

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE : 3 MAY 2005

CONSULTATIVE DRAFT: KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Committee a Consultative Draft Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy. This strategy, once finalised and approved, will provide a framework for co-ordinated action pertaining to the development of Kilmarnock and will ultimately be a material consideration with particular regard to current and future retail and other town centre related development proposals.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Kilmarnock town centre's relative position in the regional shopping hierarchy has been slowly eroded over recent years with the development of competing retail and other facilities in neighbouring authority areas and the Glasgow conurbation.

2.2 Recent planning consents and ongoing developer interest in large scale, out-of-centre retail developments, both within Kilmarnock and at other locations nearby, have also eroded and raised concerns about the continuing vitality and viability of Kilmarnock town centre.

2.3 The imminent opening of the M77 presents further challenges but proposed new housing allocations as detailed in the Draft Replacement Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan potentially provide the opportunity to attract additional shoppers.

2.4 It is considered essential therefore that an effective and practical town centre strategy is produced, as a matter of urgency, in order to identify priorities for co-ordinated action and to safeguard and improve all the various functions that Kilmarnock town centre provides.

2.5 Draft copies of the Town Centre Strategy have been deposited in members' lounges for information.

Planning Policy Context

2.6 The Draft Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy is being produced within the context of the Draft Replacement Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan as well as the East Ayrshire Local Plan Spatial Development Options Paper, a consultative paper produced as part of the process of preparing the alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan. The Options Paper addresses, amongst other issues, the subject of retail and town centre development and provides a further strategic context which will inform the Strategy.

2.7 It is intended that once formulated and agreed by the Council, the Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy should be incorporated into the Alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan.

Consultancy Study

2.8 The draft strategy has also been informed by the recently prepared strategy for Enterprise Ayrshire on Kilmarnock town centre prepared by Roger Tym and Partners in association with Jones Lang LaSalle. The completed report provides a rationale for a future investment strategy for the town centre and takes the form of a prioritised action plan. The study was completed after to the Spatial Development Options Paper referred to above.

3 THE STRATEGY

3.1 The overarching strategy as drafted is to promote the core of Kilmarnock town centre (defined as between the viaduct to the north, John Finnie Street to the west, St Marnock Street/Fowlds Street to the south and the inner ring road to the east) as the prime location for the development of major retailing activity and as the preferred location for further office, high density residential and commercial leisure activities.

3.2 The strategy document addresses and deals with the full spectrum of town centre related issues – retailing, accessibility, business, commercial, and residential uses as well as environmental factors. The Strategy identifies actions, developments and proposals that will be required to facilitate the revitalisation of Kilmarnock town centre.

3.3 Key actions being considered include promotion of prime town centre sites considered to have potential particularly for retail and commercial development, including:

- the King Street/Fowlds Street/Queen Street area;
- and areas around the Foregate and Burns Mall.

3.4 Further proposals under consideration include the potential for high density residential led mixed-use developments that may include office and retail uses at the southern end of the town centre.

3.5 It is considered that the development of sites within the town centre or identified in the Draft Town Centre Strategy should not be looked at in isolation but be viewed to complement potential new housing developments in either brownfield or greenfield locations as outlined in the Draft Replacement Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan.

3.6 Underpinning all the proposals is the need for improved infrastructure, particularly in terms of providing improved access to the town centre from outlying residential areas as well as communities within Kilmarnock's catchment area. Also included is the need to improve access between the key retail areas of the town centre core, Glencairn and Queens Drive.

4 NEXT STEPS

4.1 It is intended that the Draft Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy be advertised generally for consultation purposes but the following key stakeholders will be particularly contacted for their views:

- The Kilmarnock Town Centre Management Initiative;
- Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire;
- Ayrshire Economic Forum;
- Kilmarnock Retailers Association;
- Local Community Councils/organisation
- Various developers and their agents

4.2 Comments received on the East Ayrshire Local Plan Spatial Development Options Paper will also be taken on board.

4.2 The finalised strategy will be submitted to Committee for approval once consultation with all of the above stakeholders has been completed.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Once finalised and approved the Strategy will be material in the consideration of future retail and other planning applications affecting Kilmarnock town centre.

6 FINANCIAL/PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None directly arising from the report

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee approved the draft Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy for consultation purposes in accordance with paragraph 4 above.

James Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services

25 April 2005 (MG/KD/SA)
FV-AN

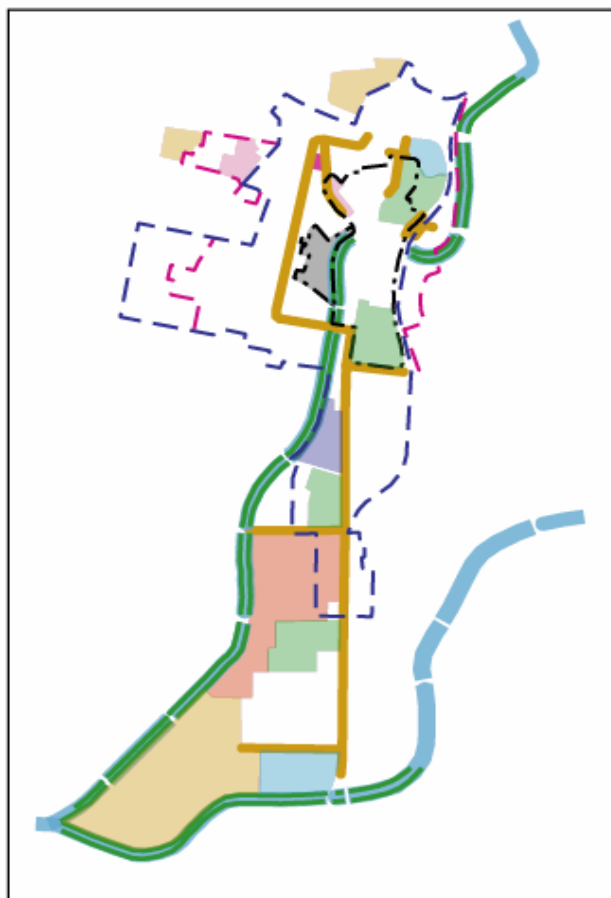
BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. East Ayrshire Local Plan Spatial Development Options Paper
2. Consultation Draft, Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025
3. Kilmarnock Town Centre Action Plan, Roger Tym & Partners in association with Jones Lang LaSalle

