



# **CRIEFF TOWN STUDY: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & OPPORTUNITIES APPRAISAL**

**A Report of a Study undertaken for  
The Crieff and Upper Strathearn Partnership**

**The work of students of  
Architecture & Planning at  
The University of Dundee**

**January, 2012**

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This report has been written by David Kirk, Head of Town & Regional Planning at the University of Dundee. The report consolidates the analysis and proposals made as a group-based assignment by the students of year 3 of the MA (Honours) in Town and Regional Planning and the post-graduate students on the MSc Advanced Sustainability of the Built Environment during the autumn of 2011.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to offer a spatial strategy of initiatives which can promote the sustainable development of Crieff.
2. The report consolidates the analyses and ideas of students of Architecture and Planning at the University of Dundee who responded to the request of the Crieff and Upper Strathearn Partnership (CUSP) to undertake a study of the town. Their task was to identify the need and opportunities for development in the next 10 years.
3. The 29 students worked in small teams over a two-month period over the autumn of 2011 in this task which was initiated by a three-day study visit to Crieff in late October.
4. The study recognised Crieff as a resilient, relatively affluent and well-provided small town with a rich architecture heritage. The town was found to have a combination of good housing, accessible services and a sought-after environment which attracts incomers to become residents and supports a resort economy attracting visitors.
5. A 'place-centred' approach was adopted for examining the issues and potentials of Crieff. Three 'central places' were identified within the town: the High Street area, the Crieff Hydro, and the emerging centre developing on land adjacent to Broich Road. These are places which accommodate various mixes of activities. These centres accordingly generate the traffic of cars, public transport and suppliers' vehicles.
6. The Crieff Hydro was viewed as hugely beneficial to Crieff. Because demonstrably the complex has confident and capable management the scope for its development was not further considered in making the study.
7. Recent developments at Broich Road and proposals in the development pipe-line (a supermarket, a primary school, housing) will make this area a focal place of new development and of resulting traffic generation. Students accepted the economic case for the further development of the Broich area, but emphasised the necessity to avoid the threat of ad-hoc site development. A master-planning approach to achieve a place of quality in this new 'central place' is recommended.
8. The students drew attention to the functional overlap between the supermarket development at Broich and the retailers on the High Street. They concluded that the competitive efficiency of the new development will mean that the customer-serving functions of the High Street area will require to increasingly attract tourist/speciality-seeking visitors.
9. The students considered that for the High Street area to increase the attraction of visitors a set of actions would be relevant to enhance its appeal as a distinctive place. Proposals for closing through traffic in Comrie Street and upper King Street and for relocating the Tourist Information Centre into the Drummond Hotel building and adapting the remainder of the building as a back-packers hostel were among a mix of proposals.

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10. The King Street neighbourhood formed by the network of local streets and lanes around King Street, Commissioner Street, Broich Terrace and Pittenzie Road was identified as suitable for providing housing within the financial means of first-time buyers and private rent tenants. This was highly relevant to meeting the need to retain young families in Crieff. However an up-lift of the built environment was required in particular concerning the pathways and derelict sites within the area.
11. The analysis of the town's form and townscape highlighted constraints arising from the priority accorded to vehicular movement over the experience for pedestrians. There was concern about the narrow pavements in the High Street and the poorly maintained pathways generally. The condition of the pathways used by school pupils was viewed as meriting early attention.
12. The pro-active and effective management of development opportunities will require collaboration in a spirit of partnership and inclusiveness. In a period of tight public resources, communities will have to draw on the un-paid services of local people with the relevant expertise and experience to lead/contribute to achieving local initiatives.
13. A key task for CUSP will be recruiting the involvement of individuals with appropriate know-how (professional, financial, project management) about developing projects. Advantage can be made of engaging students in relevant disciplines drawing on the universities and colleges in specific assignments. School pupils should become involved in 'learning by doing' initiatives.
14. The 'place' approach is recommended as the effective way to proceed. The intent for achieving the potential of each 'places' is summarised as follows:
  - Improve the High Street area to attract visitors and give greater priority to pedestrians
  - Promote the renewal of the King Street neighbourhood
  - Achieve a quality place in the development of the Broich area

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The Scottish Government initiated the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative (SSCI) in 2008 and chose a small number of projects to identify how by good design and planned development local places could be made more sustainable and resilient in the face of 21<sup>st</sup> C forces for change. Although Crieff was not one of the selected projects, the ‘pride in place’ spirit which inspired the SSCI is held by the Crieff and Strathearn Partnership (CUSP). It was then in seeking to generate ideas for making Crieff more resilient by taking advantage of the opportunities generated by change that CUSP had approached the School of the Environment of the University of Dundee.

The School responded positively understanding the task of study as that of identifying initiatives appropriate to promote the sustainable development of Crieff. CUSP and the School were in common accord as to what contributes most significantly to sustainability of a small town, this was that “*ultimately it is people’s use, interaction and enjoyment within the place that will mark its reputation and on-going success*” (Tolson, in Tiesdell & Adams, 2011:176).

