



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
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Cheantar an tSraitha Bain
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NEWTOWNSTEWART

Town Centre Regeneration Framework

July 2024



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Executive Summary

This framework document is the output of a Council mandate to prepare a deliverable regeneration vision for Newtown Stewart Town Centre.

It follows on from detailed research and analysis as well as engagement with key local stakeholders and government agencies in terms of identifying the challenges facing the health and vitality of the town centre, and recommendations for how some of these challenges can be addressed. Therefore this document will set out in corresponding order the following key areas for consideration.

The first chapters focus on developing an understanding of the historic background to the settlement and its unique characteristics in addition to the local strategic policy context to help understand how its growth and development has been shaped over the years. Within this section of the document, it focuses on the particular issues facing the town centre by concentrating on key thematic areas to include; Streetscape, Heritage, Access & Parking, Connectivity & Wayfinding, Business Development, Tourism, Community and Safety & Security.

This leads on to a SWOT analysis informed by local stakeholder engagement which has helped to identify the opportunities and potential for improvement, designed to promote the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the town centre. It is through this exercise that the Framework defines the strategic regeneration vision for Newtown Stewart together with a series of indicative actions over the short, medium and long term. The Actions contained within the Framework are a product of our understanding of the issues and engagement with key stakeholders and will help deliver change and improve the issues affecting the town centre.

A collaborative and partnership approach is an important prerequisite in the delivery of the Action Plan over its lifespan. Therefore a number of stakeholders will have responsibility in the delivery of the actions contained herein. Whilst the Action Plan does not have any allocated budgets attached it is hoped that the Framework document will assist in leveraging in the required resources to ensure effective delivery. This is set against a challenging economic and fiscal environment where public sector resources are limited. However, Council and its partners remain committed to using its best endeavours to secure the necessary resources to assist with the delivery of this Framework.

SECTION 1

Introduction

Highlighting the key challenges facing Newtownstewart town centre.

The Purpose of the Regeneration Framework

The purpose of this framework is to highlight the key challenges facing Newtownstewart town centre and recommend deliverable actions going forward which contributes to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Newtownstewart over the next 5-10 years.

The recommended actions within this document are in line with Council's Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan 2017-2032 and associated Local Community Plan.

This document aligns with the emerging Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy and also with Council's Heritage Plan - A Vision For Our Future 2022-2027, Tourism 2018-2025 - A New Level of Ambition, Arts & Culture Strategy 2019-2024, Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2020-2025 and Green Infrastructure Plan 2019-2032.

The aim of this Regeneration Framework is to provide a clear and flexible direction for the sustainable development of Newtownstewart town centre for the benefit of the whole community and visitors alike.

As a result of a co-design process and extensive stakeholder engagement this document sets out a shared strategic vision for Newtownstewart over the next 5 to 10 years. It is the product of thorough analysis of the issues affecting the town centre and its users.



The Rationale for the Regeneration Framework

The town centre plays an important role in the life of Newtown Stewart and surrounding rural area. It provides a range of important services, facilities and amenities which include retailing, community facilities, residential, places of worship, cultural heritage attractions and leisure.

Town centres generally are facing many challenges in terms of the ever-changing role of retailing in recent years which have since been accelerated by the COVID 19 pandemic, and more recently the global economic environment and the associated cost of living impacts. One of the key issues is declining levels of footfall as shoppers opt for more convenient alternatives including online and out of town provision which have contributed to increases in vacancy and dereliction. These problems are widespread, affecting most city, town and village centres throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Local issues need a local response

Council feel it is important to focus on the particular challenges facing all of its urban and rural settlements in terms of assisting in promoting opportunities which will contribute to vibrancy and sustainability of its towns and villages for the communities which they serve. Newtown Stewart is the first location to benefit from a targeted and local approach through the development of a focused document which seeks to reflect the particular and unique characteristics of Newtown Stewart town centre through concentrating on key thematic areas.

These include:



“Streets must not be monochrome, formed by retail only. Instead they should be linear routes that provide a multi-functional, flexible and diversity of spaces for people centered design, enhanced by basic social facilities such as seats, tables, quality lighting and all that will facilitate people to linger longer.”

Re-Inhabiting the Streets by Giulia Vallone

1. Streetscape: Creating people friendly places

There are various physical elements which make up Newtownstewart town centre and which create the Main Street and add to its overall appearance and presentation i.e footpaths, buildings and street furniture such as, seating and bins, provision of lighting, greenery etc.

While not exhaustive these common provisions can add to and enhance the appearance of our streetscapes which in turn create places where people want to visit and spend time in.

Similarly, the use of poor quality materials, poor placement of items and poor provision of street furniture can detract from the overall appearance and enjoyment of places and can result in a lower quality environment which people would not want to visit or spend time in.

2. Heritage

Much of the attractive character Newtownstewart has, is attributed to it's historic environment, which can be seen in its layout with its wide Main Street with attractive 2-3 storey terraces on either side book-ended by the Castle on one end and the Church on the other. The built historic environment has created a town with a unique character, reinforced by it's role as a Conservation Area. Council recognises the significance of the local heritage and how important it is to the local community and businesses.

The actions contained within this framework focus on the principles of heritage-led regeneration in keeping with Council's Heritage Plan - *A Vision For Our Future 2022-2027*.

3. Access and Parking

Newtownstewart is a plantation town and as such has kept its characteristic wide Main Street and wide pedestrian footpaths, it has therefore been able to accommodate parking on both sides of the Main Street without narrowing the road. However, traffic volumes have led to a vehicular dominated environment which often detracts from the quality of its surrounding area. There is one public car park along an arterial street, Townhall Street, where there are some connectivity challenges for pedestrians exiting the car park in the direction of the town centre.

Improving pedestrian connectivity and usage of the car park can contribute positively to the vitality and viability of the Main Street, a matter which is closely considered within this framework document.

4. Connectivity and Wayfinding

Physical connectivity of the Main Street to the adjacent river and recreation grounds present some challenges which are discussed further in this document. There are also pedestrian connectivity issues along Main Street and to the surrounding network of streets.

