



# Ballymoney Town Centre

## 2020 Masterplan Review

Executive Summary

## The Brief

The Department for Communities (DfC) appointed Arup to undertake a review of the 2014 Ballymoney Town Centre Masterplan to determine if the Key Concepts and regeneration priorities are still relevant and achievable by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CCGBC) and the DfC going forward.

## The Aims of the Masterplan Review

The aims of this review are to:

- 1 Undertake consultation with selected key stakeholders from across the private and public sector to gather information relevant to the review of the 2014 Masterplan.
- 2 Conduct a comprehensive review of the 2014 Masterplan to determine if proposals in the Masterplan are still relevant or if new priorities have emerged.
- 3 Review the priority ratings and time scales of the proposals in the previous Action Plan and along with any new priorities, supply commentary to support which proposals would have the most significant regeneration impact for Ballymoney and an assessment on their deliverability.

## Consultation with key stakeholders

The following groups were engaged through workshop sessions and 1:1 meetings. It was considered these groups were representative of the needs of the local community and businesses in Ballymoney:

- Officers from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
- Department for Communities
- Department for Infrastructure
- Translink
- Causeway Chamber of Commerce
- Ballymoney Chamber of Commerce / Ballymoney Regeneration Company
- Local Councillors
- Landowners of key sites
- Northern Regional College
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive

In terms of the feedback received:

- **2014 Vision:** General agreement that the vision remained relevant.
- **2014 Regeneration Objectives:** Stakeholders 'fully agree' and 'generally agree' with four of the five objectives. The exception being the 'provision of vital services for the tourist and capitalising on the towns proximity to the Causeway Coast'.
- **2014 Key Components:** General agreement with the Key Components.

# Masterplan Review Vision

A feedback form was provided to those who attended the Stakeholder Engagement Workshop in May 2019, this asked those in attendance the extent to which they 'fully agree' to 'fully disagree' with: the 2014 Masterplan Vision, each of the five Regeneration Objectives and each of the six Key Component proposals.

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- 2014 Key Components: General agreement with the Key Components.

Stakeholders also had the opportunity to feedback on Actions associated with the Key Components and initial thoughts on what would be considered the main drivers of change for Ballymoney in 2020.

This section reflects the outcome of the analysis of the town centre and its context as well as the main points of feedback from the stakeholder engagement undertaken.

## Delivering The Vision

2014

VISION

2020

DELIVERING THE VISION

'Ballymoney will be a welcoming and competitive town that will capitalise on its strong geographical location, rich cultural and historical heritage and distinctive architecture. The town centre will evolve to provide a contemporary mix of uses to enhance the shopping experience, create civic space and encourage a thriving evening economy'

The Vision continues to remain relevant with a renewed emphasis on encouraging diverse uses within the town centre to create a unique experience for visitors and local users.

The Vision can be delivered by focusing on specific and achievable regeneration proposals set out in the Masterplan which will facilitate and promote an attractive town centre environment.

1

A welcoming and competitive town that will capitalise on its strong geographical location, rich cultural and historical heritage and distinctive architecture.

Build on the success of the Revitalisation scheme to upgrade business frontages and the appearance of the town centre streetscapes to reinforce the strong identity of Ballymoney.

2

The town centre will evolve to provide a contemporary mix of uses to enhance the shopping experience.

As the traditional, retail focus model of towns continues to evolve, with emphasis on the requirement to secure and attract a variety of uses, with an emphasis on complementary uses: town centre living, leisure, arts, markets, events and places to eat and drink.

3

The town centre will evolve to create a civic space.

The capacity to accommodate public events and celebrations as well as somewhere to encourage people to dwell and spend time remains a priority. High Street, Castlecroft Square and the Linenhall Quarter site have been identified as areas for a new civic space.

4

The town centre will encourage a thriving evening economy.

This should be broader to relate to a coordinated schedule of events and above all, the variety and differentiation of a town centre experience in making people want to visit the town centre.

## Masterplan Review Objectives

Stakeholder engagement confirmed that generally, the 2014 Objectives were fully agreed, including the need for better pedestrian and vehicle connections to improve movement and the benefits developing key 'opportunity sites' will bring.

Objective three 'provide vital services for the tourist and capitalise on its proximity to the Causeway Coast' was cited by some of those engaged as not being a high priority. However, this Objective has been retained due to the increase in tourism experienced in the Causeway Coast area and the future opportunity that exists for Ballymoney to capitalise on this growing industry if managed correctly.

