

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

Thank you for taking the time to view the Public Consultation Boards for the Carrickfergus Masterplan. The boards contain a wealth of information in themselves, requiring a careful read. These notes are here to provide supplementary information, in response to requests by several members of the public. Each section below should be read in conjunction with each board, which are numbered 1 – 11 accordingly.

1: Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

The Masterplan was commissioned in January 2009 by the Department for Social Development (DSD) in partnership with the Carrickfergus Borough Council and the Carrickfergus Development Company. The Paul Hogarth Company is producing the Masterplan with a team of specialists from a variety of fields including planning, transportation and economics.

The Masterplan is a **15-20 year vision** for the Town Centre intended to guide and inform development as it happens in both the short and long-term. While not statutory, the Masterplan will be used as a common point of **reference** for government agencies, stakeholders and Carrickfergus residents to work towards a shared Vision of a better Carrickfergus. In the medium to longer term, it is anticipated that this Masterplan will influence new **planning policy**, as responsibility for planning transfers to new council authorities. Furthermore, the Masterplan is intended to be a **"live" document** which can be updated to reflect changing conditions and opportunities as the Town Centre develops.

Preparing the Masterplan involves a process that undergoes several stages. After launching the project in January 2009, **Information** was gathered through desktop research, site surveys and consultation with key stakeholders. Using that information, **Analysis** was undertaken to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Town Centre, along with potential opportunities. Alongside, a **Vision** for the future was created through consultation with the project steering group and a consultation event with a number of key stakeholders. This was then developed into the **Draft Masterplan** which you see before you. **Public Consultation** will take place for a six-week period, during which feedback will be actively sought from a wide range of parties, including key stakeholders and most importantly, the people of Carrickfergus. After this process feedback will be reviewed to produce the **Final Masterplan**, with completion currently set for November 2009. From this point on, delivery of the Masterplan will begin in a phased approach set out by an **Action Plan**.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

2: Draft Analysis of Carrickfergus

This board summarises the analysis work undertaken to fully understand the Town Centre. Strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in the Town Centre have been identified through desktop research, site survey and consultation with stakeholders.

Carrickfergus' long and proud **history** is one of the most important elements of the Town Centre. Many of the Town Centre's **assets** revolve around this history and heritage such as the Castle, St. Nicholas' Church, Town Walls and the Gasworks Museum. In addition, there are other strong assets, such as the Train Station, Marina and some renowned independent retailers. Analysis has found, however, that many of the town centre's assets are **underperforming**; they have the opportunity to be greatly enhanced, delivering greater benefits to the town

While the High Street, West Street and Irish Street are active during the day, the remainder of Carrickfergus Town Centre has **limited activity levels**. This is particularly noticeable in the evening and in the waterfront area, where car parks dominate.

The presence of **barriers** to pedestrian movement is one reason the Town Centre is not performing as well as it could. The most damaging barrier is the Marine Highway, which since its construction has effectively disconnected the Waterfront area from the Historic Core. Other barriers include the railway, town walls and North Road.

These issues as well as dereliction, clutter and general disrepair have meant that the **environmental quality** of the Town Centre has suffered. However, the impressive heritage assets, narrow medieval streets and historic character of the Town mean there are numerous opportunities for improvement.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

3: Draft Vision & Concept

This Vision and Concept are the foundation of the Masterplan, creating a picture of what Carrickfergus will be like in the future. The **Vision Statement** was first developed during the Carrickfergus Envisioning Workshop, an event that occurred in 2007, attended by local people with the aim of creating a picture of what they wanted Carrickfergus to be. This Vision was then refined through Consultation to arrive at the present statement for the Carrickfergus Masterplan.

Referring to the “**Drivers of Change**” diagram, it is proposed that Leisure and Residential uses will be most effective at driving the regeneration of Carrickfergus Town Centre, with other uses such as Tourism, Retail and Commerce following closely behind. Leisure uses, such as the sailing club, are already very strong in Carrickfergus and should be supported. Moreover, an increased resident population for the Town Centre would help to create a Town Centre population that can support businesses and make the streets more lively. Making the Town Centre work for its residents will mean that it will in turn be more attractive to tourists and visitors.

The “**Concept Plan**” explains the general idea of the Masterplan proposals, which is to tie together the Historic Core and the Waterfront areas to create a cohesive Town Centre. Within this, the Castle and its setting are crucial in connecting these two currently divided areas together. Opportunity also exists to enhance the setting of the castle, increasing the drama and romance associated with this important landmark.

