Activity and character

The principle of mixed use within individual buildings, blocks and within streets is encouraged across the town centre. It is however important to recognise that within many areas of the town centre there will be a predominant land use which will contribute significantly to the prevailing character.

The plan below examines the pattern of activity across the town centre, emphasising where significant changes are likely to occur. Reference to new uses does not necessarily mean that existing uses or buildings will be swept away. In many locations change can occur as an organic, incremental process through a combination of redevelopment, refurbishment and selective change of use.
1. Principal shopping streets establishing a core retail area focused around an interconnected ‘circular’ route. Retail uses predominate and retail frontage will be protected.

2. Public transport interchange designed as an integral part of a major new public square. This might include a new illuminated beacon and tourist information facility.

3. New high density development around the transport interchange. Retail uses would remain on the south side but new commercial/office development or apartments could define the space to the north and east, as long as views to the Castle are respected. This would be an appropriate location for the provision of new Council offices.

4. New high quality, high density residential development with small scale commercial/leisure uses at ground floor.

5. New high quality, high density residential development.

6. Selective redevelopment and refurbishment introducing new housing alongside existing uses.

7. As Flood Street once again becomes an integrated and important part of the public realm it is hoped that developers and landowners will grasp the opportunity to redevelop and refurbish properties that will look out onto the new boulevard. Office, institutional and or residential uses would be appropriate on this lower section of King Street.

8. These development blocks have a significant impact on the quality of the south-westerly gateway into the town centre. As a priority properties need to be redeveloped and/or refurbished to define the new King Street boulevard and the High Street. Office, institutional and/or residential uses would be appropriate.

9. As retail uses consolidate around the Market Place and Flood Street, diversification of uses towards top church will be supported. Residential, evening economy or small scale office uses would be appropriate.

10. On the north-western side of town the urban fabric is of a quality high. Where buildings become vacant or selective infill/intensification opportunities arise residential uses will be most appropriate.

11. Civic uses will continue to predominate within these blocks. If smaller properties are vacated residential conversion would be appropriate.

12. Proposals for the Castle/Zoo involve some diversification of use but leisure and recreation activities will continue to predominate within the historic environment around the Castle.

13. Some intensification of the college functions could occur if the car park were to be decked or re-designed as an undercroft. This could improve the integration of the college into the core of the town centre.

14. The Castle Street/Tower Street block is in a pivotal location but with the exception of a few characterful buildings and well established uses, is greatly underutilised and neglected. Comprehensive mixed use redevelopment including a multi-deck car park and new retail development would be appropriate.

15. There is an interlinked series of potentially very attractive, small urban spaces and narrow streets stretching from the Inhedge to the end of Tower Street which provide an exceptional setting for homes, cafes, bars, restaurants and small businesses. Small scale uses linked to the college may also be appropriate. This ‘old town’ quarter has potential to be the showpiece for the town centre in terms of the qualities of living within an historic environment. The conversion of the old court house and the transformation of Stone Street Square into an attractive setting to facilitate refurbishment of adjoining buildings are important first interventions in realising this vision.