

July 24th, 2024

To Each Member of Committee

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend a Meeting of the

Mid and East Antrim Planning Committee to be held on

Thursday, 25th July 2024 at 10:00 am in Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street,
Ballymena.

Yours sincerely



Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Agenda

1 NOTICE OF MEETING

2 APOLOGIES

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality, they may have in respect of items on this Agenda.

4 SCHEDULE OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 Planning Application No. LA02/2023/1788/F - Vacant industrial lands north of Nos 2-34 Montague Avenue, Ballymena. Proposed residential development of 60 dwellings - Circulated. Presentation circulated 24.07.24

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

Lead Officer: Sean O'Kane

Speaker:

(4 minutes in support of Officers' recommendation, via written submission - circulated)

- Mr E Loughrey, Inaltus Planning

4.1 Montague Ave 60 Dwellings.pdf	Page 1
Note in lieu of attendance at Planning Committee.pdf	Page 15
LA02-2023-1788-F Montague Ave.pdf	Page 17

4.2 Planning Application No. LA02/2024/0047/F - Lands adjacent to 108 Townhill Road, Portglenone - Circulated. Presentation circulated 24.07.24

Removal of the following planning conditions from previous planning permission LA02/2023/1208/F:

Condition 3) The proposed dwelling shall be sited in the area shaded green on Drawing No. 01 date stamped received 21 February 2023; and

Condition 4) The curtilage of the proposed dwelling shall be as indicated in green on the approved plan date stamped 21 February 2023.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

Lead Officer: Henry McAlister

📄 *4.2 Townhill Rd Removal of Conditions.pdf* *Page 25*

📄 *LA02-2024-0047-F- TownhillRoad.pdf* *Page 30*

5 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.1 Town Centre Health Check 2024 - Circulated

📄 *5.1 PC Town Centre Health Checks.pdf* *Page 36*

📄 *5.1 APP1 Town Centre Health Check 2024.pdf* *Page 39*

5.2 Consultation responses to Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance - Verbal update

6 PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

6.1 New Appeals

No new appeals.

6.2 Appeal Decisions

- LA02/2022/0590/O – Lands between no.56 Shillanavogy Road and 50m south of 33 Kildowney Hill, Glarryford. Infill dwelling & garage.

Appeal dismissed.

- LA02/2021/0814/F - Lands between 61 and 63 Victoria Road, Larne. Erection of 2 no. dwellings.

Appeal withdrawn.

not be in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 Correspondence Update - verbal

Open Committee

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council – Planning Committee

Application Ref:	LA02/2023/1788/F
Application type:	Full
Date of Committee:	11 th January 2024
Officer:	Sean O'Kane
Email:	planning@midandeantrim.gov.uk
Telephone:	02825633223
Proposal:	Proposed Residential Development (60 Dwellings) with Associated Roads and Footpaths, Landscaping, Provision of Public Open Space, Car Parking and General Site Works.
Location:	Vacant Industrial lands north of Nos 2-34 Montague Avenue, west of Nos 21-51 Toome Road and Nos 1-5 Riverside Terrace, south of Ballee Burn and east of Railway Line, Ballymena
Applicant:	S Parr Unit 1 Tamar Commercial Centre Chater Street Belfast BT4 1LB
Agent:	Eamonn Loughrey Inaltus Limited 15 Cleaver Park Malone Road Belfast
Objections:	2 letters of objection 1 petition (5 signatures)
Support:	0
Recommendation:	Approve

1. Description of site and surroundings

The proposed brownfield site is located north of Montague Avenue within the settlement limits of Ballymena. It is a broadly rectangular site extending to approx. 2.2ha . It is occupied by a number of derelict industrial buildings extending to approx. 7500sq m surrounded by hardstanding. Existing access to the site is gained from Montague Avenue. The topography is relatively flat.

The Ballee Burn runs along the northern boundary of the site into the Braid River at the northwest corner. Boundaries comprise a mixture of palisade fencing, block walls and sparse vegetation. The railway line runs in a north – south direction along the western boundary of the site.

The site is not within any specific land use zoning in the extant Area Plan.

2. Site Location



3. Proposed Development

Proposed Residential Development (60 Dwellings) with Associated Roads and Footpaths, Landscaping, Provision of Public Open Space, Car Parking and General Site Works falling into the Major category of development.

The scheme proposes a mix of house types in detached and semi detached units. The dwellings are arranged over 1 and 2 storeys and range in size from approx. 1,040 sq ft to 1,330 sq ft. A mix of finishes include red brick and render variations.

The social housing element comprises 12 No. 3 Person 2 Bedroom Houses, including 1 No. Generic Wheelchair House.

4. Relevant Planning History

G/1979/0834 Decision: Permission Granted Decision Date:
Proposal: EXTENSION TO PIPE MANUFACTURING PLANT

G/1995/6146 Decision: Enquiry: Other Letter Issued Decision Date: 09 November 1995
 Proposal: SITE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT MONTAGUE AVENUE BALLYMENA

G/1998/6079 Decision: Enquiry: Other Letter Issued Decision Date: 04 January 1999
 Proposal: REDEVELOPMENT OF LAND BALLEE BRIDGE BALLYMENA

LA02/2023/1246/PAN Decision: Proposal of Application Notice is Acceptable
 Decision Date: 14 March 2023
 Proposal: Proposed Residential Development with Associated Access Works, Landscaping Provision of Public Open Space, Car Parking and General Site Works.

5. Planning Policy Context

Regional Development Strategy (RDS)

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

Ballymena Area Plan

SGS1 Spatial Growth Strategy

ECD2 Retention of Economic Development Land

HOU1 Quality in New Residential Development in Settlements

HOU5 Affordable Housing in Settlements

HOU6 Housing Mix (Unit Types and Sizes)

HOU7 Adaptable and Accessible Homes

OSL4 Public Open Space in New Residential Development

TR1 Access to Public Roads

TR5 Active Travel

TR6 Parking and Servicing

FRD1 Development within Flood Plains

FRD3 Management of Development in regard to Surface Water Flood Risk

FRD4 Sustainable Drainage (SuDS)

WWI1 Development Relying on Non-Mains Wastewater Infrastructure

NAT2 Species Protected by Law

NAT5 Habitats, Species or Features of Natural Heritage Importance

GP1 General Policy for all Development Introduction

GP1a Criteria relating to Design Quality and Respecting Local Character and Distinctiveness

GP1b Criteria relating to Safeguarding Residential Amenity

GP1c Criteria Relating to Access/Movement/Car Parking

GP1d Criteria relating to Safety and the Safeguarding of Human Health/Wellbeing

GP1e Criteria relating to Sustainable Development

6. Consultations

NI Water – No objection
DFI Roads – No objection
Environ Health Mid And East Antrim – No objection
Historic Environment Division – No objection
DfI Rivers – No objection
Shared Environmental Services – No objection
NIEA – No objection
Northern Ireland Housing Executive - No objection

7. Representations

As set out previously 2 letters of objection were received together with a petition containing 5 signatures

Concerns raised that fall under the remit of Planning

- Change of Use of Proposed Site
- Traffic Management
- Landscaping
- Storm Sewer and Foul Sewer Requirements

Through the determination process and the involvement of statutory consultees to inform a balanced recommendation, the above points have been discussed in detail throughout the report and adequately addressed through compliance with policy and appropriate mitigation.

- Presence of Asbestos

While not being strictly under the remit of Planning, the potential presence and removal of Asbestos is rigorously controlled under separate legislation.

8. Consideration and Assessment & Consideration

Section 45(1) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (the Act) requires regard must be had to the Local Development Plan (LDP), so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Section 6(4) of the Act states that where regard is to be had to the LDP, the determination must be made in accordance with the LDP unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 establishes a plan-led planning system which gives primacy to the LDP in the determination of planning applications unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council adopted the Local Development Plan 2030 Plan Strategy on 16th October 2023. The Plan Strategy became effective from the

date of adoption and is relevant to the consideration of the following planning application.

The Council has yet to adopt its Local Policies Plan. In the interim, in line with the transitional arrangements set out in the Schedule to the Regulations, the LDP is currently a combination of the departmental development plan (DDP) and the Plan Strategy read together. Any conflict between a policy contained in the DDP and those of the Plan Strategy must be resolved in favour of the Plan Strategy.

Ballymena Area Plan

The Ballymena Area Plan comprises the DDP for this proposal. There are no policies contained within the DDP which are relevant to this application and therefore no conflict arises between the DDP and the Plan Strategy.

SGS1 Spatial Growth Strategy

Strategic aim is to focus major population growth and economic development in the three main towns of Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne, strengthening their roles as the prime locations for business, retail, housing, administration, leisure and cultural facilities within the borough. Planning for future housing growth across the borough is one of the core functions of the Local Development Plan as the provision of housing is key to population growth which in turn provides the critical mass to support the provision of infrastructure and services such as health, education and community facilities. The main aim of the LDP is to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development.

ECD2 Retention of Economic Development Land

Unzoned land in Settlements

A development proposal that would result in the loss of land currently or last used for economic development to other uses will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that one or more of the following criteria are met:

- a) the proposal is a specific mixed-use regeneration initiative which will bring substantial community, environmental or economic benefits that outweigh the loss of land for economic development use; or
- b) the proposal is for a compatible sui generis use of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the location; or
- c) the site is unsuitable for modern economic development purposes and there is no market interest in the site following one year of continuous active marketing

Within Doc 8 of the submitted information, the agent has set out the applicants approach to the brownfield site and states that the land and buildings could be re development without expressed planning permission for industrial use which would arguably result in increased impact on the amenity of 3rd party properties within the area. The report also clarifies that the site has been actively marketed for industrial use for a period of 8 years without success.

Policy ECD 2 requires one of the above criteria to be met, in this application criteria (c) has been complied with.

HOU1 Quality in New Residential Development in Settlements

All proposals for residential development will be expected to meet the General Policy (GP1) and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In addition, the guidance set out in Appendix D and in the 'Creating Places' design guide.

HOU5 Affordable Housing in Settlements

A need for Affordable Housing has been established through consultation with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The site being within Ballymena has a policy requirement for provision of 20% Affordable Housing. This totals 12 units out of the overall development of 60 dwellings.

NIHE can confirmed support for 12 No. 3 Person 2 Bedroom Houses, including 1 No. Generic Wheelchair House. The sites have been illustrated on drawing 49.

HOU6 Housing Mix (Unit Types and Sizes)

Planning permission will be granted for new residential development of 25 or more units, or on sites of one hectare or more, where a mix of house types and sizes are provided. There should be sufficient provision for smaller homes to meet future household requirements in Mid and East Antrim. In smaller schemes the need to provide greater variety in type and size will be considered on its individual merits.

There are several various house types both single and two story offering a range of accommodation from 2 bedroom to 4 bedroom units.

HOU7 Adaptable and Accessible Homes

The policy thrust is to deliver sustainable, accessible homes that allow for adaptability into the future. The proposal is for apartments arranged over a single level where bathroom and bedroom facilities are on the same level. The cill level of in the main living spaces do not exceed 800mm affl, facilitating outlook when seated. Adequate space is provided for manoeuvrability of wheelchairs.

The car parking provision illustrated car accommodate future adaption if required

OSL4 Public Open Space in New Residential Development

Council will only permit proposals for new residential development of 25 or more units, or on sites of one hectare or more, where public open space is provided as an integral part of the development.

A central area of open space has been provided and illustrated on drawing 02/2. This area is considered accessible to the units and integral to the overall development.

Management and Maintenance

Planning permission will not be granted until the developer has satisfied Council that suitable arrangements will be put in place for the future management and maintenance in perpetuity of areas of public open space required under this policy. A condition has been added to any determination securing the future maintenance of the proposed open space prior to occupation of the dwelling units.

TR1 Access to Public Roads

As part of the determination process Transport NI were consulted in their capacity as the statutory authority pertaining to road safety and access.

The acceptability of access arrangements, including the number of access points onto the public road has been assessed including the following factors:

- the nature and scale of the development;
- the character of existing development;
- the contribution of the proposal to the creation of a quality environment, including the potential for urban/village regeneration and environmental improvement;
- the location and number of existing accesses; and
- the standard of the existing road network together with the speed and volume of traffic using the adjacent public road and any expected increase.

Given no objection from the statutory authority following consultation, TR1 has been complied with.

TR5 Active Travel

A new development proposal within an urban area should ensure the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are taken into account. The development is served by pedestrian paths and public transport with links to the town centre and wider Ballymena area promoting active travel.

TR6 Parking and Servicing

A development proposal will be required to provide adequate provision for parking and appropriate servicing arrangements. As the statutory authority Transport NI have been consulted and offered no objection.

Policy FRD1 Development within Floodplains

A proposal for development within a floodplain of a river or the sea will not be permitted unless the applicant can demonstrate that the proposal constitutes an exception to the policy. Where the principle of development is accepted by the Council through being an exception to policy applicants are required to submit a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)

The proposal is considered an exception under section c) Replacement of an existing building.

As the statutory authority pertaining to Flood risk Rivers Agency were consulted and offered no objection to the submitted FRA

FRD3 Management of Development in regard to Surface Water Flood Risk

In accordance with the requirement under policy FRD3, the agent submitted a Drainage Assessment (DA)

As the statutory authority pertaining to Flood risk Rivers Agency were consulted and offered no objection to the submitted DA providing the following statement:

Rivers Directorate, while not being responsible for the preparation of this Drainage Assessment accepts its logic and has no reason to disagree with its conclusions.

FRD4 Sustainable Drainage (SuDS)

A sustainable drainage solution (hard or soft SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off will be required for any development proposal that triggers the requirement for a Drainage Assessment.

Although the submitted drainage assessment does not make specific reference to SuDS provision, the proposed open space coupled with the areas of private amenity with accommodate an element of soft SuDS through natural percolation of water run off.

Policy WW1 Development Relying on Non-Mains Wastewater Infrastructure

Through consultation with NI Water capacity has been identified to serve the development.

NAT2 Species Protected by Law

NAT5 Habitats, Species or Features of Natural Heritage Importance

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to result in the unacceptable adverse impact on, or damage to known designated site.

Information forming part of the submission has identified the potential for a number of species protected by law. Suitable mitigation and compensatory measures have been proposed and accepted by the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency through consultation. Such measures can be secured by conditions attached to any determination.

Owing to the potential Hydrological link with designated sites, consultation was sought from the Shared Environmental Services to carry out a HRA on behalf of the Planning Authority.

Within the extensive response the following comments summarise:

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council in its role as the competent Authority under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), and in accordance with its duty under Regulation 43, has adopted the HRA report, and conclusions therein, prepared by Shared Environmental Service, dated 07/06/2024. This found that the project would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site.

GP1 General Policy for all Development

Planning permission will be granted for sustainable development where the proposal accords with the LDP and there is no demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance. Where this is not the case there will be a presumption to refuse planning permission.

GP1a Criteria relating to Design Quality and Respecting Local Character and Distinctiveness

- i. The development is compatible with surrounding land uses and neither the use or the built form and associated infrastructure (including hard/soft landscaping) will detract from the visual amenity, landscape quality, local distinctiveness and inherent character of the locality;
- ii. The development, including associated infrastructure and landscaping is of high quality and, where appropriate, complements or enhances local built form;
- iii. Appropriate landscaping and means of enclosure are provided so as to facilitate satisfactory integration of the development into the local townscape or rural landscape; and
- iv. The development does not adversely affect features associated with the historic environment/setting, natural heritage or areas recognised for their exceptional landscape quality and should seek to retain or integrate such features wherever possible.

The locality is characterised by terraced dwellings. The proposal accords with the surrounding land use and context.

The site is bound on three sides by other buildings in the urban context and the railway to the west. Open space forms part of the proposal and is accessible for future residents.

No such constraints relating to the historic environment/setting, and natural heritage have been identified that cannot be satisfactorily addressed through mitigation.

GP1b Criteria relating to Safeguarding Residential Amenity

- i. Neither the use or the built form shall have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenity of existing residents living within, adjacent to or in reasonable proximity to the development site;

- ii. Appropriate boundary treatment and means of enclosure are provided so as to effectively mitigate against significant adverse impacts on visual amenity and, where relevant, other amenity impacts; and
- iii. New residential development shall be sited so as to maintain sufficient separation distance from existing or approved infrastructure likely to prejudice residential amenity or safety.

Given the established boundaries, orientation and separation distances from existing properties. It is not felt that any negative impacts will result upon the amenity of existing residents in terms of planning considerations as set out in footnote 22 on page 112 of the Plan Strategy. The Environmental Health Department of MEABC (EHD) were consulted and raised concerns relating to impact from noise and vibration and resulting from the nearby railway. As with any developments proposed within the town will be subject to levels of noise. EHD were content following the receipt of a Noise Impact and Vibration report. Mitigation can be secured by condition.

GP1c Criteria Relating to Access/Movement/Car Parking

- i. Access arrangements shall be in accordance with the latest guidance published by the Department for Infrastructure
- ii. A movement pattern is provided that, insofar as possible, supports active travel (walking and cycling), meets the needs of people with disabilities or whose mobility is impaired, respects public rights of way and provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and local community facilities;
- iii. The existing road network has sufficient capacity or can be adequately upgraded to safely manage any extra vehicular traffic that the proposed development will generate; and
- iv. Adequate and appropriate provision is made for car parking in accordance with the latest supplementary planning guidance.

As the statutory consultee Transport NI have been consulted to provide comment on issues regarding access and road safety. No objections have been forthcoming.

GP1d Criteria relating to Safety and the Safeguarding of Human Health/Wellbeing

- i. The development will not prejudice safety nor cause demonstrable harm to human health and wellbeing;
- ii. Where appropriate, the development should be designed so as to facilitate opportunities for active and passive recreation for everyone, both within and wherever possible, beyond the site;
- iii. The development is designed to deter crime and promote personal safety;
- iv. Any emission or discharge of effluent (including sewage) arising from the development is in accordance with legislative requirements pertaining to air and water quality;

- v. The development site is not at risk from flooding and the development will not cause or exacerbate flooding elsewhere, taking account of present day flood risk and the potential future risk associated with climate change;
- vi. The development site is not located in an area known to be at significant risk from coastal erosion or land instability, or will not exacerbate such risks elsewhere; and
- vii. Where a site is known or suspected to be contaminated developers will be required to carry out a detailed site investigation. Suitable mitigation must be identified to remediate any contaminated land and prevent potential adverse impacts

The Environmental Health Department of MEABC and NIEA have been consulted and commented on information relating to land contamination given the previous uses on site. This information has been provided to the satisfaction of the consultees with suggested conditions to be attached to any determination documents.

GP1e Criteria relating to Sustainable Development

- i. Development proposals, particularly major applications, will be expected to generally align with the LDP Spatial Growth Strategy;
- ii. Essential infrastructure to facilitate the development must be available or, if lacking, there must be a firm commitment in regard to its timely provision;
- iii. The development shall utilise sustainable drainage systems, as the preferred drainage solution, where feasible and practicable to ensure that surface water run-off is managed in a sustainable way;
- iv. The development does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the quality and integrity of the environment and particularly upon local biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services beneficial to the community;
- v. The development takes account of the efficient use of energy, water and other resources, where feasible and practicable, integrates micro-generation and passive solar design, in order to mitigate against the adverse impacts of climate change; and
- vi. All development will be required to have adequate provision for the storage and management.

Essential infrastructure to facilitate the development is available in close proximity to the site. No unacceptable adverse impact on the quality and integrity of the environment are envisaged. NI Water - Recommended approval as sufficient waste water capacity is available to serve the site.

If permitted, individual dwellings will have access to Permitted Development rights for the provision of micro generation equipment for the efficient use and generation of energy.

9. Recommendations and Conditions

Having had regard to the local development plan, so far as material to the application, and to all other material considerations the planning department recommends that the Planning Committee approve the proposed development subject to the conditions set out below.

Conditions/Reasons for Refusal:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

2. All soft and hard landscaping shall be in accordance with the details indicated on Drawing No. 02/2 and in accordance with the appropriate British Standard or other recognised Codes of Practice in the first available planting season following occupation of the first dwelling hereby approved.

Reason: To ensure the provision of a high standard of landscape and adequate amenity space.

3. No Dwellings shall be occupied until a landscape management and maintenance plan has been submitted to and approved by the Council. The plan shall set out the period of the plan, long term objectives, management responsibilities, performance measures and maintenance schedules for all areas of landscaping and open space. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To ensure successful establishment and ongoing management and maintenance (in perpetuity) of the open space and amenity areas in the interests of visual and residential amenity.

4. If within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting of any tree, shrub or hedge, that tree, shrub or hedge is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, or becomes, in the opinion of the Council, seriously damaged or defective, another tree, shrub or hedge of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the Council gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a high standard of landscape.

5. The 12no. residential units identified on approved drawing 49 date received 28/06/2024 shall be completed prior to the occupation of any other units, shall be used solely for the purposes of affordable housing and shall be managed by a registered Housing Association.

Reason: To ensure the provision of the 12no. affordable housing units in Ballymena and to comply with Policy HOU5 of the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Local Development Plan 2030 – Plan Strategy.

6. No residential unit in the development hereby approved shall be occupied until a signed legal agreement for the transfer of the affordable housing units to a registered Housing Association has been submitted to and approved in writing by Council.

Reason: To ensure the provision of affordable housing units and to comply with Policy HOU5 of the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Local Development Plan 2030 – Plan Strategy.

7. Prior to occupation, acoustic barriers 1.8 metres in height, with no gaps and a self weight of no less than 10 kg/m² shall be installed as per Figure I of document 'Proposed residential development off Montague Avenue, Ballymena; Inward Rail Traffic Sound and Vibration Impact Assessment', dated 25th October 2022 and maintained throughout the lifetime of the permitted development.

Reason: To protect residential amenity from noise.

8. There shall be no amendments or deviations from the remediation and verification recommendations contained within the report entitled, 'P1411 – Phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA), Phase 2 Generic Quantitative Risk Assessment (GQRA) and outline Remediation Strategy', dated 3 September 2023, without the prior written approval of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council in tandem with NIEA.

Reason: To ensure unacceptable risks to human health and controlled waters due to ground contamination are suitably managed.

9. In the event that previously unknown contamination is discovered falling outside the scheme of the approved remediation scheme, development on the site shall cease pending submission and agreement of a written report, detailing the proposed investigation, risk assessment and remediation scheme, by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and the NIEA. Development works shall not resume until the approved written report has been fully implemented to the satisfaction of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Reason: To ensure unacceptable risks to human health and controlled waters due to ground contamination are suitably managed.

10. Prior to the occupation of any dwelling within the development hereby approved, a validation report shall be submitted and agreed with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and the NIEA. The report shall be completed by a competent person and describe all the remediation and monitoring works undertaken and shall demonstrate the effectiveness of the works in managing and remediating all the risks posed by contamination.

Reason: To ensure unacceptable risks to human health and controlled waters due to ground contamination are suitably managed.

11. Compensatory bat boxes, as shown on Drawing No.46/1 Bat Box Location Plan, must be installed on site prior to the demolition of the structures identified as bat roosts (Structures 1 + 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8).

Reason: To compensate for the loss of bat roosts.

12. Prior to works commencing on site, a Lighting Plan must be submitted to the Planning Authority for assessment. The plan must include the following:
- Specifications of lighting to be used across the site, including model of luminaries, location and height;
 - All measures to mitigate for the impacts of artificial lighting on bats and other wildlife, e.g. timing of lighting, use of low-level lighting, screens, hoods, cowls etc;
 - A horizontal illuminance contour plan (isolux drawing) showing predicted light spillage across the site (no more than 1 Lux predicted lightspill on mature boundary vegetation);
 - Badger protection areas, wildlife corridors and retained hedgerows to be kept free from any artificial lighting;
 - Any bat roost mitigation/compensation measures, such as bat boxes as included on Drawing No.46/1 Bat Box Location Plan must be free from light spill.

Reason: To minimise impacts on bats.

13. The Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 as amended by the Private Streets (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. The Department hereby determines that the width, position and arrangement of the streets, and the land to be regarded as being comprised in the streets, shall be as indicated on Drawing 44 date published 16 MAY 2024.

Reason: To ensure there is a safe and convenient road system within the development and to comply with the provisions of the Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980.

14. The Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 as amended by the Private Streets (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. No more than 50 residential units shall be occupied until the works necessary for the improvement of a public road have been completed in accordance with the details outlined blue on Drawing 44 date published 16 MAY 2024. The Department hereby attaches to the determination a requirement under Article 3(4A) of the above Order that such works shall be carried out in accordance with an agreement under Article 3 (4C)

Reason: To ensure there is a safe and convenient road system within the development and to comply with the provisions of the Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980.

15. The development hereby approved shall be developed in accordance with the plans referenced at the beginning of this decision notice.

Note in lieu of attendance at Planning Committee on 25th July 2024

Section 3 of the Planning Committee Protocol.

"In lieu of speaking, Council Members, MPs, MLAs and members of the public may submit representations in writing for consideration by the Committee. Written representations will be reported to the Committee and circulated on the day of the meeting".

LA02/2023/1788/F

Proposed Residential Development (60 Dwellings) with Associated Roads and Footpaths, Landscaping and Provision of Open Space.

Vacant Industrial lands north of Nos 2-34 Montague Avenue, west of Nos 21-51 Toome Road and Nos 1-5 Riverside Terrace, south of Ballee Burn and east of Railway Line, Ballymena.

Dear Chair and members of the Planning Committee

Please accept my apologies for not being able to attend the meeting of the Planning Committee on the 25th July 2024 to speak in support of the above application.

Even if an application is recommended for approval, I consider it a matter of simple courtesy to attend and be available to answer questions on our application. Unfortunately a prior engagement prevents my attendance today.

This is an application which we have worked with the Council Planners on for well over a year. We have carried out a full public consultation exercise and addressed the matters raised during the application process.

Importantly we have amended the scheme to reflect the Council's new housing and design policies and provide 12 social housing units to NIHE specifications on this site.

All houses have been designed to be adaptable homes reflecting the Council new policies.

The application has addressed the two objections. One of the objectors has spoken to me recently and advised he supports the application as he supports the removal of the derelict buildings on the site. We have provided evidence in the form of topographical sections demonstrating there will be no overlooking of neighbouring properties. This has been done to address the concerns of the second objector.

We have addressed all matters raised by the various statutory consultees and already reached agreement with NI Water on the solutions to the water capacity network issues.

We have demonstrated that despite marketing of the land for over a year, there is no interest in the site and the lands are not suitable for modern industrial requirements. The re-development of the site for housing will make the best use of these brownfield lands.

DFI Roads have agreed the access and parking and the layout of the scheme. There is public open space provided, all dwellings have front and rear gardens at or above standards. The scheme will provide a quality residential environment.

We have addressed all queries regarding noise, vibration, contamination and ecology and satisfied Environmental Health, Shared Environmental Services and the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

It is our professional opinion, having regard to the facts and detail of this application, that the proposal satisfies the Council's Plan Strategy policies.

We are very grateful to the Council Planning Department for their hard work on this application.

We respectfully request that the application be approved.

Eamonn Loughrey



Planning Committee

25th July 2024

17

Application: LA02/2023/1788/F

Major Application

Proposed Residential Development (60 Dwellings) with Associated Roads and Footpaths, Landscaping, Provision of Public Open Space, Car Parking and General Site Works.