Some of the connectivity issues will be long term challenges to overcome, however short term improvements in wayfinding and signposting can help link and improve connectivity to services and attractions. These will help to improve the movement of people and visitors to and from the Main Street.

5. Business Development

Newtownstewart has an active town centre with the majority of premises occupied and has a strong independent retailer presence providing comparison and convenience services. However Newtownstewart continues to feel the pressure caused by the changing economic climate driven by a combination of the changing role and function of town centres, the post covid pandemic economic recovery and the cost of living pressures. These are not pressures unique to Newtownstewart but are being experienced in town centres across the country.

The purpose of the framework is to identify and understand the issues so we can design and deliver actions which will contribute to the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of Newtownstewart.

6. Tourism

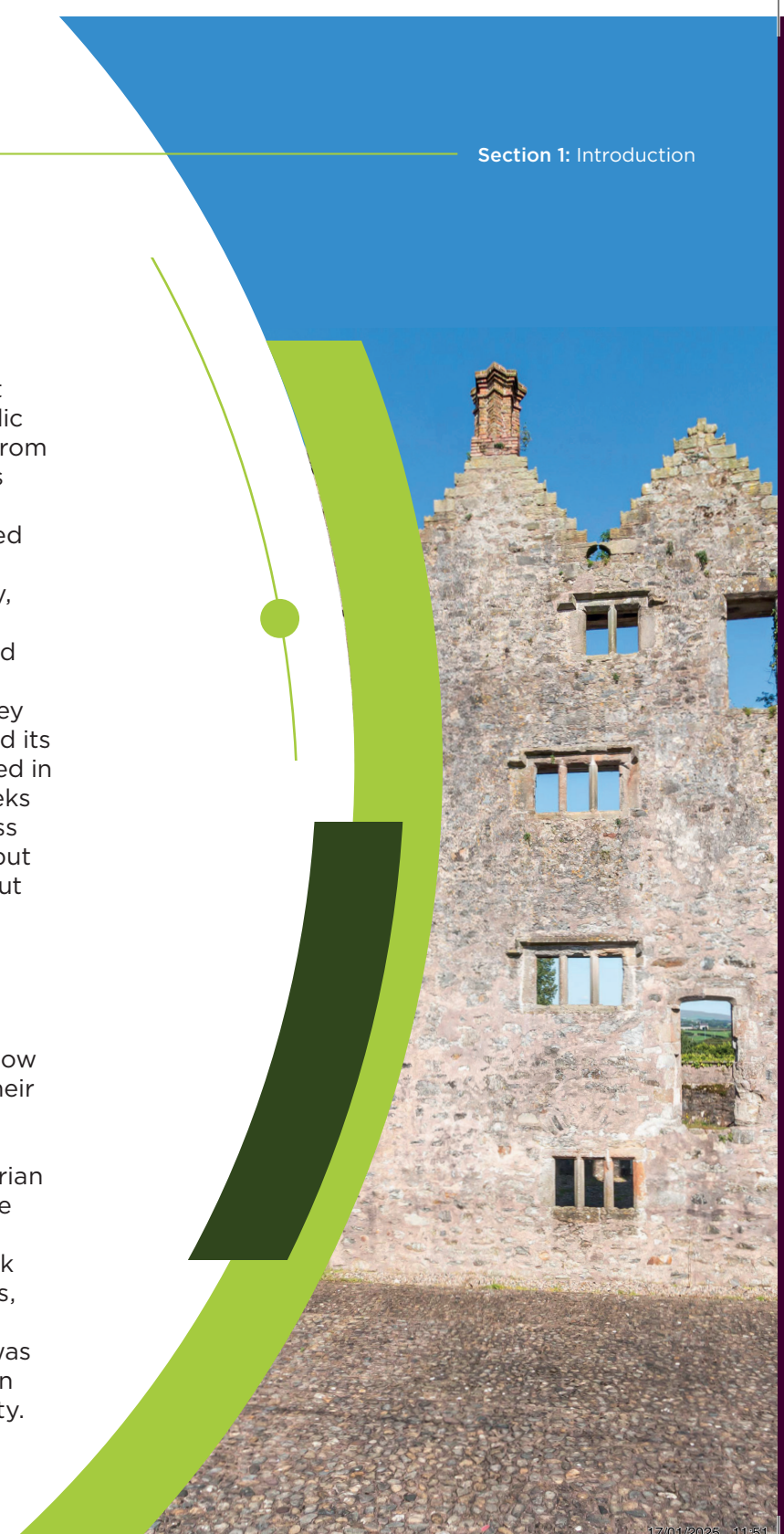
Tourism will play an important role in the sustainability of Newtownstewart Town Centre. There are opportunities to develop Newtownstewart's tourism offering relating to its local heritage in and around the town such as Newtownstewart Castle, Harry Avery's Castle, Pigeon Motte etc. Beyond the local tourism and heritage attractions, there are opportunities to enhance the linkages between the town and nearby large tourism attractions and natural landscape features including the Ulster American Folk Park, International Appalachian Trail and River Strule.

7. Community

In working toward the development of the actions contained within this framework it was important to understand fully the issues affecting Newtownstewart as a whole. As part of the preparation of this framework, two public consultation events were held to gain insight from the community and to identify what the issues are, and to ask what the community want for their town. This valuable feedback has informed the contents of the document and associated actions. There are a number of key community, business and heritage partnerships located within Newtownstewart and who have inputted positively in the preparation of this document. These established partner groups will play a key role in working collaboratively with Council and its partners in the delivery of the actions contained in this Framework. This Framework therefore seeks to build upon not only the community, business and heritage networks that exist in the town, but to also complement the wider ambitions set out in Council's Derg Local Growth Plan.

8. Safety and Security

Feedback from the community engagement highlighted the issue of a perceived need for additional safety and security measures to allow people to feel safe while using and enjoying their town centre. Measures to address the safety and security around Newtownstewart could include improved streetlighting along pedestrian routes from the radial areas of the town to the Main Street. It is felt that if these were better lit then people would be more inclined to walk as opposed to drive to the shops and services, thereby removing the pressure on on-street parking. On the basis of this feedback, there was also a desire by some stakeholders for CCTV in the town centre to improve the feeling of safety.



