

Town Action Plan

Airdrie



LIVE HERE

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LIVE LEARN WORK INVEST VISIT

Introduction

This is North Lanarkshire. This is the place to **Live, Learn, Work, Invest** and **Visit**. This is our vision.

We have come a long way with one of the fastest growing economies in Scotland, the most ambitious council housebuilding programme in the country, record levels of infrastructure investment and dozens of new schools. These are just a few examples.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire, approved in 2019, offered a clear way forward. It offered a shared ambition for inclusive growth and prosperity for all and we are delivering on that ambition.

We're making huge progress, with investment and development happening in all our towns and communities.

But what comes next? How do we deal with the undoubted challenges that remain, like unacceptably high levels of deprivation and child poverty, in-work poverty and areas of inequality across communities? How do we become the agents of change for towns and communities to ensure they have a sustainable future in the face of declining revenue budgets?

This vision for North Lanarkshire, as the place to Live, Learn, Work, Invest and Visit is reflected in the **Town Action Plan for Airdrie** which seeks to identify site specific proposals to deliver the concepts set out in the vision.

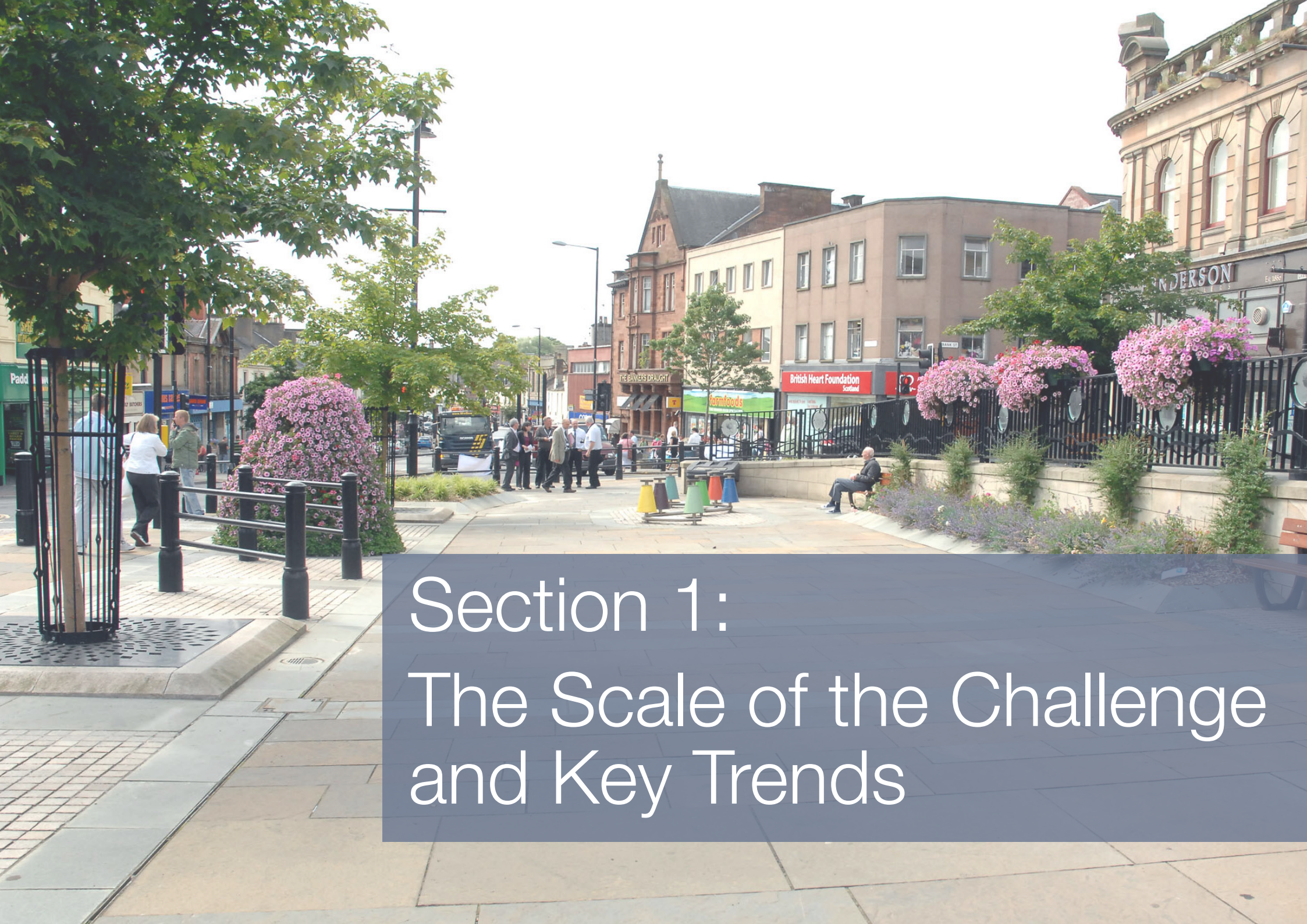
The Town Action Plan has been divided into three sections as follows:

Section 1: The scale of the challenge facing North Lanarkshire and the key trends which are impacting on North Lanarkshire's Town Centres.

Section 2: The key issues and opportunities which have helped formulate the proposals outlined in the Town Action Plan for Airdrie.

Section 3: The Town Action Plan Proposals.





Section 1: The Scale of the Challenge and Key Trends

Key Trends

The following highlights the potential impact of economic, demographic, technological and social trends on our towns.

RETAILING

Demand for UK retail space on our high street is now at its lowest since 2007, with a move toward online retail as well as prime mixed-use locations (such as Silverburn and Braehead) offering retail, leisure, entertainment and amenities, whilst serving vibrant night-time economies. Our town centres are highly vulnerable to weak footfall with a decline in retail sales across Scotland of 6.2% since 2021 alone (following year on year drops over the last decade).

The inevitable reality is that fewer physical stores will be present on the high streets of the future and that the role of those remaining stores will need to evolve. On its current trajectory, it is estimated that physical retail sales across our towns will fall by a further 35% over the next five years with a growing reliance on convenience and discount retailers paying lower rents. We will see consumers with lower disposable income and limited access to higher end retail. North Lanarkshire in particular will be highly susceptible to this trend where our towns are competing with bigger centres such as Glasgow and Edinburgh for footfall and retail spending.

Both large and small scale operators also continue to struggle to adapt to the growth in online shopping. UK consumers spend more online than any other European country – accounting for 18% of all retail sales. It is projected that 35% of sales within the next few years will be online..

Store-based profit margins have more than halved over the last decade as consecutive rises in business rates, the national living wage, the national minimum wage and relative occupancy costs spiral upwards.



LIVING

North Lanarkshire is home to over 341,000 people living in more than 154,000 homes. The Council is Scotland's largest local authority landlord, owning and managing more than 36,000 homes with a further 5,000 new affordable homes by 2035.