Location:

Vacant Industrial lands north of Nos 2-34 Montague Avenue, west of Nos 21-51 Toome Road and Nos 1-5 Riverside Terrace, south of Ballee Burn and east of Railway Line, Ballymena



Site Location Plan



Existing Vacant Buildings





Consultations

- DFI Roads – No objection
- Environ Health Mid And East Antrim – No objection
- Historic Environment Division – No objection
- Dfi Rivers – No objection
- Shared Environmental Services – No objection
- NIEA – No objection
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive - No objection
- NI Water – Refusal, lack of capacity – Suggested Condition attached



Site Plan







Summary

- Major Development (2.2ha)
- Proposed 60no. Residential Units (12 Social Housing)
- Existing Vacant Industrial Land
- Two Objections 1 Petition (5 signatures)
- Proposal is acceptable and is in accordance with MEABC Plan Strategy 2030
- Recommendation: Approval subject to conditions



Mid and East Antrim Borough Council – Planning Committee

Application Ref:	LA02/2024/0047/F
Application type:	Full
Date of Committee:	25 July 2024
Case Officer:	Gary McGuinness
Email:	Gary.mcguinness@midandeantrim.gov.uk
Telephone:	028 25633233
Proposal:	Removal of Condition No.3 – Siting Condition and Condition 4 – Curtilage Restriction from planning approval LA02/2023/1208/F for a dwelling on a farm.
Location:	108 Townhill Road, Portglenone
Applicant:	Jonathan McGrandle
Agent:	
Objections:	0
Support:	0
Recommendation:	Approval

1. Description of site and surroundings

The site to be developed is located 75m North of 108 Townhill Road. This is an agricultural field defined to the north, east and west by mature field hedgerows, approximately 2m in height. To the south a private lane runs along the site boundary separating the site from the dwellings and outbuildings at No.108 and 110 Townhill road. It is set back from the public road by 60m with the access lane 80m in length positioned 90m north of the laneway to 108 Townhill Road. The site has a width of 120m with a depth of 90m at the south narrowing to 20m at the north of the field.

There is a group of agricultural buildings at 110 Townhill road and 1 small structure within the field of the application site.

The site is located within the rural countryside outside the development limits of any settlement as defined in the extant Ballymena Area Plan 1986 - 2001.

2. Proposed Development



3. Relevant Planning History

LA02/2023/1208/O – Dwelling on a Farm - Approval

4. Planning Policy Context

Section 45(1) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (the Act) requires regard must be had to the Local Development Plan (LDP), so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Sections 6(4) of the Act states that where regard is to be had to the LDP, the determination must be made in accordance with the LDP unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 establishes a plan-led planning system which gives primacy to the LDP in the determination of planning applications unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council adopted the Local Development Plan 2030 Plan Strategy on 16th October 2023. The Plan Strategy became effective from the date of adoption and is relevant to the consideration of the current planning application.

The Council has yet to adopt its Local Policies Plan. In the interim, in line with the transitional arrangements set out in the Schedule to the Regulations, the LDP is currently a combination of the departmental development plan (DDP) and the

Plan Strategy read together. Any conflict between a policy contained in the DDP and those of the Plan Strategy must be resolved in favour of the Plan Strategy.

The Policies within the Local Development Plan 2030 Plan Strategy that apply in this case are as follows:

Policy CS1 - Sustainable Development in the Countryside

Policy HOU10 – Dwelling on a Farm Business

Policy GP1 General Policy for all Development

Relevant Development Plan – Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001

5. Consultations

N/A

6. Representations

None received.

7. Consideration and Assessment

Policy CS1 - Sustainable Development in the Countryside

Policy CS1 of the Plan Strategy outlines a range of types of development which in principle are considered to be acceptable in the countryside and will contribute to the aims of sustainable development. One of these is a dwelling on a farm business in accordance with Policy HOU10.

Policy HOU10 – Dwelling on a Farm Business

Planning permission will be granted for a dwelling on land included on a farm business where the applicant can demonstrate all of the following:

- (a) The farm building is currently active and has been established for at least the last six years.
- (b) No new dwellings or development opportunities out with settlement limits have been sold off from the farm business within 10 years of the date of the application, and
- (c) The new building is visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm and where practicable, access to the dwelling should be obtained from an existing lane.

Policy GP1 General Policy for all Development

Permission will be granted for sustainable development where the proposal accords with the LDP and there is no demonstrable harm to interests of

acknowledged importance. All proposals will be assessed against the following general policy criteria a) to f).

- a) Design Quality and Respecting Local Character and Distinctiveness
- f) Development in the Countryside

Planning reference LA02/2023/1208/O granted Outline planning approval for a dwelling on a farm and issued on 1st June 2023. The farm business was located at 108 Townhill Road and consisted of dwellings and agricultural sheds accessed via an existing lane. The principle for development has been established.

Access was proposed via a new lane which is to join the Townhill Road to the north-east of the existing buildings on the farm, and conditions were attached to ensure that the proposed dwelling and garage would be positioned at the southern side of the site, in close proximity to the established group of buildings on the farm. The current application seeks to remove these particular conditions which relate to the siting of the dwelling and the extent of the residential curtilage.

The approved application was processed in line with the relevant planning policy of the time which was the SPPS and PPS21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside, Policy CTY10. The Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy in October 2023 and largely replicates the wording of Policy CTY10 into Policy HOU10 Dwelling on a farm business.

Criteria (c) of Policy HOU10 requires the new building to be visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm.

In this case the critical public views of the site can be taken from the Townhill Road, the Skerdan Road junction to the east of the site, and from neighbouring properties which are mainly dispersed rural dwellings and associated farm buildings.

The B96 Townhill Road links Portglenone with Rasharkin and has a speed limit of 60MPH at the site location. There is no pedestrian footway at the site location. The road undulates with numerous crests and dips on the road. When travelling in both a northerly and southerly direction along the Townhill Road, a dwelling and garage on the site would read as being visually linked with the established group of buildings on the farm.

Similarly, when exiting the Skerdan Road junction onto the Townhill Road, a dwelling on the site would be visually linked with the established group of buildings on the farm.

The surrounding landform is undulating with mature vegetation marking all of the site boundaries. This will aid the integration of the proposed dwelling and garage

into the landscape and would allow compliance with Criteria (a) and (f) of Policy GP1.

On this basis the Planning Department would recommend that Condition 3 – relating to the siting of buildings, and Condition 4 relating to a restriction of residential curtilage contained on the previous Outline permission LA02/2023/1208/O be removed. All other conditions attached to this permission are to remain in place.

The Planning Department recommendation is that this application to remove Conditions 3 and 4 of LA02/2023/1208/O should be approved.

8. Consideration of Representations

No representations were received.

9. Conclusions

On the basis of this assessment the proposed development accords with the Local Development Plan therefore, the Planning Department is of the opinion that the planning application should be approved.

10. Condition

The permission hereby granted, pertains solely to the removal of Condition 3 and Condition 4 of planning approval LA02/2023/1208/O and all other conditions within the original permission remain applicable.

Reason: To ensure all other conditions of this planning approval are adhered to.



Planning Committee 25th July 2024

Application: LA02/2024/0047/F

Removal of Condition No.3 – Siting Condition
and Condition 4 – Curtilage Restriction
from planning approval LA02/2023/1208/F for a dwelling on a
farm.

108 Townhill Road, Portglenone



Site Location Plan



Previous Approval LA02/2023/1208/O

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C3. The proposed dwelling shall be sited in the area shaded green on Drawing No. 01 date stamped received 21st February 2023.

Reason: To ensure that the development is satisfactorily integrated into the landscape.

C4. The curtilage of the proposed dwelling shall be as indicated in green on the approved plan date stamped 21st February 2023.

Reason: To ensure that the amenities incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling will not adversely affect the countryside.



View of site from Townhill Road



View of site from Skerdan Road



Summary

- Proposed removal of conditions relating to siting of dwelling and curtilage on previous approval LA02/2023/1208/O.
- Policy HOU10 requires the new building to be visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm.
- In this case the Planning Department have re-considered the need for siting and curtilage restrictions.
- Proposed dwelling and garage can still comply with Policy HOU10 without the need for conditions 3 and 4 of LA02/2023/1208/O
- Recommendation: **Approval. Conditions 3 + 4 can be removed.**



Council/Committee:	Planning Committee
Date:	25 July 2024
Report Title:	Town Centre Health Check Report 2024
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Sandra Adams, Principal Planning Officer, LDP Team
Approver:	Kyle Patterson, Acting Head of Planning & Building Control

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the completion of the Town Centre Health Check Report 2024 and to seek agreement for its publication on the Council website.

2. Background

- 2.1. Town centre health checks were first carried out in 2018 in Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus by the Local Development Plan (LDP) Team with additional expertise provided by retail planning consultants, Nexus. The information collected at that time formed part of a more detailed Retail and Commercial Leisure Need & Capacity Study (available [here](#)). This study was an important element of the evidence base for the LDP Plan Strategy and was published alongside the draft Plan Strategy in 2019.
- 2.2. The Plan Strategy (adopted 16 October 2023) gives a commitment that Town Centre Health Checks will be reviewed at least once every five years to maintain an up-to-date and robust evidence base. This will assist in the development of the draft Local Policies Plan.
- 2.3. Whilst more than 5 years has passed since the last report in 2018 it was considered that the health check would not be completed until after the Plan Strategy was adopted. However, in the intervening period the LDP Team has monitored land use and vacancy rates within the town centres.
- 2.4. The 2018 study focused on the towns of Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne, however the Plan Strategy has introduced an additional tier in the retail hierarchy (Policy SGS7 Retail Hierarchy). In addition to the 3 main town centres, the Retail Hierarchy designated 5 small town centres: Ahoghill, Broughshane, Cullybackey, Portglenone and Whitehead. Whilst these second tier towns vary in size and provision of services, they contain centres which perform an important function in meeting both the daily and weekly needs of local communities. The 2024 report now includes these 5 additional settlements.
- 2.5. The data available for the small town centres is limited with no previous data available for comparison in order to establish trends. Also, due to the limited size of these small centres and small datasets collected, comparison with data at a Northern Ireland level may not offer a clear measure of their vitality and viability.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The health check for each centre considers:
 - Diversity of uses
 - Vacancy rates
 - Retailer representation
 - Average prime rents
 - Accessibility
 - Footfall
 - Physical structure and constraints
 - Perception of crime and safety
 - Environmental quality
- 3.2. The report finds that Ballymena has the most comprehensive and diverse offer of retail and services of the three main towns in the borough and, as a result, is the most popular of the three for retailing. Ballymena's proportion of vacant units within the town centre is 19.18% in March 2024. This is below the NI average of 20.12%. Ballymena had the lowest vacancy rate of the three main town centres in the Borough and it is positive that Ballymena has recovered well, post covid, from the 2021 vacancy rate of 24.79%.
- 3.3. Larne Town Centre has lower than average proportion of convenience units, comparison units and leisure services, and higher than average retail services and vacant units. These statistics are very similar to those in 2021. At the time of the survey, Larne had 72 vacant units, a proportion of almost 26%. This is higher than both the Carrickfergus and Ballymena percentage vacancy and well above the Northern Ireland average of 20.12%.
- 3.4. Carrickfergus has a particularly high vacancy rate of 24.39%, which is still well above the Northern Ireland average. In addition, the town centre has a significantly higher than average proportion of retail services, an indication that the town centre is not as healthy as it could be. The majority of retail services were health and beauty units. It has a steadily increasing number of leisure services, well above the Northern Ireland average. Footfall figures in Carrickfergus town centre have fallen by a remarkable 37.9% from April 2018 to April 2024. This compares to Ballymena with a fall of 4.4% over the same period, and Larne with a fall of 6% from April 2023 to April 2024.
- 3.5. As this is the first survey year for the 5 small town centres this report will provide a baseline from which we can now compare year on year.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. The Town Centre Health Check Report 2024 is an integral part of the Local Development Plan Process, supporting positive outcomes from the Community Plan and Corporate Plan.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Every effort must be made to ensure the declining footfall figures and high vacancy levels in Carrickfergus do not continue further. The retail policies in the Mid and East Antrim LDP 2030 - Plan Strategy aim to protect and sustain the vitality and viability of our established town centres and small town centres so they can perform to their maximum potential in meeting the needs of the citizens and visitors and contribute to the economy of Mid and East Antrim. They promote established town centres as the appropriate first choice location for retailing and other main town centre uses and require a sequential approach to the identification of sites for retailing and main town centre uses, to minimise the impact of out of centre retailing and to protect and enhance diversity in the range of town centre uses.
- 5.2. The Plan Strategy retail policies must be rigorously applied, particularly in Carrickfergus to help re-dress the reduced footfall figures and focus retailing within the town centre.
- 5.3. While Ballymena and Larne show signs of recovery following the pandemic it is still vitally important that the potential impacts of proposals for out-of-town centre retail development are carefully considered.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to agree the Town Centre Health Check Report 2024 for publication on Council's website.

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 – Town Centre Health Check Report 2024

Link 1 – [Retail and Commercial Leisure Need & Capacity Study 2019](#)

Town Centre Health Checks

2024

**Mid and East Antrim
Borough Council**

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Retailing and Town Centre Profile

Introduction

Retail Hierarchy of the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Local Development Plan 2030 - Plan Strategy.

Strategic Policy SGS7 'Retail Hierarchy' sets out the network and hierarchy of centres (termed the retail hierarchy) in the Plan Strategy. Table 5.6 on page 74 describes how the hierarchy is broken down into 4 tiers and which uses are considered acceptable in each tier. The top tier titled 'Town Centres' refers to the 3 largest town centres in the Borough, namely Ballymena, Carrickfergus, and Larne. Town centre health checks have previously been carried out in these 3 towns, historically by the Department of Environment (using consultants GL Hearn) and more recently by Council in conjunction with retail consultants Nexus, during the preparation of the Mid and East Antrim Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2019, which formed part of council's evidence base for the Local Development Plan (LDP). The second tier in the Retail Hierarchy consists of 5 designated 'small town centres', namely Ahoghill, Broughshane, Cullybackey, Portglenone and Whitehead. Historically town centre health checks have not been carried out in these 5 locations as they were previously designated as villages in their respective Area Plans. Their town centre boundaries are still to be designated through the preparation of the Local Policies Plan. Therefore, the data available will be more limited with no previous data available for comparison in order to establish trends, e.g. in town centre composition or vacancy rates until they are reviewed again in 2 years' time. It should be noted that whilst Portglenone is designated as a small town in the Retail Hierarchy due to its significant retail offer, it remains designated as a village in the Settlement Hierarchy (Policy SGS2, Table 5.3 Page 56) due to its population size.

In the Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001, Ahoghill, Broughshane, Cullybackey and Portglenone do have commercial centres identified on their respective area plan maps. So, for the purposes of this town centre health check, the extent of those commercial centres will be used for town centre health check assessment until such times as new town centre boundaries are designated in the Local Policies Plan (LPP).

Whitehead is the only remaining small town without a commercial centre identified in its respective Area Plan (Carrickfergus Area Plan 2001). In 2019 an Urban Capacity Study (UCS) was carried out for the main and small towns within the Borough where character areas were identified. The UCS type 4 character areas were areas with a relatively higher propensity for change and included town centres, mixed use areas and transitional areas. Type 4 areas generally correlated with designated town and commercial centres, therefore for the purpose of this town centre health check, in the absence of a defined town centre in Whitehead the UCS type 4 character area will be used as the study area (see map 36 Appendix A) until such times as a town centre boundary has been through the Local policies Plan.

1.0 Ballymena Town Centre

1.1 Maps 1-3 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the LDP team in March 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within Ballymena town centre boundary as defined in the Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001. Figure A below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Ballymena in March 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average (Experian GOAD).

Figure A Ballymena Town Centre Composition

Ballymena	Units # 2018	Units % 2018	Units # 2021	Units % 2021	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	29	4.79%	36	5.99%	38	6.81%	7.30%
Comparison	184	30.41%	168	27.95%	176	31.54%	30.07%
Retail Services	110	18.18%	91	15.14%	93	16.67%	13.86%
Leisure Services	88	14.55%	99	16.47%	93	16.67%	19.81%
Finance & Business	69	11.40%	58	9.65%	51	9.14%	8.84%
Vacant	125	20.66%	149	24.79%	107	19.18%	20.12%
TOTAL	605	100.00%	601	100.00%	558	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Ballymena Town Centre

Description

1.2 Ballymena is the largest settlement and main town within MEA Borough with a population of 31,205 in the 2021 Census for Northern Ireland. Ballymena town centre is broadly defined by Parkway to the north, North Street and the Galgorm Road to the west, Braid River in the south and Broughshane Street/Church Street to the east. Ballymena is identified as being a Sub Regional Town and Main Hub in the Regional Development Strategy. The town has an excellent location on the edge of BMUA with easy access to ports and airports. The town is also located on the main transport route between Belfast and the important tourism attractions of the north coast.

Overall Composition

1.3 Ballymena town centre is the largest in the borough and had 558 retail units within the town centre at the time of the town centre health checks in March 2024. Ballymena has the most comprehensive and diverse offer of retail and services of the three main towns in the borough and, as a result, is the most popular of the three. There are two main shopping centres within the town centre boundary: the Fairhill Centre and the Tower Centre. They are both popular with high levels of occupancy which is a positive indicator given the high number of vacancies recorded in the Fairhill centre in 2021. Braidwater Retail Park is also located on the edge of the town centre straddling the town centre boundary.

Convenience & Comparison

1.4 Convenience goods retail units in the town centre make up 6.81% of retail units which is marginally below the NI average of 7.3%. This slightly low proportion of convenience goods in the town centre is a general trend across the Borough. This is partly due to the prominence of large format out of centre convenience retail in the Borough. In Ballymena for example, Tesco, located out of town centre at Larne Road Link, dominates the convenience goods

market. Historical composition data for Ballymena (Experian 2018) indicated that the proportion of comparison goods stores was 30.41%, falling to 27.95% in 2021 (Council survey). However, it has surpassed the pre-covid percentage in 2024 and is now 31.54%, which is above the NI average of 30.07%.

Services

1.5 Ballymena town centre has a higher than average proportion of retail services and a lower than average proportion of leisure services. The proportion of financial and business services is marginally higher than the NI average. In terms of retail services, Ballymena town centre has a proportion of 16.67% retail services units, higher than the NI average of 13.86%. This is a trend present in all three MEA town centres. Turning to leisure services, Ballymena has a lower proportion of leisure services in the town centre (16.67%) compared with the NI average of 19.81%.

Vacancies

1.6 Ballymena's proportion of vacant units within the town centre is 19.18% in March 2024. This is below the NI average of 20.12%. Ballymena had the lowest vacancy rate of the three main town centres in MEA and it is positive that Ballymena has recovered well, post covid, from the 2021 vacancy rate of 24.79%.

Retailer Representation

1.7 Ballymena Town Centre includes an extensive list of national multiples and major retailers, testament to Ballymena being the largest centre within the Borough. 81 national multiples and major retailers were identified at the time of this Mid & East Antrim Borough Council town centre survey, including H&M, Superdrug, EE, New Look, Next, Primark, River Island and Marks and Spencer. Experian's Goad Category Reports historically listed 30 national multiples that had been identified as retailers most likely to improve consumer appeal of town centres, however Experian have advised that some retailers on the list are no longer trading on the high street or are no longer as prevalent so their list needs updating. Of the 25 shops on their list still trading or prevalent on the high street, Ballymena Town has 16, with 14 inside the existing town centre boundary.

Average Prime Rents

1.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of town centre commercial property rents revealed that most are between £6 and £10 per square foot. Some units on the periphery of the town centre are around £3 per square foot whilst some in the area between the two shopping centres are around £14 per square foot. (Propertypal.com and Propertynews.com)

Accessibility

1.9 Ballymena is reasonably well serviced by public transport, and Ballymena railway station is located a 3-7 minute walk from the town centre. Hourly train services link Ballymena with Belfast and Londonderry and operate daily. There are four main bus routes into the Town Centre, with 34 services operating each weekday, and 33 services on Saturdays. These bus routes do not operate on Sundays. There are also Ulsterbus Services servicing 19 destinations, and Goldline services to Belfast several times daily. Park and Ride Facilities are located at the Bus/Train Station off Princes Street and Ballee Park and Ride on Antrim Road off A26/Ballee Roundabout. The Town Centre is well catered for in terms of parking, with c. 3341 spaces. The January 2018

Parking Study Baseline Report completed by Systra, identified 1244 private spaces and the councils Carpark Management Team survey in March 2023 identified 2007 spaces in council operated car parks.

Footfall

- 1.10 Footfall counters in Ballymena are positioned at Church Street, Broughshane Street and Ballymoney Street and figures are monitored and supplied to council by Footfall Analytics (EMEA). Footfall figures in Ballymena town centre have fallen by 4.4% from April 2018 to April 2024. This fall is the smallest of the 3 main towns with Larne at 6% and Carrickfergus at 37.9%

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 1.11 The Ballymena Flood Map (Map 4, Appendix A) shows potential for some minor river and surface water flooding throughout the town centre. The majority of river flooding (Q100cc) is located on the western edge of the town centre. Surface water flooding (I200cc) is seen at isolated locations throughout the centre. The Ballymena Constraints Map (Map 5, Appendix A) prepared by the council, identifies defence and industrial heritage assets, archaeological sites and monuments and listed buildings. These assets are located throughout the centre, constraining development in some parts of this area. A Tree Preservation Order exists along the stretch of the Ballymoney Road which falls within the town centre boundary.

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 1.12 The most recent data available in the 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities reports that in 2022 there were 1263 incidences of crime within Ballymena Town Centre. Of the total crimes, 34% were listed as anti-social behaviour, 23% were violence and sexual offences, and 14% were shoplifting.

Environmental Quality

- 1.13 Public Realm works have recently been completed on Greenvale Street, Pat's Brae, Castle Street, and the remaining section of Church Street, including widening and re-surfacing of footpaths, soft landscaping, and installation of street furniture. There are a few core streets that have not yet undergone public realm improvements including Bryan Street, Linenhall Street and Hill Street. Most central parts of the town centre were found to be of a good standard. The addition of public art and two parklets have added to the vibrancy of the town centre, whilst there are several redevelopment schemes on former derelict sites that have improved the town centre as a whole.

2.0 Carrickfergus Town Centre

- 2.1 Maps 6-8 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the LDP team in March 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within Carrickfergus town centre boundary as defined in the Carrickfergus Area Plan 2001. Figure B below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Carrickfergus in March 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average.

Figure B Carrickfergus Town Centre Composition

Carrickfergus	Units # 2018	Units % 2018	Units # 2021	Units % 2021	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	12	4.53%	8	3.14%	7	2.85%	7.30%
Comparison	48	18.11%	48	18.82%	41	16.67%	30.07%
Retail Services	54	20.38%	50	19.61%	53	21.54%	13.86%
Leisure Services	50	18.87%	60	23.53%	61	24.80%	19.81%
Finance & Business	32	12.08%	24	9.41%	24	9.76%	8.84%
Vacant	69	26.04%	65	25.49%	60	24.39%	20.12%
TOTAL	265	100.00%	255	100.00%	246	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Ballymena Town Centre

Description

- 2.2 Carrickfergus is located in the south-east part of Mid & East Antrim and is a coastal town. At the time of the 2021 Census, the town had a population of 28141 people, making it the second largest settlement in the Borough. The town is serviced by bus and train and is within 30 minute driving time of Belfast.

Overall Composition

- 2.3 The Carrickfergus Town Centre composition varies quite considerably from the Northern Ireland average composition. The headline figures are the particularly high vacancy rate which is still well above the Northern Ireland average. In addition, the town centre has a significantly higher than average proportion of retail services and a steadily increasing number of leisure services, well above the Northern Ireland average.

Convenience & Comparison

- 2.4 In 2018, there were 12 convenience units counted in Carrickfergus, equating to 5.0% of the overall retail units within the town centre boundary. This number decreased to 8 units in 2021 and 7 in 2024, now representing only 2.85% of all units in the town centre, significantly below the NI average of 7.3%. This reduced number of units is due to the dominance of two large supermarkets within the town centre boundary – Sainsbury's and Tesco and the loss of some independents. There may also be convenience competition from LIDL and Marks & Spencer, both of which are located out of centre on the Belfast Road. In a similar pattern to convenience units, Carrickfergus has a lower proportion of comparison units than the NI average of 30.07%, accounting for just 16.67% of retail units within the town centre. Historical data from Experian shows that in 2012, 30.5% of units were comparison goods, but this decreased to 18.82% in 2021 and further declined in 2024 to 16.67%, (council surveys), an indication that the town centre has struggled to retain comparison retailers over the last decade or more. The low

proportion of both convenience and comparison retailers within the town centre indicates that there is a deviation from typical town centre retailing opportunities within Carrickfergus Town Centre.

Services

- 2.5 At the time of the council's survey in March 2024, units offering a Retail Service accounted for 21.54% of retail units within the town centre. This is considerably higher than the NI average of 13.86% and an indication that the town centre is not as healthy as it could be. The majority of retail services were health and beauty units. Leisure services accounted for 24.8% of retail units in the town centre, above the NI average of 19.81%, indicating Carrickfergus town centre has a higher than average level of leisure services, such as restaurants cafes, takeaways, gyms and members clubs etc. Carrickfergus Town Centre has 9.76% of retail units being used for financial and business services, which is slightly higher than the NI average and very similar to the 2021 figure.

Vacancies

- 2.6 Carrickfergus has a concerning level of vacant units within the town centre, with just under a quarter of retail units currently vacant (24.39%), albeit there was a marginal improvement from the 2021 figure of 25.49%. This is well above the NI average of 20.12%. The proportion of vacancies is evident and noticeable when visiting the centre, with some streets having more vacant than occupied units.

Retailer Representation

- 2.7 Carrickfergus Town has 14 national multiples and major retailers with 12 of them within the town centre. Experian's Goad Category Reports historically listed 30 national multiples that had been identified as retailers most likely to improve consumer appeal of town centres, however Experian have advised that some retailers on the list are no longer trading on the high street or are no longer as prevalent so their list needs updating. Of the 25 shops on their list still trading or prevalent on the high street, Carrickfergus Town has 6 trading, with 5 being inside the existing town centre boundary including Boots, New Look, Sainsbury's, Superdrug and Tesco.

Average Prime Rents

- 2.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of town centre commercial property rents revealed that most are between £6 and £8 per square foot. (proptypal.com and propertynews.com)

Accessibility

- 2.9 Both walk-in routes and car parking provision are considered to be adequate within the centre, and there are approximately 1138 car parking spaces throughout the town (611 council operated spaces (councils Carpark Management Team survey 2023), and 527 private spaces (Systra survey 2018)). Park and Ride facilities are available at Carrickfergus Train Station. Parking facilities are considered to be well sign-posted throughout the town. The town also has a railway station approximately 0.2 miles from the town centre that provides services to Belfast. On weekdays there are 33 services to Belfast, whilst there are 30 services on Saturday and 14 services on Sunday. In addition to trains, numerous bus services both within the town and connecting Carrickfergus with the surrounding towns.

Footfall

- 2.10 Footfall counters in Carrickfergus are positioned at Market Place, High Street and North Street with figures monitored and supplied to council by Footfall Analytics (EMEA). Footfall figures in Carrickfergus town centre have fallen by a remarkable 37.9% from April 2018 to April 2024. Compared to Ballymena over the same period with a fall of 4.4% and Larne with a fall of 6% from April 2023 to April 2024, every effort should be made to ensure this figure does not fall further. The Retail policies in the Mid and East Antrim LDP 2030 - Plan Strategy aim to protect and sustain the vitality and viability of our established town centres and small town centres so they can perform to their maximum potential in meeting the needs of the citizens and visitors and contribute to the economy of Mid and East Antrim. They promote established town centres as the appropriate first choice location for retailing and other main town centre uses and require a sequential approach to the identification of sites for retailing and main town centre uses, to minimise the impact of out of centre retailing and to protect and enhance diversity in the range of town centre uses. These policies need to be rigorously applied, particularly in Carrickfergus, to help re-dress the reduced footfall figures.