SECTION 2

Locational Context

Newtownstewart performs a function as a small market town and service centre for the surrounding rural area.

Newtownstewart Locational Context

Newtownstewart is one of three Local Towns proposed to be designated in the Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy in the Council Area. (Castledearg, Newtownstewart and Claudy) It sits along the Strule River close to the confluence with the Owenkillew and according to the 2011 Census had a population of 1,551.

The town has a wide Main Street where much of its original architectural character has survived with a Conservation Area being designated in 1993 in recognition of its historic character. Most of the retail activity is anchored around Main Street and radial streets such as Townhall Street (Strabane Road), Castle Brae, St Eugene's Street, Moyle Road and Dublin Street.

Newtownstewart is located 6 miles (approx.) south of Strabane and 8 miles (approx.) north of Omagh along the A5. Castledearg is located 8 miles (approx.) to the west, with Plumbridge respectively to the east. The beginnings of the settlement appeared at the start of the 17th Century known as "*Baille Nua*"- Newtown, owing its beginnings to the existence of the ford across the River Strule, controlled by the castles which overlooked the location.

Following this turbulent period in the history of the settlement, Newtownstewart evolved as an established market centre. Today Newtownstewart performs a key function as a small market town and service centre for the surrounding rural area. Newtownstewart has a diverse and rich history which is reflected in its array of built and natural heritage assets, making it a pleasant place to visit and explore.



Image ©2025 Google / Maxar Technologies

Map 1 Limit of Development (Strabane Area Plan 1989)

Urban Form and Streetscape

Newtownstewart is an attractive plantation town which has maintained much of its original architectural and townscape character with a wide, well-proportioned Main Street lined by attractive two and three storey terraces which date from the 19th century.

Main Street rises from the Castle at the lower end to St Eugene's Church at the top and has retained much of its attractive historic character reinforcing its designation as a Conservation Area. Main Street is the principal street with a concentration of commercial uses with Townhall Street and St Eugene's Street also providing a mix of commercial and other uses.

Heritage

Newtownstewart has a pleasant feel which is in part due to its attractive and archetypal plantation layout with the church at one end and castle at the other, the latter overlooking the river crossing point.

The assortment of small independent shops and attractive shop-frontages and signage add to the vibrancy of the main area. While the town has benefited from heritage funding over the years to enhance the appearance of some individual buildings within the Conservation Area, limited public realm works have been undertaken to improve/upgrade hard surfaces, street furniture such as bins and seating which have a 'tired' appearance.

Listed Buildings

Newtownstewart has a relatively large concentration of listed buildings for the size of the settlement as can be seen in the below map.

St Eugene's Church and Newtownstewart Castle are the primary historic buildings within the town centre. Other key buildings of heritage significance include the Town Hall, Northern Bank and the Library.



Map 2 Listed Buildings in Newtownstewart

Conservation Area

Newtownstewart Conservation Area was designated on the 20th of April 1993. The Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of Newtownstewart and includes most of the listed buildings in the settlement.

It also takes in the River Strule as it flows past the town. The 5 streets which mainly comprise the Conservation Area, Main Street and radiating out – Townhall Street, Castle Brae, St Eugene's Street, Moyle Road and Dublin Street – provide the template upon which that Area is based.

There are a number of Monuments and industrial heritage sites within Newtownstewart and three Scheduled Monuments, namely, Newtownstewart Castle and Bawn, Pigeon Hill Motte and Harry Avery's Castle approx. 200m southwest of the town. Please refer to the Historic Environment Map Viewer.¹



1. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/historic-environment-map-viewer>

Map 3 Newtownstewart Conservation Area Boundary

The River Strule

The fast flowing River Strule is a significant natural asset, which runs through the centre of the town. However, as the town evolved over the years, it turned its back on the river disconnecting it from the town centre. There is a riverside path to facilitate walking along the river.

There are opportunities for the town centre to fully capitalise on the river's natural heritage benefits with future planned projects which are discussed later in the document.

Flooding

Owing to its proximity to the river, Newtownstewart experiences flooding primarily in the floodplain of the river which encompasses the Vaughans Holm recreation grounds and play park.

As part of the process of climate adaptation and resilience planning, the situation in Newtownstewart is continuing to be monitored by Council and other agencies. Any plan in terms of town centre regeneration, where possible, will seek to mitigate against climate change by minimising green house gas emissions.

All of this will contribute to Council's climate pledge to achieve a net zero and a climate resilient City and District by 2045.



SECTION 3

Policy Context

“There is a commitment within the Rural Policy Framework (2021) to arrest the decline of our towns and villages, adapting to the changing function of town centres and to investing in the development of rural economies and rural based enterprise”.

Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

The Regeneration Framework

The Newtownstewart Regeneration Framework seeks to operate within the context of local community planning and is one of a number of plans and strategies to support the Council Strategic Growth Plan 2017-2032.

From a land-use planning perspective, the current adopted development plan relating to Newtownstewart is the Strabane Area Plan (adopted January 1989). This plan designated Newtownstewart as a Local Town within the Strabane District. The plan indicated specific zonings for the settlement in respect of housing and industry.

In terms of land zoned for recreation and open space, the land to the east of the development limit (see map1) has been developed to provide local sports playing fields.

Under the Strabane Area Plan 1986-2001, the development limit for Newtownstewart was designated with the aim of resisting further ribbon development as well as identifying potential development land which would serve to enable Newtownstewart to retain a compact urban form and to preserve its setting while at the same time offering a wide range of choice particularly for housing development.

Census 2011 data indicates that Derg DEA has 51% of its population aged 25-64 years and 15% of its population aged 65 plus.



Local Development Plan (LDP) Draft Plan Strategy 2032

The emerging LDP draft Plan Strategy sets out the Council's vision, objectives and strategic planning policies in relation to the development and use of land in the City and District to 2032.

