



Renfrewshire  
Council

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**To: Economy and Regeneration Policy Board**

**On: 28 May 2024**

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**Report by: Chief Executive**

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**Heading: Johnstone Town Centre Vision Framework**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Economy and Regeneration Board of the Johnstone Town Centre Vision framework. Developed in partnership with the local community, the framework guides a place vision which supports the future transformation and growth of Johnstone Town Centre.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- (i) Approve the Johnstone Town Centre Vision Framework;
  - (ii) Authorise the Head of Economy and Development to progress actions to realise aspirations within the framework;
  - (iii) Authorise the Head of Economy and Development to explore potential funding opportunities from external sources to support the delivery of the framework;
  - (iv) Authorise the Head of Economy and Development to undertake appropriate consultation and publicity with the local community and stakeholders to support further delivery of the framework;
  - (v) Notes that further progress on delivery of the framework will be reported to the Board as appropriate.
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### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The existing Johnstone [Town] Centre strategy was produced in 2016. While the strategy has provided a positive framework for investment within the town centre, in recent years there have been significant changes in retail trends, commuting patterns and climate resilience which impact upon our centres. There has also been renewed focus to support local living and reduce the need for travel.
- 3.2 In this context, a vision framework has been developed to reimagine Johnstone town centre, ensuring that it evolves as a diverse, sustainable and thriving place which serves both the local community and settlements across West Renfrewshire.
- 3.3 The vision was developed in partnership with the local community through a series of consultation events over late 2023. This included online engagement, a staffed 'drop in' event, visits to schools and meetings with local stakeholders and community organisations, with over 1800 responses informing the series of principles and key actions identified in the plan.
- 3.4 The vision is a high-level framework which captures the priorities of local people while being flexible in response to changing circumstances, funding opportunities and available support. It sets a long-term vision with a range of actions to introduce new uses, encourage town centre living, enhance public spaces, support community activities and improve pedestrian and traffic movement. The framework provides a guide for action and decisions over initiatives and partnerships within the town centre over the next ten years.

### **4 Johnstone Town Centre Vision Framework**

- 4.1 The framework sets out a vision for Johnstone Town Centre as a vibrant and distinctive place, supporting residents to live well locally while recognising the role of the centre as a hub for those across West Renfrewshire. It imagines the town centre as a well connected place which offers a mix of spaces, uses and activities – from retail and culture to business and housing – and a place which celebrates its heritage but looks forward to a positive future. A full copy of the Johnstone Vision can be found in Appendix 1.

### **5 Funding**

- 5.1 Opportunities for delivery of the plan have been informed by a review of major Scottish and UK Government capital funding programmes. These were reported to the Board on 19 March 2024 and include the Place Based Investment Programme, Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and Vacant and-Derelict Land Investment Programme.
- 5.2 The Scottish Government announced on 28 March 2024 that as a result of budget pressures, both the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme have been paused for 2024/25.

Officers will however continue to monitor national funding programmes as a vehicle for delivery, as well as a range of external funding sources such as active travel opportunities supported by Sustrans.

- 5.3 The Council meeting of 3 March 2022 agreed a package of investment for town and village centres across Renfrewshire to support their continued regeneration. This included £0.5M for Johnstone and it is anticipated that this allocation will now be used to support initial delivery of projects identified within the vision.

## 6 Approach and Next Steps

- 6.1 The vision provides a framework for a range of partnership initiatives which support delivery of actions and a reimagined, thriving Johnstone town centre. The Council and partners will work with the local community to explore mechanisms and external resources which support delivery, such as those funding streams set out in section 5.

- 6.2 The opportunity exists to progress a number of project ideas within the vision as 'early wins'. These initial actions would demonstrate commitment to the vision, generate confidence and act as a catalyst for wider delivery. These are anticipated to include:-

- (i) **Developing Enhancements for Civic Squares.** Houstoun Square and Ludovic Square are the heart of the social and cultural offer of the town. Improvements would have an immediate impact in supporting an enhanced sense of place for the town centre and creating spaces which encourage people to visit, gather and spend time, contributing to the feel of Johnstone as a vibrant and social place.
- (ii) **Develop Proposals to Reimagine the Town Hall.** Johnstone Town Hall is an important asset at the heart of the community but with a focus that has altered following the Covid-19 Pandemic. The opportunity exists to consider new activities, aligned with aspirations of the local community, which support the building to continue to be the social and cultural hub for the town.
- (iii) **Town Centre Heritage.** Consultation informing the plan highlighted that celebrating the heritage of the town was important to the local community as a key part of the future vision. The opportunity exists to consider projects such as a heritage trail, in partnership with local heritage groups already existing within the town, to help strengthen the identity of the town, foster community spirit and support heritage as a reason to visit Johnstone.

## 7 Progress and Reporting

- 7.1 Progress on delivery of the framework will be reported to the Board on a rolling basis and future projects brought forward for the Board's consideration.
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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community Planning** –  
**Creating a sustainable Renfrewshire for all to enjoy** – The plan supports the empowerment of local communities to become more involved in shaping their places.
4. **Legal** – None.
5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** – None.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** -
  - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risk** – None.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None.
13. **Climate Risk** – The framework will encourage sustainable neighbourhoods, sustainable links and enhancements to green space.

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## Appendices

Johnstone Vision

## List of Background Papers

None.

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## Johnstone Town Centre Vision Framework



- 1 **Introduction**
- 2 **The Town Centre Today**
- 3 **Vision & Principles**
- 4 **Spatial Strategy & Projects**
- 5 **Next Steps**

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# 1. Introduction

## About the Johnstone Vision

This plan sets out an ambitious vision for the future of Johnstone Town Centre. It identifies a range of actions and key projects which have been developed in response to the ambitions of local residents, businesses and key stakeholders as well as national policies guiding the future of our town centres.

The plan supports the sustainable growth of the town centre, ensuring that it evolves as a diverse, sustainable and thriving place for the local community and settlements across West Renfrewshire.

