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1 Introduction

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

2 Kilmarnock Town Centre Profile

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

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

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

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

3 Purpose of the Strategy

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

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

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

4 Strategic and Policy Context for the Strategy

Strategic Context

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

enabling investment in leisure and cultural activities;

encouraging the growth of existing and new businesses; and

extending the business and job opportunities associated with tourism and leisure.

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

Policy Context

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

Principal NPPG requirements of relevance to Kilmarnock town centre

- to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres as the most appropriate locations for retail and other related activities;

- to create an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector offering consumer choice;

- to apply the sequential test and the principles of sustainability to new retail and commercial leisure developments; and

- to ensure that new retail developments are fully integrated with other land uses, the existing transport network and different modes of transport.
Principal Structure Plan Requirements of relevance to Kilmarnock town centre:

- encourage a wide range of retail, commercial, business, entertainment and leisure and residential opportunities;
- promote the town centre through major regeneration initiatives;
- restrict new retail floorspace at out-of-centre locations to the sale of Do-It-Yourself, furniture, carpets, electrical and gardening goods;
- to adopt a sequential approach to the approval of retail and commercial leisure development with new investment directed first to town centres and then edge-of-centre locations;
- to ensure new retail development is of a size and scale appropriate to its location.

Principal Local Plan Requirements relating to Kilmarnock town centre

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

Spatial Development Options Paper

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

- whether the town centre boundary of Kilmarnock should be extended, with specific development sites being identified within both the existing centre and the extended area to accommodate anticipated demand for new retail and town centre uses; or
- whether to keep the town centre to its existing boundaries and to identify specific sites within that boundary as being suitable for redevelopment purposes.
4.6 The Options Paper also poses a number of other questions relating to Kilmarnock town centre, namely

- Are there any other sites within the existing town centre of Kilmarnock that should be specifically identified or safeguarded for future retail or other appropriate town centre uses?

- Are there any other sites within Kilmarnock, currently in edge of centre locations, that should be specifically identified or safeguarded for future retail or other appropriate town centre uses and included within an expanded town centre boundary?

- Is there any scope for leisure and recreational provision in the town centre to be developed in conjunction with any proposed new retail development?

- Is there any potential for the Galleon Centre to be updated, developed or extended to improve the facilities it provides? Should the Centre be relocated elsewhere and the site redeveloped for retailing or alternative town centre uses?

- Should the range of acceptable town centre uses be expanded to include Class 4, Class 7 and Class 10 uses? Should any other specific classes of development be included as appropriate town centre uses?

4.7 The results of the consultation exercise have been built into the Town Centre Strategy, as considered appropriate.

5 Town Centre Issues and Challenges to be Addressed

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

(i) Retailing;
(ii) Accessibility;
(iii) Housing;
(iv) Mixed Uses;
(v) The Physical Environment; and
(vi) Marketing and Promotion.

5.2 It is important that each of these areas of concern is not considered in isolation and that a comprehensive assessment is made as to how each one may impact on another. It is also important that an assessment is made of the overall effect each may have on Kilmarnock town centre and Kilmarnock in general.
5.3 A healthy retail environment is generally an essential pre-requisite for a vital and viable town centre. Kilmarnock town centre was positively identified as a ‘Home Town’ in the recent New Economics Foundation (nef) study, *Clone Town Britain*, which reports on the loss of diversity on high streets and assesses whether a given location is a ‘home town’ or a ‘clone town’. It is considered critical to the ongoing health and vibrancy of the town centre that it continues to provide a comprehensive, effective and efficient shopping role for the community, based on an appropriate balance and range of shops, including not only national retailers but also specialised, local and independent shops to provide choice, variety, distinctiveness and local identity.

5.4 Increasing developer interest and a growing number of proposals for retailing in out-of-town-centre locations, together with pending upgrades to infrastructure and proposed new housing allocations in peripheral locations have raised concerns about the future of Kilmarnock town centre. Kilmarnock already loses significant amounts of retail expenditure to Glasgow and to other retail centres both within and outwith Ayrshire and the new retail centre at Pollok will also have an adverse impact. Failure to improve retail provision in the town will leave Kilmarnock increasingly susceptible to competition from these other centres. The development of large areas of new housing land to meet anticipated demand, as detailed in the Finalised Draft of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025, provides the opportunity for Kilmarnock to increase the catchment population of the town centre. However, at the same time, it is vital to ensure, wherever possible, that any new housing areas are established in the most appropriate locations with easy access to the town centre itself.

5.5 Balancing developer and retailer interests with those of the local residents is a key element of the Town Centre Strategy with major implications for shopping provision and development. Further retail development at edge-of-centre sites or in out-of-town-centre locations could potentially draw existing retailers out of the town centre core and further undermine town centre vitality, viability and character. It is considered that further retailing at Queens Drive, beyond that which is provided for in the East Ayrshire Local Plan, should be resisted. Focusing retail development within the existing town centre core, on the other hand, offers the potential to build on the assets already in place, solidify Kilmarnock’s position within the retail hierarchy and create an attractive retail environment that caters to the shopping needs of the whole community.

5.6 The identification of a range of new housing sites to meet anticipated demand throughout Kilmarnock offers the opportunity for improvements to be made to town centre facilities and services through the expeditious use of planning gain. Prospective developers of new housing sites can, in particular, be requested to enter into appropriate planning agreements with the Council and be encouraged to make developer contributions, in order to facilitate an
increase in the retail offer of the town centre for the new resident populations of the housing sites concerned. It is considered that contributions to improving town centre facilities and services by this means should be actively promoted as an integral part of the Town Centre Strategy as well as the alteration to the Adopted East Ayrshire Local Plan. Any new policy will need to integrate with the Council's current Sports and Leisure scheme.