Forecasts predict that the number of households will rise by 1.5% (2,300) between now and 2028. However, the local development plan promotes sufficient land for more than 21,000 homes across North Lanarkshire.

Of our 154,000 homes, only circa. 1,500 - or just under 1% - are located within town centres with over half of these built before 1919 and likely to require significant future repair and maintenance. There is, however, significant opportunity for residential development to replace the contraction in retail. This is a key way of helping to develop footfall within our town centres and, in turn, creating a more viable (although reduced) retail and commercial offer.



POPULATION

North Lanarkshire is currently home to around 6.3% of Scotland's total population. However, the number of deaths has exceeded the number of births over the last three years although it is forecast that North Lanarkshire's total population will increase by 0.3% between 2018-28 due primarily as a result of net inward migration. In contrast, the population of Scotland over the same time period is anticipated to grow by 1.8%, demonstrating that North Lanarkshire is still failing in attracting people to come and live here.

It is well established that economic growth is closely linked to population growth. As such, to help make North Lanarkshire a more prosperous place, it is essential that we provide the right type of housing and environment that will make this a place where people already living in, or moving to or within Scotland, want to relocate.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Children and young people aged 0-15 make up almost one fifth of North Lanarkshire's population (18%) and this is forecast to decrease to almost 16% by 2028.

Almost two thirds (64%) of North Lanarkshire's population are of working age (16-64 year olds). This is forecast to continue to decline in the long-term.

The older adult population (aged 65+) accounts for 18% of North Lanarkshire's total population. This is expected to increase so that, by 2028, one in five (20%) of people living in North Lanarkshire will be aged 65+.

This demographic change will have an impact. Tax income is likely to fall because there will be fewer people of working age, and care responsibilities will increase. It is essential that towns are designed to ensure that people are able to live safely in their own homes for as long as possible, homes are adaptable and flexible and local services accessible.



CONNECTIVITY

We need to put transport and digital infrastructure in place to ensure residents can access employment and leisure as well as online opportunities and services.

13.2% of Scotland's motorway network is located in North Lanarkshire, a place which has excellent rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as three of Scotland's busiest passenger train stations (Motherwell, Croy and Airdrie).

While transport links in and out of North Lanarkshire are excellent, there are relatively poor transport connections within the local authority area. The development of the Pan Lanarkshire Orbital Transport Corridor linking the M80, M8 and M74 will in part address this issue, but the visions need to ensure that our towns are designed as accessible and well-connected places.

Road and rail use has grown significantly over recent years but the number of bus journeys has declined by approximately 23% which is significantly higher than the Scottish average of a 5% decline. Given that only

37% of households earning less than £10,000 can access a private car compared to 97% of those who earn more than £40,000, public transport is a key issue for the people of North Lanarkshire.

Whilst a national conversation about the shape of future public transport is required, particularly in terms of cost, ticketing, coverage and responsiveness, the Council needs to work with partners to identify local gaps and how they can be filled through, for example, community transportation and active travel. This was a key recommendation of the North Lanarkshire Fairness Commission and will be subject to discussion as part of the development of the emerging Local Transport Strategy for North Lanarkshire.

The ban on the sale of new petrol or diesel cars after 2030, and a requirement for them to be off the road by 2040, will also require significant investment in infrastructure to support a shift in how we fuel our private vehicles e.g. electric vehicle charging points within car park's and on streets and the development of EV Hubs (fast charge sites) along key transport corridors and within town centres.



DIGITAL ECONOMY

86% of UK households use the internet on a daily basis and it is anticipated that this use will continue to grow and drive demand for faster and better quality access.

It is clear that good quality internet access will be essential for future business development and will underpin many areas of employment.

Whilst 98% of homes have access to superfast broadband, the uptake of this is relatively low due to the cost of access. The Council has secured a digital partner, Commsworld, to take this investment further, expand opportunity for full-fibre and ultra-fast broadband and develop more affordable access for all. This will include delivery of these digital connections as part of the planned development and regeneration works across North Lanarkshire's town centres.

THE LOW CARBON AGENDA

A Scottish target of net zero for all greenhouse gas emissions has been set for 2045. However, in recognition of the importance of climate change, the council declared a climate emergency in 2019, committing it to reduce council carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.

In particular, new zero carbon policy and legislation will inform the way we design and build new housing, or refurbish existing housing stock, towards zero carbon. This includes:

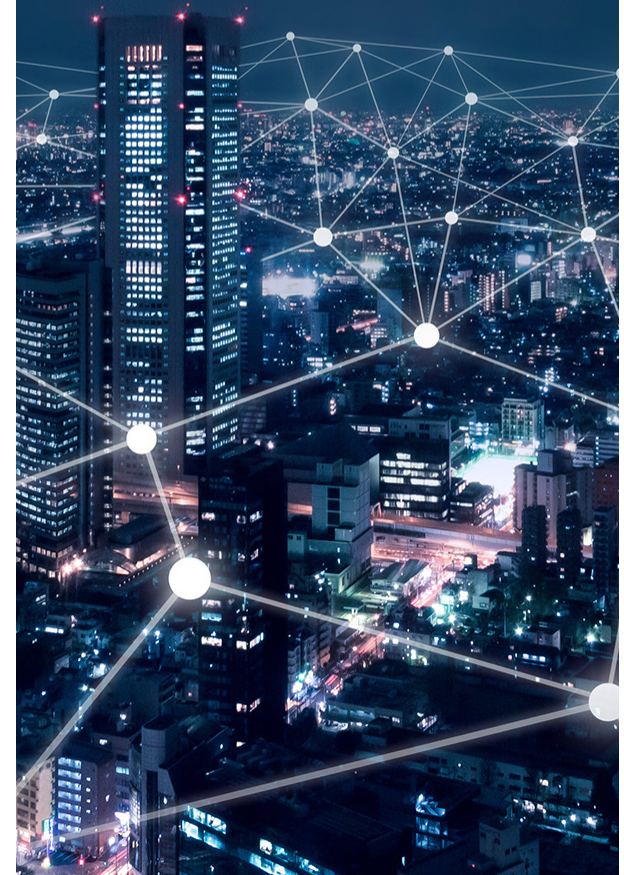
- ensuring all new housing uses renewable or low carbon heating systems from 2024;
- ensuring all private rented housing achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Rating of Band C or above by 2030;
- ensuring all socially rented housing achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Rating of Band B or above by 2032; and
- developing an undertaking, where financially and technically viable, to ensure all housing is net zero carbon by 2045.



INFRASTRUCTURE

New development within our town centres could in part be constrained by existing infrastructure such as energy, water and sewerage.

There is a need for early engagement with utility providers to identify issues of capacity within existing networks to ensure that the infrastructure to support development within our town centres is available at the right time and the right cost.





