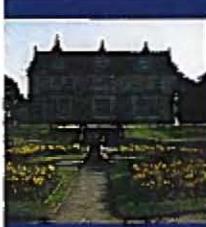


BANGOR TOWN CENTRE PLAN

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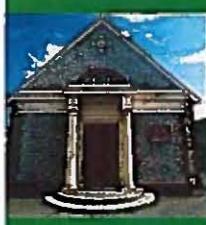
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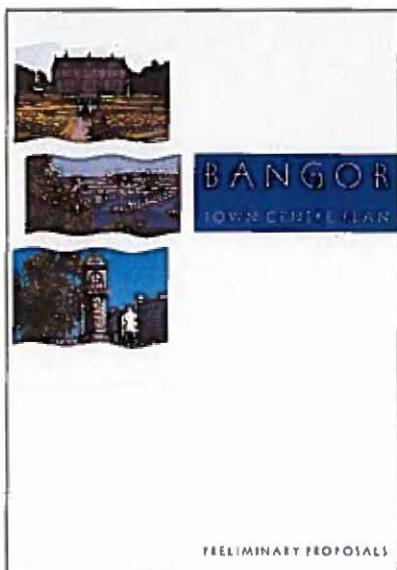
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INTRODUCTION



The Bangor Town Centre Plan has been prepared under Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. The need for a comprehensive plan for the Town Centre arose from the many development issues affecting the Town and, in November 1990, the Department announced its intention to prepare a Town Centre Plan to guide future development. The main issues for consideration were identified as:

- the development of the Seafront
- the mixture of land uses suitable for the Town Centre
- the character, appearance and attractiveness of the Town Centre
- transportation arrangements including traffic movement, car parking and servicing.

As required by Article 5(3) of the Planning (NI) Order 1991, the Department published Preliminary Proposals in June 1992. A public exhibition was held in the Tower House, Bangor to stimulate public interest and to provide an opportunity for the public to study the proposals and to make their views known.

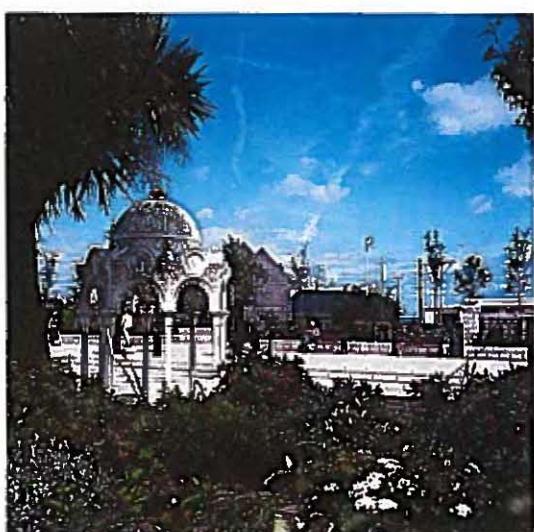
The Department is now publishing the Bangor Town Centre Plan as required by Article 5(4) of the Planning Order. Its proposals have been prepared following consultation with North Down Borough Council, relevant public bodies and Government Departments and having taken account of comments received following the public exhibition in June 1992.

Any person wishing to object to any of the proposals should do so by writing to the Department at the following address:

Bangor Town Centre Plan
Divisional Planning Office
DOE (NI)
Rathkeltair House
Market Street
DOWNPATRICK BT30 6EA

All objections should be submitted by 14th July 1994. If objections are received and cannot be resolved, the Department will ask the Planning Appeals Commission to hold a Public Inquiry, following which the Planning Appeals Commission will send its report to the Department. When the Department has considered the report, it will adopt the Plan with or without modifications or reject it.

This document may therefore be subject to changes and should be read in conjunction with any future adoption statement.





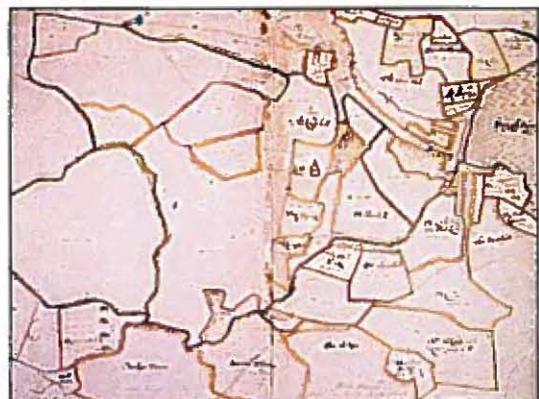
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bangor takes its name from the Gaelic 'Beannchor' which in turn is derived from 'beanna' (peaks) and 'chor' (curve), presumed by scholars to refer to Bangor Bay. There were probably settlements around Bangor and Ballyholme Bays before the establishment by St Comgall, about 558AD, of an abbey which became one of the most important in early Christian Europe. Plundered by the Vikings, the Abbey was restored by St Malachy in the 12th century only to become vacant once more at the Dissolution in 1572. About this time also, 'the whole great Ardes was split between James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery 'that the sea coast might be possessed by Scottish men who would be traders',⁽¹⁾ Montgomery being based at Newtownards and Hamilton at Bangor. Sir James Hamilton, who was to become Viscount Clandeboye was accompanied by Scots from Dunlop in Ayrshire who began the process of creating the Town of Bangor. In 1625, Hamilton commissioned Thomas Raven to prepare maps of his lands at Clandeboye. One of these shows an informal layout to the Town with two principal streets, the present lower Main Street and High Street, development along the shore linking them and a third street parallel to Main Street. The church, the castle and a mill can be identified and a rabbit warren occupies the Kinnegar.

The Ordnance Survey Memoirs of 1837 state that 'the cottages are principally built of stone, mostly thatched but in many cases slated; with a few exceptions they are but one storey high. Glass windows are in all cases employed and a tolerable degree of cleanliness and neatness may be seen to prevail in some instances'. Cotton manufacturing had been introduced to the town in 1783 and mills were built in the lower High Street area and on the site of the Sunken Gardens 'two large cotton factories with their smokey chimneys form the most striking features and the whole place has a manufacturing, crowded and dirty appearance'. By 1860 however the Valuation Survey records the New Mill as 'dilapidated' and the Old Mill had become a store.

In 1834, 2,741 people lived in 507 houses in the Town which was managed by a Corporation composed of members of the Ward family (descendants of Sir James Hamilton). In 1865, wells were sunk in Ballymagee Street (High Street), Holborn Avenue and Main Street; reservoirs were built in 1881 and 1891; main drainage was provided in 1882 and electricity arrived in 1930.

The arrival of the Belfast, Holywood and Bangor railway, in 1865, brought about the development of Bangor as a major seaside resort. This 'northern Brighton' could be reached by road, rail or steamer and 'the chastely designed elegant villas were overspreading the landscape and occupying hill and vale and points of vantage on every side, rising tier upon tier in varied architectural style and crowning the heights, which, on the land side, encompass it like the arc of an amphitheatre'.⁽²⁾ The development of Ballyholme,



Ravens Map 1625



where there was a long sandy beach, followed towards the end of the century.

Bangor's development in the 19th century was very much based on the sea, whether for business or pleasure, and, as the resort developed, the Town created tourist facilities such as the Esplanade, at the foot of High Street, to attract summer visitors. In 1905 the Seafront round to Stricklands Glen was acquired by Act of Parliament followed by Ballyholme Park in 1907, Ward Park in 1909 and eventually Stricklands Glen itself. Commercial enterprises also catered for tourists, from the Grand Hotel built on the Promenade in the 1890's to the largest cinema in Ireland, the Tonic. With two golf courses, tennis courts, putting, bowls, bathing and a dance hall, Bangor was the ideal place for holidays during the inter-war years.

The post-war period saw the continued growth of Bangor as a dormitory town for Belfast. At the same time changing holiday trends were leading to a decline in the Town's traditional role as a seaside resort.

- (1) Lowry, T.K. *The Hamilton Manuscript*, Belfast 1867.
- (2) Lyttle, WG "The Bangor Season" 1885.





CONTEXT: THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Background

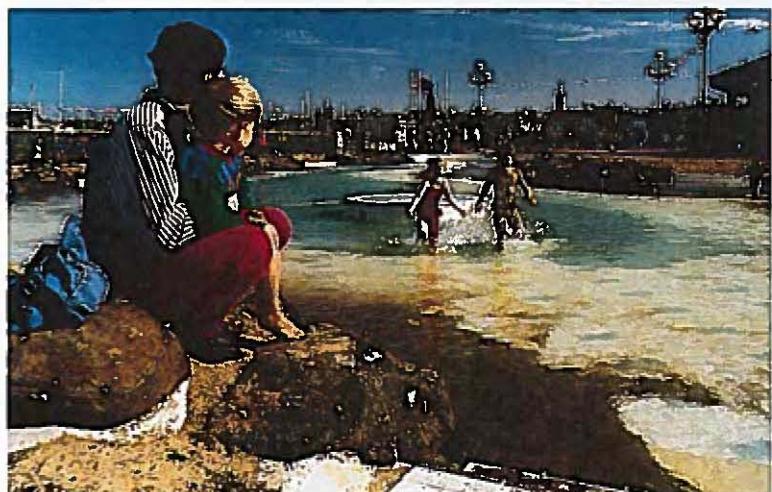
In common with a number of other leading cold water resorts in the British Isles, Bangor's decline as a tourist resort was due principally to the growth in the popularity of package holidays to foreign destinations. Increased affluence and higher levels of car ownership provided potential holidaymakers with greater freedom of movement and access to a wide range of destinations, at home and abroad. This decline led to lack of investment in many Seafront properties and to the closure or demolition of many of Bangor's traditional seaside facilities. A reduction in the quality of those that remained further contributed to the downward spiral of tourism in the Town.