The Masterplan follows three “**Key Principles**”. **Centralisation** refers to bringing together as many uses as possible within the Town Centre. **Quality** must be ensured throughout, including the environment and services offered by council and businesses. **Connectivity** must be re-established to ensure that pedestrians and vehicles can navigate the Town Centre easily.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

4: Draft General Town Centre Proposals

The Draft Masterplan Proposals are divided in “General Town Centre Proposals,” summarised by this board and Site Specific Proposals for the Waterfront, Historic Core, Joymount and Irish Quarter, shown on following boards.

Several strategies are proposed for the whole of the Town Centre to address widespread issues. A **Public Realm Scheme** is currently being developed by Roads Service for High, North and West Streets. A board showing the extents of this work is shown at the end of this exhibition and focussed public consultation for this scheme will take place at a later date. The masterplan proposes that further improvements to the town's public realm are needed as a later phase of this project. Some of these general strategies are closely interlinked, such as **Branding & Marketing, Promotional Plan and Festivals, Events & Activities**. These strategies would seek to improve the perception of Carrickfergus Town Centre and encourage people to live, work, invest and visit there.

The **Lighting Plan** will illustrate how a coherent lighting strategy could be put in place in the Town Centre to ensure the Town is just as attractive, welcoming and safe at night as it is during the day. The **Evening Economy** strategy would promote positive night-time activities in the Town Centre which are safe and open to all. A **Healthy Town Centre Initiative** would seek to improve the health and wellbeing of Carrickfergus residents through recreation, healthy eating, etc. **Living and Working above Shops** is an important scheme to encourage people to live and work in the Town Centre. The **Frontage Improvement Scheme** would give grants to encourage shop owners to update their shop fronts, improving the environmental quality of the Town Centre as a whole. Related to this, a **Town Centre Maintenance Strategy** would ensure that the streets would be constantly in the best condition.

The Masterplan will prepare **Design Guidelines** which will outline general principles about how new development in the Historic Core should be built in order to be sensitive to historic buildings without creating a pastiche or imitation of the old. **Parking Management** would ensure that car parks in the Town Centre are used most effectively, managing users and length of stay. Also, **Parking Signage** would be put in place to easily direct vehicles to car parks.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

5: Draft Transport Proposals

Key to the future of Carrickfergus Town Centre will be achieving a **balanced transport network**; one that allows easy access by car without negatively affecting the way in which it looks and functions as a place for people. Walking, cycling, public transport are therefore important components of the draft transport proposals, in addition to car parking proposals explained on the next board.

Several shared **pedestrian and cycle routes** are proposed in the Town Centre. A connected Waterfront Path would create a looped walk from Fisherman's Quay to the Castle, Harbour and Marina, ensuring that a continuous walk with many points of interest along the way encourage people to take advantage of the Town Centre's great seaside location. This would include operable pedestrian bridges which would allow people to cross over from one side of the Harbour and Marine to the other. Pier improvements may also be necessary.

Linear parks known as **Greenways** are proposed to create walking and cycling links from the outlying housing areas into the Town Centre. On the west side, a Greenway along the old industrial tram line would connect along the Woodburn River down to the Waterfront area. Another Greenway would be created from the Amphitheatre Wellness Centre to Shaftesbury Park, using an improved link under the Railway, and then to the Marine Gardens and the Seafront Promenade.

A Heritage Trail would be created to encourage visitor and local people to visit all of Carrickfergus' existing and proposed heritage assets. These assets are highlighted on the "**Walking, Cycling and Public Transport**" plan.

Also, reinforcing important pedestrian routes is essential. For that reason, several key pedestrian routes have been highlighted such as the Train Station to Town Centre route (along Victoria Street and North Street), St. Bride's Car Park to Town Centre (through the gateway at the Town Walls and down an extension to Antrim Street), and two new retail links from Town Centre to Irish Quarter. These routes would be subject to public realm enhancements, making them safer and easier routes for people.

The Marine Highway has been identified as a major barrier separating the Historic Core and the Waterfront, effectively splitting Carrickfergus Town Centre into two. It is therefore proposed that reducing the impact of this barrier is critically important if the Vision is to be realised. The Masterplan Team has evaluated many options for changing the Marine Highway, recognising that it is an important vehicular route for the town and wider region. Through study, it was found that the most viable option is to **reduce the Marine Highway** to one lane in each direction at key sections, with on-street parking in appropriate areas. Reducing the width of the Marine Highway would

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

encourage people to cross over from the Historic Core to the Castle and Waterfront area more easily, effectively turning what is a motorway into a street.

