

DUNDALK

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK PLAN



Prepared
by
KSA

In association with Moylan Engineers



For
Dundalk
Town
Council



DUNDALK

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK PLAN

Prepared by **KSA** and **Moylan**

December 2008



CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	7	7	GENERAL DESIGN GUIDANCE	108
	1.1 The Commission			7.1 General	
	1.2 Background			7.2 Plot Widths	
	1.3 The Vision			7.3 Building Lines	
2	HISTORIC INFLUENCE ON URBAN FORM	13		7.4 Building Heights	
	2.1 Context			7.5 Roofline	
	2.2 Historic Development			7.6 Scale, Mass and Composition	
	2.3 The Industrial Era			7.7 Key Buildings	
	2.4 Topography			7.8 Corner Sites	
	2.5 The Urban Pattern			7.9 Landmarks	
	2.6 Existing Urban Grain				
3	POLICY ANALYSIS	23	8	CONSERVATION STRATEGY	114
	3.1 Introduction			8.1 The Development of Dundalk	
	3.2 National Spatial Strategy			8.2 Archaeology and Architectural Areas of Significance	
	3.3 Residential Density Guidelines			8.3 Protected Structures	
	3.4 Sustainable Residential Development			8.4 Defining Dundalk : The Challenge	
	3.5 Retail Planning Guidelines			8.5 Town Core – the Historic Heart of Dundalk	
	3.6 National Development Plan			8.6 New Development within the Historic Centre	
	3.7 Regional Planning Guidelines			8.7 Infill Sites	
	3.8 Louth County Development Plan			8.8 Amalgamation	
	3.9 Draft Louth Retail Strategy			8.9 Demolition	
	3.10 Dundalk Development Plan			8.10 Building Height and Scale	
	3.11 Draft Mount Avenue Masterplan			8.11 Change of Use	
4	TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS	29		8.12 Roof Extensions	
	4.1 Introduction			8.13 Repairs to Historic Structures	
	4.2 SWOT Analysis			8.14 Living over the Shop	
	4.2.1 Strengths			8.15 Treatment of the Public Realm	
	4.2.2 Weaknesses			8.16 Northern and Southern Fringe	
	4.2.3 Opportunities				
	4.2.4 Threats				
5	THE URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK	35	9	SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDANCE	126
	5.1 Introduction			9.1 Introduction	
	5.2 Level of Guidance			9.2 General Design Principles	
	5.3 Strategic Objectives			9.3 Dundalk Shopfronts	
6	CHARACTER AREAS	47			
	6.1 Nicholas				
	6.2 Seatown				
	6.3 Town Core				
	6.4 The Marshes				
	6.5 The Station				
	6.6 Coes Road				
	6.7 The Laurels				

Part

1

INTRODUCTION







1.1 The Commission

Dundalk Town Council has commissioned specialist planning consultants Keith Simpson & Associates (KSA) in association with Moylan Consulting Engineers to prepare a *Development Strategy and Urban Design Framework Plan* for Dundalk Town Centre.

This Strategy will endeavour to actively influence change in the quality of the future development and the design of urban spaces in Dundalk Town Centre. These changes will be identifiable from the planning, design and development stages of a project right through to its delivery.

The objective of the Strategy is therefore to provide a clear guidance for future development within Dundalk Town Centre including the identification of prime opportunity sites which could act as a catalyst for change in specific areas. It comprises the generation of ideas and concepts through the preparation of a series of design statements based on consultation, research and analysis.

The primary focus of the study is to produce a comprehensive urban design compendium which will help council officials, developers and general public in guiding development within the Dundalk Town Centre Area, up to 2025, in terms of built form, movement and public realm.



Individuals character areas will include specific recommendations on the form, scale and uses that new development should while general design guidance is also provided on building height, plot ratio detailed design of public spaces, streetscape and public realm treatment. The Development Strategy and Urban Design Framework Plan includes;

- An analysis of Urban Form;
- A detailed townscape analysis
- An Overall Urban Design Strategy;
- The identification of specific Character Areas
- Objectives for each individual Character Area;
- Good practice strategic design guidance
- Conservation Strategy and shopfront design guidelines; a mobility framework.
- An implementation strategy.

1.2 Background

Dundalk, the administrative capital of the northeast region and the largest town in County Louth, is located on the east coast of Ireland mid-way between the cities of Dublin and Belfast. Traditionally identified as a border town, the perception of Dundalk has to an extent hindered its growth and development in more recent years. At present the town comprises a metropolitan area of nearly 30,000 inhabitants, which could still be described as being in its embryonic stage having experienced profound change in the last decade.

A positive change in the political climate between the North and South has no doubt improved the image and perception of the town. Recent investment in sectors such as roads infrastructure has advanced significantly, with the construction of the Dundalk– Newry Dual Carriageway and the proposed Dundalk Western By-pass, both clear indicators that Dundalk is poised for a new era of change; a period of inward investment, growth and renewal.

1.3 The Vision

The Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003-2008 makes specific reference to the promotion and enhancement of Dundalk's role as the principal economic and social growth centre of the region. As a result, Dundalk Town Council, has been proactively encouraging the regeneration, rehabilitation and conservation of urban areas within the town to ensure that the development impact of undeveloped or greenfield sites is minimised. The ethos behind this Framework Plan is the notion of **consolidation** whereby any new expansion and growth is carefully managed and coordinated with the emerging role of the town.

Dundalk Town Council has commissioned this study of the town. The strategy focuses on the regeneration improvement and redevelopments of the town centre area as well as identifying areas within the town for development and rejuvenation opportunities. It is envisaged that the strategy will maximise the town's key strengths such as its landmark buildings, historic core



and its significant retail sector, while addressing key areas which are suited to renewal projects that would act as catalysts for change in those areas.

The specific aims of the study are summarised as follows;

- To develop Dundalk as a DESTINATION where people would go to as a choice;
- To reinforce the HEART of the town and create distinct IDENTITIES within its centre;
- To provide a ROBUST structure which is FLEXIBLE enough to respond to changing retail, commercial and social trends;
- To give Dundalk a more rounded town centre and bring it to LIFE in the evenings and at weekends by the introduction of a broader MIX OF USES;
- To create a network of QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES and legible public realm;
- To improve ACCESS for PEOPLE in and around the town centre whilst retaining ease of access for all modes of transport such as buses, cyclists and cars;
- To PRESERVE and CONSERVE the town's architectural conservation areas and its protected and historic buildings and structures;
- To ENHANCE shop-fronts and building facades within the town centre.

The overall vision of the Framework Plan is to provide detailed guidelines and strategic recommendations in order to ensure an enhanced quality within the built environment.

As is the case with all supplementary planning guidance, this report can be updated as and when is necessary subject to the obligatory consultation process.

The Dundalk Urban Design Framework Plan will provide a comprehensive guide for the refurbishment, renewal and development of Dundalk over the next two decades.

This urban design framework aims to mould and shape the town in preparation of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Part

2

HISTORIC INFLUENCE ON URBAN FORM



2.1 Context



The Marshes Shopping Centre



Cooley Peninsula



Dundalk Institute of Technology



Cuchulain, Tain Bridge

Dundalk is a town with an inherited image and character which is on the brink of change. Like many border towns in Ireland, Dundalk has faced significant issues in its struggle to establish its own unique sense of identity. Ironically the town's enviable position, situated along the main transport corridor between Dublin and Belfast, was a contributing factor that earned the town a reputation as a flash-point for conflict during the troubles. The years that followed saw a decline in the local economy, particularly within key manufacturing sectors, casting doubts over the town's emerging role.

More recently new development has focussed along the southern fringe of the town, with the standard set by the establishment of the Marshes Shopping Centre, enabling Dundalk to compete economically with neighbouring centres such as Drogheda and Newry. This document aims to realise Dundalk Town Council's clear intention to build on the town's growing momentum by placing emphasis on the consolidation of its centre and the strengthening of its base as the largest town in the north east region.

The town boasts many considerable assets; a legible linear historic core, an ever strengthening retail sector and a gateway to the unspoilt Cooley Peninsula; not to mention an emerging centre of academic excellence, spearheaded by the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) which has established a state of the art 90 acre campus on the southern approach route to the town.

The last decade has seen the beginning of a period of transformation strengthened by the continued influx of inward investment particularly in infrastructural provision. Plans such as the ambitious pitch for the Gateway Innovation Fund and the concerted efforts to formalise Dundalk as a leisure capital of Ireland, all reflect Dundalk's emerging status as a genuine gateway to the northeast region and the first steps in this historic town becoming Ireland's new city for the 21st Century.



Map of Dundalk 1853 by James O'hagan

2.2 Historic Development

The name Dundalk, or Dún Dealgan, derives from the tree covered hill west of the town known as Castletown Mount. The area has been mentioned in many stories as being the home of the hero Cuchulainn, the hound of Culann, and his wife Emer and also the site of the twelfth century epic story of the Tain Bo Cuailnge (The Cattle Raid of Cooley).

The area now known as Dundalk is thought to be the site of the aonach of the Conaill Muirtheimne, which would have been a place of public assembly where matters of local concern were frequently debated. The aonach was often a market or trading centre and a place for recreational activities.

References have been made to the initial occupation of Dundalk by the Anglo-Normans, one such key character being the seneschal to King Henry II's son John, Bertram de Verdon, who was granted four cantreds of land in Uriel and a half cantred in Louth. Before his departure from Ireland in 1188, de Verdon ratified a grant that he has already made to St John the Baptist's Church of '*all the tithes and all the ecclesiastical benefices of my whole land of Dundalk including the lands of the burgages*' (McNeill 1923). Reference to the '*lands of the burgages*' implies that a town had already been founded at Dundalk by this time in the vicinity of the motte castle at Castletown, and by 1332 this area had become known as the 'old town of the castle of Dundalk'. By the middle of the thirteenth century, a new unwalled 'street-town' had emerged leading southwards from the Castletown River.

The establishment of the street-town suggests that by the twelfth century the gravel ridges along the marshes had evolved into a roadway connecting the high ground at Ballybarrack and Castletown with the harbour of Athlon at Seatown. The roadway leading northwest to Castletown was later referred to as *Balagh Carpyt*, while the roadway southwest to Ballybarrack became known as *Cassangarrow*.

In the mid fifteenth century, a statute was passed ordering landholders within the county to send men to Dundalk to cut a sea trench around the town, in the form of a moat, in order to 'protect it from the Irish' (Gosling, 1928). These roadways later informed the emerging street plan of the town the main characteristics of which were their conformity to the underlying gravel ridges. From maps produced around 1680, this defensive system was shown to comprise six gates and was further extended and strengthened during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

For most of the seventeenth century, the town endured years of warfare and depopulation. In 1732, the population of the town was recorded as being 425, compared to a population base of 1,336 in Drogheda. From this point though the economic conditions of the town improved and a plan was devised for the complete redevelopment of the town and its immediate environs including the provision of a new harbour, the reclamation of several hundred acres of land at what is now the South Marsh and the laying out of a large demesne on the western side of the town. This era of renewal also provided for



the clearance of derelict buildings, tower buildings and walls from the town which were then offered as building leases. The stones from the demolished buildings were used to construct a sea rampart along the shore which led to the establishment of a new road network.

This was the beginning of what is generally recognised today as Dundalk town. For the rest of the eighteenth century the town prospered and economic activity grew with trades and industries, such as breweries, locating in the area.

Dundalk continued to prosper during the nineteenth century with exports from the port increasing and the establishment of the rail line through the town, which linked Drogheda to Belfast. By the close of the century, Dundalk had become an industrial town comparable with those in Britain that had flourished as a result of the Industrial Revolution. All railway engineering services for the Great Northern Railway were concentrated in the town with shipbuilding and maintenance companies established at the harbour area. More specifically, brewing and distilling were growing increasingly important.

During the twentieth century development and growth in the town were hindered to a certain degree by political tensions that were evident between the north and south of Ireland. However the signing of the Belfast Agreement, more commonly known as the Good Friday Agreement, on 10th April 1998 by the Irish and British Governments changed the public perception of Dundalk as a 'border town'.



1900, by Harold O'Sullivan.



Dundalk Brewery



Dundalk Train Station

2.3 The Industrial Era

Industry in Dundalk can be traced as far back as the early eighteenth century. Back then the industrial element of the town would have comprised several shoe factories, the largest railway works in Ireland and boasted many breweries.

The economic boost provided by the engineering industries continued well into the twentieth century contributing to the further expansion of the town. So much so, that during the 1970's Dundalk had become one of the most industrialised towns in Ireland and enjoyed virtually 'full' employment. However in the 1980's and early 1990's there was a marked decline in industries such as engineering, clothing, footwear, tobacco and brewing.

The towns over reliance on these traditional industries resulted in higher unemployment levels and the proximity of Dundalk to the border during the same period also acted as impediment to local economic development.

Dundalk's engineering tradition manifests itself today in the manufacture of high technology electronic, micro electronic, industrial control and precision equipment.

Other factories are National Pen, which makes promotional pens, Heinz, makers of frozen pizzas, Striebel who make parts for cars, computer disk drives, computer keyboards and Fyffes who are one of Europe's biggest importers of fruit.

2.4 Topography

The town of Dundalk is located on the inner reaches of Dundalk Bay and south of the Carlingford Peninsula. Situated on the southern bank of the Castletown River, at its point of discharge into the Bay, the town is surrounded by an arc of hills including Faughart to the north, Castletown Mount and Ballybarrack to the west and the flatter ground of the upper estuarine marshes to the south.

The soil reflects the underlying geological formations with acid brown earth to the north of the Castletown River, which is mostly granite derived from the nearby mountain ranges of Slieve Gullion in South Armagh and the Slieve Foy Mountains of the Carlingford Peninsula. To the south of the river the acid brown earth is made up of Ordovician and Silurian Shales with mica schist glacial till, which was probably carried down by the Castletown River.

The modern town of Dundalk emerged therefore as an estuarine marsh lodged between two gravel ridges built up by the interaction of flood waters from the river flowing against the storm waters of the inner bay. These ridges can be traced from the Bridge Street area running south through Clanbrassil Street to the Dublin Road and east through Seatown to Soldiers Point.



The Town and Bay of Dundalk, Louth, Antique Print



View of Dundalk from the west 1748 (Wright)

2.5 The Urban Pattern

Technically Dundalk has been an urban centre since around the end of the twelfth century, at which time it was granted a charter by the Norman knight Bertram de Verdon (1189AD). Following the warfare of the 16th and 17th centuries, the town then entered a modern era in 1740's and 1750's via a re-development plan initiated by the then town landlord James Hamilton.

Analysis of the historic maps available, provide us with an idea of how the town initially developed and clearly shows the focus of early growth to be at the converging point of Clanbrassil Street and what is now referred to as St Mary's Road.

We can see from the 'Map of Dundalke and Seatowne in the county of Louth...1680', by Robert Richardson and redrawn under the direction of John Neville by M. Moore Graham in 1863, that while the town itself is sited on the lowest bridging point of the Castletown River (Watergate), the pattern of growth moved northwards along Warren's Gate and Cornmarket (now Clanbrassil Street and Church Street), and to the east along the Upper Seatowne Gate (now Jocelyn Street and Seatown Place). The Upper Seatown Gate ran in parallel to the route of the Mill Race before terminating at the Dundalk Channel beyond.

One of the earliest topographical maps of County Louth, produced by Matthew Wren in 1766, shows the initial town structure of Dundalk following a traditional 'Y' shaped form with the three extremities representing the barracks and Dundalk Channel to the east, the Castletown River and Belfast beyond to the north and Cambrick Hill and Dublin beyond to the south.

As in many traditional Irish towns, the Market Square was based at the heart of the town and provided the central pivotal element through which all of the above three destinations emanated. The 'Map of Dundalk Town', c. 1785, by John Brownrigg, which is presently in public ownership of the County Museum, Dundalk, reflects the importance and strategic location of the town's Market Square, witnessed by the presence of two of the towns landmark buildings, namely Cornmarket Hall which defined the western edge of the square and Seffion Houfe and County Goal (now the site of Dundalk Town Hall) defining the eastern edge. Here the centre of commerce and trade was firmly established, with the Upper Seatowne Gate providing a direct trade route eastwards to the Dundalk Channel. To the north, Middle Ward (Clanbrassil Street) and Bridge Street, represented the vital trade route to Belfast via the Castletown River, while the Dublin Road provided the vital trade routes to the south.

While the centre of Dundalk has been defined by the historical pattern of development within the area, it is particularly clear that within the latter part of the twentieth century the town witnessed a gradual shifting of its centre southwards, towards the Market Square, and more recently beyond to the expansive open lands within the Marshes area.



Part of a topographical map of the County Louth, 1766, by Matthew Wren (Royal Irish Academy)

The introduction of the eastern bypass in the mid 1990's had a dramatic effect on the urban structure of Dundalk. A direct vehicular route from the M1 Motorway immediately south had now been formulated, circumventing the eastern fringe of the town before crossing the Castletown River at St Helena's Park close to the Port area. Almost overnight, the importance of the traditional Bridge Street / Dundalk Bridge route to the north was downgraded in its importance, with the new Eastern Bypass emerging as the preferred route to the North.

The opening of the M1 Dundalk Western Bypass in September 2005 undoubtedly enhanced the Dundalk region as a location for investment and economic development, while improving transport links between Belfast and Dublin. As has happened in many comparative Irish towns, Dundalk's urban pattern now comprises extensive suburban areas on the outlying fringe areas. The impact of this hinterland suburbanisation, particularly within the southern fringe of the town, has further added to the deterioration of the town centre.

As a result the northern end of town, once the historic centre of Dundalk, has declined to a degree resulting in a diminished level of retail provision in this area together with significant vacancy rates. This area of the town needs to find a new function which is compatible with the future growth of the town.



2.6 Existing Urban Grain

Urban grain can be defined as the pattern and form of buildings, plots and blocks within urban areas. In cases where there is a dense repetitive pattern emerging with multiple buildings and plots fronting a street, the urban grain is defined as 'fine', and where few exist the term 'loose' applies.

Typically within historic towns, a 'fine' grain is prevalent and in this regard Dundalk is no exception. Plots within the town, particularly in and around the northern area on the approach to the Castletown River, namely Church Street, Linenhall Street and Clanbrassil Street, are typically deep with narrow frontage onto the street. As you can see from the presence of a number of void spaces in this location, substantial vacant plots exist to the rear of the frontage buildings, which are generally accessed directly from the street by way of narrow archways, which punctuate the streetscape at regular intervals.

In typical medieval fashion, another common townscape feature that can be identified in this end of town is the network of narrow streets which culminate at the wider 'High Street' (Clanbrassil Street in this instance). With the exception of a few taller landmark buildings, the typical building here comprises a maximum height of 2-3 storeys. This finer grain can also be seen within the residential areas which were rapidly establishing to the south of St Mary's Road and north of Jocelyn Street.

If we move further south to the central core of the town, larger scale buildings begin to emerge, particularly in and around the Market Square area, reflecting the large retail and civic presence in this location and the origins of the town's core as a popular trading area.



Finer Urban Grain within Historic Dundalk

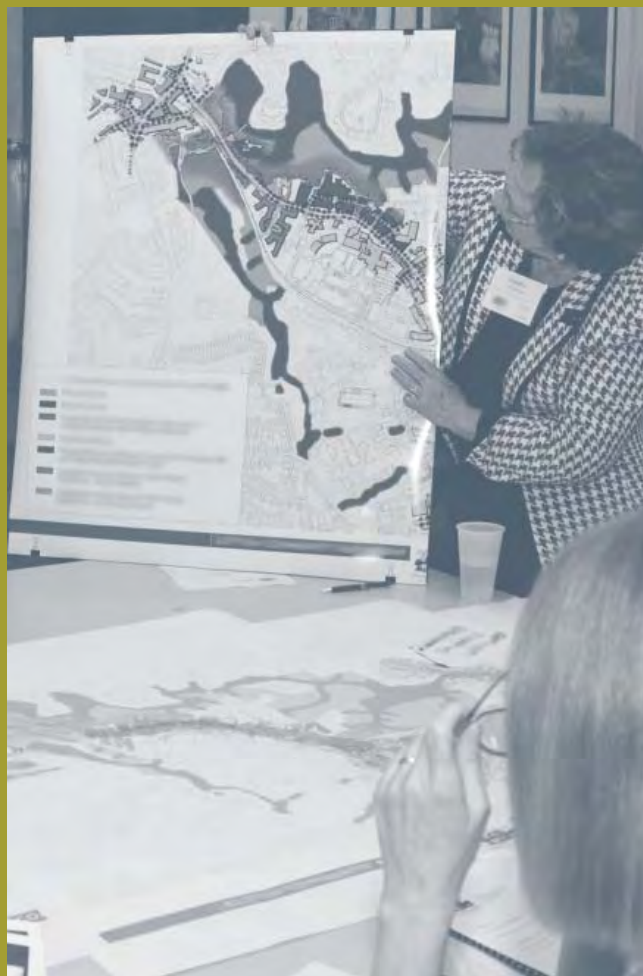


Looser Grain prevalent in the Suburban Residential Estates

Part

3

POLICY ANALYSIS



3.1 Introduction

A wide range of initiatives are presently in place which will provide the backbone in enabling and guiding the regeneration of Dundalk. This Framework Plan aims to build upon these schemes by offering strategic design guidance for the town centre and its surrounding environs. Guidance contained within this document has been informed by current strategic and local policy context which has set the structure of growth and change in the town. This section examines policy and plans which influence the town's development.

3.2 National Spatial Strategy 2002—2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002 - 2020 is a twenty-year planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions in Ireland. In the context of this strategy, Dundalk has been identified as being located within the Border region. Its strategic location between Belfast and Dublin has led to it being marked as a new national Gateway, which will have a significant impact on the future development of the town.

3.3 Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1999)

The Residential Density Guidelines were introduced in 1999 to advise planning authorities in relation to increasing residential densities, the safeguards that would be required and the steps that should be taken. These guidelines encourage more sustainable urban development by the promotion of higher residential densities in appropriate locations, particularly those close to public transport on zoned and serviced lands. The guidelines have heavily influenced the promotion of higher residential densities in built-up areas of the country, advising that the most appropriate locations for increased densities include town and city centres, "Brownfield" Sites, "Greenfield" sites and institutional lands. The promotion of higher densities in town and city centre locations, will have significant relevance in Dundalk given the quantity of 'brownfield' sites available, particularly in and around the northern end of town.

3.4 Sustainable Residential Development Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2008

The consultation draft guidelines 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the accompanying 'Urban Design Manual – A best practice guide', recently published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government set out objectives and parameters for the creation of sustainable, well designed and successful residential communities. Some of the key objectives contained within the draft guidelines, which need to be incorporated into the design and layout for new residential areas, can be summarised as follows:



- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars;
- Deliver a quality of life which residents and visitors are entitled to expect, in terms of amenity, safety and convenience;
- Provide a good range of community and support facilities, where and when they are needed;
- Present an attractive, well-maintained appearance, with a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm;
- Are easy to access and to find one's way around;
- Promote the efficient use of land and of energy, and minimise greenhouse gas emissions;
- Provide a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand;
- Promote social integration and provide accommodation for a diverse range of household types and age groups; and
- Enhance and protect the built and natural heritage.

The companion document to the draft planning guidelines entitled 'Urban Design Manual – A best practice guide' further sets out 12 criteria with indicators which are based around 12 questions introducing core principles of good residential development. These can be summarised as follows:

Context: How does the development respond to its surroundings?

Connections: How well connected is the new neighbourhood?

Inclusivity: How easily can people use and access the development?

Variety: How does the development promote a good mix of activities?

Efficiency: How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?

Distinctiveness: How do the proposals create a sense of place?

Layout: How does the proposal create people friendly streets and spaces?

Public Realm: How safe, secure and enjoyable are the public areas?

Adaptability: How will the buildings cope with change?

Privacy and Amenity: How does the scheme provide a decent standard of amenity?

Parking: How will the parking be secure and attractive?

Detailed Design: How well thought through is the building and landscape design?

The Urban Projects section of this framework plan has set out to address the key principles as set out in the two above mentioned documents.

3.5 Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005

These guidelines, which were updated in 2005, were first introduced in 2000 to ensure sustainable and good quality developments in retail planning in Ireland. The retail planning guidelines recommended that county councils and county boroughs should prepare appropriate retail strategies and policies for the whole of their administrative areas and these strategies should be incorporated into the relevant development plans.

The preferred location for retail development was stated to be within a town centre. Only where it is not possible to provide the type of development that is required within a town centre, the guidelines recommend that consideration can be given to a site on the edge of a town centre. They also state that development should be allowed in out-of-centre locations only when there are no town-centre or edge-of-centre sites suitable, viable and available.

3.6 National Development Plan 2007– 2013

The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out a regional development strategy, based on the spatial framework contained in the NSS, in the key areas of education and training, infrastructural development, regional development, the productive sector and in the promotion of social inclusion. This strategy is supported by a quantified multi-annual investment commitment.

The plan recognises the importance of Dundalk as a Gateway Centre and it identifies the need to focus investment on strengthening its enterprise structures, tackling social inclusion and providing recreational and cultural amenities. It also promotes the tenet of All-island co-operation.

3.7 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region, 2004

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region (RPGBR) set up a settlement strategy for Dundalk as well as providing specific guidance for the town's future development. This includes Dundalk reaching its NSS target population of 60,000 by 2020.

3.8 Louth County Development Plan 2003– 2009

The Louth County Development Plan was adopted in December 2003 and following an interim review was amended in July 2006. Dundalk is identified in the plan as being a principal shopping town and one of the main locations for employment uses in the county, with additional recognition of Louth as "strategically well placed to benefit from an increased inflow of retail trade". Dundalk is also referred to in the plan as an urban settlement and the settlement strategy sets out its strategic aim as follows:



"To promote and facilitate the growth of Dundalk as a major urban centre that can accommodate substantial population growth and act as a driver for development in the north of the county and the wider surrounding region".

3.9 Draft Louth Retail Strategy 2007

The Louth Retail Strategy 2007 is an update and review of the original baseline Retail Strategy 2002. It notes that although there is an increased provision of retail floor space in Dundalk, this has been mainly provided to the south of the town centre. This has co-insided with increased vacancy rates in the town core in particular to the north of the town centre.