This report is the outcome of the students work. Their reports of analysis and their thinking about the issues and the opportunities open to Crieff provided the basis of the observations and suggestions contained in this report. The report should be read, not as an exhaustive study, but as drawing together the ideas of students who have been engaged in a learning process. It is hoped that readers of the report will find within ideas which, when debated, can become the basis of further investigation, planning and ultimately, of action.

### 1.2 Acknowledgements

This report is the consolidation of five reports researched and produced by students of the School of the Environment of the University of Dundee. It is the product project work by some 29 students who worked in project teams over a two-month period in the autumn of 2011.

That the students had the opportunity to make their study of Crieff is due to the invitation made by CUSP to the University that we should undertake such a study and to the practical support extended by CUSP by way meeting the expense of bed and breakfast accommodation for the students during their 3-day study visit to Crieff. This support is gratefully acknowledged.

Members of CUSP met informally with student teams, and the students sourced information and opinions from the bed and breakfast providers, local business people and shoppers. These contacts helped to make their visit to Crieff indispensable, allowing the students to gain both a first-hand appreciation of how this small town functions and what local people think.

Two senior officers from Perth and Kinross Council, Peter Marshall and John McCrone briefed the students on the policy context for development planning and the support of community and economic vitality in Crieff. These briefings provided invaluable background

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information and greatly helped bring home to the students their recognition of the significance of the regulatory and fiscal environments within which development can be progressed.

## 1.3 The Aims of the Study

The brief given to the students was to research and outline a spatial strategy to achieve the potential of Crieff as a sustainable place to live, work, shop, learn, play and visit. The brief asked the students to combine:

- Understanding of the functions played by Crieff as a centre of the community and the local economy of Upper Strathearn
- Recognition of the influence of external forces now shaping the development of Crieff
- Assessment at town level with the objective of identifying issues affecting Crieff and the opportunities for promoting its sustainable development
- Assessments of specific places within Crieff to identify place-specific sustainability issues and opportunities

## 1.4 The Making of the Study

CUSP had invited the School of the Environment of the University of Dundee to undertake a short but intensive identification and analysis of the issues affecting the vitality of Crieff and to highlight the potential for new initiatives.

An invaluable initial briefing for the supervising academic tutors was provided by a small number of CUSP members at a meeting over coffee held in Crieff during the summer of 2011. A study brief was subsequently developed by these two staff members of the School of the Environment and became the basis of an assessed coursework undertaken by a class of 3<sup>rd</sup> year under-graduate students of Town and Regional Planning (18 individuals, home and European students) and a class of post-graduate students (11 individuals, mainly from overseas) who were undertaking a taught Masters in Advanced Sustainable Design of the Built Environment. Both groups of students comprised young people from UK backgrounds, from elsewhere in Europe, and in the case of the post-graduate group included individuals from the Near East, India and China. In this way fresh outlooks were being brought to viewing Crieff.

The coursework required that the students would work in small teams to bring forward their ideas for a spatial strategy that would address the issues affecting town's social, economic, as well as its physical environment. The strategy was required to highlight the potential for local initiatives.

The project teams undertook a three day residential visit to Crieff in late October, 2011. This provided the occasion to undertake visual study of the town and to meet with local people. The residential visit enabled the student teams to make an assessment of the planning and design of the built environment of the town. In particular, the students were asked to analyse five aspects of the town's form: movement and legibility, continuity and enclosure, diversity, resources, and townscape.

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Additional to the visit the students benefitted from policy briefings provided by senior planning and development professionals from Perth & Kinross Council. Socio-economic and other data, maps and text information on Crieff and Strathearn were gathered to build up the contextual understanding of the issues affecting the town.

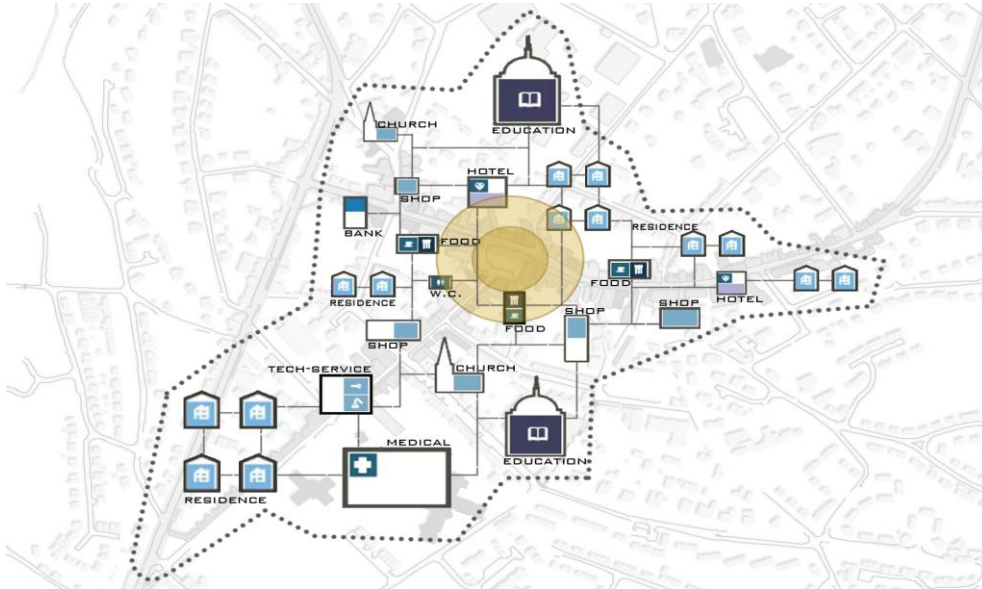
Following upon the visit to Crieff the student teams worked independently to analyse the materials gathered. The team analyses concluded with assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the Town and identified the market opportunities for development. These required their recognition of local needs and wants in the context of external societal, economic, environmental and regulatory factors which will shape the prospects for development in the immediate and medium-term future (10 years).

