

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Brief**

Ferguson McIlveen LLP was commissioned in January 2005, by Armagh City and District Council, under the sponsorship of the DETI and the EU Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme, Measure 4 – Local Economic Development, to carry out a town centre development study in Markethill. The study coincides with the preparation of the Armagh Area Plan 2018, for which DOE Planning Service is carrying out town and city centre studies, which will consider retail provision and the general health of town centres.

The brief sought:

- to support and enhance DOE Planning Service work in connection with City and Town Centre Studies
- to identify and formulate a vision for the centre of Markethill
- to provide a detailed proposal and course of action
- a partnership approach involving Council, Planning Service and local Community Groups
- analysis of the town centre, summary of consultation and an action plan with funding sources and delivery agents

### **1.2 Background of Markethill**

The town of Markethill is situated around 7 miles from Armagh City. Markethill, with the main street ascending to the summit of a hill, grew up around the demesne of the Acheson family, who received the land as a plantation grant from King James I. The first castle was destroyed in 1641, but was replaced by a house within the demesne now known as Gosford Forest Park. The present Gosford Castle was built in neo-Norman style, between 1830 and the 1850's. The castle was recently sold to a private developer, and its restoration is expected to include the creation of a number of residences. The demesne is publicly accessible as a forest park.

G.H. Bassett noted, in 1888, that Markethill had been injured by the concentration of market interests in the larger towns nearby such as Armagh and Portadown. However, the town overcame this decline and despite its small size is considered to be a flourishing and important local service centre with a number of light industries and a busy cattle market.

## **I.3 Policy Context**

### **a. Regional Development Strategy 2025**

Although Markethill is not specifically mentioned in the document, there are a number of strategies, which will have an effect on the town. The strategy, through various policies, aims to support smaller towns, making them more sustainable, such as Objective SPG-RNI 3: *support the network of service centres based on main towns, small towns and villages in Rural Northern Ireland*. This policy aims to develop a network of strong main towns as the major locations providing employment, services and a range of cultural and leisure amenities for both townspeople and rural communities. ENV 3.3: *Conserve the character of cities, towns and villages* will control and manage development within settlements, emphasising local identity and sense of place; and encouraging the retention of locally important buildings and features.

### **b. Armagh Area Plan 2004**

This plan was published in 1995 and aimed to consolidate Markethill's role as a small, but prosperous, locally important rural service centre. The 1991 census put the population at

around 1250, and the plan aimed to accommodate growth up to 1500.

The Department zoned around 15.3 ha of land for housing in the town to accommodate this growth. With regard to recreational areas the council proposed to extend the existing facilities by 1.2ha. The Department suggested that the town was already well provided for in terms of open space, in view of its proximity to Gosford Forest Park. A total of 2.1ha of land was zoned for industry on sites at Fair Green Road and Green Road.

The town centre was to be the location of new commercial activities, including shops and offices. It was noted however that commercial development would be discouraged beyond the brow of the hill in Main Street in order to preserve its pleasant residential nature. Traffic congestion was not considered to be a problem in the town centre although it did get busy during market days. A site was identified for potential future car parking, but was not zoned at the time.

### **c. Armagh Area Plan Issues Paper 2018**

This paper notes that the population in the town has increased by around 16% from 1971-2001, to a current figure of 1290. The number of dwellings in the town has increased from 382 to 540 in the same period. It is also noted that the town has seen a higher rate of growth in recent years. The new plan will aim to continue to support Markethill in its rural service centre role.

The paper highlights the fact that the town benefited significantly during the last plan period from private investment and regeneration initiatives. However, approximately 10ha of the 15 hectares that was allocated for housing in the 2004 plan remains undeveloped. The sites designated for industry have been largely developed, and the new plan will reassess remaining undeveloped land and whether more will be required.

#### **1.4 Purpose of Study**

This Development Study has been commissioned by Armagh City and District Council to draw together local opinion as to how Markethill should be shaped in the future, and has been prepared in conjunction with local community representatives,

Councillors, local school students and the general public. The consultation process identified the strengths and weaknesses in Markethill and opportunities to build on these strengths to make the town a more vibrant place to live, work and visit. The document deals with issues such as urban design, vehicle movement, parking, development constraints and poor environmental quality, and suggests actions and ideas to rectify current problems. These actions are then prioritised and possible funding sources are identified.

The recommendations within this study are intended to generate debate and to initiate constructive thinking about the future of the town. It is intended to act as a framework to guide potential investors and developers, as well as being the Council's submission to Planning Service by way of input into the preparation of the Armagh Area Plan 2018. The proposals, actions and recommendations within this document will be further investigated by Planning Service, who may or may not incorporate them within the forthcoming Area Plan. The Area Plan, once published, will be the main policy tool through which these proposals will be implemented.

## 2.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

In preparing this document, the following consultations were carried out.

- a. Meeting and walkabout held with community representatives and local Councillors on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005.
- b. Student photographic exercise, April 2005 – pupils from Markethill High School were supplied with disposable cameras and asked to photograph positive and negative elements of the urban area within Markethill and document their opinions.
- c. Public Exhibition and Questionnaires – draft ideas showing a number of potential projects in Markethill were displayed in Old Courthouse from 17<sup>th</sup> June 2005 to 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. Questionnaires were supplied seeking opinions on the contents of the display. Questionnaires and draft ideas were also sent to local businesses for their views.
- d. Drop-in Session – a Ferguson McIlveen representative was available on at the Old Courthouse on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005

between 5pm and 8pm to meet with local people and discuss the draft proposals.

