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PART ONE THE HEART OF BALBRIGGAN



1 The heart of Balbriggan

The town centre is the heart of Balbriggan and a healthy town needs a healthy heart. A key aim of the plan is to build on the positive aspects of the town's natural setting and topography, links to the wider landscape and environs, natural and built heritage, diversity and mix of uses, in order to make it a more attractive place in which to live, work and visit.

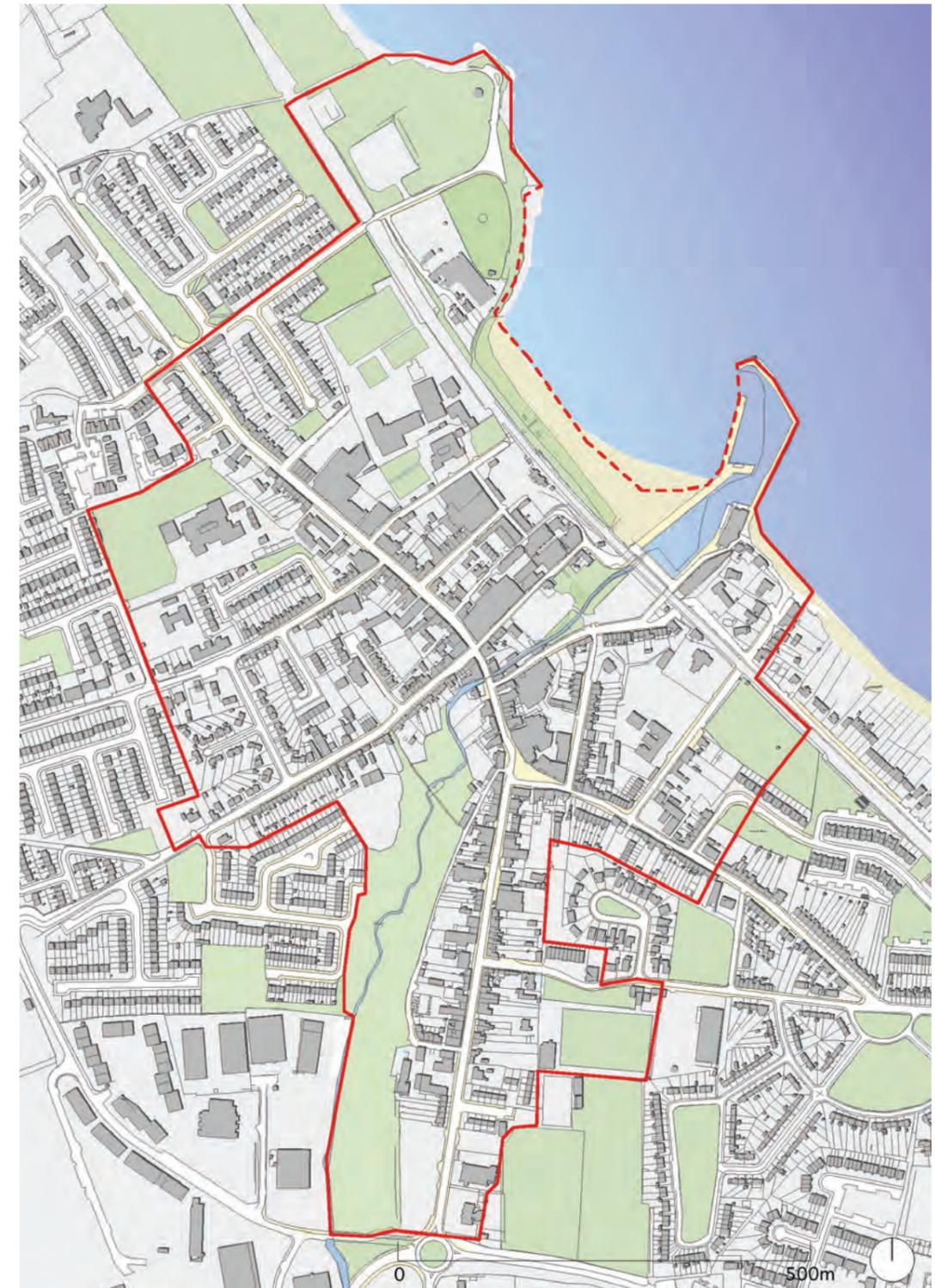
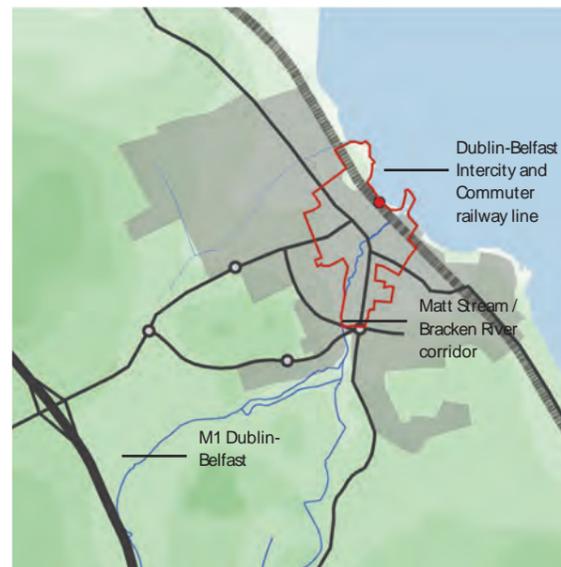
1.1 About the plan