High quality town centre living has been identified by stakeholders as a new Objective for Ballymoney. It was agreed this was important to strengthen the vitality of the town centre.

## Renewing The Objectives



# Key Components

*A review of the 2014 Masterplan's 'Key Component' proposals was undertaken to understand how changes/ development within Ballymoney in the intervening period may have impacted these, specifically if key projects needed to be added, retained or removed.*

## **KC1. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS AND RE-CONFIGURATION OF THE ROAD SPACE**

**Going Forward:** Comprehensive public realm improvements focused on Main Street, High Street, Charlotte Street and Church Street. Interventions are required to address road safety concerns on Charlotte Street as well as improving movement and linkages between main street and western and eastern quarters, creating a safe and welcoming environment for pedestrians.

## **KC2. FINDING A LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT SOLUTION FOR THE LINENHALL QUARTER OPPORTUNITY SITE**

**Going Forward:** Comprehensive development of Linenhall Street site has the potential to act as a catalyst for investment in Ballymoney. Potential for meanwhile uses including start-up business units on the Linenhall Street site was highlighted as an opportunity.

## **KC3. IDENTIFYING ACCEPTABLE AND VIABLE PROPOSALS FOR THE BACKLANDS**

**Going Forward:** New road proposed in eastern quarter is not to be taken forward. It is not feasible and given the level changes would impact on the proposed development plots and bowling green. Opportunities exist to utilise Main Street property 'yards/backlands' for new uses and enhance pedestrian linkages to proposed development plots.

## **KC4. TESTING CURRENT ASSUMPTIONS AND DEVISING A 'BEST-FIT' SCHEME FOR CASTLECROFT**

**Going Forward:** Public realm focussed proposals in Castlecroft remain essential to the connection of Main Street to the Western Quarter. Diverse/ novel events planned to encourage the animation of the streetscape have been identified as an opportunity to increase footfall in the town centre.

## **KC5. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE (ALL MODES, BUT FOCUSED ON BUS AND TRAIN)**

**Going Forward:** A viable transport solution consisting of both short and long term interventions including Seymour Street becoming one-way and a new link road. The interventions were identified as critical to alleviating traffic congestion at the Meeting House Street junction and improving connections between Riverside Park, Train Station and Town Centre.

## **KC6. THE CREATION OF A NEW CIVIC SPACE ON HIGH STREET**

**Going Forward:** The creation of a new civic space remains a priority for the town centre. The intervention was identified as an opportunity to attract restaurants, cafés and bars to utilise the space. The proposal was highlighted as being important to enhancing the overall vibrancy of the town and improving the evening economy.

# Timeline





# The Opportunities

*Set out below are the opportunities that the Masterplan proposals can be developed on.*

1

**Public Realm Enhancements** | Improve the pedestrian environment and the attractiveness of the town centre by enhancing movement throughout the town centre. Interventions such as traffic calming, reallocation of space and differentiation of appropriate materials can carefully curate a public realm that promotes pedestrian priority and movement while reflecting the street character and reinforcing key routes.

2

**Northern Regional College Redevelopment** | The planned closure of the NRC campus could significantly change the dynamics of the town centre. Although outside the town centre boundary the former use was a considerable trip generator attracting footfall to the town. Redevelopment of the site has the potential to be a catalyst in the regeneration of this part of the town centre.

3

**Linkages Project** | High quality, safe and attractive pedestrian linkages are vital to a well- connected and permeable town centre. A key opportunity includes penetrating through to key opportunity sites to enhance connectivity from Main Street. The installation of temporary and permanent artwork, creative lighting and paving improvements could transform and animate existing alleyways. New linkages would integrate future backland developments with the town centre and enhance the overall town centre experience.