Key Challenges

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

- to effectively maintain and build on Kilmarnock's status as a 'Home Town';
- to diversify the shopping options and to extend the range of goods currently available;
- to extend the scope for potential new, large-scale stores within the existing town centre core area;
- to reverse a perceived bargain basement image of existing retail goods offered for sale in the centre;
- to stem leakage from the town centre to competing centres, estimated to be in the region of £60m per annum;
- to minimise the impact that upgrades to infrastructure (M77) and shopping provision at competing centres (Pollok, Ayr, East Kilbride) may have on the town centre. These developments may perpetuate further leakage and decline in the vitality, viability and character of the town centre;
- to remove constraints caused by fragmented ownership patterns within the town centre which adversely affect the ability of developers to assemble and package sites for future large-scale development;
- to reduce uncertainty with regard to the projected growth in comparison goods expenditure and the allocation of comparison goods floorspace;
- to encourage developer interest in providing and securing additional floorspace through innovative redevelopment schemes;
- to accommodate Finalised Draft Structure Plan requirements for approximately 10,000 sq m of bulky goods floorspace in the town;
- to address the problem of existing low retail rent rates which deters private developers from developing in the town centre core;
• to address the current inability of Kilmarnock to attract high profile, quality new retailers or anchor stores (e.g. Next, Debenhams) which could lead to further deterioration of the image of the town centre; and

• to tackle the physical form of the town centre which has an elongated development pattern and constraints in the form of the existing one-way system (a concrete collar), viaduct, river and parks.

(ii) Accessibility

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

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

Key Challenges

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

• to further improve connectivity between identified development areas both within and outwith the one way system encircling the northern part of the town centre;

• to further improve existing pedestrian linkages to the town centre from key access points such as the train station or via the subway at London Road;

• to make the centre more competitive with out-of-centre developments with their generally free and plentiful car parking;

• to improve access to the town centre from those sites to be identified for housing purposes in the alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan; and

• to realise the maximum benefits to be afforded by proposed new developments, within or at the edge of the town centre and within outlying areas.
(iii) Housing

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

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

Key Challenges

5.13 The key challenges in the development of housing opportunities within the town centre are:

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

(iv) Mixed Uses

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

5.15 Development proposals for all sites and for all uses will be assessed on the extent to which they contribute to the overall vitality and viability of the town centre. There currently exists an opportunity to relocate Kilmarnock College to a site within or adjacent to the southern end of town centre. It is considered that the presence of the College in this area would provide synergistic benefits supporting a variety of town centre establishments and assist in the overall regeneration of the town centre.

Key Challenges

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

- to deal with developers who may be reluctant to get involved with the added complexity inherent in mixed-use development schemes;
- to encourage increased and diverse use of the town centre which is largely deserted after the shops close;
- to further integrate into the town centre key cultural and leisure facilities such as the Palace Theatre and Dick Institute;
- to recognise and exploit the potential for new quality office developments within or near to the town centre;
- to discourage or prevent the development of edge-of-centre sites for inappropriate uses which could undermine the diversity of the existing town centre core, lead to the reduction of retail confidence and adversely affect the image of the town centre;
- to encourage relocation of Kilmarnock College to an appropriate location within or adjacent to the town centre; and
- to promote an increase in the range of acceptable town centre uses. Certain uses, i.e. office, hotel and residential uses are not considered to be acceptable town centre uses within the current adopted local plan framework but could well be considered appropriate in certain circumstances and incorporated into the new local plan alteration.

(v) The Physical Environment

5.16 Healthy and vibrant town centres must provide a high quality, well maintained and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive. At the heart of the Strategy is the desire to deliver a regenerated
and unique town centre where people want to work, live, shop, learn and be entertained. Improving the quality of the physical environment through appropriate new development and public realm improvements can make a vital contribution to the regeneration of the town centre and to enhancing the experience of it for those who use it. All development within or effecting the town centre and its public realm should improve and refine Kilmarnock’s identity and contribute to an enhanced sense of place.

5.17 The quality and maintenance of the public realm and the environment, especially at gateways to a town centre or at key arrival points, has perhaps the most immediate impact upon the image of the town centre. Considerable effort and resources have been spent in recent years to create a high quality public realm and an attractive physical environment within the core shopping area of Kilmarnock town centre. The physical design and management of the public realm within the entire town centre should be such to ensure it is kept in good working order and is visually attractive at all times.

5.19 The town centre also contains the areas of substantial physical quality, including the John Finnie Street and Bank Street Outstanding Conservation Area and numerous listed buildings. These are considered to be assets for the town in terms of providing a distinct identity and should be improved, promoted and capitalised upon. It is considered that investment and development in these areas would underpin the long-term health of the town centre.

5.20 A key aim of the Town Centre Strategy is to maximise the benefits of the work already done in respect to the town centre environment and to enhance disregarded but nonetheless key assets of the town centre through development schemes that deliver excellent and distinctive public spaces.

