

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL29 June 2022Report by Director of EnvironmentSECOND ROUND OF UK LEVELLING UP FUND 2022**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. This purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval to submit a UK Government's Levelling Up Fund (Second Round) bid by the deadline of 6 July 2022.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Council:
- a) Notes the key Levelling Up Fund (Round 2) guidance and criteria;
  - b) Approves the proposed Levelling Up Fund bid for East Renfrewshire with a focus on Thornliebank and Barrhead;
  - c) Approves the required East Renfrewshire Council financial contribution of £2.2 million should the grant application for £20 million be successful;
  - d) Notes that the Cabinet will be advised of the outcome of the Round 2 process; and
  - e) Notes that further detail on proposed projects for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will be provided in due course.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The UK Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) provides a UK wide £4.8 billion capital investment fund allocated through a competitive bid process.

4. Total funding of £800 million has been allocated to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with Scotland guaranteed to receive at least 9% (£432 million) of the overall UK total.

5. The Fund prioritises places most in need of economic recovery, regeneration and improved transport connectivity and is delivered as part of a broad package of complementary UK-wide interventions including the UK Community Ownership Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

6. The Fund commenced in 2021/22 (Round One) and runs annually for each of the four years from 2021/22 until 2024/25.

7. In view of the circumstances at the time (including the fact that the Council was not considered a high priority area in terms of the scheme) it was felt that it would be better not to submit a bid for round one in order to learn from those successful schemes in round one and enhance the Council's chances of submitting a successful scheme in round two.

8. Applications for the Levelling Up Fund (Round Two) require to be submitted by Wednesday 6 July 2022.

### Key Elements of Levelling Up Fund (Round Two)

9. The second round LUF will invest in local priorities which have been developed in collaboration with local stakeholders that can be delivered in the next three to four years focusing on three investment themes. These are;

- regeneration and town centres;
- culture and heritage;
- transport

10. These are explained in further detail below.

11. The LUF focuses investment on projects that require less than £20m of funding, with up to £50m available by exception for larger exclusively transport (or culture projects). No ring fencing is applied across the three investment themes and places submitting bids can incorporate interventions across the themes within a bid. The Fund is a capital fund.

12. For the period of the programme East Renfrewshire Council is allowed:

- a maximum of one successful competitive bid in relation to the £20 million or less category; and
- a maximum of one additional successful competitive bid for an additional predominantly transport bid for £20 million (but up to a value of £50 million in exceptional circumstances) which must be at least 90% transport related (in terms of value).

13. The Council may submit a bid for an individual project or a package bid. A package bid can consist of up to a maximum of three projects. Package bids of two or three projects must clearly explain how their component elements are aligned with each other and represent a coherent set of interventions. They can include a mix of projects from the Fund's three investment themes.

14. Package applications will be assessed at the overall bid level (i.e. more than one project) rather than as individual projects.

15. The UK government expect applicants submitting bids to consider how to spread their proposed interventions fairly and equitably within the authority boundary and across their full range of constituencies **targeting pockets of deprivation as appropriate.**

16. To ensure the Levelling Up Fund reaches those places most in need of investment the UK government have prioritised places using an index of priority places across England, Scotland and Wales.

17. Three categories are used. Category one is the highest priority for investment with categories two and three being lower priority. East Renfrewshire is in category 2. The category ranking i.e. one, two or three will be taken into account as part of the assessment process. The category rankings do not represent eligibility criteria. Bids from categories two and three will still be considered for funding on the merits of deliverability, value for money and strategic fit.

18. The associated government guidance recommends that bids should include a local financial contribution representing at least 10% of total costs. A contribution is also expected from private sector stakeholders such as developers if they stand to benefit from a specific project.

19. In relation to the three themes examples of relevant/eligible projects suggested by the UK government include:

i. Regeneration and Town Centres

This theme recognises the importance of town centres as focal points in communities and local economies and builds on other funds across the UK all to support the renewal and regeneration of town centres and high streets. Projects submitted for appraisal under this investment theme may include:

- leisure centres and retail sites;
- removal of derelict buildings to allow space for new developments;
- acquisition and remediation of abandoned/brownfield sites;
- improving the public realm;
- creating better connectivity between key sites; and
- providing infrastructure to help make town centres and high streets more accessible for people with disabilities

ii. Culture and Heritage

This theme seeks projects which will create or renew the type of cultural assets that can rejuvenate places and lead to positive economic and social outcomes at a local level. Projects submitted for appraisal under this theme may include;

