

# DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



### EVIDENCE BASE EVB 7

#### CITY & TOWN CENTRES

(Updated May 2017)

This Document is one in a series, which builds up to form the 'evidence base' that informs the preparation of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

It comprises initial Workshop Paper(s) on this Planning topic that were presented to Council Members during 2016 / 2017, which have been subject to Member discussion and input, before further discussion at the Planning Committee (LDP) and in turn feeding into the LDP Preferred Options Paper (POP) and then the Plan Strategy (PS) and eventually the Local Policies Plan (LPP) which together forms the LDP.

Therefore, the afore-mentioned evidence base will be continually updated, to additionally include the latest information, input from public engagement, statutory consultees, stakeholder groups, Sustainability Appraisal and from other Departments within the Council, including Community Planning.

The Evidence Base is published as a 'supporting document' in accordance with Article 10(a) and 15(a) of the Planning (LDP) Regulations (NI) 2015.



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**Paper 2: City and Town Centres – Designations and Policies in the LDP**

**Purpose of Paper:** The purpose of this report is to advise Members on the following: an overview of the legislation / policy on how Derry city centre and Strabane town centre as well as Castlederg, Sion Mills and Newtownstewart should be considered in the LDP; a summary of the current characteristics of each centre and the particular issues affecting them; then to consider how these can affect our LDP designations, zonings, proposals and policies to promote them. Members' input is invited.

**Content:** The paper provides information on:-

- (i) The regional policy context in place to enhance and protect our city and town centres;
- (ii) A summary of town centre policies within current area plans and master plans; and
- (iii) A brief overview of town centre best practice in NI;
- (iv) An overview of the current issues facing Derry city and Strabane town centre and the other towns, and the scope to address these in the new LDP.

**Conclusion:** Councillors should note the contents of this paper which will assist the Council in setting clearly defined aims and objectives for Derry city centre and Strabane town centre as well as the other smaller towns. It will consider how the LDP can strategically meet the planning needs of these centres by defining their limits, policy areas, opportunity sites and policies to manage development therein.

## 1.0 Introduction to Paper

- 1.1 This Paper is one in a series, building up the ‘evidence base’ that will inform the preparation of the Local Development Plan (LDP). The LDP will have a new approach to working with stakeholders to enhance the vibrancy of our city / town centres so that they can better meet the economic and physical, as well as social and environmental, requirements of our District.
- 1.2 The discussion and input from Council Members at Workshop 5 will then feed into a forthcoming ‘Options’ Paper on these matters to the Planning Committee (LDP) - for decision, which will in turn feed into the LDP Preferred Options Paper (POP) which is due out in Spring 2017.
- 1.3 The information presented in this paper will assist the Council in developing an informed and innovative approach to setting clearly defined aims and objectives for Derry city centre and Strabane town centre as well as other smaller towns. Therefore the primary focus of this paper will be on the general health and status of Derry city and Strabane town centre and an overview of Castledearg, Newtownstewart and Sion Mills. The paper involves a review of policy and legislation, including the Derry Area Plan 2011, Strabane Area Plan 2001, The One Plan, Ebrington Development Framework, Fort George, Derry/Londonderry Demand Analysis, Riverside Masterplan, the Strabane Masterplan Baseline Report (2010) and the Strabane Town Centre Masterplan. Furthermore, the findings are summarised from a comprehensive review of existing town centres in Northern Ireland carried out by consultants GL Hearn on behalf of the DOE Planning in 2014.
- 1.4 It should be noted that this paper relates to Derry City and the 4 existing towns designated in the respective Area Plans. Should the LDP decide on a new hierarchy, similar considerations would apply to any new towns.
- 1.5 This paper will provide the evidence base information to assist members and officials in considering how the LDP can strategically meet the planning needs of these centres by identifying their current strengths and weaknesses. This will enable Members to begin to:
  - Have an understanding of the social importance/function of the town centre.
  - Formulate possible planning policies to introduce the orderly and sustainable development in Derry city and Strabane town centres particularly, as well as Castledearg, Sion Mills and Newtownstewart.
  - Consider any preferred approaches to encouraging retail, office, social, community and leisure development, to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of our town centres.

## 2.0 Legislation and Regional Policies for Town Centres and the LDP

### Regional Planning Policy

- 2.1 The regional policy context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 which presents regional guidance under three sustainable development themes - economy, society and environment. The RDS defines the North West as being the council districts of Derry and Strabane, extending into Donegal. It identifies Derry as the Principal city within the North West and Strabane as a Main Hub, as well as policies to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside.
- 2.2 **SFG6: Develop a Strong North West.** This guidance identifies Derry/Londonderry as being well suited to provide a regional level of service to much of western Northern Ireland and a substantial part of County Donegal. It also states that given its periphery location, transport, energy and telecommunication connections are important to the economic and social fabric of the region. This policy also sets out to enhance the role of Strabane, which performs an important role in providing services to local communities.
- 2.3 **SFG7: Strengthen the role of Londonderry as the Principal City for the North West.** This Spatial Framework Guidance is relevant to Derry. Securing a strong and vibrant city is important to the economic and social wellbeing of the North West. The physical transformation of this historic walled city to reflect its economic status and profile will enhance its urban character and promote neighbourhood recovery. The creation of imaginative new housing, the management of parks and open spaces and making streets safe and attractive will encourage the regeneration of the city;
- *Continue to regenerate the city of Londonderry.* The City should be the focus for administration, shopping, commerce, specialised services, cultural amenities and tourism within the North West. Key locations have been identified for regeneration in the 'One Plan'. Sites such as the former security bases of Ebrington and Fort George will add some 17 hectares of development land to the city's land stock and provide a major opportunity for boosting economic development and regeneration of the area.
- 2.4 Derry/Londonderry sits naturally as the core settlement and regional gateway city for the North West. As the Principal city of the North West, with a University, it is a key cross-border and international gateway providing access by road, rail and sea to the North West region.
- 2.5 The RDS recognises the importance of Strabane as a Main Hub and has the potential to cluster with Derry as part of a North West region which stretches cross-border to Letterkenny. Strabane is strategically located and will benefit from the improvement of the A5 Corridor and proximity to the Donegal border.

2.6 The RDS 2035 states that those places outside Principal cities, and the Main and Local Hubs are identified as constituting the rural area.

2.7 **Policy SFG 13: Sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside** supports the role of and function of rural settlements and accessibility to services. A strong network of smaller towns supported by villages to sustain and service the rural community. A sustainable approach to further development will be important to ensure that growth does not exceed the capacity of the environment or essential infrastructure expected for modern living. The RDS sets out to:

- Establish the role of multifunctional town centres;
- Connect rural and urban areas;
- Revitalise small towns and villages;
- Facilitate the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations; and,
- Encourage sustainable and sensitive development.

## 2.8 Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and the LDP

2.9 The main relevant policy and guidance document about city/town centres is the SPPS.

2.10 The SPPS (published in final form by the DOE (now DFI) in September 2015) explains the new Development Plan and Development Management system requirements and consolidates the existing suite of strategic subject planning policies into a single document. In addition, it also brings forward strategic planning policies on town centres and retailing thus replacing PPS5.

2.11 The aim of the SPPS is to support and sustain vibrant town centres across Northern Ireland through the promotion of established town centres as the appropriate first choice location for retailing and other complementary functions consistent with the RDS.

2.12 The SPPS states that planning authorities must adopt a ‘town centre first’ approach for retail and town centre uses. In preparing LDPs, councils must undertake an assessment of the need or capacity for retail and other main town centre uses across the plan area (refer to Retailing paper). Councils must also prepare town centre health checks and regularly review these at least once every 5 years.

2.13 LDP’s should include a strategy for town centres and retailing and contain appropriate policies and proposals that must promote town centres first for retail and other main town centre uses.

2.14 Furthermore, the SPPS sets out that Planning authorities should retain and consolidate existing district and local centres as a focus for local everyday

shopping, and ensure their role is complementary to the role and function of the town centre. In these centres, extensions should only be permitted where the applicant has demonstrated that no adverse impact will result on town centres in the catchment.

2.15 LDPs should also:

- define a network and hierarchy of centres – city/town, district and local centres, acknowledging the role and function of rural centres;
- define the spatial extent of town centres and the primary retail core;
- set out appropriate policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in the hierarchy of centres and other locations, and the factors that will be taken into account for decision taking;
- provide for a diverse offer and mix of uses, which reflect local circumstances; and
- allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and form of retail, and other town centre uses.

2.16 A sequential test should be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date LDP. Where it is established that an alternative sequentially preferable site or sites exist within a proposal's whole catchment, an application which proposes development on a less sequentially preferred site should be refused.

2.17 Planning authorities will require applications for main town centre uses to be considered in the following order of preference (and consider all of the proposal's catchment):

- Primary retail core;
- Town centres;
- Edge-of-centre; and
- Out-of-centre locations, only where sites are accessible by a choice of good public transport modes.

2.18 A town centre health check is an important tool to establish the baseline evidence for the LDP.

### **Marine Consideration**

2.19 In recent years, legislation has been introduced to ensure that for the first time marine activities and resources within our marine waters are planned and managed in a coherent manner. The following three interlocking pieces of legislation have been introduced to help deliver the UK vision of having “clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas”:

- UK Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009
- UK Marine Strategy Regulations 2010
- The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013

- 2.20 In addition, the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) 2011 is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment. Of particular relevance, is the legislative requirement that all public authorities taking authorisation or enforcement decisions that affect or might affect the UK marine area to do so in accordance with the MPS unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise. Accordingly, in future, Council will not only have those legal implications in relation to terrestrial planning but also for marine matters as well.
- 2.21 Therefore, any proposals or policies for city/town centres that could affect the coastal areas or settlements should be an LDP consideration.

## 2.22 **Regional Planning Policy Statements**

### **Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS 5) Retailing and Town centres**

- 2.23 Published in June 1996, PPS 5 set out the Department's Planning Policy for Retailing and Town Centres. It took precedence over existing development plans, in relation to retail planning policy and policies for town, district and local centres. This document was subsequently replaced by the publication of the SPPS in September 2015. However it is still of some value in so far as it provided greater detail and guidance on retailing and town centres than is possible in the SPPS.

### **Planning Policy Statement 13: Transportation and Land Use**

- 2.24 PPS13 provides the context for the balancing of transportation modes and the reduction in the dominance of car travel against other modes of transport; particularly public transport. The need to reduce the dominance of the physical infrastructure by the car is vital. However in locations such as Strabane where the need to travel to other settlements for employment, services and products is critical, a balanced and measured reduction is necessary. PPS13 recommends the development of lands in sequence starting with those which can most easily be linked to public transport networks. The policy also recommends that higher density and mixed use developments should be focused in locations benefitting from high accessibility to public transport facilities.

### **Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning and Flood Risk**

- 2.25 With the River Mourne's history of flooding and the devastation caused to Strabane's town centre, PPS15 will be critical in determining the future expansion of the town and for any developments which are located along the river's edge. A great deal of land in Strabane town centre is within the flood plain and the banks of the river along Main Street are also within the flood plain. This will have implications for the form and type of development which can be undertaken.



- 2.26 Derry's Commercial Core and Central Area are located on both sides of the River Foyle. Although flood defences are in place, flooding and coastal flooding remain a consideration in future designations and development in proximity to the river.