Bangor Seafront Development Scheme

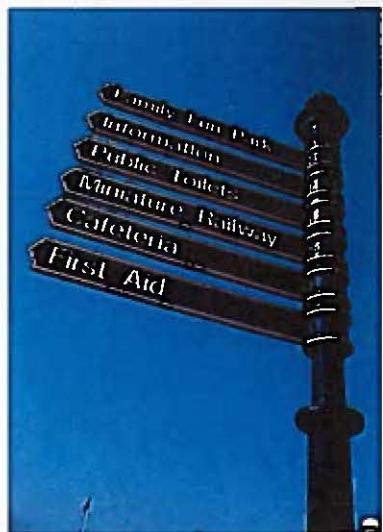
In response to these changes, North Down Borough Council sought a new role for the tourist industry in the belief that tourism still offered significant economic and employment benefits. In the 1970's, the Borough Council assembled a development package known as the Seafront Development Scheme, which was to play a vital part in the regeneration of Bangor.

The Seafront Development Scheme was a joint Borough Council/Central Government initiative which involved substantial public sector investment and drew upon European Regional Development Funds. It was linked to an annual programme of work covering an eleven year period and focused upon the potential for Bangor to capitalise on its established tourism base, strategic location and entrepreneurial expertise, in order to generate economic activity on a number of fronts.



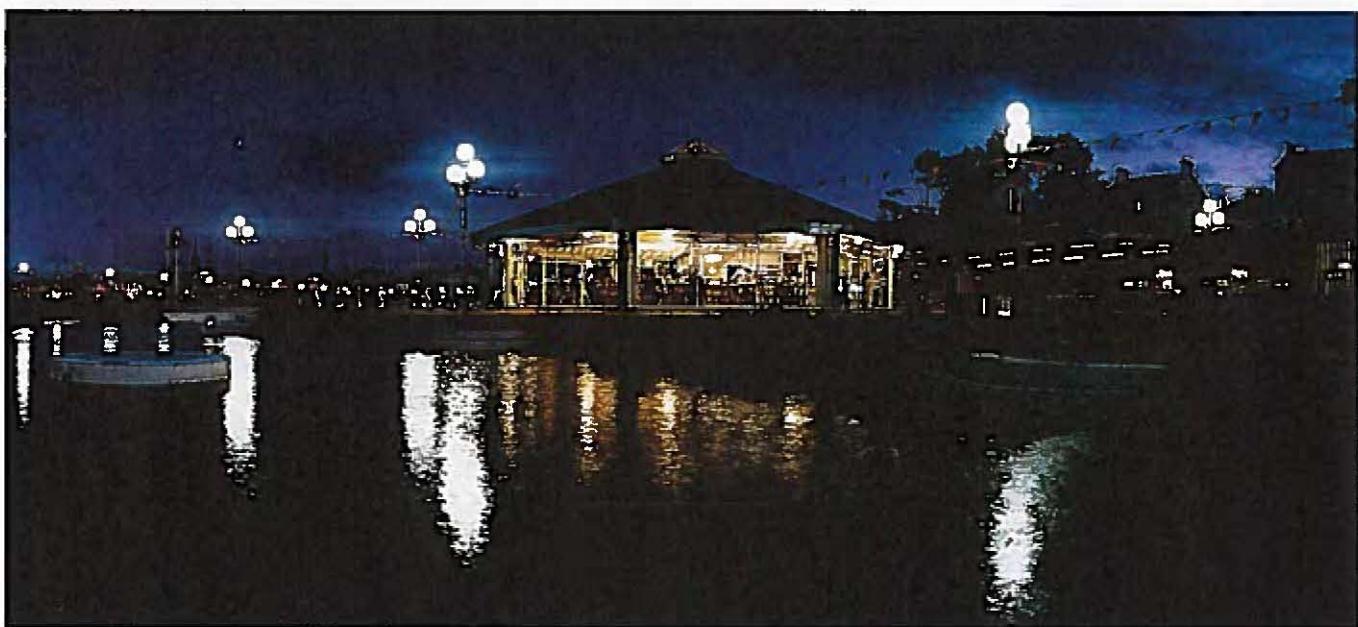
The main elements of the Scheme were the provision of regional tourist attractions, the construction of Ireland's largest marina (and related development) and a wide range of environmental improvements. These were carried out in a number of stages:

- Stage I North breakwater (1983)
- Stage II Pickie breakwater, dredging and central pier extension (1987)
- Stage III Pontoon installation and land reclamation (1989)
- Stage IV Harbour control and facilities building (1989)
- Stage V Tourist promenade, gardens, Pickie family fun park and public toilets (1992-94)





The resolution of these issues was seen as the next step in the delivery of a sustainable tourism product and the creation of a positive climate for private sector investment in Bangor. In order to develop a way forward, the Borough Council and the Department of the Environment jointly commissioned PIEDA Consultants to carry out a study. Their recommendations, which included a number of development options, were presented in 1990. The need for a comprehensive plan for the Town Centre arose from the need to resolve these development options and to provide a framework for future development. As a result, the Department, in November 1990, announced its intention to prepare a Town Centre Plan.





KEY ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF THE TOWN CENTRE PLAN

The Development of the Seafront

Changing consumer habits and preferences have brought about much closer linkages between shopping and leisure. In this respect Bangor is fortunate in having its main shopping streets in such close proximity to the Seafront, a combination not often found in the Belfast region. The opportunity to capitalise on this situation was grasped by North Down Borough Council which responded to the challenge of developing a new image and role for Bangor by means of its Seafront Development Scheme. This has greatly enhanced tourism provision on the Seafront. In addition, the large catchment population of the Town and within convenient driving distance, especially from Belfast, offers further opportunities for investment in tourism and recreational facilities to complement the development undertaken by the Council and to bolster the local economy.

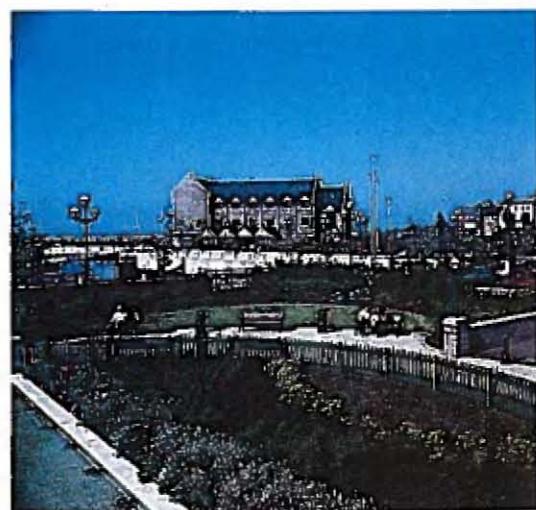
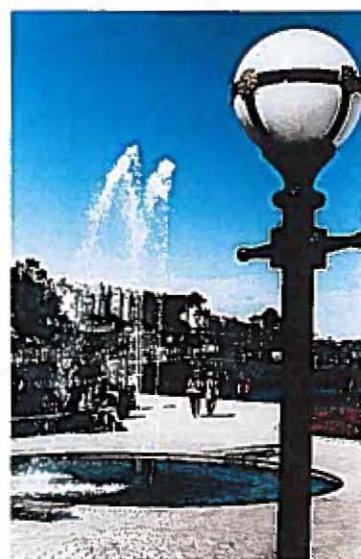
However, in places, the physical appearance of the Seafront is unattractive and uninviting. Demolition has created an unsightly gap in the Queen's Parade frontage where many properties suffer from lack of maintenance or are disused and an extensive area of derelict, underused land lies between the Queens Parade frontage and King Street. In contrast, the large area of land reclaimed on the seaward side of Queen's Parade due to the construction of the Marina, has been developed by the Council to provide car parking, landscaped areas and promenades. A key issue is the likely impact and the appropriateness of new development on both of these parts of the Seafront.

Despite the many environmental improvements which have been carried out along the Seafront, there remains an inherent conflict between traffic and pedestrians. Linkages between the Seafront and the main shopping streets could be strengthened and improved, with long lasting benefits for the economy of the Town Centre.

Town Centre Land Uses

The most significant land use change in Bangor since publication of the North Down and Ards Area Plan (1984-1995) has been the construction of the Marina and the complementary land based developments associated with it. The Seafront Development Scheme has altered the public perception of Bangor for the better and it will have ongoing land use implications for the built environment of the Seafront in terms of future development proposals. There is a clear need to signal the type of development appropriate to strengthening and sustaining Bangor's changed tourism role.

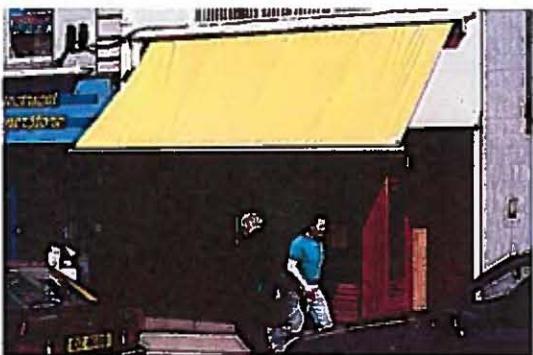
Within the Town Centre the most significant land uses are retailing, mixed commercial and residential use. Car parks account





for a significant proportion of Town Centre land but are referred to under the heading of 'Transportation', below. The traditional focus of retailing has been on Upper and Lower Main Streets. Most investment by local and national retailers has been concentrated in these streets but until recently retailing provision had not kept pace with the rapid growth in the population of the Town. In addition, the character of Upper and Lower Main Street has undergone substantial change.