For further information on the content of the report, contact Mark Greaves, Planning and Development and Building Standards Division, on 01563 576758

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Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy Consultation Draft



March 2005

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KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

CONSULTATION DRAFT

1 Introduction

1.1 The importance of Kilmarnock town centre to the economic well-being of East Ayrshire cannot be underestimated, the centre comprising, as it does, the prime commercial, cultural, entertainment and retail heart of the area. However, its relative position in the regional shopping hierarchy has been slowly eroded over recent years with the development of competing retail and other facilities in neighbouring authority areas and the Glasgow conurbation. Recent planning consents and ongoing developer interest in large scale, out-of-town-centre retail developments, both within Kilmarnock and at other locations nearby, have also eroded and raised concerns about the continuing vitality and viability of Kilmarnock town centre. It is therefore considered essential that an effective and practical town centre strategy for Kilmarnock is produced, as a matter of urgency, in order to identify priorities for co-ordinated action and to safeguard and improve all of the various functions that the town centre provides.

2 Kilmarnock Town Centre Profile

2.1 Kilmarnock is the largest shopping and commercial centre in East Ayrshire, with a good range of food and non-food outlets. While there is a sufficient supply of outlets selling convenience goods, the choice of outlets selling comparison goods is, however, limited and there is a perceived demand for a wider range and variety of shops in the town. Kilmarnock town centre contains a core shopping area centred on the pedestrian area of King Street, the Cross and Foregate Square. The majority of all establishments in the core area are retail in nature and it is considered that retail uses should predominate in this area to maintain and protect the town's retail status.

2.2 The north end of Kilmarnock town centre is considered to have considerable development potential and offers, in particular, the opportunity for a purpose built new office development adjacent to a railway station, bus station and the town centre core shopping area. However, the wider town centre area, outwith the core area, is also considered to be an appropriate location for a diverse range of retail and non-retail office, community and leisure uses. In addition, the Council encourages appropriate residential development in the town centre area in certain circumstances and, in particular, supports Scottish Homes and the Ayrshire Economic Forum in the implementation of their individual programmes which identify Kilmarnock town centre as a key area of priority.

2.3 In addition to the core shopping area of the town centre, the centre also contains an area based on Portland Road which caters predominantly for financial, professional and other office uses. Areas of more peripheral, secondary shopping are also to be found, particularly in the High Glencairn Street, Titchfield Street and John Finnie Street areas where there is a noticeable decline in the retail environment and the condition of certain properties.

2.4 Existing out-of-town-centre retailing in Kilmarnock comprises retail parks at Glencairn, to the south of the town centre, and Queens Drive to the east. Various other neighbourhood shopping centres serve local needs throughout the town.

3 Purpose of the Strategy

3.1 Because of the inherent complexities regarding town centre uses and activities and the current high level of demand and pressure for new retail development within and adjacent to Kilmarnock town centre, it is considered that early and comprehensive attention should be given to the particular issues and problems facing the town centre, prior to the preparation of the formal consultative draft version of the alteration to the local plan, work on which is currently underway. The preparation of this town centre strategy is a means of addressing the challenges faced by the town centre and is intended to provide a framework for co-ordinated action pertaining to the development of Kilmarnock, with particular regard to current and future retail and other town centre related development proposals.

3.2 The strategy document is also intended to address and deal with the full spectrum of specific town centre related issues. In this regard, retail, accessibility, business and commercial, residential and environmental factors have all been given due consideration with a view to improving town centre facilities for all those people and residents of East Ayrshire who use it.

3.3 It is intended that, once formulated and agreed by the Council, the Strategy and Action Plan should be incorporated into the Alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan which is currently being prepared by the Council and thereafter be advertised for information and comment as part of the formal local plan preparation process.

4 Strategic and Policy Context for the Strategy

Strategic Context

4.1 The town centre strategy has been prepared in the overall context of the Council's East Ayrshire Community Plan. Although retailing and town centre activity issues are not mentioned or highlighted in the Community Plan as specific issues for consideration in strategic terms, it is accepted that improvement of the retailing and town centre functions of the area communities can contribute significantly to achieving the stated aims of the Community Plan by;

- promoting a lasting pattern of development;
- enabling investment in leisure and cultural activities;
- encouraging the growth of existing and new businesses; and
- extending the business and job opportunities associated with tourism and leisure.

4.2 The Kilmarnock town centre strategy has also been placed in the context of the Ayrshire Economic Forum's Strategy for Economic Development. This aims to create a business structure for the 21st century through the development of an integrated development strategy for the principal towns in the heart of Ayrshire which specifically includes Kilmarnock and its historic town centre. The Ayrshire Economic Forum Strategy in particular identifies the 'Top of the Town' area of Kilmarnock as a major Gateway project in the attraction of new business to the area. In addition, the Ayrshire Economic Forum proposes to take forward a regeneration strategy for the historic town centre of Kilmarnock, the main retail streets of the town and new edge of centre developments.

Policy Context

4.3 The Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy is set within the overall context of NPPG8: Town Centres and Retailing and meets the requirements of all pertinent strategic planning policy documents, including the adopted East Ayrshire Local Plan and the approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan, which together comprise the statutory development plan for East Ayrshire. Both documents are currently being reviewed and, in this regard, due consideration has also been given to the consultation draft of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025 which has recently been produced.

Principal NPPG requirements of relevance to Kilmarnock town centre

- to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres as the most appropriate locations for retail and other related activities;
- to create an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector offering consumer choice;
- to apply the sequential test and the principles of sustainability to new retail and commercial leisure developments; and
- to ensure that new retail developments are fully integrated with other land uses, the existing transport network and different modes of transport.

Principal Structure Plan Requirements of relevance to Kilmarnock town centre

- to bring forward proposals to promote and enhance town centres;
- to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres;
- to apply the sequential test to new retail and commercial leisure developments; and
- to ensure new retail development is of a size and scale appropriate to its location.

Principal Local Plan Requirements relating to Kilmarnock town centre

4.4 The existing strategic approach to retail and town centre development as detailed in the adopted East Ayrshire Local Plan is to strengthen and improve retail provision in East Ayrshire and to improve the overall health and vibrancy of town centres. This is to be achieved, in so far as Kilmarnock town centre is concerned, by promoting the town centre, along with Cumnock town centre, as the prime location for the development of retailing and commercial leisure activity within East Ayrshire and for the location of offices and related activities catering for the needs of the general public.

