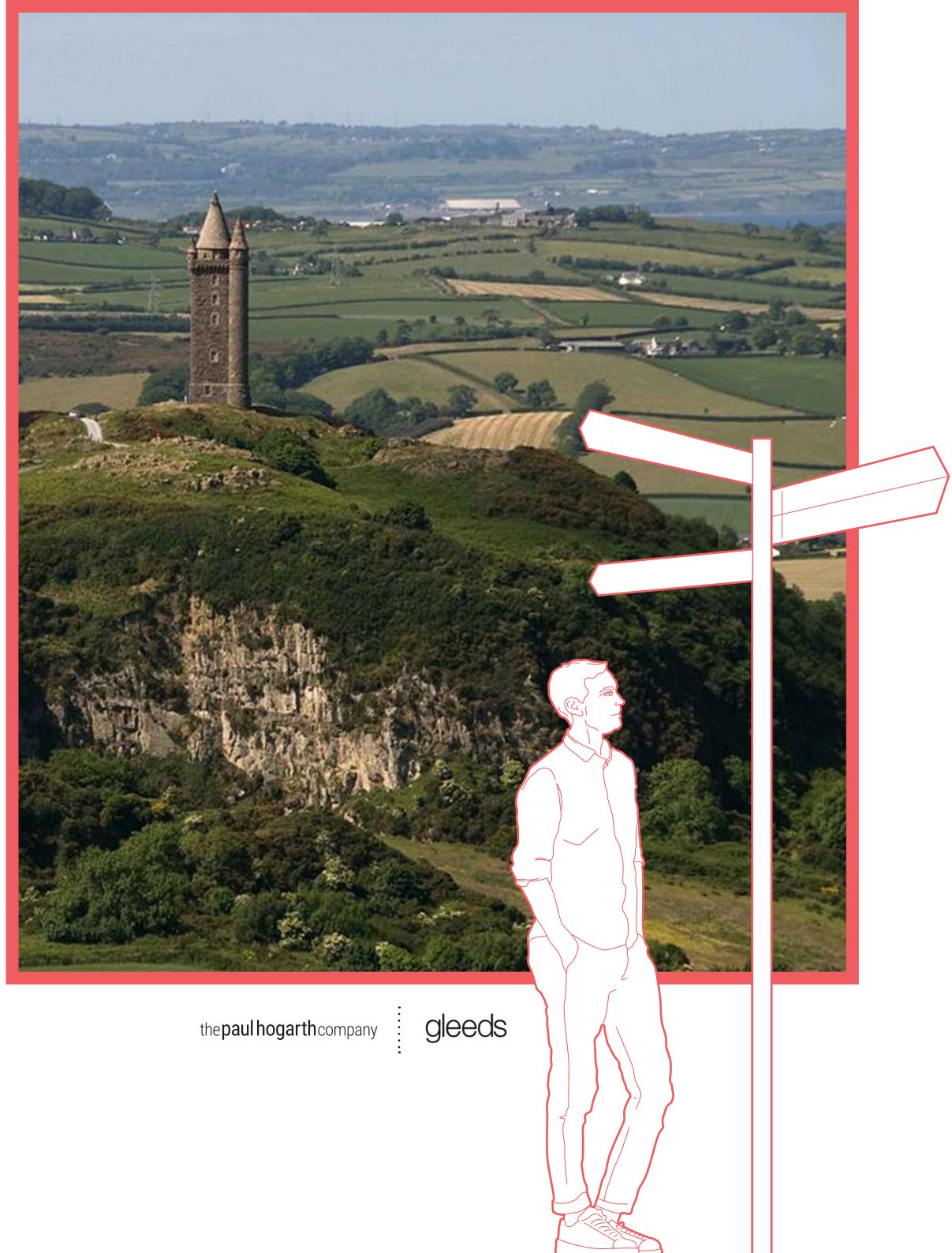


Newtownards Wayfinding Strategy



Ards and
North Down
Borough Council

NEWTOWNARDS TOWN ADVISORY GROUP



the paul hogarth company

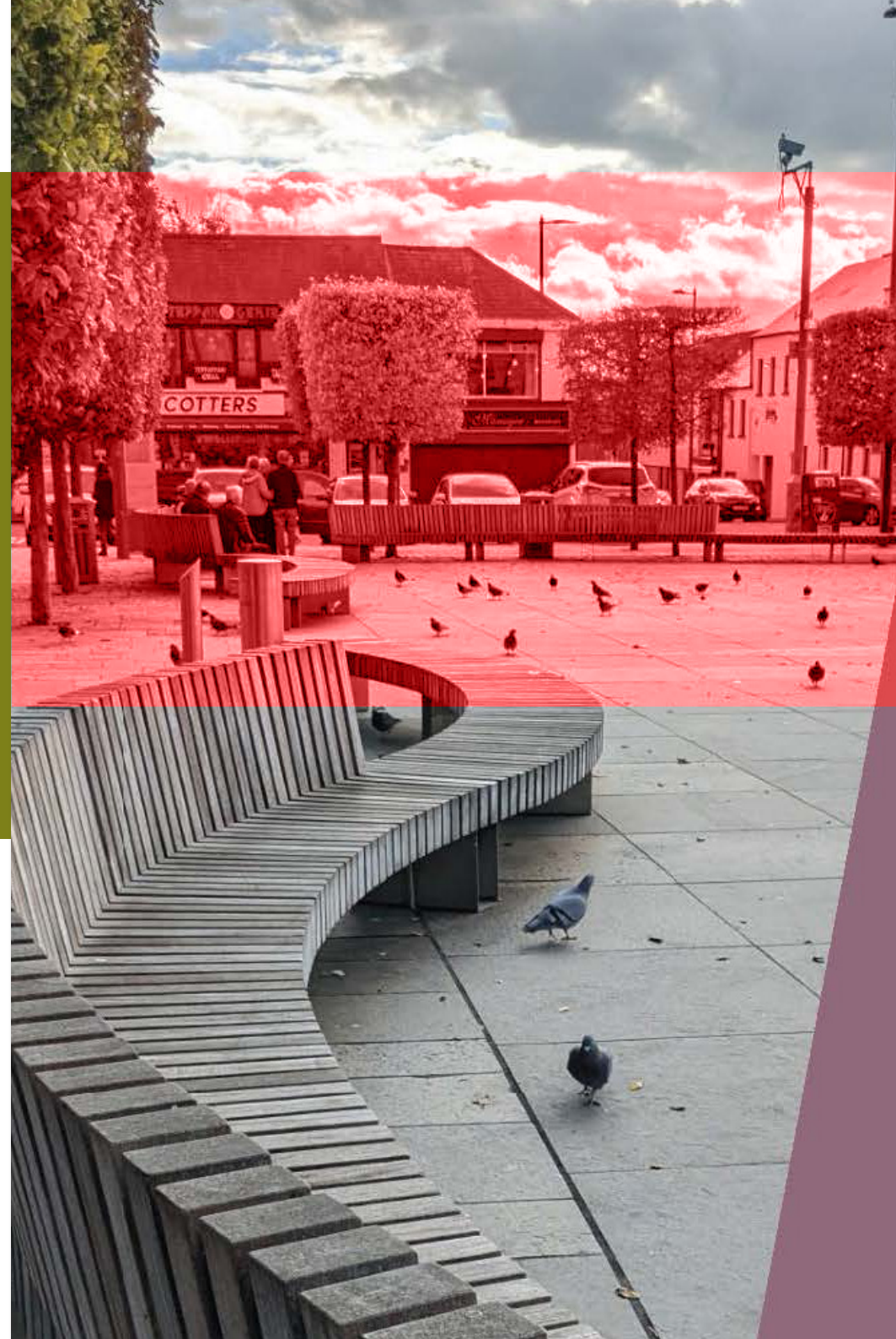
gleeds





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01. Introduction



01. Introduction

This document presents a Wayfinding Strategy for Newtownards, aiming to improve the experience for pedestrians in the town and to promote walking as a healthier and more sustainable mode of transport for the benefit of everyone. With a focus on accessibility, the strategy seeks to ensure that navigation within Newtownards is intuitive and inclusive, accommodating individuals of all abilities

Newtownards is a busy and popular destination for shoppers who avail of its many independent shops, while also a great place in which to live. The town's distinctive grid iron layout with wide streets and its relatively flat terrain is ideally suited to walking. Great potential exists to increase the numbers of people walking in Newtownards to the benefit of all.

*"Wayfinding systems should **encourage walking and transit usage** by providing **multimodal information** and **adopting the pedestrian perspective**."*

*Wayfinding works with other **visual cues** to help people **orient themselves** and **provide confidence** in navigating the geography of a city. Wayfinding can increase people's comfort in **choosing to walk** when they understand a **destination proximity**."*

Global Designing Cities Initiative (2016)

Newtownards Town Centre: Masterplan Review Proposed Priorities

