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Iain Phillips Chief Executive

21st December 2006

Dear Councillor,

I hereby give you Notice that a Meeting of the **REGENERATION COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, CROOK** on **WEDNESDAY, 10th JANUARY 2007** at **6.00 P.M.**

AGENDA

	Page No.
1. Apologies for absence.	
2. To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 1 st November 2006 as a true record – copies previously circulated.	Copies previously circulated
3. To consider the redevelopment masterplan for the Lafarge Cement UK Eastgate Site.	1 – 10
4. To receive an update regarding Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance.	11 – 55
5. To consider a request to rescind one of the requirements of a Section 106 Agreement in relation to Etherley Dene.	56 – 58
6. To agree a variation to the Hollowdene Garth, Crook, Tree Preservation Order 1986.	59 – 61
7. To receive an update on the revisions of PPS3 : Housing.	62 – 71
8. To receive information regarding Beechburn Beck Access and Environmental Improvements Phase 1.	72 – 78
9. To receive a summary of concerns and actions resulting from the examination in public panel report in respect of the Regional Spatial Strategy	79 – 94
10. To outline the current position regarding the Low Willington Office Development	95 – 97
11. To consider a re-grading request.*	98 -100

12. To consider such other items of business which, by reason of special circumstances so specified, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency

* It is likely that item 11 will be taken in the closed part of the meeting in accordance with paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Yours faithfully



Chief Executive

Members of this Committee: Councillors Bailey, Mrs. Brown, Dobinson, Ferguson, Grogan, Hayton, Mrs Jones*, Laurie, Mews, Mowbray, Murphy*, Nevins, Perkins, Mrs Seabury, Stonehouse, Townsend and Zair.

*ex-officio, non-voting capacity

Chair: Councillor Townsend

Deputy Chair: Councillor Mowbray

TO: All other Members of the Council for information
Management Team



REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

EASTGATE RENEWABLE ENERGY VILLAGE

purpose of the report

1. To report progress on the redevelopment masterplan for 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 'Renewing Weardale – the way forward'. It will maximise the potential of the site to provide an eco-friendly living, working and learning environment and visitor attraction for the benefit of people of Weardale. A 'Unique Village' linked to the generation of renewable energy, providing high-spec mixed-use development including recreation, tourism, business accommodation 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.

progress

3. The Weardale Task Force at its meeting on 14 November 2006 endorsed an updated masterplan for the redevelopment. The masterplan has been subject to substantive work to establish the feasibility and viability of the proposals and has been revised taking into account the public consultation exercises conducted and the expressions of interest from the private sector. Detailed explanations of the revisions are outlined in Annex 1.
4. The updated masterplan shows a more organic layout than the previous plan, more in keeping with existing villages in the Dale, a copy of which is shown in Annex 2. The updated illustrative master plan for the overall site, including the quarries and slopes to the south of the river is shown in Annex 3.

5. A district wide special edition of Wear Valley Matters is being prepared for circulation at the end of January 2007, to inform people about progress and the revisions to the master plan. A 3D model of the revised master plan will be on public display at the Durham Dales Centre in Stanhope between 8 December and 18 December 2006. The 3D model will be available for members viewing at Regeneration Committee on 10 January 2007.
6. In addition, a website www.weardale-works.co.uk has been developed, funded by Lafarge Cement UK, to provide information about the proposed development, latest news, timescales, images of the 'master plan' and a means for those requiring further information to get in touch. The site will be live in early January 2007 and a link from the Council website will be provided.

next steps

7. The completion of the revised masterplan, allows the redevelopment proposal to move into the third and final pre-development phase and the procurement of the technical specialists (subject of the Regeneration Committee report of 1 November 06) required to prepare the proposed hybrid planning application itself (part outline and part detailed).
8. 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 late Summer/early Autumn 2007.

conclusion

9. The completion of the revised masterplan for the development of Eastgate Renewable Energy Village allows the proposal to move into the third and final pre-development phase, namely the production of the planning application and all the supplementary documentation to support the comprehensive application.

RECOMMENDED

1. That Members endorse the revised masterplan.
2. That Members receive further reports on progress of the redevelopment in due course.

Officer responsible for the report

Bob Hope
Strategic Director for Environment and
Regeneration
Ext 264

Author of the report

Sue Dawson
Head of Economic Regeneration
Ext 305



REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration

BISHOP AUCKLAND URBAN RENAISSANCE UPDATE

purpose of the report

1. To update Members in relation to proposals for Bishop Auckland and seek endorsement of the proposed approach.

background

2. In April 2004 Red Box Design Group were appointed to carry out a master plan report for Bishop Auckland, as one of the major centres in County Durham. The aim of this report was to plan the regeneration of the historic centre, with a view to securing funding from ONE NorthEast and other stakeholders to undertake a major programme of investment.
3. The master plan report was presented to Committee in March 2006 and Members agreed the priority areas for public sector investment. The Town Centre Forum also endorsed these priorities. These being:-
 - Fore Bondgate enhancements
 - Market Place public realm
 - North Bondgate public realm
 - Shop front improvements.
4. As reported in March these proposals were seen as priorities for investment to help secure, facilitate and enhance private sector investment in North Bondgate and the Newgate Centre. This report outlines the proposed approach to implementation.
5. The Council's existing capital programme allocate resources to implement the urban renaissance programme over a 3-year period, profiled to commence in 2006/7 with £100,000; and with further funding to be considered in the budget for 2007/8 and 2008/9.

implementation

6. Since March work has been undertaken with ONE NorthEast and the County Durham Economic Partnership secretariat (CDEP) to agree an approach to progress this project and to secure the resources to enable implementation to commence.
7. A draft implementation plan has been created for initial phases of work to 2009 and indicative costings produced using the master plan report indicative costings.
8. In presenting this information to ONE NorthEast it has been necessary to re-present the information in the master plan report (see Annex 4). In particular the Shop front improvements element has been split and incorporated into the other proposals. In addition, a preliminary phase has been incorporated to create additional capacity to help deliver this programme of investment and facilitate the required detail design work to enable implementation.
9. The proposals to ONE NorthEast contain the following elements:-
 - Phase 0 – Project Management and Design
 - Phase 1 – Market Place
 - Phase 2 – North Bondgate
 - Phase 3 – Fore Bondgate
10. The total costs have been estimated over the period 2006/7 to 2008/9 at over £4million of public sector investment seeking to facilitate and encourage over £9million of private sector investment in this initial period (largely attributable to North Bondgate) and with the potential for greater private sector investment in future years particularly if developments in the Newgate Centre come forward. The indicative funding being sought for this proposal is:-

Phases 0-3	Public Sector Investment £
ONE NorthEast Single Programme	£2,750,000
Other public resources including (Wear Valley District Council and Durham County Council)	£1,268,000
Total	£4,018,000
Private sector investment	£9,000,000

11. In addition, the opportunity has also been taken to outline to ONE NorthEast the Bishop's Palace Park project which, if pursued, will be seeking additional Single Programme resources in 2008/9 and beyond. This has been included as a potential Phase 4 of the investment in Bishop Auckland as there are important linkages to the Market Place Phase of this work. The indicative funding for this element has been submitted as:-

Phase 4	Public Sector Investment
	£
ONE NorthEast Single Programme	£750,000
Heritage Lottery Fund	£3,250,000
Wear Valley District Council	£TBC
Total	£4,000,000

12. The outline details, indicative costs and timescales for the individual phases are as follows.

phase 0 – project management and design

Indicative costs	£226,000
Indicative timescales	
Project Management	January 2007 to March 2009
Preliminary design	January 2007 to March 2007

13. Although this was not originally included in the master plan report, it has been added to increase capacity and experience to deliver the programme of work over coming months. This element is particularly important to ensure a project manager with appropriate skills and abilities is employed to implement this large programme of activity and will be essential to ensuring efficient and effective implementation.
14. In addition there is a need to translate the master plan concepts and ideas into preliminary design drawings for implementation and undertake public consultation on these designs. This is proposed for inclusion under this phase of work to enable consultation on the entirety of the scheme whilst individual phases can be developed as standalone work in the context of the programme.

phase 1 – market place

Indicative costs	£2,410,000
Indicative timescales	
Design work	March 2007 to May 2007
Public realm work	June 2007 to August 2008
Shop front improvements	February 2007 to March 2009

15. This phase is the proposed first delivery phase and is the largest investment in the town. Together with the proposals for the Bishop's Palace Park outlined below, this would be a major improvement to the historic heart of the town and encourage further investment in key sites and premises.
16. Provision has been made within this phase of works for the implementation of a building improvement scheme to encourage private sector investment in the smaller and vacant premises.

- 17. The majority of the works proposed, in accordance with the proposals from Red Box, consist of public realm and highways work to bring improvements to traffic flows and the streetscape environment of this part of town. Making the Market Place a central feature again is envisaged with appropriate planting, street furniture and features.

phase 2 – north bondgate

Indicative costs	£931,000
Indicative timescales	
Design work	June 2007 to September 2007
Public realm work	February 2008 to May 2008
Shop front improvements	July 2007 to March 2009

- 18. The North Bondgate phase of work is anticipated to facilitate, encourage and capitalise upon the opportunity created from the redevelopment of the former bus depot site with the creation of new commercial floorspace.
- 19. To ensure that this is achieved and the maximum benefit is achieved from this major private sector investment it is proposed to phase the delivery of this element of the programme to coincide with the construction of the new development. This approach will ensure that the public sector investment in the area compliments the developers' investment.
- 20. Again, the key element of this work is the improvement to the streetscape and environment on a key thoroughfare through the town. Linked with Fore Bondgate below is the desire to increase permeable routes between the key shopping streets that run parallel. Some elements of work within the highway are also required within this phase of work.
- 21. Provision is also made for resources to implement the premises improvement scheme in this area to encourage investment in properties in this area.

phase 3 – fore bondgate

Indicative costs	£451,000
Indicative timescales	
Design work	June 2007 to September 2007
Public realm work	September 2008 to December 2008
Shop front improvements	July 2007 to March 2009

- 22. Improvements to Fore Bondgate, whilst relatively small within the programme, are still an important element. Fore Bondgate creates the link between all of the other phases and facilitates the potential of further investment by private sector developers over future years.

23. Linked to the proposal for North Bondgate above is the need to establish permeable routes through Fore Bondgate into North Bondgate and the Newgate Centre and vice-versa. Subject to approval this element may require the identification and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of properties.
24. Like other phases of work substantial investment is proposed to be made in the environment and streetscape, and provision is made to encourage investment in commercial premises.

phase 4 – bishop’s palace park

Indicative costs	£4,000,000
Indicative timescales	
Initial feasibility	Ongoing to March 2007
Detailed design work	October 2007 to March 2008
Implementation	August 2008 to August 2011

25. Work is ongoing to complete feasibility work in order to submit an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund seeking a substantial funding contribution towards a major investment in the Bishop’s Palace Park, including the establishment of a visitor centre.
26. The Park, and its close proximity to the town centre, is one of the greatest assets of Bishop Auckland and could potentially have a significant role in the regeneration of the town. This phase of work linked together with the proposals for the Market Place creates opportunities to increase the visitor and tourism appeal of the town.
27. The long process of securing the Heritage Lottery Funding, which will provide the majority of the money means that this phase has a longer lead time, although it is important to be seen in the context of the overall programme and the linkages between this and particularly the Market Place phase of work. Additionally, if the Heritage Lottery Funding cannot be secured for this project there is little chance of being able to find funding to replace it.

conclusion

28. The approach outlined is indicative and will change as the project and programme evolves. Essential to being able to start to implement the work is the need to commence phase 0 and recruit the additional capacity and experience to assist delivering the proposal.
29. Given the nature of the programme of activity and the number of stakeholders who will necessarily have an input to the programme it is proposed to establish a multi-organisation officer group. This will ensure that all organisations essential to the delivery of the programme, including the funding organisations, will be able to input to the process.

30. To achieve delivery within the timeframe outlined, the next critical step is translating the master plan proposal into preliminary design drawings for consultation.
31. Durham County Council as the Highway Authority reserves the right to carry out any works in the highway. It is therefore proposed to discuss with Durham County Council the commissioning of the preliminary design works, to ensure compliance with any Highway Authority requirements and avoid any unnecessary time delays and costs from having to redesign elements of the schemes. The basis for these discussions is set within the outline designs agreed with Red Box.
32. These preliminary designs and drawings will form the basis of public consultation and enable more detailed costings to be developed. In turn this will enable the funding to be secured for the delivery of each of the respective phases.
33. As with all major investment projects, it is recognised that the programme as outlined will be subject to change. However, the approach outlined is believed to be the best way to proceed and perhaps more importantly, has the most potential to be able to secure the resources required from ONE NorthEast for implementation.
34. Discussions with ONE NorthEast are continuing and it is hoped that progress towards securing the funding to enable the delivery of phase 0 can be achieved by the end of 2006.

RECOMMENDED

1. That Members endorse the approach outlined.
2. That Members authorise the Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration to recruit a project manager to implement the programme of activity on approval of the ONE NorthEast funding for Phase 0.
3. That Members authorise the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration to agree with the Strategic Director of Resources adjustments to the yearly profile of the WVDC contribution to this scheme (within the overall budget limits 3 years) to maximise the Single Programme Funding available.
4. That Members endorse the request to suspend standing orders Section 6 in relation to 'Invitation to Tender' to allow the preliminary design work to be carried out in partnership with Durham County Council.
5. That Members receive further progress reports in due course.

Officer responsible for the report

Robert Hope
Strategic Director for Environment
and Regeneration
Ext 264

Author of the report

Alan Weston
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REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

SECTION 106 AGREEMENT

APPLICATION REFERENCE 3/1996/564

139 DWELLINGS FOR MCLEAN HOMES N.E. LTD

LAND AT ETHERLEY DENE FARM, BISHOP AUCKLAND

purpose of the report

1. Planning permission 3/1996/564 was granted for housing development subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement. Members are asked to consider a request to rescind one of the requirements of the Agreement.

background

2. As part of the S106 Agreement the owner of the land (Mr Allison) agreed to transfer to the Council Etherley Dene within two months from completion of the approved housing development, see Annex 5.

policy context

3. Etherley Dene is designated an area of protected open space (Policy BE14 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan).

proposal

4. Smith Roddam, on behalf of Mr Allison, have confirmed that their client is willing to retain ownership of Etherley Dene and have requested that the Council enter into a document rescinding the relevant clause of the Section 106 Agreement.

financial implications

5. Acceptance of the proposal will be a financial saving for the Council. Upon transfer of the land, the Council would have been responsible for the maintenance of Etherley Dene.

legal implications

6. The Head of Legal Services agrees that a document rescinding the relevant clause of the Section 106 Agreement should be entered into.

analysis

7. The Council lacks the resources to properly maintain Etherley Dene which, needs a great deal of work including the removal of dead/dying trees and replanting. Therefore, it is considered appropriate that the Council does not take ownership of Etherley Dene.

conclusion

8. The request to enter into a document rescinding the clause of the Section 106 Agreement should be agreed.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 The Assistant Director for Administration and Legal be instructed to draft and complete a document rescinding the clause of the Section 106 Agreement which requires the owner to transfer Etherley Dene to the Council.

background information

Section 106 Agreement attaching to planning permission 3/1996/564, letter from Smith Roddam dated 29 November 2006.

