

# **A Strategy for Hamilton Town Centre**

A Vibrant Community Focussed Town Centre

Consultative Draft

50085 | February 2018



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Appendix 1—Town Centre Audit (STP)

South Lanarkshire are seeking to facilitate and enable new opportunities for regeneration and growth



# Introduction & Purpose

Town Centres are a key part of successful places and have an increasingly important role in building stronger, more sustainable places and communities. The central core of Hamilton has been challenged by changing patterns of use and shopper behaviour. This Strategy is seeking to support and coordinate action to revitalise the town centre.

Town Centres are under challenge from changing patterns of use and changes in retailing. To maintain their vitality town centres need to react to these changes and consider their offer, purpose and value to communities. Local communities are very supportive of their town centres and have a desire to see them thrive. The traditional function of a town centre needs to change to remain relevant to today's needs and to address expectations of contemporary communities. Key activities and areas of growth supporting centres are employment, town centre living and the growth in leisure activity. Retail will remain a key use and a core element of the appeal of the Town Centre. Extending choice and enhancing the retail experience is important to maintain our town centres.

South Lanarkshire Council, working with the Hamilton Business Improvement District and town centre partners are seeking, through this Strategy, to support change that can promote additional vibrancy and vitality within the town centre and support its sustainable future.

The Consultative Draft Strategy document sets out a range of initiatives which the Council believe will contribute both in the short and long term to town centre activity, that supports footfall and generates additional spend. Critical to the success of the Strategy will be partnership working. This will help to secure the project goals and co-ordinate combined effort across public, private and third sectors and the local community to its successful delivery.



Scottish Town Partnership & EKOS  
Town Centre Audit, October 2017



The Town House



Leisure



University Town



Hamilton has a diverse range of attractions.



Attractive Town Centre



Hamilton Race Course



Quality Retailing

# Hamilton Vision

Hamilton is Lanarkshire' largest town. Well-connected and with excellent road and rail infrastructure into South Lanarkshire and the wider metropolitan area the town has the potential to further develop the quality of its offer and the appeal of place. Hamilton needs to build on its strengths, celebrates its heritage, town centre connectivity, the diversity of its offer and the facilities associated with its historic town centre core

*The Vision for Hamilton is of a more vibrant, more appealing Town Centre celebrating its distinctiveness and diversity around a historic core that looks to build a stronger more community focussed centre that is attractive, appealing, animated by people and activity with a strong independent retail offer.*

The town has the opportunity to build on a range of current initiatives and trends. These are associated with the increasing appeal of place and the importance of connections to modern living. A sense of place is the collection of qualities and characteristics that define a location. Sense of place is what makes Hamilton distinctive and creates its appeal. Hamilton is a town with a scale, facilities, connections, and local amenities that are considered to be increasingly in demand. Hamilton needs to ensure it can promote these advantages and present itself as a great place to live, shop, work and enjoy.

This Vision for the town centre therefore seeks to make much more of its:

- role as a key hub within Lanarkshire and administrative capital
- status as a University Town developing the links between town centre and UWS
- appeal in terms of a historic core with good rail/bus and access connections
- mix of retailing, retail leisure, across both national multiple stores and independent retailers
- Regional attractions including (palace Grounds, Chaltherhault, Hamilton racecourse, University of West of Scotland, etc)
- level of enterprise and creative capacity across businesses, retailers, students and stakeholders
- established community spirit and strong local commitment

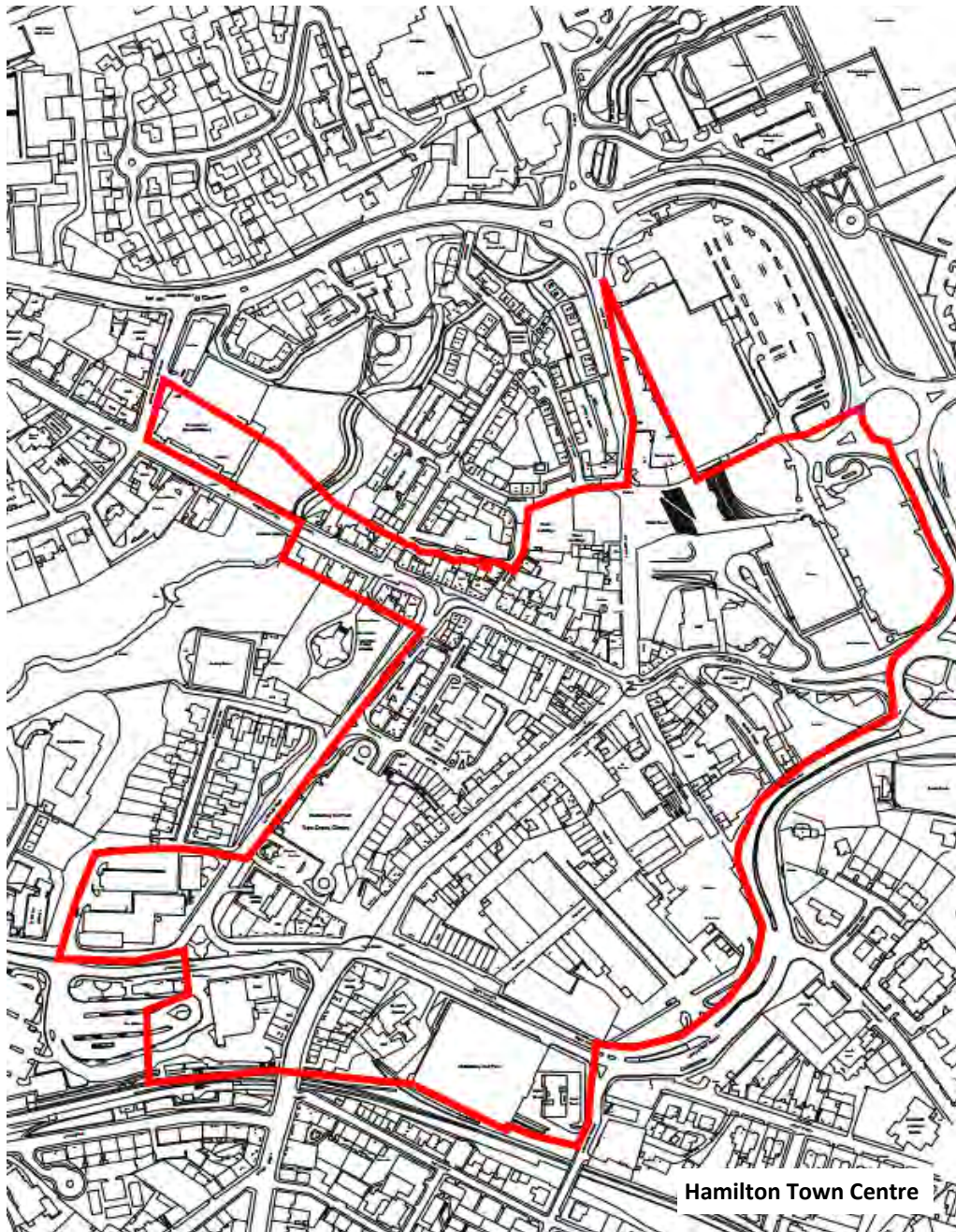
Building on the appeal and reasons to visit the town centre needs to look at securing new investment that can build on and strengthen the town centre community. The strategy looks to build more reasons to visit the centre—such as:

- stronger retail offers
- Increased leisure activity
- support for café culture
- Events
- Promoting town centre living

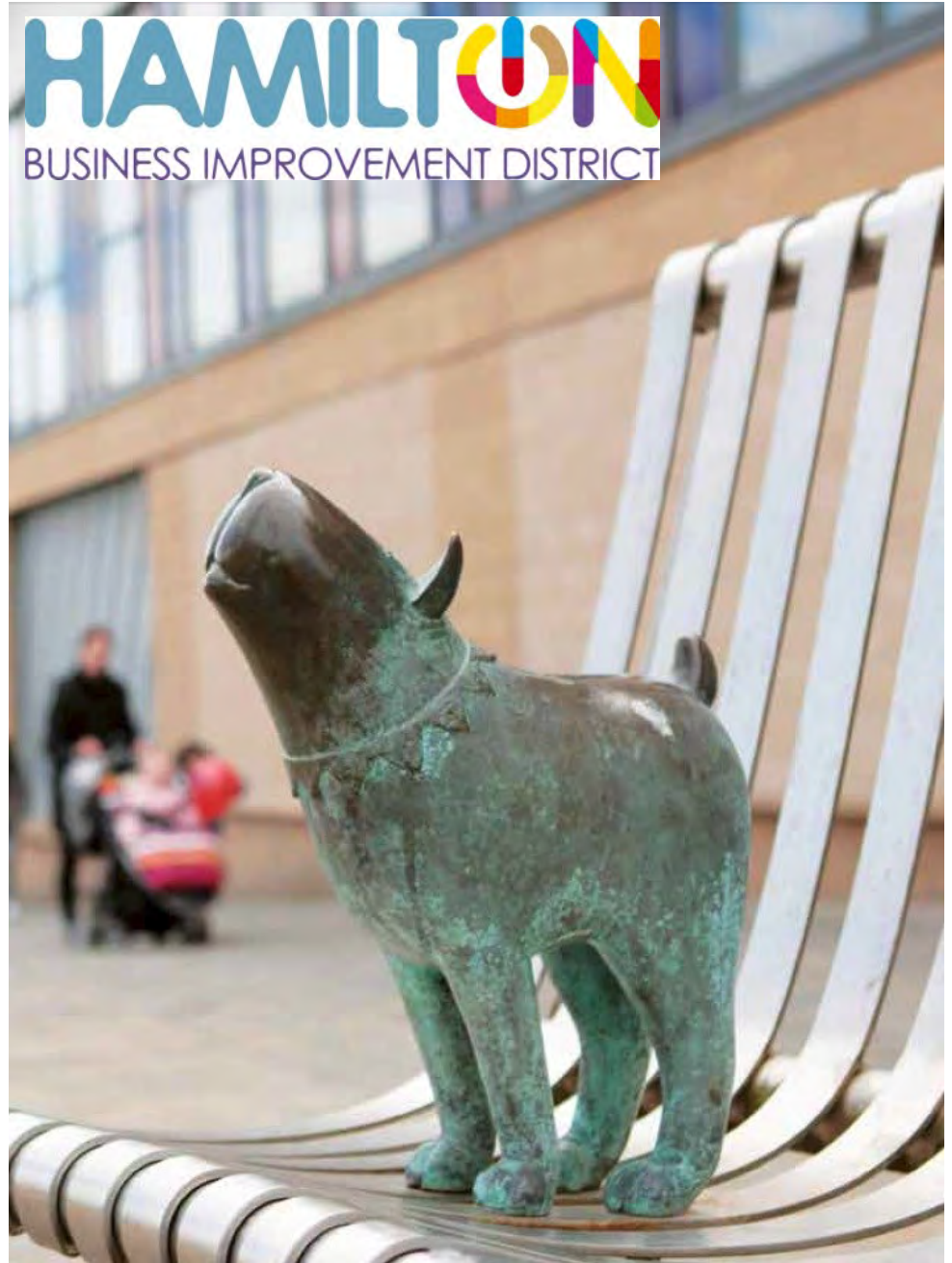
Whilst exploring means of addressing potential barriers to participation and visits - such as:

- restricted access
- town centre connections & legibility
- parking arrangements
- sense of welcome
- event programmes

Capturing investment, building confidence in the business community, engaging local residents, strengthening enterprise activity can all be better supported through collective action and the Council, Hamilton BID and local community interests are all committed to facilitating the delivery of the strategy through further engagement.



