



CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
Background Paper 4

Network of Centres



## Background Paper 4 Network of Centres

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report will present the background and context for Glasgow City Development Plan's Network of Centres policy. It will outline the policy approach taken, highlighting areas where the policy approach remains consistent with City Plan 2, and those areas where a new approach is proposed. It will also highlight progress on the MIR Preferred Options and identify ongoing work which, once completed, will help to further refine the policy approach.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 Since 2005, Glasgow's pattern of retail and commercial activity has been based on a network of centres comprising town centres, other retail and commercial leisure centres and numerous local shopping facilities.

- 2.2 In accordance with national policy, the City's town centres continue to be the preferred locations for retail and commercial development, to maintain accessible and sustainable locations for a wide range of services and goods required by the public. However, despite this policy approach, the combined forces of recession, online shopping and competition from out-of-town retail/leisure centres and stand alone food stores are affecting the vitality and viability of some town centres within Glasgow. They are experiencing issues including:

- Higher vacancy rates;
- Minimum retail thresholds not being met;
- Amenity issues associated with certain uses;
- Poor quality environment; and
- Inadequate public transport accessibility.

- 2.3 These issues are not unique to Glasgow. They are evident throughout the country. The Scottish Government therefore commissioned the preparation of a National Review of Town Centres in Scotland and, based on the findings, produced a Town Centre Action Plan in November 2013. The Action Plan proposes a number of measures to improve the vitality and viability of town centres, including a 'town centre first' principle for all footfall-creating uses. The draft version of the revised Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) also promotes town centres first for a mix of uses. More detail of how this principle will work in practice should be incorporated into the final version of the revised SPP, which is due to be published in June 2014.

- 2.4 In anticipation of this reinforced emphasis on town centres at national policy level, it was agreed that a more refined policy approach should be developed for Glasgow which aims to ensure that all town centres thrive within the network of centres.

### 3.0 National, Strategic and Local Policy Context

The following policy documents have helped to shape the Network of Centres policy:

#### **National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2)**

- 3.1 NPF2's development strategy sets out key aims for Scotland's spatial development to 2030. The following are of relevance to the Network of Centres policy:

- To contribute to a wealthier and fairer Scotland by supporting sustainable economic growth and improved competitiveness and connectivity;
- To help build safer, stronger and healthier communities, by promoting improved opportunities and a better quality of life.

3.2 None of the listed National Developments contained within NPF2 are of specific relevance to this policy.

### **Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)**

3.3 The Scottish Government published SPP in February 2010. It indicates that the role of Development Plans is to identify a network of centres, and explain the role of each centre within that network. It requires town centres to be the preferred locations for retail and commercial leisure development through application of the sequential approach.

3.4 In response to a National Review of Town Centres in Scotland, the Scottish Government produced a Town Centre Action Plan in November 2013. It recommends a 'town centre first' principle which, it is envisaged, will be a principle in favour of town centres for all footfall-creating uses.

3.5 A draft version of the revised SPP was published for consultation in April 2013 and promotes town centres first for a mix of uses including cultural and community facilities, retail, leisure, entertainment, recreation, as well as homes and businesses. The detail of how this principle will work in practice should be incorporated into the finalised version of the revised SPP, which is due to be published in June 2014.

### **The Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (SDP)**

3.6 The SDP highlights Glasgow City Centre as the core of the City Region and Scotland's primary metropolitan centre. It is defined as being at the apex of the network of Strategic Centres, and the SDP requires its strategic role to be safeguarded.

3.7 The SDP also designates the City's 5 Major Town Centres (Shawlands, Partick/Byres Road, Parkhead, Easterhouse and Pollok) as Strategic Centres, to reflect their wider sub-regional catchments. The SDP requires these centres to be protected and enhanced, with a channelling of investment to secure their respective roles, improve their quality of offer, their diversity, their public realm and environment, and their continuing sustainable accessibility.

