

Appendix 3: Statement of Consultation

Comment	Response
<p>As a resident of Chester Le Street will there be a fast food outlet anytime in the future as there are plenty pizza shops and a sub way but no McDonald's Burger King or a KFC we did hear that one is in planning permission for Stanley but nothing for our area I think it would be a great opportunity to create jobs and somewhere social for people to meet</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>The council's Economic Development and Regeneration Team work with a range of developers and investors with the aim of bringing new developments to town centres across the County. However, it is important to note that most decisions are market driven. I can advise that currently there are no outstanding applications from the businesses mentioned. It should be noted, that such proposals would generally be considered suitable for a town centre location.</p>
<p>I stumbled across the Masterplan via twitter. I really do feel the CLS could be a town full of character but sadly, since I have known the town, it has suffered for a variety of reasons over the last 16 yrs. In my opinion, these are the things to address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The marketplace. Quite frankly it is awful. It could be great if you take the ideas that are being revived at places like The Staiths and Low Fell. Quality produce with a cultural feel. Pitches would need to be low priced but the visitors would flock in. 2. Parking- make it free and an alternative to the Team Valley. Be brave and eliminate an excuse. 3. Subsidise rent to rid ourselves of vacant shops. Ensure that there is a land use plan and restrict potential users unless need is proved i.e no more takeaway/ cafes 4. Tidy it up in terms of signage and quality shop fronts. 5. Do a Britain in Bloom type competition in the town centre to make more attractive. 6. Promote and consult regularly and involve your people. Listen to them and act! 7. Sell the story and history of CLS with investment in heritage and history. Make a thing of the unique and convenient setting. 8. Go to somewhere like Hexham and see what they do. The towns could have similar character if forward thinking enough 	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The council is working to improve the marketplace through the implementation of the de-culvert project and associated public realm improvements. The future offer of the market will be considered when the current market contract is re-tendered.</p> <p>The potential benefits of free car parking are acknowledged. However, it is considered that there are also negative impacts of free car parking, which can include staff and individuals parking all day which would in turn reduce the number of available spaces for visitors and shoppers. In addition, not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council. However, as set out in the consultation masterplan, the council are in the process of upgrading pay and display machines to accommodate for card payments. Parking charges are reviewed by the council on an annual basis.</p> <p>The council's Economic Development and Regeneration Team work with landlords and prospective tenants to bring new retail, leisure and services to town centres. However, most investment decisions are market driven and as such the council tries to ensure that a range of support packages are available. Through the masterplan the council is seeking to improve the town centre environment and linkages to surrounding areas with the intention of attracting private sector investment. Indeed, the masterplan identifies a number of opportunities in this context.</p> <p>For your information, the council consulted on the Pre-Submission Draft Stage County Durham Plan between the 25th of January and the 8th March 2019. This document sets out the council's proposed planning policies, including approach to hot food takeaways. This proposed policy notes that in a large town centre such as Chester le Street, in order to minimise the potential detrimental impacts of hot food takeaways, planning applications for such uses will only be approved where the proposal would not result in more than 5% of the premises within the centre being in hot food or takeaway use.</p> <p>The council has a rolling programme of support for local businesses and property owners and the Community Economic Development Team have supported 54 businesses over the past three years, with 13 accessing the Targeted Business Improvement Scheme. This is a funding support package aimed at bringing vacant or underused properties back into use, support new start business or business growth. The funding requires some financial commitment from the applicants.</p>

The Area Action Partnership through its Thriving Chester-le-Street task group recently delivered a programme of improvements through the Retail Improvement Scheme; this saw the group working in partnership with the consultancy Shopjacket to provide small scale improvements to premises occupied by operational businesses - such as new signage or a coat of paint as well as supplying shopjackets for long term vacant premises. So far, seven operational businesses have benefitted from minor shop front improvements, and two shopjackets have been applied with plans in the pipeline for another to be applied to a long-term vacant premises in Spring 2019.

The town is a participant in the Northumberland in Bloom competition and has been awarded the accolade of best large town the past three years in a row, consideration will be given to expanding this to national competitions The Area Action Partnership also supports the annual 'Chester's Best' competition in which town centre premises are encouraged to get involved through the 'best business frontage' category.

The council is working to improve the marketplace through the implementation of the de-culvert project and associated public realm improvements. The future offer of the market will be considered when the current market contract is re-tendered.

