

# BANBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN



May 2016

**AECOM**

Department for  
**Communities**  
[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

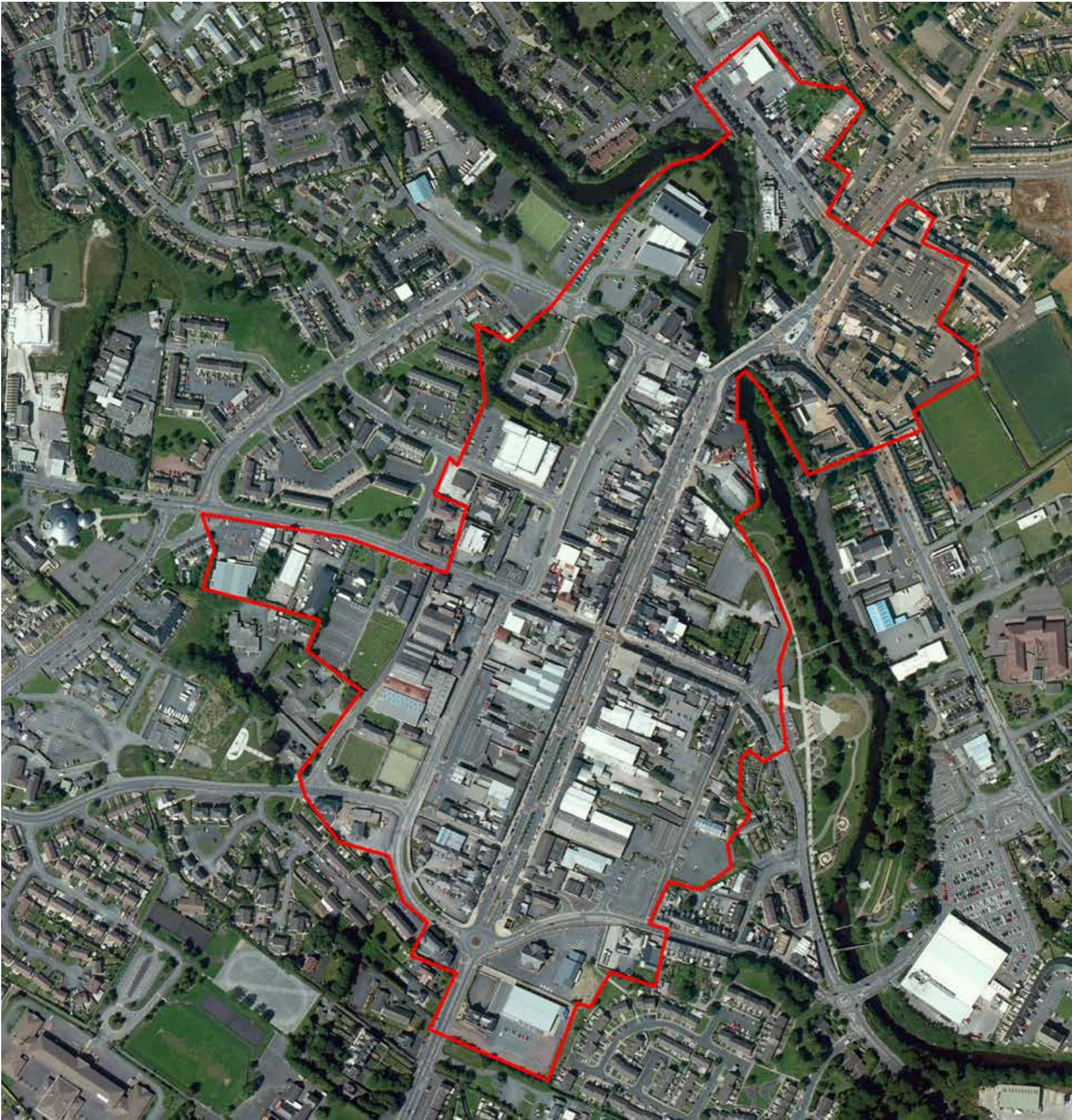
**Armagh City  
Banbridge  
& Craigavon  
Borough Council**

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\*In the concluding stages of the project the names of departments have changed in the reorganised government structure. For more information see <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/topics/your-executive/government-departments>

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**Banbridge Town Centre Boundary -  
The Study Area**

# 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Banbridge Masterplan is to set out the vision and associated action plan for the next 15 years for Banbridge Town Centre. The Masterplan will provide a framework for the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration initiatives in the town centre. Whilst the wider context of the settlement has been considered, the town centre is the geographical focus of the study.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, in association with the Department for Communities (DfC) as funding partner, commissioned AECOM in June 2015 to lead the multi-disciplinary team and prepare the masterplan. The consultancy assignment was completed by 31st March 2016 leaving a robust plan that can be taken forward.

The Masterplan process has four key stages:

**STAGE 1: Preparation, information gathering and analysis**

**STAGE 2: Visioning and strategic planning**







**STAGE 3: Design**

**STAGE 4: Implementation**

Overleaf are a range of aspirational images expressing the breadth of issues the Masterplan will address.

## Project structure

The consultancy team comprised the following organisations:

Organisation	Role
AECOM 	Lead consultants, town planning, urban design
Roderick MacLean Associates <small>Roderick MacLean Associates Ltd Planning &amp; Development Consultancy</small>	Retail survey
NEMS 	Market Research – Telephone survey
Experian 	Retail capacity
FM Research – Fiona Norman 	Footfall Survey
Steering Group  	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and DfC representatives



Example of Living Over The Shops (LOTS) and ground floor cafe culture



Example of a thriving arts and events culture



Example of town centre office development



Banbridge as the Gateway to the Mourne

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Banbridge was historically developed along the River Bann, however the local town is uniquely positioned in a key location, supporting local County Down and Armagh small towns and villages such as Dromore, Tandragee, Gilford, Loughbrickland and Poyntzpass, as well as being situated on the Belfast-Dublin corridor with direct access to the A1-M1 motorway. This marks Banbridge as another potential 'pearl in the chain' along this vital connection between the North and South of Ireland.



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Historical research of Banbridge highlighted the development of the town over the eighteenth century when a bridge was built over the River Bann in 1712, facilitating the development of an extensive linen industry and bleaching yards along the river. Other outstanding historical features of the town are most notably, the Cut, built in 1834 by William Dargan to allow the passage of coaches and other vehicles through the town, avoiding the steep hill, and the Downshire Arms Hotel, built in 1816 and still in use today. The town's built heritage is one of its great strengths.





First Presbyterian Non-Subscribing Church, Banbridge

## PLANNING CONTEXT

A review of regional planning policy (RDS 2035) identifies Banbridge as a main hub with a good quality natural and built environment, excellent sports and leisure facilities, an abundance of parks and open spaces and a robust telecommunications infrastructure. Banbridge is therefore expected to continue to have a key role as an important retail and commercial centre within the cluster and to benefit from its strategic location on the Belfast to Dublin Corridor.

The Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 identified twelve development opportunity sites within the town centre boundary of Banbridge, as well as designating the centre as an Area of Townscape Character (ATC). Furthermore, the Bann River corridor is also identified as a Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA), which emphasises the important features that contribute to environmental quality in the area and should be preserved in the interests of conservation. This also includes the recently developed Solitude Park, which is identified as being of important local amenity.

Other important contextual documents were also referenced in the research; the previous Banbridge Development Strategy 2008-2015 and the Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Regeneration and Development Strategy 2015-2020.





## 3. KEY ISSUES

The Stage 1 phase of the Banbridge Town Centre Masterplan involved a range of various types of research carried out on the town. They included:

- Planning context – historical, policy
- Planning history
- Land use survey
- Socio-economic profiling
- Environmental quality and heritage assessment
- Town Centre Health Check
- Retail Capacity Study
- Tourism Assessment
- Transport and Movement Assessment
- Public consultation and stakeholder engagement.



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## PLANNING HISTORY

Desktop research of the planning history in Banbridge town centre listed substantial current and granted planning applications from 2005-2015. The research showed a range of mixed use development applications within the town centre that if implemented would increase the amount of office accommodation, retail and commercial units, and particularly residential accommodation on the upper floors in the town centre, that has the potential to improve town centre vitality.

## SOCIO ECONOMIC PROFILE

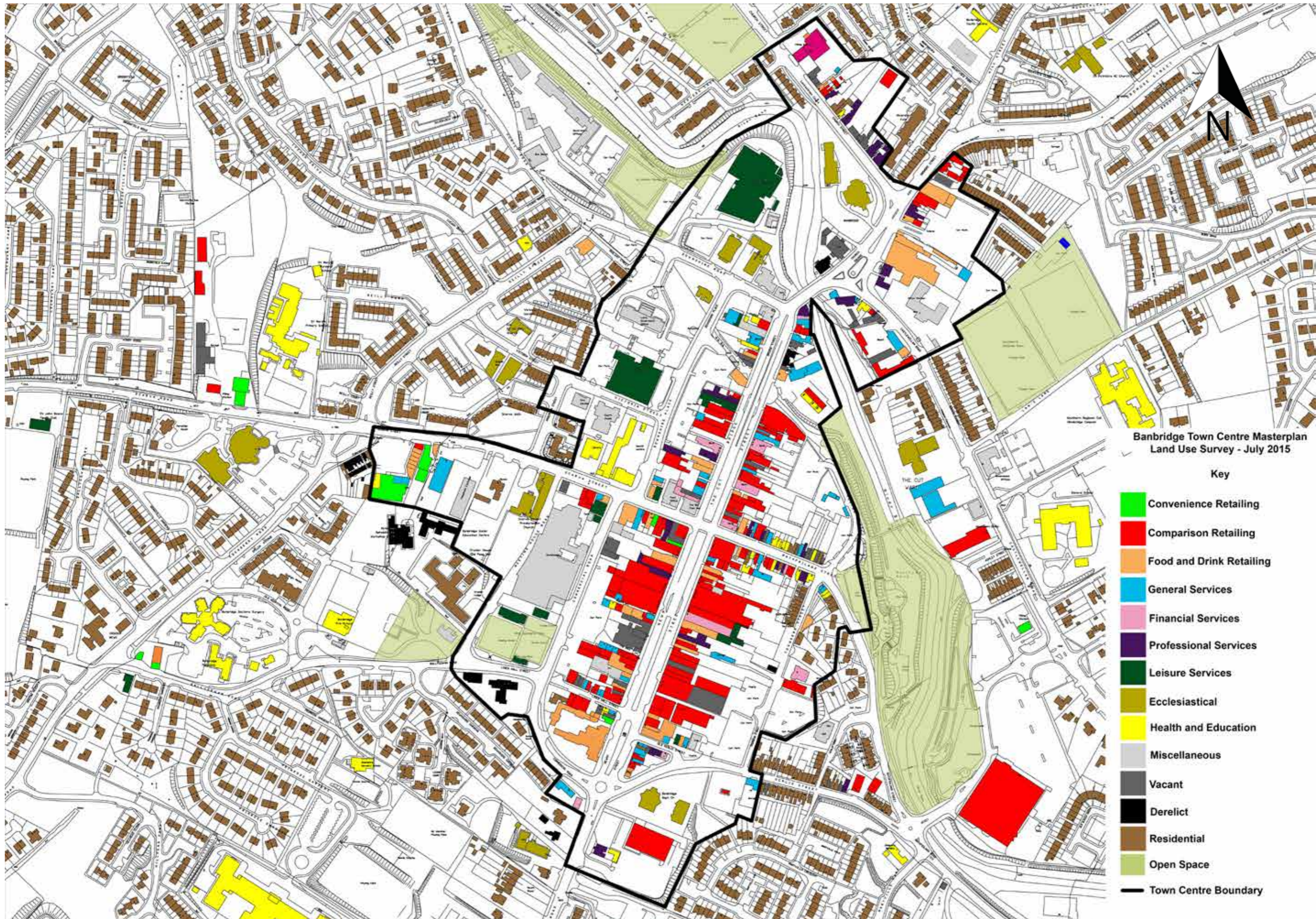
A profile of the Banbridge Super-Output Areas was compiled in order to comprehensively understand the socio-economic demographics and Multiple Deprivation Measures of the area. There are seven Super Output Areas (The Cut, Banbridge West, Edenderry, Seapatrick, Fort, Ballydown 1 and Ballydown 2) which take into account the environs of the settlement and provide more detailed and accurate data. The following key points were noted:

- The total resident population of the Banbridge Super Output Areas is 17033, with a total of 977 households of an average size of 2.46 people.
- In terms of crime rates, educational attainment and deprivation measures, The Cut SOA is ranked significantly more highly than the surrounding wards. There is a clear disparity between The Cut and Ballydown 1 and Ballydown 2 in particular, which exhibit the lowest rankings across the board. This is particularly clear with regards to living environment, employment deprivation and health deprivation.
- The Cut SOA is ranked relatively highly in relation to crime and disorder in comparison to the other Banbridge SOA's and in reference to Northern Ireland.

## LAND USE SURVEY

A land use survey of the primary ground floor and upper floor uses within Banbridge Town Centre was conducted, and identified the following observations:

- Vacancy and dereliction rates appear to be low in comparison to other towns of a similar scale in Northern Ireland;
- Diverse mix of uses within the town centre core which adds to the vitality of the town centre;
- There is a strong independent trader presence in the town;
- The western portion of the town centre is currently being dominated by the industrial seed facility and health site. Scope for growth towards this area (Scarva Street & Commercial Road).



## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

A street-by-street analysis of the environmental quality of Banbridge Town Centre was carried out, which considered the following elements:

- General appearance and atmosphere
- General quality of public realm
- Negative elements (litter, graffiti, vandalism)
- Green spaces and planting
- Linkages and usable civic spaces.

The environmental assessment highlighted the presence of several 'laneways' which if further enhanced could greatly improve pedestrian movement and accessibility through the town centre. Areas of architectural quality were noted, as well as pinpointing key access points into Banbridge and examples of good public realm treatment, such as at Solitude Park and Rathfriland Street.

Other issues such as vacancy, congestion spots, unauthorised parking, dead end streets and areas where public realm improvements were required were taken into consideration to inform the overall SWOT analysis and provided key actions for the masterplan itself.



## TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK

A town centre health check of Banbridge was carried out to assess the vitality and viability of the town centre and to provide a baseline position against which to measure future changes over the period of the Banbridge Masterplan. A range of surveys were carried out as part of the health check (see relevant appendices):

- Household telephone interviews;
- Town centre street shopper/visitor surveys;
- Business occupier surveys;
- Pedestrian flow counts.

Key findings of the Town Centre Health Check were as follows:

- Banbridge has a lower proportion of convenience retail units and a lower proportion of comparison units than most other town centres. It has the highest proportion of non-retail services.
- The vacancy rate is the lowest (13%), which is a strong point.
- Around 38% of comparison shopping expenditure is retained in the Banbridge primary catchment, with most going to other destinations.
- Banbridge has a fairly low representation of chain stores for its size, at 20%, which is lower than other comparator towns. Thus, the town is very dependent on the fortunes of its independent retail sector.



## RETAIL CAPACITY STUDY

A retail capacity study was also carried out to indicate the broad extent of retail floorspace that could be supported in Banbridge in the future. The study included a review of the existing provision of leisure facilities, including the wider hospitality and evening economy in Banbridge, identifying any gaps and potential for improvement.

Some of the key findings from the Retail and Leisure Capacity Study were as follows:

- There is almost no forecast for spare convenience capacity in Banbridge over the next ten years. The findings suggest support for upgrades to the quality and range of the convenience retail offer in the town centre, but not material increases in the floorspace.
- In the street interview survey in the town centre, 91% of the respondents did not intend to visit the Outlet Centre. These findings suggest that the Outlet Centre does not compete strongly with the town centre for shopping.
- There were a spectrum of ranges (available in the appendix) that suggest at the high level there is potential spare comparison capacity of some £6 million by 2020, rising to nearly £29 million by 2025, over and above the existing planning commitments. This would support the equivalent indicative town centre floorspace of up to 5,800 sq m net over the next ten years.
- The evening economy in Banbridge does not appear to be engaging more than half the population, but those who do visit engage in a wide variety of leisure related activities.
- The review suggests that there are no major gaps in the leisure sector in Banbridge. The main issue is to achieve improvements to the town centre environment, shopping, quality improvements in the offer, attract more visitors and promote it more as a destination. (see detailed appendix).

## TOURISM ASSESSMENT

The tourism assessment considered the overall connectivity of Banbridge, as well as the overall tourism policy context, while considering the overall attractions, activities and accommodation provision in the area. The assessment identified three distinct roles for tourism in Banbridge:

- A gateway to the Mourne
- The historical influence of river and the linen trade
- Banbridge as a retail attraction including The Outlet

The study identified a lack of amenities and facilities to fulfil the above tourism roles (see detailed appendix).

## TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT ASSESSMENT

The transportation assessment considered issues such as public transport, parking, as well as movement for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle users. Some of the key conclusions were as follows:

- Issues with parking within the town centre can lead to congestion caused by circulation of traffic
- Review required of traffic management arrangements at Bridge Street/ Scarva Street / Rathfriland Road / Newry Street to improve pedestrian crossing facilities
- Imbalance of parking – most desirable parking locations free, less desirable currently charged
- Introduce cycle / footpath connecting Solitude Park to Leisure Centre.

