

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PUBLIC DESIGN CHARRETTE CONTEXT

A Charrette is an intensive consultation that engages local people in the design of their community.

As part of the Scottish Government's Charrette Mainstreaming Programme, West Dunbartonshire Council, supported by the Scottish Government, sponsored a locally driven town centre design Charrette in Clydebank, over four days in February and one day March 2015. West Dunbartonshire Council appointed a design team to facilitate the Charrette, led by Glasgow based Austin-Smith:Lord LLP (urban designers & architects), Douglas Wheeler Associates Ltd (economic regeneration specialists), Ryden (property consultants), Transport Planning Ltd and WAVEparticle (Public Engagement / Arts Consultants).

Over 250 local residents, business, local and national agencies and stakeholders attended planning and design workshops in Clydebank Town Hall from 11-14 February 2015 and a 'report back' session on 25 March 2015. Many more local people engaged with pre-Charrette 'community animation' events in locations through the town centre, at local schools and clubs in a series of in-situ activities. The public, designers and specialists worked together, 'hands on', to prepare a **long term vision, development framework and action plan for Clydebank Town Centre**, with the ideas translated into plans and drawings.



Futurewalk

CLYDEBANK TOWN CENTRE CONTEXT

The Charrette study area was set in accordance with the Local Development Plan town centre designation boundary.

Clydebank is the largest of the three town centres in West Dunbartonshire, larger than Dumbarton and Alexandria. It serves the whole of West Dunbartonshire, western areas of Glasgow and beyond as a retail destination, particularly for non-food shopping. To the south of Clydebank town centre, across Dumbarton Road is Clydebank Town Hall and library, and to the south of these is Queens Quay (the former John Brown's shipyard) which is a 41 hectare residential-led mixed-use redevelopment opportunity; one of the most significant regeneration projects in west-central Scotland.

Clydebank has good access links with a rail station in the town centre and another nearby, designated bus and taxi areas, and parking adjoining the shopping centre. The historically significant Forth-Clyde canal bisects the town centre Charrette study area.

Retail activity in the town centre is focused on the Clyde Shopping Centre, the northern part of which is a modern enclosed mall, and the southern part a partially covered and fully pedestrianised, shopping avenue. The northern mall is adjoined by some larger retail units including a superstore, a cinema and restaurant uses, and car parking. To the south of the town centre Charrette study area are more traditional tenemental streets with non-residential uses at ground floor, street level.

At the time of the Charrette the town centre also included Council offices at Rosebery Place and the Playdrome leisure centre, both due to relocate to Queen Quay. The Council has subsequently moved to office accommodation adjacent to West College Scotland. A new leisure centre is to be constructed overlooking the River Clyde on a neighbouring site.

The Council's Local Development Plan includes the following strategy for Clydebank town centre:

- to maintain the Clyde Shopping Centre as an attractive retail core;
- to support modernisation of the southern part of the shopping centre;
- to support the evening economy and leisure offer of the town centre;
- to protect the setting of the Forth and Clyde Canal and increase activity around it;
- to improve public transport facilities and accessibility.

CHARRETTE BRIEF AND EMERGING ISSUES

The Charrette brief recognised a series of headline issues facing Clydebank Town Centre, namely;

- A perceived **lack of 'ownership' of the town centre** by the local community, linked in part, to the majority of town centre units being located within a private, covered mall
- An increasingly **unattractive environment at South Sylvania Way**, where there is a clustering of betting shops, pay day lenders and amusement arcades
- The **under-occupied Co-operative** department store on South Sylvania Way
- A **limited evening economy** and leisure offer
- **The need to make more of the Forth and Clyde Canal** given its location at the heart of the town centre
- **Enhance public transport** facilities and integration
- The opportunities and challenges arising from the **future development of the Queens Quay** site
- A limited large food store presence in comparison to equivalent towns

The above issues were tested, reinforced and extended by Charrette participants to include the following observations;

- **Town Centre needs to be about far more than retail** - Clydebank needs a better town centre. There is scope to blend social, culture, community, civic, employment and residential uses to create vibrant, convivial place
- **Provide more employment opportunities in central Clydebank** - reinforce links to College and Business Park and support enterprise, especially amongst young Bankies
- **Clydebank has a distinctive story** - make the town equally memorable : create a Town Centre with 'a sense of place and of itself'
- **Raise the bar** - Clydebank has produced excellent quality before. 21st Century Clydebank needs to emulate this excellence
- **Clydebank has significant opportunities** (eg. Queen Quay) - let's make the most of them to the wider benefit of the town
- **Improve first impressions and the sense of arrival** - transport, connections and points of access.
- **From Canal to Clyde Quayside** - enhance linkages between the Town Centre and Queens Quay
- **Improved greenspace** - provide family friendly outdoor amenity for active uses / play / leisure in the Town Centre
- **Better walking / cycling networks** with safe routes to and through the Town Centre.