Issues raised during these consultations have been incorporated within the document as much as possible. Details of the key issues raised are contained within the Appendices.

### **3.0 APPRAISALS**

#### **3.1 Townscape Appraisal**

Markethill developed on a crossroads with Armagh to the north, Newry to the south, Keady to the west and Tandragee to the east. Main Street is a wide street with 2-3 storey buildings on either side. The buildings are mostly of high quality with a small percentage of vacancies. From its junction with Newry Street, Main Street rises to a high point at the Northern Bank. This part of the street is mostly retail and other commercial and entertainment uses. The character of the street changes north of the bank, where residential uses prevail. The Old Courthouse is a dominant building in the town and forms an impressive entrance feature when approaching from the north. Newry Street is the other main entrance to the town centre and is also a residential street. The scale and layout of the buildings at this end form a less impressive entrance to the town. The secondary streets of Keady Street and Fair Green Road are quieter than Main Street, but are the locations for a church, a number of retail uses and small business units. This part of the town centre is not used to its maximum potential and a number of vacant sites exist. The economy of the town to a

large extent depends on the existence of the livestock mart, which has developed on a prominent site at the crossroads. While the use is important to the town the building is rather utilitarian and results in a less than attractive vista along lower Main Street. Overall the town centre is fairly compact, with the main commercial interest existing in lower Main Street, Keady Street and Fair Green Road.

#### **3.2 SWOT**

The following list is compiled from the results of the consultations and general observation.

##### **a. Strengths**

- Pleasant environment as result of the bypass which has stemmed heavy through traffic
- Major shops exist that attract people from outside the town
- Livestock market draws in trade
- Visually attractive town
- Town benefits from activity at Gosford Park during the summer
- Desirable location to live, with good quality of built environment

**b. Weaknesses**

- Inadequate parking facilities
- Lack of community facilities, no community centre
- Problem of severe congestion when the Mart is in operation
- Mart and PSNI station is considered to be a visually unattractive element of the town
- Relatively isolated, need for improved public transport links
- Need for more facilities such as restaurants to improve evening activity
- Need for better access into the town, as well as improved signage
- Need more residents who work in the town, currently heading towards a dormitory settlement
- Areas of dereliction creeping in, which is starting to detract from the town

**c. Opportunities**

- Use of PSNI site to allow expansion of Mart to relieve congestion and maximise its use
- Creation of better linkages with Gosford Park to help generate greater benefit from it

- Improved signage within and outside the town to attract more people into the area.
- Land to the rear of Main Street at Fair Green developed as a key car park
- Development of old Railway Yard

**d. Threats**

- Continued development as a dormitory town will have a negative impact
- Congestion and access problems to the market reduce its potential
- Increase in vacant sites and dereliction reducing the visual quality and vitality of the town

In summary, it is important to retain Markethill's status as a vibrant and popular market town. It provides attractions such as the agricultural Mart and a number of popular shops, but needs to ensure that this potential is marketed and maximised, through better signage, parking and access. There is an opportunity with the PSNI site to enhance the efficiency of the Mart. Development of residential areas should be another priority to accommodate pressure for growth, but this should be accompanied by more sites for

business and industrial use, to increase employment opportunities and limit the number of commuter residents. There is an opportunity to improve links between the town and Gosford Park, which would be of considerable benefit to the visitor economy of Markethill.

### 3.3 Converting Weaknesses to Strengths

<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Action</b>
Inadequate parking provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better linkage required from existing car parks to retail areas</li> <li>- Designated car parking for shop staff to reduce congestion</li> </ul>
Poor access to shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problem that is exacerbated by lack of parking, again better pedestrian links to commercial areas will help to reduce this</li> </ul>
Lack of community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider development of community centre/leisure centre/recreation spaces in the town</li> </ul>
Congestion caused by farmers Mart and visual appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dedicated car park for the Mart with enforcement of its use on market days, PSNI site presents an opportunity for expansion</li> <li>- Redesign of the façade of the Mart in a style that compliments the local character</li> </ul>
Lack of public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion with Translink to assess provision of bus services into the town</li> </ul>
Few facilities and lack of evening and weekend activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better links to Gosford Forest Park to increase benefit from visitors that it attracts</li> <li>- Improved signage for the town and advertisement /marketing of its assets</li> <li>- Retention and concentration of retail and entertainment facilities in key areas such as Main Street, Fair Green Road, and Keady Street</li> <li>- Development of sites such as the Old Courthouse to operate as a visitor attraction</li> </ul>
Increasing areas of dereliction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rezoning of sites, and incentives provided to redevelop them</li> <li>- Promotion of regeneration initiatives and provision of local design guides for future development</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify derelict buildings on Main Street and redevelop for business and retail use</li> </ul>
<p>Becoming a dormitory settlement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More emphasis on encouraging businesses to move in to the area and provide local jobs</li> <li>- Need to ensure that housing growth is matched by economic growth</li> <li>- Schemes to ensure that more local jobs are provided at new business units, such as the ones at Fair Green Road</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Matching Strengths with Opportunities