Officer responsible for the report

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Ext 264

Author of the report

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Ext 270



REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

HOLLOWDENE GARTH, CROOK, TREE PRESERVATION ORDER 1986 VARIATION ORDER 2006

purpose of the report

1. To agree a Variation to the Hollowdene Garth, Crook, Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 1986.

background

2. The Order was made on the 17th June 1986 and confirmed by Wear Valley District Council on the 2nd September 1986.

policy context

3. Wear Valley District Local Plan Policy ENV14 sets out how applications for works to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order will be assessed.

proposal

4. The owner of 2 Hollowdene Garth recently notified the Council that tree T5 relating to the above TPO was located in his garden on the plan attached to the TPO when in fact it is located in the hedge between numbers 1 and 2. To rectify this anomaly it is necessary to vary the existing TPO by amending the location of tree T5 on the plan from the garden of 2 Hollowdene Garth, Crook to within the garden of 1 Hollowdene Garth, Crook, see Annex 6.

legal implications

5. It is necessary to show the correct location of tree T5. As things stand the tree is not protected under the TPO created in 1986.

analysis

6. Tree T5 is worthy of protection and the proposed variation of the Tree Preservation Order will ensure that no works can be carried out to the tree without TPO consent.

conclusion

7. At present tree T5 is not protected by the Tree Preservation Order. It is, therefore, necessary to vary the Order.

RECOMMENDED 1 That the Committee agrees to vary the existing Tree Preservation Order by amending the location of tree T5 on the plan attached to the Hollowdene Garth, Crook, Tree Preservation Order 1986.

background information

Hollowdene Garth, Crook, Tree Preservation Order 1986

Officer responsible for the report

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Ext 264

Author of the report

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REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 3: HOUSING

purpose of the report

1. To update Members on the revisions to PPS3 : Housing.

background

2. PPS3 was published on 29 November 2006. It has been produced following consultation on draft PPS3 in December 2005 and the Barker Review March 2004.
3. The guidance contained in PPS3 should be reflected in Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) or Local Development Frameworks (LDFs).
4. It provides the framework for Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) to deliver both the right quantity of housing to address need and demand in their areas, and the right quantity and mix of housing for their communities, working with stakeholders (including developers) to achieve this.
5. The purpose of the changes to planning and housing policy is to:-
 - support further increased housing needed across the country;
 - bring additional brownfield land back into use;
 - increase the design and environmental standards of new homes and neighbourhoods in order to move towards zero carbon development;
 - deliver more affordable homes in rural and urban areas;
 - support more family housing, including more play spaces, parks and gardens for children;
 - give local authorities more flexibility about how and where to deliver the homes that are needed.
6. LDF core strategies should set out approach for housing development and of planning, monitoring and managing a 5-year supply of deliverable sites, for up to at least a 15 year supply. In this respect PPS3 suggests:-

- It may not be necessary to have an allocation development plan where overall supply is not high;
- 5-year supply will be a key requirement of determining planning applications from **1st April 2007** but may be used as material consideration prior to this date.

summary to key policies

7. The key policies are:-

- Local and regional planning bodies will need to take more account of affordability when determining how many new homes are needed in their area.
- Local authorities will need to identify more appropriate sites for housing. Councils need to plan 15 years ahead, to ensure they have a rolling 5-year supply of sustainable and deliverable sites, in order to prevent much needed new homes being held up by unnecessary delays in the planning process.
- Stronger emphasis on improving the quality of design of housing and neighbourhoods. PPS3 makes it clear that local authorities should turn down poor quality applications.
- Stronger environmental standards. Developers and planning bodies will have to take account of the need to cut carbon emissions as well as wider environmental and sustainability considerations when siting and designing new homes. The forthcoming Planning Policy Statement on climate change and the new Code for Sustainable Homes will set out further details including plans to move towards zero carbon development.
- New emphasis on family homes. For the first time the planning system will be required to consider the housing needs of children, including gardens, play areas and green spaces. Local authorities will have more ability to promote mixed communities and to ensure larger homes are being developed alongside flats and smaller homes.
- A continuing focus on brownfield land, retaining the national target that at least 60 per cent of new homes should be built on brownfield land. Local authorities will need to continue to prioritise brownfield land in their plans and will need to set their own local targets to reflect available sites and support the national target. They will also need to take stronger action to bring more brownfield land back into use, supported by the new National Brownfield Strategy led by English Partnerships. In response to the consultation Government has also introduced new safeguards so that local authorities can ensure their brownfield approach is delivered, to support regeneration and to prevent developers concentrating only on greenfield sites.
- More flexibility for local authorities to determine how and where new homes should be built in their area, alongside greater responsibility to ensure the homes are built. Local authorities will be able to set their own local standards for density (with a national indicative minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare)

and for car parking. They will also be able to set separate targets for different kinds of brownfield land where appropriate, to give them more flexibility to shape new developments to meet the needs of their local area.

- Stronger policies on affordable housing. The new definition of affordable housing will concentrate public funding and planning contributions on genuinely affordable housing. In addition local authorities will be able to require developer contributions to affordable housing on smaller sites where it is viable.
- Stronger emphasis on rural affordable housing. Following the recommendations of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, local authorities and regional planning bodies will have to take greater account of affordability pressures in rural areas, and the need to sustain village life by providing additional housing that is sensitive to the area and the environment.

key policy directions

(a) achieving high quality housing

8. Good quality design is seen as fundamental to the creation of sustainable mixed communities. The guidance suggests that inappropriate design should not be accepted.
9. The key design considerations are:-
 - Accessible and well-connected to public transport and community facilities; all spaces are safe, accessible and user-friendly;
 - Good access to community and green and open amenity and recreational space (including play areas), including private space, particularly where family housing is proposed, well designed, safe, secure and stimulating recreational areas should be provided;
 - Integration with neighbouring buildings and the local area in terms of scale, density, layout and access;
 - Efficient use of resources; adapt to and reduce the impact of climate change;
 - Design led approach to car parking space; integrated with a high quality public realm;
 - Greater distinctive character; supports local pride and civic identity;
 - Provides for retention or re-establishment of biodiversity.
10. Good quality design can be secured by reference to PPS1 recommended guidance (By Design, Safer Places, etc) and by techniques such as Design Coding, design guidelines, masterplans, etc; and will be monitored through the LDF Annual Monitoring Report process.

(b) achieving a mix of housing

11. A mixed community is characterised by having a variety of housing particularly in terms of tenure and price, and a mix of different households such as families with children, single person households and older people.
12. RSS provides the regional approach to achieving a good mix and LPAs should plan based upon the different types of households that are likely to require housing over the plan period. This will require:-
 - Analysis of demographic trends; and
 - Requirements from specific groups, including diverse groups (travellers).
13. Through Housing Market Assessments, LDFs should establish:-
 - Proportion of households that require market price or affordable housing (by percentage).
 - Proportion of household types (percentages of family, single etc, households).
 - Size and type of affordable housing required.
14. Developers should reflect this prescribed mix in the composition of new developments on large sites, and on smaller sites a mix of housing should contribute to the prescribed mix.

(c) market housing

15. LPAs should plan for the full range of market housing, from high quality to low-cost market housing.

(d) Affordable housing

16. Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing provided to specific eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. The latter is defined as housing at prices and rents above social rents but below market price or rents.
17. LDFs should:-
 - Set an overall target (plan wide) for the amount of affordable housing to be provided, taking into account the likely economic viability of land and the potential risk to delivery and levels of finance available for affordable housing;
 - Set separate targets for social rented and intermediate affordable housing where appropriate;
 - Specify the size and type of affordable housing;

- Set out the range of circumstances in which affordable housing will be required; the national indicative minimum site size threshold is reduced from 25 to 15, and could be lower in rural areas; and
 - Set out the approach to seeking developer contributions; there is a presumption that this is on-site, but could be off-site or a payment in lieu of provision if robustly justified.
18. In rural areas provision is made for Rural Exception Site Policies, which allows small developments on land not normally possible for market housing, where affordable housing is held in perpetuity, and which seek to address the need of a local community defined by family or employment connection.
- (e) making effective use of existing housing stock
19. LPAs need to identify and bring into residential use empty housing and buildings (conversions), in line with empty homes strategies, and use Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers where necessary.
- (f) assessing an appropriate level of housing
20. The level of housing should be determined taking a strategic, evidence-based approach that takes into account the policy framework at national, regional, sub-regional and local levels and achieved through stakeholder collaboration.
21. Account should be taken of:-
- Evidence of current and future levels of need and demand for housing and affordability levels based upon: strategic housing market assessments, latest published household projections and the regional economy growth forecasts;
 - Strategic housing land availability assessments;
 - Government's ambitions for affordability across housing markets;
 - Sustainability appraisals.
 - Assessment of development on existing or planning infrastructure.
22. RSS should set out the level of overall housing provision and how it is to be distributed amongst constituent housing markets and LPA areas, for a period of at least 15 years. This will include how development/land release is to be phased.

identifying suitable locations for housing development

- (g) providing housing in suitable locations
23. The underlying objective is to create sustainable communities, that is to ensure that housing is developed in suitable locations which offer a range of community facilities, with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure. The broad

locations for new housing development will be set by the RSS taking into account:-

- Current and future levels of need and demand for housing;
- Contribution to cutting carbon emissions; access to public transport;
- Growth areas defined nationally;
- Particular regional circumstances such as potential for new settlements or areas of low demand;
- Capability of major strategic infrastructure;
- The need to create sustainable communities in all areas, both urban and rural.

24. LDFs should set out a strategy which achieves sustainable development and identify broad location and specific sites for housing taking into account:-

- The spatial vision of the Community Strategy and the objectives of the RSS;
- Evidence of need and demand and availability of viable sites;
- Contribution to cutting carbon emissions;
- Any physical, environmental land ownership investment, constraints and risks;
- Options for accommodating new housing growth or renewal of existing stock; including re-use of vacant, derelict or industrial sites as part of mixed-use schemes, urban extensions, redevelopments, etc;
- Access to local community facilities;
- Rural needs; to enhance and maintain the sustainability of villages;
- The need to develop mixed sustainable communities.

25. In developing the appropriate strategy LPAs should undertake Sustainability Appraisals to develop and test options.

effective use of land

26. The effective use of previously developed land is promoted, with an annual target of at least 60% of new housing being provided on brownfield land. Not all brownfield land is suitable for development because of other sustainability issues. The definition of Previously Developed Land (PDL) has changed to be that which, is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. It excludes agricultural/forestry building, mineral extraction sites, parks, recreation grounds, allotments, or where restoration or association into the natural landscape has occurred. There is also **no prescription** that PDL is suitable for housing development or all of the curtilage should be developed.

27. RSS will set a regional target for the plan period.

28. LDF's should include a local previously developed land target and trajectory and strategies for bringing previously developed land into housing use and where necessary LPAs should take steps to bring land forward by use of CPO powers, redesignating former industrial land and making effective use of public sector PDL.

efficient use of land

29. RSS should set out the region's housing density policies/targets.
30. LPAs should develop housing density policies having regard to:-
- LDF vision, levels of need/demand and availability of land;
 - Current and future level and capacity of infrastructure services and facilities such as public and private amenity space and green/open space;
 - Impacts on climate change;
 - Accessibility;
 - Characteristics of the area; and
 - Desirability of achieving high quality in housing.
31. The guidance allows for a range of housing densities but with 30 dwellings per hectare (net) national minimum target guiding local policies. Any lower densities will need to have clear justification. In developing policy, account should be made to the following:-
- Good design is fundamental to using land efficiently;
 - The distinctive character of local areas;
 - More intensive development is not always appropriate;
 - Existing environmental/conservation area content;
 - Density should not reflect that of surrounding areas;
 - Residential car parking policies, and levels of an ownership.
- (h) delivering a flexible supply of land for housing
32. Using the principles of "Plan, Monitor, Manage", LPAs should develop policies and implementation strategies to ensure that sufficient, suitable land is available to achieve housing and PDL delivery objectives. Using RSS guidelines, LDFs should set out the level of housing provision, broad locations and specific sites to deliver a continuous supply of housing for at least 15 years from date of adoption.

33. Using Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment LPAs should identify sufficient specific deliverable sites for the first 5 years – to be **available** now, **suitable** in contributing to sustainable mixed communities and **achievable** within 5 years. LPAs should also identify a further supply of specific **developable** locations on key diagrams and specific sites on proposals map and illustrative expected rate of build through a housing trajectory.
34. In determining land supply LPAs should include sites with planning permission if these are developable (in the right location and available for development at the point envisaged), but should not include an allowance for “windfall” sites in the first 10 years. LPAs should continually monitor availability of deliverable sites through Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) process.

managing delivery

(a) implementation strategy

35. LPAs should set out the circumstances in which action will be needed to ensure performance is achieved in line with the housing and PDL trajectories. Strategies should include:-
 - Scenarios and contingency planning in event of actual housing delivery is not at expected rate;
 - Risk assessments;
 - Consultative/engagement with housebuilding/stakeholders;
 - Regular monitoring and review of performance; and
 - Management actions.
36. The strategy should identify the range/variance from trajectory within which action may apply, and it may reflect the need for re-appraisal to respond to changed housing market conditions.
37. Where there is underperformance against PDL targets action may be taken to remove obstacles to bringing forward PDL.

(b) determining planning applications

38. The RSS and LDF are key development plan documents and PPS3 will be treated as material consideration that may supersede existing development plans. After 1st April 2007, PPS3, relating to the maintenance of a 5-year supply will be operational.
39. LPAs should have regard to:-
 - Achieving high quality design;
 - Achieving mix of housing;
 - Suitability of a site for housing, including accounted sustainability;

- Using land effectively and efficiently; and
 - Vision and objectives of LDF/housing objectives/housing market renewal objectives.
40. Where LPAs have an up-to-date 5-year supply of deliverable sites and applications come forward for sites in the allocated overall land supply but not in the 5-year supply, LPAs will have to decide if approval would undermine the achievement of their policy objectives.
 41. Where a 5-year supply cannot be demonstrated (i.e. where LDF has not been developed or where land supply of deliverable sites is not available) favourable consideration should be given to new applications (in relation to other PPS3 objectives of design, location, etc).
 42. LPAs should not refuse on grounds of prematurity.
 43. Applications to renew outstanding permissions should be assessed considering evidence of whether the site is likely to be developed. There is no presumption that renewal will be granted.

(c) monitoring and review

44. The LDF Annual Monitoring Review process will be used to monitor and review housing delivery performance. At the local level this will include:-
 - Monitoring of permission granted, completion and PDL/greenfield delivery;
 - Report against housing and PDL trajectories, and where relevant targets and design quality objectives;
 - Action where targets are not achieved; and
 - Consideration of delivery against RSS.
45. Similar monitoring will be undertaken at the regional level through Regional Planning Bodies.

affordable housing

46. The complementary statement on *Delivering Affordable Housing* from Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is intended to support local authorities and other key players in delivering more high quality affordable housing within mixed sustainable communities by using all tools available to them. It provides information on how existing delivery mechanisms operate. This statement should be read in conjunction with Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing, but is not itself planning guidance.

national brownfield strategy

47. The National Brownfield Strategy team within English Partnerships, in its role as specialist adviser to Government on brownfield land issues, has been working with a wide range of stakeholders to develop a National Brownfield Strategy for England. This will help to understand and overcome the problems that are preventing brownfield sites from being brought back into use. The strategy considers brownfield use in the widest sense including all types of development as well as various green end uses, such as parks.
48. The Strategy consists of two documents - The first a substantial best practice guide *The Brownfield Guide - A Practitioners Guide to Land Re-use in England*, the second a short policy discussion paper that sets out the policy issues raised by stakeholders and through English Partnerships' own work in developing the Guide. The policy discussion paper suggests a set of overriding principles for brownfield development and sets out a number of outline policy proposals for further discussion at a stakeholder event in mid December.

policy context

49. PPS3 is now planning policy (with the exception of paragraphs 68 to 74 relating to 5-year land supply – operational from 1st April 2007). Previous PPG3 relating to Housing is cancelled. PPS3 will be used as planning guidance to inform consideration of planning applications and to inform the emerging LDF.

conclusion

50. PPS3 is an important change in the planning for housing. It provides a more proactive framework to bring forward and deliver new housing in the District. It, however, is presented within the context of emerging RSS and consequently the tools available to the Council to deliver the quantity and quality of housing eluded to remain constrained by overall dwelling allocations proposed in RSS.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Members note the content of PPS3 which will now be used in the determination of planning applications.
- 2 For Members to receive a presentation/briefing on PPS3.
- 3 For this report and its implications to be considered by Policy and Strategic Development Committee.