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 2.11 The Flood Map (Map 9 Appendix 1) shows the potential extent of coastal flooding (Q200) along the coast, which can impact southern parts of the town centre. The maps also show some incidence of surface water throughout the town centre. The Carrickfergus Constraints Map (Map 10, Appendix 1), prepared by the council, identifies defence and industrial heritage assets, archaeological sites and monuments, and listed buildings. These assets are located extensively throughout the centre, constraining development in some parts of this area. In addition, the majority of the town centre is included within the Area of Archaeological Potential, as well as the Conservation Area. Carrickfergus Castle is designated as a historic monument in state care.

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 2.12 The most recent data available in the 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities reports that in 2022 there were 419 incidences of crime within Carrickfergus Town Centre. Of the total crimes, 40% were listed as anti-social behaviour, 23% were violence and sexual offences, and 17% were shoplifting.

Environmental Quality

- 2.13 Public Realm improvement works have been completed at the front of Carrickfergus Civic Centre on Lancasterian Street, however other areas of the town centre that had public realm works completed over 10 years ago are now looking tired, particularly in North Street and West Street. It seems that constant traffic in these locations has significantly damaged the road surface. The environmental quality of some areas of Carrickfergus Town Centre suffers due to the overall number of vacant units. However, there is still potential for the town centre environment to be significantly improved. It is understood that future City Deal investment may address some areas of public realm. Carrickfergus is an area with important historical character and value with several historic sites, monuments and listed buildings throughout the centre, which are within the designated Conservation Area. The historic environment is both an opportunity and a constraint in terms of further development within the town centre, but overall, it offers significant potential (particularly with the City Deal investment) to be utilised more fully to improve the quality of the built environment within the town centre. Some shop fronts and other signage in parts of the Conservation Area are not to the standards outlined in the

Carrickfergus Town Plan Alterations Design Supplement. Given the substantial City Deal investment, every effort should be made to maintain the highest standards of design in every case as cumulatively a number of substandard designs can affect the overall character of the Conservation Area.

3.0 Larne Town Centre

- 3.1 Maps 11-13 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the Plan team in March 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within Larne town centre boundary as defined in the Larne Area Plan 2010. Figure C below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Larne in March 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average.

Figure C Larne Town Centre Composition

Larne	Units # 2018	Units % 2018	Units # 2021	Units % 2021	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	17	5.86%	12	4.26%	12	4.33%	7.30%
Comparison	78	26.9%	74	26.24%	67	24.19%	30.07%
Retail Services	56	19.31%	64	22.770%	60	21.66%	13.86%
Leisure Services	42	14.48%	47	16.67%	45	16.25%	19.81%
Finance & Business	35	12.07%	21	7.45%	21	7.58%	8.84%
Vacant	62	21.38%	64	22.70%	72	25.99%	20.12%
TOTAL	290	100.00%	282	100.00%	277	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Larne Town Centre

Description

- 3.2 Larne is located on the coast, on the eastern boundary of the Mid & East Antrim Borough. It is the second largest seaport in Northern Ireland. At the time of the 2021 census, Larne had a population of 18,853, making it the third largest town within the Borough, behind Ballymena and Carrickfergus. The Larne bus and railway station is located approximately 0.3 miles from the Town Centre.

Overall Composition

- 3.3 Larne Town Centre had a total of 277 retail units within the town centre boundary at the time of the MEA Borough Council survey in March 2024 the headline points are that Larne Town Centre has lower than average proportion of convenience units, comparison units and leisure services, and higher than average retail services and vacant units. These statistics are very similar to those in 2021. Overall, the centre has a diverse range of shops, albeit that the breakdown of categories diverges slightly from the Northern Ireland averages.

Convenience & Comparison

- 3.4 At the time of this survey, there were 12 convenience units, accounting for 4.33% of the total units. This is below the NI average of 7.30%, however the number of convenience units has remained constant since 2021. The lower than average percentage is due in part to the prominence of the large format Asda supermarket outside the town centre, which dominates the convenience goods market. As such there are fewer convenience units in total. Comparison goods units account for 24.19% of the total units. Historical data showed in 2009 the Experian Goad survey identified 33.9% comparison units, however this healthy percentage has continued to fall to around 27%, 26% and 24% in 2018, 2021 and 2024 and now sits well below the Northern Ireland Average of 30.07%.

Services

- 3.5 When considering services, Larne has a strong offer of retail services (21.66%), well above the NI average of 13.86%, while financial and business services (7.58%) are slightly below the NI average. Larne has a lower proportion of leisure services within the town centre (16.25%) compared with the NI average of 19.81%.

Vacancies

- 3.6 At the time of this survey, Larne had 72 vacant units, a proportion of almost 26%. This is higher than Carrickfergus and Ballymena's percentage vacancy well above the Northern Ireland average of 20.12%. According to the GL Hearn Northern Ireland Town Centre Study of 2014, historic vacancy rates were last at 26% in 2007.

Retailer Representation

- 3.7 Larne Town overall has 22 national multiples and major retailers with 19 of them within the town centre. Experian's Goad Category Reports historically listed 30 national multiples that had been identified as retailers most likely to improve consumer appeal of town centres, however Experian have advised that some retailers on the list are no longer trading on the high street or are no longer as prevalent as a result the list requires updating. Of the 25 shops on their list still trading or prevalent on the high street, Larne Town has 4, all of which are inside the existing town centre boundary including Argos, Tesco, Vodafone and Superdrug.

Average Prime Rents

- 3.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of town centre commercial property rents revealed that most are between £6 and £8 per square foot. (propertypal.com and propertynews.com)

Accessibility

- 3.9 The town centre benefits from a bus and railway station located 0.3 miles from the centre. On weekdays there are 20 daily train services Monday to Friday to Belfast, 10 on a Saturday and 7 on a Sunday. There are multiple bus routes connecting Larne to surrounding towns and 5 different town service routes. Furthermore, there are 966 car parking spaces in the centre, 611 of which are council operated (councils Carpark Management Team survey March 2023), and 355 privately operated (Systra survey 2018).

Footfall

- 3.10 Larne footfall counters are located at Broadway, 20 Main Street and 96 Main Street, however the full set footfall counters were not in place in Larne until 2020. In order to avoid taking figures during covid periods when footfall would have been abnormally affected, the figures provided are from April 2023 to April 2024. Footfall during this period fell by 6%.

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 3.11 The Flood Map (Map 14, Appendix 1) shows potential for some limited river flooding (Q100cc) in Larne, particularly in areas to the south of the Harbour Highway and along Point Street. Tidal flooding (T200cc) is concentrated to the west of the Circular Road roundabout. Surface water flooding can occur throughout the town centre. The Larne Constraints Map (Map 15, Appendix 1) prepared by the LDP team identifies defence and industrial heritage assets, archaeological sites and monuments, and listed buildings. These assets are located throughout the centre, constraining development in some parts of Larne.

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 3.12 The most recent data available in the 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities, reports that in 2022 there were 395 incidences of crime within Larne Town Centre. Of the total crimes, 36% were listed as anti-social behaviour, 34% were violence and sexual offences, and 10% were criminal damage and arson.

Environmental Quality

- 3.13 Larne was thought to have a good level of environmental quality, with an attractive high street and good quality pedestrian paths. A concerted effort by local group Larne Renovation Generation to improve the urban environment in Larne has resulted in a series of small scale projects across the town centre. The group use crowd funding and aim to turn Larne into 'a creative cultural hub for local people and tourists to enjoy'. The project has resulted in numerous small scale urban improvements including the coloured bicycles.

4.0 Ahoghill Commercial Centre

- 4.1 Maps 16-18 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the LDP team in March 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within to commercial centre of Ahoghill as defined in the Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001. A small town centre boundary will be designated for Ahoghill in the Local Policies Plan. Figure D below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Ahoghill in March 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average.

Fig D Ahoghill Commercial Centre Composition

Ahoghill	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	2	4.88%	7.30%
Comparison	3	7.32%	30.07%
Retail Services	8	19.51%	13.86%
Leisure Services	6	14.63%	19.81%
Finance & Business	0	0%	8.84%
Vacant	22	53.66%	20.12%
TOTAL	41	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Ahoghill Commercial Centre

Description

- 4.2 Ahoghill is located to the west of Ballymena and to the east of Portglenone, on the western side of Mid & East Antrim Borough. At the time of the 2021 census, Ahoghill had a population of 3537, making it the joint largest in population size (along with Whitehead), of the 5 small towns designated in the Borough. There are no bus or railway stations in this small town, however Ballymena bus and railway station is located approximately 3.6 miles from Ahoghill's commercial centre.

Overall Composition

- 4.3 Ahoghill has a total of 41 retail units within the commercial centre at the time of this survey in March 2024. The headline figures are that over half the total units are vacant with the majority of occupied units being either retail service or leisure service.

Convenience & Comparison

- 4.4 At the time of this survey, there were 2 convenience units, accounting for 4.87% of the total units. This is well below the NI average of 7.30%. The lower than average percentage is due in part to 2 spar shops at filling stations outside the commercial centre, another spar shop in nearby Galgorm and the short travel distance to a number of large format supermarkets in Ballymena which dominates the convenience goods market. The 3 comparison goods units in the commercial centre account for 7.31% of the total units which is significantly below the Northern Ireland average of 30.07%. Two are long established family run businesses selling furniture and hardware respectively while the third is a pharmacy catering for local chemist and pharmacy needs associated with the health centre. Given the very close proximity to the regional shopping town of Ballymena, it may prove difficult to generate enough footfall to sustain other types of comparison shops such as clothing or footwear etc in Ahoghill.

Services

- 4.5 When considering services, Ahoghill has a strong offer of retail services (19.51%), well above the NI average of 13.86%. Whilst there are no financial and business services in the commercial centre, it has 6 leisure services (14.63%) which is low compared with the NI average of 19.81%. It is apparent that the overwhelming nature of the businesses in Ahoghill's commercial centre are mainly supported by locals availing of personal services such as hair and beauty alongside leisure uses such as cafes and takeaways.

Vacancies

- 4.6 At the time of this survey in March 2024, Ahoghill had 22 vacant units, resulting in a proportion of almost 54% of the total units. This is the highest percentage vacancy of all towns in the borough and almost 3 times the Northern Ireland average of 20.12%. As Ahoghill has only recently been designated a small town, and therefore not previously monitored in terms of town centre health check criteria, it is not possible to determine if the vacancy rate is increasing or decreasing until a further review is completed in 2 years' time.

Retailer Representation

- 4.7 Ahoghill commercial centre does not have any national multiples present.

Average Prime Rents

- 4.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of the limited number of commercial centre property rents online, indicated £10 per square foot. (propertypal.com and propertynews.com)

Accessibility

- 4.9 Buses stop several times daily in the commercial centre of Ahoghill on route to and from surrounding towns. There is no train or park and ride facilities in Ahoghill. There are 55 council operated car parking spaces (councils Carpark Management Team survey March 2023), and no privately run car parks.

Footfall

- 4.10 There are no council operated footfall counters in Ahoghill commercial centre presently.

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 4.11 The Ahoghill Flood Map (Map 19 Appendix 1) shows the potential for some river flooding (Q100cc) across the centre of the commercial core. Similarly, there is the likelihood for surface water flooding in the commercial core. The Ahoghill Constraints Map (Map 20, Appendix 1) identified 1 listed building within the commercial core which will have limited impact upon development in the area as a whole.

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 4.12 The 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities, does not report crime statistics for Ahoghill.

Environmental Quality

- 4.13 In recent years the central island in the middle of the village was redesigned to incorporate a new Pillar clock, planters, semi-mature trees and integrated seating enclosed by ornamental railings which very much enhances the centre of the town visually. Ahoghill generally has a good level of environmental quality with good quality pedestrian paths however the numerous vacant shuttered shopfronts detract from a feeling of vibrancy within the town.

5.0 Broughshane Commercial Centre

- 5.1 Maps 21-23 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the LDP Plan team in March 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within the commercial centre of Broughshane as defined in the Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001. A small town centre boundary will be designated for Broughshane in the Local Policies Plan. Figure E below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Broughshane in March 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average.

Figure E Broughshane Commercial Centre Composition

Broughshane	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	3	8.57%	7.30%
Comparison	6	17.14%	30.07%
Retail Services	9	25.71%	13.86%
Leisure Services	8	22.86%	19.81%
Finance & Business	1	2.86%	8.84%
Vacant	8	22.86%	20.12%
TOTAL	35	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Broughshane Commercial Centre

Description

- 5.2 Broughshane is located to the east of Ballymena in the middle of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council area. At the time of the 2021 census, Broughshane had a population of 3097, making it the third largest in population size of the 5 small towns designated in the Borough. There are no bus or railway stations in this small town, however several buses stop in Broughshane going to and from other towns.

Overall Composition

- 5.3 Broughshane has a total of 35 retail units within the commercial centre at the time of this survey. The headline figures are that retail and leisure services, like other small towns make up the majority of the commercial centres uses, however convenience uses are above average too.

Convenience & Comparison

- 5.4 At the time of this survey, there were 3 convenience units, accounting for 8.57% of the total units. This is above the NI average of 7.30%. The convenience stores are long established businesses which are clearly well supported by locals. The 6 comparison goods units in the commercial centre account for 17.14% of the total units which is significantly below the Northern Ireland Average of 30.07%. The comparison stores are mostly hardware or gift related. Given the very close proximity to the regional shopping town of Ballymena, it may prove difficult to generate enough footfall to sustain other types of comparison shops such as clothing, footwear etc in Broughshane.

Services

- 5.5 When considering services, Broughshane has a strong offer of retail services (25.71%) almost double the NI average of 13.86%, and while there is only 1 financial & business type service in the commercial centre, there are 8 leisure services (22.86%) which is above the NI average of 19.81%. It's apparent that the majority of the businesses in Broughshane commercial centre are mainly supported by locals availing of personal services such as hair and beauty alongside leisure uses such as cafes and takeaways.

Vacancies

- 5.6 At the time of this survey, Broughshane had 8 vacant units, resulting in a proportion of 22%. This is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 20.12%. As Broughshane has only recently been designated a small town, and therefore not previously monitored in terms of town centre health check criteria, it is not possible to determine if the vacancy rate is increasing or decreasing until a further review is completed in 2 years' time.

Retailer Representation

- 5.7 Broughshane's commercial centre does not have any national multiples present.

Average Prime Rents

- 5.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of the limited number of commercial centre property rents online, indicated almost £10 per square foot. (propertypal.com and propertynews.com)

Accessibility

- 5.9 Buses stop several times daily in the commercial centre of Broughshane on route to and from surrounding towns. There is no train or park and ride facilities in Broughshane. There are no council operated car parks in Broughshane although there are privately owned free carparks that are to the rear of the Thatch Inn and The Vivo/McNeill's Hardware which the public can use when shopping there, along with numerous on-street short term parking spaces on both sides of Main Street.

Footfall

- 5.10 There are no council operated footfall counters in Broughshane commercial centre presently.

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 5.11 The Flood Map (Map 24 Appendix A) shows the potential for some surface water flooding within the commercial centre.

There are a number of listed buildings located within the commercial centre which may impact upon development in their vicinity. (See Broughshane Constraints Map 25 Appendix A).

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 5.12 The 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities does not report crime statistics for Broughshane.

Environmental Quality

5.13 Broughshane is a visually pleasant small town with a very good standard of environmental quality. In summer it is adorned with multiple floral hanging baskets. Footpath quality is very good and despite some vacancy the town appears busy and eventful. The numerous semi mature trees and planters along either side of the main street add to the environmental quality.

6.0 Cullybackey Commercial Centre

- 6.1 Maps 26-28 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the LDP team in March 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within the commercial centre of Cullybackey as defined in the Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001. A small town centre boundary will be designated for Cullybackey in the Local Policies Plan. Figure F below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Cullybackey in March 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average.

Figure F Cullybackey Commercial Centre Composition

Cullybackey	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	4	11.11%	7.30%
Comparison	3	8.34%	30.07%
Retail Services	12	33.33%	13.86%
Leisure Services	8	22.22%	19.81%
Finance & Business	1	2.78%	8.84%
Vacant	8	22.22%	20.12%
TOTAL	36	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Cullybackey Commercial Centre

Description

- 6.2 Cullybackey is located to the north-east of Ballymena, with the local centre of Galgorm lying in between these two settlements. At the time of the 2021 census, Cullybackey had a population of 2659, making it the second smallest in population size of the 5 small towns designated in the Borough. There is no bus station in Cullybackey however several buses stop in the commercial centre going to and from surrounding towns. There is a railway station on Station Road which is on the Londonderry Belfast line.

Overall Composition

- 6.3 Cullybackey has a total of 36 retail units within the commercial centre at the time of this survey. The headline figures are that there are more convenience units than most other small towns and as with all other small towns retail and leisure services are plentiful in comparison to other uses.

Convenience & Comparison

- 6.4 At the time of this survey, there were 4 convenience units, accounting for 11.11 % of the total units. This is well above the NI average of 7.30%. The convenience stores are mainly long established family run supermarkets or bakery businesses which are clearly well supported by locals. The 3 comparison goods units in the commercial centre account for 8.34% of the total units which is significantly below the Northern Ireland Average of 30.07% but notably include 2 national multiples in Boots and Specsavers. Given the very close proximity to the regional shopping town of Ballymena, it may prove difficult to generate enough footfall to sustain other types of comparison shops such as clothing, footwear etc in Cullybackey.

Services

- 6.5 When considering services, Cullybackey has a very strong offer of retail services (33.33%) more than double the NI average of 13.86%, and while there is only 1 financial & business type service in the commercial centre it has 8 leisure services (22.22%) which is above the NI average of 19.81%. It is apparent that most of the businesses in Cullybackey's commercial centre are mainly supported by locals availing of personal services such as hair and beauty alongside leisure uses such as cafes and takeaways.

Vacancies

- 6.6 At the time of this survey, Cullybackey had 8 vacant units, resulting in a proportion of 22.22%. This is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 20.12%. As Cullybackey has only recently been designated a small town, and therefore not previously monitored in terms of town centre health check criteria, it is not possible to determine if the vacancy rate is increasing or decreasing until a further review is completed in 2 years' time.

Retailer Representation

- 6.7 Cullybackey commercial centre has 2 national multiples present namely Boots and Specsavers. The Specsavers unit is an office for arranging home visits. Boots is on the Experian Goad Category Reports historical list of 30 national multiples, identified as retailers most likely to improve consumer appeal of town centres.

Average Prime Rents

- 6.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of commercial centre property rents online, did not reveal any retail property currently to let, however a small first floor office is currently on the market to let at £259 per month (propertypal.com and propertynews.com)

Accessibility

- 6.9 Buses stop several times daily in the commercial centre of Cullybackey on route to and from surrounding towns. There are park and ride facilities adjacent to the train station in Cullybackey. There are no council operated car parks in Cullybackey although there are privately owned free car parks which customers can avail of, to the rear of Eurospar, Village Inn and Toast café and adjacent to Maine Bakery all on Main Street. Traffic through Cullybackey is often very busy, especially at peak travel times and school collection times. Land has been protected for a through-pass around the rear of properties on the north-western side of Main Street for several decades, but it is still unknown if DfI budgets will come forward to enable this infrastructure to be developed in the future. Such a scheme may well help the commercial centre to sustain more retail units as amenity for customers would be more pleasant with less through traffic disrupting walking routes.

Footfall

- 6.10 There are no council operated footfall counters in Cullybackey commercial centre presently.

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 6.11 The Flood Map (Map 29, Appendix A) shows limited incidences of any types of flooding within the commercial core.

There are several listed buildings, an archaeological site/monument and an industrial heritage asset located in the commercial core which may have some impact upon development in their vicinity, (See Cullybackey Constraints Map 30, Appendix A)

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 6.12 The 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities, does not report crime statistics for Cullybackey.

Environmental Quality

- 6.13 Cullybackey has a good standard of environmental quality with a good standard of footpath that runs on both sides of the Main Street. Some mature trees and residential hedging help soften the townscape of this long straight road. There are pockets of vacancy interspersed with housing and shops intermittently along the length of Main Street resulting in a lack of the sense of a busy commercial centre.

7.0 Portglenone Commercial Centre

- 7.1 Maps 31-33 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the LDP team in March 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within the commercial centre of Portglenone as defined in the Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001. A small town centre boundary will be designated for Portglenone in the Local Policies Plan. Figure G below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Portglenone in March 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average.

Figure G Portglenone Commercial Centre Composition

Portglenone	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	4	5.56%	7.30%
Comparison	13	18.05%	30.07%
Retail Services	19	26.39%	13.86%
Leisure Services	21	29.17%	19.81%
Finance & Business	1	1.39%	8.84%
Vacant	14	19.44%	20.12%
TOTAL	72	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Portglenone Commercial Centre

Description

- 7.2 Portglenone is located to the west of Ballymena on the western edge of the council boundary adjacent to Mid Ulster District Council, with the boundary between the two councils defined by the River Bann. At the time of the 2021 census, Portglenone had a population of 1367 within the settlement limits, making it the smallest in population size of the 5 small towns designated in the Borough, however it has by far the most retail units of all 5 small towns within its commercial centre, illustrating that Portglenone serves a large rural hinterland as well as residents living within the settlement. There is no bus or train station in Portglenone, however several buses stop in the commercial centre going to and from surrounding towns.

Overall Composition

- 7.3 Portglenone has a total of 72 retail units within the commercial centre at the time of this survey which is almost double the next closest unit numbers in MEA small towns. The headline figures are that like other small towns retail and leisure services are dominant in comparison to other uses and it has the highest number of comparison shops of all small towns and the widest diversity of type of comparison shop.

Convenience & Comparison

- 7.4 At the time of this survey, there were 4 convenience units, accounting for 5.56 % of the total units. This is below the NI average of 7.30%. There is however a large Eurospar and a fairly large Supervalu which host bakery and butchery departments within the commercial centre along with separate greengrocer and butchers. The 13 comparison goods units in the commercial centre account for 18.05% of the total units which, while below the Northern Ireland Average of 30.07%, is notably the strongest comparison percentage of all small towns in MEA, offering

all the comparison uses offered in the other small towns along with clothing, Jewellery and pet supplies also.

Services

- 7.5 When considering services, Portglenone has a very strong offering of retail services (26.39%), almost double the NI average of 13.86%, and hosts retail services including some seen in other small towns in the borough, such as podiatrists. While there is only 1 financial & business service in the commercial centre there are 21 leisure services (29.17%) which is well above the NI average of 19.81%. While services make up almost 60% of the retail units they don't appear to dominate the commercial centre. There is also an element of browsing, window shopping and comparison shopping that isn't the case in other small towns in the borough.

Vacancies

- 7.6 At the time of this survey, Portglenone had 14 vacant units, resulting in a proportion of 19.44%. This is slightly lower than the Northern Ireland average of 20.12%. As Portglenone has only recently been designated a small town in retail hierarchy terms, and therefore not previously monitored in terms of town centre health check criteria, it is not possible to determine if the vacancy rate is increasing or decreasing until a further review is completed in 2 years' time.

Retailer Representation

- 7.7 Portglenone commercial centre has no national multiples present.

Average Prime Rents

- 7.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of commercial centre property rents online, indicated rates of £5-£8 per square foot. (proptypal.com and propertynews.com)

Accessibility

- 7.9 Buses stop several times daily in the commercial centre of Portglenone on route to and from surrounding towns. There is no park and ride facilities or train station in Portglenone. There are 2 council operated car parks in Portglenone with a total of 72 spaces (Councils Carpark Management Team survey March 2023). There is a privately owned free carpark associated with Fullan's Food Hall (Eurospar) that customers can avail of, along with approximately 100 on-street parking spaces along Main Street.

Footfall

- 7.10 There are no council operated footfall counters in Portglenone commercial centre presently.

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 7.11 The Flood Map (Map 34, Appendix A) shows limited incidences of any types of flooding within the commercial core.

There are several listed buildings, an archaeological site/monument and an industrial heritage asset located in the commercial core which may have some impact upon development in their vicinity (See Portglenone Constraints Map 35, Appendix A)

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 7.12 The 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities does not report crime statistics for Portglenone.

Environmental Quality

- 7.13 Portglenone has a good standard of environmental quality with good quality footpaths in the commercial centre area. There are several semi mature trees and planters in the area of Main Street that widens out for additional car parking. These help the townscape however it is dominated with cars and parking spaces.

8.0 Whitehead Study Area

- 8.1 Maps 36-38 in Appendix A illustrate the land use surveys which were carried out by the LDP team in June 2024. They show the ground, first and second floor uses for all units within the study area. A new small town centre boundary will be designated for Whitehead in the Local Policies Plan. Figure H below shows the number of units present for the various town centre uses in Whitehead in June 2024 and provides a comparison with the Northern Ireland average.

Figure H Whitehead Type 4 Character Area boundary Composition

Whitehead	Units # 2024	Units % 2024	NI % average
Convenience	2	9.52%	7.30%
Comparison	6	28.57%	30.07%
Retail Services	6	28.57%	13.86%
Leisure Services	3	14.29%	19.81%
Finance & Business	1	4.76%	8.84%
Vacant	3	14.29	20.12%
TOTAL	21	100.050%	100.00%

Source: Mid & East Antrim Borough Council & Experian, 2024

Health Check Assessment for Whitehead Study Area

Description

- 8.2 Whitehead is in the south-eastern corner of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council area, lying to the north-west of Carrickfergus. At the time of the 2021 census, Whitehead had a population of 3537, making it the joint largest in population size (along with Ahoghill) of the 5 small towns designated in the Borough. There is a bus and railway station in Whitehead in a very central location accessed via Chester Avenue. Several Trains stop in Whitehead on the Larne-Belfast line daily and several buses stop in Whitehead going to and from other towns and villages nearby.

Overall Composition

- 8.3 Whitehead has a total of 21 retail units within the study area at the time of this survey. The headline figures are that convenience and comparison percentages are healthy compared with Northern Ireland averages. In fact, Whitehead has the highest percentage of comparison shops of the 5 small towns designated in the Borough.

Convenience & Comparison

- 8.4 At the time of this survey, there were 2 convenience units within the study area, accounting for 9.52% of the total units. Although in close proximity there are 2 more convenience units. This is above the NI average of 7.30%. The 6 comparison goods units account for 28.57% of the total units which is significantly higher than the other 4 small towns in the Borough and almost at the Northern Ireland Average of 30.07%. There are 4 more comparison units in the vicinity of the study area too which is a very healthy sign in this small town. The comparison stores are a mix of uses including chemists, hardware, gifts, surf gear and art.

Services

- 8.5 When considering services, the Whitehead study area has a strong offering of retail services (28.57%), over double the NI average of 13.86%, and while there is only 1 financial & business type service in the study area it has 14.29% leisure services, which is lower the NI average of 19.81% however there are several other leisure uses in very close proximity to this defined study area.

