

CHAPTER 5

Town Centre



Town Centre

Aim: To support, protect and reinforce the role of Naas Town Centre as the primary retailing and service area of Naas through the consolidation and expansion of the town centre, to facilitate the provision of a high level and broad range of uses, to facilitate high quality urban design and through the provision of high quality public realm to promote the town centre as an attractive place for all to enjoy.

5.1 BACKGROUND

Naas Town Centre acts as a focus for the wider community and should be an attractive, inviting, safe and secure environment for visitors, business, shoppers and its residents. The area zoned Naas Town Centre comprises approximately 47 hectares (Refer to Map 5.1- Town Centre & LAP Lands for extent of town centre zoning).

Shops and services are located primarily in and around North and South Main Streets. The narrow plot sizes of Main Street have limited the ability of the town centre to accommodate large individual building footprints, but considerable backland and brownfield sites exist which could accommodate town centre development. The character of the town centre has been established by its historical layout and rich architectural heritage. It is important that the design of future development within the town centre builds on its character to enhance its appearance and attractiveness as a place to visit and do business.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapters 6, 12 and 13 of this Plan.

5.2 STRATEGY

A core principle of the development strategy is to promote Naas town centre as a vibrant centre offering a wide range of services and opportunities within a high quality urban environment. Consolidation of the existing town centre, utilisation of backlands and appropriate development of brownfield sites is of primary importance.

The following aims provide the framework for the town centre strategy:

- Increase the critical mass of population, employment, retail and associated uses to facilitate the consolidation and expansion of the town centre.
- Maintain the viability of the town centre by promoting the centre as the primary location for retail and other commercial development i.e. creation of a vibrant retail core supported by a mix of supporting and complementary uses.
- Encourage increased town centre residential development based on good urban design and seek to enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre with safe and attractive spaces to promote the town centre as a desirable place to work, live and visit.
- Identify and secure the redevelopment and regeneration of areas in need of renewal.
- Promote the re-use of buildings and development of under-utilised backland and brownfield sites to successfully integrate with the town centre area.
- Promote high quality urban design which responds positively to the town's historic character and architectural heritage and ensures all users are catered for.
- Reduce traffic congestion and improve the public realm.



5.3 TOWN CENTRE USES

The promotion of a variety of uses such as retail, commercial, employment and cultural within the town centre is encouraged. The increase of population within the town centre with a range of employment, recreation, educational, commercial and retail uses can help to curtail travel demand. Town centres have the greatest potential for the creation of sustainable patterns of development. A healthy retail environment is an essential pre-requisite for a vibrant and viable town centre. Increasing the retail sector within Naas town centre and promoting Naas as an important shopping destination will assist the town in maintaining its role in a regional context.

Residential use in the town centre is currently very limited. A more substantial presence would add to the vitality and viability of the town centre and as such, proposals for the residential conversion of the upper floors of retail and commercial premises will be favourably considered. Any proposed residential use must respect the historic fabric, whilst also providing adequate residential amenity. The Plan seeks to ensure that new residential developments within the town centre also incorporate a non-residential, preferably retail/commercial use at the ground floor. All applications for residential development will be assessed against the policies outlined in Chapter 13 Development Management, however in exceptional circumstances these standards may be relaxed in the town centre.

To support a vibrant town centre, evening and night time uses, will be encouraged, subject to development management criteria including access, parking and protection of residential amenity.

It is acknowledged that there has been an emergence of non-retail developments such as betting offices, and take-aways in the town centre, especially along Main Street in recent years. The cumulative impact of non-retail uses in any particular area will be considered in the assessment of planning applications for non-retail uses.

5.4 URBAN RENEWAL AND REGENERATION

There is a need to reduce levels of vacancy in the town centre and develop a town centre typified by high quality and good design. A series of connected public spaces that respect and enhance the setting of the architectural heritage of the town will be promoted.

Despite some infill development and the ongoing construction of the new shopping centre at Corban's Lane, there are considerable undeveloped backland areas to the rear of buildings on the Main Street (North and South), including Abbey Street, with significant development potential. The potential for the re-use and regeneration of derelict buildings and brownfield sites in the town centre and at edge of centre locations should be considered in the formulation of development proposals.

