

SLC Towns – Places for People

Rutherglen Town Centre Action Plan 2023-2028

1. Introduction

Town centres are at the heart of communities and are a vital part of the past, present and future. They are traditionally places to shop, work and access the facilities and essential services that people require. But the role of our town centres is changing, and people have more alternative choices than ever before. Costs of ownership and operation favoured out-of-town investment and more recently digital sales have replaced many of those made in a town centre. Consumer demand for choice and increasing home ownership has led national retailers and leisure operators to promote larger stores which are accommodated in out of town/edge of centre locations. Most centres have witnessed a reduction in the number of town centre residents and there has been a rise in car ownership leading to a decrease in local use. A growth in new build developments on the edge of centres has also led to a decline in the use of traditional town centres.

The recent move by many to working from home has resulted in an unprecedented change in how we use and enjoy our town centres as demonstrated by the change in pattern of movement and footfall. Digital commerce is now more heavily used than ever with goods, services and restaurant quality food delivered to doorsteps quickly. Further, the way in which we think about town centres at both a national and local level has changed with more emphasis being placed on sustainability and the wellbeing agenda. Like all town centres across the UK, Rutherglen has felt these changes and the town centre must adapt to meet the needs of today's consumers.

Rutherglen has a strong identity, and the people of Rutherglen are rightly proud of its rich heritage as a Royal Burgh. Rutherglen Town Centre is, in comparison to a number of similar towns, performing well with high occupancy of retail, hospitality and banking units. It is important to ensure though that what is on offer is what primarily, the people of Rutherglen need, want and can access but also provide an attractive offering for visitors to the town.

South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) can influence some factors relating to the centre and indeed has a focus on these. The vibrancy and vitality of the town centre however is dependent on a number of factors with the Council being one of many stakeholders. The town needs the support of all who live, work and do business in it to champion it and help it reach its maximum potential.

The Rutherglen Town Centre Action Plan (2023-2028) captures the collaborative actions of South Lanarkshire Council, partners and town centre stakeholders to support Rutherglen Town Centre and build strong foundations for future generations.

2. Rutherglen Town Centre Vision

“To ensure Rutherglen Town Centre is a vibrant hub, offering shopping, community services, leisure, business and residential spaces at the heart of a growing town with a proud history, heritage and culture”

Places we create impact on those who live work and relax in them and can have a positive or negative impact on their health and wellbeing. Place planning and visioning is an important tool for delivering change which can address the needs of people and place and address the challenges of the future.

The Approach

The purpose of this Action Plan is to propose a long-term shared vision for Rutherglen Town Centre and set objectives and actions to underpin it. Evolving from the work undertaken in previous town centre strategies this Action Plan has been prepared using a range of information gathered through engagement and research undertaken in partnership with the Improvement Service’s Shaping Places for Wellbeing Team. It will inform future decision making to help achieve sustained long-term improvement.

Place and Wellbeing Assessment

A Place and Wellbeing Assessment enables a systematic approach to be taken to identify impacts and make recommendations for consideration to maximise benefits for the wellbeing of people and place and minimise negative impacts. At the Assessment a report is produced with issues categorised under a set of Place and Wellbeing Outcomes, a consistent and comprehensive set of outcomes that every place needs to enable those who live, work and relax there to stay healthy and thrive.

No one sector or discipline delivers these outcomes. It allows for critical analysis of whether the right collective actions are being taken to bring about the change people need from our places.

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

Place and Wellbeing outcomes fall into five overarching themes with relevant sub themes under each. These themes in turn produce a set of outcomes from which actions are identified:



3. Addressing the Challenges

Rutherglen is a town centre with strong assets and a definable place quality. This is evident through the strong civic presence, business base, historical architecture and investment to date. These provide the foundations for Rutherglen to assert its role as a strong and vibrant town centre. Rutherglen's key strengths include:

- **A 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, mobility of customers and move towards "click and collect" their requirements have changed and there is less demand from retailers for town centre locations. Recognition of this change in certain aspects of retailing allows focus on other key aspects of the town centre including leisure and cultural offering, services and town centre living. As one of Lanarkshire's larger towns Rutherglen is well placed to provide a variety of functions to its catchment area.