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Pleasant environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extension of the EI scheme to ensure continuation of high quality environment throughout the town and enhanced maintenance of existing streetscape and furniture</li> </ul>
Major shops in the area which are a significant attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More coordinated marketing to encourage further trade into the town</li> </ul>
Agricultural Mart provides trade and interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion of the Mart to expand car parking availability and improve access</li> <li>- Renovation of façade to enhance the local character and provide a focal point in the town</li> </ul>
Desirable location to live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in residential housing availability</li> <li>- Match this increase with economic growth in terms of business and commercial development</li> <li>- Improve and support community development and facilities</li> </ul>
Proximity to Gosford Forest Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linkage of the park and town to provide mutual benefit by developing it as a destination attraction</li> </ul>

## **4.0 THE WAY FORWARD**

### **4.1 Key Themes**

The following key themes have emerged from the public consultations, the SWOT analysis and general observations by Ferguson McIlveen LLP. They form the basis for the Action Plan under Section 6.

#### ***a. Retaining a Vibrant Market Town***

One of the main strengths of Markethill is its market town status. It acts as a local service centre and the livestock mart, the Old Courthouse and the major retail uses are significant attractions within the town. The success of these uses should be capitalised upon in order to further develop the service centre role. There are a number of opportunity sites within the town centre that could be put to better use. In addition to this, a well defined town centre boundary, which helps to concentrate retail development into the lower part of Main Street, will consolidate the existing retail provision in this part of the town and go some way to eliminating vacancies. Proposals for retail and office uses outside this boundary should be resisted, so as to help provide a focus for such uses on the Fair Green and lower Main Street. A critical mass of office and retail uses within these streets will

help maintain and develop further the vibrancy that already exists in Markethill.

#### ***b. Capturing Visitor Potential***

Markethill has key assets, which as mentioned above, contribute to its service centre role and should be used to reinforce a visitor-based economy in the town. These include Gosford Forest Park, the Old Courthouse, major shops, nature reserve and the Mart. Gosford Forest Park is separated from Markethill by the bypass. The link between the two should be made stronger, so the visitors to the Park (especially weekend visitors), also make use of the Town's other facilities. Gosford Castle and the caravan park are other key attractions within the Park. Their existence will attract people to the area in the first instance. The sale of the castle to a private developer means that its renovation is guaranteed. There should also be an aim to improve the caravan park. Consultations with locals have suggested that the existence of the bypass has helped improve the quality of the environment on Main Street. However, there are potential visitors to the town who are not stopping, maybe as a result of lack of knowledge of the town. Signage and

attractive entrance features, or buildings, could help to inform passers by of the facilities within the town.

### **c. Traffic and Parking**

Due to the bypass, Markethill in general does not suffer from through traffic problems, such as high traffic speeds or congestion. The main problems are people wanting to park on the street outside shops, especially on Keady Street and Fair Green Road, and the lack of convenient off-street car parks. There are car parks within the town centre, but these are not used to their full potential. There is a conflict at the roundabout at the lower end of Main Street between vehicles using the roundabout and those accessing the mart. Consideration should be given as to how this junction can be improved. Complete redesign is not popular with local people, who state that it should be redesigned for aesthetic reasons only.

### **d. Building on Townscape Quality**

The town centre is generally regarded as being very attractive with a number of quality buildings, well presented shops and other uses and pleasant street layout. It is vital that in the first instance that this quality is protected through

planning policy and perhaps the designation of an Area of Townscape Character, and then built upon in order to create a quality town centre, that in turn helps to attract visitors. Significant buildings such as the Old Courthouse need to be promoted and the floodlighting of such buildings would highlight their importance in the streetscape. Negative elements within this quality environment have been identified by local people as being the PSNI site, the Mart building and to a lesser degree, security gates and appearance of footpaths. There are also a number of underused or derelict sites that detract from the appearance of the town. Opportunities should be created to form civic space wherever possible. Aesthetic improvements to the roundabout should be considered if redevelopment is not feasible. Any consideration for an EI scheme along Main Street needs to ensure that a consistent appearance along the length of the Street, from the northern entrance to the lower end at the Mart, is created. The hotel site is a key site on an important entrance to the town, and its redevelopment with quality landmark buildings is essential.

## 4.2 Vision

The vision for Markethill recognises the key assets which the town possesses and aims to protect and build on these. Significant change is not proposed for the town and uses such as the Livestock Mart are considered to be vital to the success of the town and should therefore be protected.

*By 2018 Markethill has built on its success as an attractive market town. The redeveloped livestock market is now an attractive focal point in the town and has allowed for an area of civic space to be created in the Square. Links with Gosford Forest Park have improved and the town acts as the key service centre for those using the park. This has led to an increase in restaurants and other evening activities. Improved parking facilities and signage have encouraged people to park off the main streets and have assisted in the overall physical improvement of the town.*

## 4.3 Strategy

In achieving this vision for Markethill, the emphasis is on improving the appearance of what currently exists and creating a better planned town with fewer conflicts between land uses. The Themes above are the main issues that need to be addressed over the next 15 years plus, in order to go some way to realising the full potential of Markethill. This Strategy summarises the main actions needed and the proposals provide ideas as to how the town may develop.