The Heart of Balbriggan: A plan for streets and public spaces in the Town Centre (The plan) is the result of a collaborative process. It presents an overall vision and strategy for improving streets and open spaces in the town centre, informed by public consultation and underpinned by a detailed strategy framework and priority projects.

The plan was prepared in the context of the existing, statutory planning and development framework for the town, the issues and aspirations identified by local businesses and the local community, and the findings of the consultant team for the project.

The plan will act as a guide for future public space projects and proposals in the town centre, alongside other plans and programmes (such as the Fingal Development Plan), and it will provide a resource for local groups and organisations to support their own plans and projects.

For the purposes of this plan, streets and open spaces include public pavements, carriageways, squares, parks and car parks (and the links between them). The building fronts enclosing the public spaces contribute much to the life and character of public streets and open spaces and they are considered in this plan as an integral part of streets and public spaces. Further detail on background, the current planning and development context, the historical development, heritage and qualities of the town centre and the consultation process and outputs are provided in the appendix.



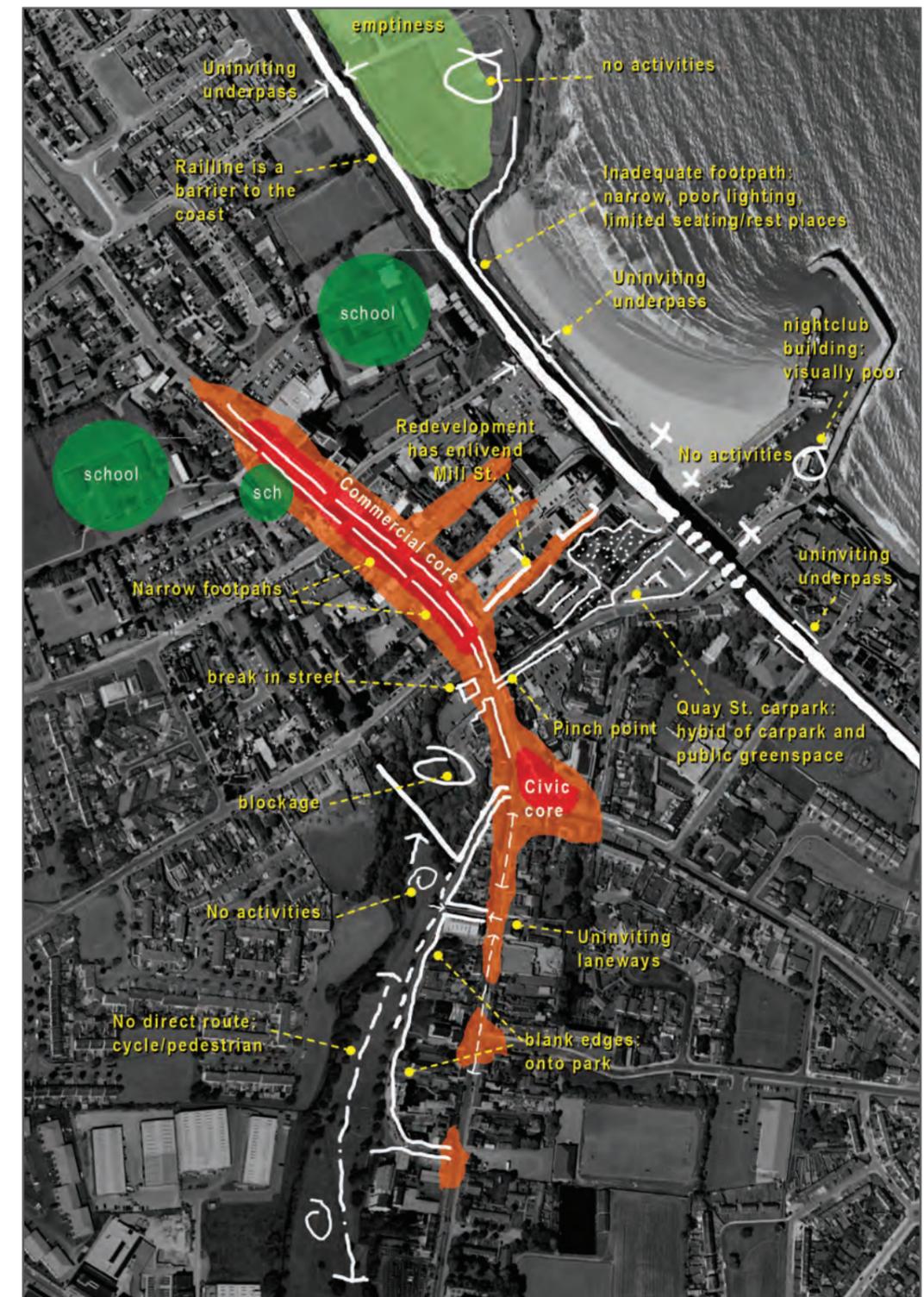
The Heart of Balbriggan study area and surrounding context