3.10 Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003– 2009

The Dundalk and Environs Development Plan was adopted in 2003, with a number of subsequent variations adopted in December 2006. The plan aims to promote Dundalk's Gateway status by improving the town centre environment and strengthening the enterprise sector. The plan also seeks to promote the development of Dundalk as the prime retailing destination of the county and region, with the identification of specific areas for renewal and redevelopment opportunities.

3.11 Draft Mount Avenue Area Masterplan

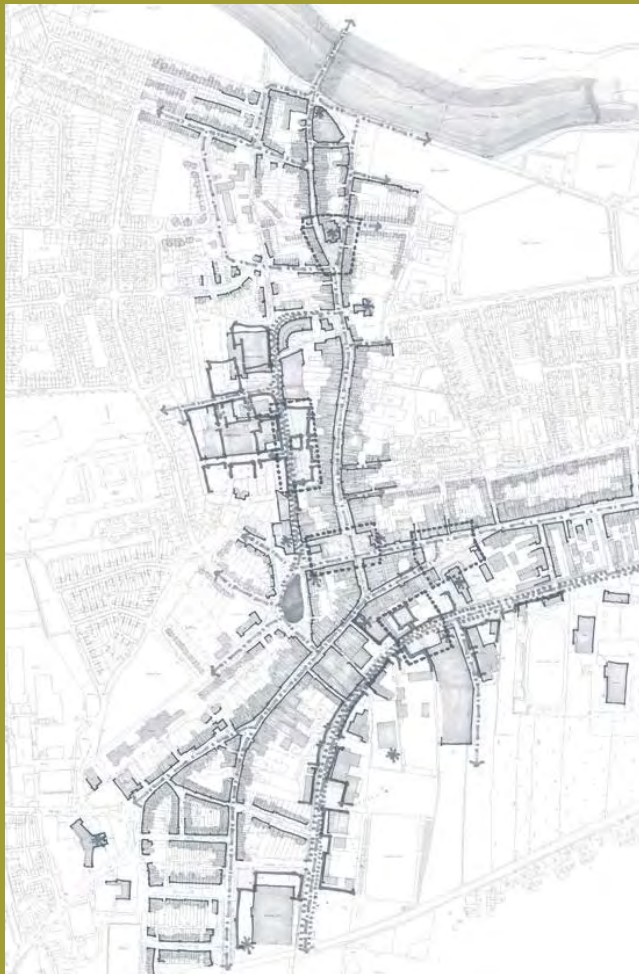
The Mount Avenue Masterplan lands are located to the west of Dundalk town centre. These lands can potentially provide Dundalk with an increase in population of 10,000 and the Masterplan provides for an overall residential yield of approximately 3,400 dwellings. The Masterplan also proposes a mix of land uses to provide amenities, facilities, services and employment including a primary and secondary school to enable the community to work shop and recreate locally.

The route line for the Western Infrastructure Road for Dundalk passes through these lands, creating significant levels of access from the M1 motorway and the town of Dundalk. The Masterplan also proposes a local public transportation network which will form a circuit connecting the area to the greater Dundalk community and the train station in the southwest.

Part

4

TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS



4.1 Introduction

The urban analysis of the Town Centre considers the current situation at which this study is written and aims to cover the following key areas;

- Dundalk's legibility, function and image;
- Built form and visual appropriateness;
- Public open spaces and major pedestrian generators;
- Transport links and movement;
- Land use and activity.

This strategy will aim to improve the strength and vitality of the Town Centre and in doing so will have regard to the policies and objectives of the Statutory Development Plan for Dundalk Town and Environs. In helping to identify areas that have the potential to develop the town centre, a full S.W.O.T analysis of the town has been undertaken, the result of which is summarised below.

4.2 S.W.O.T. Analysis

While it is widely accepted that the retail element within the town has been historically shifting southwards towards the lower end of Clanbrassil Street and Market Square, the opening of the Marshes Shopping Centre has continued this trend for development to the southern end of the town. Areas within the town have declined as a result. One such area that is showing physical as well as socio-economic symptoms of this problem is the historic quarter located within the northern sector of town close to the Castletown River, more specifically the area bounded by Church Street, Linenhall Street and Patrick Street, referred to within this study as the St. Nicholas Quarter.

The last two decades have seen an incremental loss of residential population from this area which has had a detrimental impact on the physical fabric and character in this end of town. The deterioration of this once a vibrant, bustling shopping area, centred around a medieval linear street pattern, has resulted in uses such as backland car repair workshops and, over abundance of pubs, off-licenses and bookmakers. The remaining buildings are either derelict or have been collectively cleared in clusters to make way for new residential developments, the majority of which are inward looking as witnessed by their lack of active frontages and 'electronically gated' entrances.

On the positive side the large vacancy rates and substantial surviving historic fabric within the St. Nicholas Area has left a distinctive structure which is ideal for regeneration and a prime opportunity to act as a 'catalyst for change' within this area of town. The primary aim in this context is to provide the St Nicholas Character Area with a new sense of identity and purpose.

The town centre of Dundalk stretches from Clanbrassil Street in the north, through Earl Street/Crowe Street/Park Street/Francis



Street and into Dublin St. This part of town forms the historic core, with important civic buildings such as The Court House, Town Hall and Street Patricks Cathedral being located here. This area also forms the centre of Dundalk's commercial activity, being the home to Dundalk Town Council's offices, banking and postal services and credit unions, along with retail and office areas.

As previously mentioned, hugely welcomed in the town for the range of shopping services offered and the local job provision generated, the Marshes Shopping Centre has firmly set the standard for development within the towns southern expansion area. Nevertheless, further development within this area needs to be managed to re-balance the centre of gravity of the town centre.

4.2.1 Strengths

The town centre is the commercial core of Dundalk with established retailers, and institutions being located here. The streetscape of the town centre, particularly along the lower stretches of Clanbrassil St, comprises a strong retail character with many established businesses. The main Bus Eireann station is located on The Longwalk in close proximity of the Longwalk Shopping Centre and Clanbrassil Street. This provides visitors from out of town destinations with direct access to the centre of town on public transport. The train station is located on the Carrickmacross Road - also within walking distance of the centre.

There is a sufficient supply of parking within the town centre. The introduction of pay parking has meant that parking spaces are being used more efficiently within this area. This has resulted in the town centre becoming relatively easy to navigate and to find parking.

There is an ample supply of prime redevelopment sites within the town centre as a result of the relocation of business and the non-development of derelict sites.

The National Spatial Strategy gives an objective of Dundalk having a population of approximately 60,000 by 2020. This would provide for a greater customer base and for greater activity within the town.

The town benefits from the third level Institution Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) located to the south of the town, which provides an education base of the local community and also draws in students from throughout Ireland.

Dundalk provides a wide range of services for the local community including a library, County and Town Council Offices, a swimming pool and a county museum. Other services including the Dundalk Ice Dome, JJB Soccerdrome and the All-weather Racetrack are attractions for visitors from throughout Leinster.

4.2.2 Weaknesses

Dundalk has followed the model of 'in town' shopping centres, such as the Longwalk (built in 1990) and the Marshes, located adjacent to the historic shopping area. Despite the fact that this is not an ideal model for the long term sustainable development of the town, this form of commercial development has had obvious benefits for example the provision of additional car parking facilities not normally provided in historic centres and the provision of an anchor store for small local traders.

Unfortunately shopping centres have a short life span usually between 16 and 20 years. In the case of Dundalk the Longwalk Shopping Centre has long passed its peak. The Marshes Shopping Centre has now become the new retail hub of the town. This shift in retail activity particularly the anchor stores is increasing the momentum of the decline of the Long Walk and retail units in Clanbrassil Street. Buildings are increasingly becoming vacant and the area is slowly declining. It is imperative that the town finds a more sustainable, timeless and permanent model of commercial development which is adaptable to change, similar to the historic development of urban centres.

A number of the existing edges of the town are of an extremely poor quality. This provides the town a poor perception and an inadequate sense of arrival to those passing through the town.

The introduction of edge-of-town retail developments, such as the Retail Parks, has had an adverse impact on the retail activity within the town centre. Some retail units have relocated to these developments and some of their existing units have not been filled. The reduction in the retail trade within the traditional town centre reduces its overall attractiveness.

Several of the new residential developments in the town have been built using the 'gated community' model, surrounded by high walls and electronic gates. These "gated communities" do not create a sense of social inclusion and create divides between the existing community and the residents of these new developments.

4.2.3 Opportunities

There is a multitude of prime infill and re-development sites available within the existing town centre which provide the opportunity for a rejuvenation of the town. Some of these sites comprise single storey derelict buildings which have the potential to be redeveloped, in line with recent developments on the same street.

There is a considerable amount of land available for development to the rear of buildings on many of the streets in the town. These could be developed into residential courtyard developments.

The Market Square and Courthouse area is the focal point of the town. Recent renovations to the Courthouse buildings have significantly improved its visual appearance; however the Market Square is in need of improvement. Simple measures such as landscaping would add colour and character to the square.



Here the opportunity exists to provide Dundalk with a usable town square that is not only of the highest design standard but also provides a civic amenity that can be enjoyed by the people of Dundalk.

Presently, the linkages are at either end of The Longwalk at Market Square and Carroll Village. There are additional access points through the car parks on the Longwalk. However, this is neither ideal nor safe for pedestrians. There is a need and an opportunity to improve the connectivity within the town centre for pedestrians and in particular the links between Clanbrassil Street and The Longwalk.

The development of a cycle network would be extremely advantageous to the town. Unlike many other towns and cities, Dundalk is relatively flat, which is perfect for cycling. Residents would potentially use the bicycle more often for short journeys if the proper facilities were provided for cycling safety and parking security.

4.2.4 Threats

The biggest threat to the town centre is posed by out-of-town retail centres. These have the potential to draw further consumers away from the centre, especially those travelling by car. It is imperative that prime retail sites, with a variation in size, are made available to new retailers. New development within the town should be designed to a high standard so that they are attractive to both potential retailers and the general public.

The Draft Louth Retail Strategy 2007 states that vacancy rates in the town centre have increased since the baseline study in 2001. There is a need to ensure that this trend does not continue by encouraging more development in and around the town centre and effectively managing retail developments from moving further south.

Part

5

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK







5.1 Introduction

A flexible and coherent Urban Design Framework Strategy is critical in promoting coherent and sustainable urbanism within Dundalk Town Centre. This chapter establishes the general principles and strategies that are proposed for Dundalk, including specific proposals to guide the growth and manage change within the Town Centre over the next two decades. The overall aim of the strategy will be to achieve a flexible and realistic framework for growth, continued development, regeneration and physical improvement of the town.

5.2 Level of guidance

This strategy requires a comprehensive approach of guidance in order to be both a coherent urban design strategy and at the same time an effective planning control tool. It therefore needs to cover two levels of guidance following a logical sequence of detail from large scale vision to site specific guidance. These two levels of guidance are:

- At Strategic level (included in this chapter);
- At Character Area level (chapter 6).

5.3 Strategic Objectives

Modernist Planning based on mono-use zones and open-plan layouts structured by a hierarchy of distributor roads may no longer be considered the ideal model for urban development, but it did form a coherent urban package, bought into by planners, architects and engineers. In fact it formed an 'articulated' system that allowed components to be designed according to separate professional conventions: buildings could be designed freely as individual architectural artefacts while roads followed their own flowing geometry.

Planners often nowadays express preference for a neo-traditional model of urban development: a return to a more traditional fabric of mixed-use development formed by buildings assembled in streets. This neo-traditional model itself forms a coherent package which is an alternative to urban sprawl. It implies intensification, high density and mixed uses as opposed to low density, mono use urban sprawl. Within such a definition the compact city has caught the attention of many professionals as having a potential for achieving sustainability.

The following set of strategic objectives respond to the outcome of the Urban Design analysis carried out in the previous chapter. These objectives encompass the essence of the strategy and form the basis where the next two levels of guidance, character area and urban project, sit and are measured against. These are:

- **To regenerate the area through re-redevelopment in an integrated manner starting from the historic town core towards the edge of the town:**

A fundamental objective of this strategy is to serve as a blueprint for the regeneration and consolidation of Dundalk Town Centre. It is recommended that this

redevelopment should occur in an orderly manner starting from the core of the Town Centre, eventually progressing to the edge. The size of the regeneration area and the trend of existing development recommend this sequential approach to regeneration.

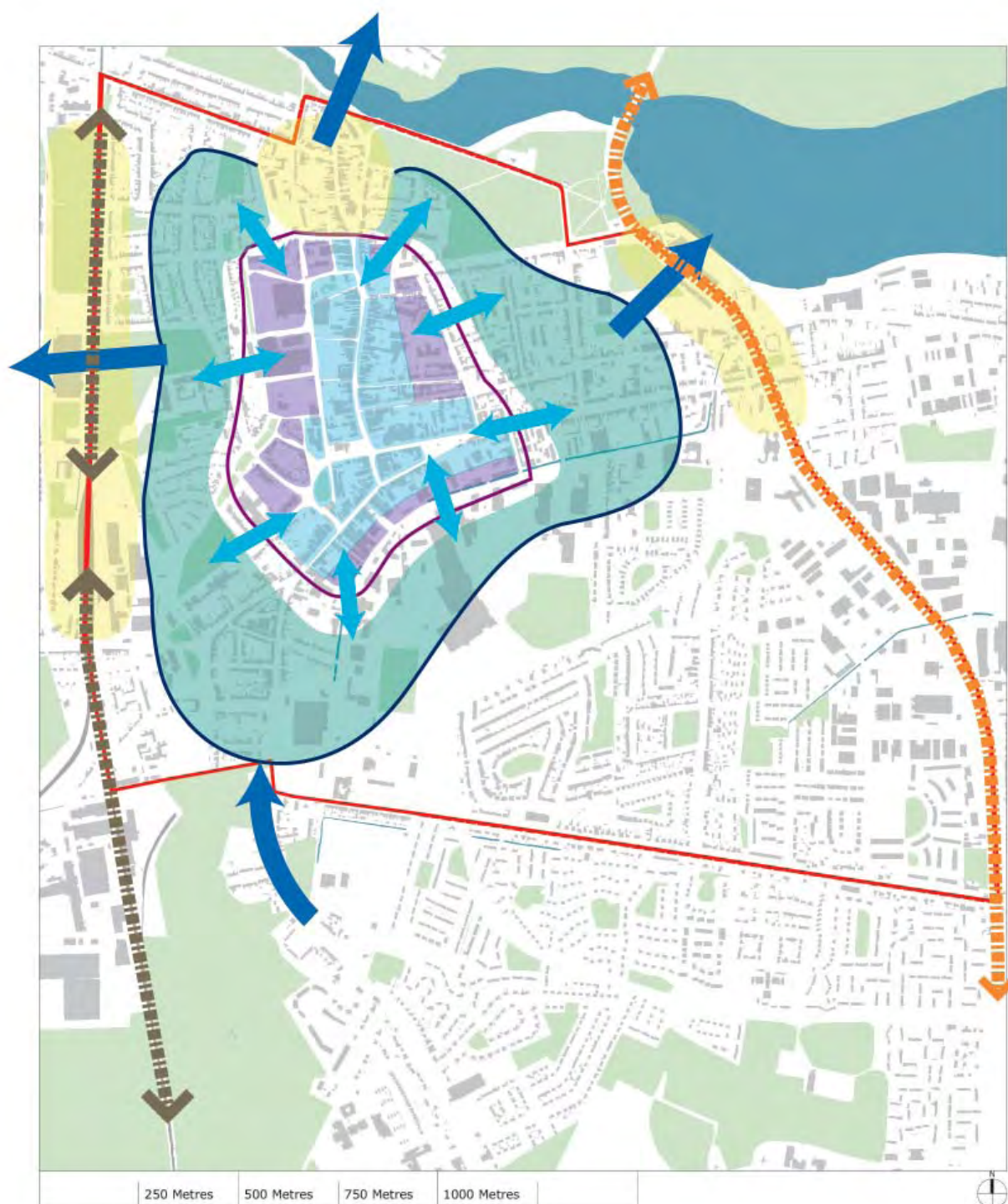
Single use strategies and short-term solutions that respond to particular economic circumstances are a real threat to the long term survival of the Town Centre. Whilst the majority of agents involved in the process of city making claim that socio-economical matters should be the engine of the transformation, it is essential to maintain a careful balance with tradition. This can be achieved by actively protecting, promoting and conserving generic components and elements of the urban pattern. New proposals should be integrated within them and should respect both existing cultural assets and traditional urban patterns. Therefore, it is a strategic objective of this study to:

- o Set up principles for the intensification of use of existing grain;
- o Preserve and enhance surviving historic fabric and setting up clear principles for the integration of modern building within ACAs.

Dundalk Town Centre enjoys the presence of a complex network of streets and back lanes. The basic structure of the historic core of the Town follows a “Y” formation made up of Clanbrassil Street, Jocelyn-Seatown Street and Hill-Dublin-Park Street. Parallel to these towards the West and South are located The Long Walk and The Ramparts. These two set of parallel streets converge at the Market Square which could be defined as the Civic core of the Dundalk. This urban pattern is particular to Dundalk and no similar one can be found anywhere else in the Country. Traditionally Irish Towns usually struggle to develop a second main street not to mention complex urban patterns.

If we look closely to those set of parallel streets, Clanbrassil Street-Long walk and Jocelyn-Seatown-Dublin-Hill Street – The Ramparts we could observe that there is a complementary relationship within each. The long walk offers shopping and provides the parking provision whilst Clanbrassil Street offers small scale retailing, services, cultural and other complementary uses. In a similar way Jocelyn-Seatown-Dublin-Hill Street and The Ramparts work. These functional pairings are key to the success of the regeneration of Dundalk Town Centre. Further more, there is an opportunity to convert both the Long walk and The Ramparts from back lanes to urban avenues. Therefore, a key objective of the strategy would be to:

- o Repair the urban grain by
 - Consolidating the established urban sequence of Clanbrassil Street and the Long Walk and transforming the Long Walk into an urban street.
 - Conforming the new urban sequence



Spatial Concept

	Urban Design Strategy Boundary		Town Core - Inner		Improved External Connection
	Middle Town Boundary		Town Core - Outer		Eastern Bypass
	Town Core Strategy		Rejuvenation Area		Railway Line
	Middle Town		Improved Internal Connection		

- of Francis Street and The Ramparts and transforming the Ramparts into an urban Avenue.
- Consolidating the Market Square as the main Town Civic Space

- Enrich the public realm along the key Town Centre Streets giving specific attention to streetscape treatment in response to localised development patterns.

- **To use a neo-traditional urban model:**

The basic recommendation is to use a perimeter block form that will help to define streets and public spaces. The majority of the historic town centre has already an established urban structure; however areas such as the Long Walk and the Ramparts suffers from a clear lack of public-private definition that prevent the area to feel “urban”. The perimeter block neatly solves this problem by locating the built form between the public space and the private space and by reallocating the private-owned spaces to the back of the site.

Furthermore, it is imperative that the urban blocks “look” outwards towards the street. The street will then act as an urban stage between “private” and “public” and will immediately become both the corridor of frantic pedestrian activity and the needed interface between transit and access. The ground floor activity should spill over the pavements. Both perimeter block and active frontage are basic conditions without which passive surveillance could not be achieved. Finally, uses that extent activity from a traditional mono-use pattern to a much more urban schedule from eight in the morning to midnight should be encouraged in order to achieve a continuous passive surveillance.

- **To evolve from Mono-use zoning to Mix of uses.**

As part of the proposed neo-traditional urban model, mono-use zoning should give way to a more sustainable mix of uses, while yet focused on employment.

The mix of uses aims to create a system of complementary uses that minimises the need for transit and maximizes the interaction between people. This is the basic requirement in order to create successful urban places. The concept of vertical zoning in which the different levels of the new buildings will have a different use is worth exploring.

- **To reinforce the individual character of specific areas within the town centre**

The Town Centre can be divided into a series of smaller areas of distinct character, use or physical definition. Over time the tendency is for the boundaries of these areas to merge and dilute into an undefined single component. This works against the objective of establishing areas of



distinct uniqueness which reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Town Centre. It is therefore pivotal to reinforce the balance and cohesion between the character areas and the town centre, redeveloping brown-field land assigned to short-term uses that may help to complete the current urban grain. Therefore, the objective is to:

- Define key quarter and character areas that promote their individual range of compatible land uses that meet a wide range of local needs;
 - Formulate quality spaces throughout the town which are identifiable, safe and appropriate to their location;
 - Breathe new life into key community areas by the introduction of well designed residential developments that embrace their surroundings, together with their ancillary uses and facilities;
- **To re-balance the centre of gravity of the Town towards the North.**

Understanding the historic pattern of development of the Town Centre is critical to the success of any regeneration proposal. The level of complexity and richness that five centuries of development have added to Dundalk is usually overlooked.

Therefore, it does not come as a surprise to see suburban models of development such as shopping malls, big-box stores and vast surface car-parks having been proposed and quite often built at town centre locations. Ironically, it could be argued that these types of developments, particularly those built along the Long Walk during the 1980s and 1990s, have actively contributed to the survival of Clanbrassil Street and the rest of commercial streets during an era when out-of-town developments posed a bigger threat to the survival of the Town Centre.

More recently, the construction of the Marshes Shopping Centre at the Southern edge of the Town, which also followed the suburban model, has altered the balance of the Town by shifting its centre of gravity southwards. Despite this, such event has triggered a positive chain reaction on the Long Walk. Proposals for the regeneration of the already outdated shopping centres are under consideration. Consequently there is now a unique opportunity to transform the Long Walk from a characterless back lane to a properly formed street that may help to rebalance the centre of gravity of the Town towards the north. Therefore, it is a strategic objective of this study to:

- Identify prime development sites and urban projects as catalyst for change that will help to rebalance the centre of gravity of the Town Centre.
 - Manage the southern expansion of the town in a manner that will not jeopardise the vitality and viability of the traditional town centre.

- **To reconnect the Town centre to the Castletown River.**

The Castletown River presents a unique opportunity to regenerate the North of the Town. A study was previously undertaken by Colin Buchanan & Partners Ltd with regard to the Castletown River, which provides a framework plan for future growth along the river. Historically, the proximity of the town to the water has been essential for the survival of Dundalk. Waterfronts are becoming icons of cities. Today, being close to the water is equally valued for the natural beauty it affords. By building on local culture and history the Castletown River could become the Town's waterfront cultural corridor, complementing the Town Centre as a place of recreation, reflection and enjoyment. Therefore, it is a strategic objective of this study to:

- Reconnect the town Centre to the Castletown River by creating a waterfront that restores the aspect of the inherited town and becomes the Town's northern cultural corridor.

- **To overcome the physical Barriers that constrain the Town**

As the railway era demonstrated, transportation projects can impede as well as catalyze development. The barriers created by these sort of projects tend to create long-term repercussions that usually condition the way urban settlements operate. The barrier created by the Dublin-Belfast railway line has historically severed the Western side of the town from the town Centre. Movement from that side of the Town accesses the Centre through two crossing points at both the Northern and Southern end, with two underpasses linking the Cox's area to the Ice House Hill Park. The severance created by the railway is seriously hindering the development of the western part of the town and affecting the natural balance of the town centre by shifting it southwards.

The construction of the Eastern by-pass in the 1990s helped to alleviate the endemic traffic congestion that Dundalk Town Centre used to suffer. Despite all these positive aspects, the eastern by-pass has dramatically changed the way the Town centre operates by altering its basic accessibility pattern. The Eastern by-pass followed the path of a disused railway line. While numerous connections to the urban network were created, the by-pass followed a suburban pattern which created a barrier between the town centre and adjacent areas to the east. Furthermore, the proximity and accessibility of the town centre to the by-pass is not evident.

While the Southern and Eastern parts of the Town Centre became highly accessible over night, the intricate street network of the North of the town was left aside. A new bridge over the Castletown River attracted the majority of the North-South traffic, resulting in the old bridge becoming a mere spectator of the new transportation corridor.



Further repercussion at the north of the town was the almost immediate lack of passing trade resulting in vacancy and dereliction particularly along Bridge Street and Linenhall Street.

Therefore, it is an objective to:

- Alleviate the barrier effect of transport infrastructures and particularly the one created by the railway line along the Western edge by creating new connections to improve connectivity and permeability, thereby improving access between the Cox's/Ard Easmuinn and the town centre area.
 - Improve the connection of dispersed urban tissues severed by the present transport infrastructure.
 - Improve the quality and integration of the infrastructures, by refurbishing existing roads and create new access roads.
 - Integrate the Eastern by-pass into the urban grid and establish a distinctive relationship between the Town Centre and the Eastern By-pass. Upgrading of the By-pass into an Avenue
- **To mend and reconnect the urban fabric in order to increase accessibility and permeability:**

In his seminal work *Traffic in Towns*, Colin Buchanan laid out a basic principle for road hierarchy that has become an influential force in shaping the layout of urban areas for forty years. Road hierarchy has been an influential – often dominating – factor in generating the character of modern urban layouts, by affecting the relationships between roads, buildings and urban structure. This urban approach has often been criticised for resulting in dull or dysfunctional roads-dominated layouts lacking in urbanity or sense of place.

New expansion areas are a clear example of this approach. Disconnected and inward-looking, the new housing estate face a difficult challenge for regeneration unless its fabric is mended and reconnected to the surrounding areas. It is therefore imperative that new connections to the surrounding areas are created or re-open.

- **To enhance the arrival to and movement through the Town Centre.**

As stated in the previous bullet point, the construction of the Eastern bypass has significantly altered the perception of arrival to the Town Centre. The sense of progressive transition leading to arrival to the Market square has been substituted by an incoherent series of unwelcome views that provides the town with neither a readable urban pattern nor a sense of place. A series of potential gateway locations and landmark buildings should signal a distinctive entrance to Dundalk Town Centre. In addition,

movement patterns should be intuitive and simple to negotiate. Key locations such as railway and bus stations and car parks should be easy to locate.