- upgrading and creating cultural and creative spaces including sports facilities, museums, theatres and libraries, production facilities, visitor attractions, landmarks, historical buildings or green space;
- protecting cultural sites from crime and antisocial behaviour;
- new, upgraded or protected community hubs, spaces or assets;
- developing local assets to support the visitor economy; and
- acquiring, renovating and refurbishing key cultural and heritage sites including hostels and historic buildings and sites.

iii. Transport

This theme supports investment in the type of local transport projects which can revitalise local economies by boosting growth, improving connectivity, and making places healthier, greener, safer and more attractive places to live and work. Projects submitted for appraisal under this theme may include;

- investments in new or existing cycling/walking provision;
- improved priority for local bus services for example bus priority lanes or signal priority junctions;
- enhanced public transport facilities such as bus stops and stations;
- accessibility improvements to local transport networks for disabled people;
- enhancements and upgrades to local road networks for example bypasses/ junction improvements;
- structural maintenance works to local roads including bridges; and
- multimodal proposals which combine 2 or more interventions to enhance transport across modes.

20. LUF projects should also be aligned to and support net zero goals, including those set out in the UK government's net zero strategy and are encouraged to demonstrate low or zero carbon best practice.

## **EAST RENFREWSHIRE PROPOSED BID – THORNLIEBANK & BARRHEAD**

21. Due to the fact that East Renfrewshire has been classed as Category 2 (not the highest priority group) and given the Fund priorities, for a bid to have the best chance of being successful it is recommended that it is based around the areas within the local authority **where pockets of deprivation are most prevalent**.

22. It is therefore proposed to submit a stage 2 Levelling Up Fund package bid application in July 2022 based around Thornliebank and Barrhead which have significant areas of deprivation. These towns would benefit greatly from investment to 'level up' and align with their more affluent neighbours.

23. A successful bid would provide the opportunity to create a better everyday life for the residents and businesses of Thornliebank and Barrhead. It could level up and transform the desirability of those areas through the addition of valuable and much needed community facilities, open spaces, public spaces, improved transport, active travel options and an enhanced streetscape.

24. As stated above package bids must clearly explain how their component elements are aligned with each other and represent a coherent set of interventions and can include a mix of projects from the Fund's three investment themes.

25. In order to achieve this coherence and alignment it is proposed that the application be based around the rich cultural heritage of both of these areas and incorporate elements of each of the three investment themes.

26. A high level outline is proposed below. This would be developed and incorporated into the detailed bid.

### **Key Cultural and Heritage Theme**

27. The interconnected network of rivers and water courses running through Barrhead and Thornliebank were harnessed and engineered to support the textile and other industries in the 1800s. These are the historical backbone as to what gave life to these areas and helped shape the towns as we know them today.

28. The principal rivers and water courses are the Levern Water in Barrhead and the Auldhouse Burn in Thornliebank. Water was first used from these sources to bleach and print cloth and then to generate power for mills and printworks.

29. Historical research has shown that at its peak East Renfrewshire had possibly the largest number of printfields, mills and cloth printworks in Scotland. Importantly and not often recognised both areas were also known for their innovation in science and technology applied to industrial processes at the time.

30. In addition a number of prominent historical figures and philanthropists often associated with those industries were pivotal in evolving Barrhead and Thornliebank and could be celebrated in a fitting way for their contributions which may help inspire future generations of local residents.

31. Currently the rich cultural and industrial heritage in these towns is at risk of being forgotten through the passage of time. Once thriving areas of industry and innovation, both towns have been disproportionately affected by industrial decline, unemployment and deprivation.

32. Celebrating the fundamental role these water courses and historical figures had in shaping Barrhead and Thornliebank provides an opportunity to bolster a sense of pride of place amongst the local communities.

33. It is proposed that a number of cultural and heritage elements will be interwoven with the wider LUF themes of regeneration/ town centres and transport. Projects will be designed to celebrate and bring to life the rich historical past of the area's waterways, textile industry and prominent historical figures. These projects will be developed and brought together in a contemporary, inspiring way to assist regeneration.

### **Proposals for Barrhead and Thornliebank**

34. The proposals being developed will support high priority and high impact projects and will make a visible positive difference to each local community by creating a welcoming, safe, better connected and sustainable space. They will create an increased sense of pride in where they live amongst local people, inspire new businesses to locate to the area and draw in people to increase footfall and spend in local shops.

