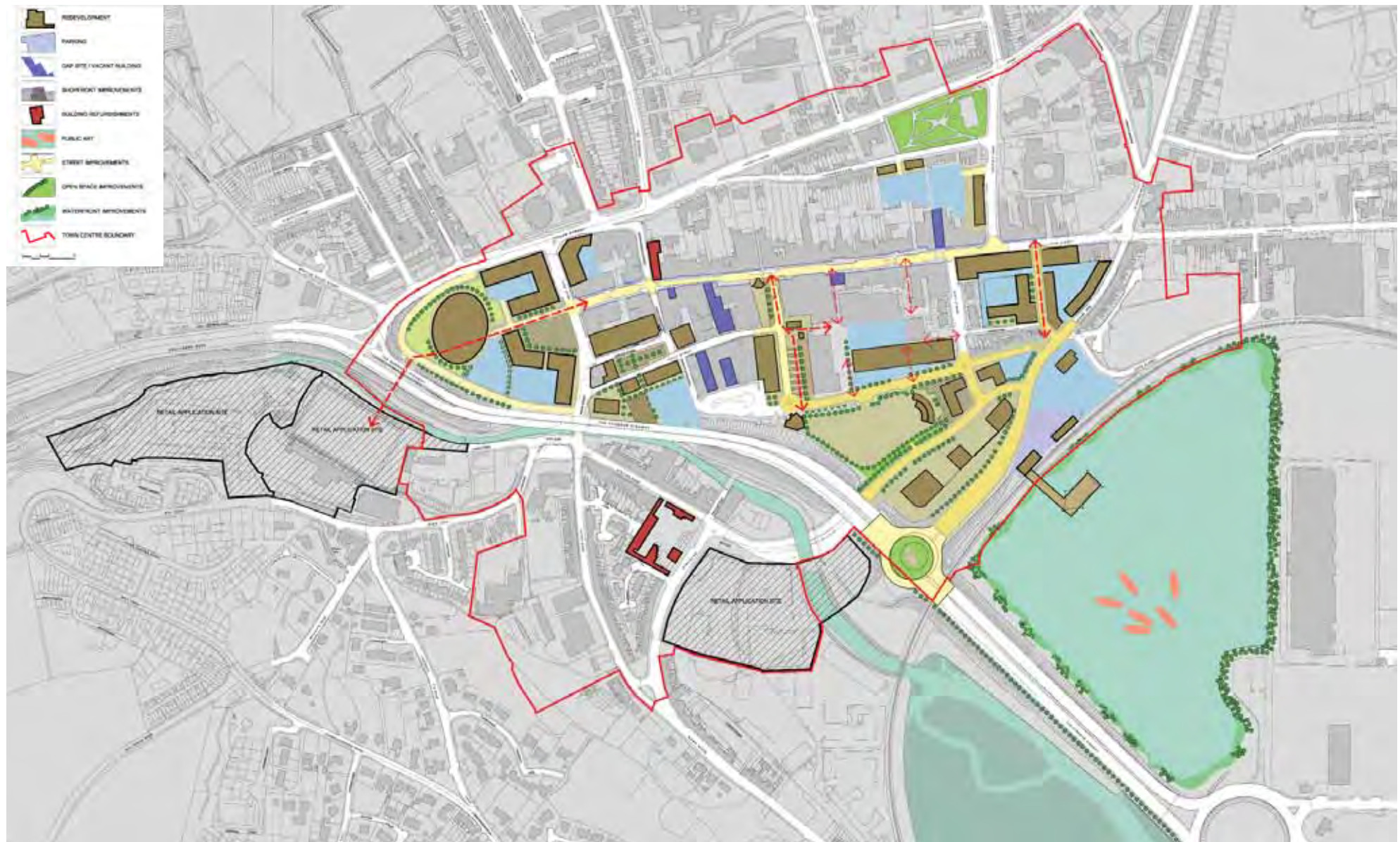
Sustainability

There is a great potential in terms of the future of sustainability in Larne. The main natural resource of the area that currently remains untapped is the wind resource. Larne is well positioned for the possibility of a wind farm and as a community project this in the long term could reap financial rewards for other sustainability projects in the town centre such as improved home insulation in an attempt to counter fuel poverty, or the provision of electric buses. The tidal resource and solar resource are also potential means of generating cleaner electricity with possible financial benefits to the town. A co-ordinated programme would reinforce Larne's existing identity as an energy centre but with an updated and more sustainable perspective. A more sustainable future for Larne should be an objective that runs through every proposal. For example, all new developments should be designed to optimise energy efficiency and reduce environmental impacts.



Concept





Implementation

The masterplan for Larne draws together all the strategies and proposals into one cohesive plan. It focuses on three main areas which represent the greatest potential for change; Town Core, Waterfront, and Riverdale, with the wider future objective of Larne evolving as an eco-town.

The role of the masterplan has been to identify the best opportunities for the town centre and to develop these as part of an overall phased strategy. It targets the key areas of the Town Core, the Waterfront and Riverdale, proposing a comprehensive programme of renovation and redevelopment. The town core is a relatively intact traditional town core and this character must be preserved. Redevelopment within this area will target derelict and vacant sites and seek to repair and strengthen the original urban pattern. At Waterfront and Riverdale there is a greater opportunity for reinvention and these sites should be used to create a new and positive identity that also respects and complements the historic core of the town.

The masterplan assists in the implementation process in the following ways;

Firstly, the masterplan, by its very nature, shows a shared vision. This enables the developer of an individual site to see how their proposal fits within the bigger picture, giving them the confidence that other projects are working in a co-ordinated way to achieve widespread regeneration. This in itself can increase developer confidence.

Secondly, the strategies take this process a stage further by demonstrating how the masterplan works in a co-ordinated way in respect of the various components that make up the masterplan, namely; urban design, public realm and open space, transportation, tourism and leisure, retail, residential and office, and sustainability. This demonstrates to developers how being part of wider regenerative strategies will benefit their proposal.

Thirdly, the indicative proposals shown for each site can help to promote the individual developments. The project files present information and guidance for each site with the aim of promoting the sites and the indicative proposals to private developers, council officers and members, government officials, MLAs, and grant funding organisations. The project files set the context for each proposal, establish the objectives for the site and the guiding parameters for design. They aim to assist in the process by emphasising the positive aspects of each site and how the design can use these to best effect. Where relevant they make reference to other individual proposals to demonstrate the cumulative value within the town centre.

The masterplan has two key functions; firstly, to provide the information and guidance necessary for the regeneration of the town centre; and secondly, to provide the strategy necessary to ensure successful implementation. To this end, the information and guidance in the masterplan has been structured and designed with a clear idea of how it is to be applied. One of the biggest issues for implementation is where the money is going to come from to pay for all these changes.

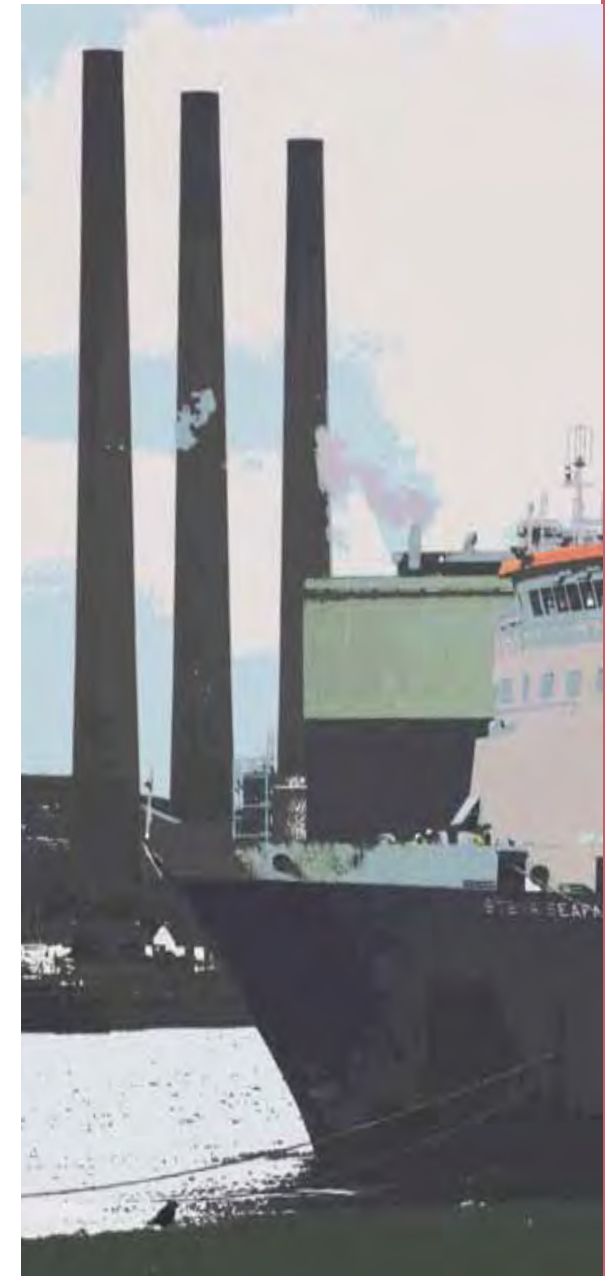
The three main ways in which projects will be taken forward will be through private development, through public funding, or through grant funding. There is also the opportunity for a combination of two or all three of these and also the possibility of community funded projects. The implementation of these specific types of projects will require a specific input from the Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership to ensure their implementation. Some of the key tasks will involve sourcing and securing public and grant funding, and assisting in the production of development briefs for private developers to consider. A programme for marketing and promotion is needed to ensure private developers and public funders become convinced that the masterplan, its vision, strategies and projects are a good idea and worth investing in.

Phasing is an important part of the implementation strategy. Not everything can happen at once, and sometimes things take time to happen, especially during periods of recession. Although redevelopment in Larne has slowed down, the masterplan has given the town the timely opportunity to plan strategically for future developments. Now is the time to make preparations for when the market picks up.

For each of the three phases there is an Action Plan. These are presented next to each other in Section 3. The Action Plan summarises all the key projects that make up the different phases of the masterplan. It identifies the type of project, the priority of the project, and where relevant, the cost of the project and potential sources of funding. This information is most comprehensive for the Phase 1 projects where there is a greater degree of certainty surrounding issues such as possible funding. Further information is contained in the Project File on each project sheet in Section 4, 5 and 6.

The masterplan for Larne is as much about the people as the place. The success of this masterplan will depend on the enthusiasm and commitment of all those involved in its implementation. Meetings, consultations and discussions have helped to develop a sense of ownership from the public sector, private sector and wider community. This level of involvement needs to be maintained to ensure ongoing involvement and commitment to implementation of the masterplan.

With the completion of this masterplan document, the responsibility of its implementation will pass from the masterplan's Project Management team to the Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership. The Partnership will take forward the delivery of the masterplan. This will require the focused and co-ordinated efforts of a range of bodies and organisations to manage, co-ordinate and monitor the strategic implementation of the masterplan. The membership of such a group should retain a balance between the public, private and voluntary sectors, along with elected representatives.







- Introduction
- Urban Design Strategy
- Public Realm / Open Space Strategy
- Transportation Strategy
- Tourism / Leisure Strategy
- Retail Strategy
- Residential / Business Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy

Introduction

The masterplan is based on a series of strategies that set out the key objectives for the regeneration of the town centre. These are presented below and cover the components of urban design, public realm / open space, transportation, retail, tourism and leisure, residential, office and sustainability.

While each strategy covers a separate component of the masterplan, the masterplan proposals pull all these components back into a cohesive whole. The strategies below are used to highlight the key objectives in respect of each component. The strategies provide an interim between the overarching vision and the more detailed project files. They help to substantiate the reasoning behind the masterplan proposals as well as provide a reference point for situations in which the masterplan may need to be modified.

Larne requires a co-ordinated approach to target potential areas of growth and broaden its economic base. This will be achieved through a co-ordinated approach to economic development.

The prosperity of the town is directly related to its economic activity. Currently, Larne has a fairly robust, yet narrow economic base, with the majority of trade and employment relating to the Port of Larne. There are a number of opportunities for future growth in Larne. These relate to market conditions that are unique to Larne, but which at the current time are not being fully exploited. They comprise tourism, leisure, retail, residential and office. There is also scope to expand the residential market once the economic climate improves. The ways in which the masterplan can assist economic development in these areas are presented within this section.

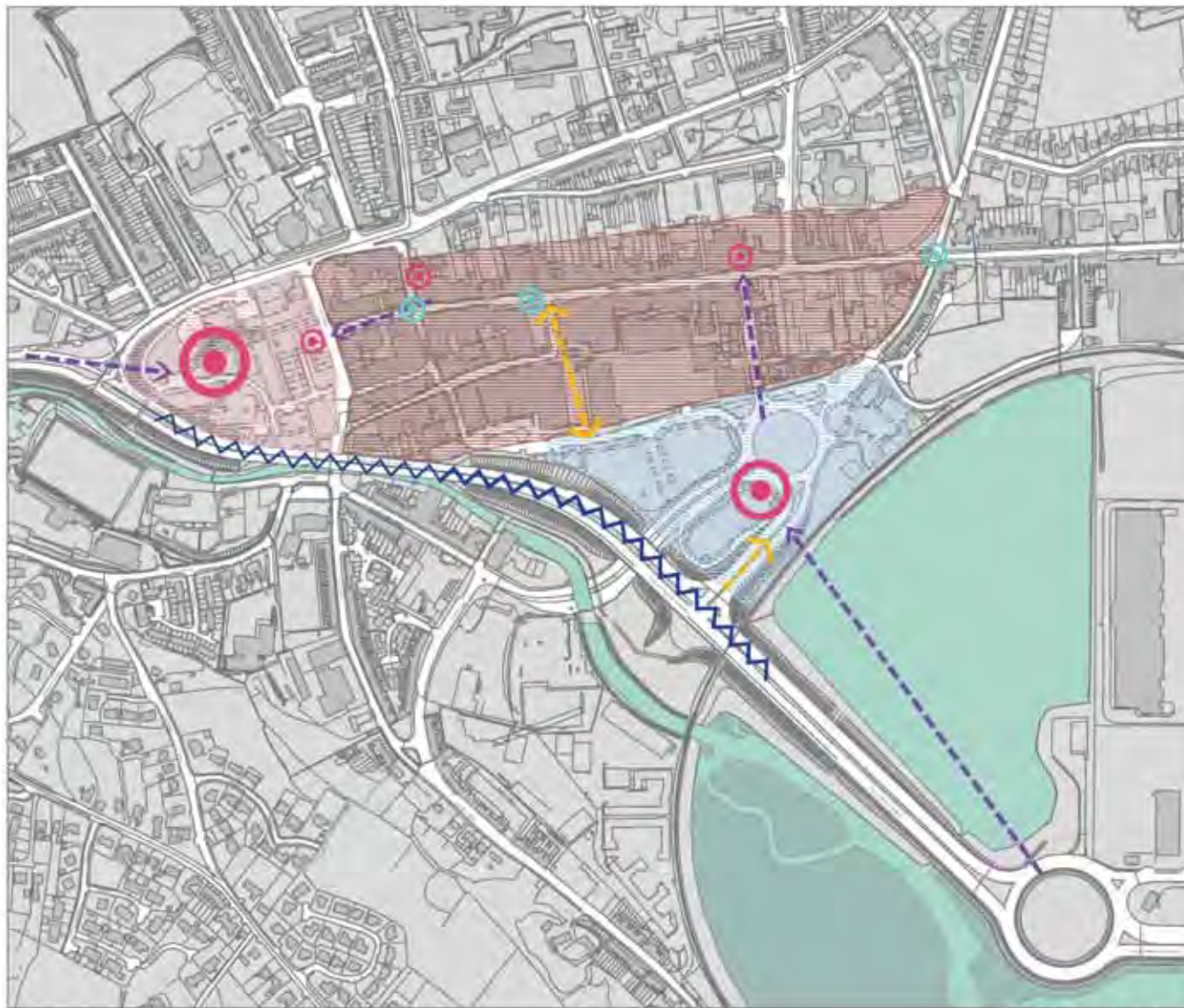
Urban Design Strategy

The urban design strategy aims to set out key guidance on the design of the town centre with the aim to ensure future developments maximise the potential of each site and at the same time contribute to the overall character and identity of the town centre.

Urban design is about taking a holistic approach to the design of our urban environment. A building or a space does not exist in isolation. It is part of a wider context in which many buildings and spaces exist together. Urban design is important because it considers this wider context and makes sure that the design of individual buildings and spaces respond to this context. Taking an urban design approach means creating places that appear and function successfully as a whole.

The purpose of urban design guidance is to encourage this responsive and holistic approach. It achieves this by setting out guidance for future designs. It is important that guidance strikes the right balance between control and flexibility. Too much control could reduce options and stifle creativity, while too much flexibility could result in a loss of order and cohesion necessary for our urban areas to look good and work effectively. The aim of the guidance is to protect what is special about that particular context; to identify the defining characteristics and consider how best to retain them. In situations where the existing context has no strong or positive identity, guidance needs to be used to set out the best approach for creating a new identity.

In respect of Larne, the Town Centre has three main contexts, Town Core, Waterfront and Riverdale. Each of these contexts is distinctly different and as such requires a different set of design guidance. The Town Core is characterised by the traditional urban pattern of perimeter blocks defining narrow streets and lanes with a continuous and well defined building line. The perimeter blocks comprise narrow terraced buildings predominantly two and three storeys with pitched slate roofs and coloured render walls. Ground floors are used mostly for retail and upper floors are largely vacant. Modern infill also exists within the town core adding a more eclectic mix to the architectural styles, although generally conforming to the traditional building line and restricted scale.



Town Core

The strategy for the town core is to preserve the traditional town character and use it as the basis for the design guidance. This strategy is not suggesting that new development in the town centre should aim to replicate exactly the traditional style. There are few buildings within the town core of architectural merit, the exceptions being the Town Hall, the Ulster Bank and the recently renovated Bank of Ireland Art Deco building. There is however merit in the overall traditional character of the town core and this should continue to be the defining character for the future.

The strategy recognises the importance of establishing key parameters that will ensure this traditional character is retained. Outwith the key parameters there will be flexibility to give developers and designers options in terms of the particular style of their building. The key parameters for the town core are;

- Respect the traditional building line which is commonly set at the back edge of the pavement;
- Respect the traditional scale of two and three storey, with four storey forming a maximum and used only in locations with capacity to accommodate larger buildings;
- Respect the fine grain of the traditional layout by either keeping shop units small or accentuating finer proportioning of larger buildings through the architectural detailing;
- Respect the existing palette of materials through a predominant use of coloured render and slate.

Waterfront

The strategy for Waterfront is different; it needs to create a new character and identity. At the moment it is characterised by large scale car parks and large scale roads. It does not, however exist in isolation. There is a surrounding context that future proposals will need to respond to comprising Larne Lagoon and the railway line to the south, Laharna Retail Park to the north, Harbour Highway to the west and the railway station and A2 to the east. Waterfront has space to accommodate larger developments that would struggle to fit into the town core. It is not restricted by narrow streets and small scale plots. There is the opportunity to make this area into a new quarter to the town with a distinct and modern character that contrasts with and complements the traditional town core. The urban layout can be looser with a better integration of public realm while still substantial enough to create enclosure and a sense of structure.

The key parameters for Waterfront are;

- To secure high quality architecture befitting of this significant location;
- To make public realm an integral component of the Waterfront area, considering its uses and appearance in respect of the surrounding buildings;
- To design the layout of the buildings to define and enclose the street spaces and public realm and relate to the other buildings;
- To achieve a scale on the Waterfront of five or six storeys that will create the necessary statement in views across the lagoon;
- To achieve a scale of three or four storey on the Town Core side that will respect the traditional character of this context;
- To consider the effect on views from the Harbour Highway and the appearance of the roofline from the elevated sections;
- To ensure buildings front onto the street spaces and create positive frontages on all aspects.

Riverdale

The strategy for Riverdale is similar in that it also needs to create a new character and identity at this prominent 'head of the town' site. The existing character of Riverdale is dominated by the two blocks of multi-storey flats. The block to the north is due to be demolished while current plans are to retain the block to the south. A disparate mix of car parking and buildings that fail to relate further characterise this area. In terms of the surrounding context, the Harbour Highway forms an increasingly imposing feature from the west to the south as the ground level falls away and the highway becomes structurally elevated. To the north is Pound Street which connects to the Harbour Highway and also forms a divide between the town centre and the neighbouring residential area. The association between these two areas is not so strong. To the east is High Street with Main Street leading off. This interface is important for ensuring Riverdale connects with the town centre so that the two areas can benefit each other.

This site is strategic on two counts; firstly in terms of its head of the town location which makes it an important anchor at the west end of Main Street; and secondly in terms of its prominence in views from the A8. Rather than bringing the development of Riverdale up to the edge of High Street, there is the opportunity to create a public square that will mark this location as being of civic importance. The buildings should enclose this space and the architecture contribute to its special character.

This site provides the best opportunity for creating a landmark feature for the town. It has the capacity to accommodate a building of scale and stature, owing to the existing scale of the high rise making big buildings an established feature of the baseline condition. With the slope of the site from north to south, the buildings in the north will create prominent features, while the impact of the scale will be reduced in the south by the lower levels and the elevation of the Harbour Highway. Design guidance needs to ensure the benefits of this strategic location are maximised.

The key design parameters for Riverdale are;

- To create an architectural showpiece that will become the landmark building for Larne in prominent views from the A8;
- To make this building the focus in the view along Main Street;
- For all buildings to create a positive frontage towards the A8 with a clear design of how the overall composition will look;
- For all buildings to create a positive frontage towards High Street, Pound Street, and Main Street;
- For buildings to range in height between three and six storeys, with smaller scale adjacent to the High Street and taller scale for the landmark building;
- To create a public square at the head of the town that will act as a focus for civic life;
- For the layout of the buildings to define and enclose the public square so that there is cohesion between the built form and the public realm;
- For the design of the public square to generate a mix of potential uses;
- For the buildings to accommodate a mix of potential uses and flexibility to adapt to changing markets.

The urban design strategy presented above establishes parameters for the design of the three town centre areas. Project files for each site or project have been prepared as part of this masterplan and are contained in Sections 4, 5, and 6 – Project Files. This guidance is site specific and deals with some of the issues in more detail.

The public realm strategy for Larne seeks to redress the current deficiency of public realm in the town centre and to highlight the benefits that well located and designed public realm will bring to this commercial core.

There is a serious lack of public realm within Larne Town Centre. The only space, other than the pavements, is the paved area at Broadway which is still limited in size. The public realm strategy aims to promote a substantial increase in provision. The importance of public realm cannot be underestimated. Public realm can bring many benefits to a town like Larne.

- It can improve the identity of the town and the character of a place;
- it can provide space for social interaction and outdoor activities;
- it can create an attractive setting to encourage new development;
- it can increase land values and commercial activity;
- and lastly, it can turn spaces into places.

There are a number of objectives underpinning the public realm strategy. The overriding objective is to increase the public realm provision in the town centre. Over provision can however be as much of a problem as under provision, whereby vast spaces fragment the urban structure and fail to generate enough activity to look occupied. The proposed location of the public realm has been largely controlled by the availability of potential space. In the traditional Town Core there is little space owing to the density of the urban form, and therefore little capacity for public realm. The exception to this is in areas where there are gap sites or proposals to remove existing buildings. In this context small scale spaces would look most befitting. Public realm improvements to Main Street will help to enhance the appearance and function of the town core.