In the short-term, the Marine Highway could be reduced in this way from Cheston street northwards. However, to extend this idea along greater stretches of the road, additional infrastructure is necessary to reduce traffic volume using the Marine Highway. Through the draft Area Plan, three roads were identified that would help alleviate traffic levels along the Marine Highway (see bottom right diagram), the **Carrickfergus Spine Road** and extensions to Victoria Road and Sloefield Road. The draft Masterplan supports these proposals, as traffic approaching Carrickfergus with housing estates as their destination would have a choice to take either the B90 or the Carrickfergus Spine Road, therefore greatly reducing the impact of traffic passing through the town centre. This would then enable the Marine Highway to be reduced in width from the Albert Road junction northwards.

All road proposals would be subject to detailed **feasibility studies** which would take place prior to implementation.

Finally, it is proposed that the **name** of the Marine Highway should be changed in consultation with local people. This would reflect the change of this important route into a street instead of a motorway.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

6: Draft Parking Strategy

It is fundamental that people using the Town Centre have access to **convenient** parking. However, if car parks are allowed to **compromise** the unique quality of the Town Centre's streets, landmarks and visitor attractions, Carrickfergus will **fail** to realise the Vision it has set itself. As a result, the Masterplan has examined ways to make car parking more **efficient** in the Town Centre, which in places means changing the **locations** of car parks.

The Parking Strategy not only addresses existing parking needs, it also addresses **future parking needs** which will become important as Masterplan development proposals are delivered. The Masterplan does not seek to reduce the overall capacity of car parking in the Town Centre, instead, it aims to meet existing and future needs in a better, more efficient way. As a result, the plan "**Town Centre Car Park Locations**" shows locations for car parking based on both existing and future parking needs. These changes would not happen immediately, they would happen in a **phased approach** as developments are completed.

The "**Walking Distances**" diagram illustrates that from almost anywhere in the Town Centre (including the Historic Core, Waterfront, Irish Quarter and Joymount areas), there is a public car park within a 2-3 minute walk. As a result, the Masterplan ensures that proposed car parks are not too far from where they are needed.

Some of the proposed car parks are **multi-storey** car parks. Because on their own multi-storey car parks are damaging to the quality of streets due to their size and unsightly character, the Masterplan proposes that multi-storey car parks are "**wrapped**" by development, thus hiding the car park with active buildings as illustrated by the sketch.

The Parking Strategy will also include a **Maintenance Strategy**, which would examine pricing and various other mechanisms, to ensure that car parks are used most effectively.

Finally, **Park & Ride** and **Park & Share** facilities are proposed for Carrickfergus as a whole to reduce the levels of commuter traffic passing through Carrickfergus Town Centre. Park & Ride and Park & Share facilities at Downshire Train Station would "catch" commuters coming from the north of Town, which means that fewer commuter vehicles would be passing through Town Centre and using Town Centre car parks. Translink have plans to expand the Park & Ride at Carrickfergus Train Station. Also, Park & Share at Sloefield Road would be another useful facility for commuters.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

7: Draft Proposals: Historic Core

The Historic Core is the oldest part of Carrickfergus Town Centre, with centuries of rich history. The Historic Core has some spectacular historic buildings and features that need to be highlighted. One such feature is the **Town Walls**. The Masterplan proposes a narrow street to be created along the Town Walls to encourage activity along their length, with shops, restaurants, cafes and services fronting the Walls. Potentially, access for people to mount the Wall **ramparts** could be reinstated in the north-east section of the Walls around Shaftesbury Park (see top right sketch).

High-quality public spaces are also important in this area. **Market Place**, in the centre of this area is especially important. Presently cluttered and underused, Market Place can become a flexible, usable public space for events and activities (see centre right sketch). **New streets** are created in areas to improve circulation and connectivity in the Historic Core. For example, Antrim Street is extended to the Town Walls, with redeveloped frontage. The Masterplan also highlights buildings in need of **refurbishment**, as well as sites where new **development** is required. These will provide opportunities to create new accommodation for town centre apartments, offices and shops. As mentioned in Board 4: Draft General Town Centre Proposals, the Masterplan will prepare **Design Guidelines** which will ensure that new development fits in appropriately with the surrounding historic buildings.

8: Draft Proposals: Castle Esplanade

The Castle is the jewel of Carrickfergus. It is the Town Centre's most important asset and should play a core role in the regeneration of the town centre. Therefore, giving the Castle the **setting** it deserves is a major priority for improving the Town Centre as a whole. As shown in the 1560 drawing of the Castle, it was once a more striking landmark on a dramatic promontory. Inspired by this, the draft masterplan proposes a number of measures to increase the **beauty** of its setting with the objective of encouraging more people to visit the **castle** and the **town**.