Newtownstewart is designated as a Local Town in the emerging draft LDP Plan Strategy and is an important service centre catering for its resident population and a wide rural area. The settlement development limits will be reviewed as part of the next phase of the Plan but are unlikely to be widened.

The emerging Draft LDP, Plan Strategy identifies Sperrin Tourism Gateways which include Claudy, Strabane, Donemana, Newtownstewart and Plumbridge. Additionally, the settlements of Sion Mills, Newtownstewart and Eglinton are recognised as important and attractive historic locations. Newtownstewart is also identified as a Tourism Settlement where tourist/visitor attraction facilities will be focused.

Local Plans and Initiatives

Derg Local Growth Plan

The Derg DEA includes the rural towns and villages of Castlederg, Clady, Glebe, Killeter, Killen, Newtownstewart, Sion Mills and Victoria Bridge.

The Rural Needs Act (NI) (2016) places a new requirement on central government and public authorities, including Councils, to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies or plans and designing and delivering public services.

The unprecedented flooding in August 2017 had a detrimental impact on many of the rural areas, including Castlederg and Newtownstewart. This

impacted on residential properties, recreational and community facilities, highlighting a need for a review of flood defences at the affected sites including Vaughans Holm and Castle Brae.

Key actions which mention Newtownstewart within the Derg Local Growth Plan

- Develop a series of linked information points and panels promoting the area's natural and built heritage including renovations to historic sites e.g. Newtownstewart Castle and Avery's Castle and celebrate ancestral heritage.
- Encourage participation in the Rural Development Programme's Cluster Village Plan process (*development & implementation of plans*). Village Renewal capital projects to be implemented in selected settlements to contribute to regeneration through environmental improvements, heritage conservation, derelict/vacant site enhancements, shop front schemes or gateway/signage projects (*Newtownstewart, Sion Mills, Castlederg, Killeter, Clady, Ardstraw*).
- Scope out the feasibility for the development of a Health & Well Being Hub in Newtownstewart and progress the options.

Newtownstewart Strategic Vision and Action Plan 2011

This Plan was commissioned by ARC North West/Strabane District Council in 2011. The Plan set out key town centre aims followed by a series of proposed regeneration initiatives including the promotion of greater connectivity, addressing dereliction, promoting tourism, heritage and community facilities etc.

SECTION 4

Study & Analysis



There are currently five key access routes which lead into the heart of the town centre (Townhall Street, Castle Brae Street, St Eugene's Street, Moyle Road and Dublin Road).

Road Links

Newtownstewart is located to the south of the A5 which links into and by-passes Newtownstewart and continues onto Omagh and Enniskillen.

The Western Transport Corridor

The A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC) is a Northern Ireland Executive led scheme which will provide 85 kilometres of dual carriageway from south of Derry/Londonderry at New Buildings to the border at Aughnacloy.

It will improve links between the urban centres in the west of the province (*Strabane, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Ballygawley and Aughnacloy*) and provide a strategic link with international gateways.

When delivered the WTC will shift the main access into Newtownstewart south and will direct traffic into the town via Junction 10 to the Baronscourt Road.



Car Parking

There are 30 off-street public car parking spaces located off Townhall Street close to the commercial core which provides free of charge parking. In addition, there are also on-street parking opportunities along Main Street and other nearby routes.

Table 1: Off-Street Car Parks and Number of Spaces in Newtownstewart

Car Park	Spaces	Tariff
Townhall Street - West	30	Free of Charge
Total	30	-

Parking Provision along Main Street

Main Street is sufficiently wide to accommodate on-street parking along both sides of the road, as well as disabled parking bays loading and bus set-down/pick-up provision. An analysis of the survey information and site inspections suggest that traffic volumes moving through the town centre – particularly heavy goods, service vehicles and public transport. Coupled with obstacles such as delivery vehicles and double parking regularly congest Main Street during the day creating a traffic-dominated environment that detracts from the environmental quality.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that there is limited turn over in on-street parking bays along Main Street particularly during business hours.

As part of the preparation of the Newtownstewart Town Centre Regeneration Framework, Council Officers conducted preliminary car parking surveys during 2022 and 2023. The aim was to provide information on usage trends for both on-street and off-street parking provision along Main Street and within the existing Council operated Townhall Street public car park, helping to inform recommendations emerging from the Framework.

It is acknowledged that the usage figures are subject to seasonal and other trends which may influence the demand for parking at any given point in time.

Public Transport

Bus

There is no bus station within the town but there are stops along Main Street. There are services which operate to Killen, Strabane and Omagh.

- Service 97 operates between Strabane and Omagh stopping at Sion Mills, Victoria Bridge and Newtownstewart and operates weekdays and weekends.
- The Goldliner 273 service has 14 direct services each weekday between Derry and Belfast stopping at Newtownstewart and also provides frequent weekend services.

Cycle/Pedestrian Linkages

Newtownstewart has two National Cycle Networks running through the town settlement limit. National Route 92 and National Route 95.



Town Centre Land Use Survey

The primary retail area within Newtownstewart is located along the Main Street. This street is the principal focus of the land use survey seen in Figure 1. Portions of St. Eugene's Street and Townhall Street have also been included in the survey.

Retailing within the town is mainly focused along Main Street, to the North of St. Eugene's Street and the East of Townhall Street. A range of local convenience and comparison retailing exists within the study area.

Two retail units (Centra and Nisa) along with a butchers are located along Main Street providing convenience retailing.

The comparison retail offering is provided by a homeware store (Hood and Co.), Giftware store (B McNamee and Co.) and pharmacy also located along Main Street.

Services are also a prominent use within the town centre, to include uses such as, a mortgage and finance provider, local accountancy, local lawyer office, insurance broker, optician, sports injury clinic, dental clinic, barbers and a hair salon.

The food and drink offering of the town consists of three fast food takeaways, two bars and a hotel (*identified as sui generis uses within the survey.*)

Other uses within the study area include a charity shop, betting office, and a credit union.