The town-level analysis in turn informed more specific investigation by the student teams of particular places within Crieff. These places were: the High Street, King Street, and the area of development potential around Crieff High School and Community Campus. These places were selected by the supervising tutors as key locations where changes had been taking place and where it could reasonably be anticipated that these places would undergo further change in the time period of the development strategy.

## **1.5 The Structure of the Report**

Sections 2 and 3 of this report provide summaries of the main points arising from the work of desk research and visual survey completed by the students in the closing months of 2011. This analysis supports the identification of key issues which are developed in Section 4. In Section 5 the 'place-centred' approach is outlined as the means for bringing forward opportunities which address the recognised issues. How the 'place' development could be progressed is the subject of the concluding Section 6.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY



### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of Section 2 is to provide an understanding of the context within which change in Crieff is occurring. The style of presentation will be to summarise key points arising from the students' analyses.

The context requires taking into account a set of factors:

- the location of Crieff relative to other centres of population and other spatial features
- population change and the socio-economic characteristics of Crieff
- the nature of the local economy of Crieff

Location is an essential starting point. It defines the relative autonomy of a place as a central place providing services, employment and as a place to live.

Population change provides fundamental insight to the demand for services and the generation/loss of employment. Understanding of the socio-economic profile provides insight into the capabilities held by members of the community as measured by the evidence of assets and education, etc. and by turn whether there are vulnerable groups within the community measured by indices of age, employability, etc.

The recognition of the business base provides insight for assessing how robust the local economy may be to competitive pressures and what opportunities are available for local employment.

### 2.2 Location

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Crieff is a small town situated on a glorious hillside position where the Scottish Lowlands meet the Highlands. Its location established Crieff as a market town for the exchange of cattle and linen, and later in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, access by the rail line and the amenity of the environment made it a place of tourist attraction and the building of villas.

The town is an important crossing point for the road network and is a tourist route. Crieff's relative distance from Perth and Stirling make it the local services centre for retailing and local trades, local professional and health services, and for secondary education. The demand for these services is closely aligned to the size of the local population which is growing.

## **2.3 Community**

The population of Crieff has shown a strong increase in numbers, from 6583 in 2001, to 7458 in 2010, a percentage increase of 13.3%. However, the proportion of children within the population is falling and the share held by the age groups over 65 years is increasing. Crieff is attracting in-migrants but many of these are in the older age groups.

Spatial analysis of socio-economic indices indicates that there are significant differences between the populations of Crieff South and Crieff North. (These are areas defined by census enumeration areas and are useful for identifying diversity in local population characteristics, but they may not tightly relate to locally perceived social differences.) In particular median house prices are markedly different reflecting the mix of house types and the market appeal of villa housing in Crieff North. Income and employment deprivation in Crieff South is close to the Scottish average whereas in Crieff North, the incidence of deprivation is well below both Scotland and Perth & Kinross averages. In short, and as is visually evident, Crieff North is a residential area of largely affluent households. It can be inferred that many of the incomes in this area will have been generated by individuals working beyond the small local economy.

Crieff South is a more densely populated area than Crieff North. In this area there is a much higher incidence of population living on vulnerable incomes. As a measure of quality of place it is significant that 30% of the population in Crieff South are living within 500m of a derelict site. Issues of more vulnerable living standards and poor immediate environmental quality impinge upon the quality of life of the residents of Crieff South.

## **2.4 The Local Economy**

The local economy of Crieff has been relatively resilient over recent years. There are a number of factors which account for this, in particular that Crieff is:

- a resort economy
- attracts investment in housing
- is an established centre for local public services
- can support local competitive retail/private services
- is the place of residence for a significant number of individuals whose incomes are earned beyond Crieff

### **2.4.1 A Resort Economy**

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Crieff is a resort economy. Tourism dominates the trade-able services by which spending takes place by customers from out-with the town. The Crieff Hydro is a major employer. This visitor complex combines an exceptional set of leisure facilities along with quality accommodation and dining. The Hydro's operation is essentially self-contained.

There are significant additional visitor attractions (Drummond Castle, etc.) close to Crieff. Again the operations of these attractions are relatively self-contained.

The town retains a significant cluster of small hotels and bed and breakfast providers. However, there have been hotel closures since 2000. Restaurants and cafes are well-represented on the main streets of the town centre. These in-town provisions are attractive to car and coach travellers. However, excepting for up-grading facilities in the MacRosty Park, the provision and maintenance of a network of walks and cycle routes which would serve to extend the visitors' stay has been neglected.