Hamilton Town Centre





# Background Context

Hamilton has positive potential to be a more thriving and successful centre. By extending its appeal and building stronger connections - physical and social - the town can create new opportunities for growth. Well connected and with further investment through strategic development opportunities and the UWS Eco-Campus the town can promote an offer around its core strengths - of a connected appealing place - to drive new investment, build business confidence, extend footfall and increase town centre activity and spend.

The future of town centres is dependent on reacting to changing behaviours by both consumers and retailers and recognising that town centres can no longer place such heavy reliance on their retail offer. Town centres need to diversify to give users the broadest range of reasons to visit and spend time there and this is particularly important in traditional High Streets and town centre retail areas. Retail remains a fundamental part of a healthy town centre, however leisure activity, café culture, evening economy and local services for local communities have an increasing role and importance within the town centre mix.

The private sector has a key role in providing a shopping, service and leisure offer that will attract and meet the needs of the local community. In addition, the strengthening of links with the University, local businesses and communities and building the town centre local residential base can support vitality, place making and create additional demand for goods and services.

The Hamilton BID is a key organisation in advancing local initiatives and supporting local businesses. The Hamilton BID has a proven record of success and is an important body along with the Council to assist in facilitating investment and activity that supports the town centre.

## **Consultative Draft Strategy – Hamilton Town Centre**

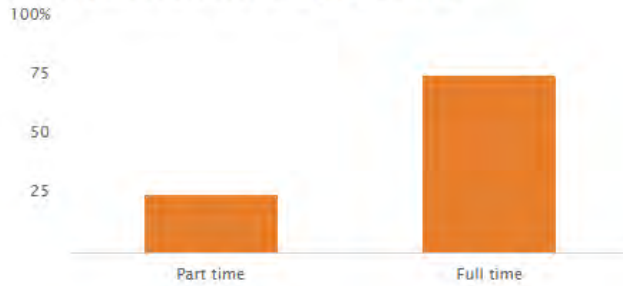
Hamilton is a town with strong assets and a definable place quality. This is evident through the strong civic presence, business base, historical architecture and the extensive investment in streetscape and transport facilities provides the foundation for Hamilton to re-assert its role as a strong, vibrant town centre.

South Lanarkshire Council has contributed heavily in Hamilton over the past 20 years, through the Hamilton Ahead Project, the BID and other initiatives including Healthy High Streets and Business Connect. Hamilton serves as the main administrative centre of the South Lanarkshire Council area. It is the fourth-biggest town in Scotland and provides one of the most significant urban centres in Lanarkshire with a population of over 50,000 and workforce of almost 30,000. It is a sub-regional shopping centre and has important civic functions. The town has a variety of bars and restaurants, a mix of national retailers and niche shops and excellent sporting and leisure facilities.

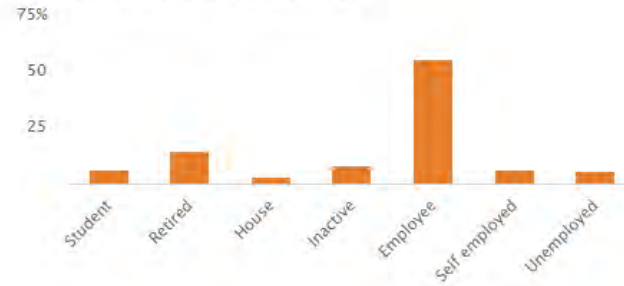
The strategy and action plan project schedules includes a combination of short-term and long-term strategies that combine elements of vision with practicality. Important to the Strategy is the resource and skills of the Hamilton BID and their ability to facilitate collaborative action between public, private and third sector. The Hamilton BID is delivering a range of initiative's that are critical to the town's future and is a lead partner in advancing the Action Plan.

# Employment

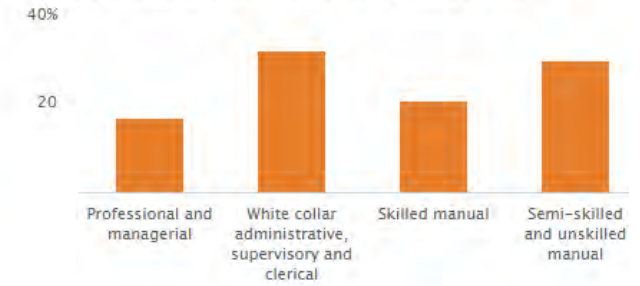
**Employment (% working age 16-74)**



**Occupation (% aged 16-74)**



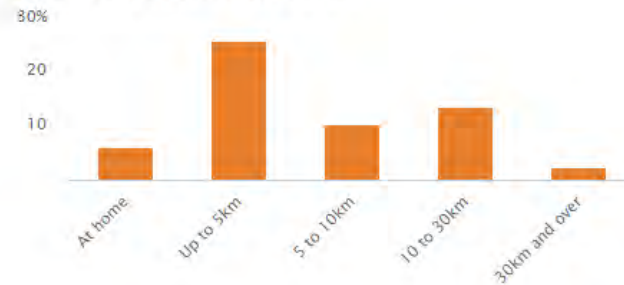
**Social Grade (% households aged 16-64)**



**Sector Diversity**



**Distance travelled to work**



**Jobs**



▲ More than similar towns per head of population

**Jobs change 2009 to 2014**



▼ Less than similar towns per head of population

## Comparative Analysis

Scottish Towns Partnership and Town Centre Audits provide a comparative analysis of Hamilton's Town Centre baseline and relative performance. This allows a wide range of comparable towns to be assessed and compared. This helps to identify any underlying imbalances or features of the town that needs to be addressed. The STP data has been used in reviewing Hamilton along with the recently completed Town Centre Audit 2017.

# Population

## Population

53k

▲ More than similar towns

## Households

24k

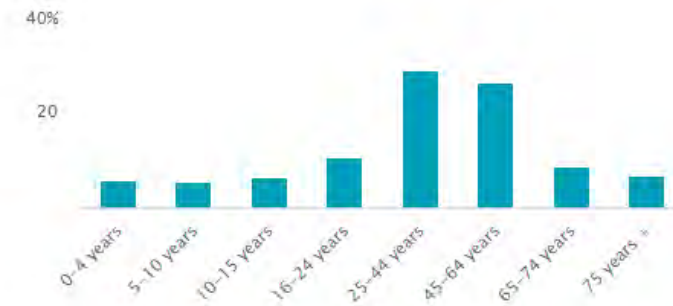
▲ More than similar towns

## Population change 2001 to 2011

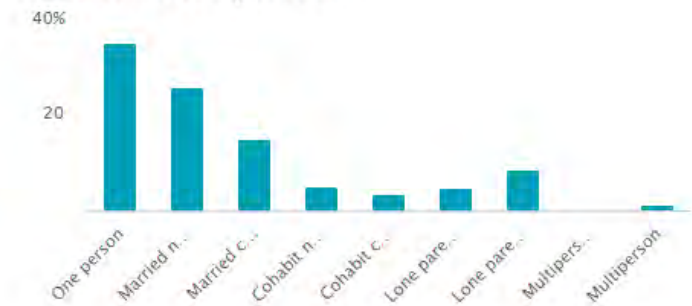
10%

▲ More than similar towns per head of population

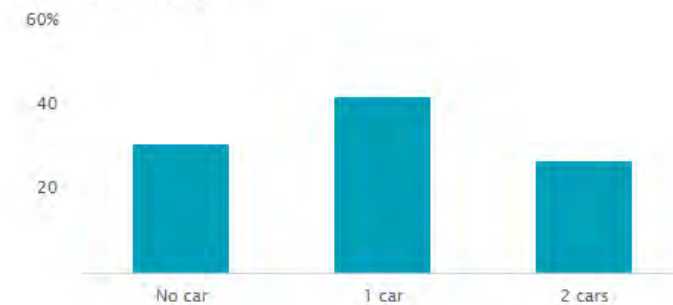
## Age



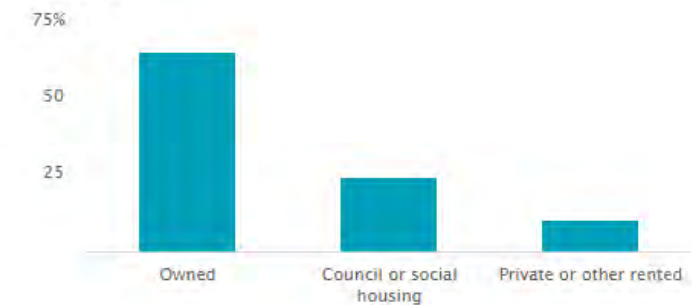
## Household composition



## Car ownership



## Tenure



## Deprivation dimensions



Scottish Town partnership have undertaken an audit of Hamilton Town Centre including a review by economic regeneration consultants to advise on the current status of the town. The town audit provides a common framework to measure and monitor of Scotlands towns and town centres. The audit is provided in Appendix 1 and was undertaken in October 2017. The audit reviews data across 7 key themes. The key opportunities and challenges are summarised below.