Section 2:

Key Considerations for Airdrie



A High Street for Everyone

A People Centred Approach

Our high streets offer a rich and authentic environment that for generations has been the backdrop to the ceremonies and memorable events of our community. Furthermore, the health of our town centre reflect the health of our wider community or society. An energised town centre that is open to all and where there is opportunity for improvement, will help enrich the lives of our residents. It is critical that we achieve a perception shift in our communities and stakeholders and reposition the High Street at the heart of the community. In doing so we are seeking to develop a better town centre where the requirements of all, regardless of age, ability or wealth, are accommodated.

The following section outlines the key issues and opportunities which have helped drive forward the development of the Town Action Plan for Airdrie. These key drivers have been identified from:

- the findings which were outlined in The Town Centre Visions and Town & Community Hub plans which were approved by Council in 2021 (as part of the Council's 'The Place: The Vision' strategy) following an extensive programme of public consultation;
- desktop research to assess the key challenges, issues and opportunities which need to be addressed or taken forward to help support the transformational change of Airdrie Town Centre;

- and the workshops and consultation work (including community board briefings, on-line plans and questionnaire and a 6-week exhibition held within Airdrie library which also incorporated opportunity for one-to-one drop-in sessions) that has allowed local communities to comment on plans and bring forward proposals for change.

The general feedback from this consultation was as follows:

- it was recognised that given current retail trends, alternative options need to be developed for our town centres;
- general support was given for the Council's goals to promote and enable town centre living;
- the importance of the heritage fabric of our towns was highlighted and a demand to, where possible, repurpose and reuse historic buildings rather than replace these; and
- good transport and access links to our town centres was seen as vital to success of our towns.

It should be noted that as part of the consultation process, there was limited input received from retailers, the business community in general. It is, however, intended that the Council will undertake further consultation on the Town Action Plans with local communities and stakeholders (including targeting local businesses) as part of future reviews and updates of these plans.





A Vision for our Towns

Some of our town centres face difficulties. Built around a twentieth century model of primary retail, they have been challenged by the rise of online and out-of-town shopping.

How do towns survive as retail gradually moves away and how can the council reimagine our towns?

The answer is to reposition town centres as mixed-use spaces. Only by shifting the focus from retail-driven town centres to a broader mix of investment, and promoting town centre living, can our towns have a sustainable future.

The council can bring about this change by positioning local services in towns and communities. By doing so, local people can have direct access to services they need and staff can be closer to the communities they work in.

This is about more than niche retail, developing the evening economy or increasing leisure opportunities. These must be living towns, with a much stronger focus on newbuild housing and residential conversion and the repurposing and reuse of our existing buildings in order to help address the decline of the built environment.

Town Action Plan Airdrie

The Town Visions for all eight of North Lanarkshire's Town Centres were approved by the Council's Policy & Strategy Committee in September 2021, detailing concept designs for our towns and forming the foundation of our Town Action Plans.

Crucially, the Town Visions join together with Town and Community Hubs and our Country Parks for the Future programmes to create a coherent, vibrant and sustainable future for North Lanarkshire.

The Town Visions highlight proposals for each town and how each town could function in the future. These recognise that one size does not fit all. Each of the towns in North Lanarkshire has its own challenges and opportunities and its own history and heritage.

A number of common themes have emerged in the development of these prospectuses. For example, there is a need for residential development which uses land no longer required for traditional retailing. Improving town centre access and active travel and examining the needs of an older population living longer, are also key considerations.

The Council can't do this alone.

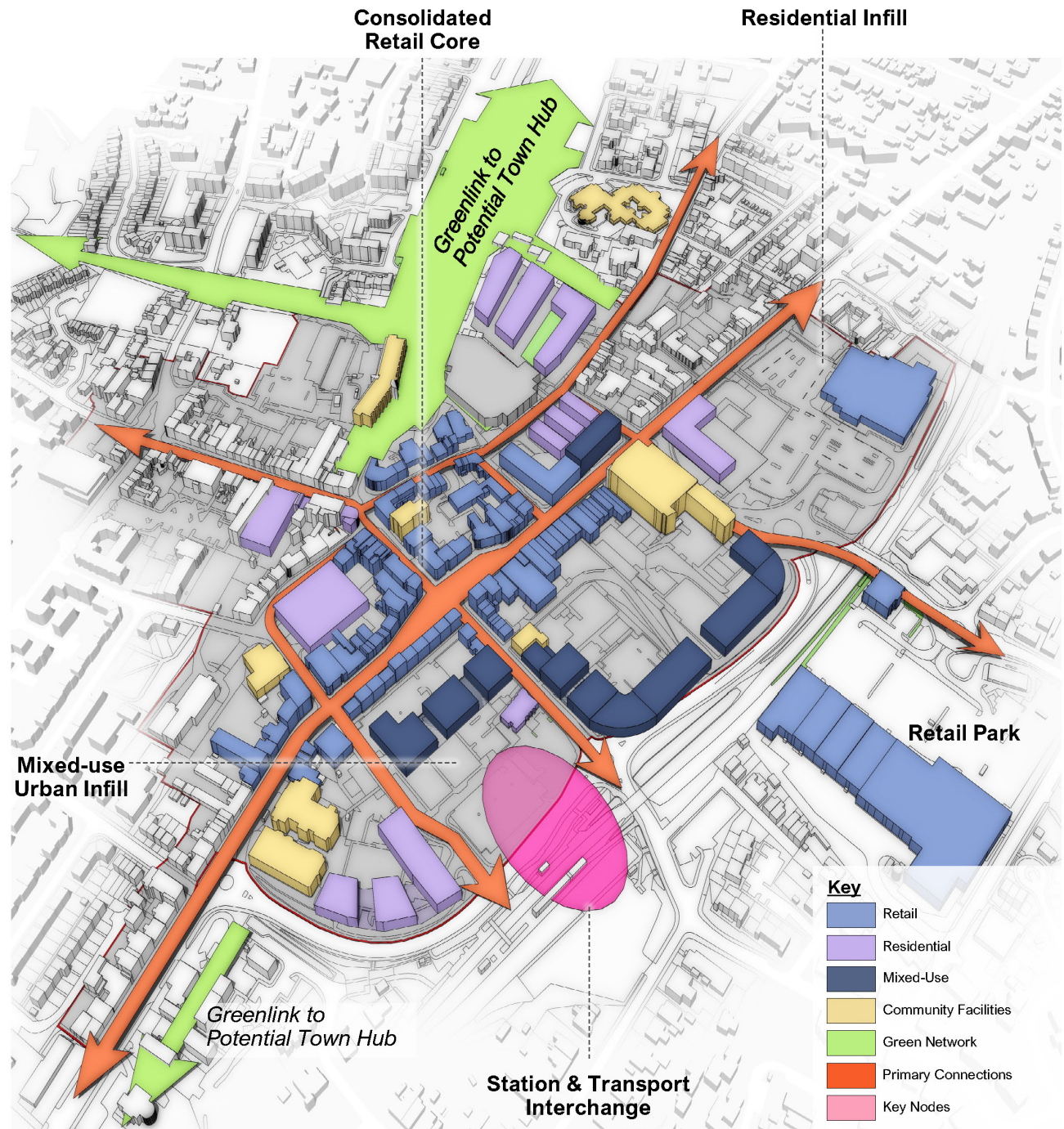
The Town Vision for Airdrie contained within is just that: A Vision.