Officer responsible for the report

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REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

BEECHBURN BECK ACCESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 1

purpose of the report

1. The purpose of the report is to consider:-
 - the intended works
 - the Offer of Grant from Groundwork West Durham and Darlington
 - the estimated project costs
 - the acquisition of land essential to the project
 - the tender report
 - maintenance implications
 - planning implications

background information / feasibility study / consultation

2. Beechburn Beck suffers from neglect, pollution and low summer flows and although there are some footpaths running along its banks, its amenity and environmental value is a long way short of its potential.
3. Approval of a partnership arrangement, between the Council, the Environment Agency and Groundwork, in order to undertake a comprehensive feasibility study was given by the Regeneration Committee on 1 October 2003.
4. The Study examined environmental issues and access improvements and included consultation with various environmental organisations, community groups and public meetings. A copy of the Feasibility Study (tabled) is available for public viewing. In general there was public support for the project, although there were reservations from some landowners.
5. The £15,000 cost of the Feasibility Study, was funded 50 % by the Environment Agency and 50% by the European Regional Development Fund.

objectives

6. The aims of the project comply with the Council's corporate objectives:-
- Lifelong Learning – it will potentially increase awareness and knowledge of the natural environment
 - Environment – both private and public investment has been secured in order to deliver access and environmental improvements
 - Crime Prevention – measures to increase community safety are included in the project, for example, lighting, barriers and appropriate landscaping works
 - Health – it will help improve the health and well being of residents and promote healthy lifestyles

intended works, phase 1

7. The work intended at this stage of the project includes:
- the creation of a footpath linking the existing Council amenity areas adjacent to Beechburn Beck, at Bladeside and Glenholme. (See plan, Annex 7)
 - lighting along the route of the footpath
 - environmental and landscaping works
 - installation of safety barrier

offer of grant

8. An Offer of Grant, dated 14th October 2006, has been received from Groundwork West Durham and Darlington and has been accepted on behalf of the Council. The offer is detailed below:

Source	Amount £	Purpose
European Regional Development Fund	30,000	creation of footpath and environmental improvements
Environment Agency	10,000	
County Durham Environmental Trust	20,000	
Liveability	60,000	
Total	120,000	

9. It must be noted all of the grants are retrospective i.e. they can only be claimed in arrears, hence there is a requirement of the Council to fund the project until grant claims have been processed. Groundwork has been asked to provide an expenditure forecast, which will help in this matter.

estimated project costs

10. The estimated project costs are set out below:-

	£
Main works, including footpath, lighting and landscaping, etc	87,508.96
Maintenance allowance	5,000.00
Land acquisition, including valuation and conveyance costs	10,500.00
Site investigation	3,248.90
Badger survey	350.00
Planning application fee	135.00
Audit fee	400.00
sub total	107,142.86
Groundwork fees, 12% of project cost, for design, contract preparation and supervision	12,857.14
Total	120,000.00

land acquisition

11. Essential to the project is the acquisition of land between the Council amenity areas at Bladeside and Glenholme (See plan, Annex 8).
12. Negotiations with the current landowner, Mr. J. G. Forster of Belle Vue, Crook, have been complex, the outcome being, Mr. Forster is willing to sell a parcel of land to the Council for no less than £9,000 plus his legal fees. The project budget is able to meet these costs.
13. The Council's Constitution has empowered Strategic Directors to purchase buildings and land, subject to budgetary provision and consultation with the Asset Management Group. Following approval from the Asset Management Group on the 15 December 2006, the Head of Legal Services has been instructed to proceed with the purchase of Mr Forster's land.
14. Mr. Forster has very kindly granted early entry to the Council, which will enable the works to begin in December 2006. This gesture from Mr. Foster is much appreciated.

tender report

15. In accordance with standing orders the following tenders were returned by the 4th October 2006.

• Brambledown Landscape Services Ltd, Brandon	£40,265.31
• Sones Environmental, Bowburn	£42,269.38
• G and B Civil Engineering, Newcastle	£44,890.83
• John Hellens (Contracts Ltd), Hetton le Hole	£47,015.14
• L and G Plant, Crook	£48,378.00

16. It can be noted that the tenders are much lower than the sum available for the main works, this is because the Liveability Grant was secured after the invitation to tender.
17. It is anticipated the lighting works and additional footpath and landscaping works will increase the contract sum to approximately £87,000. These additional works will be based on contract rates or quotations from subcontractors where appropriate and will be procured within the contract by formal Instruction.
18. In accordance with Standing Order 16.5.1, the Tender of Brambledown Landscapes has been accepted, in the sum of £40,265.31. Owing to the tight funding deadlines, a letter of acceptance to Brambledown has been issued which, will allow the works to begin in December and the signing of the contract will be arranged as soon as possible.

maintenance

19. The Council already maintains the amenity areas at Bladeside and Glenholme, which mainly consist of grassed open space with some tree areas. The route of the proposed footpath, within "Mr Forster's land", passes through dense scrub and bush, hence it is intended to open up the route by appropriate cutting back of this scrub. It is also intended to replace any fence lines, which are not up to the required standard.
20. Future maintenance costs are not likely to be onerous, never the less £5,000 has been secured from the project budget to help towards future maintenance, which will consist of grounds maintenance and perhaps some lighting repairs. This maintenance allowance is based on £250 for 20 years.
21. On receipt of funding, the £5,000 maintenance allowance should be transferred from the project account into an appropriate maintenance account.

planning approval

22. Planning Permission for the project was granted on 11th September 2006, subject to:
 - approval of surface treatments, lighting, landscaping, railings/boundary treatment
 - approval of landscaping works
 - a badger survey and it's findings

The above information has now been provided and is under consideration.

conclusion

23. The works as detailed, represent the first phase of the Beechburn Beck Access and Environmental Improvements Project. It is hoped a successful first phase will demonstrate to funding organisations, the public and landowners, that further works of this nature are worthy of support.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 The Strategic Director's acceptance of the Offer of Grant from Groundwork West Durham and Darlington, in the sum of £120,000, is noted.
- 2 The Strategic Director's instruction to proceed with the acquisition of Mr. Forster's land, at £9,000 plus legal costs, is noted.
- 3 The Strategic Director's acceptance of the tender from Brambledown, in the sum of £40,265.31, is noted.
- 4 On receipt of funding, £5,000 is transferred from the project account to an appropriate maintenance account.

Officer responsible for the report

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REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH EAST - CONCERNS AND ACTION RESULTING FROM THE EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC PANEL REPORT

purpose of the report

1. Following the presentation to County Durham MPs on 22nd November 2006 highlighting the main concerns for County Durham arising from the recommendations of the independent Panel appointed by Government, it was agreed to present a summary of what County Durham requires from the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The following comprises the collective response on behalf of the County Durham Association of Local Authorities. It is proposed that County Durham MP's will present this to Government Office.
2. The County Durham Authorities supported the aspirational vision and development principles of the Submitted Draft RSS, as embodied in the city region approach with priority given to development in their core areas, provided it did not disadvantage communities elsewhere in the city regions and rural areas. However, the recommended changes suggested by the Panel, markedly increases concentration on the conurbations. If these recommendations are endorsed by Government Office North East, they would not only have severe economic and social implications for the residents of County Durham but, it is submitted, would undermine prospects for an economic renaissance of the region as a whole.
3. The concerns of the County Durham Association of Local Authorities are highlighted below followed by details of what the Association expects from the RSS on behalf of the residents of County Durham.

Concerns

The cumulative impact of proposed employment site deletions, together with renewed concerns about housing numbers will prevent County Durham economically contributing to regional growth;

An over-concentration on core city development, and the requirement to allow only indigenous growth in the County to meet “local need” rather than “aspirations” would mean increased commuting from the County to the conurbations and increased congestion. In contrast County Durham offers relatively congestion-free access to business opportunities;

Low wage earners may not be able to afford the option to commute and the outcome could mean more people dependent on state benefits;

Employment and housing constraint may reduce the ability of Councils to achieve the sustainability of existing communities and meet the need for balance within the housing market and in particular meet the need for affordable housing;

The deletion of strategically important employment sites in Easington, Sedgefield and Durham City could lose the potential for 20,000 new jobs in County Durham and £300m of essential business investment, which could result from current development projects. The Panel have not had regard to past investments and current development commitments in the sites now proposed for deletion;

The Panel report puts forward new housing totals and district distribution without clear justification and without public debate or scrutiny;

Based upon the latest statistical information, the housing/population projections of the RSS propose housing allocations that will not be sufficient to maintain existing population levels in County Durham; the other sub-regions are allowed to grow whereas the Panel’s allocation could mean a fall in the population of the county by upwards of 10,000 people by 2021. Without in-migration the loss would be concentrated within the younger economically active age groups, leaving the County with an ageing dependant population;

The proposed housing totals will not provide an adequate land supply for house building throughout the RSS period in some parts of County Durham;

Any consequential adjustments required to meet the Panel concerns about housing allocations in Easington and Sedgefield could lead to further population constraint;

Any limitation on housing supply could lead to rising house prices and problems of affordability and inhibit the ability to sustain existing communities;

Limitations on new development in District areas will prevent new Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) from influencing and improving development patterns for the foreseeable future, from achieving balance in housing markets and sustaining communities; and

Any proposed changes to the towns to be prioritised for regeneration activity should be discussed openly with the County Durham Authorities.

EXPECTATIONS OF COUNTY DURHAM

4. The County Durham Association requires that the Government's revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East must provide a real and effective scope and capacity for the communities of County Durham to fully contribute to the agreed Vision for the Region:

“The North East will be a region where present and future generations have a high quality of life. It will be vibrant, self-reliant, ambitious and outward looking region featuring a dynamic economy, a healthy environment and a distinctive culture. Everyone will have the opportunity to realise their full potential”

5. County Durham is home to nearly half a million people and around a fifth of the region's population. It lies at the heart of the North East region and falls within the two city regions of Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley. County Durham's communities share this Vision and would wish to contribute to the creation of a vibrant and self-reliant future for the region with a dynamic economy where everyone can realise their potential and enjoy a high quality of life.
6. The Government's response on the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy needs to help create these conditions and opportunities for the communities of County Durham and their future economic well-being. Policy 1 of the draft RSS is about achieving a North East Renaissance. County Durham needs the freedom to contribute to:
 - the delivery of economic prosperity and growth; and
 - the delivery of sustainable communities.
7. County Durham requests that Government puts in place **the planning, development and economic framework through the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East, the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy to facilitate the above.**

In particular County Durham requires:

That there is strong economic infrastructure which encourages appropriate levels of wealth creating investment to be delivered across the region's communities – whether they are in conurbation, other urban centres or rural centres locations;

That County Durham is permitted to both contribute to and benefit from regional growth;

Recognition that the communities of County Durham can positively contribute to the goal of achieving a strong economic region with strong city regions through:

- The promotion and development of the major strategically important employment sites of NetPark, South of Seaham, Heighington Lane West, Tursdale and Eastgate, to enable the creation of 20,000 jobs and secure £300m of economic investment into the regional economy;
- Further development of Durham City's role in the regional economy;
- Recognition of the economic offer of the County's Major Centres to each of the respective City Region areas; and
- The value provided by the County's rural areas to regional economic growth and environmental offer.

That the RSS is based on updated population forecasts and projections reflecting an outcome of a growing regional population and a growing regional economy with provision made for:

- The ability to meet the ONS 2004 based population projection of growth in the period to 2021, in both the Region and County.
- The allocation of at least 23,000 net additional new dwellings in County Durham to achieve population growth if the regional total is held at 112,000 ;
- An ability to sustain market led house building investment at a level able to deliver sustainable communities throughout County Durham and to contribute to 'place shaping' activities in the management of physical change; and
- Recognition of the need for housing market renewal interventions focussed around the Major Centres and focussed upon the delivery of a Coalfields Housing Renewal Pathfinder Programme to deliver the required sustainable change in the communities of the County.

The priority for regeneration within the County is directed towards specific Regeneration Areas to realise the economic potential of the County's main towns and employment centres which are connected to and which economically contribute to the renaissance of the Tyne/Wear and Tees Valley City regions. These are:

- The Darlington - Newton Aycliffe/Spennymoor - Bishop Auckland strategic corridor;
- The Chester-le-Street –Stanley – Consett strategic corridor; and
- The East Durham A 19 strategic corridor focussed on Peterlee and Seaham.

Those transport and infrastructure improvements are promoted along the strategic corridors, including A19 junction improvements, A68 improvements and the East Durham Link Road (A1M – A690 – A19 link).

These Regeneration Corridors will complement the role of Durham City, the identified strategic employment sites and the rural offer to the Region's economic well being.

8. The County Durham Association of Local Authorities strongly feels that the Government in reaching its conclusions over the Panel's Report and recommendations on the draft RSS provisions needs to carefully consider the above requirements.
9. It is the Association's belief, supported by a range of stakeholders, that these requirements are essential if we are to deliver the outcomes of the agreed Vision for the Region to the communities of County Durham. A dynamic economy for the County that is vibrant, self reliant and which offers everyone an opportunity to realise their potential must be as evident within the County as within the Region overall. This fact needs to be consistently reinforced across the regional policy frameworks for planning, housing and economic development. Otherwise the full potential of the North East region and its people will be restrained.
10. Promotion and support for a competitive economy built around sustainable communities in County Durham will add value to a prosperous economic region, the individual city regions and to the communities of the County.

Evidence Base

Delivering Economic Prosperity and Growth

HEADLINE

Recognition that the communities of County Durham can positively contribute to the goal of achieving a strong economic region with strong city regions through:

- The promotion and development of the major strategically important employment sites of NetPark, South of Seaham, Heighington Lane West, Tursdale and Eastgate, to enable the creation of 20,000 jobs and secure £300m of economic investment into the regional economy;
 - Further development of Durham City's role in the regional economy;
 - Recognition of the economic offer of the County's Major Centres to each of the respective City Region areas; and
 - The value provided by the County's rural areas to regional economic growth and environmental offer.
11. Perhaps some of the most contentious changes proposed by the Panel relate to the proposed deletion of regionally significant prestige employment sites, strategic sites reserved for inward investment and sites for freight transport infrastructure and employment development. In County Durham this means – NETPark (Sedgefield Borough) is to be constrained to only phase 1, with the proposed development of only 13 hectares and the South of Seaham (District of Easington) and Heighington Lane West (Sedgefield Borough) employment sites, and the Tursdale Freight interchange are proposed for deletion.
12. The Panel take the view that the expected sources of new employment opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises can be located on existing sites, in core areas and at transport hubs. The Panel suggest that there is no evidence to justify the retention of large 'greenfield' reserve sites. It is contested, however, that County Durham can provide opportunities to attract new employment and to develop a knowledge-based economy and it can meet the needs and aspirations of local communities, particularly in deprived areas. The reality is that there is active developer interest in the sites identified for deletion, stimulated by the considerable resources already invested in site development. The Panel in pursuit of a conurbation-centric approach has ignored these points. Current 'live' development inquiries on sites within County Durham could bring forward regionally significant developments.
13. At **South of Seaham in Easington District** investors will shortly be submitting a planning application to develop a Film and Media Complex. This will include a Film Studio; ancillary floorspace (stage design and construction, costume,

catering, etc); a Film and Media School (in association with regional universities and colleges); a 4 star hotel and residential development; and studio and university accommodation. This development alone will bring an investment of £198m and lead to the direct creation of 1,800 jobs.

14. At **Heighington Lane West in Sedgefield Borough** proposed developments could provide over 1,000 jobs and £34m worth of inward investment into the County. This investment is at advanced stage of negotiations and has been made possible by considerable investment already made in site infrastructure funded by Europe and Single Programme. The development will complement the popular Aycliffe Industrial Estate which as the home of 10,000 existing manufacturing jobs, continues to attract significant developer interest and is subject to on-going revitalisation proposals.
15. **NetPark** offers County Durham an opportunity to become a world leader in new technologies and exploit its research and development and knowledge-based business capacity. How can the County expect to improve economic performance when innovative concepts are realised with regional backing, if it is to be restricted years later by Government so that a similar idea (Newcastle Science City) can be transplanted into the core of a city region instead? Further growth at NetPark, a strategic site in the recently launched Regional Economic Strategy, is anticipated to create 200 new jobs, more than 180 new businesses and over £20m of project investment in the first 5 years of development. It is also anticipated that the site could create more than 10,000 new jobs for residents of County Durham with over £100m of investment during the lifetime of the RSS period.
16. The proposed **Tursdale Regional Freight Facility**, provides a unique development opportunity linked to the enhanced role of Durham City as a regional economic driver and is identified as the most appropriate location in the region by a Railtrack study. Even though Tursdale would cater for a different market, the Panel take the view that brownfield sites in the Tees Valley, and specifically at Teesport can cater for freight transshipment. The case that the Tursdale site provides a regionally significant transport and employment opportunity in a unique location between the East Coast Mainline, the motorway and the unused Leamside rail line has been ignored. Current development proposals could create nearly 10,000 new jobs on both the proposed Rail Freight Facility and on the associated Prestige Business Site.
17. In addition the Panel fail to identify the potential of the proposed **Eastgate Renewable Energy Village** which provides an opportunity to create a major centre for energy research and business development, tourist and recreational activity based on the development and sustainable use of five land-based renewable energy sources. This could provide over 350 new jobs in West Durham and see the development of a 25 hectare brownfield site and become a catalyst for more widespread rural regeneration. The potential of the development has been recognised in the Regional Economic Strategy as a Regional Energy Centre and is currently moving to the Planning Application stage in its development.

18. It is contested that all these developments are specific to County Durham and cannot be relocated elsewhere and as a result such employment growth and investment could be lost to the region.

Delivering Sustainable Communities

That the RSS is based on updated population forecasts and projections reflecting an outcome of a growing regional population and a growing regional economy with provision made for:

- The ability to meet the ONS 2004 based population projection of growth in the period to 2021, in both the Region and County;
- The allocation of at least 23,000 net additional new dwellings in County Durham to achieve population growth if the regional total is held at 112,000;
- An ability to sustain market led house building investment at a level able to deliver sustainable communities throughout County Durham and to contribute to ‘place shaping’ activities in the management of physical change; and
- Recognition of the need for housing market renewal interventions focussed around the Major Centres and focussed upon the delivery of a Coalfields Housing Renewal Pathfinder Programme to deliver the required sustainable change in the communities of the County.