### Key Opportunities

- Extending retail choice
- Leisure Offer
  - Diverse restaurants and licensed premises,
  - Hamilton Town House,
  - Race Course and race-events,
  - Palace Grounds Retail Park & sporting facilities.
- Close proximity to the M74
- Excellent provision of public transport.
- Civic pride
- Major investment
- Unique local heritage and Historic Architecture
- Administrative centre for the area.
- High Quality, Award Winning Public Realm.
- Business Improvement District
- Free WiFi
- Renewed partnership with BID to promote the town centre.
- UWS Redevelopment
- Retained Student population
- Diversification of use
- Partners commitment to success
- Hotel at the race course
- New town centre leisure / food & beverage operator
- Potential growth at Hamilton Race Course
- Technological Advances (such as the use of the internet to disseminate information).
- Signage improvements.
- Potential to improve movement around the town centre.
- Growing programme of events
- SLC Business Support Team
- Visit Lanarkshire

### Key Challenges

- Easy accessibility
- Lack of connectivity between the old and the new
- There are a high number of vacant retail units in the centre currently c15%.
- Small retail footprints in the centre do not meet modern requirements.
- Traditional shopping hours (not in line with modern day life styles) eg. Limited Sunday opening/ no late night shopping.
- Commercial areas disconnected through topography and gap sites
- Lack of non-retail footfall drivers in the town centre = limited reason to visit if you don't want to shop
- There's not necessarily a good fit between the TC offer and the catchment customer profile = need better understanding of what people want from Hamilton
- Size and topography of town centre = creates blocks between different parts
- Ease of direction into Town Centre for visitors = signage could be enhanced provide stronger links within and across the centre.
- Competing retail developments
- 5pm-8pm gap in town centre activity.
- Changing face of retail – areas of the town centre may need to diversify.
- Perceived issues with parking and charging arrangements
- Lack of an Events Strategy or programme to support local events and Town Centre animation

# Addressing the Challenges

The challenges for Hamilton are broad and varied however there are a number of issues and areas of opportunity which are commonly raised as being the key areas that the town needs to address.

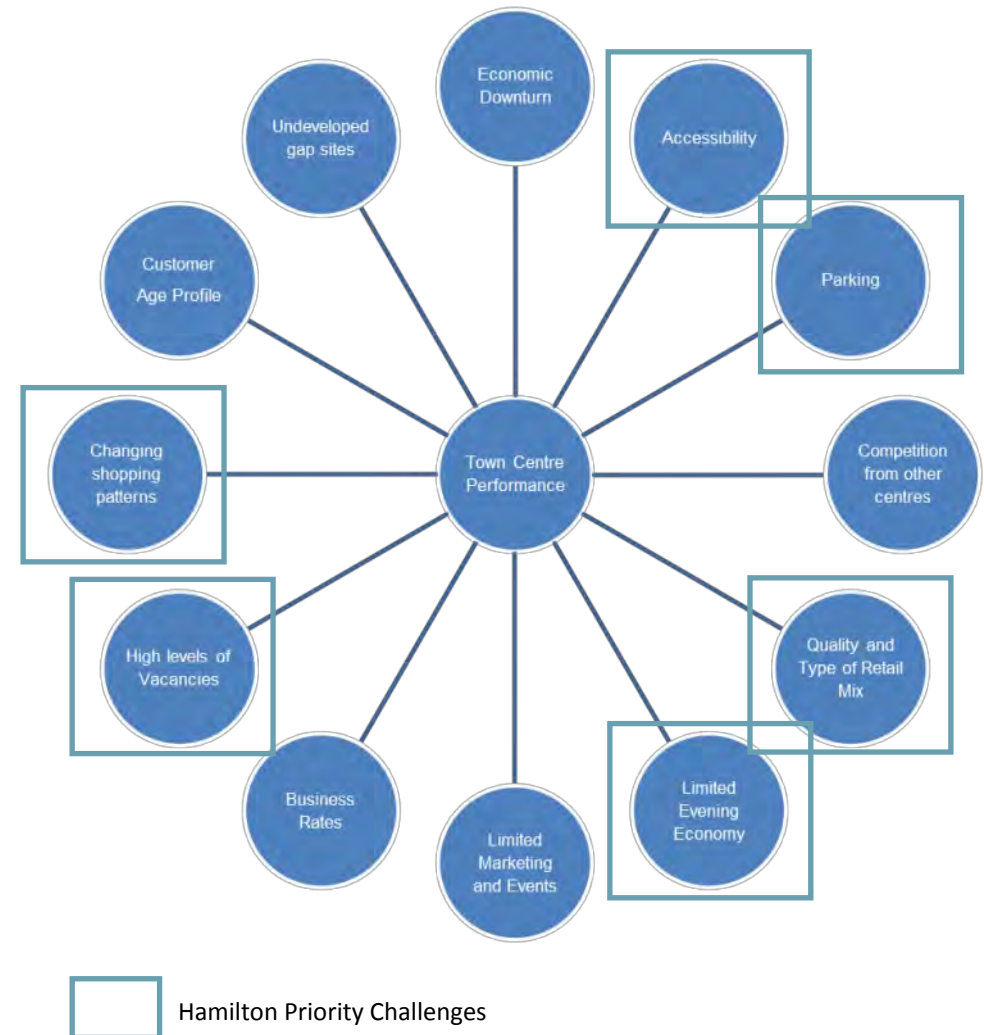
These are illustrated in terms of issues impacting on town centre performance with highlighted issues (boxed) being of specific challenges in Hamilton.

## Targeting Intervention at the Opportunities & Challenges

Hamilton has a unique mix of opportunities and constraints that impact on the appeal and functionality of the centre and its appeal as an investment location. Many of the opportunities and challenges result from a legacy of historic conditions (shop closures/ gap sites/ street patterns) and business practices (retail mix / shop opening hours / markets). Addressing the opportunities & challenges requires a focus on a number of key areas to include:

- Accessibility and the arrangements for vehicular access that can improve clarity and ensure the centre feels welcoming and accessible
- Connectivity and ensuring the historic core feels connected and is promoted within edge of centre retail parks
- Strengthening the appeal and the experience of the centre and making it a more appealing place to visit and mix leisure/ retail experiences
- Reviewing parking and arrangements that could address any perceived barriers to accessing and using the centre

When reviewing the challenges it is clear that significant work has already been advanced to support town centre vitality by both the Council and BID. While we should not underestimate the task ahead, the collaborative approach to addressing the town's future needs provides a strong and deliverable roadmap to building a more successful future as a strong and sustainable town .





Duke Street

# Key Areas of Opportunity

Hamilton has the potential to be a thriving and successful centre. It is an important regional centre and has a strong catchment for its edge of centre retail parks. The historic core needs to extend its appeal and build stronger connections and promote its distinctive offer, civic strengths and strong public transport accessibility. Key opportunity areas include:

## Hamilton Business Improvement District (BID)

Hamilton BID represent the businesses in a defined area of the town centre and deliver a series of initiatives set out in their business plan. The BID has recently been renewed for a second five year term to 31st October 2022. The BID is funded by a levy from the businesses they represent which is collected on their behalf by the Council. As an occupier of large premises within the BID area, SLC make a large contribution to the BID's revenue income, as well as provide ongoing support for operations and activity.

Hamilton BID share the Council's aim to make Hamilton a thriving, vibrant and attractive town centre. Hamilton BID delivers projects which are additional and complementary to those provided by South Lanarkshire Council, they do not replace or substitute services. The aim of the BID is to deliver a range of projects and services on behalf of the business community that will be beneficial to all town centre users. The establishment of the BID has provided SLC with a direct link to the collective voice of the businesses in Hamilton Town Centre. It allows us to pool resources to deliver projects which benefit the town centre. The BID business plan 2017-2022 contains a range of projects which the BID will deliver in partnership with the Council to the benefit of the town centre.

## Distinctive and Diverse Offer

Retailers have previously had representation in a considerably greater number of towns than their business models now allow. With the continued growth of online shopping, the mobility of customers and the move towards 'click and collect' their requirements have changed. This reduces the potential occupiers at the same time as several existing leases are coming to an end and business closures and relocations are taking effect. Independent retailing and retail models suitable to local centres and with strong customer loyalty continue to thrive.

The opportunity is to recognise the wider long-term change in certain aspects of retail and focus on new activity including leisure, culture, services including town centre living with a boost to residential development and housing within the centre. An example of this includes New College Lanarkshire student accommodation and this could be complemented with similar residential facilities for the University of West of Scotland (UWS). Town centres can meet a wide range of residential needs are well suited to providing affordable housing, housing for young people and first-time buyers, housing for older age groups and those seeking housing locations with good public transport connections. Town centre living adds additional activity, supports town centre footfall and increases local spend in town centre businesses. Planning policy and the Council as planning authority can support positive change that supports the appeal and activity within the centre.

Hamilton town centre should continue to seek identify ways to diversify the range of activity and uses within the centre and support stronger town centre activity and footfall. Planning policy can support these goals and with this in mind, consideration needs to be given to what the definition of the town centre is (extent and Town Centre boundary and Town Centre uses) and how policy can support investment and facilitate building re-use and building conversion.



Cadzow Street



## Access and Enhanced Connectivity

Accessibility and good connectivity across the centre is important. Accessibility, including support for travel choice involves all modes (walking/ cycling/public transport/cars) and needs to be easy, direct, safe and legible.

Public transport to the town is generally considered to be good. Hamilton Bus Station has recently undergone a £5million refurbishment and similar work has recently been completed at Hamilton train station. Hamilton offers a well connected hub with excellent access to Glasgow and the metropolitan area. Local access and public transport routes along Quarry Street may need further consideration.

Hamilton has operated a centre area Traffic Management System to limit vehicular use and create safer, quieter streets within the core. The current system emerged following the redevelopment of Palace Grounds in the late nineties.

Consideration is being given to the re-opening Quarry Street to traffic and short term parking as a mechanism to improve the awareness, access and function of the centre. Restricted access and pedestrianised areas in towns may not meet current requirements or provide the optimum trading conditions for changing business needs. It is therefore proposed, subject to the outcome of this consultation process to consider the re-introduction of traffic and short-stay parking to Quarry Street to improve access and convenience to customers, as an early action within the plan. In the first instance this may be progressed via an experimental traffic regulation order.

Parking is another area that is important to accessibility. There is a perception, that parking in the town centre is a barrier to trade due to the charging structure, the lack of flexibility in payment methods, car park accessibility and legibility and their remoteness from the town centre. There may be opportunity to address some of these issues including options to:

- increase the flexibility in payment methods making it more convenient for customers through use of technology/mobile phone applications
- signage to encourage additional visits.