The realisation of the vision should therefore be seen as a series of steps. In the first instance, the improvement and protection of the existing townscape is vital to attracting more visitors and further investment. Environmental improvement is needed for Main Street and Newry Street. Such improvements should consider entrances, footpaths, security gates and parking bays. Buildings can also be improved through grants for painting of facades and improvements to window displays to eliminate vacant appearance. These measures are immediate cosmetic actions that can increase confidence in a town and attract investment.

Planning policy also has a role to play in the appearance of town centres and ensuring retailing is the main use. Design guides should be produced to ensure that any new development is not only sympathetic to the town, but actually contributes to the quality of the streetscape. Consideration should also be given to the designation of the town centre as an Area of Townscape Character, which will assist in protecting the character of the area and promote quality design. Designation of a town centre boundary that will concentrate commercial development in the lower part of Main Street, Keady Street and Fair Green Road will help to rejuvenate the town centre.

The EI scheme should also deal with on street parking and signage. It is suggested that the Commons be developed into a formal car park and that the car park to the rear of the Corner Bar be given much improved and more legible access onto Main Street. This should be investigated further in a specific study, which will take into consideration landowner and local resident viewpoints. Any improvements to the provision of parking should happen in tandem with the introduction of parking enforcement, which in effect enforces parking on the street while at the same time

offering attractive alternatives for off-street parking. Congestion caused by on-street parking is not a major problem for Markethill, but ensuring that all day workers and shoppers to the town, park in dedicated car parks, will mean that the streets can be more pedestrian friendly.

The longer-term goal for the town should be the redevelopment of the two key sites in the town, namely the former hotel site, the PSNI/ Mart site and to a lesser extent the Corner Bar site. Council should ensure that these sites are identified as opportunity sites in the Area Plan. Development briefs should be prepared for each of these sites, which highlight the issues described in the Proposals section below. The development of these sites in a manner similar to that shown, will tie all the other environmental improvements together and complete the main physical improvements to the town centre.

Allied with the physical improvements to the town, better links to Gosford Forest Park are needed in order to develop Markethill further as a resort town. The main products on offer are the caravan park and Gosford Castle, and it is important to ensure that both these are of the highest

standard so as to retain visitor interest in the park. It is understood that the Castle is to be redeveloped for residential use, most likely holiday homes. It will therefore offer more in terms of tourist potential when complete. However it is important to ensure that any future additional development in connection with the castle is to the benefit of Markethill. Links to the town are therefore vitally important. Signage is a basic requirement but ease of physical movement is the main goal, and consideration should be given in the long term to create a new junction, (perhaps roundabout), linking the Northern entrance of Markethill directly into the park. In the long term perhaps a bridge, or underpass, may be possible.

**5.0 OPPORTUNITY SITES/ PROPOSALS**

**5.1 Opportunity Sites**

Opportunity sites, as highlighted in this report are not an indication of the final version of what is going to happen or likely to happen up to 2018. That will be the remit of the Armagh Area Plan 2018, which may take on board the issues raised within this report. For the purposes of this report, opportunity sites could be considered as follows:

*Under-utilised sites or contain uses, which could be relocated to make way for a more appropriate activity in order to achieve an overall vision for the area as a whole. There is however, no presumption that all or even any of the land uses in the area will definitely change.*

Figure 1 indicates a number of suggested opportunity sites for the central area of Markethill. Figure 1 also shows a red line representing a suggested town centre boundary. This boundary has been defined on the basis of the existing concentration of town centre uses. Its designation is important in order to focus future retail and office development within the main streets in the traditional commercial heart of the city.