The vision offers an opportunity to shape a Johnstone town centre which is fit for the future – a town centre which is **vibrant, sustainable, connected, green and resilient.**

## Project Approach

Renfrewshire Council and a specialist consultant team worked together with local residents, businesses and community groups to develop the plan. This included an informal 'drop in' event, online survey, visits to local schools and one to one meetings with local stakeholders and community organisations. Around 1800 people contributed their views and ideas, which have informed a series of key principles and actions.



# JOHNSTONE

The Town Centre today highlighting the surrounding settlements, infrastructure and amenity.



Linwood

Black Cart Water

A737

Johnstone Town Centre

Thorn Primary School

Train Line

Elderslie

Elderslie Golf Club

Black Cart Water

Thomas Shanks Park

Rannoch Woods

Bluebell Woods

Cochrane Castle School

Johnstone Castle

Johnstone High School

Study Boundary

N

Glasgow

Ayr



## 2.The Town Centre Today

Johnstone lies 3 miles west of Paisley and is the largest settlement in West Renfrewshire with a population of around 16,000. The town has a distinctive, historic character with a rich industrial heritage as well as strong civic, cultural, and retail functions, serving both the local community and settlements across West Renfrewshire.

The town centre is focussed around the civic spaces of Houstoun Square and Ludovic Square. A pedestrianised precinct connects the two squares with Johnstone Town Hall a key node along this route. The Town Hall was constructed in 2015 as a civic and community hub for the town and includes a library, theatre, conference space, marriage suite and office space, as well as a community office for Police Scotland.

A range of retail and business uses are located on the streets surrounding the civic squares, particularly on High Street, Church Street and Quarry Street. In recent years retail development has taken place at the edges of town centre, including a Morrisons food store to the north and a retail park development anchored by an Aldi food store to the west.

The town centre today is a great example of a compact and walkable place with a variety of shops, business, facilities and activities which support people to live well locally.

## Heritage

Johnstone developed as a planned town, formed around the house of Easter Cochrane, later known as Johnstone Castle.

Designs were commissioned by the Laird George Houstoun in 1782 with his vision quickly developing from a hamlet of 50 homes to a bustling town. Key to growth were planned streets and the iconic Johnstone High Parish Church, attracting settlers and fostering a thriving community of 1,500 within a decade.

Industrial development underpinned this growth with thread and cotton mills lining the town, powered by the Black Cart Water. Though these mills are gone and replaced by modern development, Johnstone's heritage lives on.

Historic buildings like the High Parish Church, the town's unique urban grid and its civic squares tell tales of the past. The opportunity to enhance these assets and share their stories is key to rooting the future of the town in Johnstone's unique history.



1892 plan of Johnstone town centre. Credit: National Library of Scotland



Ludovic Square 1907. Credit: Old Johnstone and Elderslie Publication, 2005



1915 plan of Johnstone town centre. Credit: National Library of Scotland

## Movement and Infrastructure

Johnstone benefits from strong transport links to Glasgow and the wider central belt. The A737 lies to the north and provides links to the M8 motorway, while the train station is a short walk east of the town centre and offers frequent services to Glasgow and Ayrshire. Bus services connect to surrounding local settlements and Glasgow while the town is also supported by good walking and cycling links, with National Cycle Routes 7 and 75 offering scenic paths west and north of the centre.

While Johnstone offers a range of options for public transport, a significant number of journeys to and within the town centre are by private car.



National Cycle Route 75.  
Credit: Sustrans



Johnstone High Street  
2023. Credit: Page\  
Park Architects

This can add to congestion, affects the reliability of public transport services and impact upon the look and feel of the town, particularly a sense of safety for pedestrians.

The opportunity to create a more balanced approach to movement within the town centre is key to this plan. A more pedestrian friendly environment, supporting public transport services and enhancing the attractiveness of the centre as a place, will encourage increased footfall, longer visits and support local businesses, facilities and activities.

# 3.Vision & Principles

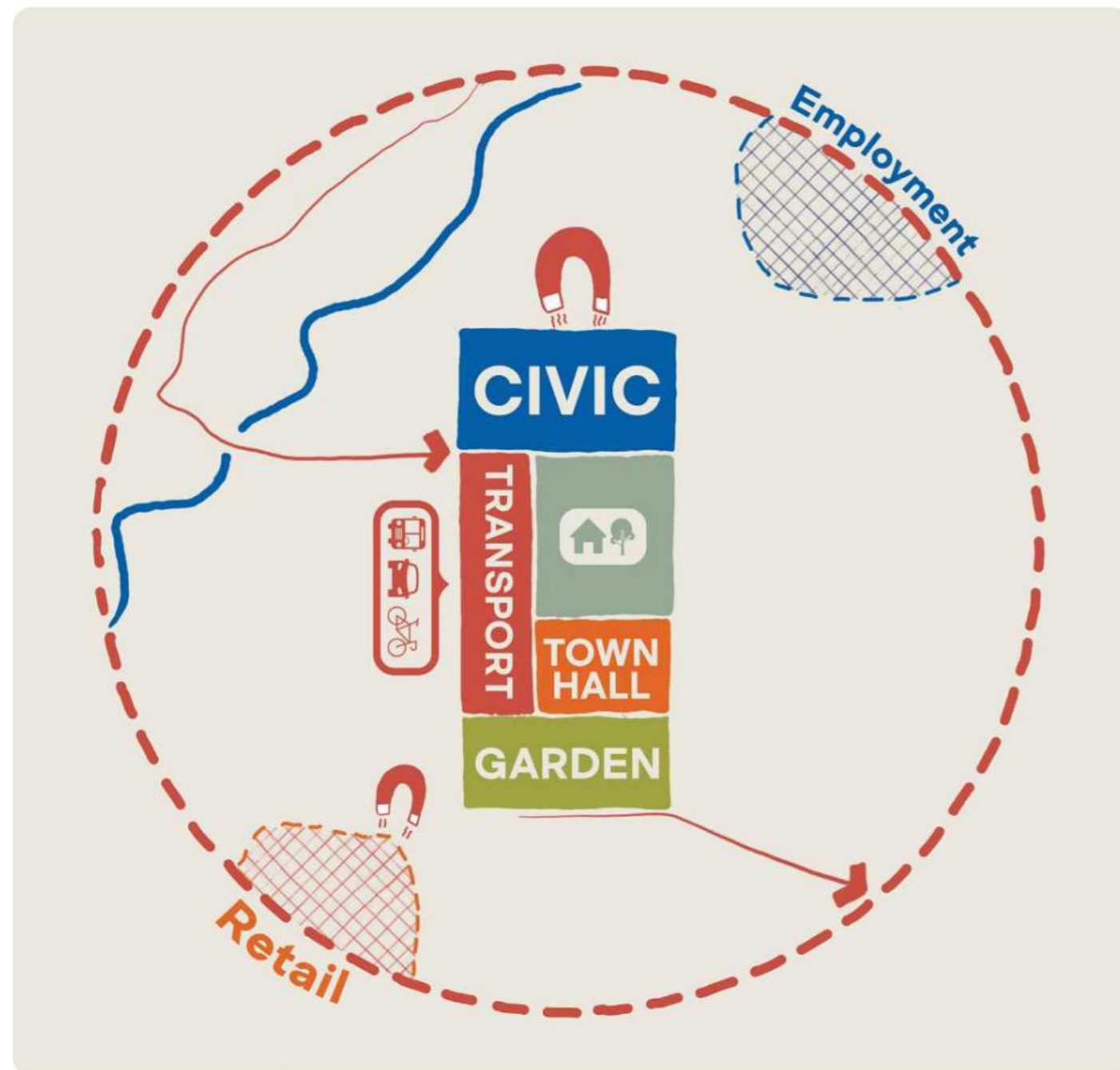
This plan sets out a vision for a Johnstone town centre which is agile and fit for the future. A well-connected place offering a mix of spaces, activities and uses – from retail and culture to business and housing – which support residents to live well locally and recognises the role of the town centre as a key 'hub' destination for residents across West Renfrewshire.