### 3.0 Existing Plans and Designations in the District

#### Derry Area Plan (DAP) 2011

- 3.1 Section 8 of the Plan related specifically to commerce and stated that Derry/Londonderry is the principal retailing centre for the City Council Area and for the neighbouring areas of Limavady and Strabane and for parts of Donegal with the provision of major facilities such as Foyleside, Richmond and Quayside Centres. Retailing outside the central area was to be concentrated in District Centres at Lisnagelvin, Northside, Springtown and Rath Mor.
- 3.2 **Policy COM1 Role of the Commercial Core** advised that the Department would seek to strengthen and consolidate the Commercial Core of the city as the principal focus for shopping in the district.
- 3.3 In conjunction with **Section 8: Commerce, Proposal CA1** designated a Central Area. It set out the development strategy for the 'heart of the city' which covered a large area from Pennyburn Roundabout to the Craigavon Bridge, extending west to incorporate the Northland Road, Creggan Road up to Rosemount Avenue including Brooke Park, Barrack Street and Abercorn Road and fully encompasses the city walls. The Central Area extends across the Craigavon Bridge to include part of the Victoria Road, Spencer Road up to and incorporating St Columbs Park and east to include the Glendermott Road up to the Rosstown Road. (Refer to Appendix 3a.)
- 3.4 Within the Central Area, the Commercial Core is also designated and characterized by a concentration of retail and office facilities on both banks of the Foyle. **Proposal CA 2 The Commercial Core** designated that favourable consideration will be given to proposals for retail shops, local services and office uses which consolidate the function of the traditional commercial core. The Commercial Core covers a smaller area which extends from Queens Quay Roundabout in the north to the Foyle Railway station toward the south on the cityside and includes Clarendon Street, Great James street, Waterloo Street, Sackville Street and part of Bishop Street (within) and extends across the River Foyle to the Waterside and including part of Victoria Road, Spencer Road and Duke Street as far north as the Broadcasting Station adjacent to the train station. Ebrington is not included within the commercial core.
- 3.5 **Proposal CA 3 Primary Retail Frontages** defined the frontages of the following streets as Primary Retail Frontage:
- Strand Road,
  - Waterloo Place,
  - William Street,
  - Waterloo Street,
  - Shipquay Street,

- Butcher Street,
  - The Diamond,
  - Ferryquay Street,
  - Bishop Street, within (The Diamond to London Street / Society Street),
  - Foyle Street, and
  - Carlisle Road.
- 3.6 Changes to non-retail commercial uses such as trade and offices were to be discouraged where there would be a significant loss of retail floor space, a clustering of non-retail uses is created or the overall area is tending to be dominated by non-retail uses.
- 3.7 Secondary shopping areas within the Commercial Core, defined as the remaining streets, were to be for local services, offices and other uses at street level, proposals to be considered on merit.
- 3.8 **Proposal CA 4 Office Development** designated Clarendon Street as an Office Development Area within the Central Area. Dacre Terrace and Ebrington Terrace (Waterside) are also designated areas.
- 3.9 **Policy CA 1 Office Development in Vacant Property** encouraged the re-use of vacant property above street level within the Commercial Core for office and business purposes.
- 3.10 Office development would be acceptable within the Commercial Core as would change of use proposals from housing to offices within the defined areas. Furthermore **Policy CA 2 Location of New Build Office Development** states that new build offices would not normally be approved outside the Commercial Core to restrict dispersion of office jobs away from the Commercial Core.
- 3.11 The Derry Area Plan also contained policy on town centre housing (Proposal CA5, and Policies CA3 and CA4) which bolstered existing housing within the Central Area, particularly at first floor level. Housing would bring about an increase in the permanent population living and contributing to the vitality and attractiveness of the Central Area.
- 3.12 The Plan designated Redevelopment Areas and Opportunity Sites within the Central Area. They differ only in so far as the former represents significant tracts of land whereas Opportunity Sites are smaller in scale.
- 3.13 The Plan defined 3 Redevelopment areas at Meadowbank, McFarland Quay and Queens Quay. Below is a table summarising the development history of each Redevelopment Area. A comprehensive table detailing the full development history can be read in Appendix 8.

Area Plan Designation	Status
Redevelopment Area (McFarland Quay/Strand Rd adjacent to Fort George)	Developed
Redevelopment Area (opp Aberfoyle Terrace and north of Council Building, south of Rockmills, Strand Road)	Developed
Redevelopment Area (Queens Quay)	Partially developed, in poor condition. Potential for re- designation.

Table 1: Development for the Redevelopment Areas in Derry Central Area

3.14 The below table summarizes the development history of the identified Opportunity Sites within the Central Area. 12 sites were designated, 7 of which remain undeveloped. (See Appendix 3a for central area map)

Area Plan Designation :Opportunity sites	Development History
Rock Terrace	Undeveloped
Rear of Clyde Street/Queen Street (preferred use Housing)	Undeveloped
Rear of Nos4-16 Strand Road and adjacent North Police Court Street	Undeveloped
NewMarket Street (preferred use Civic)	Developed - Millennium Forum
Foyle street adjacent to Foyleside	Developed - Debenhams
Foyle Embankment	Developed - Tourist Information Centre
Palace street	Undeveloped Potential public realm future development
Rear of Bishop Street Within	Undeveloped
Bishop Street Without	Developed - Sheltered Housing
Dunfield Terrace	Undeveloped- Approval for housing A/2012/0391/F: 20no split level units.
Dungiven Road	Developed- Shepherds Glen Housing development
St Columbs Road	Undeveloped- car park

Table 2 Development of Opportunity Sites in Derry Central Area

3.15 The Central Area has the greatest concentration of Civic and Education Uses. **Proposal CA6** defines Civic and Education Uses within the Central Area and

includes, for example, The Guildhall, Council Offices, The Ulster University, both Cathedrals, other churches and educational establishments.

- 3.16 **Proposal CA7 Civic and Education Precinct** defines an area between Rock Road and Asylum Road as a Civic and Educational precinct. This area incorporates the Magee Campus of the Ulster University, the Foyle Arts Centre and North West Regional College.
- 3.17 The Central Area contains two extensive urban parks, Brooke Park and St Columbs Park. Development within these areas will be subject to **Policy R1 Protection of Zoned Recreation and Open Spaces Areas**. Furthermore, Brooke Park is included within the Departments (DFI) Register of Historic Gardens, Parks and Demesnes and development proposal here must also satisfy **Policy BE 10**.
- 3.18 Strabane Area Plan 1986-2001**
- 3.19 A general objective of the Plan for the town centre was to retain and consolidate the existing commercial core and to facilitate the provision of a wide range of facilities by encouraging new development and stimulating commercial activity.
- 3.20 The Plan designated an extensive town centre that extends north from the River Mourne to Park Road and across Canal Street to the Derry Road incorporating Asda, Lesley Retail Park and the Pavillion Retail Park. The town centre boundary extends east from the bypass to Newtown Place and Newtown Street and incorporates Church Street, The Bowling Green and Barrack Street and Main Street. (see Appendix 4)
- 3.21 Abercorn Square is traditionally accepted as the focal point of the town centre from which the principal shopping streets radiate. Abercorn Square, Castle Street, Market Street, Main Street and the eastern end of Railway Street are the principal shopping areas while the remainder of Railway Street, Butcher Street, Castle Place and the central part of Main Street have a lesser though developing retail significance. These latter areas are typified by a mix of uses including retail, office, services, industrial and residential uses which serve to compliment the main shopping area.
- 3.22 Primary Shop Frontage was designated within the town centre along much of Railway Street, Abercorn Square, Main Street, Castle Place, Market Street and Butcher Street.
- 3.23 The policies and proposals in relation to the town centre are governed by the following objectives:
- To retain and consolidate the existing commercial core and to facilitate the provision of a wide range of facilities by encouraging new development and stimulating commercial activity.
  - To improve access to and movement within the town centre for pedestrians and vehicles.
  - To ensure the provision of adequate and properly distributed public car parking facilities.
  - To maintain, enhance and improve town centre buildings, streets and spaces.

- To encourage town centre housing developments as a means of improving the vitality of the central area.
- 3.24 The policies and proposals in terms of the principal activities within the town centre (shopping and commerce) are summarised as the following:
- New shopping development will be concentrated within the defined town centre to support the continued viability of the central shopping core, except in situations where small local shops are required to serve local need.
  - Large scale retail development will not be acceptable outside the defined town centre.
  - Encourage the redevelopment of vacant sites and the refurbishment of run down premises.
  - All new development and refurbishment of existing premises shall be carried out to a high standards of design.
- 3.25 Offices are spread throughout the town centre and nowhere are they a predominant land use. Existing provision varies from upper floors of retail outlets to converted properties and to purpose built relatively modern buildings such as County Buildings on Barrack Street. The town centre was to continue to be an important office location and most locations within it will likely be acceptable for change of use, subject to shopping and housing policies.
- 3.26 Ground floor conversions from commercial or retail along principal shopping streets was to be discouraged.
- 3.27 Plan objectives for office and public buildings can be summarised as:
- New office development and office conversions will be acceptable in most town centre locations subject to shopping and housing policies.
  - Office conversion will not normally be acceptable in housing policy areas.
  - Encourage the refurbishment of premises in Bowling Green for office use.
  - New office development and conversions will be expected to meet high standards of design.
- 3.28 Land suitable for mixed business use were identified to the east, west and north of Dock Street (1.1ha) and at the Western end of Railway Street (2.2 ha). Such uses include light industry, small started units, storage, offices or some specific retail uses.
- 3.29 The Strabane Area Plan recognises the need to provide a range of housing choice within the town centre by retaining the existing housing stock and improving its general environment and by identifying suitable sites for new housing.
- 3.30 The plan designated 11 Opportunity Sites within the town centre. The table below summarizes the current development states of these opportunity sites.

Site Number	Location	Plan Proposal	Current Status
1	Butcher Street	Commercial use	Developed, commercial unit
2	Main Street	Retail and office use	Commercial uses and apartments.
3	24 and 26 Main Street	Retail, office or residential uses	Shop built and apartments.
4	Main Street/Bridge Street	Commercial use	Retail, offices and flats developed
5	Main Street adj to Northern Bank	Commercial use	Shops and offices developed
6	Castle Street	Civic centre or retail	Shops developed
7	Southern side of Railway Street	Commercial use	Retail units including supermarket
8	Southern side to Railway Street	Retail, offices, retail services	Public car park
9	Western end of Railway Street	Service, retail or office use	Currently used as car sales and showroom. Planning permission granted 2016 for a 'Mc Donalds'
10	Northern side of Railway Street (Cattle Market)	Retail facility	Developed as library/resource centre and Arts Centre. Still a vacant portion to west side and planning permission for office building.
11	South of Newtown Lane	Town centre housing	Currently used as Builder's storage facility

Table 3: Development of Opportunity Sites in Strabane town centre.

### 3.31 Strabane Local Towns

#### Castleberg

- 3.32 The Strabane Area Plan set out the direction for development within the town of Castleberg. Castleberg is defined as a Local Town in the SAP.
- 3.33 The Plan designated a compact town centre for Castleberg. The town centre extends northward from the river to include Main Street, part of Lower Strabane Road, Meeting House Lane, The Diamond, William Street, John Street, High Street, Priests Lane and Fergusons Crescent, and areas of developed, under-developed and undeveloped back land to the rear.

- 3.34 Within the town centre, there is a wide range of retail, commercial and service outlets reflecting its role as a local service centre.
- 3.35 The town has experienced significant development over the years, with many town centre opportunity sites developed, providing a range of new uses and two environmental improvement schemes have been implemented creating a new town centre square through the demolition of obsolete and derelict buildings.

Location	Current Status
Rear of 29,31, 33 Main Street	Derg Valley Care & Age Concern offices
43-45 Main Street	Guest House
11 Ferguson Crescent	Public Bar/Restaurant
Ferguson Crescent	Gap site
22 & 24 Ferguson Crescent	Residential
Old Cattle Market, Hospital Road	Public library and car park
1 & 3 High Street	Supermarket
William Street	Undeveloped
12 The Diamond	Bookmakers with offices above
Meetinghouse Lane	Methodist Church Hall
Adj to DRD car park	residential
24 Main Street	Hardware Store
Albert Street/Lower Strabane Road	Gap site

Table 4: Opportunity Sites in Castlederg Town centre (2005)

### **Sion Mills**

- 3.36 Sion Mills is located 2 miles south of Strabane. It owes much of its origin to the textile Mill sited adjacent to the River. It is defined as a Local Town in the SAP but functions primarily as a dormitory settlement for Strabane and Derry. Particularly since the closure of Herdmans Mill, the town could benefit from alternative sources of employment.
- 3.37 The Plan did not have a defined town centre but the retail / business units are spread in a linear, fragmented manner along the western side of the main road. There is also a designated Conservation Area in a central location within the development limit (See Appendix 6). Much of the town's character is defined by its proximity to the river and the special architectural and historic features of the Conservation Area, so together with its proximity to the Sperrins, there is the potential to develop Sion Mills for tourism.

### **Newtownstewart**

- 3.38 The town has a wide Main Street where much of the original architectural character has been retained. It serves as an important residential centre for both Strabane and Omagh and provides important services for a wide rural area which extends into the Fermanagh and Omagh District.