## BANBRIDGE - ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Banbridge has a population of approximately 16,000 and has a strong sense of place as an historic market town. It is strategically located on the main transportation route (the A1) between the two biggest cities in Ireland, Belfast and Dublin. It is a major centre for housing, employment, retail and professional services, education, health care, cultural activities, sport and leisure. Given its location and attractiveness it is a popular place to live. As a town it is characterised by an almost unique offering of a wide range of independent businesses and facilities for residents and visitors. The study findings have confirmed the perception that the town is relatively balanced and robust with significant potential to be more sustainable and offering opportunities for securing future development.

The morphology of the town is also somewhat unique, its character has been formed by the river that gives the town its name and the drumlin topography that shapes the hinterland.

It has:

- A distinct and compact core with development focused and orientated on a north/south axis.
- Distinct character areas within the core defined by topography and the green river corridor.
- A defined change in the urban grain between the core area, along the historic route and crossroads and the outer areas of modern housing development.

Over the past 10 years and partly based on the strategies commissioned by Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon District Council 'Banbridge A Vision for the Future' and the 'Banbridge Development Strategy 2008 -2015', there has been a significant and visible

improvement in the town centre based on public and private sector investment and focused on environmental improvements, support for the independent retail sector, marketing and promotion and co-coordinating the efforts and resources of stakeholders through a successful town centre management company initiative.

### **The town however continues to face a number of significant challenges.**

- The 'centre of gravity' of the town is focused on Newry Street giving the town centre a 'one street feel'.
- The changing economic climate and the loss of some independent traders replaced by low cost and charity shops.
- An introverted town centre with limited pedestrian linkages and somewhat undefined gate ways and 'frayed' edges.
- The unattractive and underused back-land sites, some of which overlook the river.
- The town has turned its back on the river Bann leading to a lack of development along the river corridor
- A weak, badly managed night- time economy and poor evening economy has resulted in 'pockets' of antisocial behaviour
- Banbridge faces stiff competition from established centres.

A fundamental issue raised in the terms of reference was the need for Banbridge to retain its competitive edge and further improve its distinctive retail and service offer in a way that ensures that Banbridge continues to thrive and offer a wide range of facilities, interests and quality environments.

## **SUMMARY**

In light of the extensive consultation and analysis carried out, several key themes were apparent. These have been taken forward to inform the key concepts and objectives of the masterplan:

- Car parking issues;
- Traffic/congestion;
- Retail vacancy;
- Leisure facility development;
- Connectivity with the river;
- Lack of pedestrian space;
- Tourism provision;
- Town centre green space development;
- Café culture creation;
- Gateway/sense of welcome to Banbridge;
- The Cut as a key heritage feature;
- Housing allocation in development opportunity sites.



# 4. CONSULTATION

The cornerstone of the Banbridge Masterplan Process has been consultation. The multi-disciplinary consultancy team engaged in a wide variety of consultation methods and received feedback from the key stakeholders both statutory and community throughout the process.

## Consultation assisted the study process in two ways:

- it helped provide a baseline of what Banbridge has to offer and what its future needs are
- it assisted in developing a shared vision and concept of how Banbridge might be in 2030.

The detailed Stakeholder engagement plan is contained within the appendix of this report. However the following key building blocks made up the engagement strategy;

- **Surveys** – with householders, town centre shoppers, local business surveys and pedestrians were counted
- **Workshops** - Business and Local Societies, Statutory Bodies & Council, Churches, Education and Community
- **Ministerial Launch** of Public Consultation and Questionnaire
- **Council presentations**
- **Individual meetings** – councillors and statutory bodies
- **Regeneration Company** meetings
- **Open House** Events
- **Steering Group** Meetings

Noted below and overleaf are the key outcomes from the consultation process:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This plan for Banbridge centre could be realised in tandem with the ongoing preparation of the new statutory plan</li> <li>• Diverse range of food and unique offering as well as the more mainstream offering at The Outlet. Explore the link between both</li> <li>• Comber is a good example for Banbridge to follow</li> <li>• Banbridge is very welcoming however there is a need to improve the welcome from the A1</li> <li>• High quality existing and proposed housing developments</li> <li>• Commercial Road is a convenient area for people to park and shop. This is what people need and want</li> <li>• Banbridge has a good sense of community. It is a harmonious and safe place to live</li> <li>• Retail offering is as good as you will find in any town in NI</li> <li>• Shop fronts have benefitted from recent investment and are in good condition however there is room for improvement</li> <li>• New coffee shop at Downshire roundabout is a great asset. More of this type of facility would benefit the town</li> <li>• Banbridge feels like a safe town</li> <li>• The town is accessible – people want to live here. It could be considered an area of wealth – a commuter town which 5000 leave from each morning</li> <li>• Independent nature of shops is a major strength however some business is leaking to neighbouring centres such as Newry</li> <li>• Wildlife – otters have been spotted along the River Bann corridor</li> <li>• River Bann is a strong asset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town is not promoted to its potential</li> <li>• Lack of physical police presence in town</li> <li>• There is not enough car parking spaces and some of it is in the wrong place</li> <li>• Too many vacant units in the Outlet – it is believed it could be in the region of 26%</li> <li>• No physical connection to The Mourne despite trying to brand itself as the gateway to The Mourne</li> <li>• Leisure facilities are always operating at capacity</li> <li>• Working with council to access land has been difficult</li> <li>• Once in town no punctuation – no small squares or green space to enjoy</li> <li>• Need new housing in the town – either new build or living above shops</li> <li>• Stronger community presence in the past – slight deterioration potentially down to lack of funding in recent years</li> <li>• Poverty still exists in Banbridge. It is better than the NI average but we can't forget it exists in some parts of the town</li> <li>• Food banks opening up and debt queries still high</li> <li>• Design Compendium should include secure by design principles</li> <li>• There is a lack of shops for men</li> <li>• Newry Street has many large vacant units</li> <li>• Cycling on the towpath is a great idea however it creates conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.</li> <li>• Traffic congestion in Church Square creates an unsafe environment</li> <li>• Linenhall street – reconnect this street with the rest of the town</li> <li>• Huntley Road link to Lurgan Road has been mooted for almost 30 years yet no delivery</li> <li>• Areas of litter/dog mess – not enough dog bins</li> </ul>



OPPORTUNITIES		THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The link road in the area plan between Ballygowan Road and Newry Road – will it ever happen?</li> <li>• Create a leisure/cinema/restaurant area</li> <li>• A1 Corridor – 25,000 cars a day. Banbridge needs to exploit this huge resource on its doorstep</li> <li>• High quality existing and proposed housing developments</li> <li>• Build on the strong sports heritage and culture within the town with the potential multi-purpose use of facilities</li> <li>• Offer incentives to shop owners to invest in their properties</li> <li>• Brookfield House is listed and has TPOs. Great potential for this estate to be developed into an attraction</li> <li>• “Cut” as important as the Bann – currently car dominated. Need to think about options to reduce flow</li> <li>• Ensure the library links to the wider developments</li> <li>• More laneways into shopping area, such as Jingler’s Court and The Mall</li> <li>• Banbridge has a Growing evening economy. There is need to further develop this</li> <li>• To promote the River Bann’s heritage and to provide a coffee dock</li> <li>• Park and Ride scheme could be introduced on A1</li> <li>• The River Bann should provide a sporting opportunity</li> <li>• River and green corridor is under utilised</li> <li>• Architectural – Heritage can be promoted</li> <li>• The temporary use of buildings and spaces should be considered for derelict sites</li> <li>• Temporary uses on the Tesco site should be explored prior to potential reuse of land</li> <li>• Develop a heritage trail around the town, based on the Cut which was the first of its kind</li> <li>• Office accommodation needed in the town centre to attract businesses into the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14 development opportunity sites – vacant lands could be developed for offices. This requires a more active role from DfC and Council to deliver these sites</li> <li>• Masterplan can provide cover for CPO sites</li> <li>• New planning powers means Council can compel owners to make better use of their properties and remove eyesores</li> <li>• 176 on waiting list in Housing stream, 50 units – next 5 years, 33 Clanmil. Demonstrates need for social housing</li> <li>• Living over the shops – single males need accommodation in the town</li> <li>• Opportunities for those on low incomes</li> <li>• Young people – designing out crime, whole place needs improved</li> <li>• Perception that Solitude park is unsafe not backed up by crime figures</li> <li>• Link Banbridge to Gilford and onto Scarva – could expand to Madden Road – connecting into the wider Newry Canal route</li> <li>• Old Police station – need to make a difference as a key heritage building in Banbridge</li> <li>• Better balance between involvement of independents and national traders – finite expenditure</li> <li>• Outside Seapatrick church – could do a scheme to make more of the heritage in this area</li> <li>• Collaboration with the community is key to achieving realisation of the Masterplan</li> <li>• Newry Road – 22 acre site for sale. This is a massive opportunity for Banbridge</li> <li>• Rugby club – new pitch and they need another one. Potential to relocate and create another large development site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We cannot rest on our laurels. If the town is not marketed it will decline. It is important to allocate funds to this area</li> <li>• Too many vacant units in the Outlet - 26% vacancy</li> <li>• Not enough leisure facilities. People may start using facilities in other towns meaning a loss of potential custom</li> <li>• Parking and access in general is holding back Banbridge from further flourishing</li> <li>• Funding and budget cuts</li> <li>• Crime figures are obscure. Despite the figures Banbridge is safe at night. Figures may be exaggerated due to Saturday night life</li> <li>• Congestion and poor access is throttling business</li> <li>• Traffic – people driving round in circles creating further congestion because they have nowhere to park</li> <li>• Redundancy of landmark buildings</li> <li>• Roundabout at Downshire is a serious road safety issue</li> <li>• Local cinema is expensive and dated, but if lost would be detrimental to town.</li> <li>• Scarva Road very dangerous, small footpaths, cycling dangerous – route to towpath needed</li> <li>• Flood plain out to Castlewellaan Road but measures can be employed to protect the town</li> </ul>



## WHO ARE WE?

AECOM are the lead consultants who have been appointed by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council in association with The Department for Social Development to prepare a Town Centre Masterplan for Banbridge. AECOM are a multi-disciplinary company and we have planners, engineers, landscape architects, urban designers, retail specialists and transportation consultants who are all engaged on the Banbridge Masterplan project.

## WHAT IS A TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN AND WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The Masterplan is an evidence based document that sets out the strategic vision for Banbridge over the next 15 years. The Masterplan aims to put forward many project options that have the potential to transform the current town into a more vibrant, high quality and fully integrated settlement. The process is achieved through the following stages:

We are currently working on Stage 1, which involves gathering as much information as possible on the local issues within the town.

## HOW WILL IT IMPACT YOU?

In April 2015, Local Government Reform took place. Local Councils are now responsible for planning, community planning, economic and community development. DSD are still responsible for urban regeneration however this function will also transfer in the near future. This means that your local council staff and elected members will be responsible for the implementation and management of these functions. The Masterplan will provide a framework for the new council on the promotion, timing and implementation of urban regeneration initiatives within Banbridge. Projects identified within the Masterplan may find it easier to justify and acquire funding support.

## WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO UNDERSTAND FROM YOU...

Local knowledge is critical to help form the basis of our analysis of Banbridge. We would be keen to hear your opinions on the following issues:

- **Retail** – Quality, Amount, What's missing?
- **Traffic / Transport** – Parking, Public Transport, Pedestrian Links, Cycling, How is the town performing in these areas?
- **Environment** – Quality, Attractiveness, Ease of movement, Buildings, Security
- **Tourism / Recreation** – Leisure (Indoor, Outdoor), Entertainment - what's missing?
- **Community** – Facilities (Family, youth, children) - what's missing?
- **Residential** – Quality, Type, Proximity to services - would intervention help?
- **Business / Enterprise** – Current facilities / what opportunities exist for start-ups?
- **Image / Promotion** – Events, marketing - what's good and what more can be done?
- **Identification of Opportunity Sites** – Vacant / under used land / buildings – Please let us know of any land or sites which you feel should be considered for future development / or any proposals which you might have for these sites.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If you cannot attend one of our workshops please complete the attached questionnaire and return via one of the methods below. We appreciate your time, it will make a difference!

Email: [ian.turkington@aecom.com](mailto:ian.turkington@aecom.com)

Post: Banbridge Masterplan  
AECOM  
Beechill House,  
Beechill Road,  
Belfast,  
BT8 7RP

Phone: 02890 705111

WORKSHOP	DATE
Councillors and Staff, Statutory Bodies	15th October 2pm
Businesses, Clubs and Societies	13th October 6pm
Education, Churches and Youth	15th October 6pm

\*Workshops to be held in Banbridge Civic Building

## BANBRIDGE THEN:



## BANBRIDGE BY 2030:





## **CONSULTATION - CONCLUSION**

The direct result of such wholesale engagement is that the vision and action plan stems directly from the consultation process. A summary of all the consultation meetings is recorded in the appendix attached to the main report. In conclusion it can be stated that the proposals contained within the Masterplan are wholeheartedly supported by the overwhelming number of contributors.



Images from the launch of the 12 week public consultation process

## **5. THE VISION FOR BANBRIDGE**

**Following the Stage 1 Research and Analysis stage, the following vision statement and objectives were formulated:**

*“In 2030, Banbridge will have a flourishing and healthy town centre backed up by its high proportion of local independent businesses and supported by the introduction of some larger stores that have added value to an already varied retail offering.*

*Banbridge’s evening economy will have grown and diversified. It will be a town that offers a rich evening café and restaurant culture to complement its strong range of evening entertainment.*

*New life will have been breathed into brownfield areas, bringing alive residential developments, office space and other mixed use sites.*

*This balanced town centre will be sustained by its loyal local customer base providing for all as well as opening the door to the wider region by enticing people to Banbridge’s unique experience, attractions and welcoming atmosphere.*

*The town centre will be similarly accessible for pedestrians and vehicles alike, promoted by the high quality environment, suitable parking provision, public spaces and key buildings and facilities.*

*Banbridge will have built upon its excellent geographic location on the River Bann and the A1 strategic road, its heritage, its ambience and its high quality urban environment to become the true ‘star’ of County Down and a prime destination of choice to visit, invest and live”.*

## ARRIVING AT THE VISION

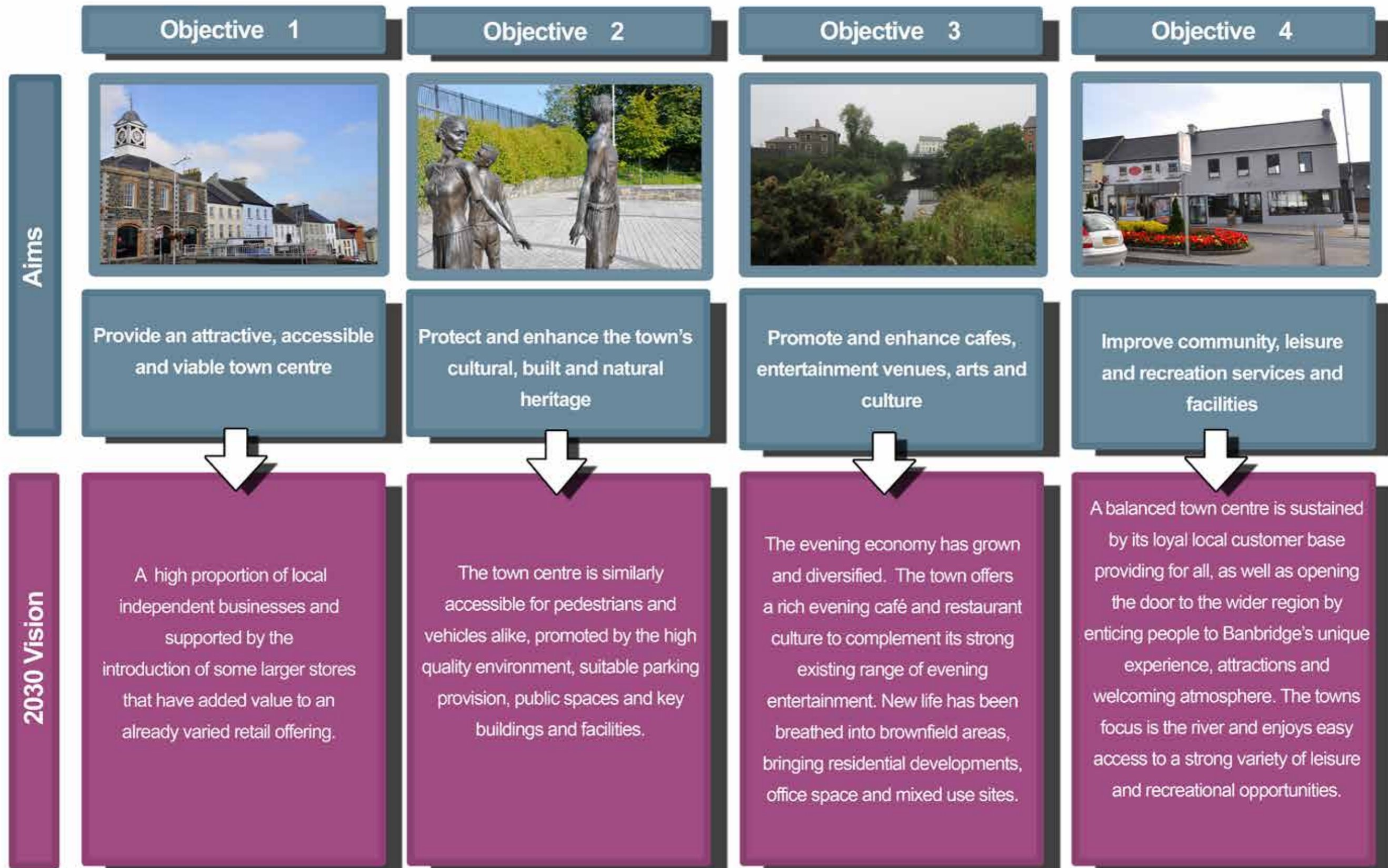
Following the in-depth desktop and on-site research, as well as the extensive consultation and stakeholder engagement exercises, a strategic vision has been developed which encapsulates the findings of the research and expresses the future aims for Banbridge by 2030. This has then been further distilled down into realisable objectives which can be readily implemented through various schemes, projects and initiatives. This chapter addresses those objectives according to five key themes which are directly linked back to the corresponding issues.