The plan imagines a Johnstone Town Centre that is vibrant and flourishing; a distinctive place which celebrates its unique heritage but looks forward to a positive future. To achieve this the plan sets out a range of actions to introduce new uses, encourage town centre living, enhance public spaces, support community activities and improve pedestrian and traffic movement.



Outcomes from community engagement informed the development of two 'key moves' central to delivery of the plan.

**The Heart** builds upon key assets within the core of the town centre - including Johnstone Town Hall, Houstoun Square and Ludovic Square - as a focus for activity and uses which support the local economy and meet the needs of the community.



**The Loop** provides opportunities for new homes and businesses which help to support a mixed-use town centre and drive demand for the key assets.

Key to this is the development of a more 'people friendly' approach to movement within the town centre which could include better opportunities for walking and cycling, improved connections to public transport and easing traffic congestion.



Five key principles underpin the delivery of the future vision for the town:

**Identity** - Celebrating and enhancing the distinctive assets of the town, including Johnstone Town Hall and the Civic Squares, as key attractions and focus for activity;

**Movement** – Supporting enhancements to pedestrian, public transport and traffic movement, making it easier for people to move around and creating a better environment for the town centre;

**Economy and Prosperity** – Introducing a range and mix of new uses - housing, retail, business and employment – which support the local economy, develop the night time economy and generate footfall for business and facilities within the town centre.

**Heritage and Culture** – Celebrating the industrial heritage and culture of the town, supporting a range of activities and social events within the centre;

**People and Community** – Providing the opportunity for a range of community activities and organisations which encourage a vibrant mix of uses within the town centre.



# 4. Spatial Strategy and Projects

The guiding principles are supported by 10 projects which will help deliver the vision. These range from 'early win' projects which could be realised in the short term to longer term aspirations. The table opposite shows how the projects contribute to the vision themes and the plan on page 12 shows where these could be implemented within the town centre.

The projects should be seen as a framework for collaborative action with the local community and a wide range of stakeholders. The details may need to be flexible over time in response to opportunities and available support but form the basis of action over the next 5 to 10 years.

Key Projects		Themes addressed				
		Identity	Movement	Heritage & Culture	People & Community	Economy & Prosperity
1.	<b>Movement</b>		✓	✓	✓	
2.	<b>Transport Interchange</b>		✓		✓	
3.	<b>Town Hall</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓
4.	<b>Civic Squares</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓
5.	<b>Town Centre Living</b>				✓	✓
6.	<b>Commercial Uses</b>				✓	✓
7.	<b>Public Realm</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8.	<b>Events and Activities</b>			✓	✓	✓
9.	<b>Town Centre Heritage</b>	✓		✓	✓	
10.	<b>Blue &amp; Green Infrastructure</b>		✓			