- **Access and enhanced connectivity**

Rutherglen is very well-connected with excellent road and rail infrastructure to other areas of South Lanarkshire as well as into Glasgow City Centre and beyond. Rutherglen has the potential to further develop the quality of its offer and appeal of place. By continuing to develop its active travel offer and providing a welcoming experience for those with additional needs Rutherglen can support its local catchment. Rutherglen fits well into a 20-minute neighbourhood model which allows it to support the community it serves.

- **Strategic Investment**

SLC secured funding for investment in Rutherglen Town Centre for the creation of The Hub, a community meeting space on Rutherglen Main Street and also business incubation space and a gym facility in the Exchange Shopping Centre. SLC was also able to support the owners of The Exchange in carrying out environmental improvements including upgrade to the frontage. Officers continue to seek funding to deliver strategic investment outlined in this action plan.

- **Council Commitment**

The Council is committed to supporting our town centres and has developed strategies for Hamilton, Blantyre, Larkhall and Cambuslang providing further information and detail on policies set out in the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP). Each strategy provides a framework for collaborative work across a range of partners, groups and delivery models and a policy basis for communities to take forward aspirations for their own town centres.

- **Shaping Places for Wellbeing**

The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme stemmed from the desire to use Place and Wellbeing Outcomes to ensure the impact of decisions consider every aspect of place. To fully understand the contribution of our places as part of the preventative solution when addressing the range of priorities facing local councils and health boards across Scotland.

Key Opportunities and challenges facing the town centre can be summarised as follows:

KEY OPPORTUNITIES	KEY CHALLENGES
Extremely active, motivated local community with many people willing to work with Council and partners on environmental and other community issues.	On-demand expectations - new technologies and business models have made getting what we want when we want it easier than ever. This offers direct competition to the high street which will need to adapt to compete.
Community Wealth Building initiatives give local people more say in the future of their centre.	Changing face of retail to more digital models reduces the need for retail provision in traditional town centres leaving empty units.
NPF 4 puts the town centre at the heart of new planning policy.	Limited event and multi-use spaces for community, clubs and groups to hire.
SLC Business Support Team has a robust programme in place to encourage start-ups and help current businesses	Energy inefficiency in ageing town centre buildings makes newer edge of town units a more viable proposition for businesses.
Green Economy – as consumer attitudes towards climate change shifts the green economy is becoming more important. Coupled with likely increased regulation, green focussed businesses and town centres will find themselves becoming more attractive to consumers.	Ageing Population – an older society will change the demands users place on high streets not only in terms of what shops, facilities and community spaces are required but also in terms of accessibility.
Excellent links to Glasgow (and beyond) via road and rail network.	Reduction in town centre homes over the years has reduced the customer base in town centres.
Close proximity to M74 and excellent public transport provision makes the town an attractive option.	Cost of living crisis reduces household spending power.
Unique local heritage and historic architecture give Rutherglen a distinct sense of place.	High volume of traffic on Rutherglen Main Street (B768) restricts pedestrian movement and contributes to a noisy environment.
Good access to Open Spaces – Cuningar Loop, Overton Park, Fernbrae Meadows with access to local walking and cycling routes	Air quality is perceived to be poor.
Town centre offer aligns with 20-minute neighbourhood model	Seen more as a road link to city centre rather than a destination.
Rutherglen is a recognised Air Quality Management Area. An air quality monitoring station is situated in Main Street. Rutherglen and has produced evidence that air quality has improved significantly over recent years.	Traditional shopping hours are not in line with modern day lifestyles (limited Sunday opening and late-night shopping).

Greater sense of “localness” after the pandemic creates demand for new community spaces, tailored retail and hospitality to meet local demands.	There is a level of perception locally that Graffiti, vandalism, fly-tipping, and the storage of waste impact negatively on the visual appearance of the town centre.
Rutherglen 900 - series of community led activities will attract visitors and promote Rutherglen as a place of historical interest encouraging community engagement and partnership working	Increasing reports of youth/anti-social behaviour.

Assessment of Rutherglen’s distinctive qualities alongside the opportunities and challenges facing the town centre show that, like all town centres, Rutherglen must evolve to take advantage of opportunities and counter threats. To continue attracting people and investment town centres must offer better quality choices that reflect our changing habits and lifestyles. They need continuing support and investment to allow them to improve and develop new functions other than retail. It is therefore important that Rutherglen Town Centre is better equipped to thrive and prosper, meeting the needs of all its residents, businesses and visitors.