In contrast the largely vacant sites at Riverdale and Waterfront contain plenty of space for public realm. The scale of everything in these areas will be less constricted and allow for both larger buildings and larger spaces. Again the size of the spaces needs to be carefully considered so that they are appropriate to their functions. Riverdale relates strongly to the town core owing to its position at the 'head of the town'. When considering the best location for a town square Riverdale presents the best option. Located at the end of the Main Street the square would form an end piece to this central axis through the town core. The space would be enclosed by the surrounding built form and provide a focus for civic life. The importance of this space would mark the importance of this location.

Within the town core there is the opportunity to create a smaller scale square that performs a more local function as a setting and spill out space for local businesses. The proposal to open out Dunluce Street and Point Street has applied this objective to create a mixed use redevelopment around a central open space. The other town core opportunity relates to the Broadway extension. The predominant use of this area will be as a link between Waterfront and the Town Core, and will be predominantly linear in nature. As such its key function will be as a meeting place and this can be reflected through the provision of street furniture. It should also incorporate local bus stops and taxi ranks to use this connecting space to good effect.







At the Waterfront Area the key space will be the Events Space. It is envisaged that this will evolve over time in response to the growing success of the town's events programme. It will start as a simple open space and gradually incorporate more features and facilities to enhance its appearance and function. Ultimately there is the option for its complete conversion into an Events Park with the phasing out of the parking facility. The design of this space needs to relate to the relocated TIC with which it has a direct function. Other spaces in the Waterfront area will be smaller scale and relate to the functions of the surrounding buildings. Collectively there needs to be continuity in the materials and style of these spaces so that they create a unified appearance across the whole area.

The courtyard space in the refurbished Market Yard will be ideal for local events that do not require the large scale of the events space. In contrast the community garden proposed for Riverdale will create a greener and more organic space with a greater level of local participation in terms of the way that it is shaped and used. Landscape improvements around Larne Lagoon will help to unlock the recreational potential of this important open space.

The key design parameters for the design of new public realm are;

- To create character and identity in the public realm that is positive and distinct and relates to the surrounding context;
- To maximise footfall by accommodating the desire lines of people's movements through the public realm;
- To consider the potential uses that the public realm can accommodate especially as a resource for surrounding businesses such as shops, cafes, bars and restaurants;
- To inbuild flexibility so that the spaces can be used for a variety of functions;
- To achieve a balance in terms of the content of the spaces, whereby they neither appear empty or cluttered, but are fit for purpose;
- To maximise conditions by creating sunny and sheltered public realm;
- To promote tree planting as an effective way to create character and seasonal interest.



-  Landscape Improvements
-  Public Realm
-  Events Space
-  Community Garden
-  Public Art
-  Improved Connections

Public realm and open space

The transportation network is one of Larne's best assets in terms of recapturing the potential market. Better connections within both the national and local networks are needed to draw the market back into the town.

The key aims of the transportation strategy are

- to better connect the Harbour Highway with the town centre;
- improve the traffic system in the town core;
- reduce the dominance of the road system in the Waterfront area;
- better prioritise public transport and pedestrian provision;
- and, provide strategically located parking.

The importance of the Harbour Highway to the town centre needs to be recognised. For many this route forms the first and last impression of the town. The process of reinvention has already begun through the installation of public art on the first roundabout from the port. This process needs to be continued with bespoke signage welcoming visitors to Larne, and environmental improvements along the route and around the lagoon setting a more positive first impression. The most important intervention will be the proposed roundabout at the first junction with the town. This will make right turns easier encouraging more people to travel down into the town. The roundabout will also provide a great opportunity for public art to mark this as an important entrance into the town.

Access into the town centre and around the town centre is not easy owing to a combination of poor connections and poor legibility. Legibility is how people understand their environment. In Larne, the enclosure of Main Street makes it difficult for people to understand how to access it, especially visitors who do not know the town well. Main Street forms the central core to the town. It currently experiences issues of congestion owing to the concentration of cars, buses, taxis and parking all within a narrow space, and which also leave only a limited strip for pedestrians. The flow of traffic is currently one-way from east to west making it difficult to access from the west. An improved system is needed that deters traffic from entering Main Street and reduces congestion through improved flows.

Phase 1 of improvements to the town centre traffic system is focused on Main Street. They include a series of measures that alleviate issues of congestion through rationalisation of the parking, and promote pedestrian priority through improved crossing points. In the longer term the Phase 3 proposal is to extend the existing road at Broadway to connect up with the Waterfront Area. This is a strategic link to ensure that the town core shares the benefits of the Waterfront redevelopment. It will draw traffic flow south to the major car parks at the Waterfront Area and Laharna Retail Park and reduce ongoing circulation.

Also in Phase 3 is the proposal to reconfigure the Circular Road System which currently restricts the development potential of the Waterfront area. This forms a strategic move to free up space and establish a cohesive structure for development. The proposal requires the removal of the roundabout, the reconfiguration of the road junctions, and the narrowing of the dual carriageways. This creates more substantial development plots and a less divisive road system to pedestrian movement.

In terms of car parking current provision is mostly located around the periphery of the town core. The town core itself is unsuitable for car parks as they would make vacuous holes in the otherwise tight urban form. Parking on the periphery is therefore the best solution. The issue is however that motorists tend to by-pass the parking and drive along Main Street in the hope of finding a closer spot. As parking is free on street in the town core and not free in some of the peripheral car parks there is little incentive to prevent this situation arising.

The suggestion is that the proportion of charged versus free car parks is maintained at a level that ensures appropriate controls are applied to those car parking spaces most convenient to the town centre. This proportion may vary over time, reflecting the level of business activity within the town centre and ensuring the most convenient spaces are reserved for visitors and shoppers with all day parkers being accommodated in the more peripheral car parks. These measures aim to deter motorists from passing along Main Street, instead encouraging use of the surrounding parking provision. To support this proposal, the legibility and connectivity between the peripheral car parks and the town core needs to be improved. The introverted nature of Main Street means it isn't always easy to access. Improvements need to be made to the lanes that connect these car parks to the centre along with clearer signage.

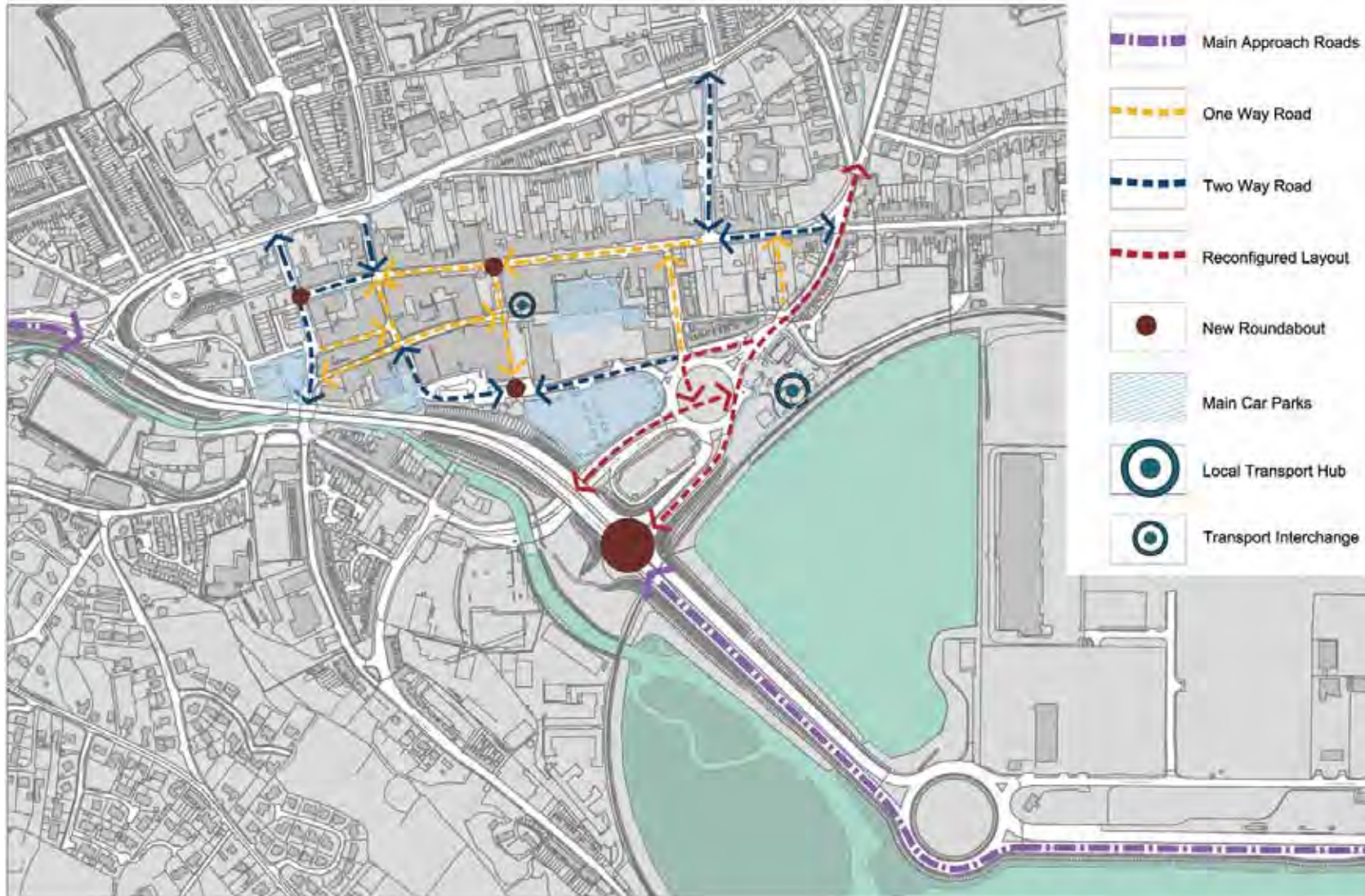
Larne is currently over provided in terms of public car parking. This presents the opportunity to rationalise the existing provision and consider the redevelopment of some car parks to use the space more productively and help fill gaps within the urban fabric. Environmental improvements are proposed for Circular Road Car Park so that it can double up as an events space and redevelopment is proposed for the eastern frontage of the Agnew Street Car Park and Exchange Road Car Park. Car parking is included as a part of proposed redevelopments to cover any additional requirements that would arise as a result.

The public transport system needs to be better prioritised within the town's traffic system. It is currently under utilised and is failing to provide an attractive alternative to private car users. Improvements will need to follow a stepped change approach. One of the Phase 1 proposals is to establish a transport hub at the site of the existing rail station in an attempt to provide a better integrated and more legible centre. The Phase 1 Main Street Improvements also look to relocate the bus stops into better locations. The Phase 3 Broadway extension will also have implications for the local bus system with the opportunity to establish an interchange for local buses on Broadway. The available space and the landscaped setting could make public transport a more attractive option.

The masterplan aims to encourage pedestrian and cycle activity. The most notable changes relate to traffic management and road design with the aim to reduce the priority of car users and increase the priority of cyclists and pedestrians. This is to be achieved on Main Street through better pedestrian crossings and reduced car dominance, and in the Waterfront through the reduced scale and layout of the Circular Road system. The proposed increase in public realm at Riverdale, Dunluce Street, Broadway and Waterfront will further enhance the pedestrian environment.

All road and junction improvements need to inbuild provision for cyclists to make the system feel safer. There is also the proposal to extend the National Cycle Route 93, which currently extends from Town Park north up the Causeway Coastal Route, through the town and ultimately on to Belfast. The most probable route through the town would be via the A2 and through the Waterfront Area. The opportunity for a cycle shop and hire has been incorporated into the transport hub.

While this strategy presents an overview of the masterplan's approach to transportation, project Files in Sections 4, 5 and 6 describe these projects in more detail.



Transportation

There are great opportunities in Larne to enhance the tourism and leisure provision and in so doing recapture markets that are currently being lost.

Larne currently captures only 9% of tourism spend generated by the Causeway Coast and Glens, with Coleraine by comparison absorbing 38% (Figures provided by NITB 2006). Every year a staggering 850,000 passengers pass through the Port of Larne, a notable proportion of which are tourists. The town can recapture this market through a number of ways, namely;

- improve accessibility and signage into the town centre;
- improve the identity of the town;
- and improve the provision of visitor facilities and attractions.

The first of these issues is addressed in the Transportation Strategy on the previous page where proposals for a roundabout on the Harbour Highway and improved signage are encouraged as a means of making the town more accessible to passing visitors. The poor identity of the town is an issue that is addressed throughout every aspect of the masterplan whereby each project bears the onus to contribute to an improved identity. As for the poor provision of visitor facilities and attractions, this is addressed here within the Tourism and Leisure Strategy and in more detail in the individual Project Files in Section 4.

Larne Tourism Strategy is a document that was prepared by private consultants on behalf of Larne Borough Council. It covers the period from 2008 until 2011 when changes following the Review of Public Administration (RPA) are expected to take effect. This document highlights the key issues that need to be addressed in order to improve tourism in the town, many of which are relevant to the masterplan.

Larne Tourism Strategy identifies the key strengths of the town as being its location next to the Port and on the Causeway Coastal route, and the key weaknesses as being the effect of the Harbour Highway 'bypass' and the notable lack of both attractions and facilities within the town. The overall goal of the strategy is to win back a share of the tourism market. In order to achieve this, an action plan has been developed. The key projects included that are relevant to the masterplan include; the creation of a 'Gateway Centre'; the relocation of the TIC; the development of an events programme; and the implementation of a signage strategy. The suggested means of delivery is through public and private funding, using partnerships where possible.

These key projects are all represented in the masterplan. The most important area for Tourism has been identified as the Waterfront area; highly visible and well connected from the Harbour Highway, and centred around the A2 Causeway Coastal Route, this area presents the ideal location for creating a tourism hub. The masterplan shows the relocation of the Tourist Information Centre into a more prominent location within the Waterfront area as an important early phase. Subsequent phases show the evolution of a 'Gateway Centre' associated with the TIC. The Gateway Centre is proposed within the Larne Tourism Strategy as a centre that would encompass the TIC as well as other tourist facilities. It is intended to create a stopping point for tourists and be able to act as a sales point for the Gobbins Path as well as other attractions in the area. The proximity to the proposed Regional Transport Hub and the provision of coach parking will assist in getting people to the Gateway Centre and will provide a platform for tourism trips to surrounding attractions.

The development of an events programme is a cost effective way of attracting visitors and locals into the town. In order to support this proposal the masterplan has developed the idea of an Events Space as a venue for medium and large scale events. This would be located in the car park next to the TIC. This dual function would mean at most times the space would be used as a car park but with the potential to be used as an events space when needed. This would be subject to a legislative agreement.

A signage strategy is also proposed that will start at the Port of Larne and feature intermittently along the Harbour Highway so that visitors are aware at an early stage of the town and its facilities. It will also be prevalent throughout the Waterfront area so as to attract visitors on further into the town core. The design of the signage will be important to project a new and fresh identity to the town.

In addition to the actions taken from the Larne Tourism Strategy the masterplan also represents additional projects that will contribute to the tourism potential of the town. The most notable proposal is for a large scale hotel development at Riverdale. This will form a highly visible landmark feature on the main approach into the town sending out the message that Larne is not just a gateway but also a destination in its own right.

All other projects that seek to improve the leisure and retail provision in the town, or enhance the environment through public realm or landscape improvements will contribute to the tourism potential by making Larne a more attractive place to visit.

The leisure market relates closely to the tourism market. Because the tourism market is largely seasonal, the economic viability of any potential facilities or attractions needs to factor in the needs of the local market which will be necessary to sustain profitability all year round. To that end any proposals should seek to cater for both visitors and locals alike. Some sort of leisure facility may therefore also provide the visitor attraction identified above as being a suitable use for either the Waterfront or Riverdale sites.

There is further potential in the leisure market for bars, restaurants, cafes and entertainments and events venues. The absence of a night-time economy has been highlighted through consultations and discussions, as a missed opportunity in the town. A night-time economy would help to draw both visitors and locals into the town in the evening, increasing the vitality of the town, improving its identity and diversifying its economic potential.

In order for this to be achieved a leisure zone needs to be identified that will concentrate these uses within one area. This will help to establish a safe and attractive character, and will hopefully be supported by bus and taxi provision into the evening. The west end of Main Street presents the best opportunity. Already there are a few bars and restaurants located in this area. The refurbishment of the Town Hall will provide a much needed indoor venue for community events and activities, while proposed redevelopment of Dunluce Street and Riverdale could further support the leisure provision in terms of bars, cafes and restaurants as well as other entertainments at this end of the town.



- Causeway Coastal Route
- New T.I.C. Location
- Events Space
- Gateway Centre
- Potential Hotel Site
- Leisure Zone

Tourism and leisure

Current issues of retail leakage can be overcome through a strategic approach to maximising the benefits of the new large scale stores and improving the retail provision in the town.

The four key objectives of the retail strategy are;

- Maximise opportunities to benefit from new large scale stores;
- Make provision in the town core for larger stores;
- Use Riverdale and possibly Waterfront to add to and complement the town core retail provision;
- Create provision for niche markets of smaller businesses to establish.

A Retail Capacity Study for Larne Town centre was completed in October 2009. The main findings highlighted were the current deficit in terms of retail provision in the town, the key issue being the deficiency for convenience and food retail with local residents travelling significant and unsustainable distances to meet their shopping needs.

In recent years Larne has attracted the interest of the large scale supermarkets. ASDA's application to develop in Redlands was approved in 2009 and the store is due to be opened in June 2010. The Retail Capacity Study has identified the need for large scale retail in the town. Currently Larne suffers from retail leakage with many shoppers travelling to neighbouring towns to do their main food shop. It is anticipated that the location of the ASDA in the town will reduce this leakage. Furthermore it is hoped that because shoppers will no longer need to travel for their main food shop they will do their additional shopping in the town as well.

Currently the links between the ASDA site in Redlands and the town centre are poor for pedestrians and cyclists with no pavements or cycle ways provided along the Harbour Highway. While it is thought the majority of the shoppers will drive between the two, it is hoped that some form of bus link could be provided to draw shoppers back into the town core.

Further pressure for other large scale retail developments exist within the town. The three key sites for these developments are Inver Park, the Co-op site and the Old Bleach Works site, all of which are live applications. The Retail Capacity Study suggests that it is possible for the provision of one more medium scale convenience store on a centrally located site within the town centre given that the Asda store is out of town. However it is highly likely that not all these proposed developments can be approved for convenience shopping purposes. Regardless of which site eventually gains approval, and in order to offset the potential loss of commerce within the town core, the potential benefits of these sites to the town centre's viability

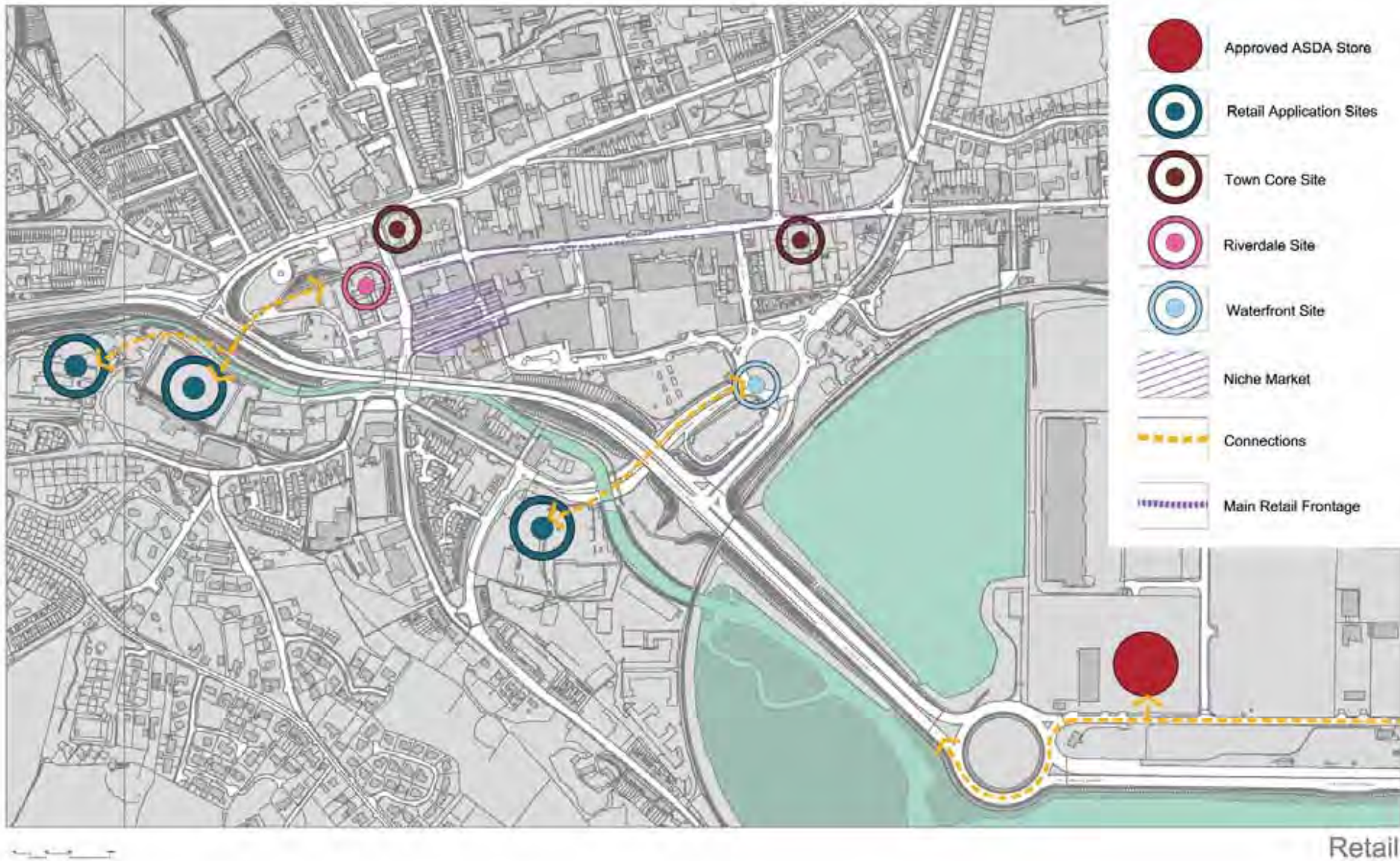
must be maximised. This again would need to be achieved through clear and direct pedestrian and vehicular connections as well as regular bus connections.

Most of the deficiencies identified in the Retail Capacity Study are uses requiring medium and large floor plates. The inherent inability of the town core to accommodate these sized stores on account of the predominantly small plots has made it difficult to attract these stores. This is why much of the new retail development has been lost to outside the town core and town centre.

Private developers have however been working to assemble land into larger plots. The masterplan represents these key sites at East Main Street and Pound Street / High Street. It shows the floor space available and includes provision for associated parking. The potential size of the units would be large enough to attract many of the multiple-nationals that the Retail Capacity suggests the town needs. Other retail offerings identified in the Retail Capacity Study as being lacking in the town include d.i.y., large scale bulky goods and electrical goods. These might be suitable uses for the town core sites or alternatively if larger sites are required which ever sites are ultimately not used for food retail.

Riverdale and Waterfront will be able to provide bespoke retail space, and could even be designed around the requirements of particular retailers. These sites will have the benefit of a new and modern character and the setting of the associated public realm. As both are on the margins of the existing retail core their role is considered to be as a support to the town core and not to detract from it. The intention is that Riverdale acts as an 'anchor' to the town core and for this reason should make some notable retail provision. The remaining ground floor uses should support leisure and entertainment uses to contribute to the role of this area as the leisure hub. The aim of the Waterfront area is more as a tourism hub and so similarly will involve a substantial mix of leisure, with retail being a secondary ground floor function.

