

## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15TH MARCH 2006

### Report of the Director of Regeneration **EASTGATE REDEVELOPMENT**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To update members on the outcome of the pre planning consultation and agree the next steps for the redevelopment of the Lafarge Cement UK, Eastgate site.

#### **background**

2. As reported to members previously Weardale Task Force has been driving forward the redevelopment plans for the Eastgate cement works site. One of the key flagship projects identified in the strategy to regenerate the Dale being 'Renewing Weardale – the way forward'. The concept could take the form of a 'Unique Village' linked to the generation of renewable energy, providing high-spec mixed-use development including recreation, tourist and housing projects, and a centre for renewable energy generation. The site has the potential to be both a national demonstrator for renewable energy and an exemplar in rural regeneration creating significant job opportunities.
3. Consultants, David Lock Associates Limited, have been refining the redevelopment plans for the site following the successful outcome of the geothermal assessment. These draft redevelopment plans have been subject to a pre planning consultation exercise between July and October 2005.

#### **outcome of the pre planning consultation**

4. The consultation programme held between July and October 2005 attempted to ensure the widest possible consultation within the timescale and available resources and included a special 'Eastgate' issue of Wear Valley Matters; an 'Eastgate Special' Weardale Task Force newsletter and displays in St John's Chapel, Stanhope, Wolsingham; Crook and Bishop Auckland. Meetings were also held with Parish Councils, Community Partnerships and key stakeholders in addition to open meetings at Stanhope, Crook, Bishop Auckland, and with Eastgate residents. A total of 115 responses were received and over 70 people attended the meetings.
5. The consultation responses were analysed by independent consultants, the KSA Partnership (a copy of the full report will be tabled). The report confirms the majority of respondents who took part in the exercise are supportive of the concept plans for the redevelopment.

6. However, six key points about the proposals were identified by the respondents, concerning:
  - The complexity of the concept plans
  - Prioritising the benefits to local people
  - Potential traffic problems
  - Potential detrimental impact on Eastgate village
  - Long-term viability
  - Fully exploiting opportunities and focussing on building long term skills in the Dale
7. Members of the Task Force have provided a response to these six key concerns which arose during the consultation exercise, a copy of which is attached (see Annex 1).
8. Articles have been produced for 'Countywide' and 'Wear Valley Matters' outlining the outcome of the consultation. Copies of the KSA Partnership report and the Task Force's response to the six key concerns are available on both the Councils websites.

### **progress**

9. Further essential preparatory work, necessary to progress towards a planning application, is currently taking place. These activities are being funded by One NorthEast and project managed by John Topliss, Property Senior Specialist from One NorthEast:
  - i) Additional feasibility work on the geothermal hot water:-
    - pumping trials to establish flow and temperature, and to satisfy Environment Agency abstraction requirements;
    - Identify requirements for bathing suitability of the borehole water, and conduct the necessary chemical and microbiological sampling and testing.
  - ii) District heating modelling for the Eastgate redevelopment to access the size and scale of the development for the site to be proposed in the planning application.
  - iii) pre planning permission preparatory work including the revision of the redevelopment plans following public consultation and soft market testing exercise.
  - iv) Topographical survey to determine the levels and existing features of the site.
  - v) Marketing and PR services to keep local communities informed of progress and raise awareness of this unique development at a national and regional level.

### **next steps**

10. The draft redevelopment plans for the site are currently being reviewed to take account of ideas raised and views expressed as part of the public consultation exercise. It is hoped that this work will be complete by late April/early May. The revised redevelopment plan will then help to inform the

final decision on the nature, extent and mix of development to be sought by the planning application.

11. As the Weardale Task Force has no legal structure, Wear Valley District Council has acted as the accountable body for the Task Force to date, until the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) is in place to formally take forward the redevelopment of the site.
12. Consultants GENECON who have made recommendations to the Weardale Task Force as to the legal structure of the SPV have also advised that there are 3 Stages necessary to move towards an SPV. Stage 1 – Planning and Set-up; Stage 2 – On site Delivery; Stage 3 – Long Term Management. They advise an interim project board be established to progress Stages 1 and 2, made up of representatives of the Weardale Task Force. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been prepared for consideration by Task Force members. Legal advice is being sought on the MoU to ensure the interests of the Council are best represented. This will be reported to members in due course.
13. It is anticipated that a tendered appointment of legal consultants to advise on the type of SPV delivery vehicle required and implementation will be made in mid 2006, again funded by One NorthEast and project managed by John Topliss, Property Senior Specialist from One NorthEast.
14. Following completion of the current round of pre planning investigations, the next step will be to commence preparation of the proposed hybrid planning application itself (part outline and part detailed). Outline financial provision has been made by One NorthEast to fund the cost of this work although detailed approval has not yet been obtained. It is envisaged that this will be formally considered by the Agency in May/June as the current investigations are completed.
15. Work is commencing on the procurement of the relevant specialist consultants needed to produce the various elements of the planning application i.e. Environmental Impact Assessment and Traffic Impact Assessment. It is likely that a number of these appointments will be tendered in line with EU regulations although it is hoped that this process can commence shortly with appointments being made as soon as One NorthEast approval to proceed is given.
16. It is anticipated that it will take a minimum of six months to prepare the planning application and all the supporting evidence with a formal application probably being submitted in early 2007. A planning decision is not expected until Spring 2008 due to the likelihood of the requirement for a public inquiry.

## **conclusion**

17. Following a comprehensive consultation programme the analysis of the results identify a majority of local support for the concept plans of the redevelopment of the Eastgate site. The redevelopment plans for the site are being reviewed to take account of the ideas raised and views expressed as part of the public consultation exercise. These revised redevelopment plans and the pre-planning investigations and consultations will help to inform the

final decision on the nature extent and mix of development to be sought in the planning application.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That Members note the outcome of the pre planning consultation and endorse the work of the Weardale Task Force to date.
- 2 That Members receive further reports on progress of the redevelopment in due course.

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Following an analysis of the submissions received during the consultation exercise by the KSA Partnership a number of common concerns emerged. In this report, members of the Task Force respond to these concerns highlighted by the community.

### ***Most repeated concerns***

1. **The proposals are too complex.** The concept as presented includes too many things and there is a need for a clearer, coherent overall vision linked to who the scheme is for.

“Major development projects are often, by their very nature, complex in terms of both the means by which they are delivered and in the composition of the uses they contain. If anything, the complexity of projects is generally becoming greater, not less, as the government places more emphasis on mixed-use development (as opposed to, for example, endless housing-only developments or business parks that are deserted at night). Vibrancy, variety and interest are all part of the current planning and design agenda. The result of this move towards mixed-use development is that the development industry is increasingly familiar with complex projects. That a proposal is itself complex should not therefore be a reason for rejecting it.

In the case of Eastgate, the complexity of the proposal can be related to two key factors. The first is the sheer scale of the opportunity. The area previously occupied by the old works buildings is sizeable by anyone’s standards. Yet even this is dwarfed many times over by the total Lafarge landholding that is now available to utilise as a means of helping to regenerate the Dale. There can be few opportunities of this magnitude in the country.

This leads on to the second key factor – that of the desire of the members of the Task Force to maximise the opportunity for the people of the Dale, using renewable energy and the very special geothermal resource that has been discovered at the site as the main focus.

But there are other aspects of the site that provide opportunities as well: the quarries, for example, contain probably the best representation of the geology of the northern Pennines that can be found in one place; the views from the tops are stunning; and the slopes down towards the river present particularly good opportunities for downhill activities. Why not make the most of these other opportunities provided any environmental concerns are dealt with sensitively and the impact is acceptable. There is no reason why the more serious side of displaying a working village utilising renewable energy cannot sit alongside the ‘fun’ activities that are proposed. Indeed, they can complement one another: mums and dads go off to look around the village whilst the kids play. Better still, the kids, having only been attracted to the site because of the fun features, actually find themselves intrigued by the renewable energy theme.

One of the things that the Task Force has learnt from the latest round of public consultation is that, whenever our ideas are presented, a clearer explanation is needed of the rationale behind the variety of uses that exist within our overall proposal. What we have at Eastgate is a proposal that is a renewable energy village, a recreation/leisure centre and an educational resource. That we have to date simply used, in shorthand, Weardale Renewable Energy Model as our working title for the proposal may have led to confusion in some people's minds.

Confusion also appears to exist in some people's minds as to the 'audience' for the proposal: is it a national attraction, a regional attraction or something more local? The answer is that it is all these things. We can see nothing wrong with, on the one hand, encouraging people to come from far a field, for example, to see renewable energy in action whilst, on the other hand, providing amenities within the site that make it a pleasant place for locals to enjoy on, say, a summer's evening. Such an approach does, of course, add to the complexity of the proposal, but with good reason.

And, finally, there is the importance of variety as part of the visitor attraction. How to encourage visitors to return after their first visit and then preferably return yet again and again is often key to the success of a new tourist destination. Providing a range of attractions typically increases the likelihood of return visits."

Jim Urwin, Director, David Lock Associates, Town planning and Urban Design Consultants and advisers to Weardale Task Force

**2. Benefits should be more focused on meeting the needs of local people.** The opportunities presented by the proposals should satisfy the needs of local people first and protect and enhance the future of life in the Dale. The benefits need to be clear.

The Weardale Task Force fully appreciate the concerns of local people and will ensure that any redevelopment addresses their needs and that any plan put forward is truly sustainable. That is why we are consulting with local residents at every phase of the planning process. The Task Force want's to see the potential of this former employment site realised as a sustainable location for economic development and regeneration in the Dale.

There are no quick fix's, however, we are determined to provide the infrastructure which will create local jobs and improve communities environment. There is no denying that this development will involve an element of change for the people of the Dale, we are however trying to minimise the impact on the Dales established way of life while maximising the benefits to the greater community. Those benefits will include more local jobs, new homes for local people and a facility that will complement and enhance the economic make-up of the Dale. Sustainability, viability and fitness-for-purpose are the key criteria by which this redevelopment is being planned.

**3. The impact in terms of traffic.** The proposals have the potential to add to existing traffic problems.

“A proposal of the scale and nature of that envisaged at the old Weardale Works site will clearly impact upon the local transport network. Of that, there can be no doubt. The key question, however, is whether that impact, after mitigation measures have been put in place, is acceptable vis-à-vis the overall benefits to the Dale that the proposals for the site are expected to bring about.

We will not have a definitive answer to this question until a Transport Assessment is undertaken during the course of 2006 as part of the package of material being prepared in readiness for the making of a planning application for the redevelopment of the site. Should the level of impact resulting from additional traffic be assessed as unacceptable, we would not expect to receive planning permission. It is as simple as that.

Preliminary advice from transport consultants assisting the Task Force suggests, however, that it is likely that the additional traffic can be accommodated in a satisfactory manner. Without this reassurance, we would not have progressed our proposals to the stage they are now at.

A summary of the preliminary advice is contained in the Task Force's 'Eastgate Special' newsletter published in July 2005. In this, we explain that:

- we hope to encourage a relatively large number of people to visit the site by public transport, particularly by using the heritage railway service, so as to reduce the number of additional cars in the first instance;
- although perceptions may be different, traffic counts undertaken by the County Council on the A689 as it runs through the Dale generally indicate significant spare capacity on the road;
- most visitors will in any event be arriving at Eastgate outside peak hours – in other words, at times of day when traffic levels are relatively low anyway; and
- those that do arrive or leave in the peak hours will largely be travelling in the opposite direction to most of the rush hour traffic.

Our best estimate at this stage is that on a normal day the increase in traffic is, at worst, likely to lead to only slightly slower journey times along the A689. It is possible that short delays within the villages, and possibly within Stanhope in particular, may occur on a limited number of busy summer weekends and bank holidays. We would not wish to pretend otherwise. Our expectation, however, is that such delays would not have an unacceptable impact, particularly when set alongside the benefits that the proposal is expected to achieve.”

Jim Urwin, Director, David Lock Associates, Town Planning and Urban Design Consultants and advisers to Weardale Task Force

**4. The impact it will have on the community.** People were concerned that the scale and scope of the proposals could impact detrimentally on

Eastgate Village, existing local businesses, local wildlife and countryside and the built environment (eg Eastgate Conservation Area).

We cannot ignore that the mix of uses proposed for the redevelopment at Eastgate will have an impact on the whole Dale. We are working to ensure that this is a positive impact that will be of benefit to all local communities.

Extensive impact studies are being conducted to monitor the effects of the redevelopment on the Dale and assess how any adverse effects can be minimised.

The impact of the redevelopment on the local environment, traffic levels, local communities and businesses are a key concern of the Task Force. For this reason a range of different studies are being proposed to ensure that the impact of the renewable energy village is measured and does not adversely change the nature and community spirit which already exists in the Dale.