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4. Strategic Context

Legislative and strategic context for SLC's town centre ambitions have developed over the past few years. Health and wellbeing, community empowerment, sustainability and the reduction of inequalities have become key priorities for the country. The key strategies and legislation which guide this document are as follows:

National Planning Framework 4

The Scottish Government has published a new National Planning Framework (NPF4) setting out the future for planning of places and environments. NPF4 differs from previous NPFs as it incorporates Scottish Planning Policy and the NPF into a single document and forms part of the statutory development plan.

The National Planning Framework recognises that the challenges town centres are facing today demand a change in the way we plan for tomorrow. Planning for the future makes it important to future-proof places, be more innovative and involve a wider range of people in the planning process. NPF4 supports the "town centre first" principle and the development of 20-minute neighbourhoods.

The NPF places significant emphasis on building a more inclusive and fairer well-being economy.

Place Principle and Place Making

The "Place Principle" promotes a shared understanding of place and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for communities.

The principle requests that "all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places".

Scottish Government Town Centre Action Plan 2 (TCAP2)

The Scottish Government published the "A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres" report in February 2021. This report was an independent collaborative review of the progress and scope of the 2013 Town Centre Action Plan. The review group was asked to build on the town centre first approach and develop a refreshed vision for Scotland's towns and the means to achieve it.

While the review group found the basis and route map of the Scottish Government's 2013 Town Centre Action Plan remains sound, they concluded that progress "needs to be more consistent and rapid".

To support this the group has made three key recommendations as follows:

1. Strengthen the formal positioning of towns and town centre in National Planning, including requirements to produce town and town centre plans, co-produced with communities and enhance data collection and use at town and town centre level. To support that:
 - Town and town centres to be included and prioritised in National Planning Framework.

- Town Centre Plans need to be developed and implemented with the local community and with a focus and commitment on the wellbeing of people, the planet and economy.
 - Develop a revised and enhanced focus on measurement and data for towns and town centres.
2. Scottish Government should review the current tax, funding and development systems to ensure that wellbeing, economy and climate outcomes, fairness and equality are at their heart.
 3. Funding of Demonstration Projects in Towns and Town Centres. Projects could be focussed around themes of:
 - Town Centre Living Expansion
 - Digital Skills and Use in Towns
 - Enterprising Communities
 - Climate Change Response

Community Empowerment Act/ Community Wealth Building

The Scottish Government has adopted the internationally recognised Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to economic development as a key practical means to achieve wellbeing economy objectives.

CWB is designed to harness the economic leverage of local “anchor” organisations (such as local authorities, health, universities, colleges, housing associations or large local private sector employers) to tackle long standing systematic challenges and structural inequalities within our communities. It seeks to transform our local and regional economic systems to enable more local communities and people to own, have a stake in, access and benefit from the wealth our economy generates. Community Wealth Building can deliver more and better jobs, business growth, community-owned assets and shorter supply chains creating greater resilience and supporting net zero ambitions.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is a significant piece of legislation which enhances opportunities for the active participation of communities. The Act created new responsibilities and powers for the council and other public bodies to help empower communities. These include:

- Participation requests whereby community groups can make a request to public service providers to open a dialogue on issues they feel are important with a view to improving outcomes.
- Asset Transfer whereby communities have the right to make requests to local authorities, Scottish Ministers and a range of other public bodies for the transfer of land or buildings they feel they could make better use of.
- Community Right to Buy which extends the community right to buy land to cover both urban and rural land and changes some of the procedures previously introduced by the 2003 Land Reform Act. The Act also makes provision for communities to buy land that is abandoned, neglected or detrimental to the environmental wellbeing of the community where the owner is not willing to sell the land.

South Lanarkshire Towns – Places for People (Town Centre Visioning)

Places for People is South Lanarkshire's place-making framework for town centres. As a strategy it sits alongside the Local Development Plan, Community and Neighbourhood plans to help guide decision-making for our town centres.