### **Glasgow City Plan 2**

3.8 In respect of 'Retail and Other Town Centre Uses', City Plan 2's Development Plan Strategy seeks to:

- Advance social renewal, by ensuring retail and other town centre uses are accessible to all residents, regardless of life circumstances;
- Promote sustainability, by promoting town centre locations and encouraging an appropriate range of uses (including retail, community, cultural, leisure, employment, etc.) within them; and
- Improve residents' health by facilitating access by walking, cycling or public transport to retail and other town centre uses.

### **The Local Development Plan for Glasgow: Main Issues Report**

3.9 The Main Issues Report set out a number of issues and preferred options relating to the network of centres, as follows:

- Maintain the City Centre as Scotland's Primary Retail Centre by setting limits on the amount of retail development that is acceptable at locations around the city, outwith the City Centre, and identifying suitable locations for such development.
- Review the Town Centres set out in City Plan 2 in relation to their health, boundaries and potential promotion of other uses;
- Undertake a study to determine the potential impact of identifying a new town centre at Robroyston;
- Review the role of the Other Retail and Commercial Leisure Centres set out in City Plan 2, with a view to clearly identifying the role and function of each;

- No further development of new superstores, outwith town centres, with the exception of those proposals currently with planning consent.

#### 4.0 Glasgow City Development Plan Policy Approach

4.1 To achieve the aims of the City Development Plan's strategy and comply with emerging national policy, the Council has developed a more refined policy approach for the network of centres which aims to ensure that:

- Glasgow City Centre maintains and strengthens its role as the prime retail and commercial leisure location within the City and City Region, whilst also accommodating a mix of other uses.
- Town Centres thrive as vibrant multi-functional destinations, attracting visitors and acting as a focal point for communities;
- Other Retail/Commercial Leisure Centres continue to serve as complementary locations for retail and commercial leisure premises that are too large for town centres and are restricted to sales of bulky goods only; and
- Local Shopping Facilities continue to provide small scale provisions to meet the everyday needs of local communities.

4.2 It is considered that this can be achieved by:

- Defining the specific role and function of each centre within the network and how they can support and complement each other;
- Emphasising the preference for uses likely to generate significant footfall to locate in town centres;
- Protecting the retail function of the City Centre and Major Town Centres;
- Introducing greater flexibility to better support the development of appropriate town centre uses;
- Supporting improved accessibility to the centres by sustainable means; and
- Co-ordinating action to improve the physical fabric of some town centres.

4.3 The following section provides a summary of the work undertaken to date on each element above, and the resulting policy approach. It also highlights additional work required to further refine the policy approach:

#### **Defining the specific role and function of each centre within the network and how they support and complement each other**

4.4 As in City Plan 2, the City's Network of Centres will comprise of Town Centres, Other Retail and Commercial Leisure Centres and Local Shopping Centres (renamed Local Shopping Facilities) with Town Centres being the preferred location for uses likely to generate significant footfall, in line with the sequential approach as set out in Draft SPP. Other Retail and Commercial Leisure Centres will continue to be locations for bulky goods development and large scale commercial leisure uses that cannot be accommodated in town centres. Site specific development opportunities for major retail and commercial leisure proposals will be identified in Supplementary Guidance. Local Shopping Facilities will continue to provide small scale provision to meet the everyday needs of local communities.

4.5 In September/October 2012, the Development Plan team surveyed the retail and commercial outlets in the City Centre plus all Major Town Centres and Local Town Centres which had not been surveyed within the previous six months. The purpose of the survey was to establish the level of vacant units within each centre, and the balance between retail and non-retail uses. Profiles have also been prepared for the City Centre and the Major Town Centres highlighting the issues affecting each centre.

- 4.6 This data has been used to determine the extent to which each centre has changed over a 5 to 10 year period and has provided information which will help determine each centre's role and function within the network). The results also provide a basis from which to conduct a review of the existing policy approach in relation to non-retail uses in Town Centres. The results of this review are discussed below.