# REGENERATION OBJECTIVES

- **Objective 1 – Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre**
- **Objective 2 – Protect and enhance the town’s cultural, built and natural heritage**
- **Objective 3 – Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy**
- **Objective 4 – Improve community, leisure and recreation services and facilities**

# REALISING THE OBJECTIVES



Key Initiatives

Objective 1

- Connecting the existing river side walks through the town centre
- Aesthetic improvements to building frontages
- Reinvigorating vacant and derelict properties and sites
- Promoting the diversity and quality of the retail offer
- Consolidating and organising the existing car parking.



Objective 2

- Revitalising historic buildings
- Defining the historic character of the streets
- Promoting the River Bann
- Promotion and marketing of town events



Objective 3

- Introduce a new Street Hierarchy to bring life to back streets
- Promote cultural areas to take advantage of existing architectural and historical heritage.



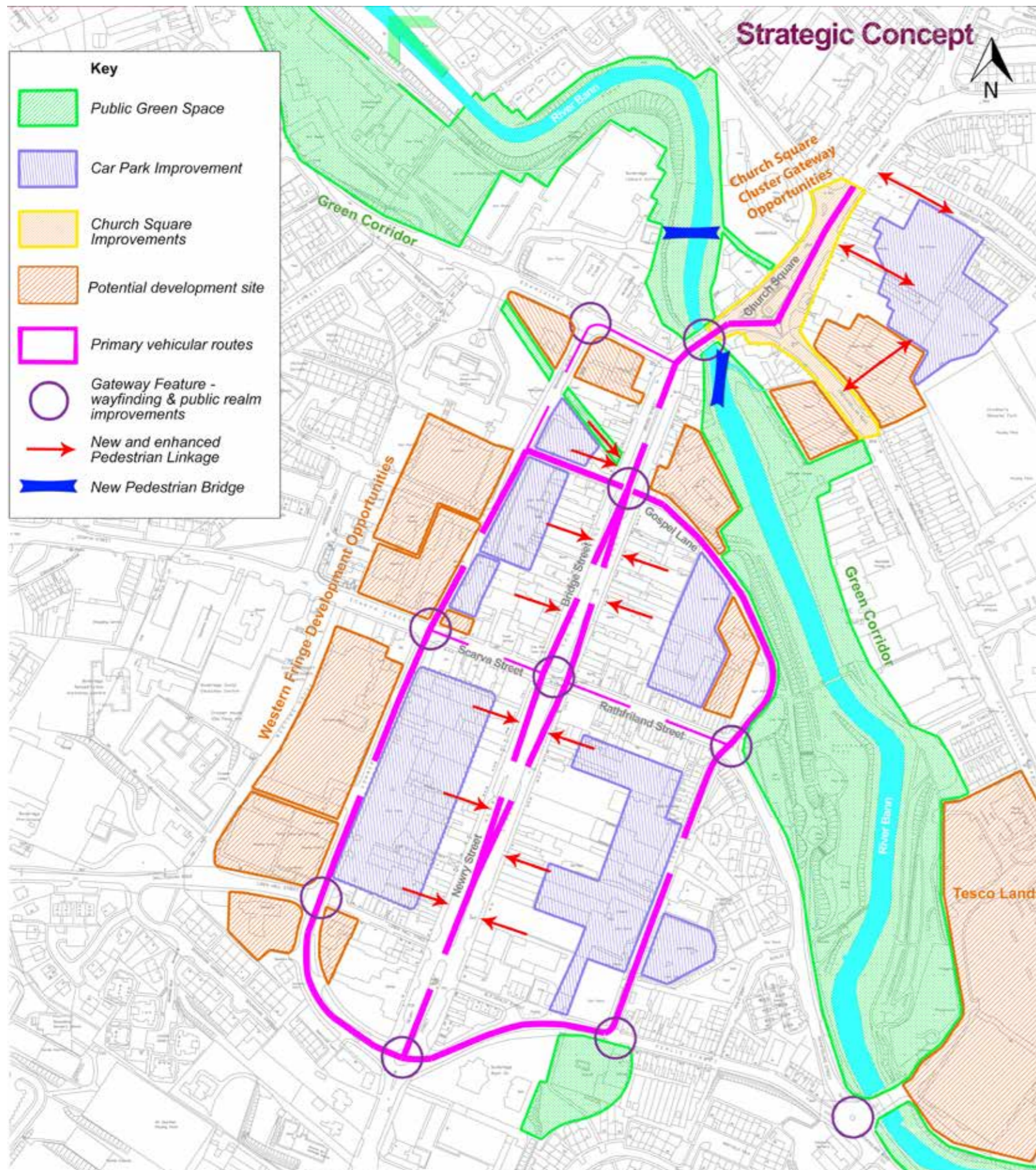
Objective 4

- Unlocking the river frontage to focus on new development and walkways along the river corridor
- Providing new footbridge access to create a continuous river greenway
- Opportunity sites exist at key points on the river
- Relocation of the tennis courts and bowling green





# STRATEGIC CONCEPT



The purpose of the Masterplan is to provide Banbridge with an integrated and robust plan for the next 15 years. The individual proposals and projects all tie into a strategic context and are therefore inter-related. The five key themes of:

- Green spaces and places
- Gateways and linkages
- Development potential
- Creating future infrastructure
- Town wide initiatives

These are not stand alone sectors, rather they provide a framework that addresses the needs of the town across the spectrum. The green corridor of the Bann helps frame the town's position and extending this will allow greater connectivity and accessibility to the river. The town core is protected and strengthened in the masterplan building on Banbridge's success with regard to low occupancy and high numbers of independent traders, with enhanced pedestrian linkage being a high priority. The peripheral roads network provides opportunity itself for improved access whilst the lands on the edges of the town offer great development opportunity. The component parts of the plan therefore come together to provide a rounded vision for the period up to 2030.



# 6. MASTERPLAN PROPOSALS

The Masterplan is designed to achieve the vision and regeneration objectives presented in the previous chapter. The projects and initiatives detailed within the Masterplan are the physical manifestation of these objectives. Over the next 15 years as individual projects are implemented by various stakeholders, the exciting vision for Banbridge should begin to take shape to both enhance and maintain Banbridge as a thriving town and destination.

The comprehensive range of projects has been collectively grouped into five key themes. Chapter 6 addresses each theme in greater detail. Proposals relating to improving the tourism offering/ infrastructure are integrated within the five key themes.

The themes are:

- Green Spaces and Places**
- Gateways and Linkages**
- Development Potential**
- Creating Future Infrastructure**
- Town Wide and Tourism Initiatives**



Development Potential



Gateways

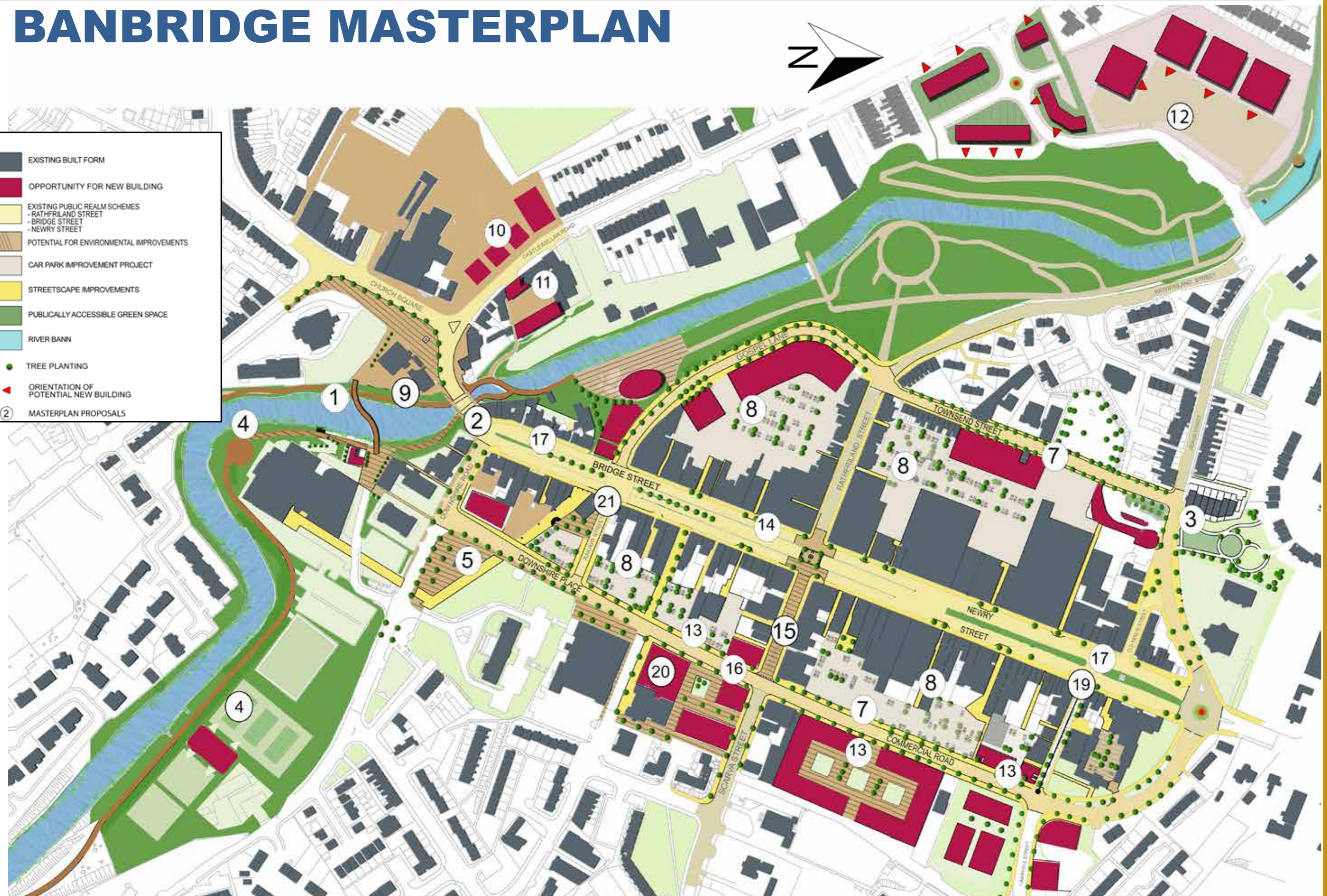


Linkages - Example of Greenway

# BANBRIDGE MASTERPLAN



- EXISTING BUILT FORM
- OPPORTUNITY FOR NEW BUILDING
- EXISTING PUBLIC REALM SCHEMES  
- RATHFRILAND STREET  
- BRIDGE STREET  
- NEWRY STREET
- POTENTIAL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS
- CAR PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
- STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS
- PUBLICALLY ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE
- RIVER BANN
- TREE PLANTING
- ORIENTATION OF POTENTIAL NEW BUILDING
- MASTERPLAN PROPOSALS

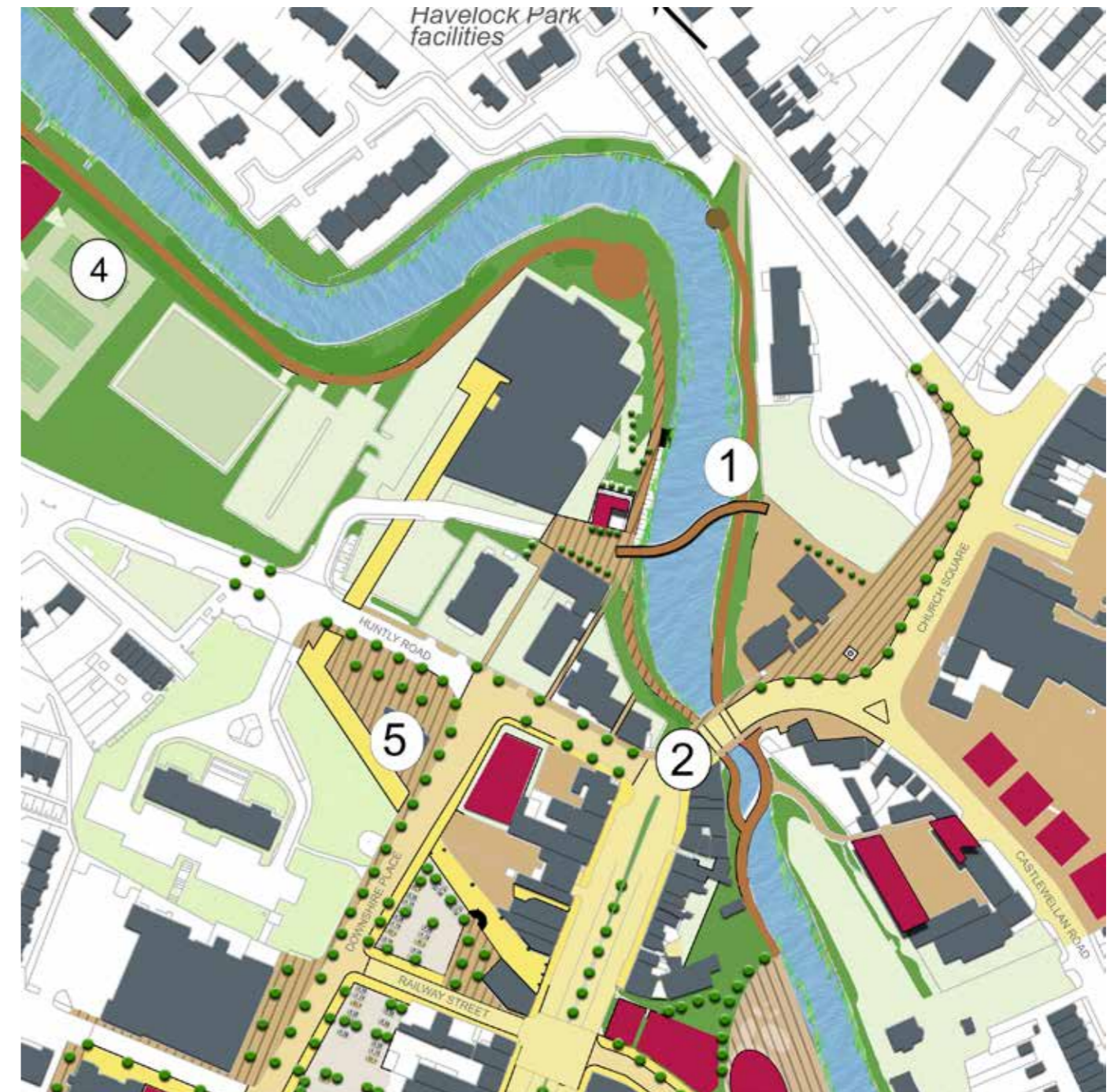


## Green Spaces and Places

Banbridge currently has an excellent provision of spaces and places for leisure and recreation activities whether it is for walking or watching an event at the amphitheatre in Solitude Park or enjoying sporting activities at the Leisure Centre. This process identified that the weaknesses in Banbridge were the connections between these facilities and spaces. Therefore the objective is to achieve a holistic and integrated approach to the spaces, places, and leisure and recreation facilities in the town. The proposal to achieve this is by creating linkages and connections between the key sites and is based on 5 key projects.