## Business Support

South Lanarkshire Council has a business support team in place which can support businesses wishing to move into the town centre find property, access grants and funding, develop business cases and support enterprise activity. The Council also supports Business Gateway Lanarkshire who work with individuals and businesses across Lanarkshire to support them to establish and grow your business. These services compliment diversification of the town centre and can make a real difference to businesses considering Hamilton as a location for business. In addition, SLC continues to work in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council on Choose Lanarkshire, a marketing initiative designed to promote Lanarkshire as a great place to do business and attract inward investment.

## Events, Marketing and Initiatives

Hamilton is home to a variety of excellent venues such as Hamilton Race Course, The Town House and Chatelherault, all of which have the potential to bring visitors to the town centre. Over recent years a full programme of events has been built up by Hamilton Business Improvement District with support from the Council.

SLC and Hamilton BID are continually looking for ways to enhance these events through a range of measures such as sponsorship and partnership working. Town Centre diversification may offer opportunities to use vacant retail premises to deliver new events and trial initiatives e.g. craft maker emporium, teenage market, heritage centre pop-up, artists co-op

Hamilton town centre has also embraced the digital age and offers free WiFi throughout the town centre. This is complimented by the excellent digital marketing communications provided by Hamilton BID through a range of social media platforms. There are many opportunities to continue to use digital media to promote the town centre. It can also aid communications between SLC and town centre businesses – helping make them aware of the work being undertaken to help the town centre.



Cadzow Street and Castle Street junction

## Strategic Investments

There are a range of projects underway by town centre stakeholders which could present significant opportunities for the town centre. These include:

- the delivery of works associated with City Deal which will facilitate the development of the Hamilton Community Growth Area thereby increasing the housing stock and population catchment for the town centre;
- the completion of the Raith Interchange improving connectivity;
- the development of the University of the West of Scotland site at Almada Street and Eco Campus growing the student population and profile of the town;
- investment at Hamilton Park Race Course into a more diverse destination;
- Other developments: retail park phase 6 site / townhouse site.

These investments around the town will provide additional catchment population and infrastructure to support and grow the town centre. The opportunities and actions proposed will ensure that Hamilton is best placed to capture the benefits arising from these strategic investments. The Strategy needs to promote opportunity within the central Town Centre core promoting mixed use activity (retail, employment, residential, leisure) and supporting Town Centre First policy.

## Town Centre Stakeholders

The range of partners and stakeholders in the town is extensive. While there can be different drivers behind their involvement in the town centre the one aspect which is not in doubt is the common goal to improve the physical and functional aspects of the town centre for the benefit of all. As mentioned earlier it is essential the partners and stakeholder work together to deliver the vision for the town. We already have a strong commitment from local stakeholders including

- South Lanarkshire Council
- MP & MSP
- Scottish Government (Business in the Community / Business Connectors)
- Owners / occupiers
- Hamilton Business Improvement District (BID)
- Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP)
- Healthy High Streets (M&S, Boots, Santander, EE, Greggs, Wilko's)

South Lanarkshire Council will continue to work closely with all these stakeholders to ensure that our common goals are met.

## Safe, Welcoming & Well Maintained

The town centre is an area where successful maintenance of public and private sector assets is at a premium to maintain public confidence and wider perceptions of the town centre as a pleasant environment to work, shop and relax. The Council seeks to maintain a high standard of maintenance across the assets for which we are responsible for and in general have positive feedback from partners that we are achieving these goals. These maintenance obligations take on a number of elements including

**Streetscape** – an extensive programme of refurbishment of the streetscape is approaching completion and has significantly improved the appearance and lifespan of the public areas. This has animated town centre spaces, generated interest and thereby improved visual connectivity for town centre businesses.

**Street furniture** – some minor changes have taken place with the street furniture such as removing telephone kiosks and installing bins and cycle racks. This aspect of the town centre will be kept under review and improvements carried out as budget becomes available.

**Litter** – Managing waste disposal and litter collection are important to town centre amenity. The majority of stakeholders accept this is a well managed issue which the council does a good job of maintaining.

**Lighting** – lighting levels and town centre lighting quality can support the sense of welcome and local improvements may offer opportunity to enhance the town centre.

**Graffiti** - The Council's Ground Services provide a graffiti removal service to council owned property with response times of 2 days and 5 days for removal of offensive and non offensive graffiti respectively. Our service standards identify a 90% target which is currently being achieved.

Policing – passive from footfall activity in TC, but also actual from police HQ?

The Council intends to maintain these high standards across the town centre while continuing to encourage private sector partners to support enhanced streetscape and street maintenance.



*"Town centres are a key element of the economic, social and environmental fabric of Scotland's towns; often at the core of community and economic life, offering spaces in which to live, meet and interact, do business, and access facilities and services. We must take collective responsibility to help town centres thrive sustainably, reinvent their function, and meet the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors for the 21st century."*

[Town Centres First Principle, Scottish Government and COSLA, 2014]



# Town Centre Strategy

The Strategy seeks to set out a range of objectives for Hamilton Town Centre and outlines in the Action Plan where resources and activities should be focused to deliver the desired outcomes.

There is no one solution or intervention which will address all of the issues facing the town centre. The issues and solutions are wide ranging, interrelated and complex. The approaches and actions adopted, will need to be given time, and progressed as a coordinated suite of measures in order to deliver the most effective impact. Regeneration requires long-term sustained activity and initiatives and these actions need to be delivered with flexibility.

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of this Strategy is to provide the environment and place quality that supports Hamilton Town Centre and which can enable all town centre stakeholders to add value to their offer and the customer experience, supporting Hamilton's appeal as an centre for retail, leisure and services.

South Lanarkshire Council with partners and stakeholders believe the Strategy and related actions should be framed through the following objectives. These objectives reflect national, regional and local policy and the commitment of the Council to supporting inclusive growth through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

### Objective 1:

To support sustainable town centre growth, mixed-use development (retail, leisure, employment, residential) and investment opportunities through planning and economic development initiatives that embrace the town centre first policy initiative.

### Objective 2:

To ensure town centre accessibility and movement supports all modes of transport and meets the needs of users ensuring the town offers convenient and safe access by foot, cycle, cars and public transport.

### Objective 3:

To continue to create an attractive environment that supports the needs of businesses and retailers, both those already in the town centre and those wishing to locate to the town through our business support team and other bodies including measures related to skills and training.

### Objective 4:

To continue to work with organisations such as Hamilton BID and VisitLanarkshire to raise the profile of Hamilton and ensure the town grows as a venue for a wide variety of leisure events and attractions supporting town centre living, positive planning, enterprising communities alongside accessible public services.

### Objective 5:

To ensure that Hamilton town centre remains relevant, inclusive and accessible through digital media that supports business growth opportunities and meets the expectations across all town centre users including residents, visitors, employees and businesses.



# Next Steps

Coordinated and sustained activity is key to supporting Hamilton Town Centre. The delivery of the range of projects and initiatives will require agreement across the range of partners and stakeholders but also a coordinated approach to delivery. This needs to reflect the resources available across the partners, the alignment and the deliverability of the various proposals and timescales. It is therefore proposed that the strategy provides a basis to consult with a range of partners and the local community. The consultation will have three main elements.

1. Partner and BID Engagement sharing the plan with partners for initial feedback on the content
2. Stakeholders engagement to be facilitated by SLC and partners
3. Public engagement organised through a consultation event and to allow the community to consider the proposals and feedback.

These three elements will run concurrently. This combined approach will allow us to get the feedback from those in the town but also independent feedback from placemaking professionals who can bring learning and best practice from across the country.

It is anticipated this process will take around 8 - 12 weeks following which Economic Development Services will collate and review feedback. In turn, a finalised Plan for Hamilton Town Centre will be prepared and implementation strategy established.

In advance of this consultation the Council will engage with Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) to carry out an updated town centre audit of Hamilton which will capture 250 key performance indicators across 7 themes, the findings of which are benchmarked against comparator towns and against performance in Hamilton in 2015. This report summarised within the format of the Town Toolkit - Active, Attractive and Accessible will provide a strong baseline from which to benchmark the current performance of the town and measure the success of the plan going forward and the ability and knowledge to update / revisit when appropriate.

The Strategy will be used to engage with key stakeholders and to support funding bids and submissions for specific projects. Funding may be available through a variety of sources including Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, Town Centre Community Funds, Conservation Area Funding and funds associated with any developer contributions, grants and public and private sector programmes.

Engagement and sharing our Town Centre vision , objectives and Strategy is important to building a broad base of support for action. The events, consultations and facilitated workshops, taken together , will provide all parties with a clear understanding of the vision of the town over the next 5 – 10 years and allow all to work in a collective approach to delivery.



Cadzow Street



# Action Plan Proposals

Advancing a coordinated set of actions across the town centre will help business confidence and support investment and should be progressed with the widest range of partner participation. Projects need to look to exploiting current programmes, grant funding and regeneration funds wherever programmes and funds allow.

The projects and initiatives which the Council are highlighting to the partners across the town centre can be broadly categorised as follows:

- **Potential Development Opportunities – diversifying the offer and supporting economic activity**
- **Supporting Business Growth and business investment**
- **Car Parking, Transportation and Access – enhancing physical access and supporting digital access for customers**
- **Events and Promotion – building footfall and loyalty**
- **Maintenance – creating an attractive environment, quality user experience and confidence for the future**