Aerial Image of Clydebank Town Centre



Chalmers Street

RECURRING TRANSFORMATIONAL THEMES

In response to the issues and observations emerging from the Brief and early discussions in the charrette, a series of overarching transformational themes recurred including;

- **Enrich the Town Centre:** Successful, convivial town centres are more than just retail destinations. There is a need to revitalise Clydebank Town Centre with a richer mix of uses and facilities. It's vital to apply a 'Retail Plus' approach; retaining a higher quality retail offer as part of **a broader mix of commercial and employment uses, leisure, civic, community services and residential.**
- Clydebank Town Centre has to **capitalise on its loyal local customer base**, provide civic and community functions, accommodate events/festivals that would help **to build more civic pride in what should be the heart of the Clydebank.** Focus and prioritise on the improvement and reuse of signature space and buildings, notably the Co-operative Building and 3 Queen Square.
- There is a need to **refresh Clydebank Regional Shopping Centre** and cinema as a regional retail and leisure destination serving West Dunbartonshire and west Glasgow, recognising the current market context where there is much more competition than when it was originally constructed.
- **Connected Clydebank:** maximising the benefit the Town Centre has with regular bus and train services by **significantly enhancing the quality of integrated passenger facilities** that provide a safe, welcoming, barrier-free interchange with clear and helpful information that encourages public transport patronage.
- **Improving open space, walking and cycling connections** to and through the Town Centre to encourage active, healthy living and sustainable transport. A fundamental aim is to improve pedestrian and cycle links between the Forth and Clyde Canal and the River Clyde; connecting the Town Centre and Queens Quay to create a compact, walkable Town Centre with excellent access to the waterfront. This would lock-in the benefit of the Forth-Clyde canal as a major asset at the heart of Clydebank.
- **Develop Queens Quay to complement the Town Centre,** ensuring mutual benefit from the mix of uses envisaged on the waterfront that supports and enlivens the existing Town Centre. The introduction of new facilities and residents within walking distance of the Town Centre and its public transport facilities should be a **powerful driver for positive transformation of central Clydebank.**
- The need to **focus on health, well-being and social justice:** tackling disadvantage and issues like community safety, proliferation of 'non retail uses' (eg. bookmakers and payday lenders) and fear of crime. Deliver more family friendly events and facilities in the centre could help improve civic pride in Clydebank Town Centre.
- Ensure Clydebank is a more vibrant **social destination where the public, commercial & social functions can overlap.** Prioritise projects that promote enterprise, business incubation/ start-ups, creativity, culture, leisure and arts/ music. These activities would **stimulate the evening economy** and appeal to young people.
- Support new **employment opportunities in Clydebank.** Optimise the positive benefits of links between established employers, West College Scotland and entrepreneurs. Provide further skills development, support and advice to prospective new business or social enterprises.

CLYDEBANK TOWN CENTRE: 2025 VISION

As a result of the Charrette discussions the 2025 vision that was presented on the final day of the charrette was:

2025 Vision

'In 2025 Clydebank Town Centre is a lively, thriving destination of choice serving West Dunbartonshire and the west Glasgow city region. Benefitting from a waterside location on the Forth-Clyde canal with great connections to the regenerated Clyde riverfront, the Town Centre has been refreshed creating a very positive first impression.

The Town Centre has been transformed with well designed streets and new buildings, an enhanced public transport interchange and a higher quality, more diverse mix of leisure, retail, creative and community uses. A family friendly evening economy has emerged and there's a greater sense of 'ownership' and sense of pride amongst Bankies about their Town Centre. The success of the Queens Quay redevelopment has complemented the Town Centre, attracting a new community that enjoys excellent connections to a walkable, compact mixed-use town centre and waterfront district.