Vacancies

- 8.6 At the time of this survey, Whitehead had only 3 vacant units within the study area, resulting in a proportion of 14.29%. This is markedly lower than the Northern Ireland average of 20.12%. When taking account of other units in the vicinity the percentage drops to 11.11% which is the lowest vacancy rate in all towns and small towns in the Borough. As Whitehead has only recently been designated a small town, and therefore not previously monitored in terms of town centre health check criteria, it is not possible to determine if the vacancy rate is increasing or decreasing until a further review is completed in 2 years' time.

Retailer Representation

- 8.7 Whitehead Study Area has 1 national multiple present, namely Gordons chemist, however it does not have any of Experian Goad Category Reports historical list of 30 national multiples identified as retailers most likely to improve consumer appeal of town centres.

Average Prime Rents

- 8.8 Recent LDP Team analysis of commercial centre property rents online, did not reveal any retail property currently to let within the Whitehead Study Area, however a restaurant within the settlement limits of the small town is currently on the market £2300 per month for a 2,400 sq. ft area which equates to commercial letting of £11.50 per square foot (propertypal.com and propertynews.com)

Accessibility

- 8.9 Buses stop several times daily at the bus and train station in whitehead on route to and from surrounding towns and villages. There is parking for 45 vehicles at the park and ride facilities adjacent to the train station and the train stops 32 times Monday to Friday in each direction from Larne to Belfast, 31 times on a Saturday and 14 times on a Sunday. There are 4 council operated carparks in Whitehead offering a total of 195 spaces (councils Carpark Management Team Survey March 2023) along with 17 spaces at the community centre carpark on Balmoral Avenue.

Footfall

- 8.10 There are no council operated footfall counters in Whitehead presently.

Physical Structure and Constraints

- 8.11 The Flood Map (Map 39 Appendix A) shows the potential for a small amount of surface water flooding within the study area. There are a number of listed buildings within and surrounding the study area in Whitehead. There are 3 industrial heritage assets located within the study area. Whitehead Conservation area completely encapsulates the study area (See Whitehead Constraints Map 40 Appendix A), These features may impact upon development.

Perception of Crime and Safety

- 8.12 The 'Town Centre Database', published by the Department for Communities does not report crime statistics for Whitehead.

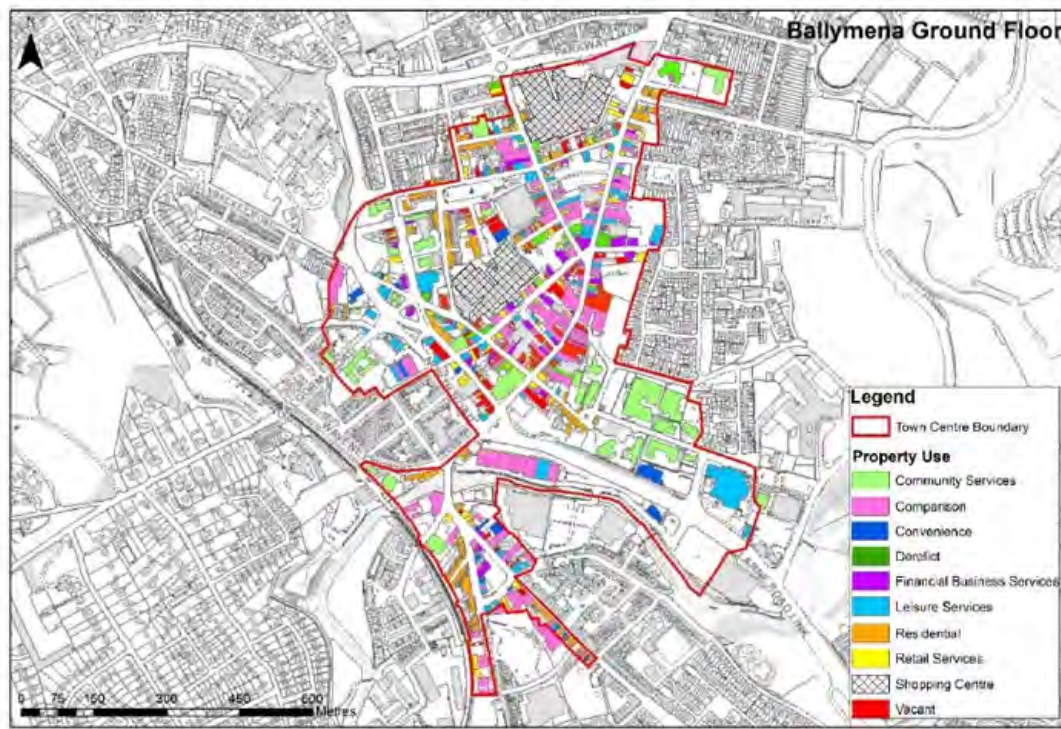
Environmental Quality

- 8.13 A environmental quality project in Whitehead enhanced the coastal park/promenade, an area crucial for the connectivity it offers visitors/locals between Whitehead's main coastal attractions and the commercial heart of the town. It was envisaged that the scheme would be the first stage in a longer-term plan to improve facilities at the coastal park/promenade.

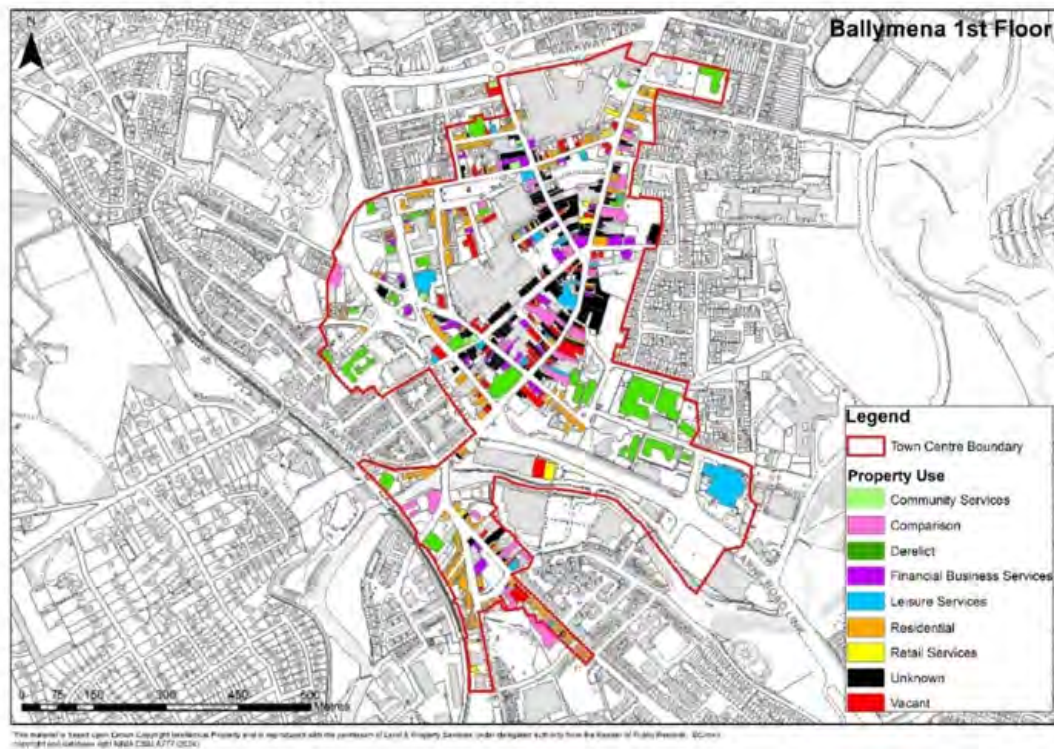
The commercial heart of the town is pleasant in terms of environmental quality and footpaths are a good standard. Occasional planters and seats along Kings Road are a welcoming feature.

Appendix A

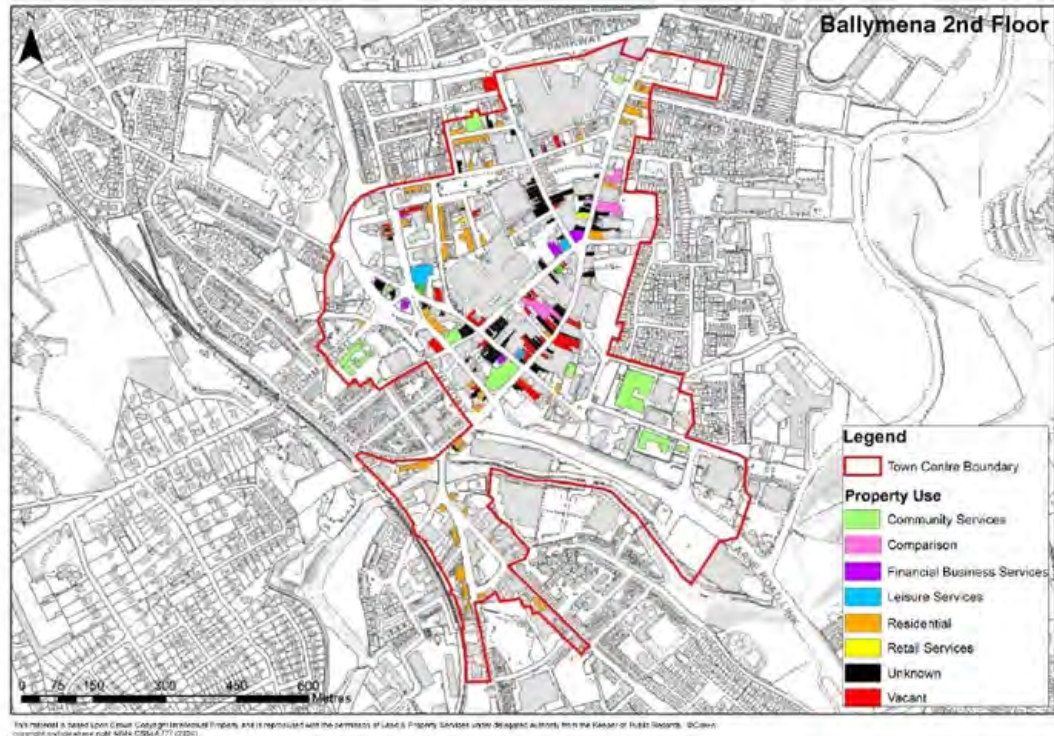
Map 1



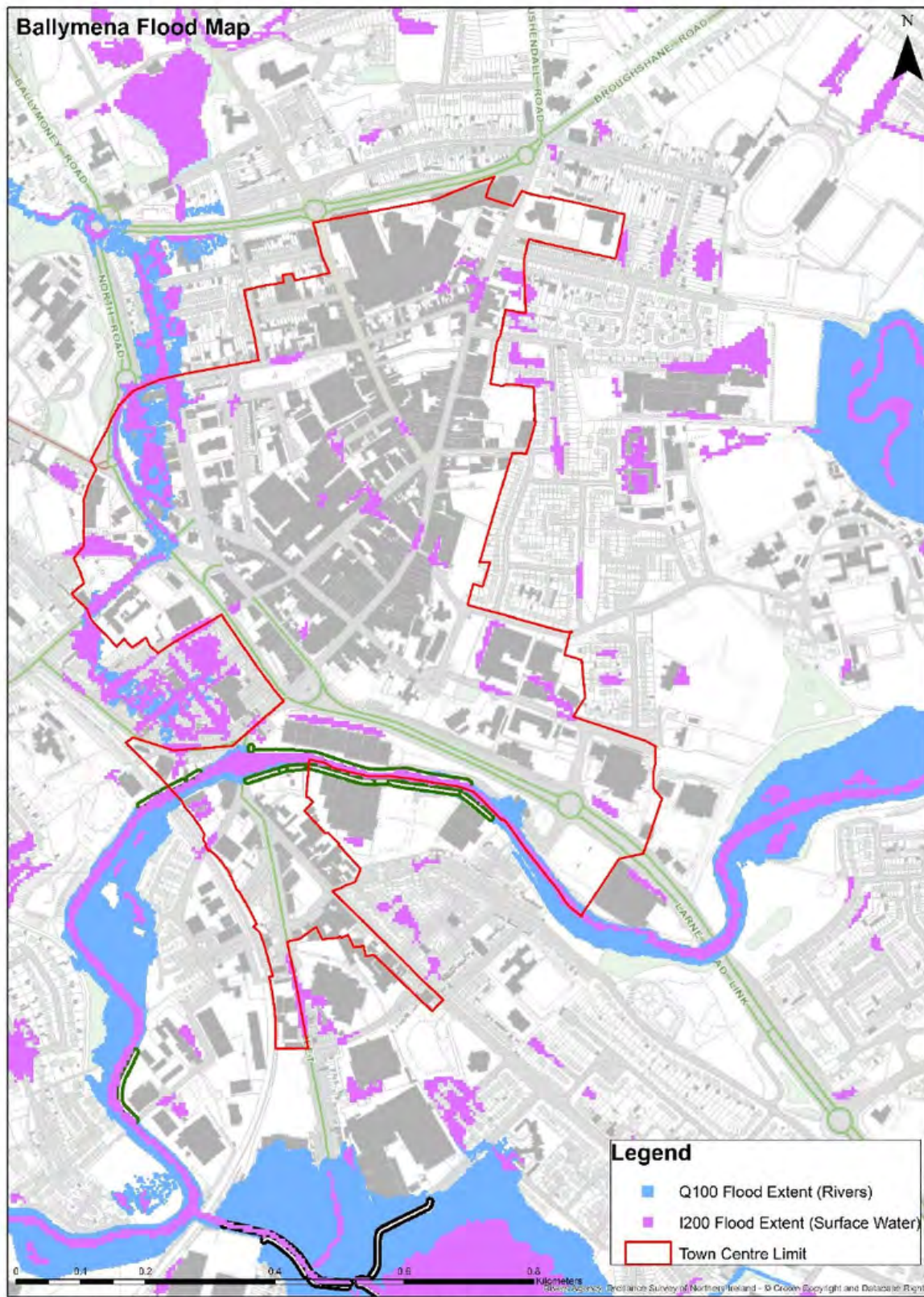
Map 2



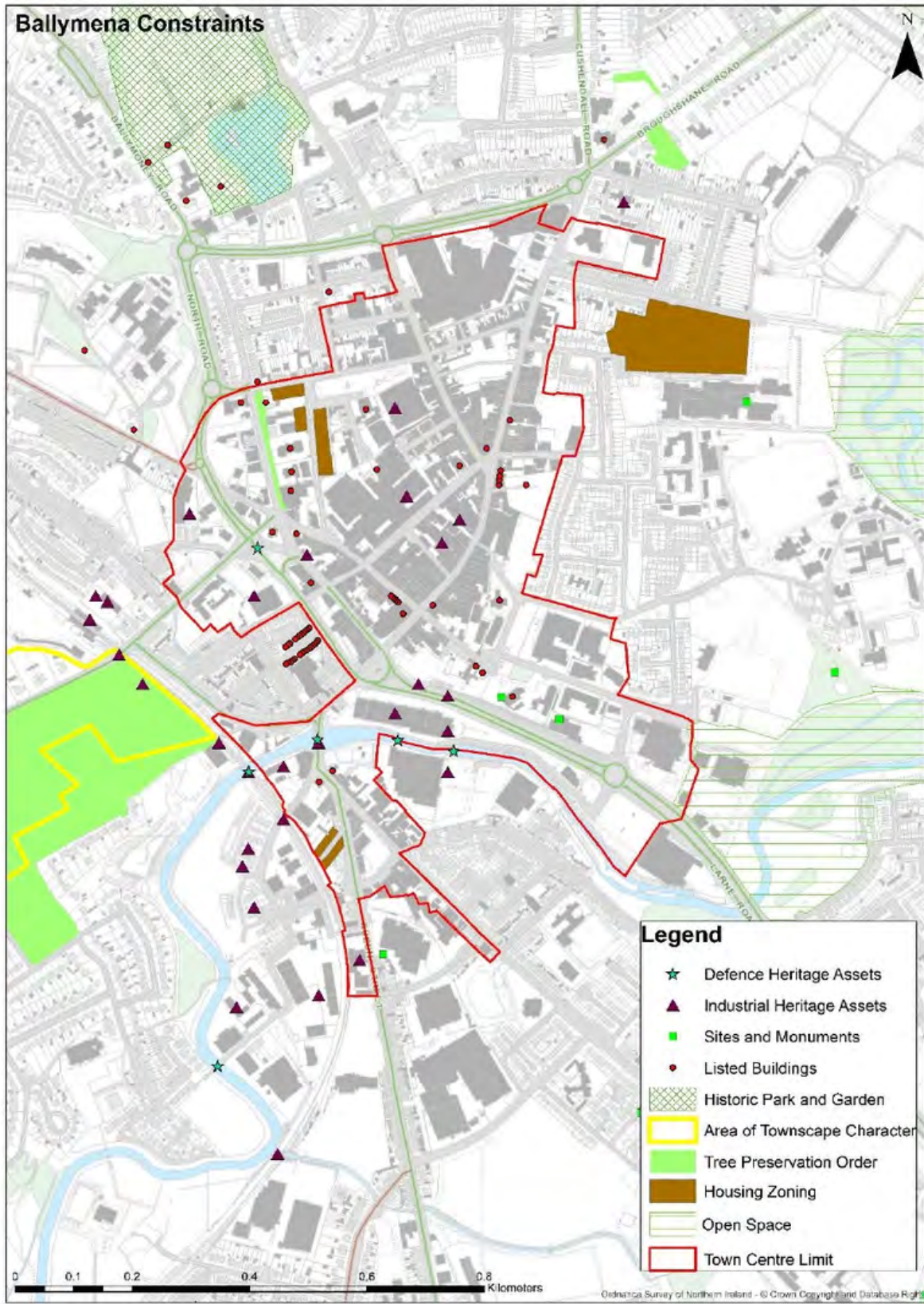
Map 3



Map 4

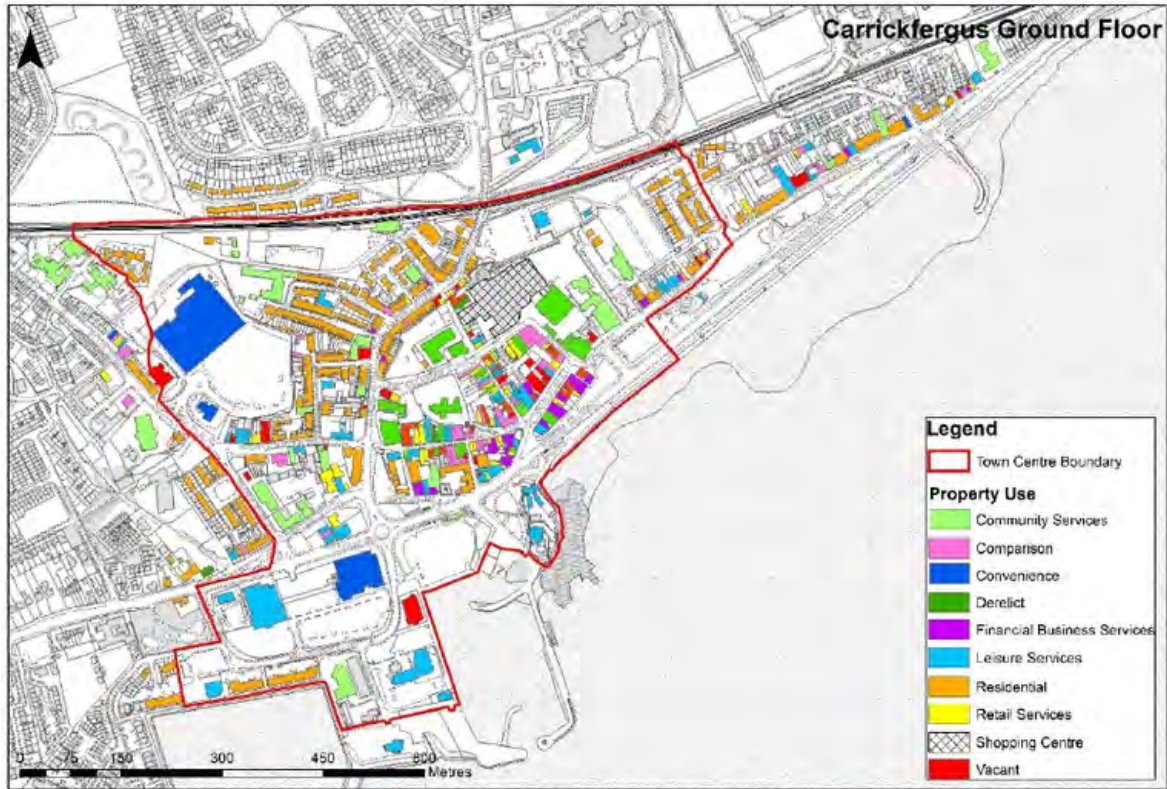


Map 5

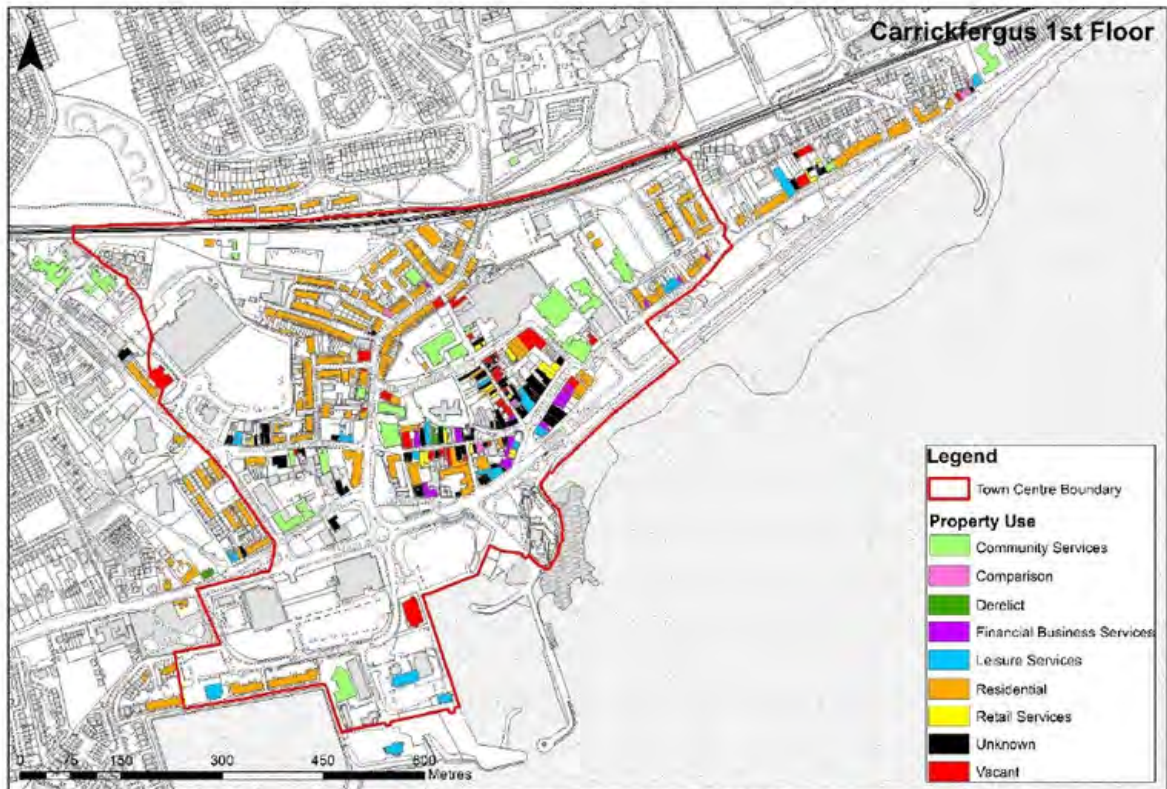


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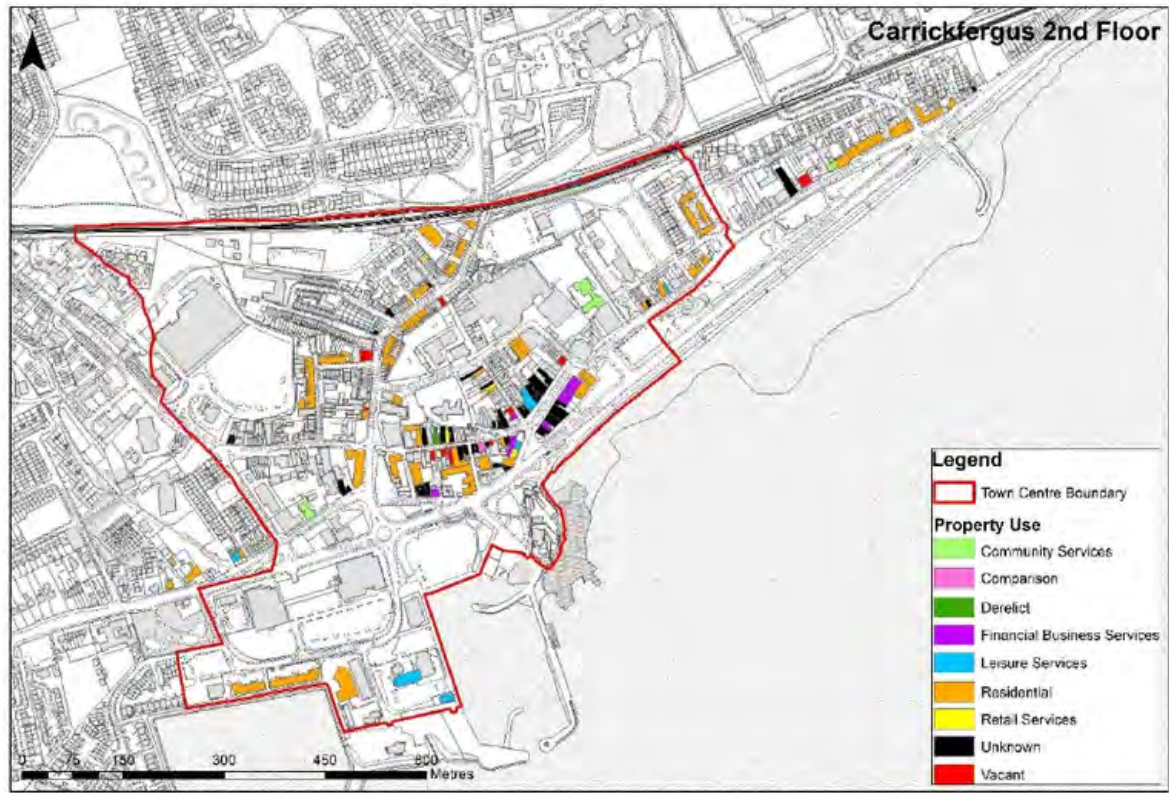
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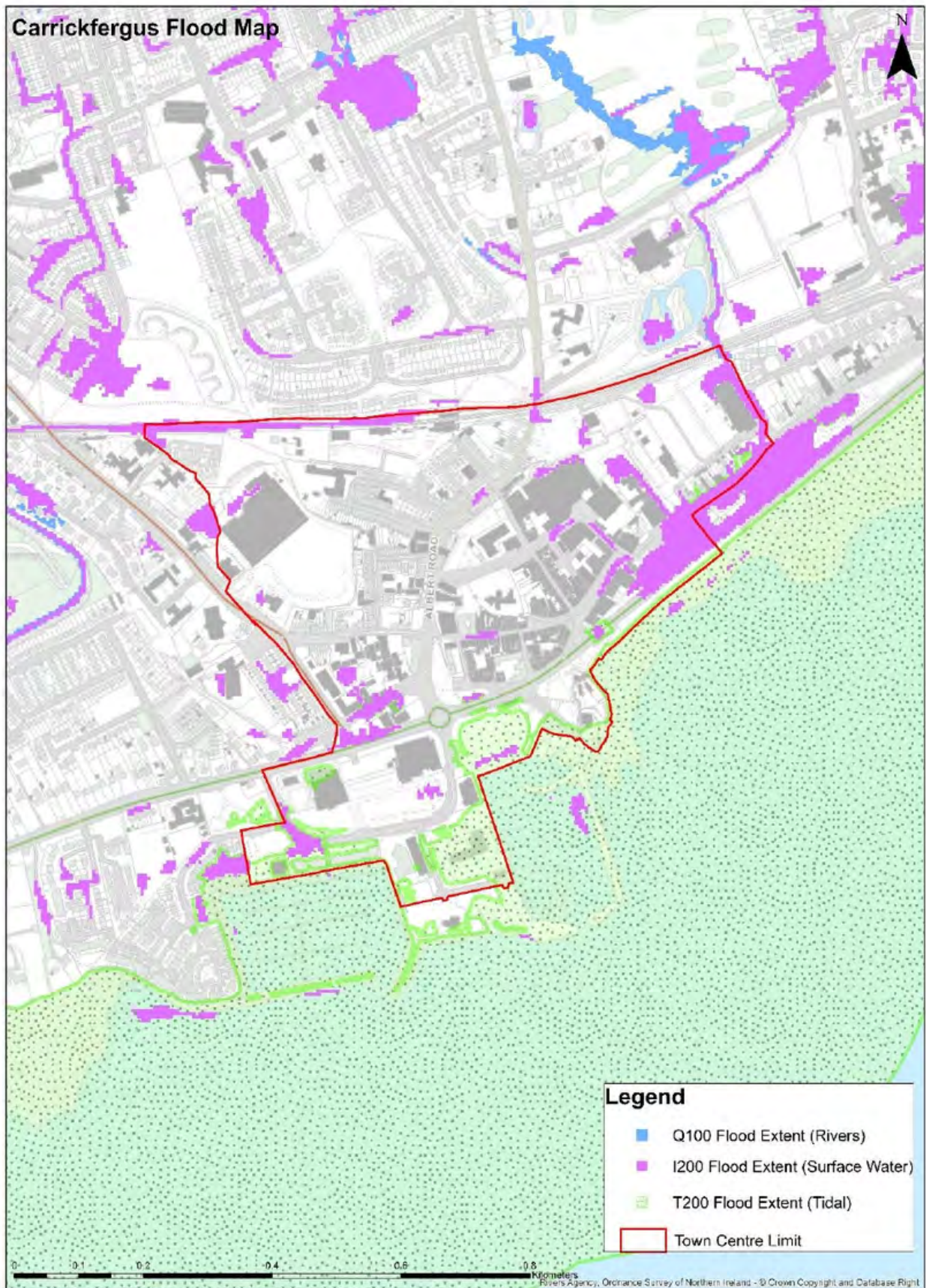
Map 7