## **2.4.2 The Housing Market**

Crieff attracted significant investment by housing developers in the past 10 years during which the construction of 426 new dwelling took place.

Owner-occupied housing is the predominant tenure type and house prices remain high compared with the Scottish average. House prices are well-above the affordability of most young local families seeking housing. The retention of young families in Crieff matters as children under-pin the provision of schools and children-related activities are an important focus of community life.

Sustaining a steady flow of new development and property renewal is a useful source of local employment. Small sites in particular can be developed by local builder/developers. The new Local Development Plan makes provision for both such a flow of housing and identifies sites for housing development within the Crieff development envelope.

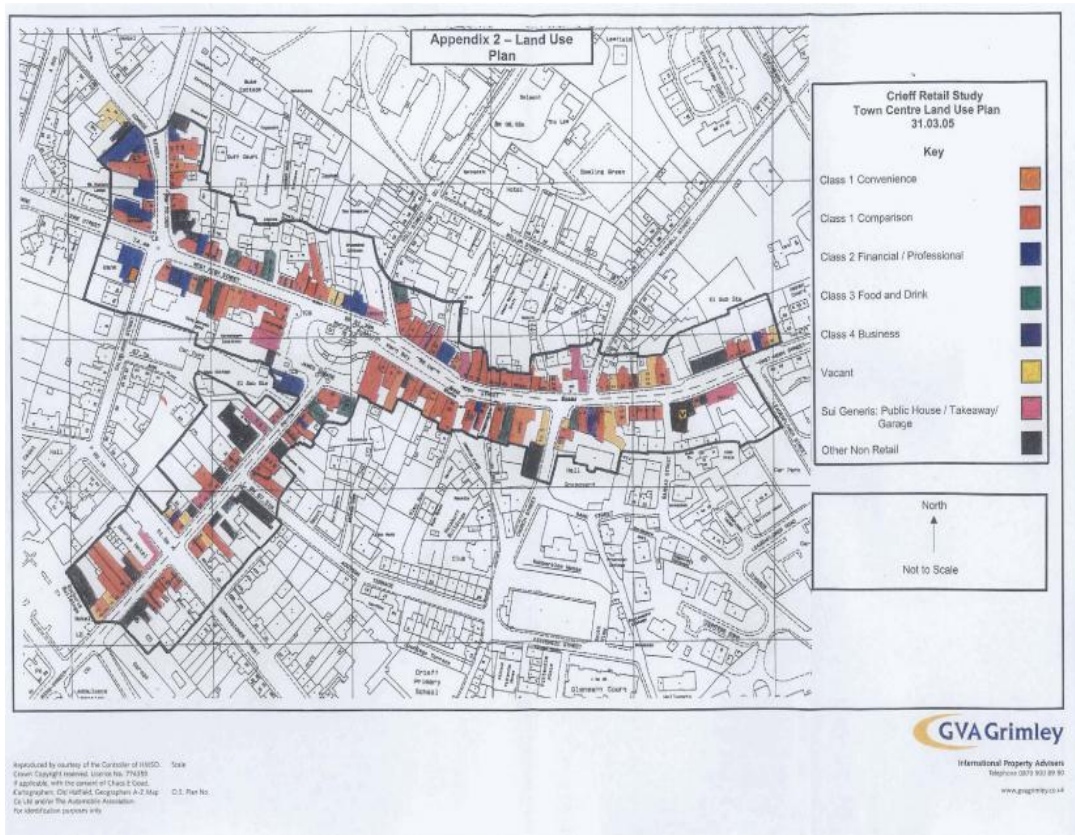
## **2.4.3 Local Services**

For reason of the relative distance of Crieff to other service centres, the town retains a diverse provision of local services. There are both public and private services providers.

Education, public community services and health services, although required to secure efficiencies in the current drive for reduced public spending, are largely resilient to change on account of existing to serve a catchment population.

Less resilient are the small private services providers. Crieff and Upper Strathearn has a sufficient population as to be able to sustain competitive retail and private local services sectors. However, intensified competition from supermarket and on-line retailers requires that small private service providers continue to identify and hold specialist niches. The composition of this segment of the services sector in Crieff may shrink, but with appropriate encouragement can continue to evolve.

## SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF PLACE



### 3.1 Introduction

The built environment in the form of the uses of land and buildings, links and infrastructure is significant for reason that it is the composition of these elements that impose constraints and as well as offer the potential of a place for adapting to change and taking advantage of market opportunities.

The analysis of the urban form of Crieff was undertaken to gain an understanding of the town both at macro- and micro-scale. The Crieff settlement area was studied, and at micro-scale, three particular areas were assessed:

- the High Street
- King Street
- the area of on-going development around Crieff High School and the Strathearn Community Campus. For convenience the latter area will be referred to as the Broich area (using Broich Road as the basis for identification.)

Students analysed the town's form in terms of its connectivity and spatial functionality, the ease of movement and legibility, and its townscape character. This analysis of place was not abstract but sought to be grounded with an understanding of the requirements of the community and the local economy.

## 3.2 Connectivity and Functions

Crieff being a touristic town, is benefitted by the A85 passing East – West through the heart of the town. The A822 links Crieff to the A9. This main highway to the south is a route of growing importance for tourist travel. These roads also provide the principal vehicle routes within the town.