3.39 The town also adjoins the main Dublin-Derry transport corridor and has the potential to act as a gateway to the Sperrins. The opening of the Newtownstewart bypass in 2003 has reduced the volume of through traffic, improving safety and reducing delays in the A5, affecting the character and functioning of this town.

3.40 Newtownstewart does not have a defined town centre in the Strabane Area Plan but has a Conservation Area encompassing Main Street, Castle Street, Townhall Street and St Eugene's Street. (See Appendix 7)

### **3.41 Community Plan**

3.42 The new style of LDP provides a unique opportunity for the Council to genuinely shape the District for local communities and will enable them to adopt a joined-up approach, incorporating linkages to our other functions such as regeneration, local economic development and Community Planning. The Local Government Act introduces a statutory link between the Community Plan (CP) and the LDP, in that the preparation of the LDP must 'take account of' the CP. It is intended that the LDP will be the spatial reflection of the CP and that the two should work in tandem towards the same vision for the Council area and our communities and set the long term social, economic and environmental objectives for the District.

In line with the emerging Community Plan and working in conjunction with the Council's Business and Culture Section, the Town & City Centre and Retailing sections of this LDP will provide the statutory and spatial expression for a City Centre Development Framework for Derry city, as well as one for Strabane town. These Frameworks will set out key physical, economic, regeneration, heritage and tourism aspirations over the next 5-10 years.



## 4.0 Other Studies about Derry, Strabane and Town Centres

### Other Strategies for Central Derry

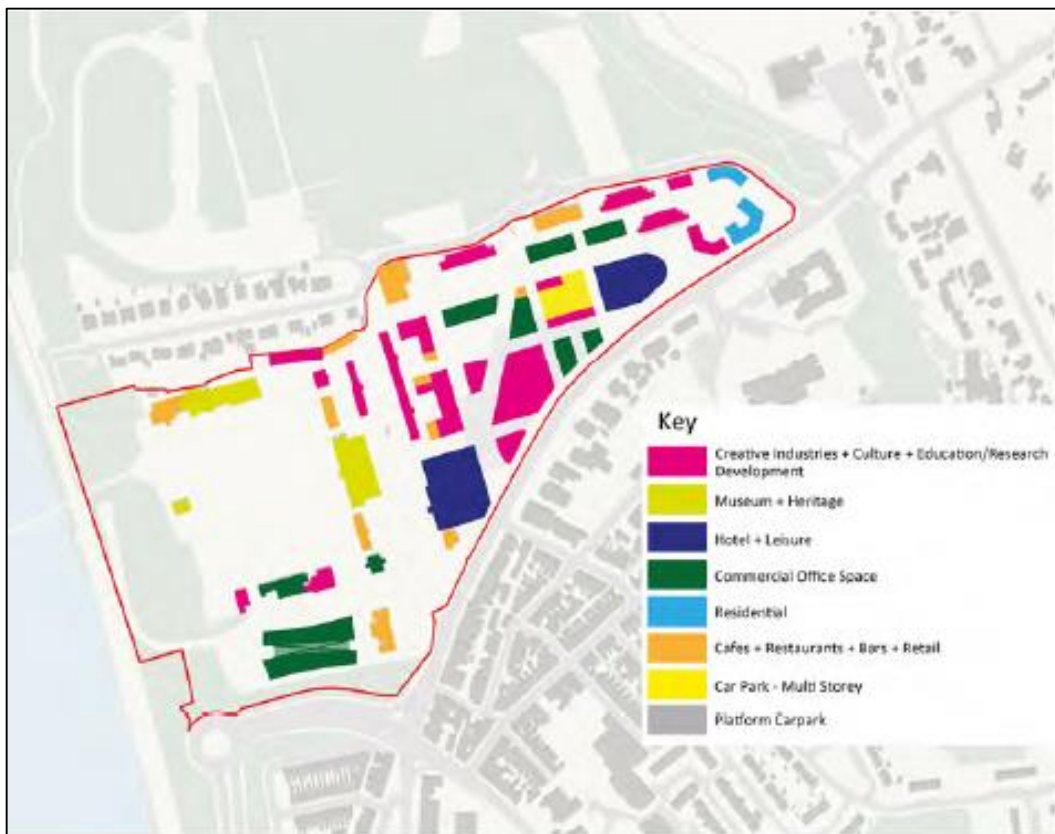
- 4.1 **The One Plan** published in 2011 by Ilex, was an extensive, strategic regeneration plan for Derry which set out a vision of the role of the public, private and community and voluntary sectors in delivering the 12,900 jobs which it believed to be required to reposition the city as an economic hub of the North West over the next 10 years.
- 4.2 The One Plan set a target to provide 1,100 additional retail jobs in Derry between 2010-2020 driven by a larger and richer economy. The report put current retail jobs at 8,450 in 2010. A target of an additional 2,500 knowledge sector jobs and 500 admin and governance jobs between 2010-2020 was set in the Plan. There was a potential for central government jobs to be decentralised which could attract other office led professional services. The Plan identified key sites such as the NWRSP or Ebrington which would provide ideal purpose built locations for these sectors. However, there was little spatial consideration in the One Plan of where or what development should take place in the Central Area of the city.

### Ebrington Development Framework

- 4.3 The Framework for Ebrington arose from an extensive process of option development and public consultation, the report set out a case for mixed use investment in the site. Ebrington is a 26 acre 'shared space' which offers an opportunity for regeneration and investment within Derry city Central Area.
- 4.4 Planning application A/2015/0001/O granted outline permission in February 2016 for the development of this former MOD site, thus giving effect to the Ebrington Development framework, as a basis for future detailed planning applications.
- 4.5 This Development Framework identifies Ebrington as a commercial gateway site, and seeks to achieve an integrated approach to the development of Ebrington, in line with the One Plan. It aims to provide the overall aspirations and guidance for Ebrington as an opportunity for mixed use development; a potential mix of commercial, office, leisure, cultural uses and tourism.
- 4.6 The framework stresses the importance of the Ebrington site in that it presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the core of Derry~Londonderry, serve as an attractor for investment and for people, and to grow our economy.



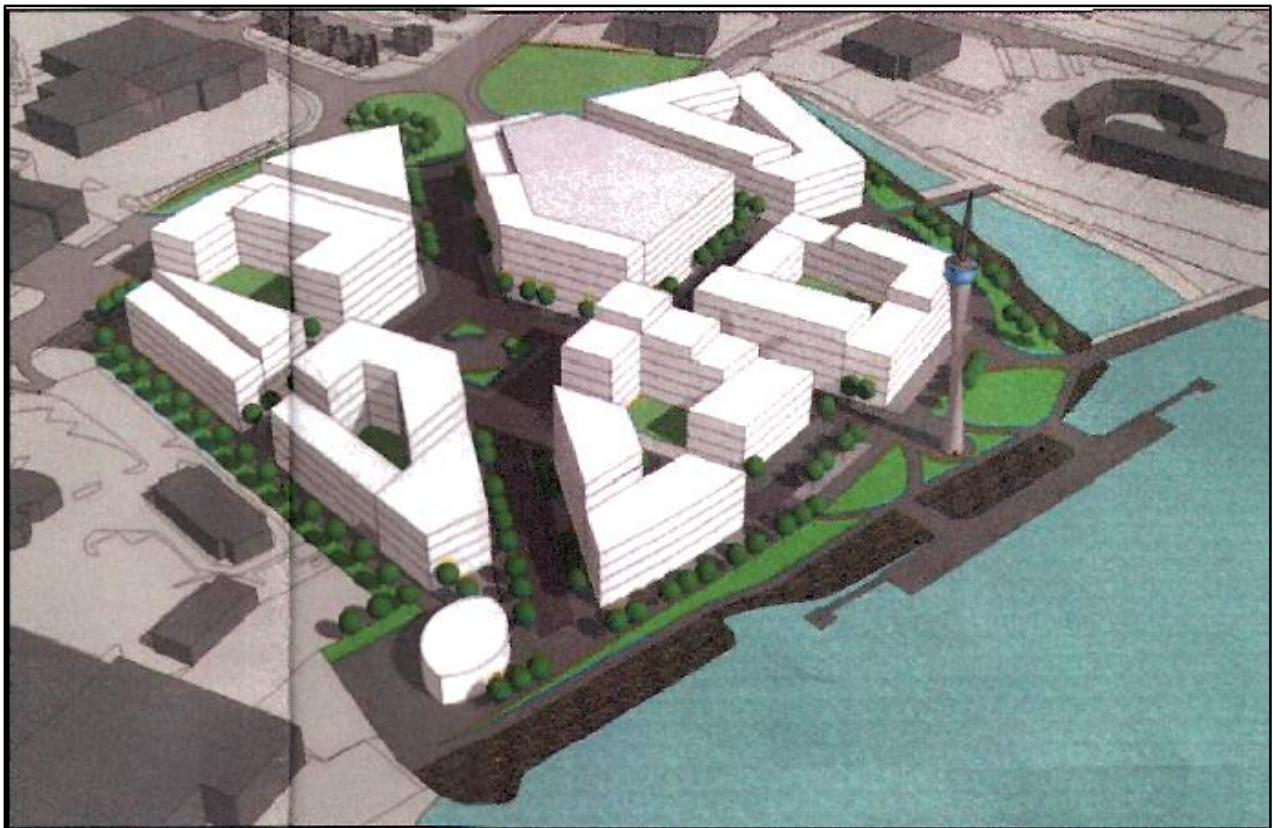
Map 1 Ebrington Existing Development (source planning reference A/2015/0001/O).



Map 2 Ebrington Proposed Land Use (source planning reference A/2015/0001/O).

### **Fort George Development Framework**

- 4.7 Planning Application A/2012/0335/O granted outline permission in December 2015 for the development of this former MOD site; it is located just within the Central Area. The proposal set out the development framework for the 6.2 ha site and provides for a significant mixed use development to include residential, office, employment and education uses, retail, cafes, bars and restaurants and associated multi story and surface car parking.
- 4.8 The Framework provides for up to 82,274 sqm of floor space. To date a portion of the site has been developed for office accommodation (the North West Regional Science Park, NWRSP) and the construction of the Hibernia Exchange Centre (Project Kelvin facility) to bring direct international connectivity to Fort George and the North West.



Map 3 Fort George Development Framework (source planning reference A/2012/0335/O)

### **Strategic Riverside Masterplan (draft published 2011).**

- 4.9 Page 115 of the Derry Area Plan referred to a Riverside Strategy and a need for a comprehensive overview for the future development of the riverside to re-establish a meaningful relationship between the city and the river Foyle. It stated that river is a valuable resource for the wider economic and environmental benefits of the city.
- 4.10 The Strategic Riverside Masterplan was prepared by the consultants *Strategic Planning* for Derry City Council, Ilex, DSD's North West Development Office, the

Loughs Agency and Derry's Port & Harbour Commission. It has three principal purposes:

- To secure a spatial strategy for the river corridor in the wider study area;
- To stimulate leisure, recreation and tourism opportunities creating employment whilst preserving and enhancing the environmental value of the river asset; and
- To secure a detailed framework to guide development along the urban waterfront between the Foyle and Craigavon Bridges setting standards that will help regenerate the city.

4.11 The Strategic Riverside Masterplan consists of two main parts – a River Strategy, which covers the entire study area from Culmore to Newbuildings and an Urban Waterfront Framework, focusing in more detail upon the Riverbanks between the Foyle and Craigavon Bridges.

4.12 The River Strategy stated that within Derry~Londonderry the major impact upon access to the riverside is created by having one of the city's main strategic arterial routes running directly adjacent to the river between the Craigavon and Foyle bridges on the cityside. Such severance also exists on the Waterside as a result of the location of the railway line running along the eastern shoreline. Whilst the city has an extensive network of dedicated pedestrian and cycle paths, their connectivity (particularly along urban waterfront areas) and access to the waterfront itself from surrounding communities is interrupted by competing land uses, namely arterial roads, car parks and rail. Integration between rail and bus services serving the city is fractured as a result of the each terminal being located on opposite sides of the river.