4

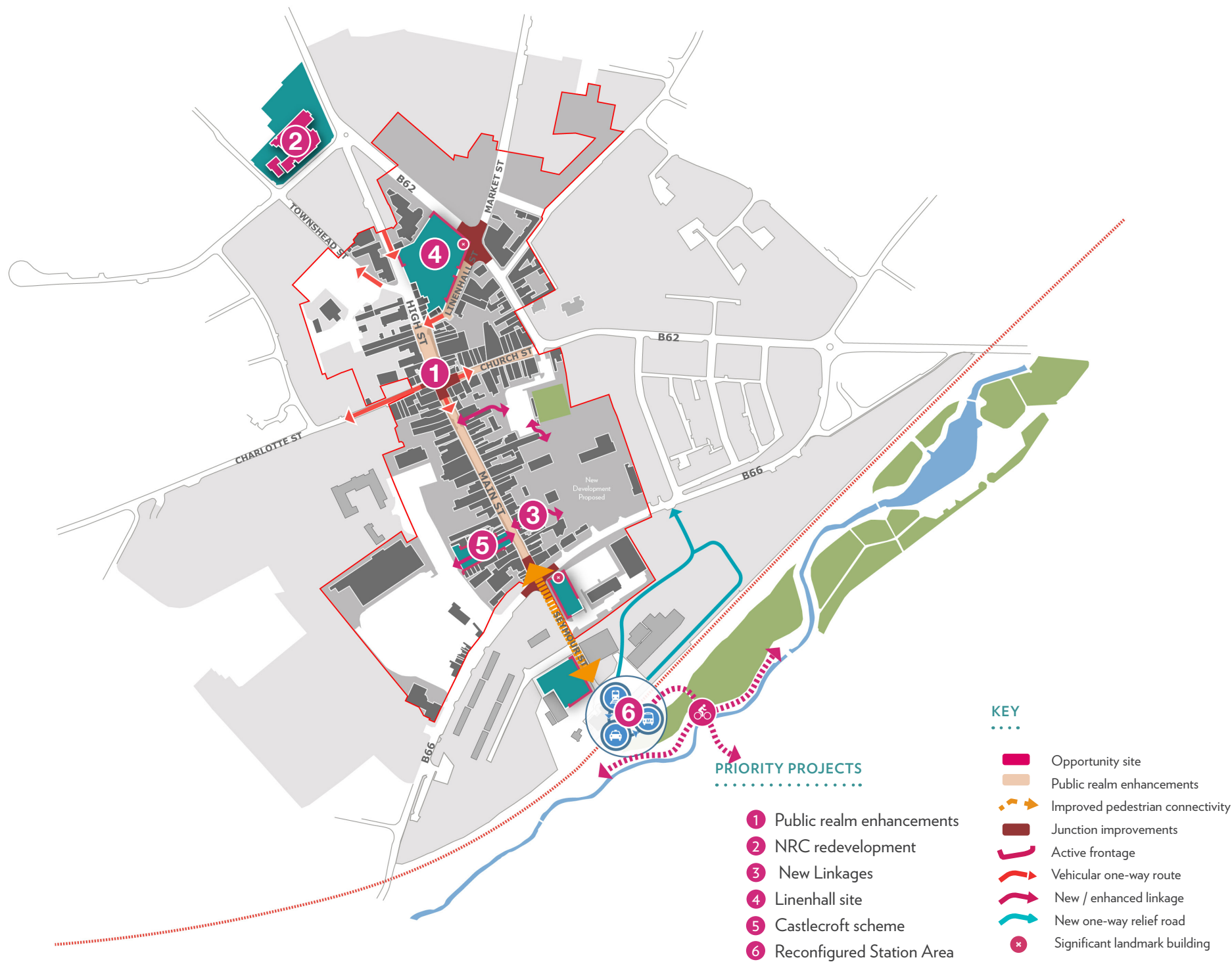
**Linenhall Site Redevelopment** | The demolition of buildings on the Linenhall site has left a large cleared site in the Ballymoney urban fabric. A flexible framework with temporary interventions would programme the space until the future use of the site is decided. Such interventions open up opportunities to appreciate the wider needs for public civic space, start-up business incubators and pop-up food and beverage markets while remaining flexible to respond to future changes in use.

5

**Castlecroft Scheme** | The creation of a high quality public space offers the opportunity to provide a place for bringing life and vitality to the town. Rediscovering Castlecroft Square as a reinvigorated pedestrian space at the heart of the town centre supported by a 'calendar of events' has the potential to enrich, enliven and animate the space. Providing a comfortable environment supportive of meeting, socialising and interacting can reclaim a sense of place and provide an inviting corridor linking Tesco, Home Bargains and Main Street.

6

**Train Station** | Rethinking the nature and character of the space around the train station is a key opportunity in announcing the town centre to visitors. Potential exists to enhance the arrival experience through a reconfigured station area. Creating a high quality, well-lit and activated route along the length of Seymour Street would clearly identify and strengthen the link between the station and the town. Make it attractive to walk, cycle or take the bus can deliver a memorable gateway, providing a strong first and last impression.





