



Derry City & Strabane  
District Council  
Comhairle  
Chathair Dhoire &  
Cheantar an tSratha Báin  
Derry Cille & Strábane  
Districk Council



## 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 Stakeholder Event – Strabane Town Centre & Retailing Briefing Note

### Strabane Town Background:

Strabane has a population of 13,172 (2011 Census) and is a main town within the new Council area, playing a supporting role to Derry. It also performs an important role as a main service centre for North Tyrone and East Donegal providing a range of retail services to its residents and rural hinterland. Within the context of Tyrone, it is the second largest town after Omagh. On the other side of the river Foyle (across Lifford Bridge) is the smaller town of Lifford so cross-border retailing is a very significant aspect. Strabane is equidistant from Omagh, Letterkenny and Derry. Historically, Strabane developed as both an industrial centre and strong market town.

The town centre has its own unique identity which is characterised by a large ASDA and modern retail development close to the by-pass and more traditional shopping area at the other side of the town centre which is anchored around old established streets such as Railway Street, Abercorn Square, Castle Street and Market Street.

In recent years, there has been significant public sector investment resulting in the Alley Arts Centre and Library with other initiatives aimed at improving the public realm and run-down buildings along key town centre streets. The traditional retail core is still seen as underperforming and suffers from high vacancy rates and signs of urban blight (vacancy, shutters and gap sites). A recent preliminary health check has shown that there is approximately 50 vacant properties concentrated mainly in the traditional core.

There is planning permission for a substantial mixed-use development at the 'Camels Hump' site, outside of the town centre, close to existing businesses at Lifford Road. Home Bargains has recently opened at the former Long's supermarket site on Melmount Road and there has been past pressure for retail development on economic development land at the southern edge of the town. There has also been some spillage of town centre uses to other outer-areas.

### Legislative/Regional/Area Plan Considerations

- Legislative requirement under the Planning Act and Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations.
- Regional Development Strategy (RDS) Strabane Main Hub
- SPPS: Main policy and guidance Document which promotes a '*town centre first*' approach. Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015 (SPPS): The SPPS is the main policy and guidance in relation to retailing and town centres. It aims to support and sustain vibrant town centres across Northern Ireland, through the promotion of established town centres as the appropriate first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions, consistent with the RDS. A **town centre first approach** for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses is the policy direction and it states that planning authorities must take a town first approach in their LDP. It sets out that in relation to retail

decision making, that a **sequential approach** should be adopted in LDPs. It also encourages that **a range of diverse uses** should be protected and enhanced in the town centre such as leisure, cultural and community facilities, housing and business. **High quality design** should be promoted in town centres and accessibility should be maintained and improved to and within the town centre.

- PPS5: Superseded by SPPS
- Strabane Area Plan 2001 – Identified an extensive town centre boundary and land suitable for mixed business use.
- Community Plan – to develop a retail strategy for Derry and Strabane
- Draft Integrated Economic Development Strategy
- Strabane Masterplan
- What opportunities and sites exist in and around the town centre for retailing, offices and leisure?

### How can we further improve our Town Centres?

Shopping is also seen as a leisure activity – by encouraging mixed use into town centres and making them a destination for shopping, food / drink and leisure, it will encourage people to spend more time there, thereby helping the economy – both day time and evening. There is still a demand for out of town shopping by developers, as the multiples are keen to occupy large spaces, with the possibility of lower rates and rents. **While out-of-town centre developments are attractive to both developers and retailers, it is important to be mindful that these developments may cause a threat to the town centre.**

#### Possible Options

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Strabane Town Centre	Existing Area Plan – retain large town centre	Contract Existing Town Centre	Expand to include Camel’s Hump

### See Questions on Screen re. a) Key Planning Issues, b) LDP Proposals and

#### c) LDP Policies

#### Prompts for Table Discussion

- What is your vision for Strabane Town Centre?
- What is your opinion on the Retail Capacity of Strabane Town – current and future?
- In Planning terms, what are the most pertinent issues affecting your area of interest?
- How could issues around Strabane Town Centre be sustainably improved in the forthcoming LDP?

- Does the town centre boundary for Strabane as currently defined in the Strabane Area Plan 2001 accurately reflect modern shopping patterns, habits and demands?
- Should the existing boundary be retained, condensed or expanded?
- Do you consider that current planning policies (SPPS/PPS 5) in relation to town centres are adequate – if not, how do you suggest we could improve these?