The village of Eastgate can benefit from potentially extending renewable energy to their properties, traffic calming measures and the opportunity to be part of the new Management Company that will drive the project forward.

There is a potentially very bright future for the Dale by capitalising on the diverse range of businesses and leisure activities planned for the redevelopment which will provide a variety of employment and business opportunities for both local residents and businesses.

**5. Whether it is a viable long term solution.** There are questions about the viability of the proposals given previous failures e.g. the Weardale Railway. There are also fears that the proposal will fail to attract sufficient funding or enough visitors to sustain it in the long term.

“All of the Task Force partners are acutely aware of the necessity to ensure that any development proposals emerging out of the Eastgate masterplan are viable and sustainable over the long term. To this end, detailed business plans for all elements of the proposed development are likely to be required prior to any construction works taking place. These business plans will have to clearly indicate predicted development costs, public and private sector funding levels, investment returns and, where appropriate, predicted visitor numbers. The veracity of such business plans will have to be sufficient to withstand independent scrutiny.

The current masterplan proposals have in part been driven by outline development enquiries from a number of potential commercial and leisure operators and investors in line with the core principles of the site. In addition to this, an independent report has been prepared by leading leisure property surveyors, which has confirmed the positive outlook for a hotel/spa development as part of the Eastgate project.

Alongside the preparation of a planning application, it is anticipated that a lot of the work of the Task Force over the next 12 months will be focused on following up development enquiries to ensure that viable development proposals are in place. “

**John Topliss, Property Senior Specialist, One NorthEast**



6. **Some opportunities have been missed or not exploited fully.** There should be a focus on building long term skills in the Dale in environmental technologies to give residents access to more than just low paid jobs.

“The Task Force's strategy has always been focused on regenerating Weardale and creating genuine employment opportunities for the people of the Dale. We are currently in discussion with the Learning and Skills Council to assess the future skills needs for the people of the Dale. We will use the results of this assessment to guide our work with other agencies and education establishments to ensure that local people have access to the necessary training that will give them the skills they need for the future. In particular, those skills needed to take advantage of the high-tech jobs in 'green' businesses that are expected to be attracted to Eastgate.

The aim of the Eastgate redevelopment is to attract a range of types of employment including skilled, well-paid jobs as well as part-time and seasonal work. The Eastgate Energy Village will be a mixed-use development like no other in the country, incorporating housing, leisure and tourism activities as well as industrial and business units. The diversity of the site and its focus on the growing renewable energy sector will bring the range of jobs that will provide the long-term sustainability we all want to see.

*John Hamilton, Chairman of Weardale Task Force*

## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15 MARCH 2006

### Report of the Director of Regeneration **LOCAL ENTERPRISE GROWTH INITIATIVE**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To inform Members that Wear Valley District Council has been successful in its joint bid for Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) funding and to provide Members with information about the next steps.

#### **introduction**

2. The aim of this new funding stream is to raise entrepreneurial aspirations and culture and increase enterprise and business activity within the most deprived communities.
3. Members will recall that at the meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> January a report was tabled outlining the bid for LEGI jointly submitted by Wear Valley District Council together with other eligible districts in County Durham (Derwentside, Easington and Sedgefield).
4. The LEGI bid, entitled "Enterprising Communities – transforming the local economy of East and West Durham" was submitted to Government Office North East on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005.
5. The aim of the bid is to provide additional resources over and above those already available to deliver projects to increase business activity in the most deprived 10% of Super Output Areas (SOAs) for employment deprivation in the four districts. This means that activity will focus on a total 96 of the 216 SOAs across the districts and for Wear Valley this will be focused on the most deprived SOAs around Bishop Auckland, Crook and Willington.
6. A full version of the submission was previously tabled for information and is available on request.

#### **bid approval**

7. Confirmation was received on 23<sup>rd</sup> February that of the 88 local authority areas eligible to submit bids for LEGI, this joint bid had been successful and was amongst the first 10 areas to receive funding.
8. The entirety of the bid was for a 10-year programme, amounting to circa £31m. Approval has only been initially been granted for £10.2m for the first 3 years of the programme running from 2006/7 to 2008/9 as per the submission made.

9. To ensure that the proposed programme of activity starts as soon as possible in 2006/7 it is essential to move quickly and establish the programme management structures and arrangements as outlined in the bid documentation.
10. Given the joint working arrangements between the 4 local authority districts one of the first key steps is the establishment of the three new structures (Management Board, Advisory Group and Programme Executive) proposed to deliver the Programme. These bodies will:-
  - continuously review of the strategic direction of the programme
  - develop a commissioning framework and performance management framework for each workstream
  - commission projects
  - manage the allocation of LEGI and leveraged funds
  - manage the performance of the programme
  - use experience of delivery of LEGI to influence mainstream programmes.

### **legi management board**

11. This is the strategic body, which it is proposed will meet quarterly to oversee the delivery of the LEGI programme. It is proposed that the board will consist of the following stakeholders:-
  - Each of the 4 district / borough councils
  - County Durham Economic Partnership
  - Durham County Council
  - Business Link
  - Job Centre Plus
  - Learning and Skills Council County Durham
  - Elected representative of the Advisory Group (see further details at para 13).
12. In addition it is proposed that other parties (e.g. ONE / Government Office) will be invited to attend board meetings with observer status. The management board will be accountable to all four Local Strategic Partnerships to ensure wider engagement from key local partners.

### **legi advisory group**

13. In addition to the Management Board the LEGI bid documentation outlined a commitment to establish an advisory group formed from the fastest growing businesses (engaged through the fastest 50 project outlined previously) and voluntary and community group organisations. This group will be able to advise the management board and will meet 2-3 times per year. This group will also be invited to elect one member to be a representative on the management board.

## **legi programme executive**

14. The LEGI Programme Executive will be the key administrative agent, responsible for the day to day operation of the LEGI programme. This will include monitoring spend and outputs against targets, claims and other administrative activities. The Executive as administrative agents will work closely with, and report to, the strategic Management Board so as to ensure effective delivery of the programme.

## **next steps**

15. Whilst the establishment of these key structures is the first step towards the delivery of the programme there will be a number of key enabling activities which will have to be carried out before implementation of the Programme can commence. This work will predominantly be carried out by the Programme Executive and will include:-
- Develop action plan and commissioning framework for each workstream
  - Agree year 1 programme activities – including roll out of existing programmes and commissioning new activity.
  - Establish performance, monitoring and evaluation frameworks for each workstream (ensuring appropriate information is available to assess performance against target for each theme) – linked to commissioning frameworks.

## **conclusion**

16. The award of LEGI funding for the bid “Enterprising Communities – transforming the local economy of East and West Durham” provides the opportunity for a step-change in the economies of the most deprived communities in County Durham.
17. The proposed structures and protocols outlined above represent the best opportunity for Wear Valley to be able to influence the programme to ensure the greatest benefit upon our deprived communities.

## **RECOMMENDED**

1. That Members note and support the proposed approach to implementing the LEGI Programme as identified in the submitted bid.
2. That Members receive further progress reports at key stages in the delivery of the programme.

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REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15 MARCH 2006

Report of the Director of Regeneration

**BISHOP AUCKLAND URBAN RENAISSANCE MASTER PLAN REPORT  
(RED BOX DESIGN GROUP)**

**purpose of the report**

1. Members will recall a report to Regeneration Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2005 and a presentation to Full Council on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2005 on the outline proposals contained in the Bishop Auckland Urban Design Master Plan.
2. This report is intended to:-
  - Summarise the findings of the draft Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance Master Plan Report;
  - consider the implications of the Master Plan Report;
  - agree priorities for intervention; and,
  - agree the next steps.

**background**

3. The Regional Economic Strategy prepared by ONE NorthEast included as a priority the renaissance of towns and villages throughout the region, and looked to sub-regional partners to help formulate more detailed proposals.
4. In Wear Valley, the Local Strategic Partnership suggested that, given the background of various funding resources already in place, the existence of an agreed strategy for the town, the availability of development opportunities, and the potential to achieve economic benefits, Bishop Auckland should be chosen as the priority town in the District for a 'renaissance' submission. If successful, this could result in capital funding being made available by ONE NorthEast to implement proposals put forward as part of the renaissance ideas.
5. Members formally endorsed this approach at a meeting of the Regeneration Committee held in November, 2002, and also agreed to the preparation of a full submission.
6. In subsequent discussions, it became clear that the original Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy, produced in 2000, needed review, since many of the projects identified there had been successfully implemented, and because significant economic and social changes were occurring which had to be

taken into account. The Government was also introducing changes in planning legislation, which would require the preparation of a new development plan, the Local Development Framework. A critical aspect of that overall document would be the treatment, in some detail, of the Bishop Auckland Sub-area, putting forward land allocation and site development proposals, and ensuring that a robust sequential approach to retailing was in place, as national planning policy required.

7. For these reasons, it was seen as imperative to have available adequate and up-to-date intelligence on retailing trends and prospects (*Wear Valley Retail Study, England and Lyle, April 2004*) and on the physical constraints and opportunities which would need to be addressed to allow the development potential of Bishop Auckland to be fully realised. *The Bishop Auckland Master Plan Report* prepared by Red Box was specifically commissioned to provide the latter.

#### **the brief**

8. Red Box Design Group was appointed in April 2004 to carry out the study. The brief required the preparation of a master plan report aimed at the regeneration of the historic centre of Bishop Auckland, based on the northern part of the town around the Town Hall, Market Place, North Bondgate and Fore Bondgate. The commission was agreed by Wear Valley District Council with the financial support of ONE NorthEast, in association with Durham County Council.
9. The study was expected to identify key public spaces and buildings, bringing forward proposals for their significant improvement, and to highlight and promote critical development opportunities in the historic centre. Public involvement and consultation being an integral part of the process.
10. Crucially, the final report was required to be sufficiently detailed to allow an application to be made to ONE NorthEast for implementation funding, through the ONE NorthEast Single Programme. The master plan preparation team are expected to produce the application following consideration by the Council and Town Centre Forum.
11. Detailed advice and proposals were expected for:
  - the design and enhancement of the public realm
  - building improvements, especially the group repair of North Bondgate frontages
  - the integration of development projects in preparation, and those about to commence (e. g. North Bondgate Development Site)
  - potential development sites already identified but not progressed (e.g. Rudd's Yard) and other opportunity sites which became evident
  - linking and integrating the northern part of the town with the river and countryside

- securing more appropriate traffic circulation and achieving additional parking provision
  - the most suitable development (and partnership) arrangements to ensure implementation of the projects identified
  - sources of funding based on projected costs
  - the formal integration of the Master Plan concepts into the Local Development Framework documents.
12. As indicated previously, public consultation during the drawing up of the Master Plan, and a final funding application package to ONE NorthEast, were integral aspects of the work to be undertaken.

### **method of working**

13. Red Box Design Group is a firm of regionally based architects and urban designers. Because of the nature of the commission, other firms were also involved in the preparation of the Master Plan. These were Roger Tym and Partners (economic analysis;) Wardell Armstrong (traffic and landscaping;) Turner and Townsend (development and construction costing) and Storey Sons and Parker (property and estates issues.)
14. The report essentially divides into three parts. The first part consists of a wide-ranging examination of **the economic context and urban fabric** of the town, paying particular attention to the important sectors of retailing, residential trends and the scope for tourism and increased visitor numbers. This section provides a more detailed spatial analysis of the principal parts of the town centre, with an assessment of how these areas function at present, and how the problems identified might be addressed.
15. From these considerations, the consultants concluded that the study area needed to be re-defined somewhat, extending the “inner area” where physical proposals were to be brought forward. A wider area beyond this zone was also identified where the interaction of urban, landscape and economic characteristics affected the core area.
16. The second part of the report deals with the actual **Master Plan and Vision** for the town, and is intended to set out the crucial policy directions for improvement of the town centre, indicating detailed proposals for individual key components in terms of urban design, transport and landscaping/public realm. Transport and car parking issues are acknowledged to be of critical importance in the context of the future development of the town centre, and a sub-section is devoted to the impact of traffic and consequent improvements to the urban fabric.
17. The commission involved public and stakeholder consultations including public workshops in the town in August 2004 and April 2005. Both events demonstrated a good level of public support for the proposals included in the report.

18. The final part of the report provides a **detailed financial estimate of the costs of the interventions proposed**, from public and private sector viewpoints, establishes priorities and sets out a tentative programme based on making a quick impact followed by medium and long term aspirations.
19. The report also summaries the key issues which have been identified and the action which is required to address these.
20. The overall assessment of the report is optimistic without understating the scale of the task.