Spatial Development Options Paper

4.5 The town centre strategy also reflects the findings of the East Ayrshire Local Plan Spatial Development Options Paper, produced as part of the ongoing review of the East Ayrshire Local Plan and which has been placed in the public domain for consultation purposes. The Options Paper addresses, amongst other issues, the subject of retail and town centre developments and seeks the views of the general public and all other interested parties on a range of issues relating to town centres in general and Kilmarnock town centre in particular. The Options Paper specifically asks a number of questions relating to the spatial development of the town centre and seeks comment on the range of development options it contains, ie

- whether the town centre boundary of Kilmarnock should be extended, with specific development sites being identified within both the existing centre and the extended area to accommodate anticipated demand for new retail and town centre uses; or
- whether to keep the town centre to its existing boundaries and to identify specific sites within that boundary as being suitable for redevelopment purposes.

4.6 The Options Paper also poses a number of other questions relating to Kilmarnock town centre, namely

- Are there any other sites within the existing town centre of Kilmarnock that should be specifically identified or safeguarded for future retail or other appropriate town centre uses?
- Are there any other sites within Kilmarnock, currently in edge of centre locations, that should be specifically identified or safeguarded for future retail or other appropriate town centre uses and included within an expanded town centre boundary?
- Is there any scope for leisure and recreational provision in the town centre to be developed in conjunction with any proposed new retail development?
- Is there any potential for the Galleon Centre to be updated, developed or extended to improve the facilities it provides? Should the Centre be relocated elsewhere and the site redeveloped for retailing or alternative town centre uses?
- Should the range of acceptable town centre uses be expanded to include Class 4, Class 7 and Class 10 uses? Should any other specific classes of development be included as appropriate town centre uses?

4.7 The results of the consultation exercise will be built into the town centre strategy, as considered appropriate.

5 Town Centre Issues and Challenges to be Addressed

5.1 The development of a sustainable town centre strategy for Kilmarnock requires a clear understanding of those national and local trends and issues which are particularly pertinent to the town. It is also important that any such strategy is firmly based on a comprehensive assessment of the role and character of the town centre and its strengths and weaknesses. The primary areas of concern addressed in the strategy are:

- (i) Retailing;
- (ii) Accessibility Issues;
- (iii) Housing;
- (iv) Mixed Uses; and
- (v) The Physical Environment

5.2 It is important that each of these areas of concern is not considered in isolation and that a comprehensive assessment is made as to how each one may impact on another. It is also important that an assessment is made of the overall effect each may have on Kilmarnock town centre and Kilmarnock in general.

- (i) Retailing

5.3 A healthy retail environment is generally an essential pre-requisite for a vital and viable town centre and it is essential that Kilmarnock town centre continues to provide a comprehensive, effective and efficient shopping role for the community.

The continued existence of a good range of comparison shops, including not only national retailers but also specialised shops to provide choice and variety, is considered critical to the ongoing health and vibrancy of the town centre.

5.4 Increasing developer interest and an increasing number of proposals for retailing in out-of-town-centre locations, together with pending upgrades to infrastructure and proposed new housing allocations in peripheral locations have raised concerns about the future of Kilmarnock town centre. Kilmarnock already loses significant amounts of retail expenditure to Glasgow and to other retail centres both within and outwith Ayrshire and failure to improve retail provision in the town will leave Kilmarnock increasingly susceptible to competition from other centres. The allocation of large areas of new housing land to meet anticipated demand, as detailed in the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan, provides the opportunity for Kilmarnock to increase the catchment population of the town centre. However, at the same time, it is vital to ensure, wherever possible, that any new housing areas are established in the most appropriate locations with easy access to the town centre itself.

5.5 Balancing developer and retailer interests with those of the local residents is a key element of the town centre strategy with major implications for shopping provision and development. Further retail development at edge-of-centre sites or in out-of-town-centre locations could potentially draw existing retailers out of the town centre core and further undermine town centre vitality, viability and character. Focusing retail development within the existing town centre core, on the other hand, offers the potential to build on the assets already in place, solidify Kilmarnock's position within the retail hierarchy and create an attractive retail environment that caters to the shopping needs of the whole community.

5.6 The identification of a range of new housing sites to meet anticipated demand throughout Kilmarnock offers the opportunity for improvements to be made to town centre facilities and services through the expeditious use of planning gain. Prospective developers of new housing sites can, in particular, be requested to enter into appropriate planning agreements with the Council and be encouraged to make developer contributions, in order to facilitate an increase in the retail offer of the town centre for the new resident populations of the housing sites concerned. It is considered that contributions to improving town centre facilities and services by this means should be actively promoted as an integral part of the town centre strategy.

Key Challenges

5.7 The key challenges facing retail provision and retail services within Kilmarnock town centre are;

- to overcome a lack of shopping options and to extend the limited range of goods currently available;
- to extend the existing limited scope for potential new, large-scale stores within the existing town centre core area;
- to reverse a perceived bargain basement image of existing retail goods offered for sale in the centre;

- to stem leakage from the town centre to competing centres, estimated to be in the region of £40m per annum;
- to minimise the impact that upgrades to infrastructure (M77) and shopping provision at competing centres (Pollok, Ayr, East Kilbride) may have on the town centre. These developments may perpetuate further leakage and decline in the vitality, viability and character of the town centre;
- to remove constraints caused by fragmented ownership patterns within the town centre which adversely affect the ability of developers to assemble and package sites for future large-scale development;
- to reduce uncertainty with regard to the projected growth in comparison goods expenditure and the allocation of comparison goods floorspace;
- to encourage developer interest in providing and securing additional floorspace through innovative redevelopment schemes.
- to address the problem of existing low retail rent rates which deters private developers from developing in the town centre core;
- to address the current inability of Kilmarnock to attract high profile, quality new retailers (e.g. Next, Debenhams) which could lead to further deterioration of the image of the town centre; and
- to tackle the physical form of the town centre which has an elongated development pattern and constraints in the form of the existing one-way system (a concrete collar), viaduct, river and parks.

(ii) Accessibility Issues

5.8 Successful town centres depend on good access to them and easy mobility within them. Kilmarnock town centre is historically the hub for public transport users in the area and considerable work has recently been carried out regarding traffic management and improvements to the one-way system. However, issues remain regarding access to the town centre from outlying areas and between the three primary retail areas within Kilmarnock as a whole, namely the historic town centre core, the Glencairn Retail Park and Queens Drive.