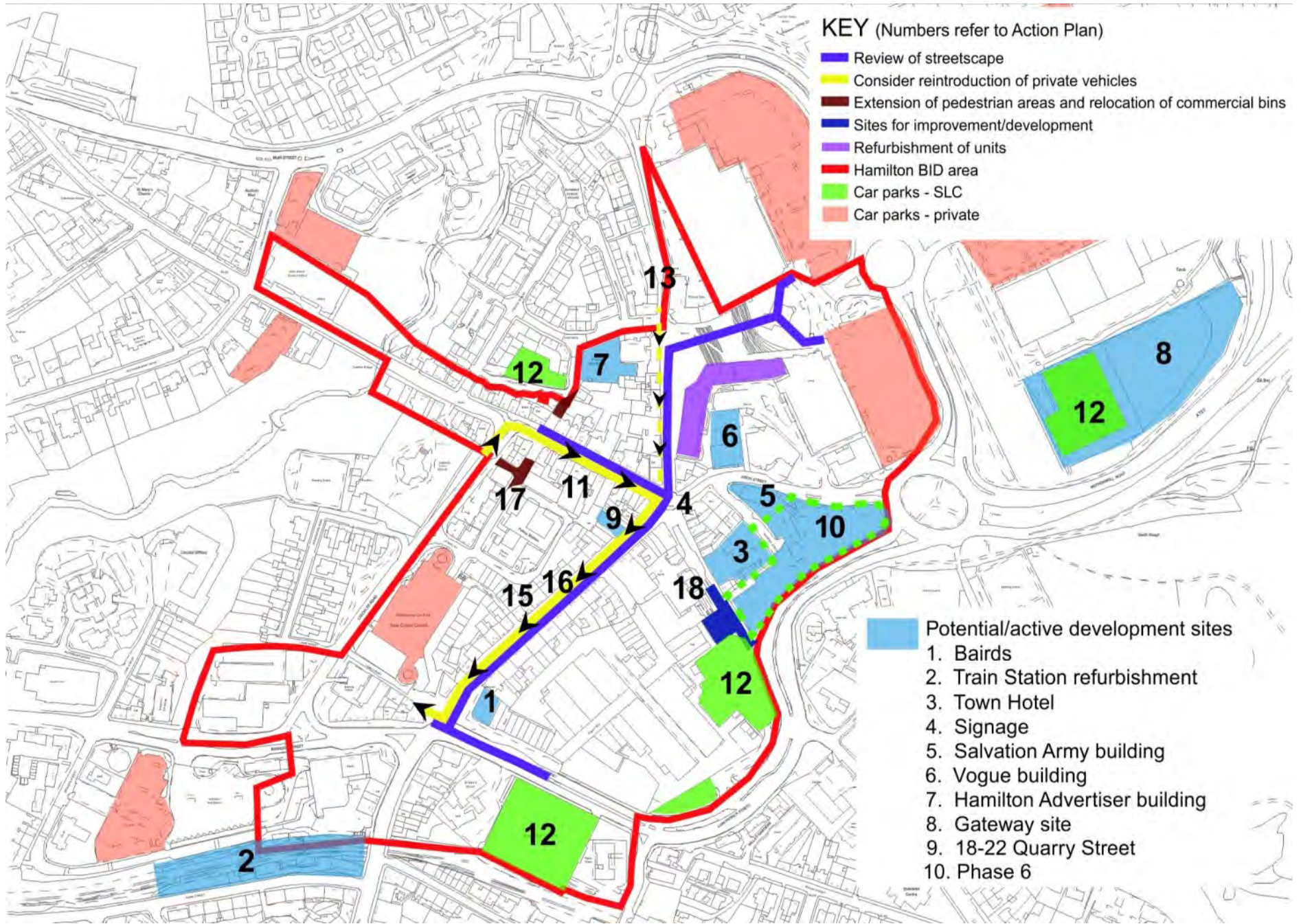


Taking these categories together provides an action plan which sets out a strategic direction to bring forward detailed proposals to address the challenges and to exploit the opportunities in the town centre.

The tables below show the range of projects and initiatives along with the potential timeframe of delivery, although this will be dependent on a number of factors such as availability of funding and market reaction. Physical projects are identified on the following plan with the numbering reflected in the table below. There is also a link to the Government's Town Centre Action Plan (TCAP) objectives set out above and the category under which the initiative would fall i.e.

- Town Centre Living (TCL)
- Vibrant Local Economies (VLE)
- Enterprising Communities (EC)
- Accessible Public Services (APS)
- Digital Towns (DT)
- Pro-active Planning (PaP)





## Action Plan: Potential Development Opportunities

Location	Project / Issue	Actions	Outcome/ objectives	Lead partner	Town Centre Objective (TCO)	TCAP	Timescales
Town Centre	Consult on the Strategy and Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SLC in consultation with key stakeholders to develop a Consultative Draft Town Centre Strategy including Town Centre assessment / vision / strategy and key action areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To extend engagement around the future needs of Hamilton Town Centre.</li> <li>- To develop a plan to enable and facilitate Town Centre investment and regeneration</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 1	All Priorities	2018 3 months
Townhead Street – Town Hotel & 37 – 41 3	Derelict properties which require investment and redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress discussions with adjoining owner</li> <li>- Explore development potential for the site.</li> <li>- Adopt proactive planning agreed framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of the site</li> <li>- Improve area of the town centre</li> </ul>	Private / SLC	TCO 1	TCL/ VLE / PaP	1-2 years
Castle Street Units 13	Fitting out shop units and providing dedicated business support to create innovative business incubation spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to identify and support suitable businesses</li> <li>- Adopt proactive planning approach</li> <li>- Identify potential needs for service delivery space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop businesses into sustainable town centre occupiers</li> <li>- Diversify town centre uses</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 1 & 3	VLE PaP EC	12 months
Former Bairds unit 1	Alternative use be explored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress discussions with potential occupier</li> <li>- Adopt proactive planning approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Redevelopment and long term occupation of a prominent gateway site to the town centre</li> <li>- Increase footfall in town centre</li> <li>- Contribute to evening economy</li> </ul>	Private / SLC	TCO 3	TCL/ VLE PaP	12-18 months
18 - 22 Quarry Street 9	Regenerate a derelict area of land which is unsightly and detracting from the surrounding area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of new owner</li> <li>- Establish their proposals for the site</li> <li>- Support owner bring forward proposals or reconsider previous “stalled spaces” project through PaP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of the site</li> <li>- Improve area of the town centre.</li> </ul>	Private / SLC / BID	TCO 1	VLE PaP	12-18 months
Streetscape Review 16	Carry out an audit to identify any local improvements in key spaces to enhance town centre function and appeal. .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review the streetscape in light of evolving town centre activity and use</li> <li>- Action findings in line with access strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining the public realm in a suitable condition to reflect the modern requirements of the town centre.</li> <li>- Ensure small negative and temporary issues are addressed.</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 3	VLE	1-2 years

Location	Project / Issue	Actions	Outcome/ objectives	Lead partner	Town Centre Objective (TCO)	TCAP	Timescales
Wi Fi	Delivery of free WiFi network	- Completion of installation by BID's appointed contractor	- Provision of free network for all town centre users -	BID	TCO 5	DT	3 months
Townhead Street 18	Derelict area which requires investment and redevelopment	- Consider options to improve environment and footfall - Adopt proactive planning approach	- Bring disused area back into active use	SLC	TCO 1	TCL/ VLE PaP	1-2 years
Campbell Street 17	Extend streetscape to provide an external seating area for local bars and restaurants to add to the cafe culture	- Carry out design and feasibility.	- Support the evening economy though improved environment and facilities - Extend opening hours	SLC	TCO 3	VLE	1-2 years
Gateway Site 8	Potential development use	- Consider options and timings to bring to the market	- Bring large scale investment to key edge of centre site	SLC	TCO 1	VLE	3-5 years
Salvation Army 5	Coordinate development of privately owned building with consent for evening economy venue	- Work with Manor View to bring forward proposals to develop a new venue. - Adopt proactive planning approach	- Bring a disused building in an underperforming area back into use - Diversify Town Centre	Private	TCO 1 / 3	VLE PaP	2-3 years
Vogue 6	Potential development site	- Consider options for development including residences - Adopt proactive planning approach	- Bring a disused property in an underperforming area back into use - Increase footfall	SLC	TCO 1/3	TCL PaP	2-3 years
Former Hamilton Advertiser Building 7	Potential development site	- Consider options for development - Adopt proactive planning approach	- Bring a disused property in an underperforming area back into use	Private	TCO 1/3	TCL PaP	2-3 years
Hamilton Towers Phase 6 10	Development site for high density, high quality mixed uses.	- Progress discussions with adjoining owner - Explore development potential for the site. -	- Development of site - improve area of the town centre - create and reinforce links between the traditional town centre and palace grounds developments various sections of the town centre - Create an iconic gateway building.	Private / SLC	TCO 1	TCL/ VLE	3 – 5 years

## Action Plan: Car Parking / Transportation / Access

Location	Project / Issue	Actions	Outcome/ objectives	Lead partner	Town Centre Objective (TCO)	TCAP	Timescales
Parking 12	The introduction of alternative payment methods, opening of Quarry Street to allow access and short term parking and improved signage / information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consult on the parking strategy</li> <li>- Review parking payment arrangements</li> <li>- Complete feasibility, procurement and statutory consents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand how parking might be improved (mobile phone apps)</li> <li>- Increased flexibility for town centre users on how they pay for parking and how long they stay</li> <li>- Seek to attract footfall &amp; extend length of stay</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 2/3/5	VLE DT PaP	12–18months
Review town centre accessibility by car 11	Consider whether the current road layout and traffic management is suitable for the needs of the town centre and users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of traffic management in key locations to establish whether improvements can be achieved</li> <li>- Review opportunity for SMART / digital information on parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved accessibility to the town centre</li> <li>- Improving perceptions and accessibility of the Town Centre</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 2/3/5	VLE DT	12–18months
Signage 4	Improving the information, directional and statutory signage in the town to make it as user friendly as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of signage for town centre users in key locations to establish whether improvements can be achieved</li> <li>- Develop a town centre signage strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide additional information on the town centre offer at key locations (retail parks / transport hubs)</li> <li>- Improved visitor experience in the town centre</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 2	VLE	TBC
Reintroduction of traffic to Quarry Street 15	Reintroduce traffic in a controlled manner to Quarry Street to support businesses through improved accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete feasibility, consultation and statutory consent process to allow implementation</li> <li>- Ensure safe access &amp; mobility for pedestrians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trial Quarry Street access</li> <li>- Improved accessibility and footfall within Quarry Street.</li> <li>- Increased turnover for business</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 2	VLE	6-9 months
Public Transport	Review public transport to and around the town to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Liaise with SPT to maximise the opportunity for public transport provision.</li> <li>- Consider introduction of shuttle bus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved accessibility and footfall within town centre</li> </ul>	SLC / SPT	TCO 2	VLE	ongoing

## Action Plan: Events / Promotion / Initiatives

Initiative	Project / Issue	Actions	Outcome/ objectives	Lead partner	Town Centre Objective (TCO)	TCAP	Timescales
Healthy High Streets	Support the Healthy High Street programme for Hamilton and encourage active travel, positive TC environment and business trading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assist our town centre businesses to access expertise through Healthy High Street partners</li> <li>- Assist high street businesses to realise their full potential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborative delivery of town centre activity</li> </ul>	Private	TCO 4	VLE	ongoing
Festive Sponsorship	Explore alternative funding models and the potential for a sponsorship arrangement to deliver Festive events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approval of initiative</li> <li>- procurement of sponsor partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivery of sustainable Festive event</li> </ul>	SLC BID	TCO 3/4	EC	TBC
Shape Future Vision through Young People Engagement	Engage with the young people of Hamilton to establish what vision they have for the future of Hamilton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider the findings of the study and implement</li> <li>- Work with partners to be at the heart activity for Scotland's year of young people 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop the vision of the town for future generations.</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 4	EC VLE	12 months
Manage 3rd party use of public spaces	Work with all 3rd party / Charites to agree the protocol for activity and levels of personnel associated with promotions and charity initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor the number and frequency of collectors is in line with agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent an over use of the town centre by inappropriate activity</li> </ul>	SLC	TCO 3	VLE	ongoing
Promote Town Centre	Promote TC at other key attractions (race course / Chaltherhault / other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinated promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More footfall</li> </ul>	BID	TCO 3	VLE	ongoing





Appendix 1

## **Your Town Audit: Hamilton**

Prepared for Scottish Towns Partnership



# Your Town Audit: Hamilton

23 October 2017



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## 1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

This report presents a summary of the Your Town Audit (YTA) for Hamilton, conducted by Scotland's Towns Partnership and EKOS. The detailed YTA Framework and Data Workbook are provided under separate cover.