# Key Projects Diagram

**Project 1.** Movement

**Project 2.** Transport Interchange

**Project 3.** Town Hall

**Project 4.** Civic Squares

**Project 5.** Town Centre Living

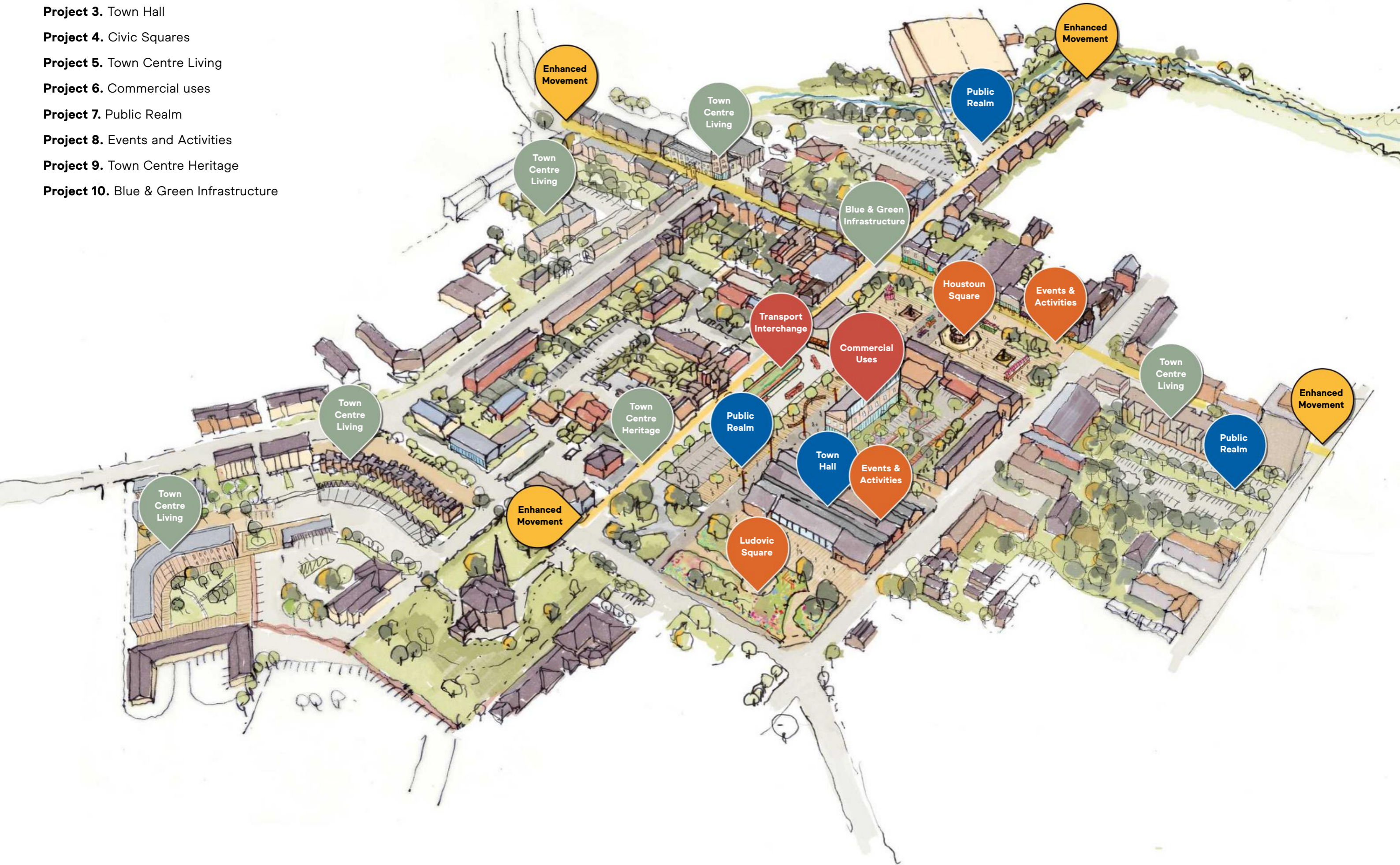
**Project 6.** Commercial uses

**Project 7.** Public Realm

**Project 8.** Events and Activities

**Project 9.** Town Centre Heritage

**Project 10.** Blue & Green Infrastructure





# Project 1 Movement



## Project Summary



Johnstone benefits from a compact and legible town centre layout where facilities and activities are easy to reach. Feedback from consultation indicated that some areas within the centre can be affected by traffic congestion, with an impact upon the sense of safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

In this context there is an opportunity to develop a more 'people-friendly' approach to movement within the town centre, through enhancements such as wider pavements, improved crossings and connections with existing path and cycle routes. Consideration could also be given to management of 'on street' parking within the town centre, for example enforcement of illegal parking, as this could assist in supporting an improved experience for local residents and visitors.

These improvements could link with other priority projects around transport and public realm to help significantly enhance movement around the centre, supporting the vision of the town centre as a vibrant, well-connected place.

### Key

1. Johnstone Loop
2. New route between Civic Squares
3. High Street enhancements
4. Houston Square
5. Ludovic Square



Artists impression of the view along High Street past Houston Square.

Project 2

# Transport Interchange



## Project Summary



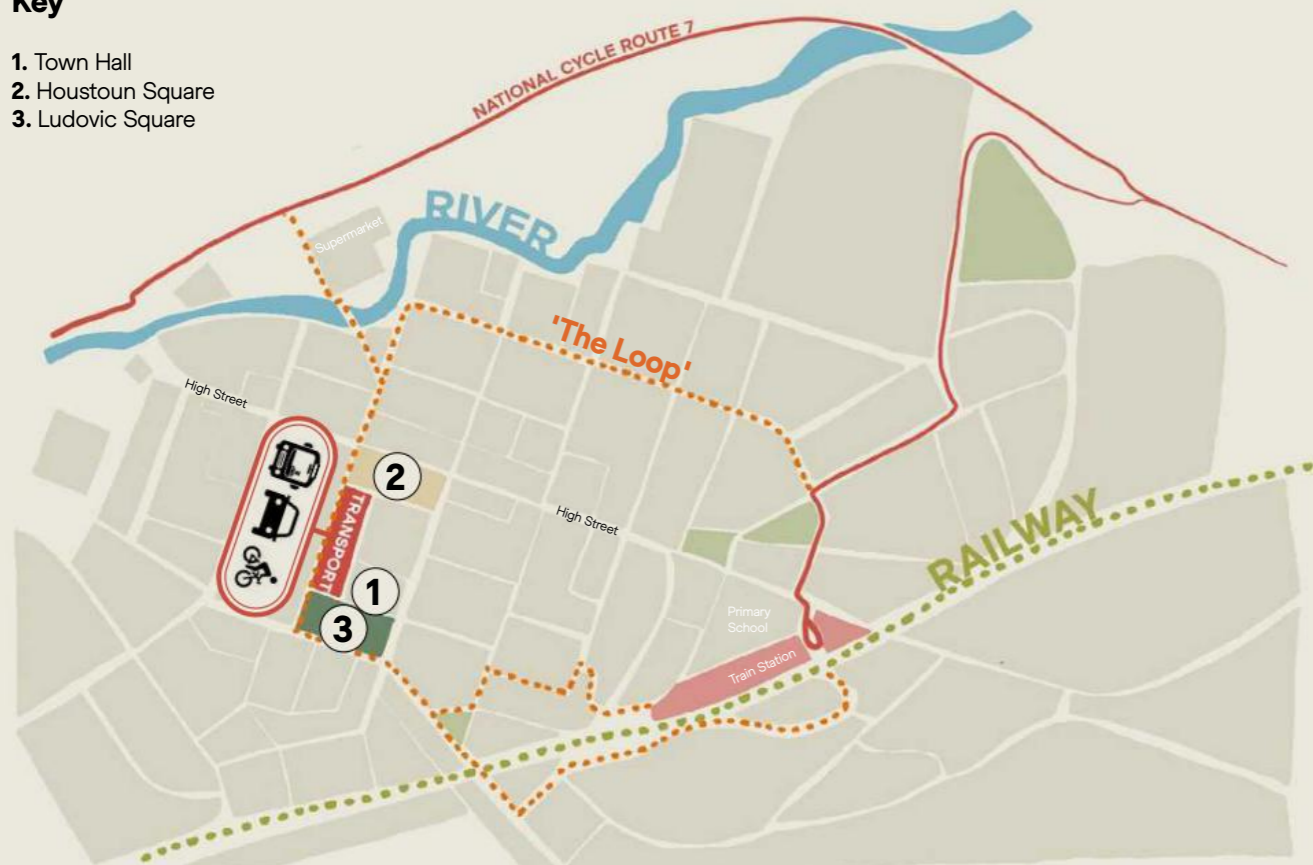
Supporting the 'people friendly' approach to movement within the town centre, there is an opportunity to enhance facilities for public transport and promote a range of sustainable modes of transport within the town, from bus services and electric vehicles to cycling.

