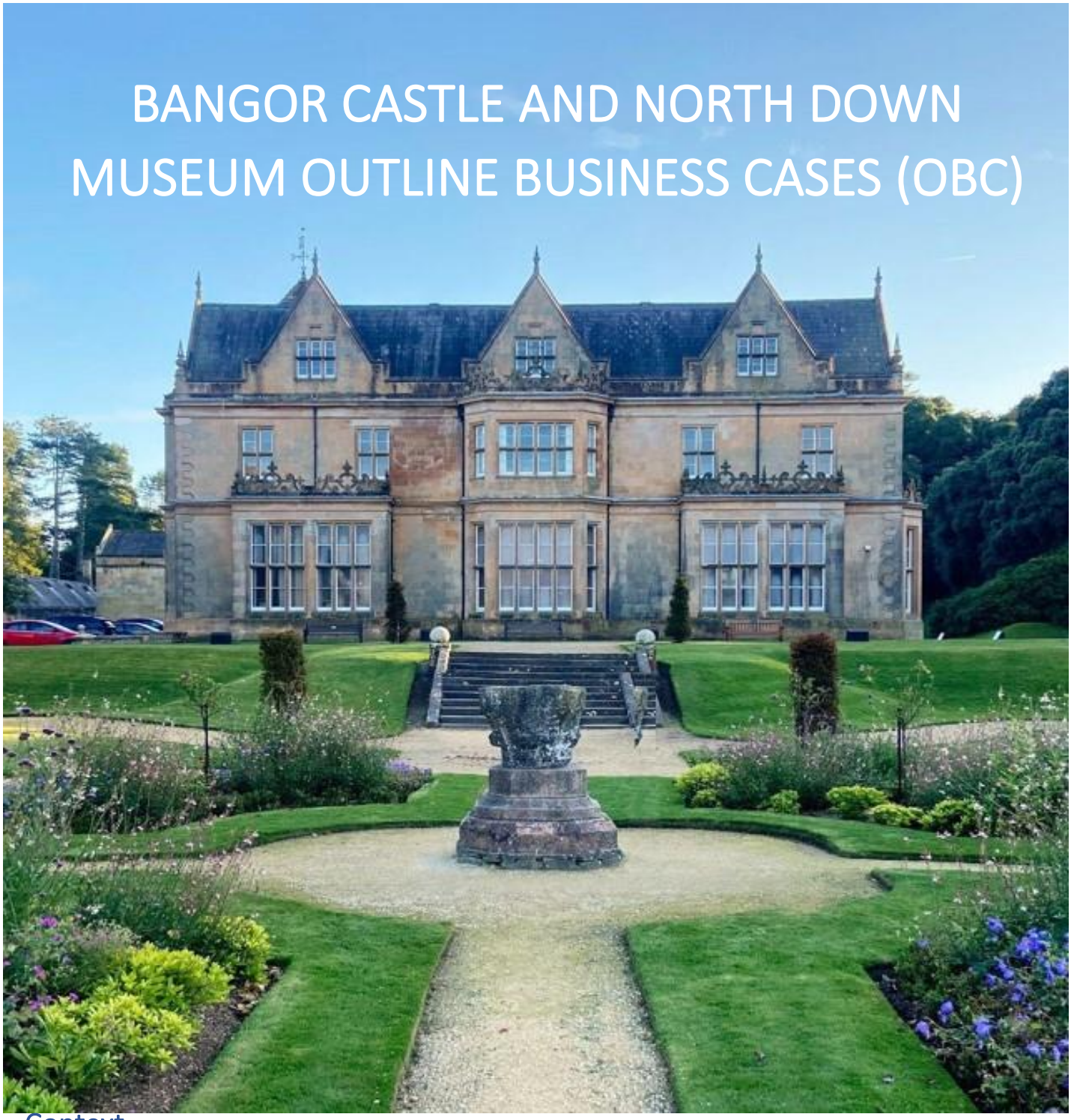
BANGOR CASTLE AND NORTH DOWN MUSEUM OUTLINE BUSINESS CASES (OBC)



Context

- Ards and North Down Borough Council is embarking on a significant rationalisation of its office estate. Currently, the Council operates from multiple administrative buildings, many of which are inefficient to use, operate, and maintain. This initiative will relocate approximately 420 Council employees to a single, modern, fit-for-purpose office building in Bangor city centre. The new office will embrace the efficiencies of hybrid working, requiring around 50% less office space than the current footprint. The move aims to promote better collaboration between council services, provide efficiencies, increase footfall to support existing businesses, offer the potential for shared service delivery with other key public sector agencies, and act as a catalyst for economic growth and city centre regeneration.