*“The town centre is not beyond repair but it is important that the masterplan begins to restore its character without upsetting the balance of previous and ongoing investment.*

*The following proposals seek to find a way to lay down a short, medium and long term plan for this regeneration, suggesting civic improvements where there is a clear opportunity, but also reinforcing and supporting the effort of the private sector.”* [Master Plan page 54, paragraphs 4 and 5]

### **key findings:**

#### *general*

21. Bishop Auckland is the major commercial and residential centre in south-west Durham, having a population catchment of some 150,000 people. It is characterised by an ageing population and one, which has gradually reduced over recent years. Also of note is a reduction in key economic groups, apparently losing these to other (often nearby) areas.

#### *retailing*

22. The town’s position in the regional retail hierarchy has become weaker, and this trend seems to be continuing, although at a slow rate. Paradoxically perhaps, the town has experienced an overall increase in retail employment, yet there are clear indications that the town is deficient, in relation to its size and catchment, in respect of certain sectors of shopping and services such as clothing, leisure and multiple retailing. The proportion of total comparison goods shopping is below the national average, and there is clear statistical and anecdotal evidence that the town is ‘underperforming’ significantly in retailing terms.
23. On a positive note therefore, considerable scope exists for expansion and improvement to meet the potential suggested by the catchment, and furthermore, any positive changes in the characteristics of the catchment area itself would increase that potential still further. The centre also hosts a number of key national retailers, and the two major convenience superstores are located in, rather than out of, the centre. These facts endorse the earlier work of England and Lyle who identified extensive capacity in the town and its catchment area for new retail floorspace.



24. The report notes that vacant premises tend cluster together, and that these seem to occur in parts of the centre which are identified for other reasons as foci for improvement and intervention. Prime examples are Fore Bondgate and the Market Place.
25. An interesting observation is that '*much of the current floorspace on offer appears to be sub-optimal for modern day retailing requirements,*' suggesting that a degree of physical redevelopment is not only necessary but indeed inevitable if the centre is to prosper.

#### *car parking and circulation*

26. Also central to retailing success is the issue of car parking and circulation. In the consultants' view car parking should not be decreased but needs to be rationalised. Furthermore, a more pedestrian – friendly approach towards traffic circulation is needed in particular areas.

#### *housing*

27. Residential demand in and around the town is mixed, with some areas very buoyant whilst others remain more subdued. Nevertheless, Bishop Auckland has seen house prices increase more rapidly than either the Wear Valley or County Durham average (although from an admittedly lower base.) Average prices are currently slightly below the Wear Valley and Durham averages, suggesting a potentially increasingly strong market.
28. Several housing schemes have recently been implemented in the town centre, indicating that national trends for town centre and upper-storey living are being replicated in Bishop Auckland, although on modest scale.
29. Again, the physical opportunities for further schemes of these types are considerable. Scope for 'courtyard' schemes is evident, particularly to the east and west of Newgate Street, in areas where the need to meet other objectives ties in very well with the visual improvements and increasing spending which residential development would bring to the centre.
30. Overall, the encouragement of high quality housing in the centre is especially important and is gaining momentum, leading in turn to the attraction of better services, and then to improvements in the catchment of the town – a self-sustaining spiral of improvement rather than decline.

#### *visitors and tourism*

31. Although the visitor and tourism sector of the national economy is recognised as having major potential, and is regarded as a key regeneration driver, in Wear Valley tourism and related activities account for only some 2% of the workforce. Bishop Auckland centre, despite having a number of suitable attractions, fails to present these coherently or to make the most of those that are more widely known.

*visitor attraction – urban fabric and sense of place*

32. The report emphasises that the development and enhancement of the town centre is vitally and inextricably related to the development of the town as a visitor attraction in its own right. A fundamental requirement is the need to create a positive 'sense of place,' and to foster the development of the so-called 'Historic Quarter' – the pattern of streets and buildings in the vicinity of the Castle, Market Place and Fore Bondgate – in a manner which supports and reinforces the perception of Bishop Auckland as a place worth visiting in its own right.
33. To do so will require action to address a number of problems:-
- a failure to draw visitors through the centre
  - the lack of linkage between areas of activity
  - the rapid 'fading' of activities in key locations
  - key attractions are not sufficiently exploited or linked.
34. Once again, the solution to these wider problems is considered to hinge on the treatment of the key individual locations that help to structure the town centre. Whether analysed from the viewpoints of retailing, housing or tourism, it is these fundamental components of the urban structure which are repeatedly identified as being in need of attention.

**master plan and vision**

35. The report therefore puts forward broad strategic objectives, which should be followed. Importantly, it details various works necessary from urban design, transport and landscape viewpoints in 18 key locations in the centre to ensure that these objectives are met. An indication of costs is included, and a summary programme of schemes, and further actions, is appended.
36. The principal strategic objectives identified are:-
- the introduction of appropriate retail and residential development
  - the immediate commencement of improvements in the built environment, especially the public realm
  - the support and co-ordination of private initiatives via the context provided by the master plan
  - rationalisation of car parking

37. The key locations (see Annex 2) are:-

### **Urban Design**

1. The Newgate Centre and Bus Station
2. Poundstretcher Corner
3. Public Space to the west of Fore Bondgate
4. Kingsway North
5. Kingsway South
6. Site to East of Go-Ahead Depot
7. North Bondgate (Go-Ahead/WVDC)
8. Shop Front Improvements

### **Transport**

9. Traffic Restrictions and Diversions to Market Place
10. Car Parking – Bob Hardisty Drive
11. Car Parking – Kingsway
12. Bus Station /Bus Routes
13. North Bondgate ('Build Outs' etc)
14. Theatre Corner

### **Landscape**

15. Tourism and Branding
16. North Bondgate (Pedestrian Environment)
17. Fore Bondgate
18. The Market Place – Civic and Community Role

38. A summary of the characteristics of, and the consolidated proposals for, each geographic location is given in Annex 2. Displays boards of the proposals will be presented at the meeting.

### **implications of the report**

*have the requirements of the brief been met?*

39. As has been indicated, the brief to consultants was refined and modified somewhat as work progressed, principally by changes to the inner (red lined) study area and the surrounding outer area (Master Plan Report, para 4, p.51.) Nevertheless, it is clear that the primary requirements set out in the brief remain valid and were accepted, i.e. no subsequent discussions caused any changes to be made in the anticipated outputs.
40. These primary requirements are reiterated in the table appended overleaf, and analysis shows that the Master Plan Report has largely met the '*Basis of the Master Plan,*' '*Master Plan Objectives*' and '*Additional Master Planning*

*Tasks'* set out in the brief. The Master Plan Report therefore provides detailed information, diagnosis and proposals showing how its implementation would promote positive change in the urban fabric. It is a solid, achievable and practical platform of ideas to reverse the decline of the town.

#### *further work*

41. In presenting the proposed town centre developments and enhancements it is, however, understood that traffic and transport constraints have influenced the outcome; particularly in relation to the proposals for the Market Place.
42. The calibration of a traffic model for Bishop Auckland has been a longstanding issue on which the Council has pressed the Highway Authority in the past. Decisions and meaningful progress on the town centre can only be made where there is a clear understanding of the consequences of actions and that must involve the question of traffic in and around the town. The Master Plan report therefore recommends the necessary work should be undertaken and this needs to be raised again with Durham County Council and other partners. This may, therefore, influence long term changes in traffic circulation. However, this does not reduce the validity or importance of the changes proposed in the Master Plan.

#### *delivery arrangements*

43. Specific advice was also requested on the establishment of detailed partnership arrangements. Again, this needs some elaboration and further refinement. The Report refers only in general terms to carrying out or initiating discussions on various sites, clearly simply as a prelude to detailed, advanced negotiations which will occur as matters progress. That is to be expected, of course, but there is no particular approach specified or recommended with regard to the form of partnership arrangement which might be considered from the outset.

#### **one funding bid**

44. An important additional Master Plan task was the construction of an application for package funding from the ONE NorthEast Renaissance Funding Programme. This has not been carried out, as yet because such an application can only be finalised once the principles and proposals of the main Master Plan have been agreed and adopted by the Council and its partners.
45. There is clearly sufficient information and detail, including critical financial estimates, to enable the order of funding necessary to be calculated, and for certain proposals to be formally set out and costed with a reasonable degree of accuracy at this stage. Further work is nevertheless necessary once priorities have been firmly established and agreed.
46. The preparation of a rounded, well-argued and detailed application was a key output of the work tendered for and this must be included in the final submission to the Council.

### *planning framework*

47. A related requirement is the need to ensure that the Master Plan document and its proposals are set within an up-to-date legal and planning framework. This is necessary to ensure that the policies and projects have a solid legal foundation, particularly at a time when planning and development legislation is changing and the Government has reasserted the need for decisions to be in accordance with the development plan, the Local Development Framework (LDF).
48. The Council attaches vital importance to the implementation of the Master Plan, and it is absolutely essential that its policies and proposals are incorporated seamlessly and convincingly into the formal hierarchy of Council documents so that these become part of the development plan, and all are mutually supportive.
49. This aspect has not been addressed in the Master Plan, although it seems logical that the Bishop Auckland sub-area development plan document of the LDF is the appropriate location to host the material. Advice is needed on what policies ought to be included and this aspect remains to be addressed.

### *maps/text*

50. Finally, it is evident that some aspects of the Master Plan document remain to be completed. These are minor textual alterations or completions, and the inclusion of most of the drawings and illustrations, which are currently in the Powerpoint presentation.
51. It is clear from consideration of the text, however, that all of the ideas put forward are argued from the basis of a thorough examination and analysis of the situation 'on the ground'.

### *financial*

52. The cost of the works proposed and considered necessary is extremely large – a total of some £50.7m, of which the public share is of the order of £6.85m and the private sector £43.85m. These figures can, of course, only be approximations at this stage and may eventually vary significantly. The consultants suggest, for example, that instances may occur where private sector involvement is impossible to secure and the Council (or other public sector body) may wish to intervene.
53. It is important to realise, too, that the timescale involved is not specified apart from loosely, such as 'early wins,' 'medium' and 'long term.' In this type of programme, 'long term' could mean just that; up to, say, 10 years and perhaps longer. Medium term might run for up to five years. Where 'early wins' are discussed, action is expected to begin being taken immediately, once a decision is agreed, with results occurring perhaps within 18 months – 2 years.
54. The clear message is that the Council will need to incorporate the spending profile of the Master Plan into its wider financial budgeting process – not an easy task in view of the uncertainties involved – but one which must be

attempted. It would be disastrous if, having agreed to adopt the Plan, the Council was forced to alter dramatically or abandon it simply because it had neglected to appreciate the incidence of funding requirements.

55. The size of public commitment is considerable and this makes the need for a well thought out and presented funding application, supported by all the partners involved in the wider project, so important. There will also be a corresponding requirement for the Council's internal staffing arrangements to reflect the task ahead and the seriousness of the Council's intent.

#### *legal*

56. The Master Plan deals in projects bound in the reality of land ownerships, rights and privileges, partnerships, land development law, the relationship between public and private bodies, company law, and the panoply of complex and time-consuming legal issues surrounding these concepts.
57. It is certain, therefore, that the volume of legal transactions will increase beyond the normal background level as work on implementing the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Master Plan picks up. This aspect, too, needs to be taken into account in considering the level of resources involved.

#### *administration and procedures*

58. The potential scale of the work involved suggests progress might best be maintained by the formation of a dedicated group of officers of the various disciplines necessary, a project team, who would be charged, individually and corporately, with actually undertaking the tasks needed, led by a Project Officer. The latter could either be the Director of Regeneration or a senior officer reporting to him. A parallel political overview might be established through regular briefing of key Members – certainly the Chair of Regeneration and the Leader.
59. A feature of this type of programme is, of course, the need to work very closely with other external partners, including the private sector. The project team should be expanded as appropriate to include 'external' representation.
60. Details of administrative/project management arrangements are to be considered as part of the bid to ONE which, should include funding for such arrangements.

#### *the Council's corporate objectives*

61. The rejuvenation of Bishop Auckland is central to the regeneration of the wider District, and a successful outcome will benefit the whole range of the Council's corporate objectives.

#### *public involvement*

62. This was an integral aspect the original brief and it is expected that it will continue as the overall, and individual, projects develop. The Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum is already an established and appropriate sounding-board from which to attempt further innovations.

## response to the master plan recommendations

63. The fundamental recommendation proposed by the constants is that the Master Plan should be adopted as a basis for facilitating public sector funding and for progressing discussions with the private sector.
64. As indicated, the Master plan is considered to be a well-rounded document which does provide the necessary justification for the proposals it expounds. In agreeing to the general content the final published document should include:-
- full text and illustrations as indicated above.
  - guidance on partnership arrangements.
  - an explanation of how the principles, policies and projects can best be integrated into the Council's Local development Framework
  - and to be accompanied by a suitable form of application to ONE NorthEast.
65. The consultants have been requested to comply with these commissions from the original brief. In addition other policies and proposals are set out as a list of both broad requirements and individual actions necessary to progress specific schemes. These have been rationalised as follows:

### *broad requirements*

- explore housing options further and gauge developer interest.