4.13 The Urban Waterfront Framework is a material consideration for the LDP. It focuses on the waterfront areas between the Foyle and Craigavon Bridge. Its purpose is: "to set out rules for future development such that:

- The intentions of the river strategy are protected in the city;
- A vision for the waterfront city centre is established to stimulate development; and
- A framework is established to guide development along the urban waterfront between the Foyle and Craigavon Bridges which can be relied upon for development management

#### **Derry 'Demand Analysis' Study**

4.14 This study was undertaken on behalf of the DSD, Derry City Council, DOE and Ilex (by Colliers International) to undertake an analysis of the demand in the number of commercial development sectors in Derry.

4.15 The purpose of the analysis was to inform the timing and approach to the redevelopment of key sites and the implementation of regeneration schemes in the city. The report was published in November 2014.

4.16 The key findings of the report were the following:

### **Retail Sector**

- The city centre needs a leisure facility in the form of a family leisure facility eg indoor adventure activities/bowling and a cluster of family friendly restaurants/cafes and bars within the commercial core.
- Consideration should be given in the LDP to redrawing the commercial core boundary making it more compact.
- The capacity analysis indicated scope to grow comparison retailing in the city.
- A permanent residential population within the city centre would boost the evening economy alongside additional office workers and students.
- The city is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> best retail location in NI behind Belfast and Ballymena. This needs to improve is it is to market itself as the principle city in the north-west.

### **Knowledge Economy and Business Service Sector**

- There is a need for additional Grade A business space within the city centre in particular, to promote growth and attract new occupiers to the city.
- The North West Regional Science Park (NWRSP) provides the opportunity within the City for local entrepreneurs and corporate occupiers.

### **Evening Economy and Hospitality and Commercial Leisure Sector**

- Establish a residential population within the city centre to sustain a vibrant coffee culture and evening economy.
- There is a need for a wider choice of daytime/evening leisure options within the retail core to blend with existing uses, in particular family friendly options.

### **Digital Media and Creative Technology Sector**

- This is an untapped sector in NI. Possible locations for this sector could be the NWRSP or Ebrington.

- 4.17 Recommendations from this report include extending and clustering development toward the Strand Road area of the city centre coupled with the expansion of the University; offer grade A office development within the city centre; encourage a resident city centre population and provide leisure facilities to act as an anchor to attract people and other businesses.

## **4.18 Other Strategies for Strabane**

### **Strabane Masterplan and Baseline Report. (September 2010)<sup>1</sup>**

- 4.19 In February 2009, the Department for Social Development (DSD) and Strabane District Council (SDC), with DOE Planning Service acting as a statutory partner, commissioned (Tribal Group, supported by Colliers CRE and Oxford Economics) a Regeneration Masterplan for Strabane town centre. This non-statutory document

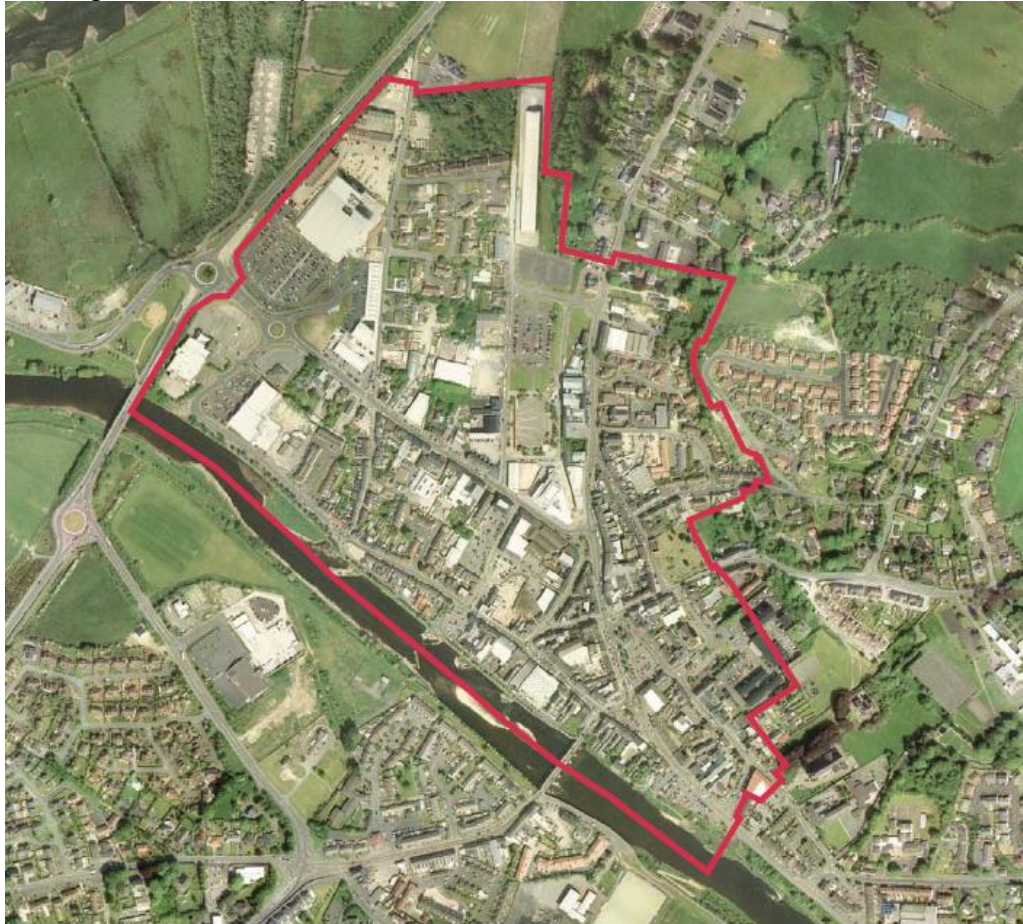
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<sup>1</sup> Strabane Town Centre Masterplan Baseline Report(2010)<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/strabane-town-centre-baseline-report.PDF>

is intended to provide the basis, and justification for decision making on the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration initiatives in the town centre for the period up to 2020.

- 4.20 The Baseline Report is a background document and sets out the information collated during the Masterplan project. In formulating a regeneration plan for Strabane it is guided by European, National and Regional planning guidance as well as, relevant documents and initiatives such as Strabane 2000 - Town Centre Regeneration and Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Town Centre Living Initiative, Strabane BID Project. It summarises the emerging understanding of the key issues affecting the town centre.
- 4.21 The Strabane Masterplan Baseline report references the West Tyrone Area Plan 2019 –Strabane Town Centre Health Check. The WTAP Strabane Town Centre Health Check provides a comprehensive evaluation of the economy in Strabane by sector with a consideration of the future of the town given the current rate of growth. The main heading of the report are broadly divided into:
- Retail Profile;
  - Rents;
  - Shopper's views;
  - Pedestrian flows Accessibility;
  - Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime;
  - Environmental Quality; and
  - SWOT Analysis.
- 4.22 The Baseline report concluded that Strabane town centers performance was generally poor with an over reliance on independent retailers and investors wary to invest in the town. Dereliction and high levels of vacancy are particularly off-putting to visitors and investors alike. The regeneration of both the building stock and public realm are identified as key to the attraction of new trade which in turn can revitalize the Town centre. The ASDA store can be linked to the town more clearly which could draw in secondary trade from the store.
- 4.23 As part of the Masterplan, Colliers CRE undertook an analysis of how Strabane performed in terms of retail, office, leisure and tourism. They identified the following key issues:
- Successful re-development of the SCORE site and the vacant land on Main Street, attracting national multiples into Strabane.
  - Addressing traffic congestion on Main Street.
  - Bringing retail on Branch Road/Railway Street closer to the town centre.
  - Potential to create an office market within the town, which will add to the vibrancy of the town centre.
  - The office market in Strabane is dominated by local business. The town centre office users as in most provincial towns tend to be local professional firms such

as accountants and solicitors. Attracting offices into the town in the future would add a degree of vibrancy to the centre.



Map 4 Strabane town centre (Strabane Town Centre Masterplan 2010)

### **A Masterplan for Strabane Town Centre (September 2010)<sup>2</sup>**

4.24 The first principle of the Masterplan was to Enhance and Promote the Town Centre Core. The core should be promoted as a destination focusing on the quality of place, together with a complementary commercial offer comprising local, independent retail, leisure and tourism. Appropriate uses within the core, might include:

- Small to medium sized retail;
- Cafes/restaurants;
- Some offices and business uses; and
- Education/learning facilities (possibly on the SCORE site).

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<sup>2</sup> Strabane Town Centre Masterplan (2010) <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/strabane-town-centre-masterplan.PDF>

4.25 The Masterplan recommended extending the primary shopping frontage areas to other streets such as Dock Street and Canal Street. This may assist in the redevelopment of the SCORE site, encouraging a mixed use approach. Furthermore, the possibility exists that the leisure use proposed for the SCORE site might not be deliverable, in which case a mixed use scenario, with a substantial element of retail, could be considered. Regardless of scenario, the SCORE site offers a unique opportunity for redevelopment with the town centre and provides an opportunity to attract investment into the town centre and should be fully utilised.



Map 5 The SCORE Site (Strabane Town Centre Masterplan 2010)

4.26 Cross border trade has tended to focus on Strabane’s edge of town retail operations at the expense of those in the town centre.

4.27 The Second Core Principle was to Enrich the Existing Built Heritage. The baseline report identified a significant number of historic assets in the town centre, however, these are underplayed and often neglected and some of the more recent development detracts from the overall beneficial effect of these assets. This principle could be applied in the following ways:

- Designate a Conservation Area to cover those parts of the town centre that possess a higher quality townscape/ streetscape.
- Commission town centre design guidance, to provide developers with advice on how they might respond to the built heritage issues when preparing development proposals -such a document would:



- Require that new developments respond to their context including any distinctive townscape and streetscape features, buildings and landscape planting.
  - Ensure new buildings should respect the prevailing scale, form, plot size, block structure and urban grain of the vicinity ensuring that the integrity and setting of key historic buildings and areas of historic townscape value are preserved;
  - Devise a heritage trail linking the main areas or buildings of historical interest, this could include using artwork integrated within hard landscaping to provide a visual trail; and
  - Investigate the potential for securing grants for improving buildings of historic/heritage interest.
- 4.28 Core Principle 3 - Create an accessible, legible and welcoming Town Centre sets out the following key issues which need to be addressed:
- Ensure that the relationship between vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists maximises accessibility for all users.
  - Design streets and walks to ensure that people can easily and conveniently get to where they need to be.
  - Provide attractive and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to adjoining areas enhancing the overall accessibility of the central area; and
  - Enhancing key gateways and ensuring development in the vicinity of gateway locations is of the highest design standard and makes a positive contribution to the arrival experience.
- 4.29 Core Principle 4 - Provide a Safe, attractive and animated public realm sets out 8 key objectives to ensure Strabane has a high quality public realm, these include:
- Restore character and identity through the design of the public realm;
  - Ensure a people focused pedestrian friendly environment;
  - Provide pedestrian routes and crossing points which reflect desire lines;
  - Simplify and eliminate street clutter;
  - Specify high quality materials with simple detailing;
  - Introduce tree planting;
  - Animate the public realm; and
  - Enrich the public realm with artistic intervention and imaginative lighting.

### **Three Rivers Project**

- 4.30 In December 2014, DOE NI HQ and the NI Environment Minister approved a 'regionally significant' 'Three-Rivers' Development, which is to be built on the 'Camel's Hump'/military custom base. The development site is a 50 acres site between the towns of Strabane in Northern Ireland and Lifford in the Republic – see map 6. The outline approval was granted for a mixed-use scheme for retail and leisure facilities as well a 12,000 sqm Employment Park, a Learning Campus about half that size, and a 90-bed hotel. Also incorporated into the scheme is a 'Peace Project' that comprises of a new shared public space.
- 4.31 The site is outside Strabane town centre.



Map 6 Three Rivers Project (DOE)



Map 7 Three Rivers site (DOE)

### **Regional Town Centre Studies**

- 4.32 The Town Centres and Retailing Research Project prepared by GL Hearn Limited, for DOE NI (January 2014) undertook an assessment of the current health of designated town centres. Derry and Strabane were included in this assessment.
- 4.33 In their report, GL Hearn carry out health checks on 24 towns in Northern Ireland in April 2013 reviewed against the following indicators:

- Town centre diversity;
  - Floorspace in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations;
  - Potential capacity for growth and change;
  - Retailer representation and intention to change;
  - Shopping rents;
  - Vacancy rates;
  - Commercial yields;
  - Pedestrian flows;
  - Accessibility;
  - Safety and crime; and
  - Environmental quality.
- (for full details see Appendix 1)

4.34 From their research they concluded that, in general, the town centres in NI provide a good quality and pleasant shopping environment and that in addition to their shopping role, the town centre provides a cultural and social focus and administrative and service function to their loyal catchment population.