High Street is quite different in character from Upper and Lower Main Streets. The basic Victorian form and scale of the street has altered little over the years and there is substantially greater representation of the smaller type of shop and retail service such as bars, restaurants and cafes. Throughout the Town Centre there is underused upper floor space which could provide for expansion in a number of Town Centre uses.



The shopping core has undergone pressure from non-retail uses, especially offices, to locate within it. Offices require central area locations and much of the expansion of office space is attributable to the conversion of larger residential properties close to the Town Centre which are no longer suitable for single family accommodation. Because of this, the impact of offices on the main shopping streets or on stable residential areas within the Town Centre, has been limited. An important planning issue is the extent to which future expansion of office space can be accommodated without impacting adversely on the shopping core or on existing Town Centre residential areas.

Housing areas enclose the commercial parts of the Town Centre. In general, Town Centre housing stock is in good condition and there is no shortage of demand especially from specialised user groups such as the elderly, single persons and small households. A resident population is a vital ingredient of a successful Town Centre but the amount of land available for new housing is limited and there is pressure on existing stock arising from proximity to, and the demands of, the commercial sector. In addition, some housing is no longer suitable for single family accommodation leading to pressure for sub-division of these properties into flats.



Character, appearance and attractiveness of the Town Centre

The character of the Town Centre derives principally from the architecture of the Victorian/Edwardian era. In recent years, however, the appearance of some Town Centre streets has undergone change which has considerably altered this character. Commercial pressures and fashions, particularly in the design of shop fronts and signage, bear some responsibility and where new building has taken place, integration with the existing street-scene has not always been successful. In other cases, the original Victorian character of some properties has been tarnished through ageing, lack of maintenance and unsympathetic modern improvements. The character of High Street, however, is largely intact, principally because it remains the preserve of small shop units and because new development has not occurred to any significant extent.

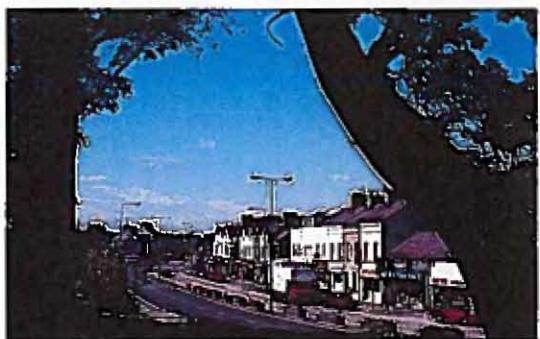
The Victorian/Edwardian period of the Town's development has also left a fine heritage of townscape assets in the form of the extensive open spaces of Castle and Ward Parks and the residential area in the vicinity of Princetown Road. The former provide distinctive parkland settings close to the Town Centre whilst the latter represents a built heritage of considerable architectural character and historic importance which, because of its age and character, is undergoing pressure for change. Inappropriate new development could change this character and appearance irrevocably.

The approaches to the Town Centre are important in creating initial impressions on visitors. Abbey Street, in particular, the main entrance to the Town Centre from Belfast, has lost much of its original character through alterations to the built environment.

Transportation

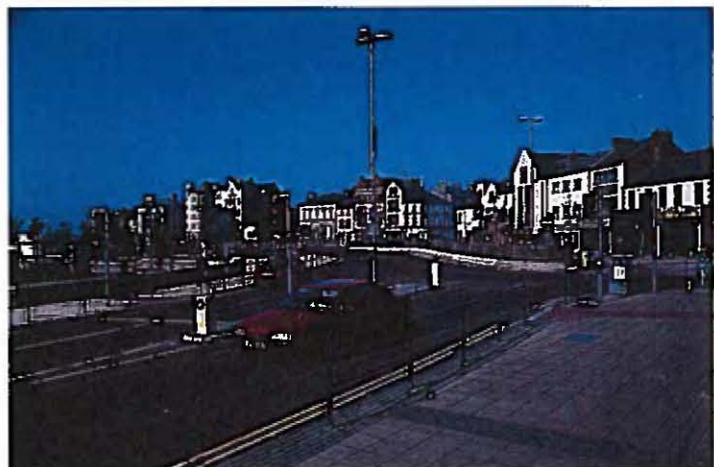
The Town Centre already caters for large amounts of traffic. A substantial increase in traffic volume would have implications not only for the quality of the Town Centre environment but also for the safety and convenience of all who visit, live or work in it.

The prosperity of the Town Centre is dependent upon its accessibility to the general public whether they arrive on foot, by public transport or by private car. The train/bus station provides access convenient to the Town Centre for those without cars but for those who arrive by car there are a number of public car parks within the central area. Generally, there is sufficient space for those who wish to avail of car parking facilities but during peak periods there is considerable pressure on the car parks closest to the Seafront and to the shopping core. At the same time it has been found that capacity exists in some more peripheral car parks.



Pedestrian links between the main shopping streets and the Seafront could be improved and pedestrianisation of lower Main Street has been suggested; implications for traffic management would arise from measures to address these issues, particularly pedestrianisation. The new link road between High Street and Hamilton Road and the revised central area traffic circulation system are major innovations in the Town Centre and monitoring is being carried out to measure their efficacy. The needs of people with disabilities will continue to be a priority in new traffic management schemes and in the design of new roads.

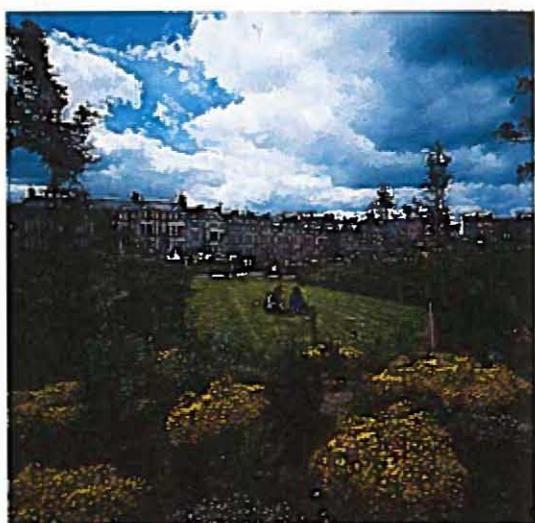
Ideally, servicing of commercial premises should occur to the rear of properties at off peak times and it is especially preferable in pedestrian areas. This is not always practicable, however, especially where access is narrow and restricted. Servicing of new development within the Town Centre is an important issue requiring careful consideration. It will be the aim of the Department to ensure minimum disruption to the convenience of shoppers and to the commercial life of the Town Centre.



Role of the Town Centre Plan

The Town Centre Plan has a vital role to play in the future of Bangor by building upon what has been achieved and by providing:

- ❑ a planning framework within which public and private sector development initiatives for the physical and economic benefit of the Town can be promoted and achieve success
- ❑ the policies against which development proposals can be assessed
- ❑ a means of promoting, assisting and co-ordinating activities which will lead to further development and improvement of the Town Centre



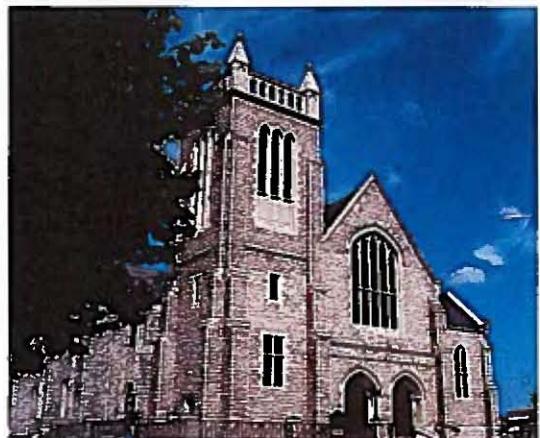


PLANNING STRATEGY

The Planning Strategy for Bangor Town Centre provides a framework to allow the Town Centre to expand commercially, to retain its status as a major focus for recreation and leisure activities and to become a more attractive place in which to live and work.

The aims of the Strategy are:

- to identify development opportunities which can help to attract new investment, create employment and enhance the appearance of the Town Centre
- to provide environmental improvement measures where they will contribute most to revitalising the Town Centre
- to ensure high standards of design in new development and environmental improvement measures
- to improve accessibility to and within the Town Centre for the benefit of all
- to maintain the character of the Town Centre by protecting its heritage of buildings, townscape, open spaces and views
- to protect Town Centre residential areas and to facilitate the creation of more dwelling units
- to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities continue to be catered for in the design of new development, roads, footpaths and car parks





THE SEAFRONT

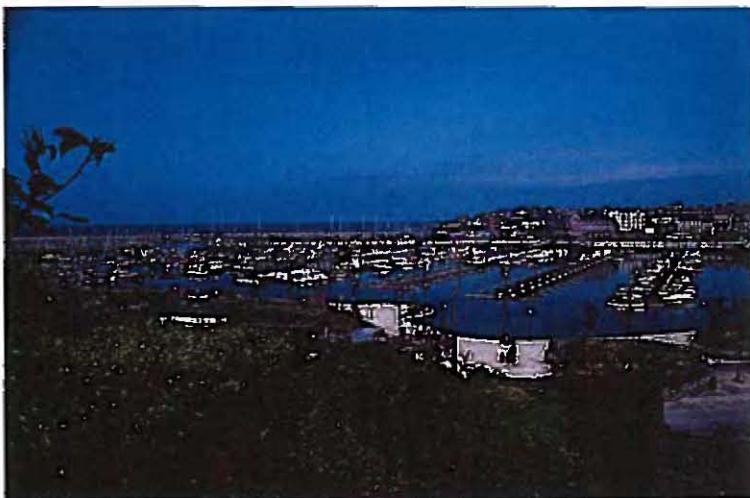
Traditionally, the Seafront was the focus of Bangor's economic life and its decline gave rise to the need for a range of new tourist attractions to complement and support the other economic activities of the Town. The Borough Council's Seafront Development Scheme was a response to the challenge to prepare a development strategy which would seek to maximise the potential of the Seafront. Centred on the Marina, it has successfully transformed Bangor's tourism role and has given the Town a new maritime image.