To become a reality, the vision needs to be shaped through extensive consultation and engagement with community planning partners, landowners, retailers, residents, councillors and other agencies (via the development of the Town Action Plan). The Vision should inform both public and private sector investment.

The Town Vision represents a long-term strategy for transformation over a 20 year period. It works alongside town centre projects that are planned for the short, medium and long-term including regeneration projects, the acquisition of prominent vacant and derelict buildings and sites, new council house construction and infrastructure and access developments.



The Vision for Airdrie



The Vision for Airdrie

Airdrie's vision is built around transformational investment in the town's infrastructure that will create one of the best connected settlements in North Lanarkshire. A more accessible and attractive centre built around its 'market town' qualities will attract new homes and new investment celebrating the towns heritage, character, scale and connectivity.

New transport connections created by rail, road and the green network make Airdrie an easy and accessible place to move around. Moreover, the development of Airdrie Health Centre supports town centre liveability, health and wellbeing and creates a cluster of accessible services to address local needs.

Airdrie with its improved access and connections offers excellent opportunities for town centre living. The historic centre with sensitive urban infill and potential building conversions will provide a range of homes with good access to local services and an attractive town centre environment.

Improved access to public services, employment and leisure facilities could also allow Airdrie to take advantage of its location and place appeal as an important town centre in North Lanarkshire. The development of the New Monklands Hospital on the edge of Airdrie also has the capacity to drive demand for town centre living and the growth of leisure and hospitality uses as we capture some of the buying power and needs of a new workforce.

Airdrie also has a number of quality heritage buildings which contribute to the townscape and history of the town. In seeking to move Airdrie to a mixed-use town centre through the stabilisation of the retail, leisure and hospitality offering and promoting new town centre living, the heritage estate presents an opportunity for refurbishment to these new uses in a way that secures the character of the town.

Airdrie Opportunities

Town centres are facing a range of opportunities and challenges as community needs and the way we use our town centres change. Airdrie needs to adapt and strengthen its role as an appealing and active centre based on quality of place, enterprise, community assets, heritage and the potential for low carbon living.

The core concept proposals outlined in the Vision include:

- developing a new Town Hub for the delivery of public services including education and leisure uses.
- focusing investment in the town centre around the cross and connections to the rail station.
- the creation of new active travel routes to link the town centre to major community assets, other towns and important greenspace such as Brownsburn Park.
- promoting a sense of place by securing long term futures for heritage assets such as the Townhouse, Airdrie library and the former Royal Bank of Scotland; and
- promoting lifestyle appeal based on town centre living locations adjacent to facilities, services and places of interest.



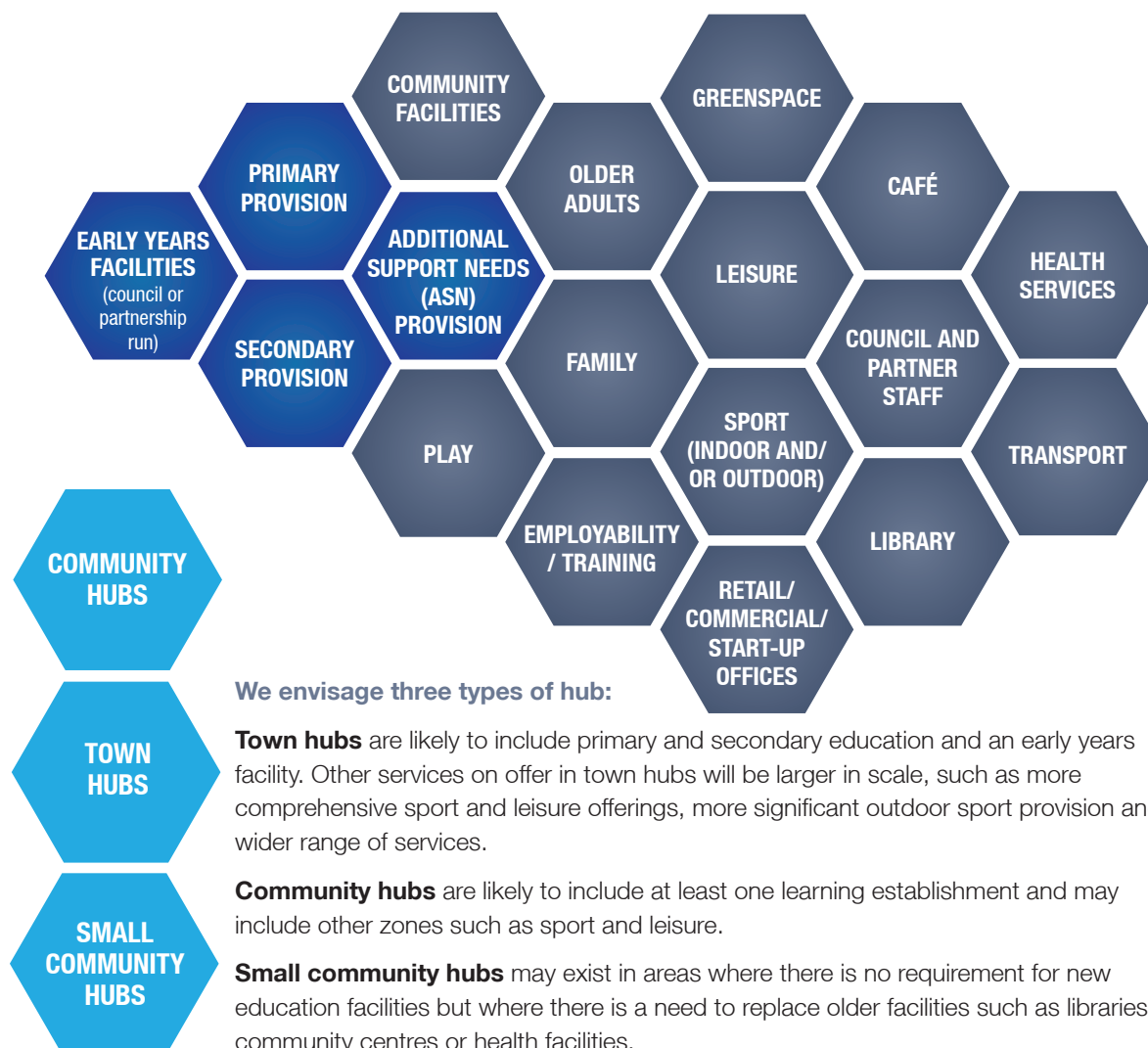
Town & Community Hubs

As part of the Council's ambition for North Lanarkshire, all schools constructed pre-1996 have been identified for improvement or replacement. So that they can be sustainable, we need to reduce the number of building assets across North Lanarkshire, working with communities and partners. As such, our town and community hubs will in some places, be merged, co-located or combined and integrated with other community and partnership assets. For example, there may be a single campus for 2-18 year olds where early learning, primary and secondary education is delivered alongside other council and community services.