This is regarded as a part of the continuing commitment to encouraging further residential development in the town centre. The Council should always be sympathetic and receptive to residential development ideas for the centre.

Priority: high

- continued investigation of the traffic issue; car parking rationalisation

Essential to identify and investigate the feasibility of many individual improvements. May also reveal the possibilities for new approaches. This is a key priority that needs to be resolved without delay. Discussions are needed with the Highway Authority.

Priority: high

- emphasise the delivery of design quality

A fundamental aim of the Master Plan is to achieve a major improvement in townscape quality and this must be signalled by the Council's refusal to accept second-rate solutions.

Priority: high

- maintain shop front improvement scheme

This has had a noticeable beneficial effect and should continue. Discussions are necessary with the County Council initially.

Priority: high (an 'early win')

- improve signage and lighting

A high quality, integrated scheme for the approaches/centre is viewed as an 'early win.'

#### *specific schemes*

66. As mentioned the scale of the activities identified require a considerable amount of both public and private finance and could be phased over a long time period. It is important that the Council prioritise projects in order to make best use of the resources available and within the timescale of their availability. Within this process it is also important to identify priorities for private and public sector involvement. At present the Council is separately negotiating private development at North Bondgate (proposal 7/13) and Newgate Centre (proposal 1/12). The successful pursuit of these will enable public sector resources to be more effectively targeted. The Council, if successful, can seek to access ONE NorthEast's Urban Renaissance funding for the public sector programme. This is available through the County Durham Economic Partnership and is allocated within a 3 year funding cycle. An indicative allocation of £2m has been identified. In relation to the identified public sector proposals the following should be considered:-

- the *priority areas in terms of impact* are identified as Poundstretcher Corner; North Bondgate; Market Place (public realm) and Fore Bondgate. The case for these is well made and should be accepted.
- Poundstretcher Corner. Although a medium/longer term programme aspiration, this needs to be given an immediate work priority, to initiate discussions with (possible) stakeholders aimed at establishing the scale of the problem and determining how obstacles might be removed.
- North Bondgate. Public realm improvements are recommended to bolster private sector interest as a priority. This should be accepted, including the provision of better pedestrian links. The latter will therefore involve property acquisition and possible CPO procedures and will involve early discussions with stakeholders. Because of the impact on adjoining schemes, other stakeholders will need to be involved.
- The Market Place. Improvements to the public realm are identified as an 'early win' (reinforcing the need for progress on traffic management possibilities). The scope for pedestrian links to Kingsway, with 'threading through' to encourage other new development is also emphasised, requiring work here, as well, on property acquisition and removing obstacles to the development of possible Kingsway sites. Again, CPO powers might need to be invoked so preparatory work should commence as soon as possible. The Tourist/Visitor centre is integral to measures to improve the Market Place but is considered a 'medium term' aspiration.



- Fore Bondgate. Public realm improvements here have implications for a key gateway to the town and for the perception of development opportunities adjacent, to the west of the Newgate Centre. It is categorised as an 'early win' and therefore requires immediate attention.

*other concomitant requirements*

- Relocation options. Discussion with the occupiers and freeholders of the ALDI store, Vinovium House and Saddler House. Although the eventual development of this part of the centre is viewed as a medium/long term aspiration, it is clear that a long lead-in time means that action needs to be taken quickly to explore the likely obstacles which will need to be resolved.
  - Theatre Corner. Improvement in an appropriate manner of this part of the centre is underway but its importance should not be underestimated because of the critical location the site occupies in relation to the rest of the town's fabric.
67. All schemes put forward are worthy of intervention and implementation. The scale of the activity requiring public funding exceeds this potential total. In order to make best use of this resource and to achieve maximum private sector leverage, it is necessary to prioritise the proposals of the Master Plan. It is also important to identify which schemes should be left to the private sector to develop, and therefore, leave the public sector to invest in those where leverage is difficult.
68. The Master Plan identifies 18 key study zones. These are a mixture of public realm and development sites, and car parking/traffic activities. They can be better grouped geographically into the following six areas:-
1. Bus station
  2. Market Place
  3. North Bondgate
  4. Fore Bondgate
  5. Kingsway
  6. Other.
69. Annex 3 identifies the projects involved in these areas and suggests priority action for public involvement. This identifies the key activities for the public sector to be:-
1. Fore Bondgate enhancements
  2. Market Place Public Realm
  3. North Bondgate Public Realm
  4. Shop Front Improvements.
70. These accord with Red Box priority areas. These would require the following key development sites to be implemented by the private sector:-
1. Bus Station/Newgate Centre
  2. North Bondgate Depot Site
  3. Poundstretcher

71. The scale of public sector investment in these priorities is still in excess of £4.5m. The Council may need to prioritise the area identified above in order to make best use of any available public service.

## **conclusion**

72. The Master Plan report is a well-argued document, which highlights the need to take action if the town centre of Bishop Auckland, and ultimately the town itself, is to be rejuvenated. This is fundamental to the welfare of the District as a whole and accords with the Council's corporate objectives and those of partner organisations.
73. Although some tasks specified in the consultants' brief remain and will need to be completed, a list of proposals has been prepared and costs attributed to these. Likely public and private sector expenditure is detailed.
74. Indications are given of expected timescales, and the degree of priority, which is pertinent, is also considered.
75. The information provided would allow the Council to formulate a work programme based on the objectives and priorities set out.
76. It is important to identify the priorities for action and to identify the level of public and private sector activity anticipated. The scale of activity is large compared to the potential funding available. This report attempts to prioritise action and to recommend the outline content of a bid for ONE NorthEast funding.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 The Committee accepts and approves the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Master Plan Report, subject to completion of the brief as indicated in paragraph 65 of this report, and
- 2 Agree to prioritise the projects as identified in paragraph 68 to form the basis of the public sector involvement in the implementation of the Master Plan and to be the basis of the bid for ONE NorthEast funds.
- 3 Authorises the Director of Regeneration to bring forward proposals for staffing/administrative arrangements to implement the proposals.

**background information**

Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance Master Plan Consultant's Brief. Wear Valley District Council, March 2004.

Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance Master Plan Report. Red Box Design Group, Newcastle, May 2005.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Robert Hope

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## STRATEGY PROPOSALS

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Newgate Centre and Bus Station (1 and 12)</b>		
Characteristics:	Tarmac expanse	
Existing Proposals:	Possible extension of Newgate Centre.	
Revised Proposals:	Integrate new bus station; reduce number of stands; reduced tarmac; new development	
Requirements:	Potential relocation of ALDI; Longer term potential of redevelopment of Vinovium House and Saddler House for housing.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£18,480 (environmental improvement)	£13.14m (land acquisition, demolition, new build and external works)	£13.15m
Priority:	Long term. NB contact already initiated with Newgate Centre owners and architects re expansion.	
Action:	Discussion with: private sector investors and stakeholders Occupiers and freeholders of ALDI, Vinovium House, Saddler House (esp. relocation options) Gauge developer interest.	
Comments:	A fundamental and wide-ranging appraisal of the scope for the extension of the Newgate Centre has commenced and should be developed as a short-term aim. The inclusion of other areas such as Vinovium House is logical and timely but consider more long term. WVDC is well placed to act as a catalyst because of its existing land ownerships and potential CPO powers to assist land assembly.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Poundstretcher Corner (2)</b>		
Characteristics:	Poor architectural quality of a key location.	
Existing Proposals:	None.	
Revised Proposals:	Demolish and rebuild to provide landmark building that turns the corner between Fore Bondgate and Market Place. Increase active frontage. Possible hotel or similar development.	
Requirements:	Land acquisition (possible CPO), relocation of Poundstretcher, demolition of existing building, new build.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
None identified.	£4.67m plus other costs to be confirmed.	£4.67m +
Priority:	Immediate priority (described as "non-negotiable").	
Action:	Initiate discussions re Poundstretcher Corner – improvement or rebuild. Investigate interest in hotel development.	

Comments:	This is perhaps the most pivotal single project of the Master Plan, linking Fore Bondgate, the Market Place and Newgate Street in a truly effective way by a massive rejuvenation of the key corner site. Not surprisingly, this scheme could be difficult to achieve, relying heavily on private sector input for attraction of the right type of use and physical quality of development – which must provide ‘public’ benefits. To achieve such a scheme will require sensitive persuasion in a very competitive market and might only be possible through public financial assistance of some form. The latter needs to be fully explored, based on a clear brief setting out what will be required on the site.
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Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Public Space to west of Fore Bondgate/Finkle Place (3,17)</b>		
Characteristics:	Car park; currently a poor “gateway” to the town – not functioning well as public open space.	
Existing Proposals:	Minor improvements to car park and provision of interpretation facilities.	
Revised Proposals:	Demolition of block between Fore Bondgate and Finkle Street. New build, landscaping works. Direct pedestrian link to North Bondgate. Provision for market stalls.	
Requirements:	Property acquisition avoiding CPO if possible. Demolition, new build, external works including planting, lighting, street furniture.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£388,000 plus proportion of Fore Bondgate works.	£366,000	£704,000
Priority:	Immediate priority for public realm works.	
Action:	Initiate discussions with property owners. Development of public aspect in more detail. Establish “fall back” CPO position.	
Comments:	A strong ‘opportunity area’ for redevelopment in association with Newgate Centre expansion and other proposals nearby. However public input will be necessary. Although clear indications are given of the preferred form of public development (landscaping, a market) this must not compromise private sector proposals. Needs to be taken forward as part of Newgate Centre ideas.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Kingsway North (4 &amp; 11 – see also separate reference to detailed car parking proposals)</b>		
Characteristics:	New road cutting through former back land areas, but lack of integration into the fabric of the town. Few appropriate architectural frontages. Key area for regeneration.	
Existing Proposals:	Encouragement of redevelopment in back land between Kingsway and Newgate Street, with frontage to Kingsway.	
Revised Proposals:	Establish Kingsway as important urban street with own identity. Relocation of car parking from Kingsway South to existing car park adjacent Castle Chare. Provide direct pedestrian link to Market Place. Continue to emphasise potential for leisure/residential/mixed use, providing Kingsway frontages.	
Requirements:	New building by private initiative.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
None identified.	£1.3m	£1.3m
Priority:	Medium/long term.	
Action:	Identify key stakeholders, agreement on tentative scheme. Look to negotiate or undertake CPO to enable pedestrian link to be provided.	

Comments:	Already private sector interest here, but strengthening the attraction of this area is likely to be crucially dependent on the link to the Market Place. This could be difficult and may require CPO action which would be costly, although no figures have been identified as yet. Further public sector expenditure will be necessary on revised car parking arrangements.
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Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Kingsway South (5 – see also separate reference to detailed car parking proposals)</b>		
Characteristics:	New road cutting through former back land areas. Lacks identity, not integrated well into fabric of the town. New housing under construction.	
Existing Proposals:	No integrated approach. Opportunistic development of sites as available.	
Revised Proposals:	Establish Kingsway as important street with own identity. Parking relocated. Development of sites with frontage to Kingsway encouraged. Two storey leisure/retail units suggested.	
Requirements:	Demolition or alteration, new build, external works.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
None identified.	£659,000	£659,000
Priority:	Medium/longer term.	
Action:	Continue to discussion with stakeholders. Consider site assembly by agreement (CPO if appropriate).	
Comments:	Agree importance of sites in this location; however, development likely to be dictated by market conditions. 'Back to back' acquisition/immediate disposal via CPO might be appropriate.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Site to east of Go-Ahead Depot (6)</b>		
Characteristics:	Range of unprepossessing buildings fronting North Bondgate.	
Existing Proposals:	Currently no substantive proposals but recognised as ripe for redevelopment.	
Revised Proposals:	Acquisition to facilitate better servicing arrangements but adjacent site on North Bondgate.	
Requirements:	Land acquisition, demolitions, new build, external works.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£511,434 plus acquisition costs to be confirmed.	£1.56m	£2.091m
Priority:	Medium/long term.	
Action:	Initiative acquisition discussions. Consider integration of site with adjoining North Bondgate development site.	
Comments:	An important site when taken in conjunction with adjoining development opportunity – could ultimately determine quality of the latter. Public intervention may not be necessary depending upon proposals for the North Bondgate Depot/Car Park development site.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>North Bondgate (7 &amp; 13)</b>		
Characteristics:	Very prominent site on edge of centre overlooking Wear Valley. Excellent road frontage to North Bondgate. Key flagship site.	
Existing Proposals:	Redevelopment of site for retailing/residential.	
Revised Proposals:	High density retail/residential; "undercroft " car parking utilising natural change in levels.	
Requirements:	Gap funding, high standard design.	
Costs		

Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
None identified.	£22.2m	£22.2m
Priority:	Key priority.	
Action:	Explore townscape opportunities of site further. Identification of preferred developer. Negotiation to improve scheme in light of wider priorities.	
Comments:	Scheme formulation progressing	

Location and Report Reference Nos.		
<b>Shop front improvements (8)</b>		
Characteristics:	These are currently concentrated in Fore Bondgate/ Upper Newgate Street. Impact is significant where groupings occur.	
Existing Proposals:	Negotiate extension of scheme once current programme completed.	
Revised Proposals:	Continuation of scheme.	
Requirements:	Identification of most appropriate location/properties.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£711,480	Not known.	£711,480+
Priority:	An "early win" scheme.	
Action:	Discussion with Durham County Council on how scheme should be extended. Early notification of budget requirements.	
Comments:	Overall effect may be enhanced if appropriate areas are identified adjacent to, or in association with, other key redevelopment proposals. Cost estimate provided in report based on 35 properties at an average cost of £16,500 and standard treatment, which may not be appropriate in all cases.	