Following publication of the Preliminary Proposals for the Town Centre Plan, North Down Borough Council has proceeded to develop the land between the Marine Gardens and Bregenz House as a major public amenity space. This will provide a public space for activities and events on Bangor Seafront, adjacent to the Marina. Included in the overall scheme are a new public toilet block and landscaping of an existing car park.

In addition, planning permission has been granted for a fifty bedroom hotel with frontage to Quay Street at the former 'Barry's' site. Construction commenced in late 1993 and development of the site will fill a prominent gap on the Seafront.

Planning Strategy

Efforts to improve the attractiveness of the Seafront through environmental enhancement and private sector investment, can, by bringing about an increase in visitors to the Town, provide opportunities for further expansion of Town Centre trade. The Planning Strategy is to build upon the success of the Seafront Development Scheme and to continue to revitalise and upgrade the appearance of the Seafront by identifying further environmental enhancement measures and development opportunities for expansion of Town Centre uses, by enhancing accessibility and by ensuring good standards of design.



Planning Policies and Proposals

SEA 1

To support the provision of appropriate tourist and recreational facilities at appropriate locations on the Seafront.

In general, planning policy will seek to encourage a broad spectrum of uses in this area in order to improve its vitality and viability. Indoor recreational or leisure uses, retailing and residential development would be acceptable and would widen the range of uses along the Seafront considerably. However, it is considered that the Seafront is adequately served by hot food carry-outs and amusement arcades and further proposals of this nature which would result in their over-representation will be resisted.

Because of the visual significance of the Seafront, it will be important to ensure that all new development achieves a high standard of design and that due attention is given to the height, scale, design and appearance of shop fronts and signage, to the general detailing of upper floors and to the relationship of the proposed development with adjoining buildings/properties. The Department will pay particular regard to the implications of development proposals for regeneration of the Seafront and for enhancement of the environment. The car parking implications of development proposals will also be carefully considered. It is likely that only large scale proposals will require the provision of car parking and a multi-storey arrangement may be the most appropriate means of meeting the car parking requirements.



Opportunities exist to assist the regeneration of the Seafront and to upgrade and enhance its attractiveness through the development of vacant and underused sites. In particular, there is an opportunity to assemble a major development site at Queen's Parade to include Seafront properties along with extensive associated areas of underused backland. The Department would be prepared to assist by facilitating the inclusion of its land at the Vennel in an aggregate development scheme which includes a substantial increase in public car parking places and would be prepared to consider the use of its land acquisition powers to assist the private sector in assembling a suitable site. This location is a key one in Bangor, as it presents an opportunity to consolidate tourist and recreational provision on the Seafront whilst taking advantage of its direct physical link to the commercial heart of the Town.



SEA 2

To ensure that the open space around Bangor Bay from the North Pier to Pickie is kept free from further built development.

Because the Marina and new seaside facilities are major visitor attractions, it is important that visual and physical links between the Seafront and the Town Centre are retained. Landscaping schemes and the construction of new promenades along the Seafront have greatly improved its appearance and attractiveness. Environmental improvement measures in the Town Centre have reinforced the physical links between the two areas through continuity of design and materials. In order to ensure that the visual links remain, the open area to the seaward side of Queen's Parade will be kept free from further built development.

SEA 3

To support the introduction of environmental enhancement measures on Bangor Seafrot.

The Department has undertaken a major improvement scheme to Queen's Parade involving realignment of the Parade to its seaward side, landscaping, new ground treatment to roads and footpaths and substantial widening of pavements on the landward side of the Parade. These improvements will create a more attractive environment for the pedestrian and an improved setting for buildings along the Seafrot.

Pedestrian movement will be facilitated by an increase in the number of crossing points along Queens Parade enabling more convenient movement between the Shopping Area and the recreational attractions of the Seafrot.

The potential for further measures to reduce traffic speed or to discourage non-essential traffic on the Seafrot will be kept under review during the plan period as environmental and traffic conditions permit. Future proposals will be the subject of consultation with North Down Borough Council, Town Centre traders and the public.



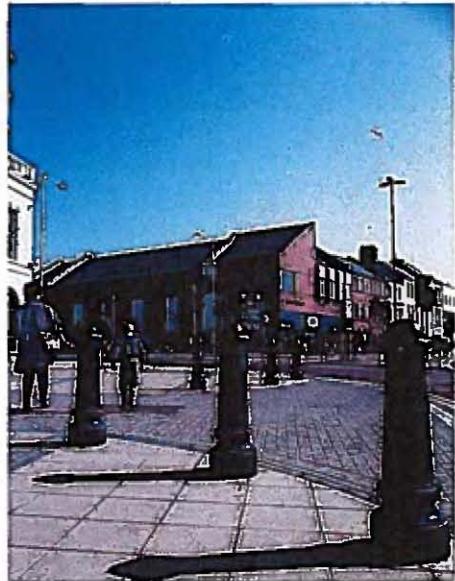


THE SHOPPING AREA

Bangor Town Centre performs a dual role as the commercial heart of the Town and as the focus for recreational activity along the Seafront. The Department's policies are aimed at achieving an efficient and attractive commercial centre whilst allowing for expansion to meet the future needs of the increasing population. The Shopping Area of the Town Centre has a major part to play in creating a more attractive and successful image for Bangor and already public and private sector investment have considerably enhanced its appearance. The Flagship Centre has added to choice and convenience for shoppers with resulting benefits for the economic life of the Town. Environmental improvements in the form of widened footpaths, new surfacing to roads and footpaths, landscaping and themed street furniture have added to its attractiveness whilst the new-one way traffic system has improved accessibility. These improvements form the basis of overall enhancement of the Town Centre in terms of the quality of the shopping environment and increased accessibility.

Planning Strategy

The Planning Strategy for the Shopping Area will endeavour to ensure that there is scope for an adequate range of shopping uses providing a lively, interesting and attractive shopping environment within a compact area. Development opportunities for the attraction of new investment are also identified. These can provide additional retail, office and service businesses, strengthening Bangor's commercial role and creating more jobs. In addition, new development, refurbishment of older properties and infilling of gap sites can do much to enhance the appearance of the built environment. The Strategy envisages complementary environmental improvement measures for the enhancement of the appearance of public areas of the Town Centre and these will be introduced as resources permit. In all cases, high standards of design will be expected in order to ensure that the Town Centre is as attractive as possible and a place in which the shopper / pedestrian can feel comfortable and secure. Finally, the pedestrianisation of Lower Main Street remains an option and will be the subject of further consideration.



Planning Policies and Proposals

S1

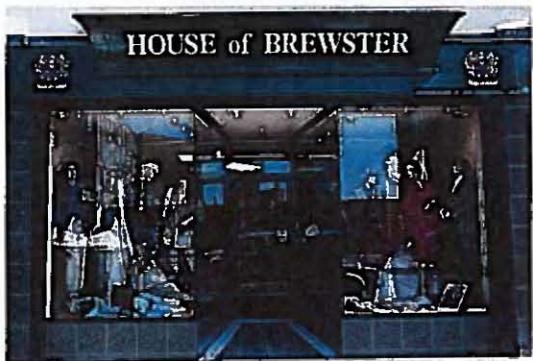


New shopping and retail services will generally be expected to locate within the commercial area defined on the Town Centre Plan map. Retail development outside the commercial area will be discouraged except for local shops serving the needs of local residential communities.

Concentration and continuity of shopping enhance accessibility, create a favourable impression and contribute to the image of a successful shopping centre. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the commercial area is both compact and convenient and offers an adequate range of retail facilities within a clearly defined area.

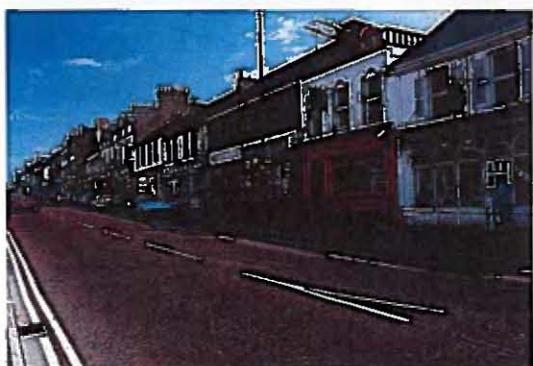
S2

Within the Town Centre commercial area, the principal shopping streets are Upper and Lower Main Streets, Bridge Street and High Street. These streets will constitute the main shopping core of Bangor.