Outcomes from consultation indicated that traffic congestion is a particular issue at High Street, acting as a barrier to the use of Houstoun Square and impacting upon the surrounding local businesses. By relocating the bus layover space, an opportunity exists to enhance the setting of the square and its attractiveness as a place for people to spend time. In turn, this will support and generate footfall for surrounding businesses.

The key diagram shows a proposed location of a new Transport Interchange with bus stops, electric car charging points and cycle hub. This will connect with a reimagined Town Hall and Civic Squares to create an enhanced public space which not only supports movement but creates a new focus for people to relax and explore the town.


### Key

1. Town Hall
2. Houstoun Square
3. Ludovic Square



Artists impression of the view from Houstoun Square past Transport Interchange and Town Hall to Ludovic Square.

# Project 3 Town Hall



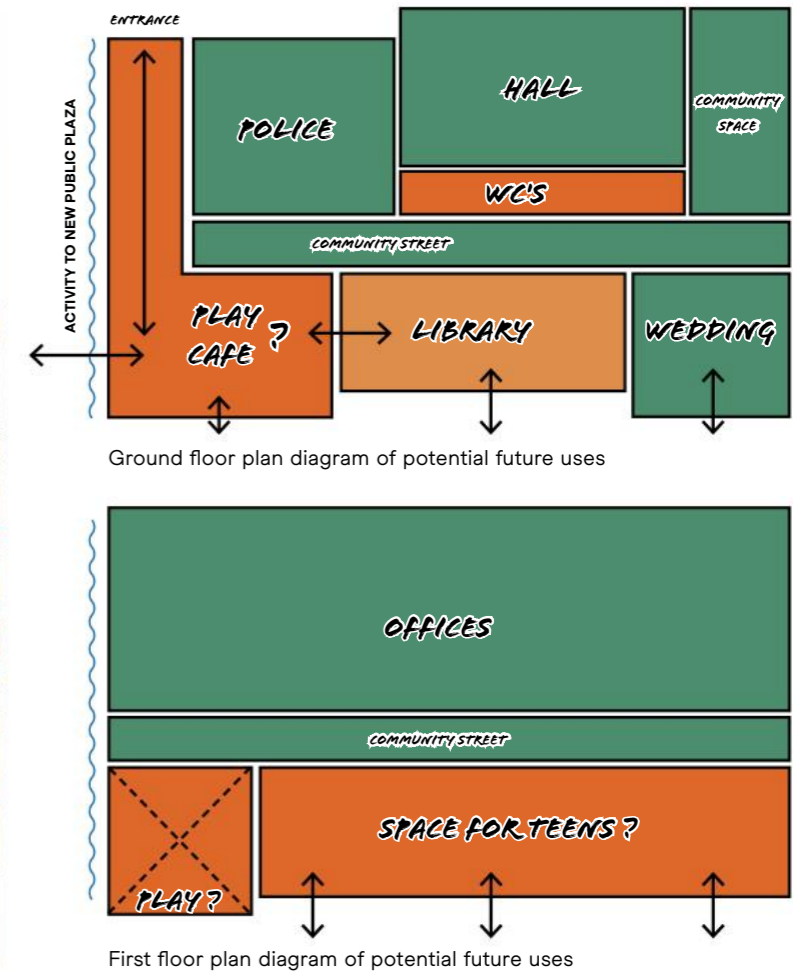

## Project Summary



Johnstone Town Hall is an important cultural asset at the heart of the community, playing a vital role in the sense of place and identity of the town. While originally designed to support a range of activities which generate footfall and vibrancy within the town centre, outcomes from consultation have indicated that as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic many of these activities have ceased or have been relocated, leading to the building becoming underused.

In this context there is an opportunity to reimagine the Town Hall and consider the range of activities which could be offered to align with the aspirations of the local community in Johnstone and beyond. This would retain established 'anchor' uses such as the library and could consider uses such as space for young people, café facilities and community space.

This project, taken alongside other priority projects relating to transport and public realm, helps to reinforce the Town Hall, together with the Civic Squares, as the heart of community activity within the town



Project 4  
**Civic Squares**



**Project Summary**



The Civic Squares play a key role in defining the character and identity of Johnstone and together with the Town Hall are the heart of the social and cultural offer of the town. They are important spaces which encourage people to visit, gather and spend time, supporting local businesses and a range of activities which contribute to the feel of Johnstone as a vibrant and social place.

There is an opportunity to introduce enhancements to the squares to reinforce their key role. This could include restoration of heritage features such as the bandstand, considering how the squares could be improved for events, opportunities for play and increasing biodiversity through more diverse planting.

The key diagram and illustrations show potential improvements to the squares – enhancing Houstoun Square as a hub for retail, culture and events, with Ludovic Square as a reflective green space at the heart of the town.



Artists impression of Houstoun Square with connections beyond to the transport Interchange and Town Hall to Ludovic Square.