Balbriggan town centre is a place of unique character and qualities, held together by a strong, diverse and coherent community. Its historical development is unique and this is evident in its rich natural, built and cultural heritage. However, there are large areas of under-utilised space (including Mill Park, the Harbour, the Beach and Martello Tower area and Viaduct car park), which are poorly-connected to the town or to each other, yet which have considerable potential to be improved for the benefit of the town as a whole.

1.2 Participation and consultation

Community participation is an important part of the plan-making process. It was crucial in identifying the main qualities and issues facing the town centre, establishing a broad, shared vision and pointing the way to the plan's strategy and proposals. The process included collaborative workshops. School children were also involved, as part of a related initiative led by the Chamber of Commerce. Several themes emerged from the consultation process:

- Presence of unique local character and community spirit;
- Lack of free parking;
- Benefit of high quality transport infrastructure and connections;
- Under-use of local green spaces (beach, harbour, Bracken River corridor / canal, Martello Tower);
- Need for better links between green and urban open spaces;
- Need for better signage to promote heritage/cultural/amenity walks;
- Need to promote viaduct and harbour area and improve visibility from town centre;
- Poor physical and/or visual access and connections in some areas, particularly between the busier main streets and the Beach/Harbour and surrounding residential areas;
- Low levels of business or social activity on some streets, particularly on some of the secondary streets off the main streets;
- Issues with the quality of existing development and the need for redevelopment of key sites and areas;
- The presence of some empty, uninviting or under-used public spaces; and
- Over-dominance of car traffic and parking in certain locations.



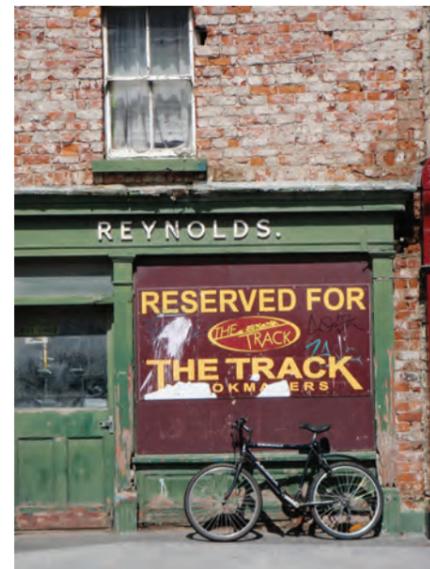
Summary of 'headline' issues

1 The heart of Balbriggan

The following aspects of the town centre were consistently highlighted as exploited or unexploited assets:

- The beach, the harbour, coastal walks and Martello Tower;
- Local businesses and community;
- The Main Street and Square;
- The Town Park; and
- The significant heritage buildings and structures (such as the Courthouse, Churches and railway viaduct).

The urban analysis and the consultation process also highlighted the town centre's major assets, such as its heritage, streets and landmark buildings, the harbour and seafront. Surprisingly, many of these are, as yet, untapped or not fully exploited. There are also significant issues surrounding these assets which need to be addressed. All of this points to significant potential for the town centre to improve and flourish.



Public and stakeholder consultation as key stages in the development of the Plan

Images from the community consultation workshop that was held on the 19th October 2010