Community and cultural uses are provided by a day care, library and two places of worship. There are other community facilities provided at the nearby Newtownstewart Centre 2000 located along Moyle Road.



Figure 1: Land use map of Newtownstewart town centre (August 2023)

While retailing and services are the dominant uses within the town centre, housing is also present. Residential uses are located along Main Street and nearby St Eugene's Street and Town Hall Street.

Vacancy

The mix of architecturally significant buildings and traditional townscape features is an important quality of the town centre. However, a number of vacant and derelict properties and some poor quality buildings impact upon townscape character.

As of the date of this document there are 7 vacant properties which represents an increase from 3 properties when last surveyed in 2018. The vacant properties are illustrated within Figure 1.

Dereliction

Long term vacancy can result in dereliction. Whilst there are no derelict properties along Main Street, there are small pockets of dereliction located along Dublin Street and St Eugene's Street.

Residential Offering

The current composition of land uses is such that the town centre has a proportionate mix of residential within the core and on the periphery. This adds to the vibrancy of the town centre in terms of having an active community located alongside commercial and other facilities. The Framework seeks to encourage an appropriate range of uses which add to town centre vitality and it is considered that there is the potential for additional residential development opportunities within the town centre - utilising vacant upper floors and derelict/gap sites on the periphery. Over and beyond this, the Framework also acknowledges that the town centre has the potential to benefit from any future residential development that might take place within the wider settlement limits.

SECTION 5

Planned Projects

Council's commitment to Newtownstewart town centre extends beyond the preparation of this framework document.



Already plans are in place to take forward a number of important regeneration and connectivity projects in the town centre and surroundings.



1. Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme

Circa £650k of investment has already been secured to support the delivery of green infrastructure and streetscape interventions, estimated completion timeframe in 2024

- Revitalisation painting scheme
£250k investment secured to deliver a commercial façade painting scheme in the town centre, including installation of street furniture along Main Street.
- Vaughan's Holm £400k investment so support the delivery of new and improved pathways, provision of picnic tables, benches, lifebelt stations, interpretation & orientation panels and environmental improvements.

2. Town Hall Street Car Park Resurfacing scheme

Circa £50k investment already secured to resurface Town Hall Street car park and install new disabled and family friendly parking spaces with environmental improvements including repairs. Estimated timeframe for completion by December 2023.

3. Relining of Main Street

Works have been recently carried out.



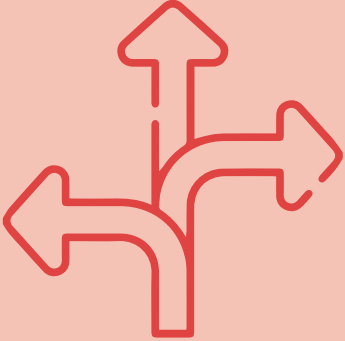











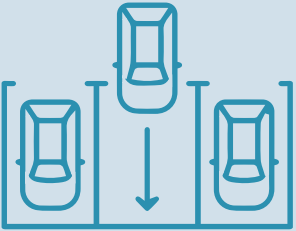


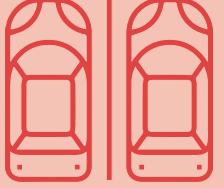




SECTION 6

SWOT Analysis and Public Engagement

In working towards the development of the actions contained within this framework, Council Officers carried out site visits, surveys and stakeholder engagement.



Strengths		Weaknesses	
 <p data-bbox="444 531 766 625">Scenic location setting, adjacent to river with proximity to A5.</p>		 <p data-bbox="1220 577 1514 701">Some dereliction and vacancy. Worn road markings and lack of pedestrian crossings.</p>	 <p data-bbox="1655 910 2154 1017">Lack of way-finding signage / interpretation panels and existing signage in poor condition.</p>
<p data-bbox="174 758 451 852">Attractive Main Street and landmark buildings.</p>		<p data-bbox="879 847 1326 971">Poor pedestrian connectivity and no dedicated crossing points in the town centre. Pedestrian connectivity issues to the river.</p> 	 <p data-bbox="1930 1132 2149 1286">Limited public open space and seating areas within the town centre.</p>
 <p data-bbox="174 1163 451 1287">Concentrated town centre with a strong independent business presence.</p>	<p data-bbox="503 1014 766 1139">Attractive traditional building design with built heritage assets.</p>	<p data-bbox="879 1385 1255 1509">Streetscape assets such as lamp posts and bus stop signs are poorly maintained and unclean.</p> 	<p data-bbox="1655 1414 1860 1474">Lack of cycling infrastructure.</p> 
 <p data-bbox="392 1385 766 1509">Sloping nature of Main Street enable long distance views and expansive views of surrounding countryside.</p>	<p data-bbox="503 1222 707 1282">A strong sense of place.</p>		

Opportunities			Threats	
<p>Scope to increase town centre living, improve the public realm and provide seating.</p> 	<p>Provision of cycling infrastructure.</p>	<p>Electric vehicle charging provision in town centre.</p>	 <p>No investment in the town. Continued dereliction and vacancy. Growth in out of town retailing.</p>	
<p>Opportunities to introduce measures to improve on-street parking provision / turnover and encourage greater use of nearby off-street car parking facilities.</p> 	 <p>The town library entrance area provides opportunity to remove rails and provide environmental improvements.</p>	<p>Built heritage assets such as Newtown Stewart Castle could be better utilised and used to attract tourists.</p>	  <p>Inadequate public car parking capacity to meet increasing demand arising from increased visitor numbers and new business development opportunities.</p>	
<p>Back-land areas provide interesting development opportunities.</p>	 <p>Visual improvements could be made on Town Hall street and the adjoining car park to provide a better entrance to the town.</p>	<p>Delivering changes without stakeholder buy-in and consensus.</p>		
<p>Create pedestrian crossings to make the street more pedestrian friendly.</p> 	<p>Signage at heritage sites to provide information and better act as a tourist site. Increasing linkages to key tourist attractions outside of the town.</p> 	 <p>Removal of parking spaces.</p>		



Consultation and Public Engagement

In working towards the development of the actions contained within this framework, Council Officers carried out site visits, surveys and stakeholder engagement. Council hosted 2 public engagement events on 16th February 2023.