Highly accessible and containing the largest number of comparison goods shops in the Town Centre, the main shopping streets generate large volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic and their vitality provides an indication of the economic health of the Town Centre. The Planning Strategy is to support the shopping core by means of environmental enhancement, identification of development opportunities and appropriate planning policies.

In the North Down and Ards Area Plan (1984-1995), the defined shopping core of Bangor included Upper and Lower Main Streets only. However, a feature of the Town Centre has been the resurgence of High Street. It has retained much of its Victorian - Edwardian character and consists mainly of small shops many of traditional appearance, selling and providing a wide variety of goods and services. Public investment in road and environmental improvement works plus considerable private investment in the upgrading of property have enhanced its appearance and attractiveness as a shopping street. In the Bangor Town Centre Plan Preliminary Proposals (1992), the main shopping core was extended to include Bridge Street and Lower High Street as far as the new link road. The Town Centre Plan proposes to extend the shopping core to the Prospect Road junction, taking in all of High Street.



S 3

Applications for non-retail uses within the shopping core will be assessed in terms of their impact on the vitality and viability of this area of the Town Centre.

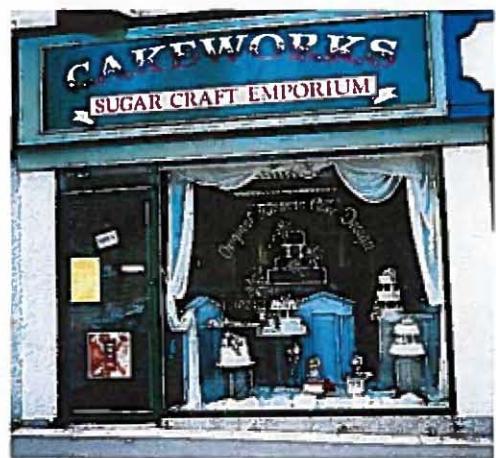
Colourful and interesting window displays enhance the attractiveness of the Town Centre, generating trade and pedestrian activity. It is important, therefore, to encourage and retain a predominance of retail outlets in the main shopping core so that variety and vitality in shopping provision are ensured. Uses such as banks, restaurants and cafes, normally lacking in window displays are complementary to the main retail function and are often availed of by shoppers during the shopping trip. However, it is important to ensure that such uses do not proliferate or cluster at the expense of retail units. Proposals for development of this kind will be assessed in terms of their likely impact on the vitality and viability of the shopping core.



S 4

Within Abbey Street proposals for development will be assessed in terms of their impact on the character and appearance of this part of Bangor Town Centre.

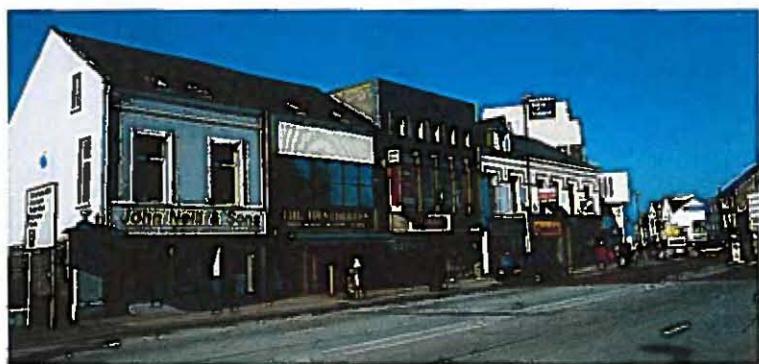
Abbey Street, flanked on one side by Castle Park and by commercial premises on the other, is the main approach to the Town Centre from Belfast. The impression it makes upon visitors is, therefore, of great importance. Pressure from non-retail uses to locate here has led to a decline in the numbers of retail uses and to an increase in the numbers of offices, hot food bars and other non-retail uses. In addition, the number of residential properties has steadily declined and the remainder may eventually be replaced by commercial uses. The Department considers Abbey Street to be a suitable location for mixed commercial uses. However, because of its visual importance as a main approach route to the Town Centre, greater emphasis will, in the future, be placed upon those aspects of development of most significance to the appearance of the street. Developers will be expected to pay particular regard to the height, scale, design and appearance of shop fronts and signage, to the general detailing of upper floors and to the relationship of proposed development with adjoining buildings/properties.



☒ S 5

The Department will introduce Environmental Improvement measures in Upper Main Street, as resources permit.

In the Preliminary Proposals of the Town Centre Plan, the Department invited views on the longer term pedestrianisation of Upper Main Street. It was indicated that this would require construction of a new road from Abbey Street to Hamilton Road through Market Square. The Department's view is that the benefits to be gained from pedestrianisation are outweighed by the disruption which would be created by new road construction, in terms of loss of property, displacement of car parking and intrusion into Castle Park and Market Square. Public response to the road link has generally been adverse and the road is not included in the Town Centre Plan. The alternative to pedestrianisation of Upper Main Street is environmental improvement by widening of footpaths, improved paving treatment, planting and landscaping, whilst allowing continued traffic circulation. The opportunity to enhance the appearance of Upper Main Street by means of environmental improvement will be kept under review as resources permit.



☒ S 6

To identify opportunities for expansion of Town Centre uses.

Market Square

North Down Borough Council is considering development at Market Square which could include a market area, library and other facilities. This could provide a new focus for Town Centre activity with a civic/market emphasis.

West of Upper Main Street

There is an opportunity for development in depth behind the existing frontage of Upper Main Street. Suitable land uses could include shopping, offices and car parking. The nature of the ground levels would facilitate multi-level development.

West of Lower Main Street

The large area of open land to the west of Lower Main Street in the vicinity of the Vennel provides an opportunity to link development at this location to Lower Main Street, perhaps by means of a shopping mall.



ACCESSIBILITY

A substantial increase in the amount of Town Centre traffic would have implications for the quality of the Town Centre environment and also for the safety and convenience of all who visit, live or work in it. Bangor's Ring Road offers easy access to all areas of the Town and improved usage can relieve pressure on the Town Centre.

Bangor does not have a pedestrianised area from which vehicular traffic is excluded. The revised Bingham Street - Mills Road inner traffic circulation system, in association with improved crossing points and enhanced pavement treatments, have improved traffic flows whilst contributing to a safer environment for shoppers. The new traffic arrangements do not preclude full scale pedestrianisation of Lower Main Street but a revision of Town Centre traffic flows would be required to achieve this. Traffic flows on Queen's Parade are also in conflict with the movement of pedestrians between the Seafront and the Shopping Area.

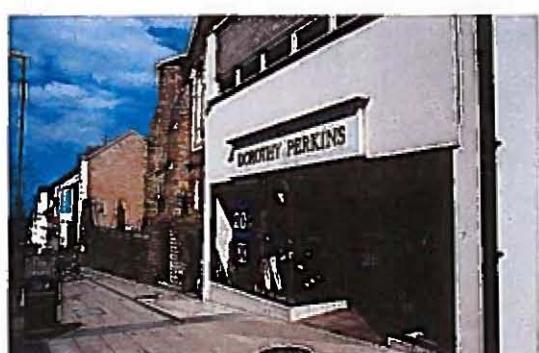
The Seafront Development Scheme and the Flagship Centre have provided Bangor with approximately 1000 additional car parking spaces. However, car parking demand tends to be concentrated in the Seafront area particularly at seasonal peak periods in contrast to the lower levels of demand experienced by car parks on the periphery of the Town Centre. In addition, long-stay car parking by business operators and workers reduces parking options for shoppers and visitors. An integrated car parking strategy involving both the Department and North Down Borough Council could produce more efficient and effective usage of public car parks throughout the Town Centre.

People with disabilities have special needs in relation to access to Town Centre facilities and buildings. Bangor Access Group, a local voluntary association concerned with the provision of safer access for those with disabilities, has been involved in the design of the revised system and this is reflected in the provision of appropriate facilities eg kerb detailing.

Planning Strategy

The Planning Strategy is to create an accessible and safe environment for Bangor Town Centre. The main aims of the Strategy are:-

- to ensure an effective traffic management system
- to ensure that levels of car parking provision are adequate to meet demand
- to address the needs of people with disabilities.



Planning Policies and Proposals



☒ AC 1

To monitor traffic flows and consider further traffic management measures if required.

It is the view of the Department that following the construction of the Bingham Street - Mills Road traffic link, traffic flows may be accommodated by traffic management measures without the need for further major roadworks. Through traffic using the Town Centre will be encouraged to use the Ring Road. In assessing the need for future traffic management measures for the Town Centre, the Department will give consideration to traffic wishing to go to and from the Town Centre, traffic seeking access to the Seafront and facilitating additional numbers of pedestrians and tourists using the Seafront and the main shopping streets.

☒ AC 2

To consider pedestrianisation of Lower Main Street.

Experience in other towns has shown that pedestrianisation has resulted in a quieter, safer and cleaner environment for the shopper. Environmental enhancement could be achieved by pedestrianisation of Lower Main Street. To facilitate this, alternative routeing would be required for displaced traffic by means of the Bingham Street - Mills Road link together with an extended one-way system on existing roads. Pedestrianisation would mean increased journey lengths and would increase traffic flows along the Seafront. It would also displace on-street parking from some streets. The opportunity for pedestrianising Lower Main Street will be kept under review. Account will be taken of traffic conditions, environmental issues and the views of North Down Borough Council, Town Centre traders and the public. Pedestrianisation proposals will be subject to separate public consultation and statutory procedures.

☒ AC 3

To ensure that the supply of car parking provision in the Town Centre is adequate to meet future demand.