5.9 It is considered that one of the most important issues that must be addressed in the town centre strategy is to improve access to the town centre from those areas to be identified for new housing development in the emerging alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan. Significant house building over the next 20 years offers the opportunity to improve accessibility through the effective use of Planning Gain.

Key Challenges

5.10 The key challenges facing accessibility issues within the town centre are:

- to further improve connectivity between identified development areas both within and outwith the one way system encircling the northern part of the town centre;
- to further improve existing pedestrian linkages to the town centre from key access points such as the train station or via the subway at London Road;
- to make the centre more competitive with out-of-centre developments with their generally free and plentiful car parking;
- to improving access to the town centre from those sites to be identified for housing purposes in the alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan; and
- to realise the maximum benefits to be afforded by proposed new developments, within or at the edge of the town centre and within outlying areas.

(iii) Housing

5.11 A thriving local resident population can be a positive force for change and the maintenance of quality within town centres. This is equally true of Kilmarnock where an increase in the residential population of the town centre and areas immediately adjacent to it can make a valuable contribution to its vitality, viability and character by supporting the evening economy, sustaining a broad mix of day-time uses and providing additional levels of self-policing, security and safety.

5.12 The pending redevelopment of the Kilmarnock Infirmary site and the ongoing development at the Hunslet Barclay site to the north of the town centre indicates there is healthy demand for new town centre housing within the town. A number of under-utilised sites and proposed large-scale development schemes indicate there is scope for further residential development, especially as a part of mixed-use schemes. These schemes could provide monetary benefits for the town centre and alleviate need for Greenfield housing land release in peripheral locations.

Key Challenges

5.13 The key challenges facing housing within the town centre are:

- to encourage developer interest in providing housing in and around town centre locations;
- to stimulate demand for town centre residential living from the general population;

- to remove any negative perceptions that residents of the area may have about the notion of town centre living;
- to address existing issues of competing higher value town centre uses such as retail and leisure;
- to address and, wherever possible, remove any ownership constraints in relation to the use of upper floors and space above shops for residential purposes; and
- to widen the range of traditional 'typical' town centre dwellers, i.e. students, and young singles and couples and to cater for a wider variety of potential residential groups.

(iv) Mixed Uses

5.14 The most successful town centres contain a diverse mix of attractions and uses that draw a range of different groups into the centre at different times. Town centre activities are inter-related and mutually dependent. Diversity is dependent on the existence of a critical mass of a whole range of uses and activities, including housing, businesses, services, entertainment, and social meeting places. The loss of individual components reduces the reasons people may have to visit a town centre and consequently affects its vitality and viability.

Key Challenges

5.15 The key challenges facing mixed use issues within the town centre are:

- to dealing with developers who may be reluctant to get involved with the added complexity inherent in mixed-use development schemes;
- to encourage increased and diverse use of the town centre which is largely deserted after the shops close;
- to consider the potential of proposed new office developments within or near to the town centre;
- to discourage or prevent the development of edge-of-centre sites for inappropriate uses which could undermine the diversity of the existing town centre core, lead to the reduction of retail confidence and adversely affect the image of the town centre.
- to promote an increase in the range of acceptable town centre uses. Certain uses, i.e. office, hotel and residential uses are not considered to be acceptable town centre uses within the current local plan framework but could well be considered appropriate in certain circumstances.

(v) The Physical Environment

5.16 The quality and maintenance of the public realm and the environment, especially at gateways to a town centre or at key arrival points, has perhaps the most immediate impact upon the image of the town centre as an attractive and inviting place to live, work, shop or spend time. Considerable effort and resources have been spent in recent years to create a high quality public realm and an attractive physical environment within the core shopping area of Kilmarnock town centre.

5.17 A key aim of the town centre strategy is to continue these efforts, to maximise the benefits of the work already done and to enhance long disregarded but nonetheless key assets of the town centre through quality development schemes.

Key Challenges

5.18 The key challenges facing the physical environment within the town centre are:

- to using potential planning gains from proposed developments to the greatest advantage, in order to increase the attractiveness of the town;
- to strengthen and improve the currently weak relationship between the town centre and the river running through it, which requires imaginative solutions but could have large benefits.
- to overcome and address the current fragmented development pattern of the town which could be exacerbated as a result of disparate development proposals / projects;
- to environmentally enhance and improve the various vacant and derelict buildings in secondary retail areas such as Titchfield Street, Strand Street, and Portland Gate which make area feel run down, downmarket and deter investment; and
- to effect and expand the existing high quality environmental improvements and pedestrianisation of King Street and Bank Street.

6 The Strategic Approach

The Town Centre Vision

6.1 Drawing on the above issues and challenges described in Section 4 above, a vision statement for Kilmarnock town centre has been prepared, which is:

To strengthen, improve and promote retail and town centre facilities within Kilmarnock town centre and to create a lively, vibrant and healthy centre that provides for the needs of the local community.

The Town Centre Strategy

6.2 In order to support this vision, an overarching key strategy has been adopted which states:

The overarching key strategy for Kilmarnock town centre is to promote the town centre as the prime location for the development of major retailing and commercial leisure activity within East Ayrshire and for the location of offices and related activities catering for the needs of the general public.

6.3 A series of strategic aims has been devised as a means of helping achieve this strategy, each strategic aim being based on the five broad areas of concern, ie retailing, accessibility issues, housing, mixed uses and the physical environment detailed in paragraph 5.1 above. An assessment as to how each of these strategic aims can best be achieved has then been made and a series of specific actions devised, detailing how these objectives can best be implemented and achieved on the ground.

Strategic Aims

6.4 Five broad strategic aims have been devised to help achieve the Council's vision for the town centre, these being as follows;

- (i) to encourage and facilitate the revitalisation of Kilmarnock town centre by developing a robust retail core, with a variety of retailers catering for the shopping needs of the community;
- (ii) to improve and enhance accessibility into and within the town centre;
- (iii) to promote town centre living and increase the number of residents living within the town centre;
- (iv) to diversify the range of acceptable town centre uses and to encourage wider use of town centre facilities and services; and
- (v) to improve and enhance the environmental character, appearance and amenity of the town centre and surrounding areas.