35. Building on previous investment, the Levelling Up Fund proposals for Thornliebank and Barrhead will in general terms include the following aligned objectives for both settlements in terms of a package bid:

- improved sense of place, drawing on the rich heritage of these towns as inspiration;
- creation of heritage trails and increased public programming, including exhibitions;
- enhanced setting of and access to heritage assets;
- improved and additional public spaces including green space/parks;
- flexible spaces which could host appropriately scaled pop up activities;
- landscaped seating areas;
- lighting to transform and animate the streets and surrounding areas after dark and throughout winter creating safer public spaces;
- upgraded and repurposed buildings to meet the needs of local residents/communities and improve and enhance dated infrastructure;
- sustain and support existing jobs and local businesses ;
- attract new, sustainable jobs and investment;
- improved accessibility and connectivity;
- encourage active travel on the main thoroughfares;
- areas designed for the needs of everyone;
- widened pavements to enable ease of access;
- marked gateway points;
- bring public services and safe, accessible community spaces into town centres;
- identify potential housing opportunities including affordable housing; and
- acquire and redevelop vacant shop units where appropriate.

36. More specific proposals under consideration for Thornliebank and Barrhead are outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 along with a contextual narrative which illustrates how individual sub projects could be worked up and related to the overall heritage and culture theme.

37. It is also proposed to link the proposals for Barrhead and Thornliebank with accessibility to the Council's existing proposals for improvements to the Aurs Road/boardwalk and Balgray links which are all associated with the water theme and the landscape at Dams to Darnley Country Park. Geographically the towns of Barrhead and Thornliebank are

connected by Rouken Glen Park and the Dams to Darnley Country Park creating a crescent shaped development area and allowing both towns to benefit from the current City Deal investment plans for the Dams to Darnley Country Park. This will be reflected in the bid.

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS & TIMESCALE

38. There is a three-stage approach to assessment and decision-making which is set out in the published guidance:

- Stage 1 Gateway: The first stage is a pass/fail gateway criterion, where bids will be assessed against several criteria, including whether they can deliver some LUF expenditure in 2022/23. Bids that do not meet this gateway criteria will not be considered further.
- Stage 2 Assessment and Shortlisting Bids: Applications will be assessed at the bid level against Characteristics of Place, Strategic Fit, the Economic Case and Deliverability. A funding shortlist will be drawn up.
- Stage 3 Decision Making by Ministers regarding funding decisions.

39. The UK Government's timescale for receiving funding applications and its decision making process is as follows:

6 July 2022	Deadline for applicants to submit bids
Summer 2022	Bid assessments
Autumn 2022	Decision making
Autumn 2022	Round two funding announcements made

## SUSTAINABILITY

40. Sustainability is central to East Renfrewshire's bid and the proposals support the ambition to achieve net zero by 2045.

41. The Council's Local Development Plan and emerging Transport Strategy prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling over other forms of transport. In line with this, the proposals for Thornliebank and Barrhead will improve the quality and range of integration of sustainable travel options.

42. Importantly, the active travel proposals in both communities link to existing active travel routes to provide direct links to other parts of East Renfrewshire and the surrounding areas.

43. Bus accessibility and bus stop locations on the main and surrounding streets will be improved. Signalised crossings will be installed at key junctions for the safety of people walking, wheeling and cycling.

44. Any renovations to buildings will include carbon saving measures such as alternative heating systems, LED lighting and low carbon materials.

45. It is also proposed to introduce a variety of suitable shrubs, hedging and fauna to help to increase local biodiversity.

## **FUTURE LUF TRANSPORT BID**

46. The preparation of a further LUF transport bid is being considered. This requires the development of an extensive and resource intensive transport appraisal prior to a bid submission. It is proposed that this opportunity is considered in relation to the third round of LUF for the summer of 2023. This would not in any way disadvantage the Council. On the contrary it would improve the chances of being able to develop a successful bid.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

47. The main financial implication is that the stage 2 Levelling Up Fund project package for East Renfrewshire totals around £22 million. If successful, the ERC project proposals require at least 10% match direct financial funding. Funding in kind is not eligible.

48. It is proposed therefore to submit a £22 million package requesting a grant of £19.8 million to be matched by a £2.2 million contribution from the Council.

49. Project development of LUF at a local level will be funded through existing resources including a UK Government Capacity Fund grant of £125,000 which was awarded for that purpose.

## **CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

50. People and communities are at the heart of the Thornliebank and Barrhead town centre transformation, whether as a resident or there to work, visit, shop, cycle or travel to and through.