Therefore, it is an objective to:

- Improve the main approaches to the town.
 - Creating new gateways to the Town (Eastern and Western)
 - Re-enforcing the Northern Gateway
 - Enhancing the Southern Gateway
 - Re-establishing a 21st century railway gateway to the Town
 - Establish a clear hierarchy of landmarks
 - Re-connect the physical and visual links throughout the town ensuring increased permeability between the various character areas;
 - Improve movement patterns within the Town Centre
 - Improve signage
- **To setup the basis to an orderly town centre expansion**

The regeneration of Dundalk Town Centre is a complex process of adaptation of existing urban areas, preservation of areas of historic significance and a balanced growth beyond the existing boundaries. While the first two options require a careful approach to development that often results in higher development costs, the expansion of the Town Centre on greenfield land is generally the preferred option favoured by most of development agents, however the strategic and statutory planning policy framework would not support the Greenfield site except where all other options are exhausted. However the strategic and statutory planning policy framework would not support the Greenfield site except where all other options are exhausted. Lower land prices and increased car-based access is a result of relief-road construction, are common feature for this sort of location. However, the numerous negative implications of this trend, such as the defragmentation of historic town centres and worsening of traffic conditions, tend to surpass the forecasted benefits unless a balanced approach is undertaken.

Therefore, it is an objective to:

- Set up a framework for the orderly town centre growth that balances adaptation, preservation and expansion.
- Set up principles for the intensification of use of existing grain within the establish Town Centre.
- Set up the design codes and phasing for the orderly future development of the southern expansion area.
- Establish a consistent approach to key redevelopment sites by way of comprehensive design guidelines;



Part

6

CHARACTER AREAS



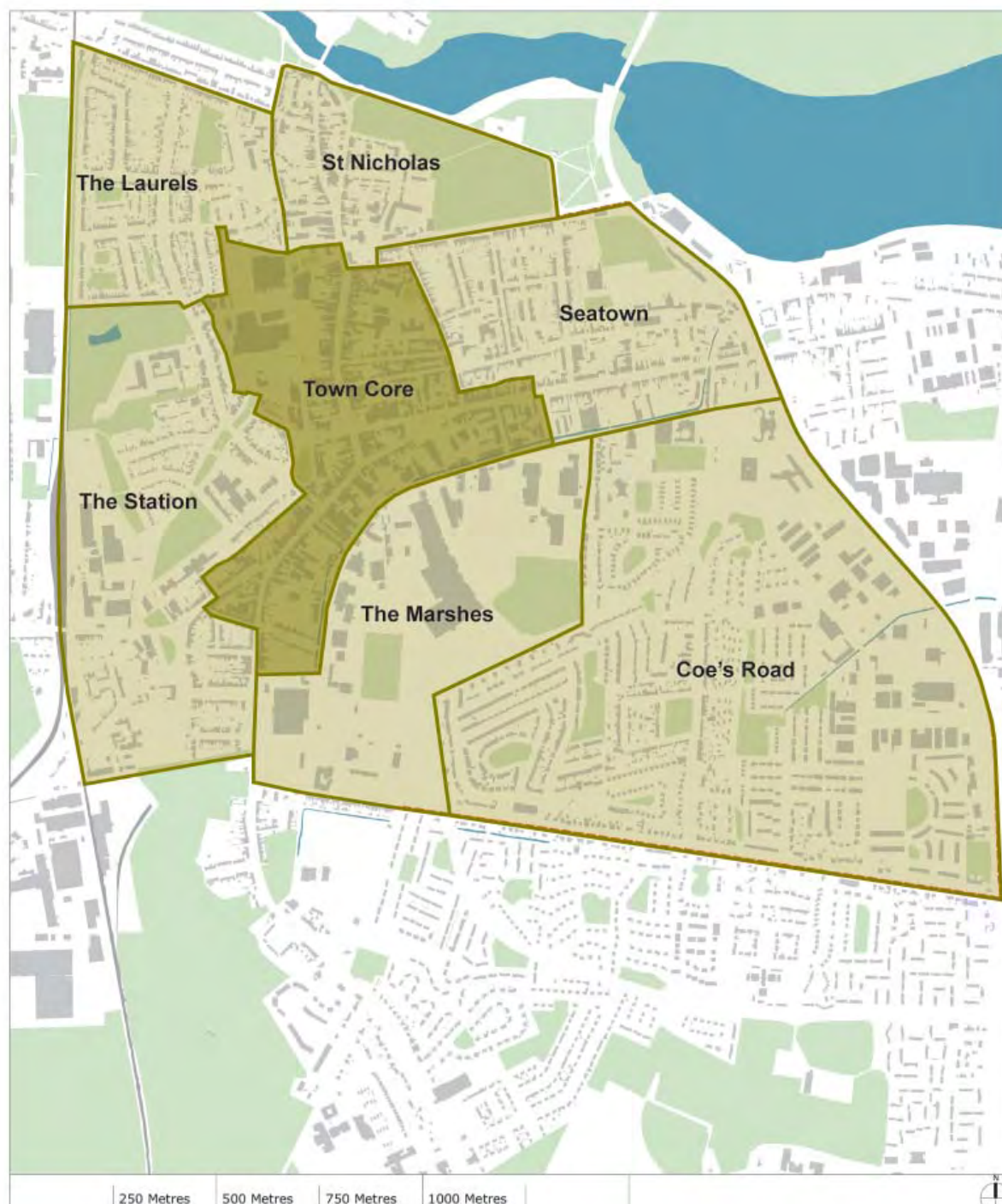
6.1 Introduction

As previously mentioned, Dundalk Town Centre comprises a number of distinct *character areas*, each of which contains unique historical and physical characteristics which in turn has resulted in land uses specific to those areas. One of the main objectives of the Urban Design Framework will be to ensure that a clear identity emerges in each character area and that the connections between each area are identified, strengthened and managed. The sub-division of the larger study area into smaller more manageable character areas, which reflect the particular historic, economic or architectural form unique to that area, will provide the reader with an insight into how the town presently performs and more importantly how each area can benefit from localised intervention. Each character area will be assessed in terms of their specific role in the formation of the urban design framework, their relationship with neighbouring character areas and finally the opportunities that the area presents for urban improvements based on the function and distinctiveness of the area.

The eight character areas, which are dealt with individually within separate chapters, comprise;

- St Nicholas
- Seatown
- Town Core
- The Marshes
- The Station
- The Laurels
- Coes Road

A more detailed analysis identifying key urban design issues will be conducted for each character area. Development guidelines will allow townscape opportunities to be addressed in each area at a localised level in order to reinforce both the unique identity of the area and the distinctive sense of place.





Gateways Landmarks and Public Spaces

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Urban Design Strategy Boundary | Primary Public Spaces | Existing Landmark Building |
| Character Area Gateway
A=Reshape B=Enhance C=Create | Secondary Public Spaces | Existing Landmark to be upgraded |
| Primary Routes | Key Streets | Proposed Landmark Building |
| | Key Streets to be upgraded | Railway Line |



St. Nicholas Character Area





6.1 St. Nicholas Character Area

6.1.1 Study Area

The study area considers Bridge Street and Linenhall Street and their surrounding context but essentially focuses on the area bound to the south by St Marys Road, to the west by Patrick Street / Laurels Road, to the east by St Helena's Park and the Castletown River to the north. The Character Area pays homage to both the St Nicholas Catholic Church located at the junction of Church Street, Bridge Street and Linenhall Street, and the St Nicholas Church (Church of Ireland) located at the junction of Church Street, Yorke Street and Nicholas Street. While the latter church terminates views west along St Mary's Road, the former terminates the long vista north along Clanbrassil Street. This area is shown outlined in red on the above previous graphic.

6.1.2 Key Issues

As previously mentioned, out of the character areas identified within this Strategy, the St Nicholas Character Area has probably witnessed the largest degree of deterioration resulting in significantly high vacancy rates throughout. Apart from the tight urban grain, containing some noteworthy examples of traditional shopfronts, this area at present bears no memorable visual identity despite being the first point of arrival to the town from the north. Furthermore, despite the tight knit appearance of the narrow frontages along Bridge Street and Linenhall Street, large underutilised vacant backland plots exist to the rear.

The main spine routes of Bridge Street and Linenhall Street, which together form the central fork within the St Nicholas Character Area, fail to address the surrounding residential streets and roads, and more importantly lack any focal points from which the area can bear some reference. With the obvious exception of the two churches, the absence of landmark buildings and legible public spaces within the area, particularly along the main spine routes result in a less memorable environment for both pedestrians and drivers alike. Few 'reference' buildings or visual aides stand out from the general backdrop of buildings, and as such, visitors to the area are deprived of vital markers with which to orientate themselves.

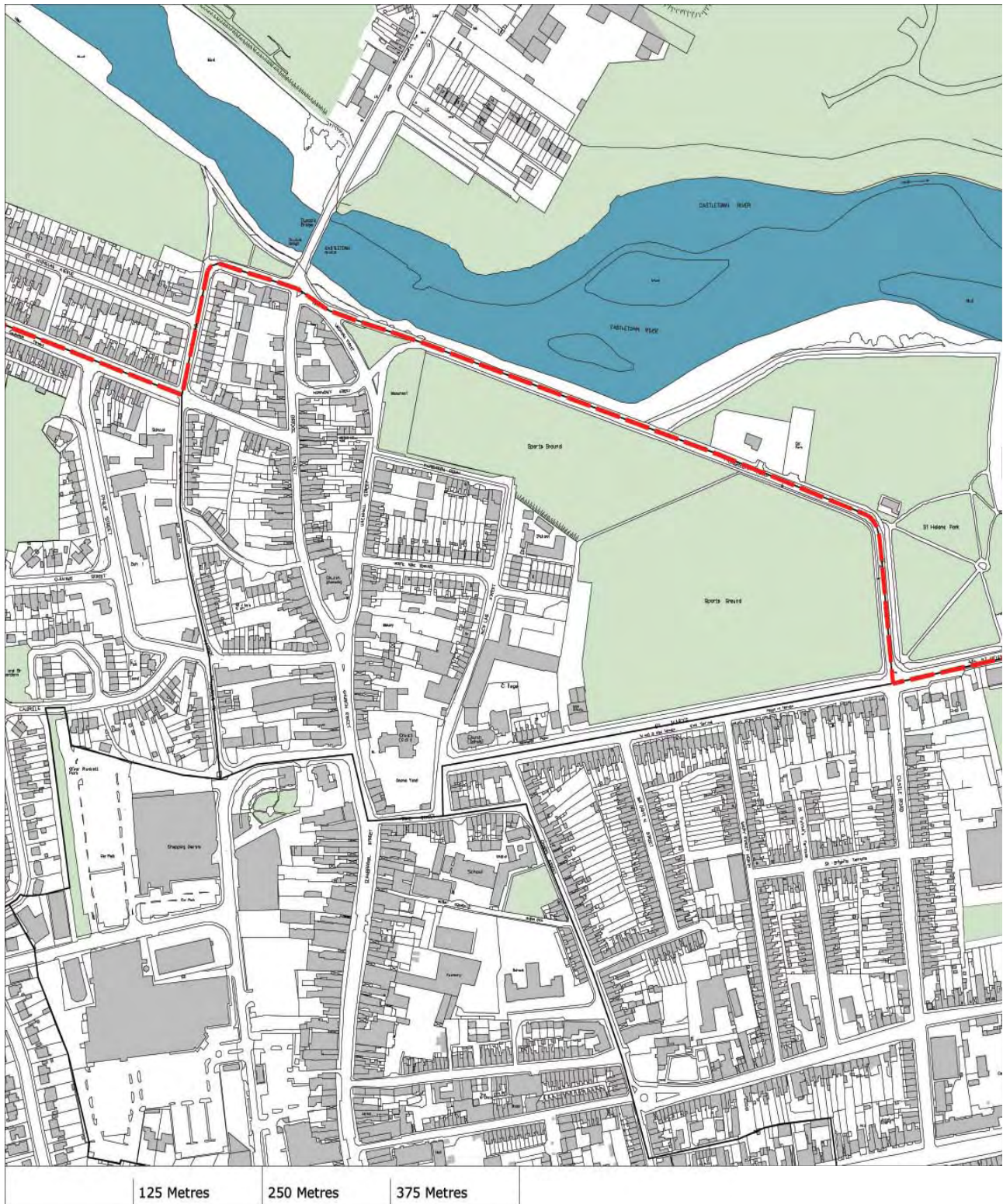
The western edge of St Mary's Road, formerly referred to as 'Quay Road' and 'Wellington Place', was the original site of the 'Seatowne Gate' and can be found on historic town maps dating back to 1680, with its full length laid out in its entirety by 1785. As an original 'gateway' to the town, St Mary's Road represented an historic connection eastwards linking the then town proper (Middle Ward) with the expanse of coal yards, the Custom House and finally the Quay located at the Castletown River. Today many fine examples of red brick Victorian residential properties still exist on the southern side of St Mary's Road, ranging from the narrow frontage two storey terraces along the western end to the more ornate detached houses facing St Helena's Park. Regrettably the construction of the eastern bypass has effectively blocked this former connection and downgraded the importance of St Mary's Road as a formal 'gateway' to the town.



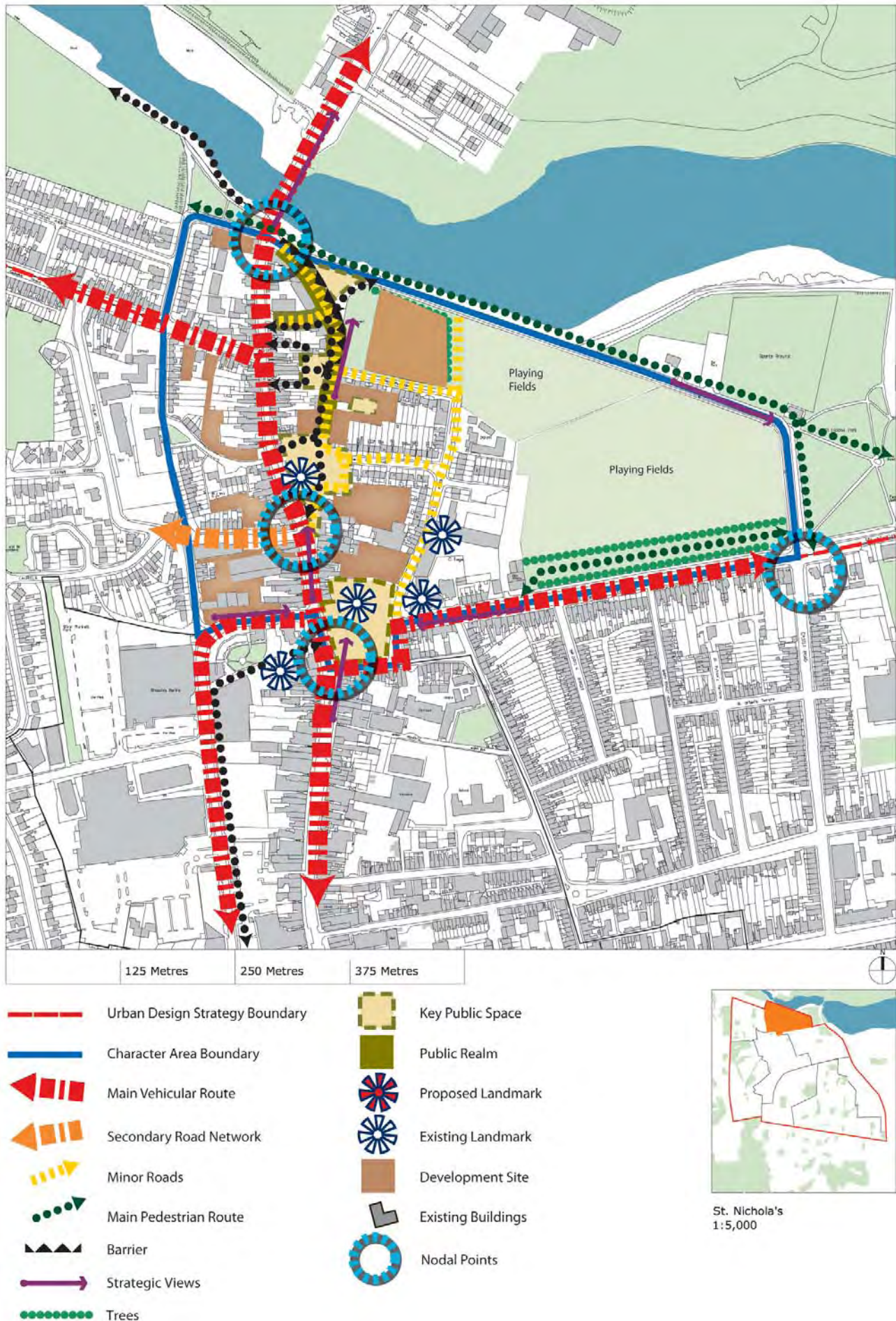
Photo Analysis: St Nicholas

1	2	3
4	5	
6		

1. A vacant terraced property with opportunities for courtyard development to rear
2. Infill opportunities adjacent to a vacant property on Linenhall Street
3. Backland site occupied by successful art gallery
4. Recently constructed courtyard residential development
5. St. Nicholas Church - possible location of a new civic space
6. Prime site: opportunity to re-use and restore protected structure opposite the Dundalk Bridge



St. Nicholas's
1:5,000





St. Nicholas's Square -The Vision



Fair Green -The Vision

6.1.3 Key Design Objectives

- **Formulation of a New Identity**

The framework should seek to establish a new identity for this strategic northern gateway to Dundalk. It is envisaged that the St Nicholas Quarter has the potential to become the centrepiece of a vibrant, cultural community – a springboard for the arts showcasing local talent and the general promotion of cultural activities within the town. It is recommended that Bridge Street could be developed to become a visitor destination comprising a series of small scale cultural sites and buildings with the promotion of cultural events and festivals where possible.

- **Reinforce key East-West pedestrian routes**

Access to and from the residential neighbourhoods to the west and east of the study area should be reinforced by way of public realm improvement works, selective landscaping and the introduction of traffic calming measures along Bridge Street and Linenhall Street.

- **Define key public spaces at points of arrival**

The establishment of a new focal point fronting St Nicholas Church, at the junction of Church Street, Bridge Street and Linenhall Street will help create a sense of arrival into the southern edge of the study area and reinforce the importance of this historic junction. A similar civic space is also proposed in the grounds of the St. Nicholas Church of Ireland at York Street and Nicholas Street, Providing a focal point at the Western end of St. Marys road. A smaller more intimate public space is proposed at the western end of Fairgreen Row as a long term objective.

- **Utilise backland sites for new development opportunities**

The substantial amount of vacant backland sites, located behind the properties fronting Bridge Street, presents prime opportunities for appropriate backland development. Access arrangements should be organised to avoid any adverse disruption to the appearance of the streetscape. In particular circumstances, it may be possible to assemble a sufficient land bank from a number of adjoining landowners to enable a small group of buildings to be developed in a courtyard style layout. Several good quality examples of such courtyard style development already exists in this area, many of which house professional services or destination uses such as art galleries and specialist retailing outlets, all of which appear to be thriving and do not rely on passing trade.

- **Reduced levies**

In order to trigger the regeneration of the area It is envisaged that reduced levies should be introduced to specific development plots within the St Nicholas Character Area.

Recommendations

- Establish the St Nicholas Church Area as a centrepiece of a lively cultural community.
- Reconnect the area to the adjoining residential estates;
- Formalise key arrival points;
- Facilitate backland developments where appropriate;
- Encourage mixed use development along the main spine route of Bridge Street and Church Street, with active uses at ground floor level;
- Formalise St Mary's Road as an entrance to the town;
- Consider the use of financial incentives to encourage regeneration;
- Encourage more marker buildings along key routes;
- Consider the internal amalgamation of plots whilst maintaining the external vertical rhythm along the streetscape;
- Define new Public spaces at St Nicholas Catholic Church and St. Nicholas Church of Ireland.
- Fairgreen, important public space to be preserved and improved

Design Guidelines

- Preservation of existing perimeter block structure and fine grain built form
- Active street frontage
- Mixed use development (retail, commercial, residential and community uses)
- Quality public realm with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and traffic calming on main streets
- New development which extends over more than one historic plot should reflect the historic plot pattern with variations in the facade composition
- The roofline should reflect the rhythm, harmony and scale of the entire street frontage with the roofline picking up the subdivisions of the facade.

Site Coverage: maximum of 80%

Plot Ratio: maximum of 2.00

Typical Height: 2.5 - 4 storeys

(landmark and key sites will be considered on their merits)



Seatown Character Area





6.2 SEATOWN CHARACTER AREA

6.2.1 Study Area

The Seatown Character Area is located in the north east region of Dundalk. The study area is bounded to the north by St. Helena Park and St Mary's Road, to the west by Chapel Street, Castle Road and Jocelyn Drive, to the east by the Bypass and to the south by the Ramparts Road. The area is primarily defined by the established residential communities immediately east of Chapel Street, the dwellings of which date from the early 19th Century. Historically, Jocelyn Street and Seatown Place, along its southern boundary, formed an important arterial link from the towns Market Square eastwards to the Cavalry Barracks and the Quay at Dundalk Harbour. The extent of the Character Area is shown outlined in red on the previous graphic.

6.2.2 Key Issues

The main concern regarding this area is the severance that has been caused by the introduction of the eastern bypass which has effectively cut off the critical residential mass from the historic Quays and waterfront. As a result, the eastern edge of this area is now characterised by a wide suburban transportation corridor with fast flowing vehicular traffic. When travelling south along the bypass into town, immediately following St Helena Park at the junction with St Mary's Road, the visitor is presented with low grade commercial uses enclosed by impenetrable industrial railings. The surrounding built form at this location makes no reference to the importance of this junction as an entrance to town, and as a result, motorists are unaware of how close they actually are to the town centre. Instead they are encouraged to continue along the bypass, and enter the town further south. With the obvious exception of residents within the internal network of established streets, the present urban form indirectly encourages visitors to travel through the area; more often as a means of accessing outer lying areas of the town to the north and south.

Older industrial warehouse type units flank both sides of the bypass, however a larger concentration exists on its eastern side, an area historically associated with activities at Dundalk Harbour. While just outside the study boundary of this Strategy, it is imperative that this strategic strip of land, which is defined by large inexpensive structures of limited aesthetic value, is included within the limitations of the Seatown Character Area and the combined area is examined in its totality.

The presence of several schools at the western end of St Mary's Road does provide activity and ease of accessibility to the eastern edge of the town core. However, the playing fields associated with both schools, primarily St Marys College on Nicholas Street, create a dead frontage and impenetrable barrier along the northern edge of St Mary's Road, effectively disconnecting St Helena Park from the town proper.

Moving southwards, one of Dundalk's protected monuments, namely the disused windmill along Seatown Place, lies derelict within a neglected overgrown setting. Once a beacon of Dundalk's pastoral farming economy in its functional role along the Ramparts and Mill Race, this iconic structure is hidden from view within one of the lesser visited corners of town.

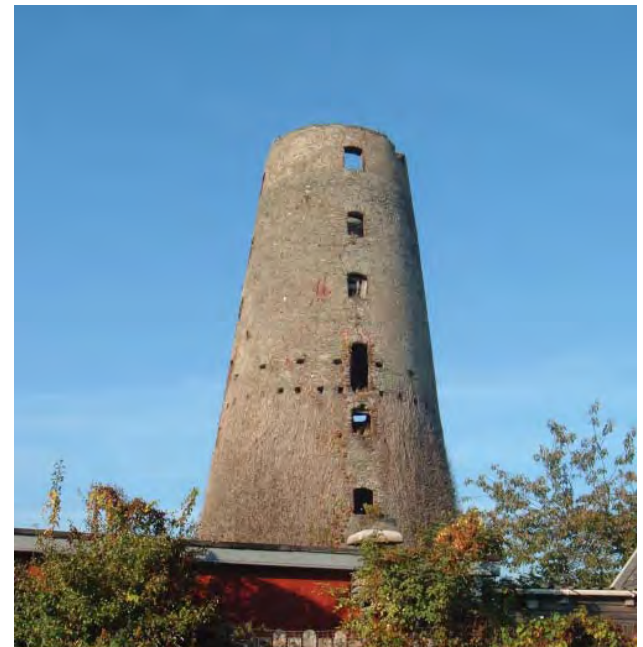
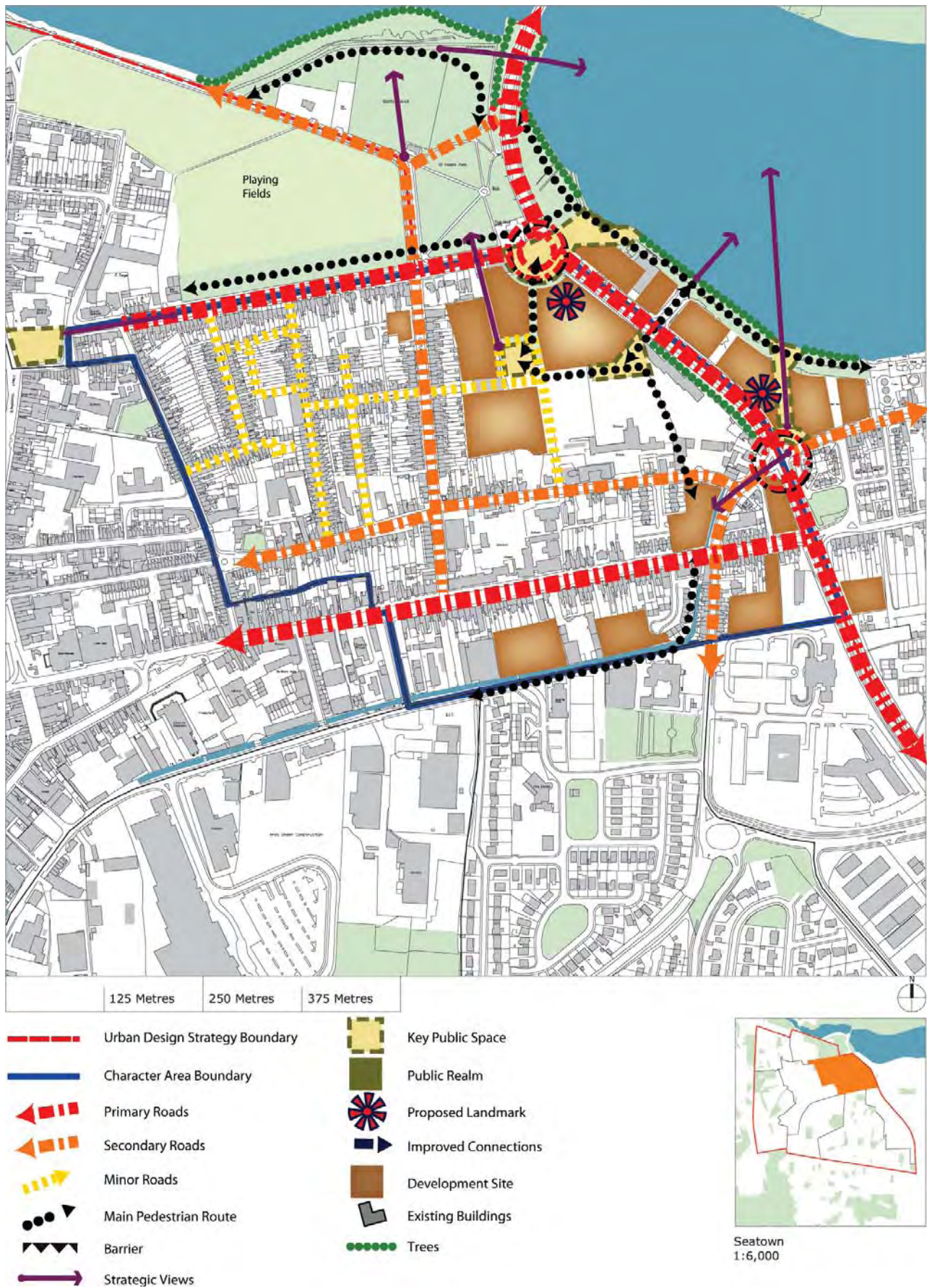


Photo Analysis: Seatown

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 3 | 6 |
1. Opportunity to formalise a new gateway along the eastern bypass
 2. Hostile boundary treatment enclosing lands to the east of the bypass
 3. St. Helena Park which would be extended along St. Mary's Road
 4. Large lengths of inactive frontage common throughout area
 5. Existing high density residential housing along St. Mary's Road
 6. Potential exists to restore the windmill and its setting



Seatown
1:6,000





6.2.3 Key Design Objectives

- Re-establish St Mary's Road as a formal gateway**
 Here special attention must be given to the design of the junction where St Mary's Road meets the eastern bypass adjacent to St Helena Park. Gateway Buildings established along a new recessed frontage will place emphasis on this neglected entrance to town. An improvement of connections in a west - east direction will help link the lands to the east of the by-pass to the town centre linking to a new formal civic space along the Harbour Area.
- Linear extension of St Helena Park along St Mary's Road**
 The land on which St Helena Park is laid out was reclaimed from the Castletown River. The Ordnance Map of 1916 showed an avenue of trees planted opposite the Marist Wall and running approximately half the length of the boundary opposite St Helena. In order to strengthen connections between the town core and St Helena Park, it is proposed that a 30m deep strip of land, presently occupied by the St Mary's College playing fields, is transformed into a linear tree lined extension of the park. This proposal would in effect establish a new entrance to St Helena Park within 300 metres of Clanbrassil Street, provide dedicated pathways and cycle lanes for soft modes of transport and bring much need activity to the northern side of St Mary's Road.
- Masterplan the lands flanking both sides of the eastern bypass**
 The graphic on the previous page illustrates one way in which this area could be masterplanned. As previously mentioned, to ensure connectivity between the established residential areas within the heart of this character area and those lands along the waterfront, pivotal to the masterplan is a newly formed civic space directly opposite St Mary's Road. From this civic space, pedestrian and cycle access can then be gained along the full extent of the Dundalk Harbour continuing up to the Castletown River via a network of coastal walkways and cycle lanes. Two additional public spaces are also proposed to the west of the bypass within the new layout which knits into the established network of streets.