The provision of adequate car parking in convenient locations is essential to the continued prosperity of the business and commercial life of the Town Centre. The Department of the Environment is responsible for a number of public car parks in Bangor. In addition, North Down Borough Council has provided car parks associated with local amenities and tourism, and a privately operated multi-storey car park has recently opened at the Flagship Centre. The introduction of tariffs on car parking maximises the vehicle turnover in the most intensively used parks. This system of parking control assists with traffic management and provides space for short-stay parkers in the Town Centre. It also encourages long stay parkers to use outlying car parks or to consider the use of an alternative form of transport. The Department will continue to monitor the usage of Town Centre car parks and, in association



with North Down Borough Council, will seek to ensure that parking supply is adequate to meet future demand. This may involve an overall car parking management policy involving North Down Borough Council and the Department, to ensure effective usage of all Town Centre car parks.

Major growth in parking supply in the Town Centre is only likely to result from multi-storey development. The Department will consider the provision of multi-storey car parking in association with appropriate development proposals. The Flagship Centre includes Bangor's first multi-storey car park with a capacity of 500 cars. The provision of parking will be an important factor in considering development proposals, especially those for major development sites at the Vennel and Upper Main Street.



AC 4

The provision of rear servicing will be required where practicable when proposals for commercial development are being considered.

Servicing of properties from the street frontage introduces heavy goods vehicles into shopping and commercial areas. Rear servicing has safety and environmental benefits for shoppers but is not always practicable. The possibility of rear servicing will be considered when planning applications for commercial development are being processed.

AC 5

To assist in identifying a suitable site for coach parking.

Accommodation of parties touring by coach is an important element in the trade of hotels on Bangor Seafront. Long-stay parking of coaches on Bangor Seafront will not be favoured for visual reasons though provision can be made for picking up and setting down of coach passengers at suitable locations. The Department will be prepared to assist in identifying a suitable site.

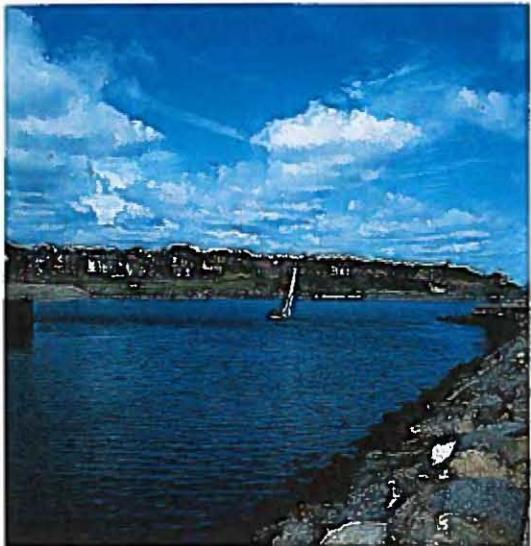
AC 6

The needs of people with disabilities will continue to be taken into account in the layout of car parks and footpaths and in considering proposals for development of public and commercial buildings.

Parking facilities for people with disabilities will continue to be provided at convenient locations in Town Centre car parks. On public footpaths, attention will continue to be paid to the needs of the handicapped by ensuring that, where possible, all changes in level have ramped facilities and by providing handrails, where necessary. The policy of lowering kerbs at street crossings will continue.

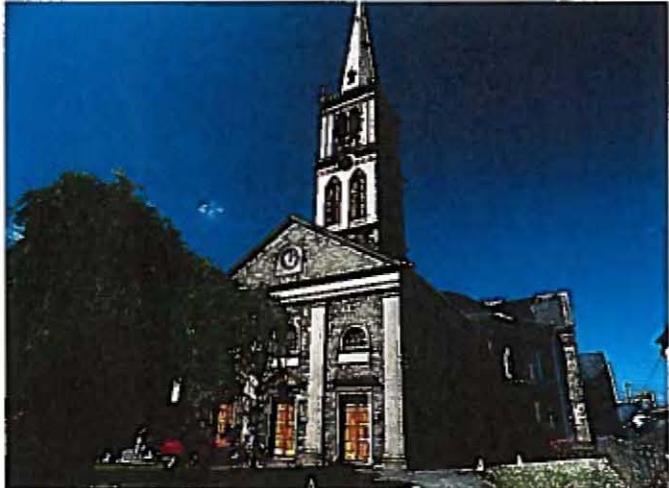


The necessity of providing appropriate access for people with disabilities to all new public buildings will be drawn to the attention of developers during the processing of planning applications.



The Victorian/Edwardian period provided Bangor with a legacy of fine townscape which contributes greatly to the character and setting of the Town Centre. The architecture of the central area, the solid terraced dwellings on the edges of the Town Centre, the large 19th century houses sited in extensive landscaped grounds and the sweep of fine villas high above the shoreline to the west of Bangor Bay, represent a built heritage of considerable importance. In addition, the Town Centre contains a number of listed buildings of special architectural or historic merit which make an important contribution to its character and appearance. This heritage could be undermined and disrupted through pressure for change and by unsympathetic development. Sensitivity will be required if redevelopment and rehabilitation are to be satisfactorily integrated with existing development.

Plentiful open space and good landscaping have an important role to play in creating an attractive Town Centre which can make a favourable impression on visitors and potential investors, as well as being a source of civic pride for residents. Bangor is fortunate to have the extensive public open spaces of Castle Park and Ward Park extending into the Town Centre. They meet the built environment at Abbey Street, Hamilton Road and Park Drive offering vistas into the scenic parklands beyond. These views represent a valuable legacy to the residents of Bangor and must be protected from development.



A major part of North Down Borough Council's Seafront Development Scheme has involved environmental improvements to the Seafront in the form of landscaped amenity areas finished to a high standard. The Department of the Environment has complemented the Council's efforts by providing enhanced footpath treatment, street furniture, street lighting and landscaping in the main Shopping Area. Together, these improvements have created a new and positive image for Bangor Town Centre. The opportunity exists for further improvements at the key locations of Upper Main Street and Abbey Street.

Planning Strategy

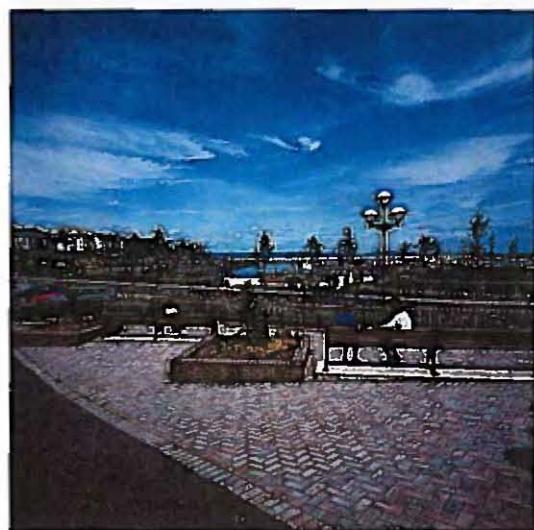
The aim of the Planning Strategy is to protect and enhance Bangor's built and natural environment by means of environmental improvement measures and the control of new development.

Planning Policies and Proposals

T.E.1

To enhance the environment of the Town Centre by means of landscaping schemes and environmental improvement.

Schemes undertaken by North Down Borough Council and by the Department have improved the physical environment of the shopping core. The Planning Strategy is to build on the success of these projects by means of further environmental improvements at key locations within the Town Centre. Priority will be given to Upper Main Street and to the main approach to the Town Centre along Abbey Street, as resources permit. The provision of landscaping will be required, where appropriate, in new development proposals and off street car parks.



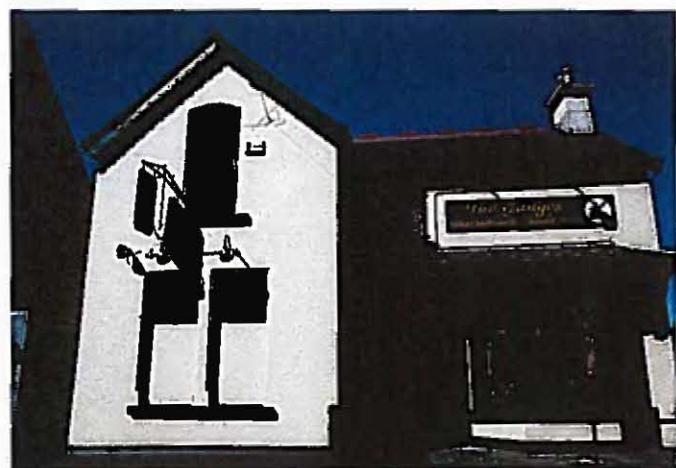
T.E.2

To ensure that proposals for new development respect the scale and character of existing development within the Town Centre.

Pressure for commercial expansion within the Town Centre is expected to continue during the plan period. Where conversion of properties is proposed, care should be taken to ensure that any associated external alterations do not detract from the character and appearance of the existing street-scene. Where conversion is not practicable or desirable and new development is proposed, the Department will expect new buildings to exhibit a good standard of design and to respect the scale and character of existing townscape.

New shop fronts can make a positive contribution to townscape and enhance the overall street-scene by complementing the design and detailing of the parent building and reinforcing, where appropriate, the strong vertical emphasis traditional in the Town Centre. In addition, they should normally be confined to the width of one building unit.

Particular attention will be paid to proposed development on the Seafront, within the shopping core and in Abbey Street, the main approach to the Town Centre.