51. The LUF2 bid proposals are based upon several years of development and engagement to refine investment opportunities with East Renfrewshire residents and stakeholders, including business, community councils, walking and cycling and accessibility groups.

52. The Environment Department are currently undertaking a wide range of consultations with key internal and external stakeholders. This includes engaging with local residents, community groups and businesses in the area - both face to face and online - on what projects are important to them and allowing them to comment upon and influence specific proposals for their town centre as part of the LUF bid.

53. This work will help to inform the development of Local Action Plans for the area and ensure that any future funding secured from a source can be allocated to the projects that are important to East Renfrewshire communities.

54. Specific consultation for the proposed Levelling Up Fund projects in Barrhead and Thornliebank has been done through a combination of face to face events, business drop-ins, emails to local groups and through the dedicated Have Your Say online consultation tool (Commonplace).

55. If successful, the proposals will be the first projects to be delivered as part of an emerging East Renfrewshire Council investment plan in conjunction with local stakeholders and will complement proposals for Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF), to be outlined in a separate future report by the Director of Environment.

56. Successfully securing LUF investment would providing a catalyst for further meaningful community and stakeholder engagement to provide direction for future investment and collaborative working to further refine and develop plans for the towns.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

57. There are no equalities, IT or staffing implications associated with this report at this point in time.

## CONCLUSION

58. The proposed LUF bid for East Renfrewshire provides the opportunity to transform the towns of Thornliebank and Barrhead. Once thriving areas of industry and associated scientific innovation both towns have been disproportionately affected by industrial decline, unemployment and deprivation. If successful, the LUF bid would enable significant, and much needed investment in the towns and bring significant economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits.

59. Celebrating the fundamental role that the interconnected water courses and related industry had in shaping Barrhead and Thornliebank provides a long awaited opportunity to bolster a sense of pride of place amongst the local communities by bringing the rich heritage to the forefront.

60. Proposals have been designed to meet the specific needs of the community in terms of facilities and infrastructure, as well as elevating the overall look and feel of the towns, with ongoing community engagement planned to help inform plans.

61. A further update report will be provided to the Cabinet in due course as plans develop and the outcome of the LUF bid is known.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

62. It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Notes the key Levelling Up Fund (Round 2) guidance and criteria;
- b) Approves the proposed Levelling Up Fund bid for East Renfrewshire with a focus on Thornliebank and Barrhead;
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Director of Environment

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June 2022



## APPENDIX 1: PROPOSALS FOR THORNLIEBANK

Inspired by the rich heritage of the town and the influence of the Auldhouse Burn and connected water courses, these proposals provide Thornliebank with a significant positive lift in terms of the overall look and feel of the area, helping to boost civic pride amongst current residents and desirability for new businesses and visitors.

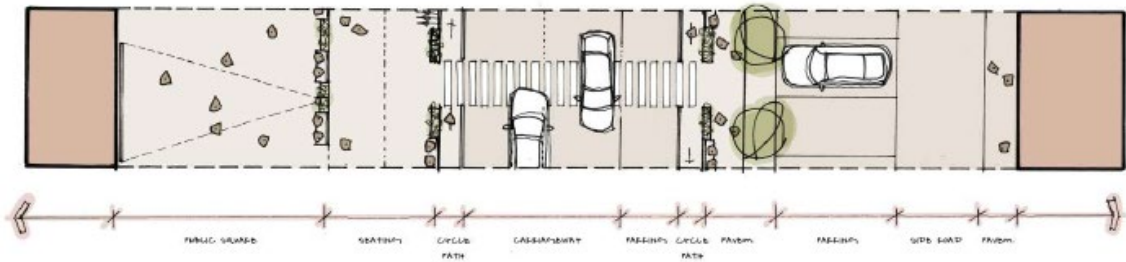
Stunning textile patterns from the Thornliebank cloth printworks exist in an archive in Manchester (moved when the Calico Printers associated took over in 1899). An important and currently missing part of Thornliebank's heritage, further exploration of these archives could translate into stunning and creative designs for new seating, lighting, public realm space and shopfronts/canopies.