They are as follows:

1. **New footbridge linking the existing Riverside Walkway to Solitude Park**
2. **Boardwalks and secondary bridging point linking Riverside Walkway to Solitude Park for pedestrians and cyclists - incorporating a riverside plaza**
3. **New gateway park at Kenlis Street - see page 32**
4. **Relocation and rationalisation of Banbridge's leisure services to a single, multi-functional complex beside the river**
5. **New pedestrian and cycle linkage along the route of the former railway line – phase 1 of potential re-use of the line**



## Green Spaces and Places

### Precedent Images - inspiration for Banbridge



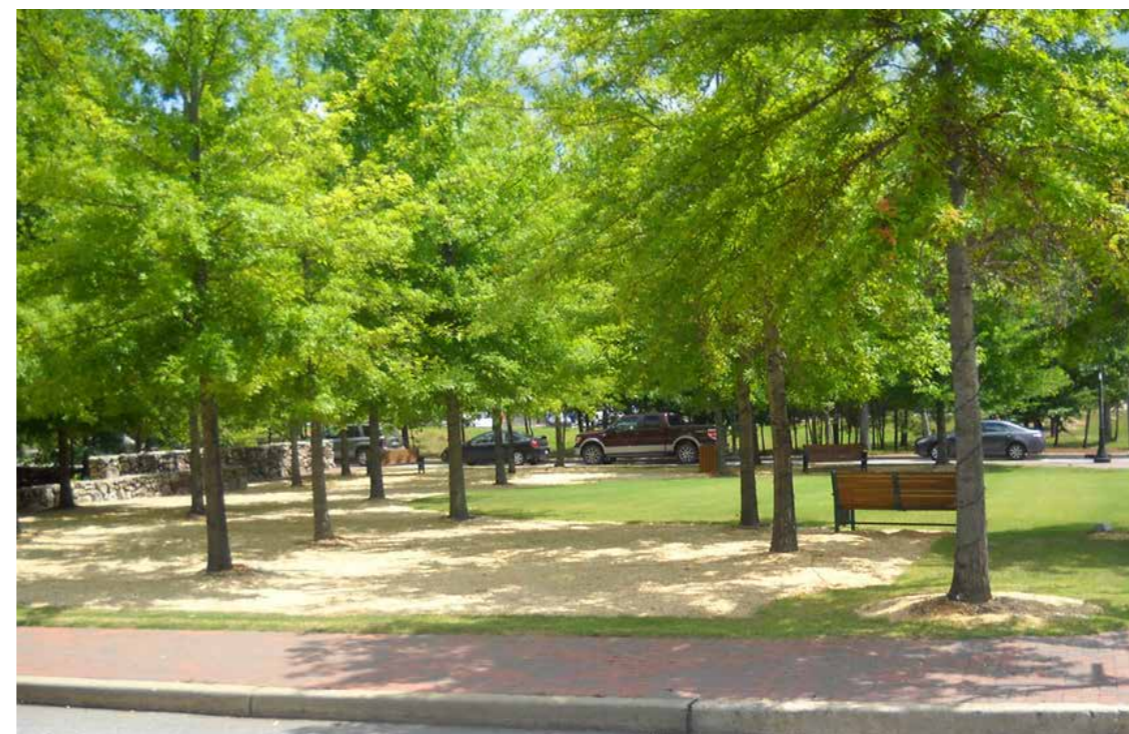
Access to the River



High quality riverside public realm



Example of pedestrian bridge



Urban pocket park

## Green Spaces and Places

### 1. New footbridge linking the existing Riverside Walkway to Solitude Park

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage
4	Improve community, leisure and recreation services and facilities

The River Bann is a valuable asset to Banbridge and in recent years, many new developments in the town have overlooked the connection with the river, both physically and visually. The aim is to form a network of connections that will bring life back to the river by connecting the Leisure Centre and walking route to Huntly Wood directly into Church Square and Solitude Park. This will create a fully integrated Riverside walk from Solitude Park to Huntly Wood for pedestrians and cyclists of approximately 2.5km in length. The footfall across the new footbridge will encourage frontage to the rear of the Leisure Centre that will embrace the River and also provide access to the rejuvenated Church Square heritage area.



Example of pedestrian footbridge



Visualisation showing proposed footbridge over the River Bann

## Green Spaces and Places

**2. Boardwalks and secondary bridging point linking Riverside Walkway to Solitude Park for pedestrians and cyclists - incorporating a riverside plaza**

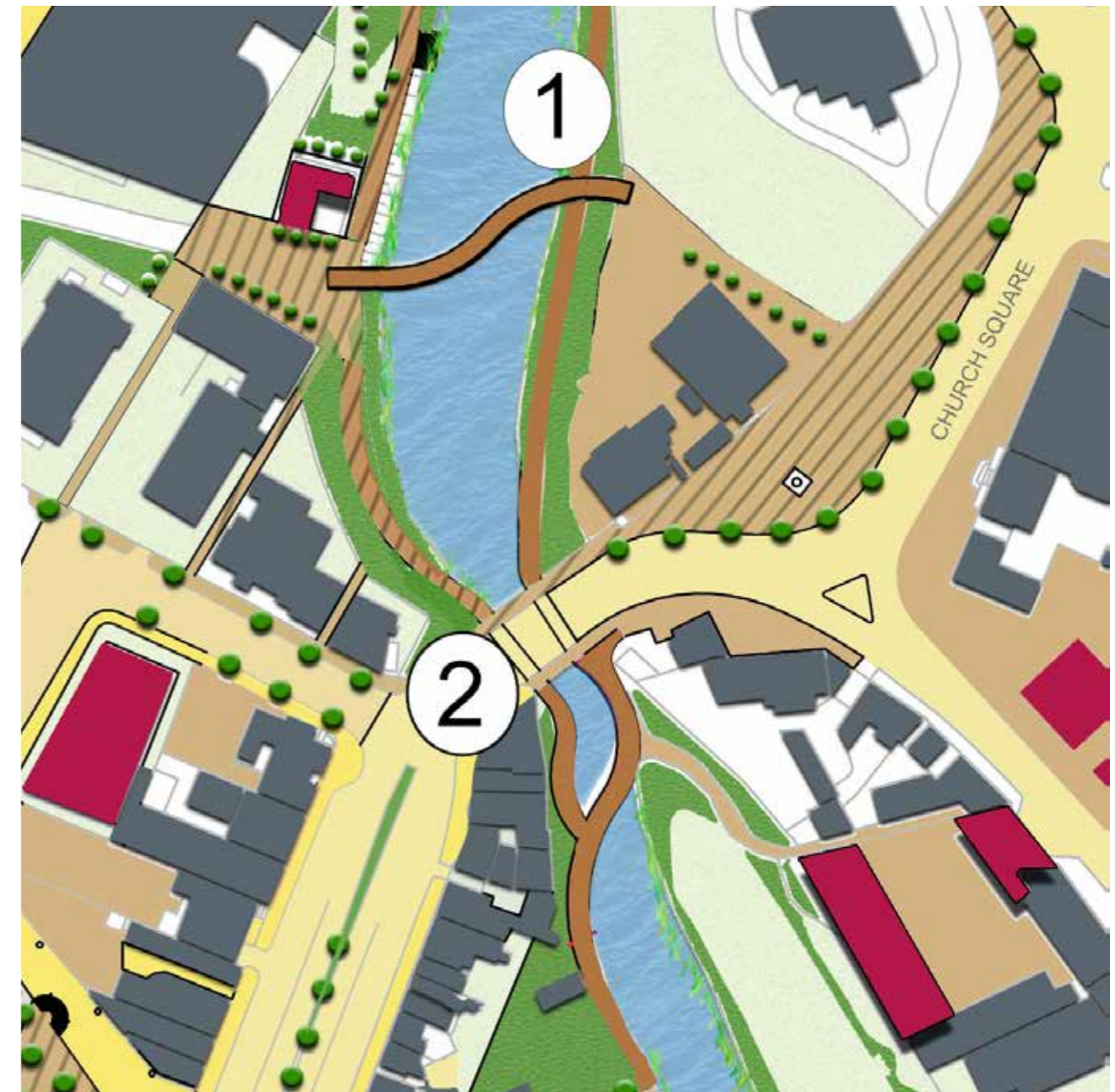
### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage
4	Improve community, leisure and recreation services and facilities

The aim is to form part of a network of connections that will bring life back to the river by connecting the Leisure Centre and walking route to Huntly Wood directly into Church Square and Solitude Park. This, in combination with project number 1 (new footbridge), will create a fully integrated Riverside walk from Solitude Park to Huntly Wood. It is envisaged that the boardwalk would be situated tight to the riverbank to enable it to pass under the existing road bridge.



Examples of riverside Boardwalks



## Green Spaces and Places

### 3. New gateway park at Kenlis Street

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy
4	Improve community, leisure and recreation services and facilities

The development of the new bus station on Kenlis Street will naturally create a new gateway for Banbridge. The Kenlis Street gateway park will create the first impression for visitors to the town, therefore it is important to create a feature that will enhance the experience. The development of a gateway park will have a secondary impact in that it will provide an attractive environment for the neighbouring residential properties, improving the residential amenity value of the area and a new linkage to the Town Centre.



### 4. Relocation and rationalisation of Banbridge's leisure services to a single, multi-functional complex

#### Relevant Objectives

3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy
4	Improve community, leisure and recreation services and facilities

A longer term strategic project is the relocation of the existing sports facilities at King George V Playing Fields, Commercial Road to create a consolidated facility. The Masterplan suggests that a suitable site would be the land located adjacent to the existing Leisure Centre (formerly Translink & NI Water). This would create capacity at the King George site on Commercial Road for future development purposes.



Construction of the new bus station



Banbridge Leisure Centre



## Green Spaces and Places

5. **New pedestrian and cycle linkage along the route of the former railway line – Phase 1 of potential re-use of the line.**

### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage
4	Improve community, leisure and recreation services and facilities

Creating a physical gateway to The Mournes is another strategic project to boost recreation and tourism potential for Banbridge and the wider area. The first phase proposes to open an initial section of the former County Down railway line which connected Banbridge to the South East Coast. This will act as a catalyst to encourage opening additional sections of the former line. The new linkage would be designed to cater for pedestrians and cyclists and forge a physical connection between the town centre and the Leisure Centre/River Bann.

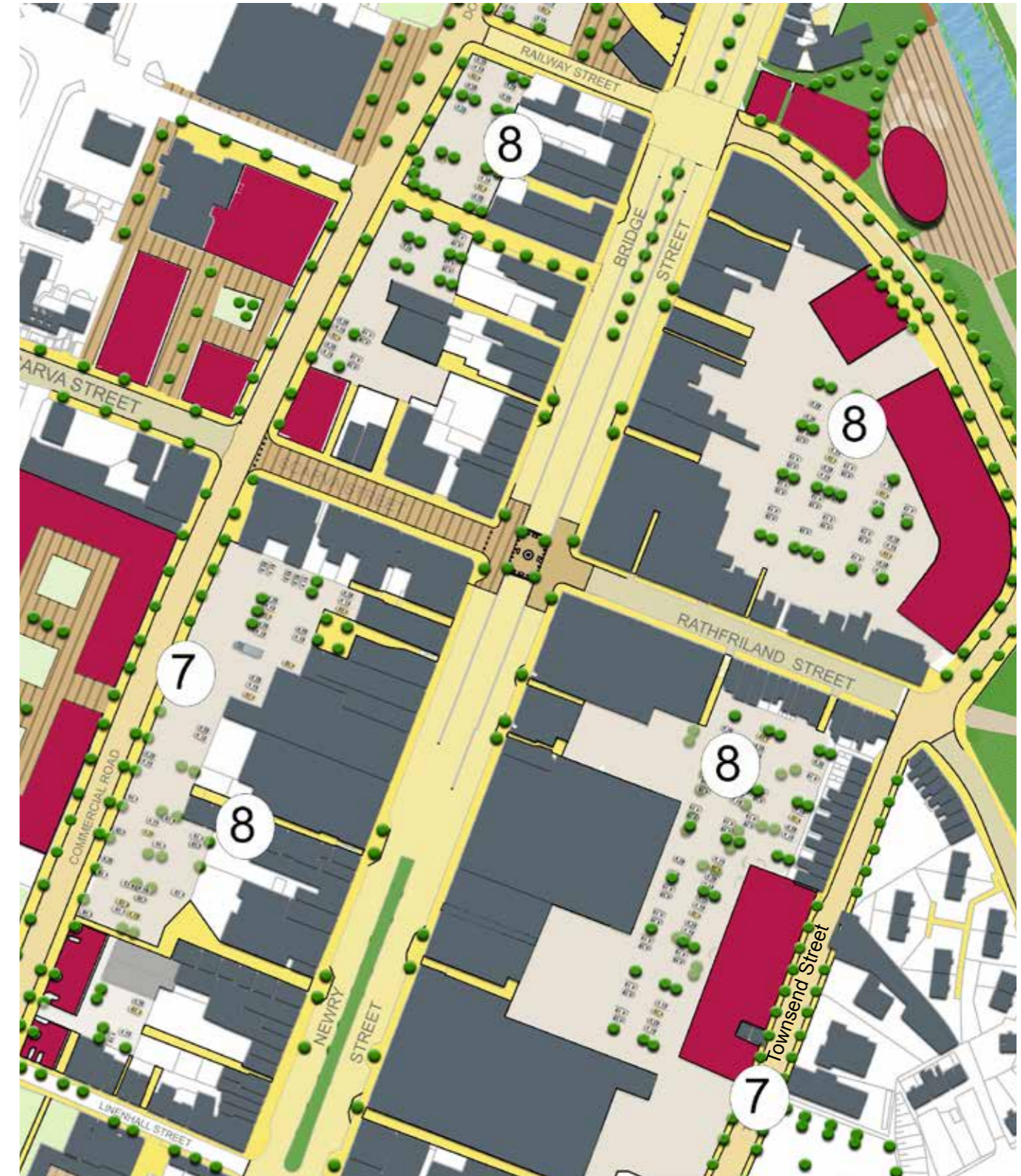


Great Western Greenway, Westport

## Gateways and Linkages

Some precincts of Banbridge currently function relatively effectively in terms of the linkages and connectivity between important locations however, other areas will require further interventions in order to thrive. The key issues arising from the analysis and consultations were parking, circulation and also exploiting the large volume of traffic that by-passes Banbridge on a daily basis. The following 3 projects aim to address these issues through a multi-faceted approach.

6. Implementation of new gateway features along the A1 corridor to form part of a strategic gateway strategy - see page 35
7. Environmental improvement schemes to Commercial Road and Townsend Street
8. Rationalise carparking and services within backland

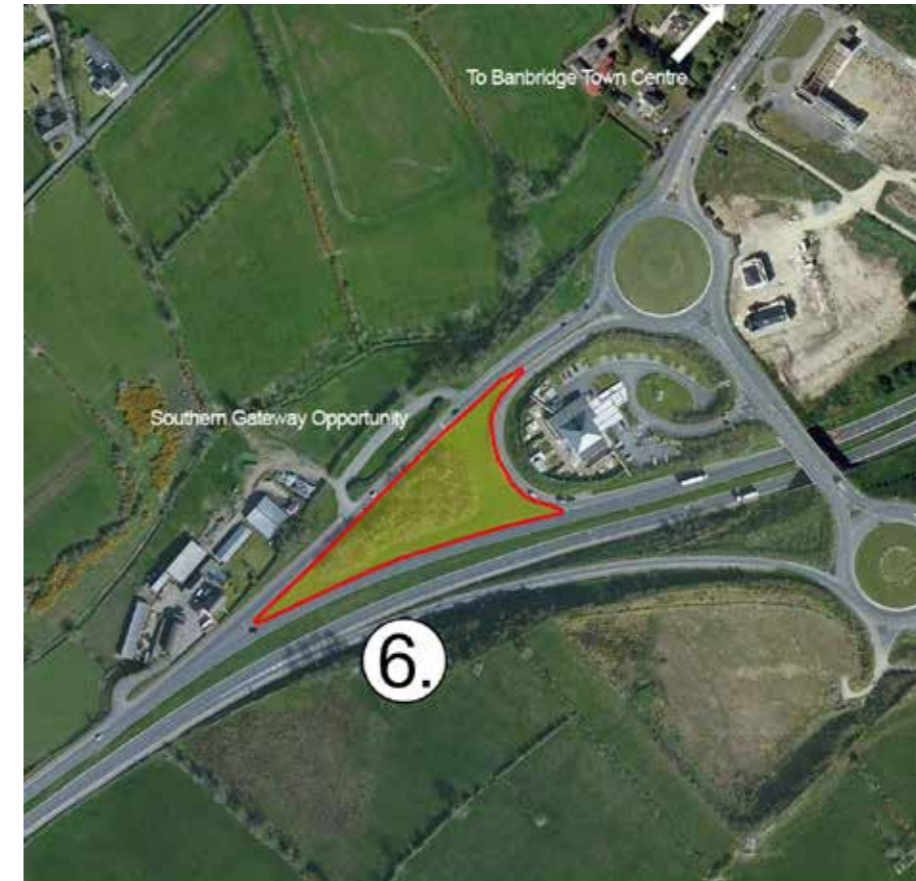


## Gateways and Linkages

6. Implementation of new gateway features along the A1 corridor to form part of a strategic gateway strategy

### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy



The Masterplan aims to increase visitor numbers to Banbridge, may it be as shoppers, visitors or as a destination. Undeniably, the A1 is a huge unexploited asset from which the town must attempt to generate more passing trade. Although The Outlet is the obvious destination for this trade, marketing and branding should be targeted to alert these potential customers that Banbridge Town Centre hosts a variety of other unique shops, eateries and services that they won't find at The Outlet. The first step is to provide a physical gateway feature to the north and south of Banbridge along the A1 corridor. This will take the form of a landmark signature art piece unique to Banbridge that will act as a waymark for the Town Centre.

## Gateways and Linkages

### 7. Environmental improvement schemes to Commercial Road

#### Relevant Objectives

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre |
|---|--|



Gospel Lane precedent for Environmental Improvement in the town



As part of the strategy to improve circulation, the creation of a gyratory system around the town is integral to achieving this. This system will be based on Gospel Lane, Townsend Street, Kenlis Street, Commercial Road and Downshire Place to form a complete loop around the Town Centre. Gospel Lane is a recently completed example of the quality of public realm treatment required for these links. The aim is to create link “streets” rather than link “roads” that may encourage built form to infill existing gap sites along the circulatory route.