Location and Report Reference Nos.		
<b>Traffic restrictions and diversions to Market Place (9 &amp; 18)</b>		
Characteristics:	Central to town's local and regional identity. Key social and civic space with landmark building of Town Hall. Not pedestrian friendly, fast through traffic splits area, poor connections to North Bondgate and Auckland Castle. Poor quality paving materials, uncontrolled parking detract from visual appearance and quality.	
Existing Proposals:	Embryonic ideas to improve linkage to Castle.	
Revised Proposals:	Reconfigure current road layout to enhance setting of Town Hall. Introduce high quality sympathetic paving materials. Improve links to Auckland Castle via realigning street tree layout. Better street furniture. Reconfigure useable space to accommodate all events and users.	
Requirements:	Break up existing hard surfacing; provide new floorscape treatment and trees. Provide revised traffic signalling and lighting.	
Costs		
Public Sector expenditure including Wear Valley District and Durham County Council	Private Sector	Total
£2.6m	None identified.	£2.6m+
Priority:	"Early win" – immediate priority.	
Action:	Discuss with Durham County Council re initiating thoroughgoing traffic analysis to determine what is possible.	
Comments:	Major inhibiting factor here continues to be the wider traffic impact of the proposals. The starting point should be that the desirability of the works in the Market Place should determine the traffic outcomes, and not vice-versa. This will be a major point of contention with the Highway Authority, and cannot be argued by either side with certainty until the traffic situation is properly investigated and modelled.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Car parking – Bob Hardisty Drive (10)</b>		
Characteristics:	Areas of grassland and mature planting adjacent to new road.	
Existing Proposals:	No changes currently proposed.	
Revised Proposals:	Utilise existing open space (at the south end of Westgate Road) for new car parking.	
Requirements:	Removal of woodland area, excavation, incidental demolition and break up of existing hard surfacing. New surfacing, new mature tree planting, lighting.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£385,845	None identified.	£385,845
Priority:	Identified as “early win”.	
Action:	No action identified.	
Comments:	Removal of mature planting will be contentious. Will only be successful in townscape terms if the detailed design can be used to minimise the impact.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Car parking – Kingsway (11, 4 &amp; 5 - see references to Kingsway above)</b>		
Characteristics:	New road through former back land.	
Existing Proposals:	No proposals.	
Revised Proposals:	Relocation of car parking.	
Requirements:	Breaking up of hard surfacing; site clearance; provide surfacing; provide mature trees and planting; new lighting, environmental improvements at Castle Chare.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£552,798	None identified.	£552,798
Priority:	“Early win”.	
Action:	None identified.	
Comments:	Public expenditure to be restricted to car parking and provision of access to Market Place. (see earlier references)	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Bus Station/Bus Routes (12 – see also 1)</b>		
Characteristics:	Tarmac expanse.	
Existing Proposals:	No substantive proposals.	
Revised Proposals:	Provision of integrated bus station as part of Newgate Centre extension.	
Requirements:	Relocation of ALDI; redevelopment of Vinovium House and Saddler House for housing.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£18,480 (environmental improvement)	£13.14m (land acquisition, demolition, new build and external works)	£13.15m



Priority:	Long term. NB contact already initiated with Newgate Centre owners and architects re expansion.
Action:	Discussion with: private sector investors and stakeholders occupiers and freeholders of ALDI, Vinovium House, Saddler House (esp. relocation options) Gauge developer interest.
Comments:	Integration of bus station into Newgate extension proposals essential

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>North Bondgate Build outs etc.</b> <b>North Bondgate Pedestrian Environment (13, 16, see also 6 &amp; 7)</b>		
Characteristics:	Main approach to town, broad enough to accommodate (hazardous) informal parking. Poor overall impression.	
Existing Proposals:	None in relation to street itself.	
Revised Proposals:	Change emphasis from vehicle dominated streetscape to pedestrian friendly one. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>widening footpaths, providing dedicated crossing points and build outs to improve safety</li> <li>introducing high quality paving materials and street furniture</li> <li>parking restricted to south side only, improving vistas to Market Place</li> <li>introducing street works</li> <li>improving signage</li> <li>integrating footpath links towards River Wear and other landscaping.</li> </ul>	
Requirements:	Agreement with Durham County Council. Break up of existing surfacing. Provision of external works (eg new parking bays).	
<b>Costs</b>		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£90,400 £842,490	None identified	£933,000
Priority:	North Bondgate generally identified as key priority. Build outs, etc identified as an "early win".	
Action:	Discuss with Durham County Council and other stakeholders.	
Comments:	North Bondgate is a key location and the improvement of the environment for pedestrians will assist the delivery of other schemes.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Theatre Corner (14) excluded – works procured direct by Wear Valley DC</b>		
Characteristics:		
Existing Proposals:		
Revised Proposals:		
Requirements:		
<b>Costs</b>		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
Priority:		
Action:		
Comments:	Proceeding separately	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Tourism and Branding (15)</b>		
Characteristics:	"Gateways" to town are currently not identified or exploited. Signage, locations merely incidental to primary function as roads.	
Existing Proposals:	Importance acknowledged, but no substantive works yet decided.	
Revised Proposals:	Initial emphasis on improving gateways to historic north part of town. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or enhanced signage and waymarking, especially High Bondgate, Durham Road, West Chare.</li> <li>• Better links to countryside and new facilities on "The Butts".</li> <li>• "Outreach" transport.</li> <li>• Improve Tourist Information Office.</li> </ul>	
Requirements:	Agree signage work. Agree outreach transport provision with stakeholders.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£345,000	None identified	£345,000
Priority:	Signage and lighting identified as "early wins".	
Action:	Establish Tourist Visitor Centre in strategic location between Town Centre and Bishop's Palace.	
Comments:	Appropriate signage agreed by all stakeholders and introduced in a co-ordinated way is essential.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>Fore Bondgate (17, 3)</b>		
Characteristics:	Attractive, narrow and intimate environment of strong architectural identity. Partially pedestrianised, but influence of motor vehicles detracts.	
Existing Proposals:	Maintain pedestrian priority, improvement to street properties.	
Revised Proposals:	Restrictions of delivery vehicles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic control barriers – no cars at any time.</li> <li>• New public square to west end of Fore Bondgate.</li> <li>• Introduce high quality stone paving at link between North Bondgate and north entrance to Newgate Centre.</li> <li>• Improve street lighting.</li> </ul>	
Requirements:	Some surface demolitions and alternations. Paving and drainage works. Lighting and street furniture.	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
£393,380	None identified.	£393,380
Priority:	Fore Bondgate public realm identified as an "early win". Also a key priority.	
Action:	Agree nature of works with stakeholders.	
Comments:	Fore Bondgate continues as a focus of improvement activity.	

Location and Report Reference Nos. <b>The Market Place Civic and Community Role (18 – see also 9)</b>	
Characteristics:	One of the most important spaces within Bishop Auckland – central to town's local and regional identity. Character derives from surrounding high quality architecture and Auckland Castle. Not pedestrian friendly – fast through traffic, which separates Town Hall and Market Place. Poor quality paving materials and parking detract from visual appearance and quality.
Existing Proposals:	Currently no substantive proposals.

Revised Proposals:	<p>Reconfigure road layout to provide more space to front of Town Hall.  Relocate parking to new Kingsway car park.  Introduce high quality paving materials sympathetic to location.  Predominance of pedestrians emphasised in design. New paving to extend to Fore Bondgate and Newgate Street.  Improve links with Auckland Castle by framed views resulting from realignment of street trees, widened footpaths and dedicated crossing point.  Introduce new high quality street furniture.  Layout of Market Place reconfigured to accommodate all events and users.</p>	
Requirements:	<p>Agreement with Durham County Council on traffic arrangements.  Break up existing hard surfacing; provide new floorscape treatment and trees; provide revised traffic signalling and lighting.</p>	
Costs		
Wear Valley District (Public Sector) expenditure	Private Sector	Total
Included under Traffic Restrictions to Market Place and North Bondgate (9 & 18)	None identified	£2.6m+ (see No 9)
Priority:	"Early win" – immediate priority.	
Action:	Discuss with Durham County Council re initiating thoroughgoing traffic analysis to determine what is possible.	
Comments:	See previous comments in relation to the need for the implications of the Market Place improvements to be taken into account in the wider traffic management solutions for the town centre. Durham County Council's acceptance of the pedestrian priority principle behind the works is essential.	

## PHYSICAL GROUPINGS

	Projects	Involvement	Investment (estimated)			Priority
			Public	Private	Total	
(A) Bus Station	1 Newgate Centre Extension Bus Station Rationalisation	Public/private	18,480	13,140,265	13,158,745	High priority to be facilitated by the private sector but public sector priority for public realm works.
	3 Public Space / Fore Bondgate		387,772	316,008	703,780	
	12 Bus Station / Bus Routes		-	-	-	
			406,252	13,456,273	13,862,525	
(B) Market Place	2 Poundstretcher	Public/private	-	4,664,352	4,664,352	High priority for public realm works to be facilitated by the public sector.
	9 Market Place Traffic restrictions		2,600,998	-	2,600,998	
	18 Market Place Civic/Community Role		-	-	-	
			2,600,998	4,664,352	7,265,350	
(C) North Bondgate	7 North Bondgate	Public/private	-	22,192,478	22,192,478	High priority to be facilitated by the private sector. Public sector to facilitate public realm.
	6 East of Depot		511,434	1,580,040	2,091,474	
	13 North Bondgate Build outs		90,393	-	-90,394	
	16 <b>North Bondgate Pedestrian Environment</b>		842,484	-	842,484	
			1,444,312	23,771,518	22,215,830	
(D) Fore Bondgate	17 Fore Bondgate	Public	393,377	-	393,377	High priority to be facilitated by the public sector
(E) Kingsway	4 Kingsway North	Public/private	-	1,294,708	1,294,708	Medium term priority.
	5 Kingsway South		-	658,719	658,719	
	11 Kingsway Car Parks		552,798	-	552,798	
			552,798	1,953,427	2,506,225	
(F) Other	8 Shop Front Scheme	Public/private	711,480	-	711,480	Shop fronts improvement a high priority. Scale to be phased. Other aspects medium term priority.
	10 Bob Hardisty Drive Car Parks		385,845	-	385,845	
	14 Theatre Corner		-	-	-	
	15 Tourism Branding		344,960	-	344,960	
			1,442,285		1,442,285	

## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15TH MARCH 2006

Report of the Director of Regeneration

### CLIMATE CHANGE

#### purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to briefly inform Members of the way in which our climate is changing and how this authority can take important steps to meet the challenge of climate change.

#### background

2. Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today. Rising global temperatures will bring changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.
3. The main human influence on our global climate is the emissions of greenhouse gases.
4. The most significant man-made source of greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), emitted from burning fossil fuels and the human, environmental and economic costs associated with this are now becoming apparent and are likely to be huge in the future.
5. The challenge for council leaders and chief executives is to make a political decision to start now and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by acting promptly and dramatically to avert climate change.

#### proposals

6. As a Local Authority we can do a great deal to co-ordinate action on climate change. Commitment from Local Authorities is fundamental to success and some of the positive steps that can be taken include:-
  - Making a public commitment to tackling climate change, such as signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change;
  - Adopting a council-wide strategy on climate change and sustainable energy and using a variety of management tools to deliver it;
  - Promoting sustainable energy and climate change objectives through community wide strategies and land use plans;
  - Integrating climate change across all service areas within the authority.