To design this model, we will use six guiding principles:

- **Inclusive, universal provision:** a hub must serve the whole community and offer universal provision of services as a default.
- **Sense of community ownership:** central to the model is learning and teaching, but the hub must be an asset for the whole community.
- **Maximum availability and usage:** hubs will operate from early in the morning until late in the evening. They must be multi-functional and must be able to be used throughout the day.
- **Designed with the community:** options for design should be shared as early as possible in the process so that people in communities have ownership.
- **Tailored, bespoke, representative:** each hub will be unique to ensure it meets specific community needs.
- **Maximise services on offer:** services available within the hub should complement rather than compete with services already serving the same community.

Hubs will have a form and facilities based on the need of the local community.
Zones which could be included are numerous and could be some or all of the following:



Airdrie Town Hub

Following a programme of public consultation, the Council has identified the land in and around St Margaret's HS and Airdrie Sports centre at Rawyards off Motherwell Street (A73) as the preferred site for the development of the Town Hub for Airdrie. This site was short-listed for consideration as it is owned by the Council, has sufficient land to accommodate the footprint of the Town Hub campus and is easily accessible. An active travel route will be developed to link the Town Hub to the town centre via the existing green corridor of Central Park.

The Council is currently seeking to secure the funding to proceed with the design development of the Town Hub and the associated statutory public consultation around education provision (although this is likely to be a long-term project). The hub would provide new state of the art facilities for St Margaret's High School and associated primary schools.



Economic Prosperity & Stability

Retail

Whilst the ambition for all of our town centres is to move towards a more mixed-use offering to improve resilience and recognise the shift in how we use our town centres, the Council wants to retain and support the retail sector and assist its recovery from the double impacts of an economic downturn and the covid pandemic.

Research has shown that the independent retail sector is more resilient to change than larger national multiples and that these, in most cases local businesses, will prevail if sufficient infrastructure and interest is in place. We will therefore seek to support the retail sector in Airdrie by, offering support to smaller and independent shop owners in core retail areas of the town centre.

Funding constraints and legal issues do, however, constrain the level of support which the Council can provide. Support could nevertheless be provided through small funding schemes such as shop-front improvement grants.

Moreover, where vacancies occur, we will encourage businesses to concentrate around the key retail node within the town centre (with other premises being promoted for conversion to residential use) in an effort to sustain existing footfall within the core town centre and create a more viable offer.

Commercial

The collapse in the demand for commercial premises such as offices in town centre locations echoes wider structural changes in the economy and the growth of digital connectivity. The impacts of the covid pandemic demonstrated the benefits and ease of remote working across the public and private sector and led to an exponential growth in homeworking with a resulting impact on footfall within the town centre.

This needs to be recognised in how we change the structure of Airdrie town centre and make best use of the vacant premises which occur as a result of lower demand and need for town centre office space. In addition, moving forward, the commercial space which remains also needs to be more accessible and energy efficient to compete with out of town locations with consideration given to how we measure the scale of this challenge and take forward the repurposing of vacant office space.

Leisure & Hospitality

The leisure and hospitality sector is a key component of the move towards a more mixed-use town centre. The importance of 'Place' in terms of the public's perception of character and safety is very important in attracting people to use existing leisure and hospitality businesses. Ease of movement to and from these uses will encourage people to access the town centre for leisure activities and sustain and develop the nighttime economy and footfall. In meeting this aim, the Town Action Plan for Airdrie aims to promote active travel routes and transport options to support access to

town centre facilities and build footfall that will help these sectors to grow.





Image: Former Broomknoll Parish Church

Town Centre Living

New Build

Encouraging more people to live in town centres is a key policy aspiration for the Council underpinning priorities around sustainability, net zero, inclusion and wellbeing. More people living in town centres means more support for local businesses. It means keeping bus routes active, a safer place thanks to passive policing and greater local interest in the town centre environment. These all make a town more attractive to people living here.

Admittedly, developers looking to offer housing options within town centres find that they are typically more expensive, riskier, and take longer than other housebuilding options. Town centre projects also tend to be smaller, providing less financial return. However, the Council is of the view that the overall gains outweigh risks and costs if we take into account the wider societal benefits such as improved wellbeing and a reduction in carbon footprint. Key to helping to deliver this is identifying how the Council de-risks and enables such development through, for example, providing development support (e.g. via the Council's Invest in North Lanarkshire's Programme of Work) or promoting development opportunity through agreeing upfront to buy off-the-shelf housing being proposed by the private sector (or an agreed percentage of the proposed housing) in order to guarantee sales.

For example, the former Orr's Department store development is seen as an approach which could set the tone for future housing developments within the town centre. This is a private sector investment where the Council has agreed to purchase the new flats being developed on the site of this former store for long-term affordable housing. This type of joint venture between the Council and the private sector is seen as a key model for delivery of town centre living across North Lanarkshire including in Airdrie.

The Council hopes that by taking the lead in the delivery of town centre living, we can make the case that there is a latent demand for good quality town centre houses and encourage the private sector to invest. Private sector investment and development is important to ensure both tenure and design diversity so that we can, over time, improve the townscape and character of the town centre.



Image: Former Orr's Department Store

Refurbishment

The Council is also actively seeking to replace redundant and in some cases derelict properties within the town centre to residential development to ensure that we respond to issues of vacancy and dereliction in order to maintain the character of the town centre and to promote its place function.

It is hoped that private owner occupiers and landlords will recognise both the environmental and financial benefits of the refurbishment of existing properties over the long-term.

Improving the thermal efficiency of existing properties is in most cases easier than demolition and new build where ownerships are complex. It can be argued that refurbishment as opposed to demolition and new build is more sustainable in terms of the carbon footprint, but more importantly, it retains the character of the townscape as it preserves the urban grain of the streetscape and gives a unique sense of place to each town centre.

The Council itself has also identified a number of existing properties within Airdrie Town Centre that are in need of refurbishment due to long term vacancy or neglect. Where the building design contributes to the townscape we will endeavour to retain and refurbish the building towards a mixed use, with retail on the ground floor and residential uses on the upper floors (within the retail core area) and exclusively residential outwith the core retail areas.

Heritage Refurbishment

The communities' perception of 'Place' is informed by the quality of the public realm and key heritage buildings. Airdrie Town Centre has a number of heritage properties which are functionally obsolete but of good quality and whose external appearance contributes to the character and history of Airdrie.

Key buildings on the Main Street include, for example, the former Royal Bank of Scotland and the Treasury Bar both of which are seeking a new purpose and function. Such buildings make a significant contribution to the townscape and it could be argued that the Main Street would be poorer if they are not repurposed as they could fall into disrepair leading to demolition.