**Protecting the retail function of town centres and introducing greater flexibility to better support the development of other uses**

- 4.8 City Plan 2 takes a strict approach to protecting retail uses in town centres. It seeks to maintain 70% Class 1 across town centres and sets out a higher requirement of 80% in Principal Retail Areas and retention of a continuous retail frontage in parts of the City Centre.

- 4.9 The revised approach set out in the proposed City Development Plan's Supplementary Guidance is as follows:

*Glasgow City Centre*

- 4.10 The requirement to maintain a continuous retail frontage within the City Centre Level 1 Primary Retail Streets (as designated in City Plan 2) will be retained with an adjustment to the boundary at the western end of Sauchiehall Street to reflect the Business Improvement District (BID) boundary, which sets out a vision for that part of Sauchiehall Street (between Rose Street and Charing Cross) as an entertainment destination. Queen Street and Gordon Street will no longer be designated as level 2 Primary Retail Streets as the survey results show there are now lower levels of retail uses in these streets.

- 4.11 A more flexible approach will be taken for non-retail uses proposed in areas of the City Centre outwith the Primary Retail Streets. Supplementary Guidance (ie. City Centre Strategic and Local Development Frameworks) will outline criteria for such proposals to be assessed on their merits.

*Major Town Centres*

- 4.12 It is proposed to retain the City Plan 2 minimum threshold of 70% retail use within the Major Town Centres, however if future analysis of the distribution of retail/non-retail uses in these centres demonstrates that this level of retail use is no longer a realistic aspiration then alternative policy approaches will be considered. This may include the designation of new Principal Retail Areas where the retail offer in a centre will be focussed. This approach will allow the retail function of Major Town Centres to be protected whilst also introducing diversity, in accordance with national policy.

- 4.13 A minimum retail threshold of 80% will continue to apply within the Principal Retail Areas in Partick/Byres Road to prevent the further encroachment of non-retail uses that can harm local amenity and undermine the retail function of this centre.

- 4.14 Ongoing monitoring of land use and vacancy rates in all Major Town Centres will continue on an annual basis.