- A. Grow the influence of the Square
- B. Tackle hotspots
- C. A connected Town
- D. Streets for all
- E. Town centre citizen's hub

This Wayfinding Strategy emanates from a review of the Newtownards Town Centre Masterplan. Shaped by the Newtownards Town Advisory Group and consulted upon with the public, the 2023 review identified the need to **'a connected town'** and **'streets for all'**.

The **goal** is to address the existing shortcomings and **provide clear, practical guidance for navigating Newtownards** and its surrounding regions. This strategy includes proposed improvements such as providing wayfinding elements and decluttering existing infrastructure. The strategy aims to **streamline navigation and enhance the overall pedestrian experience**.

01. Why Walk?

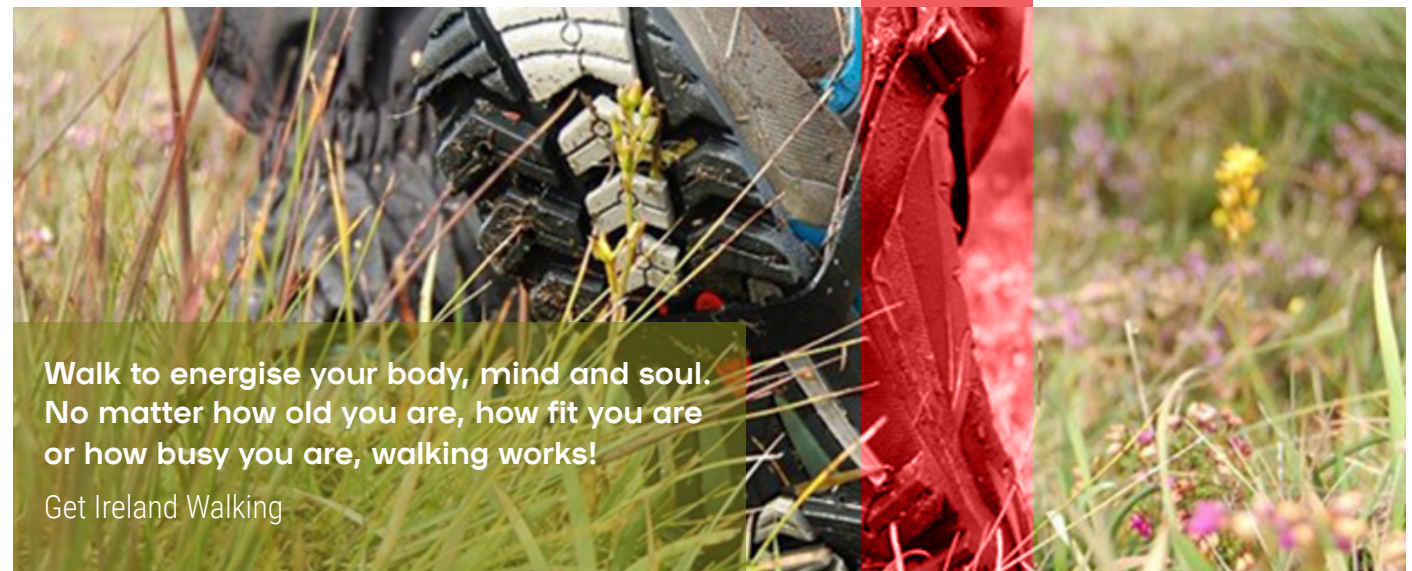
An effective wayfinding strategy can empower individuals to engage in walking and exercise. By providing clear signage, maps, and directional information, a wayfinding system can **motivate individuals to confidently navigate their surroundings, discover new routes and explore outdoor spaces**. A wayfinding system in a town can highlight paths, trails, and points of interest. By showcasing the accessibility and attractiveness of nearby walking routes, parks and green spaces, the strategy can **encourage people to incorporate walking into their daily routines as a convenient and enjoyable form of exercise**.

“Walking to school has been associated with positive cognitive development in school children ... habits form early in life.