☒ T.E.3

To ensure that commercial signage is in keeping with the character of the shop front and the building on which it is located and that poster panels do not detract from the character of their surroundings.



Good signage on shop fronts and commercial premises can contribute to the character and appearance of the Town Centre. Signage can enhance the appearance not only of individual buildings but also the overall street-scene. The size, shape and position of signs should be in keeping with the scale and facade of the building on which they are located. Fascia signs should blend with, and not obscure, architectural detailing. Projecting signs may be acceptable below first floor window level provided their dimensions are appropriate to the overall elevation. Hand painted signs or illumination by bracket or wash lighting are preferred to internally illuminated fascia signs. Where security shutters are needed they should be perforated and should also be painted in a manner that complements the shop facade. Shutter boxes should be concealed within the building elevation and guide rails should be recessed into window reveals.

As a form of advertising, poster panels will only be considered where it can be shown that they will not detract from the character of their surroundings. In practice, given their scale, poster panels are only likely to be acceptable in locations where they are used to screen vacant or derelict sites.

☒ T.E.4

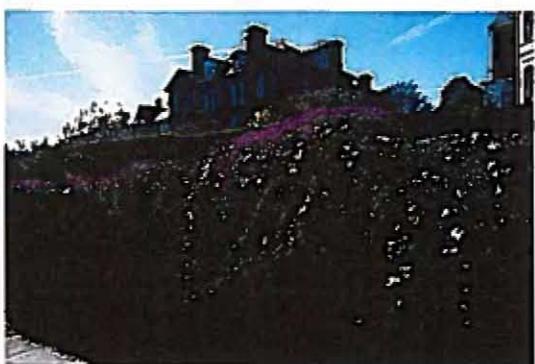
To protect the existing open spaces of Castle Park and Ward Park from further development where they adjoin the Town Centre.

These open spaces provide natural visual relief and contribute to the setting and appearance of the Town Centre. Particular attention will be paid to the preservation of views into the Parks from the Town Centre and development which would impair or disrupt views will be resisted.

☒ T.E.5

The Department will designate a Conservation Area in the residential area along Princetown Road between Grays Hill and Seacourt to the west of Bangor Bay.

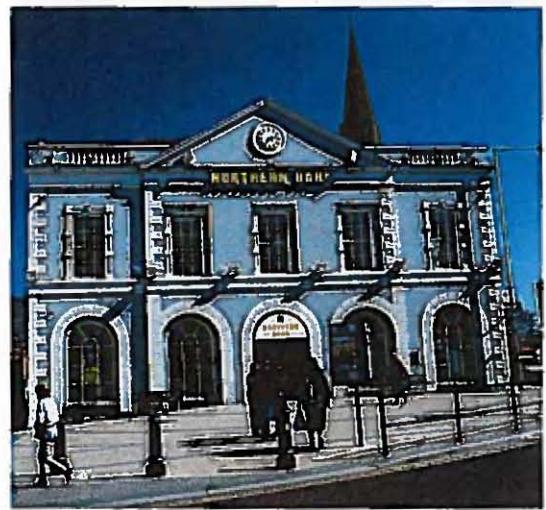
The character of the proposed Conservation Area derives from large 19th century houses in extensive grounds set amidst mature landscaping and tree lined roads. Together, these elements combine to produce an environment altogether different from the surrounding area. The sweep of fine villas overlooking the landscape of slope and shoreline along the western side of Bangor Bay are equally important, both visually and architecturally. This area will be designated a Conservation Area under Article 50 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991, following adoption of the Town Centre Plan. Designation will provide a framework for the protection of this unique historic and architectural environment. Development which would threaten the character of the area will be resisted.



T.E.6

To ensure that the future use of buildings of special architectural or historic interest is compatible with their status as listed buildings.

Bangor Town Centre contains 47 buildings of special architectural or historic interest protected by listing under Article 42 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. The significance of their individual and collective contribution to townscape character will be an important consideration in determining applications for development. Demolition of listed buildings will only be considered as an issue of last resort. Where new development consists of a change of use or alterations, it should respect and enhance the architectural character and historic importance of the listed building. Similarly, proposals for the use or development of adjoining buildings or land should respect and enhance the character of the listed building. Where listed buildings lie within the proposed Conservation Area (T.E.5), their future use and development should contribute to the enhancement of the character of the area as a whole.



T.E.7

To seek the co-operation of developers in the excavation and investigation of features of archaeological or historic interest likely to be uncovered by building operations in the Town Centre.

Redevelopment of Town Centre sites may offer rare opportunities to study the traces of earlier settlement and provide valuable knowledge of, and insight into, the history and development of the Town and the way of life of its previous inhabitants. Where features of archaeological or historic interest are likely to be uncovered during new building works, the Department will seek the co-operation of developers in arranging excavation and investigation within the constraints of their development timetable. Where development will result in archaeological destruction, planning permission will normally be conditional on the completion of a licensed excavation and recording of remains. In such cases, an agreement may be made between the Department and the developer under Article 40 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991.





HOUSING



The construction of Town Centre housing took place during the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries and it is distributed around the margins of the commercial area. In general, the housing stock is in good condition but the overall numbers in residential use have declined due to encroachment by commercial uses.

There is a demand for housing accommodation within the Town Centre from single persons and small households, from the elderly and from those without cars who wish to avail of Town Centre facilities. It would be difficult to accommodate large scale housing development within the Town Centre due to the limited amount of land available but small infill schemes, located behind existing residential or commercial frontages, may be possible. In addition, there is a substantial amount of vacant and underused upper floorspace which could provide additional accommodation for specialised user groups, whilst the conversion to flats of large dwellings no longer suitable for single family accommodation may also be possible.



Planning Strategy

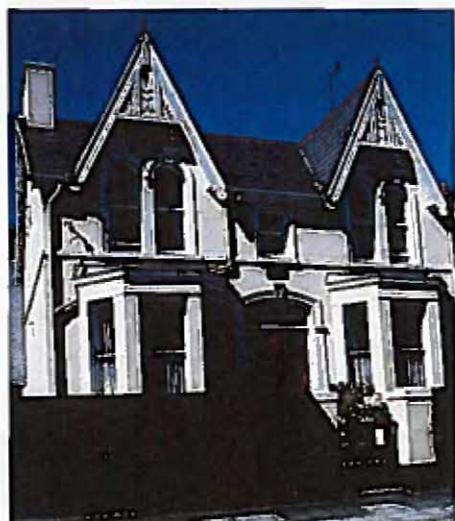
The aim of the Planning Strategy is the retention of the Town Centre population within existing residential areas by protecting established housing areas from encroachment by commercial development, by ensuring choice in accommodation for small households and by encouraging the re-use of redundant commercial properties for residential purposes.

Planning Policies and Proposals

H 1

Town Centre residential areas identified on the proposals map will be protected from unsympathetic development.

The areas shown on the proposals map, ie Dufferin Avenue, Southwell Road, Primrose Street, Central Avenue, Park Drive and Springfield Road/Springfield Avenue, provide a valuable housing stock for established communities which contribute to the variety and vitality of life in the Town Centre, as well as providing activity and security outside normal business hours. Planning policy will be to protect these areas from unsympathetic and inappropriate development.



H 2

To encourage the conversion of disused or underused commercial properties to residential use.

Opportunities may arise within the Town Centre for conversion of redundant commercial properties to residential use. This will be encouraged provided that commercial activity is not thereby impaired and that satisfactory standards of residential amenity can be achieved.

The potential for the re-use and conversion of upper floors above ground floor commercial premises occurs throughout the Town Centre. Residential use of upper floors could ensure improved appearance and standards of maintenance and increased security for ground floor commercial premises.

Proposals will be considered on their merits, taking into account the scale of the development, access arrangements and car parking provision.

H 3

To limit flat conversions to larger residential properties which are no longer considered suitable for single family accommodation.

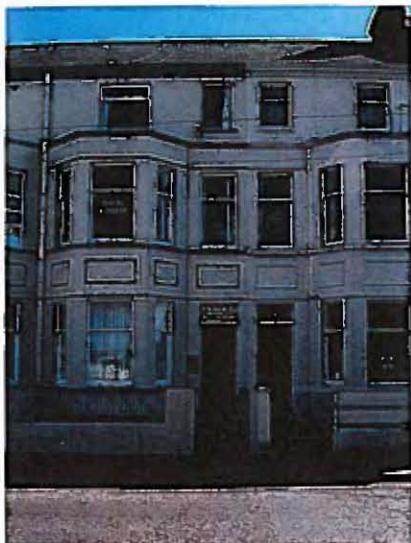
As the total number of households in Northern Ireland continues to increase, the conversion of larger and older houses to flats can make a useful contribution to meeting the housing needs of specific groups by making more dwelling units available. However, it is necessary to control the location of flat conversions in the interest of orderly land use change, protection of character and amenity and prevention of traffic or parking congestion. Proposals for conversions will be carefully assessed to ensure that they do not adversely affect the appearance of the building or cause undue overlooking of adjoining property. Access and parking provision are also important considerations. In appropriate circumstances, for example where multiple occupancy is the predominant land use, the Department may allow further conversions to take place by way of consolidation.

Planning permission will not be granted for the sub-division of a small house into flats where the provision of normal facilities would require a disproportionate extension. This will prevent the loss of good housing accommodation and protect the character of existing residential areas in single family accommodation.