6.5 An assessment as to how each of these particular strategic aims can be facilitated and achieved is given below.

Strategic Aim (i)

To encourage and facilitate the revitalisation of Kilmarnock town centre by developing a robust retail core, with a variety of retailers catering for the shopping needs of the community.

6.6 It is considered that this strategic aim can best be achieved through the following actions:

- promoting, through the development planning system, the existing town centre core shopping area as the priority area for retail development.
- identifying key sites for new retail development and investment that meet the requirements of developers, retailers, businesses, customers of the services and facilities provided and the wider community;
- broadening, through the expeditious use of Section 75 Planning Agreements, developer contributions and planning gain etc, the range and scope of retail and other town centre provision within the town centre; and
- encouraging potential developers and existing retailers to improve and expand the range and quality of goods and services provided within the town centre.

Strategic Aim (ii)

To improve and enhance accessibility into and within the town centre

6.7 It is considered that this strategic aim can best be achieved through the following actions:

- developing further improved vehicular and pedestrian access to the centre in conjunction with the development of new or improved town centre facilities, services and other attractions;
- enhancing access, through the expeditious use of Section 75 Planning Agreements, between the town centre core shopping area and other retail areas within the town, namely the Glencairn Retail Park and Queens Drive;
- promoting and implementing, in conjunction with the Council's Roads Division, a comprehensive Transport Management Plan for Kilmarnock to facilitate new development, in so far as it relates to Kilmarnock town centre; and
- examine the feasibility of a new link road between Queens Drive and East Shaw Street.

Strategic Aim (iii)

To promote town centre living and increase the number of residents living within the town centre

6.8 It is considered that this strategic aim can best be achieved through the following actions:

- positively encouraging and promoting the introduction and integration of new build housing developments within or adjacent to the town centre, either as stand alone developments or as an integral part of an appropriate mixed-use scheme;
- identifying and promoting opportunities for the redevelopment or change of use of existing properties to provide additional residential accommodation, particularly in relation to vacant properties or properties above existing shops, offices etc. Such opportunities could possibly be promoted to both private and social housing providers through development of a Town Centre Living Initiative
- promoting a range of housing tenures within the town centre to broaden the diversity of the town centre resident population and to improve and expand the social and economic health of the town centre.

Strategic Aim (iv)

To diversify the range of acceptable town centre uses and to encourage wider use of town centre facilities and services

6.9 It is considered that this strategic aim can best be achieved through the following actions:

- positively encouraging and promoting the sensitive mixed use development of available gap sites or vacant properties in secondary retail areas which offer potential for this type of development;
- actively providing and proactively promoting any appropriate town centre sites in Council ownership for the sensitive development of Class 4 business and office uses;
- expanding, through the ongoing alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan, the range of uses that are considered to be acceptable within the town centre.
- facilitating, through the expeditious use of compulsory purchase powers, land assembly in relation to the comprehensive development of town centre sites for appropriate uses.

Strategic Aim (v)

To improve and enhance the environmental character, appearance and amenity of the town centre and surrounding areas

6.10 It is considered that this strategic aim can best be achieved through the following actions:

- encouraging and promoting the upgrading and restoration of all derelict and degraded buildings within the town centre area that have potential to contribute positively to the townscape, character and appearance of the area;

- positively encouraging the environmental improvement of the town centre through the introduction and implementation of appropriate Environmental Improvement and Town Centre Improvement Schemes.
- encouraging the highest possible quality of design in relation to all new developments within the town centre;
- identifying and targeting certain identified areas for appropriate and comprehensive redevelopment;
- encouraging individual developers whose developments are likely to generate increased use of the town centre to contribute, through the expeditious use of Section 75 Planning Agreements, to a dedicated Town Centre Trust Fund designed specifically to help fund the environmental improvement and physical upgrading of the town centre;
- positively developing and capitalising on the environmental quality and value of any outstanding natural and built heritage features located within the town centre (eg rivers, parks, listed buildings, conservation areas etc). The potential of such features to become key foci for the town centre should be recognised and developed as an integral part of any suggested development proposals; and
- promoting the production of a detailed Urban Design Framework that provides a uniform and comprehensive single 'identity' for the town centre and helps build both community and developer confidence in the area.

6.11 All of the above courses of action are general in nature and relate to broad actions that are equally applicable to the town centre as a whole. In addition to these actions, the Council has identified a number of actions which are site specific in nature but which, if implemented, would contribute positively to the upgrading of the town centre and its vitality and viability.

7 Site Specific and Location Based Strategic Actions

7.1 A series of site specific actions have been identified to help meet the strategic aims of the town centre strategy for the area and these are set out below. These actions take into account both current development proposals and ideas for future projects or actions. The actions identified are intended to provide a framework for the future strategic development of Kilmarnock, based on an analysis of the current situation in Kilmarnock, proposed future trends and the strategic and local planning context.

7.2 For ease of reference and for consistency, the site specific actions that have been devised are addressed under the five broad categories of retailing, accessibility issues, housing, mixed uses and the physical environment used to identify and describe the specific challenges detailed in section 3 of the strategy. It should be

noted, however, that some of the particular actions proposed may well relate to more than one of the categories described.

(i) Retailing

Sites in the town centre core shopping area

7.3 In accordance with existing National, Regional and Local Planning Policy Guidance retail development should be directed first and foremost to the existing town centre core shopping area. The ability of the Kilmarnock's retail core to maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector depends on the Council providing a proactive role towards town centre change and improvement. Given the weaknesses of the town centre and threats from competing shopping centres, this proactive role takes on a greater sense of urgency. Without expansion and increase in retail offer within the core area it is likely that Kilmarnock's position within the retail hierarchy will continue to deteriorate.

7.4 One of the difficulties facing the core area is the lack of opportunity sites that are attractive to developers/retailers to expand the retail offer. However, the Council has substantial interests in two key locations within the town centre core shopping area, the development / redevelopment of which is considered key elements in the implementation of a successful town centre strategy.

- Site 1: The Tesco supermarket and the associated Council owned car park at Fowlds Street / Sturrock Street and adjacent sites along King Street (See town centre strategy diagram).

This area comprises a prime retail pitch at the southern end of the Kilmarnock town centre core shopping area. It should be noted that the presence of a convenience store is considered to an asset within the town centre and it is advised that if the site is comprehensively redevelopment floorspace is allocated either within this site or another within the town centre for a 'Metro' style convenience store format.