From historical documentation, it can be seen that harbour improvements effected in the years 1740-58 included a pier that extended into the river, upstream from the present harbour area which survived well into the nineteenth century. While this pier has since disappeared, when it was included in subsequent land reclamations. Paramount to this masterplan is the permeability of the layout which allows for varied views through to the waterfront and multiple options for pedestrian and cycle connectivity.

- **Regenerate the disused windmill site along Seatown Place**

The opportunity exists here to restore the disused windmill into a visitor centre in order to re-establish the historic connections within this area and enable visitors to understand the connection between the windmill, its setting and the socio-economics of its time. This regenerated site would encourage activity in this lesser visited area of the town and form an intrinsic part of the overall masterplan for the area. While visitors to the town from the south presently benefit from the impressive sight of the ultra modern wind turbine within the grounds of Dundalk Institute of Technology, the northern entrance to the town would now glorify the historic importance of the town's original wind turbine.

Recommendations

- Intrinsically link the lands east of the bypass to the Character Area;
- Formalise a new gateway from the eastern bypass to the town centre via St Marys Road;
- Extend St Helena Park westwards in a linear fashion along St Marys Road;
- Establish a new network of streets and public spaces connecting with the established residential areas west of Castle Road;
- Reinject life back into the windmill along Seatown Place and transform this iconic structure into a visitor centre.

Design Guidelines

Use of perimeter block as basic urban form as indicated in the strategy diagram on page 63

- Mixed use development
- Quality public realm with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and creation of a public space as indicated in strategy diagram on page 63.

Site Coverage: maximum of 60%

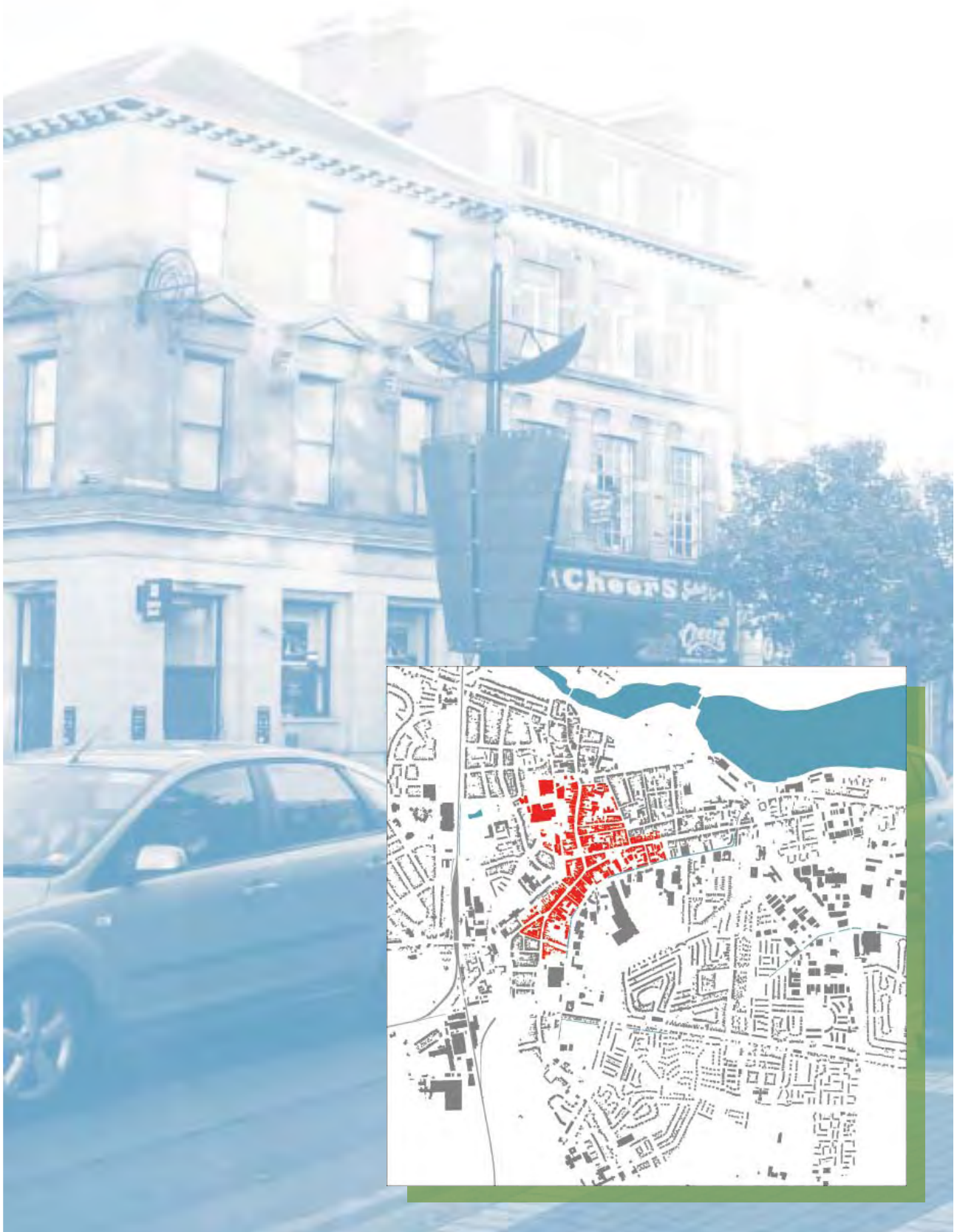
Plot Ratio: maximum of 2.50

Typical Height: 2.5 - 4 storeys

(landmark and key sites will be considered on their merits)



Town Core Character Area





6.3 TOWN CORE CHARACTER AREA

6.3.1 Study Area

The study area is defined by the central retail and civic core, commonly referred to as the 'town centre', with the Market Square at its heart from which the main axis into town terminates. The main shopping thoroughfare, Clanbrassil Street, projects northwards from the Market Square, with a secondary north-south thoroughfare the Long Walk running in parallel. The two parallel thoroughfares running eastwards, namely Dublin Street/Park Street/Francis Street/Jocelyn Street and the Rampart Road, link the town core to the eastern bypass, via the Seatown Character Area.

6.3.2 Key Issues

The increased importance of the roles that the two pairs of streets play, has shaped and informed the 'town centre' as we know it today. Each street within each pair relies heavily on the other in order to function properly in its own right, resulting in a successful union in both cases. In the case of the Clanbrassil Street/Long Walk pairing, the Long Walk at present provides support in the form of bulkier retail outlets, vehicular and pedestrian access as well as car parking provision with the provision of access points to Clanbrassil Street. However, over the last two decades the role of the Long Walk has showed signs of deterioration, to such an extent that its main role now is to fully support its twinned street, in effect functioning as the rear 'service yard' to the more popular Clanbrassil Street. While this problem is not so apparent in the second pairing of streets, namely Dublin Street/Park Street/Francis Street/Jocelyn Street and the Rampart Road, similar traits are beginning to emerge and without managed intervention, the Rampart Road could eventually evolve into a similar supporting 'service' role to the detriment of its own role as a fully functioning street.

The Market Square, at the heart of this character area, is also facing a new period of transition. Recently approved developments, such as the new four-storey corner building occupied by the Ulster Bank, has provided much needed enclosure to the square. The market square has the potential, with improvements to the public realm, to provide Dundalk with a key civic space

As mentioned earlier in this Strategy, the retail centre of Dundalk has seen an incremental shift southwards towards the lower end of Clanbrassil Street and Market Square. More recently this southern shift has gained momentum as a result of the opening of the Marshes Shopping Centre in 2005, which has extended the perceived boundaries of the town centre across the Rampart Road. While the Marshes Shopping Centre has proved to be a retail success, with a second phase of development in the pipeline, the further expansion of the town core southwards needs to be assessed. There is no doubt that the Marshes Shopping Centre has reinjected life and much needed economic activity into this end of town, however the regeneration and consolidation of the historic town centre is paramount in order to re-balance the centre of gravity of the town towards the north. This concept of consolidation and careful development measures are illustrated within the Spatial Concept Plan.

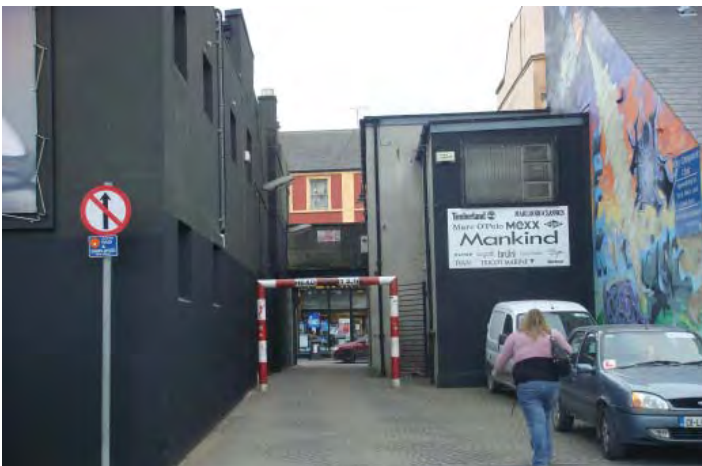
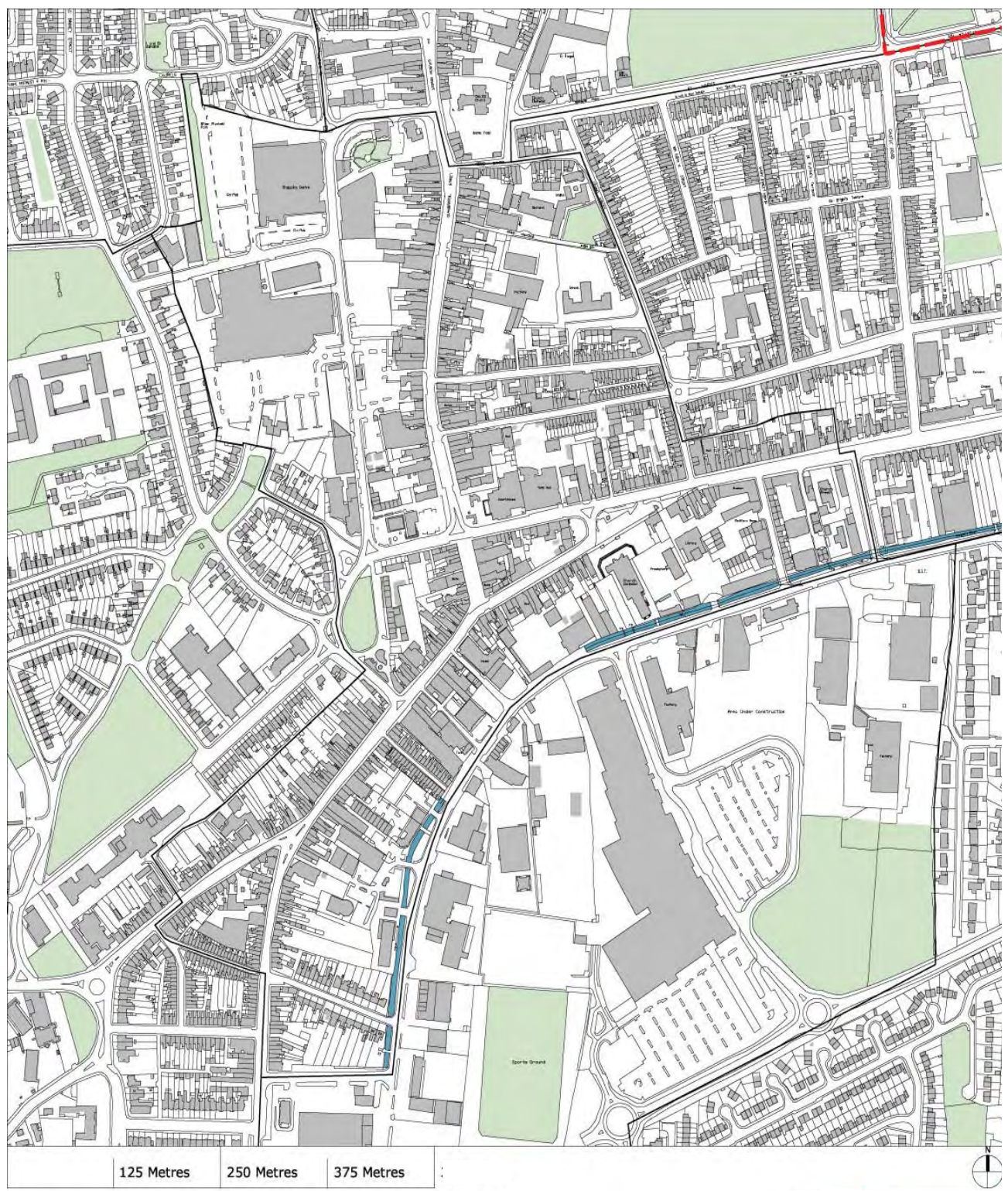
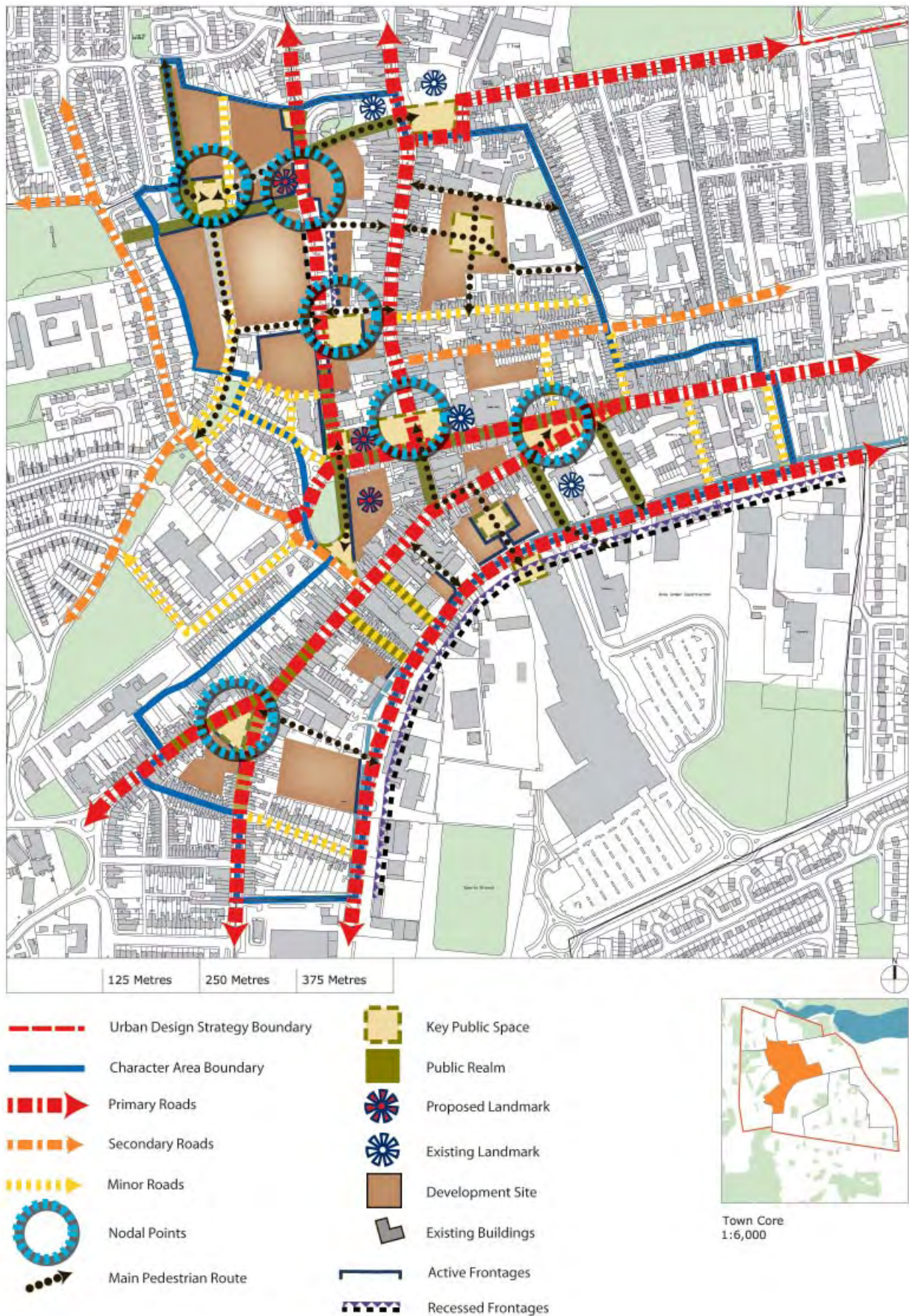


Photo Analysis: Town Core

1	4
2	5
3	6
	7

1. Large expanses of surface carparking along the Long Walk.
2. One of the several connections from the Long walk through to Clanbrassil Street.
3. The main shopping thoroughfare of Clanbrassil Street.
4. View south along Park Street.
5. The Ramparts Road - showing signs of its emerging 'servicing' role.
6. Weak enclosure of the Market Square and poor public space definition.
7. A new contemporary building of appropriate scale provides enclosure to the South West corner of market Square.







6.3.3 Key Design Objectives



Long Walk - Existing



Long Walk - The Vision



Town Core - The Vision

- Re-balance the centre of gravity of the town to the north**
 The success of the retail expansion within the southern edge of town has left many sections of the shopping streets in the northern end of town, such as Clanbrassil Street, with vacant units as retailers have relocated or gone out of business. Existing shopping centres in core locations such as the Long Walk have reached their life expectancy and are in need of refurbishment or complete redevelopment. It is for these reasons that the Strategy seeks to establish a set of principles such as plot ratio and site coverage to encourage the intensification of the existing urban grain within the historic town core and guide development opportunities to brownfield sites. These parameters can be found at the end of this chapter.
- Transformation of the Long Walk into an urban street**
 While the supporting role the Long Walk provides to Clanbrassil Street has been key to the success of this prime retail corridor, equal importance should also be given to the transformation of the Long Walk into an urban street. The consolidation of the vast amount of surface car parking into an integrated underground car park, will release a significant amount of prime land for appropriate mixed use infill development. It is also envisaged that this avenue will have a major role to play in the network for soft modes of transport such as pedestrian routes and cycle paths all of which would form part of any redevelopment project.
- Transformation of the Ramparts Road into an urban avenue**
 Several opportunities exist for appropriate infill development within vacant sites along the northern edge of Ramparts Road, many of which extend through to Park Street, Francis Street and Jocelyn Street. Here potential exists to establish active frontages along large sections of the Ramparts Road. These active frontages would define the northern edge of a new urban avenue along the Ramparts Road, interspersed with newly formed linkages connecting back through to the town centre.
- Consolidating the Market Square as the towns main civic space**
 Dundalk Town Council has recently commissioned a competition for the design of the Market Square. It is envisaged that the chosen design will include an appropriate scale of built form that provides adequate enclosure to the square and will cater for a range of activities that extend the squares usage and re-establish its role as the focus of civic activities within the town. While opportunities exist to establish additional public spaces at strategic locations along the Long Walk, each new space created will be secondary in both scale and function to the central Market Square.

Recommendations

- Re-balance centre of gravity of the town;
- Remodel the Long Walk into a new urban street within an overall masterplan framework;
- Transform the Ramparts Road into a new urban avenue;
- Consolidate the Market Square as the towns primary civic space which should include an iconic landmark structure;

Design Guidelines

Use of perimeter block as basic urban form as indicated in the strategy diagram on page 71

- Mixed use development
- Quality public realm with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and creation of a public space as indicated in strategy diagram on page 71.
- Maximise the use of courtyard and underground parking
- All new architecture apart from the landmarks indicated on page 71 should provide background fabric for the town
- Facades should have a vertical emphasis

Site Coverage: maximum of 80%

Plot Ratio: maximum of 2.50

Typical Height: 3 - 6 storeys

(landmark and key sites will be considered on their merits)



The Marshes Character Area





6.4 Marshes Character Area

6.4.1 Study Area

The study area is centred on the Marshes Shopping Centre and its surrounding context but essentially focuses on the area bound to the east and north by The Ramparts Road and the Town Centre area beyond, to the east by the Meadow Grove Estate, to the west Hill Street and by the Long Avenue area to the south. A large proportion of the area is occupied by the recently constructed Marshes Shopping Centre, a large new retail shopping centre. The remaining area houses a number of older prefabricated warehouse structures particularly along the southeast edge of the Rampart Road, most of which are nearing their expectancy. This area is shown outlined in red on the previous graphic.

6.4.2 Key Issues

Due to its close proximity to the town centre core, this area has become the new expansion area to the town. The introduction of the Marshes Shopping Centre in November 2005, which in itself has become the main anchor development, has created a catalyst for additional development on the immediate adjoining sites. In terms of architectural style, the Marshes Shopping Centre has set the tone for the development of the area. Nevertheless, due to the proximity of the shopping centre to the town centre, the danger exists that additional competition from new retail development in the character area will leave the town core in a vulnerable position eventually causing a shift in the location of the town core of Dundalk to the Marshes area. It is imperative that the primacy of the town centre area is respected and reinforced by careful development measures within the Marshes character area. Therefore future development within this area needs to be phased accordingly

The area is characterised by the Marshes Shopping Centre and older, obsolete warehouse type retail units particularly along the southern edge of the Ramparts Road, which by nature are typified by large expanses surface car parking. The identity of the area is therefore mainly defined by large buildings of limited aesthetic value and loose urban form.