An interesting mix of banking and other service points, small shops, speciality retailers and eating premises cluster along the High Street, Comrie Street and King Street. Unfortunately these premises are serviced on-street causing obstruction by parked HGVs.

On- and off-street car-parking is provided close to the High Street. However, the visitor's experience is that the latter is poorly sign-posted and that the on-street parking is congested at prime times. The main bus stops are also found on the High Street. Buses are heavily used around School closing hours and the passenger waiting areas are at these times congested.

Because the historic settlement clustered tightly around the High Street and King Street the pattern of minor streets and lanes is for visitors somewhat of a puzzle.

The Crieff Hydro Complex lies on the Northern edge of the town within the Conservation Area. This fine Victorian institution has recently benefitted from the development of contemporary recreational facilities and additional lodge accommodation. Albeit serving visitors rather than locals, the Hydro is a vital 'central place' in Crieff and provides the town with a strong tourist identity.

More recent local medical services development has been located on the southern section of King Street on sites vacated by the former rail link. They provide a convenient concentration of local medical facilities. The town's current small supermarket also located on the former rail line is well-placed for access to the A822.

Since 2000 there has been the development of a new High School and Community Campus complex on Broich Road on the southern periphery of the town. In the near future a large supermarket will be built also accessing this road. Land on the south side of Broich Road has been identified in the forthcoming Development Plan for housing (300+ units) and mixed use development. In short, this area will under-go a transformation of functions and associated traffic generation.

## 3.3 Townscape Character



The centre of Crieff retains a rich architectural character. The designated Conservation Area demonstrates the historic evolution of distinct places and within the boundary of the Conservation Area there are localities of exceptional quality.

Crieff is located in a beautiful landscape setting of wooded hills views of which are gained on points along the prime streets of the town. Close-at-hand the MacRosty Park is particularly picturesque and Lady Mary's Walk provides an access to the River Earn.

However, there are weaknesses:

- The presence of derelict property in the town centre, the former Drummond Hotel in particular, presents a poor picture to visitors and residents
- There is no significant 'sense of entry' to the High Street
- Streetscape in the town centre and in the South Area is poorly maintained.
- Development of the former rail sites and of the School and Campus complex has been of buildings rather than considering their relationship within place and space
- Some of the recent residential development is of mediocre building design and layout

## 3.4 Movement and Legibility

Historically Crieff was a compact settlement. This retained character, the architectural landmarks and the straightforward layout of the main streets of the town centre makes for an easy general comprehension of place.

However, a number of constraints have arisen primarily from the way that the physical infrastructure of the town centre is organised and used. These are summarised as follows:

- The tight form of the historic centre constrains vehicular movement

- Priority has been given to the flow of vehicle traffic
- Servicing arrangements (loading and unloading) in the town centre are non-existent and contribute to street congestion
- Car parking arrangements in the town centre are irrational, free on-street parking but charges in the public car-parks
- Inadequate attention has been given to ensuring the safe flow of pedestrians along/across the main streets
- Pavements in the historic centre are overly narrow and often congested
- The location of key facilities lacks organisation and can confuse the visitor
- Signage is generally poor. A number of poorly designed/maintained shop fronts detract from the street environment
- Footpaths generally across the town are in poor condition. This short-coming is especially noticeable of the paths linking the Broich developments through the Crieff South area. The problem particularly requires addressing because of the heavy use by school pupils of these routes.

Unfortunately the sum of these constraints significantly detracts from the attractive qualities of the townscape.

### **3.5 Interpretation of the Analysis of Community, the Local Economy and Place**

The aims of Section 2 were to recognise the profile of Crieff as a distinctive community and to assess the features of the local economy. Section 3 considered the suitability of the physical characteristics of the town to satisfy the needs of the community and the visitor. The purpose of reviewing the key features of the community, the local economy and the built environment is to identify the issues that require to be considered strategically in the forward-planning for Crieff's development.

The analysis identified Crieff as a local services centre relatively well-provided with local public services. The town has a relatively resilient local economy by virtue of being a resort town and also an attractive place of residence for relatively affluent individuals whose earnings are generated beyond the local economy.

Although being a relatively prosperous community, it was recognised that there is some spatial concentration of more vulnerable members of the community. Also it was identified there is an increasing risk of the loss of younger families resulting from the relatively high price of housing in Crieff. Sustaining a mix of young as well as older age groups was implied as being important for the well-being of the overall community.

#### **3.5.1 The 'Central Places' of Crieff**

The analysis identified that there are three 'central places' evident in Crieff:

- The traditional central business district formed by the High Street/Comrie Street/King Street (the High Street area)
- The Crieff Hydro
- The emerging 'central place' around Broich Road (the Broich area)

Each of these 'central places' was recognised as providing distinctive functions.

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Because the management of place within the Crieff Hydro complex is being capably pursued by its commercial operator and it need not be furthered considered in this report.

However, the Broich area is an emerging 'central place'. The new Development Plan proposes that it will become a focal location of new development. This also will result in traffic generation. Accordingly the area will merit further consideration in this report.