Key Challenges

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

- to using potential planning gains from proposed developments to the greatest advantage, in order to increase the attractiveness of the town;

- to strengthen and improve the currently weak relationship between the town centre and the river running through it, which requires imaginative solutions but could have large benefits in terms of enhanced town centre amenity;

- to improve the appearance of the town centre through enhancement of ongoing maintenance programmes for concerns such as street cleaning, litter, graffiti, etc;

- to overcome and address the current fragmented development pattern of the town which could be exacerbated as a result of disparate development proposals / projects;
• to deliver design and public realm solutions regarding proposed developments that meet developer requirements and are respectful and responsive to their wider physical environments, positively contributing to the urban context of the town centre;

• to effectively address safety and security issues for all town centre users;

• to environmentally enhance and improve the various vacant and derelict buildings in secondary retail areas such as Titchfield Street, Strand Street, and Portland Gate which make area feel run down, downmarket and deter investment;

• to effect and expand the existing high quality environmental improvements and pedestrianisation of King Street and Bank Street.

(vi) Marketing and Promotion

5.22 There is an increasing recognition of the wide range of direct and indirect benefits from marketing and promotion of town centres. Co-ordinated events and initiatives support town centre vitality and viability by promoting a positive image for the town centre amongst retailers, businesses, visitors and residents; increasing footfall in the centre; and enhancing investor and developer confidence through a ‘branded’ image.

The Key Challenges

5.22 The key challenges facing the promotion and marketing of the town centre are:

• to overcome some negative perceptions about the town centre;

• to develop a co-ordinated, effective and marketable ‘vision’ for the town to be used in the branding campaign; and

• to develop a schedule of promotional events and initiatives that attract new visitors to the centre.
6 The Strategic Approach

The Town Centre Vision

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

To strengthen, improve and promote Kilmarnock town centre and to create a lively, vibrant and healthy centre that meets the needs and aspirations of the local community.

The Town Centre Strategy

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

The overarching key strategy for Kilmarnock town centre is to promote it as the prime location for major retailing and commercial leisure development, offices and all related activities catering for the needs of the general public and to act as a focus for residential development within and surrounding the town centre to support the range of activities that encompass a vital and viable town centre.

6.3 A series of strategic aims has been devised as a means of helping achieve this strategy, each strategic aim being based on the six broad areas of concern, ie retailing, accessibility issues, housing, mixed uses, the physical environment and marketing and promotion detailed in paragraph 5.1 above. An assessment as to how each of these strategic aims can best be achieved has then been made and a series of specific actions devised, detailing how these objectives can best be implemented and achieved on the ground. The actions identified in the Strategy are by no means conclusive or finite and should be developed and instigated through the establishment of an effective working group representing various stakeholder interests and devoted to promoting the town centre. Actions identified will provide the basis for the preparation of more detailed Action Plans to implement them within the context of the Strategy.

Strategic Aims

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

(i) to encourage and facilitate the revitalisation of Kilmarnock town centre by developing a robust retail core, with a variety of retailers catering for the shopping needs of the community;

(ii) to improve and enhance accessibility into and within the town centre;
(iii) to promote town centre living and increase the number of residents living within the town centre;

(iv) to diversify the range of town centre uses and to encourage wider use of town centre facilities and services;

(v) to improve and enhance the environmental character, appearance and amenity of the town centre and surrounding areas; and

(vi) to effectively market and promote the town centre.

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

**Strategic Aim (i)**

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

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

- promoting, through the development planning system, the existing town centre core shopping area as the priority area for retail development;

- identifying key sites for new retail development and investment that meet the requirements of developers, retailers, businesses, customers of the services and facilities provided and the wider community;

- broadening, through the expeditious use of Section 75 Planning Agreements, developer contributions and planning gain etc, the range and scope of retail and other town centre provision within the town centre; and

- promoting comprehensive redevelopment proposals, including appropriate retail floorspace, for key town centre sites identified within the Strategy;

- building on the positive recognition of Kilmarnock as a ‘Home Town’ by promoting the Bank Street/John Finnie Street and Titchfield Street areas for independent and specialist retailers through local rates relief or Section 75 Planning Agreements;

- attracting a high profile, quality retail anchor store within the core shopping area;
• encouraging potential developers and existing retailers to improve and expand the range and quality of goods and services provided within the town centre;

• appropriately and effectively using Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to assist in site assembly to deliver key sites for retail and other suitable town centre uses; and

• amending the town centre boundary by drawing it north to West Netherton Street and that this be incorporated in the Alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan.

Strategic Aim (ii)

To improve and enhance accessibility into and within the town centre

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

• developing further improved vehicular and pedestrian access to the centre in conjunction with the development of new or improved town centre facilities, services and other attractions;

• enhancing access, through the expeditious use of Section 75 Planning Agreements, between the town centre core shopping area and other retail areas within the town, namely the Glencairn Retail Park and Queens Drive;

• promoting and implementing, in conjunction with the Council’s Roads Division, a comprehensive Transport Management Plan for Kilmarnock to facilitate new development, in so far as it relates to Kilmarnock town centre;

• examining the feasibility of a new link road between Queens Drive and East Shaw Street;

• installing pedestrian orientated directional signage and maps at key gateway locations, railway station, bus station and car parks indicating town centre facilities and amenities (See Diagram 1);

• exploring opportunities to improve the Fowlds Street/St Marnock Street area for pedestrians and car traffic (see Diagram 1);

• investigating opportunities to improve traffic circulation on the inner ring road;

• investigating the alteration of minimum car parking standards pertaining to residential development within the town centre;
• installing co-ordinated electronic signage indicating parking availability at all Council-owned car parks within or adjacent to the town centre (See Diagram 1);
improving the pedestrian route from the train station to the town centre (See Diagram 1); and

exploring opportunities to improve pedestrian linkages to the Palace Theatre/London Road cultural area to reintegrate a valuable town centre resource in to the fabric of the town centre, providing benefits to the evening economy as well (See Diagram 1).