Project 5

# Town Centre Living



## Project Summary



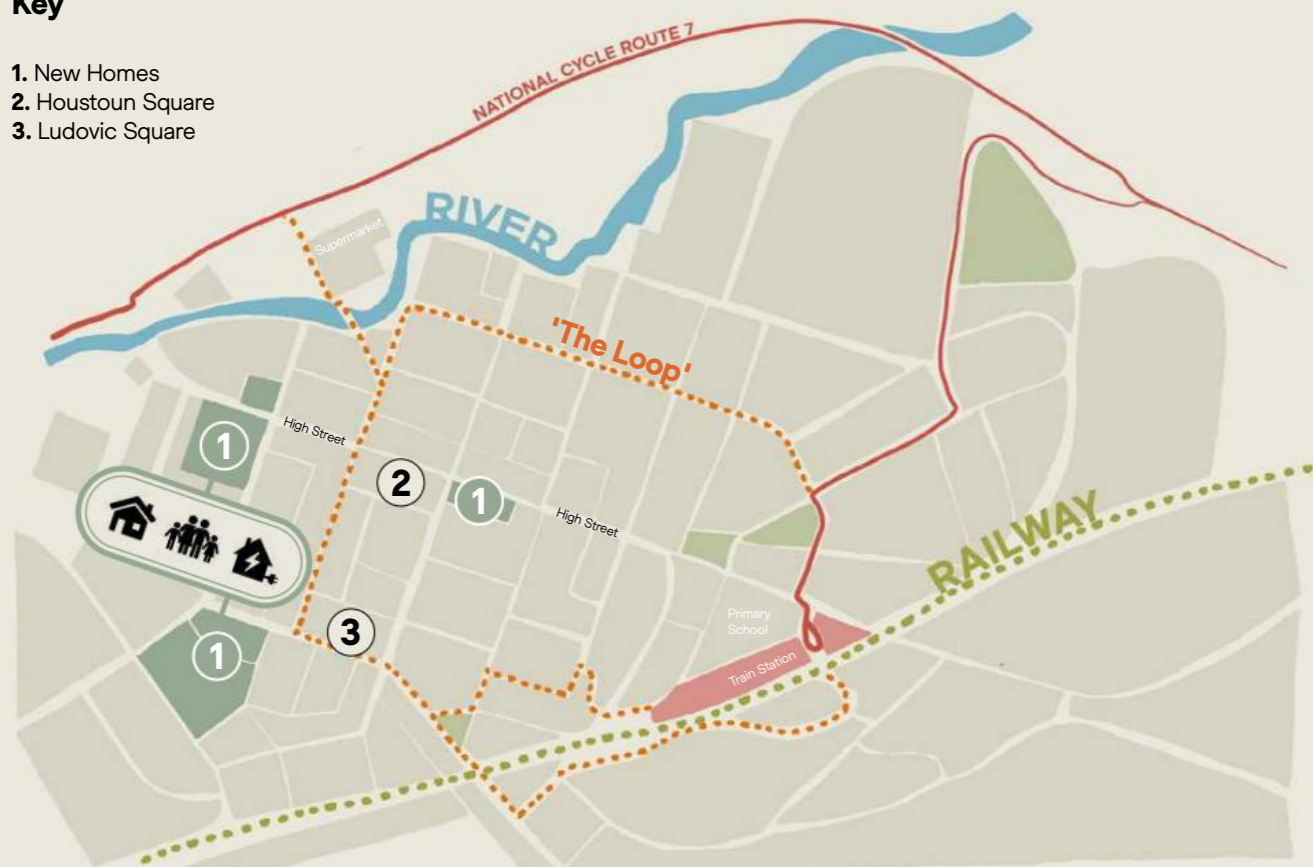
Town centre living plays a key role in the regeneration of our places. Increasing the residential population creates demand for services, supports the local economy and contributes to the feeling of safety and security at all times of the day. In turn, new homes can also support people to live well locally as access to everyday services, facilities and greenspaces are within easy reach.

High quality development can also contribute to the character and feel of town centres as well as returning vacant or underused land to a positive use.

Johnstone town centre has a small number of vacant sites and potential to consider the future redevelopment or refurbishment of homes as part of a wider transformation supporting the vision. The key diagram identifies a number of sites which could be the focus of an enhanced approach to town centre living.

### Key

- 1. New Homes
- 2. Houstoun Square
- 3. Ludovic Square



Low rise housing by Page\Park Architects

Project 6

# Commercial Uses



## Project Summary



Renfrewshire Council's 'Start-Up Street' in Johnstone, a business incubator offering affordable workshop and support for new ventures, provides a strong base for developing the economy of the town, building on Johnstone's historical legacy of innovation.

There is an opportunity to grow the existing business base in this context, creating a welcoming environment for commercial uses which support the overall vision of the town centre as a sustainable place to live, work and visit.

The key diagram identifies areas within the town centre which could support commercial and business uses. These link with other priority projects, for example new homes, which create demand for services and support employment opportunities.

### Key

- 1. Commercial Uses
- 2. Houstoun Square
- 3. Ludovic Square



# Project 7 Public Realm



## Project Summary



As well as the Civic Squares, there are a number of key public spaces within the town centre which would also benefit from enhancement. These include a new pedestrian link at Houston Court, public spaces at the Town Hall and key 'gateways' into the town centre, particularly linking to Johnstone Rail Station.

Enhancements to public spaces could link with other priority projects, for example in reflecting the heritage of the town, building in resilience to climate change and introducing a more 'people friendly' approach to movement within the town centre.

The key diagram shows the location of potential enhancements, which support the overall vision and encourage people to visit, gather and spend longer in the town centre.

### Key

- 1. Public Realm
- 2. Houston Square
- 3. Ludovic Square



## Project 8

# Events & Activities



## Project Summary



Events and activities are hugely important to town centres. They encourage people to gather, creating a vibrant feel and purpose to our centres while creating demand for local businesses and services.

A range of events already take place within the town centre, a number of which are run by local community organisations. Outcomes from consultation indicated an appetite for additional events which would build on the success of the existing programme and support increased community activity within the town.