When the Tesco supermarket development opens there will be a functional overlap of retailing between this new retail centre and the grocery and related businesses on the High Street. The competitive efficiency of the Tesco development will mean that the customer-services of the High Street area require being made increasingly attractions for tourist/speciality-seeking visitors.

## **3.5.2 A Key Neighbourhood**

The neighbourhood, referred to as Crieff South in this report, lies between the High Street and the emerging 'Broich Road' area. This residential place comprises the network of local streets and adjoining lanes formed around King Street, Commissioner Street, Broich Terrace and Pittenzie Road. For convenience, we have defined this area as the King Street neighbourhood.

This neighbourhood area contains a mix of types of housing including dwellings which are relatively inexpensive. There are obsolescent properties within the area which can be converted or cleared for redevelopment. In short, the area has the potential to provide a source of property which can suit the needs of first-time buyers or private-rent tenants.

The design quality and maintenance of the micro-places and the pathways through the King Street neighbourhood is likely to be important in order that an up-lift of the properties in this neighbourhood is to be fully materialised.

## **3.5.3 Traffic Management and Streetscape Design and Maintenance**

The students identified a number of potentially significant weaknesses relating to the appearance of the townscape and to how the town's internal infrastructure of streets and paths is used and maintained. Many of the points made in the physical analysis of the townscape could be said to reflect the prioritising of vehicle movement over pedestrian needs and in particular places to inadequate initial design and of insufficient maintenance.

## SECTION 4: KEY ISSUES

### 4.1 Introduction

Societal, economic, regulatory and environmental forces which are external to Crieff will provide the sources of market opportunities and also of threats of competitive or environmental change in future years. These are factors which have to be taken into account in bringing forward and implementing a sustainability strategy for Crieff. In Section 4, the aim is to recognise these external influences and to assess their significance for the future development of the town.

### 4.2 Prospective Changes

In the next 10 years the UK will be affected by significant social, economic, environmental, policy and regulative change. Some directions of change and their impacts are predictable, others less so:

- **Societal change**

The Scottish population is ageing. There will be increasing numbers of people living well beyond 75 years of age. Policies towards the provision of care of the elderly may adapt across the spectrum from institutional accommodation to care at home. A common factor will be that care of the elderly will require increasing provision by local carers.

Rising house prices and constrained bank lending has meant that owner-occupation of housing has become a remoter aspiration for many households. Developer activity in the housing sector has not recovered from the 2008 crash. Housing needs will have to be addressed by a greater diversity of approach and provision.

Income constraints and rising costs of car ownership may change travel behaviours. Individuals may move to be nearer their work-place, or seek to increase home-working requiring good internet infrastructure.

- **Environmental and Regulative change**

Climate change appears to take the form of less predictable weather which in Scotland produces wetter and windier conditions. Exceptional rain results in over-flooding of river banks and surface water drainage systems.

Regulation to reduce CO2 emissions is driving the interest in electricity production by renewable and cleaner fossil technologies, but the resulting energy is more expensive. Regulation about insulation standards to reduce energy requirement is increasing housing construction costs.

Government policy now prioritises pedestrians over vehicles for the use of urban streets and places.

- **Economic change**

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The 2008 financial crisis and resulting collapse of economic confidence in the UK, Europe and N. America markets and impact on public finances has meant that for the foreseeable future public spending on services is reduced. The public authorities will be cash-constrained and staff-short. More initiatives will have to be launched and carried out by community groups with the local authority and other agencies acting as development and service partners and less-often as the provider.

Inflation, restricted bank credit and policy to limit earnings in the public sector will constrain domestic demand in the UK for at least the immediate years.

Commercial competitive forces in retailing and services will intensify the pressures on marginal businesses. Banks will continue to be risk averse, limiting lending into new enterprises unable to offer low risk returns.

- **Community Change**

Overall, these are not conditions favouring growth. Development projects without sound business plan and short on investment will be non-starters. Instead there has to be a clear recognition of priorities by local communities. Addressing these will have to be taken forward by incremental steps of complementary action. This places an importance on communities organising to tackle local issues in a flexible and resourceful manner.

## **4.3 Threats to Crieff**

Economic pressures and the policy response threaten the quality of life in all UK towns and villages and will most affect vulnerable age and social groups. Drawing upon the analysis presented in Sections 2 and 3 and the preceding scenario of future conditions, the specific threats to Crieff can be summarised as:

- The loss of younger age groups due to lack of employment opportunities and/or being unable to secure affordable housing.
- The likely contraction of general businesses on the High Street in the face of the competition provided the new Tesco supermarket.
- Failing to attract additional spending visitors to the High Street area due to poor traffic management and streetscape maintenance and under-investment by visitor-focused businesses in new specialist outlets.
- The risks of poor quality development of the Broich area by following an ad-hoc approach to site development and a failure to adopt a sufficiently comprehensive traffic management scheme.

## SECTION 5: PROPOSALS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CRIEFF



### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of section 5 is to show how the threats facing Crieff can be successfully confronted by strategies which exploit the town's assets. The place analysis of Crieff identified that there are four 'places' within the town where attention should be focused in order to make use of the town's assets to meet needs and take advantage of opportunities. These 'places' are used in this section as the basis for setting out proposals for each.