- In progressing any rationalisation of buildings of which Bangor Castle is one, the Council has committed to prioritising regeneration, business rates and tourism benefits, by considering how any building(s) it no longer needs can be used for new purposes to compliment the Council's Corporate Plan.

Barker Langham Consultants

An important element of this rationalisation is the future use of the Bangor Castle. In August 2024, the Council appointed global consultants Barker Langham to explore viable options for the future use of Bangor Castle and develop a preferred option, culminating in the production of Outline Business Cases (OBCs) for Bangor Castle and North Down Museum.

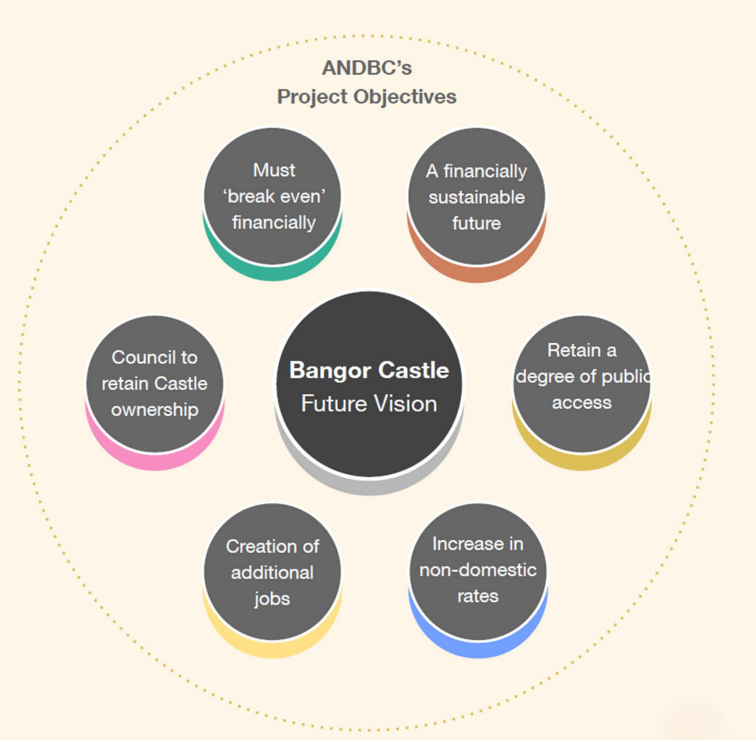
The consultants' brief is two-fold:

Bangor Castle (City Hall)

- Investigate all potential uses for the Castle site.
- Appraise their feasibility across the five key business case elements to determine their strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management viability.
- Work from a broad longlist through to a selective shortlist, increasing the level of analysis according to viability.
- Measure the options against the Council's strategic objectives, spatial feasibility, market viability, deliverability and contribution to the local community.
- Take forward a preferred approach to an outline business case.

North Down Museum

- In the context of the future uses for the Castle, outline the possible incarnations for the North Down Museum.
- It may not be possible, or desirable to keep the museum in the existing location, therefore we need to define a vision for the future museum.
- Provide a brief for an enhanced Museum, giving it the tools that a contemporary cultural hub needs to serve the Borough and the community, with facilities to enable:
    - A greater visitor experience
    - Enhanced visitor engagement through a calendar of programmed events
    - A healthy, secure collection that reflects the Borough.
- Take forward a preferred approach to an outline business case.



In addition to Council's overall priorities for the Borough, as outlined in our Corporate Plan, Big Plan, Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development and Arts and Heritage Strategy, the following set of specific objectives have been developed for the Bangor Castle project.