Possible projects include:

- Introduce eye catching new areas of public realm, including a new public square behind Thorntree hall, better linking this to the health centre. This could include seating areas and artistic features which carefully consider the heritage the town, adding life to the streets and encourage people to spend more time there
- Create a heritage trail with interpretation panels and wayfinding realised in a modern, eye catching way to creatively tell the story of Thornliebank's history – highlighting the importance of the water courses, textile industry and prominent local figures. A key emphasis would include fascinating insights on generations of the Crum family, responsible for the growth of Thornliebank through the printworks
- The Crums were environmental pioneers and favoured water power instead of steam power to prevent smoke and smuts from damaging their high quality printed textiles. Much could be highlighted for today's generations under the themes of climate change and net zero today as part of a heritage and associated educational activities
- Add exhibition space to allow archive treasures to be displayed and enabling public programming, including exhibitions
- Improve access to Thornliebank Library (Crum Heritage library)
- Refurbish and extend Thorntree Hall to create a modern Community Hub that could potentially house a Food Co-operative or Community Laundry, provide business development support and meeting space and offer additional Council Services.
- Improve wayfinding to greenspace at Thornliebank playing fields and consider additional facilities
- Improve the existing parks and green space.
- Identify any vacant properties that could be converted to housing
- Create new connections and civic space making better use of existing, neglected lanes and open space behind the commercial units and Thorntree Hall on Main Street
- Provide a safe, attractive cycle route which links from the main street to the health centre, the local primary and secondary schools, Thorntree Hall Community Centre, the library and the park
- Create and enhance blue badge parking
- Remove general parking on the main thoroughfare
- Improve the safety and ease of crossing streets and junctions for pedestrians and cyclists
- Introduce a shop front/canopy improvement grant scheme to assist local businesses and improve the appearance of the main street
- Acquire and redevelop vacant shop units where appropriate
- Increase the existing space available for walking, wheeling and cycling on Main Street
- Prioritise access for people of all abilities including those with sensory and mobility impairments
- Give careful consideration to bus users
- Give careful consideration to residents parking, retaining and improving this on the Main Street offshoot adjacent to the existing residential flats



Indicative layout of Thornliebank Main Street



Indicative road layout for Thornliebank.



Indicative entrance to greenspace (park/ playing fields)

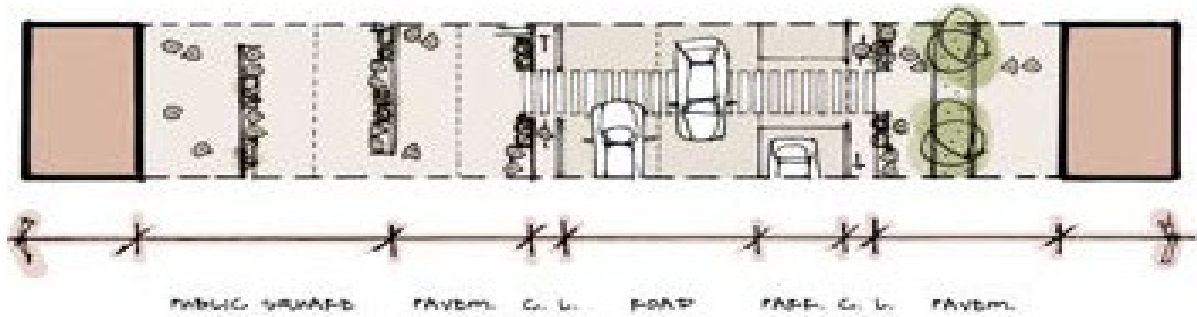
## APPENDIX 2 : PROPOSALS FOR BARRHEAD

Barrhead has a strong and varied industrial history including a number of influential historical figures who contributed to the infrastructure of the town and the development of its civic identity. From the early days of textile manufacturing – cotton spinning, print works and weaving, to the influence of renowned sanitary ware manufacturers Shanks & Co – there are many stories to be told, with water being the common theme that brings them all together.

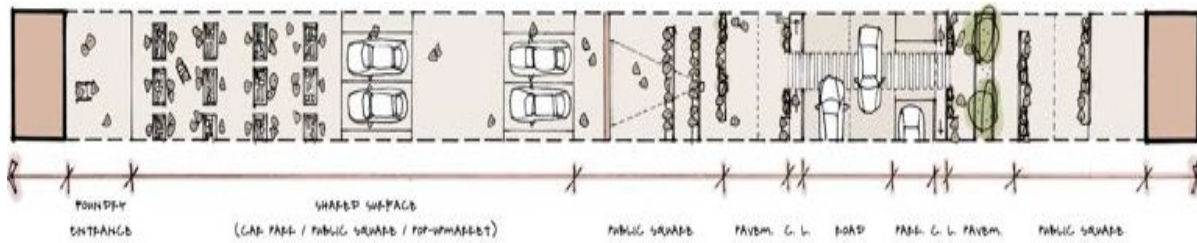
Taking inspiration from the important industrial heritage of the town and the influence of the Levern Water (and related water courses) it is proposed to make important enhancements to the town, helping to boost civic pride amongst current residents, increase footfall to local shops and raise the desirability of the area to new businesses and visitors.