The opportunity exists to support local groups to develop further activities, particularly through considering infrastructure within key spaces of the town centre, such as the Civic Squares, to support improved access and use. Consideration could also be given to the variety of indoor spaces across the town centre and the approach to securing these for events, including hire costs and administration.

### Key

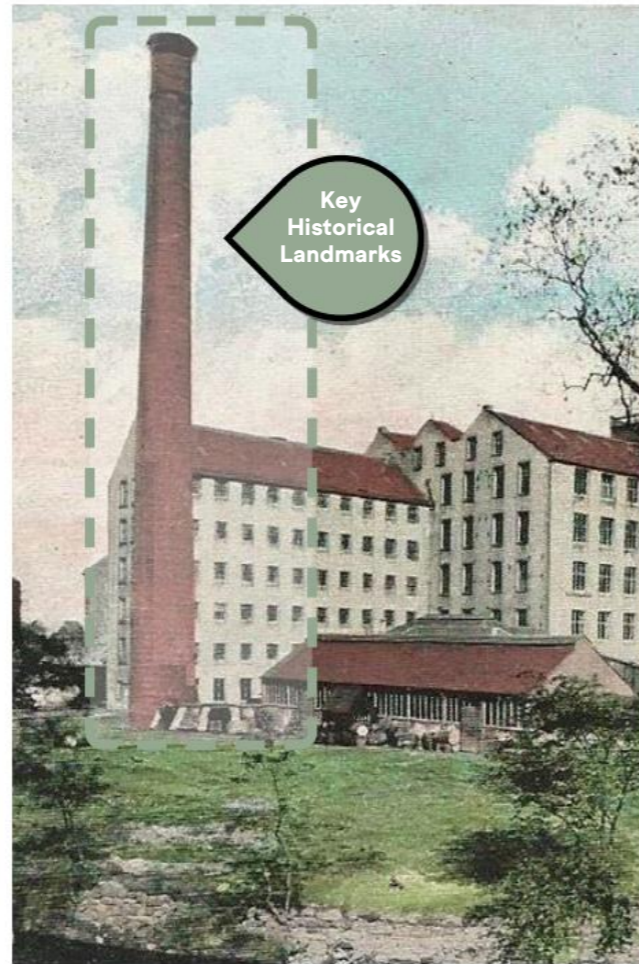
#### 1. Events & Activities





Project 9

# Town Centre Heritage



## Project Summary



A key focus of Johnstone's future is weaving the past into the present. Embedding memories of the town's manufacturing heritage could strengthen the identity of the town and foster an even stronger sense of community.

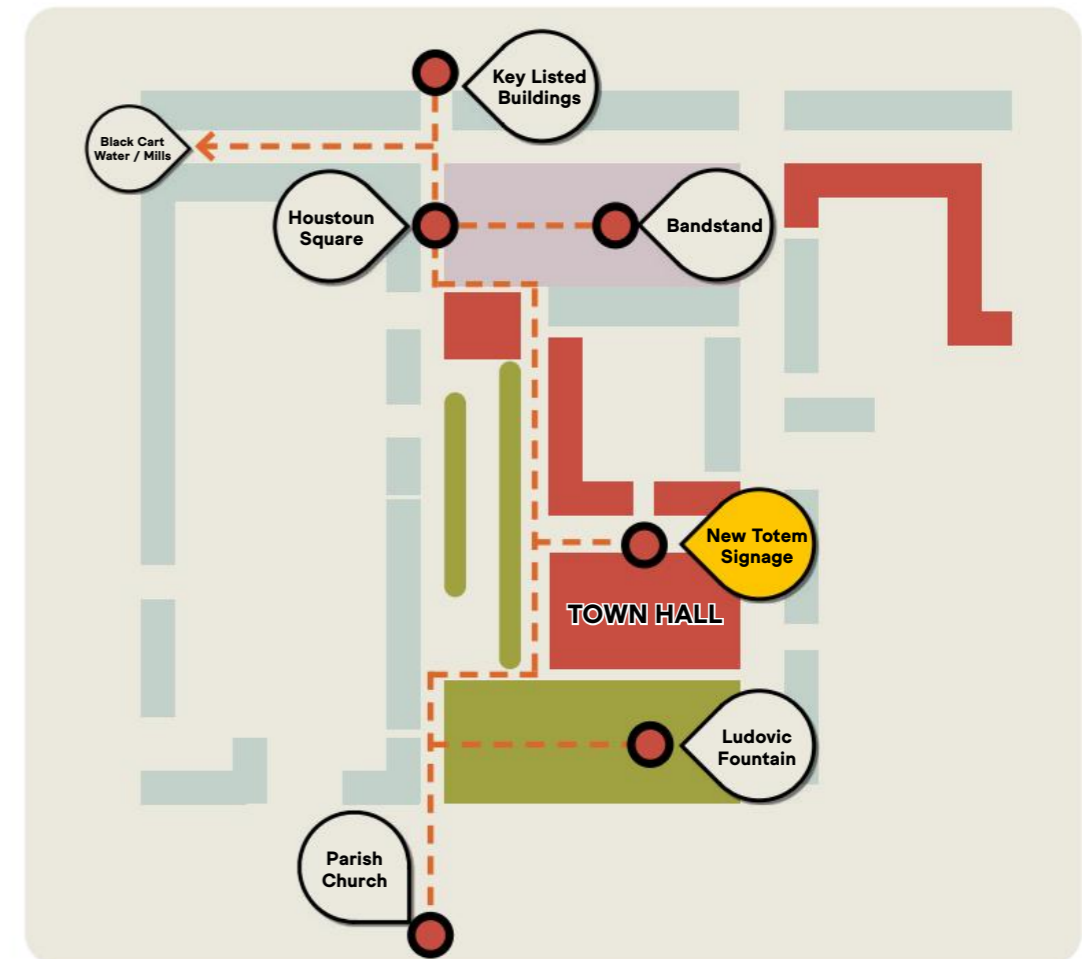
One way in which this could be achieved is a "Living History Trail", co-created by residents, exploring significant locations, memories and stories. These could be documented and showcased along a permanent walking route. Physical installations and oral histories could bring the past to life, enriching the town centre experience.