Safe Routes to School programme

Reasons why walking is beneficial:

- Physical Health
- Mental Well-being
- Environmental & Climate Benefits
- Social Interaction & Community
- Accessibility & Affordability
- Increased Economic Activity
- Traffic Reduction
- Public safety



**Walk to energise your body, mind and soul.
No matter how old you are, how fit you are
or how busy you are, walking works!**

Get Ireland Walking

Studies conducted in the UK and Ireland have consistently shown that regular walking is associated with numerous health benefits. According to data from the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK, **adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise**, such as brisk walking, per week to maintain good health. Research from the Irish Heart Foundation highlights that **walking for just 30 minutes a day can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke**. These statistics show the importance of integrating walking into our daily routines as a simple yet effective way to improve cardiovascular health and fitness.

Yet walking does not just benefit our physical health. It also can make a significant contribution to our **mental health and well-being**, giving us time to relax while stimulating endorphins in the brain. Walking also promotes **social interaction** with friends, family and even strangers, thereby contributing to an overall **sense of community**.

Walking also contributes to the safety of our streets and spaces, with more people 'out and about' increasing passive surveillance and dissuading antisocial behaviour.

Finally the promotion of walking and investing in infrastructure also makes good economic sense. Firstly, unlike other forms of transport, walking is free and benefits a large percentage of the population. Secondly, it increases the dwell time of people in the town and therefore their propensity to frequent local businesses and contribute to the local economy.

" There must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street."

Jane Jacobs

"A walkable environment reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 4 tons a year, compared to living in an automobile-dependent suburb."

Congress for the New Urbanism

"We move around less and burn off less energy than people used to. Research suggests that many adults spend more than 7 hours a day sitting down, at work, on transport or in their leisure time."

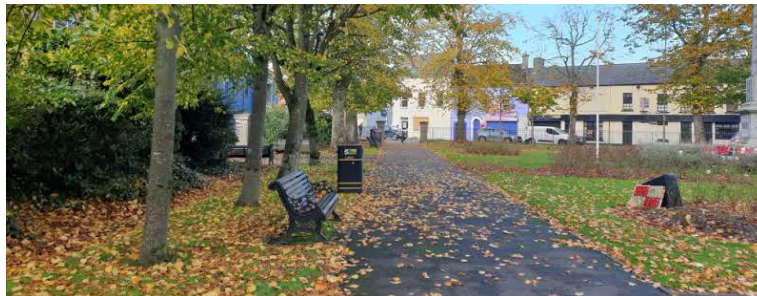
National Health Service

"Walking and cycling projects can increase retail sales by 30% or more."

Living High Streets

02. Why Newtownards?

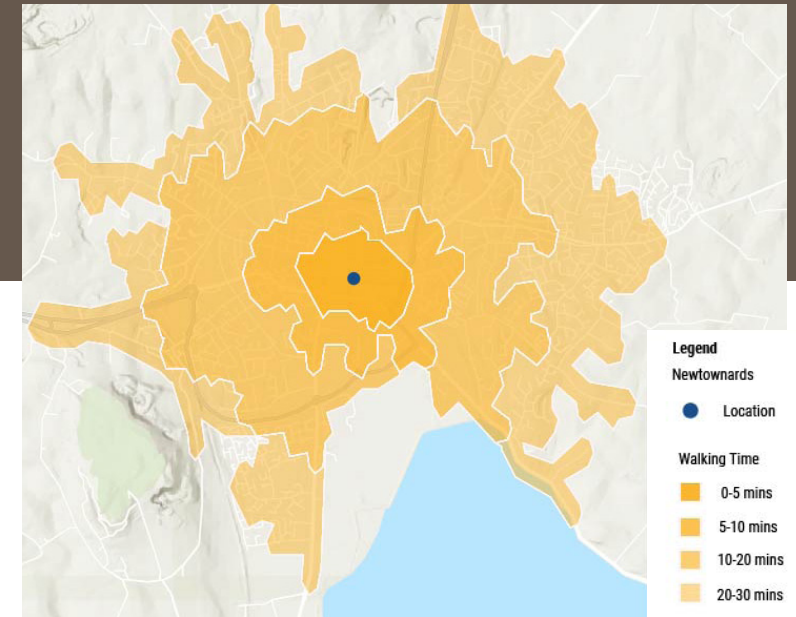
Newtownards is a large town with a vibrant town centre. This, combined with its relatively flat topography, makes it ideally suited to the promotion of day to day walking and cycling. Points of interest in and around Newtownards, such as Scrabo Tower, Strangford Lough and the town centre canal system, give further impetus to promoting pedestrian journeys. Future plans for greenway connections with Comber and Bangor will further catalyse this potential.



Navigating Newtownards' Pedestrian Experience:

Car Dominance: Like most town centres, the pedestrian experience in Newtownards is affected by traffic, especially moving at pace along its one way systems. This places great emphasis on the quality of footpaths and crossings, while promoting active travel an alternative to the car.

Commercial Development Patterns: Retail developments outside the town centre are primarily accessed by car. However, large shops such as Tesco are within walking distance of the centre and the wayfinding system has potential to promote these links more effectively.



03. The Strategy

Did you know that
Conway Square
to the Ards Blair Mayne
Wellbeing and Leisure Complex
is a 6 minute walk?



Aims & Objectives

To improve pedestrian wayfinding in Newtownards

- Increase levels of walking and wheeling to and from the town centre
- Provide greater confidence in support of pedestrian journeys within the town centre
- Spread footfall and increase dwell time in the town centre
- Provide infrastructure to support walking and public health initiatives

The aims are to transform Newtownards into a town of **easy navigation and cultural exploration**. The project aspires to redefine how individuals interact with the townscape.

The project seeks to create a **network of wayfinding elements** that seamlessly blend with the town's character, providing not just directions but also **a sense of place**. With each signpost, mural, and installation, the aim is to capture the spirit of Newtownards, celebrating its rich history, vibrant culture and promising future.

The Wayfinding Strategy is more than just aesthetics; it's a driver for **economic vitality and community pride**. By enhancing the visitor experience, the project aims to support local businesses, encourage exploration of hidden gems and foster a **deeper connection** between residents and their urban and natural surroundings.



04. The Users



→ the shopper

- **Retail**
- **Town Centre**
- Parking, park & ride
- Hospitality / food / restaurants
- Public transport
- Public toilets



→ the visitor

- **Town Centre**
- **Key Points of Interest**
(landmarks, parks, gardens,
historic features, etc)
- **Hospitality / food / restaurants**
- Retail & Entertainment
- Sports & Leisure
- Walking trails
- Parking, park & ride
- Public transport
- Public toilets



→ the exerciser

- **Looped walks / running trails /**
greenways etc
- **Parks / Country parks etc**
- **Sports & Leisure**
(eg. Leisure complexes,
playing fields)
- Parking, park & ride
- Public transport
- Public toilets
- Town Centre

Often wayfinding systems are aimed at one particular user group, such as tourists or shoppers. This strategy for Newtownards seeks to provide infrastructure useful to a range of different users, from the visitor to the local alike.