In addition to North and South Main Streets, there are a number of "side" streets and lanes which are an under-utilised resource as they offer development potential for the expansion of retail and service outlets. The development of laneways can offer potential benefits in terms of enhancing the permeability of the town centre, and in the development of attractive, unique and pedestrian friendly urban spaces.

Naas Town Council has been proactive in the identification of derelict sites which negatively affect the townscape and will continue to address the issue of dereliction under the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990. Re-use and regeneration of derelict/obsolete land and buildings will help achieve the preservation of the character and quality of the town, particularly in terms of vernacular/historical architecture.

5.4.1 Opportunity Sites

There are a number of opportunity sites within the town centre and adjoining area, which are under-utilised in terms of their development potential. These sites are capable of accommodating a mix of uses. The development of these sites should be of a high quality of urban design and innovative architectural design solutions will be sought at these locations. Chapter 12 identifies a number of these sites and provides guidance for the future development of these areas. In assessing proposals for opportunity sites, the Council shall have regard to the development standards and guidelines outlined in Chapters 12 and 13.

5.5 MOVEMENT, ACCESS AND THE PUBLIC REALM

Vehicular traffic in the town centre diminishes the quality of the environment for shopping, visitors, pedestrians etc. This Plan proposes the reduction in vehicular traffic in the town centre and promotes streets as “living spaces” which are a functional part of the community and the focus of activities. The Plan seeks to link commercial areas, employment areas and public spaces through a network of quality pedestrian and cycling routes in an enhanced public realm. An improved pedestrian environment will encourage higher levels of footfall on the main thoroughfares with associated higher levels of economic activity.

Town centre public realm and general streetscape improvements have been carried out in recent years,

including improvement works to the public spaces in front of the Courthouse and at Poplar Square. These public realm improvements have contributed positively to the commercial environment, ease of use and attractiveness of the Main Street areas. It is an aim of the Council to facilitate further public realm improvements, both in terms of regeneration, building fabric, street materials and furniture and connectivity. In general, any urban renewal or environmental improvement scheme should retain historic features. In exceptional cases where any of these features need to be removed, their reuse where appropriate within the town centre will be encouraged. This Plan also seeks to encourage pedestrianisation of parts of the town centre such as Poplar Square and Market Square during the plan period.



5.6 TOWN CENTRE DESIGN

The significance of built and architectural heritage particularly with regard to the numerous Protected Structures in the town centre and to the designated Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is recognised in Chapter 11 of this Plan. Proposals for new development in the town centre should adhere to the character of the area and to the principles of good practice, as set out in Architectural Heritage Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2004).

The Council will consider proposals for modern architecture, where it respects the character of surrounding development. In general, innovative modern development using high quality materials will be favoured over pastiche or reproduction of existing buildings.

Development proposals (including new build and proposals for alteration/conversion/renovation of historic structures) should support the role of Naas town centre as a primary location for commercial, retail and cultural activities with a good mix of uses, particularly at ground floor level.

Naas contains a number of traditional shopfronts, which contribute to the distinctive character of the town. The Council will encourage the preservation and refurbishment of existing traditional shopfronts and name plates. New non-traditional design shopfronts will be considered. However these should be designed to the highest standards.

Development proposals within the town centre should:

- Promote high architectural quality, and by their design and relationship to setting, create or contribute to a sense of place;
- Relate appropriately to the surrounding townscape and any building of note;
- Have regard to the scale and character of adjacent streets;
- Have regard to local views, prevailing heights and building lines;
- Preserve as much as possible, the historic street layout and urban form;
- Present a lively active street frontage, with regular entrances and windows facing the street;
- Have a continuous building line up to the back edge of pavements.