## Gateways and Linkages

### 8. Rationalise carparking and services within backland sites and improve linkages to the primary retail streets

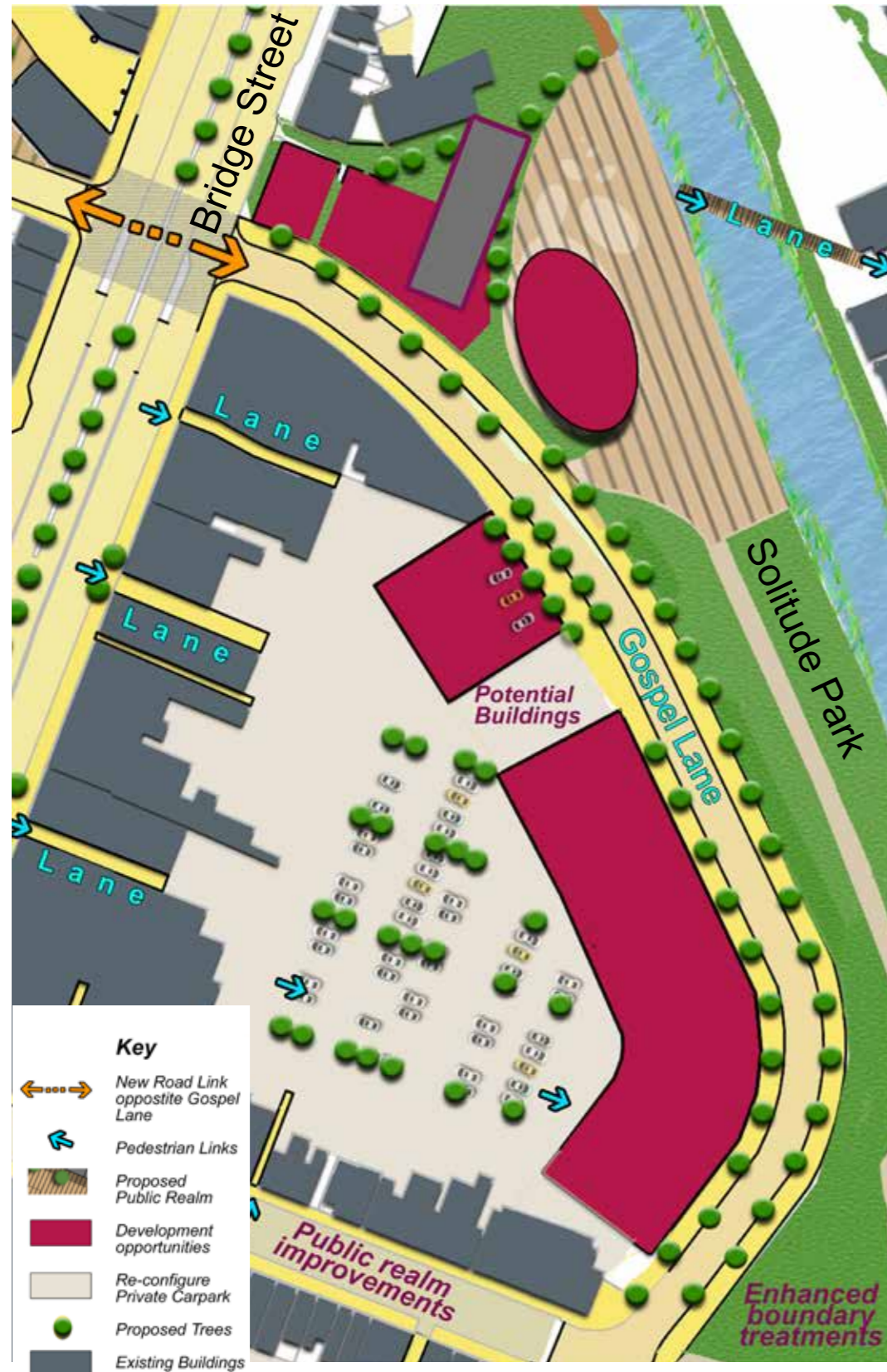
Relevant Objectives	
1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy

Banbridge has a large quantity of under-utilised backland sites to the rear of the primary commercial streets (Newry Street, Bridge Street and Rathfriland Street). Currently the land use is piecemeal – some private parking, servicing, access, storage and what appears to be waste ground. The proposal is to rationalise these spaces and create shared parking and servicing access where feasible and subject to agreement between various landowners. This should generate a gain in town centre parking without the loss of significant development opportunity sites.

To increase connections and permeability to the main streets, a range of laneways is encouraged. The concept is based on best practice and is similar to what has been achieved at the carpark on Commercial Road with associated lanes of Jingers Court and the Mall leading to Newry Street.



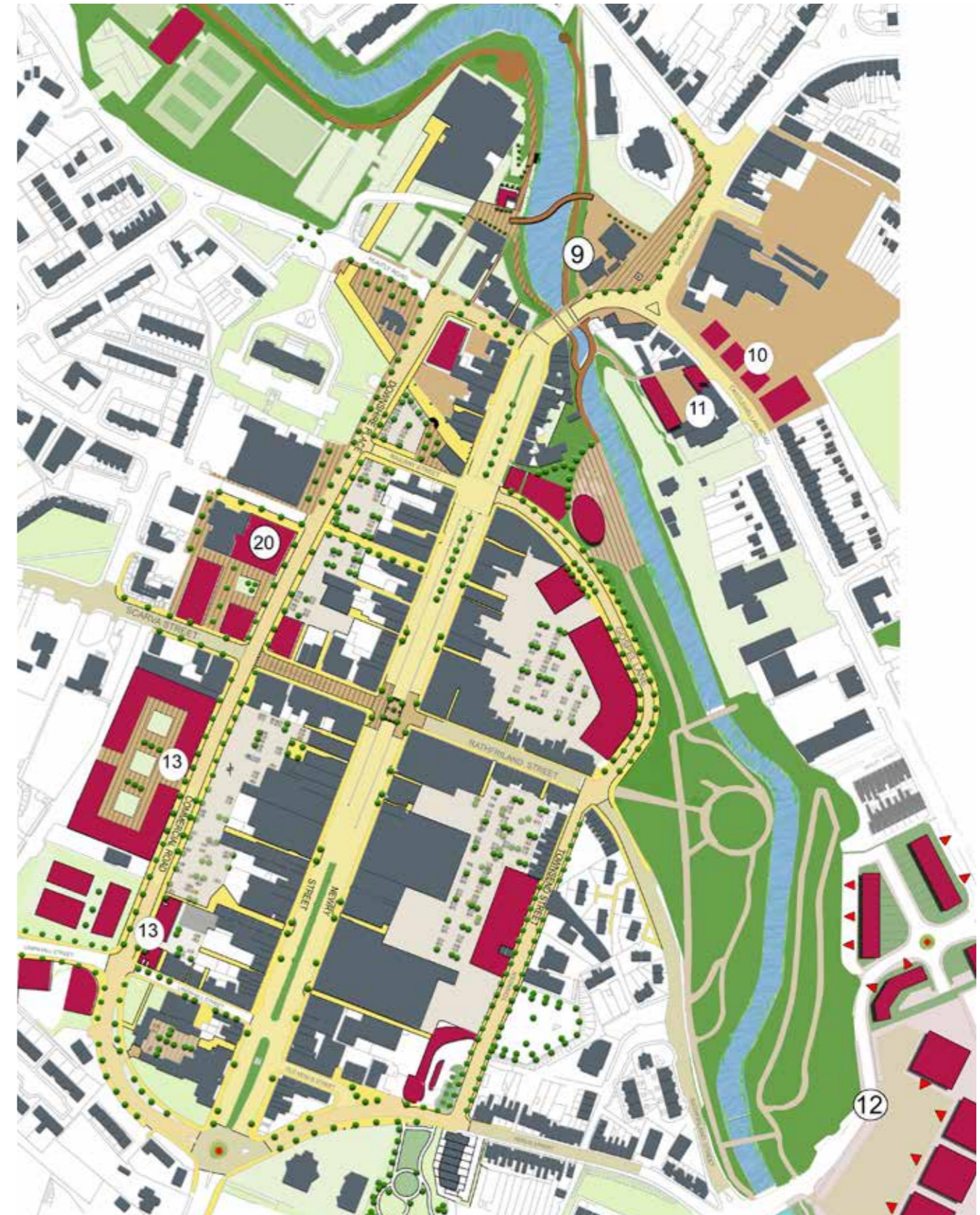
# Gateways and Linkages



## Development Potential

In order to provide for future development needs within the next 15 years, suitable sites have been selected where the potential capacity could be met in terms of commercial, retail or residential developments. The regeneration value of the redevelopment of these lands will provide a significant economic boost to Banbridge in terms of physical investment and potential job opportunities and encouraging town centre living. This assists with sustaining a vibrant evening and leisure economy within the Town Centre, a key component of the Masterplan. Contained within the Appendices is a Design Compendium which sets out guidance on the materials palette to be used on new development sites and public realm initiatives. All of the proposals are subject to the necessary landowner agreements and statutory approval process.

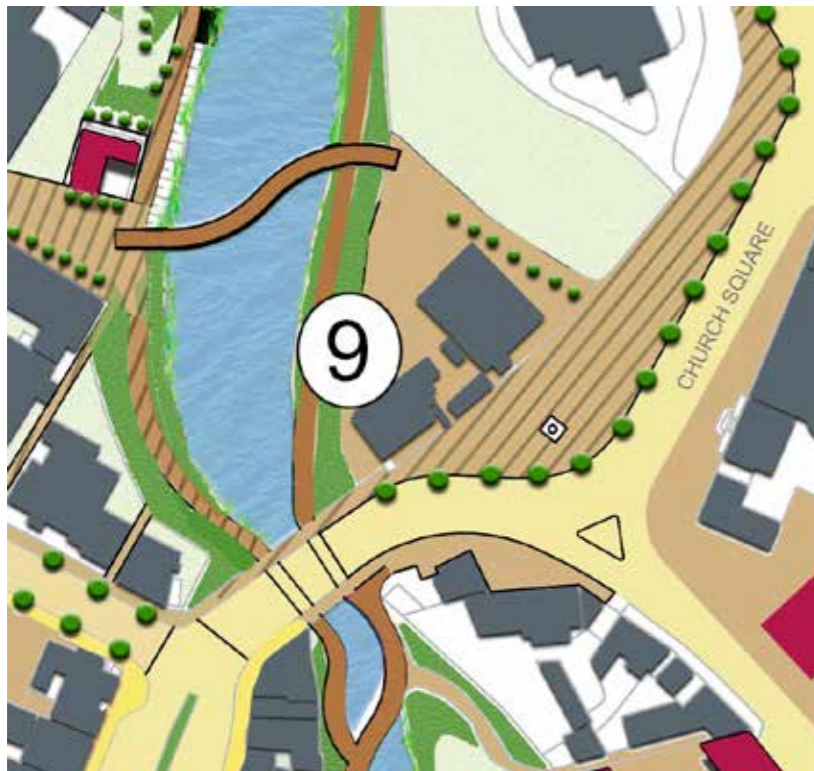
- 9.** Refurbishment and re-utilisation of the former police station for leisure use (restaurant, pub, hotel etc.)
- 10.** PSNI development opportunity site - potential future commercial uses and car parking opportunities subject to agreement
- 11.** Development of an arts and crafts village within the grounds and courtyard of the former mill building
- 12.** Potential future use of Tesco lands as a business campus with associated residential developments overlooking the River Bann and Solitude Park
- 13.** Commercial Road development opportunity site. To provide capacity for future growth in the commercial, office or residential market if the future need arises.
- 20.** Comprehensive regeneration scheme to include the former Health Trust site, Library and Banbridge Courthouse incorporating a continued judicial function.



## Development Potential

### 9. Refurbishment and re-utilisation of the former Police barracks for leisure use (restaurant, pub, hotel etc.)

Site area: 0.07 hectares



### Relevant Objectives

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre |
|---|--|

A key proposal of the Masterplan is sensitive re-use of the former Police barracks. Future alterations should enable the listed building to form one of the centre pieces of the proposals to reconfigure Church Square. The building should also embrace the proposed new connection with the Leisure Centre and engage with the River Bann.

Appropriate uses may be as a small hotel or similar accommodation, restaurant or pub with outdoor seating on street and along the river bank. A detailed development brief would need to be prepared for each of the development sites, setting out a comprehensive scope and approximate mix of uses.



## Development Potential

### Character of the site:

The site consists primarily of the grade B1 listed former police barracks and associated walling. The condition of the external fabric of the building is average whereas the internal fabric would require reconfiguration to enable functionality as a commercial opportunity. The west of the site slopes down to the banks of the River Bann, offering excellent views of the river.

### Character of the area:

The site is one of few buildings sitting within Church Square which are currently underutilised and deteriorating. The Crozier Monument and Avonmore House offer excellent historical context to Church Square, considering the relationship as the home of Captain Crozier. Although dominated by vehicular traffic, the Masterplan aims to shift the emphasis from cars to people and history in this space by creating a plaza that encapsulates the monument and offers an ideal setting to the former police station building. Church Square also boasts other built heritage assets such as Seapatrick Parish Church and the Masonic Building and also natural heritage assets (The River Bann).

### Suggested uses:

- Restaurant
- Public House
- Small hotel,
- B & B accommodation
- Café,
- Coffee shops

**Timescale:** 5-10 years

### Primary Action:

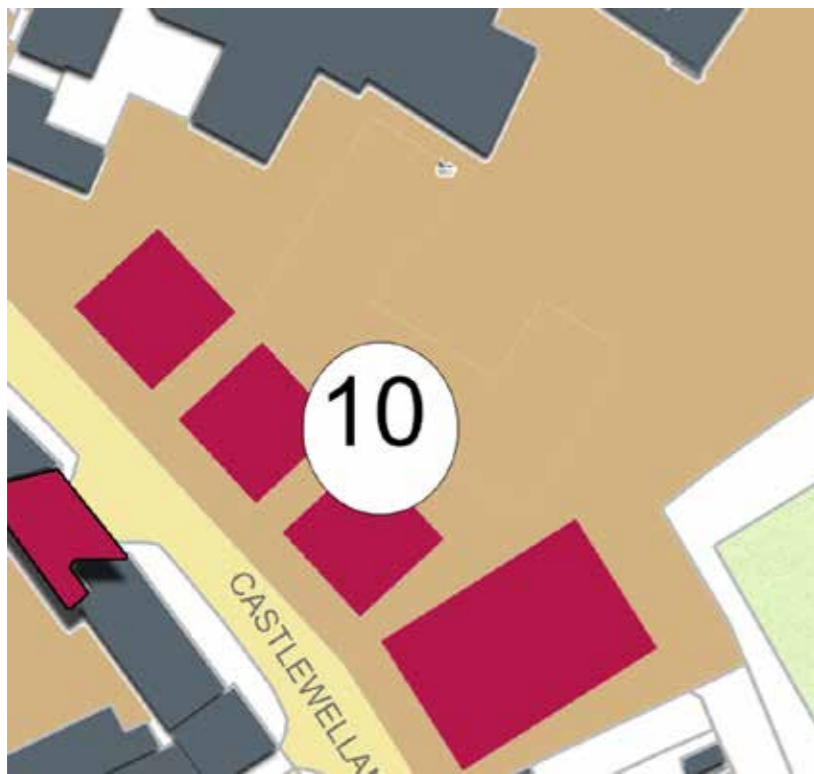
Facilitate negotiations between the landowner and various statutory agencies/funding bodies who could provide support to safeguard the future of the building.

**Indicative Cost:** £1.6m

## Development Potential

### 10. PSNI development opportunity site - potential future commercial uses and car parking opportunities

Site area: 0.5 hectares



### Relevant Objectives

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy |
|---|---|

This scheme has the potential to provide a significant portion of land for regeneration purposes. Uses could range from commercial/office development with complementary car parking and linkages to Church Square. It is dependent on the future plans of the PSNI.

## Development Potential

### Character of the site:

The site consists primarily of the existing PSNI station that serves Banbridge and the wider area. It is reported that the current facility is to become an administration centre with no active duty officers present. Within the site is the main building, car parking and large boundary red brick walls.

### Character of the area:

The site sits behind Avonmore House and on the Castlewellan Road just off Church Square. As mentioned earlier, Church Square is rich in historical and built heritage assets. The current PSNI development does not enhance the character of the area and therefore retention in the future is not recommended considering the scale and prominent location of the site.

### Suggested uses:

- Commercial development which includes office use, subject to future demands. The site also should include a parking element which could connect to the existing 140 space Church Square car park.

**Timescale:** 10-15 years

### Primary Action:

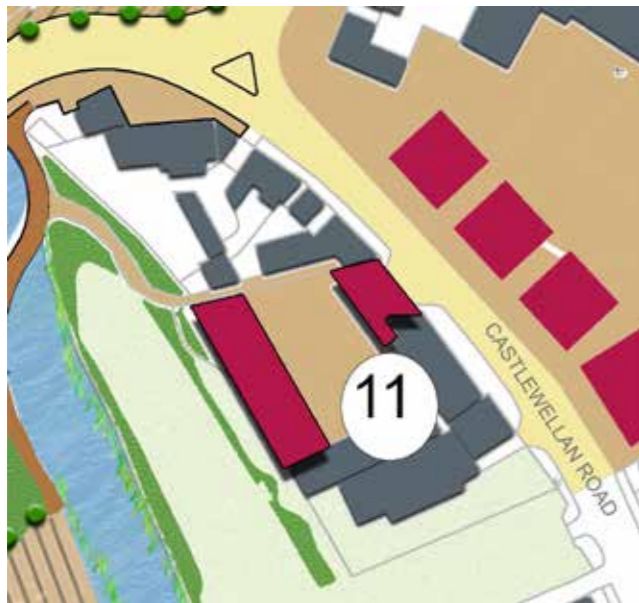
Future discussions with PSNI in regards to their plans for the site.