→ the mobility aid user

- **Safe and Accessible Routes**
- **Town Centre**
- Parking, park & ride
- Public transport
- Public toilets



→ the students

- **Schools**
- **Town Centre**
- **Parks, playparks, wetlands etc.**
- Sports & Leisure (Leisure complexes, sports pitches)
- Key Points of Interest (landmarks, parks, gardens, historic features, etc)
- Public toilets
- Public transport



→ the commuter

- **Public transport**
- **Parking, park & ride**
- Town Centre
- Public toilets

05. The System



The Wayfinding System encompasses detailed **mapping initiatives, directional signage and markers**, ensuring that Newtownards is easily accessible. Whether exploring historic landmarks, the waterfront, shops or scenic trails, these wayfinding elements offer **comprehensive guidance** for any user.

Newtownards Wayfinding System is not limited to the physical realm. It also engages in **educational campaigns** to promote walking and active travel, encouraging residents and visitors to explore Newtownards on foot. Through **community events and workshops** a culture of **pedestrian-friendly living** is fostered, making walking an enjoyable and accessible mode of travel.

The strategy incorporates **robust digital infrastructure**, using technology to enhance navigation experiences. From interactive maps and mobile apps to virtual tours and the possibility of augmented reality features, these innovative tools are provided that empower users to explore Newtownards with ease.

In essence, Newtownard's Wayfinding System is more than just signage; it's a **dynamic framework** that embraces mapping, campaigns and digital solutions to create an easy and enjoyable navigation experience for residents and visitors alike.

identity

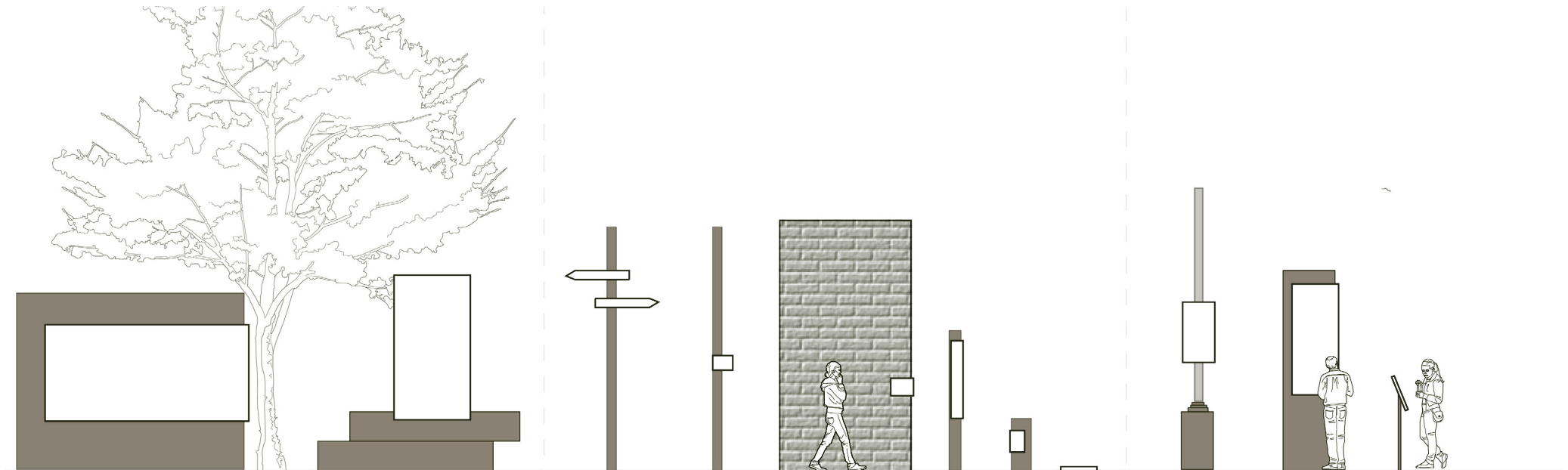
Identity wayfinding integrates elements of artwork, sculpture, murals, and branding into navigation systems to reflect a place's unique identity. By using curated colors, typography, and thematic motifs, this approach creates a cohesive and memorable experience for users, enhancing the environment's overall branding and sense of place.

directional

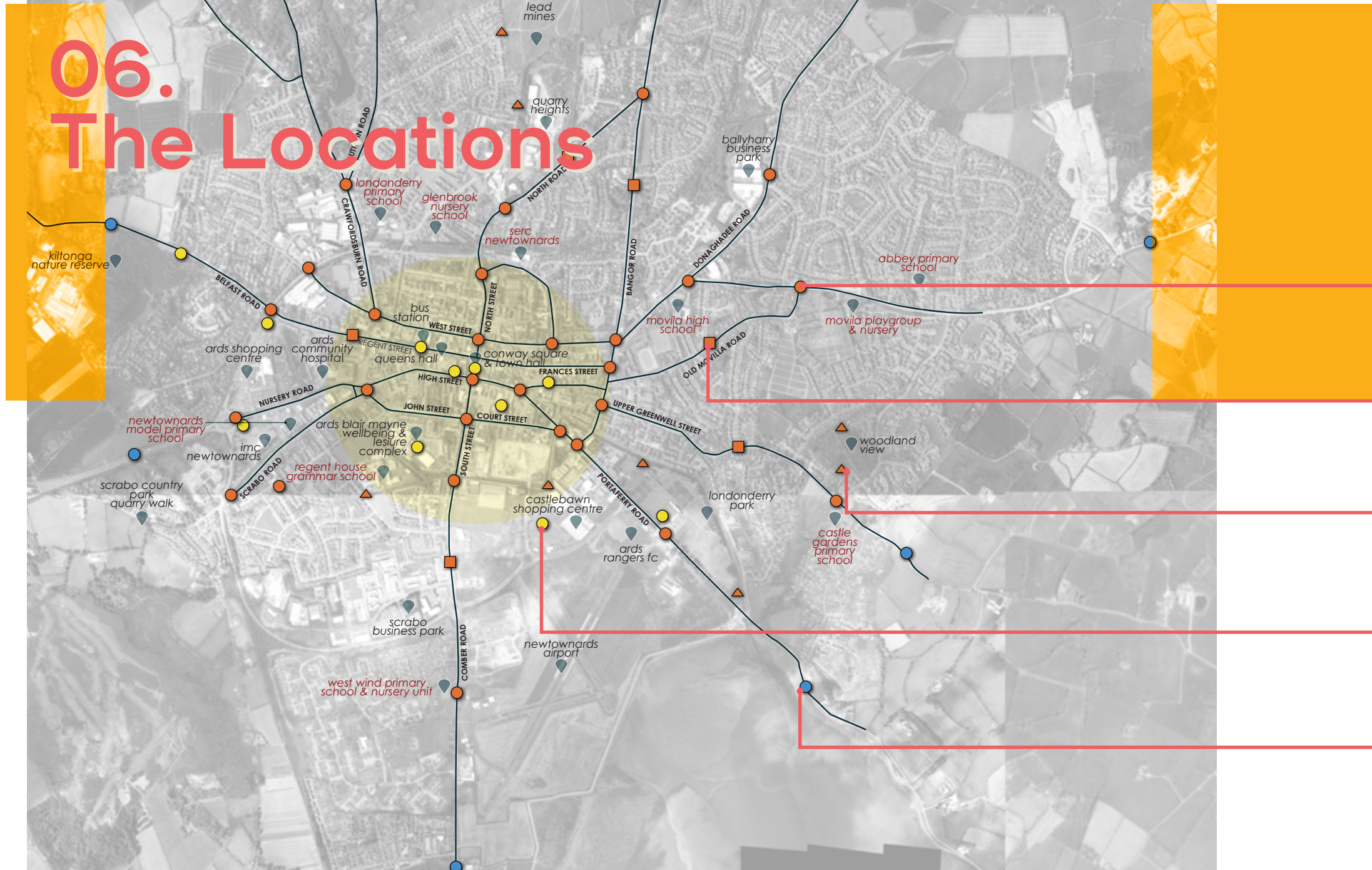
Directional wayfinding signage includes location indicators, markers, destination information, directions, symbols/ pictograms, consistent branding, clear typography, consistent design and strategic placement. It guides users efficiently through environments, ensuring they reach destinations with confidence.