The draft masterplan proposes formalising the space in front of the castle as a **world-class event space** for large events, festivals and activities. It is recognised that the Harbour car park is an important facility and the draft Masterplan ensures that the same level of car parking is maintained in the area through the use of multi-storey and / or underground car parking. (Refer to Board 6: Draft Parking Strategy). To complement the new esplanade space, the draft Masterplan also proposes the development of a **landmark visitor and conference facility** on the site of the current car park. This will serve as a venue for functions and events, relieving the castle pressures it currently faces and providing a venue for local people and visitors to the town. The plan at left shows a sketch layout of what this space could look like. Below that, the concept plans explain the rationale for structuring the space.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

9: Draft Proposals: Waterfront

Currently the Waterfront area is **disconnected** from the Historic Core by the Marine Highway. Moreover, existing development in this area creates large stretches of car parking which make it difficult for pedestrians to access the waterfront. As a result, the Waterfront area has not realised its full **potential**.

The Masterplan seeks to create a lively **town centre waterfront**, taking advantage of the great waterfront location and stunning Castle views. A **water channel** could be created to connect the Marina with the Harbour. The **boat yard** would be relocated to enable people to access the waters edge. New **cafes and restaurants** would line the harbours edge making it more lively during the day and evening. There is also an opportunity to have **historic ships** permanently moored in the Harbour to attract visitors and create interest..

As mentioned in Board 5: Draft Transport Proposals, a Greenway following the old industrial tram line is proposed to connect outlying housing with the waterfront.

10: Draft Proposals: Irish Quarter

The main priority for this area is improving connections to Town Centre. For this reason, Irish Quarter West would undergo **environmental improvements** in order to transform it into a pleasant, inviting street (see top right sketch) with connections to Tesco and the town centre. This would involve widening footpaths, improving lighting and street furniture and redeveloping vacant and derelict sites.

Frontage along Davy's Street would be redeveloped to create a better environment. Potentially, the Jobs & Benefits Office could become a **Knowledge Centre** which combines their present services with extended adult education.

As mentioned in Board 5: Draft Transport Proposals, a Greenway following the old industrial tram line is proposed to connect outlying housing with the waterfront (see centre right sketch).

11: Draft Proposals: Joymount

As mentioned in Board 5: Draft Transport Proposals, a link is proposed to connect the Amphitheatre Wellness Centre with Shaftesbury Park using a well-designed connection under the railway to discourage anti-social behaviour. Part of the Marine Gardens would be redeveloped into a **high-quality park** including a playground and lawn for games, whilst also retaining the war memorial. It is also proposes to re-establish the historic Joymount Court as a venue for events and activities.

Carrickfergus Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Notes on Public Consultation Boards

Along with the reduction in width of the Marine Highway, the draft masterplan has identified potential for development on part of the Marine Gardens. This would create a **new seafront** area with a mixture of uses including residences, offices and a hotel, served by underground car parking facilities.

A new **public space** is proposed at Fisherman's Quay (see top right sketch) which will include a **Maritime Museum**, relating Carrickfergus' fascinating maritime history. A **new marina**, subject to feasibility studies, is proposed around Fisherman's quay which would include active ground floor uses such as cafes and restaurants on the ground floor and offices and apartments above. There is potential for the **Boat Yard** to be relocated to this area, redeveloped to be partially sunken from street level to limit the impact on views.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I get a copy of the consultation boards?

The boards are available online, where they can be viewed on screen and printed.
<http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations/consultation-carrickfergus-masterplan.htm>

How long is the consultation period?

The consultation period will last 6 weeks, ending on 15 October 2009.

Where can I find out more information?

The Carrickfergus Development Company would be pleased to welcome you to their new office at 8 West Street, where you can discuss the masterplan and ask questions.

How can I give feedback?

Feedback forms are located in the Civic Centre and the Development Company office. These can be hand written and posted in the box provided or sent to Carrickfergus Masterplan, The Paul Hogarth Company, Avalon House, 278 – 280 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1HE. Alternatively you can email feedback to carrickfergus@paulhogarth.com

What will happen to my feedback?

All feedback will be collated by the consultants, who will prepare a consultation report and make recommendations for changes to the masterplan. Once agreed by the client and steering group, the masterplan will be finalised, published and launched.

Will any of this happen?

Yes. A number of projects are already in the pipeline for development. Others will be identified by key stakeholders as priorities for delivery in the short term.