**Indicative Cost:** £3.4m

## Development Potential

### 11. Development of an arts and crafts village within the grounds and courtyard of the former mill building

Site area: 0.14 hectares



#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy

Building on the strong arts and crafts presence that exists in Banbridge and the surrounding area (which includes the award winning F.E. McWilliam Gallery), this proposal is to create a space where arts and crafts can be created and sold. Re-use of part of the listed mill building could provide small studios for local craftsmen and artists and the courtyard space could host a regular market to sell these wares. Not limited to arts and crafts, the proposal could be expanded to include local foods and produce.

## Development Potential

### Character of the site:

The site consists of buildings associated with the Mill Court development. Mill Court is a grade B listed former warehouse/mill complex. It now contains a shop but a large portion on the site appears underutilised. The fantastic courtyard is also an asset which exists but is not operating to its potential.

### Character of the area:

The site sits behind Solitude House and adjacent to the River Bann. The area is also within close proximity to Church Square which is rich in historical and built heritage assets.

### Suggested uses:

- We do not recommend removal of the uses which currently exist in the site. It is recommended however that surplus space in the complex could be a perfect base for a formal arts/crafts workshop in the town. As this develops, there may be potential to host markets and fairs in the courtyard.

**Timescale:** 0-5 years

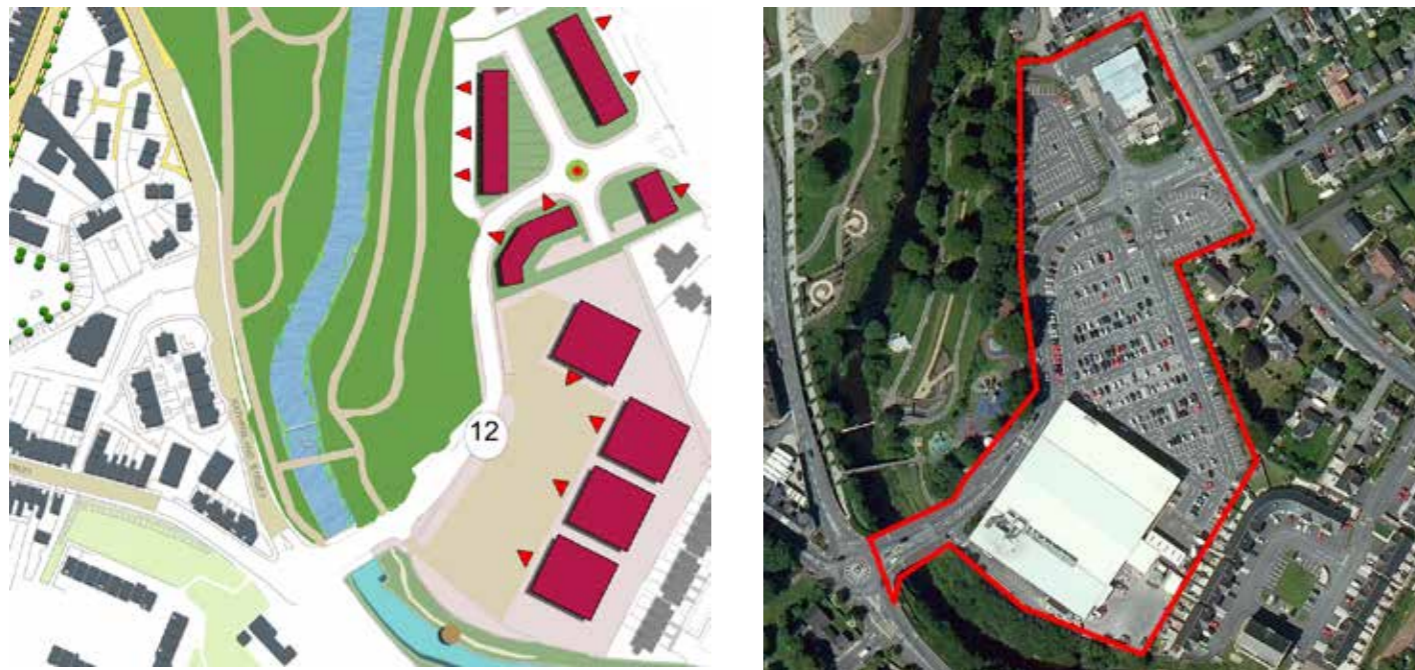
### Primary Action:

Engage with landowners and generate business case.

**Indicative Cost:** £442k

## Development Potential

### 12. Potential future use of Tesco lands as a business campus with associated residential developments overlooking the River Bann and Solitude Park



Site area: 2.7 hectares



Precedent riverside apartments

#### Relevant Objectives

3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy
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Project is based on Tesco's future plans. The site has been highlighted as a potential opportunity to create a business campus that could cater for start-up businesses or provide office accommodation. Most of the infrastructure would already be in place from the existing development. Some of the surplus carparking could be used as residential development land, providing apartments overlooking Solitude Park which would create passive surveillance of the area.

## Development Potential

### Character of the site:

The site consists of a modern Tesco complex with associated car parking and petrol filling station.

### Character of the area:

The site is bounded by the River Bann and Solitude Park however currently they do not integrate with each other.

### Suggested uses:

- We do not recommend removal of the uses which currently exist in the site. However if the operator ceased using the site we recommend that the link road is formally adopted by the Council or TNI, as this is a strategic secondary crossing point over the River Bann. The site affords the opportunity of creating a business park if future demand required it. Close proximity to the A1 Belfast-Dublin corridor and space for parking/campus design would enable this to become an attractive site. The site also offers the potential for some residential developments. It is recommended that residential development should be designed to overlook and integrate with Solitude Park.

**Timescale:** 5-15 years

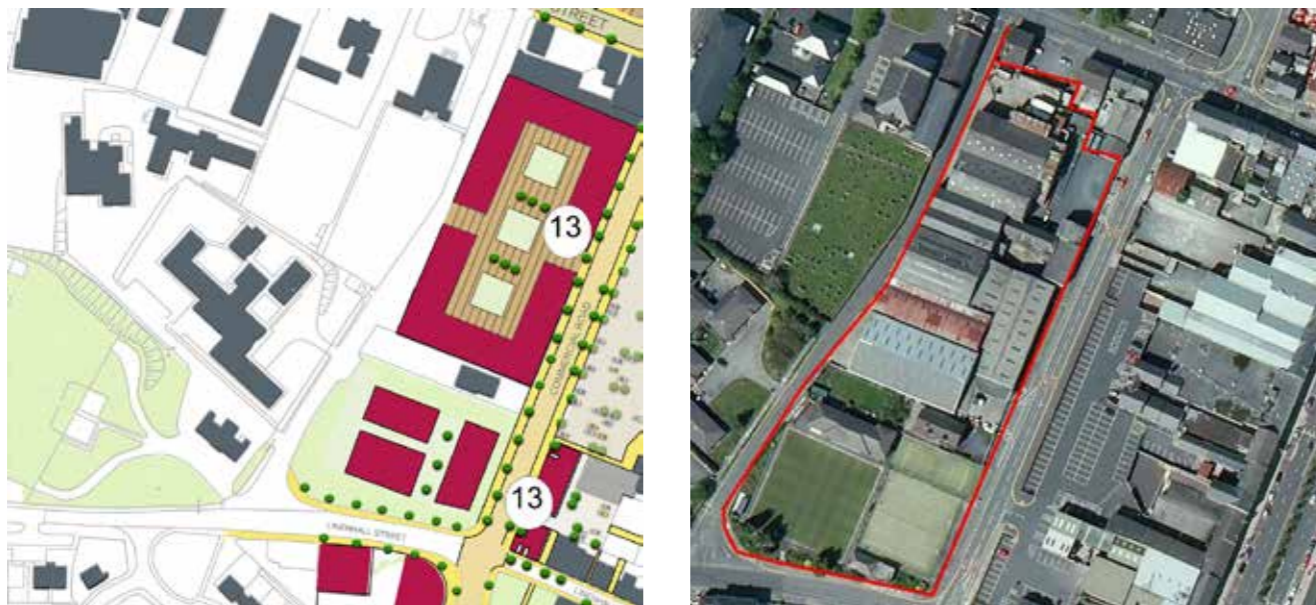
### Primary Action:

Engage in discussions with Tesco regarding their future plans for the site and any potential considerations for site disposal. Also plans for the road bridge to secure this crossing.

**Indicative Cost:** £17m – entire development

## Development Potential

**13. Commercial Road development opportunity site. To provide capacity for future growth in the commercial, office or residential uses market if the future need arises.**



Site area: 1.4 hectares



### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy

This is a long-term strategic project that can provide the necessary land to cater for significant increased demand for commercial property if the need arises within the next 15 years. As the site is currently occupied by an industrial operator, an alternative site would need to be acquired to suitably accommodate this facility. This is likely to be on the periphery of the town where it is typically more appropriate for industrial developments. The site can provide in-curtilage car parking and significant commercial or residential opportunities.



## Development Potential

### Character of the site:

The site consists of a recently upgraded industrial facility and the King George V complex.

### Character of the area:

The site is based on Commercial Road. Commercial Road is a sparsely developed area with limited frontage onto the street. The road primarily functions as a link road, providing access around the town and to the car parks. This is reflected in the quality of built fabric within the area.

### Suggested uses:

- We do not recommend removal of the uses which currently exist in the site unless demand for commercial, retail or residential use requires the use of town centre lands. If this becomes the case over the next 15 years, it would be advisable to find an alternative site for the industrial facility and free up the land for town centre compatible uses.

**Timescale:** 10-15 years

### Primary Action:

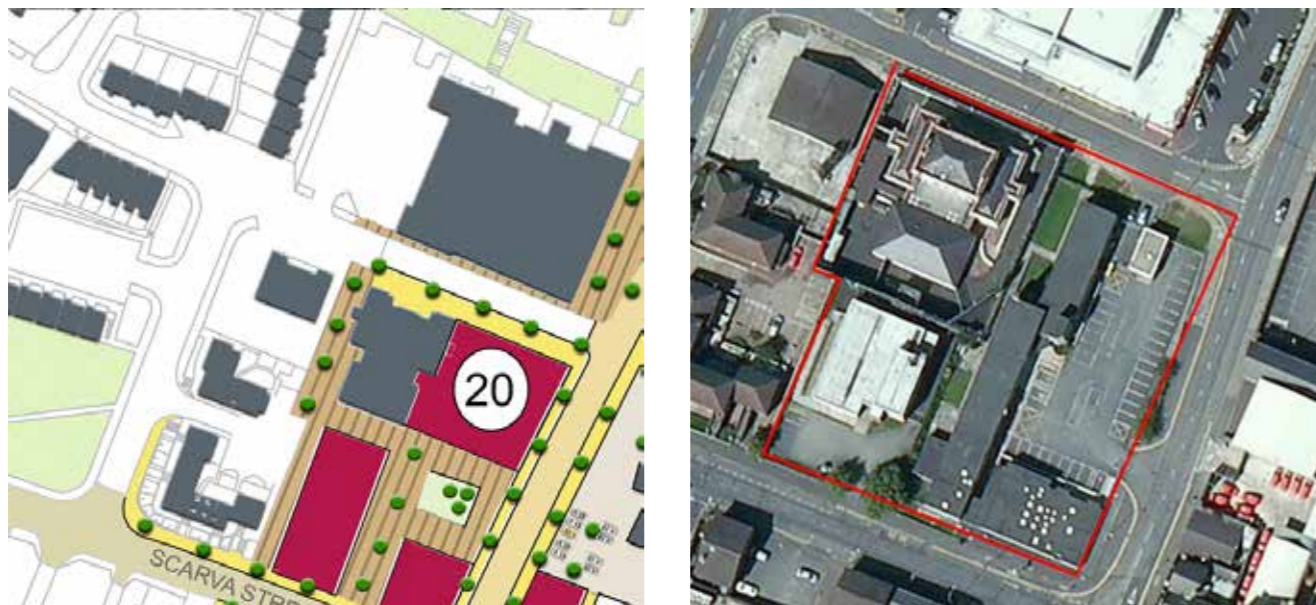
Engagement between Council and landowner. Ensure provision for alternative industrial site is available should the future need arise for re-location.

**Indicative Cost:** £17.1m – entire development

## Development Potential

**20. Comprehensive regeneration scheme to include the former Health Trust site, Library and Banbridge Courthouse incorporating a continued judicial function.**

Site area: 0.7 hectares



### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy

Site 20 provides a significant urban regeneration opportunity within the heart of the Town Centre. It also creates the opportunity to realign the junction between Downshire Place and Commercial Road. The site itself would retain the existing Courthouse and its associated judicial functions as a feature building with a sympathetically designed extension that could accommodate community functions such as a performance space or library.



The remainder of the site could provide commercial-led uses that may include ground floor retail with upper floor offices or apartments. Parking should be accommodated on site – potentially at basement level. The heart of the site will function as a public plaza and tie into the wider Downshire Bridge – Scarva Street enhancements.

## Development Potential

### Character of the site:

The site is situated in the town centre adjacent to the current cinema complex. The site consists of the former health centre (now redundant) which holds limited merit in terms of architecture or character. The site also hosts Banbridge Courthouse. This building does hold particular interest. It's a B1 listed building that currently does not operate judicially but the hope is that it may in the future. The third element of the site is the library. Again the quality of this building is similar to the health centre.

### Character of the area:

The site is based on Commercial Road. Commercial Road is a sparsely developed area with limited frontage onto the street. The road primarily functions as a link road, providing access around the town and to the car parks. This is reflected in the quality of built fabric within the area.



Mixed use town centre precedent

### Suggested uses:

- Primarily commercial uses – ground floor retail and/or food outlets with the upper floors being occupied by office space or residential depending on future market requirements. The site would also consist of a multi-functional facility based around the existing courthouse, integrating the court functions, library/community centre and potentially a theatre (if the existing theatre is threatened). Outside, the site could have a landscaped plaza that ties in with the realigned road junction and the public realm treatments to Scarva Street. Car parking would need to be catered for on-site. Solutions such as undergrounding should be explored.

**Timescale:** 10-15 years

### Primary Action:

Preliminary task: Council/DfC to undertake a comprehensive regeneration scheme and appoint regeneration/design consultants.

**Indicative Cost:** £11.1m – entire development

## Infrastructure Projects

Over the next 15 years, the growth of Banbridge will put significant pressure on the town's infrastructure. Therefore certain projects have been identified that should improve the infrastructure by increasing capacity or adding alternative options and modernise the current provision. They are as follows:

- 14.** Closing the Downshire Bridge to traffic and creating a new civic space and heart to the Town Centre retaining the "Cut" below open to traffic
- 15.** Lessening the dominance of vehicular traffic on Lower Scarva Street - options including pedestrianisation
- 16.** Realignment of the junction between Downshire Place and Commercial Road
- 17.** Environmental improvement scheme for Newry Street and Bridge Street to include new surface materials etc.
- 18.** Creation of a historic plaza in Church Square to create an improved setting for the heritage assets in this area
- 19.** Reopening Linenhall Street
- 21.** New link road to facilitate closure of the Downshire Bridge and fully utilise Gospel Lane



## Infrastructure Projects

### 14. Closing Downshire Bridge to traffic and creating a new civic space and heart to the Town Centre plus reinstating the town fountain

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage

The Downshire Bridge resting above the “Cut”, is the heart of Banbridge Town Centre from a historic, geographical and strategic perspective. Currently it functions as a problematic traffic junction, with a history of numerous minor collisions and near misses. In order to provide a safe and attractive space for pedestrians using the town centre and to enhance the historic feature unique to Banbridge, the solution to transform the space into a car-free area for pedestrians has been selected as the best option. Other solutions such as signalisation were considered but deemed less appropriate to the fabric of the bridge. The idea of creating a public space is tied specifically to the proposal to pedestrianise/traffic manage lower Scarva Street and the proposed plaza at the health Trust development site (no.20). The design should remain sympathetic to the character of the bridge. One option for consideration is to return the fountain from the Civic Building to its original position, in the middle of the bridge. It is important that any design proposals would be subject to further investigation, transport study and further consultation prior to implementation.



Downshire Bridge above the “Cut”



## Infrastructure Projects

### 15. Lessening the dominance of vehicular traffic on Lower Scarva Street - options including pedestrianisation.

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage



The rationale for pedestrianising this portion of Scarva Street is based on the principle of connecting the Town Centre to the potential large scale urban regeneration scheme at the former Health Trust site and beyond. This physical pedestrian link will ensure this development is fully integrated with the town centre. Access to businesses on Scarva Street will be affected but this is offset by a parking area on Downshire place as described in the next project (no.16).



## Infrastructure Projects

### 16. Realignment of the junction between Downshire Place and Commercial Road

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
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Realignment of the traffic junction between Downshire Place, Commercial Road and Scarva Street would significantly ease the burden on this junction and part of the town at peak times. It is also essential to create the gyratory loop system mentioned previously as the existing staggered junction arrangement could not easily facilitate the necessary vehicle movements. Several options exist for this junction – it could be a T-junction due to lower Scarva Street being inaccessible to vehicular traffic, or it could consist of a roundabout. This will be subject to detail design and traffic modelling. The realignment is achieved by a land-take from the former health Trust site. This creates a surplus of land of the eastern side of Downshire Place that can be used to offset parking lost on the pedestrianisation of Scarva Street.