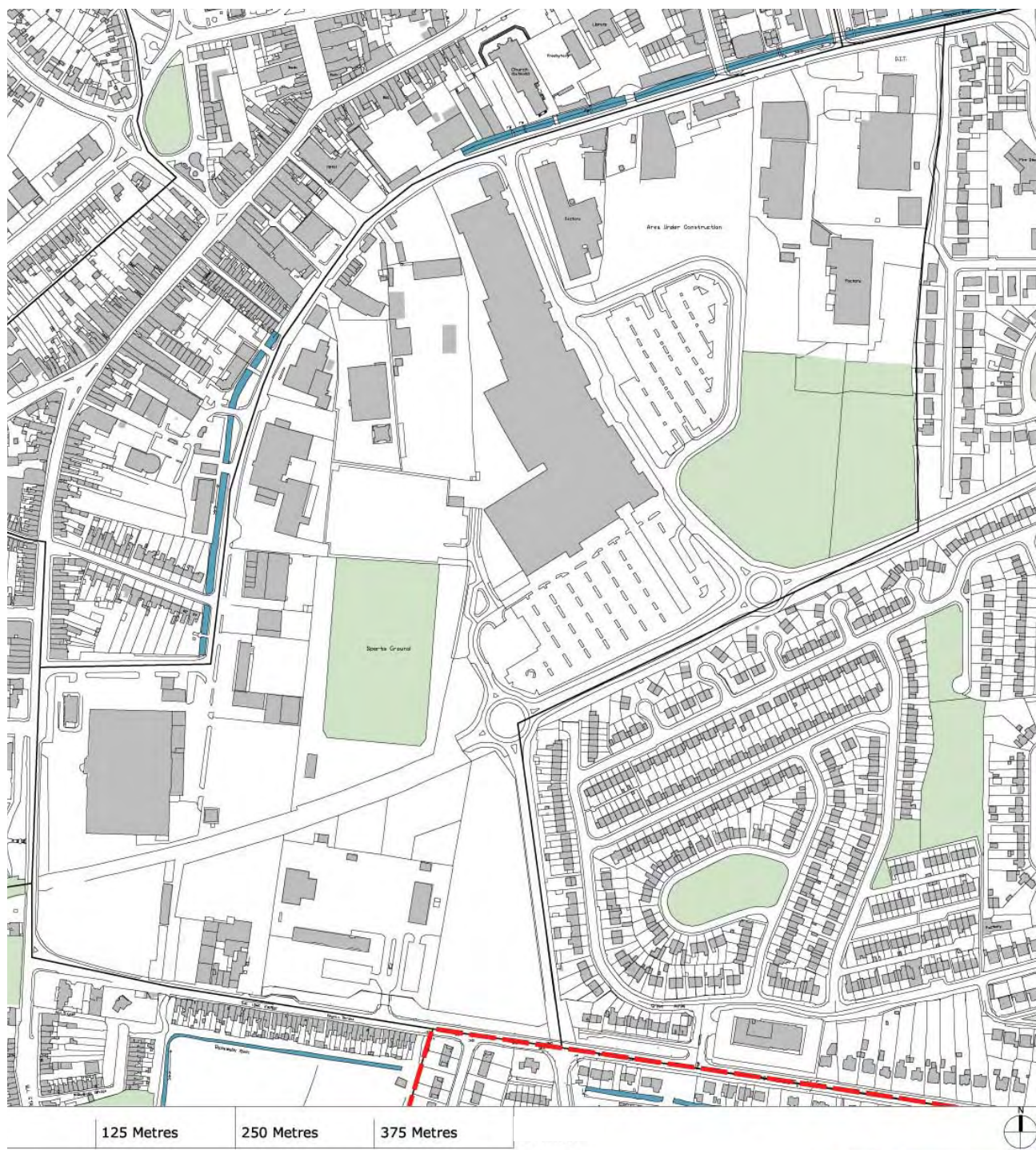
Existing development does not address or provide active frontages onto the Ramparts Road and the area is dominated by vehicular transport servicing those streets to the north. Older warehouse type retail units along the Ramparts Road provide an opportunity for redevelopment as does the underdeveloped plots along the New Road adjacent to Coes Road housing development.

Ramparts Road will provide the opportunity to redefine the southern edge of this route by recessing the new building line in order to accommodate soft modes of transport within a landscaping setting and transform this 'back lane' into a new urban boulevard.



Photo Analysis: The Marshes

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | 1. The cathedral provides the reference point between The Marshes and the rest of the town centre |
| | | 2. The Rampart has the potential to become a landscape feature |
| | 4 | 3. The narrow width of the Ramparts Road allows limited provision for soft modes of transport |
| 2 | 5 | 4. The Marshes Shopping Centre follows a neo-classical approach to traditional architecture |
| | | 5. Large retail and warehouse type of development are characteristic of this area |



Marshes
10





6.4.3 Key Design Objectives



The Marches

- **Secure the primacy of the existing town centre**

The framework should seek to consolidate the existing town centre. The district has the potential to pose a threat to the existing town core therefore limitations should be placed on the further growth of development to the south of the district.

- **Transforming the Ramparts Road into a boulevard**

When redevelopment opportunities arise along the southern edge of the Ramparts Road every opportunity should be taken to establish a new building line which will allow the transformation of the Ramparts Road into a generous tree lined boulevard and accommodate soft modes of transport by providing footpaths, cyclepaths and verges. It is envisaged that the Ramparts Road will become part of a larger cycle network throughout the town and environs.



Development along this route shall comprise a mix of high quality designed, fine grained, active frontage blocks. The street may be punctuated with intermittent individually designed buildings to ensure visual interest and develop a stimulating streetscape. It is intended that these buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures thereby promoting a town with a collection of new and historic buildings, presenting an eclectic mix of building styles which have been evolved over time.

Surface car parking associated with any new development should be located behind buildings to encourage the continuity of the streetscape. It is an objective of the framework that the layout of the development is designed to *accommodate* but not be *dominated* by the car.

- **Connectivity and Permeability**

Central to the vitality of any urban centre is its network of paths and routes. A fine grained network of streets and routes is critical to the creation of a human scale environment attractive and accessible for the pedestrian. All new development should provide a fully permeable and recognisable, interconnecting network of streets.

- **Existing retail, warehousing and enterprise development**

Large retail warehousing development tends to follow a suburban model of development and should be viewed as temporary, with a limited lifespan. This type of development can be of less aesthetic value and be accommodated within the Marshes Character Area. Proposed development shall comply with the framework of streets and spaces as shown in previous graphic.

- **Housing**

It is envisaged that in the long term the Marshes will contain medium to high density housing linking the Meadows estate to the mixed use development along the Ramparts. Housing layouts shall follow a perimeter block layout complying with the parameters/objectives as set out in the urban project described in chapter 6 and following the framework of streets and spaces outlined in the subsequent detailed masterplan.

- **Urban Park**

It is an objective of this strategy to provide an urban park to the south of the Marshes character area along the new road. New development should address and overlook the park incorporating the principles of passive surveillance to encourage a community atmosphere and to discourage anti-social behaviour.

Recommendations

- Ensure the primacy of the town core by encouraging development that supports and strengthens the town core ;
- Transform the Ramparts Road into an urban boulevard;
- The Ramparts should comprise a mix of high quality designed, fine grained, active frontage blocks constructed along a new recessed building line;
- Encourage mixed use development along the Ramparts with active uses located on the ground floor;
- Transitional uses such as retail warehousing will be allowed however it is expected that over time plots will develop a fine urban grain;
- Therefore it is envisaged that in the long term the Marshes will contain medium to high density housing and other mixed use;
- This strategy supports the provision an urban park to the south of the Marshes character area along a new road.

Design Guidelines

Use of perimeter block as basic urban form as indicated in the strategy diagram on page 81

- Mixed use development
- Quality public realm with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and creation of a public space as indicated in strategy diagram on page 81.
- Establishment of a permanent urban structure i.e. a network of streets and public spaces
- Footprint of buildings should be significantly smaller than that of the Marshes Shopping Centre

Site Coverage: maximum of 60%

Plot Ratio: maximum of 2.00

Minimum Height: 2.5 - 5 storeys

(landmark and key sites will be considered on their merits)

The Station Character Area





6.5 THE STATION CHARACTER AREA

6.5.1 Study Area

The study area is centred on the railway line and Ice House Hill and the surrounding context, but mainly concentrates on the area bound to the west by the Coxes and Mount Avenue, to the north by the housing developments along Laurels Road and Legion Avenue, the Town Centre area to the east and the Balmers Bog to the south. The area is defined by the railway station, Ice House Hill Park along with old industrial plants such as the Diageo and Eircom. This area is shown outlined in red on the previous graphic.

6.5.2 Key Urban Design Issues

The railway line defines the character area and presents a barrier to pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles access from Cox's/Ard Easmuinn area to the town centre. Within the character area there are currently two access points that cross the railway line one vehicular and one pedestrian. In order to connect the Station area, and allow for permeability linking development to the west of the rail line (including Cox's/Ard Easmuinn), the barrier of the railway line needs to be overcome.

There are a number of key opportunity sites contained within the character area. Factories such as Diageo and the Eircom plant all present opportunities for regeneration. In particular the Harp factory along with the Railway Station forms a gateway into the town along St. Dominick's Road providing the only vehicular crossing on the railway line in the character area. St Dominick's Place also provides access to the Diageo factory and the train station. A key opportunity therefore exists to strengthen this Gateway and transform the railway crossing to create an entrance worthy of a town which places sustainable population growth and energy use high at the heart of its decision making.

It is envisaged that the train station will become the starting point for the cycle network, with the pedestrian and cycle network connectivity to the bus station in the centre of the town following the existing green network in the Park Drive, Park Avenue area eventually linking to the Long Walk and encouraging soft modes of transport. Historically known as the Dundalk Ice House Hill the main town park in Dundalk. Unfortunately the railway line severs the park from the mainly residential development to the west in Mount Avenue. An unattractive pedestrian underpass currently provides the only crossing from the park to the Mount Avenue area. Bridging the infrastructure in this way can repair the physical and social divides by connecting residents and workers to destinations within and beyond the district.

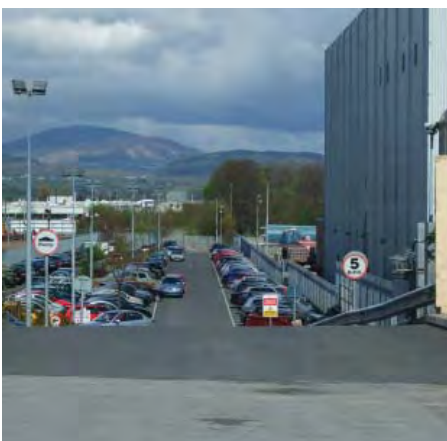
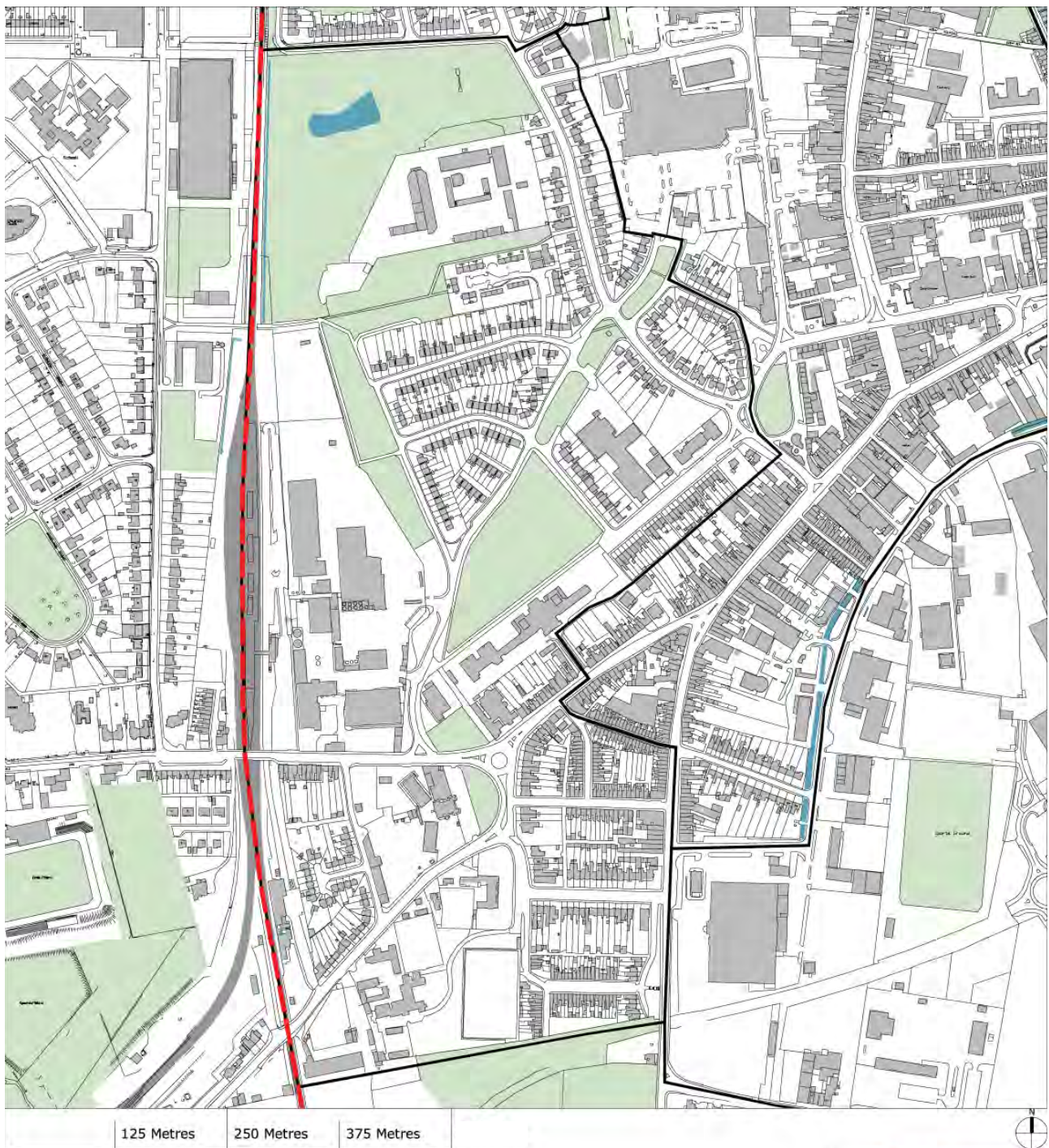
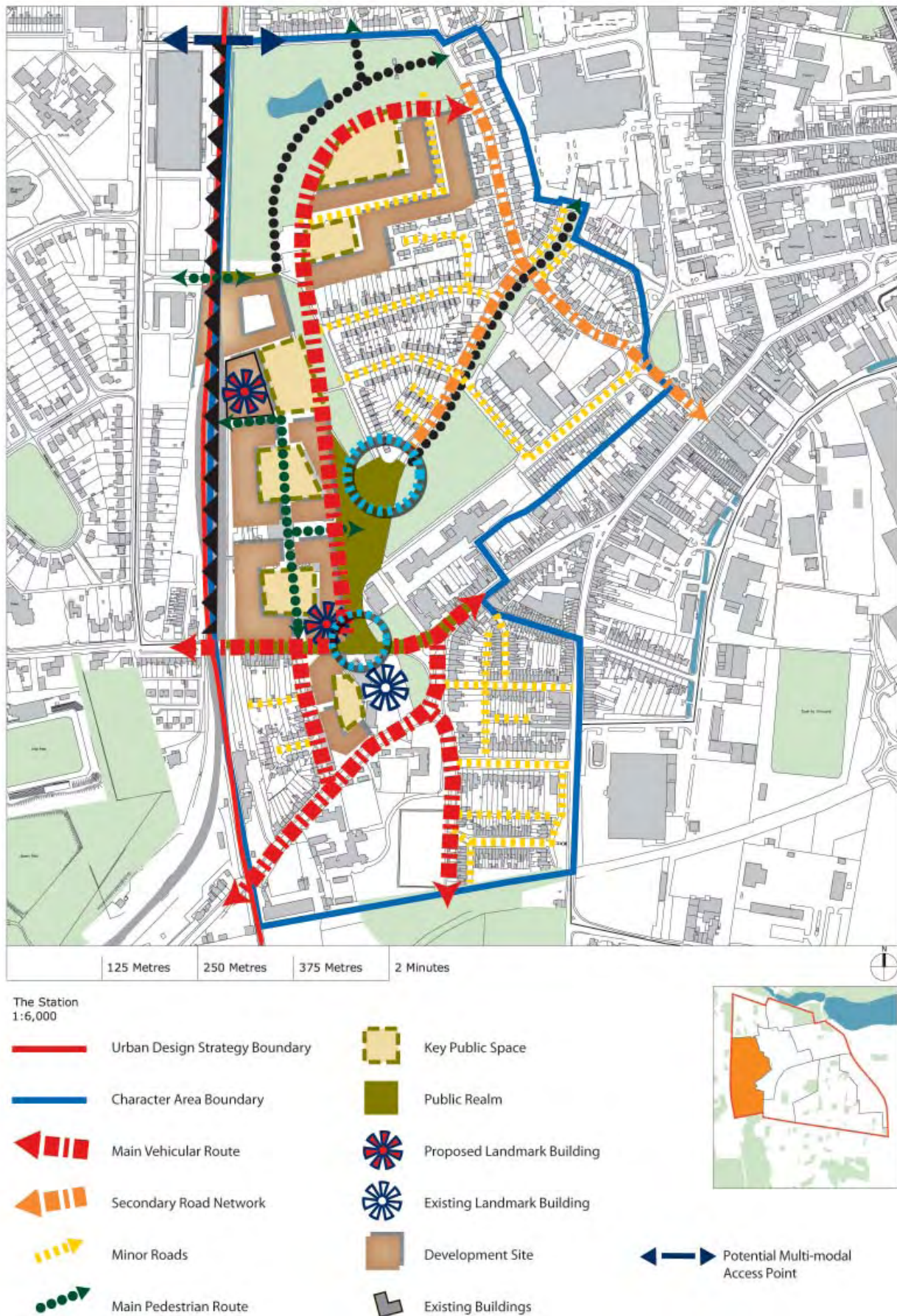


Photo Analysis: The Station

1	4	1. Existing railway line forms an impenetrable barrier
2	5	2. Dundalk Brewery prime redevelopment opportunities adjacent to the train station
3	6	3. Inefficient use of prime land in close proximity to train station
		4. Hostile built environment adjacent to train station
		5. Good examples of existing high density housing within the area
		6. One of the few pedestrian links to the train station



The Station
1:6,000





6.5.3 Key Design Objectives

- **Iconic Gateway Development**

The framework seeks to transform the Train Station and the adjacent Diageo factory site into a new Gateway for Dundalk. The Gateway should be formed by an iconic object public building at this location to signal the importance of the entrance into the town centre.

The railway line and its adjacent spaces are vastly underused therefore a new building integrated with the railway line could transform the railway station into a high density mixed use transport node.

The redevelopment of the train station therefore not only provides an opportunity to become a multi-modal transport hub, providing access to trains, cars, buses, pedestrians and cyclists. By developing the Diageo site in tandem with the multi-modal transport hub an opportunity exists to provide residential, commercial and civic uses in order to provide for a high density, mixed use development transport node.

An opportunity exists for this Gateway building to bridge the railway therefore repairing the physical and social divides by connecting residents and workers to destinations on both sides of the railway line. It is envisaged that vacant brownfield sites in and around the train station will become high density mixed development areas with a concentration of employment uses. This development is detailed further in the Urban Projects section of this report.

- **Formation of Cycle Network**

It is envisaged that the cycle network for the town and environs which will be described in further detail in this report will commence at the train station along Mc Entee Avenue, therefore linking the train station to the bus station and the centre of town following the existing green network along Park Road and Park Avenue.

- **Transformation of Mc Entee Avenue**

It is envisaged that Mc Entee Avenue will be transformed into a generous tree lined boulevard and accommodate soft modes of transport by providing footpaths, cyclepaths and providing a main access route to the town and reinforcing the importance of the transport hub. It is proposed that the new gateway structure will have its main frontage onto Mc Entee Avenue. The Avenue should be extended to link the train station to the Eircom site and Ice House Hill and terminate at the Long Walk.

The extension and transformation of Mc Entee Avenue will also provide the opportunity for the redevelopment of the Eircom site located adjacent to Ice House Hill Park. It is envisaged that these lands will be characterised by residential development. New development should address and overlook the park incorporating the principles of passive surveillance to encourage a community atmosphere and discourage anti-social behaviour.

Design Codes

- Use of perimeter block as basic urban form as indicated in the strategy diagram on page 91
- Mixed use development
- Quality public realm with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and creation of a public space as indicated in strategy diagram on page 91
- Passive supervision of Ice House Park by the redevelopment of the Eircom Site and the provision of a new avenue

Site Coverage: maximum of 70%

Plot Ratio: maximum of 2.50

Typical Height: 2.5 - 6 storeys
(landmark and key sites will be considered on their merits)

• Connectivity between Ice House Hill lands to the west of the railway line

Ice House Hill is severed from the development to the west of the railway line and Mount Avenue beyond. The urban form of the area to the west of the railway line is characterised by old warehouse structures therefore reflecting this severance. An unattractive pedestrian underpass providing the only connection from the Mount Avenue area to the park. It is possible to reconnect these areas and in doing so increase their development potential by improving the appearance or redesigning the connection bridging the infrastructure.

By upgrading the connections between the areas either side of the railway, therefore providing attractive and safe crossing points and bridges, the development potential of the land to the west of the rail line will be increased. It is expected that this land will be redeveloped into a high density mixed use with a concentration of employment uses.

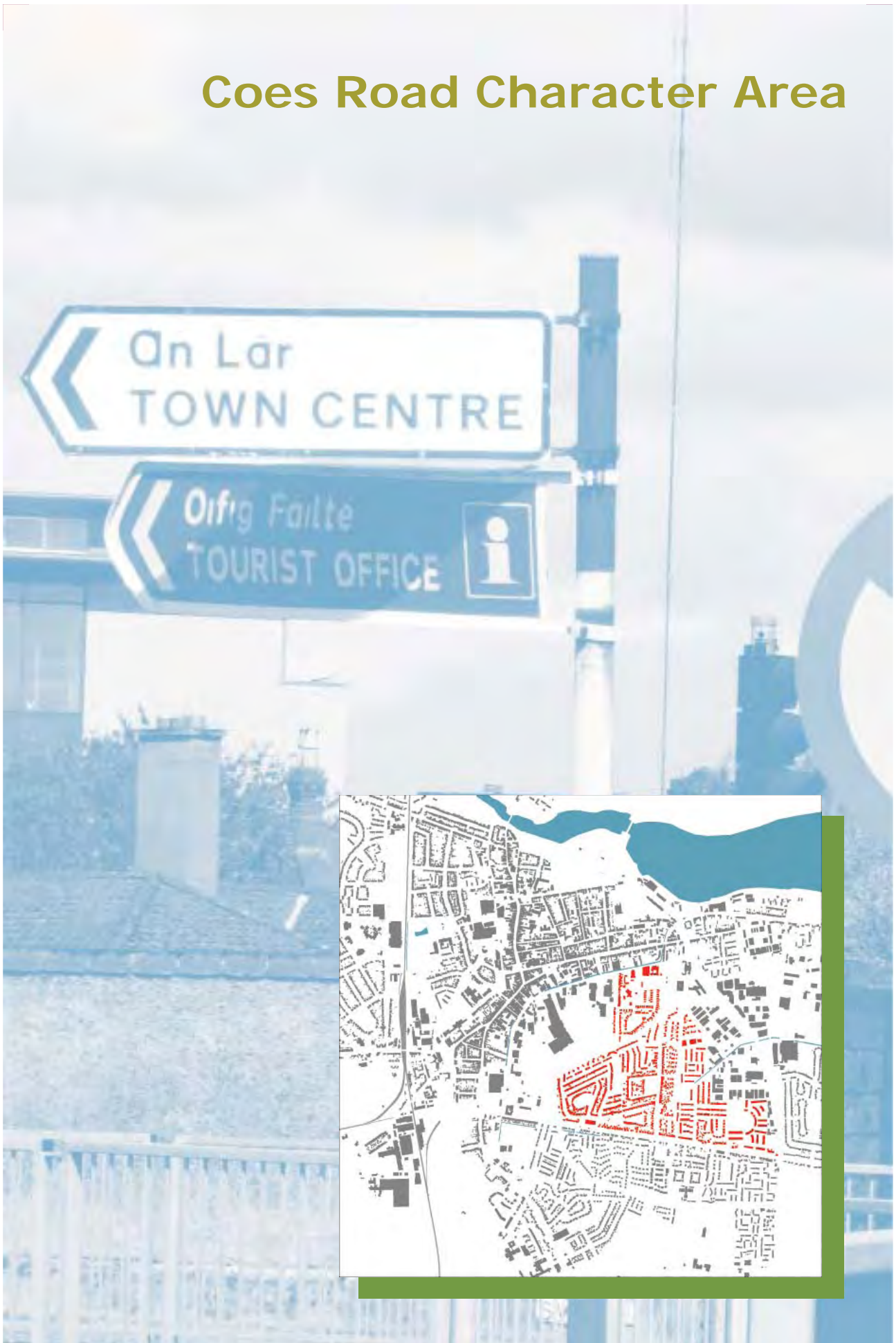
• Strengthening the Appearance of St Dominicks Road

It is envisaged that development along south St. Dominicks Road and Anne Street should comprise a mix of high quality designed, fine grained, active frontage blocks on sites such as the lands to the rear of the existing Garda Station. Intermittent individually designed buildings should be allowed to ensure visual interest and develop a stimulating streetscape. However the primary function of the architecture should be to provide background fabric rather than object buildings. It is intended that these buildings be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures thereby promoting a town with a collection of new and historic buildings, presenting an eclectic mix of building styles which have evolved over time.

Recommendations

- Reinforce the Diageo Factory and Train Station into a gateway to Dundalk;
- Transform the Train Station into the multi-modal transport hub and iconic gateway structure;
- Creation of multi-modal dual aspect transport hub including provision for trains, buses, bicycles and multi-storey car parking which bridges the barrier of the tracks.
- Overcome the constraints of the railway line by improving connections in order to encourage and facilitate the rejuvenation and regeneration of the Cox's area and integration to the town centre services;
- It is an objective of this strategy that the cycle network shall commence and terminate at the train station;
- To create a new multi-modal link along the southern boundary of Ice House Hill in order to link the Station Character Area to the town centre;
- Encourage mixed use development along St. Dominick's Avenue with active uses located on the ground floor;
- Creation of a new high density mixed use employment quarter;

Coes Road Character Area





6.6 COES ROAD CHARACTER AREA

6.6.1 Study Area

This character area, located along the southeastern fringe of the town, abutting the bypass on its eastern side. The site of the Louth County Council offices is located along its northern boundary, while the eastern bypass delineates the full extent of its 1000m long eastern boundary. To the west and south the boundaries of this character area are defined by the Meadow Grove housing estate.

The northern quarter of this character area includes some of the town's recently constructed civic buildings comprising the offices of Louth County Council, the public swimming pool and the Department of Health offices. The remainder of the area stretching south along the eastern bypass comprises an industrial estate with a mix of two to three storey shed structures within a traditional industrial estate layout, while the southern and western sectors comprise the established Meadow Grove Housing Estate.

6.6.2 Key Issues

While it could be argued that the Meadow Grove Housing Estate represents conventional everyday architecture, this established residential estate is a response to the suburban model and appears to be functioning adequately and is likely to require no intervention during the lifespan of this Strategy. The main area of concern therefore lies along the eastern flank of this Character Area concentrated around the linear industrial estate.