The comparative shopping basis of the Retail Capacity Study shows how poorly Larne relates to other similar towns. A potential shortcoming is therefore recognition of Larne's potential to develop more specialised markets. The small scale of many of the town core shop units, make them suitable for small scale independent retailers. This could evolve to attract a niche market. Redevelopment around Dunluce Street where the proposal is to intersperse cafes, bars and restaurants with shops on the ground floor, would provide an ideal location for such a market. It also has the added advantage of the central plaza onto which retail functions can 'spill out'.



A resident population is essential to the vibrancy and success of the Town Centre. It will help to generate activity, support local businesses and encourage a night time economy.

A resident population is to be encouraged within the town centre as it adds life and activity to the character and provides a local market for shops and facilities. It also creates a more sustainable model in which people are no longer reliant on their cars. High density living is designed to be more energy efficient and the regeneration of brown field sites prevents the continuation of urban sprawl.

The current demand for residential properties in the town centre is low. This reflects the global recession as well as a more local preference to live in the newer housing estates around the edges of the town. It also reflects the poor provision of housing stock within the town centre where there is little choice in terms of type. The exception to this is the Laharna Apartments, but uptake is unfortunately slow at this time.

Town centre living is actively encouraged through the masterplan proposals. Best provision should be made to accommodate a range of markets so that there is flexibility in choice and a mix of social groups. Currently town centre living is associated with lower income groups and the elderly. While social housing should remain an important component of the town centre mix there is the opportunity to attract more middle income groups. This would help to change the identity of the town core and bring more prosperity into the town.

In order to achieve this there needs to be enough of a critical mass to establish a new neighbourhood with a new identity. This could be achieved at both Waterfront and Riverdale where the majority of the provision will be apartments. This reflects the need to achieve density on these sites to make them commercially viable, as well as the need to achieve scale to create the intended character. These properties need to be designed to a high standard to make them an attractive alternative to the other housing schemes in the town. They should be designed to accommodate a range of sizes to suit single people as well as families. This would help to diversify the choice.

The town centre location is ideal for the elderly; with most of the town's shops and many of the town's facilities within easy reach. A proportion of the town centre accommodation should be designed with the needs of this particular section of the population in mind, giving careful consideration to means of access as well as the possibility of care provision.

While apartments will appeal to young couples, it will be more of a challenge to attract families. The provision of larger apartments perhaps set over two floors and with good provision for outdoor space will help to sell these. There also needs to be the highest standard of sound insulation and to fulfil sustainability objectives good thermal insulation as well.

To further diversify the choice on offer, sites such as Agnew Street, Exchange Road and the Circular Road site to the south east of the East Main Street site present the opportunity for town houses. This housing type is better suited to these locations where terraced houses are an existing feature. These will add the choice of traditional family accommodation with small private gardens.

Office and business space is an important component in the Town Centre mix of uses. This role as a centre for employment needs to be provided for through the masterplan proposals.

Offices and businesses are important to the overall mix of uses being encouraged, as they help to increase the prosperity of the town centre and broaden the economic base. There is currently limited demand for office space in the town centre. This may be largely to do with the limited provision on offer as well as the poor image of the town which in turn will affect office and business location as much as any of the other land uses.

It is hoped that interest in office and business space will improve as both these issues are tackled. Firstly, new developments at the key sites of East Main Street, Waterfront and Riverdale are encouraged to include office and business space as part of the mix. This will improve the stock and create a more attractive proposition for businesses to either start up or relocate. Secondly, other developments in the town centre will be helping to lift the image of the town which will have a knock on effect on its viability as a centre for employment.

Attracting businesses into the town centre is especially important in light of the centralisation of many of the public offices. At Riverdale the existing Veterinary and Jobs and Benefits Offices are under threat of rationalisation. The Review of Public Administration will result in the reorganisation of local government in 2011 and may bring a further loss of offices. This situation further undermines the importance of Larne within the regional context and needs to be addressed through a strategy to attract alternative businesses.

The renovation and refurbishment of Market Yard has special relevance to the office and business strategy. The intention is to use the Yard as a centre for Creative Industries, encompassing market trading activities that will test new business ideas to support new entrepreneurs. This will hopefully provide the seed bed for new business development within the town.

In order to reflect the uncertainty in this market, buildings should be designed with flexibility so that units can be adapted for office use, residential use or retail use. It is hoped that an improvement in the identity and image of the town will make the start up or relocation of a business in the town a more viable proposition. Small enclaves of offices associated with a particular feature such as a new public plaza or views over Larne Lagoon may provide the selling point that businesses would like to be associated with. While demand for office space is not anticipated to be so great to merit whole office developments, it will be important to integrate into the mix to encourage a greater diversification of business and employment in the town.



-  Apartment Locations
-  Townhouse Locations
-  Business / Office Locations

Residential / office

Climate change is an issue we read or hear about almost every day. It is reported to be having a damaging effect on many parts of the planet and in many different ways. Every town and city has a responsibility to do its bit to help combat climate change.

Larne Borough Council has already undertaken a number of initiatives to promote sustainability throughout the area. The masterplan needs to support these efforts by making a strong commitment to sustainability in its proposals.

The definition of sustainability is 'preserving the best of today for future generations'. It is about considering the environmental effects of every action; trying to minimise the harmful effects and maximise the beneficial effects. A sustainable approach needs to underpin all the proposals put forward by the masterplan.

This masterplan provides the opportunity for the Town of Larne to show its commitment to a sustainable future, as well as to show how this commitment will be put into practice.

There are a number of good reasons for promoting Larne as an Eco-Town;

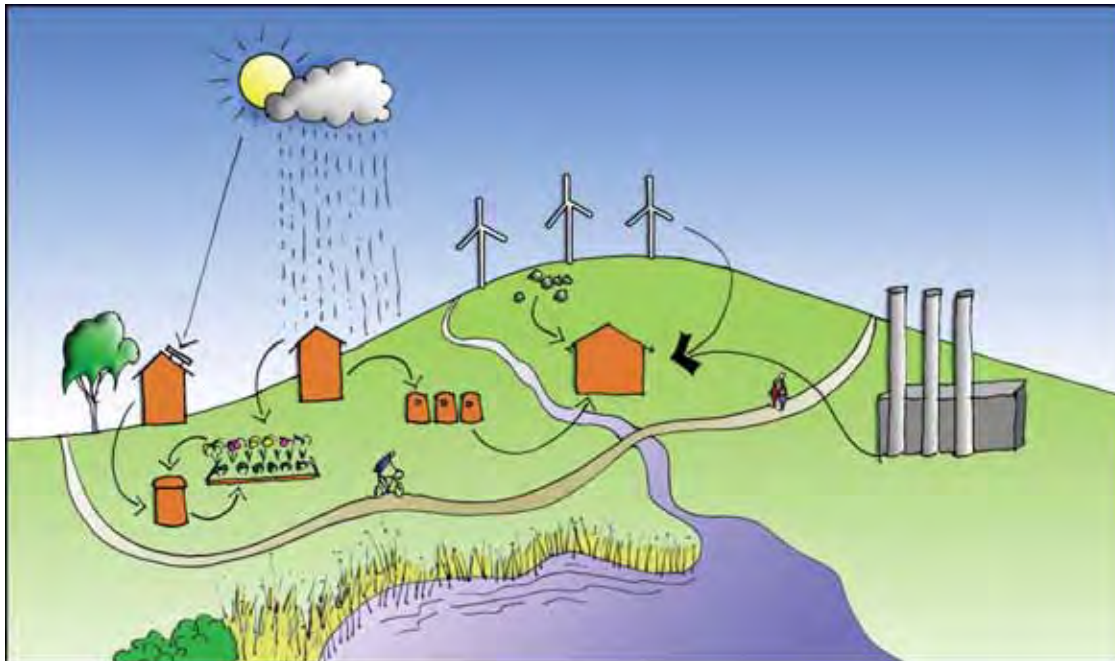
- Larne could make a substantial contribution in combating climate change;
- Larne could be used as an exemplar for sustainability, which in turn would lead to positive publicity and an improved public identity;
- Larne could be made more self-sufficient and therefore less controlled by market prices;
- Larne could use fewer resources and become more energy efficient, which in turn would help to save money;
- Projects such as the community / partnership wind farm could provide a useful source of revenue to fund community projects;
- Projects such as the allotments and community gardens would help to draw sections of the community together;
- Projects such as increasing the bio-diversity of Larne Lough would help to improve the image of the town.
- Larne could become a cleaner and more attractive place; drawing in both locals and visitors alike.

Community wind farm

Larne is well positioned to capitalise on wind energy. The local wind resource is more than sufficient for economical generation and Larne is close to centres of population as well as the transmission network into which a connection is needed. The community wind farm could either generate electricity for a particular use such as the local leisure centre or local factory, or generate electricity to be sold back to the transmission network. In both cases money could be made from the generation of electricity that could be reinvested in town improvement projects.

There are three potential ways in which a community wind farm could work, all of which will rely on a community group being set up to run the project. Firstly, the group buys a site and develops it as a wind farm with the assistance of a private sector partner, while retaining a share of the profit. Secondly, a series of suitable sites are identified and the group brings together the landowners concerned to develop the wind farm on the sites, and the profits are shared between the landowners and the community group as part of an agreement. Thirdly, a number of large electricity users are identified as potential direct customers of a community wind farm and the group forms a not for profit company to offer them a supply of electricity under contract. Private sector partners would be needed to develop and operate the wind farm, with the community group retaining a share of the profit.

There are a range of public and private funding opportunities for renewable energy which could be targeted if the idea of a community wind farm was to receive sufficient support.



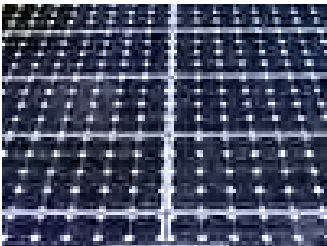
Bio-diversity

Larne Borough has a coastline rich in bio-diversity. To the north and south of Larne the coast is covered by special designations for its protection. The ridge lines around the town are another important feature and much of the land to the north of the town is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

There is an opportunity through the masterplan to extend these areas of bio-diversity into the town to create a better connected system for wildlife in the wider area. The River Inver is already an important corridor for wildlife. Landscape improvements to adjacent areas, better signage and improved linkages could further enhance its value. Larne Lagoon is the area with the greatest potential. With substantial planting of native trees and edge aquatics the Lough could be transformed into an attractive, and biologically diverse, water feature.

Solar power

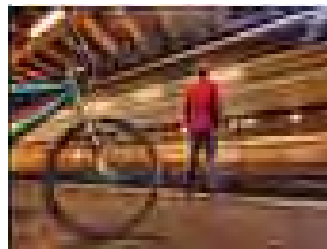
Larne is one of the sunniest towns in Northern Ireland (Met Office Statistics). Combine this statistic with the south facing aspect of the land on which the town centre is located and you have the ideal conditions for solar power. The best opportunities for solar power will relate to new development. At a basic level, the orientation of the largest glazed facade towards the south will mean the internal space of the building will be heated by the sunshine. There is also the opportunity to include solar panels on new buildings which again will need to be orientated towards the south. These panels can also be fitted on existing buildings, many of which will have a suitable orientation for this type of retro-fit.



Transport

Larne could benefit in many ways from an improved transport system. In terms of sustainability the priority is to reduce the use of cars in favour of more sustainable options such as public transport, cycling and walking. Car use in Larne is prevalent which has negative implications for the health of the community as well as the health of the environment. By providing better linkages, signage and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, in particular between the Port of Larne and the town centre, it is hoped the use of cars can be reduced. An opportunity to link the town centre with the National Cycle Route 93 also exists, with the hope that eventually this will link the entire coastline back to Belfast.

Larne also needs a better integrated public transport system. The train station is an important asset, set in a good position for potential links into the town centre. The relocation of the regional buses next to the train station will strengthen the importance of this facility by forming a transport hub that will make it easier for trains and buses to connect. There is also the opportunity to introduce a cycle hire facility within the hub. Local buses need to be given better provision by placing bus stops in the best available locations. There is also the possibility for local buses to be electric which would help to reduce the harmful pollution they create.



Allotments / Community gardens

Interest in productive gardening has been gradually growing over a number of years. Plans are being discussed to introduce allotments at Town Park and Drumalis retreat already has a well established garden. Allotments and community gardens are a great way to use land productively where currently there is no demand for redevelopment. They provide an opportunity for people in the community to join together and enjoy growing their own food. They also provide an attractive and positive feature especially where land has been previously vacant or derelict. The cost of setting up allotments and community gardens is relatively low although these projects often rely on the commitment and dedication of participants. There are also small business opportunities for selling produce or making by-products. Riverdale presents the ideal location to establish such a community garden.

Recycling

Larne already has one of the best records in Northern Ireland for recycling. There is a large recycling centre at Redlands and smaller centres throughout the town. This presents a great starting point from which to explore ways of encouraging more extensive recycling of a wider range of materials as well as to explore business opportunities for the reuse of recycled products.







- Introduction
- Phasing
- Phase 1 Action Plan
- Phase 2 Action Plan
- Phase 3 Action Plan
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Funding
- Land Acquisition / Key Risks

The masterplan is designed to be a working document with practical applications to assist the town's regeneration at every stage. In order to ensure this aim is achieved, a clear implementation strategy is needed.

The successful implementation of this masterplan relies on four key requirements.

- Firstly, a practical and achievable masterplan. The vision, strategies and proposals must be appropriate and effective in achieving the desired aims of regeneration for the town.
- Secondly, a clear and well prioritised set of action plans. The proposals need to be organised into a logical order that reflects priorities and builds on early wins.
- Thirdly, available sources of funding. Funding is essential for anything to happen and opportunities for attracting funding need to be explored.
- Fourthly, a committed and enthusiastic Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership. A Partnership and supporting Project Teams are critical for keeping the plan alive and driving proposals forward.

The masterplan presents the information and guidance necessary to kick start the regeneration of the town. Information at the strategic level is presented in Section 2 and at the detailed level in Sections 4, 5 and 6. Here the project files present indicative proposals in terms of what can be achieved on each site. This information will need to be supplemented with more detailed designs once proposals are being brought forward for implementation.

There are three action plans, one for each five year phase. These set out the separate proposals into a logical order that reflects what can be practically achievable within the early stages, also singling out those projects that will act as effective catalysts to further regeneration.

The main sources of funding will be private, public or grant funding. Private funding will come from private developers who have a stake in the development of specific sites. Public funding will come from governmental organisations, which at the local level is currently Larne Borough Council but will become Mid and East Antrim Council, and which at the regional level is the NI Executive. Grant funding is distinct from public funding as it is awarded through non-governmental organisations such as the European Union and the Lottery Funding. Partnerships are to be encouraged between public, private and community bodies as a means of increasing the scope for potential funding.

A Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership comprising elected representatives, Council officers and public and private sector representatives is to be established. This partnership is to be supported by specific and time-bound project teams with the sole remit of delivering against actions within the plan; each team would have a designated leader who would report progress to the Partnership. The servicing and co-ordination of the partnership is to be undertaken by Council officers.

An Advisory Panel will be established following public advert and will include public and private sector departments, agencies, organisations, forums and individuals who have an interest in the masterplan and who can offer advice, support, skills and influence.

Action Plans

The central feature of the implementation strategy are the Action Plans presented on the following pages. These are effectively a series of tables that summarise all the key projects that make up the different phases of the masterplan. They identify the type of project, the priority of the project, and where relevant, the potential cost range of the project and potential funding. They also identify the potential Project Teams and where relevant the associated stakeholders. This information is most comprehensive for the Phase 1 projects where there is a greater degree of certainty surrounding issues such as possible funding. For the Phase 3 projects this information has been omitted as within 10 to 15 years costs could have dramatically changed and estimates could be largely misleading. Further information is contained in the Project File on each project sheet in section 4, 5 and 6.

Phasing

Phasing is an important part of the implementation strategy. Not everything can happen at once, which is why development is shown in incremental stages over time. Currently redevelopment in Larne has slowed down in response to the recession. Cuts in public and private spending mean that many of the larger scale developments may take some time to happen. This gives the town the opportunity to implement some basic environmental improvements as well as plan thoughtfully for future economic growth. Now is the time to make preparations for when the market picks up.

The masterplan is divided into three phases; 2010 to 2015; 2016 to 2020; and 2021 to 2025. Each phase shows indicatively what might happen in that period of time and is based on the following factors -

- What will be the early wins in light of the current recession and lack of commercial interest and financial uncertainties?
- What are the priority projects that will have the greatest impact in regenerating the town centre?
- Which projects will help to act as a catalyst for future projects?
- What sources of funding may be available and for what types of project?

While the phasing is based on best judgement, some projects might happen sooner and other projects might take longer. A feature of the phasing has been to ensure that the failure of one proposal to be implemented does not preclude the possibility of other proposals taking place. The only exceptions to this are the Circular Road Reconfiguration in Phase 3 which would preclude the redevelopment of the Circular Road sites but not the Lorry Park site, and the relocation of the Fire Station which would preclude the redevelopment of Agnew Street Car Park. While the optimum solution is for all the proposals to be implemented and in the logical order suggested in the phasing, it must be remembered that proposals can be implemented in a variety of different ways. The three phases are therefore indicative and the design of the proposals provides the flexibility for them to be implemented in a different order.

Phase 1

The selection of the Phase 1 projects focuses on securing early wins that will make visible improvements to the image of the town by redressing the more notable negative impacts.

This aim leads to an emphasis on environmental improvement projects. These have the benefits of being relatively low cost, especially if located on public land, and comparatively high impact, especially if designed and implemented to a good quality. The focus on environmental projects is supported by available public funding in which two possible sources have already been identified with the potential of further possible sources.

The environmental improvement projects in Phase 1 include the following; Larne Lagoon and Harbour Highway which will have a huge impact in terms of improving the image and identity of the town in the approach from the Port; Town Core Shop Front and Gap Site Improvements which aim to redress the negative impact of gap sites and empty shops as well as raise the profile of existing shops; the Events Space which will improve the image of the parking area along the town frontage; and the Community Gardens which will introduce an attractive feature on an otherwise disused piece of land prominent in views from the main A8 approach. These environmental improvements have been strategically located to have the greatest visual impact on the town. As early wins these projects benefit the whole process by improving the image of the town and in so doing increasing developer confidence to make future investments.

The possibility for funding these projects will be drawn from a variety of sources, Larne Borough Council, the Arts Council, DRD Roads Service and NIEA Natural Heritage Grant Programme. The DSD through their ReStore programme may assist in the funding of the shop front and gap site improvements. The Big Lottery Fund's proposed Spaces and Places Programme for Northern Ireland would appear to be a suitable funding vehicle for the Community Gardens initiative.

The current slowdown in developer interest does however mean that there can be little reliance on large scale private development within this initial phase. There are however two key sites to be brought forward in this first stage. They are both critical to the image of the town core as they are currently gap sites. There is the possibility of developer interest which ties in with the priority objective to stop the rot in the town core. The two key sites are East Main Street and Pound Street / High Street where proposals for mixed use developments are important for infilling these gap sites, and in respect of East Main Street establishing a strong retail anchor.

Also a priority in the Town Core is the issue of congestion. Main Street Improvements have been included in Phase 1 to help alleviate this situation and make Main Street a more attractive place to shop. The knock on effect of this project will be the requirement to review parking charges throughout the town car parks. Also at a strategic level is the promotion of a Local Transport Hub which will be important for the promotion of the currently underused and undervalued system.

Other projects proposed which will be reliant on some form of public funding include the relocation of the Tourist information Centre and the relocation of the Fire Service. The NIFRS have funds to pay for

a new Fire Station and are keen to relocate at an early stage in the Waterfront area. In terms of the TIC this will be an important project to win as it will give the tourism industry a huge boost and act as a catalyst to the future development of the Gateway Centre. From a funding perspective, it is useful to think of the creation of the events space and of a new TIC as a single integrated project. The most appropriate source of funding would be the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for NI 2007 - 2013. Priority 2 of the Programme deals with Promoting Enterprise and Entrepreneurship and covers a wide range of activities including *'investing in tourism capital projects and product development activity, including signature projects and the development of sustainable activity tourism'*.

The inclusion of the Town Hall refurbishment in the Phase 1 programme reflects the importance of this building both in terms of townscape as well as community value. It is hoped that in Phase 1 sufficient public and grant funding will have been sourced to pay for the refurbishment of Market Yard. This will create an important catalyst for future business development as well as social activity in the town.

Phase 2

The emphasis for the Phase 2 projects is more towards improving the infrastructure with projects designed to improve access and connections and in so doing open up new areas for redevelopment.

The two key projects in Phase 2 are the Harbour Highway Roundabout and the Broadway Extension. It is hoped that by Phase 2 these projects will have won enough support to be brought forward with public funding. Broadway Extension may even attract a private partner in light of the development potential of the adjacent sites. Harbour Highway Roundabout is essential for drawing visitors into the town and in so doing increasing the potential of the Phase 3 Waterfront sites. Similarly, the Broadway extension not only enables the release of the adjoining land but forms a connection between the Town Core and Waterfront, which is essential for the Town Core, if it is to reap any of the benefits from the tourism market drawn in by the future Waterfront development.

In addition to these, the proposal at Dunluce Street / Point Street further helps the flow of traffic in and around the town core by allowing west to east flows connecting High Street with the main Waterfront car parks. The wider objective is to improve the townscape and provide for redevelopment in this much neglected corner of the town. Some form of public / private partnership could be useful with the public provision of the central plaza providing enough of an incentive

to attract quality retailers into what is proposed to be a higher quality niche market. The focus on this area also ties in with the Youth Centre and Urban Sports Park which are proposed on sites to the rear of Point Street and aim to provide an important facility for young people in this location.

By Phase 2 developer interest will be starting to pick up and this is why an initial phase for the Riverdale site has been included. It would send out a positive message about the potential of the site with the aim of increasing confidence for the more ambitious Phase 3 proposals. It is hoped that the private development will contribute to the public realm improvements. Agnew Street is a smaller scale proposal which will help to patch up the old Fire Station site.

Phase 3

Phase 3 marks the culmination of all the phases by promoting the release of the key sites at Waterfront and Riverdale for redevelopment.

The priority project in Phase 3 is the reconfiguration of the Circular Road System. While it has been designed to recycle the existing routes where at all possible, it will inevitably be a big public spend. This cost could be offset by the sale of the surrounding Waterfront sites for redevelopment and could even involve a private developer as a partner in the overall scheme. The reconfiguration of the roads is essential to the quality of the Waterfront area. Without it, the existing parcels of land could still be developed but they would never achieve any of the sense of place or cohesion necessary to make this a quality development.