Map 8

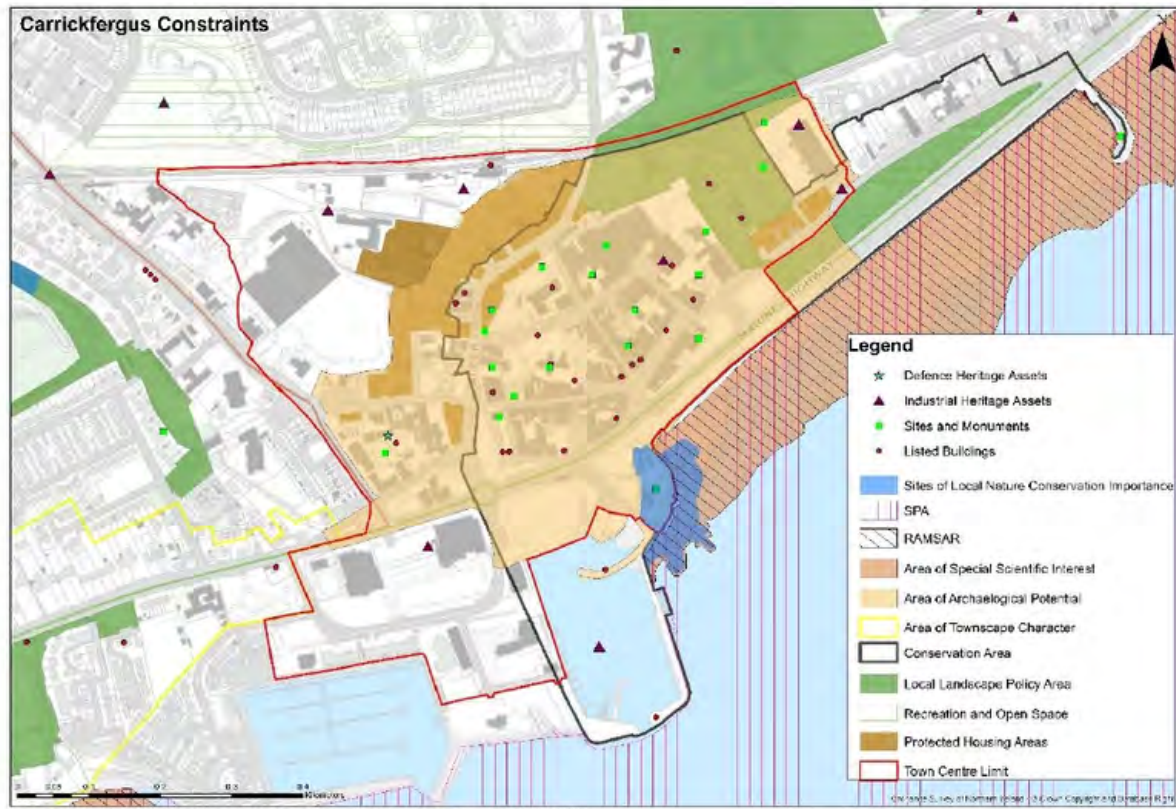


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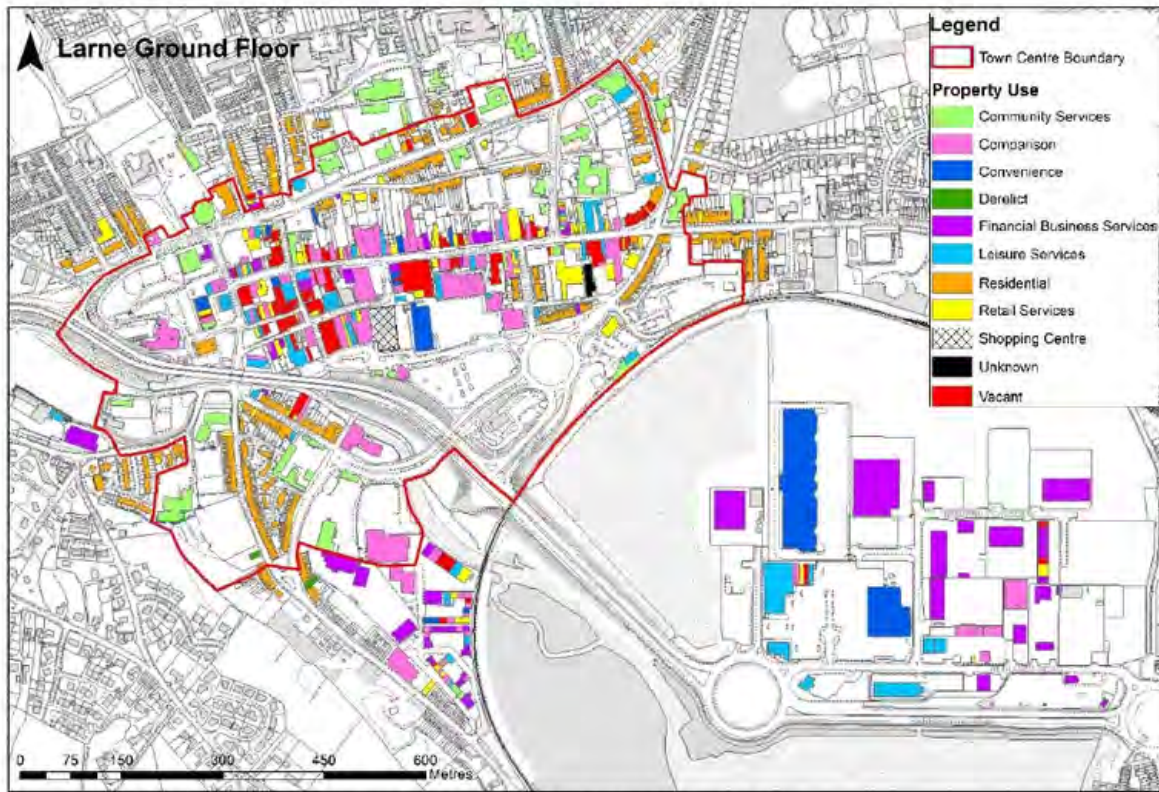


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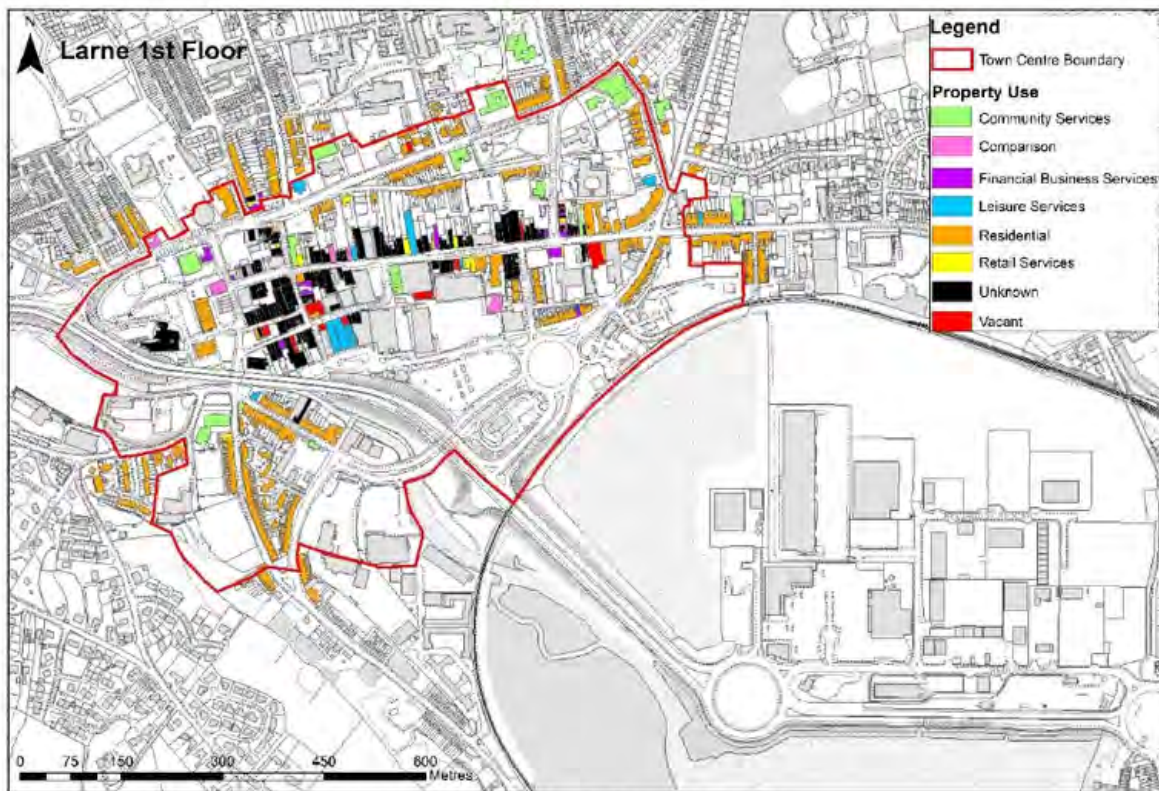
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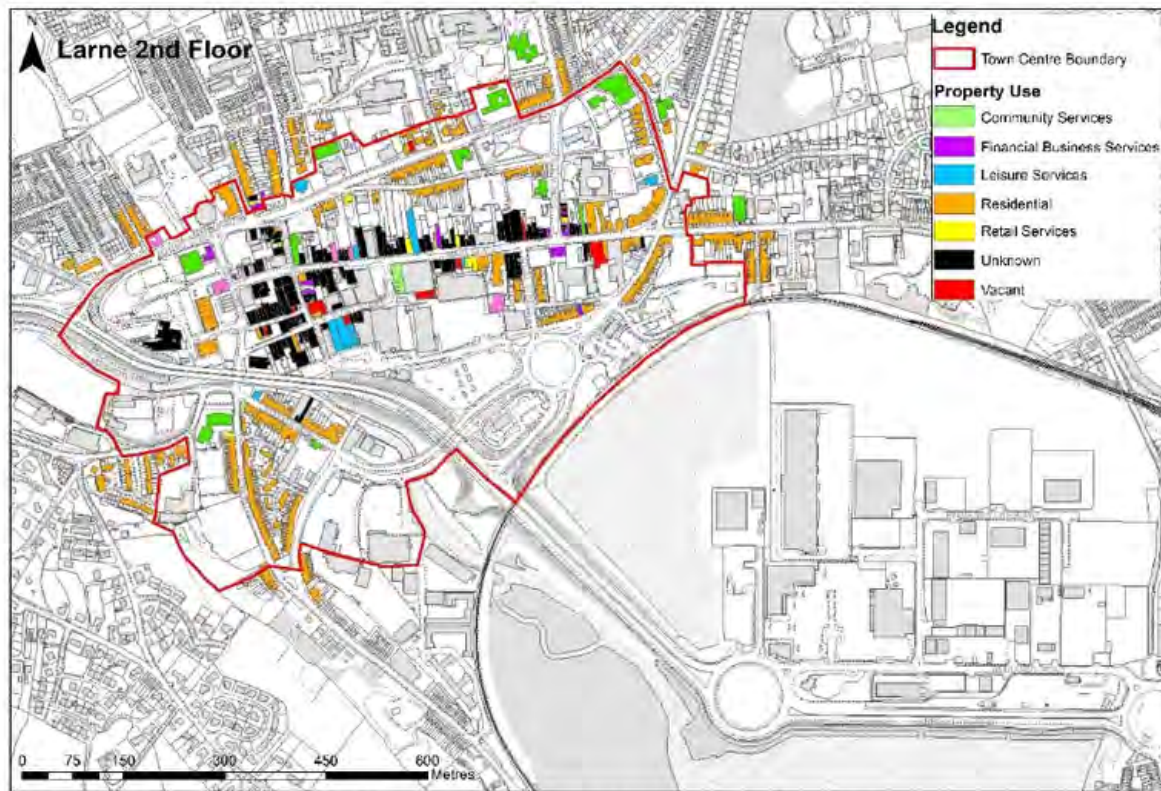
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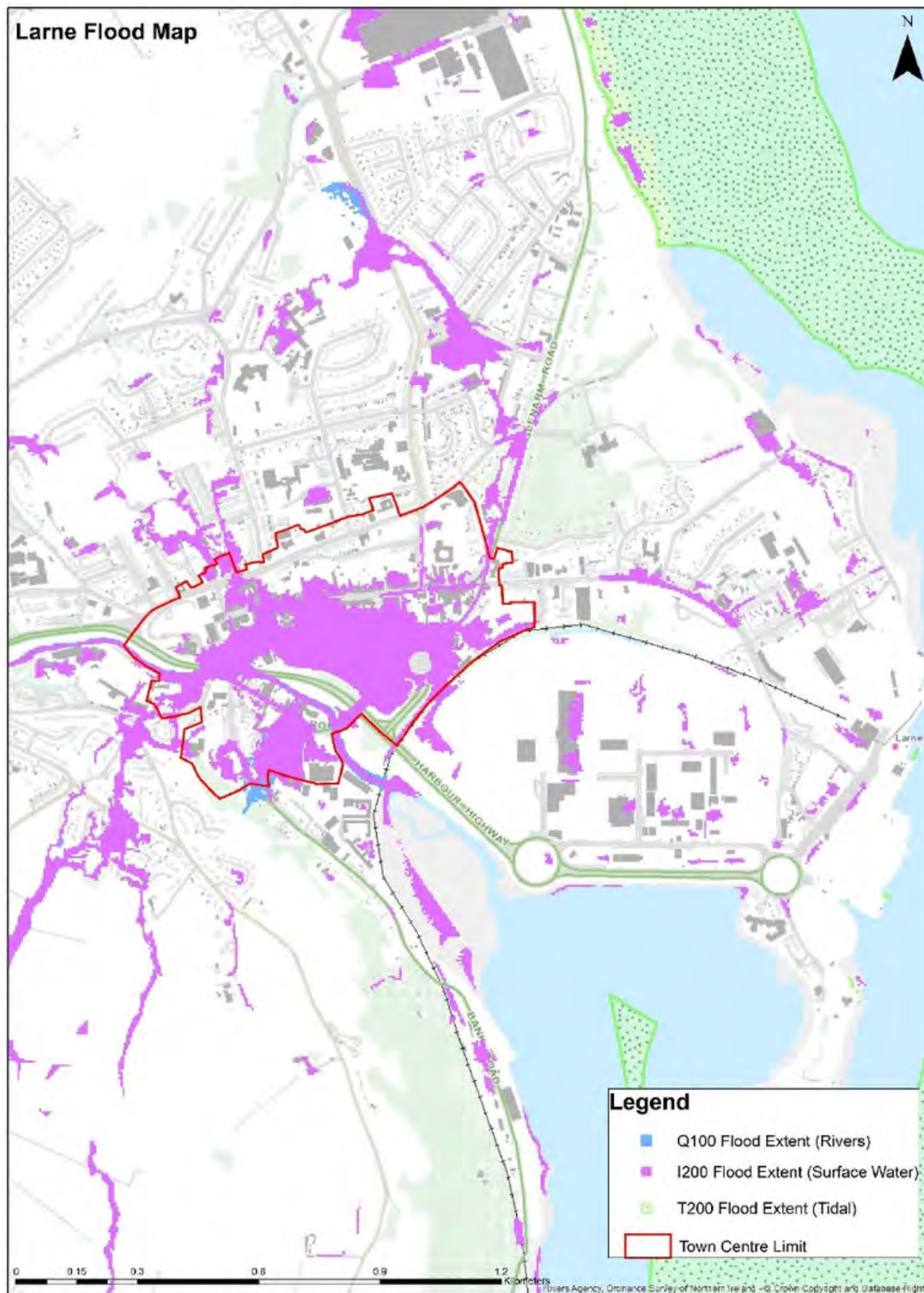
Map 12



Map 13

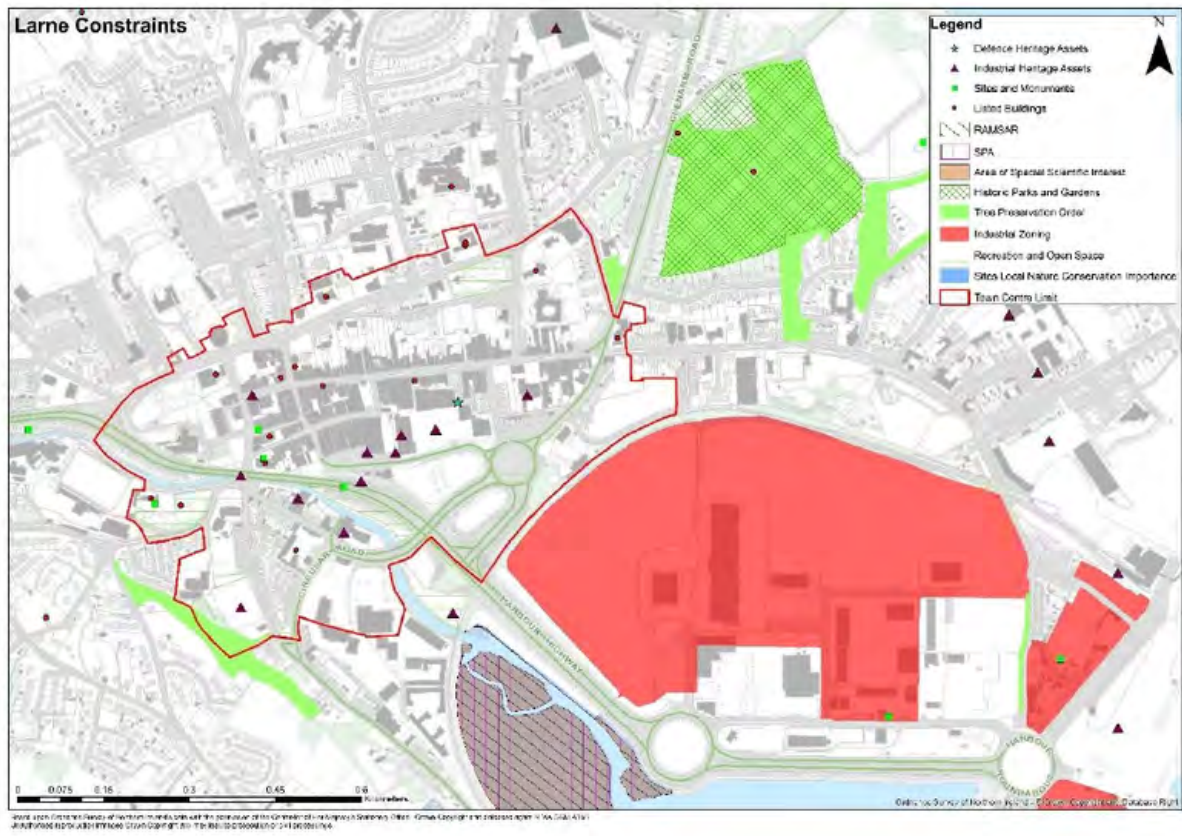


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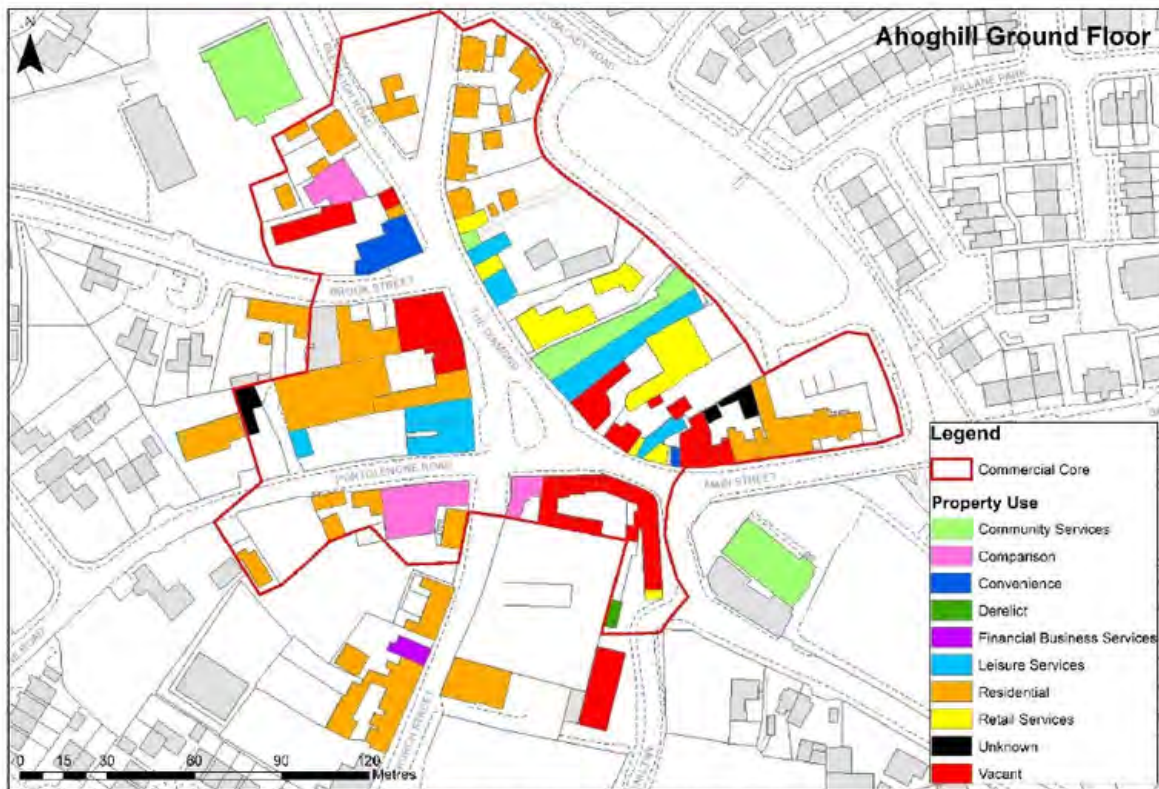