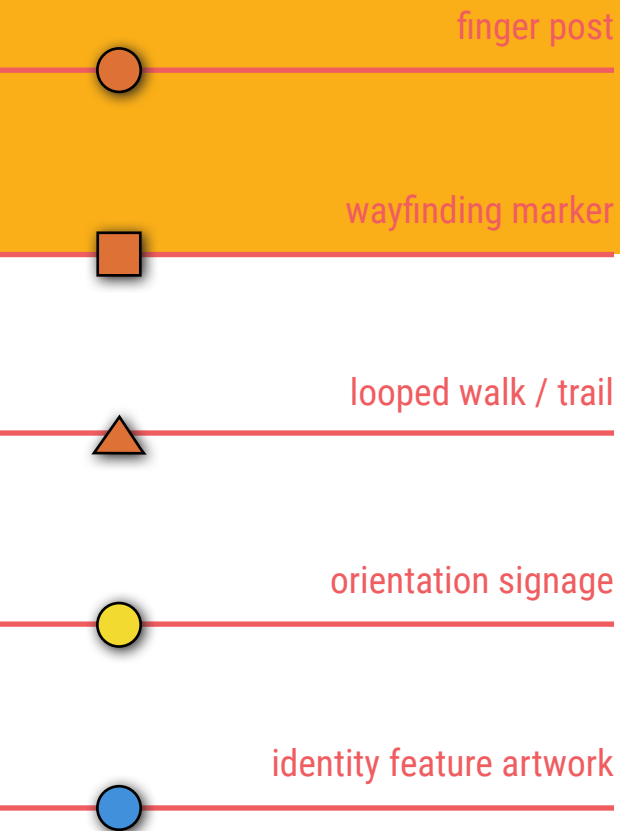
orientational

Orientational wayfinding helps users in understanding their overall spatial orientation within urban environments. Key elements include maps, landmark identification, path hierarchy, consistent design and visual clarity. It helps users develop a mental map of their surroundings and promoting confidence.



06. The Locations

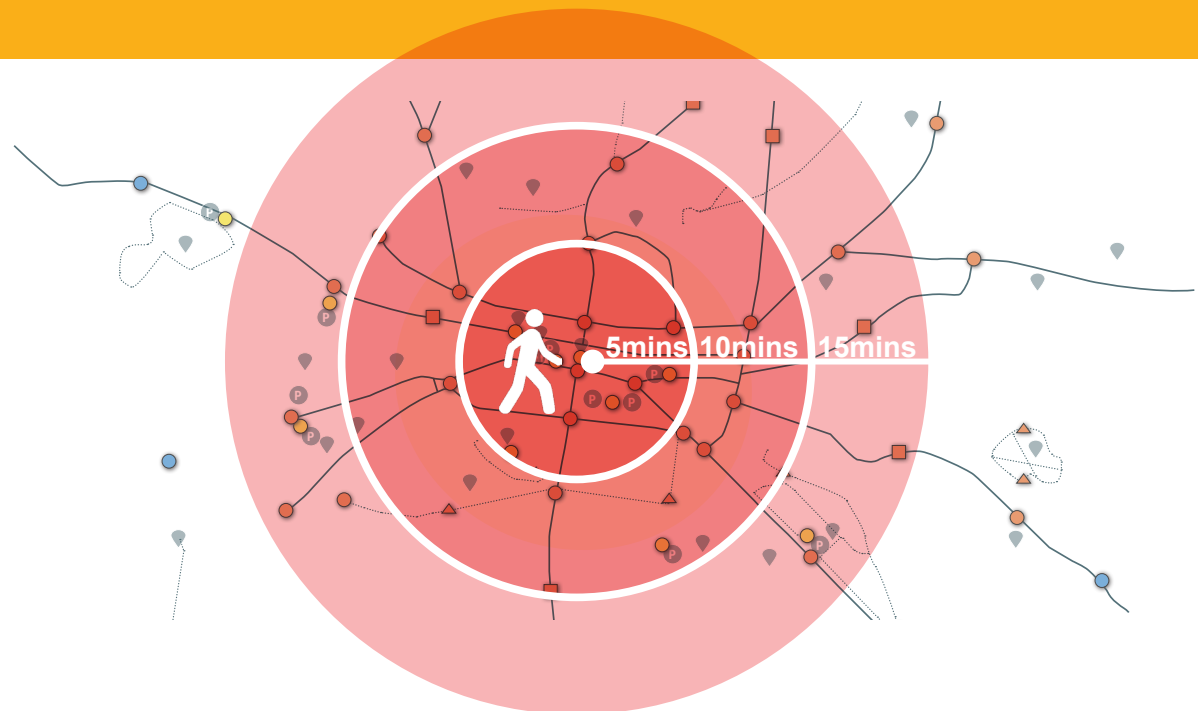




The Newtownards Wayfinding System will apply to the entirety of the town and promote its walkability with reference to walking times. **The majority of Newtownards is reachable within a 15 minutes walks from the centre.**

Identity feature artworks are proposed for the approaches into Newtownards while **orientation signage and mapping** will be provided at key arrival points. **Directional signage** will adopt the form of finger posts, augmented with smaller wayfinding markers as appropriate.