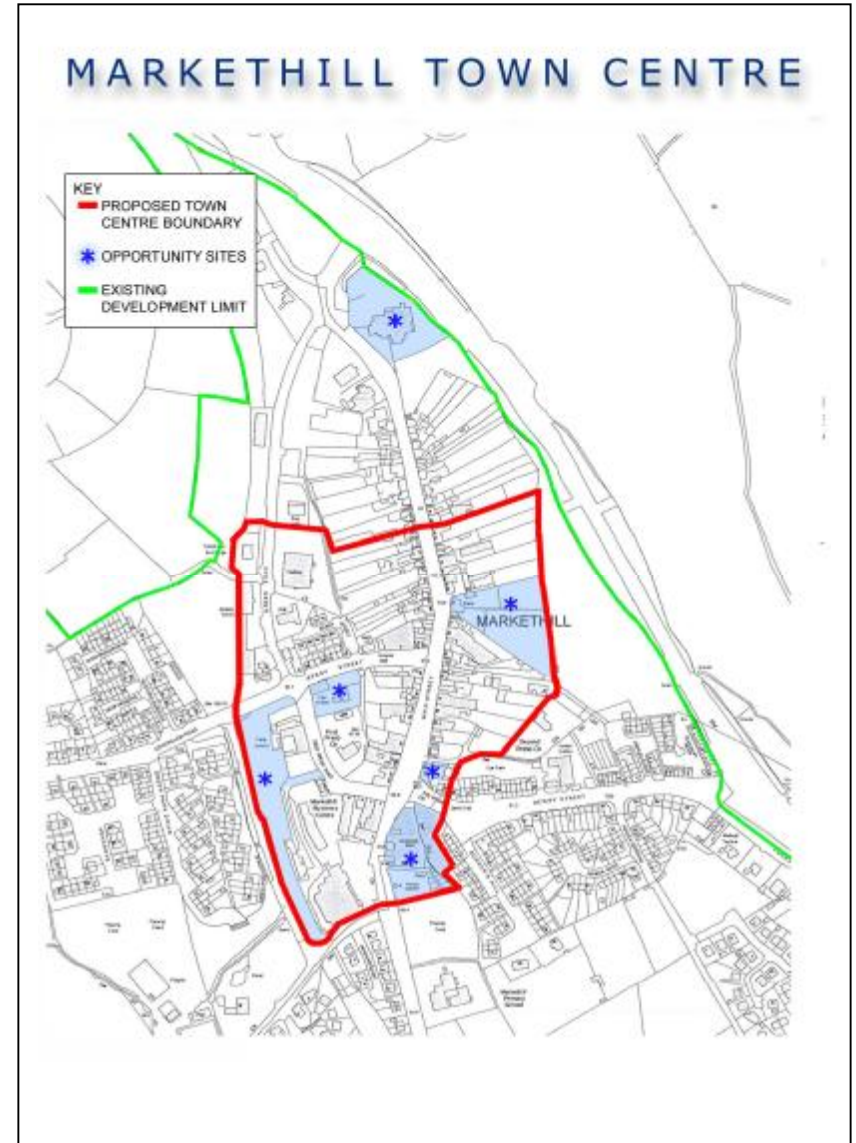


Figure 1 – Opportunity Sites and Town Centre Boundary

**a. Former Hotel Site**

In line with capturing visitor potential, this site has a key role to play. It is a key landmark site and, while it is not within the town centre, its redevelopment will have an impact on the potential success or otherwise of the town centre. More detail of the potential development of this part of the town is provided in section 5.2.

**b. Fair Green**

This is an area of common land to the rear of Main Street. It has a derelict appearance and is sometimes used for informal car parking. It has good links to Main Street and is close to two major retail uses. This site should be developed as a formal car park, perhaps coupled with small commercial use.

**c. Former Railway Yard**

This is a derelict site behind the business units on Fair Green Road. It is a suitable site for residential use or mixed residential and commercial use. Car parking within the site is essential so as to prevent further parking, and thus congestion, on Fair Green Road.

**d. Northern Bank**

This is a site of just over 1 hectare in area which includes the existing Northern Bank building and the field to the rear. It is on the northern edge of the proposed town centre boundary and should be considered for retail use to the front with housing and parking to the rear.

**e. Corner Bar**

The use of this site as a public house is appropriate to the location and, if possible such use should be retained. The appearance of the building could be radically improved to reflect the importance of this corner site. Given the scale of the buildings further up Main Street, it could accommodate a 3-storey building. The most important element of any redevelopment will be the creation of open space to the front of the building providing the opportunity for a potential future café/restaurant use to “spill” out onto the footpath. This is shown in Figure 3.

**f. PSNI/ Mart Site**

This site is currently made up of two land uses, the PSNI site and the Livestock Mart. The PSNI site is not operating at full capacity and there is a possibility that it could become available in the near future. The Mart site on the other hand is working at full capacity and might benefit from expanding into the PSNI site. This would not only benefit a very important use within Markethill, but also provide an opportunity to improve the streetscape and provide some civic space. Some more detail on this potential project is provided in the Proposals section.

**5.2 Proposals****a. Entrance Development**

Attracting visitors into the town centre is considered to be an important action for Markethill. The northern entrance to the town lacks identity and purpose. The proposal in Figure 2 shows the development of potential entrance feature buildings either side of the entrance road and development on the former hotel site. The aim is to create that sense of arrival, that the visitor is entering somewhere important and that if the entrance buildings are of good quality, the rest of the town may also be the same. It is suggested that the former hotel site be redeveloped for housing, but it could also be used for commercial development, but not retailing, which should be concentrated in the town centre. The use however is less important than the scale and the layout of the buildings. The design must be of the highest quality and the Old Courthouse Building should be used as a guide. Figure 2 is one option, and shows the layout of the site being orientated diagonally across the site to draw the eye of the potential visitor towards the Old Courthouse Building and Main Street.