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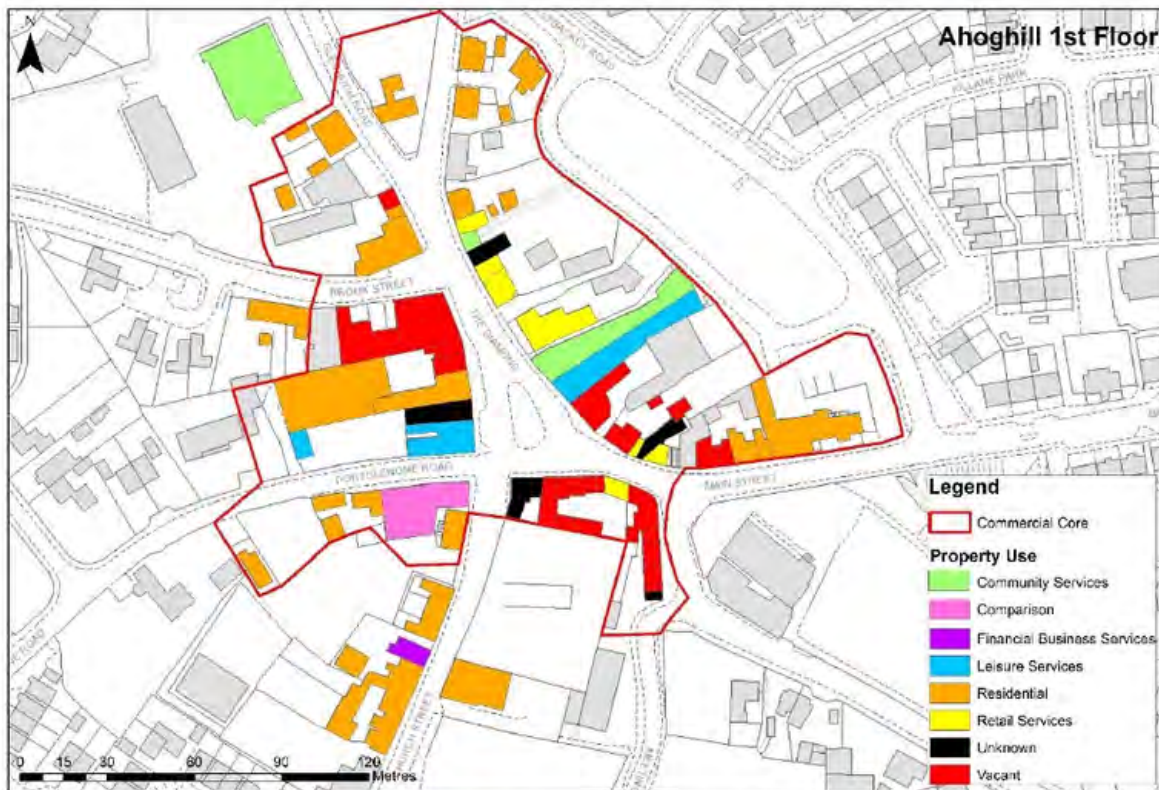
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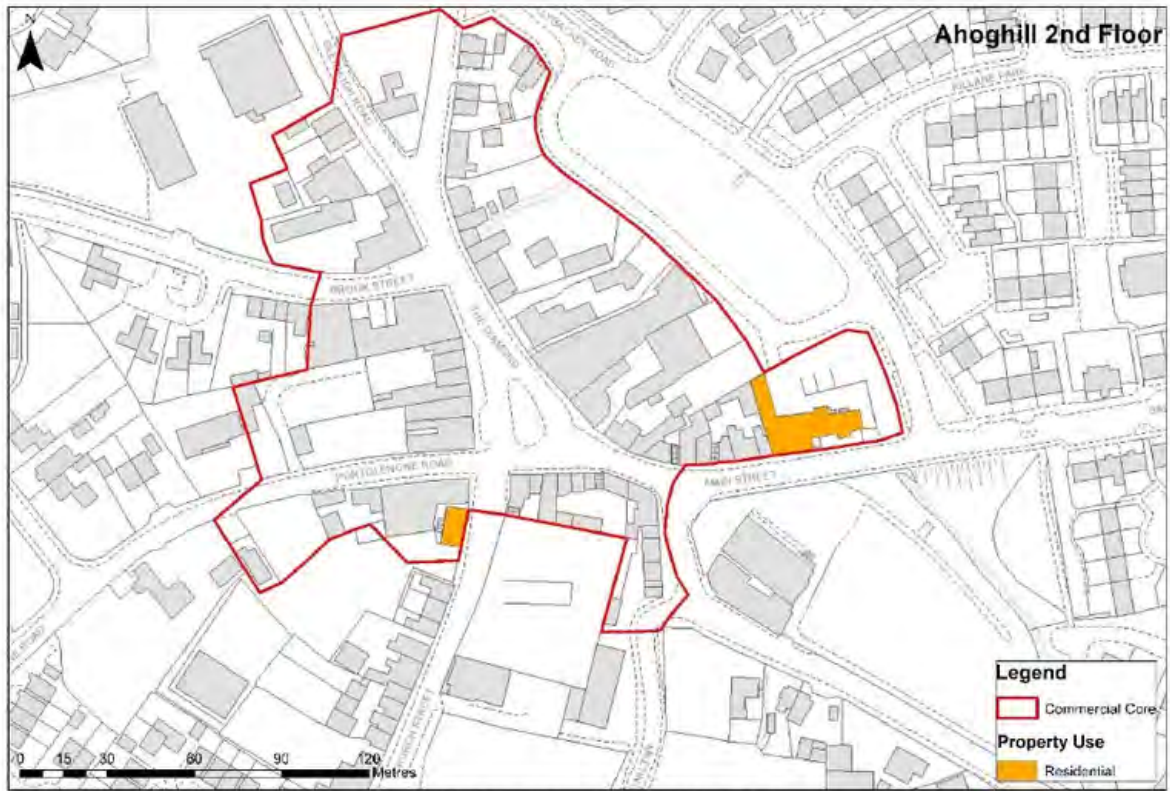
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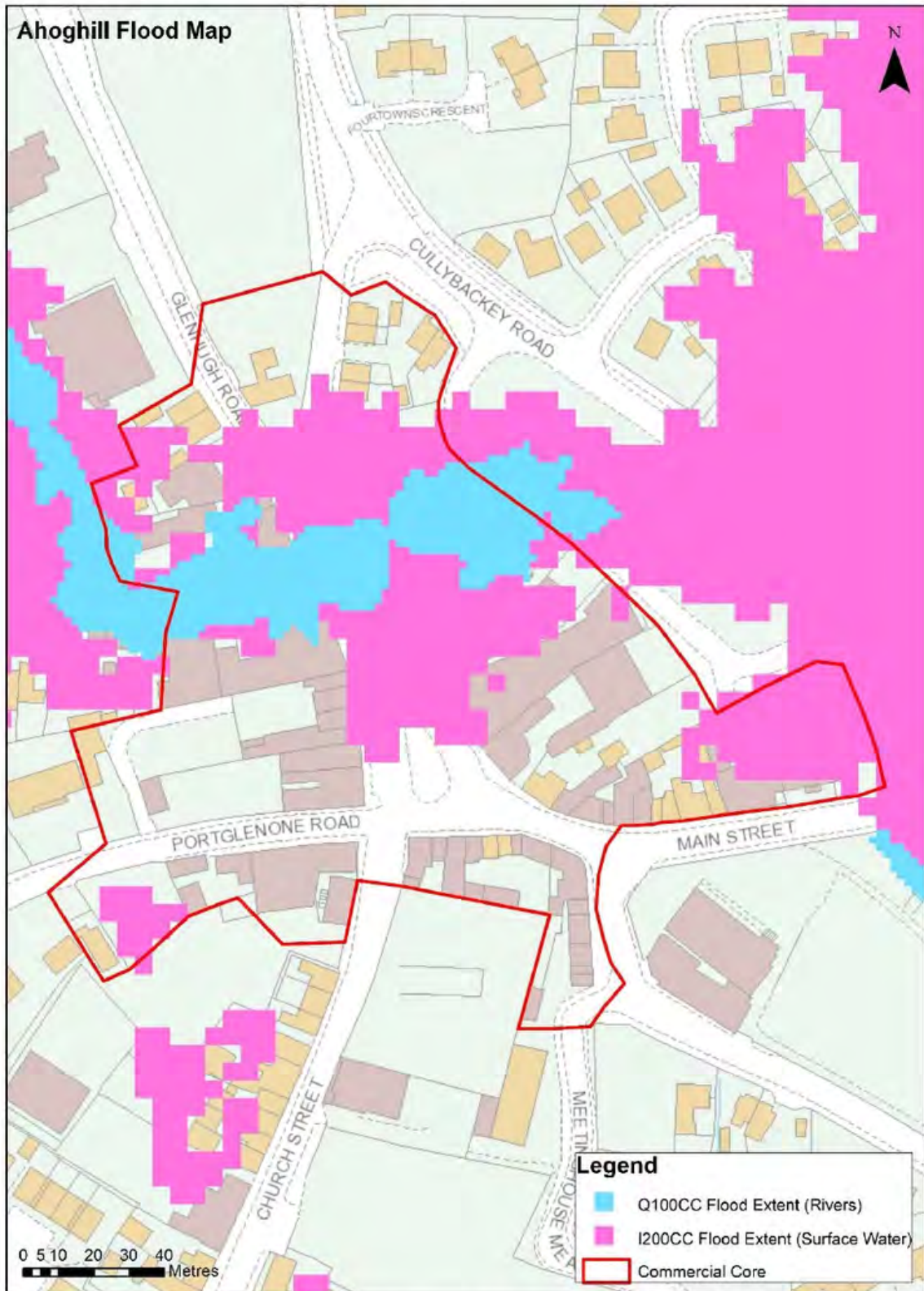
Map 17



Map 18

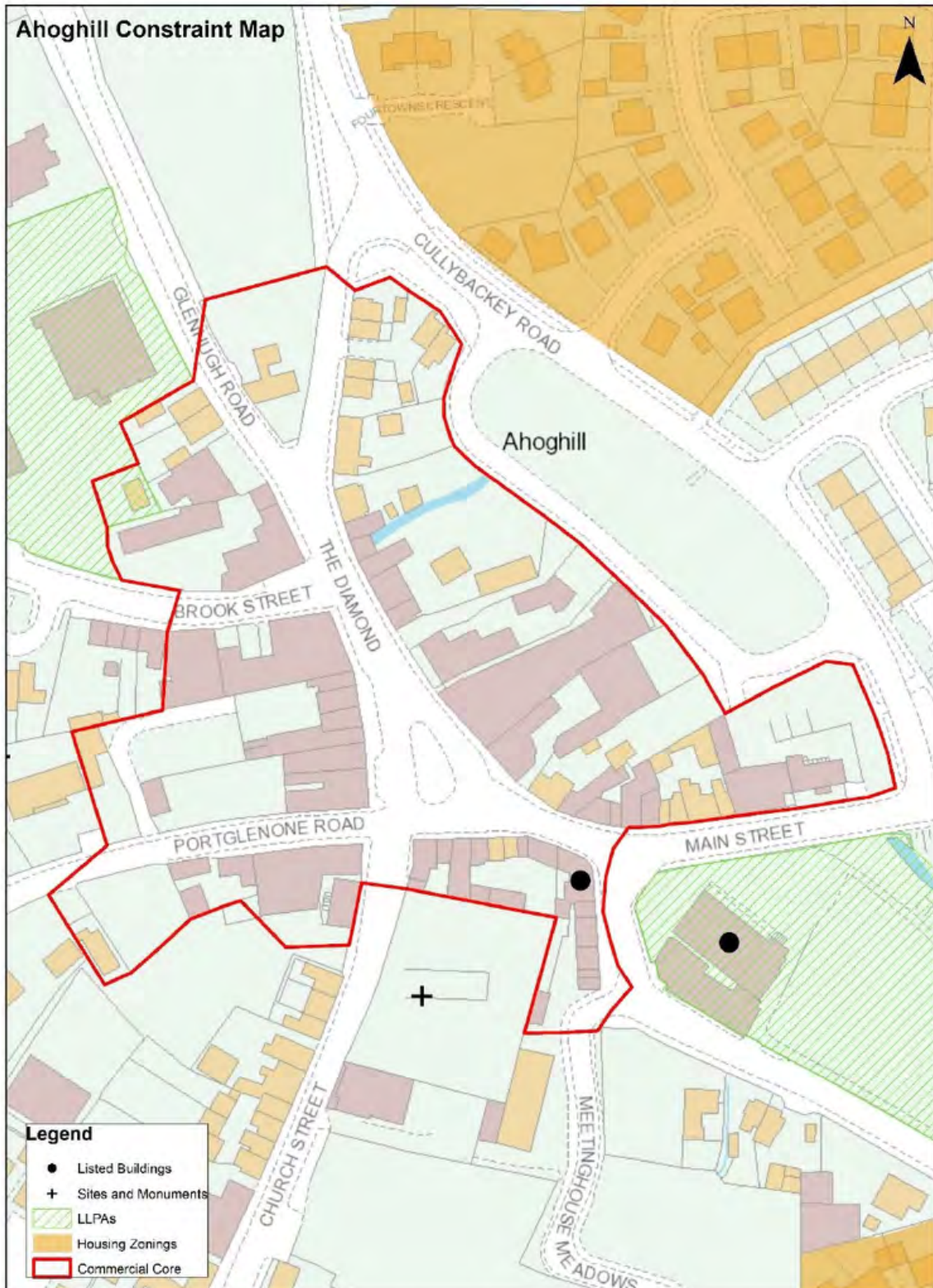


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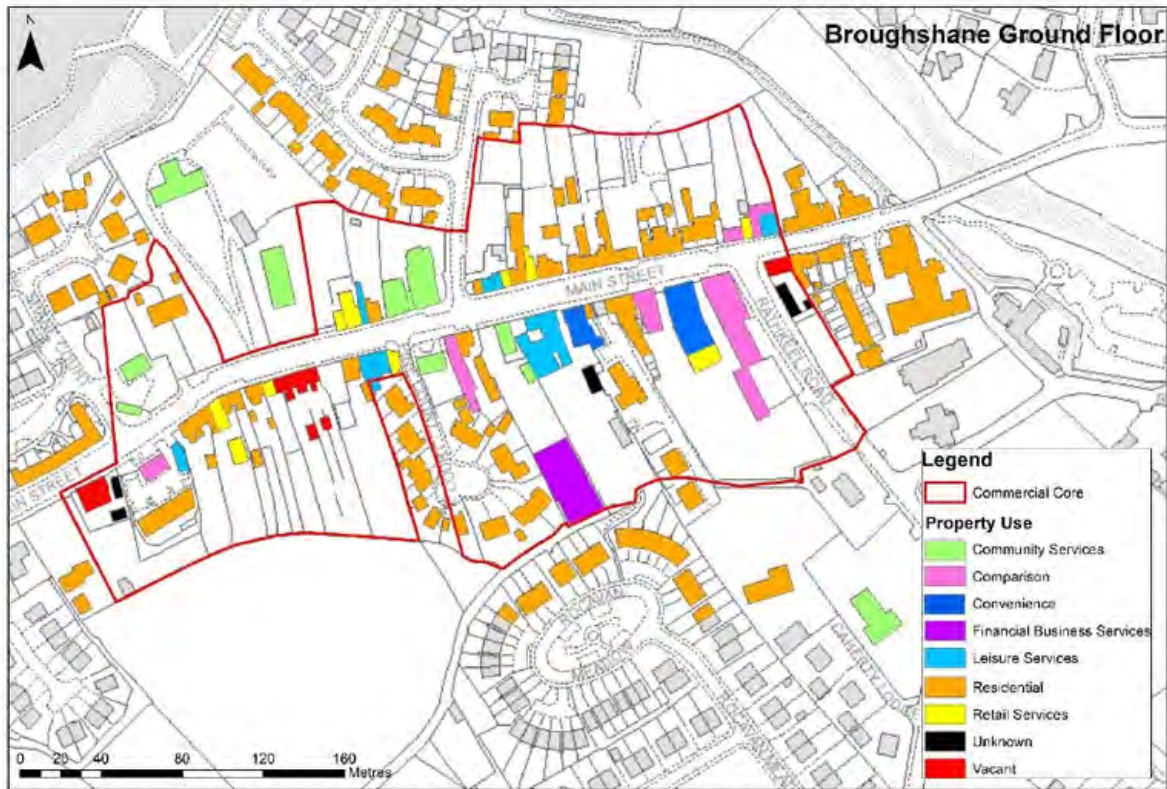
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Map 20

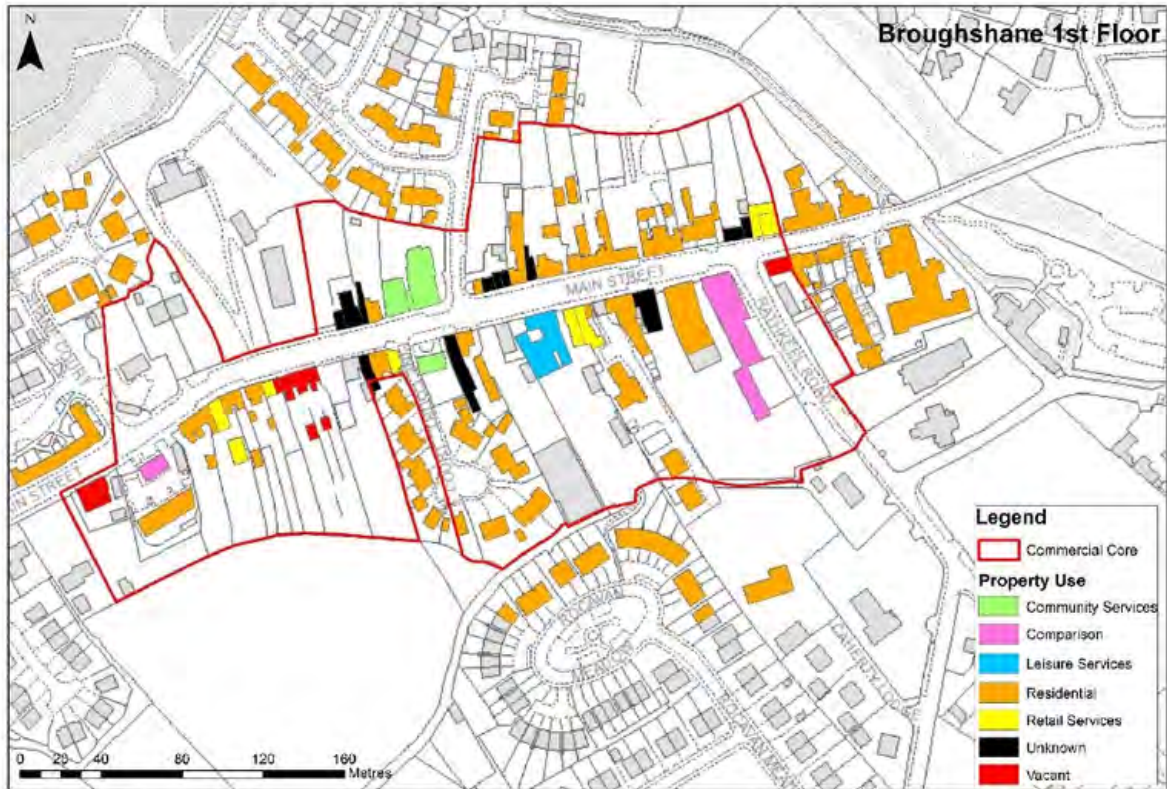


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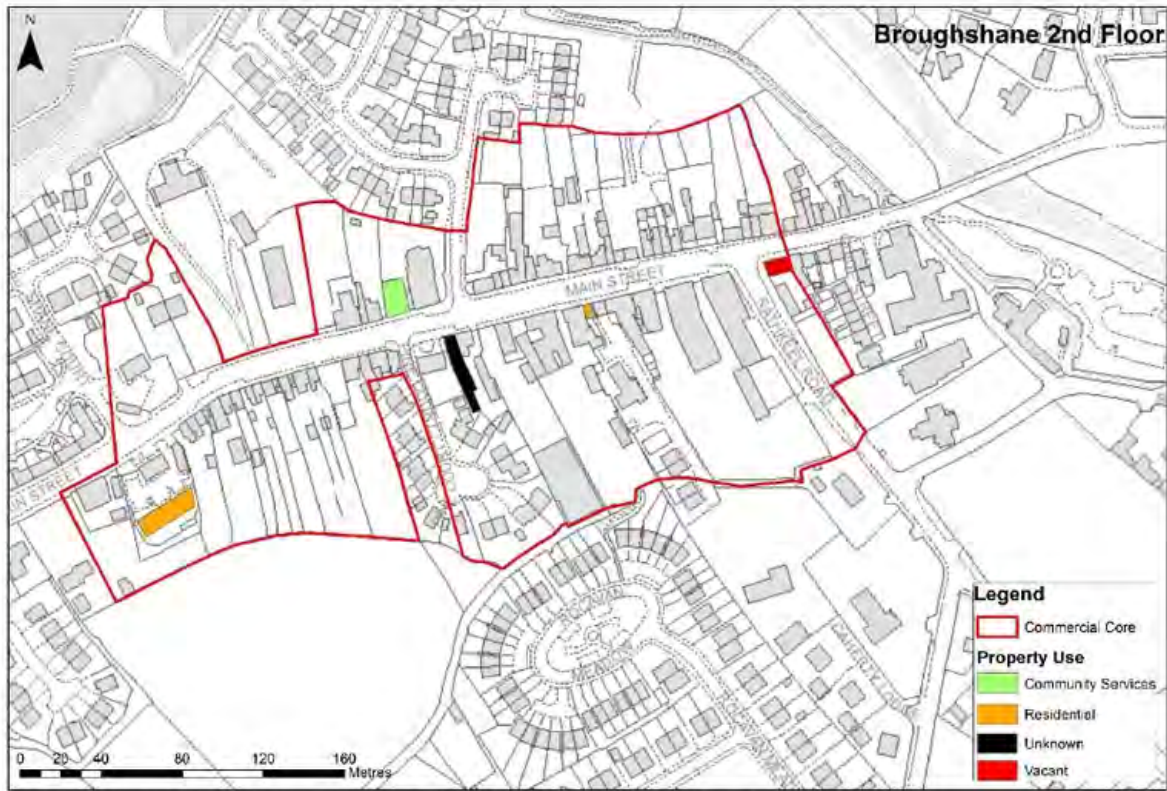
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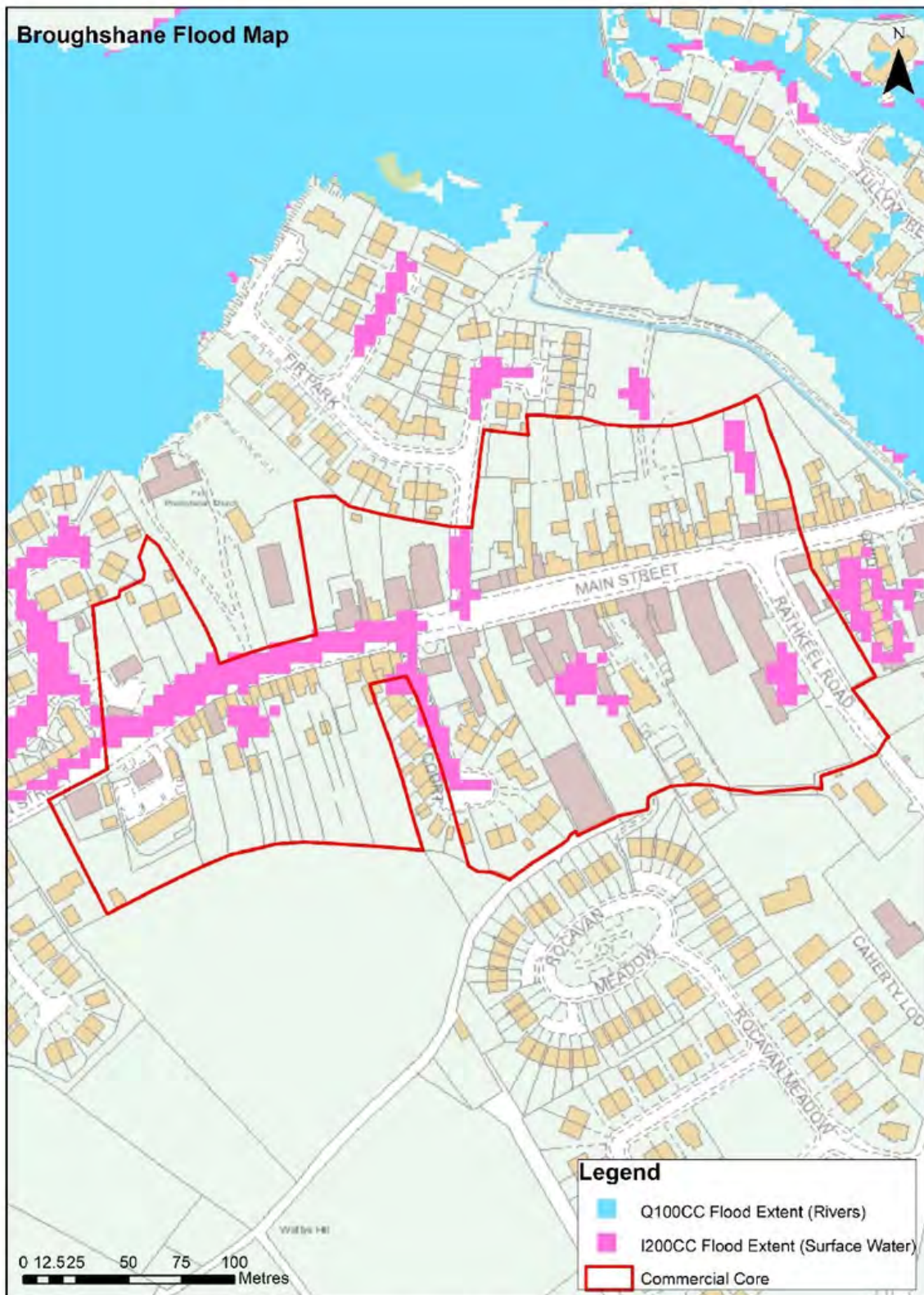
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Map 23

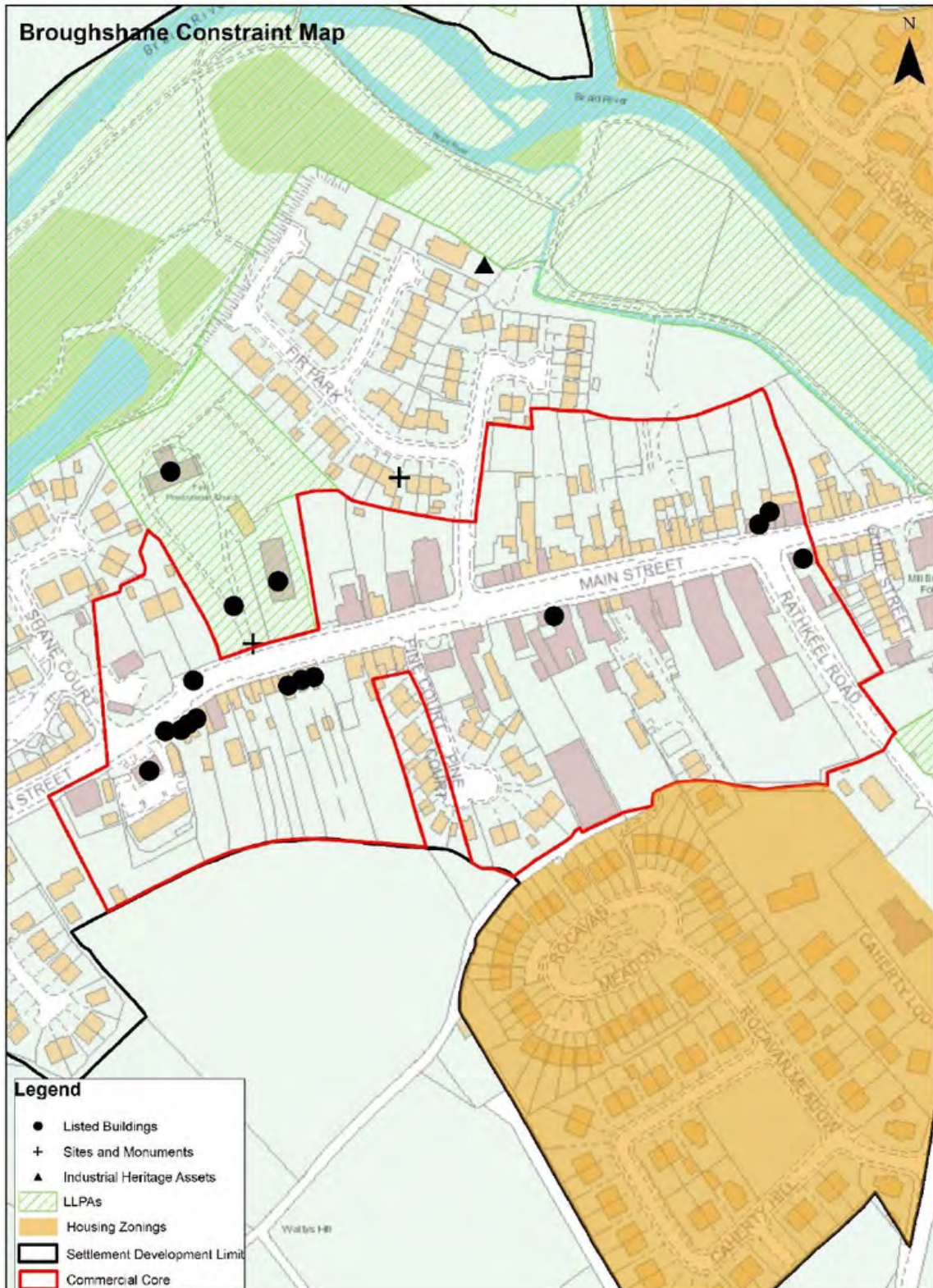


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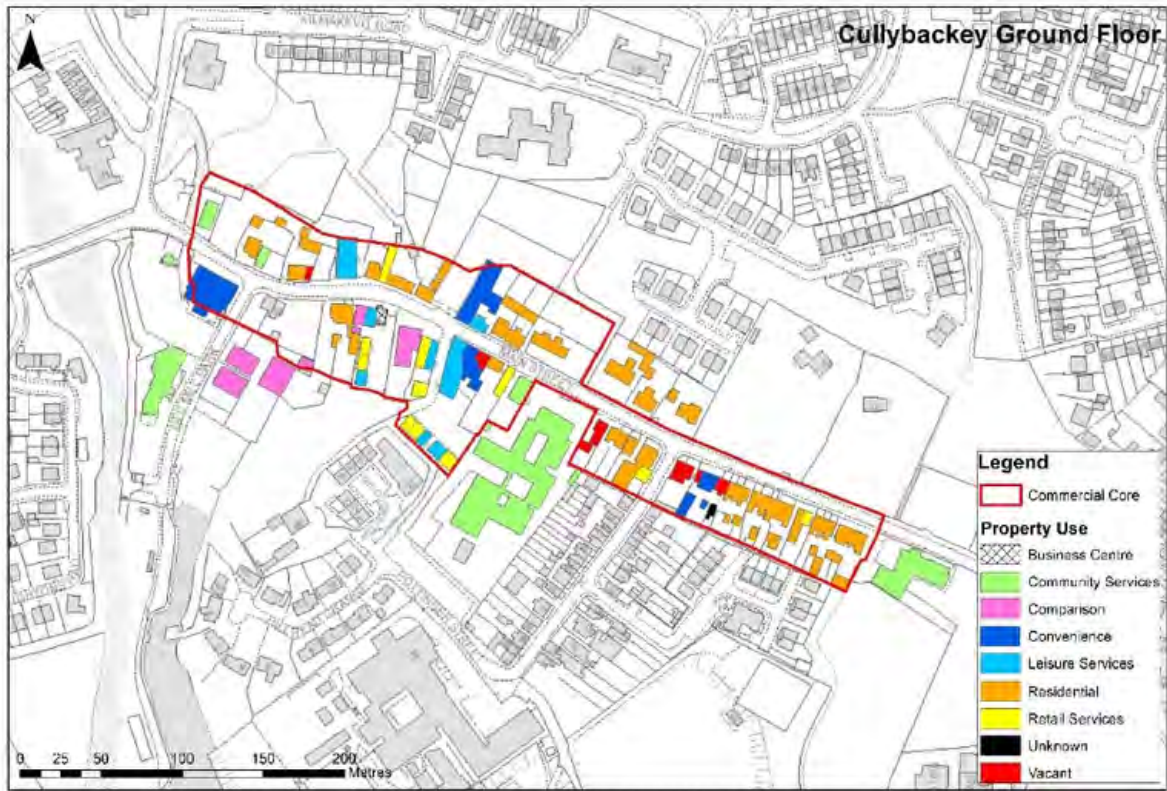
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Map 25