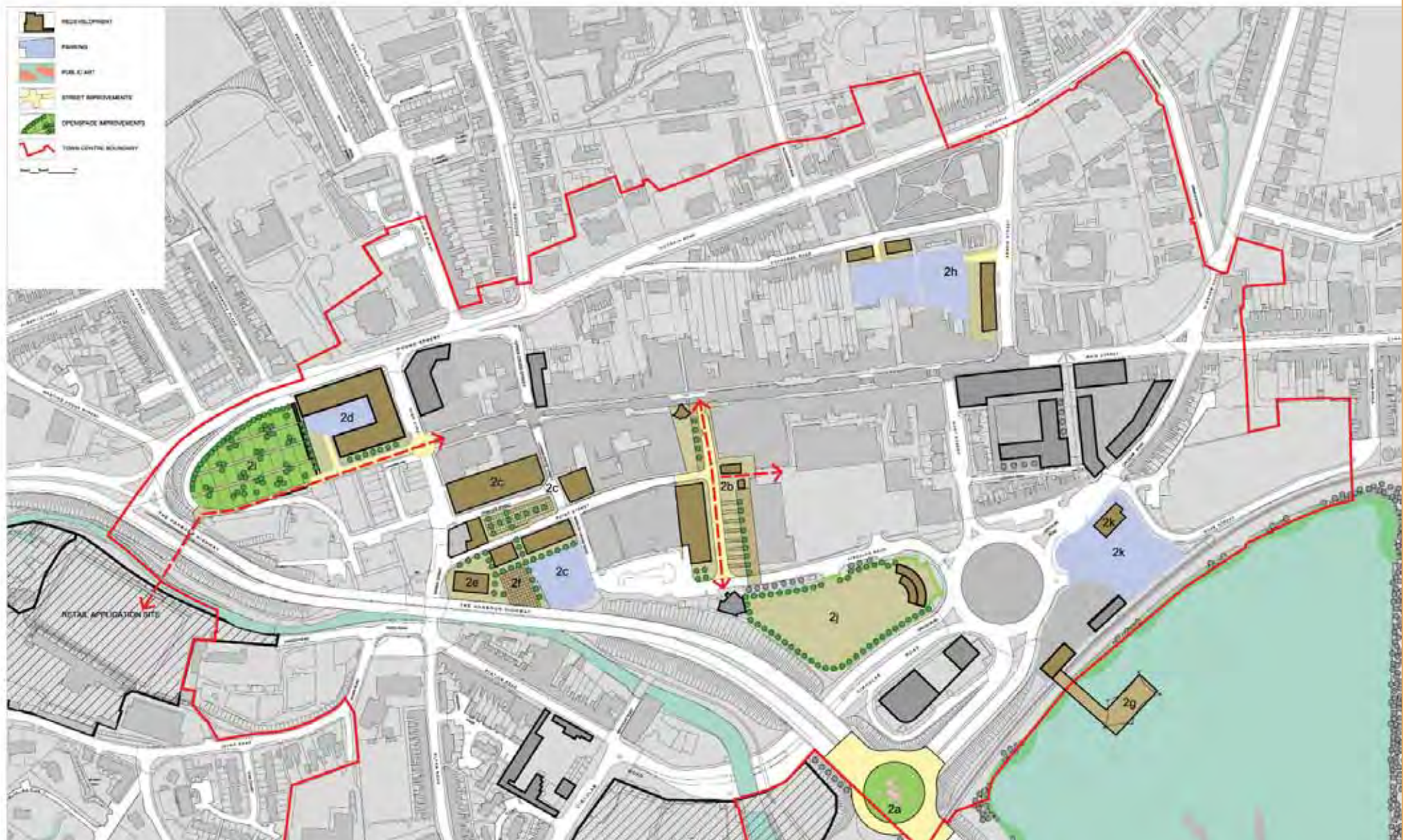
It is hoped that by Phase 3 through the culmination of all the other projects, the image and identity of the town will have dramatically improved along with developer interest. It will therefore be timely to release the Waterfront sites, Riverdale sites and Laharna Retail Park for redevelopment assuming suitable proposals come forward. The phasing of these sites may also take longer than the five years allocated, but should be initiated within this period. It is more important to secure quality development than achieve a quick result on these critical sites.

Land at Riverdale is mostly in public ownership although there may be some issues of land acquisition where private ownership exists. At Laharna as the land is in private ownership the best approach would involve some sort of partnership to progress the development proposal. The redevelopment of Waterfront will be relatively straight forward in that the majority of the land is in public ownership, with DRD ownership passing to the new Council, under RPA.

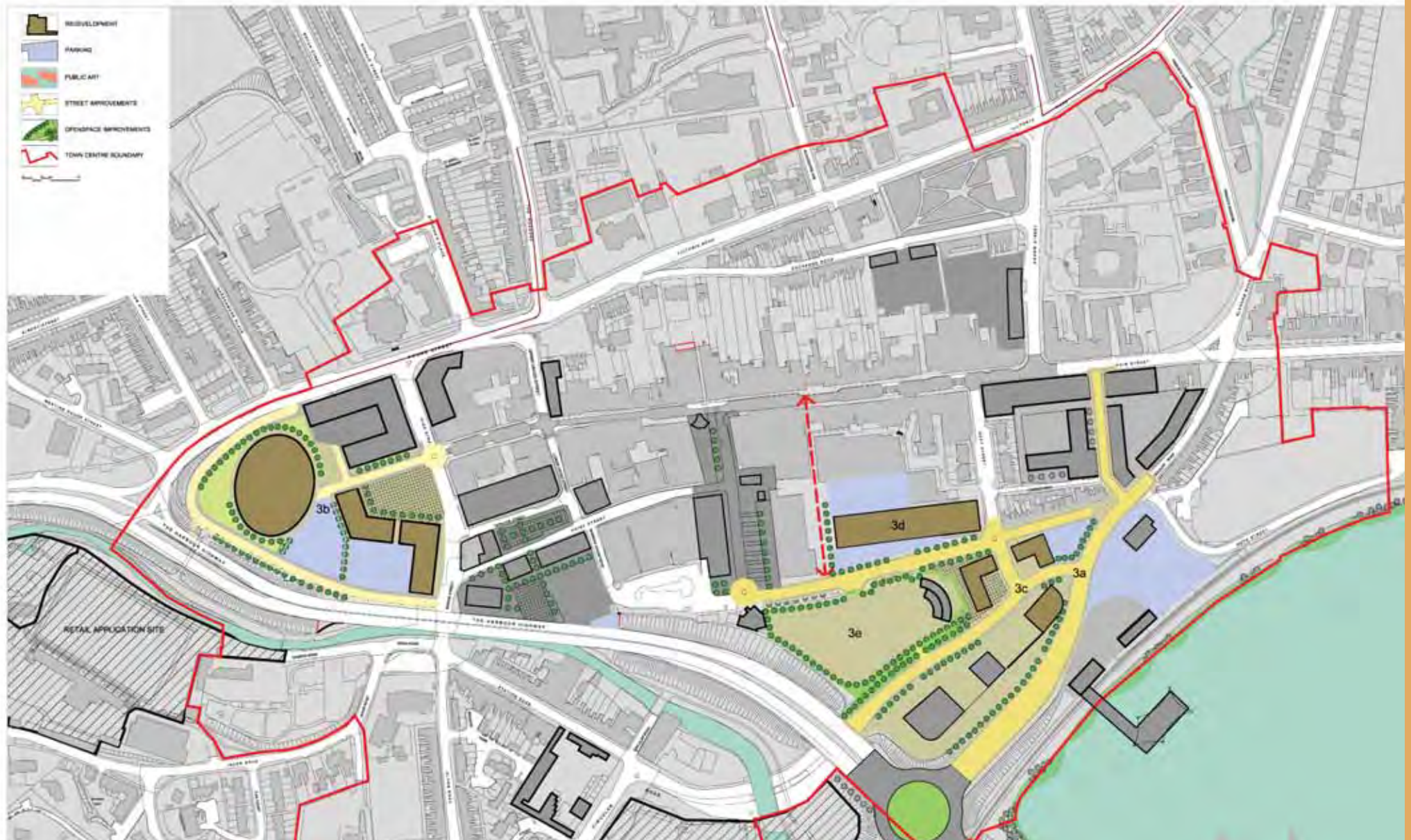
no.	project	project description	potential cost	potential funding	priority / timescale	associated projects
1a	Larne Lagoon – Lagoon planting / Signage	Planting of trees, reeds and aquatic plants around edge of Larne Lagoon. Planting of trees along Harbour Highway and installation of signage.	£100,000 - £300,000	Larne Borough Council NIEA Natural Heritage Grant Programme	High 1-2 years	2a Harbour Highway Roundabout 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
	Larne Lagoon – Public Art	Public art installation in Larne Lagoon and tree and reed planting around edge. Public art on Circular Road Roundabout.	£100,000 - £500,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Department of Culture Arts Leisure / Arts Council	Medium 2-4 years	2a Harbour Highway Roundabout 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
1b	Shop front / Gap site improvements	Shop front improvements to key Main Street buildings and installation of creative hoarding to gap sites.	£150,000	ReStore DSD funding Shop owner contributions	High 1-2 years	1g Main Street improvements
1c	Events Space	Improve landscape edge and remove internal barriers to create functional open space.	£30,000 - £40,000	Mid and East Antrim Council European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for NI 2007 - 2013	Medium 2-4 years	1d Transport Hub 1e Tourist information Centre
1d	Local Transport Hub	Relocation of bus station and ticketing facilities adjacent to Larne Railway Station. Relocation of bus stations.	£750,000 £22,500	TRANSLINK Private developer	Medium 2-4 years	2k Cycle Hire centre 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
1e	Tourist Information Centre	Development of new TIC in more prominent location associated with events space. Marketing of old TIC for leisure use such as restaurant / bar.	£600,000 - £700,000	Mid and East Antrim Council European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for NI 2007 - 2013	Medium 2-4 years	1c Events Space
1f	Community Gardens	Establishment of community gardens in open disused land.	£20,000 - £40,000	Housing Executive Ulster Garden Villages Big Lottery Fund - Spaces and Places	Medium 2-4 years	2d Riverdale / High Street
1g	Main Street Improvements	Road improvements to rationalise parking provision and pedestrian priority on Main Street.	£250,000 - £350,000	DRD DSD Mid and East Antrim Council	Medium 2-4 years	2b Broadway extension / redevelopment
1h	Fire Station Relocation	Relocation of fire station to lorry park at Waterfront with improved access onto A2 and A8 link road.	£4,000,000 - £5,000,000	NIFRS	High 1-2 years	1c Events Space
1i	High Street / Pound Street Redevelopment	Redevelopment of prominent corner site for ground floor retail and upper floors residential. Parking accommodated to rear.	£4,000,000	Private developer funding	Medium 2-4 years	2d Riverdale / High Street
1j	Town Hall Refurbishment	Renovation and refurbishment of existing Town Hall to accommodate community and social functions.	£3,000,000	Larne Borough Council Possible grant aid: NIEA – Historic Building Grant	High 1-2 years	1l Market Yard refurbishment
1k	East Main Street Redevelopment	Redevelopment of block between Main Street and Cockle Row to accommodate medium scale retail on Main Street ground floor and office / residential above. Residential development on Circular Road.	£16,800,000	Private developer funding	High 4-5 years	1g Main Street improvements
1l	Market Yard Refurbishment	Renovation and refurbishment of existing Market Yard to accommodate community and business functions.	£1,500,000	Larne Borough Council Possible grant aid: DETI / NIEA / IFI	High 1-2 years	1j Town Hall refurbishment



no.	project	project description	potential cost	potential funding	priority / timescale	associated projects
2a	Harbour Highway Roundabout	Construction of new roundabout at main junction between Harbour Highway and town.	£600,000 - £800,000	DRD Private developer	High 6-7 years	3a Circular Road reconfiguration
2b	Broadway Extension / Redevelopment	Relocation of existing Murrayfield Shopping Centre and associated public realm and redevelopment. Construction of new road link between Main Street and Narrow Gauge Road and local transport interchange.	£6,000,000 £180,000 - £200,000	Private developer funding DRD	High 6-7 years	1c Events Space 1g Main Street improvements
2c	Dunluce Street / Point Street Redevelopment	Removal of central buildings and installation of public plaza. Redevelopment of surrounding buildings and provision of multi-storey car park.	£14,000,000	Private developer funding DSD	High 6-7 years	3d Laharna Retail Park
2d	Riverdale / High Street Redevelopment	Redevelopment of north east quarter of site for office / residential mix and installation of associated public realm.	£15,420,000	Private developer funding	Medium 7-9 years	3d Laharna Retail Park
2e	Youth Centre	Conversion of Old Presbyterian Church from Carpet Warehouse / Snooker Hall to Youth Centre and installation of associated public realm.	£100,000 - £300,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Youth Service	Low 9-10 years	2f Urban Sports Park
2f	Urban Sports Park	Construction of skate park under Harbour Highway and adjacent to Youth Centre.	£100,000 - £200,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Youth Service Big lottery space and place	Low 9-10 years	2e Youth Centre
2g	Larne Lagoon Centre	Construction of Larne Lagoon building to be used as visitor centre or alternatively some leisure use.	£2,900,000	Private developer funding Public / grant funding	Low 9-10 years	3a Circular Road reconfiguration 3c Circular Road redevelopment
2h	Agnew Street / Exchange Road Redevelopment	Redevelopment of old fire station site for residential to enclose street and rationalisation of parking to rear. Redevelopment of Exchange Road frontage.	£2,400,000	Private developer funding	Low 9-10 years	1h Fire Station relocation
2i	Community Garden	Extension of community garden with establishment of productive gardens.	£3,500	Housing Executive Ulster Garden Villages	Low 9-10 years	3b Riverdale redevelopment
2j	Events Space	Resurfacing of car park, further tree planting and development of public realm around TIC.	£250,000 - £350,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Big lottery space and place	Low 9-10 years	1c Events Space
2k	Local Transport Hub	Rationalisation of parking layout. Development of cycle shop / hire.	£400,000 - £500,000	Translink Private sector	Medium 7-9 years	1d Transport Hub



no.	project	project description	potential cost	potential funding	priority / timescale	associated projects
3a	Circular Road reconfiguration	Replacement of existing road structure to remove heavily engineered system including roundabout and rationalisation of road layout.	£2,000,000	DRD Private developer	High 11-12 years	3c Waterfront Redevelopment – Circular Road
3b	Riverdale Redevelopment	Redevelopment of site including removal of existing buildings and replacement with landmark hotel, mixed use retail / leisure / residential and associated public realm.	To be confirmed	Private / Public Partnership	High 11-12 years	1i High Street / Pound Street 2d Riverdale / High Street
3c	Waterfront Redevelopment – Circular Road	Redevelopment of land reclaimed from Circular Road reconfiguration for leisure development (Gateway Centre).	To be confirmed	Private / Public partnership	Medium 12-14 years	1h Fire Station relocation 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
3d	Laharna Retail Park Redevelopment	Replacement of existing retail park with attractive and well designed street frontage overlooking events space, containing retail on ground floor with residential above and capacity for medium sized stores.	To be confirmed	Private developer funding	Low 14-15 years	1c Events Space
3e	Events Park	Development of Events Space into more permanent Events Park.	£300,000 - £400,000	Mid and East Antrim Council	Low 14-15 years	1c Events Space 1e Tourist Information Centre



Roles

With the completion of this masterplan document, the responsibility of its implementation will pass from the Masterplan's Project Management Team to the Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership. The Project Management team comprised representatives at official level from the Department for Social Development, Larne Borough Council, Roads Service of the Department for Regional Development and Planning Service of the Department of the Environment. The role of the project management team was to oversee the work of the consultants appointed by DSD to prepare the masterplan.

The Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership will take forward the delivery of the masterplan. This will require the focused and co-ordinated efforts of a range of bodies and organisations to manage, co-ordinate and monitor the strategic implementation of the Masterplan. The membership of such a group should retain a balance between the public, private and voluntary sectors, along with elected representatives. Support will be necessary from Project Teams, each commissioned with progressing individual projects. Dynamic individuals, including local entrepreneurs, are integral to this to ensure that it is enterprising in its approach to the challenges.

It is proposed that the Partnership includes Council elected members and senior officers, representatives from Government departments, and private sector representatives and individuals. This partnership is to be supported by specific and time-bound project teams with the sole remit of delivering against actions within the plan; each team would have a designated leader who would report progress to the partnership. The servicing and co-ordination of the partnership is to be undertaken by Council officers.

An Advisory Panel will be established following public advert and will include public and private sector departments, agencies, organisations, forums and individuals who have an interest in the masterplan and who can offer advice, support, skills and influence.

The available resource within Larne Borough Council should be used to good effect by involving the relevant council officers on progressing specific proposals. This will allow a wider delegation of responsibility and enable a greater number of masterplan proposals to be progressed simultaneously. The move to the new Mid and East Antrim Council in 2011 will further increase this available resource and it would be prudent to engage with officers in Ballymena and Carrickfergus at this stage to engender in them a sense of involvement in the masterplan.

The town is fortunate to have its own enterprise company and many of the proposals would benefit hugely from the involvement of LEDCOM. They are currently closely involved in assisting the council with specific proposals such as funding applications for the refurbishment of the Market Yard. Opportunities to use the specialist skills and expertise in terms of economic development and business enterprise should be maximised.

The Town Centre Partnership is a relatively new group and as such its role within the process is still emerging. While over time it is considered that the TCP will become more pro-active in the process, initially it is thought that they will provide a valuable sounding board for proposals, providing advice and feedback through ongoing consultations and discussions.

Private consultants should also continue to play a role in the process, adding more detail and specialised information to specific proposals in the masterplan that are prioritised to be progressed. In light of the cost of private consultants, their efforts should be clearly focused on particular inputs. A particular concern is the notable lack of design specialists in the planning system. This input is essential to ensure design of the utmost quality is achieved in the town centre. Design consultants should therefore be used to develop design briefs for the key sites. Moreover there needs to be input at the application stage and this role could be fulfilled by the Advisory Panel.

Responsibilities

The masterplan for Larne is as much about the people as the place. The success of this masterplan will depend on the enthusiasm and commitment of all those involved in its implementation. Meetings, consultations and discussions have helped to develop a sense of ownership from the public sector, private sector and wider community. This masterplan marks the way forward for the future regeneration of Larne.

The Partnership responsible for driving the masterplan forward will have a wide range of tasks to perform. These tasks are outlined below with an indication of where specialist skills and input will be necessary to ensure the objectives of the masterplan are respected. Some tasks are general to all proposals while other tasks are specific to the type of project, for example progressing private development proposals will need a different approach from progressing public development proposals.

Tasks for consideration

Promoting and marketing the masterplan.

The masterplan needs to be actively promoted both within Larne BC and its Mid and East Antrim Council colleagues in Ballymena and Carrickfergus as well as within government departments and the NI Assembly. Promotion and marketing should also target landowners, developers and investors.

Co-ordinating project delivery.

It is anticipated that each project within the masterplan will be pursued by an individual working group or project management team. A team leader will report progress to the partnership on a regular basis. The project team will have responsibility for delivering each individual project and will also have support from the Advisory Panel; the teams may use their own specialist consultants.

Lobbying for provision of public sector funding.

The partnership has a vital role in seeking funding support from public sector bodies to facilitate the delivery of the masterplan. Some projects may require complete public funding to provide the catalyst for private investment; other projects may benefit from partial public sector funding being in place as leverage to create confidence for a range of grant and private sector funders to commit contributions.

Mobilising resources of all partners and stakeholders.

The partnership will seek to influence the allocation of available resources to ensure that their use is maximised. The masterplan provides a strategic framework for investment and highlights where projects need sequencing and integration to make most impact. The Advisory Panel provides opportunities for all local stakeholders to contribute.

Acting as a catalyst for private investment.

The partnership has a role in ensuring that the private sector can raise funds and develop sites. The promotion and marketing of the masterplan, the clear demonstration of a shared vision and partnership working as well as the use of land assembly powers will all contribute to attracting private sector investment.

Encouraging wide participation.

The Advisory Panel is a mechanism to encourage wide participation in the implementation of the masterplan. Individuals and groups may contribute skills, expertise, advice and resources to individual projects which interest or involve them or to general issues across the whole plan. Length of engagement and commitment will be flexible to meet the needs of individuals, groups or the particular project.

Facilitating continuous consultation opportunities.

Consultation needs to be an ongoing feature of the whole masterplan implementation process. Formal consultation will be needed at key points to provide updates and enable contributions.

Developing detailed design briefs, as required.

Detailed design and development briefs will provide the best means of protecting and promoting the potential of key development sites. Such briefs will help reduce ambiguity and give potential developers a clear direction in terms of expectations and what is to be delivered. There is also the opportunity to clearly state how public and private sector investment may be co-ordinated for individual sites.

Reviewing progress and integrating new proposals as they emerge.

To keep the masterplan alive and relevant, it will need to change over time. The partnership should regularly monitor and review the actions and their impact. Significant changes may be required; these should be made available for public consultation at the end of each five year phase so that the masterplan is an active working document on which to report progress and provide up-dated information. The masterplan has been designed to be adaptable in this way.

Planning

The current Local Plan is the Larne Area Plan 2010 (March 1998). Although twelve years old, there are no plans to update this document as a result of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) which will see Larne Borough Council merge with Ballymena Borough Council and Carrickfergus Borough Council in 2011. Reorganisation will require the preparation of a new Area Plan which will be carried out by the DOE Planning Policy Team. As they will have plans to prepare for all regions in Northern Ireland it is unsure when the Larne, Ballymena and Antrim plan will be completed. It is therefore considered that the Larne Area Plan 2010 will remain in place for some time to come.

There is therefore a gap in the system during which time material considerations will come to have a bearing on emerging development plan policy. The masterplan is intended to be one such material consideration and aims to assist in the determination of applications in a positive way. In respect of the emerging plan, it is important that this provides a convincing argument for the regeneration of Larne Town Centre and clearly defines plan policies to support specific proposals. To this end it is hoped that the masterplan can inform this process and assist in achieving a more ambitious plan for the town.

Further information and guidance

While the masterplan establishes the Vision, Strategies and Project Proposals for the regeneration of Larne, inevitably the implementation of the masterplan will require additional and supplementary information that will address specific issues in more detail. It is considered that the most useful or necessary additional items to enable the masterplan to progress may include detailed development briefs for the key sites at Riverdale and Waterfront, a detailed signage and interpretation strategy, the production of marketing and promotional information and detailed designs for the early environmental improvements.

Phasing, monitoring and reviewing

Phasing of the masterplan proposals has been based on a number of specific criteria as detailed earlier in this section. The proposals themselves have undergone a comprehensive consultation process involving the MLA's, the steering group, stakeholders and the wider community. This masterplan marks the way forward for the town. Over a period of 15 years there will however inevitably be the need to adapt these proposals to respond to changes, for example in the global economy, the restructuring of the planning system or shifts in potential sources of funding.

To keep the masterplan alive it will need to change over time. It is hoped that it will provide enough of a robust base that projects can be added and removed while the main body of the document will remain. The Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership should regularly monitor and review the actions and that significant changes are made, as required, to the masterplan at the end of each five year phase. These significant changes should be made available for public consultation at the end of each 5 years phase so that it becomes a live working document on which to report progress and provide up-dated information on the actions required in the future phases within the next five or ten years. The Masterplan is intended to act as a working document and as such has been designed to be adaptable in this way.

Private development

The most significant source of funding for urban renewal in cities, towns and villages in Northern Ireland is private funding. Of course such private funding must be able to make a return in the market place and the recent economic conditions have resulted in the termination of a number of projects which can no longer make a return at the lower values at which properties are trading in Northern Ireland. However, over a 15 year period private investor confidence is likely to return.

The experience of some Northern Ireland towns of private development during the recent economic boom has been very negative. Many developments were criticised as short term, opportunist and of poor quality and often the styles adopted by private developers were at odds with the traditional architecture of the towns involved. However, this is a reflection of unconstrained private sector development in the context of an over stretched Planning Service without the full range of powers to direct and channel private investment in a positive direction.

In England and, to a lesser extent, in Scotland a range of mechanisms has been developed to guide and channel private investment in cities and towns. A variety of different mechanisms have been used by different local authorities, including levying developer contributions on a tariff basis, strong enforcement of planning policies, development briefs for particular sites, development of urban blueprints and the use of urban development corporations to masterplan and oversee the development of particularly sensitive parts of cities and towns.

In Northern Ireland it has been more difficult to direct private investment in cities and towns because we have had less experience of the issues, because the Planning Service has been over stretched, because Area Plans have been allowed to fall out of date, because the Planning legislation has been allowed to fall somewhat behind that in other parts of the UK and because there has been a disconnection between the articulation of planning policies and elected local representatives. The Review of Public Administration will reconnect planning policy for local towns with development control. A revised '*fit for purpose*' Planning Service will transfer to local authority control in 2011 with revised planning powers and there will be a new opportunity for a strong and consistent implementation of planning policies to direct and channel private investment and to challenge poor quality development proposals.