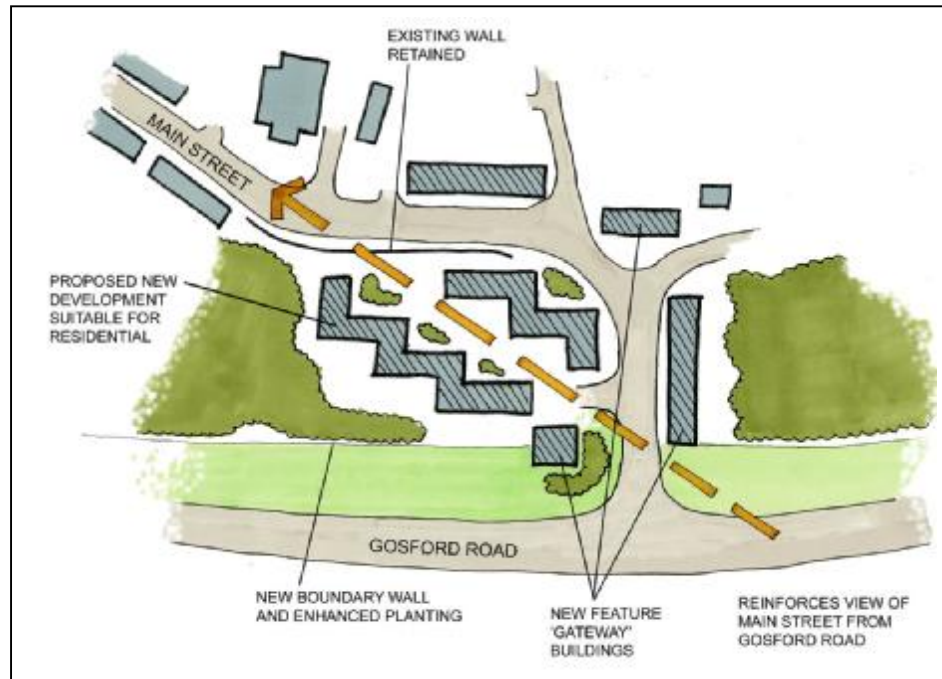


Figure 2 – Entrance Features and Former Hotel Site

### b. Main Street and the Square

It is believed that the PSNI building will be vacated in the near future. Should this be the case, removal of the building should be considered to facilitate redevelopment of the site. This will provide the opportunity to redevelop the mart site using the PSNI site and allow the Main Street frontage of the Mart building to be developed into a more traditional shop frontage for retail and commercial uses.

Reconsideration of the junction layout, and the redevelopment of the Mart site along with the Corner Bar site, could provide opportunities to create some public open space, and the opportunity for a potential future café/restaurant use to “spill” out onto the footpath. Given that there is limited pressure in Markethill from traffic congestion problems, it should be the aim to create a more pedestrian oriented town centre, which capitalises on the quality town centre environment.

Off street parking and the encouragement to use it is considered essential for Markethill. Figure 3 shows the development of the Commons as a formal car park, which should be well signed as being the main shopping car park in

the town centre. Other off street parking opportunities exist to the rear of the Corner Bar site, the redevelopment of which should include improvement of the access to this car park to make it more obvious and attractive. On-street parking provision is also shown as end on parking (perpendicular to kerb) at a wide part of the street, which will allow for more parking provision.

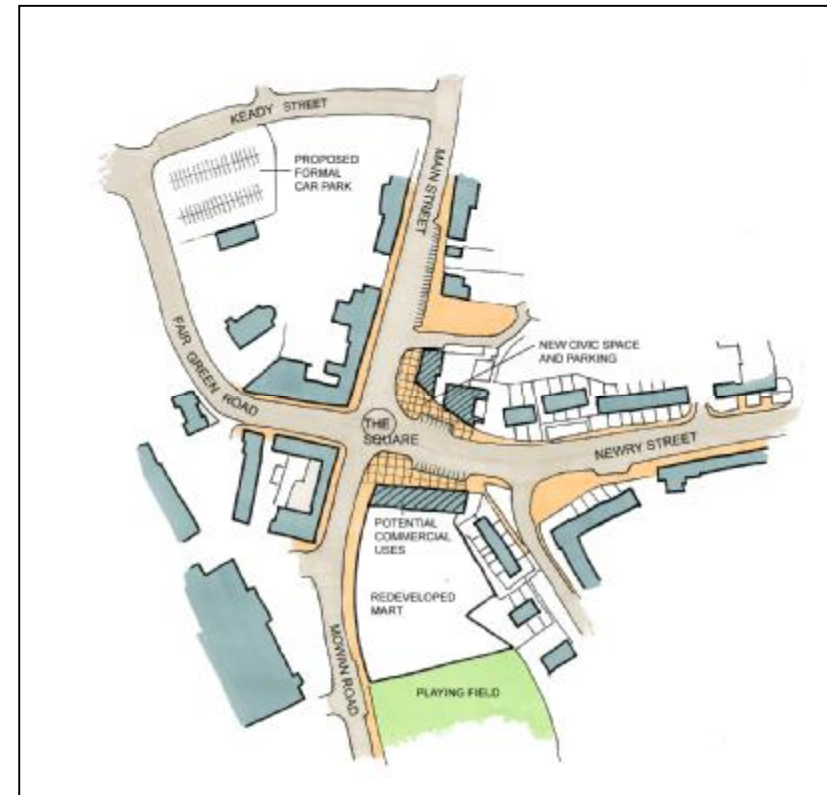


Figure 3 – Main Street and the Square – Mart/ PSNI Site and Junction

## 6.0 Markethill Action Plan

- a. Retaining a Vibrant Market Town** - retain retail (lower Main Street, Fair Green Road and Keady Street); housing development pressure – opportunities for town centre living.