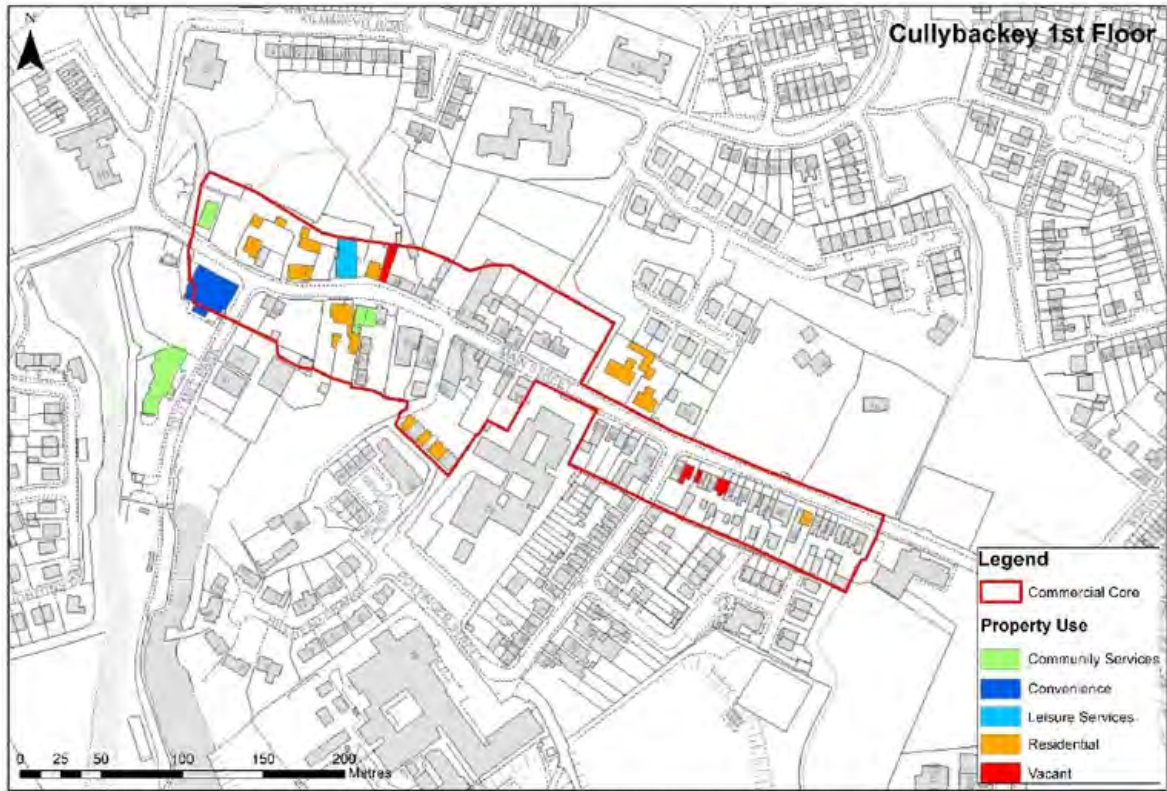


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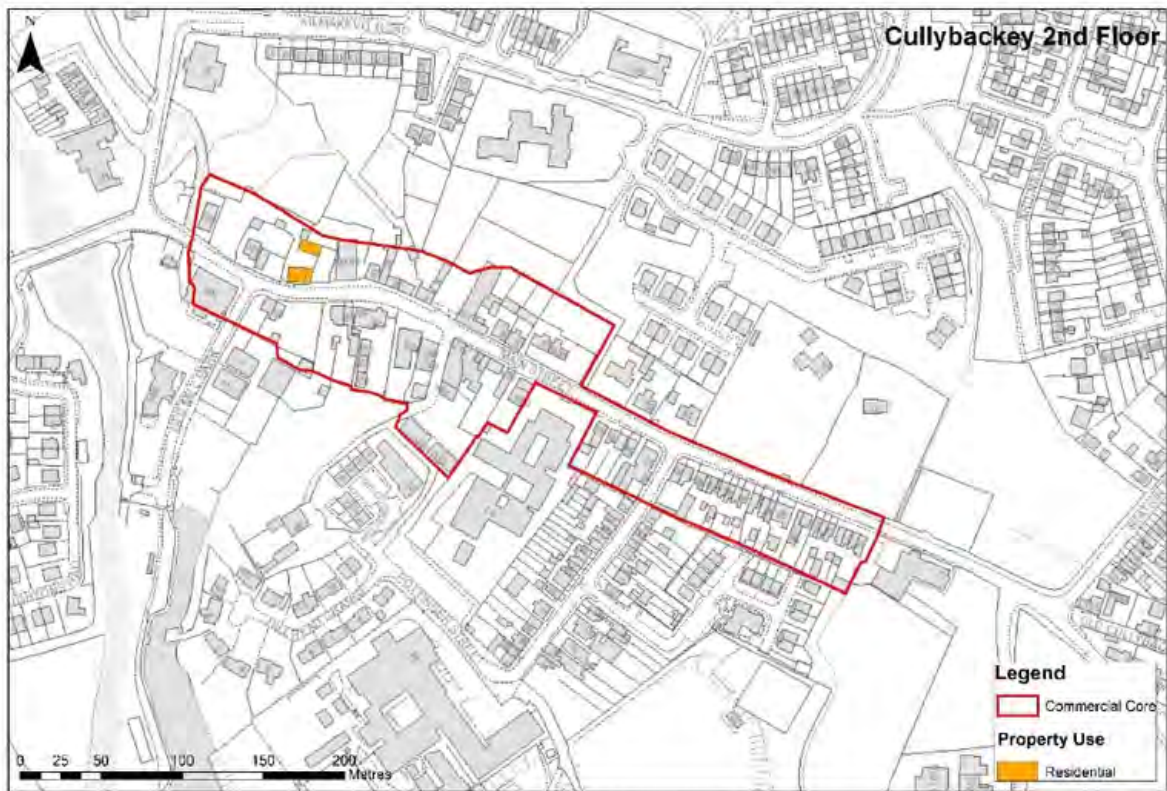
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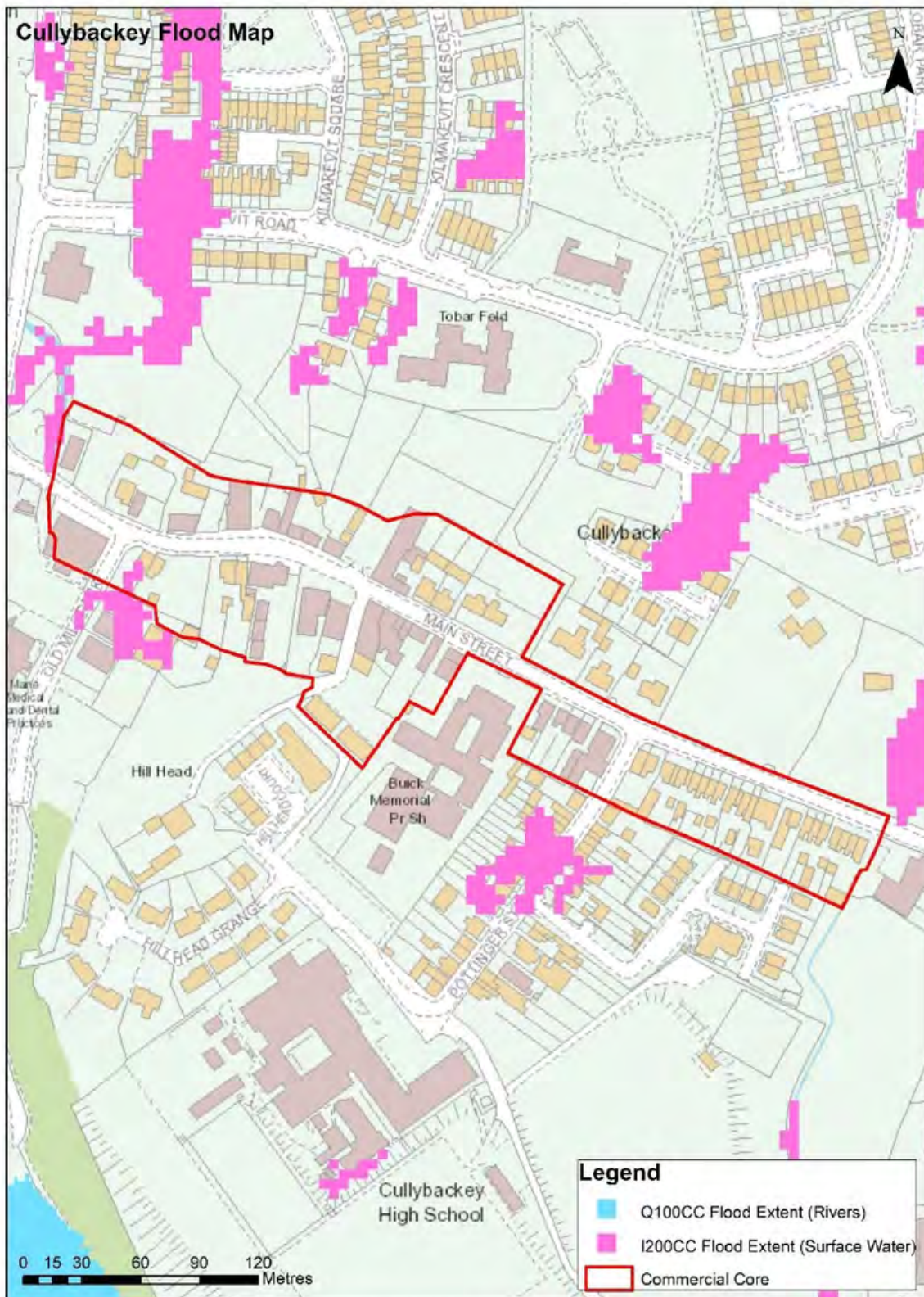
Map 27



Map 28

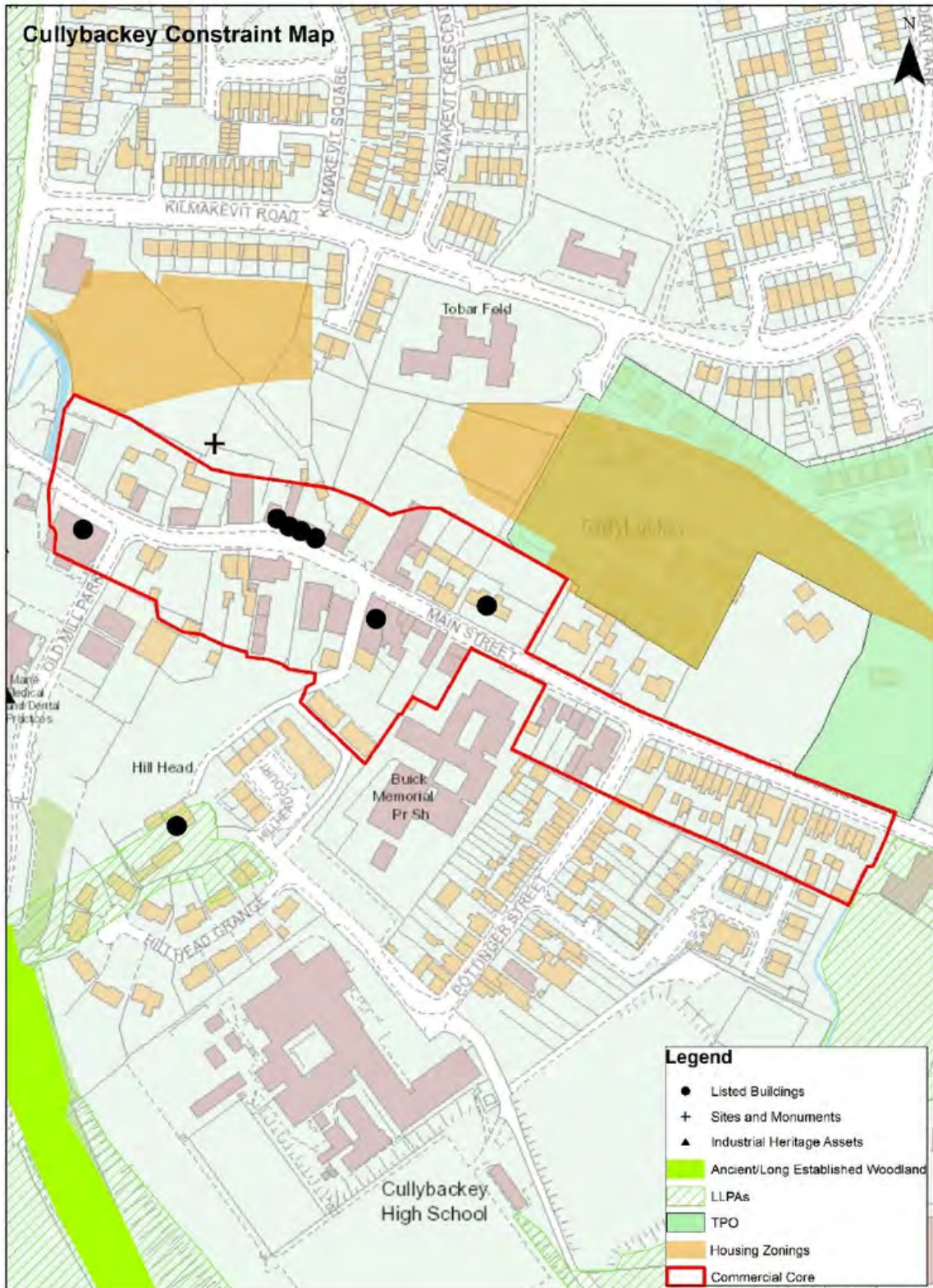


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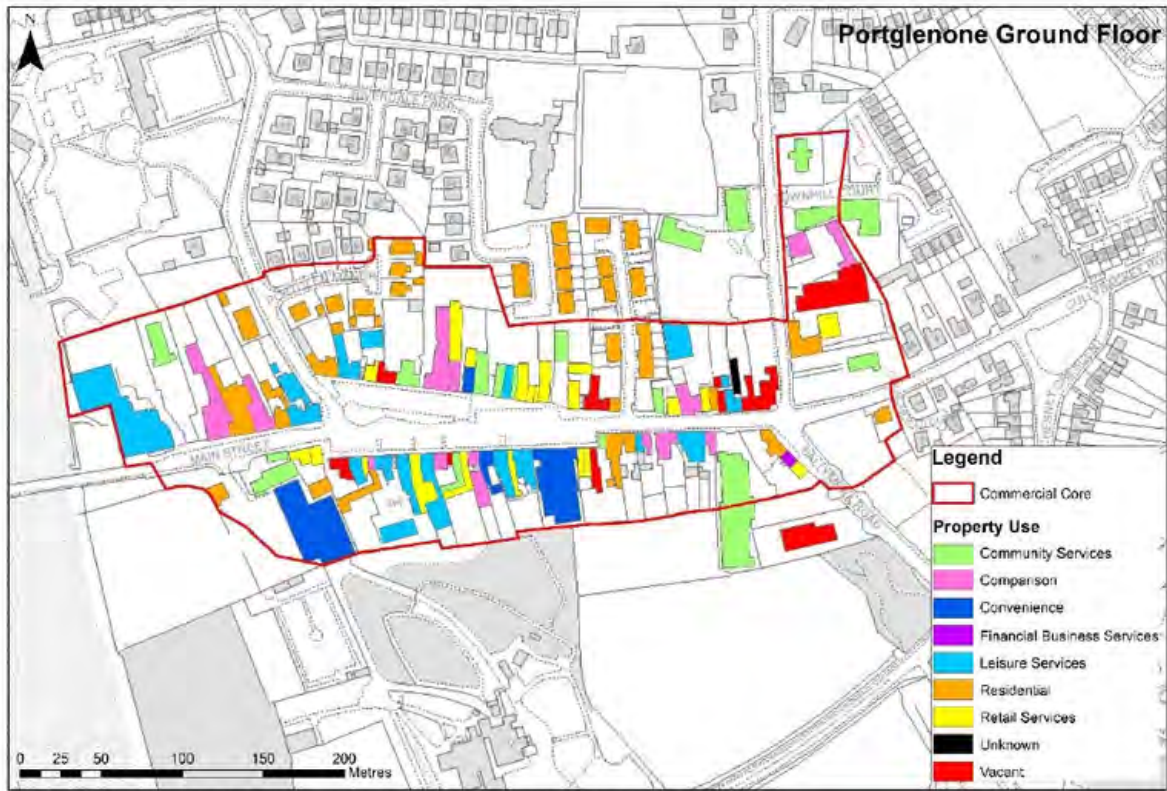
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Map 30

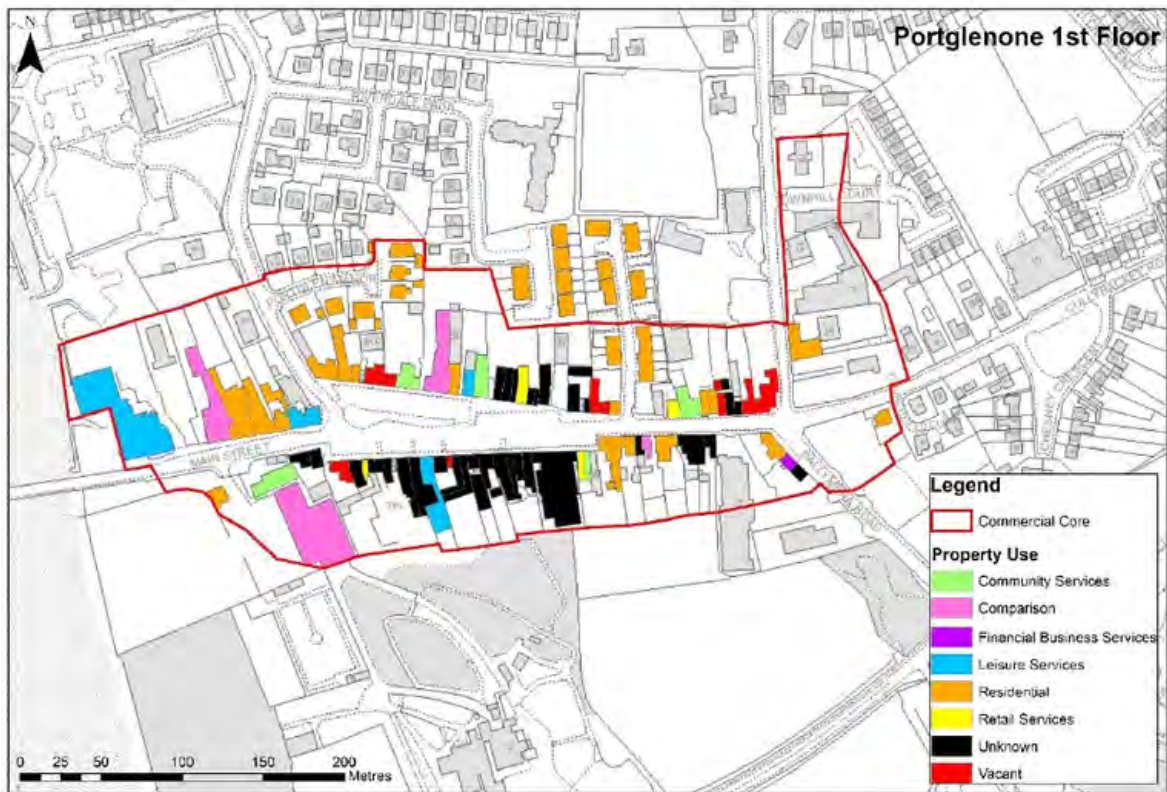


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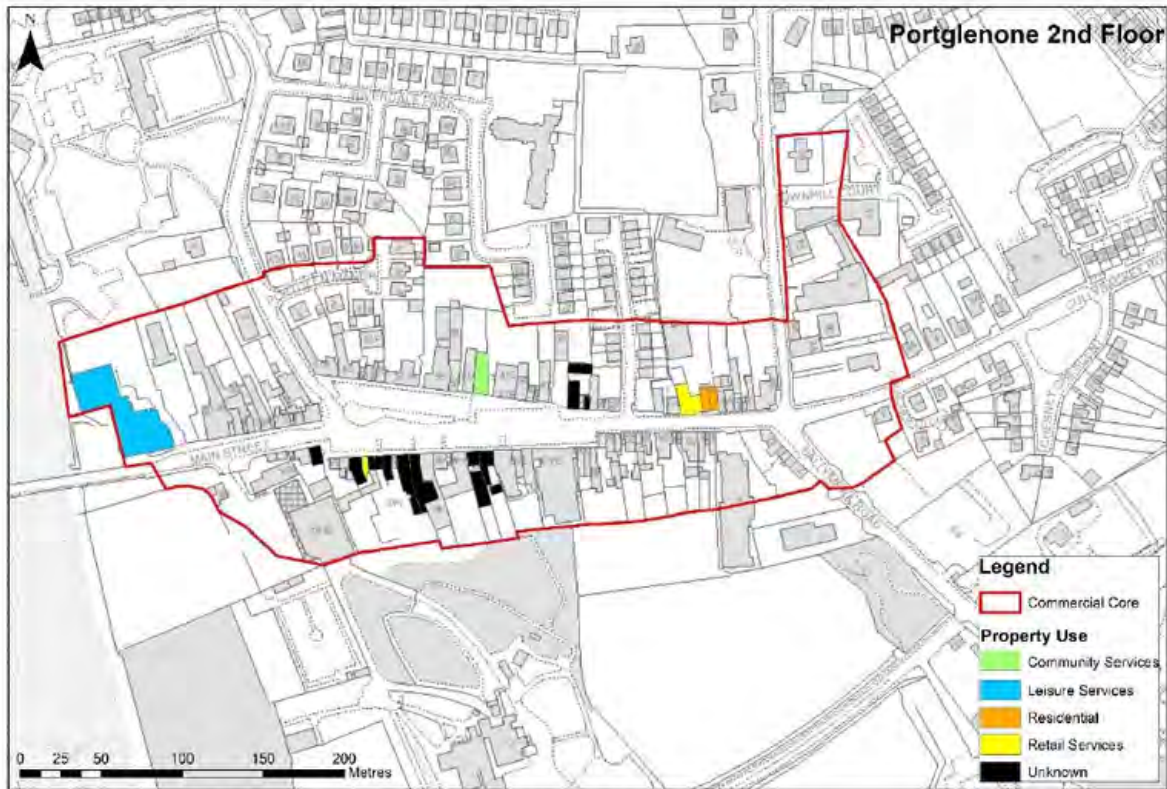
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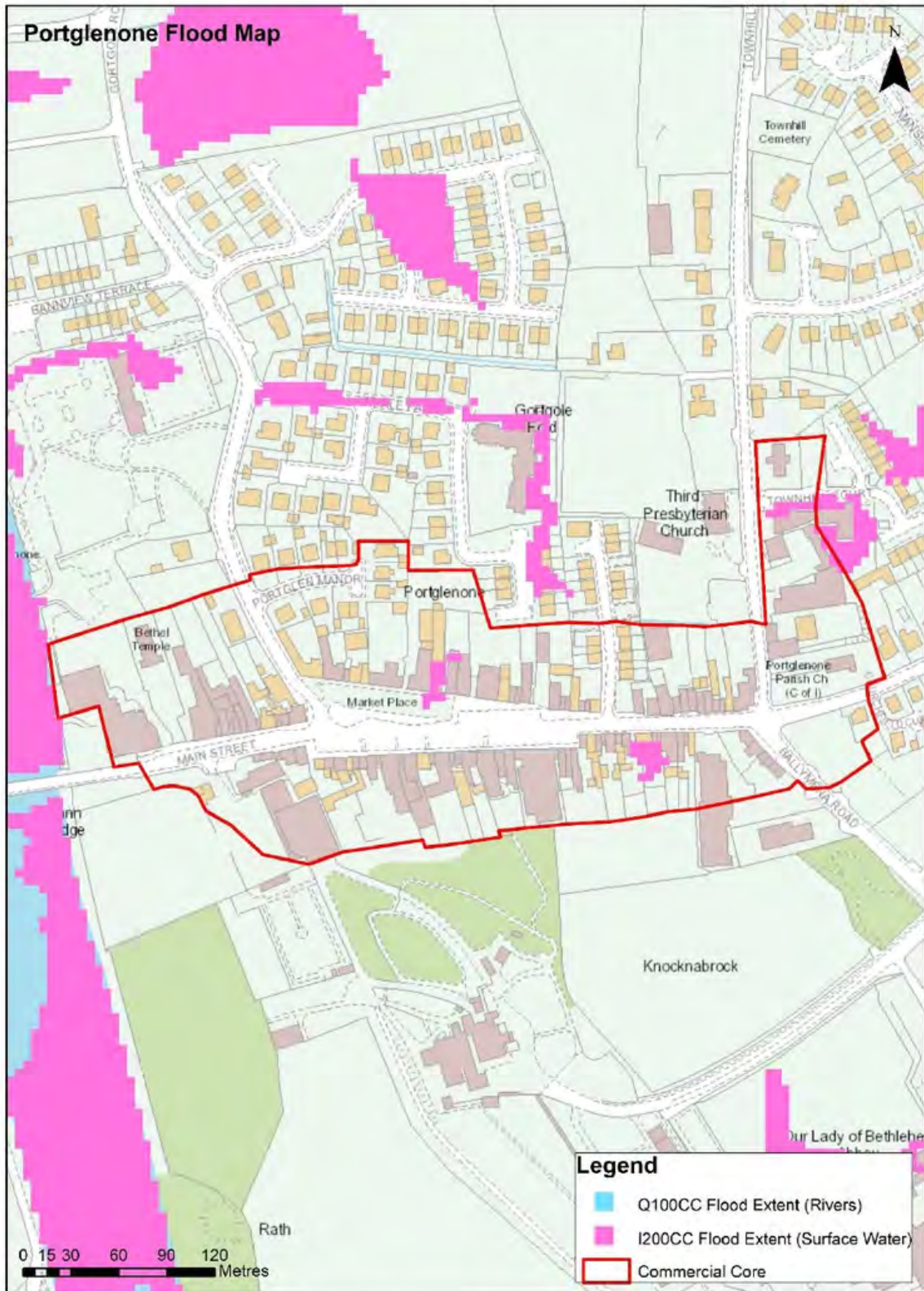
Map 32