The existing morphology of the industrial estate provides for low-rise buildings on large footprints. From aerial photos available, it can be observed that site coverage, particularly in the northern half of the industrial estate, is particularly high equating to approximately 40-50% while plot ratios are particularly low for an urban location (around 0.5) resulting in the under-utilisation of land. Therefore, despite the fact that the estate appears to be fairly built up, in reality there is an inefficient use of prime urban land as expressed through the low plot ratios that exist. In the intervening years of construction, consolidation, expansion and decline, the industrial estate has appeared to have reached saturation point. Buildings around the estate have been traditionally built following a low rise, centre of plot arrangement, and while the residual spaces are great in number, they are not of sufficient size to cater for future expansion. As a result these areas are often used as external storage areas for large container units.

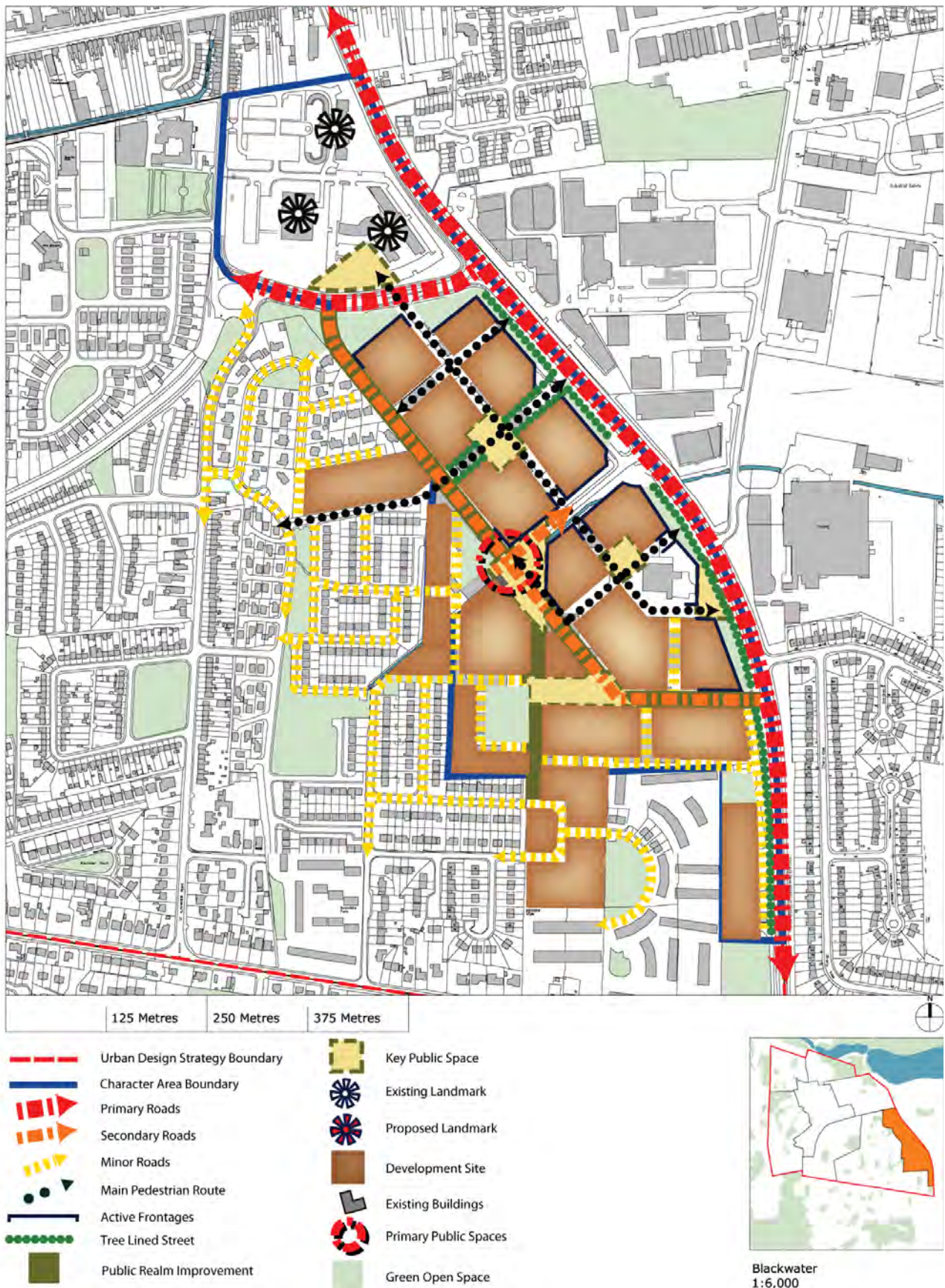
It is therefore safe to say that this industrial estate has reached saturation point in terms of expansion and radical steps are required if this area is to benefit from regeneration opportunities. As is the case around the country, vacancies and reduction of employment are an all too common trend within such estates. Once located on the fringe of the town, with close links to the harbour activities, it is envisaged that this area will be firmly embedded within the urban mesh. Furthermore, a large percentage of workers within these units appear to be travelling to the estate by car representing an unsustainable modal split. The exodus of the estates original uses to more attractive locations has left the estate in search of a new identity and in serious need of regeneration.



Photo Analysis: Blackwater

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 1. Dundalk Town Council Leisure Centre |
| | | 2. Louth County Council offices |
| 3 | | 3. Aerial photo of Coes Road Character Area |







6.6.3 Key Design Objectives

- **Seek to intensify land use within the industrial area**
Dundalk has historically developed at fairly low densities and contains several areas where vacant or underutilised land is not used to an optimum. Given the existing trends towards the intensification of land use and the densification of existing built environment, at both national and local levels, the prime objective for the strategy with regard to the industrial sector within this character area is to encourage a shift from mono-use zoning to a more sustainable mix of uses in line with the more traditional urban model. Here opportunities exist to review the scope for intensification and / or height increase within an underutilised industrial zone. The areas close proximity to established residential estates, would also allow for the promotion of higher residential densities as part of the mix of uses throughout the character area.
- **To upgrade the physical character of the area through a comprehensive framework for regeneration**
Due to the inward looking nature of the existing industrial layout, it is imperative that the edges of the industrial estate, particularly the eastern edge abutting the bypass, are redeveloped first and therefore set the tone for development and assist in 'image redefinition' for the area. Corner sites and sites indicated as gateways or nodal points should also rank highly in order of priority. It is proposed that the future development of this area occurs in accordance with a specific urban design framework plan. A suggested urban design framework / masterplan is presented in the previous graphic.
- **To use a neo-traditional urban model**
One of the basic design recommendations within this area is the proposed use of the perimeter block form that will help to define both the internal and external streetscape and public spaces. While the estate has an evident linear structure, it suffers from a clear lack of public-private definition that forces individual landowners to erect tall perimeter fences in order to protect their private spaces. The perimeter block solves this problem by locating the built form between the public space and the private space and by reallocating the private-owned spaces to the rear of the site. Through the use of the perimeter block form, new legible connections through the site and onward to the surrounding areas will be created or re-established.
- **Connectivity and Permeability**
Central to the vitality of any urban centre is its network of paths and routes. A fine grained network of streets and routes is critical to the creation of a human scale environment attractive and accessible for the pedestrian. All new development should provide a fully permeable and recognisable, interconnecting network of streets.

Recommendations

- Protect the existing employment base while allowing diversification and intensification;
- Adopt a neo-traditional urban model;
- Seek to upgrade the physical character of the area;
- Encourage a shift from mono-use zoning to a sustainable mix of uses;
- Mend and reconnect the urban fabric in order to increase accessibility and permeability.

Design Codes

- Use of perimeter block as basic urban form as indicated in the strategy diagram on page 109
- Mixed use development
- Quality public realm with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and creation of a public space as indicated in strategy diagram on page 109

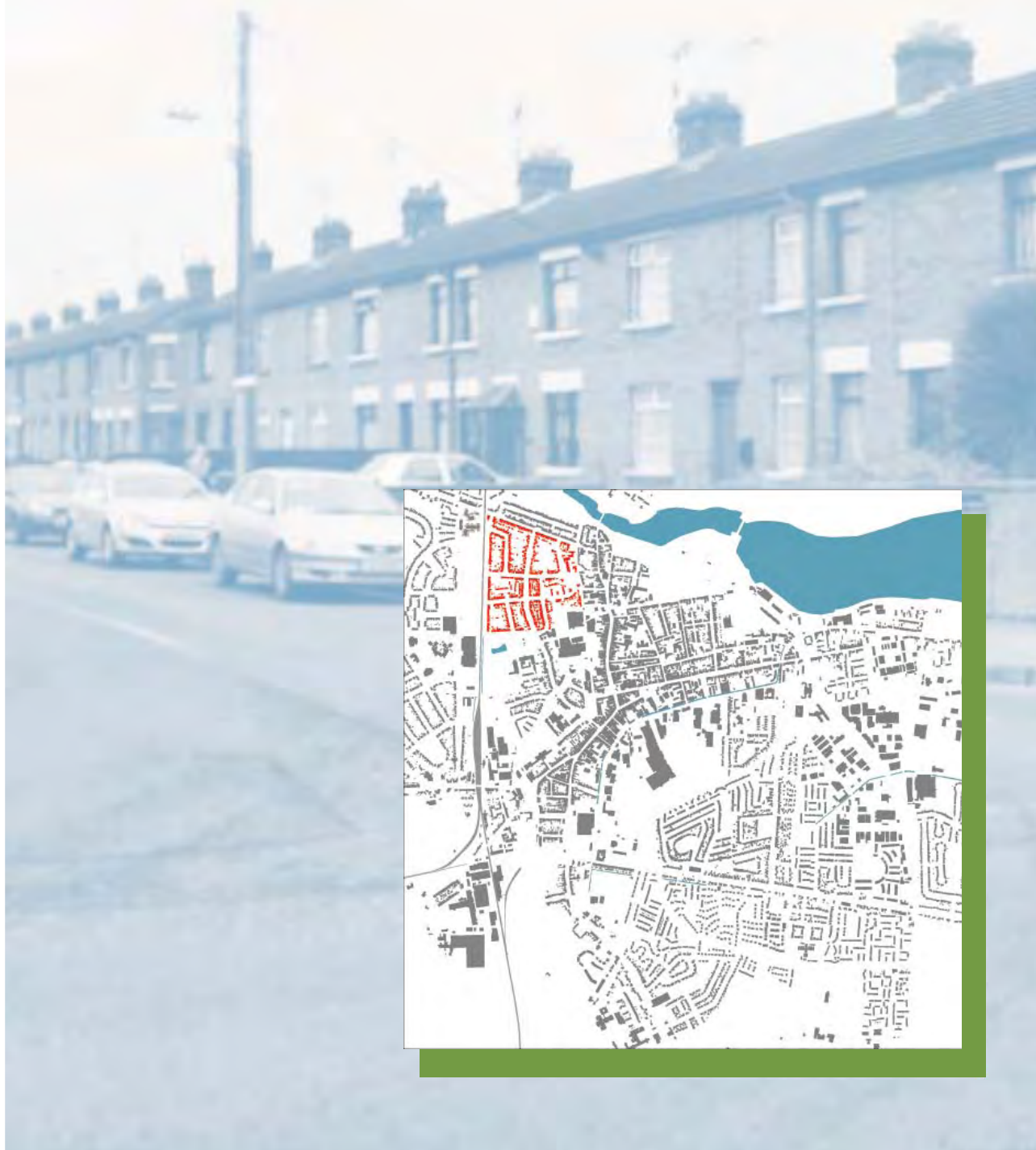
Site Coverage: maximum of 60%

Plot Ratio: maximum of 2.50

Typical Height: 2.5 - 4 storeys

(landmark and key sites will be considered on their merits)

The Laurels Character Area





6.7 THE LAURELS CHARACTER AREA

6.7.1 Study Area

The study area is centred on the railway line and existing housed developments along Laurel Road and Legion Avenue. The character area is bound to the west by Mount Avenue and the Coxes, to the north by the Castletown Road, the Town Centre area to the east and Ice House Hill Park and Train Station to the south. This area is shown outlined in red on the previous graphic.

6.7.2 Key Urban Design Issues

The study area is largely characterised by established housing developments to the east of the railway line. These housing developments are based upon the perimeter block urban structure and therefore allow a clear distinction between public fronts and private backs.

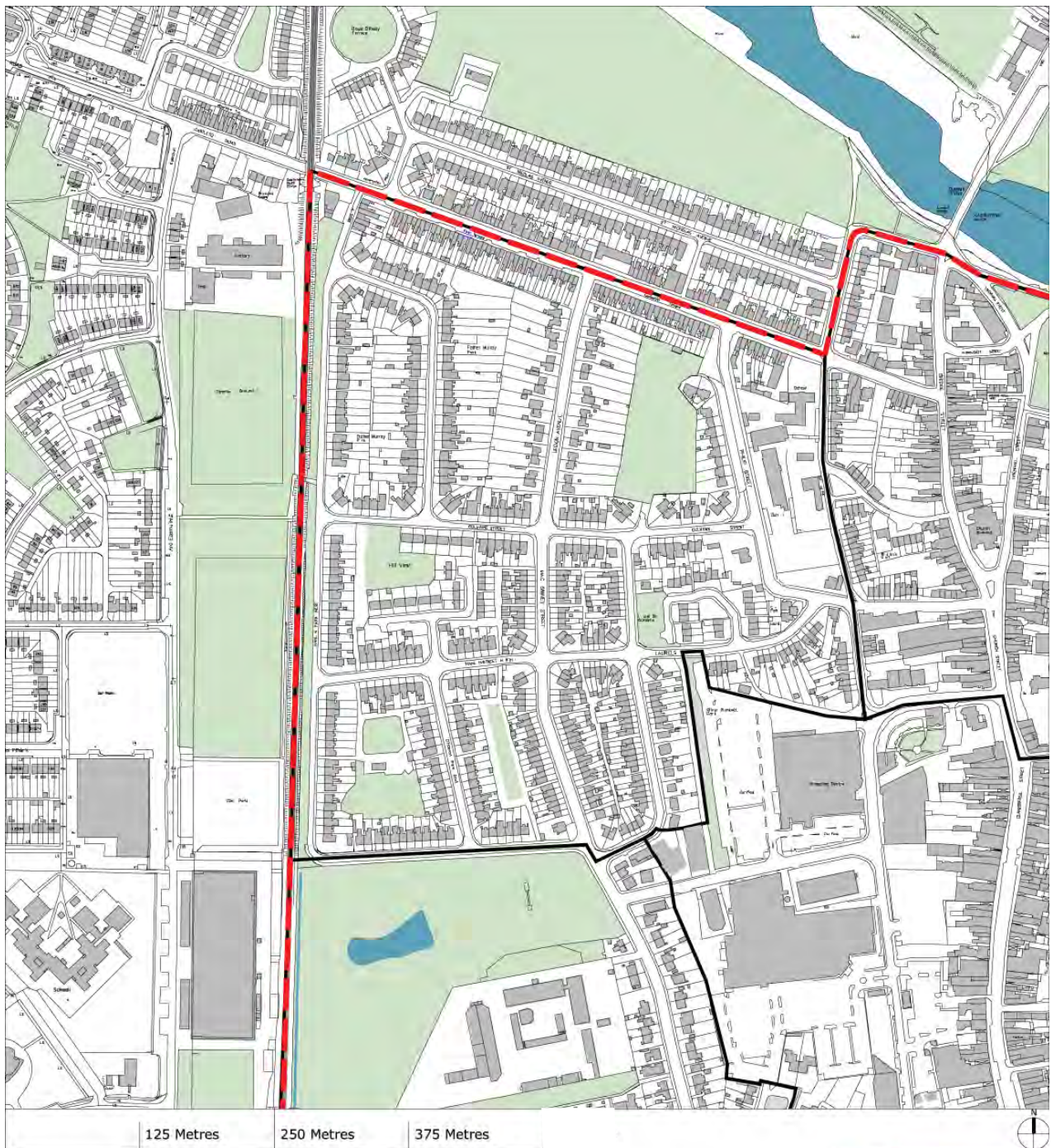
The railway line bisects the character area physically therefore dividing the community socially as well as presenting a barrier to pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. There are currently two access points under the Dublin/Belfast railway line, one vehicular access point along the Castletown Road at Castletown Bridge which is located to the extreme north of the character area and a pedestrian crossing from O'Hanlon Park to the Coxes on the west side of the railway line. These crossings provide inadequate permeability within the character area. Subsequently the land to the west of the rail line is under-utilised and as a result land uses primarily include surface car parking and playing fields.

In order to consolidate the character area, and allow for permeability linking development to the west of the character area to the town centre, the barrier of the railway line needs to be overcome.

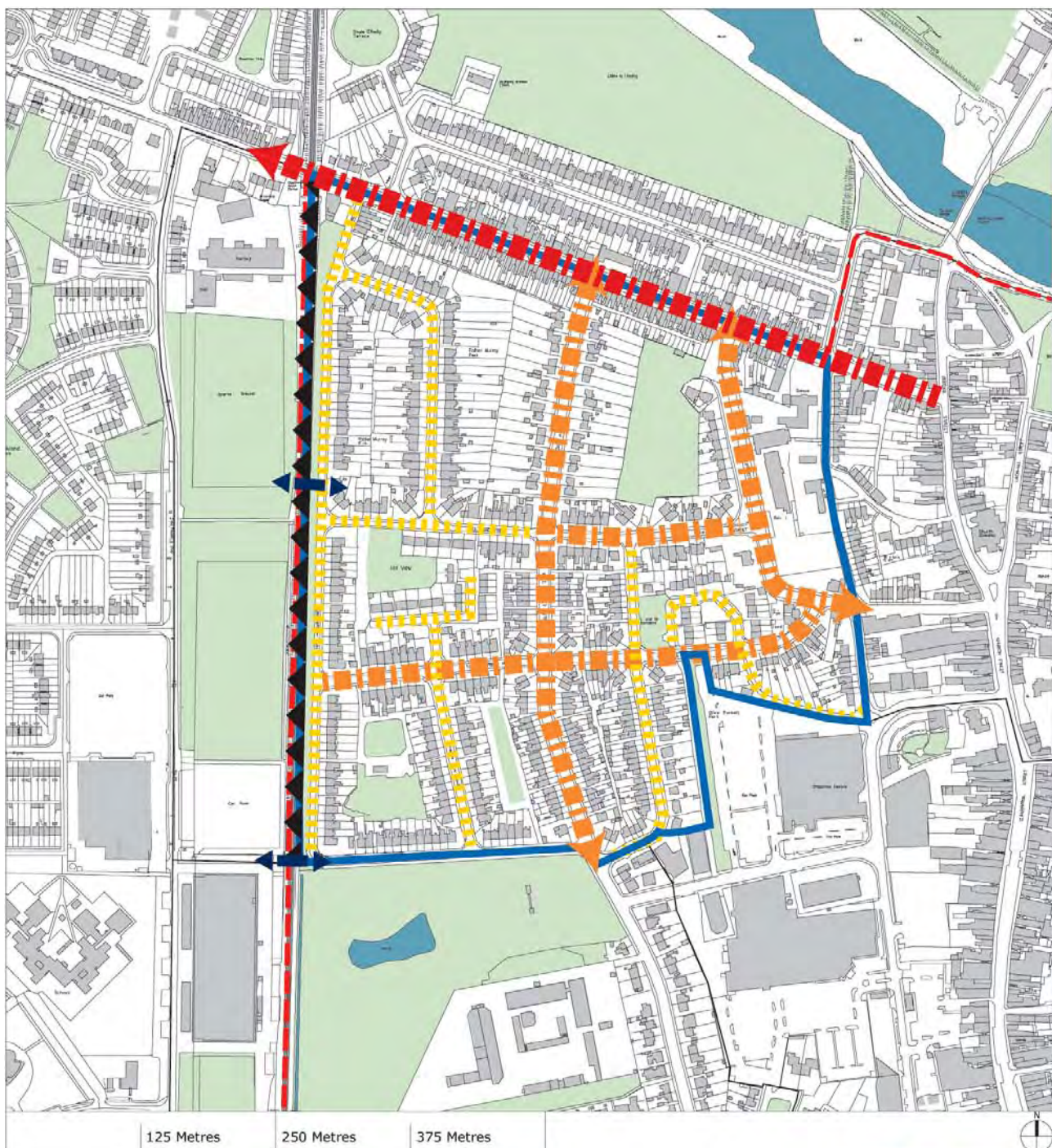


Photo Analysis: The Laurels

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | 4 | 1. Established housing development which forms the character of the area |
| 2 | | 2. Existing development is based on the perimeter block urban structure with a clear distinction between public fronts and private backs |
| 3 | 5 | 3. Ice House Hill Park provides the area with passive recreational open space |
| | | 4. Recent infill housing around the Ice House Hill |
| | | 5. View west along Castletown Road |



The Laurels
1:5,000



The Laurels
1:5,000

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| | Urban Design Strategy Boundary | | Potential Multi-modal Access Point |
| | Character Area Boundary | | Barrier |
| | Main Vehicular Route | | Existing Buildings |
| | Secondary Roads | | |
| | Minor Roads | | |





6.7.3 Key Design Objectives

- The key objective for this character area is to maintain and enhance the quality of the residential environment.

- **The Coxes Area**

A key objective for this character area is to provide stronger linkages to the Cox's and Ard Easmuinn areas west of the rail line. Improved connectivity will support rejuvenation of Cox's and other brownfield sites to the west of this character area.

An opportunity also exists to support the transformation the existing Dunnes Stores retail development and adjoining area of surface car parking into a neighbourhood centre. The neighbourhood centre should provide a mix of uses with active frontages in the form of community and retail development on the ground floor and residential or office units over. It is envisaged that the neighbourhood centre will provide for the daily needs of the local surrounding community, therefore respecting the primacy of the town centre.

- **To develop suitable Crossing Point(s)**

It is proposed to provide and/or enhance cross points along the rail line in order to maximise permeability and connectivity to lands to the west. In particular the development potential of the land to the west of the rail line will be increased by bridging the rail line. It is envisaged that a link will be created in the adjacent station area. Providing a link at this point will help to consolidate the community and provide access to the neighbourhood centre for the existing residents of the Laurels area.

- **Connectivity from the Coxes to the Train Station**

It is envisaged that all new development in the Coxes area will be connected to the train station through a fully permeable network of vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist routes.

Recommendations

- Protect and Improve residential amenity
- Improve connectivity and enhance permeability to the Cox's and Ard Easmuinn areas to west of the rail line

Design Guidelines

Use of perimeter block as basic urban form as indicated in the strategy diagram on page 104

- Quality public realm with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and creation of a public space as indicated in strategy diagram on page 104

Site Coverage: maximum of 60%

Plot Ratio: maximum of 2.50

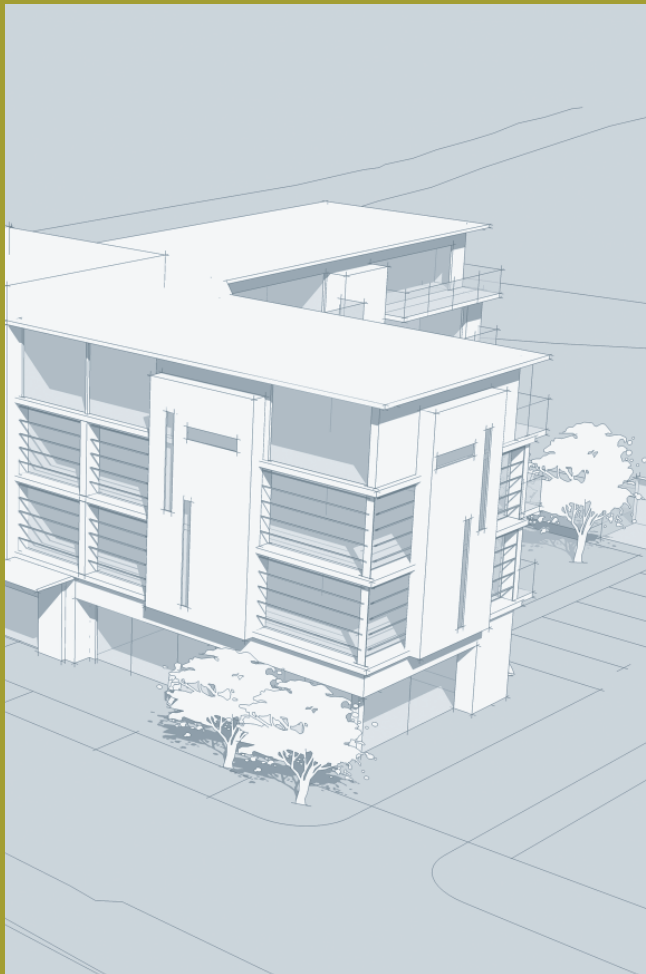
Typical Height: 2.5 - 5 storeys

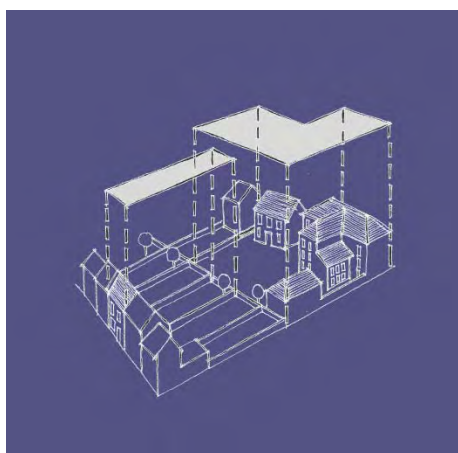
(landmark and key sites will be considered on their merits)

Part

7

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDANCE





7.1 General

This guidance has been produced as a general blueprint to improving the quality of new development in Dundalk Town Centre. During the last four decades, much of the development produced in most Irish Towns has been of poor visual quality, and often has failed to respect the distinctive historic character of their settings. The aim is therefore to enhance, transform and create a set of urban environments that respect their local context and help to transform Dundalk into an attractive place in which live, work and play.