7. The Leader of the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration at a conference (organised by the Council) on Climate Change on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

**conclusions**

8. Addressing the effects of climate change can bring social, environmental and financial benefits for the local authority.
9. By signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change we:-
- Demonstrate our intent and commitment to tackle climate change
  - Agree with the growing evidence that climate change is occurring and that it will affect the UK's economy, society and environment, and
  - Pledge to develop plans with partners and local communities to progressively address the causes and the impacts of climate change.
10. It is important, in taking this commitment forward, to propose a formal Council policy/plan for Climate Change.

**RECOMMENDED**

1. Members endorse the action to sign up to the Nottingham Declaration.
2. Members agree to undertake work to prepare a Climate Change policy to include reducing carbon emissions and encourage alternative energy supplies where appropriate.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Ian Bloomfield  
Environment/LA21 Officer  
Ext 423

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15 MARCH 2006

Report of the Acting Director of Community Services  
**CAR PARKING – BISHOP AUCKLAND**

**purpose of the report**

1. To agree changes to the Bishop Auckland Car Parking Strategy.

**background**

2. In 2001 the Bishop Auckland Car Parking Strategy was agreed by the Council with the following aims:-
  - (i) To maximise the availability of car parking spaces for shoppers and visitors, i.e., predominantly short stay parking.
  - (ii) To make provision for workers and residents, i.e., some long stay parking.
  - (iii) To improve the appearance and security of the car parks.
  - (iv) To generate parking revenue to cover the costs of the strategy and a programme of improvements.
2. During the consultation period comments were received from the Town Centre Forum and Bishop Auckland Traders' Association recommending a minimum 2 hours payment to encourage shoppers to spend more time in the town. In addition they suggested a voluntary rebate scheme by traders in the town. The charges they proposed led to a compromise on the Council's original figures to those currently in operation.

**short stay**

2 hours	50p
3 hours	£1.50

**long stay**

Per day	£2.00
Per week	£7.00

3. The scheme was the subject of the Wear Valley District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2004 and came into operation on 1st August 2004. As there has now been over a year of operation it would seem an appropriate time to review the operation and make any amendments considered necessary.

## review of the aims

### i) **to maximise the availability of car parking spaces for shoppers and visitors**

4. Prior to the introduction of the scheme, car parks close to the Newgate Centre, Market Place, etc., tended to fill up by 9.00 a.m. This was due to people who worked in the town using those car parks that were closest to their places of work. This left limited parking for shoppers and visitors to the town. Since the introduction of the scheme, spaces have been available for shoppers and visitors in the Newgate Centre and North Bondgate car parks at all times apart from exceptional times such as Christmas or when major attractions are taking place in the town, e.g., the Food Festival at Auckland Castle.
5. In the early days of the scheme there was some resistance from shoppers to pay the small charge when previously it was free. However, over time that resistance has been overcome and the car parks have become well used by shoppers and visitors.

### ii) **to make provision for workers and residents**

6. Displacing workers from the short stay car parks created a necessity to provide long stay car parking. Three car parks were identified, together with some provision within the Newgate Centre. However, the new owners of the Centre insisted that only short stay parking be provided. This resulted in a loss of 54 long stay spaces in the town centre. To supplement the long stay parking provided by the Council, Asda agree to provide 57 long stay spaces at their relocated store.
7. The town centres long stay car parks, i.e., Tenters Street and Castle Chare, tend to fill early and are well used providing 60 spaces. The South Terrace site operates at under half capacity, only 6 – 9 spaces (out of a possible 18). The Asda site is greatly under used with less than 12 (out of a possible 57) used on a regular basis.
8. At the time of the implementation of the strategy the Council also leased on an annual licence, two small car parks with a total of 46 spaces from a private individual. These were not included in the order because of the short tenure. These spaces were, therefore, available free of charge to anyone who used them for long or short stay use. It was hoped to purchase these sites from the owner, or take out a longer lease in order for them to be brought into the scheme. However, the sites have recently been sold so it has not been possible to include them in the Council's scheme. The new owner has offered them on an annual fee basis to individuals but there has been little interest.



9. There has been considerable displacement into nearby residential streets by those not wishing to pay parking charges. This has resulted in several complaints from residents to the Council. Discussions have taken place with Durham County Council with a view to introducing a residents permit scheme. Durham County Council has indicated that any such scheme must be self-financing and have said that they would wish to monitor the effects of our scheme before making any decisions.
10. It would appear that some additional long stay provision is required in the central area, together with an incentive for use of all available spaces.

iii) **to improve the appearance and security of the car parks**

11. In order to direct people to the car parks additional signage was provided on road signs around the town. In addition, new signage was provided at each car park indicating the name of the car park, whether long or short stay, the number of spaces and whether disabled parking was available.
12. Victoria Avenue car park was transferred from Durham County Council to Wear Valley so that it could be included in the scheme. It was in a rough, unmade condition and during 2004/05 capital funds were used to carry out a major refurbishment including the provision of additional lighting and fencing. During the current financial year a similar major refurbishment of Tenters Street has been carried out with improvements to Durham Chare hoping to be completed by the end of March.

iv) **to generate parking revenue to cover the costs of the strategy and a programme of improvements**

13. Income from car parking since 2003/04 is show below:

2003/04	£104,000	(North Bondgate was the only pay and display)
2004/05	£310,000	(North Bondgate April – July 2004 + All car parks August 2004 – March 2005)
2005/06	£365,000	(Estimated from all car parks)

In addition it is estimated that approximately £20,000 will be generated from parking fines in 2005/06.

14. As well as operating our own car parks, the Council has entered into an arrangement with Morrisons whereby we are paid a fee for carrying out enforcement in their car park.
15. It is considered, overall that the scheme has worked well. In particular, short stay arrangements have worked well. Apart from the busy Christmas period there are sufficient spaces. However, it is expected that the redevelopment of the North Bondgate car park will commence in January 2007. On completion, car parking spaces will be available and are set to be leased back to the Council. However, at some stage during the development some or all of the spaces currently provided will not be available. Provided they are not lost during December there should be sufficient capacity in the remaining car parks.

16. Better arrangements could be made to the South Terrace long stay car park. This has been underused throughout the year and some local businesses have asked that it be used for short stay car parking. It is recommended that it be used as a dual use car park, i.e., short stay and long stay in order to maximise use of the spaces available.
17. The introduction of long stay charges has resulted in many people who work in the town parking in areas where they don't have to pay, most notably in the residential areas. This has inevitably led to complaints from residents who have found it difficult to park near their homes. The loss of long stay spaces in the Newgate Centre coupled to the loss to the Council of the two car parks licensed to the Council, has reduced the number of spaces originally intended for long stay use. Although these private car parks are still available for use, the level at which the new owner has set the fees has resulted in both of these sites being greatly under used.
18. Having seen that the Newgate Centre is not full and that there is spare capacity, the new owners have agreed in principle to the Council's original proposal of some long stay spaces being made available. This would be for an initial one year period in order to assess the impact on their tenants.

#### **staffing arrangements**

19. Prior to August 2004 there was only one car park attendant. Temporary staffing arrangements were put in place to cover the initial 18 months operations in order to assess staffing requirements for the expanded scheme. The scheme has run successfully utilising two full time officers and part of the time of a third officer. Part of their duties includes emptying the cash machines, counting the money collected, bagging it and supervising its collection involving considerable time of two officers due to health and safety and auditing constraints.
20. In order to utilise staff time more efficiently it is proposed to outsource the cash collection and counting aspects of the work in order to allow officers to concentrate on the management of the car park scheme. Once these duties are removed then two full time officers will be sufficient to carry out the management and enforcement duties for Bishop Auckland and the initial stages of the proposed Crook car parking scheme. Quotations have been sought for this work and are expected to be approximately £15,000.

#### **proposals**

21. Asda have indicated that they are prepared to reduce their long stay charge from £2.00 to £1.00 or even to remove the charge altogether. It takes approximately ten minutes to walk from this car park to the Newgate Centre. A reduced charge would make the site more attractive despite the increased walk. It would also encourage those who work in that area of the town to use the car park.

22. The owners of the Newgate Centre have agreed, in principle, to a permit scheme for the proposed long stay spaces at the Newgate Centre. These are to be offered initially to those businesses operating within the Newgate Centre itself, or their staff, at an annual cost of £250 (or £25 per month). This would guarantee the holder a space at all times. However, discussions are ongoing to persuade them to allow the area to be used as a normal long stay car park available to all.
23. Under the permit scheme four spaces would be offered without charge to Oakgate Properties in return for the annual licence. The remaining permits would produce an income of £12,500 in a full year if all were taken up. Any spaces not taken up in this way could be offered to any business or worker in the town. Permits result in less time and effort by the Council in that there is no investment in equipment and enforcement is easier.
24. That the owners of the Finkle Street and Durham Chare car parks are to be approached with a view to negotiating a number of permits at the same rate as the Newgate Centre which could then be offered to businesses within the town to supplement the permit spaces in the Newgate Centre.

#### **financial implications**

25. As part of the budget process the Council has agreed to increase car parking charges as follows:

<b>Short Stay</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
2 hours	50p	60p
3 hours	£1.50	£1.60
<b>Long Stay</b>		
Daily	£2.00	£2.10
Weekly	£7.00	£7.50

26. The effect of these increases will be to provide an additional income of £59,500 in a full year. The expected date from which they will apply is August 2006 as the proposed changes in this report will require amendments to the appropriate order. The income for the year 2006/07 is, therefore, expected to be £39,667.
27. During the budget the Council also agreed to increase the excess notice charge (parking fine) from £50 to £75 with a reduction to £50 if the charge is paid within seven days. The expected additional income from this in a full year is expected to be £10,000 reduced to £6,600 during 2005/06.

28. The effect of the changes referred to in this report are summarised in the following table:

	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Net income from existing car park charges	£ 365,000	£ 365,000	£ 365,000
Income from permit scheme		£ 8,333	£ 12,500
Additional income - increased charges		£ 39,667	£ 59,500
Income from excess notice charges	£ 20,000	£ 26,600	£ 30,000
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£ 385,000</b>	<b>£ 439,600</b>	<b>£ 467,000</b>
Less additional staff and collection costs		£ 38,000	£ 38,000
<b>Net Income</b>		<b>£ 401,600</b>	<b>£ 429,000</b>
<b>Net increase on 2005/06</b>		<b>£ 16,600</b>	<b>£ 44,000</b>

## RECOMMENDED

1. That the Wear Valley District Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2004 be amended to include the following changes:-
  - (a) that charges from 1st August be:
    - 60p for 2 hours
    - £1.60 for 3 hours
    - £2.10 for all day parking
    - £7.50 for weekly parking
  - (b) Excess charge notice be increased to £75 with a reduction to £50 if paid within seven days
  - (c) South Street car park be designated as a dual use short and long stay car park
  - (d) that the second floor overflow car park at the Newgate Centre be designated as a permit holders' car park.
2. That an additional Commercial Assistant (Car Parking) post be added to the establishment graded at Scale 3.
3. That cash collections and counting be outsourced.

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
 Max Coleby  
 Acting Director of Community Services  
 Ext. 218

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**Author of the report**  
 Tom Carver  
 Head of Public Protection  
 Ext. 377

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## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15TH MARCH 2006

### Report of the Acting Director of Community Services **CAR PARKING - CROOK**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To agree the implementation of a Car Parking Strategy for Crook.

#### **background**

2. Originally proposals for Crook were considered with the Bishop Auckland Car Parking Strategy. In 2003 the decision was taken to delay the implementation of the Crook scheme to:
  - a. Allow further consultation
  - b. Await the outcome of the traffic management and enhancement of the north side of the town centre, including Hope Street, North Terrace and the green.
3. The traffic management and enhancements will be completed by June 2006. It is therefore appropriate to assess the potential for introducing a parking strategy for Crook.
4. Consultation on the Car Parking Strategy was undertaken as part of the enhancements and traders agreed in principal to short stay pay and display being introduced on the Market Place and in Hope Street. Further consultation will be required once the appropriate traffic order is published.

#### **assessment of the four aims**

5. Crook is a much more compact town than Bishop Auckland. Shopping is located in a central area based around Hope Street, the Market Place, North Terrace and Commercial Street. In addition, the major employer is the Council and our main offices are situated in this central area. The shopping and commercial sites sit cheek by jowl with residential properties.
6. The two main town centre public car parks are the Market Place with 90 spaces and Hope Street with 70 spaces. The West Road and Glenholme car parks lie just outside the town centre but within five minutes walk and between them would provide approximately 100 spaces.
7. The introduction of parking restrictions will inevitably lead to significant displacement into these streets. Any scheme must, therefore, take account of the impact on residents.

8. It is likely that a scheme to cover all of the aims will be introduced on a gradual basis in order to assess the impact of each stage and minimise disruption. It is unlikely that any scheme will meet the expectations of residents unless it includes an appropriate parking scheme in the residential streets. For this reason it will be necessary to involve Durham County Council in discussions at an early stage.