Map 33

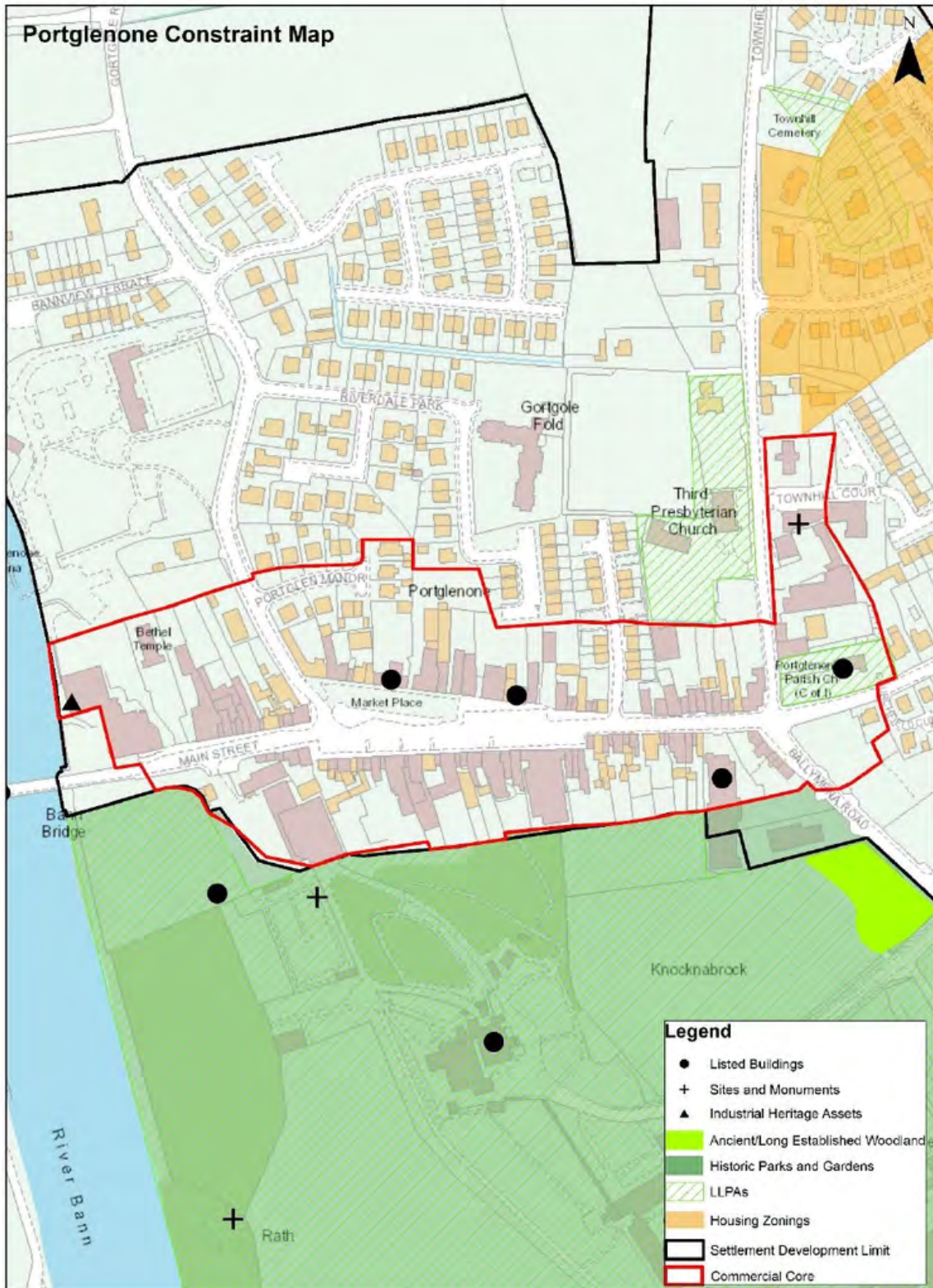


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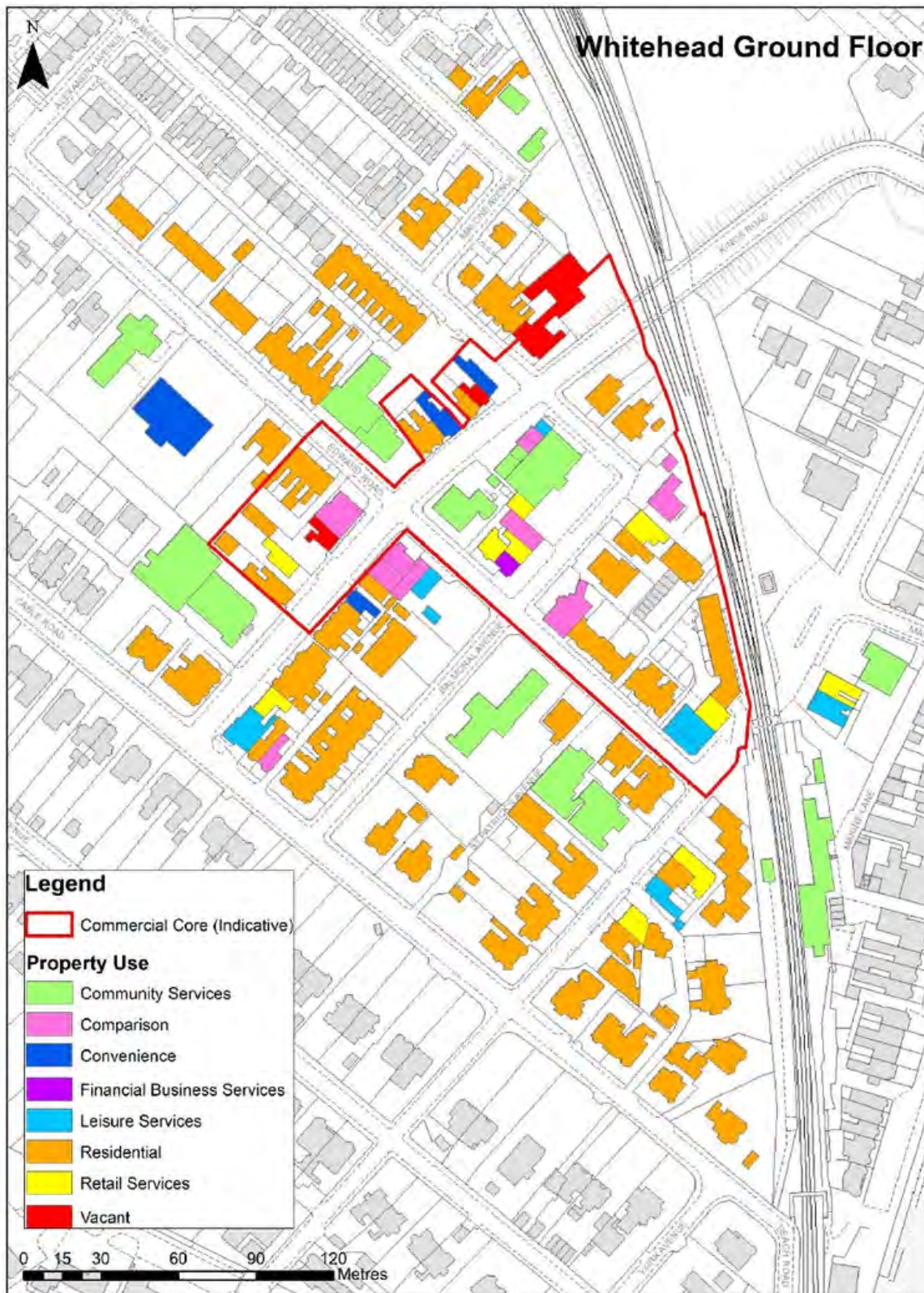
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Map 35



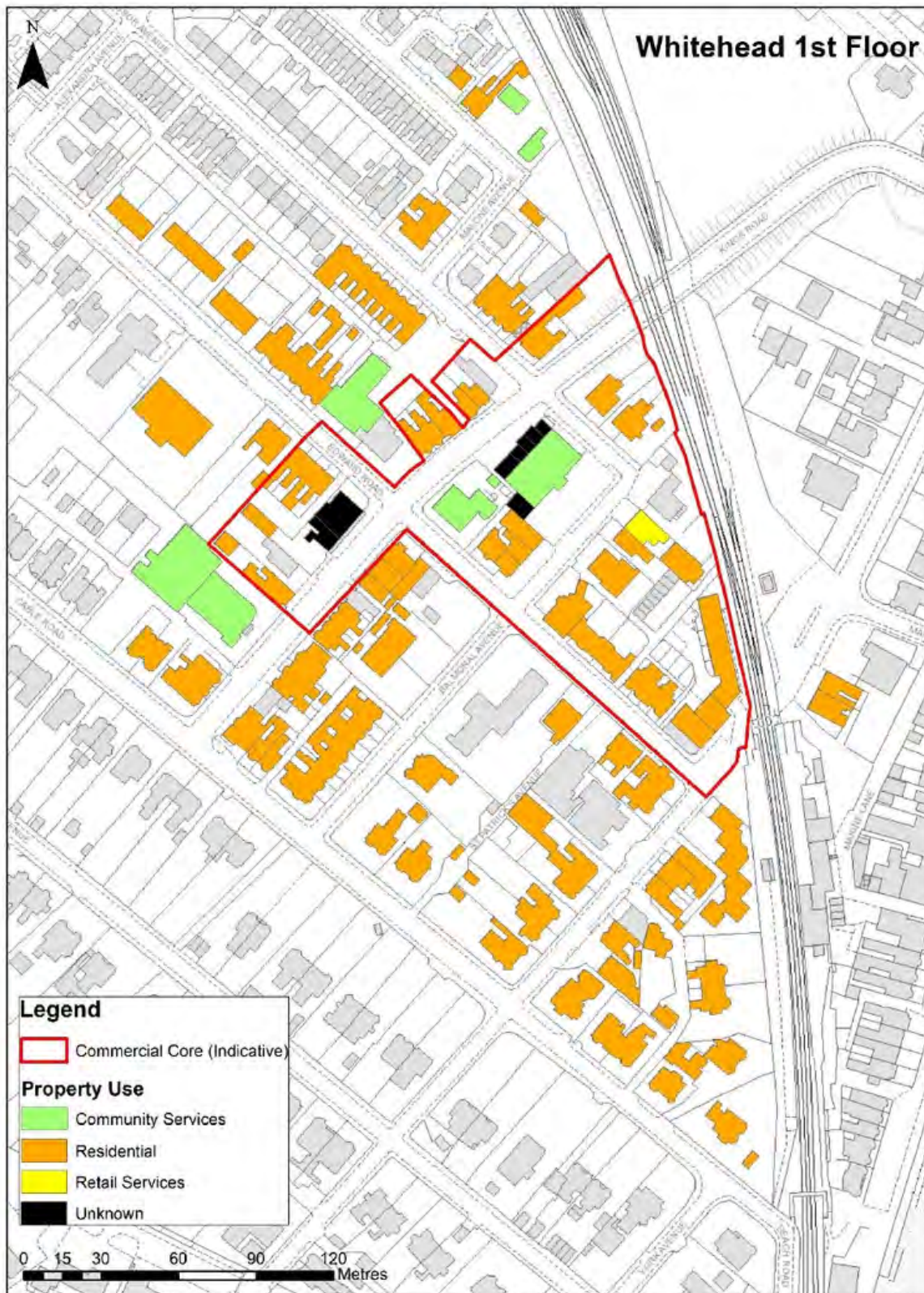
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Map 36



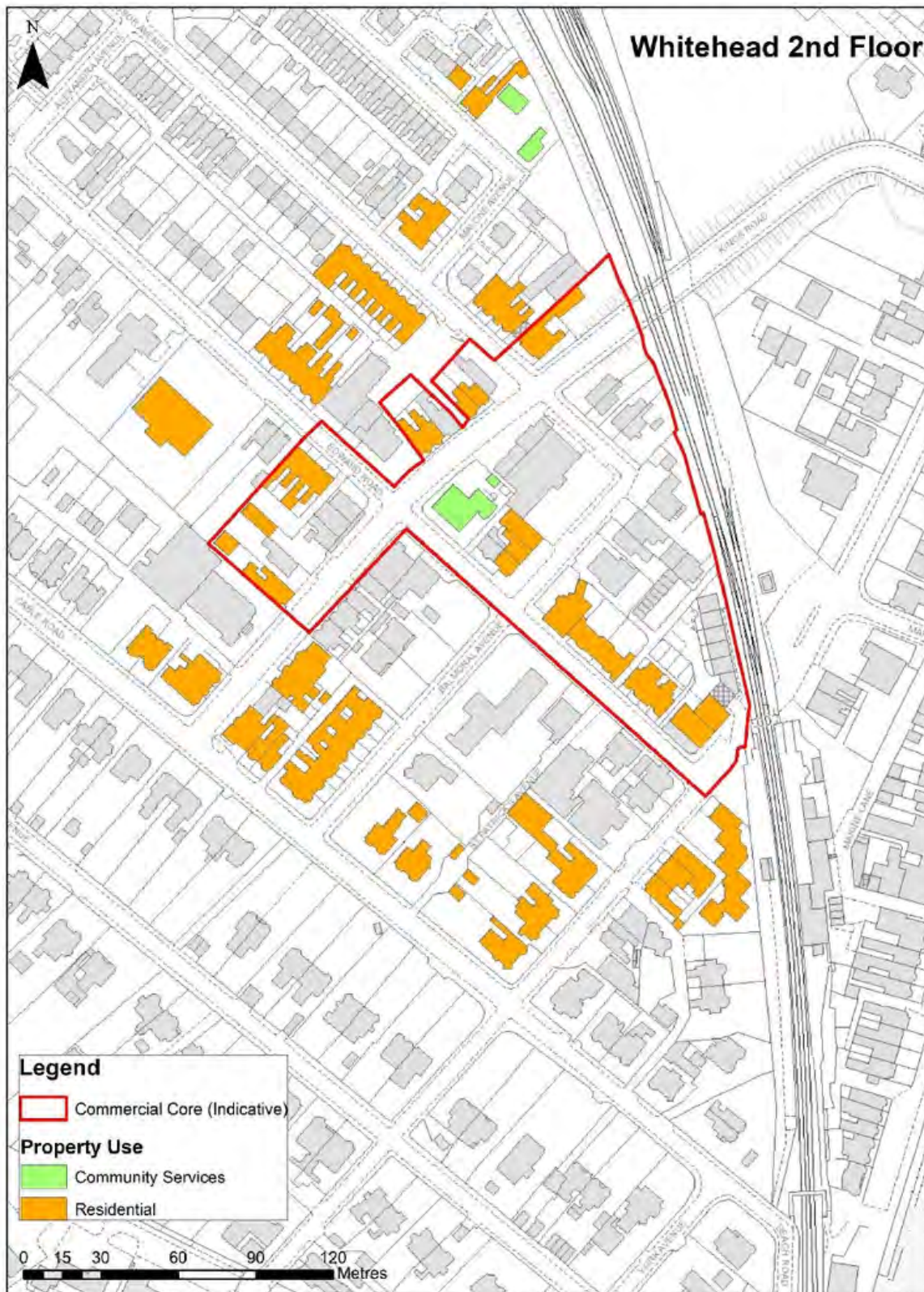
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Map 37



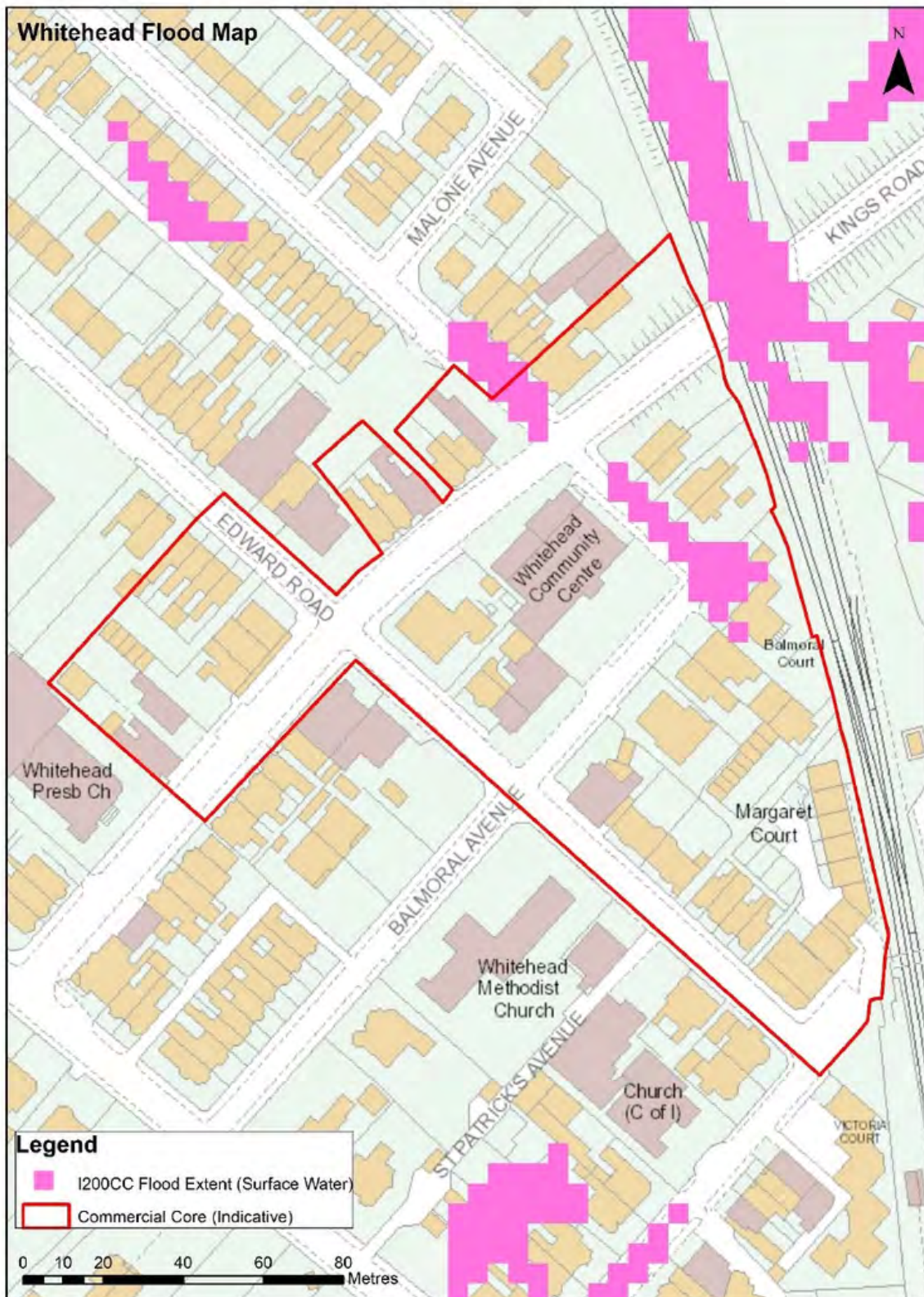
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Map 38

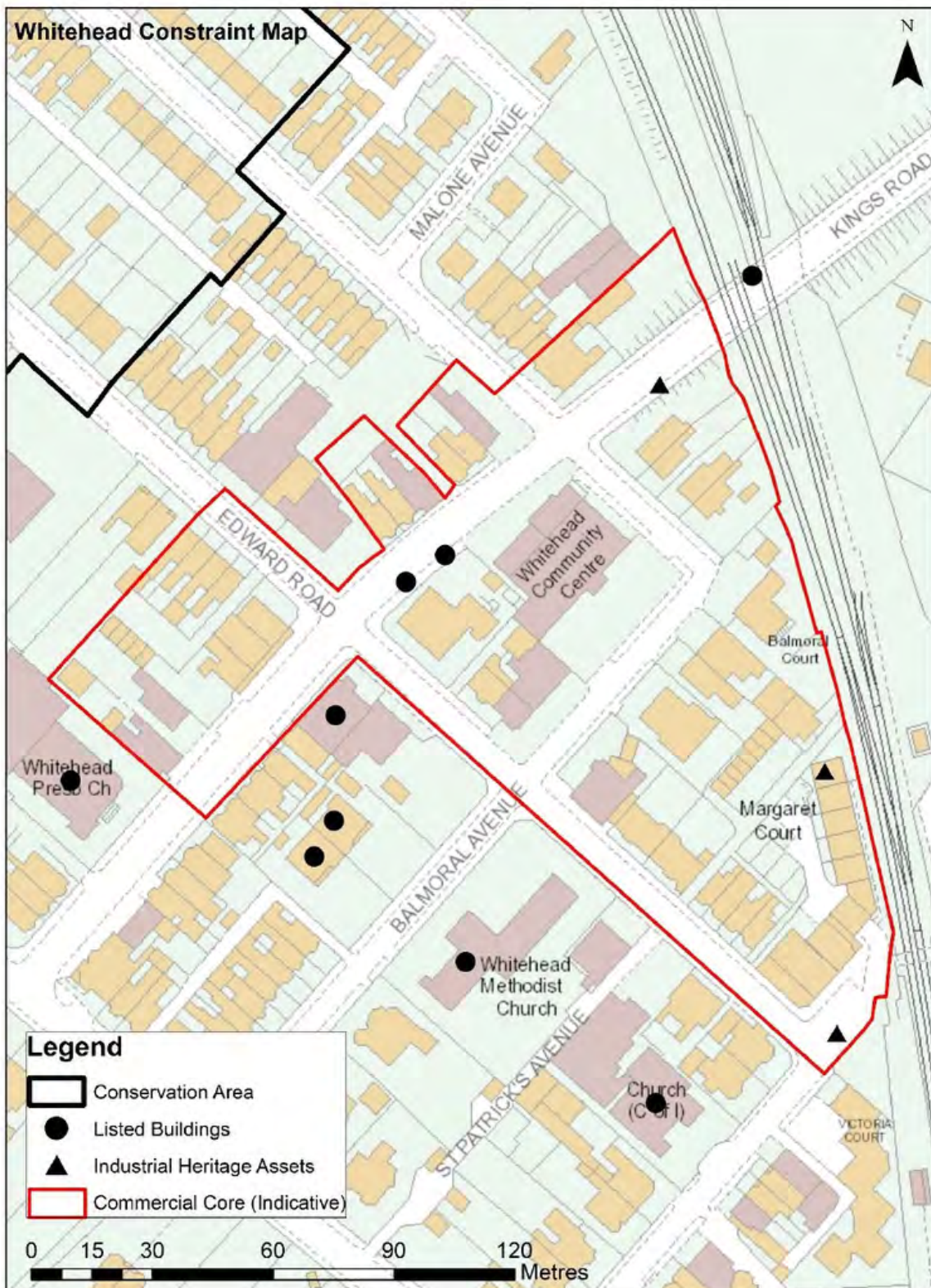


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Map 39



Map 40



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Appendix B**Definitions of categories used in town centre land use survey.****Comparison**

Antique Shops / Art & Art Dealers / Booksellers / Carpets & Flooring / Catalogue Showrooms / Charity Shops / Chemist & Drugstores / Childrens & Infants Wear / Clothing / General Crafts, Gifts, China & Glass / Cycles & Accessories / Department & Variety Stores / DIY & Home Improvement / Electrical & Other Durable Goods / Florists / Footwear / Furniture Fitted / Furniture General / Gardens & Equipment / Greeting Cards / Hardware & Household Goods / Jewellery, Watches & Silver / Ladies & Menswear & Acc./ Ladies Wear & Accessories / Leather & Travel Goods / Menswear & Accessories / Music & Musical Instruments / Music & Video Recordings / Newsagents & Stationers / Office Supplies / Other Comparison Goods / Photographic & Optical Second hand Goods, Books, etc. / Sports, Camping & Leisure Goods / Telephones & Accessories / Textiles & Soft Furnishings / Toiletries, Cosmetics & Beauty Products / Toys, Games & Hobbies / Vehicle & Motorcycle Sales / Vehicle Accessories.

Convenience

Bakers & Confectioners / Butchers / Convenience Stores / Fishmongers / Frozen Foods / Greengrocers / Grocers & Delicatessens / Health Foods / Markets / Off Licences / Shoe Repairs Etc / Supermarkets.

Retail Service

Clothing & Fancy Dress Hire / Dry Cleaners & Launderettes / Filling Stations / Health & Beauty / Opticians / Other Retail Services / Photo Processing / Photo Studio / Post Offices Repairs, Alterations & Restoration / Travel Agents / TV, Cable & Video Rental / Vehicle Rental / Vehicle Repairs & Services.

Leisure Services

Bars & Wine Bars / Bingo & Amusements / Cafes Casinos & Betting Offices / Cinemas / Theatres & Concert Halls / Clubs / Disco, Dance & Nightclubs / Fast Food & Take Away / Hotels & Guest Houses / Public Houses / Restaurants / Sports & Leisure Facilities.

Financial & Business Services

Building Societies / Building Supplies & Services / Business Goods & Services / Employment & Careers / Financial Services / Legal Services / Other Business Services / Printing & Copying / Property Services / Retail Bank.

Community facilities

Churches / Church Halls / GP Surgeries / Clinics / Social clubs / Orange Halls / Community centres / Childcare facilities / Recycling centres / Parish Halls / Hospitals / Nursing homes.

Vacant

Existing shop unit which is structurally sound intact and secured but has currently no use in it.

Residential

Houses in all tenures and apartments including social housing and residential homes.

Gap Site

There is no building left, completely demolished or no building ever on site.

Derelict

There is still a building present but major construction work would be required in order to occupy it.