Loops trails and walks should also be sign posted with the use of **wayfinding markers**.

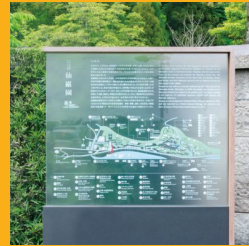
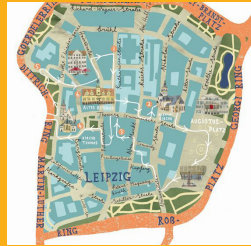


06. The Locations



All **signage must be very carefully located** in the public realm so to ensure visibility without detracting from its setting. This is particularly important in proximity to heritage buildings and views. **Street clutter must be minimised** so that circulation flows are not adversely affected. Superfluous existing signage should be removed, while new signs should be affixed to existing poles or structures whenever possible.





Due to their size, orientational panels including maps must be positioned with great care. The location must be a safe place for pedestrians to congregate, while the panel must not block important sightlines, be they at traffic junctions or towards the most attractive views.



07. Design Guidance

The design guide for Newtownards pays attention to the selection of colours to ensure a harmonious and visually appealing aesthetic. Contrasting colours such as deep greens with reds and yellows. These vibrant tones were carefully chosen to infuse depth and vibrancy, enriching the overall visual experience of the wayfinding elements and enhancing the distinct charm of Newtownards.

Incorporating Newtownard's identity into signage offers benefits such as:

1. Improved **navigation**
2. Enhanced **brand recognition**
3. Positive **visitor experience**
4. Boosts **tourism appeal**
5. Fosters **community engagement**
5. Boosts the **local economy**





In the development of the design guide, particular emphasis was placed on selecting colours that resonate with vibrancy and dynamic contrast. The introduction of bolder contrasts, such as vivid yellow, deep blue, and coral red, injects an energizing and compelling dimension to the visual palette.

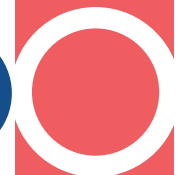


RUSTIC
Background



TRANQUIL
Typical

VIBRANT
Accent



PRINCIPAL COLOUR

CONTRASTING COLOURS

Newtownards, where rich hues of browns and greens paint the landscape, weaving together the town's historical structures and nearby rolling hills.

07. Design Guidance

Colours and Icons Recommendations

Colour plays a vital role in shaping our perceptions and contributes significantly to branding and graphic identity. It can serve as an identifier for specific areas, aiding in hierarchy and clarity within a wayfinding system. However, when employing different colours, it is crucial to avoid combinations that may confuse individuals with colour vision deficiencies. For instance, combinations below should be avoided to ensure clarity and accessibility for all users.

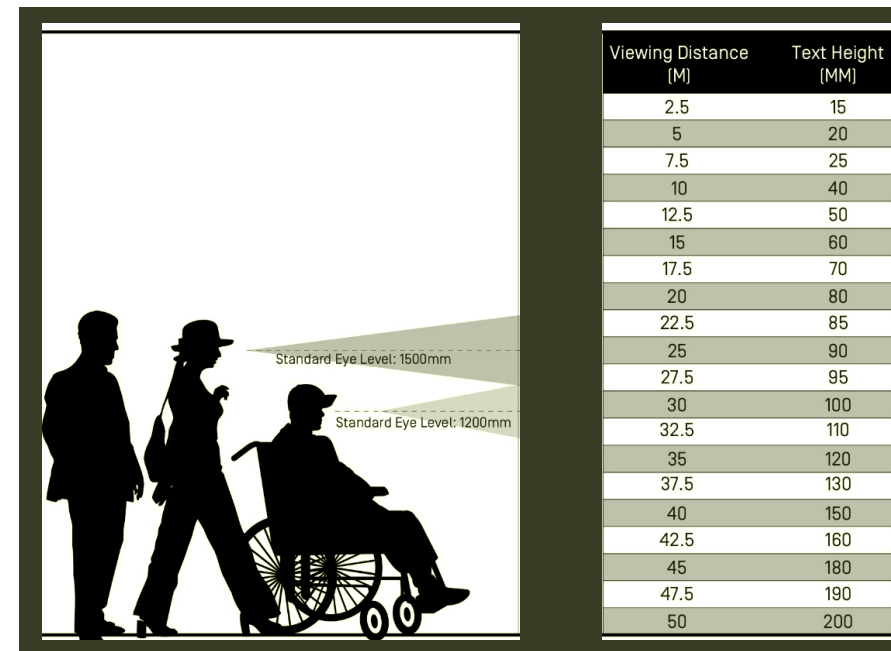
- red/yellow/green
- red/black
- blue/green/purple

Fonts

Fonts are selected based on principles of readability, versatility, and brand consistency. Sans-serif fonts are preferred for their clean, modern appearance and legibility across different mediums. A primary font is chosen for headlines and prominent text, while a complementary font is used for body text and secondary information.

Legibility

Signs are more legible for people with visual impairment when character contrast with their background by at least 70%. As the design of the system can be flexible in colour and brand application. Tests should be carried out to ensure the finished design has a high contrast finish.



"Rule of thumb" guideline, which suggests that every 25mm of letter height provides approximately 3m of legibility distance.

Wayfinding Signage

Wayfinding signs, including finger posts, play a crucial role in guiding individuals throughout the town.

Design Recommendations:

Sign Colours: Consistency is key for all wayfinding signs. Therefore, it is recommended to use the same sign colours across all elements to create a cohesive and unified wayfinding system.

Font and Symbol Colours: To ensure legibility and clarity, the font and symbols on finger posts should be in a contrasting yet complementary colour. For example, crisp white can be used for the font and symbols against the slate grey background of a sign.