4.35 Overall the town centre health checks did not identify any towns that were performing badly, but equally there was little evidence of particularly strong performance. There is room for improvement in the vitality and viability of the town centres and a policy stance which seeks to protect and enhance town centre performance and diversity will contribute to uplifting existing viability and viability.

4.36 The key findings regarding town centres in Northern Ireland include:

- Belfast is the largest centre by a significant margin (341,070sm). The majority of centres fell below the national average of 80,170sqm, with only Bangor, Coleraine, Enniskillen, Lisburn, Ballymena, Newry and Derry (137,800sqm) sitting above this threshold.
- The smaller town centres are notably traditional, high street market town centres which have not been expanded or extended through town centre redevelopment to provide shopping centre schemes, whereas the largest have one or more shopping centre schemes.

- Convenience good floor space was focused in a proportionately small number of larger units and reflects the wide UK trend of the dominance of larger supermarkets in meeting convenience shopping needs.
- The proportion of other town centre uses in Northern Ireland is notably higher than the UK average. Uses include transport services, employment and commercial activities, religious buildings, wholesale trade, civic and unclassified buildings and are considered to be a positive attribute which confirms that town centres are performing as a hub for a range of activities which attract people.
- The majority of centres have a vacancy rate (per unit) which exceeds the UK national average (12% in 2013), Derry city has a vacancy rate of 16% (16.2% City Centre Initiative 2015). Strabane is one of 6 centres below the national average with 10%.
- Much of the vacancy is within the secondary/tertiary areas rather than primary retail frontages.
- Out-of-centre retailing is focused outside larger towns or along strategic arterial routes.
- Whilst some retail parks are dominated by bulky goods retailers, this is not exclusively the case. Sprucefield, Showgrounds in Omagh, Lisnagelvin in Derry/Londonderry and Boucher Retail Park Belfast also include a wide range of core comparison including clothing retailers.
- The amount and quality of out-of-centre retailing and their convenience in terms of accessibility and free parking are attractive to shoppers.
- There are few vacancies at the out-of-centre retail parks suggesting a good level of demand for these modern larger units.

4.37 The report concluded that their analysis and review of the health of NI town centres has highlighted a number of issues facing town centres which are summarized in the following table.

Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity of existing town centres.</li> <li>• Strong local independent retail offer.</li> <li>• Good quality physical environment.</li> <li>• Town centre parking, particularly short stay 'on street' provision.</li> <li>• Employment uses within town centres.</li> <li>• Good accessibility and public transport hubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacancies and potential obsolescence of some floorspace.</li> <li>• Low and falling retail rents.</li> <li>• Amount and profile of out-of-centre retailing.</li> <li>• Development pipeline.</li> <li>• Limited private sector town centre development/investment.</li> <li>• Heavy traffic flows and congestion leads to conflict with shoppers.</li> </ul>

Table 5 SWOT analysis for NI cities and towns by DOENI / GL Hearn

### Retail Trends

- 4.38 The DOE/Hearn report identifies and carries out an assessment of the main retailing trends, specifically detailing the implications for town centres in the future. The retail sector is dynamic and subject to change in response to consumer needs and market influences. For example increased private car ownership, availability and convenience of parking are factors which influence shopper choice. Furthermore the recession has resulted in greater pressure on personal expenditure, the knock on effect is that retail expenditure is expected to remain low in the medium term.
- 4.39 Online shopping has seen growth with internet shopping replacing mail catalogue shopping, high street retailers are now operating websites and reducing their physical 'high street' presence to make savings on rent, business rents, wages and other property related costs. With retail space becoming a show room for consumers to experience and test potential e-retail purchases.
- 4.40 Mobile technology, apps, price checking website, amazon, ebay etc no longer confine comparative shoppers to browsing the high street shops.
- 4.41 With a rise in internet shopping there is the potential for town centres to remain viable by using click and collect services. Shoppers will also still require specialist services within the town centre for example, DIY, product advice, quality service, opportunity for social interaction and someone to go to should a product go wrong. This will remain valued by the consumer.
- 4.42 The food and beverage sector is one of the few town centre components which does still show growth, primarily coffee shop and family dining. These are not solely restricted to national multiple chains and provide vitality and footfall to town centers but needs to be balanced against the loss of retail.

4.43 The commercial leisure sector is not particularly strong at present. A growing trend in the market place is the role of the cinema as the anchor attracting food and beverage units, thereby creating a destination in its own right/ as part of a retail scheme.

**Recommendations for the future of Town Centres.**

4.44 As part of the research study and to inform the recommendations, a series of workshops with key town centre stakeholders were undertaken to discuss the issues facing town centres and ideas on future policy direction. The key and recurring themes from the workshops are summarized below:

- Need for a level playing field for business rates for town centre, out-of-town and online retailers.
- Business rates are a disproportionate cost.
- Town centres have not been politically important to date.
- The need to avoid the ghost town and clone town problems experienced in the UK.
- A need to tackle the loss of residential above the shops.
- Town centres needs to establish their own unique selling points.
- Challenges with adjacent towns having complementary rather than competing roles.
- The independent sector is strong but there are concerns over how long it can be sustained.
- Independent businesses have strong family/generational influence but there is potential for this to fall away.
- The apparent strength of the independent sector in NI is potentially misleading with many family businesses struggling.
- The role of the internet has not been fully felt.
- People still see town centres as a community resources compared with other parts of the UK.
- There has been significant public realm investment but congestion/lack of convenient car parking remain an issue in town centres.

4.45 While Northern Ireland towns appeared to have fared better during the recession than a greater number of UK towns there are still areas of weakness and threats which indicate that it would be appropriate to have a stronger policy stance on protecting and enhancing town centres, by encouraging private sector investment and development and making town centre the focus for not just retail but other significant footfall generating uses.

## 5.0 What Hierarchy, Designations and Policies for the LDP?

### Summary of Key Characteristics of Derry City

- 5.1 Derry / Londonderry sits naturally as the core settlement and regional gateway city for the North West. As the Principal city of the North West, with a University, it is the key cross-border and international gateway providing access by air, road, rail and sea to the North West Region.
- 5.2 The city walls attract thousands of visitors and the redevelopment of the former military sites Fort George and Ebrington offer a significant opportunity to advance the transformation of the city.
- 5.3 Derrys ‘City Centre’ straddles both sides of the River Foyle utilizing the Craigavon Bridge and Peace Bridge as the link. The Boundary extends north along the River Foyle on the city side towards and including Fort George. The boundary extends north and east on the Waterside taking in St Columbs Park.
- 5.4 There are three areas zoned for redevelopment within the Central Area, these are all located along the River on the city side (see appendix for details of development uptake of these zonings). 9 Opportunity sites are zoned on the city side and 3 in the Waterside. There are 3 Conservation Areas within the Central Area boundary, 2 of which are within the commercial core, as are the City Walls which are a Scheduled Monument in State Care. There are also 2 Areas of Townscape Character within the Central Area Boundary, one of which extends into the Commercial Core in the waterside. St Columbs Park and Brooke Park are within the Central Area, Brooke Park is also a Historic Park and Demesne. Magee University is within the Central Area and identified in the Area Plan as a civic and educational precinct.
- 5.5 The Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats facing Derry city’s Central Area are summarised below.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Shopping- Foyle side, Richmond Centre and Quayside Centres with car parking.</li> <li>-Landmarks including Foyle Railway Centre, Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall, The Bogside, Murals, Craft Village, Free Derry Corner, O’Doherty Tower now the Tower Museum, The Guildhall, the Harbour Museum, the Museum of Free Derry, the Nerve Centre,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ebrington and Fort George redevelopment sites within the city centre.</li> <li>- Expansion of Ulster University.</li> <li>- Derelict sites along Carlisle Road, Tillie and Hendersons, Ben Sherman Factory and Hamilton Shirt factory.</li> <li>- Riverfront, walk and cycle path.</li> <li>- Guildhall place public realm and Ebrington Public realm.</li> </ul>

<p>St Columbs Park and Foyle Arena leisure centre. St Eugenes Cathedral, Millennium Forum, Peace Bridge. Numerous listed Building within town centre and Conservation Areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New boutique 5 star hotel in city centre.</li> <li>- Proposed new Integrated transport Hub on Waterside.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative image of Foyle Valley gateway including Tillie and Henderson, Hamilton and Sherman factories, Railway station and track along river bank. Negative image for tourist, investors and residents on their entry to city centre.</li> <li>- Unattractive shop fronts with dereliction and vacancy, poor signage.</li> <li>- Prevalence of pound shops and charity shops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vacancy within Commercial Core, The Diamond, Shipquay Street, Bishop Street within, Carlisle Road.</li> <li>- Austins Department store closed.</li> <li>- Severance from river front by main road on city side and railway line on Waterside.</li> <li>- Rail and Bus station on opposite side of the river.</li> </ul>

Table 6 SWOT Analysis for Derry Central Area, Development Plan Team assessment

- 5.6 The redevelopment of Fort George and Ebrington are key opportunities for mixed use development to attract investment back into the town centre, particularly Ebrington due to its proximity to the commercial core. The recently closed Austin’s Department store in the heart of the town centre offers a unique opportunity for an appropriate town centre use to revitalise the town centre.
- 5.7 The ‘Peace Park’ on Foyle Street is a prime location within the commercial core and in proximity to the Peace Bridge and Ebrington, it is in the ownership of the Department for Communities and should be considered as an opportunity site in the LDP. The site at Lower Fountain Hill which fronts onto Spencer Road and Duke Street is also in their control and in a prime location to be considered and opportunity site for development in the LDP.

**Summary of Key Characteristics of Strabane Town Centre**

- 5.8 Strabane is identified in the RDS as a Main Hub and, due to its proximity, is clustered with Derry. The town has a close cross-border relationship with Lifford, which is an administrative centre for Donegal County Council.
- 5.9 Abercorn Square is traditionally accepted as the focal point of the town centre from which the principle shopping streets radiate. Abercorn Square, Castle Street, Market Street, Main Street and the eastern end of Railway Street are the principal shopping areas (identified as primary retail frontage) while the remainder of Railway Street, Butcher Street, Castle Place and the central part of Main Street



have a lesser though important retail significance. The SCORE site is a major, central re-development site owned by the Department for Communities, it is located on the site of the former canal basin which is a Scheduled Monument. This presents challenges for redevelopment within this area. The Area Plan's town centre and the Strabane Masterplan identify a 'Core Area' within the town centre which encompasses the following:

- Lower to Upper Main Street;
- Abercorn Square and Market Street;
- Castle Street;
- The roundabout adjacent to ASDA;
- Railway Street to Abercorn Square;
- John Wesley Street;
- Bridge Street; and
- Butcher Street.

5.10 Currently there is an imbalance created by the 'edge-of-town centre' retail offer on the western part of the town centre which challenges the economic function of the original core.

5.11 The Strengths Weakness, Opportunities and Threats facing Strabane's town centre are identified below.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industrial Heritage.</li> <li>- Strabane canal.</li> <li>- Cross border draw</li> <li>- Historic properties throughout the town.</li> <li>- Ally Arts Complex.</li> <li>- Good range of 'national multiples'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SCORE Site.</li> <li>- Potential Conservation Area designation.</li> <li>- Main Street gap site.</li> <li>- Town centre relationship to river.</li> <li>- Pedestrian footbridge across Mourne.</li> <li>- Link the town centre to ASDA.</li> <li>- Develop public realm.</li> <li>- Implementation of River Links Project.</li> <li>- Three Rivers Development.</li> </ul>
Weakness	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limitation of open space within town centre.</li> <li>- Limited office space deflecting investors.</li> <li>- Traffic congestion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empty Properties.</li> <li>- Main Street gap site.</li> <li>- Disjointed, ASDA and retail park away from town centre.</li> <li>- Shifting commercial core.</li> </ul>

- No 'headquarter' business or government buildings.	- Impact of Three Rivers on commercial core.
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Table 7 SWOT Analysis for Strabane town centre, Development Plan Team assessment.