### 5.2 Places of Development Opportunity

Crieff has assets which can be enhanced to work in its favour. The town already has the ingredients of sufficient scale, good housing, accessible services and a sought-after environment which attracts visitors and in-comers as residents.

The analysis summarised in the preceding sections has identified that the development of Crieff can be focused on the needs and opportunities of four 'places':

- the Crieff Hydro
- the High Street
- the Broich area
- the King Street neighbourhood

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Appropriately coordinated actions to direct the development of these places will enable Crieff to respond to the foreseeable challenges.

## 5.3 The Crieff Hydro

The Crieff Hydro is hugely beneficial to Crieff and can be expected to continue to contribute strongly to sustaining the town's reputation as a tourist resort. The Hydro demonstrably has confident and capable management. It need not be considered further in this report.

## 5.4 The High Street

To replace a shrinking element of general retailing on the High Street, the 'central place' of the old town must be re-conceived to attract additional spending visitors.

There is already a good core of local services providers in the High Street area serving the visitor market. None-the-less, Crieff's attractiveness for the visitor can be enhanced.

Additional enterprises exploiting niches in Crieff can be attracted to operate from shop-front premises within the High Street/King Street/Comrie Street. These include boutiques, perfumeries, specialist book sellers, etc.

Close to the High Street, there is property that can accommodate other visitor-related activities, for example, the vacant former supermarket property at Church Street/Pittenzie Street would appear suitable as a venue for centre selling antique and vintage items possibly in the style of the Scottish Antique and Arts Centres at Abernethy and Doune. Other premises might be put to use by small businesses offering for example, cycle-rental.

However, private entrepreneurs need to have the confidence to invest in such enterprises and actions to enhance the attraction of the High Street and its environs can make a useful contribution.

A number of ideas merit consideration:

- The provision by design of 'gateways' to distinguish for visitors their entry into the High Street.
- The closing of Comrie Street and upper King Street to through traffic to provide additional 'honey-pot' places where shops and on-street uses (street markets/fairs/music events, etc.) could attract visitors.
- Much could be done by traffic management measures taking better account of pedestrians, by improved signage of off-street parking, and by streetscape up-grading including the widening of pavements and the maintenance of vennels, all to enhance the pedestrian experience of the traditional town centre.
- Perhaps the most critical to making the High Street a 'central place' of attraction for visitors is the idea of relocating of the Tourist Information Centre from its present restricted premises and into the ground-floor of the former Drummond Hotel. The remainder of the building could usefully also serve to attract visitors through use, for

example, to provide back-packers accommodation. A bold scheme of conversion would be required designed to provide for revenue-generation to make the investment feasible.



Streetscape and traffic management measures would give confidence to entrepreneurial vitality and help ensure that emerging retailing vacancies on the High Street are few and short-lived. A Tourist Information Centre with much enhanced visibility would reinforce the value of the High Street for visitors. Closing King Street and Comrie Street to through vehicles would transform how the streets could be used for greater public benefit. The preparation of a local action programme focused on the High Street area would provide a useful means to establishing momentum.

### **5.5 The King Street Neighbourhood**

This residential neighbourhood has considerable scope for rehabilitation. Its streetscape can be readily enhanced adopting walk-able streets principles as advocated by Scottish Government policy for “Designing Streets” and in turn this can generate interest by housing associations, first-time buyers and buy-to-let developers. The proposal is to coordinate rehabilitation activities in this place by preparing a local action programme.

To prevent King Street increasingly becoming a ‘rat-run’ between the High Street and the Broich Area, as a part of the Action Area scheme, it is proposed that the upper section of King Street should be closed to through traffic. King Street is an important part of the visitor experience. The specialist and quality independent outlets on this street are assets that can benefit from gaining the resulting additional visitor foot-fall.

### **5.6 The Broich Area**

The proposed town expansion around Broich Road will transform the rather non-descript character of this area. Development can help generate building employment and the new housing will help sustain the requirement for schooling and other services. However, if planning applications are considered without regard to an overall framework of place design

and appropriate road measures, there is a risk of resultant development creating a 'place' which is functional but undistinguishable.

There is then an opportunity to enhance the town but this will require the preparation of a master-plan for the entire development of this locality with clear design guidance established for the built form, open space, walk-ability and traffic circulation. A master-plan for the development of greater Broich is recognised in the new Local Development Plan.

### **5.7 The Study Proposals and the New Local Development Plan**

At the close of 2011 Perth and Kinross Council was finalising its planning policies and development guidance in the form of a new Local Development Plan. The proposals which have been formed from the Town Study made by the students are very consistent with the direction of the spatial strategy of the Local Development Plan as it applies to Crieff. The students' proposals offer ideas which are more detailed than would be appropriate in the Development Plan. None-the-less, that there is convergence of analysis and policy development is welcome for in taking forward initiatives for the sustainable development of Crieff it will be important that the local community and the Perth and Kinross Council share broad agreement as to the direction of development.