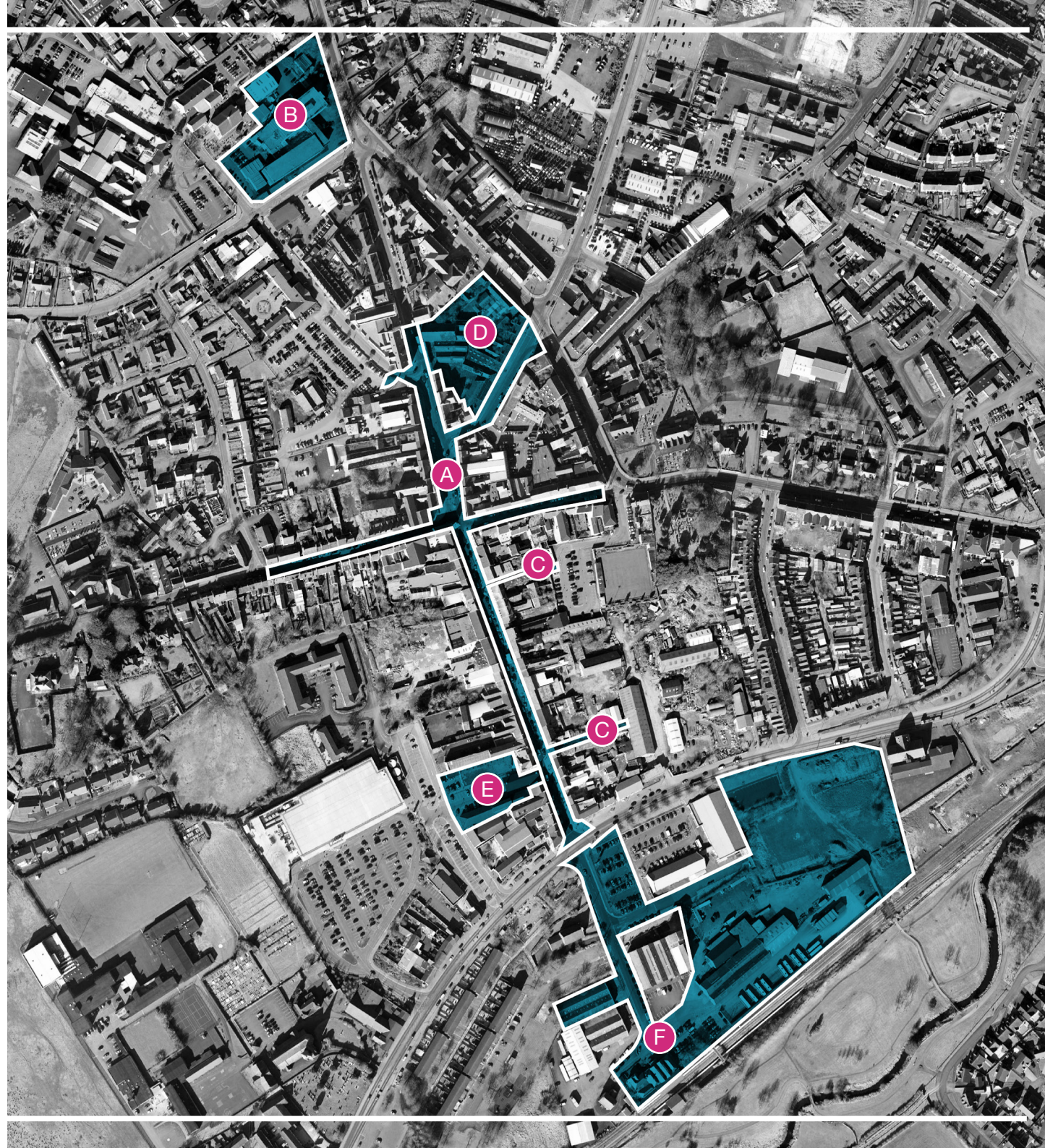
## Areas of Change

The Masterplan Review identified several potential projects throughout the town centre. These projects have been informed through earlier engagement on the 2014 masterplan.

For each site, a potential future or temporary use has been identified alongside key interventions and examples of best practice.