### Role of the LDP

- 5.12 The preparation of the LDP provides the opportunity to address the needs, challenges and opportunities facing our city/town centres and retailing in the District. Given the wide range and complexity of issues that influence the development, role, function and success of town centres, the Council should work collaboratively with other relevant stakeholders to inform plan preparation.

### Next Steps

- 5.13 Going forward, the Council's Planning officials will create a Stakeholder group seeking representation from, for example, Derry City Centre Initiative, Derry and Strabane Chambers of Commerce, Northern Ireland Retail Traders Association, Derry City and Strabane Economic Development Team, Department for Communities, DFI Strategic Planning, Foyleside Centre and Richmond Centre management (this list is not exhaustive).
- 5.14 The SPPS states that in preparing the LDP, the Council must prepare town centre health checks and regularly review these. It is intended to complete a Health Check of Derry and Strabane Centres to inform the LDP Preferred Options Paper (POP).
- 5.15 In light of this Paper, Member's feedback is required on a proposed retail hierarchy promoting Derry as the Principal City in the North West for retail, commerce, and leisure. Followed by Strabane as the Main Hub and in a supporting role to Derry and as a service centre for local communities. The role of local town centres Castlederg, Sion Mills and Newtownstewart should be defined in the LDP. The RDS 2035 states that the role of towns and villages is to support economic growth as they can offer opportunities for growth in new sectors, provision of rural services, recreation and tourism. Furthermore, they offer attractive places to invest, live and work, and have a reservoir of natural resources and highly valued landscapes.
- 5.16 As well as the role of the towns in our district, the spatial extent of town centres requires reconsideration. Member input is required regarding possible amendments to the city/town centre boundaries and amendments to Derry's commercial core and the possibility of designating a retail core for Strabane and town centre for Sion Mills and Newtownstewart.
- 5.17 Consideration should be given to bolstering development of the underutilised Opportunity Sites zoned in the relevant Area Plans. In preparing the LDP for the District, it is appropriate to examine potential new Opportunity Sites and their possible inclusion in the LDP. Such sites will need to be considered in terms of location, possible use, townscape contribution and infrastructure.

- 5.18 The LDP will be required to allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale of retail and appropriate town centre uses. Member input is required to identify potential sites within the town centre.
- 5.19 The new LDP will provide an opportunity to spatially address the loss of vibrancy and vitality from town centres and redirect investment and visitors back to the city/town centre by adopting the ‘town centre first’ policy approach of the SPPS.
- 5.20 Policies within the centres will be required to provide for a diverse range of suitable uses which reflect local circumstance within each of the hierarchy centres.

## Feedback

- 5.21 The paper has highlighted various key issues facing the city/town centres in our District. To provoke thought and stimulate discussion, a few questions are asked below, this list is not exhaustive. Member’s feedback is welcomed.
- What do you perceive to be the main issues facing Derry Central Area?
  - What do you perceive to be the main issues facing Strabane town centre?
  - Should the primary retail frontage in Strabane be extended, if so, where?
  - Should the commercial core area of Derry city be expanded or reduced?
  - What development opportunities including redevelopment sites exist in and around the Derry city Central Area and Strabane town centre?
  - What should be done about the current issue of retail uses in the Industrial Estates?
  - What environmental measures should be taken to protect and improve the environmental quality of Derry and Strabane town centres?
  - Are there particular areas of character within Derry and Strabane town centres that require specific protection/enhancement?
  - Is there a need to increase leisure and recreation provision within these centres, and if so where?
  - Is there a need to increase housing provision within these town centres and if so where?
  - Is there a need to provide new ‘Grade A’ office space within Derry and Strabane town centres, if so where?
  - Future development of the SCORE Site?
  - Should Strabane town centre boundary be extended to include the Three Rivers site?
  - Should Castlederg, Sion Mills and Newtownstewart have defined town centres?

## 6.0 Preferred Options for City and Town Centres

The research findings contained in this paper together with Members views and advice from the relevant parties/consultees have informed the following options which have been taken forward and subjected to Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) as part of the Preferred Options Paper (POP) process.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<b>B - City / Town Centres - generally</b>	<b>Strong focus on existing centres whilst constraining District Centres and outer / arterial sites</b>	<b>Balance – focus is on existing centres plus potential limited development in District Centres</b>	<b>Support existing centres but with growth in District Centres and outer / arterial sites</b>
<b>D - Derry City Centre</b>	<b>Evaluate the existing Central Area &amp; Commercial Core within Cityside and Waterside, clarifying / simplifying their definitions / roles and adjusting their boundaries if necessary</b>	<b>Retain the existing Central Area plus a compact Cityside focus for commerce</b>	<b>Expand the overall central areas within Cityside and Waterside</b>
<b>E - Strabane Town Centre</b>	<b>Maintain existing Strabane Area Plan Town Centre boundary, subject to detailed re-evaluation of boundaries</b>	<b>Contract the existing Town Centre boundary to a more compact form.</b>	<b>Expand Town Centre boundary to beyond the Bypass / Camel's Hump area</b>
<b>F - Local Towns – Castledearg, Newtownstewart, Claudy</b>	<b>Retain the compact Town Centre boundary for Castledearg and define compact Town Centres for N'Stewart (existing designated town) &amp; Claudy (proposed new town)</b>	<b>Do not define Town Centres for Castledearg, Newtownstewart or Claudy</b>	

- 6.1 In the absence of firm proposals from the relevant authorities, further feedback will be required to enable the LDP to be fully informed of future proposals which can subsequently be subjected to the SA/SE appraisal.

## Appendix 1

### Town Centre Health Check Criteria

- Town centre diversity: assessed in terms of types of uses (by number and, where available, by floor space), in conjunction with analysis of Experian historic trends.
- Floorspace in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations.
- Potential capacity for growth or change: analysis of historic trends and identification of key opportunities in terms of vacant sites for expansion or clusters of vacancies which might point towards contraction.
- Retailer representation and intentions to change: notable retailers present in the town and identification of any clear gaps in representation/evidence of retailer requirements in centres.
- Shopping rents: where available, details of rental levels in the prime shopping Areas.
- Vacancy rates: identification of ground-floor vacancies and observations on any notable clustering.
- Commercial yields: where available, analysis of yield data to provide insight on investor confidence in the centres.
- Pedestrian flows: observation of footfall on main shopping streets to assess vitality and identify main attractors within the centres.
- Accessibility: consideration of opportunities to access the centre by non-car transport modes and provision of car parking.
- Safety and crime: observations, including evidence of CCTV or police presence, vandalism and graffiti, limited to daytime and relating to the Town centre only.
- Environmental quality: qualitative assessment of the Town centre environment including dominance of traffic, ease of pedestrian movement and details of any recent investment in public realm.

*(DOE Planning Policy Statement 5 Retailing and Town Centres)*

## Appendix 2

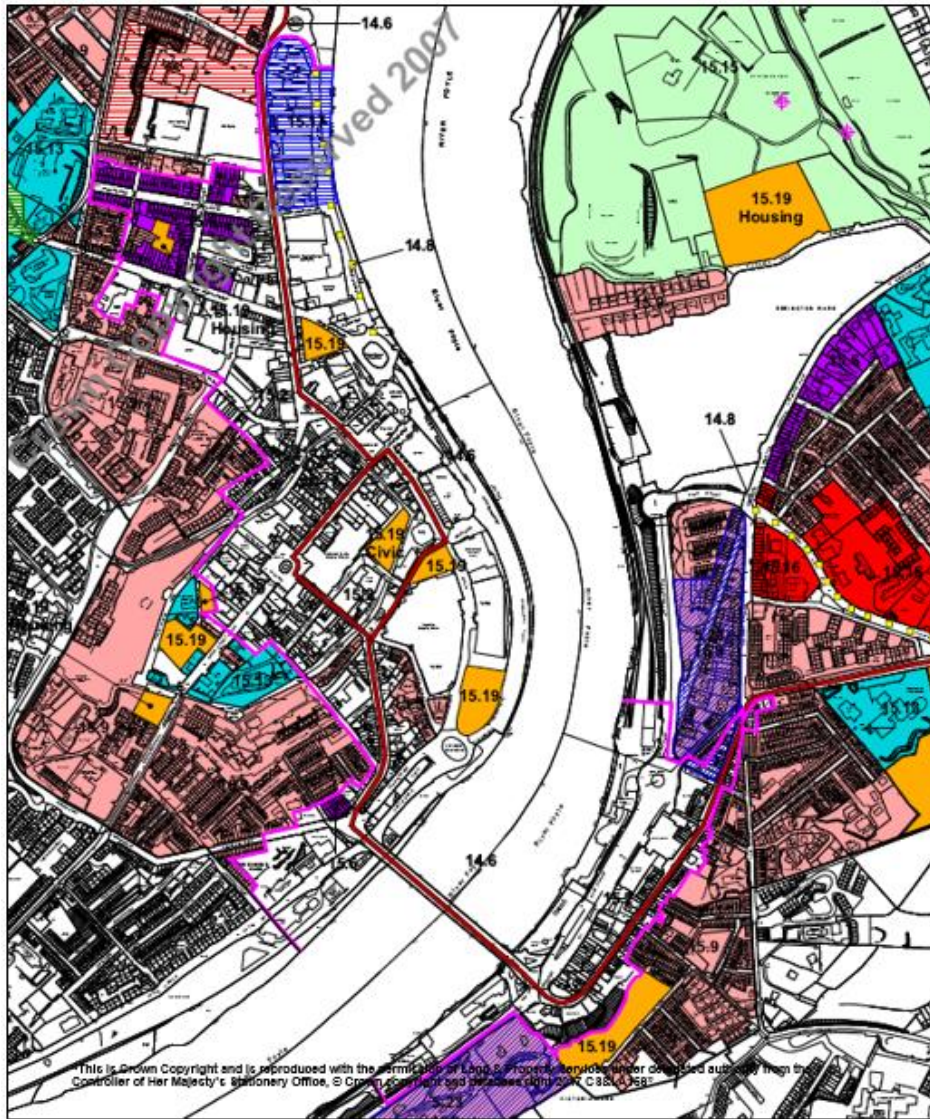
### Vacancy Audit for Derry City

Streets Audited														
Total Vacant Units														
Within Walled City - 15	Total Units	15th Mar 12	1st Oct 13		1st July 2014 (Sept)		1st Dec 14		1st April 2015		1st July 2015		1st October 2015	
Shipquay Street	33	7	7	21%	11	33.30%	10	30.30%	6	18.18	6	18	5	15%
Shipquay Place	6				1	16.70%	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	17	1	17%
Bishop Street Within		4	2		1		2		3		1		3	
Ferryquay Street	18	0	1	5.50%	1	5.60%	1	5.6	2	11.1	2	11	2	11%
Butcher Street	9	0	0	0	2	22.20%	2	22.3	0	0	0	0	0	0%
The Diamond	15	0	1	6.70%	1	6.70%	2	13.3	1	6.6	2	13	2	13%
Castle Street	10	2	2	20%	0	0%	0	0	3	30	3	30	1	10%
Pump Street	16	0	1	6.25%	3	18.80%	3	18.75	2	12.5	2	13	3	19%
London Street	12	2	5	33%	7	58.30%	6	50	2	16.7	1	8	1	8%
Magazine Street	12	1	1	8.30%	1	8.30%	1	8.33	1	8.3	1	8	1	8%
Artillery Street	4	2	1	25%	0	0%	0	0	1	6.3	1	25	1	25%
Union Hall Place	6	3	3	50%	1	16.70%	1	16.7	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Bank Place	4	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Market Street	2	1	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Society Street	5	1	1	20%	1	20%	1	20	1	20	0	0	0	6%
The Craft Village	18	2	0	0	1	6%	0	0	1	5.6	1	6	1	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18.23%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17.64</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>South of the Walls - 3</b>														
Carlisle Road	55	13	12	21.80%	15	27.30%	13	23.63	14	25.5	15	27	13	24%
John Street	19	3	3	15.80%	4	21.10%	4	21.1	3	15.8	4	21	3	16%
Foyle Street	24	6	5	20.80%	5	28.90%	5	20.8	5	20.8	4	17	6	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15.70%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22.44</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>North of the Walls - 11</b>														
Waterloo Street	47	9	5	10.60%	5	10.60%	7	14.9	5	10.6	7	15	6	13%
Waterloo Place	16	2	3	18.75%	5	31.30%	5	31.25	5	31.3	3	19	3	19%
Guildhall Street	3	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Custom House Street	3	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Strand Road	56	5	5	8.90%	4	7.10%	3	5.35	5	8.9	2	4	2	4%
Clarendon Street	56	8	5	8.90%	14	25%	9	16.07	11	19.6	9	16	9	16%
Great James Street	34	4	4	11.80%	7	20.60%	7	20.6	9	26.5	9	26	8	24%
William Street	26		6	23%	3	11.50%	3	11.53	4	15.4	3	12	3	12%
Sackville Street	10		1	10%	2	20%	2	20	2	20	2	20	2	20%
Patrick Street	6		2	33%	2	33.30%	2	33.33	3	50	1	17	1	17%
Queens Quay	10	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>11.61</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>15.73%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>14.23</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Waterside - 3</b>														
Spencer Road	105		29	27.60%	30	28.60%	31	29.5	30	28.6	24	23	24	23%
Duke Street	19		4	21%	4	21.10%	5	26.31	5	26.3	7	37	7	37%
Clooney Terrace	15		0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>		<b>33</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>24.50%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Total Number of Streets - 32</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>16.30%</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>19.40%</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>16.2%</b>