In addition, masterplans, such as that being prepared for Larne will give private developers a context for their development proposals and a framework within which they can work.

However, it must be remembered that Larne will be competing with other towns in Northern Ireland, across the UK and elsewhere in Ireland for smart private investment and it will only be successful in that competition if Larne is seen to provide good prospects of a sound return on investment. It is for that reason that it is essential that Larne recovers its air of vitality and prosperity which once attracted visitors to the town as a destination in its own right, rather than as a gateway to other places. To do so is likely to require strong partnership working between the public, the private sector and the community sector in Larne and use of a mix of public and private funds to put right Larne's offering to retail customers, to visitors and to investors.

Public funding

Northern Ireland Executive Funds

The Northern Ireland Executive has full responsibility for policy and funding across a very wide range of functions, including health, education, culture, arts, leisure, economic development and energy policies and urban renewal.

In 2010/11 planned current and capital expenditure was just under £20 billion. Of this by far the largest component is on current expenditure (90% of the total) and of the total current expenditure Social Development (including the Social Security Budget), and Health together accounted for 59% of total expenditure with Education and Regional Development accounting for a further 29% of all expenditure. These 'Big 4' functions together accounted for 88% of all planned public expenditure in Northern Ireland. As all these Big 4 budgets are currently under pressure the remaining budgets are being squeezed to sustain expenditure on health, social security and education.

Those immediate pressures on public funds in Northern Ireland are just the latest reflection of a long term trend to reduce per capita public expenditure in Northern Ireland relative to that in other UK Regions. As a result of these long term trends and immediate short term pressures Northern Ireland public expenditure budgets are likely to be under particularly severe pressure in the next few years and it is likely that it will not be possible for Departments to fund some projects which probably could have been supported in previous years.

Funding Transferring to Local Government

The Review of Public Administration (RPA) examines how public services in Northern Ireland are organised with a view to putting in place modern, accountable and effective arrangements for public service delivery.

Departmental reviews on the RPA have been completed and decisions agreed by the NI Executive for local government were as follows:

- The number of councils will reduce from 26 to 11 by May 2011
- Community planning will be at the heart of local government
- A range of functions will transfer to local government including: aspects of planning, rural development, the public realm aspects of local roads functions, urban regeneration and community development, a range of housing related functions, local economic development and tourism.

Those aspects of Northern Ireland public expenditure which may be particularly relevant to the Larne masterplan and will transfer to local authorities include

- Local development plan functions, development control and enforcement;
- Local public realm aspects of roads functions including street-scaping; town and city centre environmental improvements; street lighting; off-street parking; permitting local events to be held on roads etc;
- Urban regeneration and community development delivery functions including physical development, area based regeneration (such as Neighbourhood Renewal), some community development programmes and support for the voluntary and community sectors;
- A range of housing functions including registration of Housing of Multiple Occupancy and housing unfitness responsibilities as well as taking lead on energy conservation at a local level;
- A number of local economic development functions including Start a Business Programme, Enterprise Shows, Youth Entrepreneurship, the Social Entrepreneurship Programme and Investing in Women;
- Local tourism such as small scale tourism accommodation development, local tourism marketing etc;
- Local arts, sports and leisure.

At the time of publication of the masterplan no decision had been made on the actual amount of funding which will transfer from central Government to the councils in respect of transferring functions nor any confirmation on the date of transfer for any of these functions.

Grant funding

EU Funding for Northern Ireland 2007 – 2013

The EU Structural Funds have supported a number of major expenditure Programmes in Northern Ireland since 1989. The aim of the Structural Funds is to support convergence in the economic and social conditions of EU regions and cohesion of the regions around EU standards. However, Structural Funds support for Northern Ireland in the current period, 2007 – 2013, is much reduced compared to previous periods. This reduction reflects 3 factors

- Northern Ireland has made considerable economic progress and is now, on some indicators, one of the EU's more prosperous regions
- The previous exceptional EU assistance to mitigate the effect of the Troubles and to encourage and support the peace process has been much reduced, and
- With the accession of new, less well-off Member States the priority of the EU has shifted to Eastern Europe.

EU funding is committed in a series of multi-annual Programmes. For the current period 2007 – 2013 Northern Ireland has 3 EU Programmes

- A Competitiveness Programme administered by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The total value of this Programme over the period is €453 million
- An Employment Programme administered by the Department of Employment and Learning and funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The total value of this Programme over the period is €244 million, and
- A Peace III Programme administered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and funded by the ERDF. The total value of this Programme over the period is €333 million.

In addition, the SEUPB manages the Interreg IVA Programme for Ireland, Northern Ireland and Western Scotland and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) administers a separately funded Rural Development Programme for Northern Ireland. Larne Borough Council has been active in pursuing EU support for its activities and has a number of applications with the Competitiveness and other EU Programmes. It has a good knowledge of the various Programmes and criteria which apply to each of them. Larne Borough Council is part of a consortium of Councils, the North East Partnership, which is seeking to build up links with other EU Regions, including Western Scotland, to develop further opportunities for EU funding.

Lottery Funding

Twenty-eight percent of the money raised by the National Lottery goes to 17 good cause distributors. Of those the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery have funding programmes most likely to be relevant to the Larne masterplan. The relevant current Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant programmes include Heritage Grants, Parks for People and Landscape Partnerships.

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is responsible for distribution of half of the entire Lottery funds in the UK, its funds go to community groups and to projects that improve health, education and the environment. BIG is finalising a consultation about its future funding support in Northern Ireland in the period to 2015. BIG proposes to focus on

- Older people
- Young people at risk
- Alcohol related harm, and
- Space and place.

It proposes to launch each of these 4 programmes to run initially between 2010 and 2012.

Space and place will be the largest of the 4 programmes with a budget of £15 million for the 2010 to 2012 period. The idea of the Space and place programme came from demand, evidenced in the consultation exercise, for support to the integration of communities across political and class divides, for better use and safer and more inviting spaces and places where people can play, meet others, learn and undertake healthy activities.

BIG proposes to allocate the £15 million Space and place budget across the 11 new Council areas on the basis of deprivation and population. Funding would be provided in two stages, with development funding being offered to support the development of second stage applications. The Space and place programme will be launched in 2010 and all projects will be required to be completed by 2015. As is the case with EU funding, Larne Borough Council has been active in pursuing funding from Lottery sources and has a good awareness of the criteria which apply to each funding programme.

Community Funding

It is possible that some of the actions under the Larne masterplan will be undertaken as community-led or social economy initiatives. Where this is the case a further range of funding options becomes available. This includes grant making organisations such as the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Ulster Garden Villages and the other foundations active in Northern Ireland such as the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Esmé Fairbairn Trust. Each of these organisations has its own grant making criteria which vary from time to time as new grant schemes are developed.

In addition community and, particularly, social economy organisations have access to a range of loan funds to pursue projects of public benefit. The largest loan funds operating in Northern Ireland are Ulster Community Investment Trust (UCIT) and Charity Bank but other loan funds such as Triodos Bank and Unity Trust are also active in the local market. Some grant funders, such as the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, are also interested in providing loan finance either on its own or in association with a grant package.

Land acquisition

Establishing viable mechanisms for the delivery of projects will be a key process in realising the vision set out by this masterplan. Proposals have been made throughout Larne in respect of land in both private and public ownership. In many cases the achievement of the comprehensive redevelopment and improvements advocated by this masterplan will require the simultaneous redevelopment of land that is under more than one land ownership.

The Department for Social Development has statutory regeneration powers which are derived from Part VII of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 (as amended) providing a legislative basis for a number of regeneration initiatives including comprehensive development schemes, compulsory acquisition of land, disposal of land and the extinguishment of public rights of way. Where the Department considers it expedient that any area should be developed, redeveloped or improved as a whole, the Department may after consultation with the appropriate district council prepare a development scheme defining by reference to a map, the area of the scheme indicating in general terms the manner in which it is intended that the area should be laid out and the land therein used.

Publicly owned land, including car parks, road space and government buildings, often hold the key to unlocking the regeneration potential in areas of Larne. In such circumstances, the disposal of sites must be carefully considered so that the regenerative return is fully maximised. An effective means of achieving this is through the production of Development Briefs. Based on the principles of this masterplan, they enable sites to be released to the market on a competitive basis but with clear conditions based on the type and style of development to be taken forward. Undertaken correctly, this gives a degree of control over the project with regards to maximising its regenerative impact, without stifling commercial viability of the project.

Should instances occur where land in private ownership cannot be made available for development through negotiation or disposal, the use of compulsory purchase powers can be considered. This mechanism involves the public sector acquisition of sites so that they can be released for development. Most commonly used to resolve issues of prominent dereliction or to consolidate access and maintenance arrangements, these powers are held by the Department for Social Development, though seen as a last resort once all other delivery options have been explored. The Department's powers must be exercised in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998. In addition the Department has a duty to promote equality of opportunity under S75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and to give regard to Targeting Social Need objectives to combat unemployment and increase employability.

Another important mechanism for delivery of the masterplan will be Planning Gain. This involves Planning Obligations under Article 40 of the Planning (NI Order) 1991 being agreed through the permission process, so that infrastructure or community benefits can be delivered as part of the overall development. This may involve the making of contributions towards public realm improvements, contributions towards or the delivery of public art schemes and more commonly the improvement or modification of transport infrastructure, funded by private sector developers. Such works enable benefits to be gained by both the developer in question, but also the wider local area. Potential exists for the creative use of this process to deliver proposals contained within the masterplan that will bring benefits to Larne as a whole.

Key risks

The Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership will work together to determine the most appropriate approach to minimise, or work around any risks identified from the Masterplan. A preliminary analysis of potential risks has been carried out. These, together with the proposed approach to manage them, are as follows:

- **Failure to promote and uphold the vision of the town centre.**

The partnership will establish a cohesive communication strategy to keep all stakeholders and the general public informed on the progress of the masterplan.
- **Negative perceptions regarding partnership's role and potential contention over regeneration issues.**

Proper governance arrangements will be maintained by the partnership, clear roles and responsibilities set out, and issues dealt with sensitively so that a broad consensus is reached among key stakeholders to maximise the development potential of the town.
- **Uncertainty about future available financial resources both public and private.**

The partnership will continue to monitor, review and progress the masterplan taking account of the general economic conditions and public expenditure plans so as to maximise the potential regeneration opportunities that exist and source all available funds on a timely basis, and any moves concerning implementation of RPA.





Project Files

- 1a Larne Lagoon
- 1b Shop Front / Gap Site Improvements
- 1c Events Space
- 1d Transport Hub
- 1e Tourist Information Centre
- 1f Community Gardens
- 1g Main Street Improvements
- 1h Fire Station Relocation
- 1i High Street / Pound Street Redevelopment
- 1j Town Hall
- 1k East Main Street Redevelopment
- 1l Market Yard



1a Larne Lagoon

Larne Lagoon presents the best opportunity for an early win in the town centre regeneration. It has great potential to form an attractive and distinctive setting to the town – all important in those first impression views from the Harbour Highway.

In both our urban and rural environments, water can so often form a compelling feature. Here on the edge of the town centre, Larne already has a water feature, although at the moment it doesn't appear particularly compelling. This is because of the poor quality of the shoreline which is sparsely vegetated and unkempt. Improvements around the shoreline could quite easily transform the image of the whole lagoon and in so doing the setting to the town.

For a relatively small cost, edge planting of native trees, reeds and rushes could change the image of the lagoon from that of an engineered balancing pond to an attractive water feature and sanctuary for wildlife. Care would need to be taken to ensure that planting is kept low to allow views through to the town, although should be higher along the eastern edge to screen views of the Redlands developments. The natural filtering ability of reeds could help along the northern edge to filter out impurities in the run-off that enters the lagoon from the town. This would help to improve water quality for both plant and animal life.

Tree planting along the Harbour Highway could be used to create an avenue to define this route and mark the procession from port to town. This will help to form some enclosure in this otherwise wide and open space while still allowing views through to the town.

There is a further opportunity to create a landmark feature within the lagoon. This will help to point out Larne to visitors and demonstrate a positive identity with which the town can be associated. The water provides a fantastic setting for public art, especially if using light, which could look most effective in the hours of twilight and darkness, causing reflections across the water. Public art is also proposed for the Circular Road Roundabout and this can be relocated to the Harbour Highway Roundabout when constructed in phase 2. These should be designed as part of a co-ordinated approach to public art so that the individual pieces follow a theme or complement each other in some way. To ensure that the public art forms a significant landmark feature it will need to be large enough in scale and sufficiently eye-catching.

There is the opportunity to introduce recreational activities onto the Lagoon such as boating. This will rely on creating safe access over the railway line and could tie in with the Lagoon Centre proposal in Phase 2. Also a previous proposal to create a Wetland Park in the Estuary of the River Inver could be included as a second phase to the environmental improvements.



Project File	
Project name:	Larne Lagoon Environmental Improvements
Project location:	Larne Lagoon
Project type:	Soft landscaping
Site area:	NA
Proposed land use:	Improved setting to the town / Improved biodiversity
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed design of landscape improvements
Priority:	High 1-2 years
Duration:	3 months
Potential cost:	£100,000 - £300,000
Potential funding:	Larne Borough Council
Associated projects:	2a – Harbour Highway 3a – Circular Road Reconfiguration

Project File	
Project name:	Larne Lagoon Public Art
Project location:	Larne Lagoon / Circular Road Roundabout
Project type:	Public art
Site area:	NA
Proposed land use:	Environmental Improvements
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed design of public arts Involvement of artists
Priority:	Medium 2-4 years
Duration:	3 months
Potential cost:	£100,000 - £500,000
Potential funding:	Mid and East Antrim Council
Associated projects:	2a – Harbour Highway 3a – Circular Road Reconfiguration

1b Shop front and gap site improvements

A critical first step in improving the image of the town is to enhance the appearance of the shop fronts and reduce the damaging effect of empty shops and gap sites.

Improvements to shop fronts and gap sites must be a priority in the implementation of the masterplan if the town is to counter the negative image that currently exists. The suggested programme would involve the redesign of shop fronts, the temporary use of vacant shop fronts, and the design of hoarding for gap sites. Similar projects that have been carried out in other towns have involved the participation of artists who have come up with imaginative ideas for the redesign of shop fronts. Using colour and graphic signage to lift the image of the buildings, the designs are often associated with the particular use to create a strong identity.

It would not be possible or desirable for all the shop fronts to receive this treatment. The key buildings therefore need to be carefully selected. Firstly, buildings in prominent positions, for example corner sites or at the end of street vistas, should be made a priority as they have the greatest influence on the townscape character and can therefore be the most effective in improving that character. Secondly, the programme will need to take into account whether the shop owners are willing to partake. Thirdly, a decision will need to be made as to how many shop fronts can be improved in respect of the available budget and an estimate as to how much each shop front will cost.

Where shops are vacant there is the opportunity to stop their empty appearance from detracting from the vibrancy of the town. The empty shop units at the Laharna Buildings are a good example of using large scale images on shop fronts to present a more positive image. Using images and art in this way would be a relatively cheap and effective way of filling shop windows. An alternative approach would be to allow temporary use of the buildings. Empty shops could accommodate small start-up businesses, craft workshops or artist's studios. This would require some form of relaxation in the Planning Service's policy on temporary uses.

The involvement of graphic artists would also be needed for the design of gap site hoardings. The idea here would be to paint wooden hoardings in a creative way to screen the gap sites and present a more attractive frontage to the street. As sites are redeveloped these hoardings could be reused at future derelict town centre sites. There is the opportunity for local trade's people to assist in this process and to involve volunteer community groups, making the process more cost effective and more of a team effort.



Project File	
Project name:	Town Centre Improvements
Project location:	High Street / Main Street
Project type:	Townscape improvements
Site area:	NA
Proposed land use:	Improved shop fronts Gap sites hoarding
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Graphic artists involvement Assistance from local trades people / community groups
Priority:	High 1-2 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	£150,000
Potential funding:	ReStore DSD Funding Private developer contributions
Associated projects:	1g – Main Street Improvements

1c Events Space

Larne needs an events space to enable a greater variety of events to take place in the town centre and in so doing attract a greater number of visitors and locals back into the town.

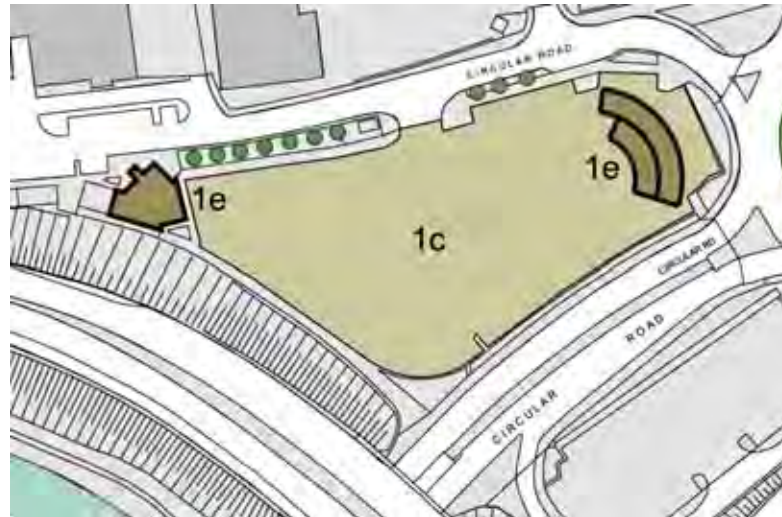
The Circular Road Car Park offers a great location for an events space. Not only is it both highly visible and readily accessible from the main roads through the town, but it can also be easily linked with the town centre and the tourist information centre. It offers a substantial sized open space with existing hard surfacing making it ideal for accommodating a variety of different events. This proposal would be subject to a legislative agreement.

It would be difficult to justify creating a stand-alone events space for reasons of cost as well as loss of parking. The two functions can however quite easily be doubled up so that the space can continue to be used as a car park for most of the time and as an events space when required. Modifications to the space will be needed in order to facilitate the events space. These can be phased over time in response to the growing success and reputation of the events space, as well as the availability of public or grant funding. During events, provision for alternative parking can make use of the other town centre car parks and public transport can be promoted or laid on especially. The location close to the Local Transport Hub 1d will assist in this aspiration.

The association between the events space and the Tourist Information Centre is all important owing to the to support the TIC can give the events space through the provision of facilities such as a café and toilets as well as ticket office and events information. If the TIC remains in its current location at the west end of the car park, the Events Space can still be implemented. A relocated and improved TIC would be preferable as it would be designed to integrate with the events space.

Over time, the redevelopment of the Waterfront area will lead to built form enclosing the events space and in so doing making it a central feature of the modern Waterfront area. Ultimately if either parking provision can be accommodated elsewhere or the demand for parking declines there is the opportunity to make the events space a permanent feature and could lead to its evolution into an events park.

The town benefits from a well organised events programme, prepared by Larne Borough Council. There is great potential in expanding this programme to include a wider range of town centre events. While currently there is a lack of both indoor and outdoor venues in the town centre in future years the refurbishment of the Town Hall and the Market Yard will provide great indoor venues.



Project File

Project name:	Events Space
Project location:	Circular Road Car Park
Project type:	Public realm / Car parking
Site area:	2,750m ²
Proposed land use:	Events space / Car Parking
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed design of car park showing phased stages
Priority:	Medium 2-4 years
Duration:	6 months initially 15 years ongoing improvements
Potential cost:	£30,000 - £40,000
Potential funding:	Mid and East Antrim Council
Associated projects:	1e – Tourist Information Centre 1d – Local Transport Hub

1d Local Transport Hub

A Local Transport Hub is important in achieving a better integrated, more effective, and more usable transport system in the town. Waterfront offers a central location with the opportunity for improved connections to the town core.

The creation of a Local Transport Hub would help to consolidate the transport provision on one site and in so doing make a centre with a stronger identity that can make a more positive statement about the importance of public transport in the town. The existing rail station is positioned in a prominent Waterfront location. As this area gradually becomes redeveloped it will reconnect the rail station back to the town, redressing the issue of detachment that currently occurs between the two.

The creation of a Local Transport Hub would involve the relocation of the regional bus station, currently located on Station Road, to next to the train station site. Ticketing facilities could either be shared with the existing Rail Station Office or a new Bus Station could be built. The car parking layout would need to be modified to accommodate the bus stations and turning radii. The existing tele-communications mast should be relocated so as not to preclude the expansion of this area.

The existing sense of detachment occurs as a result of the perimeter fencing and overgrown planting that encloses the site and screens any visual connections with the town. This all needs to be removed to open up visibility and assist visitors in orientating themselves in relation to the town centre. A simpler landscape edge of single trees and low ground cover would assist in this objective. Better connectivity also relies on improved crossing points over the A2. A temporary measure of a raised table could be used in the short term, while in the long term the reconfiguration of the Circular Road system will hugely improve pedestrian priority. Signage will also help to reinforce better connections.

Lastly, the Local Transport Hub presents an ideal location for a cycle and cycle hire shop. This could help to promote cycling the National Cycle Route 93 to visitors and locals. The route currently starts at the Leisure Centre but plans exist to extend it into the town and ultimately on to Belfast. There is a good chance it will pass this site and therefore provisions for cyclists must be included (Project 2k).



Project File	
Project name:	Local Transport Hub
Project location:	Larne Railway Station
Project type:	Transportation / Landscape Improvements
Site area:	2642m ²
Proposed land use:	Bus station Car parking
Potential floor space:	385m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of bus station Detailed design of landscape improvements
Priority:	Medium 2-4 years
Duration:	6 months
Potential cost:	£750,000 – Bus station £22,500 - Relocation of bus stations
Potential funding:	Translink
Associated projects:	3a – Circular Road Reconfiguration 2k - Cycle Hire

1e Tourist Information Centre

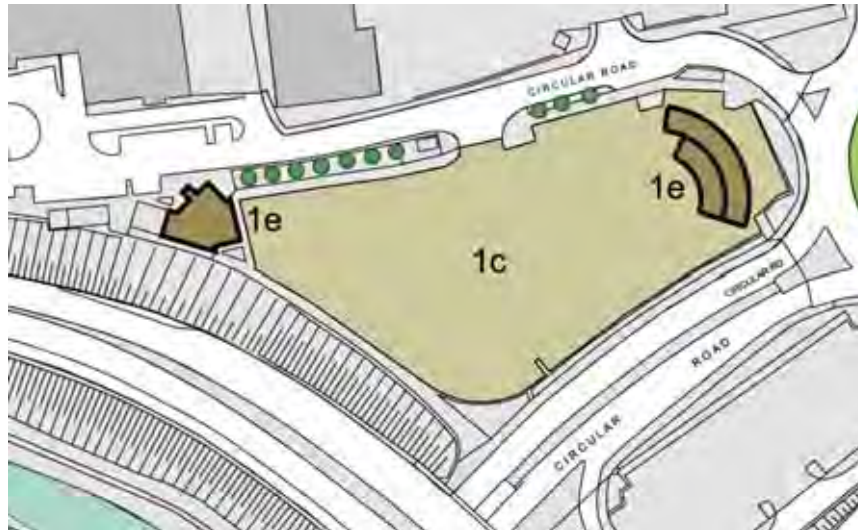
The Tourist Information Centre signifies to visitors the importance of Larne to tourism. As such it needs to be in a much more prominent position and provide a much greater range of facilities, encouraging visitors to stop off.

The Tourist information Centre is difficult to locate in its current position; tucked below the Harbour Highway at the western end of the Circular Road Car Park. A highly visible TIC is needed to make the statement that Larne is a destination for tourism. It needs to be highly visible from the Harbour Highway as it is along this route that the majority of visitors from the ferry pass through the town.