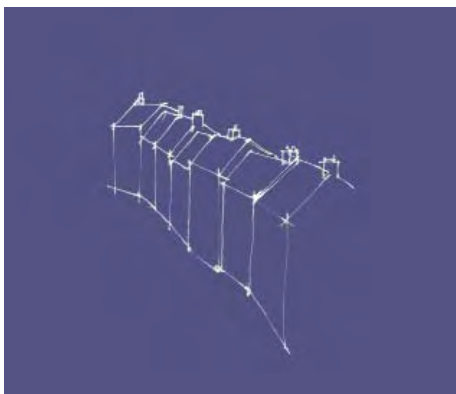
A key objective of this chapter is to provide guidance to developers, architects and public in general, in the regeneration of Dundalk Town Centre. These guidelines will seek to focus on and highlight the visual qualities already existing in Dundalk. However, this guidance is not meant to be a rigid set of rules but a framework for creativity, innovation and integration of new developments within the existing urban pattern.

7.2 Plot Widths

Traditionally, plots in Dundalk town centre are relatively long and narrow, reflecting the pattern of medieval burgage plots. This is reflected in the facades and the narrow widths within the St. Nicholas Character Area particularly along Bridge Street and Linenhall Street.

The following guidelines will apply to plot widths:

- New developments particularly on Bridge Street and Linenhall Street should have regard to the historically narrow plot sizes;
- New developments which might extend over more than one historic plot, should address the plot through design, with variations in the façade composition that echo the historic plot pattern.
- Where plot amalgamation is considered necessary to accommodate new land uses, the aim will be to retain the narrow frontage to the street front, while permitting amalgamation to the rear of the building in the backland areas, which can accommodate car parking, storage, retail expansion, etc.



7.3 Building Lines

Building lines refers to the position of the front of the building along the street edge. The aim in most new urban developments will be to maintain or create a new building line or building edge. This is important as the position of the building line determines the width of the street, therefore influencing the sense of enclosure created.

Some of the newer streets in Dundalk have straight building lines such as Jocelyn Street and Market Street. However, more often, building lines are continuous but not rigidly straight as can be seen along Clanbrassil Street, Church Street, Park Street as well as Bridge Street and Linenhall Street. They tend to stagger and deflect at certain intervals, adding significantly to the character of the street.

The following principles will apply:

- Generally, maintain existing and established building lines where they exist.
- Create new building lines where they do not already exist. e.g: in the case of Greenfield site with little context.

Building lines may be relaxed in the following circumstances:

- For innovative design solutions where it can be demonstrated that the design will positively enhance the townscape.
- Where important areas of public or civic space is to be provided.
- To accentuate an important building.

It is a particular objective of this plan that when redevelopment opportunities occur along the southern edge of the Ramparts Road a new building line should be created, thereby increasing the width of the Ramparts Road to provide a generous tree-lined avenue accommodating pedestrian paths and cycle lanes. The new building line should be setback of 9 meters from the original building line in order to accommodate an increase in the width of the Ramparts Road.

7.4 Building Heights

With the exception of a few streets, it is not typical for building heights to be uniform or consistent, but rather to display variations within a particular range. As with building lines, this variation of building heights, create a distinctive rhythm in streetscape.

The following principles will generally apply:

- The general range of building heights and number of storeys, which are evident in the street should be retained.
- Stepping up of corner buildings or buildings creating significant landmarks will be permitted.
- In general, the difference in a buildings height should not exceed one and a half storeys.



However variations in building height, does not itself provide a justification for height increases. An alteration or extension to the existing roofline may still be unacceptable under the following circumstances in assessing applications for higher buildings:

- The degree to which its prominence is justified in the townscape – traditionally, only significant public buildings received such prominence;
- The extent to which the building detracts or enhances important landmarks and views;
- The extent to which the building detracts or enhances the character of open space or public realm;
- The degree of intrusion or obtrusion of the building skyline and the impact on the topography of the street;
- Issues of shadow, significant loss of light and micro-climatic impacts;
- Impact on Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas;
- The extent to which an imbalance in height is created between opposite sides of the street. This may not be relevant where there is future scope for the redevelopment of the opposite side too;
- The extent to which the alteration to the façade or roofline impacts adversely upon the architectural integrity and quality of the existing or neighbouring buildings.

7.5 Roofline

The height and form of a building will have a direct influence on the skyline of the Dundalk. Features such as chimneys also added interest and variety to the skyline. Rooflines should normally respond to the articulation of the rest of the façade. It should therefore be possible to read the width of the plot division from the bottom to the top of the building.

Designers shall have regard for the following:

- In many modern architectural solutions, roof tops tend to be flat and it extended over a considerable distance (i.e., a building with a long façade) it can result in monotony rooftops should therefore be relieved with variations in building height at appropriate locations such as the stepping up heights at the centre of a uniform composition or at the corners;
- The roofline should reflect the rhythm, harmony and scale of the entire street frontage, with the roofline picking up the subdivisions of the façade;
- Materials should be chosen for their compatibility with the existing roof tops of the town, i.e., red dyed tiles would be inappropriate in the town centre where dark grey slate predominates;





- Machine and mechanical plant rooms should be designed as an integral part of the building and should not cause disruption in the roofscape.

7.6 Scale, Mass and Composition

An appreciation of scale is one of the key elements in the design consideration for new buildings; the building's size must relate to its neighbouring buildings.

Building scale essentially refers to the size of plot and average storey height and also the manner in which the façade is articulated. If these components of a building's design are excessively large when compared to neighbouring buildings along a particular street, then the scale, mass or bulk of the building is likely to be out of place and could be an intrusion on the streetscape. Exceptions may be permitted, but will be dependant on use, particularly if it is a building of major public importance or if the use demands such a building and the location is deemed to be the most appropriate because of site characteristics or the degree to which it can contribute to the economic vitality of the town centre.

7.7 Key Buildings

Buildings and sites at prominent locations such as corner sites, end of streets, closing off vistas, have the potential to act as important icons and should address the civic importance of the site. In such instances, it may be more appropriate to increase building heights so as to provide greater emphasis on the building, but there will also be a greater expectation of design quality and architectural treatment.

7.8 Corner Sites

Corners should be accentuated by the design of a building. Buildings on corner sites should equally address both street frontages, with openings, windows and where appropriate, entrance ways. There are various possibilities to address a corner, e.g. an increase or stepping up in building height, a round corner, a stepped back corner (for example, to create a civic space), or a simple splayed corner. Such buildings should be designed to an exceptional standard that is carried through all its elevations.

7.9 Landmarks

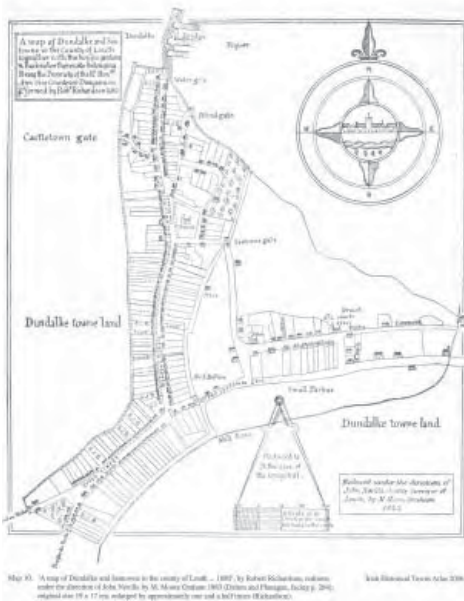
A landmark or object building is a single outstanding building which can be of a different scale, or of a more notable design than its neighbours. It should be associated with a specific historic setting or environment.

Landmarks should only be acceptable where they will substantially enhance the character and legibility of an area, for example by marking an important street corner or contributing to the character and quality of a particular place. Landmarks should not compete with existing landmarks. Consideration will be given to the cumulative effect of landmark developments in an area because to many landmark developments in an area may undermine the urban fabric of the area.

Part

8

CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Map of Dundalk 1680

8.1 The Development of Dundalk

Dundalk or Dún Dealgan, meaning Hill of Dealga's Fort, referring to the hill to the west of the town where the fort is said to have been built by Dealga. The town was founded by the Anglo-Normans in the twelfth century, and initially was centred on the church, Dundalk Bridge and the top of Clanbrassil St. Its strategic location on the main north-south route, as well as its importance as a market town, led to its expansion during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and defensive walls, gates and moats were constructed around the town to protect it from the Irish (Town's Atlas, p. 2). The turbulent seventeenth century, with the arrival of Cromwell in the 1640s and the Jacobean Wars in 1689-90, left Dundalk in turmoil, and as a result little of the medieval town survives. However, there is some evidence of this period in the medieval street plan, which has largely been retained and is evident in some of the street names, such as Northgate St and Ramparts Road, St. Nicholas' Church and the Franciscan tower on the corner of Mill St and Castle Rd.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the town enjoyed a renaissance, which brought with it new investment and development. Lord Limerick, the local landlord, was responsible for the modernisation and redevelopment of Dundalk, and he began by reclaiming land in the South marsh area and extending the shoreline, thus expanding the existing town in every direction and building an array of new buildings including a Market House in the Market Square and a Demesne for himself. By the end of the eighteenth century, a strong merchant class had emerged in Dundalk, which is reflected in the varied and high-quality buildings around the town. New roads were built to connect the town to the harbour, to facilitate trade. The advent of the railways in the nineteenth century resulted in greater industrialisation and by the end of the nineteenth century a wide range of industries, ranging from milling and textiles to engineering and construction were prevalent in the town. The religious diversity during this period is reflected in the variety of Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist churches in the town.

8.2 Archaeology and Architectural Areas of Significance

Several important building periods, styles and materials combine to create the significant character of Dundalk. Dundalk's medieval historical and archaeological significance is recognised in the Zone of Archaeological Potential delineating the centre of the town.

Six Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) have already been designated within the study area, as follows

- St. Mary's Road
- Roden Place
- The Crescent
- Clanbrassil Street
- Jocelyn St/Seatown Place, and
- Magnet Road/The Demesne.



Planning permission will generally be required for any works, except routine repairs, that affect the exterior of the structures located within ACAs, including replacement of shopfronts, windows and roofing and any more extensive works, including removal of render. In relation to works affecting shopfronts, please refer to the guidelines included within this document.

Applications for development that has the potential to affect the character or appearance of the above conservation areas, or for significant new development outside these boundaries, should ideally be supplemented with a statement setting out the design rationale for the scheme. This statement should indicate how the proposals have been informed by an understanding of local context, paying particular attention to the character or appearance of conservation areas and significant buildings within them. A views analysis should be included in this statement.

Where proposals involve façade retention, substantial demolition or other changes with structural implications (such as roof extensions, additional storeys or the insertion of mezzanines) to a building of intrinsic interest, the design statement is encouraged to assess the structural implications of the proposals for the building. Proposals will be encouraged to give consideration to the principles of good practice, as set out in guidelines from the Department of the Environment.

8.3 Protected Structures

A Protected Structure is a “building, structure, excavation or other thing constructed or made on, in or under any land, or any part of a structure” which is deemed to be of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, cultural, social or technical interest and therefore is included in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

The structures included in the RPS for Dundalk are included in the town’s Development Plan. Planning permission is required for any works that “materially affect the character of the structure”, which includes its curtilage. In the case for any development proposals affecting Protected Structures, the applicant shall have regard to the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006 (and as amended), and any relevant guidelines and regulations issued.

In the case of significant works being proposed to a protected structure, the Council will normally request that an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment be carried out, outlining how the proposals will affect the character of the structure, the extent to which original fabric and features are being retained and the necessary measures being undertaken to protect these during construction works. In this regard, applicants are requested to refer to relevant guidelines from the Department of the Environment.

In the case of alterations to a protected structure, the Council will normally only grant permission for schemes that reinstate lost or missing features of historic or architectural interest on such buildings, including doors, shop or showroom fronts, decorative



details and cornices. The Council will discourage schemes which involve the loss of historic or architecturally significant features or the introduction of glazing to upper floors that is not consistent with the character of the building. Similarly, the Council will discourage the closure and relocation of principal entrances to buildings of interest, where the position of the original entrances is reflected in the overall architectural composition or positioned on a prominent corner site.

All extensions to protected structures require planning permission, but these may be acceptable provided that they:

- Are of the highest possible quality; and,
- Have regard for the architectural form, scale, massing, height and materials of the principal building, and any surrounding buildings of merit.

8.4 Defining Dundalk: The Challenge

Dundalk's unique historic urban character, which is defined by the complex development of the town over the last millennium, is an important aspect of the town's heritage and local distinctiveness, and provides a tangible link between each previous generation and those to follow. The historic buildings which have survived are generally high quality structures which are pleasing to look at and make a positive contribution to the town. Thus, it is often economically, environmentally and socially beneficial to conserve historic buildings, as part of a wider regeneration scheme.

Historic buildings are a finite resource, and once lost cannot be replaced. Even where they are retained, the value of these buildings can often be diminished by inappropriate works which erode their special character or destroy or damage features of special interest, often irreplaceably. For this reason, historic buildings should be given special treatment to ensure their survival.

This section of the Urban Design Framework Plan relates predominantly to the historic core of the town. However, a brief appraisal and more detailed guidance is provided at the end that relates to the northern and southern fringes of the Urban Design Framework Plan area.



8.5 Town Core – the Historic Heart of Dundalk

The historic centre of Dundalk, including Church Street, Clanbrassil Street, Bridge Street, Nicholas Street, the Long Walk and Linenhall Street has street patterns dating to the medieval period and includes some of the fine commercial, civic and religious buildings of Dundalk. There is a significant number of two- and three-storey terraced buildings with commercial premises to ground floor level and residential accommodation above, which define the character of the centre of Dundalk. Including a number of attractive shopfronts - guidelines for which are provided in a separate section of this document. The buildings are a clear physical record of the commercial and economic prosperity that the town has enjoyed during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and indeed the extent to which the town is a focus for the educational, ecclesiastical and retail needs of the surrounding population.

The **urban grain** of this part of the town is compact, with plots being predominantly long and narrow at right angles to the street line. The buildings create a strong frontage that delineate the spaces, which are again predominantly linear in nature, apart from Market Square.

In terms of **materials**, the town centre comprises predominantly rendered and red brick premises, with some of the more significant civic and ecclesiastical premises being of stone, including the Town Hall, Courthouse and churches.

8.6 New Development in the Historic Centre of Dundalk

The conservation of the historic urban fabric is an important factor in wider urban design and planning issues within the town. When the colourful tapestry of past civilisations is combined with new designs to create the twenty-first century town, it is important to achieve the correct balance to ensure an attractive, colourful, high quality town centre, in which locals and visitors alike can enjoy to live, work and recreate. This balance can be achieved by giving careful consideration to the established buildings styles visible around the town when designing a new building or making alterations to an existing one.

To this end, the following established features, styles and details must be taken into account before commencing any new buildings within the town:

- Proportion
- Scale
- Mass
- Building heights
- Building lines
- Roof pitches
- Openings
- Materials
- Colours

Each of these combine to create an attractive streetscape and, while there are plenty of opportunities for creativity and high quality new design, by taking note of the established designs these can be successfully integrated into the town. By using



good quality materials, taking established proportions, scale and massing as a guide and using skilful interpretation of the site, it is possible to achieve contemporary development which not only complements but successfully integrates with the established streetscape.

Development proposals (including new build and proposals for alteration/ conversion/ renovation of historic structures) shall support the regeneration of Dundalk town centre as a primary location within County Louth for commercial, retail and cultural activities with a good mix of uses, particularly at ground floor level.

Development proposals within the historic core are encouraged to include the following characteristics:

1. Are of the highest architectural quality, and by their design and relationship to setting create or contribute to a sense of place (including contemporary design where appropriate);
2. Relate appropriately to the surrounding townscape and any buildings of note;
3. Have regard to the scale and character of adjacent streets. This may entail development that changes character or materials in response to local circumstances;
4. Have regard to local views, prevailing heights and cornice lines;
5. Preserve the historic street layout and urban form (alleys, courts and mews);
6. Are acceptable in land use terms;
7. Present a lively active street frontage, with regular entrances and windows facing onto the street;
8. Have a continuous building line up to the back edge of pavements;
9. In certain locations - gap sites flanked by buildings of historic note - scholarly facsimiles of adjacent buildings may be acceptable, provided they are correctly detailed.

In terms of new development within the historic core, the Council will consider proposals for modern architecture within where it respects the character of surrounding development. In general, innovative modern development using high-quality materials will be favoured over pastiche or reproduction of existing building using lesser-quality materials and incorrect detailing, such as windows, size of (doors and windows), roofing materials and shopfronts.

8.7 Infill Sites

In particular, the urban fabric of this area should be reinforced and any proposal for development shall have regard to the surrounding character, particularly where the proposed development is located on a small plot. In cases where development is located on a large plot or significant infill site, it may be in a position to establish its own character.



8.8 Amalgamation

The amalgamation of several sites for the purposes of large-scale redevelopment will only be considered favourably where the existing grain is respected/reflected in the design. The historic core of Dundalk has limited capacity to support such proposals, which tend to be detrimental to the historic grain, massing, scale and street frontage. This type of development is more suitably located on the fringes of this study area (see the guidelines relating to the northern and southern fringes below). In cases where this type of proposal is deemed acceptable, the Council will encourage the retention of the varied plot pattern of historic development within the conservation areas. This may be achieved through design detailing having reference to the original plot pattern.



The amalgamation of two or more historic buildings may be achieved successfully in certain circumstances, normally within a terrace. In this case, it is important that the distinction between each building is retained, and that the external appearance "reads" as being two separate building – for example, by retaining two front doors, even if one is not in active use.

8.9 Demolition

Development in the historic core of Dundalk must preserve or enhance the character of the area, particularly the Conservation Areas and their settings. As such, the Council will not normally grant permission for proposals that involve the total or substantial demolition of buildings that are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Permission for the total or substantial demolition of such buildings will only be granted where it can be shown that it would be economically unfeasible or unviable to repair the structure, and that reasonable efforts have been made to refurbish or re-use the building.



8.10 Building Height and Scale

In relation to specific proposals, applicants shall have regard to the individual character area appraisals and their key objectives. Proposals for buildings significantly out of scale with the surrounding area within the historic core shall not be positively considered by the Council. In general, taller buildings will be located on the fringes of the town and shall be located, orientated and designed to as to perform a strong urban function as a landmark or gateway building. Generally, a strategy of 'ramping' building heights between the fringe areas and the more modestly scaled buildings in the historic core should be followed. The Council will consider the prevailing heights within individual blocks and to take into account the scale of nearby development when assessing development proposals for tall buildings. Visual impact is especially important in the tall building opportunity area and all proposals are required to assess the impact of a tall buildings presence not just upon the local area but on the wider zone of visual impact.





8.11 Change of Use

The Council recognises that the best way of retaining historic structures is to retain them in active use. Proposals for change of use must, however, demonstrate the following:

- How the new use will respect the historic fabric of the building;
- How specific features of importance will be retained (e.g. historic shopfronts, plasterwork and original timber sash windows);
- The extent to which the new use will require structural or other modification of the building – e.g. in the case of upper-floor offices in historic structure, additional floor loadings may require strengthening of floors and ceilings below.
- In the case of buildings with particular ecclesiastical or civic functions, for example churches, schools and civic buildings, the new use shall involve minimal alteration to the exterior of the structure. In the case of churches and graveyards, burials, statuary, graves and other monuments shall not be removed and shall be protected in the course of works.

8.12 Roof Extensions

In general terms, the Council will discourage a roof extension if it is considered to:

- (i) Harm the architectural integrity, proportions or uniformity of a building or significant group of buildings;
- (ii) Harm a significant or sensitive view;
- (iii) Reduce the visual interest generated by a varied skyline, or where the building has features that were designed to be silhouetted against the sky; or
- (iv) Result in the loss of historic roof forms.

Extensions and additions may be considered acceptable where:

- (i) The scale of the proposed addition is appropriate to the scale of the existing property, or is unobtrusive;
- (ii) The proposed addition is of a high standard of contemporary design where appropriate; and,
- (iii) Steps have been taken to prevent the build-up of visual clutter apparent from the street at high level.

Permission will not be granted for other roof-top structures where these intrude into significant or sensitive public views, harm the character of a building or an area, or adversely affect the amenity of adjoining properties.

8.13 Repairs to Historic Structures

In order to keep a building functioning and in active use, repairs will be necessary. However, it is important to ensure that these works demonstrate the following:

- Adopting a philosophy of repair rather than replace;
- Minimal intervention into the historic fabric;
- Where replacement is necessary, replace like with like – i.e. using the same materials, style and detailing;
- Using the best practice conservation techniques.

Painting of brickwork shall not be permitted. In general, sand blasting buildings in order to clean the façade is not acceptable, particularly where the façade comprises brick or softer stone.

In the case of protected structures, planning permission may be required for these works – in all cases advice should be sought from the Council prior to the commencement of works.

8.14 Living Over the Shop

In order to encourage vitality and to create a safer night-time environment within the town centre, the Council will favourably consider proposals for residential conversion of upper floors above shops and commercial premises within the town centre. As noted above (under Change of Use”), the proposed residential must respect and retain the historic fabric, with minimal intervention. Proposals shall indicate the extent to which new interventions are necessary and how these impact on the historic fabric of the structure.

8.15 Treatment of the Public Realm

The public realm contributes significantly to the appreciation of a place. In the case of Dundalk, the public realm has fine historic features, again highlighting its historic prosperity and status within the county. In general, any urban renewal or environmental improvements scheme shall retain historic features such as granite setts and paving slabs, railings, In the case where any of these features need to be removed, the Council will support their reuse within appropriate locations within the Urban Framework Plan area.

In general, the introduction of public art into the streetscape makes a very positive contribution to the visual and physical amenity of the place, as well as creating a strong sense of uniqueness and identity. Public art shall be located at appropriate locations and should not detract from, or be injurious to, the historic environment.



8.16 Northern and Southern Fringes of the Town Centre

The southern quarter, and to a lesser extent, the northern fringe of the study area, has a weaker urban form than the historic core. The character of this area is less clearly defined, which creates a good opportunity for new development to create a new urban identity that is vibrant, busy, exciting and that complements the historic core of the town. In particular, there may be potential for residential development and other types of development that would not be easily accommodated within the historic fabric of the town core.

The southern quarter has the potential to attract significant development, having a large area with development potential that provides the opportunity to attract large-scale investment. In particular, this area has the potential to accommodate new uses for which larger-footprint buildings are required, with good vehicular access and larger plot sizes. Such uses may not be appropriate to the more historic part of the town centre, as to amalgamate the number of plots required would seriously disrupt the rhythm of the street and the urban grain, which would be very detrimental to the character of the place. It is considered that there is scope here for new development that provides well-defined and enclosed public spaces within a built environment of high architectural quality.

Within the northern fringe of the study area, there is significant potential to amalgamate sites in order to re-develop on large-scale plots. There is scope for redevelopment, which may allow a different range of uses to be located close to the town centre, which cannot accommodate these uses within the historic fabric. The redevelopment of two or more adjacent plots should include in its design some reference to the original plots, for example in the pattern of fenestration, the profile of the roof or the detailing of the façade. In this way, the historic rhythm of the street is retained within the design detailing. The street pattern and street frontage should be retained – large yards or parking areas that introduce setbacks that did not previously exist are not sympathetic to the historic fabric and their introduction will be discouraged.



New Development in the Northern and Southern Fringes

Development proposals within the fringe areas (within this study area) are encouraged to include the following characteristics:

1. Encourage pedestrian movement or create new pedestrian routes where appropriate;
2. Create clearly defined edges or increase the legibility of the public realm by their architectural design or by a suitable landscape area in the setting of the proposed development;
3. Create a strong gateway to the historic centre of Dundalk, particularly for the passing motorist and pedestrian passing through to the centre.
4. Tall buildings (i.e. buildings that are significantly taller than surrounding development) are most acceptable in these locations.



Dundalk Town Centre has a unique and diverse character that must be preserved or enhanced. As such, conservation and design are key priorities for this Urban Design Framework Plan. The objectives set out in this document, and the policies outlined below, set out a framework of guidance for new development, which aims to complement and enhance these buildings, through a number of measures. In general, this document seeks to encourage an exemplar approach to design quality.

Specific policy objectives for the retention, conservation and enhancement of the historic fabric within this study area are listed below.

1. The Council will seek development that contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of the historic environment in the historic core of Dundalk, particularly within the designated Architectural Conservation Areas, while ensuring that new development is exemplary in its design.
2. The Council will encourage development that promotes a design-led approach in the re-use of existing buildings and the flexible design of new buildings to accommodate a range of future uses.
3. The Council will seek to optimise the use of brownfield sites, particularly located on the fringes of the study area, and underused buildings - encouraging reuse and refurbishment.
4. Development that allows the historic core of Dundalk to rediscover its "town centre" identity will be encouraged, where facilities, amenities, living and working areas are provided for local people while respecting the historic fabric, streetscape and grain of the place.

Part

9

SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDANCE



Good example of traditional shopfront in Dundalk

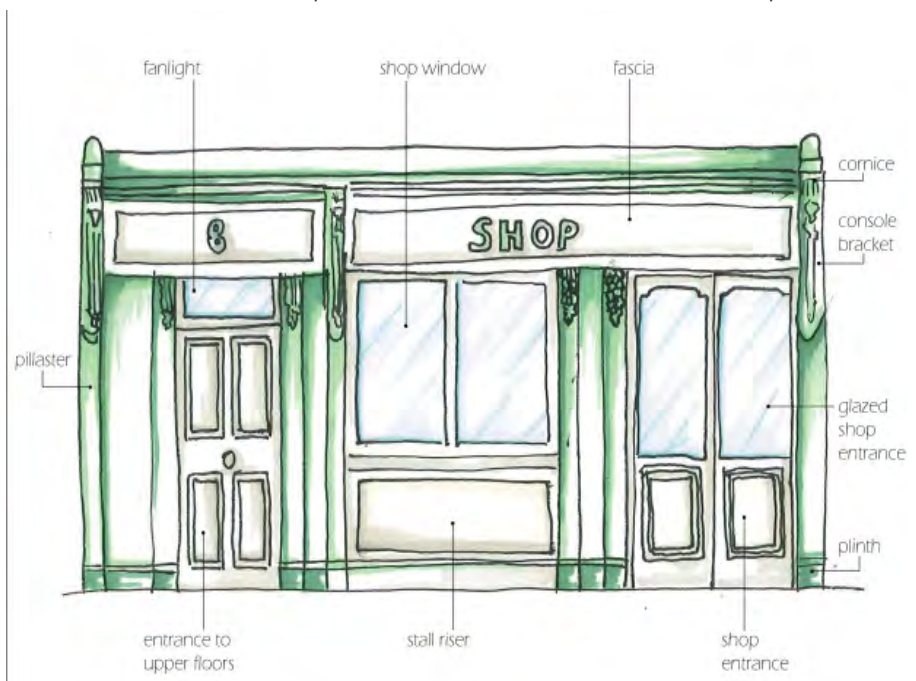
9.1 Introduction

Shopfronts form an important part of a street's character, as they constitute a highly visible part of the building at street level. Well-designed and well-maintained shopfronts create a more attractive street for the shopper and passer-by, whereas poor quality shopfronts, on the other hand, damage the public perception of a street.