Projects/ Actions	Possible Funding Sources	Delivered By	Priority
- Ensure that planning policies help to concentrate retailing into the lower part of Main Street, Keady Street and the Fair Green Road	-	DoE/ Armagh CDC	1
- Consider reduced rates to attract retail investment - dependent on a Government policy change	-	ACDC	3
- Ensure the zoning of the former railway yard as opportunity site for housing or business use	-	DoE/Private	2
- Explore the possibility of a bus halt on the Main Street or Keady Street	DRD/Translink/ ACDC	DRD/Translink	1
- Consider expansion of Markethill Business Centre and promote	-	MBC/ABC	2
- Ensure that Area Plan zones the Mart site and PSNI site as an opportunity site.	-	DoE	1
- Prepare development brief and promote the comprehensive redevelopment of Mart and PSNI site (landmark building for use as Mart with parking or new uses such as retail/ offices)	ACDC/Private	Private/ACDC	1
- Investigate Living Over The Shop opportunities	NIHE	ACDC/NIHE	2

**b. Capturing Visitor Potential** - evening/weekend activity – restaurants; major shops; overnight stays; Gosford Forest Park – service centre; signage; entrances to town; leisure and community facilities.

<b>Projects/ Actions</b>	<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	<b>Delivered By</b>	<b>Priority</b>
- Explore the feasibility of creating better linkages between the town and Gosford Forest Park – signage and physical connections. Linkages should be pedestrian and cycling friendly	SATi /DARD	DARD/ACDC/ DRD	2
- Consider roundabouts on bypass to slow traffic and improve access into town – access into the Forest Park from the roundabouts could be considered	DRD/ACDC	DRD/ACDC	3
- Promote the restoration of Gosford Castle and ensure any restoration for residential use is of positive benefit to Markethill	Markethill C.A/ ACDC	DARD/Private	2
- Improve caravan site in Gosford Park	DARD	DARD	3
- Install signage at both entrances to Markethill on bypass directing people into town	DRD/ACDC	ACDC/DSD	2
- Market key assets – Old Courthouse; major shops, nature reserve and Mart	Private/ACDC/ Markethill C.A	ACDC/ Markethill C.A	2

- c. **Traffic and Parking** – on street parking; inadequate parking facilities; bus service needed; no congestion problems; Roundabouts at the junctions to the bypass to improve access

<b>Projects/ Actions</b>	<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	<b>Delivered By</b>	<b>Priority</b>
- Promote more on-street and off-street parking in connection with future development and on street EI schemes	DRD/Private	DRD/Private	1
- Encourage parking time restrictions on Main Street and promote on street parking for shoppers only. Ensure business/ shop owners promote this initiative with their staff	DRD/PSNI	DRD/PSNI	1
- Set out Fair Green ('The Commons') as a formal car park	DRD/ACDC/ Private	DRD/Private	2
- Ensure a commitment to enforcing parking restrictions	DRD/PSNI	DRD/PSNI	1
- Encourage the development of existing car park behind buildings on Newry Street/ Square/ Main Street and Alexander's car park as town centre car parks with improved linkages to Main Street	DRD/ACDC/Private	ACDC/Private/DRD	2
- Install signage to all off-street parking and ensure clear access to Main Street	DRD	DRD	1
- Greater control of Mart vehicles required during Mart days with dedicated parking for Mart users	DRD/Private	DRD/ Private	1
- Ensure relocation of access into the Mart from roundabout to Mowhan Road	DRD	DRD/ACDC/ Private	3

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any redevelopment of Mart site should take opportunity to improve the layout of the roundabout at the junction of the Square and Main Street and Events space</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">DRD</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DRD/ACDC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aesthetic improvements to the roundabout should be considered if redevelopment is not feasible</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACDC/DSD</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACDC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p>

- d. Building on Townscape Quality** – protect quality of the local built environment; remove security gates; extend EI Scheme; vacant/derelict buildings; brownfield redevelopment; redevelop livestock mart/PSNI site

Projects/ Actions	Possible Funding Sources	Delivered By	Priority
- Establish the timescale of the PSNI site. Should presence continue, promote the scaling down of fortifications around the site to improve appearance	PSNI	PSNI	I
- Ensure the removal of security gates	-	PSNI/NIO	I
- Extend EI scheme to include all of Main Street, linking former hotel site with Square	ACDC/DSD	ACDC	I
- Ensure redevelopment of the former hotel site with quality landmark buildings that provide entrance features to the town – ideal for housing and community use.	-	ACDC/DoE/ Private	I
- Promote the sensitive reuse of Pembroke House for commercial or residential use	ACDC/Private	ACDC/Private	3
- Protect and enhance the historical appearance of the town through the designation of a town centre Area of Townscape Character and promote for Conservation Area status	-	EHS/ACDC/Private/DoE	I
- Encourage traditional shop fronts for the main streets. Publish a Design Guide to assist in retaining this character and promoting a uniformity in design	-	DoE/ACDC	I

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policies in Area Plan to regulate the design quality of buildings so that they make a positive contribution to the town centre</li> </ul>	<p>-</p>	<p>DoE</p>	<p>I</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Floodlight prominent buildings – such as a redeveloped Mart Building and the Old Courthouse</li> </ul>	<p>Private/DSD/IFI/ ACDC</p>	<p>ACDC/Private</p>	<p>I</p>

## APPENDICES

### I. Councillor/ Community Group Walkabout

A walkabout and meeting was held with local Councillors and Community Representatives on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005. The main issues are listed below:

- Former hotel site is to be developed for housing. Hotel relied on passing trade – not viable. There needs to be a focal building.
- Parking – people wanting to park on the street – convenient to the front door
- No through traffic problems
- Bypass has not affected business in the town – in fact has made a more pleasant environment
- Benefit from Gosford during the Summer
- Evening activity – weekends only – a few restaurants
- Major shops (Alexanders) attract people from long distances – day trips, no one staying over.
- Livestock Mart - developed as Market town – the main business in the town. Tuesday is the main day. Wednesday night market and Friday smaller market. Mart contributes to the town – provides an interest and confidence in the town. Should stay.
- Other side – poor appearance, farmers cause problems with parking etc. Nuisance factor. Perhaps a dedicated car park for Mart and enforce them to park in it. Perception that presence of farmers once or twice a week does not contribute to town's economy. Some say that it ought to be out of town.
- Alternative use of the site could be retail – prime site.
- Part time PSNI station – historical site but has been fortified over time and general perception that it should be removed on visual grounds.
- Roundabout needs redesigned.
- Security gates should be removed.
- Business units off Fair Green Road – satellite centre of Armagh Business Centre. Cheap rents – not attracting people it was intended for – locals.
- Role of the town – mostly residential but also some shopping. Aim should be to retain retail.
- Signs on the road to show loop road through town – on bypass.
- Aspirations to extend EI Scheme
- Main retail / commercial focus is lower part of Main Street, Fair Green Road and Keady Street.
- Parks – Gosford Forest, small Nature Reserve and play areas.
- Generally thought to be a thriving town
- Post Office was recently taken from Main Street and relocated to Hunters.
- Alexanders (both shops) cause parking problems with people parking on the street (Keady & Fair Green) as opposed to using the large car park.
- Nothing within the grounds of the Police Station – possible review of the removal of this in 2006 – could be an opportunity site – test public opinion.

- Issues with regard the roundabout – it is needed but not a good design. Access into Mart is via the roundabout.
- Fair Green – opportunity site – IFI approved scheme
- Town Centre – no further than Northern Bank – should be centred on Fair Green and lower Main Street.
- Business Centre – not the best location
- Roundabouts at both entrances to improve access and safety.
- Forest Park day visitors and weekend people.
- Housing – attractive housing generally and cheaper.
- Employment – small area at Green Road.

## 2. Student Photographic Exercise

### Positive Issues

- It was noted that there is a high standard of building design, quality and architecture throughout the town, in relation to both original buildings and new constructions done in the vernacular style. The courthouse is given as an example.
- There is good car parking provision.
- The addition of a recycling centre is welcomed in the town.
- There are a number of good examples of street furniture; planters and bins throughout the town, more of these are encouraged.



### Negative Issues

- There are a number of derelict and abandoned sites, which would offer a development opportunity but are visually unpleasant.
- There is a problem of littering in the town centre and dumping in some of the aforementioned abandoned sites.
- It is noted that some of the streetscape needs to be improved, particularly in regard to cracked footpaths and kerbs, which are visually unpleasant and unsafe.
- The open work yard of the Fairgreen Plastic Factory is noted as being an eyesore in the town.







- b. New Junction arrangement on Main Street: Y - 2  
N - 3
- c. New development on hotel site and new entrance buildings:  
Y - 1  
N - 3  
No response - 1

• ***Please comment on your answers? What changes would you make?***

- Retention of PSNI station at current location.
- New Junction in the square will impede traffic flow and result in collisions
- New entrance buildings will detract from Markethill Wood and the approach to the town
- Hotel site plans OK
- Are these changes really necessary? Markethill is a small country town and has a largely unspoiled charm.
- It is vital that should the PSNI site become available that it be used to extend the Mart. The Mart is under considerable pressure from the Department of Agriculture to extend the premises to bring them to a suitable standard.
- Not sure on layout of residences on hotel site.

**Q5. What issues do you consider are of key concern within Markethill Town Centre and how should these be prioritised?**

- Your plans to develop it would be a major concern
- Lack of car parking a problem, footpaths could be narrowed to allow greater vehicular access
- Need to retain the PSNI station
- Traffic congestion around the Mart
- I consider that the continuation of the Mart is vital to the future of Markethill. Mart days bring many people to the town who would not normally come for any other reason.
- Parking and need for commercial units.
- To have a livestock market in the middle of a village is an anachronism. A few businesses may benefit but residents and most traders are inconvenienced. If you wish to make Markethill a more pleasant place in which to live, then forget making the Market an attractive focal point.

**Q6. Please tell us about any other ideas you may have for improving the town centre?**

- Provide incentives for the relocation of the Mart to an edge of town site, either greenfield or even the hotel site. This would perhaps reduce congestion and parking problems
- Existing Mart site could be redeveloped for retail/parking/civic amenity.
- Our site at the former railway yard is suitable for town centre housing development, which I would be very keen to see mature.
- Area behind chip shop should be town car park with entrance off main street.
- Markethill needs improved car parking facilities; PSNI site offers this opportunity. Better still would be the relocation of the Mart to an agricultural location. A combination of civic space; parking; retail and residential may emerge. Anything, even a flat piece of scrub would be better than any focal point based on the livestock market.