5.7 TOWN CENTRE POLICIES

5.7.1 General Town Centre

It is the policy of the Council:

- TC1:** To promote the vitality and viability of the town centre area so that it becomes a high quality environment for shopping, working and visiting.
- TC2:** To encourage and promote development within the town centre which is of a high standard of design, has an appropriate mix of uses, enhances the built environment and delivers a high quality public realm.
- TC3:** To reinforce the heart of Naas town centre as the priority location for new retail development, with quality of design and integration/linkage with the existing urban form/layout being fundamental prerequisites.
- TC4:** To retain buildings and streetscapes of character in the town centre and to ensure that new development complements the existing character of the streetscape.
- TC5:** To ensure that the town centre is accessible to all members of the community, including people with disabilities, the elderly and people with young children.
- TC6:** To seek to support the appropriate development of lands for the future expansion of Naas town centre.
- TC7:** To continue to enhance the streetscape and heritage assets of the town centre, to continue environmental improvements, to sustain and improve its attraction for living, working, visiting and investment.
- TC8:** To promote appropriate residential development within the town centre and encourage the concept of 'Living Over the Shop' in the town centre.

5.7.2 Urban Renewal, Regeneration and Public Realm

It is the policy of the Council:

- TC9:** To encourage a greater usage of backland areas and to promote the re-development of brownfield sites in the town centre area where new development will positively contribute to the commercial vitality of the town centre.

- TC10:** To promote the re-utilisation and revitalisation of derelict or obsolete structures in the town centre and encourage the renewal/repair and maintenance of structures on the Council's Derelict Sites Register.
- TC11:** To encourage the use of upper floors of existing buildings and the development of mixed-use schemes, particularly for residential uses.
- TC12:** To encourage the creation of new public spaces within the fabric of the town centre, provided they are passively supervised and surrounded by active ground floor use.
- TC13:** To require that any new development creates or positively contributes towards a connected network of streets and spaces, which prioritises pedestrians and cyclists.
- TC14:** To ensure that town centre environmental improvements including improved paving, street furniture and tree planting are designed and implemented to a high design standard.

5.7.3 Town Centre Design

It is the policy of the Council:

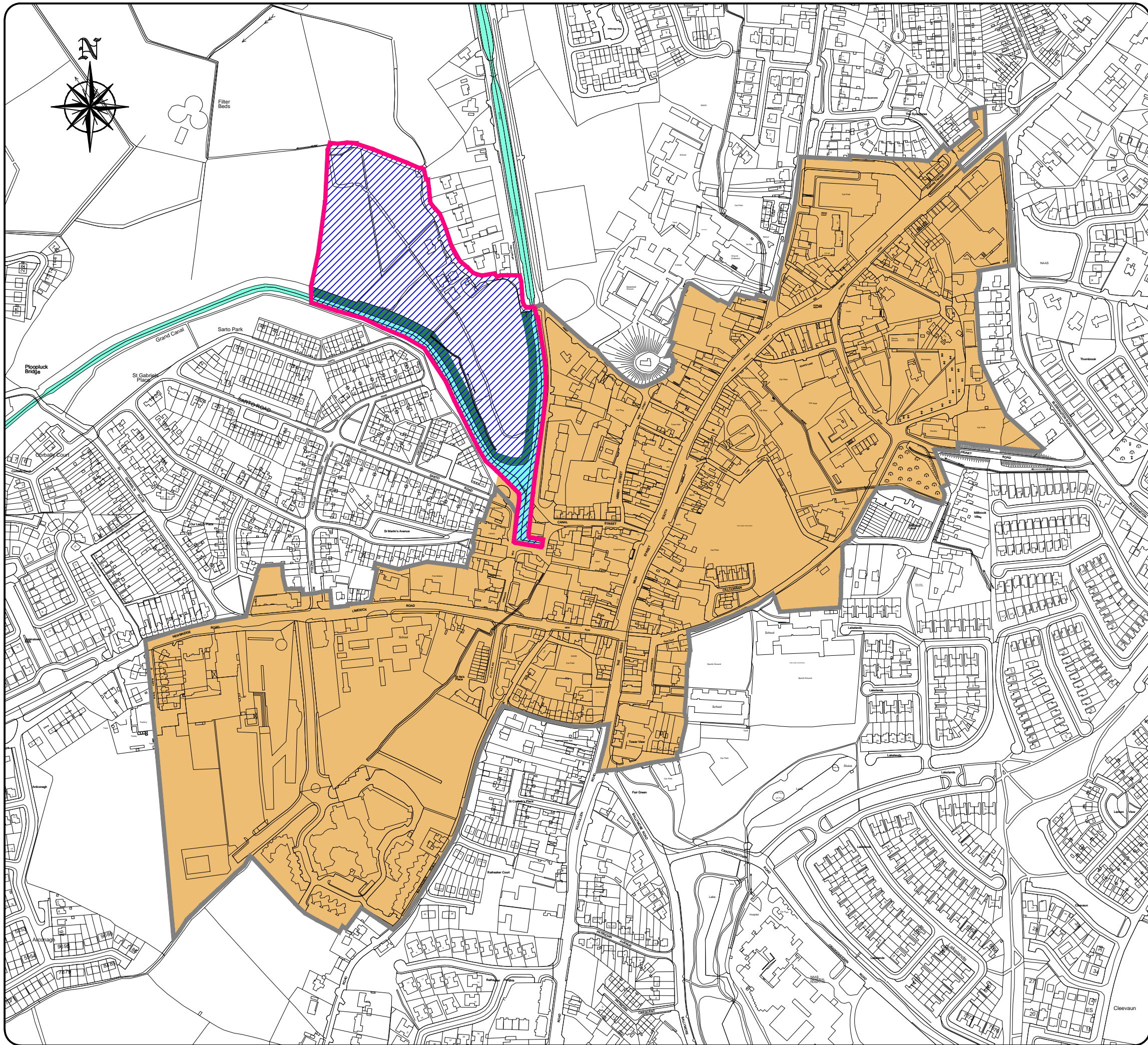
- TC15:** To ensure that new development in the town centre will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances its character thereby promoting high quality urban change and improvement.
- TC16:** To ensure the retention of shop fronts and other significant elements of the streetscape, which enhance the visual amenity and distinctiveness of the town centre.
- TC17:** To seek to improve existing shopfronts and to ensure that new shopfronts reflect the scale and proportions of the existing streetscape.
- TC18:** To restrict unnecessary additional lighting, including intermittent lighting and neon lighting on external elevations, particularly in or adjacent to residential properties.
- TC19:** To place underground new service cables and ducting such as electrical, telephone, broadband and cable television.

- TC20:** To encourage the use of traditional hand painted signs, as opposed to uPVC, plastic or other man made materials. Internally illuminated plastic signage will generally not be permitted.
- TC21:** To restrict the use of external security grilles/shutters on shop fronts.
- TC22:** To restrict advertising signs/banners/ stickers on the inside of shop front/commercial business windows.

5.8 TOWN CENTRE OBJECTIVES

It is an objective of the Council:





- TC01:** To maintain the Council's Derelict Sites Register and to exercise its powers under the Derelict Sites Act 1990.
- TC02:** To seek the removal of unauthorised advertising/signage through enforcement provisions and to encourage new advertising and signage which is appropriate to the streetscape and positively contributes to the public realm
- TC03:** To prepare an Environmental Improvement Scheme to visually enhance the streetscape and key urban spaces with an emphasis on promoting a pedestrian and public transport friendly environment.
- TC04:** To investigate the feasibility of the pedestrianisation of Poplar Square and Market Square during the Plan period.
- TC05:** To progress implementation of the recommendations of the Naas IFPLUT Study (2003) and Naas Traffic Management Plan (2008) and to facilitate removal of traffic congestion in the town centre.



NAAS TOWN COUNCIL

Naas Town Development Plan
2011 - 2017

LEGEND

-  Town Centre
-  Lands subject to future Local Area Plan
-  Open Space & Amenity
-  Canal

Town Centre & LAP Lands

Scale: N.T.S.

Map Ref.: 5.1

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THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN
CONJUNCTION WITH THE WRITTEN STATEMENT