19. At the Examination in Public the County Durham Authorities presented a united case, accepting the Submission Draft which proposed a 20,000 net new dwelling allocation to the sub-region out of a regional total of 107,000. This was accepted as the minimum required, under the NEA population/housing model, to achieve population stability in the County. It was argued, however, that an early review to the distribution of sites post 2011 was required, because after that date, housing allocations to districts within the County reduced dramatically. It was proposed by the Tyne and Wear authorities that the total regional allocation should be reduced and that their share should be 50%, but this was rejected by the Panel as prejudicing an adequate supply of housing elsewhere. The Panel has, however, adopted a new set of figures from a revised run of the NEA’s demographic model. The NEA suggest that, under the re-run model, the RSS still allows for a **stable population** for County Durham but it receives a smaller proportion of new housing from a larger regional figure as shown below.

Total Net Dwelling Provision 2004-2021

Sub- Region	Submission Draft RSS	Percentage Share	Panel Report	Percentage Share
Tees Valley	29,000	27%	33,145	30%
Co. Durham	20,000	19%	19,040	17%
Northumberland	13,000	12%	13,235	12%
Tyne & Wear	45,000	42%	46,450	41%
NORTH EAST	107,000	100%	111,870	100%

20. These new sub-regional figures, which the NEA state result from a “technical exercise” using more recent demographic information, were circulated barely a month before the EiP. Of even greater concern is that the district distribution was not discussed at the EiP and is contained in a NEA information note, produced at the Panel’s request. The note clearly states “this model run has not been endorsed by the Assembly and no discussions have taken place with stakeholders”. The Panel themselves acknowledge “that there are some anomalies which are difficult to explain” but “as some of this data only became available during the EiP we have not been able to seek verification”. It is contested that to adopt unsubstantiated figures in this way may be subject to challenge.
21. It is of note also that more recent ONS population information shows sustained growth in the population of County Durham since 2001 and projects continued and significant population growth in both County Durham and the region as a whole in the RSS period to 2021. These new figures are at considerable variance with those adopted by the RSS Panel in terms of the amount of population growth anticipated. It is contended that the basis of the RSS projections are therefore out of date.
22. ONS 2004-based projections anticipate that a demographic renaissance will take place in the region with a sustained period of in-migration in the period 2004-2021. The region will grow by 2.6%, not 1.5% projected as in the RSS. If the trend is accurate it is anticipated that the region will need 141,800 additional dwellings, not the 112,000 proposed. All four sub-regions will benefit. For County Durham it is anticipated that population will grow by 2.9%, not the 0.1% allowed for in the RSS.
23. The extrapolation of these new population projections into dwelling requirements would produce a requirement of at least **21,000 additional new dwellings** (not 19,000 as proposed) to maintain **existing** population levels in County Durham. **To meet the predicted population increase – but retaining the 112,000 regional total allocation proposed by the Panel - would require about 23,000 new dwellings.** These figures accord with Durham County Council’s own 2004-based projections – which uses all the latest available information on births and deaths and projected mortality and fertility.
24. It is contested, therefore, that the figures resulting from the re-run of the NEA model and subsequently included in the Panel recommendations, are both suspect and out of date. Whichever way the total figure is divided, on current information the share attributed to County Durham will not deliver population stability and inevitably lead to population decline. It is vital, therefore, that in considering the Panel report, Government Office have regard to up-to-date information and accept the need for early review of the housing allocations.

25. The distribution of housing totals between districts as put forward by the Panel has not been the subject of debate and has not been endorsed by District Councils or in fact by the NEA. The changes proposed by the Panel are as follows:

Net Dwelling Provision County Durham 2004-2021 – Totals (per annum)

District	Submission Draft RSS	% Share	Panel Report	% Share	Proposed Change
Chester-le-Street	1785 (105)	9%	1530 (90)	8%	-255 (-15)
Derwentside	4250 (250)	21%	3230 (190)	17%	-1020 (-60)
Durham	2975 (175)	15%	3230 (190)	17%	+255 (+15)
Easington	2975 (175)	15%	2720 (160)	14%	-255 (-15)
Sedgefield	3995 (235)	20%	4930 (290)	26%	+935 (+55)
Teesdale	1190 (70)	6%	1360 (80)	7%	+170 (+10)
Wear Valley	2805 (165)	14%	2040 (120)	11%	-765 (-45)
COUNTY DURHAM	19975 (1175)	100%	19040 (1120)	100%	-935 (-55)

26. The implications of this distribution is that some District Councils could ‘build out’ their entire housing allocation (designed for development over the 17 year period to 2021) in the first half of the plan period because of the availability of existing planning permissions and current rates of build. As District Councils prepare their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), with so many commitments for future housing available through existing planning permissions, the ability for future land-use and development patterns to be influenced will be severely hindered. As shown below, in relation to the Panel report distribution, some authorities already have more housing permissions than are required.

District	RSS/Panel Allocation	Annual Rate of Build since 2004	Years Supply from 2004	Current Supply	Additional Allocation for LDF
Derwentside	4250	280	15	4181	59
	3215		11		-966
Easington	2965	231	13	2583	392
	2720		12		137
Wear Valley	2805	290	9	2795	10
	2040		7		-755

27. The Panel recommends further consideration be given to the allocations for Easington and Sedgefield and that any consequential adjustments should reflect the opportunity to increase the concentration of development in the conurbations. Whilst the NEA maintains that the revised County Durham total figure, of 19,040 over 17 years, would still allow for a stable population, if additional reductions are now made in some districts in favour of the conurbations this would not be the case and accentuate the concern that the RSS plans for decline in County Durham.

28. Any constraint on housing numbers will have inevitable consequences on housing markets in the County. Suppression of availability may lead to rising house prices and affordability issues, already experienced in some areas. The scale of allocations potentially available to District Councils to develop in LDFs will be insufficient to make any real impact on the task of achieving balance in the housing market, and may lead to the inability to maintain sustainable communities in some parts.
29. Government Office wrote to the Planning Inspectorate on 15 August 2006 asking the Panel to give further explanation of the main factors taken into account in determining the changes to the housing allocations in each district. In response the Panel has said they sought to identify whether the housing distribution resulting from the new projections accorded with the RSS locational strategy, such as supporting the core areas, maximising the use of urban brownfield sites and avoiding “excessive development in suburban/peripheral areas” such as Derwentside and Chester-le-Street. They state they are content with the output from the model apart from the district allocations for Easington, Sedgefield and Blyth Valley which they consider too high.
30. We are extremely concerned that the whole process of producing these new figures has been flawed and there **has been no opportunity for debate**. It is suggested that Government Office needs to enter into a dialogue with local authorities for the purposes of verification and checking information, before finalising Proposed Changes to the housing figures.

Focussing on growth and regeneration

The priority for regeneration within the County is directed towards specific Regeneration Areas to realise the economic potential of the County’s main towns and employment centres which are connected to and which economically contribute to the renaissance of the Tyne/Wear and Tees Valley City. These are:

- The Darlington - Newton Aycliffe/Spennymoor - Bishop Auckland strategic corridor;
- The Chester-le-Street –Stanley – Consett strategic corridor; and
- The East Durham A 19 strategic corridor focussed on Peterlee and Seaham.

Those transport and infrastructure improvements are promoted along the strategic corridors, including A19 junction improvements, A68 improvements and the East Durham Link Road (A1M – A690 – A19 link).

These Regeneration Corridors will complement the role of Durham City, the identified strategic employment sites and the rural offer to the Region’s economic well being.

31. The Panel has accepted the concept of a strategic focus on the city regions as the main driver of economic growth in the region. A concept that has been supported by previous County Durham submissions to the RSS on the basis that the strategy allowed for development in County Durham as contributing to prosperity in the city regions.
32. The Panel's recommended changes, however, further reinforce the strategy of concentration on development in the conurbations and in particular in the core areas of the City Regions. In seeking further concentration, they propose that only indigenous growth will be allowed to meet local needs in the regeneration towns of County Durham but "aspirations" for more significant growth or developments that could have an adverse impact on the regeneration of the conurbations will not be allowed. This concept is not accepted.
33. The Panel's narrow interpretation of "sustainable development" in terms of the locational strategy, places additional constraints on employment opportunities and housing provision outside the Tyne & Wear and Tees Valley local authority areas. Concentration on major new employment sites in the conurbations, rather than allowing for more locally based employment opportunities, encourages long distance commuting (almost inevitably car-based) resulting in increased congestion.
34. The Panel's approach will not only prejudice the County's ability to secure new investment and achieve its own regeneration but could damage the prospects of the Region as a whole and the aim of reducing regional disparities. The realism of relying so heavily on the success of the core areas is questioned. Constraining opportunities elsewhere casts doubt on the Region's ability to achieve the ambitious growth rate put forward in RSS, which the Panel has supported.
35. The concentration on the core areas of the city regions is considered counter to the approach now adopted in the respective Business Cases submitted for the City Regions. The Tees Valley Business Case, for example, clearly identifies the important strategic developmental relationship between the conurbation and County Durham through NetPark, and the growth corridors along the A19 to Peterlee, from Darlington to Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland.
36. The Panel is critical of the "blanket approach" to regeneration areas in County Durham in the RSS and recommend identification of more specific priorities. In particular they do not consider that all of the 12 towns identified as regeneration centres in County Durham require the same combination of action. However, the named towns are retained in the relevant RSS policies for the time being, as places outside the conurbations where regeneration should be supported.
37. The long-standing spatial strategy for the County, embodied in both the Structure Plan and District Local Plans, has been of urban focus on these 12 "major centres" serving a hinterland of related villages. 93.9% of the County's population lies within 5 miles of a major centre. Each of the 12 towns acts as a significant location for employment, services and housing, fulfilling the same role as the

region's larger urban areas and the case for retaining this role was strongly supported by the County Durham Authorities at the EiP.

38. Work currently being undertaken to revise the County Durham Economic Strategy has identified three strategic economic corridors in the County which already have a significant business base and have the potential for significant further investment. This is likely to include re-investment by successful companies and a large number of these businesses are in high value activities, with companies exporting to national and international markets.
39. The concept of strategic economic corridors fits comfortably with the approach adopted elsewhere in the region, such as SENNTRI. The Strategic Economic Corridors have been developed to meet the following criteria:
 - Sufficient critical mass to secure significant new investment and re-investment
 - Ability to contribute to the objectives of the City Region
 - Focus for the long term economic development of the area
 - Clear benefits from strategic approach to co-ordinating funding and activity

The corridors identified are:-

Darlington – Newton Aycliffe/Spennymoor - Bishop Auckland Corridor

40. The Darlington to Bishop Auckland strategic corridor contains the main commercial centres of south Durham and a wide rural hinterland stretching far into the North Pennines to the west. It contains the main towns of Bishop Auckland (pop.25,000), Shildon (pop.10,000) and Newton Aycliffe (pop.25,500) located and linked along a strategic rail and road corridor and astride the A1(M) gateway to the North East Region.
41. The area is an important economic entity, strategically situated at the entrance to the region and astride the urban/rural divide. It is an area of great economic opportunity with vibrant commercial and retail centres and a network of major employment zones (Newton Aycliffe industrial estate alone accommodates nearly 10,000 manufacturing jobs giving it high regional significance). It is an area which can generate significant economic growth, positively contributing to the future development of the Tees Valley City Region. Given the prevailing levels of economic and social deprivation it is also an area which will benefit from city region growth to generate additional employment opportunities.
42. The focus of activity will include;
 - **Strategic employment site/premises investment:** Enhancements to the strong network of strategically important employment sites including Aycliffe, Bracks Farm Bishop Auckland and Green Lane Spennymoor;

- **The Urban renaissance** of Bishop Auckland and Newton Aycliffe town centres, including proposals for housing market renewal and retail re-development;
- The creation of a **strategic tourist zone** along the Darlington to Bishop Auckland branch railway, linking up Darlington Railway Museum, Locomotion Shildon and the re-opened Weardale Railway, providing an integrated visitor attraction of regional significance and a link to Eastgate. Also including a major landscape restoration programme to the historic parkland of Auckland Palace, the home of the Bishop of Durham, as a major historic tourism attraction.

Chester le Street - Stanley - Consett Corridor

43. The Consett / Stanley / Chester-le-Street Corridor is an important investment location in its own right, close to the heart of the Tyne and Wear City Region. It is an area of considerable economic opportunity and offers investors and companies further choice with regard to where to invest in the North East. As importantly, the Corridor is already the base to a number of very successful companies. The Corridor has a number of important commercial and retail centres, although a long period of under-investment has resulted in some centres not realising their full potential. There are a number of major employment locations with the Corridor including a number of high quality industrial estates (Derwentside has 30 industrial estates with over 5 million square feet of floorspace). It is an area which can make a major contribution to the City Region and the regional economy.
44. The focus of activity will include:
- **Strategic employment site/premises investment:** Enhancements to the strong network of strategically important employment sites including Tanfield Lea and Tanfield Lea North Industrial Estate; Drum Industrial Estate and the Riverside Business Park;
 - **The Urban renaissance** of Consett and Stanley town centres, including proposals for housing market renewal and retail re-development;
 - High quality support for a **strategic tourist zone** incorporating Beamish, the proposed major sports / leisure centre in Stanley and Riverside County Cricket Ground.

East Durham A19 Corridor

45. The East Durham A19 Corridor provides a complementary spatial component to the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley City Regions and can provide additional opportunities for growth and economic re-investment. Given the potential of Seaham and the opportunity to continue the economic regeneration of Peterlee, it can also make a substantial contribution to addressing the high levels of

economic deprivation found in East Durham and hence the economic regeneration of County Durham.

46. The Corridor has considerable economic potential and includes a number of regionally significant assets. Located only eight miles from Durham City and ten miles from Sunderland, Peterlee is home to 25% of Easington's population and a large proportion of employment. As a new town, designed to accommodate significant manufacturing employment it has a number of large industrial estates. The Seaham/Murton area is in the process of economic regeneration with much progress being made to create new employment generating infrastructure and with its coastal location and harbour offers enormous potential to develop a new and sustainable economy. There are, in addition, the attractions of the East Durham Heritage Coast as well as Dalton Park, a major retail destination and initial work with the University of Newcastle over the establishment of a geothermal energy sector leading to greater economic diversity. This coupled with increasing levels of market led housing investment represents a considerable process of renaissance that is underway and offers the potential of further economic improvements with appropriate support.
47. The focus of activity includes:-
 - **Strategic employment site/premises investment:** Enhancements to the network of strategically important investment and employment sites including Spectrum and Hawthorn, Seaham North Dock; Dalton Park Phase 2; former Murton Colliery site; and the North West and South West Industrial Estate, Bracken Hill and White House Point sites at Peterlee.
 - **The Urban renaissance** of Peterlee and Seaham including housing market renewal programmes;
 - High quality support for a **strategic tourist zone** based on the Heritage Coast and heritage experience linked to Christian as well as industrial and social heritage connected to coal mining and its associated communities. Other attractors include Seaham Hall Hotel and Spa and Dalton Park Phase 2 as a major leisure attraction/destination.
 - **Access Improvements** including a range of highway improvements, the A19 connection to the Southern Sunderland radial route and East Durham Coastal Rail – additional investment in rail halts at Seaham and a new location(s) to improve connections to the adjacent conurbations.
48. That members agree that Government Office when reviewing the regeneration areas in accordance with the Panel's recommendation, have regard to and adopt the approach to strategic corridors for growth and regeneration now proposed within County Durham.

RECOMMENDED

That members endorse the above as the content of MP's submission to Government Office on behalf of the County Durham Association of Local Authorities.

Officer responsible for the report

Robert Hope
Strategic Director for Environment and
Regeneration
Ext 264

Author of the report

Robert Hope

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

LOW WILLINGTON OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

purpose of the report

1. To outline the current position in relation to the Low Willington office development and seek an additional contribution from Wear Valley District Council Capital resources to enable the project to be completed.

background

2. The development of a courtyard suite of offices on Low Willington Industrial Estate is a joint project between Durham County Council and Wear Valley District Council. Construction commenced in April 2006 with MMPlasline (MMP) as the successful tenderer.
3. Unfortunately, with MMP going into administration in June, construction ground to a halt. Advice from Economic Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as a major funder to the scheme, has required that a new tender be issued to complete the project and this has resulted in increased costs.
4. Negotiations with both Single Programme and ERDF have maximised the funding from these sources but this has still left a shortfall for implementing the project. The funding profile is as follows (this includes previous payments and the calculations for completion of the project):

Funder	Approved Contribution		Revised Contribution	
Single Programme	£1,050,000	43.0%	£1,149,948	41.1%
ERDF	£513,673	21.0%	£588,719	21.0%
Durham County Council	£439,000	18.0%	£530,899	19.0%
NRF	£289,000	11.8%	£300,899	10.7%
Wear Valley District Council	£150,000	6.1%	£150,000	5.4%
Total	£2,441,673		£2,720,465	
Funding shortfall	£0		£80,000	2.9%

5. Of the amount identified above Wear Valley District (including the NRF element) has already contributed £353,209 towards the costs paid to MMP before they were placed into administration.