Investing in heritage and arts not only preserves history, but also fosters community connections, learning, and a sense of belonging. A proposed route, outlined in the schematic plan, highlights key "heritage nodes" which could be celebrated.

Working with property owners, there may also be opportunities to consider enhancement of existing listed buildings within the town.

### Key

- 1. Heritage Landmarks / Destinations
- 2. Houstoun Square
- 3. Ludovic Square



Project 10

# Blue & Green Infrastructure



## Project Summary



Measures such as improved drainage, planting trees and vegetation helps to reduce the effects of climate change. Projects such as 'rain gardens' – planted areas designed to absorb rainfall - can also help to support biodiversity and help to create an improved sense of place as green 'lungs' within town centres.

There are opportunities to introduce this 'blue and green' infrastructure within Johnstone, supporting enhancements to movement and public realm within the town centre which better connect people and places and create an improved sense of place. The key diagram shows where this could be considered, including Church Street, High Street and new pedestrian link between Houstoun and Ludovic Squares.

### Key

- 1. Houstoun Square
- 2. Ludovic Square



# 5. Next Steps

The vision and priorities within the Johnstone Town Centre Vision Framework have been developed in partnership with the local community. The role of this plan is to provide a framework for further collaborative action and to steer decisions over actions, initiatives and partnerships within the area over the next five to ten years.

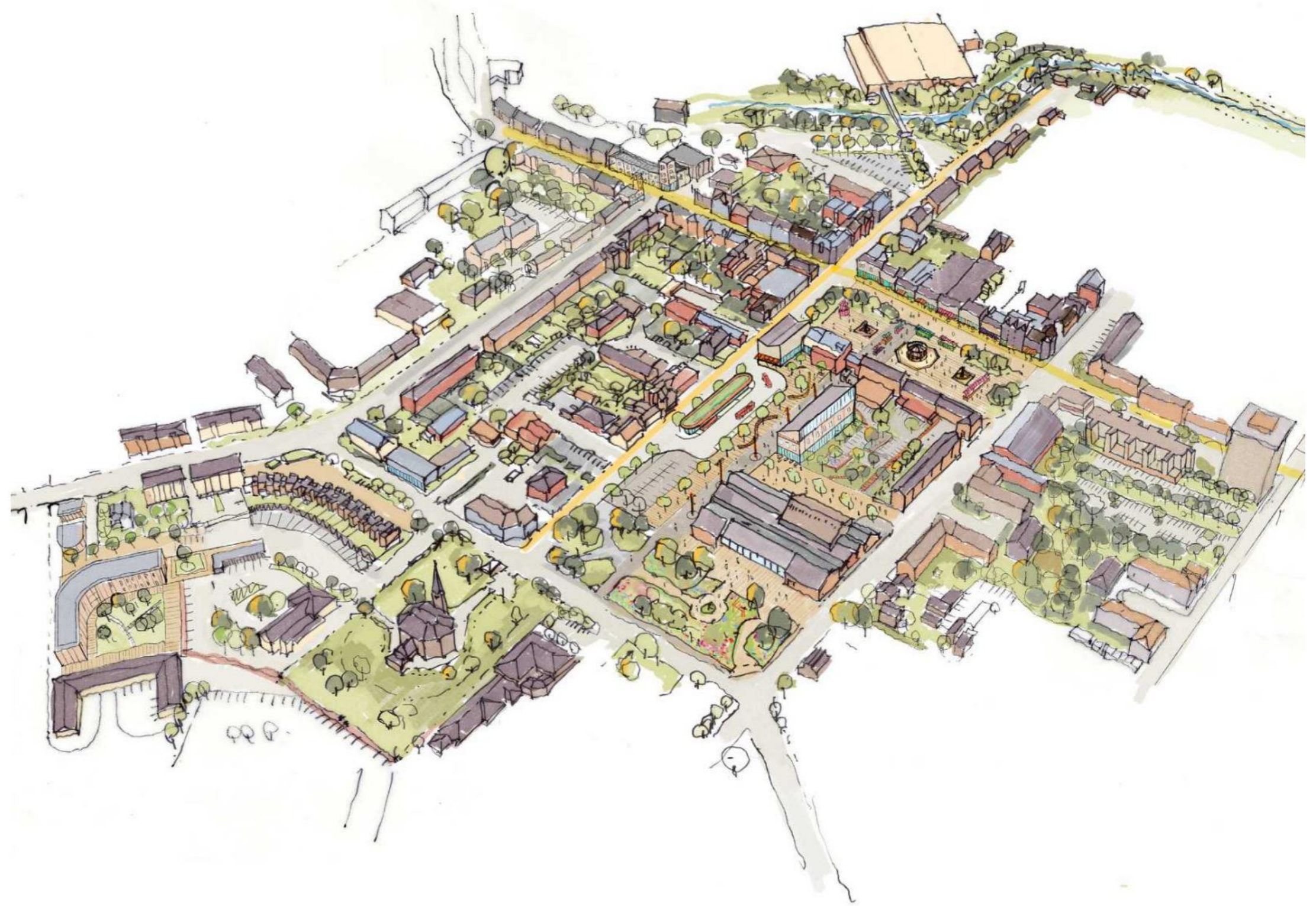
The plan should be seen as flexible in response to funding opportunities and available support. Collaboration is crucial and delivery of priorities will require positive partnership working between the Council, local residents and stakeholders that has been the focus of this plan.

A key element of next steps will be to consider:-

- How best to align the activities of local residents, community groups, landowners and stakeholders to support delivery of actions;
- Available funding streams and how these are best matched to ambitions;
- Additional work needed to prepare proposals and test feasibility of the project ideas.

In doing so it is important that 'early win' projects are identified and delivered to generate momentum and sustain the enthusiasm generated in the production of the plan. These initial projects are likely to align with the key assets within the core of the town centre, including Johnstone Town Hall and the Civic Squares.

The local community, Renfrewshire Council and all of those with an interest in the future of Johnstone town centre will work in partnership to develop and deliver the vision as a catalyst for the next chapter in the story of 'Our Johnstone'.





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