The identified sites for these projects are:

- A** Main Street/ High Street Public Realm
- B** NRC Site
- C** New Linkages
- D** Linenhall Quarter Site
- E** Castlecroft Square
- F** Train Station / Seymour Street





A

## Public Realm: Re-animating the Town Centre

The project provides a single overarching public realm enhancement scheme to ensure consistency of interventions. Due to the coverage, it is envisaged works will be carried out via a phased approach reflecting the hierarchy, importance and opportunities offered by each street.

The priority approach is considered as:

- High Street and Main Street are recognised as being the main priority to receive enhancements and would provide significant enhancement to the town centre.
- Charlotte Street and Church Street is a secondary priority.
- Linenhall Street is a tertiary priority.



B

## NRC Site: Re-utilising a Key Asset

The opening of new facilities in Coleraine and Ballymena will result in the Ballymoney Campus being surplus to the NRC requirements when their new Campus in Coleraine opens. The relocation of educational facilities from Ballymoney whilst unfortunate, represents an opportunity for the public sector to lead on devising a plan for the future use for the site, thereby putting in place a plan for a quick disposal and redevelopment of the site that can contribute to Ballymoney town centre

Prior to leaving the site, the NRC will follow Land Property Services (LPS) guidance regarding disposal of surplus land and property. All stakeholders, including the NRC, are very keen to avoid dereliction of the facilities upon decant. The 0.86 hectare (2.11 acre) site has significant potential to encourage viable future uses that will be critical in contributing to the regeneration objectives of the town centre.

C

## Linkages Project: Connecting to the Backlands

Safe and attractive pedestrian linkages are vital to the overall movement and access within the town centre. The project provides an opportunity to enhance east-west connectivity linking Main Street to lands located to the east. A number of enhancements are proposed for an existing alleyway while an opportunity exists to create a new linkage to a backlands development site.

Enhancements to the towns secondary movement network of alleyways has been identified as a quick win opportunity. Transforming Taggart Mews alleyway into a safe, attractive and comfortable route would encourage visitors to utilise Church Street Car Park and contribute to the overall experience for residents and visitors alike.

In addition to enhancements, the creation of stronger pedestrian linkages possibly through an entry located at Imperial Bar would integrate any future developments on the eastern backlands with the town centre. Increased permeability and connectivity between these destinations would increase footfall for local businesses.



D

## Linenhall Quarter: Maximising the Potential

The Linenhall Quarter has the ability to enrich, enliven and animate its surrounding environment. Prior to full development of the site, temporary and meanwhile uses offer opportunities to initiate activity and shape positive change.

Recognising the timescales to bring forward comprehensive redevelopment proposals of the site temporary and meanwhile uses could provide an early win by injecting a wide range of uses and activities within the town centre to enhance and diversify the local economy.

The project would deliver an attraction unique to Ballymoney. The variety and alternative nature of the proposals could be a catalyst in marketing the town and attracting a wider catchment of visitors.



## Movement and Access: Maximising Capacity and Efficiency

The current road network is perceived as heavily congested, under pressure at peak hours of the day and contributing to unnecessary traffic through the town centre. The current layout of the road network encourages vehicular movement through as opposed to around the town centre.

A series of interventions have the potential to improve the efficiency of the network, ease traffic congestion and improve the pedestrian environment. Two options offer potential opportunities that could provide potential solutions.

**Minor Improvements:** The potential to alleviate traffic congestion through minor changes in the existing network is the most feasible and deliverable in the short-term. A programme of coordinated interventions range from upgraded/revised traffic signals, junction re-design and the removal of roundabouts.

**Major Infrastructure:** An aspirational approach to alleviate traffic congestion in Ballymoney, particularly on Meeting House Street, would be a comprehensive remodelling of the network to include a southern bypass. A bypass would have the potential to reduce and redirect traffic that would otherwise make unnecessary journeys through Ballymoney town centre.



## Action Plan Framework

The Action Plan is one of the most vital parts of the Review, as it provides a framework for taking forward regeneration projects. These actions have been drawn up to contribute positively to the regeneration objectives of Ballymoney and are a direct result of stakeholder engagement.

As a non-statutory document, this masterplan should be used to inform planning and design decisions prior to the planning application stage. Responsibility lies with all key stakeholders to promote such use of the Masterplan Review, leading through example and by proactive outreach to key individuals and organisations. The delivery of the projects identified in the refresh of the Action Plan will require a dedicated resource, if available, with the requisite skills and experience to help drive, deliver and implement the range of actions identified in the Masterplan. The projects have been categorised within a series of key moves that underpin the 2020 Masterplan Review.