6. The increase of Wear Valley District Council resources to fill this shortfall would ensure that both authorities are equal contributors to the scheme and therefore be entitled to an equal share of the rental returns. Agreement has been reached that Wear Valley District Council will be more actively involved in the operation of these premises and this will be formally agreed in writing.
7. The preferred tender is valid until early January and there are still processes to be undertaken with Single Programme and ERDF to confirm the funding package, but these can only commence when the other contributions have been confirmed. It is hoped that if this can be achieved quickly to allow construction to re-commence with the new contractor in January and be completed in autumn.
8. If a successful funding package cannot be put together then there are serious implications for the resources that have already been claimed as the Single Programme, ERDF and NRF funding packages are all based upon outputs being gained in return for the investment and if the project is undeliverable then clawback of these funding sources may become an issue.

potential funding

9. Having analysed the possibilities and reviewed the current Capital Programme and NRF Programme, the following potential sources have been identified:

Economic Development Fund	WVDC	£30,000
West Auckland / Fieldon Bridge	WVDC	£20,000
	NRF	£30,000

10. The half-year estimates show that it is anticipated that none of the available Economic Development Fund will be spent in 2006/7. In addition, whilst the West Auckland scheme is a valuable and worthwhile proposal in the long term, the Low Willington scheme is deliverable in the short term and it is our view that this is a higher priority.

conclusion

11. This is a very unusual situation with regards to this project. Whilst the costs of the project have increased, due to the issues outlined, there is still evidence of need and demand for the premises being built. In the context of the entire scheme, the current funding shortfall is relatively small. Potential funding sources are identified above to enable Wear Valley District Council to maintain an equal share of the cost and therefore an equal share of the rental income generated in the future. In accordance with financial regulations a report will be submitted to members seeking their approval for the transfer of funds identified in para. 9.
12. It is also suggested that discussions be had with Durham County Council to secure in future a bond from contractors to ensure risk to project implementation is reduced.

RECOMMENDED

that Members agree to the request to increase the Wear Valley District Council contribution to this scheme utilising the resources identified above, and allow changes to the NRF programme to be sought.

Officer responsible for the report

Robert Hope
Strategic Director for Environment and
Regeneration
Ext 264

Author of the report

Alan Weston
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EASTGATE RENEWABLE ENERGY VILLAGE

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

8 December 2006

An updated illustrative master plan for the redevelopment of the former cement works site at Eastgate was endorsed by the Weardale Task Force at its meeting on 14 November. The revisions follow comments made during last year's public consultation exercise and new interests received since then from potential developers and operators.

Form and Structure

The updated master plan of the renewable energy village shows a more organic layout than in the previous plan – one more reminiscent of existing villages in the Dale, with the centre of the renewable energy village defined more strongly. An effect of this is to reduce long straight sections of street that appeared in the previous master plan and which may have, on occasions, become wind tunnels. The revised arrangement at the centre of the renewable energy village also allows for a larger hot springs spa – one of sufficient size to accommodate a pool for general public use (in contrast to smaller pools associated with more exclusive spa facilities).

The removal of the plant nursery – an early interest from a potential operator has not materialised – and the relocation of the fish ponds to the south of river mean that built development no longer stretches as far west on the site as previously proposed. This provides the opportunity to extend the visitor car park at the western end of the site – to the extent that it may be possible to dispense with the second visitor car park, on the south side of the river, or only use this as an overflow facility during peak periods in the summer.

Two main access points – the existing works access and a new access at the western end of the site – continue to serve the renewable energy village, but, with more emphasis on the western visitor car park, it is the latter that will see the greatest use. This will help to reduce still

further the number of car movements through the renewable energy village, where pedestrians, not general traffic, are intended to dominate.

The intended style of development – a contemporary version of the local vernacular – remains unchanged. The inclusion of more traditional housing, at the expense of apartments, is in part aimed at strengthening the local vernacular theme.

Also unchanged is the intention to strengthen the landscaping of the site, particularly around the western boundary of the site and within the western car park – to the extent that when viewed from distance the car park will have a wood-like appearance. A change in the layout of the car park, responding more to the ground-shape of this part of the site and changes in levels, will also help to make the car park less intrusive in the general landscape.

Land Uses

Described below, from west to east, are the main changes in the proposed land uses on the old works area:

- As described above, the western visitor car park is increased in size.
- Within the car park, the tram shed is relocated to a less visually intrusive location. From the north, the tram shed will not be visible. From the south, the shed is set against a backdrop of rising land and existing trees, and is therefore less apparent. The historic tram service continues to start from the western car park but now terminates at a picnic area at the eastern end of the riverside park rather than extending across the river to the southern visitor car park which may no longer be required.
- A Living Machine sewage treatment system – effectively an accelerated reed bed process in a large greenhouse - has been introduced. Plants can be grown (potentially, by local residents) within the greenhouse as part of the process.
- Adjacent to the Living Machine, outdoor allotments, for use by local residents, have been introduced (the possibility of their inclusion having been raised during the public consultation process).
- The permanent residential accommodation is now located in a more attractive setting with many of the houses overlooking or close to the river (all housing having previously

been located along the northern side of the development, close to the embankment running up to the A689). The permanent residential accommodation is now also separated from the proposed holiday lets - they were in together before – the two uses, on reflection, not being considered to be especially compatible. (The holiday lets broadly remain in their previous location.)

The previous master plan included 131 permanent residential properties and holiday lets, plus 48 live/work units, a total of 179. The updated master plan includes 65 houses, 25 holiday lets and, located towards the eastern end of the site, 9 live/work units, a total of 99. A limited number of comments were received during the consultation process in respect of the quantity of housing proposed. The reduced level now included in the master plan is considered to be the minimum necessary to ensure that future residents feel an integral part of the overall development, not swamped by it.

- The proposed community centre is also transferred, from the eastern end of the site, to be close to the homes of the on-site residents.
- The workshops and offices, previously divided between the western end and eastern end of the renewable energy village are now mainly located together, under the generic title of 'flexible business units', on the north side of the renewable energy village.
- As referred to above, the hot springs spa has been enlarged and the hotel relocated to its western side. This has allowed for the introduction, immediately opposite the station, of a renewable energy visitor centre, tea rooms, craft shops and a restaurant at ground floor level with an extensive education centre (including classrooms, display areas, etc) above. Some concerns were expressed during the public consultation exercise about the lack of education-related uses proposed. Education was always planned to be an integral part of the master plan: the specific allocation of an education centre is intended to reinforce this fact.
- A hostel has been introduced, both to offer a wider choice of on-site accommodation for visitors and to provide possible accommodation for any seasonal workers over the summer period engaged in the various visitor attractions.
- A significant introduction is the tilapia fish rearing building at the eastern end of the site, close to the existing sub-station and proposed biomass plant that will fuel the district heating system. The proposal, put forward by the aptly named Weardale Fish Farm,

currently operating in Kent, will utilise the natural hot water from beneath the site to breed tilapia, a replacement for declining cod stocks that is already finding its way onto the shelves of the major supermarkets.

- The land-take of the railway station and tracks has been increased, both in width and length. Additional platforms now allow for the eventual operation of the local heritage service, a commuter service and excursion trains. The latter, being up to 13 carriages long, have also required an extension to the length of two of the platforms.
- The locomotive roundhouse, displaying historic working engines, has been relocated to near the site of the old social club. Changing facilities, for those using the playing fields, are to be built up against the outside wall of the roundhouse.
- A consequence of the increased land-take of the railway is that the playing fields are reduced in size. They are still, however, substantial, able to accommodate a football pitch and one junior pitch or a reasonably sized village cricket pitch.
- The extent of the riverside park remains unchanged, although its character in the vicinity of the centre of the renewable energy village is now more akin to a town park, with more seating, more colourful plants and a more intricate network of footpaths.

Riverside Meadows

With the southern visitor car park at most to be used on an occasional basis only, the logic of running a circular route of the Green Dragon narrow-gauge railway from here through the riverside meadows no longer applies. Therefore, the Green Dragon is now to operate solely on the other route previously proposed, starting at the 'tops' terminus of the funicular railway and running through the western quarry.

The removal of the narrow-gauge railway does, however, provide scope for other opportunities:

- Ludwell Farm, previously ear-marked for a rural training and holiday centre, is now proposed as an outdoor education centre. Chateau Beaumont, based in Stanhope and currently operating an outdoor education centre in Normandy, propose a facility that would accommodate up to 200 children at any one time. Additional accommodation would be created through the construction of buildings with the appearance of historic barns, focused

around a newly created yard. Adjoining fields would be used for informal play and outdoor activities.

- Koi carp fish ponds, utilising the geothermal water, are now proposed to be located close to but above the river at a point where they are visually discrete, look natural in their setting and enjoy the security of being away from a public area (as opposed to their previous location, on the north side of the river, immediately adjacent to the renewable energy village). An existing farm track provides access to the fish ponds via Ludwell Farm.
- Mountain bike and cross-country bike trails (as described in more detail below) are now incorporated within the riverside meadows bringing riders down from the 'tops' to a new bridge over the river. A skills loop is included between Ludwell Farm and the river, where beginners can test their competence and more experienced riders can train. A field between Ludwell Farm and the fish ponds has been allocated as an informal kick-about area for the outdoor education centre for the majority of the time but would be available as an informal arena where occasional mountain biking competitive events would finish.

Overall Site Master Plan

The update of the overall site master plan shows the removal of the ski training area on the slopes – doubts having been raised during the public consultation exercise about the 'greenness' of producing artificial snow for the ski training area – and, conversely, the inclusion of an extensive network of cycle trails across many parts of the site, comments having been made about the potential for cycling, both from individuals and local cycling businesses.

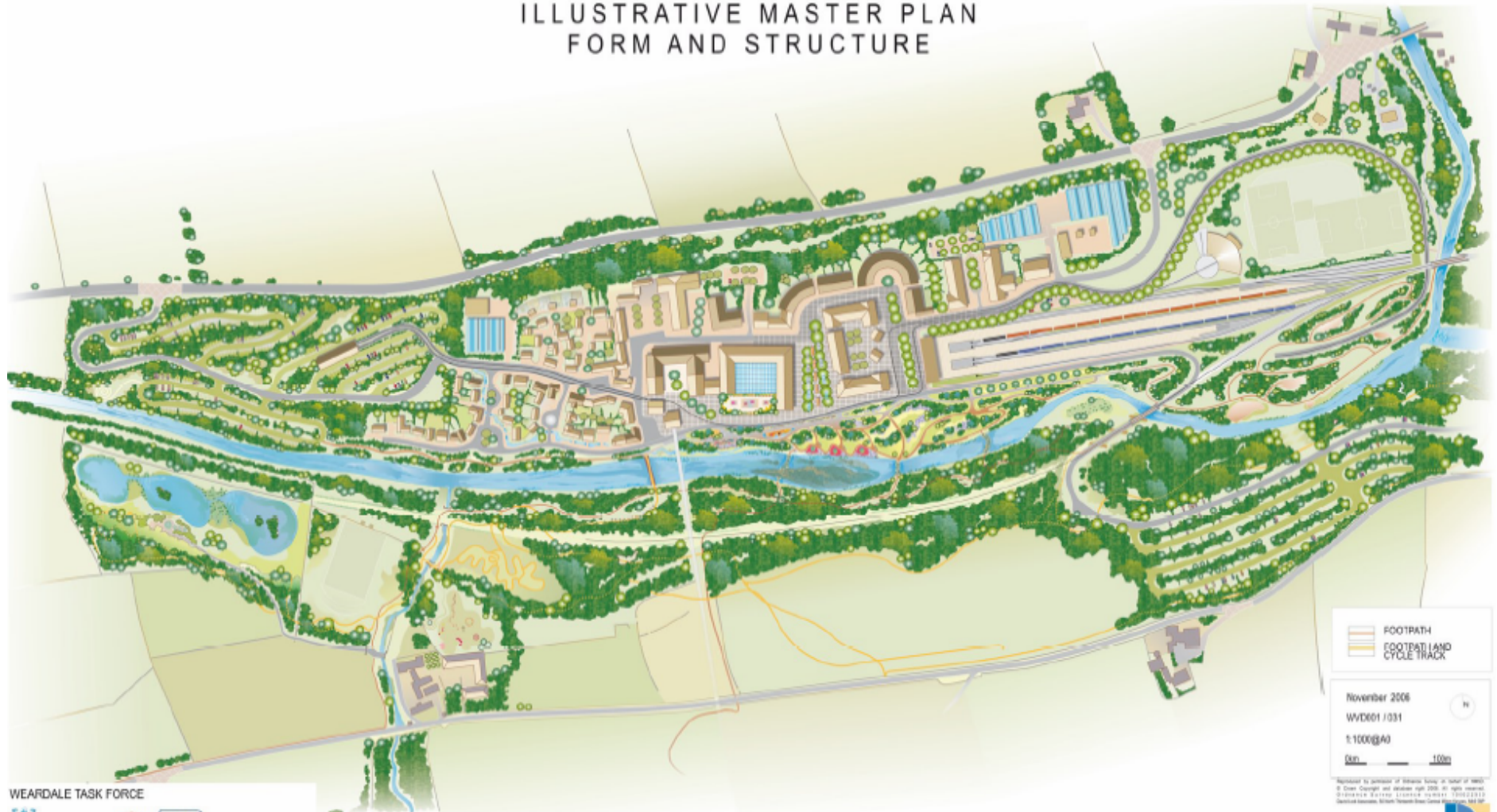
Eastgate could potentially become the leading mountain bike course centre in England, catering for all levels, from beginners to professionals participating in World Championship events. Seven trails are currently envisaged. Cyclists would take their bikes to the tops using the funicular railway. From here, there would be a choice of five routes down to the new bridge across the river, these routes passing through a new underpass that would be created beneath the Stanhope-Westgate back road. Two other routes, with start points further up beyond the funicular railway terminus, would be for competition use only.

In addition to the mountain biking, there would also be:

- an extensive network of cross-country routes, from easy family cycling to international competitive trails;
- a fourtrack circuit up on the tops where four riders at a time race against one another over obstacles; and
- free-rider trails, where cyclists going both up and down the hillside would encounter various difficult challenges.

In the updated overall site master plan, activities and uses in the riverside meadows, on the slopes and at the tops are intended to be consistent with – indeed, reinforce - the aims of the renewable energy village (just as they were considered to be in the previous plan). Some of these uses are distinctly ‘green’ (the wind turbines, the fish ponds, the new plantations); some are clearly of a direct educational value (the Rock Park, the outdoor education centre); whilst others, including the mountain biking, dry toboggan run and narrow-gauge railway, will add to the tourism offer.

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN FORM AND STRUCTURE



WEARDALE TASK FORCE



EASTGATE RENEWABLE ENERGY VILLAGE

November 2006

WVD001 / 031

1:1000 @ A0

0m 10m

Prepared by permission of Weardale Task Force on behalf of WEED.
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Produced in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1967.
Detailed location shown on the Ordnance Survey map.