We would encourage the owners of listed buildings who are considering the future of their building(s) to approach the Council to discuss ways in which the properties can contribute to the vision of a mixed-use town centre. The Council has recent experience in working with external organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland and RSL Partners to refurbish such buildings towards a viable future use. This includes, for example, the former Broomknoll Church in Airdrie where the Council provided financial support to allow this historic building to be repurposed for housing by Clyde Valley Housing Association.

Tower Reprovisioning

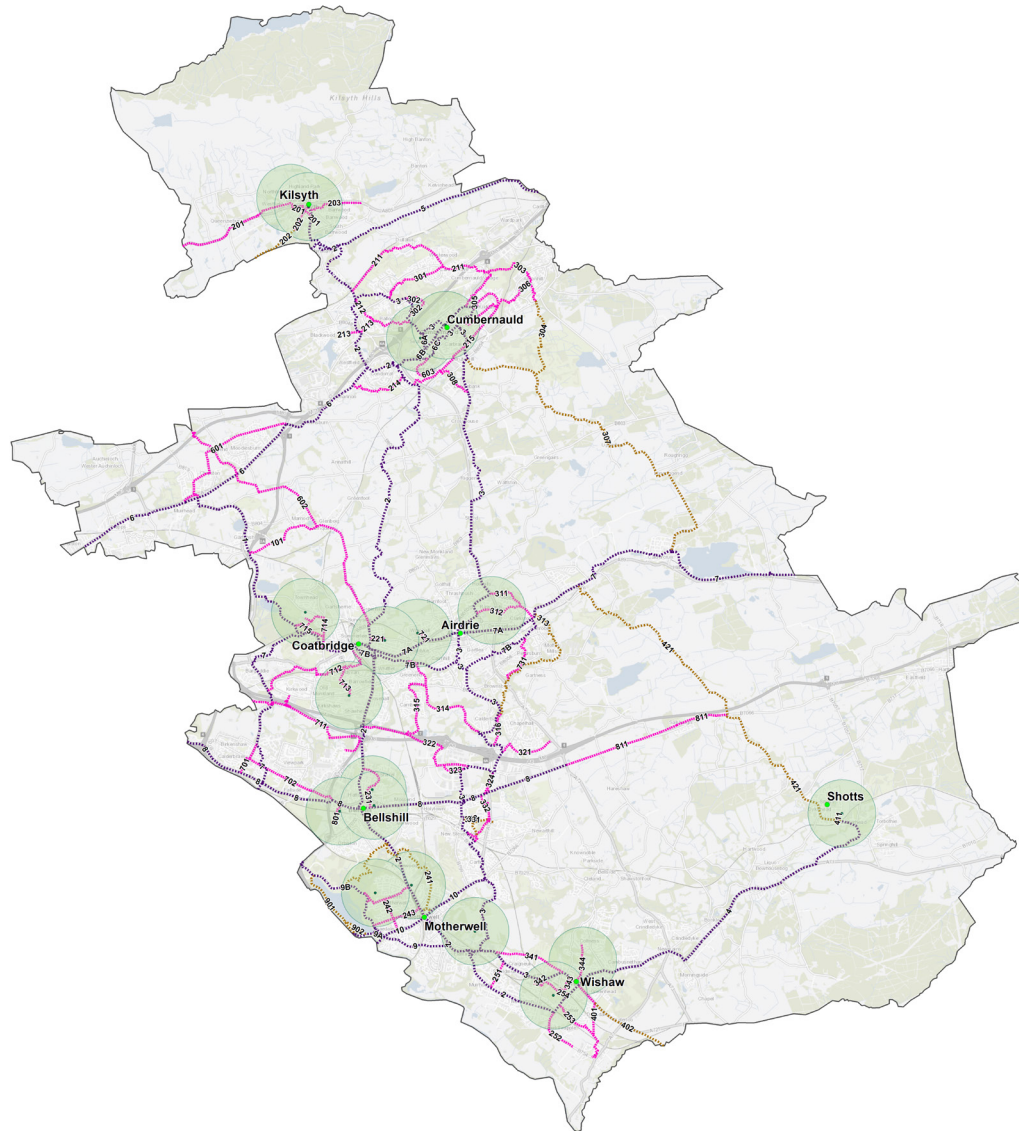
North Lanarkshire's Towers Reprovisioning Programme is seeking to demolish all high-rise towers and selected low-rise block properties across North Lanarkshire and replace them with quality flatted, terraced and semi-detached housing to meet the needs of the local community.

In the first phase of these works, the low-rise properties at Northburn and Holehills in Airdrie have been replaced whilst the second phase of works (to be delivered over the next 3-5 years) will include the replacement of low-rise blocks at Kennedy Drive (4 blocks), Kippen Street (7 blocks) and Glencraig Street (1-19). Whilst the footprint of these low-rise blocks will provide housing for some former tenants, the reprovisioning of existing properties and construction of new residential development within the town centre offers an opportunity to rehouse those tenants, helping to repopulate the centre and bring them closer to key facilities and services which our communities require.



Image: Exemplars of modern residential flatted development

Movement & Active Travel



Key

- Key Towns
- Proposed Hub Sites
- Proposed Hub Sites 1km Boundary

Proposed Routes

- Strategic Active Travel Network
- Local Neighbourhood Active Travel Network
- Connecting Active Travel Network
- National Cycle Network
- North Lanarkshire Council Area



Movement & Active Travel

Prioritising Sustainable Transport

Walking and wheeling



Cycling



Public Transport



Taxis & Shared transport



Private Car



Public Transport

Town centres are hubs for transport interchanges with Airdrie having strong rail network and bus service links. Developing the points of interchange, making public transport more accessible, appealing and environmentally responsive are key considerations within the Airdrie Town Action Plan.

As already highlighted, Airdrie rail station is one of the three busiest passenger train stations in North Lanarkshire. The council will enter into discussions with Scotrail and Strathclyde Passenger Transport to consider the options for the development of an improved transport interchange around the rail station, potentially enhancing transitions between rail and bus and increasing car parking capacity to promote a switch from private car travel to public transport as part of our commitment to a low carbon future.

Securing net zero and developing a carbon neutral economy will require the need to travel to be reduced. Radical solutions are required based on reduced car travel, the development of stronger active travel infrastructure and piloting new initiatives around 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Active Travel

Active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) has many environmental benefits, as well as improved health and wellbeing, and is a core part of rebalancing the transport modes within our town centres. The town centre as a focus for active travel activity needs to be driven by connecting the town to facilities and services as well as the surrounding area. As such, developing active travel routes between Airdrie and other nearby towns and communities as well as other key facilities and locations, such as the proposed town hub, local schools and greenspace (e.g. Brownsburn Park), are seen as a central priority of the Action Plan.