Town visioning has increasingly become part of the toolkit to address the challenges facing town centres and to reposition towns to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Places for People provides a forward-looking strategy aligning local outcomes with wider national programmes and funding. It established a framework for a shared sense of vision. National programmes and funding initiatives offer new routes to develop and fund town centre investment programmes. Scottish and UK Government funding through Community Regeneration Funds, Levelling Up Funding, Growth Deals, Net Zero Initiatives and Place and Active Travel Funds create new opportunities to fund larger integrated programmes. Partnership funding can help accelerate project delivery, advance strategic programmes and build long term value alongside local initiatives.

While currently in draft form this strategy will be adopted in 2024 and will sit alongside the Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan.

South Lanarkshire New Places New Futures – Strategy and Action Plan

South Lanarkshire Council's "New Places New Futures" is an ambitious programme to support the transition to net-zero across South Lanarkshire's towns while enhancing their qualities as places to invest, visit and work. Within the programme the Council has developed a vision and strategy for towns that builds on their existing assets, identifies areas and opportunities for improvement and place-making that supports sustainable living.

Following the development of the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy, this net -zero towns strategy provides a specific route map for how principal settlements across South Lanarkshire will positively address the transition to net-zero through place-based action and investment.

While currently in draft form this strategy will be adopted in 2024 and will sit alongside the Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan.

5. Town Centre Action Plan

The Action Plan seeks to set out a range of objectives for Rutherglen 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 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 to deliver the most effective impact. Regeneration requires long-term sustained activity and initiatives and these actions need to be delivered with flexibility.

Advancing a coordinated set of actions across the town centre will help business confidence and support investment. It must be progressed with a wide 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 partners across the town centre will be categorised using the place and wellbeing themes as follows:

- Movement
 - Active travel
 - Public transport
 - Traffic and Parking
- Spaces
 - Streets and spaces
 - Natural spaces
 - Play and recreation
- Resources
 - Services and support
 - Work and economy
 - Housing and Community
- Civic
 - Identity and belonging
 - Feeling safe
- Stewardship
 - Care and maintenance
 - Influence and control

The Plan is a holistic range of measures aimed at revitalising a variety of aspects within the town centre. With this in mind, the success of the strategy is dependent on the actions of the Council in partnership with the private sector, community and third sector.

6. Action Plan

Movement			
Action	Lead	Timescales	Outcomes
Active Travel Plan	SLC/	Short-Medium	The Rutherglen and Cambuslang area Active Travel Network Plan was published in 2019 and identified actual and perceived barriers to all-ability cycling and walking for everyday journeys in and around Rutherglen and neighbouring Cambuslang. The network needed to enable modal shift to those modes and promote Rutherglen and Cambuslang as Active Travel Friendly Towns. Key routes have been identified, and implementation work is ongoing. Proposals to increase capacity at park and ride sites in the area are also identified
Better Points App	SLC	Ongoing	A pilot project funded by SLC and Scottish Government to move people away from unnecessary car journeys to walking, wheeling and cycling, car sharing and public transport by encouraging tracking and rewarding active and sustainable travel.

Spaces			
Action	Lead	Timescales	Outcomes
Accessible town centres	SLC, Shaping Places, Third sector partners	Short-Medium	Audits to be carried out to establish the suitability of Rutherglen Town Centre for those with accessibility needs. This will include looking at initiatives that will assist those with additional needs such as dementia, autism, and physical accessibility issues. Audits will determine future actions to be implemented.
Support SLC's litter strategy – the council wide litter strategy was approved by	SLC	Ongoing	The strategy focuses on litter, fly tipping and dog fouling with an emphasis on prevention. Work will concentrate on education, engagement and enforcement. We will work with

Committee on 31 st August 2023.			town centre partners on an action plan with key measurables.
Greener, cleaner town centre	SLC	Medium	SLC signed a concordat with the Clyde Climate Forrester committing, amongst other things, to target tree planting in urban areas. Not only will this help towards net-zero ambitions and improve air quality, but studies have shown that trees help to increase dwell time in town centres. SLC aim to carry out design feasibility works to ascertain how the town centre could contribute to the ambitions of this scheme.
Town Centre Net Zero Study	SLC	Medium	This study looks at the longer-term net zero ambitions for Rutherglen such as improving air quality, good transport links.
Community Rail Partnership – Rail 74	CRP/SPT	Ongoing	Rail 74 covers six stations between Rutherglen and Hamilton. In partnership with Scotrail CRP develop projects working with local businesses and social enterprises for example develop station artwork with a focus on improving mental health.