Strategic Aim (iii)

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

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

• positively encouraging and promoting the introduction and integration of new build housing developments within or adjacent to the town centre, either as stand alone developments or as an integral part of an appropriate mixed-use scheme (See Diagram 2);

• promoting a range of housing tenures within the town centre to broaden the diversity of the town centre resident population and to improve and expand the social and economic health of the town centre.

• identifying and promoting opportunities for the redevelopment or change of use of existing properties to provide additional residential accommodation, particularly in relation to vacant properties or properties above existing shops, offices etc. Such opportunities should be promoted to both private and social housing providers through development of a Town Centre Living Initiative (TCLI) (See Diagram 2); and

• investigating further issues of land contamination which could inhibit development at Holmquarry Road.
Kilmarnock Town Centre Living Initiative (TCLI)

The broad aim of the TCLI is to increase the amount, quality and choice of residential accommodation in Kilmarnock town centre, providing commensurate benefits to the physical environment through the provision of residential accommodation within vacant or underused upper floors of shops and other commercial buildings.

The objective of bringing vacant or underused properties in town centres back into viable use fits extremely well with the emerging national, regional and local planning and economic policy context as set out in Smart Successful Scotland, the Ayrshire Economic Forum Strategy, Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan, East Ayrshire Local Plan, the Community Plan and the Local Housing Strategy.

The TCLI offers:

- significant private sector investment opportunities
- tax breaks and grants (subject to criteria)
- links to CARS and THI (see para 6.10)
- benefits for the evening economy
- reduction in vandalism, antisocial behaviour and improved community safety
- improved maintenance

The TCLI would support the wider regeneration of the town centre and will bring significant physical, economic and social benefits. A study carried out by private consultants in July 2005 for Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire Study demonstrates a strategic case to pursue a TCLI and identifies the need to appoint a dedicated Council officer and to prepare an Action Plan.

The Study found approximately 50 properties which appeared vacant or underused within Kilmarnock town centre and highlighted in particular the potential for 2 key demonstration projects, which would also support the potential CARS and THI within the John Finnie Street and Bank Street Outstanding Conservation Area, at:

- 100 – 106 John Finnie Street; and
- The Former Kilmarnock Printing Office.

Strategic Aim (iv)

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

6.9 It is considered that this strategic aim can best be achieved through the following actions:
• positively encouraging and promoting the sensitive mixed use development of available gap sites or vacant properties in secondary retail areas which offer potential for this type of development;

• expanding, through the ongoing alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan, the range of uses that are considered to be acceptable within the town centre;

• progressing schemes such as the ‘Top of the Town’ and other efforts to bring appropriate employment uses and high quality office development into key town centre and edge-of-centre locations (See Diagram 3);

• recommending that the Council maintain a significant presence within the civic core area of John Dickie Street. It is considered that the presence of Council employees and services provides numerous direct and indirect benefits for town centre vitality and viability (See Diagram 3);

• developing a Business Space Strategy to effectively deal with Scottish Executive relocation requirements, Council rationalisation and private sector interest;

• exploring opportunities for the redevelopment of the Galleon Centre, possibly in co-ordination with the Kilmarnock College relocation, taking into consideration the potential to redistribute certain activities to other locations yet encouraging the retention of certain uses with the town centre and taking advantage of resources such as the Howard Park (See Diagram 3);

• encouraging the relocation of Kilmarnock College to an appropriate location within or adjacent to the town centre. It is considered that the siting of the College to the south of the town centre would provide physical, economic and social benefits to this area and support the wider regeneration of the town centre (See Diagram 3);

• exploring opportunities to integrate a mixed-use scheme, incorporating retail, high quality office space and other uses considered appropriate within the top of the town area (See Diagram 3);

• encouraging a variety of leisure and cultural uses to stimulate and diversify the evening economy and improving physical linkages with the Palace Theatre and Dick Institute; and

• facilitating, through the expeditious use of compulsory purchase powers, land assembly in relation to the comprehensive development of town centre sites for appropriate uses.
Strategic Aim (v)

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

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

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

- improving the character and quality of the town centre and the way it functions by promoting good design, appropriate to its setting and context and by assessing all proposals for development effecting the town centre in regards to not only the design of the individual building but also on how it relates to the wider town centre environment;

- improving and creating new gateways to the town centre through the use of public art and landscaping to enhance entrances and routes through the town centre (See Diagram 4);

- positively encouraging the environmental improvement of the town centre through the introduction and implementation of appropriate Environmental Improvement and Town Centre Improvement Schemes involving hard and soft landscaping or a mixture of both;

- extending the current hanging basket scheme to all areas of the town centre

- identifying and targeting certain identified areas for appropriate and comprehensive redevelopment;

- encouraging individual developers whose developments are likely to generate increased use of the town centre to contribute, through the expeditious use of Section 75 Planning Agreements, to a dedicated Town Centre Trust Fund designed specifically to help fund the environmental improvement and physical upgrading of the town centre;