The events were attended by residents, local business owners and other key stakeholders and provided the opportunity for those attending to provide feedback and their views on the process and what should be included in the Regeneration Framework. Council has also undertaken consultation with statutory agencies including DFI Roads Service and DFC Historic Environment Division.

Views were recorded on the day and are reflected within this document. These stakeholder contributions have helped shape the actions contained within this document.

At the engagement event, attendees were asked the following questions:

1. What do you see as the issues for the town centre?
2. What are the key short term and long term challenges facing the town centre?
3. What do you consider to be the biggest threats to the town centre viability?
4. Any other issues?
5. What do you consider to be the main strengths and opportunities for town centre growth?
6. (a) What do you see as the immediate priorities for the town centre?
(b) How would you like to see the town centre develop over the next 5-10 years?

This provided stakeholders the opportunity to explain the main issues within Newtownstewart from their own perspective.



SECTION 7

Challenges & Observations



Key Challenges and Observations

Arising from the observations of Council and its statutory partners and those made during the public engagement consultation sessions by local stakeholders the following is a summary/highlight of the key challenges and themes.

Many of these challenges will assist in informing the suggested actions within this document.



Streetscape

Feedback included:

- Lack of quality public realm, no seating along main and arterial streets within the town.
- Lack of uniformity with existing street furniture, signage, paving etc.
- Scope and space to provide public realm enhancements.
- Unattractive arrival points.



Heritage

Feedback included:

- Newtown Stewart Castle is closed to the public and needs seating and lighting.
- No interpretation or animation of the Castle, large forecourt not being used.
- Directional signage to the castles and surroundings i.e trails/Baronscourt/historic cemeteries/Ulster American Folk Park etc need improved.
- Local historical events not widely known.



Access & Parking

Feedback included:

- Poor connectivity between Townhall Street carpark and Main Street- no dropped kerbs, no pedestrian crossing point, no traffic calming.
- Narrowing of pavement along Townhall Road.
- No signage at Townhall Street car park, no information or direction/wayfinding signage.
- Townhall Street car park not used to full capacity.
- High level of on-street car parking along Main Street.
- Main Street line painting faded, need for more disabled spaces, need for residents parking permits, loading bays and keep clear markings not discernible.
- No pedestrian crossing points.
- No provision for bike stands or electric vehicle charging points.
- Lack of loading bays or markings to distinguish loading bays, resulting in delivery vehicles double parking resulting in congestion.

Connectivity and Wayfinding

Feedback included:

- Lack of signage to orientate and direct visitors from Townhall Street car park to the Main Street.
- No wayfinding to other amenities from Main Street such as a Vaughan Holms, recreation grounds, market etc.
- Uncoordinated and disjointed signage.
- Lack of connectivity (marketing/business development opportunities) nearby attractions such as the Ulster American Folk Park, Bessy Bell, Mary Gray, Baronscourt, Golf Clubs etc.
- Lack of cycling infrastructure.
- Existing directional signage is in poor condition and information signage is worn.



Business Development

Feedback included:

- Businesses need to encourage a more efficient use and turn-over of on-street car parking spaces along Main Street to attract shoppers and visitors.
- Need additional parking provision to meet the future growth ambitions of the town.
- Need further business support and engagement with Council.
- Issues with business sustainability and closures.
- Need to develop attractions, facilities and tourism to increase footfall.



Tourism

Feedback included:

- Under-utilised tourism and heritage assets.
- Need to enhance current tourism offering.
- Lack of a collaborative approach.
- Limited marketing and promotion of Newtown Stewart.
- Lack of infrastructure - tourism information centre, accommodation, café, public toilets.



Community

Feedback included:

- Need for better communication between community, business, heritage and statutory stakeholders.

Safety & Security

Feedback included:

- Lighting at entrances and throughout the town is poor.
- Derelict buildings and the risk of further deterioration.
- Lack of footpaths and narrow footpaths (Mill St, Townhall St).
- No town centre public CCTV system.

SECTION 8

Delivery

This Framework sets out the regeneration strategic vision over the next 5-10 years.



Endorsement of the Framework

In the development of the Framework, Council has initiated public engagement processes during the early stages of its preparation and latterly when the draft document was produced in February 2024. A period of public consultation on the draft Framework took place during February and March 2024, inviting comments from interested parties and stakeholders. Relevant feedback from this exercise has been reflected within this final version. Accordingly, the Framework has been presented to Council's Environment and Regeneration Committee in July and formally endorsed.

Delivery of the Framework

This Framework sets out the regeneration strategic vision which will contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Newtownstewart over the next 5-10 years.

The delivery of the actions contained within this Framework will fall to a number of stakeholders including Council, Central Government agencies/ departments, business, heritage and community partners. Therefore, collaboration and partnership working between all of the stakeholders will be necessary to ensure co-ordinated delivery over the lifespan of the Framework.

Whilst there are currently no confirmed funding sources to deliver on the recommended actions, partnership working will be key in identifying where potential funding opportunities might exist.

There is a recognition that some of the actions are not funding dependent and instead have the opportunity to link to or enhance existing or planned projects already being managed or developed.



Monitoring and Evaluation

An action plan setting out the short/medium/long term priorities across the thematic areas has been developed by Council in partnership with the statutory stakeholders and community partners. Given that the delivery of actions will fall to a number of stakeholders each action will identify a delivery lead and associate partners (where applicable).

A monitoring and evaluation template will be developed by Council against which the actions that are contained within this framework will be monitored and progress of the projects/initiatives will be tracked.

Management and Co-ordination

The co-design process which was used to inform the writing of this plan highlighted some issues raised by local stakeholders with regards to limited engagement and consultation on key matters pertaining to the Town Centre.

Council is keen to ensure that there is an appropriate and effective communication mechanism that will provide the opportunity for engagement with all of the stakeholders who have been engaged in the development of this Framework.