Built Heritage & Place



From Top Left: Airdrie Townhouse, Airdrie Health Centre, Cairnhill Parish Church, Former Broomknoll Parish Church, One Wellwynd, Airdrie Library & Observatory

Built Heritage & Place

Built Heritage

Airdrie is a historic market town which has made important contributions to banking, culture and industry. The legacy of this rich history can also be seen in Airdrie's built environment, with its town centre a designated conservation area boasting numerous listed and other historic buildings. External funding opportunities for built heritage in town centres has recently been made available through two complementary funding programmes run by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). NLC submitted development phase applications to these funders for a project entitled 'Rediscovering Airdrie: the heritage-led regeneration of Airdrie Town Centre'. In 2023 it was announced that NLC's development phase application had been successful with a full project bid now being worked up for submission in 2024.

Rediscovering Airdrie aims to rediscover and celebrate the history of Airdrie and use it and the town's historic built environment as a catalyst for physical, social and economic regeneration, connecting people with their heritage and establishing Airdrie as a vibrant centre of creativity, culture, enterprise and learning. It will do so through two inter-related programmes

- a series of physical interventions aimed at restoring and repurposing heritage assets and improving the townscape and 'Built Heritage & Place'.

- a series of heritage activities aimed at engaging with a wide range of residents and visitors alike, connecting them with Airdrie's heritage, bringing interest and investment into the town and improving educational, health and wellbeing and economic outcomes.

Proposed physical interventions (subject to funding approval) include the repurposing of Airdrie Town House to establish a new centre for culture and studio space aimed at the creative sector businesses, works to improve the rooftop observatory at Airdrie Library and the refitting of One Wellwynd to support the piloting of a Women's Business Centre. The Council also proposes to establish and administer funds to support owners to improve shopfronts within the core retail area of the town and to repair and maintain tenement housing.

Place

When we speak of place we are talking about the character and quality of the townscape which is a key asset of our towns and comprises all publicly accessible space (streets, squares and greenspace) for people to come together and engage as a community.

We are seeking to promote a more inclusive place promoting longer dwell time and increased town centre footfall. Public use of town centres and increased activity supports civic presence and improved security. Actively used, thriving public space is both safer, and more welcoming than unused space.



Airdrie Townhouse

In helping to improve space within our town centres, and in direct response to the requirements of Scotland's National Planning Framework 4, the Council is currently preparing an Open Spaces Strategy for North Lanarkshire.

This strategy will assess existing open space and green networks and help guide how we manage and meet the need for openspace in town centres such as Airdrie in the future. Future reviews of the Action Plan will give cognisance to the findings of this emerging strategy and help guide how we shape our openspace going forward.



Transition to Net Zero

Carbon Reduction

Town Centres have a key role in supporting a sustainable future and contributing to the essential adaptation necessary to address climate change and our commitment to net zero. Place shaping can help contribute to climate change targets through the repurposing of buildings; developing 20-minute neighbourhoods, reducing the need to travel and supporting flood mitigation.

Key measures within the vision for supporting carbon reduction in Airdrie will include:

- property upgrading, retrofit and re-purposing (making these more energy efficient);
- developing active travel infrastructure;
- greening activity;
- extending EV Charging infrastructure; and
- planning for compact urban centres and accessible services.

The carbon cost of demolishing existing buildings and then developing new buildings is also in most cases higher than the carbon cost of refurbishment and adaption of buildings to new uses. The Council will, where possible, advocate and take forward the adaption and reuse of buildings within the town centre, rather than replacement, making them more energy efficient and extending their viable use. This both reduces our collective carbon footprint and retains the heritage and character of the town. Buildings in scope for such an approach to redevelopment include, for example, Airdrie Town House and Coats House.

Green Blue Infrastructure

Planning needs to support local measures to minimise the impact of intense rainfall events and to mitigate flood risk while also designing-in flood resilient places. Area wide measures may include, for example, green corridors for storm water flows linked to new habitat management measures and our active travel networks.

EV Charging Infrastructure

The Scottish Government's requirement to phase out the need for petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 will impact on our centres with charging and fast charging points becoming part of the urban fabric.

From 5 June 2023, regulations also requires electric vehicle charging to be installed for new buildings and those subject to major renovation. This includes one EV charge point socket to be provided for all new housing and flats and in 10% of parking spaces for non-domestic buildings where these have 10 car parking spaces or more.

Added to this, in order to encourage and enable the use of our towns, the council needs to take forward the installation of EV charging points within our town centres for general public use. At the moment work is ongoing through the Glasgow City Region team on behalf of all local authorities with a view to engaging a provider to install and operate our EV charging going forward. As part of this, the intention would be for the provider to agree proposed sites with the Council, located at key points that will meet future demand and need of town centre users.

The Council will adopt the guidance set out in the revised Building Regulations regarding EV charging points within new developments. The council will also investigate the roll out of EV charging within public car parks and public facilities.

Other Considerations

Finance & External Funding

It has been well publicised that over the next three years, North Lanarkshire Council (along with other public services across Scotland) face significant budget cuts. As such, investment made through the Town Action Plan has to ensure that ongoing future revenue or operational costs associated with any works is minimal and, where possible, additional revenue generated through, for example, increased rents or business rates.

Moreover, to reduce the burden on the Council's available capital, the Council will look to fund such works by alternative means through: promoting and seeking private sector investment; use of North Lanarkshire's Housing Revenue Account; and sourcing funding through Scottish Government Programmes (such as the Place Based Investment Programme and Regeneration Capital Grant Fund Programme), the UK Government (with funding recently received for Cumbernauld and Coatbridge Town Centres through their Levelling Up Fund and Town Fund programmes respectively) or other funders (such as the National Heritage Lottery Fund).

Community Wealth Building

The Town Action Plan for Airdrie has been developed in consultation with local communities to help identify the key actions which we want to take forward to help improve and regenerate Airdrie Town Centre. However, in order to drive and sustain real change, it is critical that local communities buy in to and take ownership of these plans.

Community Wealth Building is designed to harness the economic leverage of local 'anchor' organisations to tackle long-term systematic challenges within local communities and help to change the way we manage and provide local services through, for example, community-owned assets, a focus on local supply chains and local job creation – key goals which need to be embedded as part of the delivery of the Action Plan.

Communications Plan

It has been identified that the Action Plan affects four key stakeholder groups:

- local communities and residents living in the town centre (with the viability of the centre dependent upon being able to attract local people to use the town and sustain local spend);
- local businesses and shops (with retailers particularly interested in opportunities which may be brought forward through the plan, how change will affect their business and how works may disturb trade);
- potential visitors to Airdrie and people who live outwith Airdrie but work within the town centre (both of whom will contribute to spend and the local economy); and
- the council and other public bodies (who will lead on and contribute to the delivery of the plan).

Raising awareness of our plans for Airdrie is essential to keeping these stakeholders engaged in the process of transforming the town centre and securing their buy in to the works being proposed. To ensure these groups are fully informed, a detailed Communications Plan will be developed for Airdrie Town Centre to make sure proposals are shared and stakeholders kept updated on progress made.