- Site 2: The Foregate, including the multi-storey car park and the Burns Mall (See town centre strategy diagram)

The Burns Mall is the focus of much of the current retail offer in Kilmarnock and benefits from its location at the Cross, its links to the transport network and the proximity of the town centre multi-storey car park. The Council has substantial interests in the car park which, although providing valuable car parking spaces, is nonetheless an unattractive feature of the town centre and underutilised.

It is considered that the entire area should be investigated, in conjunction with the proposed 'Top of the Town' office development on an adjacent site, with a view to incorporating and integrating a large-scale retail development within

the area. It should be noted that the presence of a car parking at or near this location is an important asset within the town centre and it is recommended that, if comprehensive redevelopment of the site takes place, an appropriate level of car parking is allocated either within this site or at an alternative location within easy reach of the town centre.

7.5 It is considered that comprehensive redevelopment of either or both of these areas would:

- provide opportunities to develop modern and flexible formats to cater to the requirements of the high-profile retailers that Kilmarnock needs to attract, in order to maintain and improve its position within the retail hierarchy;
- act as a catalyst to spur further investment / development within the town centre core shopping area and the wider town centre in general;
- support the vitality and viability of the town centre;
- help improve Kilmarnock's image as an attractive shopping destination and attract additional investment; and
- retain a convenience store and an appropriate level of car parking within the core shopping area.

7.6 Development / redevelopment of these areas would be in accord with National, Regional and Local Planning Policy in terms of development within town centres. However, such developments would require commensurate upgrades to infrastructure and the improvement of access to the centre from outlying areas, possible through the implementation of appropriate planning gain measures. Such town centre development would also do much to prevent unnecessary or inappropriate retail development in out-of-town-centre locations.

7.7 The existing town centre core shopping area is presently confined to the pedestrianised areas of the Cross, King Street and the Foregate which comprise the key retail areas within the central area. However, it is also considered the pedestrianised area of Bank Street also provides a valuable retail function for the town and that, as with the Cross, King Street and the Foregate, all efforts should be made to prevent any degradation of that function or loss of retail floorspace in the area to other uses. Consequently it is proposed, as an integral part of the town centre strategy, that the existing core shopping area should be expanded to cover Bank Street (See town centre strategy map).

Sites in the wider town centre area

7.8 Notwithstanding the existence of the town centre core shopping area, retailing is a major component of town centre activity elsewhere in the central area of the town. However, within the wider town centre area, outwith the core shopping area, there are no specific sites which can be classed as having the potential, exclusively

and solely, for retail development. However, the former Kwik Save supermarket site and its associated car park, located at the southern end of Titchfield Street, which is currently lying vacant, (See town centre strategy diagram) is considered to constitute a suitable site for a comprehensive retail led, mixed use redevelopment with an associated residential or office component.

Sites adjacent to but outwith the town centre

7.9 There are three sites lying adjacent to but outwith the town centre boundary at the southern end of the area which are considered to have limited potential for residential led, mixed use development (See town centre strategy diagram).

- Site 1: Site of the existing Safeway Supermarket at West Shaw Street
- Site 2: The Stoddard redevelopment site at West Shaw Street, Mill Street (including properties fronting onto High Glencairn Street) and the BMK site at Burnside Street

The overall area covered by these two sites comprises a substantial area of land at the southern end of the existing town centre. This broad area is currently dominated by vacant or derelict sites, sporadic retail development and a number of workshops and industrial units. The overall quality of the environment is low. However, the area benefits from a location adjacent to the Kilmarnock Water and the Howard Park, two high amenity features that could provide assets to incorporate with any future development. The eastern portion of this area, which fronts directly onto High Glencairn Street, also benefits from a location within the town centre boundary.

Developer interest with regard to retail provision in Kilmarnock is currently largely centred on this particular area. There are existing consents, relating to the existing Safeway Supermarket site at West Shaw Street and the Stoddard's redevelopment site at Mill Street for significant amounts of both convenience and comparison retail floorspace. However, any strategy that promotes single use retail schemes for these areas, at the levels of floorspace currently being considered by developers, runs the risk of creating a 'second town centre' that, in essence, would compete with the existing town centre core. It is considered that, based on current patterns of shopping expenditure, the viability of the existing core shopping area would come under increasing threat if a second town centre was to be developed, especially if some key tenants of the current core area are lured to any new comprehensive shopping area in the southern part of the town central area.

It is therefore recommended that, because of the potential threats to the existing core shopping area, neither of the two sites comprising this southern area should not be considered in the strategy as areas identified exclusively

for retail development. Rather, it is considered that Kilmarnock could best be served by promoting both areas for comprehensive and innovative mixed-use development. For the existing Safeway Supermarket site, it is proposed that a retail led, mixed use development with an associated residential or office component would be considered acceptable. A mixed use development of the Stoddard's and BMK sites would again be considered acceptable, but the development of these sites should be primarily residential led. A retailing, leisure, commercial and office element, supporting the primary residential use of the sites would also be considered acceptable. The uses proposed for these two sites would support and compliment the various functions of existing core shopping area and the wider Kilmarnock town centre in general (See section relating to mixed uses, below).

- Site 3: Holmquarry Road

An area of land to the south of Holmquarry Road (See town centre strategy diagram) is also considered to have some potential for future development to help support the nearby town centre. Although remote from the existing town centre boundary, and constituting an out of town centre site, a planning application for retail development of the site, with specific regard to providing comparison goods floorspace, is presently under consideration by the Council. Notwithstanding the submission of this application, it is considered that the larger western portion of the Holmquarry Road area, as shown on the town centre strategy map, would lend itself best for a comprehensive residential redevelopment. It is also considered that the eastern portion of the site would best be identified as a site for a potential office development. It is suggested that the overall Holmquarry Road site should therefore be identified accordingly in the town centre strategy.

7.10 Although it is proposed in the town centre strategy to amend the town centre boundary as considered appropriate, it is not proposed to extend the town centre boundary to incorporate or include these three potential development opportunity sites. It is considered, however, that all three sites should be identified in the town centre strategy as suitable and valuable sites for the types of development detailed in paragraph 7.9 above.