Clydebank Town Centre is now recognised as an ambitious and enterprising place. It has a friendly, clean and green Town Centre: a community focussed, safe and dynamic place to live, work, visit and invest'

CLYDEBANK TOWN CENTRE: DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK & ACTION PLAN

The 2025 vision for Clydebank Town Centre aims to inspire, shape and direct the identification of projects and priorities across the overarching themes of place, business and community. The vision has helped shape the integrated Development Framework and Action Plan that were the main outputs from the charrette. The action plan themes were identified, discussed and refined over the first three days of Charrette events (See page 12).

The four main **Action Plan themes** are;

- **Boosting Enterprise:** Existing and New Business; Clydebank Town Centre needs to evolve as a retail and leisure **destination** but where commercial, enterprise, public, cultural and social functions overlap. In this context projects that promote enterprise, business incubation, creativity, culture, arts/music and appeal to young people will be crucial.
- **Consolidating and Extending Town Centre Living:** Part of the challenge is to tackle the declining population in West Dunbartonshire by offering more housing choice. New homes for affordable rent, mid-market rent, Low Cost Home Ownership and sale should all be possible subject to Scottish Government funding and accessing private finance.
- **Delivering Business Infrastructure:** There is an opportunity to 're-set the office market' in Clydebank to provide a wider range of employment space and to build on the recent investments like West College Scotland, WDC locating at Queens Quay, Golden Jubilee / Beardmore and target niches like arts / creatives.
- **Investing In Health and Well Being:** Community Infrastructure and Third Sector. The need is to continue to improve local access to health services, better co-ordinate existing services and improve awareness / provision of information. In addition there needs to be support for an increased economic contribution of an **enterprising third sector** through the delivery of programmes aimed at building the capacity and sustainability of the sector in Clydebank.

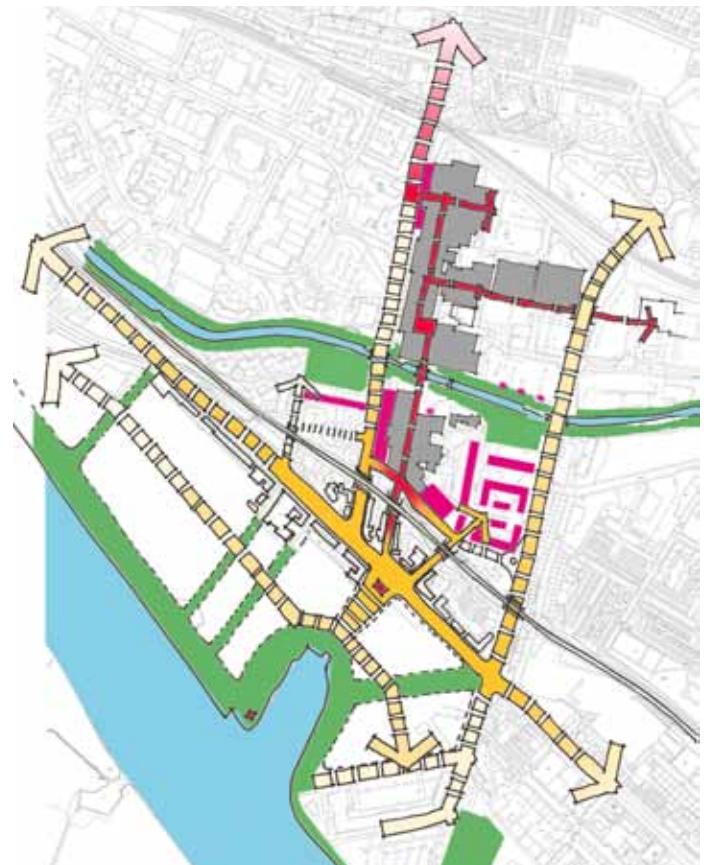
The Action Plan supports, and is supported by, the Development Framework. The principal projects within the Development Framework can be summarised as:

- **Playdrome Site:** the charrette outlined options for replacing the Leisure Centre (which is being relocated to Queen Quay) with a range of potential new uses. These could be new food and leisure outlets, a landmark leisure destination or a residential-led, mixed use urban block. Regardless of use, this site is a high profile location that has to provide a positive, active frontage to the Canalside, Argyll Road, Abbotsford Road and Chalmers Street. There is also scope for a small pocket park on the Canalside.
- **Rosebery Place Development:** the charrette considered options to reuse or redevelop the office block at Rosebery Place for residential property. Previously occupied by the Council this site should be redeveloped to create a positive frontage on Kilbowie Road and setting for enhanced open space along the Canalside.
- **Transport Interchange:** participants at the charrette were firmly of the opinion that existing rail and bus stations require enhancement. They fall short of current standards for high quality, barrier-free passenger interchange facilities. The rail and bus station are well placed to serve a rejuvenated town centre. Enhancing these facilities would make a significant impact and transform this key gateway into central Clydebank.
- **Co-operative Building:** this is one of the most cherished buildings in central Clydebank. Many participants spoke fondly of one of the few listed buildings in the Town Centre. The building is currently under occupied, with upper floors vacant. The challenge is to adapt the upper floors to accommodate alternative uses whilst retaining activity at ground floor. The charrette considered a range of uses including creative studios, business incubator spaces or student accommodation.
- **A814 Public Realm:** the links between the Town Centre and Queens Quay are critical to the shared future success of both. Dumbarton Road (A814) was the heart of Clydebank pre-WW2 but currently the dual carriageway road creates severance between the Town Centre and the riverfront regeneration area. Creating better links, north-south across the A814 was a topic that the charrette focussed upon as a priority, considering scope to create improved public realm at principal crossing points/desire lines (eg Alexander Street).
- **North Canalside:** the canal is a great asset in the heart of Clydebank. It has benefitted from significant public realm investment in recent years. However the layout of the Shopping Centre and associated car parks undermines the setting along the Canalside. The charrette recommended introducing pavilions with external terraces along the northern Canalside to accommodate food / drink / leisure outlets associated with the wider retail / leisure offer. These pavilions would enliven the Canalside and screen the car park. Adjustments to the retail frontage facing the canal would also enhance this area of the Town Centre.
- **3 Queen Square:** despite significant public realm investment this public space on the southern bank of the canal is underperforming. Events have not flourished for a variety of reasons. The lack of active frontages around the square deters footfall and dwell times. The charrette considered scope to create active frontage with the introduction of a food/drink unit (perhaps a cycle cafe?), overlooking the square and catering for passing trade in the shopping centre and along the Canalside. This would also make the space more compact with an anchor/landmark destination.
- **Kilbowie Road Enhancements:** Kilbowie Road is a harsh and unprepossessing road. It is blighted by the service yard/backside of the Shopping Centre. The Charrette considered opportunities to create additional retail/commercial spaces fronting Kilbowie Road at the northern end of the Shopping Centre at the footbridge entrance (above the service road) as well as infill development to the rear service yard at South Sylvania Way, also fronting Kilbowie Road.

- **South Sylvania Way:** the retail arcade would benefit from a refresh with improved public realm, better quality and range of retail offer. The issue of clustering of betting shops and payday lenders was the subject of a workshop in the course of the charrette and is covered in detail elsewhere in the report. The charrette also considered the possibility of frontage servicing to enable redevelopment of the underused rear service space (see above)
- **Abbotsford Road Development:** east of South Sylvania Way, behind the Co-op, Abbotsford Road lacks any definition as a street in the Town Centre. The charrette proposals sought to create an urban block with infill development on Abbotford Road creating a tenement development of town centre flatted residential units over non-residential uses at ground floor.
- **Chalmers Street Development:** in tandem with Abbotsford Road redevelopment infill development on Chalmers Street (opposite the rail station at the Co-op Car Park) would complete the urban block and create a street setting along Chalmers St. It was suggested that development at this location could provide street level accommodation associated with the on-street bus station.
- **Clyde Shopping Centre Car Park (incl. Sorting Office):** many charrette participants raised concern about traffic congestion at the Livingstone Street roundabout and the confusing layout (for drivers and pedestrians) once in the Shopping Centre car park. The location of the Royal Mail Sorting Office in the midst of the car park is incongruous and compounds the incoherence of the area. To enhance the quality of the Shopping Centre visitor experience it was suggested that the car park be more clearly laid out with better structure landscape, clearer pedestrian routes and better wayfinding signage for drivers.

FUNDING AND DELIVERY

The Development Framework and Action Plan are aimed at **all partners across the public, private/ business community and third sectors** for their support and commitment. It is intended that the Development Framework and Action Plan priorities can be used as a basis for partnership working and collaboration to secure funding. An array of funding options and opportunities is set out, alongside details of short, medium and longer term next steps.



Development Framework