## **proposals**

### **short stay parking**

9. It is proposed that a pay and display scheme initially will apply to the Market Place and Hope Street car parks.
10. The Market Place be designated as a short stay car park. It must be remembered that it is fully used on Tuesdays and partly used on Saturdays as a market. During the budget process the Council agreed that the tariff be 60p for two hours and £1.60 for three hours as it is in Bishop Auckland.
11. It is also proposed that the Hope Street car park be designated as a short stay car park at the same rate of 60p for two hours and £1.60 for three hours.
12. This would provide 160 short stay parking spaces that will be adequate to allow shoppers and short term visitors easy access to Crook in the same way that they can access Bishop Auckland.

### **long stay parking**

13. The introduction of short stay charges will inevitably result in displacement parking in nearby streets, to introduce charges for long stay parking at the same time would only make the situation worse. The two major car parks at West Road (Plan 1) and Glenholme (Plan 2) require substantial renovation to bring them up to an appropriate standard. Funding is available from the capital allocation to allow the renovation work to be carried out during 2006/07.
14. It is, therefore, proposed that the remaining car parks within the Council's ownership be designated as long stay car parks without any charge at this stage. Including them in the order (without charge) allows formal enforcement of parking conditions, e.g., no overnight parking without permission, no parking in disabled bays without appropriate blue badge, no parking in staff car parks without appropriate permit.

### **impact on residents**

15. The above proposals will allow the impact to be assessed during its initial operation and allow further proposals to be brought before Members. It will allow time for discussions with Durham County Council with a view to introducing appropriate on-street parking arrangements before any further pay and display charges are considered.

### **human resource implications**

16. It is considered that the staffing levels proposed in the report on car parking in Bishop Auckland will be adequate to carry out enforcement duties in Crook. However, the situation will be monitored once the scheme has been in operation for an appropriate period.

### **financial implications**

17. A sum of £29,000 has been included in the capital budget to cover the start costs including machinery, signage and legal costs. It is difficult to predict accurately how the car parks will be used once charges are introduced. However, based on experience from Bishop Auckland it is expected that income in a full year would be £56,000 from parking charges and £3,000 from excess notice charges. It is expected that charges will apply from August 2006 because of the time needed to implement the appropriate traffic order.
18. The income for 2006/07 is, therefore, expected to be £37,300 from parking charges and £2,000 from excess notice charges. The expected additional revenue costs associated with the scheme are likely to be £3,600 in a full year and £2,400 during 2006/07. The effect of the proposals in this report are summarised in the following table:-

	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Income from parking scheme	£ 34,000	£ 51,000
Income from excess notice charge	£ 2,000	£ 3,000
Total income	£ 36,000	£ 54,000
Less revenue costs	£ 2,400	£ 3,600
Net income	£ 33,600	£ 50,400
Additional income – Bishop Auckland	£ 16,600	£ 44,000
Total additional income from all car parking	£ 50,200	£ 94,400

### **legal implications**

19. The current arrangements for the implementation of the Council's car parking strategy as embodied with the Wear Valley District Council (Off-Street Parking) Order 2004. This Order is prepared to be amended to include the proposed arrangements for Crook.

**RECOMMENDED**

1. That the Wear Valley District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2004 be amended to include the following:-
  - (a) that the Market Place and Hope Street car parks be designated as short stay car parks
  - (b) that all other car parks shown on the attached plans be designated as long stay car parks
  - (c) that the short stay charges be as follows:-  
60p for 2 hours  
£1.60 for 3 hours
  - (d) that there be no charge for long stay car parks.
2. That officers liaise with Durham County Council and local residents with a view to implementing appropriate on-street parking restrictions.

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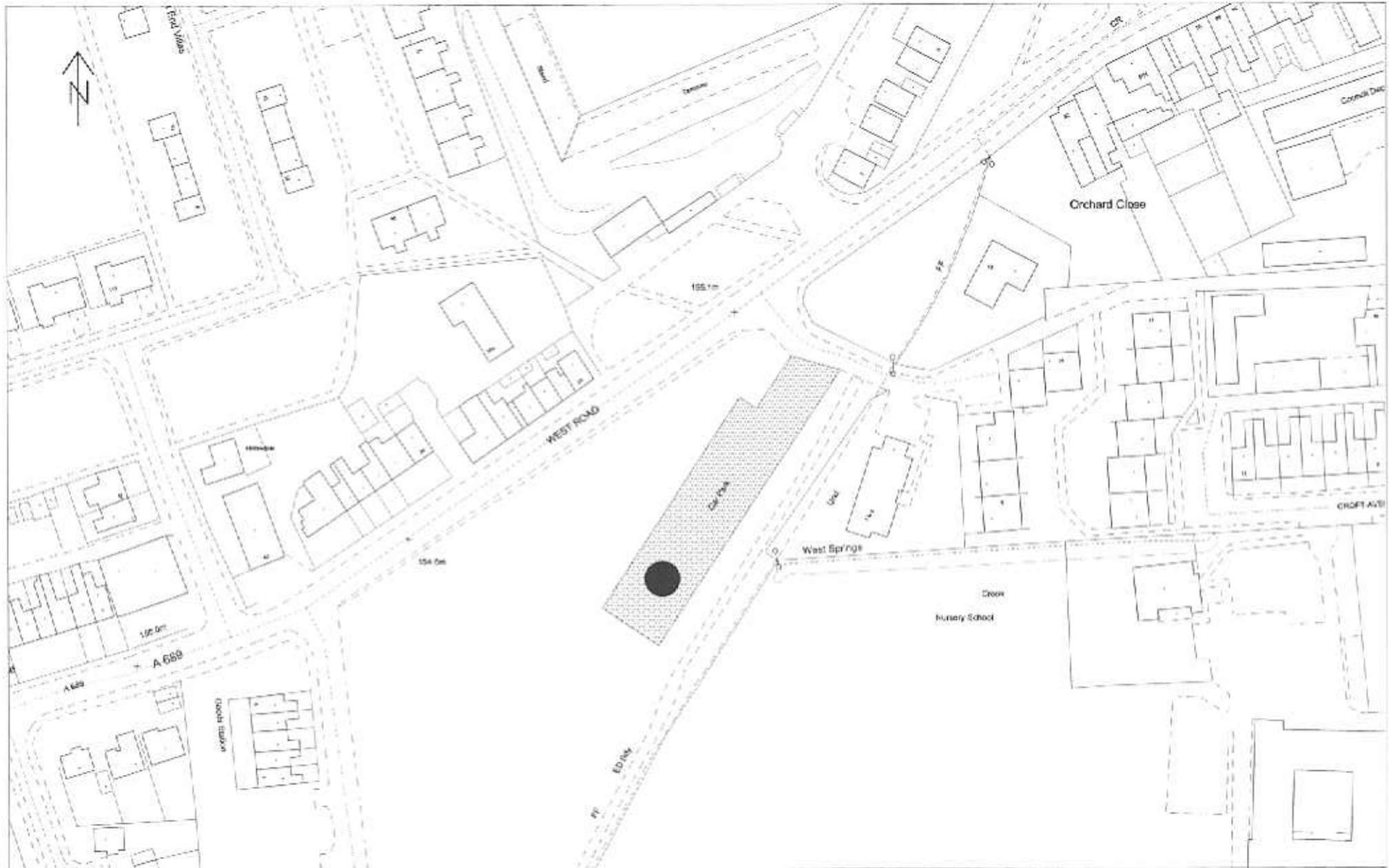
**Officer responsible for the report**  
Max Coleby  
Acting Director of Community Services  
Ext. 218

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**Author of the report**  
Tom Carver  
Head of Public Protection  
Ext. 377

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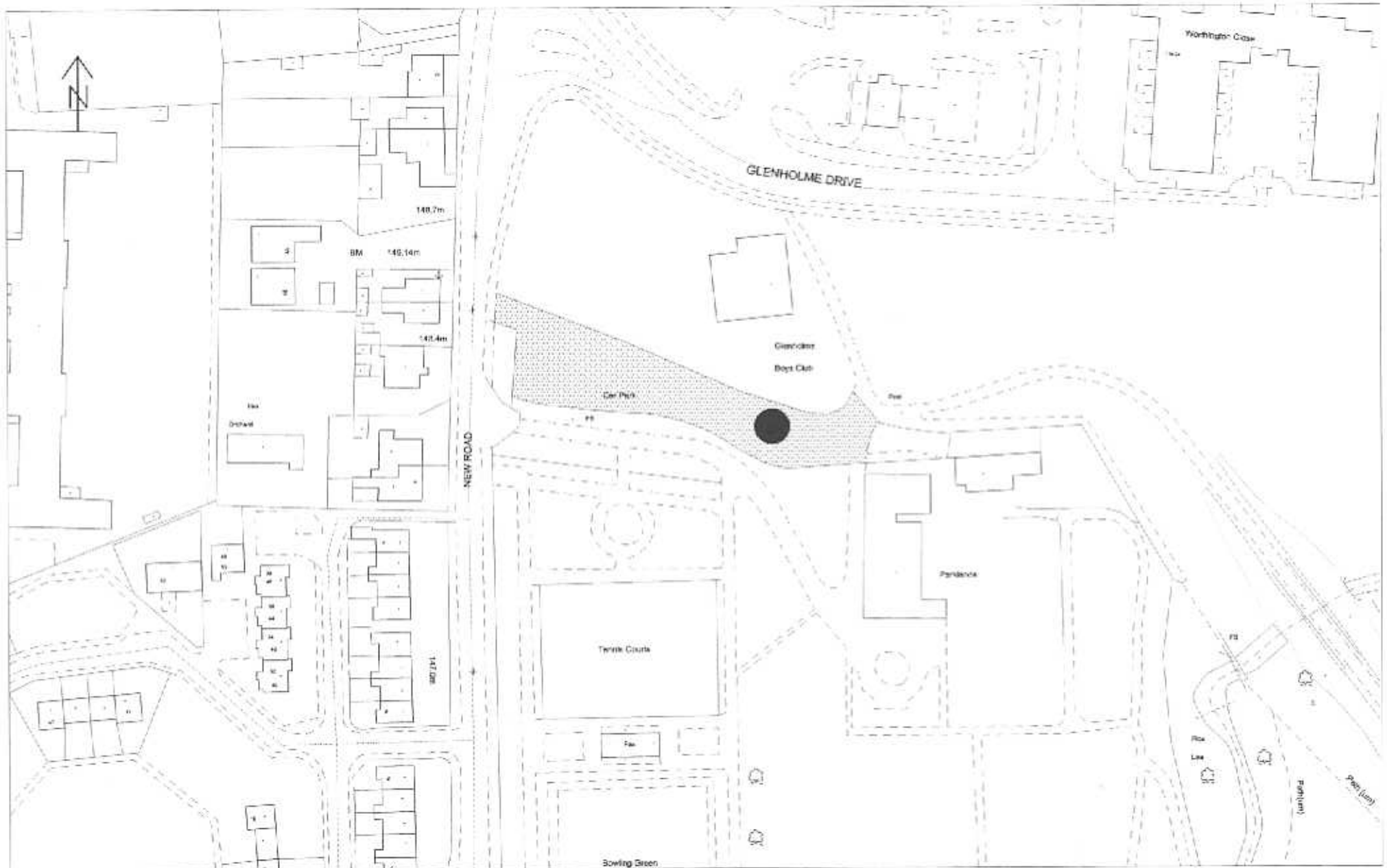
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**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**15 MARCH 2006**

Report of the Director of Regeneration  
**ENFORCEMENT – BACKLOG OF CASES**

**purpose of the report**

1. To consider and agree action relating to the backlog of enforcement cases, received prior to January 2005.

**background**

2. Recently the enforcement service has been internally audited and this has highlighted a need to make a decision regarding the backlog of complaints which stretches back to 2002. There were 526 outstanding complaints between January 2002 and December 2004.
3. Members will recall that the enforcement service has been affected by staff shortages, staff turnover and increases in the number of complaints received which has led to a large number of cases being unresolved.
4. The table below shows the details for the period 2002-2004.

Month	Total 2004	O/St. 2004	% O/St.	Total 2003	O/St. 2003	% O/St.	Total 2002	O/St. 2002	% O/St.
Jan	23	9	39	18	12	67	13	3	23
Feb	21	12	57	24	13	54	11	10	91
Mar	45	23	51	34	18	53	20	10	50
Apr	27	18	67	30	13	43	36	27	75
May	28	16	57	23	13	57	25	22	88
Jun	32	17	53	32	12	37	23	17	74
Jul	27	13	48	39	23	59	26	21	81
Aug	30	13	43	28	17	61	30	25	83
Sept	33	16	48	19	9	47	29	22	76
Oct	31	19	61	18	7	39	25	15	60
Nov	30	10	33	16	10	62	25	10	40
Dec	14	11	79	19	13	68	16	7	44
<b>Totals</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>68%</b>

O/St. - Outstanding

5. Last year 481 complaints were received of which 44% remain unresolved and so far this year 67 complaints have been received. Due to this level of workload the two enforcement officers are unable to investigate the outstanding complaints prior to 2005. The auditors have accepted that the priority of the section should be focused on resolving the more recent complaints.