(ii) Accessibility Issues

7.11 To aid cohesion in Kilmarnock town centre it is desirable to strengthen the transport links between the traditional core shopping area and the other main edge of town centre retail areas such as Queens Drive, Glencairn and West Langlands Street (Morrisons Supermarket). In this regard, all efforts should be made to further improve accessibility to the town centre to those users of the centre travelling by both public and private transport. However, it also considers that it is equally important to improve accessibility to the centre for those people dependant on public transport. Pedestrian and vehicular conflict and circulation problems also detract from the image of the town centre. The Council has already taken positive steps to

address this issue with the implementation of recent improvements and will continue to make further improvements as the town centre continues to develop.

7.12 An important aspect to be taken into account when considering the issue of accessibility is that Kilmarnock is likely to be the focus of significant new housing developments, many of which could possibly be accommodated in outlying areas with easy access to the upgraded M77 motorway and hence to other shopping areas. Thus there is a requirement to improve accessibility between these new housing areas and the town centre in order to retain as much retail expenditure as possible in the town and to support the town centre strategy.

7.13 It is recommended, as an integral part of the strategy, that detailed consideration should be given to feasibility of establishing a new road link between Queens Drive and East Shaw Street, which would necessitate the construction of a new river crossing. The creation of this route could provide a number of benefits in the town centre and provide new and improved links between the potential key development areas of Kilmarnock town centre as detailed elsewhere in the Town Centre Strategy (See the town centre strategy diagram).

(iii) Housing

7.14 At the present time there are no parts of the town centre that are under construction or with planning permission exclusively for housing development although detailed permission for housing has been granted on the site of the former Kilmarnock Infirmary Site, lying directly adjacent to the current town centre boundary. The former Hunslet Barclay buildings at West Langland Street / Park Street, located close to but outwith the town centre boundary are also currently being converted to residential use. (See town centre strategy diagram).

7.15 It is not proposed, as part of the town centre strategy, to identify any particular areas within the town centre itself exclusively for residential use. Rather, residential use within the town centre will be promoted as an integral part of mixed use development schemes in appropriate locations. However, it is proposed that an area of land at Holmquarry Road, outwith the town centre boundary, should be identified specifically for residential purposes within the town centre strategy (See paragraph 7.9 above)

(iv) Mixed Uses

7.16 Within the wider town centre area there are only a few sites which are considered to be readily available for the development or redevelopment of appropriate town centre uses. This lack of a wide range of available development sites is considered to represent a constraint on the future development and growth of the town centre and its ability to meet the needs of existing and future populations of the town. A number of specific actions are, therefore, proposed in the town centre

strategy to address this situation. These actions, in so far as they relate to mixed use and non retail developments, are detailed below.

Sites within the existing town centre

7.17 Although there is a lack of opportunity sites that are attractive to developers to expand town centre services and facilities, there are four key locations within the town centre, the development / redevelopment of which could contribute significantly to the implementation of a successful town centre strategy.

- Site 1: The 'Top of the Town' site at the Green Street car park (See town centre strategy diagram).

It is considered that an important way of expanding and increasing the vitality and viability of the town centre is to increase the number of people working within the area. Consequently, it is proposed within the town centre strategy to promote use of the town centre for appropriate Class 4 business and industrial use. The site known as 'The Top of the Town' site at the northern edge of the town centre is considered to have particular potential for this particular type of office development and has therefore been specifically identified for such purposes in the strategy.

The development of new office space would be a positive factor for Kilmarnock as much of the existing office space in Kilmarnock is inadequate, comprising smaller units that are unsuitable for large scale modernisation and upgrading. Office and commercial uses support town centre vitality and viability by bringing in a greater variety of uses and underpinning both retail and further commercial growth. In this regard, the 'Top of the Town' office development offers the potential to either attract either private or public sector tenants.

- Site 2: The Galleon Centre, Titchfield Street (See town centre strategy diagram).

The Galleon Centre is a valuable town centre leisure facility but is located on a highly constrained site. It is considered that the potential exists to update, develop and extend the facilities provided. Alternatively, the facilities provided could be possibly be relocated and the site itself redeveloped for alternative retailing or other appropriate town centre use. No matter which course of action is chosen, it is considered imperative that a range of sporting, leisure and recreational facilities is retained within the town centre area. In this regard, due consideration should be given, if at all possible, to relocating such facilities in an alternative town centre location.

- Site 3: Former bonded warehouse at Strand Street

Recent interest has been shown the redevelopment of the former bonded warehouse at Strand Street (See town centre strategy diagram). Located within the town centre boundary, it is considered that the property is suitable for conversion to a range of appropriate town centre use, particularly office and residential uses. The site has been identified as being suitable for such purposes in the town centre strategy.

- Site 4: 6-14, 30-38 John Finnie Street, with associated sites in Dunlop Street and Strand Street

This site is primarily centred on the former Opera House on John Finnie Street, located within the town centre boundary, which has an existing outline planning consent for an hotel and residential development. It is considered that there is potential for associated tourism or housing related development to extend into Dunlop Street and Strand Street. Both of these proposed uses for the site, which is located in a highly accessible position close to the railway station, will greatly help improve the vitality and viability of the northern part of the town centre. The site has therefore been identified as being suitable for such purposes in the town centre strategy (See town centre strategy diagram).

Sites adjacent to but outwith the town centre

7.18 There are a number of sites lying adjacent to but outwith the existing town centre boundary which are considered to have the potential for mixed use or non-retail development. Two of these sites, the site of the existing Safeway supermarket on West Shaw Street and the Stoddard's and BMK sites at Mill Street and Burnside Street, have already been discussed in paragraph 7.9 of the strategy. A further site with potential for mixed use development, as identified in the strategy, comprises the following:

- Site 1: The former cattle market site at Park Street

The former cattle market site at Park Street (See town centre strategy diagram) is a potential development opportunity site for appropriate uses in a location that is close to both the town centre and public transport nodes. Redevelopment of this area would bring a long vacant and derelict site back into active use, help to revitalise the area and further consolidate and support existing uses in the adjacent town centre. For these reasons, it is recommended that the existing town centre boundary should be extended westwards to include the former cattle market site and the adjoining Hunslet Barclay site which is currently being developed for residential purposes (See paragraph 7.15 above). It is intended that the cattle market site itself should be identified particularly for office development or for a mixture of housing, office and other non retail town centre uses.

(v) The Physical Environment

7.19 It is considered that an essential part of developing and maintaining a healthy and vibrant town centre economy is to create an attractive environment to draw new inward investment and to make the area an attractive destination for all users of the centre. Although many positive improvements to Kilmarnock town centre have been carried out in recent years, there remains much to be done. It is considered that general improvements to the environment of the town centre can be characterised as either:

- environmental improvement projects; or
- as part of enhancements to the public realm through quality building schemes.