## 7. MOBILISING RESOURCES



### 6.1 Introduction

The town study carried out by the students was intended to help formulate an understanding of the challenges facing Crieff and to suggest practical approaches for making the most of opportunities to address needs and to promote the sustainability of the town.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the development planning process is development management for this requires putting policies and proposals into action. In this concluding section, the aim is to consider how action can be taken forward in partnership by CUSP and Perth and Kinross Council; what resources may be available; and how these may be mobilised to achieve the sustainable developments suggested in this report.

### 6.2 The Outcomes of the Study

It was recognised from the analysis of the community, the local economy and the physical characteristics of Crieff that the approach likely to have highest impacts was one which is 'place-centred'. The 'places' considered in the report are: the High Street, the King Street neighbourhood and the emerging Broich area. Appropriate development of these 'places' is central to ensuring Crieff has a sustainable future. The functions of each 'place' were considered including the relationship of each to the other. This led to schemes of treatment

appropriate to the uses, needs and potential of each of these three ‘places’. Ideas and proposals for their development identified in this report were drawn from the many possibilities which the students generated.

## **6.3 Mobilising**

The Town Study has been concerned the sustainable development of Crieff. It is hoped that this report will be found useful by CUSP and Perth and Kinross Council to recommend the issues to be addressed and what outcomes should be sought in the process of development management in the short and medium term future.

It is worth setting out the aims and manner of development management. Guidance issued by the Department, Communities and Local Government in 2009 helpfully makes clear that:

*“The process of development management is a positive and proactive approach to shaping, considering, determining and delivering development proposals. It is led by the local planning authority (LPA), working closely with those proposing development and other stakeholders. It is undertaken in the spirit of partnership and inclusiveness, and supports the delivery of key priorities and outcomes.” (Part 1; 1.4)*

Although the guidance has the purpose of directing planning authorities practice in the formal determination of planning applications, its thrust is wider and defines the principles of how planning policy and development proposals are generated, accepted and put into action. Development management is then about the processes providing for *“the pro-active and effective management of development opportunities.”* (Part 1; 2.5)

Although their roles differ, CUSP and Perth and Kinross Council are key players in the development management process required to take Crieff forward.

## **6.4 Resources**

The scenario of foreseeable conditions set out in Section 4 of this report regarding the future availability of resources identified that: the risk avoidance stance of the financial sector affected both would-be house purchasers and developers, and that the public services are required to reduce their expenditures in capital investment and in operating activities. These constraints have to inform the implementation of any schemes of town development.

Much more so than has been the case in the recent past, communities will have to draw upon the un-paid services of local people with relevant expertise and experience to lead and contribute to local initiatives. Crieff is fortunate in that within its community there are relevant professionals and individuals with experience of project management. A key task for CUSP will be that of recruiting a ‘talent’ pool of such individuals to take forward feasible initiatives. This will include identifying individuals who have essential know-how about fund-raising, financial judgement and development project management.

Students of Architecture and Planning at the University of Dundee have provided the analysis and ideas which under-pin this report. Further use may be made of students in relevant disciplines drawing on the universities and colleges to undertake specific assignments required for designing of specific initiatives.

Within the Curriculum for Excellence there is greater opportunity to involve school pupils in local initiatives in which 'learning by doing' can be secured.

## 7.1 Initiatives

This report deliberately does not set out tidy lists of what each partner should do to take the schemes forward. This requires discussion amongst the local partners.

The main premise of this report is that the 'place approach' provides the most effective way to proceed.

In taking the 'place approach' forward the following recommendations are made:

### **Intent: Improving the High Street to attract visitors and to take greater account of the requirements of pedestrians**

#### **Actions:**

1. Establish a steering group of the businesses who wish to attract additional visitors to the High Street area. Task this steering group to bring forward designs for shop-front enhancement, pavement widening, closing upper King Street and of Comrie Street to through and to generating street events. This will require the steering group to work effectively with the planning and roads authorities as well as with property owners.
2. Establish a working group of relevant interests to commission a feasibility study/business plan to adapt the Drummond Hotel building to provide a new location for an improved Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and to accommodate other revenue-generating uses, perhaps as a back-packers hostel.
3. Subject to the positive progress of the feasibility study/business plan for relocating the TIC, then establish a working group drawn from community organisations to bring forward a business plan to use the vacated building for use as a venue for public exhibitions.

### **Intent: To promote the King Street Neighbourhood**

#### **Action:**

1. Take forward the aim of preparing a local action programme for this neighbourhood. This might be initiated by CUSP organising a design charette to prepare a plan of renewal and up-grading. (A charette is an intensive planning workshop conducted over several days and involving the residents and the owners of sites and buildings in the area as well as the planning and roads authorities.) Through this process establish a neighbourhood steering group for on-going engagement with planning/housing/roads/building services.

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2. As an early initiative, CUSP and Perth and Kinross Council should prepare and implement the up-grading of routes and pathways used by school pupils. School pupils should participate in the design and execution of this action.

**Intent: To achieve a quality place in the development of the Broich area.**

**Action:**

1. Support the preparation by Perth and Kinross Council of a Master-plan for this area to provide effective planning and design guidance for the development of traffic management and the development of sites for this area. Engage with the Council over the appointment of consultants with a well-established reputation for master-plan production, the development of a scheme of community consultation, and there-after in monitoring the design and implementation of the Master-plan.

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