The potential benefits of free car parking are acknowledged. However, it is considered that there are also negative impacts of free car parking, which can include staff and individuals parking all day which would in term reduce the number of available spaces for visitors and shoppers. In addition, not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council. However, as set out in the consultation masterplan, the council are in the process of upgrading pay and display machines to accommodate for card payments.

The council recognises the importance of the heritage and history of Chester-le-Street and this is captured in the masterplan. Future initiatives developed by the likes of the AAP may indeed look at heritage agenda. The Area Action Partnership offered support to Chester-le-Street Heritage Group to relaunch the town's Heritage Trail and the group continue to be represented on the Thriving Chester-le-Street task group and provide their input and expertise.

The Thriving Chester-le-Street task group of the Area Action Partnership is open to all AAP Forum Members and the AAP Forum is open to anyone who lives, works, studies or volunteers in the AAP area – local people with an interest in the town centre are actively encouraged to get involved by contacting the AAP. The group is responsible for the development of projects to address specific issues in the town and also acts as a body for consultation on issues such as the re-negotiation of the market contract, the town centre masterplan, and the flood mitigation scheme, all of which are issues that the task group has been empowered to 'have their say' about and have also had some success in influencing the outcomes of the consultation.

In terms of promoting the town, the Area Action Partnership has worked with Visit County Durham to create a page on the Visit County Durham website and to take a page in the Durham Pocket Guide which is distributed around the region to detail what the County has to offer visitors, they've also worked on special one-off marketing opportunities for example to promote the town to visitors

	<p>to the area for cricket matches. The Partnership continues to promote the area both locally and regionally through town centre events such as Market Activity Week and sustained involvement in the international BRASS Festival. Events scheduled for Summer 2019 include the return of Market Activity Week and the inaugural Chesterfest – a free two-day festival style event organised by Durham County Cricket Club Foundation which will take place in Riverside Park on 22nd and 23rd June which among other things will serve as an opportunity for the town’s businesses, community and voluntary organisations to promote themselves.</p> <p>The AAP is also working to establish a funding package to develop a piece of feature public art to promote the town and encourage people to visit it.</p>
<p>The Front Street has been in a steady decline, along with the rest of Chester-Le-Street, ever since it was made buses only. Opening the Front Street up to other vehicles at least outside of hours around school opening and closing times would surely see an improvement.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>At the current time opening the Front Street to full vehicular traffic access is considered to be detrimental to road safety, therefore this is not proposed. It is also considered that opening up Front Street to all vehicles may be detrimental to the retail environment and the vitality and viability of the town centre.</p>
<p>Taking a look at your master plan it is clearly evident that in recent years the market has now become practically non existant. This was many years ago the hub of the town especially busy on Fridays when a variety of goods were provided. Since the Nobles have taken over the running of the market, it has become a disaster area and no longer attracts residents or visitors to the town. Many other market towns provide various uses to their markets, ie micro brewery days, craft fairs, farmers markets etc. It is evident we need to do something like this to attract visitors to our town There are also too may charity shops and bookies on the front street giving the place a down and out appearance.I agree we need to attract a greater variety of retailers to the front street and a big one to coerce would be Primark. The nearest one in Co. Durham is Darlington. I am aware that they also retail at the metro centre and Sunderland but everyone does not want or can afford to travel if there is something specific that they need. At one time we had 4 cinemas in Chester-le-Street and we now have to travel to visit our nearest. A small multiplex would provide entertainment for the town. It is not a cheap night now visiting the cinema but if you have to add on travel costs for a family of four it makes it especially expensive. We certainly need to make the front street more attractive with trees, seating areas, flowers etc. Lets be proud of where we live, I have lived here for 65 years and wouldn't consider moving to another area but over the years it has really gone into decline.Lets get it back on the map!!</p>	<p>The future offer of the market will be considered when the current market contract is re-tendered. The Council is currently reassessing the use of its community spaces looking to support a variety of events and activities.</p> <p>The council’s Economic Development and Regeneration Team work with a range of developers and investors to bring new developments to town centres across the County. However, most investment decision are market driven and therefore outside of the council’s control. Through the masterplan the council is seeking to improve the town centre environment and linkages to surrounding areas with the intention of attracting private sector investment. Indeed, the masterplan identifies a number of opportunities in this context.</p> <p>The town is a participant in the Northumberland in Bloom competition and has been awarded the accolade of best large town the past three years in a row, consideration will be given to expanding this to national competitions The Area Action Partnership also supports the annual ‘Chester’s Best’ competition in which town centre premises are encouraged to get involved through the ‘best business frontage’ category.</p>
<p>I have read the plan in detail and submit the following comments and observations. Section 4.11 Typo Masterplan. I am in agreement with the plan and proposals.I have wondered for some time whether wonder whether DCC already have some powers under existing arrangements to remind owners of property on the front street to maintain the external facade. I commend Lambton Arms for their regular continuing efforts in this respect, is there any encouragement that can be used from their work and the beautiful plasterwork uncovered during the last external maintenance at Lambton Arms.</p> <p>I have also thought for some time that perhaps empty properties could be used to promote the area through a set of large agreed window screens, rather than the current view of</p>	<p>The support and agreement of the masterplan is noted.</p> <p>The council has a rolling programme of support for local businesses and property owners and the Community Economic Development Team have supported 54 businesses over the past three year, with 13 accessing the Targeted Business Improvement Scheme. This is a funding support package aimed at bringing vacant or underused properties back into us, support new start business or business growth. The funding requires some financial commitment from the applicants.</p> <p>Please note, under the planning system the council does not have powers to require property owners to maintain their premises. Limited action can only be taken under planning powers, in very</p>