### 17. Environmental improvement scheme for Newry Street and Bridge Street to include new surface materials, street lighting and planting

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town’s cultural, built and natural heritage
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy



The public realm treatment on Newry Street and Bridge Street was carried out approximately 15 years ago and has served its purpose well throughout these years. However wear and tear has taken its toll and the scheme is due to be upgraded. This would consist of redressing the pavement and potentially introducing new lighting and greenery to the main streets. As these streets have been carried out previously, it is recommended that the Banbridge Link Roads are upgraded first because they have never been treated and consist of basic asphalt or pre-cast concrete paving.

## Infrastructure Projects

18. Creation of a historic plaza in Church Square to create an improved setting for the heritage assets in this area

### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage
3	Create an enriched town centre experience by reinvigorating opportunity sites and the evening economy

- 1 Former Police Station
- 2 Masonic Hall
- 3 Crozier Monument

Sketch scheme proposal for Church Square

v image below: Existing  
> image right: Proposed





## Infrastructure Projects



Church Square is the area of Banbridge with the greatest heritage offering. Consisting of Avonmore House and Crozier Monument along with several other listed buildings, it has the potential to become an attractive space. It is currently dominated by the existing transport arrangements – traffic island, signals and road markings. The concept here is to strip this back and extend the area outside the Old Police Station to create a larger plaza which would include the Crozier Monument. This would create a much more prominent setting for the monument, as well as providing another public space. To facilitate this, the junction requires a redesign which would eat into the very wide footpath area on the other side of the Square.

The alternative is to reduce traffic flow to the junction through the implementation of a strategic bridge between Lurgan Road and Huntly Road. This has been mooted for some time and it remains unclear if this bridge is still a priority for Transport NI to pursue. The proposal needs to be subject to detailed technical appraisal balancing road geometry, impact on heritage assets and realising the potential.

## Infrastructure Projects

### 19. Reopening Linenhall Street

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
2	Protect and enhance the town's cultural, built and natural heritage



Reconnecting Linenhall Street would enable vehicular traffic to access Commercial Road again. This would help to ease pressures created by turning vehicles on this street. Proposal should not be difficult to achieve however it may require the re-configuration of the junction on Commercial Road.

### 21. New link road to facilitate closure of the Downshire Bridge and fully utilise Gospel Lane

#### Relevant Objectives

1	Provide an attractive, accessible and viable town centre
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If the proposal proceeds to prevent traffic from crossing the Downshire Bridge, an alternative crossing point has been suggested between Downshire Place and Bridge Street. This would enable a vehicular connection onto the new Gospel Link, subject to detail design of the junction arrangements on Bridge Street. A newly created Railway Street would help form the final piece of the town centre loop. The name derives from the proximity to the former railway.

## Town Wide and Tourism Initiatives

### 23 & 24. Transport assessment and car parking study

Preliminary task: Commission transport consultation to undertake transport assessment that encompasses all projects

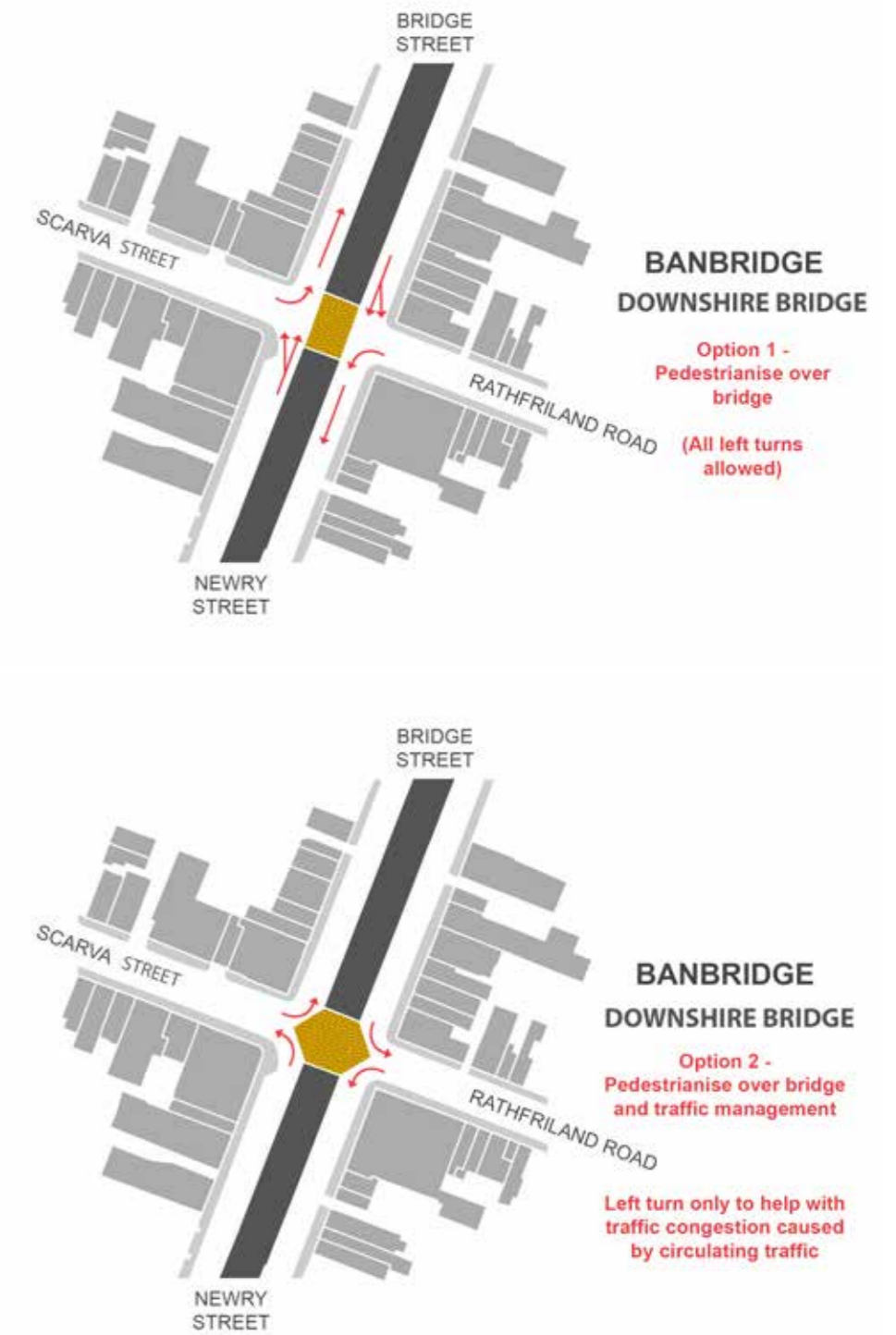
Traffic congestion around Banbridge was highlighted as a key concern both for safety and for ease of movement, particularly at the Cut and at roundabouts in the town. Prior to any new traffic options being implemented, a traffic consultant will be required to undertake an assessment of all transport movement and car parking options across the town, which will consider any potential impacts upon traffic flows through the town before proceeding to the next phase of commencement of works. The following indicative layouts and locations on the following pages could form the basis of a further transport assessment within Banbridge. It focusses on the junctions where key interventions are recommended within the Masterplan.



## Town Wide and Tourism Initiatives



Indicative traffic reconfigurations in Church Square



Detailed testing and design of options for pedestrianisation of Downshire Bridge

## Town Wide and Tourism Initiatives



Detailed testing and design of new link road (“Railway Street”) and the junction options between Bridge Street & Gospel Lane

### 25. Marketing, branding and promotion of Banbridge Town Centre

*Preliminary task A:* Implementation of the strategic gateway project on the A1 and physical branding through the Town Centre

*Preliminary task B:* acquire the services of a place branding consultant to prepare a new branding proposal and options for a joint marketing plan for the Outlet and Town Centre to maximise opportunities to promote Banbridge and the Outlet as one unique destination.

In light of the new and exciting changes which will be coming to Banbridge, it is important that the town is effectively promoted and marketed. As such, it is proposed that an overall marketing strategy is developed which will maximise upon the unique aspects of Banbridge as the ‘Star of County Down’ and utilise them in a strong visual branding exercise which will connect the masterplan with the various projects that follow. Not only will this ensure continuity as the masterplan is implemented, but it will also promote the town to the wider region and help to attract visitors to the area.

- **Linen and industrial heritage**

The river corridor between Banbridge and Gilford was once one of the most prolific linen producing areas in the UK. There is scope to develop this heritage theme as a tourist attraction but also as a brand unique to the local area.

- **Independent retail offering combined with the Outlet**

**discounted brand offering** - Banbridge has an exceptionally high level of independent traders compared to other towns of similar scale and nature. Banbridge also caters for the multinational retail offering through The Outlet. This combined retail offering is a unique facet that should be celebrated and promoted, especially in attracting passing trade on the A1 and The Outlet to come to the town centre.

## Town Wide and Tourism Initiatives

- **Connection with the River Bann**

The Bann is the longest and one of the most famous rivers in Northern Ireland and it's a river from which the town derived its name. Banbridge should be better utilising this natural asset through marketing initiatives.

- **Large local town to smaller settlements**

Banbridge is a provincial town which supports a wide geographical range of smaller settlements and large rural hinterland. Events to attract the farming community should be considered.

- **Key annual events such as Buskfest**

A wide range of successful and heavily attended annual events take place in Banbridge, already notably the Buskfest and performances in Solitude Park. These events are a great marketing opportunity for the town centre as people who may not normally come to Banbridge are attracted by these events.

- **Destination Mourne**

The Mourne region is the outdoor playground for the North of Ireland. Incorporating the Ring of Gullion and ranging from the Blue Flag beach at Cranfield to Slieve Croob in the north, this rolling landscape is a fantastic place for all kinds of activities. It is important to promote the connection to the Mourne in tandem with developing a physical linkage via the greenway (proposal no.5 in the Masterplan).

- **Existing arts and crafts**

Banbridge was home to F.E. McWilliam and now hosts an award winning gallery that was named after him. There is a thriving arts and craft heritage in the town, with locals producing handmade crafts and goods. If there was a hub for this type of trade in the Town Centre that could compliment the Gallery, a brand could be developed to attract people from across the country to buy and sell wares and appreciate the locally produced art.

### The Town Centre

The Town Centre's success is the pivot of the overall masterplan, therefore it is vital that it epitomises the overall 'brand' that the masterplan seeks to create for Banbridge. It is proposed that through various schemes such as shop frontage improvements and new pedestrian areas, (see individual opportunity site proposals) the Town Centre should be promoted according to the marketing strategy for all projects.



Examples of town branding.

## Town Wide and Tourism Initiatives

### Individual Opportunity Sites:

Key projects which form the basis of the implementation of the masterplan in the years that follow should be promoted according to an overall branding and marketing strategy. This creates a sense of continuity from the production of the masterplan through to completion. Such projects include:

- **Transformation of the area above the “Cut” - the Downshire Bridge;**
- **Public plaza development Church Square;**
- **Regeneration of Health Centre/Court House site;**
- **Arts and Craft village development at Castlewellan Road;**
- **River Bann boardwalks and bridges.**

### Heritage and Tourism Assets

Proposals for a new Heritage Trail (see proposal no. 26) will aim to connect and promote the various heritage and tourism assets within Banbridge in an all encompassing visitor product for the town. Signage for the trail should also correlate with the overall branding for Banbridge.

### Gateway public art

It is important that ‘a sense of welcome’ is felt at key arrival points into Banbridge. One notable location is that of the A1 corridor, where it is proposed that a new gateway and signage strategy will be implemented. It is essential that this is designed in keeping with the overall branding proposals and the vision of the masterplan to achieve consistency throughout the various aspects of the marketing of Banbridge. Early work is already being commissioned by the council on this project.

### Evening Economy

Over the last number of years, Banbridge’s evening economy offering has begun to grow. A number of new coffee shops, restaurants and cafes have opened and some offer evening opening hours. The establishments that have embraced the evening economy can create a multiplier effect and entice more of these businesses to follow suit. There is some work to ensure that the evening economy and night time entertainment economy of Banbridge can live in harmony and complement each other.

### Implications – key tasks

- **Utilisation of the already-established Steering Group to agree upon new branding strategies**
- **A dedicated marketing budget – funding DfC and Council allocations**
- **Creation of a branding and marketing package for all local events/projects to utilise in their advertising and promotion.**

## Town Wide and Tourism Initiatives

### 26. Creation of a Town Centre Heritage Trail

Preliminary task: Commission consultancy exercise to design a heritage trail which would make the most of Banbridge's historic assets.

Banbridge has a wealth of heritage and historic assets which are currently being overlooked by visitors to the area. In order to maximise on these assets, a heritage trail could be developed to improve connectivity between heritage sites, creating a new tourism product for both visitors and locals alike. This could include the various monuments in the town including the Crozier monument, as well as key historic buildings such as the former Police Station, the Cut and the Downshire Arms hotel and linking to new proposals such as the arts and crafts village proposal at the former Mill building on Castlewellan Road. It could also be linked into new riverside connections and Solitude Park.



Winchelsea heritage signage



Dutchmalacca Malaysia heritage trail

### 27. Shop front improvement scheme

Preliminary task: Agree on eligible shops and budgets

Banbridge Town Centre is designated as an Area of Townscape Quality. In order to further improve the overall aesthetic quality of the town centre, grants should be made available to business owners to make improvements on their shop frontages, to include signage, shuttering and general improvement works to fatigued buildings in the town. These grants will seek to enhance the local town character of Banbridge. The area which will be eligible for improvement needs to be determined, as well as individual allocations for funding.



Examples of shop front improvement schemes, London



# 7. ACTION PLAN



## INTRODUCTION

The overall timescale to develop the ‘vision’, encapsulated within the Masterplan will extend over the next 15 years. Some elements of the Plan will be more suited to meet short and medium term goals, while other areas may be more appropriate for development in the longer term. Indeed, in addition to the specific proposals contained within the Masterplan, a number of areas are identified as having longer term development potential.

The detailed phasing of the development proposals needs to be examined further as there will, for example, be issues relating to disturbance of existing occupiers, temporary arrangements during the construction phase, access to existing properties, parking provision, traffic flow etc, as well as provision of construction compounds.

Certain projects are undeniably tied to other projects and therefore it is important to look at the Action Plan holistically.

The action plan within the next chapter sets out the key projects and proposals identified through the Masterplan process, followed by the priority level and timescales for delivery.

These actions will provide a baseline by which the delivery of the Masterplan can be monitored. The Action Plan is a working document and should be updated on a regular basis to reflect progress and developments within the Town Centre.



Newry Street, Banbridge

Key Projects and Proposals		Priority Level	Timeframe for Delivery	Key Stakeholders and delivery agents	Indicative cost*
<b>GREEN SPACES AND PLACES</b>		High	Short (0-5)		
		Medium	Medium (5-10)		
		Low	Long (10-15)		
<b>1</b>	<b>New footbridge linking the existing Riverside Walkway to Solitude Park</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, TNI, NIEA	£1.0m
<b>1a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Commission a feasibility or option study to examine the options in specific detail.</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>2</b>	<b>Boardwalks and secondary bridging point linking Riverside Walkway to Solitude Park for pedestrians and cyclists - incorporating a riverside plaza</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, TNI, NIEA, Land owners, Sustrans	£4.3m
<b>2a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Commission a feasibility or option study to examine the options in specific detail and engage in early discussions with various landowners. Consider potential environmental impacts.</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>3</b>	<b>New gateway park at Kenlis Street</b>	Medium	Medium	Council/DfC, NIHE, TNI, Translink, Adjacent residents	£500k
<b>3a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engage with NIHE, property owners and local residents. Instruct landscape design team.</i>	Medium	Medium		
<b>4</b>	<b>Relocation and rationalisation of Banbridge's leisure services to a single, multi-functional complex</b>	Medium	Medium-Long	Council/DfC, Land owners	£2.51m
<b>4a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Negotiate with current landowners and commission a future study to determine if the highlighted site can accommodate for the services and supporting functions such as parking and access.</i>	Medium	Medium-Long		
<b>5</b>	<b>New pedestrian and cycle linkage along the route of the former railway line to act as Phase 1 of a wider project to reopen the railway line to Newcastle as a greenway for cyclists and pedestrians.</b>	High	Short – Long	Council/DfC, TNI, NIEA, Sustrans	£1.45m
<b>5a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engagement between TNI and Council as the two landowners involved. Instruct technical feasibility team.</i>	Immediate	Short-Long		

Key Projects and Proposals		Priority Level	Timeframe for Delivery	Key Stakeholders and delivery agents	Indicative cost*
<b>GATEWAYS AND LINKAGES</b>		<i>High</i>	<i>Short (0-5)</i>		
		<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium (5-10)</i>		
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Long (10-15)</i>		
<b>6</b>	<b>Implementation of new gateway features along the A1 corridor to form part of a strategic gateway strategy</b>	Immediate	Short	Council/DfC, TNI, Land owners	£375k x 2
<b>6a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Award tender and commission team to deliver project.</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short</i>		
<b>7</b>	<b>Environmental improvement schemes. First phase: Banbridge Linkages. Second phase: Banbridge loop streets to include Commercial Road and Townsend Street.</b>	High	Short-Medium	Council/DfC, TNI, Local traders	£1.2m
<b>7a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Appoint a design team to take forward the design process</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short</i>		
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Rationalise car parking and services within backland sites to the rear of the primary retail streets</b>	High	Short-Medium	Council/DfC, TNI, Local traders, Land owners	£1.42m
<b>8.1a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engage with landowners to ascertain feasibility. If feasible, instruct consultants to design scheme.</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short-Medium</i>		