Council is already actively engaging with business and heritage stakeholders in the design and delivery of a series of short term actions.

SECTION 9 Action Plan



Theme 1: Streetscape

Action	Delivery Partners	Providing Support	Timescale
1.1 Secure external funding to clean and repair existing public realm along Main Street comprising of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repair/replace damaged street furniture e.g bins, benches • maintenance/replacement of uneven footpath surfaces 	DCSDC Regeneration	DfI-Roads	Short
1.2 Scope and identify external funding opportunities to undertake an environmental improvement scheme within the town centre comprising of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved street furniture (seating, cycle stands etc) • new soft landscaping along Main Street i.e hanging baskets, planters and trees • improving façades of commercial premises 	DCSDC Regeneration	DfI-Roads, DfC-Historic Environment Division, DAERA	Short-medium
1.3 Scope external funding opportunities to deliver a targeted heritage-led town centre regeneration scheme promoting the re-use of vacant/derelict/under-occupied properties to enhance vibrancy and attract new business/residential/community opportunities.	DCSDC Regeneration	External funders, Property Owners	Medium
1.4 Work with local businesses and property owners to identify suitable properties and resourcing to facilitate appropriate temporary/meanwhile uses for empty buildings to stimulate vibrancy in the town centre e.g exhibition/events.	DCSDC Regeneration, Property Owners and Community Stakeholders	DCSDC Museum & Visitor Services, Arts & Culture, Community Services & Leisure	Medium
1.5 Explore opportunities to develop/optimize green urban spaces in suitable/appropriate locations in the town centre.	Community/Private stakeholders	DCSDC Regeneration	Medium-Long

Short: 0- 18 months (NB there are some actions identified as short which are ongoing) | **Medium:** 18-36 months | **Long:** 36+ months

Theme 2: Heritage

Action	Delivery Partners	Providing Support	Timescale	
2.1	Work in partnership with DfC Historic Environment Division to agree a suitable management arrangement in relation to improving public access to Newtownstewart Castle.	DfC - Historic Environment Division Community/Private Stakeholders	DCSDC Regeneration	Short
2.2	Work in partnership with DfC Historic Environment Division to improve and upgrade interpretation at Newtownstewart Castle.	DfC - Historic Environment Division	DCSDC Regeneration	Short
2.3	Work in partnership with DfC Historic Environment Division to improve and upgrade interpretation at Harry Avery's Castle, and scope potential options to improve off-road car parking at the attraction.	DCSDC Regeneration DfI Roads	DfC - Historic Environment Division	Medium-Long
2.4	Undertake a technical feasibility study to scope options for the design and delivery of an exterior lighting scheme for Newtownstewart Castle.	DCSDC Regeneration	DfC - Historic Environment Division	Short
2.5	Work in partnership with local community-led heritage organisations to provide advice and assistance in the development, delivery and promotion of their respective projects.	DCSDC Tourism; Marketing; Regeneration; Newtownstewart Heritage Group; Two Castles Community Association	Museum & Visitor Services	Short
2.6	Work in partnership with local stakeholders to develop a heritage walking trail incorporating and connecting local heritage and cultural attractions through improved on-site interpretation, marketing materials (brochure/maps) and online presence.	DCSDC Tourism; Marketing; Regeneration	Newtownstewart Heritage Group and Two Castles Community Association.	Short-Medium
2.7	Work with partners to develop our understanding of local heritage in Newtownstewart by carrying out archaeological research.	DfC - Historic Environment Division; Newtownstewart Heritage Group; Two Castles Community Association	-	Short
2.8	Deliver suitable highway directional signage e.g Brown Tourist Signs to highlight the heritage significance of Newtownstewart.	DCSDC Regeneration	DfI Roads Tourism NI	Short
2.9	Work with community stakeholders to identify an eligible heritage building as part of a potential Village Catalyst funded regeneration project, to restore and reuse for local community use.	DCSDC Regeneration; Community partner (to be identified)	External funder (to be identified)	Medium-Long

Short: 0- 18 months (NB there are some actions identified as short which are ongoing) | **Medium:** 18-36 months | **Long:** 36+ months

Theme 3: Parking, Access & Traffic Management

Action		Delivery Partners	Providing Support	Timescale
3.1	Commission a parking needs assessment and site options appraisal in respect of future on-street and off-street car parking provision in the town centre to include consideration for coach parking drop-off/set-down provision.	Dfl Roads	DCSDC Regeneration	Short
3.2	Investigate options to improve existing on-street car parking capacity and availability including reconfiguration of layouts (general parking, disabled, bus stop, EV charge points and loading).	Dfl Roads	DCSDC Regeneration	Short
3.3	Scope the feasibility for new and improved pedestrian crossing points in the town centre.	Dfl Roads	DCSDC Regeneration	Short
3.4	Engage with local town centre stakeholders to assess the feasibility of undertaking a review of existing vehicular traffic movements in the town centre designed to improve flows and ease congestion.	DFI Roads	-	Medium
3.5	Investigate opportunities for new electric car parking charging point locations in the town centre.	DCSDC Energy	-	Medium
3.6	Identify locations for new cycle parking facilities in the town centre.	DCSDC Green Infrastructure	-	Short
3.7	Engage with local town centre stakeholders to assess the feasibility of undertaking a review of existing parking controls on Main Street in order to improve the efficient use of on street parking provision and general traffic flows, through the implementation of an agreed pilot/trial initiative.	DFI Roads	-	Medium

Short: 0- 18 months (NB there are some actions identified as short which are ongoing) | **Medium:** 18-36 months | **Long:** 36+ months