Resources			
Action	Lead	Timescales	Outcomes
Cultural asset – feasibility study	SLC	Medium	Identify a vision for key cultural assets in Rutherglen Town Centre.
Social enterprise – “Re-use” projects	SLC/ VASLAN/ Social Enterprises	Medium	Explore the possibility of a shared space for sorting and distributing for social enterprises selling pre-loved items through a cooperative model.
Former Mecca Bingo Hall	Private sector/ SLC	Short-medium term	We will continue to work with the owner of this site to secure development.
Insideout App	SLC	Medium	Digital noticeboard – aims to be a one stop shop for all business and community information.

Inward Investment	SLC/Clyde Gateway	Ongoing	Number of projects complete and ongoing e.g. Red Tree Magenta Business Centre, Rutherglen Links Business Park which creates assets which can aid economic development within Rutherglen.
Town Centre Living	SLC/Scot Gov/RSLs		In response to Scottish Governments, Town Centre Action Plan which encourages town centre living. Officers are working with Housing colleagues and the private sector to identify sites in Rutherglen.
Shaping Places for Wellbeing	SPfW	Ongoing	Three-year programme delivered by Public Health Scotland and the Improvement Service jointly with local authority and NHSL to improve wellbeing by reducing the significant inequality in the health of people and to support those making decisions that will influence a place to consider the consequence of those decisions on all the evidenced features of places that impact people's health and wellbeing.

Civic			
Action	Partners	Timescales	Objective
Rutherglen 900	Community Groups/SLC/Shaping Places	Short	To support a series of community led activities to celebrate the 900 year anniversary as a Royal Burgh.
Engagement with local community on town centre activity through establishment of a business forum	SLC Community Engagement/Shaping Places/ Community Group	Short-Medium	Seek to establish a business group within the town. Consideration to be given to establishing a Business Improvement District.
Town Centre CCTV rollout	SLC, Police Scotland	Ongoing	Engagement with key town centre partners has been undertaken to ascertain areas of need and roll out a new state of the art system will be rolled out over the next 18 months.

Air Quality Monitoring	SLC/SEPA	Ongoing	Continued monitoring of air quality via Air Quality Monitoring Station on Main St Rutherglen to ensure continued improvement in air pollution levels.
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Stewardship			
Action	Partners	Timescales	Objective
Landlord Engagement	SLC	Short – Medium	Empty shop units can discourage investment in the town centre, decrease the offer of the Main Street and contribute to a general sense of decline. Engagement with absentee landlords aims to connect them back to the local community and consider ways which the units can be brought back into use through initiatives such as shop front improvements, pop ups, business support and change of use

7. Next Steps

The improvement of Rutherglen Town Centre is not solely in the gift of the Council. It is vital to build on the initial engagement and continue to work in partnership with local businesses and property owners, the local community, local interest groups and statutory agencies.

The vision, objectives and actions outlined are intended to form a basis for discussion and for all stakeholders to collectively share and take forward.

Coordinated and sustained activity is key to supporting Rutherglen Town Centre. The delivery of the range of projects and initiatives will require agreement across all stakeholders taking a coordinated approach to delivery. With this in mind, this draft strategy will be subject to consultation before being finalised. The consultation will have three main elements:

- Partner and stakeholder engagement
- Public engagement through a consultation event to allow the local community to consider the proposals and feedback.
- Digital consultation through SLC's webpage.

These three elements will run concurrently.

It is anticipated that this process will take around 8-12 weeks following which Economic Development officers will collate and review feedback. This feedback will inform a finalised strategy and action plan for Rutherglen Town Centre.

The finalised strategy will be used to engage with key stakeholders and support funding bids and submissions for specific projects. Engagement and sharing the town centre vision, objectives and strategy build a broad base of support for action allowing a collective approach to delivery.

The indicative timetable for the process of developing and approving the Action Plan is as follows:

November 2023	Draft Strategy to Community & Enterprise Committee for approval to carry out consultation exercise.
February – March 2024	Online consultation live
February – March 2024	In person consultation events held in Rutherglen Town Centre
May - June 2024	Revision of action plan in response to consultation outcome.
July 2024	Seek approval of Community & Enterprise Committee for finalised action plan.
August 2024 +	Implementation of action plan.