The YTA was developed to provide a framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Hamilton with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services, Activities + Events, Development Capacity, Tourism, and Place + Quality Impressions.

The *Understanding Scottish Places* (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Hamilton and describes Hamilton in the following general terms:

**Hamilton's Inter-relationships:** Hamilton is an interdependent town.

Interdependent towns have a medium number of assets in relation to their population; average diversity of jobs; and residents travel a mix of short and long distances to travel to work and study. These towns are attractors of people from neighbouring towns who come to access some assets and jobs but they are also reliant on neighbouring towns for other assets and jobs.

**Hamilton's Typology:** This type of city-sized town is extremely mixed in terms of demographics. There are particularly wide ranges of people, housing and activities. The number of older couples with no children is higher than average in this group. There is a mix of professional and non-professional jobs, and part-time and self-employment are both important for a significant proportion of residents. Socioeconomic status is higher than in other kinds of city-sized town and there is a mix of professionals and non-professionals, those with higher and lower educational attainment

Combining inter-relationships and typology, the USP platform – [www.usp.scot](http://www.usp.scot) – groups Hamilton with only one other town with similar characteristics, Cumbernauld. These towns have similarities in terms of the number of charities, hospitals, children in primary/secondary schools, jobs, shops, GP/ dentists, diversity of retail offer, and distance travelled to study.

Hamilton and Cumbernauld differ in terms of the diversity of jobs and the distance travelled to work. They differ most in terms of the number of public sector jobs in Hamilton, at least in part due to the presence of the Council's HQ in Hamilton.

### Inter-relationships



Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Hamilton based around the Scottish Government's *Town Centre Toolkit* – an online resource available via the USP website which provides advice, guidance and case studies across three thematic areas: accessible, active and attractive.

## 2. Accessible Town Centre

Hamilton is a historic town located 15 miles south east of Glasgow with a large and somewhat dispersed town centre stretching almost one mile north to south. By population, it is one of the largest towns in South Lanarkshire, and forms the administrative centre for the local authority area. Within a five mile radius the catchment (and competitor) towns include Larkhall, Wishaw, Motherwell, Bellshill, Uddingston and Bothwell.



The town is very well connected by bus and train to central Scotland and the wider South Lanarkshire area, and is around 20 miles from Glasgow International Airport. Hamilton Central train station and the bus station are both located within the town centre, just a short walk from the main retail areas. Trains to Glasgow city centre take around 30 minutes and run half hourly.



As well as Glasgow, bus and train services also connect the town with other settlements across South Lanarkshire including Uddingston (18 minutes by bus and 50 minutes by train) and Cambuslang (30 minutes by bus and 15 minutes by train), and towns in North Lanarkshire including Wishaw (30 minutes by bus and 20 minutes by train) and Motherwell (10 minutes by bus and 10 minutes by train).

These transport connections position Hamilton, especially the town centre, as an attractive commuter settlement – with a range of services and easy access to employment and education across a considerable part of west-central Scotland.

The core of the town centre along Quarry Street is pedestrianised which, in theory, should create a safe and attractive setting for users. In reality, however, there is vehicle access for business owners and delivery drivers and, with no obvious policing of access, there was a steady flow of vehicles within the pedestrianised zone during the day of the audit.

There is a good level of parking throughout the town centre area of Hamilton, with a number of on-street parking spaces in the town centre (on Quarry Street, Cadzow Street and Campbell Street), as well as off-street car parks including: the Palace Ground Retail Park and the Hamilton Palace Towers Retail Park Centre (100 and 300 spaces respectively), those at the ASDA supermarket (300 spaces) and a large multi-storey car park on Duke Street (700 spaces).

Although parking in some areas is free of charge (such as those located at the Palace Grounds Retail Park and Hamilton Palace Towers Retail Park), most make a relatively small charge, with costs ranging from 80p per hour to £5.80 per day for off-street car parks, and from 80p per hour to £2 for 3 hours for on-street parking where there is a maximum stay of 3 hours.



Accessing the town centre may be confusing for visitors that are not familiar with the area, as busy roads and dual carriageways encircle the central retail areas, thereby



reducing visibility. For vehicular traffic travelling from the M74, the first road sign that provides directions to the town centre is less than 50 yards from a large and busy roundabout.



There is, however, good signage within the town centre for those travelling by foot or bike, and the pavements and roads in the centre appeared to be in relatively good condition with only minor damage found and a few cracks and pot-holes. There are also ample pedestrian crossings and traffic lights spread throughout the town centre.

The town centre provides access to local services which, alongside a mix of retailers and business services, includes a town hall, police station, New College Lanarkshire, bus and train stations. These

are, however, almost exclusively located around the edges of the town centre, which is large and spread out.

There is 3G and 4G coverage throughout the town and town-wide free WiFi, as well as superfast broadband.

### 3. Active Town Centre

#### 3.1 Population and Housing

According to the 2011 Census, Hamilton has a population of around 53,000 people, of which around 3,400 are within, or within walkable distance of, the town centre. Using the best fit area for the town centre zoned boundary identifies a total of 775 people, just 1% of Hamilton's total population, living within the immediate town centre area<sup>1</sup>. Over the past decade, the wider town centre population has increased by 20%, significantly higher than the 6% average from 31 other YTA audited towns.

The majority of housing within the town centre<sup>2</sup> is in flatted accommodation (81%), with tenure split between private ownership (57%), private rented (27%) and social rented (14%). At 4%, the town centre has a higher housing vacancy rate than the 2% average across Hamilton as a whole, creating opportunities to further increase the population base. The 4% vacancy rate is slightly higher than the average found across 35 other YTA audited towns of 3.5%, and is similar to vacancy rates in Irvine and Dumbarton (both 4%) both of which are commuter settlements with good public transport connections.



Nearly half of the houses (27%) in Hamilton town centre are in council tax bands A, B and C. The streets surrounding the town centre shopping streets are almost solely residential – primarily flats – these provide a large catchment population for the retail and service businesses.

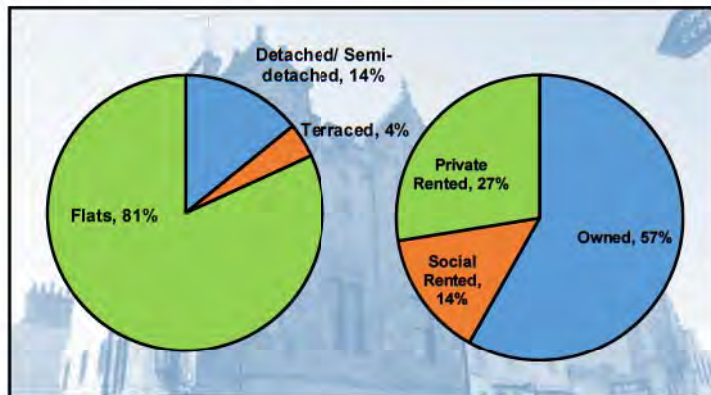
The average purchase price of a town centre dwelling in Hamilton (£127,835) is higher than that of the town as a whole (£90,500)<sup>3</sup>. Prices in the town centre have increased by 49% in the decade to 2013, and by 31% in the wider town. In comparison with other YTA audited towns, Hamilton has both a higher average purchase price (YTA average of £104k from 33 YTAs) and higher average ten year increase (YTA average of 44% from 30 YTAs).

<sup>1</sup> 2011 Scottish Output Zones: S00131945, S00132773, S00132318, S00131943, S00131897, S00132328, S00131941, S00131859 and S00131896.

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Statistics, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Statistics, 2013.

There is, however, significant variation across the audited towns (from £55k to £200k average price for town centre properties), but prices in Hamilton are closer to towns in East Renfrewshire, Fife and Lothian than the other large towns in the Glasgow City region including Barrhead, Clydebank and Dumbarton. This will be partly due to the type of housing within the town centre, but also suggests that Hamilton is regarded by purchasers as an attractive place to live.



### 3.2 Town Centre Employment and Business

The town centre plays an important role in the economy of Hamilton, with 26% of the town's jobs located within it. This is due to a combination of:

- the large physical area that the town centre covers – measuring almost one mile in distance from Gateside Street to the furthest unit at Hamilton Palace Retail Park;
- the presence of a number of large format retailers including Marks & Spencer and Currys/ PC World; and
- the presence of a number of large office and other service providers including Police Scotland, Council, Skills Development Scotland and NHS Health/ Dental practices.



Across 35 YTAs the average is 232 town population per retail unit – at 330 Hamilton scores much higher than this. The higher the rate, the more the town's retailers rely on spend from local residents – other YTAs with similar rates include Clydebank (330), and Dumbarton (307) – rather than drawing custom from elsewhere.

### 3.3 Town Centre Retail

The traditional town centre retail area is focused on Quarry Street, Cadzow Street and Gateside Street. Quarry Street runs through the town centre and gives access to the two shopping centres (the Regent Shopping Centre and New Cross Shopping Centre), both also connecting to adjacent streets.



However, Hamilton has a large number of shop units that most of the YTA audited towns, (average of 144 across 35 YTAs), and retailers are spread across a large town centre area. Areas to the south of the traditional town centre around Quarry Street are included within the zoned town centre boundary, taking in the Palace Grounds Retail Park and Hamilton Palace Towers Retail Park, both with large format chain retailers including Halfords, Next and Homebase.