*Local Town Centres*

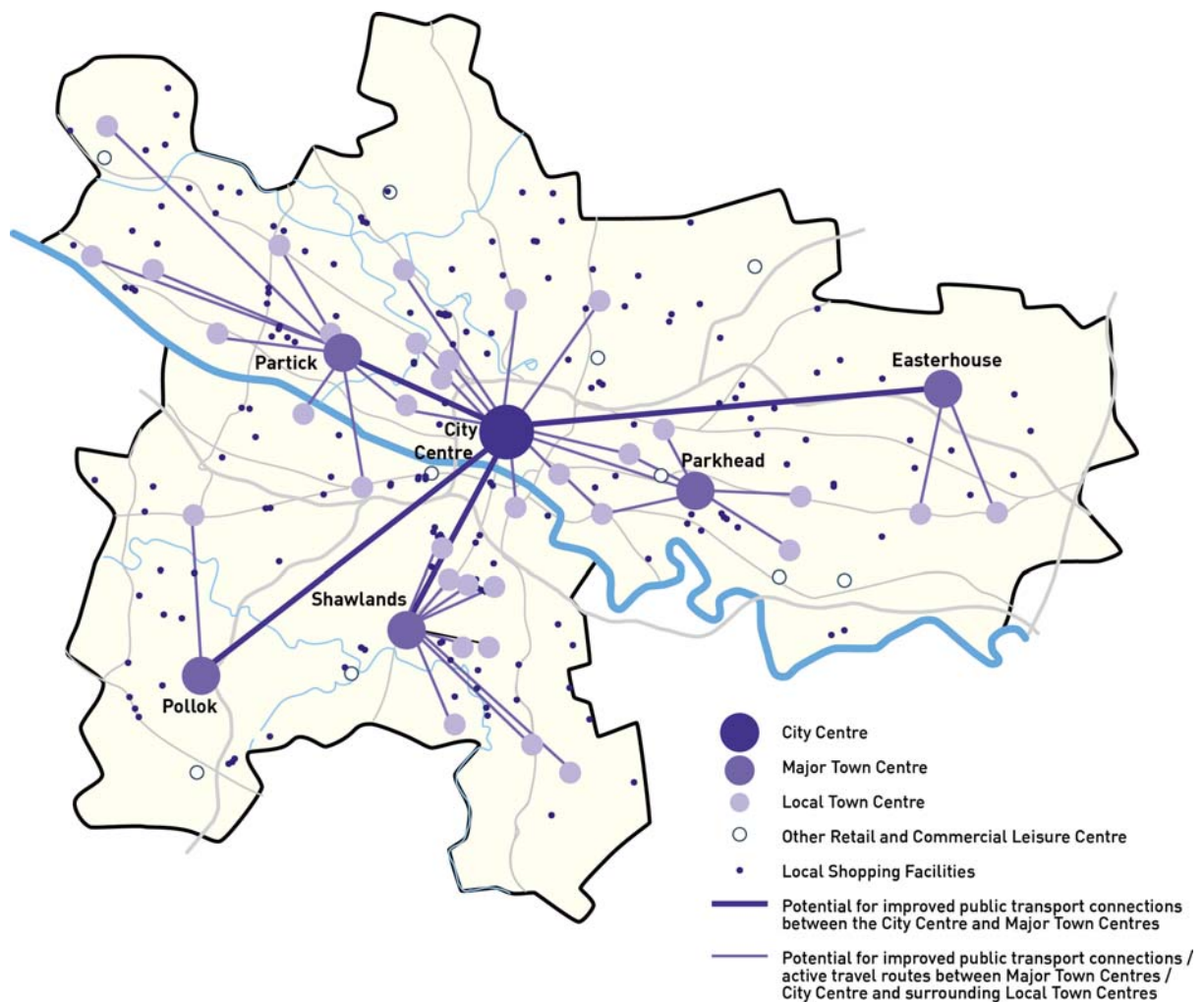
- 4.15 The policy framework applied to the smaller Local Town Centres will be modified where appropriate in order to better reflect the draft SPP emphasis on promoting diverse uses in town centres.

- 4.16 An analysis of the land use mix in the Local Town Centres is scheduled to be undertaken Summer 2014 with a view to classifying them according to their function. Supplementary Guidance will set out the policy approach to non-retail uses in each Local Town Centre based on these categories. The current minimum 70% retail threshold will continue to be applied in centres that retain a strong retail base. In centres where the retail offer is concentrated in a part of the centre work will be progressed to designate new Principal Retail Areas where the

70% threshold will apply with a lower level of retail use acceptable outside the PRA. Centres with no significant retail function will be subject to a more flexible approach.

**Supporting improved accessibility to the centres by sustainable means**

- 4.17 It is the aim of the City Development Plan that all citizens of Glasgow will have good access by sustainable means to a range of goods and services, by ensuring that all sectors of the City are within easy reach of the hierarchy of town centres.
- 4.18 The hierarchy of town centres has been mapped with public transport links added from the City Centre to all Major Town Centres, and from Major Town Centres / City Centre to the nearest Local Town Centres. The intention is to support the improvement of public transport connections and active travel networks between the hierarchy of centres so that each sector of the City is adequately served.



- 4.19 It is proposed to undertake a review of the spatial distribution and accessibility of the hierarchy of town centres to identify where residential communities are currently underserved and to support, if required, the designation of new or expanded town centres.
- 4.20 There also opportunities to improve accessibility to town centres through application of CDP 12: Delivering Development.

**Co-ordinating action to improve the physical fabric of some town centres**

4.21 The City Development Plan Action Programme sets out a schedule for the preparation of Town Centre Action Plans (including timescales for completion) for those centres where improvement of the physical environment is a priority.