7.20 Areas or locations where it is considered that environmental improvement or enhancement to the public realm could take place within the town centre, comprise:

- the John Finnie Street area;
- the general area adjoining the Kilmarnock Water, including the Kilmarnock Water itself and the various buildings backing on to it;
- the general Foregate and Burns Mall area, including the pedestrian subway link to the London Road / Palace Theatre area;
- the Fowlds Street / King Street (south) / Saint Marnock Street area;
- the general Titchfield Street / High Glencairn Street area; and
- the area around Strand Street / Croft Street.

7.21 It is considered that the character, appearance and amenity of the town centre could be enhanced positively through application of the highest possible standards of design, in relation to both the redevelopment of existing properties and open spaces, and to new build developments. This could possibly best be achieved through the introduction and implementation of a comprehensive and cohesive Urban Design Framework, promoting and providing a single, robust identity for the whole of the town centre area. It is considered imperative that the design of future development in the town centre should reflect local architectural identity and compliment those traditional features which contribute to character and amenity of the area.

8 The Way Forward

8.1 It is intended that, once formulated and agreed by the Council, the Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy should be incorporated into the Alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan and placed before the public for information and comment as an integral

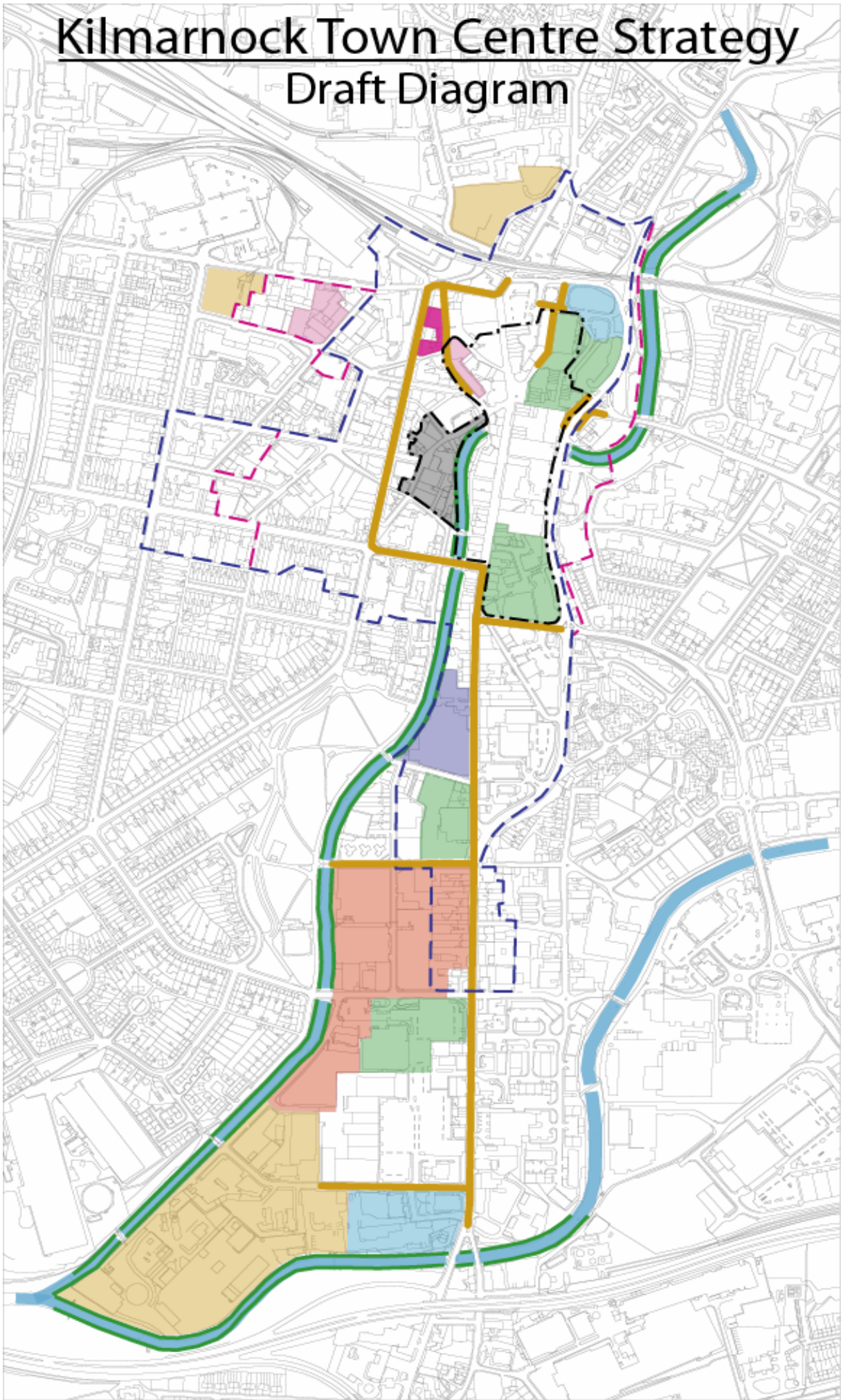
part of the statutory local plan preparation process. Any further development of the Strategy and, in particular, any physical implementation of the actions proposed should be progressed with input from:

- The Kilmarnock Town Centre Management Initiative;
- Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire;
- Ayrshire Economic Forum;
- Various retailers, developers and their agents;

8.2 Once finalised and approved, the strategy will be a prime material consideration in the consideration of all town centre related planning issues, including the assessment of all future retail and other planning applications relating to the centre.








Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy

Draft Diagram



Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy

Key to Strategy Diagram

	Retail led mixed use development, including elements of housing & office/commercial
	Office/commercial development
	High quality residential led mixed use development, including elements of office/commercial and retail
	Residential development
	Priority for office or residential led mixed use development
	Galleon Centre - priority for retention/redevelopment of leisure facilities. Redevelopment for retail or other uses may also be considered appropriate.
	Hotel/Retail development
	Existing Town Centre Boundary
	Proposed changes to Town Centre Boundary
	Existing Town Centre Core Shopping Area
	Proposed extension to existing Town Centre Core Shopping Area
	Riverscape improvements
	Public realm/streetscape improvements