Hamilton's retail performance has been in decline over recent years. The 2015 YTA audit found that 13% of retail units in the town centre were vacant, now at 16% with this 2017 update. The average retail vacancy rate across 33 YTA towns is 9.3% – those with similar average rates to Hamilton include Ayr (16%), Kilmarnock (15%) and Dumbarton (16%).

The update audit also identified that two-thirds of all the retail units that were vacant in 2015 are still vacant (albeit that some *may* have been occupied in the intervening period), and that 89% of all vacant units in Hamilton town centre are retail properties (54 of 61 units).

Quarry Street has by far the highest number of vacant retail units but other areas within the town centre recorded very high vacancy rates:

- Quarry Street / Place – where 21 of 113 retail units are vacant, 19%;
- Townhead Street – where 7 of the 14 retail units are vacant, 50%;
- Gateside Street – where 6 of 20 retail units are vacant, 30%;
- Regent Shopping Centre – where 5 of 29 retail units are vacant, 17%; and
- Duke Street – where 3 of 11 retail units are vacant, 27%.

These five streets account for 42 of the 54 vacant retail units in Hamilton, 78% of the total; 29 of these 42 units (69%) were vacant in the 2015 audit.

The data suggests deep-rooted issues with retail vacancy in Hamilton that will require further analysis and consideration to identify and develop actions to address the underlying causes, which might include a combination of:

- there are simply too many retail units in Hamilton for the level of occupier demand – there might be a need to reduce/ rezone the town centre boundary and encourage redevelopment for alternative uses;

- some parts of the town centre might be particularly unattractive to occupiers and would benefit from improvements – lighting, streetscape, directional signage, etc may make these areas more attractive; and
- some properties may be particularly unattractive to occupiers and do not meet the needs of modern retails – these might benefit from being upgraded or possibly demolished and redeveloped.

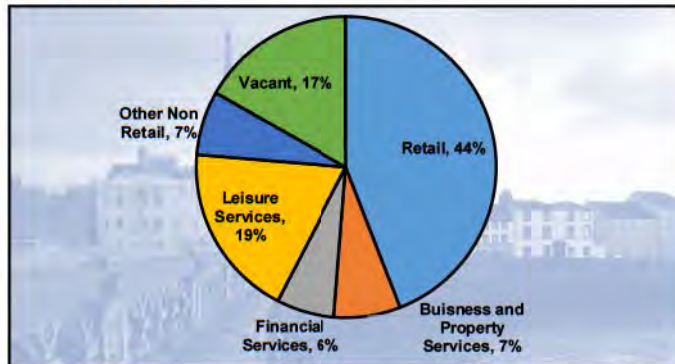
It is also important to note that while Hamilton has a high vacancy rate there has been some level of churn in the town centre – with 11% of all retail units changing occupier or changing from vacant to occupied status between the 2015 and 2017 audits. This shows that demand for retail units in Hamilton is active.

Shops located at the Palace Grounds Retail Park and Hamilton Palace Tower Retail Park, to the south of town centre area are typically open until 8pm Monday to Saturday and 6pm on Sundays. Of the ten units in this area only one is vacant – the former Chiquito restaurant.



Within the town centre, larger traders generally open 7 days a week until 5pm or 6pm, with some operating with slightly later closing on Thursdays or shorter hours on Sundays. This is comparable with trends in other large traditional town centres, but with a relatively large catchment from residents, workers and visitors there may be greater opportunity to extend town centre opening hours in Hamilton's traditional town centre area if footfall can be increased.

Town Centre Unit Mix



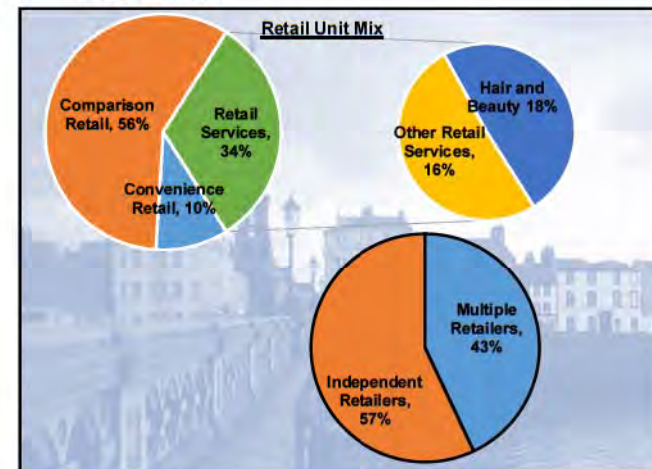
The largest single use in Hamilton town centre is retail, which accounts for 44% of all activities (average 46%, 35 YTAs). This equates to a slight drop of three percentage points since 2015 when retail accounted for 47% of the mix of uses, but is in line with the findings from other YTA audited towns. The town has a variety of independent retailers, alongside a number of national chains. Key anchors include Marks and Spencer, Primark, New Look and Next.



The YTA analysis is based on the following retail definitions:

- **Convenience Retail:** primarily low cost goods that are typically bought out of habit or on impulse i.e. food, drink (alcohol and non-alcohol), news, tobacco, etc. – 16 convenience retailers were identified in Hamilton town centre;

- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – 90 comparison retailers were identified in Hamilton town centre; and
- **Retail Services:** services that consumers would expect to find in a town centre including hairdresser, beauty salon, repair of goods, hire of specialist clothing, health clinics, post office, travel agent, etc. – 55 retail service operators were identified in Hamilton town centre, of which half are hair and beauty businesses.



Just over half of retailers (57%) in Hamilton town centre are independently operated, with 43% part of a larger chain. Independent traders are spread throughout the town, although with particularly high concentrations on Cadzow Street and Quarry Street where 80% and 76% respectively of all occupied retail properties are independent. Multiples are, for the most part, clustered in the retail parks, and within the Regent/ New Cross Shopping Centres.





While the proportion of independent retailers is considerably lower in Hamilton than the average for YTA audited towns (71%, 35 YTAs), their dominance in some streets creates an opportunity to brand and market zones with a high proportion of independent traders, building on their unique characteristics and potential to adapt quickly to market changes. A number of town centres have introduced shared spaces for independent retailers – indoor markets or emporiums where small and new businesses can test market conditions and interest for their products and services.

Hamilton also has a higher than average proportion of comparison retailers at 56% of all retail traders (42%, 35 YTAs), also creating potential to attract shoppers that are interested in browsing for goods. Other towns with high proportions of comparison retail outlets tend to include smaller and destination towns (e.g. Moffat and West Kilbride) or larger towns with indoor shopping centres (e.g. Ayr and Kirkcaldy).

### 3.4 Hamilton Business Improvement District (BID)

The initial Hamilton BID was established in 2012 and has just had a successful renewal ballot for a second five-year term, which will come to an end in October 2022.<sup>4</sup> Website is currently down but need to add something about the activity of BID – purpose and project profile.

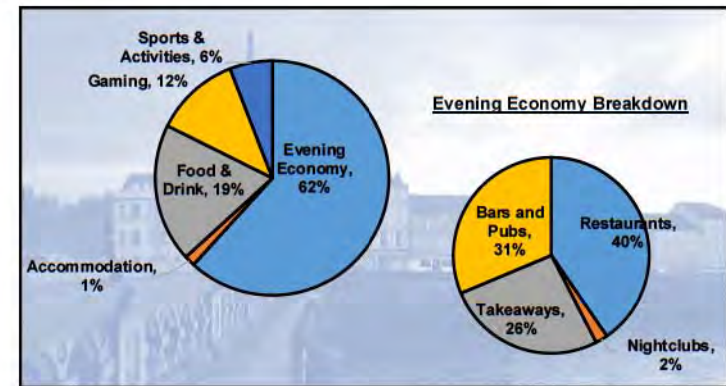
One of the most recent BID projects was the Big Stampede, which took place from June to August 2017, and saw over 30 large safari sculpture animals placed throughout the town centre. The sculptures were decorated by local and national artists, small local companies and national corporations, community groups and individuals. After being on display for ten weeks, all sculptures were auctioned, with £90,000 raised at for the Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity.

The Big Stampede created a public arts trail through the town centre. With many of the sculptures placed outside businesses it created footfall and spend opportunities from people following the trail on the day (using either the publically available map or downloadable app), particularly in retail, food and drink outlets. The trail also builds awareness of the range of retailers and other services in the town centre, helping to attract customers in the future.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hamiltonourtown.co.uk/>

## 4. Attractive Town Centre

### 4.1 Leisure Mix



The leisure offering in Hamilton town centre is dominated by evening economy uses (62%). There is one cinema within the town centre, the Vue Cinema at Hamilton Palace Towers Retail Park and two gyms (at the Palace Grounds Retail Park and within the New Cross Shopping Centre), but only one hotel and no museum/ gallery.



The Town House is a Category A listed building on the edge of the town centre which combines three linked structures individually constructed and separately opened in 1907 (Camegie Library), 1914 (Town House) and 1928 (Town Hall). The Town House completed a £9m refurbishment in 2004 with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Arts Council, and Historic Scotland.

It was re-opened as a multi-purpose Arts venue with facilities for hosting performances, weddings and other social events, classes and courses, conferences and meetings as well as its varied arts and cultural events programme. The venue has hosted a range of performances, from West End productions, national companies through to local amateur groups.

Hamilton town centre has a strong night time economy offering – consistent with its profile as a town with a large catchment population across both the settlement and Lanarkshire. The evening economy comprises 42 operators made up of restaurants (40%), bars and pubs (31%) and hot food takeaways (26%). There is only one nightclub in Hamilton – the Palace on Keith Street.



The number of bars is relatively consistent with other YTA audited towns – Hamilton has a population of 4,100 residents per town centre outlet, compared with a 33 town YTA average of 3,900. It does, however, have more restaurants at 3,100 residents per unit compared to 4,700 from 29 town YTA average; and significantly less hot food takeaways at 4,800 residents per unit compared to 2,900 from 33 town YTA average. While Hamilton has only one nightclub for over 50,000 residents, the 10 town YTA average is 22,000 residents per outlet, dropping to 18,600 when Hamilton is excluded.

#### 4.2 Events and Attractions

Hamilton Racecourse is a key attraction within the town, with 10 race days a year.