Rationale:

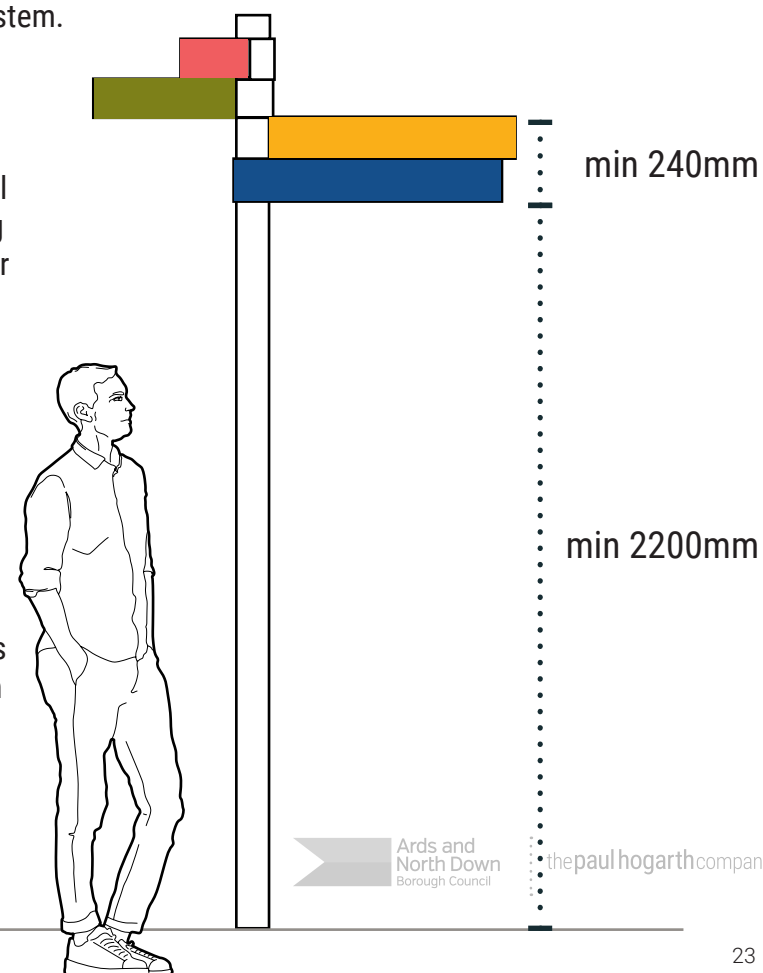
Consistency in sign colours across all wayfinding elements ensures a cohesive and easily recognizable wayfinding system. By using the same sign colour for all wayfinding signs, individuals can navigate the town with confidence, knowing what to look for regardless of



Colour Coding for Specific Categories:

The use of colour can also be strategically employed and varied across signs. By colour-coding signs according to specific categories individuals can quickly identify relevant destinations and amenities within the town. This approach not only adds visual interest but also assists in efficiently conveying information to users, helping them navigate the environment with ease. Consistency reinforces familiarity and helps in establishing mental associations, ultimately contributing to a more user-friendly wayfinding system.

The strategic use of colour can be varied across signs while still adhering to or aligning with the original colour palette. By employing this approach, even highlighted categories feel integrated into the cohesive whole, mitigating the risk of using generic colour associations such as green for parks and blue for water. Colours such as 'blue' for town centre and 'green' for parks can be used within Newtownards wayfinding system.



07. Design Guidance



Orientation Signage

Orientational signs play a crucial role in guiding individuals throughout the city. Due to their limited presence compared to other signage types, such as finger posts, orientational signs have the opportunity to stand out prominently.

Design Recommendations:

Sign Colours: Vibrant colours should be employed for the orientational signs to ensure maximum visibility and prominence within the urban environment. This bold approach will help the signs effectively catch the attention of individuals seeking direction.

Font and Symbol Colours: In contrast to the vibrant sign colours, a tranquil colour scheme should be utilised for the font and symbols. Subdued hues, such as lighter tones or earthy shades, will ensure legibility and clarity while complementing the overall aesthetics of the environment.

Braille: Include Braille on all signs for visually impaired users.

Tactile Maps: Provide tactile maps at key locations.

Audio Systems: Integrate Sound Cloud technology or audio guides activated by buttons or sensors.

Rationale:

The rationale behind this design recommendation lies in the sparse distribution of orientational signs throughout the city. With fewer signs present, there is greater flexibility to make them visually striking without overwhelming the urban landscape. By opting for vibrant sign colours and tranquil font/symbol colours, these signs can effectively fulfil their navigational function while contributing to the overall visual identity of the area.

This design guide recommendation aims to enhance visibility, clarity, and overall user experience for individuals navigating the city, ensuring that orientational signage remains an integral part of the urban environment.

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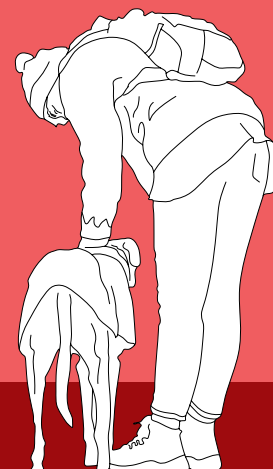
Wayfinding Markers

Due to their smaller size and varied locations, require a design approach that ensures they stand out prominently while aiding navigation effectively.

Design Recommendation:

Marker Colour Scheme: Markers should feature a vibrant colour to enhance visibility and attract attention. A bold hue, such as vibrant colour is recommended for the marker itself. This eye-catching colour ensures that markers are easily noticeable amidst their surroundings.

Font and Symbol Colour: To ensure clear legibility, a contrasting colour should be used for the font and symbols on markers. A neutral colour, such as black or white, is recommended for the font and symbols against the vibrant background of the marker. This contrast enhances readability and ensures that important information stands out effectively.



Symbol Usage:

Depending on the size and visibility of markers, symbols may or may not be appropriate. If symbols are included, they should match the font colour to maintain consistency and visibility.

08. Creative Applications

Identity Artworks

Public art, including murals, sculptures and temporary signage should make a significant contribution to Newtownard's wayfinding in addition to signage provision. Well placed artworks can become landmarks in their own right. They also help to enrich place identity and our cultural landscape. Consideration should be given to artworks that specifically contribute to the wayfinding system. These should relate to the colours of the signage design guide and skilfully incorporate useful directional information, such as arrows or maps. As with all interventions, the quality of artwork and craftsmanship should be a paramount consideration at all times.

Possible Artwork Themes for Newtownards:

- Market Town History
- Ards Peninsula Landscapes
- Newtownards Aviation Heritage



Creative and Collaborative Process:

- Engaging stakeholders, including local residents, businesses, and authorities, in the design process.
- Encouraging input from diverse perspectives to ensure the wayfinding reflects the community's needs and desires.
- • Fostering a collaborative environment where designers, artists, and local stakeholders can contribute ideas and insights.

Bespoke and Contextual Design:

- Tailoring wayfinding elements to the specific character and context of each town.
- Designing signage and artwork that seamlessly integrates with the surrounding environment, enhancing rather than detracting from its aesthetics.