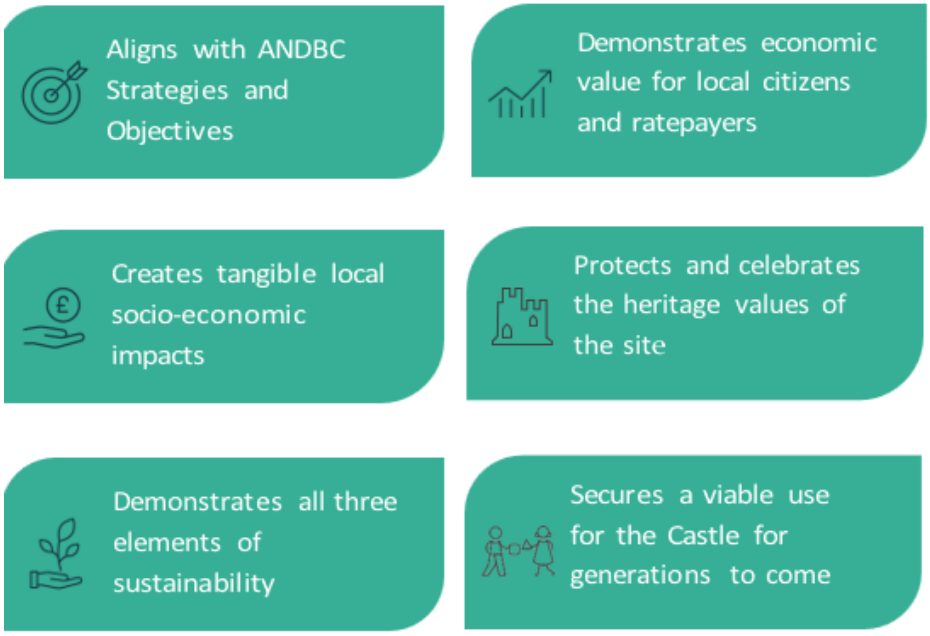
These project-level objectives will guide and have direct implications on the project including:

- potential future activities
- management and operating arrangements
- Council's financial considerations
- Potential financial risks and rewards

For each of the shortlisted options, these and other related issues will be considered.

Longlisting Process

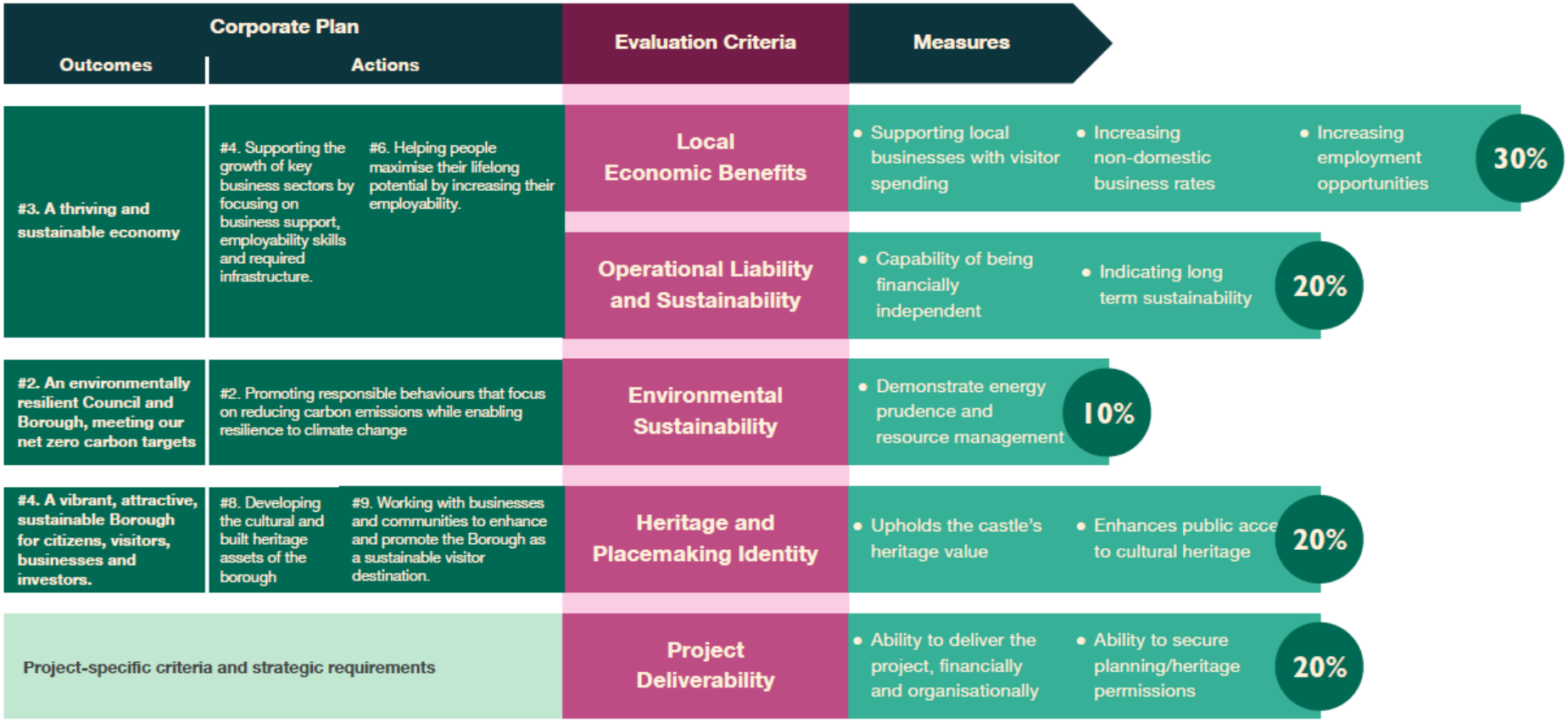
The Consultants completed a Situation Analysis and established an initial list of functional prospects which were passed through spatial, economic and social 'fit' filters to produce a longlist of fourteen options, which have met the following minimum eligibility requirements:



Options Longlist		Initial high level appraisal score (out of 5)
1	Private Apartments	3
2	Private School	2
3	Small Business Workspace	4
4	Specialist Wedding Venue	3
5	Day Spa	2
6	Boutique Hotel	4
7	Boutique Hotel & Events Centre	4
8	Larger Hotel & Events Centre	4
9	Restaurant with rooms	4
10	Art Gallery	3
11	Museum / Heritage Centre	3
12	Culture & Arts Centre	4
13	Small Business Workspace + Museum	4
14	Creatives hub + Cultural Arts Centre	4

The longlist options were evaluated using the following weighted criteria, informed and underpinned by the Council's Corporate Plan and the strategic project objectives.

Options Appraisal Criteria



Proposed Shortlist

Below are the five highest scoring options which make up the proposed shortlist being taken forward for further detailed analysis.

Options Longlist		Weighted scoring %
1	Private Apartments	54%
2	Private School	56%
3	**Small Business Workspace**	**70%**
4	Specialist Wedding Venue	64%
5	Day Spa	44%
6	Boutique Hotel	62%
7	**Boutique Hotel & Events Centre**	**84%**
8	**Larger Hotel & Events Centre**	**80%**
9	Restaurant with rooms	64%
10	Art Gallery	64%
11	Museum / Heritage Centre	52%
12	Culture & Arts Centre	66%
13	**Small Business Workspace + Museum**	**70%**
14	**Creatives hub + Cultural Arts Centre**	**74%**

These options capture the key variables outlined below, to ensure that all reasonable scenarios are documented and illustrated using case studies:

- Existing model, but with necessary improvements
- Singular private commercial use
- Blended private and public uses
- Retention or relocation of the Museum
- Demonstrating the financial context to arts uses
- Evaluating the viability of building extensions

Next Steps

Having moved from the original longlist down to a shortlist, the consultants and Council Officers are currently working through the next key element of the Phase 2 Options Appraisal. This involves a full multi-disciplinary appraisal of the five shortlisted options, outlining the opportunities, challenges, viability and cost of each option. Barker Langham will use case studies to demonstrate the viability of the tangible options. Potential operating models will also be outlined, alongside governance, comparable projects and lessons learned. In appraising the options careful consideration will be given to the public experience and the heritage and placemaking values of the site.

The identification of a preferred working option will be reported to Council in February 2025, following which it will be presented to stakeholders to garner feedback on the proposals. before producing detailed financial delivery and operational models as part of the final Outline Business Case.