- Create an iconic town centre park between Main Street and Church Street and name this after ‘Lady Glen’, an important historical figure with interpretation panels and public art to celebrate her generosity to the people of Barrhead
- Introduce eye catching features to the public realm outside Asda with seating areas and artistic features which carefully consider the heritage of Barrhead. There is an opportunity to look to both the textile and sanitaryware industries for inspiration and develop unique pieces of public art and street furniture – creating a unique and different proposition
- Create an inspiring new heritage trail, celebrating the industrial roots of Barrhead
- Improve Barrhead’s municipal buildings (Barrhead Burgh Hall (museum) and James Maguire Building), an important and iconic part of the Main Street in Barrhead. Elevating the historical importance of the external building facade including restoring and lighting the ‘statue of justice’ would form part of a heritage trail as well as improving the general look and feel of the surrounding properties
- Reimagine the industrial past of the various print works which historically existed in the area by installing striking light projections that change the colour of the water along the Levern Water, situated close to the shops and amenities in Barrhead town centre. In the days of the print works, the water from would have turned the colour of the dye they were using that day. This provides an opportunity to explore a unique aspect of the areas and Scotland’s heritage in a new and innovative way, providing a fantastic attraction for local people while helping to increase the profile of Barrhead to visitors. This would form part of the proposed heritage trail and walking / cycling routes around the area. This project links to an existing project with £2.7 million funding from SEPA and the Scottish Government’s vacant and derelict land programme to create an attractive riverside green space from formerly derelict land and re-engineer the Levern Water to reduce flooding risks
- Create new and enhance existing civic space on Main Street including pop up uses such as markets, events etc.
- Introduce a shop front/canopy improvement grant scheme to assist local businesses and improve the Main Street
- Acquire and redevelop vacant shop units where appropriate
- Identify a space for possible Food Co-operative and/or Community Laundry
- Identify opportunities for affordable housing
- Remove or redesign the central reservation along the Main Street to increase the existing space available for walking, wheeling and cycling
- Improve parking generally including management and control
- Create and enhance blue badge parking
- Improve the safety and ease of crossing streets and junctions for pedestrians and cyclists
- Remove general parking on the main thoroughfare
- Prioritise access for people of all abilities including those with sensory and mobility impairments
- Give careful consideration to bus users

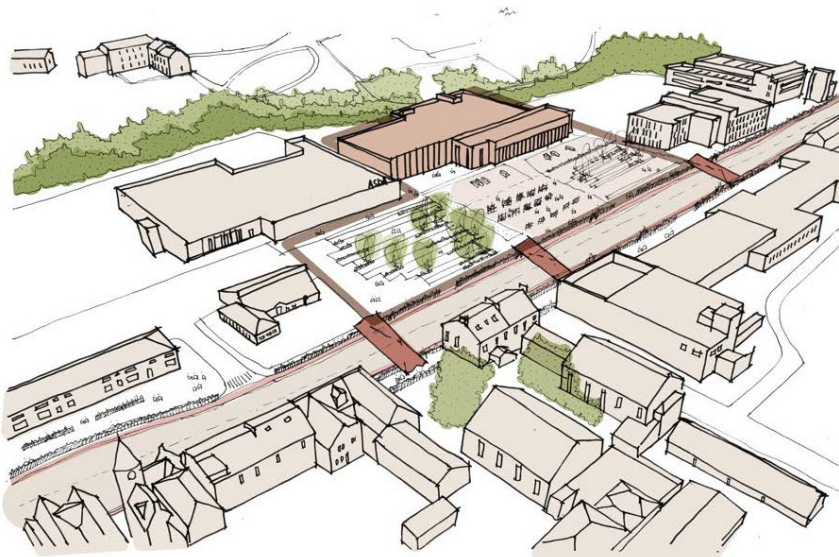
- Provide a safe, attractive cycle route from urban spaces along Main Street including the health and sports centre, supermarkets and shops and linking to the Levern Water and nearby parks
- Give careful consideration to residents parking, retaining and improving it whenever possible



Indicative area outside Asda



Indicative area outside of the Foundry



Overview of the Main Street, Barrhead