

3rd Place - Pioneer Landscape Architecture

Introduction - The approach proposed to revitalising Dumfries' Midsteeples Quarter is to look for responses on both a regional and local scale. This will reinstate the importance of Dumfries as a regional capital in a post retail society. The strategic vision will influence the design and programme of Midsteeples Quarter allowing a solid foundation to be created for an incremental and flexible reimagining of what a high street is for in a contemporary town.

Regional Vision - The Midsteeples Quarter is to become a centre for research, learning and community involvement on regionally important topics, such as flood prevention, community self-sufficiency, public health and skill development.

The main driver of the regional vision is a flood prevention strategy based on alternative ideas to the traditional flood prevention methods proposed for the town centre. The initial line of investigation is to be inspired by research that states that beaver's dams in Scotland have flood alleviation potential. This approach relies on small dams on tributaries to hold back water high up in the River Nith's catchment area in order to reduce pressure downstream. This would not impact any one landowner disproportionately and would be monitored from the Midsteeples Quarter research centre. In parallel to the scientific monitoring of the strategy there would be an artist in residence programme to bring cultural meaning to scientific endeavour

The design and construction of the dams would be a unique learning opportunity and could help skill development within the region, centred around Midsteeples Quarter.

Midsteeples Quarter - Scientific innovation, education and the arts are the key themes of regeneration, the quarter becomes a physical manifestation of the regional vision. This changing focus is marked by the introduction of a third steeple in the town centre in the form of a Swamp Cypress tree. This species is tall and columnar, tolerating wet and polluted conditions. These attributes tell a story of the new direction for the quarter, one that will only get stronger and more visible over the next 100 years. The quarter is to be opened up, creating a network of vibrant spaces of differing character that will add flexibility and adaptability to the area, moving away from the model of an active high street and passive back lands. This rich mix of building scales and types will allow for a wide range of users to establish themselves, supported by a strong framework of revitalised public space.

The redevelopment of the Baker's Oven, adjacent close and rear space will act as the catalyst for the renewal of the quarter. The adjacent ground floor units can then be used for supporting uses with residential above for key workers, students and older people who will benefit from living in the town centre.





Spaces - The public space framework will be created by improving and reactivating the closes, alongside redefining the spaces to the rear of the high street. There will be a mix of openly public and semi public spaces that react to and influence the transformation of the surrounding buildings. The main public areas are to the exterior of the block, with the internal spaces being more intimate in character, offering a different spatial experience to the High Street. This reintroduced pedestrian permeability through the blocks will have an increased impact on the flexibility of existing building uses. The following key spaces will be used to unlock the quarter's potential:

- Closes - As buildings are gradually redeveloped they will respond to the closes. As a precursor, the closes will be renovated to provide a setting for a public arts programme to encourage people to step off the High Street and explore. Initially activating the closes in this way paves the way for future redevelopment and new public spaces as these routes will already have become part of people's understanding of the townscape.
- Yard - This space will be created to the rear of the Baker's Oven and will primarily function as a spill out space for the Baker's Oven and new live/work building. It will have a yard character allowing for informal events and a space to work in. Occasional tree planting will add to liveability of space without impeding its main functions.
- Wetland - This is a high profile new public space created at Irish Street. It will be a wetland and reed bed that both collects surface water run off from the quarter and also fills up artificially as an indicator of river levels, giving a warning to imminent flooding.
- Garden - This is the site of the swamp cypress and a public garden will be created below the tree. Historic plans show a garden previously in this location. This will also form part of a new public route through the quarter. Generally, all spaces will have elements of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) incorporated within them and crucially, their performance can be monitored by the research unit.

Buildings - Key buildings are proposed to define revitalised public spaces and improve pedestrian permeability. The Baker's Oven redevelopment will kick start and monitor the regeneration of the quarter, creating a fertile environment for future development:

- Baker's Oven - Facing on to the High Street will be a flexible space for community and university use. The main research and teaching spaces will be situated on the floors above. To the rear of the building is a cafe/restaurant space with that opens out onto the close and through to the newly created yard.
- Live/Work block - This new building will define the extents of the yard and have large building envelope allows for internal flexibility. Part can be fitted out as live/work units allowing for easy personalisation and future adaptation. This process will be managed by occupants as a collective. The remaining portion of the space is reserved for prefab construction techniques allowing the elements needed to fulfil the regional aspects of the vision, such as dams and refuge studios, to be developed within the Midsteeple Quarter. This will be a commercial and educational/research facility.
- Winter Garden - A glasshouse is proposed between the garden and wetland. This winter garden will allow for a public route to be created from the High Street, through the garden and wetland, to Irish Street. The winter garden will allow for a verdant public space to be enjoyed all year round, even during the cold winter months. Areas of this space could also be used for botanical research relating to agricultural self sufficiency.