## proposal

6. For the purposes of future audits it is proposed to draw a line under complaints received prior to 2005 which have so far not been investigated or which no work is currently on-going. Any new complaint, which is a repeat of any of these earlier complaints, will result in the earlier complaint being investigated.
7. None of the outstanding cases would be written off. If the enforcement officers do find they can devote their attention to the old cases these will be selected according to their priority score.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That the Committee endorses the decision for the purpose of future audits to draw a line under complaints received prior to 2005 which have so far not been investigated or where not work is currently on-going, except if a repeat complaint is received.

### **background information**

Auditors' report dated 15 February 2006.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

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**Author of the report**

David Townsend  
Head of Development & Building Control  
Ext 270

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## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15 MARCH 2006

Report of the Director of Regeneration

### **CONFIRMATION OF THE HOME FARM, EDMUNDBYERS TREE PRESERVATION ORDER 2005**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. This report seeks confirmation of the above provisional tree preservation order preventing its felling at Home Farm, Edmundbyers, in accordance with sections 198, 201 and 202 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

#### **background**

2. The tree in question is a semi-mature Sycamore growing near to the Old Barn, within the Edmundbyers Conservation Area. The owner of the Old Barn, Mr J Walsh, applied on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2005 to fell the tree because "*the tree is very close to the boundary wall and is also being damaged by farm tractors travelling through the adjacent gate*". A site visit was made and it was considered that despite the tree being a Sycamore (a non native species) the tree was not threatening the boundary wall by its growth and that in a sparsely treed area it made an important contribution to the visual amenity of the Conservation Area. It was felt that the tree was worthy of retention and a Provisional Tree Preservation Order was served on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2005.
3. In accordance with the procedure for making an Order Mr Walsh has been given an opportunity to comment and he has objected as follows:-

*"The tree is situated inches away from the boundary wall on two fronts. It is close to an electricity sub-station and wooden pylon. My fears are that should the tree fall over, as did quite a few last year, extensive damage may be caused to the dry stone wall, field gate and possibly the electricity lines and or sub-station. If this happens no doubt someone will try and hold me responsible for any damage and subsequent repair costs. The tree can hardly be seen from the roadside and even fully grown is unlikely to add any value to the surrounding area. It is not native to this area and has potential to cause damage."*

#### **conclusion**

4. The concerns expressed by Mr Walsh were taken into account before the provisional tree preservation order was made. The tree makes a worthwhile contribution to the character and appearance of the Edmundbyers Conservation Area. The tree is not dead, diseased or dangerous. In the future Mr Walsh could apply for permission to undertake pruning works if such

works are necessary to maintain the health and appearance of the tree, or in the interests of safety.

**RECOMMENDED**                      1            That the Home Farm, Edmundbyers Tree Preservation Order be confirmed.

**background information**

Application to fell the tree ref: 3/2005/1015, Mr Walsh's representations dated 5 January 2006.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the report</b>
Robert Hope Director of Regeneration Ext 264	Peter Duff Planning Officer Ext 220

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**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**15 MARCH 2006**

Report of the Director of Housing Services

**EXTENDING CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DENE VALLEY HOUSING RENEWAL AREA**

**purpose of the report**

1. To seek approval to extend and negotiate future agreements with capital works contractors.

**background**

2. Currently all capital and major revenue funded works are carried out by external contractors. These contracts were all awarded following tendering exercises where the most economically advantageous tender was accepted.
3. This report seeks to deal with the contractual arrangements for continuing the programme of works within the Dene Valley Renewal Area.

**progress**

4. Extensive works were completed over the spring and summer of 2005 based around Randolph Street in Coundon Grange. This work was awarded to Vest Construction through a tendering process. Vest Construction has completed the work to an exceptional standard as highlighted by both Customers and our partners.
5. The Council currently work with a Quantity Surveyor who ensures that all work is completed in the correct manner and completed to a high standard. The Quantity Surveyor is also responsible for ensuring that prices and quotations are in line with local market conditions and are not excessive. Through the excellent working relationship that has been developed through the implementation of the Randolph Street Scheme it would be beneficial for this to continue.

**proposals**

6. Looking at the contract identified above, it is proposed
  - Vest Construction – Negotiate to work in partnership with Vest Construction over the next phase of works which will be centred around the High Street Area at Eldon Lane.

7. All contractors in question have indicated they are willing to continue on this basis and would welcome to continue the partnership working.

### **legal implications**

8. All contracts are bound by the Council's Standing Orders. Clause 8.2 of Standing Orders refers to negotiation with a contractor based on a contract won in competition. The clause allows negotiation to take place where a contractor was successful in a tender within the last two years. Formal approval has been sought from the consulting Head of Legal Services and Director of Central Resources prior to using this clause.

### **financial implications**

9. For the financial year 2005/06, there are budgets established for the works as detailed above. Dene Valley Renewal Budget has an allocated amount of £248,000 for this scheme.
10. Further savings will be realised by not undertaking procurement exercises which can cost on average £4,000 per exercise.

### **summary**

11. It is proposed that negotiations commence with the contractors identified for an extension of the existing arrangements. In order to progress this proposal Clause 8.2 of Standing Orders relating to Contracts requires formal approval of the Director of Central Resources. This has been obtained, subject to the continuation of the contract being for a period of one year.

- RECOMMENDED**                      1            that Committee note that negotiations will begin with Vest Construction to extend their existing contract for a period of one year in accordance with Clause 8.2 of Standing Orders Relating to Contracts.

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
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Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

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**Author of the report**  
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Principal Housing Strategy Officer  
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## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

15 MARCH 2006

Report of the Director of Regeneration

### **WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – SUBMISSION STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. For Members to agree the outcome of public consultation on the Submission Statement of Community Involvement as summarised in the Statement of Consultation.
2. To inform Members on the Planning Inspectorate's decision to examine the Submission Statement of Community Involvement by way of Written Representations.

#### **background**

3. As part of the production of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) which will progressively supersede the currently adopted Local Plan a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared. The purpose of the SCI is to inform third parties as to how this Council will provide them with the opportunity to become involved in the plan making and development control processes.
4. Members will recall that the outcome of the public consultation undertaken on the initial draft SCI was reported to the Regeneration Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2005. The programme of public consultation, the representations received during this consultation and this Council's response to these representations were incorporated into a 'Pre-submission Statement of Consultation', as required by the relevant regulation.
5. The initial draft SCI was revised as a result of representations received. This is now known as the Submission SCI and was also endorsed by Members at the above-mentioned committee. The Submission SCI was formally submitted to the Secretary of State on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005. Public consultation on the Submission SCI was subsequently carried out from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005 until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006. This period was longer than the statutory 6 week period to compensate for the Christmas break.

## **public consultation**

6. To ensure that the Submission SCI was subject to full and meaningful consultation the following programme was implemented:-
- Letter of full explanation, full copy of Submission SCI, a copy of the Pre-Submission Consultation Report, a summary of the Submission SCI, guidance notes and response forms sent out to 47 statutory consultees;
  - Letter of full explanation, full copy of the Submission SCI, a copy of the Pre-Submission Consultation Report, a summary of the Submission SCI, guidance notes and response forms sent out to 219 additional consultees;
  - Letter of full explanation, a summary of Submission SCI, a copy of the pre-submission consultation report, guidance notes and response forms sent out to 72 parties who requested that a piece of land be included in the review of the settlement limits during the preparation of the LDF;
  - For those parties who made representations on the initial draft SCI a letter of full explanation, a full copy of the Submission SCI, a copy of the pre-submission consultation report, a summary of the Submission SCI, guidance notes and response forms was sent. The also letter summarised their comments and noted the Council's response and, where applicable, the relevant changes made to the document;
  - The Submission SCI and supporting documents publicised on the Council's website;
  - Poster displayed in publicly accessible establishments in each settlement publicising the Submission SCI consultation event;
  - Article published in Wear Valley Matters;
  - Exhibition/discussion sessions held at the following events or venues:
    - 'Stanhope Christmas Event' at The Dales Centre, Stanhope on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2005 (10am to 5.30pm);
    - The Mini Market at St Catherine's Community Centre on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2005 (9am to 1pm) and
    - The Newgate Centre, Bishop Auckland on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2006 (10am to 3pm)
  - Submission SCI and supporting documents made available to view at the Civic Centre; County Hall; district libraries and leisure centres.

## **public response**

7. Given the relatively uncontentious nature of a SCI and the level of response experienced during the public consultation on the draft SCI it was not anticipated that there would be a significant level of response to the public consultation.

8. A total of 29 representations were received which is significantly lower than the 48 responses received during the consultation on the initial draft SCI. Due to the poor turn out at the discussion sessions during the initial draft SCI consultation, it was considered more appropriate to hold them in conjunction with pre-organised community events across the District. Although attendance was slightly higher using such an approach the turn out was still relatively poor. However it is still considered that these discussion sessions will make a valuable contribution to future public consultation on the forthcoming Local Development Framework Development Plan Documents (DPDs).
9. Notwithstanding the above the representations received have been generally supportive of the Submission SCI. Of those received 3 representations made on the Submission SCI considered that the language and content of the document were cumbersome and over complex. By its very nature the information which the Council is required to present is complex. However, every effort has been made to present the information in as an understandable and free flowing form as possible. It must be noted that this is a relatively minor number of adverse comments in relation to the level of consultation that was undertaken.
10. The Regulations require the Council to prepare a 'Statement of Consultation', summarising how the public consultation was undertaken at this point in the process and the representations received. The Council's response to these representations have also been noted. A copy of all the representations received and the 'Statement of Consultation' are tabled for Member's information. As the Regulations require this to be submitted immediately after the expiry of a consultation period. It has therefore been necessary to report the Statement of Consultation in retrospect; this Statement of Consultation and copies of the representations were sent to the Secretary of State on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2006.
11. The Planning Inspectorate have written to confirm that the Submission SCI will be examined by way of written representation; this will take place in the timescale as set out in the adopted project plan, the Local Development Scheme (LDS). When considering the acceptability of the Submission SCI the Planning Inspectorate will consider the representations made by third parties.

### **legal implications**

12. The SCI has been prepared in accordance with current Government policy guidance, good practice guides and the relevant regulations. The 'Statement of Consultation' is the procedural document, which demonstrates the conformity with the relevant regulation.

### **financial implications**

13. The production costs for the Submission SCI can be met out of this years Development Plan's budget. However, for future years commitment will need to be made through the budgetary process to accommodate the on-going increase in costs of production of subsequent Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and holding Examinations in Public.

## other ldf matters

14. Funding was recently secured for an additional Forward Planning Officer; the post has recently been filled and the officer has now commenced duties. Whilst the production of the SCI is still on target in relation to the timescale set out in the adopted LDS, progress on the 4 proposed Development Plan Documents (DPDs) has been hindered by the lack of team resources over the past year.
15. The two Sustainability Officer posts, which are been jointly funded by this Council, Sedgefield Borough Council and Teesdale District Council, have recently been advertised. A high level of interest was received. Interviews for the two posts are scheduled to take place towards the end of March. As sustainability appraisal (SA) and strategic environment assessment (SEA) are key aspects of LDF preparation the Forward Planning Team have had to focus its recent activity on progressing this work. I am seeking to revise the current LDS timetable to reflect this. I shall report the proposed changes to the LDS for Members approval in due course pending the recruitment of the Sustainability Officers in question. However this will impact upon the progression of the 4 proposed DPDs.

## conclusion

16. The responses received in relation to the public consultation of the Submission SCI are generally supportive and welcomed. All representations received during the consultation on the Submission SCI have been forwarded to the Secretary of State, together with the 'Statement of Consultation', which sets out the programme of consultation undertaken and a summary of the representations received, together with the Council's response.

<b>RECOMMENDED</b>	1	That Members agree the content of the 'Statement of Consultation' which has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, to assist in his assessment of the acceptability of the Submission SCI.
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## background information

Draft Statement of Community Involvement (July 2005)

Submission Statement of Community Involvement (December 2005)

PPS12: Local Development Frameworks (2004)

Creating Local Development Frameworks – A Good Practice Guide (2004)

Wear Valley Local Development Scheme (April 2005)

The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

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### Officer responsible for the report

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### Author of the report

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