While the building itself does not require to be large in scale, there needs to be a strong vertical element that will ensure it stands out in the approach views from the Harbour Highway. The most suitable location would be the eastern end of the Circular Road Car Park where it would be readily visible and adjacent to the Events Space, which it is intended to serve. This location would also ensure that the TIC would relate to the proposed Events Space. There would be the opportunity to create a public realm around the TIC that could extend the functions of the building into the outdoor space.

While the Town Hall 1j and Market Yard 1l refurbishment projects will provide new venues for community events, there is the opportunity to design the TIC to facilitate some community functions that complement these alternative provisions. The indicative layout of the building shown on the phase 1 plan demonstrates the prerequisite of how the building must respond to the adjoining events space. The scale of the building will depend on how many facilities it accommodates which in turn depends on the available budget. The ground floor would accommodate the majority of the public functions with the possibility of extending into the first floor, where also offices could be situated.

The existing TIC building is an attractive building and in good condition. The intention is that it would be retained and could provide an opportunity for a restaurant, café or bar to be set up that would support the leisure aspect of the Waterfront area. In light of the proposed Broadway Extension 2b, this building will form a prominent feature in views from the town core.



Project File	
Project name:	Tourist Information Centre
Project location:	Circular Road Car Park
Project type:	Public Development
Site area:	610m ²
Proposed land use:	Tourist Information Centre
Potential floor space:	340m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of building Design of surrounding public realm
Priority:	Medium 2-4 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	£600,00 - £700,000
Potential funding:	Mid and East Antrim Council
Associated projects:	1c – Events Space

1f Community Gardens

The many benefits of Community Gardens as a temporary use on a redevelopment site include a productive use of land, a focus for community activity and the creation of an attractive feature.

Community gardens would provide a temporary use with many beneficial spin-offs. Firstly, it would provide a productive use of the land which would otherwise remain unused. Secondly, it would provide a focus for community involvement, possibly as a project for those involved in the Housing Executive. Thirdly it could create an attractive feature in this prominent part of the town, demonstrating the town's commitment to sustainable living.

Redevelopment at Riverdale is a longer term objective for the site. It will take time for the private market to pick up and in addition there are issues of land acquisition that need to be resolved owing to the mix of ownerships. In the interim Community Gardens would use this land to good effect.

The site is well suited to productive gardening on account of its south facing slope; maximising solar gain and ensuring effective drainage. Peripheral tree planting would help to add some shelter. The land could either be used as one large communal garden or divided into individual plots. A group such as the Housing Executive may be well placed to organise this project especially in light of their knowledge of this site as major landowner. There may also be the opportunity to use a local shop or market yard stall to sell produce.

While community gardens provide a useful interim use, the visual and commercial importance of this site means that ultimately its greatest benefit to the town will be through redevelopment. To this end an established landscape will create an attractive setting for future development and be seen as an important asset in terms of marketing the site. The initial design and layout of the garden should take this into account so that the 'structural' components of the landscape can be retained. For example, concentrating tree planting around the edges will create an enclosure to the site without precluding flexibility in the layout of the development.

When the time comes for the community gardens to move, a suitable site elsewhere in the town could be provided. In a similar way the process could be used to reclaim disused or derelict sites around the town; establishing enhanced landscape character that could ultimately assist in the ongoing regeneration of the town.



Project File

Project name:	Community Gardens
Project location:	Riverdale
Project type:	Landscape improvements
Site area:	2546m ²
Proposed land use:	Community Gardens
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed layout of gardens
Priority:	Medium 2-4 years
Duration:	3 months initially 10 year ongoing
Potential cost:	£20,000 - £40,000
Potential funding:	Housing Executive
Associated projects:	2d – Riverdale / High Street Development

1g Main Street Improvements

Early measures are needed to alleviate issues of congestion along Main Street in order to reduce the dominance of vehicles and create a more pedestrian friendly environment.

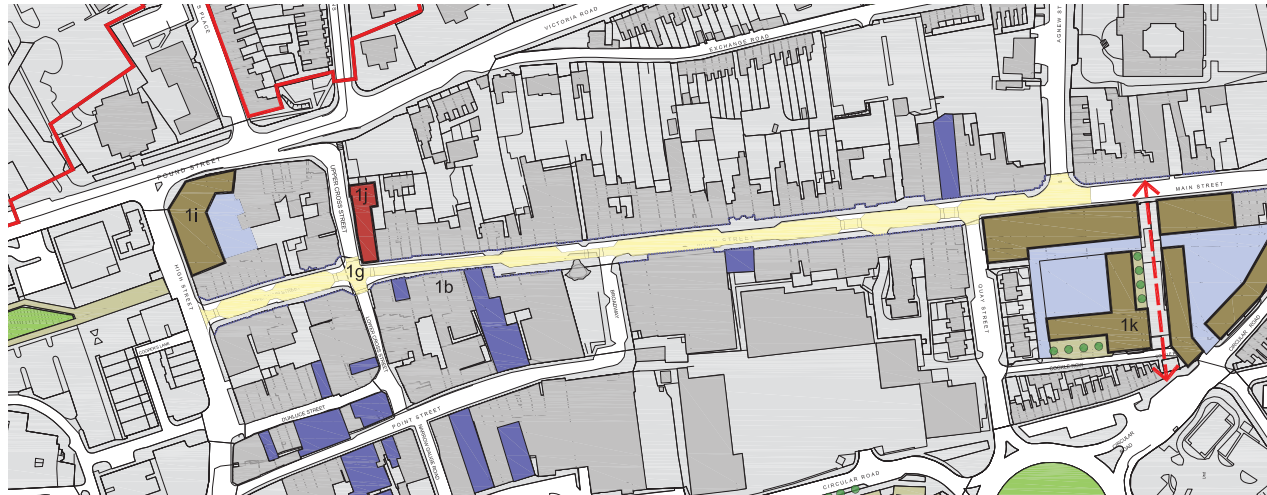
The biggest issue on Main Street at the moment is the amount of congestion caused by the concentration of cars, taxis and buses. Car users are looking for parking spaces which are limited and the resultant build up of traffic causes problems for public transport and deliveries. Taxis compound this problem further by filling up parking in the street.

The proposed improvements work with the existing east to west one-way traffic flow. Main Street Improvements will rely on the rationalisation of the parking provision; providing more free spaces for disabled blue badge holders and possibly introducing some form of parking charges for the remaining spaces. The suggestion is that the proportion of charged versus free car parks is maintained at a level that ensures appropriate controls are applied to those parking spaces most convenient to the town centre. This proportion may vary over time, reflecting the level of business activity within the town centre and ensuring the most convenient spaces are reserved for visitors and shoppers with all day parkers being accommodated in the more peripheral car parks. These measures aim to deter motorists from passing along Main Street, instead encouraging use of the surrounding car parks.

In terms of physical improvements, the proposal is to introduce pavement build-outs and raised tables at critical points along Main Street that will serve to slow traffic as well as facilitate pedestrian crossing. It is also proposed that the footway be widened to the east of Lower Cross Street to counter problems of the existing narrow width and create a more comfortable pedestrian environment.

The reduction in congestion will help to alleviate flows for public transport, hopefully making this a more attractive option. Taxi ranks need to be restricted to their current provision with any further provision being located outwith the town core or alternatively on the Broadway Expansion 2b. This would also provide a suitable location for a local bus interchange.

The masterplan proposes in Phase 2 to add a link between the town core and the Waterfront area (Project 2b – Broadway extension / redevelopment). In the short term the need is more to rationalise the existing system to reduce issues of traffic congestion and improve pedestrian priority.



Project File

Project name:	Main Street Improvements
Project location:	Main Street
Project type:	Transportation Improvements
Site area:	NA
Proposed land use:	Vehicular and pedestrian space
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed design of road and pavement improvements
Priority:	Medium 2-4 years
Duration:	6 months
Potential cost:	£250,000 - £350,000
Potential funding:	DRD, DSD, Council
Associated projects:	2b – Broadway extension / redevelopment

1h Fire Station Relocation

The Lorry Park is a highly visible site with the potential to create a landmark feature in the approach along Harbour Highway. High quality architecture will be needed to .

For some time, the local Fire Brigade have wanted to relocate to a new site within the town where there is capacity for a bigger building and larger training area. They have expressed an interest in the Lorry Park site in the Waterfront Area. This site is suitable as it provides quick and direct access to the A2 and the A8 and will provide the necessary space for a larger building and grounds.

The key site in the Waterfront area is the existing lorry park. The development of this site does not rely on the reconfiguration of the Circular Road layout and can therefore be developed at an early phase. The development will effectively form a first impression of the town in the approach along the Harbour Highway. While the NIFR have specific requirements for their building and grounds, it is essential that these requirements are accommodated within a design of the highest quality to ensure this prominent site will form a positive first impression of the town.

This building needs to be unique and stand out as something special within the wider panorama. It needs to be dual aspect, forming a frontage south towards the Harbour Highway and Larne Lagoon, and a frontage north towards the Events Space where main entrances would be best located. The south facing aspect of this building will catch the light, a factor to consider in the choice of materials. The design needs to be original and innovative and the possibility of an architecture competition should be explored.

The Fire Service has a requirement to develop greater community involvement. To this end, the Circular Road frontage, as the most visible and accessible frontage should appear open and inviting. This will mark the main entrance into the fire station. Sufficient provision for a car-free public realm should be made to create a safe entrance. This space should relate to the public realm associated with the Event's Space and Gateway Centre on the opposite side of Circular Road to ensure that pedestrian provision all connects up and the spaces appear well co-ordinated.



Project File	
Project name:	Fire Station Relocation
Project location:	Circular Road
Project type:	Public development
Site area:	
Proposed land use:	Relocated Fire Station
Potential floor space:	2,000m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of buildings, ancillary structures and grounds
Priority:	High 1-2 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	£4,000,000 - £5,000,000
Potential funding:	NIFRS
Associated projects:	1c - Events Space

1i High Street / Pound Street Redevelopment

This vacant corner site is prominent in the approach to the town centre from the A8 / Pound Street turn-off. Its redevelopment will send out an important message in respect of the regeneration of the town centre.

This site, on the corner between Pound Street and High Street, is prominent to many motorists and pedestrians passing along Pound Street or down High Street. It is an important corner site in terms of its contribution to the townscape and is influential in forming people's impression of the town core. Much of the traffic passing along Pound Street is by-passing the town. This site will be important to demonstrate the commercial viability of the town centre to those who currently shop elsewhere. It will show that redevelopment is taking place and that the town core is on the upturn.

In order to achieve this, the site needs to be designed with care. Firstly, the importance of the corner location needs to be expressed through the architectural design. This can be done by creating a feature both through the scale and the form of the corner component. This can be used to mark an entrance into the building.

The location of the site on a downward slope combined with the wide scale of Pound Street means that a minimum of three storeys will be needed to achieve the necessary scale to achieve a sense of enclosure. Four storeys would need to be a maximum so as not to appear overly dominant to adjacent properties. The other features that need to respect the traditional town core include the establishment of a traditional building line at the back edge of the pavement and with continuous frontage onto the High Street.

The uses should be mixed with upper floors designed as residential apartments with parking provision contained in a courtyard to the rear. There is potential to use the ground floor as retail although the use would need to be attractive as this location is on the margins of the retail core. The character of High Street will be improved by the medium and long term redevelopment of Riverdale, the most significant feature being the new town square which will create an attractive focus for the on-looking High Street properties to front onto. High Street will be largely redefined by this new development, becoming a place in its own right rather than as a through route.



Project File	
Project name:	High Street / Pound Street Redevelopment
Project location:	High Street / Pound Street
Project type:	Private development
Site area:	1,742m ²
Proposed land use:	Residential / retail
Potential floor space:	2,730m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of development Design statement
Priority:	Medium 2- 4 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private developer
Associated projects:	2d – Riverdale High Street Redevelopment

1j Town Hall

The town hall is the most important historic building in the town centre. It serves an important role as a landmark feature in the traditional townscape. The refurbishment of the building will enable it to serve an even more important role as a centre for community life.

The Town Hall is in desperate need of renovation. It currently lies largely unused and is suffering from disrepair. Larne Borough Council is leading this project and is the main funder in terms of meeting the cost which would be £3,000,000 with the anticipated start date of 2010. An application is being submitted to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency – Historic Buildings Grant to seek grant funding for the refurbishment of the building.

The proposals would be to carry out all necessary building repairs retaining the historical features of the building, and internal refurbishment to provide facilities for the regular use of the building by the community. The proposed facilities would include a Council Service Point, a Meetings Centre, a Civic Room, a Main Hall and Minor Hall with kitchen, stores and toilets, and private office space.

There is also the possibility that the works can extend to include improvements to the public realm on Upper Cross Street from where the main access will be drawn. As this is a dead end street there is the opportunity to widen the pedestrian space which would serve to accommodate crowds both entering and leaving the building.



Project File	
Project name:	Town Hall
Project location:	Main Street / Upper Cross Street
Project type:	Public development
Site area:	NA
Proposed land use:	Community facilities
Potential floor space:	1,800m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of building repairs and refurbishment
Priority:	Medium 2-4 years
Duration:	2 year
Potential cost:	£3,000,000
Potential funding:	LBC /Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Associated projects:	1i – Market yard

1k East Main Street Redevelopment

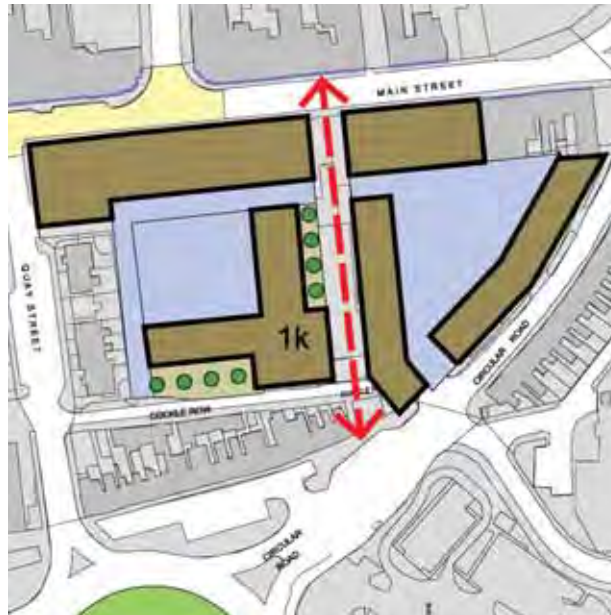
Redevelopment of the East Main Street site is essential to remove the damaging effect of the existing gap sites and establish a vital 'retail anchor' at the east end of the town core.

The vacant site on the junction between Main Street and Quay Street leaves a gaping hole in the urban fabric of the town. It undermines the integrity of the town centre and diminishes confidence in the vitality of the town's retail provision. As a high priority, this site needs to be actively marketed for redevelopment. Even more urgently the site needs to be boarded up in a more creative way to reduce its visual impact on the image of the town.

In addition to the gap sites, adjoining sites with poor quality land uses can be consolidated to form a more substantial site. This extended site would have a greater capacity to accommodate the type of medium scale retail development that is currently lacking in the town. While retail would be the primary land use, a mix of residential, office and leisure should be encouraged to ensure the overall vitality of the scheme.

The development proposes a new road link between Circular Road and Main Street. This would not only access the new development but also create a more direct link into the Town Core, by-passing the signalised junction at Glenarm Road. Development along this new road and the existing Circular Road would be predominantly residential and not retail which would only serve to stretch the retail core out beyond its margins. The design of the buildings should be limited to two or three storey and follow the traditional style in terms of form with pitched roof, building line continuous, fine grain with regular rhythm, and materials render and slate.

The East Main Street site has a direct presence on Main Street. In order that the future development does not come to overwhelm or diminish the existing character of the street there are a number of specific design parameters which will need to be respected. Firstly, the majority of the buildings along Main Street are two storeys, with some three or four storeys in places. The proposed development must use four storeys as a maximum height. The design should also work to emphasise the ground floor, making it active and transparent to contribute to the appearance of the retail core.



Secondly, Main Street is characterised by a strong building line continuous along the back edge of the pavement. This must be replicated within the new development to ensure continuity and avoid undefined space being created. The frontage must be active with doors and windows facing onto Main Street. There is also the opportunity for a main entrance to be set on the corner with Quay Street to address the importance of views down both streets to this point. Thirdly, car parking and servicing should be kept to the rear of the development so as not to detract from the character of Main Street.

Project File

Project name:	East Main Street
Project location:	East end of Main Street
Project type:	Mixed-use private development
Site area:	9,606m ²
Proposed land use:	Retail / residential
Potential floor space:	2 x 8,600m ² 3 x 2,400m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of buildings and associated space
Priority:	Low 4 -5 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private developer
Associated projects:	1g – Main Street Improvements

11 Market Yard

For centuries Market Yard has played a significant role as a centre for commerce and social activity in Larne. Despite recent decline, proposals for its refurbishment aim to restore the character and vitality of this important historic site.

The Market Yard comprises a large walled yard on the corner of Station Road and Circular Road. Buildings are located along the southern wall and a roof structure extends along the western wall. Historically the site was used for the market of cattle, later evolving into a more general commercial market. While a market still operates every Wednesday, its popularity has diminished and only a handful of traders continue to attend.

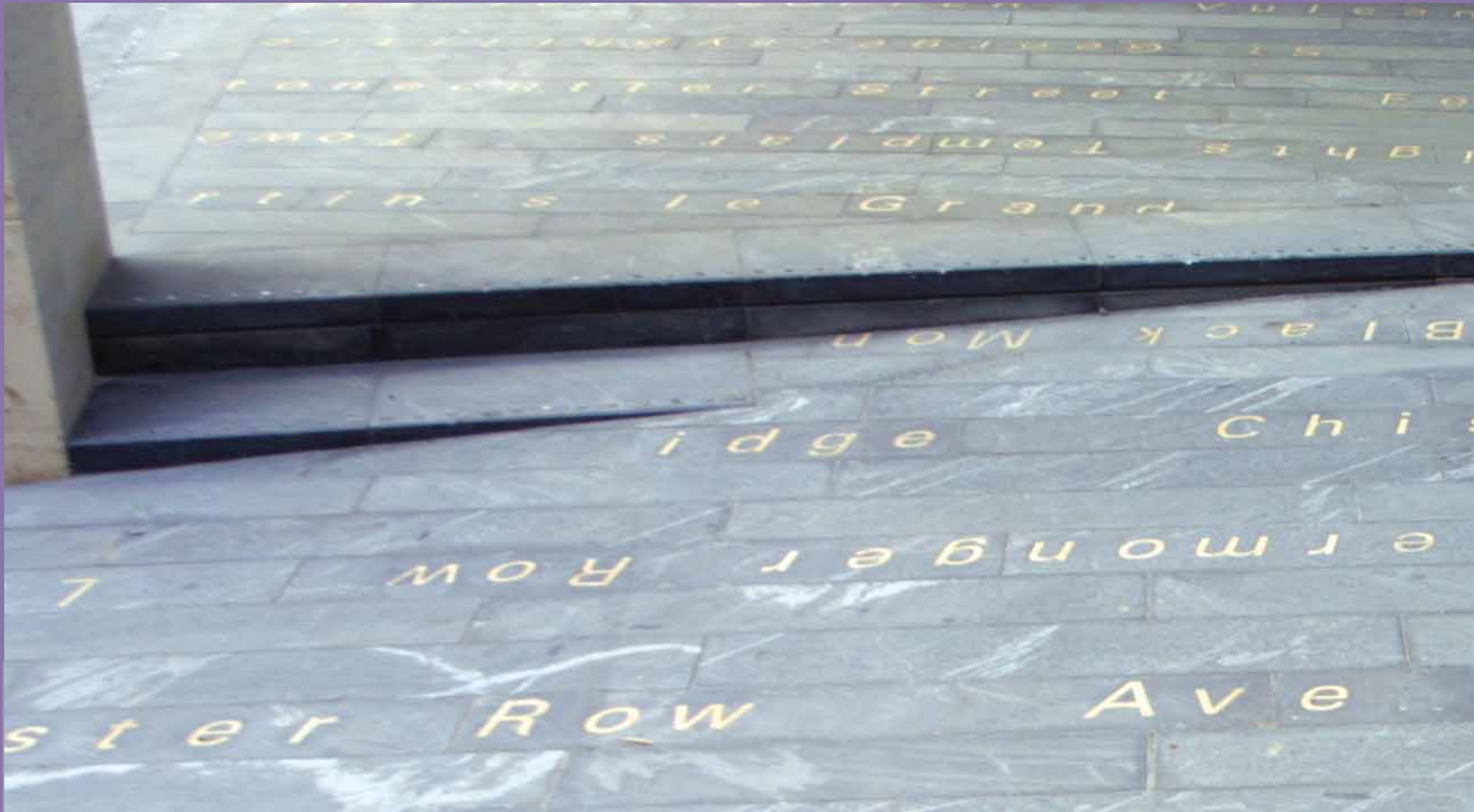
The Market Yard appears run down. There has been no investment over the years and the structures are now in a state of disrepair. It does however still have a special character derived largely from the enclosure of the space and containment of the buildings. It is easy to see the opportunities on offer for refurbishment which should reuse the existing layout and form to preserve the historic character.

Larne Borough Council is currently working to secure funding for the refurbishment of the Market Yard in conjunction with Larne Regeneration Company Ltd. A grant for £300,000 has been applied for through the Department of Enterprise, trade and Investment from European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for NI 2007-2013. An application is also being prepared for an Historic buildings Grant to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and a further application is being considered by the International Fund for Ireland. The balance of funds will be sought by Larne Borough Council by way of loans. The current project cost is £1,500,000. The proposal incorporates a mixed use scheme which will include office and workshop accommodation, social economy opportunities, indoor and outdoor markets, community meeting facilities and indoor and outdoor performance space.

The intention is to promote the Market Yard as a Creative Industries Centre and Market Centre for the Larne area. The history of the buildings and the site will contribute to providing a unique location for these activities. Further development of market trading activities will test new business ideas to support new entrepreneurs. Proposals for food convenience stores to be developed at either Inver Park or the Co-op site will assist the regeneration of the Market Yard by increasing the footfall and traffic in this end of town.



Project File	
Project name:	Market Yard
Project location:	Station Road
Project type:	Public development
Site area:	2,670m ²
Proposed land use:	Office / light industry / leisure
Potential floor space:	1,022m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of building refurbishments / courtyard
Priority:	High 1-2 years
Duration:	1 year
Potential cost:	£1,500,000
Potential funding:	LBC / DETI / NIEA / IFI
Associated projects:	1j – Town Hall Refurbishment





Project Files

- 2a Harbour Highway Roundabout
- 2b Broadway Extension / Redevelopment
- 2c Dunluce Street / Point Street Redevelopment
- 2d Riverdale / High Street Redevelopment
- 2e Youth Centre
- 2f Urban Sports Park
- 2g Lagoon Centre
- 2h Agnew Street / Exchange Road

Phase 2

- 2a Harbour Highway Roundabout
- 2b Broadway Extension / Redevelopment
- 2c Dunluce Street / Point Street Redevelopment
- 2d Riverdale / High Street Redevelopment
- 2e Youth Centre
- 2f Urban Sports Park
- 2g Lagoon Centre
- 2h Agnew Street / Exchange Road
- 2i Community Garden
- 2j Events Space
- 2k Local Transport Hub / Cycle Hire



2a Harbour Highway Roundabout

A new roundabout on the Harbour Highway is essential to improve access into the town centre and redress the bypass effect currently being experienced.

The key junction into the town centre occurs just north of Larne Lagoon. It links the Harbour Highway with the A2 coastal road north, via the Circular Road roundabout. This junction currently works satisfactorily for southbound motorists turning left but is unsafe for northbound travellers turning right across the flow of oncoming traffic. Consultations have shown that this puts motorists off from using this junction. An improved layout would therefore encourage more people to use this junction and hopefully draw more of the visitors coming off the ferry into the town centre.