- positively developing and capitalising on the environmental quality and value of any outstanding natural and built heritage features located within the town centre (e.g. rivers, parks, listed buildings, conservation areas etc). The potential of such features to become key foci for the town centre should be recognised and developed as an integral part of any suggested development proposals;
• improving the experience of the town centre by providing facilities and services that make the centre more user-friendly, e.g. public seating areas and information boards;

• Extending the current CCTV system and maintaining in partnership with Strathclyde Police effective policing arrangements;

• supporting the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and proposed Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for the John Finnie Street and Bank Street Outstanding Conservation Area (See Diagram 4);

### Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

The CARS is a scheme part funded by Historic Scotland’s Historic Environmental Regeneration Fund to help meet the cost of a programme of repair work to an area’s historic fabric with an emphasis on building repair. Through the CARS grant assistance could be channelled to the private sector to bring 10 void properties back into use as private rented accommodation, and to improve the quality of that provision by funding essential building repair in up to 26 properties within the conservation area. This project will be targeted at the John Finnie Street and Bank Street Outstanding Conservation Area and is also linked to the Kilmarnock Town Centre Living Initiative.

A bid has been submitted to Historic Scotland and a decision is awaited.

### Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

The THI aims to improve the exterior of residential and commercial properties within the John Finnie Street and Bank Street Outstanding Conservation Area. The THI aims to both enable renovation work and ensure that such repair is carried out to a high conservation standard through a grant-giving programme (up to 50 %) under which schemes led by partnerships of local, regional and national interests aim to regenerate the historic environment.

The following work is likely to have the greatest effect on the conservation and regeneration of historic areas and so is the highest priority for THI grant aid:

- Structural and external repair of historic buildings which are still being used.
- Repair and conversion for new uses of empty historic buildings.

It is anticipated that a bid will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in May 2006.
• Use development opportunities at sites such as the former Kwik Save and Mill Street/West Shaw Street to improve the physical environment at secondary areas such as Titchfield Street and High Glencairn Street (See Diagram 4);

• Encouraging businesses to tidy up areas to the rear of their buildings (See Diagram 4);

• Continuing to improve standards and frequency of street cleaning;

• Extending the canopy along the east side of King Street to provide cover for pedestrians;

• Working with local schools to co-ordinate a litter awareness and education scheme; and

• investigating the production of a detailed Urban Design Framework promoting good design and providing a uniform and comprehensive single ‘identity’ for the town centre.

Strategic Aim (vi)

To effectively market and promote the town centre

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

• co-ordinating all groups interested in promoting the town centre to establish a ‘Brand’ or ‘Vision’ to be used within marketing and promotion strategies;

• promoting the town centre through the use of a consistent signboard at all development sites identifying and linking the development within a single, common and co-ordinated framework, i.e. the ‘Brand’ or ‘Vision’ for the town centre;

• publicising facilities, events, initiatives, changes, etc to the town through a marketing programme;

• producing a quality glossy monthly or quarterly magazine promoting town centre cultural and leisure events, initiatives, developments, shops, services, etc. The magazine could also be used to provide promotional articles giving a positive spin on the town centre;

• establishing a project team dedicated to town centre issues, comprising officers drawn from within East Ayrshire Council and representing Departments and Sections including Planning, Roads, Economic Development and Property Services, Legal, Corporate
Communications, Housing, Leisure and Neighbourhood Services, This team should be developed to prioritise and implement the Strategy and actions/projects identified within;

- establishing a town centre project identification group, comprising other stakeholders with interests in the town centre;
- instigating a ‘Shop Local’ campaign in support of local retailers; and
- improving the competitiveness of the town centre by supporting and promoting initiatives such as a Business Improvement District (BID), which would seek to improve town centre cleanliness, safety and make the town centre generally more attractive.

### Kilmarnock Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID)

BIDs support the long-term sustainability of town centres by enabling locally controlled partnerships to be created by groups of businesses within a defined area to make their area safer, more accessible, better marketed and more able to attract quality investment. BIDs are created where businesses vote to pay an additional levy on their rates bill to finance local improvements in addition to those already delivered by local government. The idea is that by sharing costs businesses will benefit from a cleaner, safer, better promoted and a generally nicer town centre. It is important to note that the local improvements provided by the BID do not substitute or replace services offered by the Council but enhance them.

Scottish Ministers have recently committed to implementing the necessary legislation to allow BIDs in Scotland and have indicated financial support for 5 pilot schemes. East Ayrshire Council has submitted a request to the Scottish Executive for consideration as one of the pilot projects.

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

### 7 Site Specific and Location Based Strategic Actions

7.1 The Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy promotes appropriate investment and development within the existing town centre to consolidate its strengths while acknowledging that significant physical restructuring of the area could be required to help deliver a more lively, vibrant and healthy centre. The Strategy also recognises that retail, housing and other key uses at edge-of-centre locations can provide potential synergistic benefits to the town
centre by improving degraded environments increasing footfall and activity and inspiring both local and developer confidence in the town.

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

7.2 For ease of reference and for consistency, the site specific actions that have been devised are addressed under the broad categories of retailing, accessibility issues, housing, mixed uses and the physical environment used to identify and describe the specific challenges detailed in section 3 of the strategy. It should be noted, however, that some of the particular actions proposed may well relate to more than one of the categories described.

(i) Retailing

Sites in the town centre core shopping area

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

7.4 The Council has substantial interests in two key locations within the town centre core shopping area, the development / redevelopment of which are considered key elements in the implementation of a successful town centre strategy.