(Source Derry City Initiative June 2015)

### Appendix 3

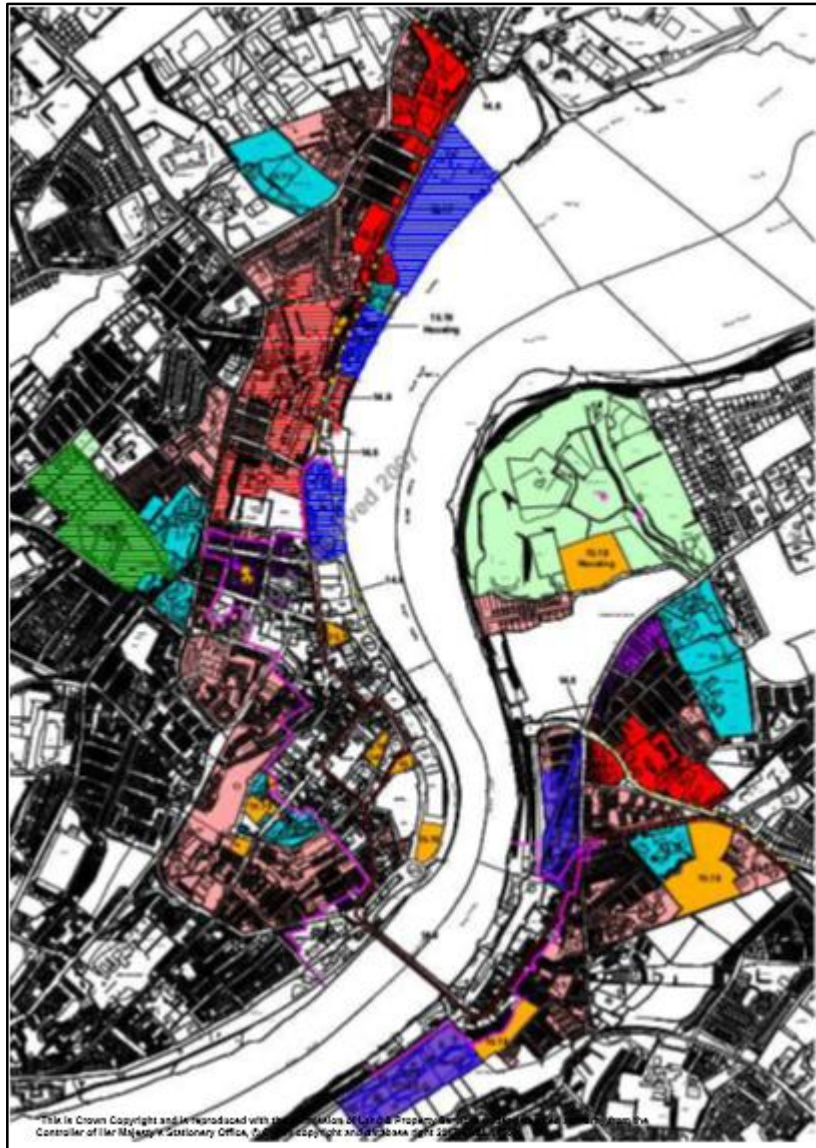
#### Map of Derry City Commercial Core



(Derry City Area Plan 2011 Map 3)

## Appendix 3a

### Map of Derry City Central Area



*(Derry Area Plan 2011 Map 3)*



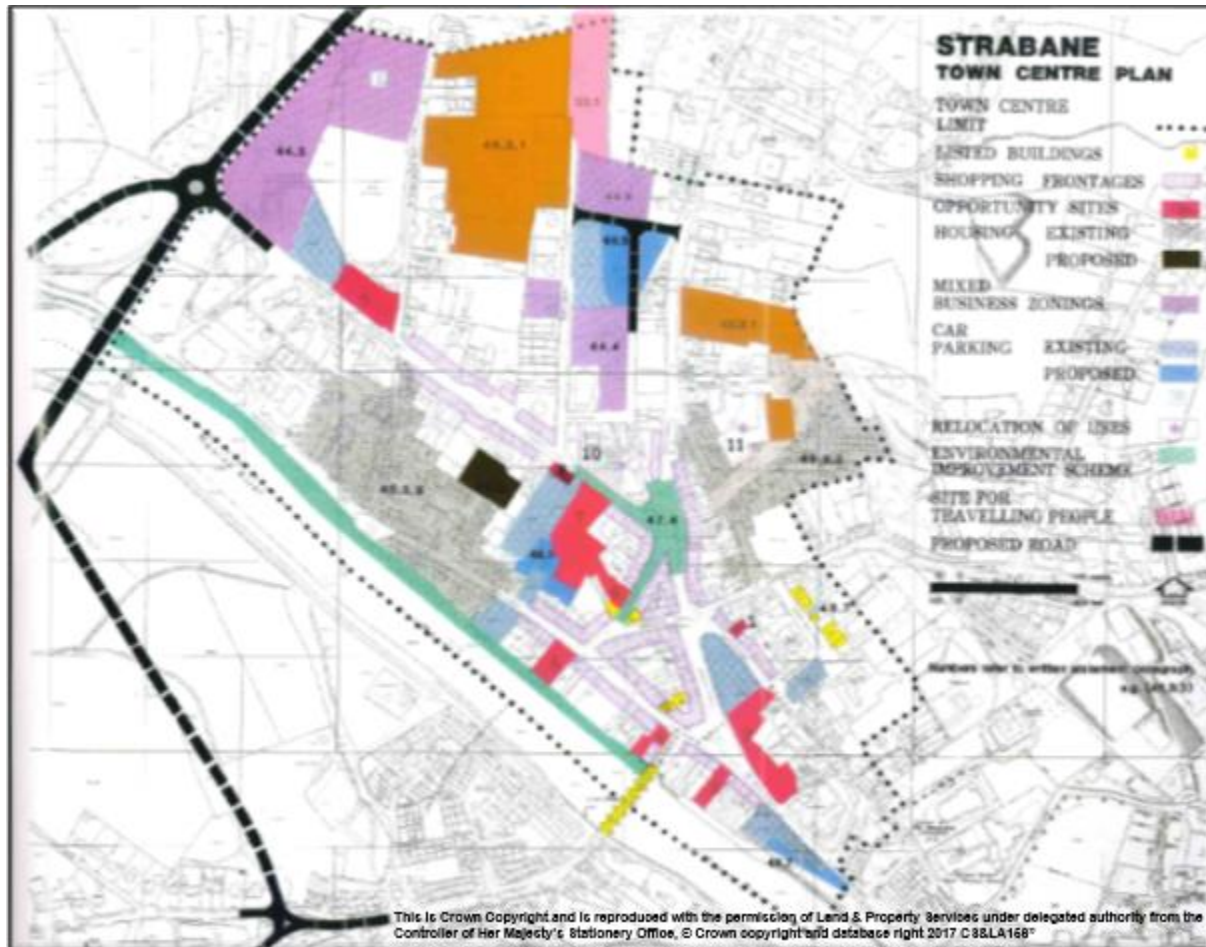
## Appendix 3b

### Derry Area Plan 2011 Map 3 Legend

	Central Area Boundary
	Commercial Core
	Residential
	Recreation and Open Space
	Office Development Area
	Civic and Education Uses
	Civic and Education Precinct
	Redevelopment Areas
	Opportunity Sites ( Preferred Use )
	Historic Park, Garden and Demesne
	Mixed Use
	Area of Townscape Character
	Major Road Proposals
	Public Transport Corridor
	Archaeological Sites and Monuments
15.6	Refers to Plan Written Statement