Theme 4: Connectivity & Wayfinding

Action	Delivery Partners	Providing Support	Timescale
4.1 Undertake: (1) A review of the existing wayfinding/welcome signage provision and commission a design toolkit to ensure coordinated signage infrastructure on key arrival points/public car park and within the town centre. (2) Identify external funding opportunities to deliver the key actions arising from the strategy & toolkit.	DCSDC Regeneration; Green Infrastructure	DCSDC Tourism	Short-Medium
4.2 Scope potential greenway linkages to/from key natural/built heritage, tourism and recreational attractions (eg Vaughans Holm) within the town centre - including optimising opportunities for linkages arising from the proposed A5 redevelopment.	DCSDC Green Infrastructure	-	Long
4.3 Undertake an audit of local provision of cycle route signs and interpretation and replace tired and damaged Cycle Routes interpretive panels or integrate messaging into other new interpretation.	DCSDC Green Infrastructure	DFI, Sperrins Partnership & 4 Sperrins Councils (Sperrins Cycle Routes) Sustrans	Medium
4.4 Audit local provision of existing Sperrin Scenic Driving signage and address gaps.	DCSDC Tourism	Sperrins Partnership 4 Sperrins Councils DfI Roads	Medium
4.5 Continue to liaise with LDP team to identify opportunities for connectivity for sites in strategic locations or with development potential to ensure they allow for wider connectivity.	Local Development Plan, DCSDC Green Infrastructure	-	Long

Short: 0- 18 months (NB there are some actions identified as short which are ongoing) | **Medium:** 18-36 months | **Long:** 36+ months

Theme 5: Business Development

Action	Delivery Partners	Providing Support	Timescale
5.1	DCSDC Business	-	Short
5.2	DCSDC Business	-	Short
5.3	DCSDC Business	DCSDC Tourism, Visit Derry, Tourism NI	Short
5.4	DCSDC Business	-	Medium

Short: 0- 18 months (NB there are some actions identified as short which are ongoing) | **Medium:** 18-36 months | **Long:** 36+ months

Theme 6: Tourism

Action	Delivery Partners	Providing Support	Timescale
6.1 Investigate and create opportunities to promote Newtownstewart visitor experiences via existing and new destination marketing bodies and marketing platforms; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Derry • Sperrins Partnership • Visitor information Centres • International Appalachian Trail Ulster Ireland • Sperrins Sculpture Trail 	DCSDC Tourism, Visit Derry, Sperrin Partnership, and Strabane Visitor Information Centre	-	Short
6.2 Review the tourism content and profile of Newtownstewart and area within existing tourism marketing materials (publications and online) and maximise opportunities for future.	DCSDC Tourism	Sperrins Partnership. International Appalachian Trail Ulster Ireland Steering Group. Local Stakeholders.	Ongoing
6.3 Continue to liaise with Newtownstewart Centre 2000 to display a tourism information point in Newtownstewart.	Strabane Visitor Information Centre	DCSDC Tourism	Short
6.4 Enable linkages and partnership working between local tourism stakeholders in Newtownstewart and other areas (e.g the Sperrins), other organisations (e.g the Ulster American Folk Park and the International Appalachian Trail Ulster Ireland) and products (e.g Sperrins Sculpture Trail).	Sperrins Partnership, DCSDC Tourism	Local and Regional tourism providers, attractions and local stakeholders	Medium
6.5 As part of the development of a post 2025 strategic vision for tourism delivery within Derry & Strabane consideration should be given to opportunities in Newtownstewart. These may include; an audit of the local product ^{*1} , identifying regions unique selling points, opportunities for tourism related development and promotion, capacity building and training.	DCSDC Tourism	Tourism Stakeholders	Medium
6.6 Engage with local stakeholders to promote participation/applications to DCSDC's Community Events Fund for the delivery of events in Newtownstewart.	DCSDC Events and Arts & Culture	-	Short
6.7 Promote relevant community led events for Newtownstewart.	DCSDC Events, Community Services and local community stakeholders.	DCSDC Arts & Culture; Tourism	Medium

*1 An audit of local product and revision of contact database to be undertaken in short term.

Short: 0- 18 months (NB there are some actions identified as short which are ongoing) | **Medium:** 18-36 months | **Long:** 36+ months

Theme 7: Safety & Security

Action		Delivery Partners	Providing Support	Timescale
7.1	Explore the feasibility for new CCTV provision in Newtown Stewart Town Centre.	DCSDC Regeneration	-	Medium
7.2	Review existing street lighting in the town centre to promote and scope a lighting scheme to improve existing provision along Main Street and arterial walking routes into the town centre.	Dfl Roads	DCSDC Regeneration	Medium

Short: 0- 18 months *(NB there are some actions identified as short which are ongoing)* | **Medium:** 18-36 months | **Long:** 36+ months

Appendix



Newtownstewart Listed Buildings

HB10/04/004 A - Northern Bank, 17 Main Street.

HB10/04/004 B - House, 15 Main Street.

HB10/04/005 - Hood & Co (Shop), 29 Main Street.

HB10/04/007 - Newtownstewart Old Bridge, Douglas Road.

HB10/04/045 A - House, 5 Townhall Street.

HB10/04/045 B - House (*Former townhall*), 7 Townhall Street.

HB10/04/045 C - House, 9 Townhall Street.

HB10/04/023 - House and Offices, 8 Main Street.

HB10/04/024 - Former House, 6 Main Street.

HB10/04/025 - House, 4 Main Street.

HB10/04/027 - House, steps, railings, walling and outbuildings. 5 Dublin Street.

HB10/04/026/ B - House, steps, railings, walling and outbuilding. 3 Dublin Street.

HB10/04/026 A - House, steps and walling. 1 Dublin Street.

HB10/04/003 - Church, walling, steps and gates. St Eugene's Church of Ireland Main Street.

HB10/04/008 - Schoolhouse, walling and railings. Former Newtownstewart County Primary School, 2 Main Street.

The information is available upon request in a number of formats including large print, Braille, PDF, audio formats, (CD, MP3, DAISY) and minority languages.

For further information on alternative formats please contact
T: 02871 253 253 or equality@derrystrabane.com

Please Contact:

Regeneration Section
Environment & Regeneration Department
Derry City and Strabane District Council
98 Strand Road
Derry-Londonderry
BT48 7NN

T: 02871 253253

E: regeneration@derrystrabane.com

W: www.derrystrabane.com/services/regeneration



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle
**Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSraitha Báin**

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Destríck Cooncil