- Site 1: The Tesco supermarket and the associated Council owned car park at Fowlds Street / Sturrock Street and adjacent sites along King Street (See Diagram 5).

This area comprises a prime retail pitch at the southern end of the Kilmarnock town centre core shopping area. It should be noted that the presence of a convenience store is considered to an asset within the town centre and it is advised that if the site is comprehensively redeveloped floorspace is allocated either within this site or another within the town centre for a ‘Metro’ style convenience store format.
- Site 2: The Foregate, including the multi-storey car park and the Burns Mall (See Diagram 5)

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

It is considered that the entire area should be investigated, in conjunction with the proposed ‘Top of the Town’ office development (para 7.17, Site 8) on an adjacent site, with a view to incorporating and integrating a large-scale retail or mixed-use development within the area. It should be noted that the presence of a car parking facility at or near this location is an important asset within the town centre and it is recommended that, if comprehensive redevelopment of the site takes place, an appropriate level of car parking is allocated either within this site or at an alternative location within easy reach of the town centre.

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

- provide opportunities to develop modern and flexible formats to cater to the requirements of the high-profile retailers that Kilmarnock needs to attract, in order to maintain and improve its position within the retail hierarchy;

- act as a catalyst to spur further investment / development within the town centre core shopping area and the wider town centre in general;

- support the vitality and viability of the town centre;

- help improve Kilmarnock’s image as an attractive shopping destination and attract additional investment; and

- retain a convenience store and an appropriate level of car parking within the core shopping area.

7.6 Development / redevelopment of these areas would be in accord with National, Regional and Local Planning Policy in terms of development within town centres. However, such developments would require commensurate upgrades to infrastructure and the improvement of access to the centre from outlying areas, possible through the implementation of appropriate planning gain measures. Such town centre development would also do much to prevent unnecessary or inappropriate retail development in out-of-town-centre locations.
7.7 The existing town centre core shopping area is presently confined to the pedestrianised areas of the Cross, King Street and the Foregate which comprise the key retail areas within the central area. However, it is also considered the pedestrianised area of Bank Street also provides a valuable retail function for the town and that, as with the Cross, King Street and the Foregate, all efforts should be made to prevent any degradation of that function or loss of retail floorspace in the area to other uses. Consequently it is proposed, as an integral part of the town centre strategy, that the existing core shopping area should be expanded to cover Bank Street (See Diagram 5).

Sites in the wider town centre area

7.8 Notwithstanding the existence of the town centre core shopping area, retailing is a major component of town centre activity elsewhere in the central area of the town.

- Site 3: The former Kwik Save supermarket site and its associated car park located at the southern end of Titchfield Street (See Diagram 5).

  The site has been the subject of a recent planning application for retail development. Retail development is considered acceptable in principle in this location.

Sites adjacent to but outwith the town centre

7.9 There are three sites lying adjacent to but outwith the existing town centre boundary at the southern end of the area which are considered to have limited potential for residential led, mixed use development (See Diagram 5).

- Site 4: Site of the existing Safeway Supermarket at West Shaw Street

- Site 5: The Stoddard redevelopment site at West Shaw Street, Mill Street (including properties fronting onto High Glencairn Street) and the BMK site at Burnside Street

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

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

It is therefore recommended that, because of the potential threats to the existing core shopping area, neither of the two sites comprising this southern area should be considered in the strategy as areas identified exclusively for retail development. Rather, it is considered that Kilmarnock could best be served by promoting both areas for comprehensive and innovative mixed-use development. For the existing Safeway Supermarket site, it is proposed that a retail led, mixed use development with an associated residential or office component would be considered acceptable. Development of the Stoddard’s and BMK sites could comprise a variety of acceptable uses with preference given to incorporating the relocation of Kilmarnock College as a primary element of any potential mixed use development scheme. Residential-led mixed use, taking advantage of the inherent amenity features of the area would also be considered acceptable. It is envisaged that retailing, leisure, commercial and office elements, supporting the primary uses of the sites would also be considered acceptable. The uses proposed for these two sites would support and compliment the various functions of existing core shopping area and the wider Kilmarnock town centre in general (See section relating to mixed uses, below). It is considered essential that any development in this area adhere to high standards of urban design to effectively integrate the area within the town centre’s urban fabric and to consolidate and strengthen the core area.

- **Site 6: Holmquarry Road**

An area of land to the south of Holmquarry Road (See Diagram 5) is also considered to have some potential for future development to help support the town centre. It is considered that the larger western portion of the Holmquarry Road area, as shown on the town centre strategy map, would lend itself best for a comprehensive residential redevelopment. It is also considered that the eastern portion of the site would best be identified as a site for a potential office development, although residential development on this site would be considered acceptable as well. It is suggested that the overall Holmquarry Road site should therefore be identified accordingly in the Town Centre Strategy.
7.10 Given the proposed removal of High Glencairn Street from the town centre boundary, it is not proposed to extend the town centre boundary to incorporate or include these three potential development opportunity sites. It is considered, however, that all three sites should be identified in the town centre strategy as suitable and valuable sites for the types of development detailed in paragraph 7.9 above.

(ii) Accessibility

7.11 To aid cohesion in Kilmarnock town centre it is desirable to strengthen the transport links between the traditional core shopping area and the other main edge of town centre retail areas such as Queens Drive, Glencairn and West Langlands Street (Morrisons Supermarket). In this regard, all efforts should be made to further improve accessibility to the town centre to those users of the centre travelling by both public and private transport. Pedestrian and vehicular conflict and circulation problems also detract from the image of the town centre. The Council has already taken positive steps to address this issue with the implementation of recent improvements and will continue to make further improvements as the town centre continues to develop.