An assessment of the quality and presentation of existing shopfronts within Dundalk town centre, which comprise the principal shopping streets, reveals that a number of the shopfronts are characterised by poor design, use of inappropriate materials, proliferation of signage and a lack of maintenance.

Shopfronts present the public face of local business. The vibrancy of a shopping street is reflected in the number and variety of shops and businesses present. Dundalk is fortunate to have a wide range of retailers and businesses, particularly along Clanbrassil Street; however, the inconsistency in design and condition of the existing shopfronts has created an untidy streetscape. The council supports the improvement of shop fronts through a special fund set aside for the Shopfront Improvement Scheme. This scheme is designed to encourage renewal of traditional shopfronts, hand-painted signs and/or the provision of new high quality shopfronts in a traditional or modern idiom. These guidelines shall be used by the council in assessment for grants under Shopfront Improvement Scheme

A shopfront can often be an important feature in a Protected Structure or a significant aspect of the character of an ACA. As such it is important that the character of these shopfronts



Shopfront Elements

is retained and that these are sensitively repaired where necessary.

The aim of these guidelines is to establish a design framework that can be applied to Dundalk's shopfronts in order to ensure that a coherent design approach is achieved and maintained throughout the town centre. This is an attempt to encourage more examples of well-designed, imaginative shopfronts.

Furthermore, urban fringe and out-of-centre retail developments (including larger bulky goods retailing) have the potential to act as a major attractor in terms of generating visitors to Dundalk. Their design is significant in making the retail and visitor experience more pleasant. In recognition of this fact, guidelines are provided below to set out a framework for how the commercial and retail uses may best be accommodated to maximum visual effect.

Dundalk Town Council intends to promote a dual approach to shopfront design:

- Protecting traditional and original shopfronts
- Encouraging good contemporary shopfront design

In addition to the aesthetic design elements, consideration will also be given to how accessibility can be improved for all and how shop security measures can be more sensitively incorporated into the design of the shopfronts.

Note: Any alteration or works to shopfronts within an ACA, other than routine maintenance works, which comprises the carrying out of works to the exterior of a structure requires planning permission under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to 2006 (and as amended)

9.2 General Design Principles

Within the area covered by this Urban Design Framework for Dundalk there is a huge variation within the building stock and streetscape, and therefore there is a wide range of types and materials in the shopfronts and commercial facades. The historical core – principally the Town Core and St Nicholas' character areas, has several shopfronts of significant artistic, historical and architectural importance. This area would benefit from an approach that is based on conserving and protecting the historic building fabric and any existing shopfronts of merit and approaching new shopfronts with a sensitive design palette.

The Station, The Marshes and Balmer's Bog character areas could be characterised as urban expansion areas and as such have a less historic building stock and streetscapes and a less homogenous character and looser urban grain. In these areas, larger-scale retailing is being encouraged, along with uses that are not easy to accommodate within the fine historic grain of the town centre (due to logistical, access, delivery and retail floorplate considerations).

Coes Road and Seatown character areas are predominantly residential and therefore these Shopfront Design Guidelines may not apply, save in certain circumstances.



Parkes Bar shopfront



Original Shopfront



Unsympathetic Alterations

In terms of the guiding principles for the design and construction of shopfronts within Dundalk, set down below is a series of general design principles, which will be applied by the local authority in considering proposals affecting existing or proposed shopfronts.

Below, specific considerations for each character area within the town are highlighted.

(i) Design Approach

All Character Areas

The design approach to a new shopfront should provide a contemporary architectural expression of today within the context of the character and tradition of the area, the character of the individual street and the character of the building itself. The character of each area within this Urban Design Framework are set down within each relevant appraisal section of this document, and should act as a point of reference for those considering new works and alterations.



A traditional shopfront with a more modern type of signage and font, updating the appearance of this building while retaining the historic proportions, fabric and detailing. Note: the small hanging sign to the right ensures that the shop is visible from along the street with minimal visual clutter to the shopfront.

The integration of new into older fabric, and the contemporary styling of shopfronts will be considered by the planning authority, particularly where the design is of a high quality and achieves a balance of finish and textures establishing a sense of performance in contemporary design. Historic robust materials such as granite, limestone, brick, timber, cast-iron, brass and copper can be integrated with lightweight contemporary materials such as stainless steel and glass. Glass, in particular, introduces reflective properties which aid in a sense of playfulness and liveliness across facades.



A good example of a late nineteenth century shopfront – typical of those found in Dundalk - illustrating the importance of retaining original materials and using a limited range of heritage colours in the paintwork of the frontage

Design needs to be imaginative within the constraints of the existing building, enhancing its character rather than conflicting with it. In most cases a modern proposal is preferred to inaccurate historical representations or pastiche. As an example where a modern style has been successful is in the front elevation of Parke's Bar, which draws on the vertical lines used in the framing of traditional shopfronts teamed with the use of timber, to create an attractive modern shopfront with contemporary styling.

All Character Areas except Town Core and St Nicholas

Larger-scale new retail developments, in particular shopping centres and bulky goods retailing in edge-of-centre areas, is often of a scale that is can establish its own character, and therefore its own design approach. In designing these areas, legibility and pedestrian ease of movement should be a prime consideration in developing layouts.

(ii) Framework

It is important to create a good visual frame for the shopfront. This will generally be formed by the pilasters, fascia and a well-defined stall riser. These may be expressed in a modern or traditional architectural idiom. A successful framing helps to contain the shopfront, and provides a context for composing the shopfront elements within.

(iii) Access for People with Disabilities

All Character Areas

Access for people with disabilities, the elderly and the very young, should be incorporated into the design of the shopfront. Care must be taken to ensure that access meets requirements set out in Part M of the Building Regulations, which can be achieved in a manner which is sensitive to the building and shopfront design. Certain steps can be taken in

- Door opening widths should have sufficient clearance to be used by wheelchairs
- The interior layout should be fully accessible
- Displays should not create barriers
- Surfacing at the entrance to the shop should be slip-resistant.

(iv) Materials

All Character Areas

The type of material used in the construction of shopfronts is an important feature and care should be taken to ensure that the choice of materials complements the architectural character of the building and integrates with the overall visual unity of the streetscape. The decision to build a traditional shopfront or a modern one will, to a large extent, dictate the type of materials used.

Timber is the most appropriate material within traditional shopfront design, but a high level of attention to detail and standard of craftsmanship is required.

Some materials, including plastics, reconstituted stone, and aluminium, can look visually bland especially when used in large quantities on a single plane. This can be improved with the introduction of effective modelling, detailing, and the use of appropriate features. Existing stone fascias and pilasters



Ornate plasterwork and marble pillars



A good example of how a long shop front can be successfully broken up to incorporate variety into the streetscape. In this case, this large store originally comprised a number of individual buildings that are now amalgamated into one large store.



Above: traditional proportions with normal-scale fascia.
Below: over-scale fascia, which has resulted in covering part of the building both above and below the shopfront. This issue arises when the internal ceiling is dropped or suspended. The new fascia should be broken up either vertically or horizontally to minimise the visual impact of this modification. In all cases, fascia signage should be

provide excellent framings, within which a modern treatment can be inserted, the older traditional materials providing a good foil for modern display and lighting. Painting over brickwork or stonework is not acceptable as this can lead to the long-term deterioration of the material.

All Character Areas except Town Core and St Nicholas

In terms of the retail frontages within new larger-scale retail developments, the palette of materials permissible is wider, and may include, for example, back-lit signage, where there is no negative visual impact, particularly at locations where residential areas are located nearby. The use of glass and creative lighting design can enliven these areas significantly. Where large-scale retail is proposed, a varied shop frontage should be created by varying the building line, and by introducing setbacks and porticos.

(v) Signage

Town Core and St Nicholas Character Areas

The guidelines below apply not only to retail premises but also to commercial, medical and medical-related and other premises providing services within Dundalk. In all cases, existing signage, tiled shopfronts, wrought ironwork, stonework, plasterwork detailing and any original features shall be retained on retail and commercial premises.

Signage forms an integral part of the overall design for the shopfront and should be restricted to the fascia level. Generally, only the name and street number of the shop should be included, preferably hand-painted, on the fascia panel. The size, shape and position of shopfront signage should reflect the scale and façade of the building on which they are situated. Illumination by bracket or wash lighting is preferred to internally illuminated signage.

All lettering is to be legible and in character with the building. Minimum lettering should be used.

Preferred signage locations are to position lettering

- Directly to the glazing
- To the bulkhead behind the glazing
- To architectural feature like doors
- Behind the glass

Lettering or logos should not be affixed directly to the glazing of any shop or business windows, other than etched lettering. All sign displays inside the shop should be kept back a minimum distance of 500mm from the glazing. Lettering or logos should not obstruct the window display or exceed one quarter of the area of the window through which the advertisements are exhibited. Lettering and use of the Irish Language in shop signage is encouraged and supported by the Council.

In general, corporate, mass-produced signage using bright colours with plastic shopfronts and plastic fascias will not be acceptable within the area covered by this Urban Framework Plan. However, in some cases, this may be permitted within new retail developments in out-of-centre locations (outside the Town Core and St Nicholas character areas).



An example of modern restaurant signage that has been incorporated into the building in a sensitive manner with minimal visual and physical intrusion into the historic fabric



Internal lighting can provide security at night as well as providing an interesting and active night-time street frontage



A good example of a 'standard' corporate image being successfully adapted to complement the character of the building, incorporating more modern materials and a more muted colour palette

Projecting signs shall not generally be permitted as a profusion of such signs in a confined area can lead to visual clutter in the streetscape. However, positive consideration may be given to the use of a projecting sign if a building is in multiple occupancy and the proposed sign would lead to a significant overall reduction in the number and scale of advertisement structures on or projecting from the face of the building. In these circumstances, the following guidelines must be observed:

- Not more than one projecting sign should be displayed on a building;
- Signs should not be fixed directly to the face of a building but should be fixed by a bracket;
- Projecting sign should be fixed at fascia height adjacent to the access to the upper floors;
- Signs should depict a pictorial feature or symbol illustrating the trade or business being undertaken and should be as transparent as possible;
- Signs should be individually designed to complement the scale, materials and design of the building;
- Signs should not obscure important features of a building or adjacent buildings.

All Other Character Areas

In developing and re-developing retail areas outside the historic town core, there is more scope to utilise imaginative signage proposals. In retail parks, shopping centres and local and district centres a palette of design types and materials should be selected for the treatment of all areas of the public realm, including signage and façade treatments, to create an attractive public realm.

(vi) Lighting

Town Core and St Nicholas Character Areas

The illumination of the shopfront should be discreet either by concealed tubing where the fascia details permit or by rear illumination of the individual letters. The colour and intensity of illumination shall be complementary to the overall shopfront design and architectural context. Neon illumination around windows is unacceptable. Internally illuminated fascia panels or projecting box signs will not be permitted. Concealed strip or flood lighting of fascias or traditional hand painted hanging signs lit by spotlight may be an acceptable alternative.

All Other Character Areas

In developing and re-developing retail areas outside the historic town core, there is more scope to utilise imaginative lighting solutions. In retail parks, shopping centres and local and district centres a palette of design types and materials should be selected for the treatment of all areas of the public realm to create an attractive public realm.

In particular, lighting that is an architectural feature in itself will be favourably considered, for example to illuminate parking areas and the public realm in general.



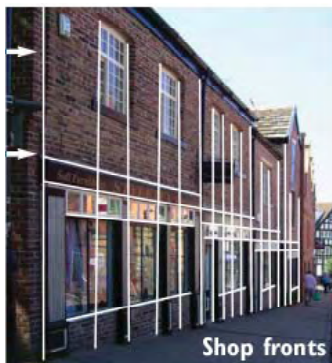
A traditional shopfront with inset porch. Fascia has been revived and is bulkier than the original



A modern shopfront with a limited palette of colours and materials, executed in a high-quality design. This illustrates how a simple design can have a strong impact as well as being an attractive part of the streetscape.

Vertical
Emphasis

Horizontal
Emphasis



(vii) Colours

All Character Areas

The colours used in the shopfront should be complementary to those of the building and adjoining buildings. Loud, garish colours which clash with the colours and tones of the building and adjoining buildings should be avoided. Painting over brickwork or stonework is also not acceptable.

Corporate design packages, including colour and material palettes and signage, will generally not be acceptable unless fully compatible with and complementary to the character of the building and adjoining buildings. The context for the proposal is considered more important than uniformity between branches of one company.

(viii) Security Features

All Character Areas

The installation of security shutters requires planning permission. The use of such shutters is discouraged as these can visually detract from the ambience of a shopping street at night. The location of rollers on the exterior of the shopfront will not be permitted. Alternatives to roller shutters such as demountable open grilles will be considered where security needs are involved.

Where security shutters are considered essential because of the nature of the business, they may be permitted provided they meet the following criteria:

- They must be open grill type, not solid, or perforated.
- They must be painted or coloured to match the shopfront scheme.
- Where possible they must be housed behind the window display.

Acceptable Materials	Unacceptable Materials
Stone Brick Timber Render Steel Bronze Brass Glass Cast-iron Copper	Highly polished stone Plastics Acrylic uPVC Mirrored Panels Poor quality flat-faced panels

A security hatch or slot of a sufficient scale to accept newspaper deliveries shall be incorporated into the design of new shopfronts, as appropriate. Such a feature shall be located at or immediately above the level of the stall riser and should not interfere with the general proportions and presentation of the front façade of the shopfront.

(ix) Relationship with Overhead Building

All Character Areas (as appropriate)

A shop front is an integral part of the building of which it forms part and therefore the shop front should relate to the architectural character of the upper floors in respect of

proportion, scale and alignment.

Excessively deep fascias should be avoided most particularly where these obscure detailed elements such as console brackets and cornices. The fascia should not encroach on or above first floor level or extend uninterrupted across a number of buildings.

The design of a new shopfront should relate to the architectural characteristics of the building of which it forms part, relating sympathetically to the upper floors in structural concept, proportion, scale and vertical alignment.

Existing features of the building such as string courses, arches, plaster detailing or existing fascias and pilasters provide an opportunity to pick up and identify elements to be reflected in the design of the shopfront.

Texture and colour of materials are important considerations in integrating new shopfronts with older buildings. A typical terrace with original shopfronts. The fascias, windows and doors are all in proportion within the shopfront and in relation to the upper floors, and the materials and colours are all complementary.

The same terrace has been drastically altered, with shop units being unsuccessfully amalgamated and divided, crude signage being inserted and inappropriate colours and materials being used.



Stallriser with Art Nouveau tiling on Clanbrassil St



An example of a simple, modern shopfront with a limited colour palette – note the absence of a stallriser gives the shop an open appearance, although this can impact on security

(x) Relationship with Adjoining Buildings

All Character Areas (as appropriate)

Buildings and shop fronts relate to adjoining buildings and therefore the starting point for the design of a shop front must be its architectural context. Shop fronts should respect the scale and proportions of the streetscape and the established pattern of window and door openings.

New shopfront design must respect the scale and proportions of the streetscape by maintaining the existing grain of development along the street and respecting the appropriate plot width. Large expanses of undivided glass should be avoided where possible. Long runs of horizontal façades should be broken up by elevational modelling and vertical division or features. It is important to relate to the fascia heights of adjacent shops.

(xi) Windows & Doors

All Character Areas

In all instances, clear glazing should be used within the shopfront facade: no frosted/tinted/opaque or laminated glass should be used except in exceptional circumstances where the overall design concept would warrant the use of such materials.

Shopfront displays (including gable elevations and upper floor windows) must be provided as an integral part of the shopfront design and these displays should be managed and maintained. The window display fixtures, fittings and illumination must be of high quality and complement the shopfront.



An example of good and bad canopy design and good quality signage.

(xii) Stall Risers

Predominantly Town Centre and St Nicholas Character Areas

The stall riser forms the base of the shopfront between the display windows and the pavement, to reinforce the visual frame of the shopfront. Stall risers can vary in height depending on the style and provide security, reducing the likelihood of the shopfront being rammed by vehicles in order to gain access to the goods on display, offering protection from fouling by dogs and splashing from the feet of passers-by. This should be constructed of a durable material.

The use of the public footpath for security stanchions or roller shutter fittings/fixtures is not acceptable. Timbers should never run directly to the ground. If timber stall-risers or pilasters are preferred, a small, stone, recessed plinth should be provided between the timber and the ground.

(xiii) Canopies

Predominantly Town Centre and St Nicholas Character Areas

In traditional shopfront design, blinds were regularly incorporated within the shopfront fascia and designed to retract into it when not required, a solution which is still considered best practice.

- Canopies, if considered necessary by reason of key corner sites or landmark buildings, should be traditional in style, appropriately integrated into the overall shopfront, open-ended and in a muted colour. Shop names or advertising on the blind are not permitted.
- The curved or Dutch canopy is unsympathetic to the traditional streetscape as it obscures the original detail of the shopfront, neighbouring advertising, and deteriorates with age. However, there may be particular locations where these would be acceptable.
- Glass canopies may be considered subject to agreement on design and maintenance.

(xiv) External Seating

External seating may be required for cafes, bars and restaurants. In such cases, care must be taken to ensure that these do not obstruct the pavement. Restrictions on hours of operation may be required in particularly busy areas. These shall be regulated through Section 254 licenses in accordance with provisions of the Planning & Development Act and will also be considered with due regard to safe access for the mobility impaired.



A successful shopfront conversion to residential in Portsmouth in England. The poor quality shopfront is contradictory in scale, colour and materials to the rest of the building. The style of the first floor windows has been replicated at ground floor level, and access issues have been overcome with the insertion of Victorian-style doors which are appropriate to the building style.



Combination of buildings with variety of shopfronts in Clanbrassil St. Note how the Lifestyle Sports and Hibernian shopfronts clash with the upper floors and neighbouring buildings in colour, material, scale and proportion.



Dearys of Clanbrassil Street

(xv) Interior

The design of the interior of retail units, including layout, furniture, display cabinets, materials and colour, should have regard to the visual impact on the exterior of the shopfront and the requirement to complement the design of the shopfront and building overhead.

The rear of interior display stands and storage units should not be positioned up against or close to the window display.

In addition to the above General Design Principles, the following guidance applies specifically to the Town Core and the St Nicholas Character Areas:

(xvi) Removal

Where a shopfront is of minimal architectural merit, it may be desirable to remove it to increase development potential. Where this is permissible, any replacement development should echo any common themes, features or aspects of the remaining terrace. Many of the buildings and shopfronts in Clanbrassil St are traditional and therefore retention is highly desirable. However, there are some exceptions where the removal of inappropriate modern shopfronts is encouraged. Care must be taken in every instance in case removal of a modern shopfront reveals an earlier, high quality shopfront.

(xvii) Repair

When shopfronts require repairs, it is imperative that original features are retained as far as possible, and that missing details are replaced in order to ensure the survival of the character. The local authority will endeavour to promote any future government grant schemes for the refurbishment of traditional shopfronts.

(xviii) Materials

Locally sourced lighting and signage is always preferred, and efforts should be made to use these in every circumstance. Materials should be compatible with the building and, in the case of repair, should replicate as closely as possible the original material. Several of the buildings in Clanbrassil St date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the town was at its economic peak. As a result, several of these buildings are of high quality construction, using particularly special materials. In these circumstances, it is especially important to ensure that the materials used complement the original building and its neighbours.

(ixx) New Design

A high standard of contemporary design is encouraged by the council, where appropriate, using the above guidelines. However, since many of the structures within the area are Protected Structures and often within an ACA, care should be taken to ensure that the entire structure and terrace are taken into consideration, and proportions, materials and overall design should respect the existing and surrounding structures.



Landmark building opposite
Dundalk Bridge (Castletown River)



Redevelopment Potential



Consideration of Proposals Affecting Shopfronts in
Clanbrassil St

9.3 Dundalk Shopfronts

The establishment of Dundalk's architectural heritage is reflected in the town's centre, which includes some of the finest commercial, civic and religious buildings of the town. The main thoroughfares boast significant terraced two-and-three storey buildings, conforming to the traditional arrangement of commercial premises to ground floor level, with residential above. The wide variety of shopfronts present within the main character areas (discussed below) contribute to the character of the town. These included several attractive traditional shopfronts and some tasteful modern examples; there is however, great scope for shopfront improvements throughout the town centre.

Town Core

Clanbrassil Street was traditionally the main shopping street in Dundalk, which is located in the Town Core character area. This area has suffered from the construction of the Long Walk shopping centre in the 1990's. Located directly to the rear of the Clanbrassil street, the success of this Shopping Centre resulted in the relocation of much commercial trade away from the main street. This in turn had a negative knock on effect on the continued use and maintenance of commercial units along the street.

There are several traditional shopfronts, such as Deary's and Eden's in Clanbrassil Street. These are well-maintained buildings dating to the nineteenth and twentieth century. However In recent years these buildings have declined significantly. This is a result of a combination of social and economic factors, and it is the desire of the council to reverse this trend, either by promoting and encouraging the retail potential of the area or reinventing the area as residential by tasteful renovation of shop units to new commercial/ residential uses.

Corner buildings such as that illustrated occupy prominent positions in the streetscape, often defining the beginning/ end of a street. This building is located facing directly onto Castletown River. Now redundant this building has become and make a positive contribution to the streetscape and the overall character of the area. The architectural significance of the street is displayed through its designation as an ACA. These buildings along with several other examples have retained much original fabric as illustrated through architectural detailing like the tiling to The Bartender, the ornate plasterwork and marble pillars to Boylan's and the ornate timber shopfront to The Phoenix Bar.

The decline in the use of Clanbrassil Street has resulted in the deterioration of several traditional shopfronts. The retention of and successful conservation of traditional shopfronts, and the introduction of tastefully-designed modern shopfronts would lead to a sustainable regeneration of the area, alleviating this problem.

St. Nicholas's Character Area

The area centred on the two St. Nicholas's Churches was the centre of Medieval Dundalk. From here the town evolved and expanded with the construction of mainly three-and-two-storey terraced replacement with inappropriate, poor quality signage.



Existing bay window has been continued at ground floor level respecting the existing window detailing of the upper floors

The depth of the full length fascia overdominates the facade at ground floor level extending well below the existing cornice line, resulting in poorly proportioned fenestration below.



The window's horizontal emphasis bears no relation to the vertical emphasis windows to the upper floors

UPVC door detracts from the character and appearance of the area

Examples throughout Ireland and the rest of Europe have shown that the presence of unsightly shopfronts and signage acts as a negative catalyst for the aesthetic, economic and social deterioration of an area.

Accommodating new uses for imposing structures such as this can enliven the streetscape. This type of regeneration can be achieved through managed conservation measures by drawing on the existing architectural detailing of a building and complementing it with sensitive alteration or extension.

Long Walk Character Area

A relatively new area within the town, The Long Walk runs parallel to the old retail street of Clanbrassil Street. This retail area has potential to lend itself to the introduction of high-quality contemporary shopfronts. However, given that the rear of a number of the buildings on Clanbrassil St are visible from the Long Walk, care must be taken to ensure that new development in this location does not effect the character of the Protected Structures in Clanbrassil St.

Consideration of Proposals Affecting Shopfronts in Bridge St/ Church St/Linenhall St Conversion

Often when buildings are no longer in use as shops, and they have living accommodation upstairs, it is possible to convert the shop for residential use. This can be achieved successfully by retaining the proportions and scaling of the existing building, while ensuring that residential requirements are met. This is particularly an issue in Bridge St., where many of the shop units are empty.

When converting commercial premises to residential accommodation there are two key rules:

- Use the windows above as the key, ensuring that the materials, proportions and scale are retained
- Match the materials as closely as possible between floors

The ground floor must integrate with the floors above, and this can be achieved easily with careful observation and consideration. Generally, if the shopfront surround is of particular architectural merit, or if the upper floors are on a different vertical plane to the lower floors, the surround should be retained.

Removal

Where a shopfront is of minimal architectural merit, it may be permissible and prudent to remove it. Where this is permissible, any replacement development should echo any common themes, features or aspects of structure and/or the remaining terrace.

Repair

When shopfronts require repairs, it is imperative that original features are retained as far as possible, and that missing details are replaced in order to ensure the survival of the character. Grant assistance may be available depending on circumstances, particularly in the case of Protected Structures.



Summary of General Design Principles for Town Core & St. Nicholas Character Areas

Characteristic Features –
*To Be Maintained in Existing Buildings and
 Complimented by New Development*

Vertical emphasis windows and doors
 Traditional shopfronts & signage
 Timber windows and doors

Uncharacteristic Features –
*To Be Avoided, Where Possible, in Existing
 Buildings and New Development/
 Redevelopment*

Overtly large signage
 Neon lights
 Loud, garish colours
 Extension of shopfronts into floor above
 Roller shutters
 uPVC doors and windows
 Dutch canopies
 Extract grills (on front elevation)
 Illuminated box signs



Long Walk Character Area

Materials

Locally sourced lighting and signage are preferable. Materials chosen should integrate with the existing and surrounding buildings, so as to create and enhance the strong visual character which defines the area.

Consideration of Proposals Affecting Shopfronts in Long Walk

There is greater scope in this area for innovation in design and materials used in the Long Walk than in other parts of the town centre. Therefore, the council will encourage high quality, modern designs.

Removal

Where a shopfront is of minimal architectural merit, it may be desirable to remove it to allow for new development. Where this is permissible, any replacement development should take cognisance of the established proportions, building heights and lines, colour and materials.

Materials

Locally sourced lighting and signage are preferable and efforts should be made to source these where possible. Materials should integrate with the established styles in neighbouring buildings. However, exceptions may be made for certain landmark sites where high quality designs warrant the use of different materials.

For further information regarding works to shopfronts in Dundalk, please contact:

Planning Section
 Dundalk Town Council
 Crowe St
 Dundalk
 Tel: (042) 9332276