Key Projects and Proposals		Priority Level	Timeframe for Delivery	Key Stakeholders and delivery agents	Indicative cost*
<b>DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL</b>		High	Short (0-5)		
		Medium	Medium (5-10)		
		Low	Long (10-15)		
<b>9</b>	<b>Refurbishment and re-utilisation of the Old Police Station for leisure use (restaurant, pub, hotel etc.)</b>	High	Medium	Council/DfC, Heritage Lottery Fund, Land owner, NIEA, TNI, Private investors	£1.6m
<b>9a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Facilitate negotiations between the landowner and various statutory agencies/funding bodies who could provide support to safeguard the future of the building.</i>	Immediate	Medium		
<b>10</b>	<b>PSNI development opportunity site - potential future commercial uses and car parking opportunities subject to agreement</b>	Medium	Long	Council/DfC, TNI, PSNI	£3.4m
<b>10a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Future discussions with PSNI in regards to their plans for the site.</i>	Medium	Long		
<b>11</b>	<b>Development of an arts and crafts village within the grounds and courtyard of the former mill building</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, Land owners, Local traders, Private Investors, TNI, NIEA	£442k
<b>11a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engage with landowners and generate business case</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>12</b>	<b>Potential future use of Tesco lands as a business campus with associated residential developments overlooking the River Bann and Solitude Park - subject to long term Tesco company proposals</b>	Low	Medium-Long	Council/DfC, Land owners, Local traders, Private Investors, TNI	Phased development of up to £17m
<b>12a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engage in discussions with Tesco regarding their future plans for the site and any potential considerations for site disposal. Also plans for the road bridge to secure this crossing.</i>	Short-Medium	Medium-Long		
<b>13</b>	<b>Commercial Road development opportunity site. To provide capacity for future growth in the commercial, office or residential market if the future need arises.</b>	Low	Long	Council/DfC, TNI, Land owners, Private investors, Local traders	Phased development of up to £17.1m
<b>13a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engagement between Council and landowner. Ensure provision for alternative industrial site is available should the future need arise for re-location.</i>	Short - Medium	Long		
<b>20</b>	<b>Comprehensive regeneration scheme to include the former Health Trust site, Library and Banbridge Courthouse incorporating continued judicial function.</b>	Immediate	Short – Long	Council/DfC, Land owners, Private investors, TNI, NIEA, Local traders, Health Estates, DENI, DOJNI	Phased development of up to £11.1m
<b>20a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Council/DfC to undertake a comprehensive regeneration scheme and appoint regeneration/design consultants.</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>22</b>	<b>Development of SRC site to become an integrated digital hub for the wider Council area.</b>	Short	Short-Medium	Council/DfC, Land owners, Private investors, TNI, DEN	Approx £30m
<b>22a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engage with the design team to ensure the campus is fully integrated within the context of the Masterplan</i>	Immediate	Short		

Key Projects and Proposals		Priority Level	Timeframe for Delivery	Key Stakeholders and delivery agents	Indicative cost*
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE SPACES AND PLACES</b>		<i>High</i>	<i>Short (0-5)</i>		
		<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium (5-10)</i>		
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Long (10-15)</i>		
<b>14</b>	<b>Closing Downshire Bridge to traffic and creating a new civic space and heart to the Town Centre whilst retaining the “Cut”</b>	Immediate	Short	Council/DfC, TNI, Local traders, NIEA	£415k
<b>14a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Town wide transport study to determine feasibility on traffic circulation</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short</i>		
<b>15</b>	<b>Lessening the dominance of vehicular traffic on Lower Scarva Street - examine range of options including pedestrianisation</b>	Immediate	Short	Council/DfC, TNI, Local traders	£978k
<b>15a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Continue consultation with local traders and landowners. Project would be tied to the completion of Downshire Bridge and comprehensive regeneration of Health Trust site as a key linkage.</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short</i>		
<b>16</b>	<b>Realignment of the junction between Downshire Place and Commercial Road</b>	Immediate	Short	Council/DfC, Health Estates, TNI	£1.5m
<b>16a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: This should be undertaken as part of the comprehensive regeneration scheme for the former health site on Scarva Street.</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short</i>		
<b>17</b>	<b>Third phase of Environmental Improvement Schemes: Newry Street and Bridge Street to include new surface materials, street lighting and planting</b>	Medium	Short-Medium	Council/DfC, TNI, Local traders, NIEA	£2.3m
<b>17a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Appoint landscape design team</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium</i>		
<b>18</b>	<b>Creation of a historic plaza in Church Square to create an improved setting for the heritage assets in this area</b>	Medium	Medium	Council/DfC, TNI, Land owners, Private investors, NIEA, Heritage Lottery Fund	£1.3m
<b>18a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Undertake a study to examine the impacts on protected structures, road geometries and existing public realm.</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short</i>		
<b>19</b>	<b>Reopening Linenhall Street</b>	Immediate	Short	Council/DfC, Local Traders, TNI	£255k
<b>19a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Town wide transport study to determine feasibility on traffic circulation</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short</i>		
<b>21</b>	<b>New link road to facilitate closure of Downshire Bridge and fully utilise Gospel Lane</b>	High	Short – Long	Council/DfC, Land owners, Private investors, TNI, NIEA, Local traders	£287k
<b>21a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Engagement between TNI and Council as the two landowners involved. Instruct design team.</i>	<i>Short</i>	<i>Short</i>		

Key Projects and Proposals		Priority Level	Timeframe for Delivery	Key Stakeholders and delivery agents	Indicative cost *
<b>TOWN WIDE AND TOURISM INITIATIVES</b>		<i>High</i>	<i>Short (0-5)</i>		
		<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium (5-10)</i>		
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Long (10-15)</i>		
<b>23</b>	<b>Transport assessment of all components of the Masterplan</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, TNI	£35k subject to available data
<b>23a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Commission transport consultation to undertake transport assessment that encompasses all projects</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>24</b>	<b>Town Centre car parking study</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, TNI	£15-20k subject to available data
<b>24a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Commission consultancy team</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>25</b>	<b>Marketing, branding and promotion of Banbridge Town Centre</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, Local traders	£25-100k
<b>25a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Implementation of the strategic gateway project on the A1 and physical branding through the Town Centre</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>25b</b>	<i>Preliminary task B: acquire the services of a place branding consultant to prepare a new branding proposal and options for a joint marketing plan for the Outlet and Town Centre to maximise opportunities to promote Banbridge and the Outlet as one unique destination.</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>26</b>	<b>Creation of a Town Centre Heritage Trail</b>	Medium	Short	Council/DfC, DOE, Land owners	£50k
<b>26a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Commission consultancy exercise to design a heritage trail which would make the most of Banbridge's historic assets.</i>	Medium	Short		
<b>27</b>	<b>Shop front improvement scheme</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, Local traders, Land owners	£200k
<b>27a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Agree on eligible shops and budgets</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>28</b>	<b>Night time economy scheme - initiatives to support the retention of and expansion of night time/leisure and entertainment uses</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, Local traders	£25-50k
<b>28a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Agree budget and scope of services</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>29</b>	<b>Review of funding sources</b>	High	Short	Council/DfC, DOE, Land owners	£5-10k
<b>29a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Investigate a pilot BID project, undertake an initial feasibility study to examine options and comparative examples – eg Ballymena, Newry etc</i>	Immediate	Short		
<b>30</b>	<b>Capacity building - continued support for existing businesses to build on the opportunities for revitalisation</b>	Medium	Short	Council/DfC, Local traders, Land owners	£10-20k
<b>30a</b>	<i>Preliminary task: Agree budget and scope of services</i>	Medium	Short		

\* Each costing is for construction cost only and relates to completed construction cost: many of the projects are phased. Additional costs should be allowed for preliminaries and design development and construction stage risk. All projects are subject to agreements with landowners and statutory approvals. The Action Plan is subject to change dependent on available opportunities at that particular moment in time. Town wide initiatives based on a basic scope.

## 8. DELIVERY

The Masterplan sets out a comprehensive programme of proposals and improvements that will build upon the foundations of Banbridge Town Centre over the next 15 years. Private sector investment needs to be encouraged and it is essential that statutory bodies and the Council play their part, by seeking the right mix of development and by securing the high quality development expected by the Masterplan.

A wide range of initiatives are outlined in the Masterplan and accompanying Action Plan which together have the potential to increase the vibrancy and accessibility of Banbridge, whilst identifying significant sites that can accommodate for future growth in certain sectors if the market demand exists. The regeneration benefits associated with developing some of the key opportunity sites may bring significant economic and employment uplifts to the local area.

It will be essential that the community see demonstrable change in the early stages even if those projects are limited in scale.

### Delivery responsibility

The statutory responsibility for urban regeneration will be with The Department for Communities for the foreseeable future and/or the Council so it is vital that officials from Council and DfC are represented on the Project Delivery Team/Steering Group. It is also recommended that officials from TNI and DOE are closely consulted through the implementation phase. It is recommended that the current Banbridge Regeneration Company play an active role in delivering the Masterplan.

### Delivery Mechanisms

The masterplan provides a broad range of schemes that vary in their cost and complexity. Some of the more complex projects will require the use of innovative delivery mechanisms such as:

- **Compulsory purchase**

DfC, as the statutory authority responsible for urban regeneration, hold the power to vest or purchase land to carry out urban regeneration functions where it is demonstrable in the public interest. These powers may be used on proposals that have complex land ownership issues.

- **Comprehensive development**

DfC, as the statutory authority responsible for urban regeneration, may decide that defining a site/area as a comprehensive development scheme could assist in achieving regeneration. Once the land is assembled, a development brief would normally be produced in the hope of procuring a developer to advance the scheme comprehensively.

- **Developer contributions and planning gain (Article 40 agreements)**

Local Authorities may soon be able to enforce developer contributions on certain schemes falling within prescribed criteria. These contributions can then be used for upgrading local infrastructure etc. Some larger development opportunities may require developer led infrastructure such as link roads and bridges. These can be attached as conditions through the planning process where necessary and deemed appropriate.

- **Local Asset Backed Vehicle**

Requires co-ordination between public and private sectors. Essentially it is a combination of the ability of public bodies to draw funds combined with the private sector ownership. It can achieve regeneration benefits quicker than simply waiting for public funds to delivery larger projects.

- **Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)**

BIDs legislation was enacted by the NI Assembly in 2014 and enables local businesses to take control and improve their local trading environment. If engaged businesses select which projects they want the funds spent on. Although a relatively new concept, they have been successfully implemented in Ballymena and Belfast. These schemes may serve as models for Banbridge.

## Quick Wins

Quick wins are designed to have a catalytic impact on the wider delivery of the Masterplan. It is important that progress and delivery is being physically demonstrated. The following list consists of projects that are recommended to commence immediately post adoption of the Masterplan, subject to funding and resourcing:

- Riverside walkway feasibility study
- Engagement on the re-use of the former railway line
- Implementation on the Banbridge gateway strategy along the A1 corridor
- Backland parking feasibility and landowner negotiations
- Church Square heritage assessment
- Arts and craft market feasibility/business case
- Decide on delivery mechanism for the Health Trust Site
- Ensure the Southern Regional College (SRC) campus links with this Masterplan
- Conduct a town wide transportation study
- Conduct a town wide parking study
- Engage with TNI on the reopening of Linenhall Street
- Agree marketing and branding budgets
- Feasibility of town heritage trail
- Commence shop front improvement scheme and business capacity scheme.

## Current Town Centre Projects

The Local Council, in partnership with DfC are currently undertaking the following projects:

- Kenlis Street, Poplar Row Public Realm Improvements
- Design of Strategic gateway artwork
- Annual town centre events programme
- Business / landlord training / capacity building
- Marketing and promotion initiatives
- Shop front grants scheme
- Meanwhile space projects
- Dereliction projects

These projects should be encouraged in the context of meeting the Masterplan Objectives

## Phasing

Timescales for developing all aspects of the Masterplan will extend up to 15 years. Certain elements within the report will be suitable for immediate or short term commencement whereas others will require a medium to long term aspirational approach dictated by need, market influences and future growth. Projects identified as immediate can commence directly after the launch of the Masterplan as initial feasibility studies and modelling are normally the first step. It is important for the local community to see visible change by ensuring some projects are commenced or delivered early, post Masterplan launch. This will help maintain the high levels of interest generated during the public consultation stage and ultimately achieve a level of “buy in” and “ownership” of the future of the town.

Each project identified in the Masterplan needs to be examined further as there will, for example, be inter-relating issues. It may therefore be premature to implement one without the other and vice-versa. Through our consultation with the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment, it was suggested there may be merit in testing some of the proposals prior to undertaking physical works. We recommend that this is explored in relation to Downshire Bridge and Church Square.

Phasing and prioritising of schemes needs to be examined on a scheme by scheme basis at the time of programming and by the appointed delivery steering group. Factors which may influence phasing are:

- Funding
- Land availability and ownership agreements
- Temporary arrangements if proposals are co-incident
- Parking, traffic and access
- Local support will be vital – further consultation with traders and residents as the Masterplan is delivered will be important.



## Stakeholder Responsibility

The following key stakeholders will play important roles in helping to deliver the Masterplan:

- **Council led Project Delivery Team/ Steering Group** - The team responsible for driving forward the Masterplan over the next 15 years.



- **Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council** - The Council will play a significant role in progressing the plan. Officials will have a direct role as part of the project delivery team/steering group. The Council will also be an important funding source for some projects. The Council's Planning Department will be responsible for overseeing the statutory approvals required for each proposal as well as developing a new Local Development Plan which should reflect the findings of the Masterplan.



- **The Department for Communities** – Currently responsible for urban regeneration and renewal. DfC will be heavily involved in the early stages of the Masterplan in terms of expertise, funding and advice, until statutory regeneration powers transfer to the Local Council.
- **Banbridge Community Regeneration Limited** – Continue to have an active role in delivery of future town centre regeneration projects.

## transportni

- **Transport NI** - Transport NI is the authority responsible for highways throughout Northern Ireland. Transport NI manage, maintain and develop the road network. Enhancements are recommended in the plan which Transport NI will be required to support and implement where necessary.



- **DOE** – Considering the sensitivities with regards to built heritage in Banbridge, it is recommended that a presence on the steering group from DOE Historic Environment Division would be useful to achieve statutory buy-in at an early stage and assist with project delivery.

## Other statutory agencies



Depending on the proposal, certain alternative statutory authorities will play a key role in assisting with delivery either as landowners, funders or statutory responsibilities.

- The Business Community - Local businesses and traders will be important partners in both the delivery and success of the Masterplan, therefore it is important that Council and all government bodies work closely with them. This could be particularly relevant in relation to any future Business Improvement District.
- Community and Voluntary Sector - Banbridge has several community and voluntary organisations who have a continued interest in the regeneration of the town and who's input could be beneficial in the successful delivery of the Masterplan.
- Private developers/landowners/investors - These will be key partners in the delivery of many of the proposals within the Masterplan. The Council and all government bodies will continue to work closely with private developers to ensure the implementation of the Masterplan and exploitation of potential opportunities in the market.



Funding from a variety of sources including public sector interventions and private sector investments are essential to deliver the high quality developments that will fulfil the Masterplan in its entirety.

By utilising the Masterplan and associated Action Plan, delivery agencies will have clearly identifiable steps on how Banbridge can build upon its solid foundations and achieve further regeneration and become an attractive location for private investors. This section highlights various funding streams considered at the time of publication of this report however the list is not exhaustive and further research will be essential to the delivery of any given project. Research has also been obtained from NI Government Funding Database (<https://govfundingpublic.nics.gov.uk>).

A number of the funding programmes are entering new phases and may have differing criteria in their updated formats.

- **Urban regeneration funds** - Additional funding streams should be available from local councils once regeneration powers and budgets transfer to local councils (date to be confirmed post 2017). Until then, the funding stream will be the responsibility of DfC. Comprehensive Development funding may be available towards the design, implementation and maintenance of regeneration schemes.
- **Sport NI/Libraries NI** – Several projects have sporting or educational functions and therefore may be eligible to apply for funding from these bodies. Sport Northern Ireland has announced a new plan to invest £17.5m of its National Lottery funding into sports facility projects over the next five years as part of its Facility Fund.
- **Tourism NI** – Funding may be available for a variety of tourism accommodation schemes from Tourism NI and Invest NI. This can range from advisory services through to financial assistance.
- **DRD TNI** - DRD Cycling Unit offers funding on a yearly basis to projects which encourage the use of cycling. The former railway proposal linking Banbridge to the North and to the South could benefit from this. Also Sustrans can play a role as a strategic advisor and draw upon their experience on funding and delivering similar projects.
- **Other Government Bodies** - Funding opportunities may be available from other bodies such as Department of Education NI, Department of Employment and Learning, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Department of Environment, Department of Justice and Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister. Existing committed capital development such as the Southern Regional College represents a significant investment in the town.

### **Charitable, voluntary and EU sources**

- Ulster Garden Villages
- Woodland Trust
- Lottery Funds
- EU Peace monies
- INTERREG.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of the Masterplan is to enable Banbridge to shine brightly as “the true star of the County Down”. Delivery of the Masterplan will require support from all sectors (public, private and community) in relation to funding, co-ordination and agreement.

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