Strong Local Resonance and Story:

- Infusing wayfinding elements with local narratives, symbols, and imagery that resonate with residents and visitors alike.
- Celebrating the town's heritage, landmarks, and stories through artistic representations and storytelling.
- Creating a cohesive narrative that connects wayfinding elements to the town's identity, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

Commitment to Quality Design, Materials, and Workmanship:

- Upholding high standards of design excellence, using quality materials and craftsmanship to ensure durability and longevity.
- Prioritising sustainability and resilience in the selection of materials.
- Investing in skilled artisans and craftsmen to execute the design vision.

Thinking Outside the Box - Embracing Creativity:

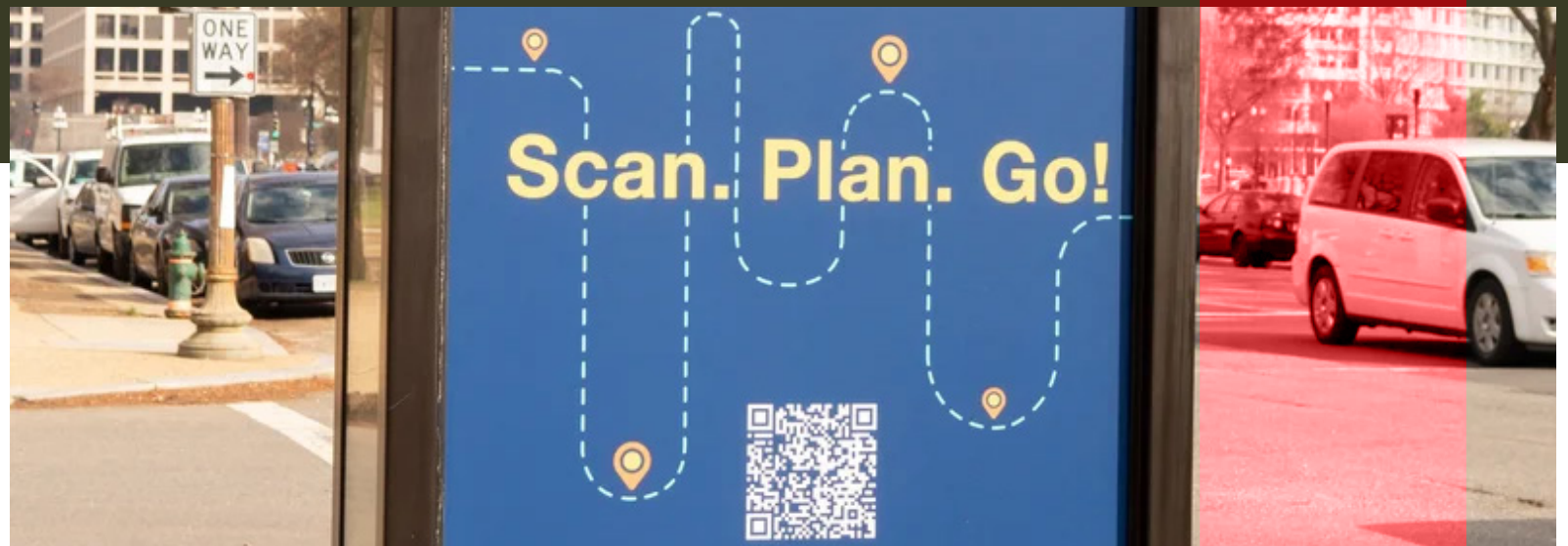
- Embracing creativity and experimentation in the use of materials, forms and technologies to push the boundaries of traditional wayfinding solutions.
- Inspiring curiosity and engagement through thought-provoking design elements that capture the imagination and spark conversation.

Digital Interactivity

Great potential exists to introduce digital connectivity to the Newtownards wayfinding system. The utilisation of QR codes and other digital devices presents an exciting opportunity for enhanced interactivity. By linking physical signage to web-based content, it can provide users with instant access to a wealth of information, directions and resources. This approach not only streamlines the user experience but also opens up endless possibilities for dynamic content delivery, including real-time updates, and interactive maps.

While the system set out in this document pertains to wayfinding, such digital interactivity could also be used to provide further information. For example, links could inform the visitor of upcoming events or special offers from local businesses. They also have much potential for interpretation, sharing stories and information about places of interest within the town.

**Wayfinding
information extends
beyond signage.
Digital tools offer
a multitude of
communication layers
for wayfinding.**



08. Creative Applications

Campaigns and Activities

To bring the wayfinding system 'alive' and to get more people walking in Newtownards, creative campaigns and activities are to be greatly encouraged. A proactive approach is required to inform everyone about the wayfinding system and the value of walking to individuals and the town as a whole. The wayfinding system can be used to support existing initiatives, such as walking groups, fitness clubs or walking to school campaigns. Creativity with how the system is used can also unlock new ideas, such as treasure hunts, history tours and competitions.



08. Next Steps'

Through the provision of signage, mapping and artworks the Newtownards Wayfinding Strategy aims to

- Increase levels of walking and wheeling to and from the town centre
- Provide greater confidence in support of pedestrian journeys within the town centre
- Spread footfall and increase dwell time in the town centre
- Provide infrastructure to support walking and public health initiatives

This document should now be used to attract funding and inform the first phases of delivery, which will include detailed design, planning consent, fabrication and construction. Importantly, the people of Newtownards should be further engaged to help ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the system, while being encouraged to support its overall objectives.

Newtownards has significant potential to capitalise upon its layout and vibrancy to further increase levels of walking. In doing so great benefits can be realised for residents, visitors and everyone who sets foot in the town.

Action Plan:

- 1. Secure Funding:** Obtain the necessary financial resources to support the wayfinding project.
- 2. Appoint Design Team:** Select and appoint a design team to develop and implement the wayfinding system.
- 3. Prepare Detailed Sign Designs:** Create detailed designs for each wayfinding sign.
- 4. Scope Each Sign Location:** Identify and assess suitable locations for each sign to ensure optimal visibility and effectiveness.
- 5. Consult with Council, DFI Stakeholders and others:** Meet with the the local council, Department for Infrastructure, and other relevant stakeholders to review and approve proposed sign locations.
- 6. Public Consultation:** Engage with the public to gather feedback and ensure community support for the wayfinding project.
- 7. Refine Designs:** Adjust and refine sign designs based on feedback
- 8. Submit Planning Application:** Submit a planning application for advertising and consent if necessary
- 9. Prepare Tender Documents:** Develop and issue tender documents to solicit bids from contractors/fabricators for the manufacture and installation of the wayfinding system.
- 10. Deliver Wayfinding System:** Oversee the production and installation of the wayfinding signs according to the approved plans and designs.