As part of this Communications Plan, the Council aim to host a bespoke 'Town's Page' for each of the main towns across North Lanarkshire on its website. This will incorporate news and information for each town including copies of the Town Visions and Action Plans and progress being made on the delivery of Action Plan proposals.

Section 3: Airdrie Town Action Plan



Town Action Plan Proposals

Project	Proposal	Timescales*
Economic Prosperity & Stability		
Shopfronts	Implement a shopfront improvements grant scheme for core retail areas within the town centre as part of the Rediscovering Airdrie Project.	Short-term
Audit & Demand Analysis – Vacant Office Space	Undertake an Audit and Demand Analysis for vacant office space within Airdrie Town Centre to develop a strategy for the repurposing of this space.	Medium-term
Town Centre Living		
Coats House	Feasibility & Design works to assess potential residential conversion (with particular focus on the provision for older people given proximity to Airdrie Health Centre)	Medium-term
Airdrie Police Station	Liaise with Police Scotland to determine future requirement for building/potential residential conversion.	Medium-term
Tenement Improvements	Implement a grants scheme for repairs and improvement to historic tenement properties as part of the delivery of the Rediscovering Airdrie Project.	Medium-term
Buy-Backs	Promote the continuation of the Council's Open Market/Empty Homes Purchase Schemes to increase the supply of quality affordable housing within Airdrie Town Centre.	Ongoing
Movement & Active Travel		
Active Travel	The development of a design and costing study, aligned to North Lanarkshire's Active Travel Strategy, to map out potential Active Travel Networks across Airdrie Town Centre. At the same time, work will also be undertaken to source external funding to support the delivery of this infrastructure.	Short-term

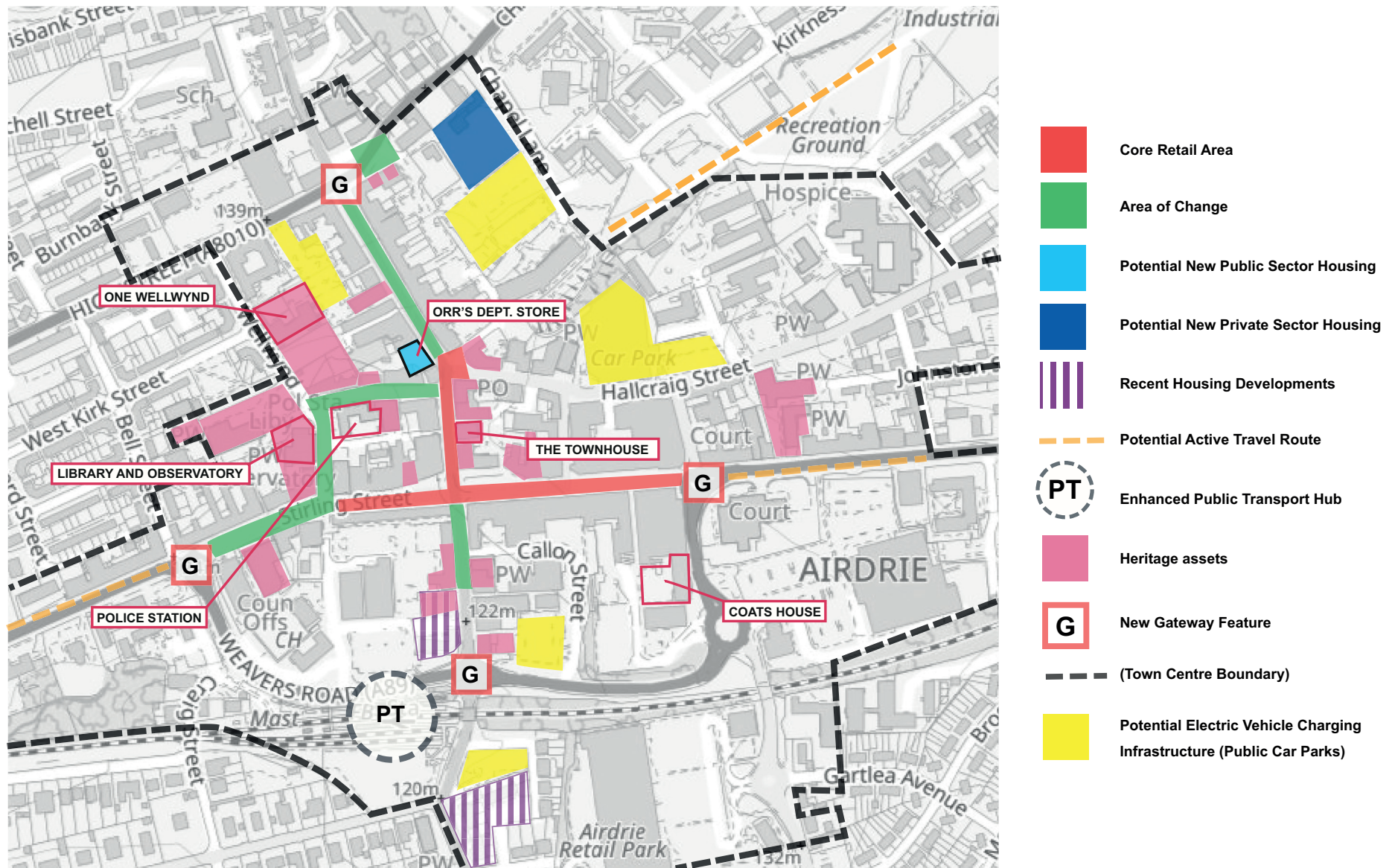
Project	Proposal	Timescales*
Built Heritage & Place		
Airdrie Library & Observatory	Explore works to improve and create a viewing platform for the rooftop observatory at Airdrie Library as part of the Rediscovering Airdrie Project.	Medium-Term
Various locations	Undertake feasibility works to assess viability and costs for the development of town gateway features.	Medium-Term
Transition to Net Zero		
EV Charging	Site Investigations of NLC's car parks across Airdrie Town Centre to assess suitability/infrastructure needs for EV Charging Installation as part of the delivery proposals currently being developed through Glasgow City Region.	Long-Term
Town & Community Hubs		
Airdrie Town Hub	The development of Airdrie Town Hub (with the preferred location identified at St. Margaret's High School, Airdrie Sports Centre).	Long-term

*Short-term: 1-3 Years

*Medium-term: 3-7 years

*Long-term: 7+ years

The Action Plan Proposals Map





Strategic Alignment

The Town Action Plan for Airdrie is aligned with The Plan for North Lanarkshire and other key strategies, policies and plans.

Together this strategic policy framework ensures that work is aligned with our priorities and enables the required resources and working practices needed to facilitate delivery of the shared ambition.

Airdrie Town Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, not only to ensure that it remains aligned to any new or emerging strategies developed by the Council and its partners, but also to make sure that any new opportunities can be incorporated within the plan proposals and any new issues arising within the town centre addressed.



Notes

Notes



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