The Racecourse is located to the north of the town centre and is largely surrounded by residential areas, so there are limited spin-off benefits for town centre businesses. The Racecourse largely provides for visitors through its own catering facilities located on-site. It opened in 1926, and since the early 1970's has been owned by Hamilton Park Trust.



Photo via Flickr user Andrew Rendall, [under terms of license](#).

Low Parks Museum is another tourist attraction in the settlement, located just outside the town centre. The museum traces the local history of South Lanarkshire, with exhibitions about early settlement; working life, including agriculture, weaving, and coalmining; and also the history of the local regiment, the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). The museum received a 5-star rating from the Visit Scotland grading scheme, and is located in the former Low Parks of the Duke of Hamilton's estates.

Strathclyde Country Park is located near to Hamilton, a 15 minute drive from the centre. The Park sits within 400 hectares of countryside and is one of the most popular family attractions in the central belt of Scotland, with visitors coming each year to enjoy the wide range of activities and events taking place.

Some of the events that take place within the Park include 5k and 10k races, rowing regattas, music events, triathlons and fireworks events.

Some of the facilities within the park include: outdoor playgrounds, bicycle hire, fitness gym, watersports centre with cafe, conference facilities, watersports activities, and family funboats. The Park is open year-round and daily from 9am-7.45pm from April to September, and from 9am-5pm between October and March.

Bordering Strathclyde Country Park is M&D's Theme Park, which has a number of rollercoasters, water rides, fairground rides, an arcade, theatre, ten-pin bowling and indoor reptile centre. The theme park is not open daily, and information about open days is via the website<sup>5</sup>. Prices for entry range from £10 to £16 depending on ticket type and purchase method. Other facilities within the theme park include: parking, bars, restaurants, picnic areas, toilets and cash machines.

The other key attractions within and around the town, including the Hamilton Mausoleum and Chaterherault Country Park, which are located on the outskirts of the town.

<sup>5</sup> [M&D's Theme Park Website](#)

### 4.3 Historic Town Centre

There are two conservation areas within Hamilton, with most of the town centre being covered by one of these. The town centre conservation area includes 88 listed buildings, four of which are Category A listed buildings.



One of the Category A listed buildings has been placed on the Buildings At Risk Register. Keith's Building, which was built in 1903, is vacant and is noted as being in a poor condition, needing substantial restoration and refurbishment works. Although the building was auctioned again in 2010, it remains vacant and undeveloped.

Another entry on the Buildings at Risk Register is the property which was once the Hamilton Town Hotel on Townhead Street, dating back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. This building has been on the register since 2010, and has continued to deteriorate. There are no known plans for restoration and redevelopment of this property, which is one of the largest on the street. Its' obvious derelict condition is in clear contrast to other business premises in the area.



### 4.4 Place and Quality Impressions

With a recent programme of streetscape improvements coming to an end, it is not surprising that Hamilton town centre scored well against Place + Quality Impression KPIs, with clean streets, good pedestrian access, a good range of retailers alongside leisure uses, and ample seating spread throughout. Pedestrian signage in the town centre is also clear, with fingerpost signs.

There are a number of modern artworks and statues placed across the town centre area, which helps to bring character and a unique sense of place. These are mainly located on Castle Street and Quarry Street, both of which have very high proportions of independent retail operators.



Business confidence interviews found that more than half of the businesses (56%) reported that they were not confident about the future of their business. The overall confidence score for Hamilton is 4.3 / 10 which is much lower than the average of 5.8 / 10 from 28 YTAs.



During the in-street audit, the appearance of shop fronts and window displays in Hamilton was rated. This is a very subjective analysis – buildings were rated at 6.4 / 10 and window displays at 6.6 / 10 – but is consistent with the approach adopted for other YTA audited towns where the average from 31 YTAs is 7.0 / 10 for building fronts and 7.1 / 10 for window displays.

Scores were somewhat brought down by the relatively high vacancy rate – while these properties were well-maintained on some streets, it is not consistent and the condition of some detract from the overall appearance of the town. Areas where shopfronts were rated low include:

- 3.4 / 10 average for Townhead Street with individual scores ranging from 0 to 9, and where eight of the 14 retail units are vacant;
- 5.0 / 10 for Gateside St with individual scores ranging from 3 to 7, and where six of the 20 retail units are vacant; and
- Kemp St and Keith Street – scoring 5.0 and 5.4 respectively but with only a small number of units on each.

Of the 364 units in Hamilton, 88 or 24% scored between zero and five out of ten for the condition of shop fronts, raising concerns for the condition of the town's retail and other business premises.

## 5. YTA Summary and Key Points

The following are offered as final comments on the Your Town Audit of Hamilton within the framework of the Scottish Government's Town Centre Toolkit.

### 5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Hamilton is well connected with excellent public transport links and services – while car ownership in the area is high, regular bus and train services connect across Lanarkshire, Glasgow and further afield creating good accessibility for people visiting Hamilton town centre and also for residents travelling to work/ study elsewhere;
- there is potential to exploit the excellent transport connections in the town centre and attract new residential development to strengthen Hamilton's position as an attractive settlement for commuters travelling to work/ study across the central belt;
- there is growing recognition that pedestrianisation has not always been entirely successful in town centres – this, combined with the regular flow of traffic using Quarry Street, suggests a need to review traffic arrangements in Hamilton town centre, albeit with continued dominance for those on foot;
- there is a good level of car parking in Hamilton town centre – although on-street parking is limited, there are 11 off-street car parks providing almost 2,000 spaces;
- while there is a good level of car parking provision in and around Hamilton town centre, there appears to be a perception of distance and disconnect that could be addressed by enhancing visual connections and walking routes and also by improving parking signage for drivers;
- there is good access to financial and other personal/ business services with a number of registered banks and ATMs spread throughout the town, and a range of financial, legal and property services;
- there are a number of leisure and cultural facilities within Hamilton but these are located on the edge of the town centre or further afield and therefore do not support linked trips – while it would not be practicable to relocate these uses into the town centre, there is an opportunity to promote the town centre at these locations to raise its profile and give residents/ visitors a better understanding of the range of retail and other services that it offers; and

- Hamilton has good 3G/4G mobile phone coverage, superfast broadband and free WiFi connectivity for town centre visitors.

## 5.2 Active Town Centre

- Hamilton has a population of over 50,000 and a workforce of almost 30,000 people – of these almost 3,500 and 8,000 respectively are within, or within walking distance of, the town centre giving businesses a large potential catchment to draw custom from;
- of the 2,300 residential properties within the town centre catchment area just under 100 are recorded as vacant, equating to 4% which is in line with the overall YTA average of 3.5% from 35 towns – combined with the slightly higher than average house price in Hamilton and increasing trends toward town centre living there may be an opportunity to secure redevelopment of these empty homes and also attract new residential development in other parts of the town centre, possibly through zoning a residential quarter;
- in comparison with other YTA audited towns there is a high level of vacant units in Hamilton town centre equating to 17% of all properties and 16% of all retail units – this has increased since the 2015 audit (13% for both indicators) equating to an additional 13 vacant retail units (from 41 to 54) and two non-retail properties (from 5 to 7);
- as well an increase in the volume, the audit also found that two-thirds of all retail units that were vacant in 2015 remain vacant in 2017 – there is therefore a need to undertake further analysis to understand the underlying factors that are causing high retail vacancy overall in the town centre, and very high rates in particular streets, to identify appropriate mitigating actions;
- Hamilton has a very large town centre area stretching almost one mile from north to south and is effectively split into three core areas:
  - the central core around the pedestrianised Quarry Street is the traditional retail area with two indoor shopping malls and paid car parking around its outer edge
  - the northern core has a greater share of independent and service businesses with some paid on-street car parking
  - the southern core made up of Hamilton Palace Retail Park with large format stores, cinema, supermarket and substantial free car parking

- together with the topography of the town centre, this split makes it somewhat difficult to navigate Hamilton as a single entity. With pockets of high retail vacancy in parts of the centre, there may be benefit in reviewing the boundary to ensure a continued focus on a smaller core retail/ service area and also potential to introduce a zoning or quarters based approach to future development;
- there is a relatively high proportion of national retail chains (43% compared with the YTA average of 29% from 35 towns) confirming Hamilton's position as a major shopping centre, but with a number of high profile retail failures in recent years – and likely more to follow with ongoing economic pressures, increases in online shopping and competition from large dominant retail centres – there is a risk that the retail vacancy rate in Hamilton may increase in the future;
- there are, however, parts of the town centre where independent retailers dominate – this creates an opportunity to brand and market a zone that promotes a niche cluster of unique businesses;
- there is a need for SLC (and other stakeholders) to continue their active support for Hamilton town centre BID over the next five years – this should include efforts to deliver additional events and activities in the town centre that will attract new footfall and create activity across the calendar year; and
- there is a need to gain a better understanding of the customer base for Hamilton town centre, both those that are currently using the town centre but, more importantly, local people that do not use it, with a view to targeting future resources on activity that meets the needs of residents and visitors – this might include for example a teenage market, local craft emporium, history/ heritage outlet, family friendly food & drink premises, live performance venue, etc.

## 5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- Hamilton has an attractive streetscape setting and an extensive improvement programme is nearing completion for the public realm, giving the town centre good quality street furniture, lighting and public art – this provides a strong base from which any future activity can build;

- there are, however, a large number of vacant units (61 within the town centre), including heritage properties on the Buildings at Risk Register, which reduce the town's attractiveness and create a sense of disrepair – the average YTA rating for quality of building fronts and window displays is fairly average but the audit found significant variation and clusters of properties in Townhead St and Gateside St that were rated with very low scores;
- as with the 2015 audit results, business confidence in Hamilton town centre is low with an average rating of only 4.3/10, compared with the YTA average of 5.8/10 – it is good that businesses have supported the Hamilton BID for a second term but there is a need for action that will increase business turnover to ensure they are sustainable in the future – a programme of focused town centre business support may be beneficial;
- there may be benefits in adopting a zoning or quarters based approach to any future development in Hamilton town centre – this should respond to the apparent over-supply of retail units and help to re-shape the centre to meet the needs of modern business practices, shopper demands and leisure attractions;
- there are a number of development opportunity sites within the town centre – where possible, there is a need to ensure that any new activity contributes to and complements the existing town centre offer rather than introduce additional competition for existing businesses; and
- while funding is constrained at present there is potential to work up some bespoke shovel-ready projects for the future that could respond to any new funding opportunities that would further enhance the attractiveness of Hamilton town centre and help to grow/ diversify the business base.