OFFICES



Most offices in Bangor Town Centre are small in scale and serve local needs. It is likely that this will remain the pattern of development throughout the Plan Period. An increase in office floorspace will depend on the growth of population in the Borough and on future economic performance. Growth in office development in some parts of the Town Centre has resulted in the loss of shopping frontages, detracting from vitality and continuity. Expansion of offices into residential areas can also lead to loss of housing stock and impact adversely on residential amenity.

Planning Strategy

The Planning Strategy is to allow for expansion of office floorspace in appropriate circumstances throughout the commercial area whilst ensuring that the vitality and viability of the shopping core and the amenity of existing housing areas are not adversely affected.

Planning Policies and Proposals

OF 1

To permit office development in established commercial frontages outside the main shopping core.

Office development can play an important role in revitalising commercial areas outside the main shopping core. Planning policy will be to permit office development in such commercial frontages, whether at ground floor level or otherwise. However, the Department will seek to confine changes in facade and signage to ground floor properties (T.E.3).

OF 2

Proposals for financial or professional services within the shopping core will be assessed on the basis of their likely impact on the vitality and viability of the streets within it. There will be a presumption against business office use at ground floor level in this area.



Within the main shopping core it is important to ensure that the continuity, variety and vitality provided by retail uses are maintained. The intrusion of offices could create dead frontages at ground floor level, detract from the attractiveness of the shopping core and reduce the amount of floorspace for retailing. To provide flexibility within the range of uses the public expects to find within the shopping core, the Department will assess proposals for financial or professional services on the basis of their likely impact on the vitality and viability of the main shopping streets. However, there will be a presumption against business office use at ground floor level within the shopping core. In order to ensure more positive use of upper floor accommodation, office development will be encouraged subject to normal planning considerations.

OF 3

There will be a presumption against office development in residential areas.

The intrusion of offices into the residential areas defined on the Town Centre map will be resisted in order to avoid loss of housing stock and the break-up of communities. Outside the shopping core and in areas of mixed land use within the Town Centre, applications for the change of use of dwellings to offices will be considered, subject to normal planning considerations.



IMPLEMENTATION



It is intended that the plan should cover a period of about ten years.

Progress on implementation of the opportunities identified will depend, among other things, upon economic circumstances and on the level of financial resources available in the public and private sectors. The achievements to date have been considerable and there will be important roles for the Council, Government, private investors and the public at large, in pursuing the further opportunities identified in the Plan.

The Department of the Environment administers a range of measures by which it can seek to assist subject to available resources:

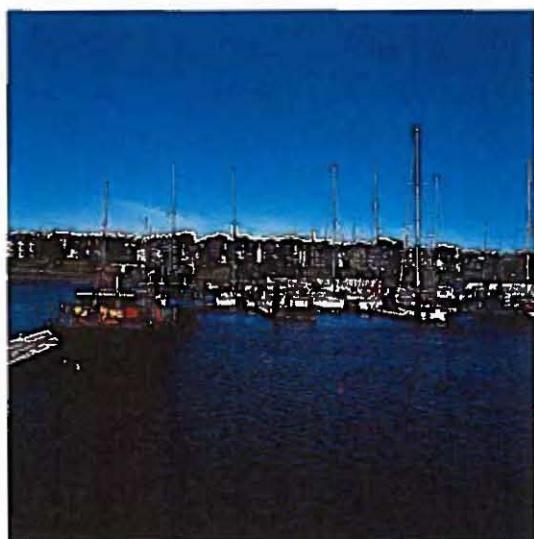
- environmental improvement
- pedestrianisation
- urban development programme grants
- land acquisition
- land availability
- conservation area grant

Environmental Improvement

The Department of the Environment funds an environmental improvement programme throughout Northern Ireland. The purpose is to create environmental improvement particularly in town centres. Improvement of the environment is seen as important in attracting new investment, bringing unused and underused land back into use and restoring confidence in the future of inner cities and towns. Schemes are carried out directly by the Department or, indirectly, by funding to District Councils, public bodies and the voluntary sector.

Pedestrianisation

Under Article 100 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the Department may, for the purpose of improving the amenity of any area, provide for the pedestrianisation of shopping streets. Pedestrianisation involves closure of streets to traffic and is usually accompanied by environmental improvement measures to enhance amenity, for example, by landscaping and paving of the pedestrian area.



The Urban Development Programme

This fund, which is administered by the Department of the Environment on behalf of the International Fund for Ireland aims to promote physical and economic regeneration in the commercial centres of towns and villages. Further details on the scope and application of the scheme may be obtained from the Downpatrick Divisional Planning Office.

Land Acquisition

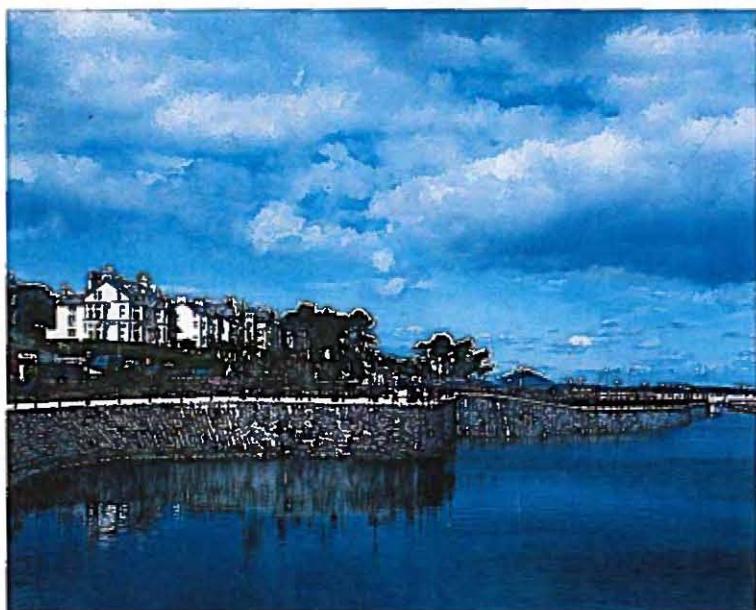
The Department of the Environment has powers to acquire land compulsorily or by agreement, where it is satisfied that this is necessary and appropriate to serve the comprehensive development of town centre sites. These powers can be effective in unlocking land ownership difficulties. Subject to the availability of public resources, the Department will be prepared to consider their use in relation to any development opportunity site in Bangor Town Centre where this is necessary and appropriate to assist development by the private sector.

Land Availability

The Department is prepared to consider the inclusion of land acquired for the provision of car parking in a development scheme where the scheme would provide for enlarged parking facilities, for example by multi-storey development.

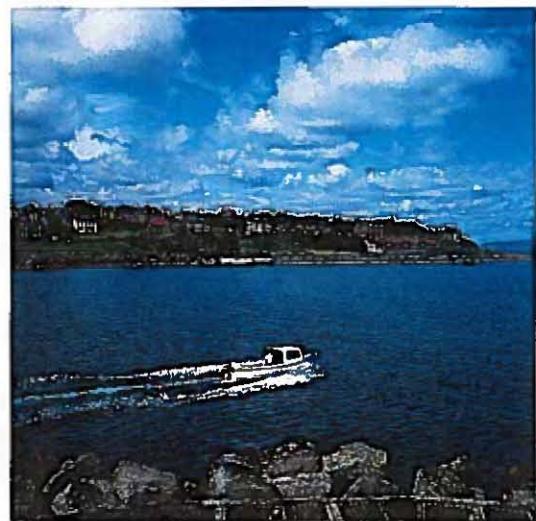
Conservation Area Grant

Following designation, the Department of the Environment (N.I.) may grant aid expenditure relating to works to either listed or non-listed buildings that promote the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Further details may be obtained from the Downpatrick Divisional Planning Office.





APPENDIX 1



The Planning Team

The Citizen's Charter for Northern Ireland states that Divisional Planning Offices will have a contact point where progress on a Development Plan can be checked. Accordingly, the following is a list of names of the Department's Officers chiefly involved in the production of the Bangor Town Centre Local Plan.

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Roisin Alexander B.A., M.C.D., M.R.T.P.I.

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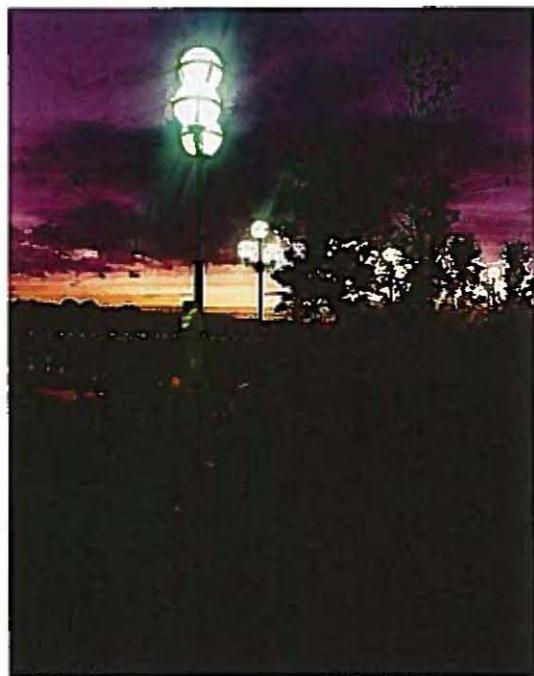
APPENDIX 2

Acknowledgements:

The Department wishes to thank the following for their co-operation in the preparation of the Town Centre Plan.

Mr. Stanley Matchett for the photographs marked with an asterisk which occur throughout the Document.

North Down Heritage Centre for the use of the photographs from the Lawrence Collection on page 5.



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