## Appendix 4

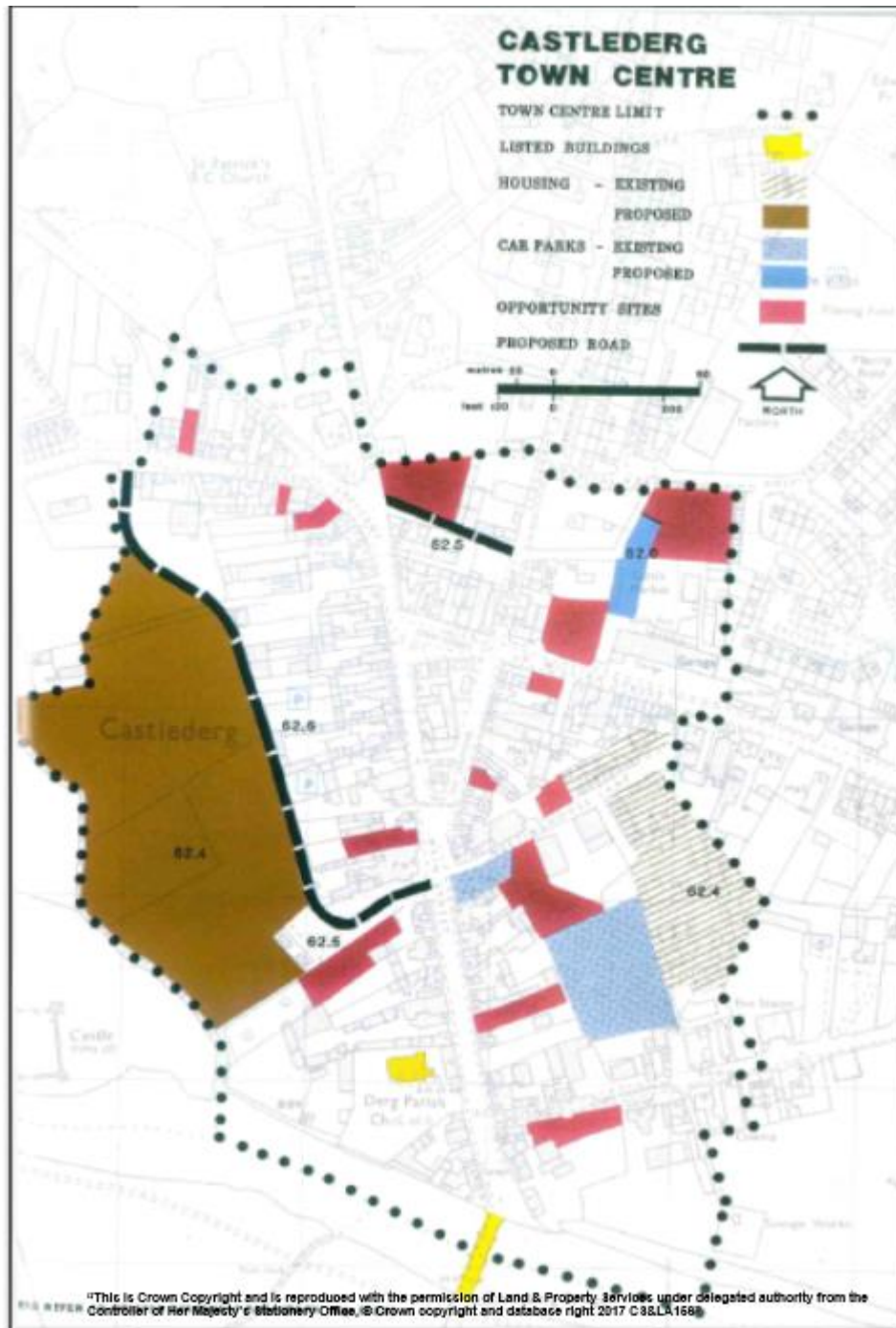
### Strabane Town Centre Map



*(Strabane Area Plan 1986-2001 Town centre Plan)*

## Appendix 5

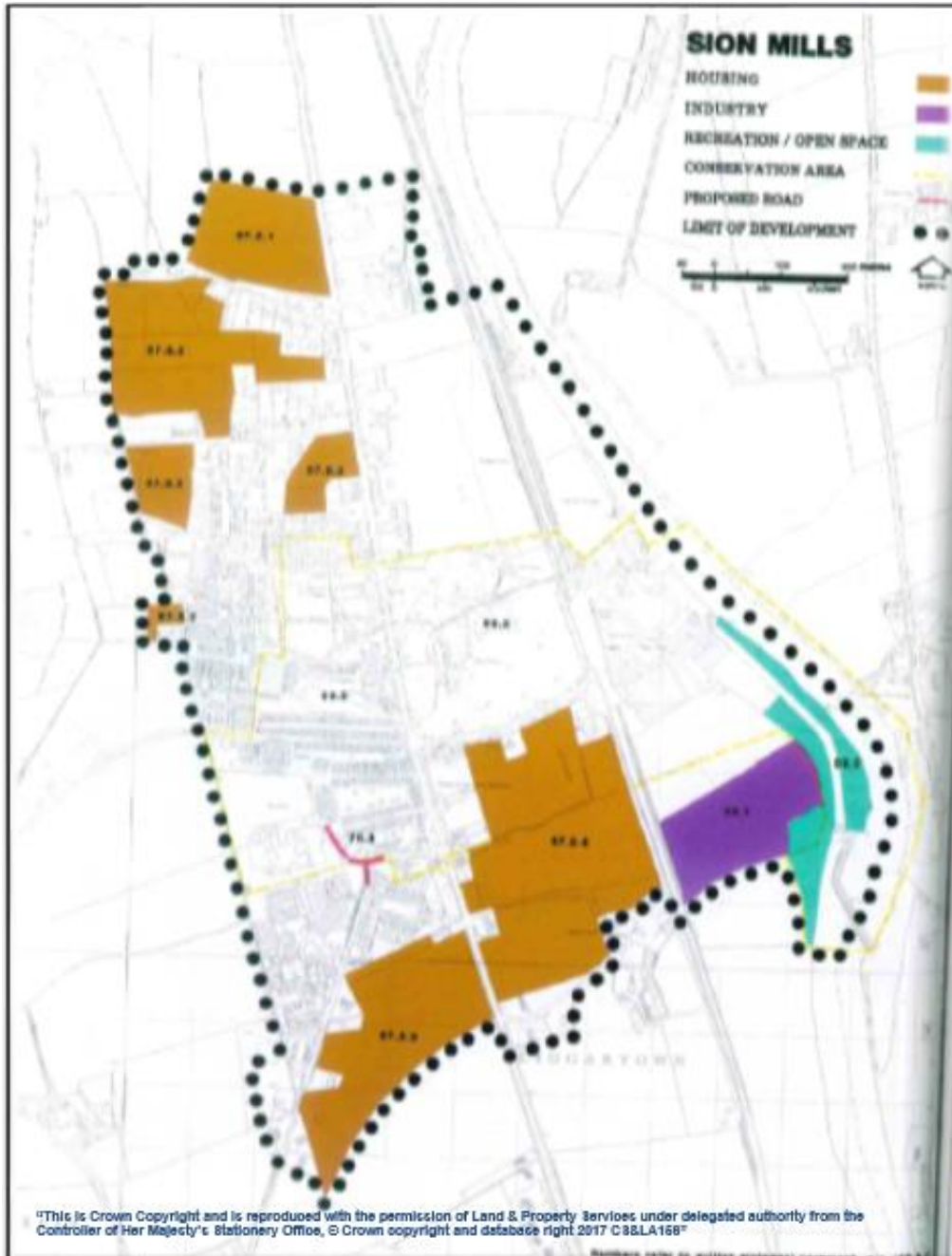
### Map of Castlederg Town centre



*(Strabane Area Plan 1986-2001 Castlederg Town Centre)*

## Appendix 6

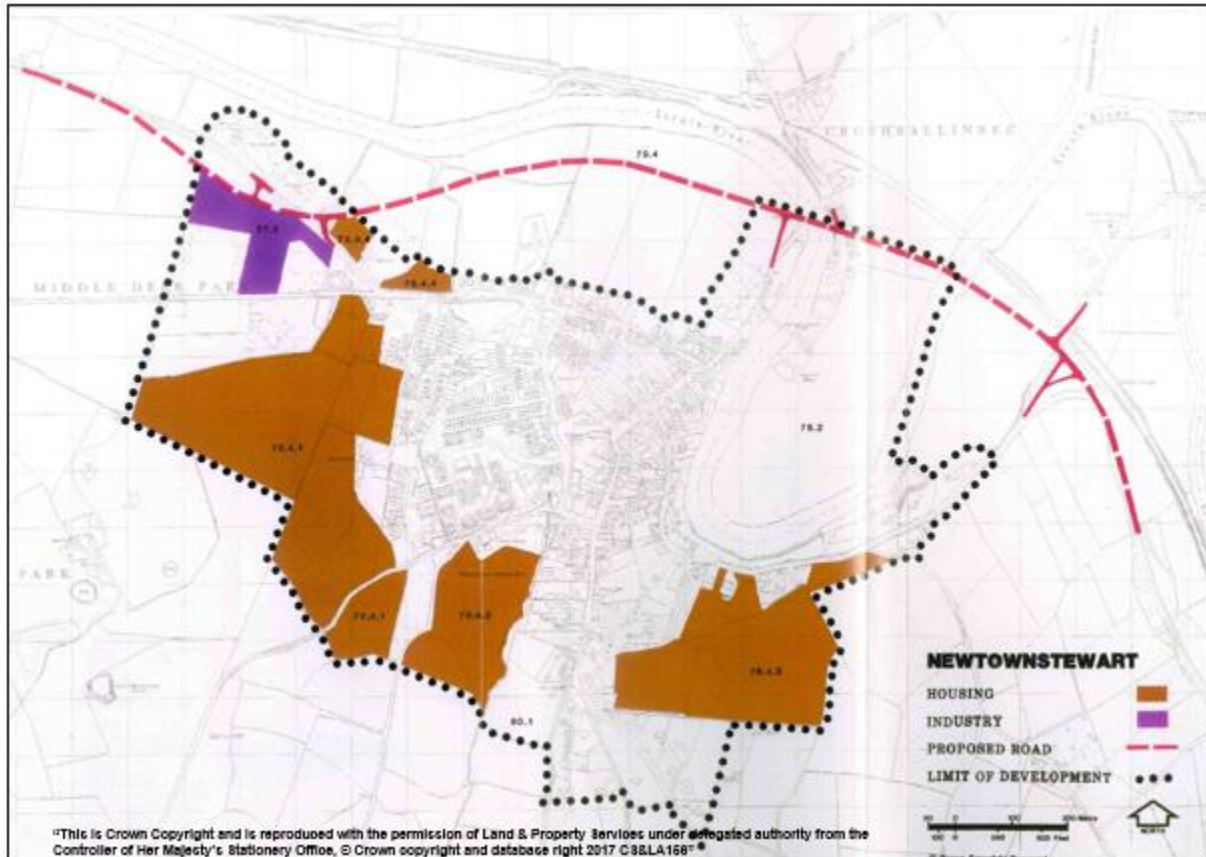
### Map of Sion Mills



*(Strabane Area Plan 1986-2001 Sion Mills)*

## Appendix 7

### Map of Newtownstewart



*(Strabane Area Plan 1986-2001 Newtownstewart)*

## Appendix 8

### Planning History for Designated Redevelopment Areas with Derry Central Area.

Area Plan Proposal	Current Status	Planning Commitment
<p><b>Redevelopment Area</b></p> <p>(McFarland Quay/Strand Rd adjacent to Fort George)</p>	<p><b>Developed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Car Show room (Ford).</li> <li>-McDonalds Drive thru</li> <li>-Sainsburys and First Trust Bank</li> <li>-KFC</li> <li>Foyleview Apartments</li> <li>-2 Retail Units, Pure Gym and Smyths Toys.</li> <li>- 1 derelict site with planning history for an office block and a current application for a PFS</li> </ul>	<p>A/1993/6076- Site for vehicle showroom &amp; vehicle storage compound</p> <p>A/1998/0676- Erection of foodstore and non retail store with coffee shop, off licence, petrol filling station, car wash and associated car parking, access and riverside walk</p> <p>A/1999/0734/F- Erection of sit-in and drive through restaurant.</p> <p>A/1999/0726/F- Mixed use development including 31 apartments with covered parking, fitness suite, 2No. retail warehouses measuring 10,000 and 15,000 sq ft and a drive through restaurant.</p> <p>A/2006/0843/F- Proposed six storey office and retail building with basement car park. Not implemented and expired</p> <p>LA11/2015/0649/F- Unattended 24 Hour operating filling station to include new canopy, 5 fuel dispensers, new underground fuel tanks, upgraded associated site works and site boundaries. Current application</p>

<b>Redevelopment Area</b>	<b>Developed</b>	
(opposite Aberfoyle Terrace and north of Council Building, south of Rockmills, Strand Road)	<p>Aberfoyle Medical Practice. 7 storey TimberQuay mixed use development including multi-storey car park, offices, restaurant, coffee shops, hair dresser, carphone warehouse dentist. Fujitsu, Click energy, Kainos.</p>	<p>A/2000/0048/F- Demolition of existing buildings and the construction of 3762 sq.m gross commercial area; 147 apartments, consisting of 21 one-bed apartments, 101 two-bed apartments, 25 three -bed apartments; car park containing 270 parking spaces and associated site works</p>
<b>Redevelopment Area (Queens Quay)</b>	<p><b>Partially Developed Queens Quay Elevation</b></p> <p>Queens Quay medical Practice. Quay West Restaurant. NWRC Building Foyle electrics Hire Shop Derelict Site Wolf Stack restaurant. Mama Masala restaurant. Dulux paint Centre Car park Furniture liquidator. Derelict site (formerly Restaurant) Mandarin Palace with apartments above.)</p> <p><b>Lower Clarendon street Elevation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mandarin palace</li> <li>-Dananos restaurant</li> <li>-Taxi Office</li> <li>-Clarendon Bar</li> </ul> <p><b>Strand Road elevation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Clarendon bar</li> <li>-Derelict site</li> <li>-Empty Unit</li> <li>-Disability Action</li> <li>-car park</li> <li>-Derelict site</li> <li>-Envy Bar</li> <li>-Retail units</li> <li>-Bingo Hall</li> <li>-HSS yard</li> <li>-Arcade</li> </ul>	<p>A/2007/0940/F- 24 Queens Quay, Change of use from car parts retail to restaurant for the consumption of food and drink on the premises and alterations to front elevation</p> <p>A/1996/0513- Erection of five storey block of flats (16 units) (apartments above Mandarin Palace).</p> <p>A/2004/0327/F- 56 Strand Road and 20a Queens Quay, Erection of proposed new building between 56 Strand Road (4 storey) and Queens Quay embankment (5 storey), ground floor retail with upper floor office space including demolition of existing office and retail warehouse building. NOT Implemented.</p> <p>A/2003/1181/F- Proposed office accommodation, retail unit and public bar and restaurant development (4 storey to Queen's Quay and 3 storey to Strand Road).</p> <p>A/2003/0758/F- Change of Use and alteration of 4 storey building with existing ground floor restaurant and take-away with three floors of flats above to provide ground and first floor restaurant with take-away, office accommodation on second floor and staff facilities and 1 No. flat on third floor.</p>