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

7.13 It is recommended, as an integral part of the Strategy, that detailed consideration should be given to the feasibility of establishing a new road link between Queens Drive and East Shaw Street, which would necessitate the construction of a new river crossing. The creation of this route could provide a number of benefits in the town centre and provide new and improved links between the potential key development areas of Kilmarnock town centre as detailed elsewhere in the Town Centre Strategy (See Diagram 5).

(iii) Housing

7.14 At the present time there are no parts of the town centre that are under construction or with planning permission exclusively for housing development although detailed permission for housing has been granted on the site of the former Kilmarnock Infirmary (Site 7a), lying directly adjacent to the current town centre boundary. The former Hunslet Barclay buildings at West Langlands Street / Park Street (Site 7b), located close to but outwith the town centre boundary are also currently being converted to residential use. (See Diagram 5).
7.15 It is not proposed, as part of the Town Centre Strategy, to identify any particular areas within the town centre itself exclusively for residential use. Rather, residential use within the town centre will be promoted as an integral part of mixed use development schemes in appropriate locations. However, it is proposed that an area of land at Holmquarry Road, outwith the town centre boundary, should be identified specifically for residential purposes within the town centre strategy (See paragraph 7.9 above)

(iv) Mixed Uses

7.16 Mixed land uses and development proposals involving mixed uses are broadly supported within the Strategy as they provide diversity. Within the wider town centre area there are sites which are considered to be readily available for the development or redevelopment of appropriate town centre uses. A number of specific actions are proposed in the Town Centre Strategy to further extend the range of opportunities. These actions, in so far as they relate to mixed use and non retail developments, are detailed below.

Sites within the existing town centre

7.17 There are four key locations within the town centre, the development / redevelopment of which could contribute significantly to the implementation of a successful town centre strategy.

- Site 8: The ‘Top of the Town’ site at the Green Street car park (See town centre strategy diagram).

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

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

The site is also considered to have potential to be incorporated within a wider development scheme including the Foregate site (para 7.4, Site 2). It is envisaged that a comprehensive scheme, including significant
amounts of physical restructuring, could be progressed. Such a development could include a variety of retail and other uses appropriate to its town centre location.

- Site 9: The Galleon Centre, Titchfield Street (See Diagram 5).

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

- Site 10: Former bonded warehouse at Strand Street

Recent interest has been shown for the redevelopment of the former bonded warehouse at Strand Street, a landmark building within the town centre and one which makes a significant contribution to the historic character of the town centre (See Diagram 5). It is considered that the property offers a unique opportunity for a signature development and is suitable for conversion to a range of appropriate town centre use, particularly office and residential uses. The site has therefore been identified as being suitable for such purposes in the Town Centre Strategy.

- Site 11: 6-14, 30-38 John Finnie Street, with associated sites in Dunlop Street and Strand Street

This site is primarily centred on the former Opera House on John Finnie Street, located within the town centre boundary, which has an existing outline planning consent for an hotel and residential development. It is considered that there is potential for associated tourism or housing related development to extend into Dunlop Street and Strand Street. Both of these proposed uses for the site, which is located in a highly accessible position close to the railway station, will greatly help improve the vitality and viability of the northern part of the town centre. The site has therefore been identified as being suitable for such purposes in the Town Centre Strategy (See Diagram 5).

Sites adjacent to but outwith the town centre

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

- **Site 12:** The former cattle market site at Park Street

The former cattle market site at Park Street (See Diagram 5) is a potential development opportunity site for appropriate uses in a location that is close to both the town centre and public transport nodes. Redevelopment of this area would bring a long vacant and derelict site back into active use, help to revitalise the area and further consolidate and support existing uses in the adjacent town centre. For these reasons, it is recommended that the existing town centre boundary should be extended westwards to include the former cattle market site and the adjoining Hunslet Barclay site which is currently being developed for residential purposes (See paragraph 7.15 above). It is intended that the cattle market site itself should be identified particularly for office development or for a mixture of housing, office and other non retail town centre uses.

(v) **The Physical Environment**

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

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

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

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

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

8 The Way Forward

8.1 The Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy is intended to help guide investment, development and improvements to the town centre over the next decade. Following consultation and input from numerous stakeholders it provides the framework upon which future detailed projects, proposals, funding bids and action plans can be progressed and implemented.

8.2 The Strategy will be a prime material consideration in the assessment of all town centre related planning applications and will be incorporated into the Alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan.

8.3 Many of the objectives and actions identified within the Strategy have been identified through the consultation process. To ensure continued support in any further development of the Strategy and to ensure successful physical implementation of the actions proposed, sustained involvement and co-ordination should be progressed with the following groups:

- Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire;
- Communities Scotland;
- The Kilmarnock Retail Trades Association;
- Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Limited;
- Local community groups and organisations;
- Ayrshire Economic Forum; and
- Various retailers, developers and their agents.