DAVID LOCK ASSOCIATES
100% PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN



RENEWABLE ENERGY VILLAGE

- See detailed plan for full range of proposed uses and activities
- HOT SPRINGS SPA**
 - WEARDALE RAILWAY EASTGATE STATION**
 - PUBLIC RAILWAY TERMINUS**
 - CYCLE CENTRE**
Parking cycle hire, eBike/accs, cafe and refreshment facilities, equipment hire/purchase
 - BIOSOLIDS PLANT**
Feeding the distributed system
 - THE VILLAGE GREEN**
Parking space near bus stop linking village green to public connections
 - VOSS RICH PARKING AREA**
 - SOIL CARE CENTRE**
Bicycle storage reserved to provide access for cars, e-bikes, e-cycles and pedal bikes (e-cycles/pedal bikes and/or e-cycles)
 - FOOT TUNNELL**
Linking village off the main road
 - STEPHEN TUNNELL CIRCULAR**
Linking village park connection with
- ## THE REVERSED ROAD CORSE
- FISH BREEDING POND**
Using the residual water from underground
 - NET WALK RESTROOM/TEN POINT**
Entrance point for ground level water course
 - LIFFELL POND**
Outdoor exercise centre
 - OVERFLOW PARKING AREA**
Recreation space within area identified for occasional use only
 - OVERSEER FOOTPATH**
 - SOIL CARE**
New cycle path to be used as for long point of aggregation for only
 - ADAPTABLE TRANSFER POINT**
Where there is transitional clarity from the main railway to main footpath

- ## THE SLOPED HILLSIDE
- PUBLIC RAILWAY**
Parking cycle hire, e-bike/accs, cafe/refreshment, woodland walks and dog/buggy route
 - DRY TUNNELL GALLERY**
The building will be feature
 - TREE CLIMBED PILL**
Children's play area placed out of woodland with feature tree planted
 - SHAW'S GARDENS AND BIRTHPLACE**
Family play area
 - BIOSOLIDS PLANT**
Stackable, new woodland and supply for main biomass plant and Green Dragon railway
 - EAST FROM GALLERY**
Parking biomass as part of ground connection to sustainable woodland and wood sculpture features
 - SOIL CARE TUNNELL**
Sustainable sculpture on footpath
 - SMALL HILLSIDE CLIMBER**
Climbing route in woodland and challenging cycle features in woodland
 - WALKING CENTRE**
Walking centre, only feature of wood sculpture

- ## THE TOPS QUARRY AREAS
- WOOD TUNNELL**
 - WOOD TUNNELL VIEWING GALLERY**
View from main tunnel with viewing gallery
 - OPENED FAN**
Feature gate in the quarry (part of quarry and linked access to public features)
 - ORONATE QUARRY ZONE**
Small scale quarrying of aggregate stone
 - ROCK PARK WITH QUARRY PLATFORM**
Inland stone quarrying (small scale) equipment with viewing platform overlooking on road quarrying point
 - ROCK PARK WITH QUARRY PLATFORM**
High ground level for cycle parking, information, cultural, ecology, geology, landscape history and art
 - UNDER TUNNELL**
Equated to the low level of the main biomass plant
 - WATER TUNNELL**
Potential biomass access point to underground cave system
 - PUBLIC RAILWAY UPPER TERNUS POND AND START OF MAIN CYCLE ROUTES**
Main access point for road and cycle routes
 - CAPE RESERVATION INFORMATION POINT**
Footpath providing information of features of the top and upper slopes

FOOTPATHS

- Public Rights of Way
- New Way-Marked Footpath

CYCLE ROUTES & FACILITIES

- Green Cycle Route (existing or existing in the future) and challenging sections of the routes
- Blue Cycle Route
- Green Cycle Route
- Footpath Cycle Route
- Blue Cycle Route offering training and assessment of skills
- Green Cycle Route for E-cycles
- Blue Cycle Route for E-cycles
- Green Cycle Route for Longer Distance Competitive Events
- Green Cycle Route Associated with outdoor education centre

ROCK PARK & QUARRY ACCESS

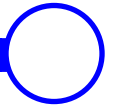
- Access to Rock Park and Onnate Quarry

December 2006
WDC01034
Scale 1:5000 @ A0

DAVID LOCK ASSOCIATES
TOWN PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN



EASTGATE RENEWABLE ENERGY VILLAGE HILLSIDE AND QUARRIES



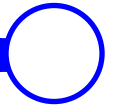
Preface

Bishop Auckland is one of County Durham's major towns and with a population of 25,000 it is the main commercial, residential and employment centre serving a wider 150,000 population within South West Durham.

The town centre is the home of a number of national multiple retailers and accommodates the highest amount of retail outlets and retail floor space of any town centre in County Durham. It is also a conservation area and a centre of great historic significance being the home of the Bishop of Durham.

The District Council, in responding to the economic needs of the District, commissioned research to help identify and develop the potential of the town centre to realise the great economic opportunity the town centre provides in meeting the wider needs of south west Durham.

This report provides a summary of the results of the commission undertaken by Red Box Design Group. It provides a pro-active design based master plan for the northern part of the town centre. It identifies new development opportunities and areas for environmental improvement, and it presents an integrated programme of intervention for both the public and private sector.



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Introduction

This master plan has been produced as part of ONE NorthEast's Urban Renaissance programme, and has been co-sponsored by ONE NorthEast and Wear Valley District Council. The urban renaissance programme forms part of a wider programme of improvement in all the major towns of County Durham currently being developed by the County Durham Economic Partnership, supported by ONE NorthEast.

Bishop Auckland is the major commercial and residential centre in south-west Durham having a catchment area extending into Weardale and Teesdale. The town centre is a major retail location with a number of national multiple stores including ASDA, Morrison's, Boots and Marks and Spencer's, and with 362 retail outlets and nearly 1m sq.ft. of retail floor space, is the largest retail town centre in County Durham.



Existing Aerial View of Bishop Auckland ▲

New developments in recent years have enhanced the retail offer of the town, particularly the development of a new 45,000 sq.ft. ASDA store in the southern part of the town, but the town has struggled economically in competition with other more distant centres which continue to attract significant retail spend from residents of the town's catchment area.

Wear Valley as a whole is economically vulnerable being ranked in the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation as the 32nd most deprived district in England and Wales, and having the highest unemployment rate in County Durham. As a result the Council have commissioned a new economic strategy to address economic problems and to exploit clear areas of potential and opportunity.

As a consequence the District Council has identified the economic potential of the town centre. Achieving improvements to the vitality, viability and competitiveness of Bishop Auckland Town centre and the employment opportunities that this will bring is an important strand of the regeneration efforts of both Wear Valley District Council and the Wear Valley Local Strategic Partnership.

The District Council has taken a proactive approach to town centre activity and, assisted by EDAW, produced a Town Centre Strategy for Bishop Auckland in 2000. The publicly agreed vision of Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy vision is:

“To restore Bishop Auckland’s role as a vibrant and attractive market town for all the communities of Wear Valley and South West Durham as a whole, building upon the heritage and character of the town centre to enhance its competitiveness as a place to shop, work visit and live”.

To achieve this vision 18 key development proposals formed part of the strategy. Major developments have taken place including the new ASDA development and the refurbishment of the Newgate Centre. Public realm enhancement has taken place in Fore Bondgate and Newgate Street and a car parking strategy has been introduced. In addition a number of other development proposals are currently at various stages of development. These include:

- The redevelopment of the North Bondgate car park and adjacent bus depot.
- New housing development in North/High Bondgate.
- The restoration of Auckland Palace historic parkland and development of a visitor centre.
- The further redevelopment of the Newgate shopping centre and bus station.

Underpinning the strategy has been the development of town centre management orchestrated and directed by a very pro-active community and business based Town Centre Forum. As a result of the significant interest in the town since 2000, a review of the strategy has commenced to ensure that the town is best placed to meet future challenges and to realise new development opportunities for economic and retail growth. This will also contribute to the review of the existing District Local Plan and will ensure planning policy accords with national retail planning guidance. As part of this review a retail study has already been carried out. This design-based master plan produced by REDBOX Design Groups on behalf of the District Council is seen as a critical element of this review.

Design Based Master Plan

The master plan provides a detailed framework to promote, implement and co-ordinate the development of a number of important sites and public realm schemes leading to the regeneration of the northern part of Bishop Auckland town centre. The area of interest is shown on Figure 1, over the page.

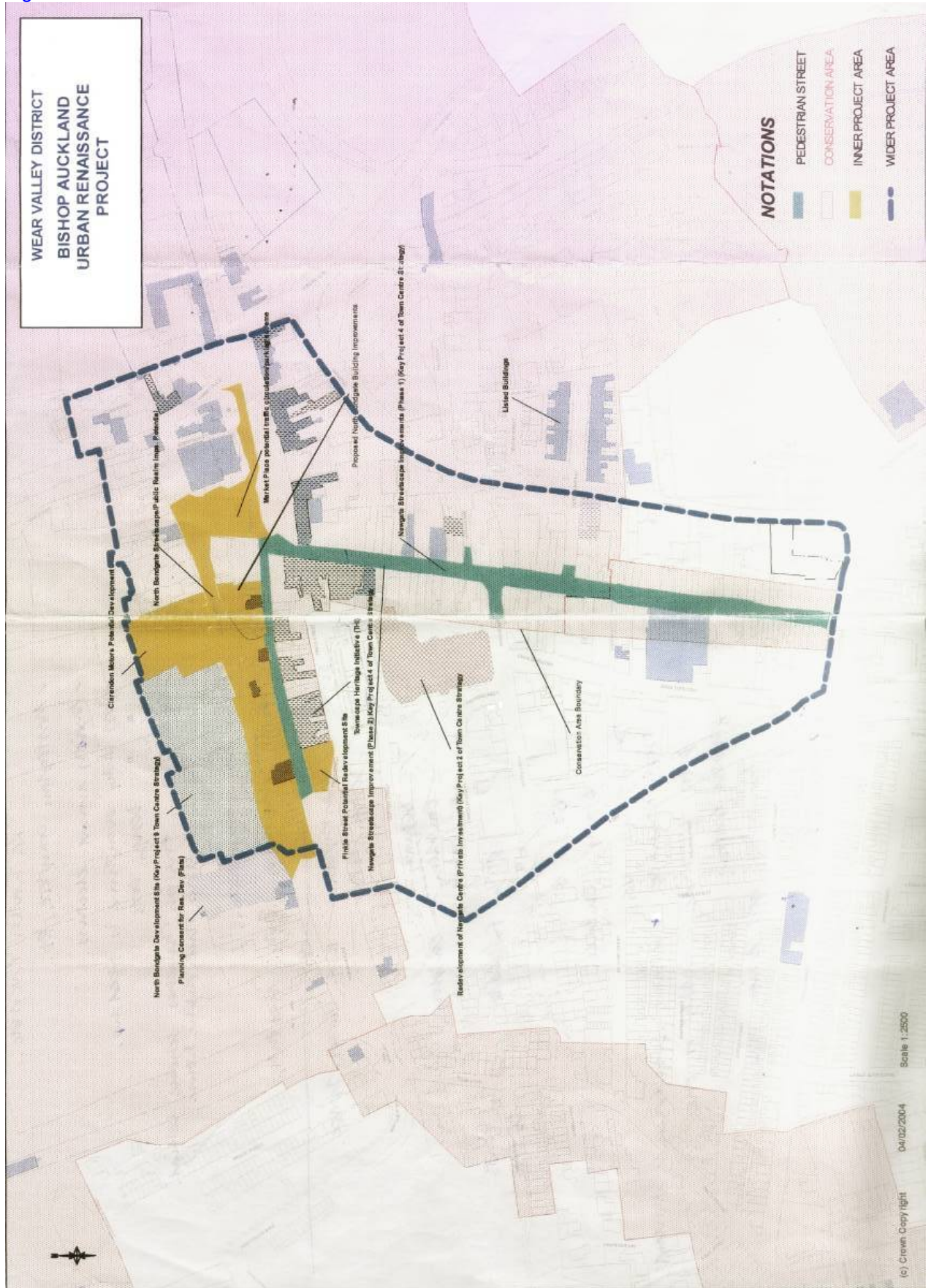
The basis of the master plan is:

- The identification of key public spaces and buildings, and proposals for their significant improvement: and
- The identification and promotion of critical development opportunities in the northern part of the town (particularly in Market Place, Fore and North Bondgate).

To meet the objectives the master plan includes:

- Public realm design proposals throughout the northern part of the town centre;
- Building improvement proposals, including proposals for possible group repair of North Bondgate frontages;
- Integration with other proposals, including the North Bondgate development site (car park/bus depot), Bishop's Palace Park Landscape restoration and visitor proposals, and Newgate Centre development proposals;
- Identification and design proposals for important development sites (including Clarendon Motors, Fore Bondgate, Rudd's Yard and Westgate Road sites);
- Proposals which exploit the potential to link and integrate the northern part of the town with the riverside and countryside to the north; and
- Traffic/management proposals (including exploration of Market Place circulation changes) and the possibilities for additional parking provision.

Figure 1:



Economic Context

The main Master Plan report sets out the appraisal of the land use and economic activities within Bishop Auckland town centre, their functional linkages, and the competitive position of the town centre in the context of the economic and retail baseline information available. This has been informed by extensive consultations with key interests both community and private in the town. It consists of a number of elements which assess the existing land use pattern, sectoral performance and benchmark the economic performance of the town centre. This covers the economic sectors for retail/retail services, residential and tourism and leisure facilities.

Retail function

The main factors arising from the economic/retail assessment are:

- Significant strength in retail offer in floorspace and retail outlets, the largest town centre in County Durham.
- A particular large number of national retailers, including two major convenience superstores (of a size often found in out-of-town locations);
- The centre is a focus for retail expenditure for a wide area extending across all of south west Durham;
- In total 45% of expenditure in the town is retained in the town centre (conversely expenditure leakage is high);
- A feeling that the town is, however, underperforming;
- Much of the floorspace is considered sub-optimal for modern day retailing requirements;
- A number of significant national retailers are not present in the town but a significant number of retailer requests have been expressed;
- Above average vacancy rate;
- Falling national retail ranking; and
- Competition from other centres (high expenditure leakage).

To address these is a strong desire to strengthen the current overall retail offer. Demand clearly exists in the catchment area, and the town offers the potential to clawback leakage of expenditure. The Master Plan is essential to identify new development opportunities.

Other Town Centre Functions

The economic appraisal demonstrates that the creation of a competitive Town Centre requires the assembly of the necessary 'building blocks' and appropriate investment to attract shoppers, business and leisure visitors and their expenditure. In addition the Town Centre is and will be home to numerous residents who live in and around the

centre to take advantage of the services and facilities available to them. A range of opportunities are there to be exploited and promoted and in summary the necessary conditions for a sustainable and competitive town centre – building upon existing resources – will be as follows:

- Additional infill housing;
- Consolidation and building of the population and expenditure base;
- Generating housing for elderly in appropriate locations close to facilities;
- Efficient reuse of available property and reduction in voids and vacancies;
- Use of development to create new frontages and put ‘fronts on backs’- eg.at Kingsway;
- Attraction of more diverse range of retailers; and
- Attraction of further retail and support services.

In addition to the retail and residential offer, the town centre has a significant tourism offer. The “historic” quarter of the Bishop Auckland Palace, the Market Place and Fore Bondgate, at the heart of the conservation area, is a significant tourist attraction. The potential to exploit this as an economic asset is great. The events led strategy developed by the Town Centre Forum has built upon the historic and tourist potential of the town, with notable success. Other opportunities for enhancement are:-

- Refurbishment of Auckland Castle Park;
- Further tourist use of Auckland Palace;
- The heritage potential of the Weardale Railway;
- The Stan Laurel heritage; and
- The link to other attractions including Binchester Roman Fort and Escomb Saxon Church.

The Master Plan provides the context to further develop these features and achieve their support for the growth of the town centre.

Urban Fabric

Underpinning the Master Plan is a detailed assessment of urban fabric, and an understanding and appreciation of this had led to the detailed Master Plan proposals. The Master Plan focusses upon the northern part of the town centre outlined on Figure 1. This comprises the North and Fore Bondgate areas, Market Place, Kingsway, Newgate Street north and Westgate Road. It has also included the listed buildings in east Victoria Avenue, the garths bounded by Kingsway, Gib Chare and Castle Chare, and the open space between North Bondgate and the River Wear – all areas of important heritage and landscape value. Whilst the physical proposals contained in this report are confined to this area, these have been considered against wider studies of the townscape where the urban, landscape and economic characteristics were deemed to be interactive. In particular it was felt that the large floorplate retailing offer now present in the vicinity of South Newgate Street is exerting considerable pressure on the viability of the town's historic quarter. In the same way the Peel Street area currently accommodates a number of active commercial concerns. These create problems of traffic access and congestion, and more appropriate land uses, such as specialist retail, housing and leisure could well lead to the detriment of the historic quarter's sustainability if not properly controlled.

The under-performance of the northern part of the town centre can be directly attributed, but not confined, to the following:

- External economic competition;
- A one-dimensional evening economy;
- Insufficient occupied housing stock;
- Poor public realm (recent improvements in the vicinity of Newgate Street are an obvious exception);
- Destruction of much of the towns historic fine-grained street patterns;
- Poor linkages between key nodes and attractions;
- Historic failures of development control. (The existing bus station fails as an attractive first impression of the town on several levels, and the original Newgate Shopping Centre design has created an unfortunate conflict of private, public and service space in a pivotal area of the town and west Fore Bondgate);
- Haphazard car parking areas owing more to short term expediency than forward planning. (This is particularly evident along Kingsway and west Fore Bondgate);
- Poor environment to the market place, a space dominated by through-traffic and late night anti social behaviour; and
- Inadequate strategic signage and brand awareness.