## 5.0 Progress on the MIR Preferred Options

5.1 The Main Issues Report highlighted a number of preferred options to take forward in the new City Development Plan in relation to the network of centres. This section reviews the progress of those preferred options and provides justifications for those that have not been progressed.

### **Maintain the City Centre as Scotland's Primary Retail Centre by setting limits on the amount of retail development that is acceptable at locations around the city, outwith the City Centre, and identifying suitable locations for such development.**

5.2 The protection and enhancement of the City Centre's retail function is a key principle of the City Development Plan, and the current precautionary approach to major retail proposals outside the City Centre will be retained. The MIR Preferred Option was to set limits on the amount of retail floorspace that can be provided outwith the City Centre, however this option was predicated on the completion of a retail floorspace capacity study at the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan level. This work has not been approved by the SDP constituent authorities and consequently the City Development Plan will not set floorspace limits. Nevertheless there remains a commitment at the strategic level to undertaking a capacity analysis focussing on the impact of retail development within the GCVAs on the City Centre and it is envisaged that the findings of this will be incorporated in Supplementary Guidance when it is available. At the local level, it is proposed to undertake a study which focuses on the impact on the city centre of development at other major shopping destinations both within Glasgow and elsewhere.

### **Review the Town Centres set out in City Plan 2 in relation to their health, boundaries and potential promotion of other uses**

5.3 Town Centre reviews will be carried out for all town centres to analyse how they are performing and to identify any concerns relating to their vitality and viability. These will include analysis of the following: geographical boundaries, mix of uses, retail offer, occupancy levels, and public transport accessibility. Data captured will be used to help determine the predominant roles and functions of Town Centres.

### **Undertake a study to determine the potential impact of identifying a new town centre at Robroyston**

5.4 It is not proposed to designate any new town centres in the City Development Plan. The MIR identified a need to undertake a study to explore the potential for a Town Centre at Robroyston to serve the Robroyston/Millerston CGA. The Council has prepared a Robroyston Town Centre Masterplan Brief that is intended to guide the production of a Masterplan setting out the location and layout of a new town centre. As yet no Town Centre Masterplan has been prepared and, in light of this, it is considered that it would be premature to designate a town centre in the Plan.

### **Review the role of the Other Retail and Commercial Leisure Centres set out in City Plan 2, with a view to clearly identifying the role and function of each.**

5.5 Land use surveys were carried out in 2013 at all nine of the Other Retail and Commercial Leisure Centres. This information will help to define the role and function of each centre. The policy approach taken in City Plan 2 will be retained, whereby the sequential test will be applied for all major retail and commercial leisure developments and sales will be restricted to goods types and formats that cannot be easily accommodated in a town centre.

### **No further development of new superstores, outwith town centres, with the exception of those proposals currently with planning consent.**

5.6 It is considered there is no basis in SPP for a moratorium on new superstore development. Proposals will therefore continue to be assessed on their merits.



## **6.0 Additional Work**

- 6.1 As outlined in sections 4 and 5, a series of reviews will be undertaken to inform the Council's future approach to the management of the Network of Centres. The results of these reviews will help to develop a more refined policy approach which builds on the unique strengths of individual town centres; provides opportunities to improve the physical quality of centres; and incorporates measures to improve accessibility to them.

## **7.0 References**

### **Policy documents**

National Planning Framework 2 – The Scottish Government, June 2009  
Scottish Planning Policy – The Scottish Government, February 2010  
Draft Scottish Planning Policy – The Scottish Government, April 2013  
Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan – Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Planning Authority, approved May 2012  
Glasgow City Plan 1, adopted August 2005  
Glasgow City Plan 2, adopted December 2009  
The Local Development Plan for Glasgow: Main Issues Report, Autumn 2011

### **Other Relevant Documents**

Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres – National Review of Town Centres External Advisory Group, June 2013  
Town Centre Action Plan: The Scottish Government response to the National Review of Town Centres – The Scottish Government, November 2013