The introduction of a roundabout at this junction provides the best means of achieving a safer right turn manoeuvre. By slowing traffic down it will also give motorists more time to consider making this right turn. The installation of a public art feature on this roundabout provides the opportunity to make a positive statement about the town that will be seen by thousands of visitors each year. It will provide an important marker to the main turn off into the town.

A roundabout on its own will not have the desired effect of recapturing the visitor market. It needs to be carried out as part of a programme addressing the wider identity along the Harbour Highway. Proposals for improved signage which will tie in with the rebranding strategy for the town, and tree planting along the Harbour Highway and around Larne Lagoon will contribute to an improved identity. Redevelopment of the Waterfront area with a more prominent TIC will also create a more attractive townscape to entice visitors. All these proposals will need to consider the experience along the Highway in terms of visibility, so that key views do not become blocked by planting and the best possible impression of the town is presented.



Project File

Project name:	Harbour Highway Roundabout
Project location:	Harbour Highway
Project type:	Transportation
Site area:	5,260m ²
Proposed land use:	Roundabout
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed design of roundabout layout
Priority:	High 6 – 7 years
Duration:	3 month
Potential cost:	£600,000 - £800,000
Potential funding:	DRD
Associated projects:	3a – Circular Road Reconfiguration

2b Broadway Extension / Redevelopment

Broadway marks the heart of the town centre. The proposal to extend the street and public realm to connect with Waterfront will further strengthen the role and identity of this central core.

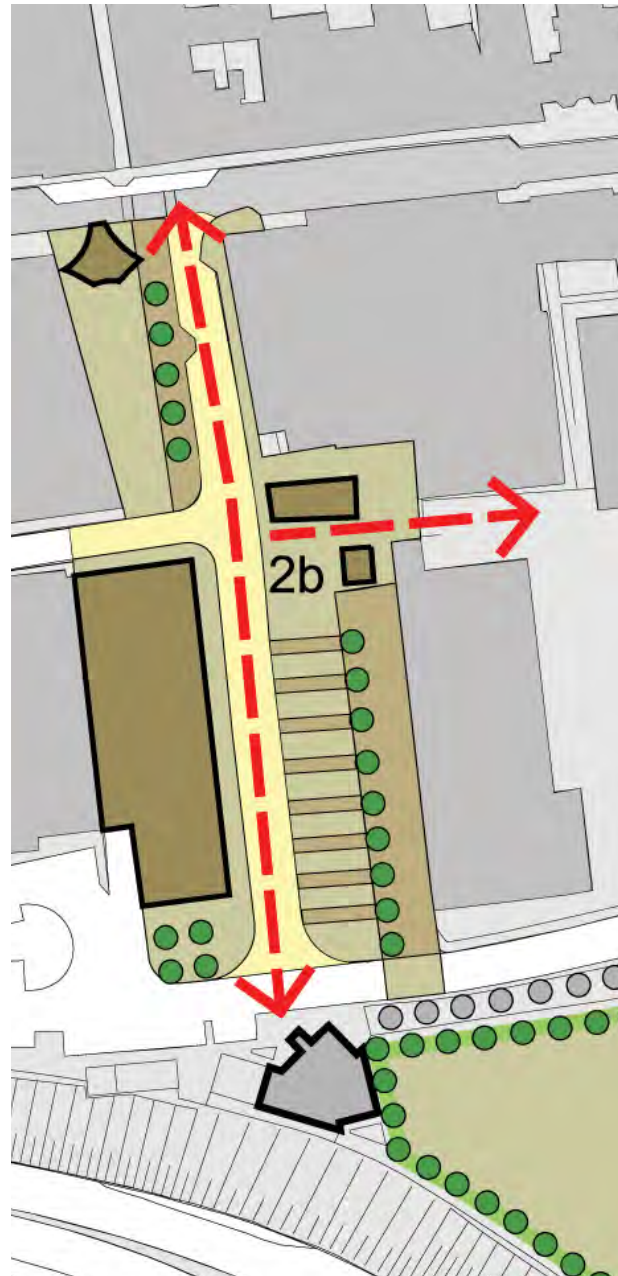
The historical street pattern of Larne town centre has followed a predominant east west orientation, established largely by the direction of the coastal route through the town. By comparison connections north south have always been secondary. The introduction of the Harbour Highway in the 1970's severed this pattern and disrupted the east west flow of the system. The result has been to require more movement north south which has been difficult to accommodate within the historic street pattern. Main Street is one example in which the introverted layout restricts connections for both pedestrians and motorists and makes legibility difficult.

The Broadway Extension makes a strong north south connection to better facilitate movement through the town centre and form a clear link between Main Street and Waterfront. The importance of this link will grow over time as the redevelopment of the Waterfront area gathers momentum. It will ensure that the footfall generated by new Waterfront developments, finds its way easily and directly into the town core.

In terms of traffic flow, the creation of a one-way through route at Broadway will help to draw vehicles south into the Waterfront area where the main car parks are located or alternatively to filter out along Circular Road or back round through Narrow Gauge Road.

The extension of Broadway relies on the relocation of the Murrayfield Shopping Centre. The opening up of Broadway presents a further opportunity for redevelopment in the vicinity. A new retail unit is shown to the west of the Broadway, which will benefit from high footfall and a long street frontage. To the east of the new road there is the opportunity for a public plaza which will help to make this street alluring to visitors, drawing them from the Waterfront area onto Main Street. This would also provide a suitable location for a local bus interchange and taxi rank.

Broadway forms an important transition from the modern Waterfront quarter to the traditional town quarter. Its location within the town core suggests that new development should follow the basic parameters of the block pattern, the traditional building line and the regular rhythm of the façade treatment. It is however important that this building attracts the attention of visitors to the Waterfront and for that reason it should be set at four storeys and designed using high quality materials.



Project File	
Project name:	Broadway Extension / Redevelopment
Project location:	Broadway
Project type:	Transportation / Public Realm Private development
Site area:	3,390m ² - road / public space 1,360m ² - redevelopment
Proposed land use:	New road extension Public plaza / Redevelopment
Potential floor space:	4,350m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of road layout Detailed design of public realm
Priority:	High 6-7 years
Duration:	18 months
Potential cost:	£6,000,000 - £8,000,000 Redevelopment £150,000 - £200,000 Road extension
Potential funding:	Public / Private Partnership
Associated projects:	1g – Main Street Improvements 1c – Events Space

2c Dunluce Street and Point Street

Dunluce Street and Point Street have great potential in forming a distinct quarter to the town core by providing a unique setting for small scale retail and leisure uses.

Dunluce Street and Point Street have a special historical character derived from the narrowness of the streets and fine grain of the buildings. Unfortunately, many of the buildings in this area have fallen into disrepair and this has led to the formation of gap sites and vacant units. The streets appear dark and dingy and as a result they form a negative impression within the town.

In order to address this problem one option would be to renovate and rebuild the properties in these two streets. While undoubtedly this would improve their appearance, it would be extremely costly and little advantage would have been gained. An alternative option would be to open out this area to create a public realm that would contribute to the setting of the surrounding buildings and enhance their potential economic value.

The buildings along the south side of Dunluce Street and north side of Point Street present the obvious choice for removal. The narrowness of this strip has meant that only a frontage onto Dunluce Street exists and of these buildings, many have already been removed to form gap sites. Many of the remaining buildings are in disrepair and their removal appears the logical option to resolving these current issues.

The removal of the buildings enables a central space to be created onto which the surrounding properties can front onto. The quality of light in this area will be dramatically improved and the additional space will allow improved circulation to encourage people into this space. It is hoped that the enhanced land values will assist in the regenerative process so that individual buildings can be renovated or redeveloped. The aim is to create a distinct quarter to the town, characterised by small and medium scale specialist shops, restaurants, bars and cafes to offer a higher quality retail and leisure provision in the town centre. It is envisaged that a mix of retail and leisure uses would occupy the ground floors, while the upper floors could be used for either small scale offices or residential.

Renovation of existing buildings should be in-keeping with the traditional vernacular, while redevelopment should respect the traditional parameters of scale, form and massing with a presumption in favour of two and three storey terraced properties in traditional coloured render. There is however an opportunity to step up the scale on the north side to four or five storey which will help to contain the open space as well as increase the capacity for residential and office provision. The scale on the south side needs to be kept lower to allow the sunlight in.



The public realm needs to be designed to serve the surrounding retail and leisure uses, allowing space for functions to spill outdoors. The space should be kept simple and uncluttered with a predominance of hard paving to maximise the potential and tree planting to soften the edges. The sunny and sheltered south facing aspect of Dunluce Street should be used to best effect through the location of street furniture and widened pavement. To maintain the pedestrian priority in this space the intervention of the roads should be minimised by removing carriageway definition, using planting to create pinch points, limiting traffic signage and requiring low speeds. Multi-storey car parking could be incorporated into the redevelopment; the area adjacent to the Harbour Highway offering the most suitable location.

Project File

Project name:	Dunluce Street / Point Street
Project location:	Dunluce Street / Point Street
Project type:	Mixed-use redevelopment
Site area:	7,770m ²
Proposed land use:	Small scale retail / leisure / residential
Potential floor space:	6,700m ² + 4,350m ²
Required input:	Development brief Detailed design of buildings Detailed design of public realm
Priority:	High 6-7 years
Duration:	18 month
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private development
Associated projects:	3d – Riverdale Redevelopment

2d Riverdale / High Street Development

The proximity of the Riverdale / High Street site to the town core makes it a strategic first stage in the transformation of Riverdale. This redevelopment will be important in setting a high benchmark for the redevelopment of the wider site.

The north east quarter of the Riverdale site has been selected for the initial stage of the Riverdale redevelopment because it is closest to the town core and provides a prominent site to assist in the promotion of the remainder of the site. Two of the three main facades are set on existing roads with existing development set opposite.

While ultimately the development will be seen as part of the wider Riverdale development it will need to also relate to the town core context. This can be achieved through following the traditional building line set along the back edge of the pavement and comparative scaling, although Riverdale does have capacity to accommodate larger scale buildings both in terms of footprints and height. The aspiration is for Riverdale to create a new character and identity within the town through a creative architectural approach and use of materials.

Secondly the earlier phasing of this development is so as it can be used to boost developer interest in the remainder of the site. It should be used as an advert for the wider development and increase confidence in its viability. High quality design is therefore necessary to project the best impression. The more marginal location of the site in respect of the town centre makes it best suited to residential but with flexibility inbuilt to accommodate leisure, retail or office uses on the ground floor. Leisure and retail should be especially encouraged along the southern façade to secure an active frontage and contribute to the vitality of the next phase town square.

The redevelopment will include an access road that forms a projection from Main Street, courtyard parking contained within the centre of the block and a linear paved area with tree planting to allow uses to spill out in good weather and maximise this south facing aspect.



Project File	
Project name:	Riverdale / High Street Redevelopment
Project location:	Riverdale / High Street
Project type:	Private redevelopment
Site area:	4,630m ²
Proposed land use:	Retail / Residential
Potential floor space:	7,600m ²
Required input:	Development brief Detailed design of buildings Detailed design of public realm
Priority:	Medium 7-9 years
Duration:	1 year
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private developer
Associated projects:	3d – Riverdale redevelopment

2e / 2f Youth Centre / Urban Sports Park

The town centre currently lacks provision for local young people. A central Youth Centre associated with new Urban Sports Park will help provide a safe and secure focus for youth activity.

In considering a suitable location for the Youth Centre it seems logical to tie it in with the proposed Urban Sports Park so that the two can strengthen the youth identity and function of this area. The area under the Harbour Highway is currently used by Skaters. This location is well suited to this use as it is in an area largely unused by other groups in the community. As such the Skaters are able to claim territory without giving rise to undue conflict. Issues of disturbance are also limited by the absence of a local residential population and the existing noise of the road above. The sunken and enclosed nature of this area makes it discreet and gives it a sense of privacy from the rest of the town.

The hard urban character of this area, derived from the imposing concrete mass of the Harbour Highway looming overhead and the graffiti art on the supports, is befitting for a Skate Park, subject to obtaining the necessary insurances. Concrete and concrete will match, and the organic form of the skate park will contrast with the engineered formality of the Highway. Good lighting will be required to make this space feel safe and some form of regulation may be needed in terms of controlled access and hours of opening.

The logical location for the Youth Centre is therefore next to the Skate Park and the Old Presbyterian Church presents the ideal opportunity. Currently used as a pool hall on the first floor and a carpet warehouse on the ground floor, this building could be easily converted. This building is one of the few notable historic buildings in the town. The establishment of a permanent use in this building will help to ensure its preservation. The surrounding public realm will act to link the centre with the skate park as well as provide for other associated outdoor activities. One potential use would be a climbing wall although again this would require regulation of access and hours of opening.

It has a central location which would hopefully make it accessible to youths from all over the town and would be close to the proposed core of leisure uses in and around the west end. A greater volume of people out on the streets in the evening will help to establish the night time economy and hopefully through passive surveillance ensure a better level of safety.



2e Youth Centre

Project File	
Project name:	Youth Centre
Project location:	Bridge Street
Project type:	Building conversion
Site area:	1,010m ²
Proposed land use:	Youth Centre
Potential floor space:	450m ²
Required input:	Design for building layout Design for surrounding public realm
Priority:	Low 9-10 years
Duration:	4 month
Potential cost:	£100,000 - £300,000
Potential funding:	Mid and East Antrim Council
Associated projects:	2f – Skate Park



2f Urban Sports Park

Project File	
Project name:	Skate park
Project location:	Point Street
Project type:	Public realm
Site area:	625m ²
Proposed land use:	Skate Park
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed design of skate park
Priority:	Low 9-10 years
Duration:	3 month
Potential cost:	£100,000 - £200,000
Potential funding:	Mid and East Antrim Council
Associated projects:	2e – Youth Centre

2g Lagoon Centre

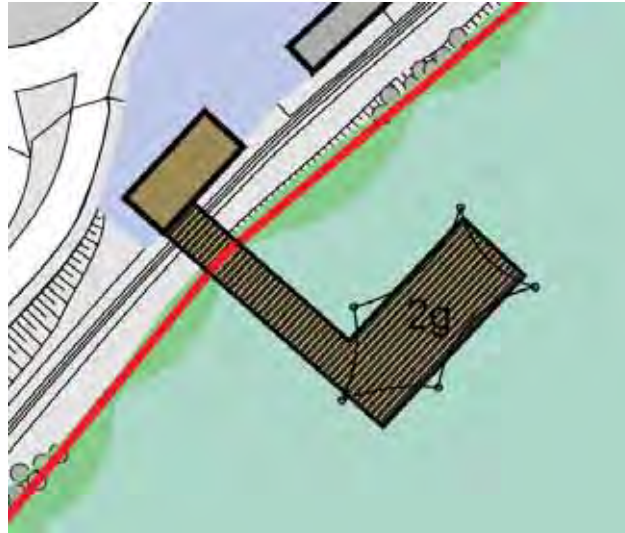
Larne needs landmark buildings. These will redefine the identity of the town and make people notice it in a different light. Larne Lagoon presents an opportunity to create a landmark building that through its use could reinforce the sustainable identity of the town.

The proposal is to locate a building in the lagoon. Environmental improvements to Larne Lagoon in Phase 1 have been designed to enhance the appearance of this water feature and increase the biodiversity of the Lagoon. It provides a unique setting for a special and bespoke piece of architecture that will form an eye-catching feature to visitors passing through the town from the port. It will also help to reconnect the town with the water and in so doing reinforce the coastal location as part of the town's identity.

The building could be used for a variety of private sector opportunities including a restaurant or cafe or alternatively perform some public function such as an educational or interpretative centre.

The building will be relatively compact so as to appear as a feature within the lagoon and not to dominate it. It will be designed to use the reflective properties of the water to best effect and to respond to the high winds and direct sunlight. The materials that are selected and methods of construction should minimise the environmental impact. Access to the building will be taken from the Waterfront area bridging over the railway and then crossing a raised walkway.

As development expands through the Waterfront area the perceived remoteness of the Lagoon from the town will decrease. The Lagoon Centre will provide a destination that visitors stopping at the tourist information centre or gateway centre can enjoy. The provision of parking in this area can be used to support the function of the building.



Project File	
Project name:	Larne Lagoon Building
Project location:	Station Road
Project type:	Public / Private development
Site area:	NA
Proposed land use:	Leisure use / Educational
Potential floor space:	100m ²
Required input:	Detailed design of building and bridge
Priority:	Low 9-10 years
Duration:	1 year
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private developer / Grant funding
Associated projects:	3a Circular Road 3c Waterfront Redevelopment

2h Agnew Street / Exchange Road

The townscape of Agnew Street and Exchange Road suffer from the gaps caused by the hinterland car parking. There is an opportunity to repair these streets by completing the frontage with new residential development.

The relocation of the Fire Station opens up an opportunity for redevelopment on the former site at Agnew Street. The street lies outwith the main retail core and as such would be best redeveloped for residential. This will rely on the resurgence of the property market which may take some time. In the interim there is the opportunity to rationalise the car park to the rear of the site and to make sure the best provision is made for the redevelopment of the site. Buildings must front onto Agnew Street. They should form a traditional building line not set back more than 5m from the back edge of the pavement to ensure enclosure and containment of the street space.

A similar possibility for residential redevelopment exists on Exchange Road at the northern edge of the car park. The existing entrance forms a substantial gap in what is otherwise a relatively complete street. New residential development could follow the pattern of terraced properties and the continuous building line. A central axis could be used to emphasise the lane linking Exchange Road down to Main Street. Car parking could still be provided to the rear of the properties.



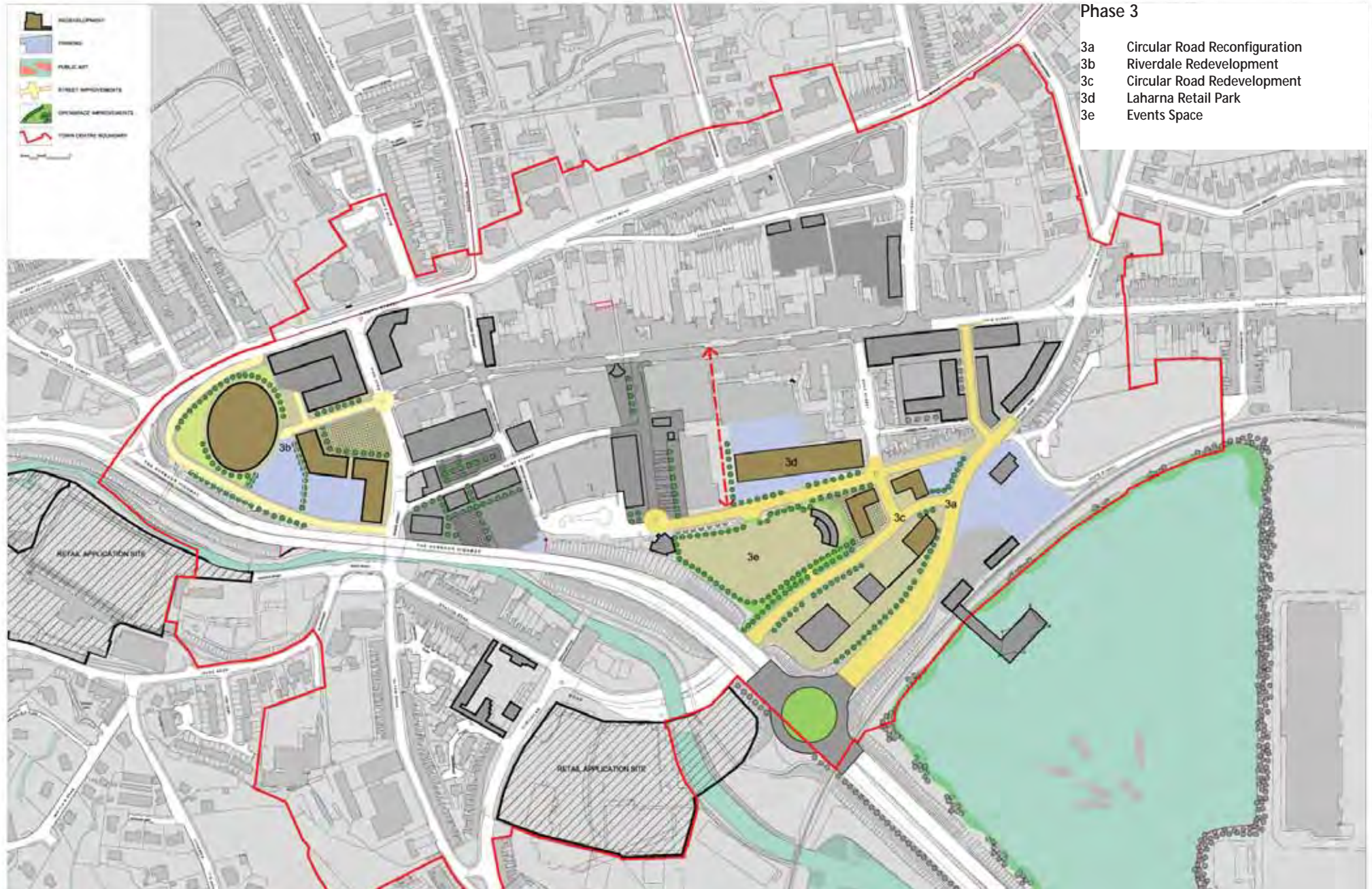
Project File	
Project name:	Agnew Street / Exchange Road
Project location:	Agnew Street / Exchange Road
Project type:	Private development
Site area:	1,722m ² - Agnew 698m ² - Exchange
Proposed land use:	Residential
Potential floor space:	631m ² - Agnew 378m ² - Exchange
Required input:	Detailed design of building / car parking
Priority:	Low 9-10 years
Duration:	1 year
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private developer
Associated projects:	1h – Fire Station Relocation





Project Files

- 3a Circular Road Reconfiguration
- 3b Riverdale Redevelopment
- 3c Waterfront Redevelopment - Circular Road
- 3d Laharna Retail Park Redevelopment



3a Circular Road Reconfiguration

The current road layout around Circular Road is heavily engineered. This layout needs to be scaled down in order to release the full development potential of the Waterfront.

The connection from the A8 to the roundabout and the section of the A2 from the Station Road junction to the roundabout are both 22m wide and accommodate two lanes each way. The roundabout itself is over 60m wide. Not only does the current system eat up huge chunks of land, it also produces disparate parcels of land that would be difficult to pull together to form a cohesive urban structure.

The proposed reduction in the scale and extent of the Circular Road layout is based on three key objectives; firstly, to reduce the dominance of the road system on the character of this area; secondly, to increase the development potential by improving the shape and size of the plots available; and thirdly, to create a more pedestrian friendly environment by reducing excessive road widths and in so doing reducing the barriers to pedestrian movement. Ultimately this area will be a place in which people, live, work and play. To make it work the streets need to tie the whole place together. Retaining the current road system will never allow this to happen.

The main feature of the reconfiguration is the removal of the roundabout which alone frees up a considerable amount of space and removes a huge obstacle to pedestrian movement. This is then replaced with a series of junctions, the key junction being between the southern section of the A2 and the A8 link road. The A8 link becomes the priority in the system, connecting seamlessly into the northern section of the A2. This is to ensure a smooth onward flow and prevent cars backing up onto the more strategic A8 Harbour Highway during peak flows. The junction between the A2 and the A8 link could be signalised to control movements and will require two lanes to facilitate the left and right turns.

Narrow Gauge Road is then realigned to follow its original route and connects into an extension of Quay Street, which itself extends down to connect with the southern section of the A2. The extension of Quay Street draws this important town core connection into the Waterfront area, making it clearer and more direct for visitors. Again, these junctions can be signalised to assist the control of flows at peak times, and will also help further facilitate pedestrian crossings.