8.4 Projects will be prioritised although it is considered that identifying and implementing early successes or ‘wins’ is considered imperative in order to build momentum in the Strategy and developer and community confidence in the town. Subsequent action plans will be prepared identifying funding sources, project partners and project managers, but in the short term certain high priority projects or actions have been identified for each of the Strategy’s strategic aims and are summarised in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Aims</th>
<th>Short-term Priority Actions/Projects</th>
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| 1. To encourage and facilitate the revitalisation of Kilmarnock town centre by developing a robust retail core, with a variety of retailers catering for the shopping needs of the community. | ▪ Actively promote the key town centre sites for appropriate redevelopment schemes.  
▪ Resist inappropriate out-of-centre retail developments that undermine the successful implementation of the Town Centre Strategy. |
| 2. To improve and enhance accessibility into and within the town centre.      | ▪ Investigate opportunities to improve road linkages between the key retail areas of the town centre, Queens Drive and Glencairn.  
▪ Install pedestrian orientated signage and maps at key gateway locations, railways station, bus station and car parks.  
▪ Install co-ordinated electronic signage at parking facilities indicating parking availability.  
▪ Investigate lowering minimum parking standards for town centre residential development. |
| 3. To promote town centre living and increase the number of residents living within the town centre. | ▪ Ensure progress of housing development at key locations, e.g. former Infirmary site.  
▪ Investigate issues of land contamination at Holmquarry Road  
▪ Progress the Kilmarnock Town Centre Living Initiative per the framework for intervention as outlined in the consultants report. |
| 4. To diversify the range of town centre uses and to encourage wider use of town centre facilities and services. | ▪ Explore opportunities re the Galleon Centre  
▪ Promote the town centre or an edge of centre site as the most appropriate for the relocation of Kilmarnock College.  
▪ Pursue opportunities to integrate a mixed-use scheme with retail and office elements at the Top of the Town  
▪ Prepare a Business Space Strategy.  
▪ Commitment from the Council to retain a presence in a Civic Core. |
| 5. To improve and enhance the environmental character, appearance and amenity of the town centre and surrounding areas. | ▪ Pursue a CARS and THI for the John Finnie Street and Bank Street Outstanding Conservation Area.  
▪ Improving town centre facilities and amenities, i.e. toilets, seating areas, street cleaning, etc.  
▪ Use existing development opportunities to improve the physical environment.  
▪ Encourage businesses to tidy up the rear of their buildings.  
▪ Environmental improvement projects should be identified and Actions Plans drawn up for delivery. |
| 6. To effectively market and promote the town centre. | ▪ Establish a ‘Vision’ and Brand for the town.  
▪ Investigate the potential for establishing a BID.  
▪ Prepare a promotional and marketing package to highlight key development opportunities within and adjacent to the town centre. |
8.5 The actions/projects identified in the table above are by no means conclusive or finite and should be developed and instigated through the establishment of an effective working group representing various stakeholder interests devoted to promoting the town centre. Actions identified will provide the basis for the preparation of more detailed Action Plans to implement them within the context of the Strategy.

8.6 As a matter of the highest priority an internal working group within East Ayrshire Council, comprising a group of officers dedicated to town centre issues and drawn from Departments and Sections including Planning, Roads, Economic Development and Property Services, Legal, Corporate Communications, Housing, Leisure and Protective Services should be developed.

8.7 The active involvement of wider stakeholders is considered to be vital as it ensures ownership of the Strategy within the local community and an interest in the delivery of it. As such it is considered that effective partnership working be given the highest priority to turn the Strategy into reality. It is envisaged that both public and private sector means will be required in terms of finance and resources. This document provides the opportunity to support partnership working and the chance to develop a shared vision, to which all key players with an interest in the town centre, from the public and private sectors, are committed. It is advised that existing bodies such as Promoting Kilmarnock offer the potential to resolve town centre issues and for project identification although structures and involvement in individual projects and actions will be tailored as required.

8.8 It is recommended that the Strategy be formally launched early in 2006 to raise awareness of the Strategy and built commitment to it by stakeholders and the Council’s partners. Thereafter it is proposed that regular progress reports are submitted to committee and to all stakeholders.

8.9 The Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy sets out a vision for the town centre and a programme of actions to strengthen and transform the town centre. A plan of the site specific actions and key sites can be found on page 40.
Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy

Key to Key Sites

- **Retail led mixed use development, including elements of housing & office/commercial**
  - Site 1: Tesco Supermarket, Fowlds Street/Sturrock Street
  - Site 2: The Foregate, inc. Burns Mall & Multi-storey Car Park
  - Site 3: Former Kwik Save Supermarket, Titchfield Street
  - Site 4: Former Safeway Supermarket, West Shaw Street

- **Office/commercial development**
  - Site 6: Holmquarry Road
  - Site 8: Top of the Town site, Green Street

- **High quality residential led mixed use development, including elements of office/commercial and retail**
  - Site 5: Redevelopment site at West Shaw Street, Mill Street, High Glencairn Street & Burnside Street.

- **Residential development**
  - Site 6: Holmquarry Road
  - Site 7a: Former Kilmarnock Infirmary Site
  - Site 7b: West Langland Street, Park Street

- **Priority for office or residential led mixed use development**
  - Site 10: Former Bonded Warehouse, Strand Street
  - Site 12: Former Cattle Market, Park Street

- **Galleon Centre - priority for retention/redevelopment of leisure facilities. Redevelopment for retail or other uses may also be considered appropriate.**
  - Site 9: Titchfield Street

- **Hotel/Retail development**
  - Site 11: John Finnie Street & Dunlop Street

- **Proposed Town Centre Boundary**

- **Existing Town Centre Core Shopping Area**

- **Proposed extension to existing Town Centre Core Shopping Area**