The principal objective of the improvements to the public realm is to enhance and create new spaces that are interesting, safe and attractive. Key elements will include:-

- Pedestrian priority over vehicles.
- Enhancing and protecting vistas and views of landmarks.
- Clear and direct routes.
- Legible signage.
- Well lit and safe environments.
- New opportunities for civic and community activities.
- Places that encourage social interaction.
- An enriched experience of place through use of high quality materials.
- An inclusive environment that can be used by everyone.

Master Plan and Vision

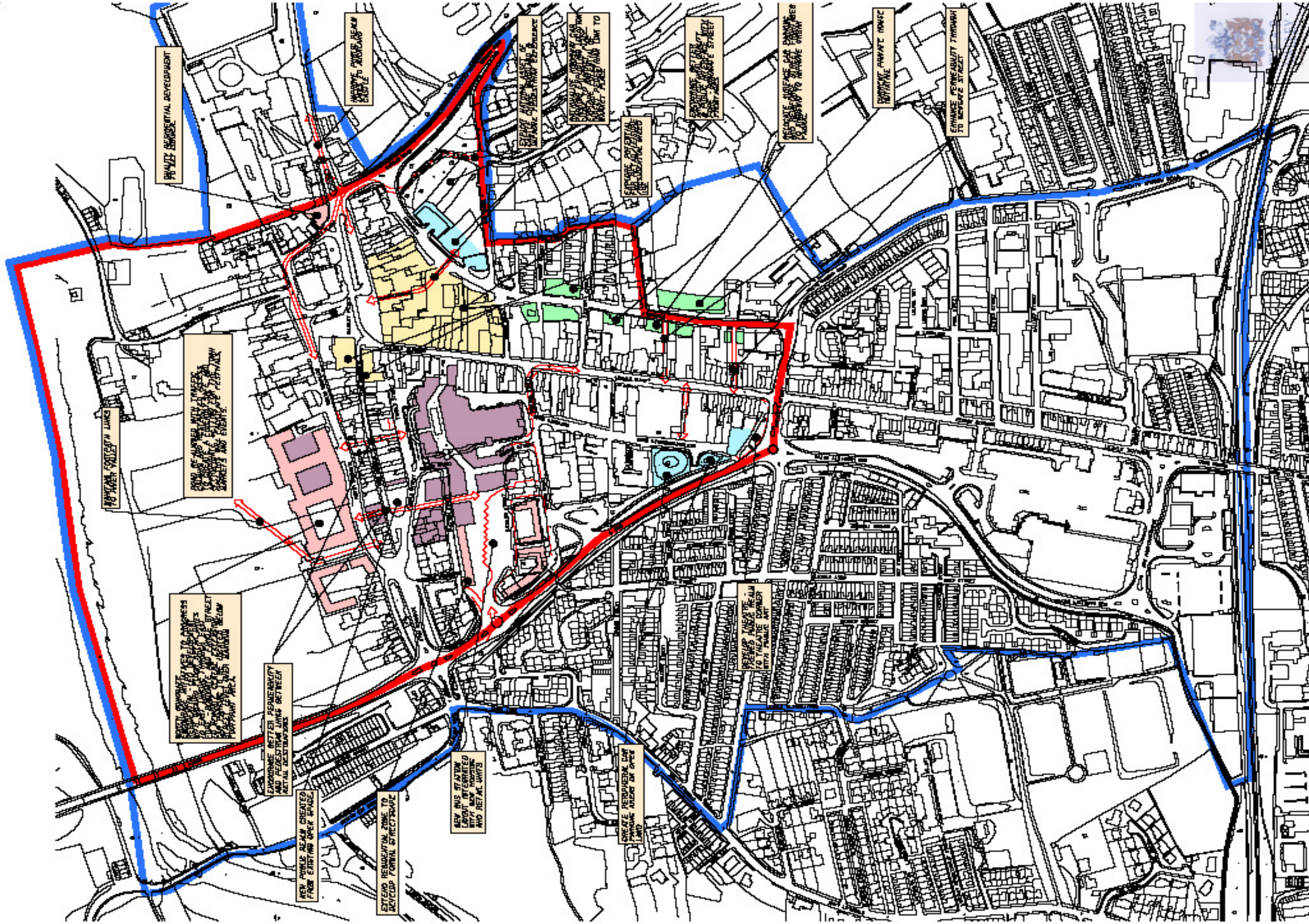
Overview

The master plan is a product of economic, urban fabric, transport and landscape assessments. It is based upon increasing accessibility and permeability within the town centre, identifying new development opportunities and areas for improvement, both in the public realm and in building groups. It is implicit in the approach that the presentation of car parking numbers in the inner study area must not be scaled down, but rationalisation of its distribution, which could provide for development opportunities, is vital to the success of the vision.

The introduction of appropriate retail and residential development for, which there is both demand and opportunity, is also considered essential to the well-being and sustainability of the historic town centre. Current “living over the shops” initiatives must be reinforced by larger scale developments which can deliver the critical mass and passive surveillance that can establish more of a sense of place and economic viability.

An improvement of the built environment, however gradual, must now be embarked upon. The public realm, in particular, must provide a consistent network of high quality spaces which will be the most pervasive expression of confidence and respect for the traditional values of Bishop Auckland. For the sake of clarity the physical aspects of the master plan have been broken down into 6 site-specific areas, or study zones. Each study zone has been subjected to a degree of design feasibility and financial appraisal which will facilitate a process of prioritised programming, essential to their deliverability.

Encouragingly, a number of private initiatives are currently under consideration and have resulted from a pro-active approach and strategy for future to town centre improvement. Proposals are being considered for the redevelopment of North Bondgate; a key residential development is on site in Kingsway South; proposals are being considered for the expansion of the Newgate Centre and bus station; and significant investment is being ploughed into the south side of the market place, and other potential sites may come forward near Vinovium House and in Peel Street. It is essential that investment is made in the public realm and general environment of the town centre to ensure the delivery of these potential private sector developments. The intention of this report is to support and co-ordinate these activities within the context of a regulated plan.



PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

CONNECT TO PUBLIC SPACE

REPAIR AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE

IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE AND LINK TO

REPAIR AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE

REPAIR AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE

REPAIR AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE

REPAIR AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE

IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE

TO PARK HOUSEHOLD LINKS

TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACE AND LINK TO

IMPROVE BETTER CONNECTION AND REDUCING LINKS BETWEEN

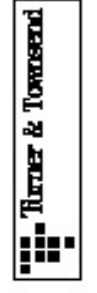
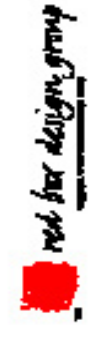
NEW PUBLIC SPACE CREATES FREE EXISTING OPEN SPACE

EXTEND RESIDENTIAL ZONE TO EXISTING TOWNHALL STREET

NEW BUS STATION LAYOUT INTEGRATED WITH NEW HOUSING AND RETAIL UNITS

CREATE PERIPHERAL LINK PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE TO

PERFORM UNDER THE PLAN



Newgate Centre/Bus Station (Zone 1)

The Newgate Centre is the most significant “modern” shopping facility in the northern part of the town. At its entrance is the prime retail pitch within the town and the centre provides a critical link for bus penetration into Newgate Street. The centre has been refurbished following the relocation of ASDA to their new store at the south of the town centre but great scope exists to further increase the retail space available. Recent proposals from the private sector propose in excess of 140,000 sq.ft. of new retail floorspace and leisure uses.



Existing view ▲



Proposed Plan ▲ (Indicative)



Clayton Street ▲ (Indicative)

The zone provides an important area of development potential for the town by rationalising the area used by the bus station and extending the Newgate Centre westwards towards Bob Hardisty Drive.

The opportunity exists to rationalise the area used by the bus station space but retain 10 stands and a layover space, with a potential echelon layout and modern user facilities. Any proposals could also increase the availability of car parking as an expansion of the current shopping centre multi-storey facility. Development proposals should seek to rationalise the current 'sea of tarmac' of the current bus station configuration, with retail, leisure and housing opportunity. Previous development plans to extend the Newgate Centre could integrate a new bus station layout with affordable housing fronting onto Clayton Street. It is important that any development plans reinforce the bus station facilities creating a modern and attractive route into the shopping centre. In particular new retail development could provide a vibrant appearance to the centre from the west and create an attractive and much improved entrance to the town from the bus interchange.

Development proposals could also provide for further development opportunities contingent on the relocation of the ALDI Store and car park. In the long term it is envisaged that Vinovium House and Saddler House could be replaced by a further independent, yet integrated, housing scheme. Any new planning application, however, for the area should take into account the full development potential of the area.

The key proposals include:-

- Rationalised and improved bus station;
- Major expansion of retail, leisure and possible housing uses;
- Improve car parking provision; and

- Improve frontage appearance to the west and Bob Hardisty Drive to create a new and attractive elevation to the west to create better entrance to the town from the bus station.

Market Place And Bishop's Park (Zone 2)

The Market Place is one of the most important areas within Bishop Auckland and is central to the town's local and regional identity. The rich character of the Market Place is derived largely from the surrounding high quality architecture and Auckland Castle. The Market Place is an important social and civic space, with the Town Hall being an important landmark within the town and the surrounding landscape.



Existing views ▲

The Market Place at present is not a pedestrian friendly environment due to the often fast through traffic, with the Town Hall physically separated from the Market Place by this traffic. Connections from the Market Place to North Bondgate and Auckland Castle are difficult and often hazardous. Poor quality paving materials and often uncontrolled parking detract from the visual appeal and quality of the place.

Proposed Plan ▼(indicative)



The success of the Market Place as a pedestrian friendly environment is central to the Urban Renaissance of Bishop Auckland. The connections for both traffic and pedestrians through the Market Place will be key to this success. It has been shown that to completely remove all traffic from the Market Place is not possible at this time. The objective of the master plan is, therefore, to improve links providing safer pedestrian connections. Reconfiguring the current road layout together with improved traffic management and restricted car parking will control traffic flow and density.

The proposals are both functional and of high quality to add to the character, enriching the sense of place. The key proposals are:

- Reconfiguring the current road layout to provide more space to the front of the Town Hall, as a new focus for civic and community activities. Disabled persons parking will be retained to the front of the Town Hall and new disabled bays provided within North Bondgate. It is proposed that the spaces to North Bondgate will be used for Taxis during the late evening. All other parking will be relocated to a new car park at Kingsway.
- The introduction of high quality paving of natural materials sympathetic to the location. Materials for the new road will be similar in character, but selected to ensure that vehicle and pedestrian areas are clearly distinguished. The height of kerbs will be kept to a minimum to maintain the sense of space and the predominance of pedestrians within the Market Place. New paving will extend to Fore Bondgate and up to Newgate Street to emphasise the 'gateways' and improve connections between these areas.
- Improved links between Auckland Castle though emphasising vistas and framing views through realigning the layout of street trees, widening footpaths and providing a dedicated crossing point from the Market Place.
- Introduction of new street furniture package that is both robust and high quality, with way marking to assist visitors, together with interpretative information boards as part of a series of new town trails. Street furniture will be kept to a minimum and individual elements combined to reduce visual clutter.
- Reconfigured layout of the market place to accommodate all events and users, including; markets, festivals, and street performers.
- Provision of new centre with Bishop's Park Grounds.

Three further proposals are critical to the success of any improvement to the Market Place.

'Poundstretcher Corner'

In many respects the improvement of this part of the Town Centre is critical. The poor quality of the Poundstretcher building lets down what is an attractive architectural ensemble fronting the market place. Redevelopment of the building provides huge potential to improve the quality of the streetscene, and to enhance the Market Place at such a critical location on the main east-west axis from Auckland Palace. Any proposals should also seek to improve pedestrian flow into Fore Bondgate, and increase active frontage. Redevelopment proposals could introduce a new use such as a hotel.

Kings Lodge

The vacant corner site on Kings Lodge provides a unique opportunity to provide new residential use into the Market Place. At such a critical location at the entrance to the Palace its development could provide an essential improvement to the quality of the eastern part of the Market Place.

Bishop's Parks Restoration Plan and Visitor Centre

The restoration plan for Auckland Palace potential provides a great opportunity to create a unique visitor attraction based upon the medieval parkland landscape surrounding the residence of the Bishop of Durham. Detailed proposals are being prepared for a Heritage Lottery Bid which will restore the woodland of the Park, refurbish existing features (and many listed structures) and re-introduce lost features of the Park. It will provide for visitors by the creation of a visitor centre and a small car park. The plan suggests that a viable location for a new visitor centre could be within the boundaries of the park itself.



Palace Entrance ▲



Proposals for the Market Place need to be dovetailed with those for the Park. The latter has the potential to fully exploit the visitor potential of the town and add significantly to the diversity of use and as a consequence the viability of the town centre.

North Bondgate (Zone 3)

North Bondgate is a major entrance and thoroughfare for the northern part of the town centre. It provides the critical east-west route through the historic core. Whilst improvement has been achieved at its western end with the streetscaping improvements in High Bondgate facilitated with the opening of the viaduct scheme, the section between Finkle Street Junction and the Market Place is particularly unattractive. It is dominated by road traffic and unattractive/non-conforming town centre uses. It is also presented with the rear elevation of commercial properties in Fore Bondgate.

Improvements to this important through route are essential. Opportunities clearly exist and have been promoted for some years now and should be actively pursued. The key sites for development are:

North Bondgate (WVDC/Go Ahead Site)



Existing views ▲



North Bondgate /Finkle Street (Indicate)▲

The North Bondgate car park and bus depot has a valid planning brief which will deliver a high quality mixed use development of retail, residential and commercial activity. The introduction of new/volume retail uses will provide a key focus and visitor attraction in the north as a counter-balance to the modern facilitation in the south. The brief seeks to ensure the redevelopment of the site meets the essential criteria of including the re-establishment of a new street frontage, high quality design complementary to the character of the conservation area and the retention of essential car parking facilities.

Preferred developer status has been given to the North Bondgate site which reflects the response of the private market to the potential of a site. It is important that in townscape terms a high density retail/residential scheme is produced. This could consider undercroft car parking which may be more in keeping with the site opportunities presented and it is felt that this option should be fully explored. The extension of the site to the east towards the Market Place provides a further opportunity for enhancement. There are clear advantages to be had by incorporating the land to the east of the depot to facilitate better and segregated servicing arrangements away from any new residential components and providing much enhanced and comprehensive streetscene with great links to the Market Place. The delivery of design quality in this key flagship scheme is vital for the success of the town centre's regeneration.

Wilkinson Yard (High Bondgate)

An important site at the end of High Bondgate which has detailed permission for housing development. A high quality scheme is essential in this location to create a visual link between North and High Bondgates. Any development needs to protect and enhance the listed Gazebo on site.

North Bondgate Pedestrian Environment

As part of the North Bondgate proposals it is important to enhance the potential of the car park/depot development site by improving the quality of public realm. North Bondgate is an important thoroughfare providing links between the A689, the Market Place and destinations to the east of the town. The street is broad and often accommodates informal and haphazard parking to both sides, whilst allowing east-west traffic to pass freely. Parked cars present a hazard to pedestrians and cyclists and detract from the overall appearance and character of the areas which is an important visitor approach to the town centre. There are established pedestrian links to footpaths to the north and to the town centre via an alleyway 'Cocksure Nook'. The key proposal is to introduce build-outs to create formal parking areas along one side of the road.

The key proposals for this zone are:-

- The implementation of redevelopment proposals for key development opportunity sites at Wilkinson Yard (housing), car park/depot (retail and mixed use) and site east of solicitors (mixed use);
- Achieve building enhancements to the rear of properties on Fore Bondgate to create improved streetscene/building frontage;
- Improve the pedestrian environment of North Bondgate by widening footpaths and providing dedicated crossing points and build outs to improve the safety of links to the town centre;
- Introduce high quality paving materials and street furniture to enrich the experience of place;
- Restrict parking to the south side of the street only, thereby improving vistas toward the Market Place;
- Introduce street trees to focus views and improve the microclimate;
- Improve signage to direct visitors toward Fore Bondgate, the Market Place and the town centre; and
- Preserve and enhance footpath links toward the River Wear and landscapes.