The proposed road layout responds to the need to create a better urban structure. To this end it has been considered alongside the layout of the buildings and the layout of the public realm and ensures the result forms a cohesive whole. The road layout defines development plots that respond to one another and which through development will form enclosure and character to the street space. The removal of the roundabout and reduction in road width allows the development parcels to be drawn together into a more structured urban form, whereby buildings on opposite plots can relate to one another.



Project File	
Project name:	Waterfront Redevelopment – Circular Road
Project location:	Circular Road and Roundabout
Project type:	Private development
Site area:	NA
Proposed land use:	Improved road system
Potential floor space:	NA
Required input:	Detailed design of road system
Priority:	High 11-12 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	£2,000,000
Potential funding:	DRD
Associated projects:	1h Fire Station Relocation 3c Waterfront Redevelopment

3b Riverdale Redevelopment

Riverdale is the key site in the regeneration of the town centre owing to its strategic location between the A8 and the town core. The redevelopment of this site will act to draw people back into the core and in so doing restore the vitality and prosperity that has in recent years been lost.

Riverdale is in a prime location. Not only does it form a highly visible first impression of the town centre in the approach along the A8; it also forms what is known locally as the 'head of the town'. This description denotes the importance of this location to the town. The existing disparate mix of high rise flats, shops, offices and car parking do not do this location justice. Redevelopment is needed to fully exploit the potential of this site.

First and foremost, development on this site must relate to High Street and Main Street. It must act as a source from which the rest of the town can feed. As a source it will draw in people and activity which can then be drawn further into the town centre. In order to achieve this, it will not only have to look special, it will also have to provide something special. The site is large enough and with few enough contextual constraints to allow a comprehensive redevelopment that will be able to establish a new identity to the west end of the town centre.

Secondly, the redevelopment must maximise the dual aspect of this site by creating a positive frontage towards those all important views from the A8, as well as towards Main Street. In terms of marketing, these views act like a huge shop window to the town. Larne needs to use this opportunity to present the best possible image.

In order to make the development look special it will need a high quality input into both the design of the architecture and the public realm. To take development up to the edge of Main Street would miss a prime opportunity. A public plaza at the head of the town would celebrate the importance of this site and provide a forum for civic events. It would form an end piece to the central axis of Main Street, further strengthening the association between the two.

While links with Main Street are essential, Riverdale retains the capacity to establish its own unique identity, owing to its clear definition as a separate area. This identity will be drawn from the urban design of the architecture and the public realm, and will be largely determined by their unique layout and form in response to the shape, size and landform of the site. Larger scale buildings at Riverdale are needed to signify the importance of this site as the head of the town, and to make a statement in views from the A8.

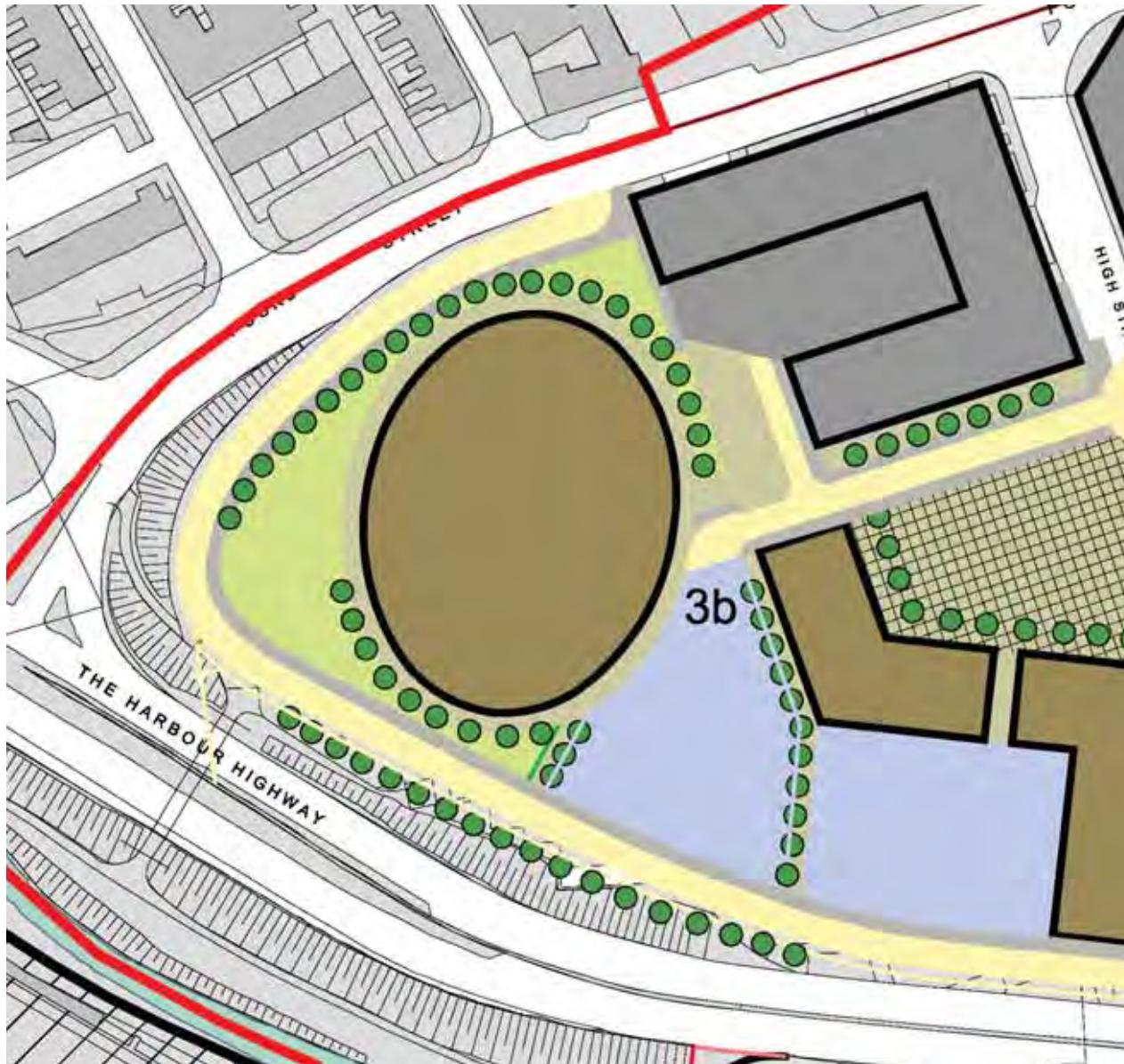


The indicative proposal in the Phase 3 plan promotes a landmark building in the prominent west end of the site. This has been shown as a curved building to reference the shape of the site as well as create a unique form to denote its importance. The circular form of the building also means it addresses the various directions from which the A8 views come. To connect the building visually and physically with Main Street a view between the other buildings needs to be retained and a direct path to connect them. Well established tree planting retained from the former use as a community garden will form an attractive setting. The architecture needs to be of the highest quality and similar to the Lorry park site could merit an architectural competition.

In order to ensure the development provides something special there needs to be provision for flexibility in the potential land uses. Certainly there is the opportunity for a visitor attraction which could encompass leisure facilities. The possibility of a hotel on this site is also encouraged incorporating the provision of conference / function facilities.

The two buildings shown to the south of the site will need to relate to the buildings to the north of the site included in the earlier Phase 2. The south east building will need to be laid out to enclose the public plaza, as well as provide a frontage to Bridge Street. While the scale needs to be sufficient to form a sense of enclosure it should be no more than four storeys in the central section otherwise it will block out too much light to the space. There is the opportunity for either end to step up to five storeys. The use of this building will be retail and leisure on the ground floor and residential above. Parking will be contained to the rear in the area below the elevated section of the Harbour Highway. The adjacent building will not be so prominent being tucked behind and at a lower level. It could take five or six storeys and would be used for residential. The style and materials of both these buildings should correspond with the Phase 2 buildings to ensure cohesion in the appearance of this area.

The public plaza also forms part of this phase and should be designed to be multi-functional. The central core of the space should remain clear to allow civic events to take place. Tree planting and street furniture should be located around the edges, seating located especially along the sunnier south facing aspect. The surfacing should be high quality particularly in prominent parts, such as the main axial route extending from Main Street. There should also be provision for the uses of the local resident population with the possibility of play features being included. A special lighting design will bring this space to life at night and help to encourage the night time economy.



Project File	
Project name:	Riverdale
Project location:	West end of Main Street
Project type:	Mixed-use private development
Site area:	
Proposed land use:	Retail / leisure / residential / parking
Potential floor space:	6,850m ²
Required input:	Detailed building design Detailed public realm design
Priority:	High 11-12 years
Duration:	2 years
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private / Public Partnership
Associated projects:	1i - High Street / Pound Street 2d - Riverdale / High Street



3c Waterfront Development – Circular Road

The Circular Road sites will collectively form a 'Gateway Centre' marking the entrance into the town centre and providing a hub for tourist activity at a strategic point on the Causeway Coastal Route.

The Waterfront area needs to establish its own distinctive character and be seen as a separate quarter within the town centre. The town core is characterised by small plots of a tight grain set in a dense urban pattern with public realm limited to narrow street spaces. The buildings are in themselves nothing special but combine to form the traditional perimeter blocks that define the urban fabric. In contrast the Waterfront area has the space to create a looser grain with a better integration of public realm. The buildings can act as features in their own right and be complimented by the surrounding public realm. This aspiration reflects modern requirements for larger buildings and associated space that would be unable to fit within the town core.

The reconfiguration of the Circular Road layout releases three additional plots to the main Lorry Park plot; one next to the proposed Tourist Information centre on the proposed southern extension of Quay Street, the second to the south of Cockle Row, and the third to the east of the main Lorry Park plot. Collectively, these sites form a group around the key junctions of the A2 – A8 link and Quay Street – A2.

While the Lorry Park site forms the first impression from the southern approach, these sites will form a secondary, but more intimately experienced impression. They will mark the entrance into the town centre and as such act as the physical gateway the town currently lacks. It is therefore important that they achieve a sense of unity in their design, the unity giving strength to their collective identity and presence. The buildings need to establish a sense of scale and relate to the more open scale of the wider Waterfront area. They should therefore be a minimum of four storeys with the use of varied height adding interest to the roofline.

The aspiration in the Larne Tourism Strategy is to create a 'Gateway Centre' that will provide facilities and attractions for visitors, that are currently lacking in the town. This Gateway Centre would be based in association with the proposed Tourist Information Centre and Events Space and could provide a mix of leisure facilities including restaurants, bars, cafes, shops and entertainments, and most importantly hotel provision. As the tourism market is largely seasonal, these uses need to be designed with the local market in mind, so as to ensure greater viability all year round.



Retail and leisure uses can only go so far and it would be favourable to concentrate these close to the Tourist Information Centre. Ground floors should be designed to be flexible with the option of accommodating office space if the demand requires. Office use would be suitable for the site to the south of Cockle Row which is more marginal to the tourism hub and retail core. A resident population is also vital to the character and success of this area. Upper floors of buildings should therefore be designed to accommodate apartments and be marketed in terms of their association with the Waterfront Quarter.

Project File	
Project name:	Waterfront Redevelopment – Circular Road
Project location:	Circular Road Roundabout (reconfigured road system)
Project type:	Economic Development / Tourism sub-group
Site area:	
Proposed land use:	Retail / Leisure / Residential / Office
Potential floor space:	4,200m ² + 2,700m ²
Required input:	Detailed design buildings / public realm Design statement
Priority:	Medium 12 – 14 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private / Public partnership
Associated projects:	3a – Circular Road Reconfiguration 1h - Fire Station Relocation

3d Laharna Retail Park

Laharna Retail Park undermines the quality and integrity of the town centre. Its replacement with a quality retail development will complete the new urban structure of the Waterfront area.

Laharna Retail Park was built in the 1990's. It comprises a collection of medium scale retail units set around an open car park. The retail park is often busy and draws shoppers into this part of town. Its poor quality design combined with its prominent location however detracts from the image of the town. The buildings are large sheds set around a large car park making it the focus of the layout. Furthermore they turn their back on Main Street, with one pedestrian path connecting through to Main Street and one to Broadway.

This retail park was never built to last. Already it looks outdated and in a further ten to fifteen years it will be time to go. The masterplan therefore must make future provision for its replacement, and present ideas of how best to redesign this all important town frontage. The redevelopment of the Laharna Retail Park will possibly form one of the later projects in the phase and will mark the completion of the Waterfront area.

This site is important to the Waterfront area as well as the town. In both respects it forms an important frontage. With the reconfiguration of the Circular Road and the development of the plots Waterfront will take on a new character and identity. Laharna Retail Park in its current form will only serve to detract from the new Waterfront area.

The proposed development needs to draw the frontage close towards the road edge to create a greater sense of enclosure and contribute more fully to the emerging character and identity of the area. The parking can then be tucked in behind so as not to dominate the appearance from the primary streets. There is also the opportunity to create a better pedestrian link through to Main Street and to connect the access round to meet up with the centre of the improved Broadway link.

The design of these buildings should again follow a minimum height of four storeys so as to achieve a suitable scale in proportion to the extent of the Events Park it encloses. It is important these buildings create a good level of visual interest as they will be prominent in views throughout the Waterfront area. To achieve this the mass needs to be broken down vertically to give the appearance of component parts rather than as one single building, replicating a traditional town frontage in terms of the visual variety, but at the same time tying in with the materials and style of the new Waterfront developments.



Project File	
Project name:	Laharna Retail Park Redevelopment
Project location:	Laharna Retail Park, Circular Road
Project type:	Private development sub-group
Site area:	
Proposed land use:	Retail / residential
Potential floor space:	5,600m ²
Required input:	Detailed building design Design Statement
Priority:	Low 14-15 years
Duration:	12 months
Potential cost:	NA
Potential funding:	Private developer
Associated projects:	1c – Events Space





- Summary

The masterplan for the regeneration of Larne presents a unique opportunity for the town to shape its future. Through consultations and discussions, research, consideration, and thoughtful design, the masterplan has come into being. This document provides the information and guidance necessary to instigate and implement the successful regeneration of Larne's Town Centre.

Larne lies in a particularly strategic position along the Northern Irish coast. Located at the closest point to the Scottish coast, Larne has developed as one of the most historic and strategic ports in Ireland. The port, in combination with good road and rail links has made Larne well-connected. Set midway between Belfast and County Antrim's famous scenic attractions, Larne has become known as the 'Gateway to the Glens and Coast'.

Historically, Larne prospered from both a busy port and a vibrant town centre. While the port has remained commercially buoyant, in more recent times the town centre has suffered from gradual decline. Political instability, weak market conditions, and poor strategic planning have all contributed to this decline. The priority given to economic development has often been at the expense of the quality of the townscape and public realm.

Over the past years the town has been caught in a downward spiral. The construction of the Harbour Highway in the 1970's effectively created a by-pass to the town causing a loss of much of the visitor market. This in turn has led to a reduction in the commercial activity and a lack of inward investment. The development of large convenience stores in neighbouring towns has further compounded the problem by causing retail leakage out of the town. Signs of the decline are evident throughout the town centre in the form of gap sites and empty shop units. And while these signs are by no means widespread, the negative impression that they create can be. Poor quality design can form just as much of a negative impression, and much short-term and opportunistic development combined with a lack of inward investment has been to the detriment of the town's appearance.

Opportunities

Over the next 15 years a number of improvements will take place in the town centre and with the completion of each improvement the identity and character of the town will improve and in so doing will act as a catalyst for future improvements. The role of the masterplan has been to identify the best opportunities for the town centre and to develop these as part of an overall phased strategy. It targets the key areas of the Town Core, the Waterfront and Riverdale, propos-

ing a comprehensive programme of renovation and redevelopment. The town core is a relatively intact traditional town core and this character must be preserved. Redevelopment within this area will target derelict and vacant sites and seek to repair and strengthen the original urban pattern. At Waterfront and Riverdale there is a greater opportunity for reinvention and these sites should be used to create a new and positive identity that also respects and compliments the historic core.

Despite the many challenges, the town of Larne has great potential. The greatest potential lies with the two substantial and largely untapped markets which are sitting on the doorstep. The first is the tourism market which currently by-passes the town, the second is the local market which currently shops elsewhere. A number of the proposals in the masterplan combine in an attempt to recapture these markets. Provision is made to improve accessibility into the town, increase the facilities on offer and enhance the overall image and identity of the place.

Furthermore, local developers have been carrying out land assembly within the town core to consolidate larger and more developable parcels of land. This provides a great opportunity to attract the much needed multi-nationals into the town. The masterplan seeks to demonstrate the potential of these sites and promote them as part of the wider regeneration strategy.

Other opportunities relate to public developments which focus on bringing life back into some of the town's most historic buildings, the two most notable examples being the proposed refurbishment of the Town Hall and Market Yard, which will both contribute hugely to the community facilities on offer. A new Tourist Information Centre will compliment these facilities and form the focus for a new tourism hub.

Redevelopment in the town centre presents a great opportunity to redress the current under provision of public realm and open space on offer. There is huge scope to make an enhanced public realm an integral part of the redeveloped areas and moreover improvements to the wider landscape setting of the town will have an even wider impact on people's impressions.

The opportunities in the transportation system relate to improving connections. New connections will help to open up the town core and create new connections to the Waterfront and Riverdale quarters. Improved access from the Harbour Highway and reconfiguration of Circular Road are essential for optimising the redevelopment potential of the Waterfront and wider town centre.

Through redevelopment proposals there is the opportunity to enhance the mix of uses increasing the town centre population and presenting a more varied offering of office and business space. This

will help breathe life back into the town and establish it as an attractive place to live and work.

The feature common to all these opportunities is the need for high quality urban design. This will make all the difference in achieving the aspiration of rebranding the town as a destination and not just a gateway. Also opportunities for optimising a sustainable approach should be implemented in each and every proposal to contribute to the establishment of Larne as an Eco-Town.

Benefits

The benefits that the masterplan can bring to the town are described below in respect of economic, physical and social benefits.

Economic Benefits

The masterplan seeks to encourage economic development throughout the town centre. This area includes a number of disadvantaged communities and has suffered from a lack of investment over a number of years. New investment in the town centre will create a focus for economic growth, meeting identified market demand for retail, tourism, leisure, business and residential developments within an enhanced public realm.

The economic benefits the masterplan can bring to Larne include;

- Strengthening the retail sector by making provision for multi-nationals within the town core, establishing an area for small scale independent niche markets; and connecting with the new large scale stores as well as complementing their provision;
- Re-establishing the tourism sector through the relocation of the TIC; the provision of tourism facilities in a new associated 'Gateway Centre'; the provision of hotel sites at key landmark locations; improved accessibility into the town;
- Increase leisure and recreational provision in the town centre to ensure greater vitality and contribute to the establishment of a night time economy;
- Broadening the economic base of the town by promoting a mix of town centre uses that includes attractive office and business space;
- Increasing the resident population of the town centre to improve support for local businesses and town centre facilities;
- Creating an enhanced landscape setting and public realm in and around the town centre to improve image and attract developer interest;
- Selling publically owned land to achieve quality developments and revenue for further town centre improvements;

Physical Benefits

Each and every proposal within the masterplan aims to improve the physical quality and identity of the town centre. The key sites targeted for redevelopment are either those within the Town Core that are derelict or vacant and cause a major source of environmental degradation or those at the Waterfront or Riverdale which have greatest potential to change the physical fabric of the town.

The physical benefits the masterplan can bring to Larne include;

- Removing the damaging effect of vacant and derelict sites and replacing them with new and well designed developments;
- Creating two new and distinct quarters at Waterfront and Riverdale that will create a new and positive identity as well as support the existing town core;
- Integrating the built form and public realm to create unique and usable urban areas;
- Encouraging the development of high quality architecture to form the landmark features of the future at both Waterfront and Riverdale;
- Creating a new street layout that will reduce the dominance of the car, improve pedestrian priority and better connect the town core with the emerging new quarters to maximise the combined benefits;
- Creating an enhanced landscape setting and public realm that will dramatically improve the identity of the town.

Social Benefits

Social benefits will arise through the beneficiaries of the regeneration efforts, with the masterplan proposals seeking to improve the identity and character of the town centre as a place to live, increase the social and leisure provision within the town centre, and improve the economic prosperity which in turn will bring greater employment opportunities.

The social benefits the masterplan can bring to Larne include;

- Improving the overall identity of the town centre through new development and public realm improvements to engender a greater sense of civic pride;
- Improving housing provision for a mix of social groups and types of resident within the town centre;
- Providing town centre leisure and recreational facilities, and open space that will encourage greater social activity and interaction;
- Enhancing the public realm to make pedestrians more of a priority and public spaces safer and more attractive to use;
- Maintaining community involvement in the overall process, highlighting opportunities for consultation and participation at every stage.

The aim of the masterplan is to set out the opportunities as a series of practical proposals. The proposals respond to the needs of the town and reflect the opportunities on offer. The key recommendations to be drawn from the masterplan in respect of the opportunities on offer are;

- Target those areas in greatest need of regeneration such as the gap sites and sites of derelict and unused buildings;
- Use environmental improvements as a direct and effective way to improve the identity and image of the town;
- Preserve the traditional core of the town and enhance its value by bringing key civic buildings such as the Town Hall and Market Yard back to life;
- Improve connections into and around the town to make it more accessible, open up new areas for development and create a more symbiotic system;
- Encourage redevelopment within the town core through the consolidation of development parcels and preparation of development briefs;
- Target Waterfront and Riverdale as the two key areas for new development, taking care to secure the optimum land uses and quality of design for these sites.

The successful implementation of this masterplan relies on four key requirements.

- Firstly, a practical and achievable masterplan. The vision, strategies and proposals must be appropriate and effective in achieving the desired aims of regeneration for the town.
- Secondly, a clear and well prioritised set of action plans. The proposals need to be organised into a logical order that reflects priorities and builds on early wins.
- Thirdly, available sources of funding. Funding is essential for anything to happen and opportunities for attracting funding need to be explored.
- Fourthly, a committed and enthusiastic Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership. A Partnership and supporting Project Teams are critical for keeping the plan alive and driving proposals forward.

The masterplan presents the information and guidance necessary to kick start the regeneration of the town. Information at the strategic level is presented in Section 2 and at the detailed level in Sections 4, 5 and 6. Here the project files present indicative proposals in terms of what can be achieved on each site. This information will need to be supplemented with more detailed designs once proposals are being brought forward for implementation.

There are three action plans, one for each five year phase. These set out the separate proposals into a logical order that reflects what can be practically achievable within the early stages, also singling out those projects that will act as effective catalysts to further regeneration.

The main sources of funding will be private, public or grant funding. Private funding will come from private developers who have a stake in the development of specific sites. Public funding will come from governmental organisations, which at the local level is currently Larne Borough Council but soon to become Mid and East Antrim Council, and at the regional level is the NI Executive. Grant funding is distinct from public funding as it is awarded through non-governmental organisations such as the European Union and the Lottery Funding. Partnerships are to be encouraged between public, private and community bodies as a means of increasing the scope for potential funding.

The Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership will be responsible for the future regeneration of Larne Town Centre. As such there needs to be a robust structure to the team and involvement of all the key players in the redevelopment of the town. The Partnership will need support from Project Teams to enable them to undertake the sheer scale of the task. This partnership is to be supported by specific and time-bound project teams with the sole remit of delivering against actions within the plan; each team would have a designated leader who would report progress to the partnership. The servicing and co-ordination of the partnership is to be undertaken by Council officers.

Ultimately the success of the masterplan will rely on the enthusiasm and commitment of all those involved in its implementation and ongoing evolution. While this is a huge task for any town to undertake, there is no doubt that Larne has enough individuals with the necessary enthusiasm and commitment that collectively they can achieve this task.