Existing View ▲



Artists Impression) ▲

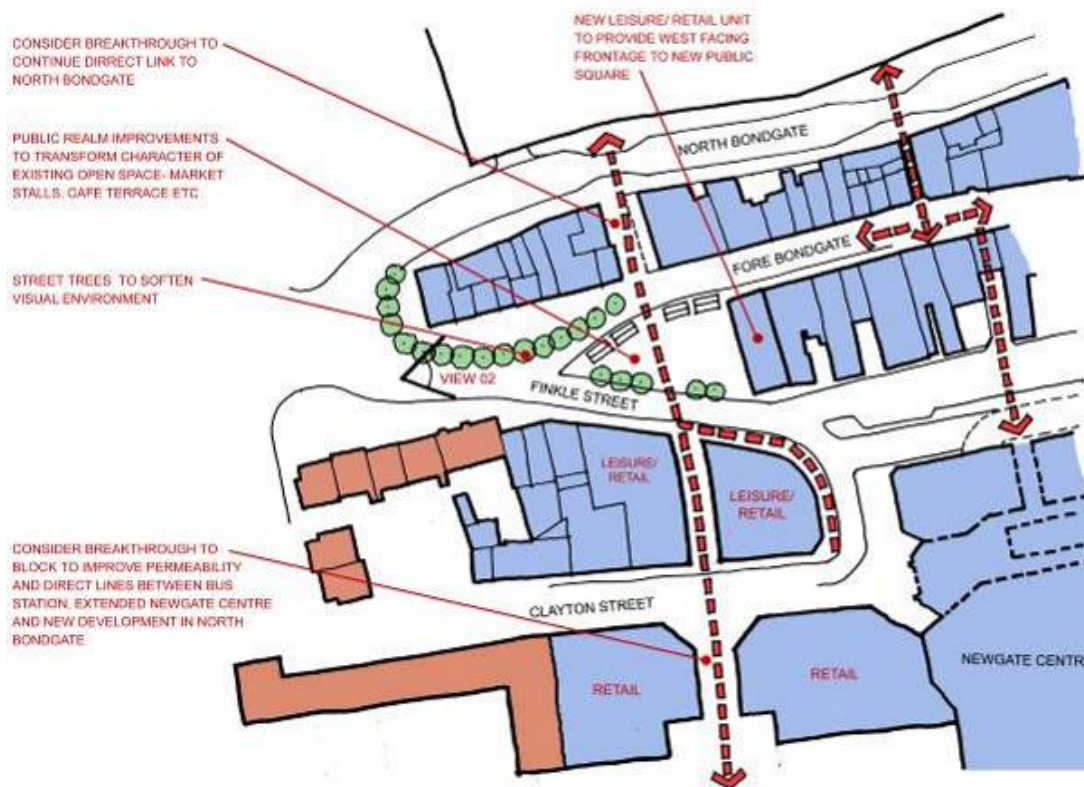


Fore Bondgate (Zone 4)

Fore Bondgate is generally an attractive narrow and intimate environment of strong architectural identity and character. Despite being partially pedestrianised, the influence of motor vehicles detracts from the experience of this area. Such influences include, the informal car park close to Finkle Street, and cars parked within the street itself. Building improvement has been achieved in the street through the successive application of Townscape Heritage Initiative and Heritage Environmental Regeneration Schemes. But responsive grant regimes have left some buildings untouched and unimproved. It is considered appropriate to target such building through a potential comprehensive building improvement scheme.



Existing view ▲



Proposed Plan ▲ (Indicative)

Proposed view ▼ (Indicative)



It is important also to create linkages between North Bondgate and the Newgate Centre, and create new areas of enhanced public realm.

Steps need to be taken to improve direct pedestrian linkages between the proposed bus station redeveloped (Zone 1) and the North Bondgate Redevelopment (Zone 3), combined with the establishment of Finkle Street as an attractive and viable public space. This should involve discreet selective demolition of properties between North

Bondgate and Fore Bondgate, subject to acquisitions preferably, as proposed in the entire master plan development scenario.

The key proposals are:

- Restrict vehicles to deliveries only at agreed key times of day. Introduce traffic control barriers to each end of the street to prevent access to cars at all times;
- The creation of a new public square to the western end of Fore Bondgate, extending the feeling of enclosure of the street and providing a new focus for visitors approaching from High Bondgate. There will be improved opportunities for social interaction with new seating areas and out door dining. This area will also benefit from new links from North Bondgate to a possible extension of the Newgate Centre. New tree planting will enhance the character of this area further, improve microclimate and provide an attractive focus for views along Fore Bondgate from the Market Place. It is possible that this area could be used on market days for a number of stalls thereby extending activity from the Market Place along Fore Bondgate;
- Introduce physical breaks between North Bondgate and Fore Bondgate to help link up the major retail growth opportunities in North Bondgate with the Newgate Centre;

- Introduce high quality stone paving with a feature paving detail, possibly public art, at the link between North Bondgate and the northern entrance to the Newgate Centre. The use of high quality materials will be important to enhancing the character of the street and providing continuity along the street; and
- Improve street lighting to enhance safety and encourage a wide range of activities extending the appeal across a range of age and social groups throughout the day.



Landscape proposals ▲ (Indicative)

Kingsway (Zone 5)

Kingsway is not a natural street. Formed to help ease traffic through the Market Place it cuts a route through the properties to the rear of Newgate Street and severs roads including Victoria Avenue. This is a key regenerative area in the master plan. Proposals should seek to recreate a frontage to Kingsway by building upon obvious development sites.

Kingsway North

It is proposed to relocate car parking from Kingsway South to an extension of the existing car park next to Castle Chare where potentially it will have better connection to the market place, at the same time freeing up potential residential development sites in Kingsway South. There are already encouraging private initiatives ongoing in these areas, notably by Maycom Developments in the vicinity of Durham Chare.



Existing view ▲

Kingsway South

The new housing under construction to Kingsway South, fronting the playing fields is another welcome intervention which should be reinforced by housing developments in the former backland and gap sites facing the main road. This presents an exciting opportunity to establish Kingsway as an important urban street with its own identity. Other opportunities lie in Rudds Yard and other backland areas to the rear of Newgate Street.

Gib Chare Town Houses

The Gib Chare triangle is an area of good woodland character within the conservation area. It is, however, in need of comprehensive treatment. Opportunities exist for small scale development and enhancement particularly around the water trough and the pedestrian route between the Dellside and the Market Place.

Subject to conservation area appraisal and an assessment of landscape impact there is scope to introduce a number of town houses fronting on to Gib Chare. This would be co-ordinated with the restoration of the existing monument and its setting.

The key proposals are:

- Build up the Kingsway frontage developments;
- Relocation of the car parking at Victoria Avenue to an expanded Gib Chare car parking;
- Development of residential/commercial uses on Victoria Avenue, Rudds Yard and Durham Chare; and
- Comprehensive landscape restoration and small scale residential development in the Gib Chare triangle.

Tourism and Identity (Zone 6)

A number of other smaller scale proposals are considered essential. These include:-

Shop Front Improvements

Building and shop front improvements – operated in the past under various built environment initiatives, providing incentives for improvements to commercial premises throughout the town centre. This should be re-introduced to create new private sector investment in the built fabric of the town.



Before ▲



After ▲

Car Parking – Bob Hardisty Drive

One of the core objectives of the master plan is the relocation of car parking to the periphery of the study area, where access from the distributor roads is better. It is recommended that existing open space is utilised at the south end of Westgate Road for this purpose.

Theatre Corner

Improvements to Theatre Corner are currently subject to design initiatives involving floorscaping and public art. This should be undertaken comprehensively across the four corners of the Princes Street junction.

Town Brand

Public realm improvements that focus on the town's heritage, character and quality will provide both an interesting and attractive place to live and a destination that people will want to visit. Harnessing the potential of tourism is seen as very important to the revitalisation of the town. Enhancement of the town as a visitor destination could include:-

- Improvement to gateways to increase local and regional identity directing visitors toward the town;
- Improvements to way marking and signage within the town and providing connections that are convenient, attractive and safe, guiding visitors to key areas of interest;
- Providing a high quality townscape that preserves and enhances local identity to encourage visitors to stay;
- Improving and promoting links to the established system of footpaths and bridleways to the surrounding countryside;

- Improvement opportunities close to the Wear and Gaunless Valleys and Auckland Castle;
- Providing a connection between the town centre and local sites of tourism potential via an outreach bus service; and
- Increasing the profile of the local tourist office within the Market Place as a focus for cultural activities, community and visitor information.

This will achieve an objective for Bishop Auckland as an attractive centre for tourism in the region promoting the town as 'The Gateway to Weardale'.

Financial Appraisal

The above presents an ambitious but essential programme of activity to prepare Bishop Auckland town centre for the challenges of the future. It seeks to achieve the opportunities for growth and enhancement which will secure the position of the town as the main commercial centre in South West Durham. It is also an important component of the economic strategy for the District representing an area of growth to provide essential jobs and achieve economic growth within the District. Implementing the strategy will require commitment and resources from both the private and public sectors. The scale of the resources required is considerable. It is essential that public investment provides the conditions within the town to promote and stimulate private sector investment. The interest from the private sector is encouraging but the opportunity should be taken to ensure this is delivered by appropriate public sector intervention.

The following table provides cost estimates for the implementation of work identified in each Study Zone. All cost estimates have been prepared by Turner and Townsend using property valuations supplied by Storeys-SSP. The costs are based on tender pricing levels at May 2005 and will be subject to percentage uplift in accordance with BCIS tender inflationary forecasts. Costs for zones 2D and 5D are based on construction costs only.

Financial Summary (Indicative Costs)

	Study Zone	Estimated Public Sector Expenditure	Estimated Private Developer Expenditure	Total Cost of Development
1	Newgate Centre Bus Station Area			
1A	Newgate Centre Bus Station		13,200,000	13,200,000
1B	Public space to west end of Fore Bondgate	399,000	310,000	700,000
1C	Bus Station/ Bus Routes	Included in item 1A		
2	Market Place and Bishops Park			
2A	Pound stretcher Corner	-	4,600,000	4,600,000
2B	Traffic Restriction and Diversion to Market Place	2,600,000	-	2,600,000
2C	The Market Place – Civic and Community Role	Included in item 2B		
2D	Bishops Park Restoration Plan and Visitor Centre	4,000,000	-	4,000,000
3	North Bondgate			
3A	Site to East of Go Ahead Depot			
3B	WVDC/Go Ahead Site	-	9,000,000	9,000,000
3C	Build-outs			
3D	Pedestrian Environment	930,000		930,000
4	Fore Bondgate	450,000		450,000
5	Kingsway			
5A	Kingsway North		1,300,000	1,300,000
5B	Kingsway South		700,000	700,000
5C	Car Parking	550,000		550,000
5D	Gib Chare Town Houses		1,400,000	1,400,000
6	Tourism and Identity			
6A	Shop Front Improvements	720,000	-	720,000
6B	Car Parking – Bob Hardisty	380,000	-	380,000
6C	Theatre Corner	Excluded – to be procured directly by WVDC		
6D	Town Brand	340,000		340,000

*All costs estimates by Turner Townend May 2005

All projects will be subject to detailed display, cost appraisal and funding processes.

Programme

Implementation of the design outputs will of necessity be contingent on the extent to which the master plan stimulates private investor interest. Bearing in mind the diversity of the study zones it is axiomatic that there will be a degree of phasing and privatisation.

Priorities

The key areas for intervention independently identified by the master plan consultancy team and subsequent deliberations have established the following areas of priority central to the viability and credibility of the master plan:-

- Poundstretcher corner (study zone 2)
- North Bondgate (study zone 3)
- Market Place Public Realm including Traffic Issues (study zones 2)
- Fore Bondgate Public Realm (study zone 4)

Early Wins

Due to issues of relative affordability and current land ownership the following aspects of the master plan have been identified as opportunities for early implementation.

- Market Place Public Realm (study zones 2)
- Fore Bondgate Public Realm (study zone 4)
- Shop Front Improvements (study zone 6)
- Traffic calming – North Bondgate and Market Place (study zones 2 and 3)
- Car Parking Rationalisation (study zones 5 and 6)
- Theatre Corner (study zone 6)
- Signage and Lighting (study zone 6)

Medium/Long Term Aspirations

There are a number of key areas which may be deemed critical, to the sustainability of the masterplan.

- North Bondgate (Catalyst).
- Site to East of GO Ahead Depot (Catalyst).
- Newgate Centre/Bus Station.
- Poundstretcher Corner.
- Kingsway North.
- Kingsway South.

- North Bondgate Pedestrian Links.
- Tourist Information Centre.
- Traffic Restrictions and Diversions.

Consultation and Endorsement of the Master Plan

The master plan has been developed with the extensive involvement of stakeholders and users of the town centre. It has been facilitated through the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum and by Wear Valley District Council. The process has involved a stakeholder option event in August 2004 followed by a public exhibition in September 2004. Further presentations were made to members of Wear Valley District Council members in December 2004 and April 2005. A final public presentation was made on 14 April 2005 and an exhibition of the master plan was held in Bishop Auckland Town Hall during the week of the presentation. The master plan has been agreed by both Wear Valley District Council and the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum.

All developments identified in the Master Plan will be subject to further detailed design and public consultation.

The content of the master plan will be a fundamental input in to the emerging review of planning policy, leading to the production of the Council's Local Development Framework and conservation area appraisals for the town. The Council has an obligation to both consult the public and present conservation area appraisals as part of the Local Development Framework. Any future Conservation Area Appraisals will fully consider the recommendations of this report.



- Public Realm - Aspirations and Issues**
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|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Image, Gateways and Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve gateways to the historic north part of the town with new entrance signage and way marking including High Bondgate, Durham Road and Wear Chare. Provide integrated way marking and signage throughout the town to enhance access. Improve links to countryside to include new recreational facilities at 'The Batts'. Provide outreach transport (minibus) to important local sites of tourism potential, including Binchester Roman Fort and Low Barnes Nature Reserve. Enhance presence of Tourist Information Office in the Market Place. | <p>North Bondgate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve streetscape to enhance the quality and image of gateway to the historic north part of the town. Manage traffic and enhance environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Improve way marking and safety of pedestrian routes, offer choice of routes to access shopping areas and links to the countryside to the north. | <p>Fore Bondgate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrianise the street restricting access to deliveries at key times of day only. Enhance the gateway to commercial and historic areas with new pedestrian routes to give variety and choice, and increase activity. Improve the quality of the environment with natural paving materials street furniture and enhanced street lighting. Create new public square to the west of North Bondgate to extend the intimate scale of the street whilst improving the urban environment and encouraging activity. | <p>Market Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the pedestrian environment by restricting access to traffic and calming permitted traffic. Enhance the sense of place with high quality paving, street furniture, and improved lighting and new tree planting. Reconfigure spaces to encourage a variety of civic, cultural and social uses. Protect and enhance important views toward the landmarks of the Town Hall and Auckland Castle and grounds. Encourage activity in the Market Place and link this to the shopping areas of Fore Bondgate and Newgate Street and Newgate Centre. |
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Conclusions and Recommendations

The master plan has been agreed by the District Council and is to be used as a basis to facilitate applications for public sector funding and further and stimulate the private sector intervention in the town. Given that the design proposals have implicit political and public support the key issues to be addressed are:-

- Further exploration of the townscape opportunities in North Bondgate to bolster and enhance the private sector proposals;
- Carry out further discussion with private sector investors and stakeholders with particular reference to the Newgate Centre expansion and Maycom Properties in Kingsway North/Market Place;
- Initiate discussions with the occupiers and freeholders of the ALDI store, Vinovium House, and Saddler House to explore relocation options;
- Explore Housing Options and gauge developer interest;
- Consider implications of property acquisitions to deliver more direct and coherent pedestrian links between the bus station and North Bondgate, and Kingsway North and the Market Place, either by negotiation or CPO procedures;
- Establish Tourist/Visitor Centre in strategic pivotal location between town centre and Bishop's Palace, or in Bishop's Park;
- Encourage improvements, or rebuild, of Poundstretcher Corner with hotel use;
- Develop further the progress made on traffic calming, to identify by means of comprehensive transport modelling whether traffic load can be reduced in central areas and consequently improve environmental quality;
- The delivery of design quality to be paramount, to reverse the prevailing trend of apathy and scepticism and create confidence; and
- Carry out conservation area appraisals in accordance with the masterplan and emerging Local Development Framework.

Implementation of the Master Plan presents a great opportunity to establish the role of Bishop Auckland as the main retail and commercial centre for South West Durham. It provides a unique opportunity to both improve the urban fabric of the town, building upon its significant historic character, and to provide considerable opportunities for economic growth and investment which will have enormous economic benefits for the wider areas. The Master Plan is a significant step towards achieving the main objectives of the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy.

“To restore Bishop Auckland’s role as a vibrant and attractive market town for all the communities of Wear Valley and South West Durham as a whole, building upon the heritage and character of the town centre to enhance its competitiveness as a place to shop, work, visit and live.”