<p>mountains of post, abandoned fittings, and fly posters. Alternatively a lesson could be learned from Intu at the Metrocentre, who have adopted a similar approach, albeit that their window screens just look like more shoppers, rather than empty units. I did try to set up a business in chester le street this year and found that there was no coordinated approach to empty units, even a list of landlords or agents with contact details would have been helpful. I found that it was seriously expensive to set up a small business either on the front street or the market place. The only landlords that were helpful, accommodating, gave sensible suggestions were Cestrian Estates. They were affordable and had an excellent approach for start-up businesses. In the end I could not secure any start-up funding through any of the available schemes .</p>	<p>severe circumstances and where the appearance of a building is seriously detrimental to the appearance of the area.</p> <p>The Area Action Partnership through its Thriving Chester-le-Street task group recently delivered a programme of improvements through the retail improvement scheme; this saw the group working in partnership with the consultancy Shopjacket to provide small scale improvements to premises occupied by operational businesses - such as new signage or a coat of paint as well as supplying shopjackets for long term vacant premises. So far, seven operational businesses have benefitted from shop front improvements, and two shopjackets have been applied with plans in the pipeline for another to be applied to a long-term vacant premises in Spring 2019.</p> <p>The council's Community Economic Development Team is a dedicated team to support retail businesses and centres, whose aims are to encourage and support sustainable business growth and job creation, and, to protect and improve the retail environment.</p> <p>The council work with key stakeholders and business support organisations to ensure new start businesses have access to the most appropriate available support.</p> <p>However, most investment decisions are market driven and as such the council tries to ensure that a range of support packages are available. Through the masterplan the council is seeking to improve the town centre environment and linkages to surrounding areas with the intention of attracting private sector investment. Indeed, the masterplan identifies a number of opportunities in this context.</p>
<p>First , can I say that I think it's great that you are working on this master plan. I have the following suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To increase footfall in the town make it a transport interchange <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For business travelers - Durham and Newcastle station car parks are often full beyond capacity with business users heading to London and other destinations... Travel in and out of Newcastle and Durham can be a challenge . CLS is an alternative. Except... there is limited long term parking available near to the station. . Adding this facility will not only generate car parking revenue, it will encourage people to use CLS shops and restaurants at the start and end of their journey. This availability of this facility will also encourage train operators to change their timetables to stop more trains at CLS. - For commuters - providing cheap all day parking in CLS linked to park and ride tickets will encourage commuters to park and continue a journey by bus or train into Newcastle will enable them to make use of leisure and shopping in CLS . - A regular "Hopper" type bus service will encourage people in surrounding villages and estates and to interconnect with the other transport - it could also link the railway station with the buses that stop in Front street. - A glass roof over part of Front street - creating a covered bus waiting area. - A regular hopper bus to from Beamish open air museum could ease parking issues there and also encourage visits from people staying in the increasing number of hotels in Durham and Newcastle or even visiting for longer periods of time. - secure cycle parking at the station and bus interchange will encourage people to cycle to the town centre. 	<p>The support and agreement of the masterplan is noted.</p> <p>Not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council, however, the council does have long stay provision available within the town. The masterplan has been updated to note that a review of the parking provision will be undertaken to optimise the balance between long stay and short stay opportunities linked to key locations. The councils transport team are engaged in actively lobbying government, Local Enterprise Partnerships and service operators regarding all types of public transport, especially rail services in Chester-le-Street. The council is aware of capacity issues on the East Coast Mainline that are often given as reasons preventing the expansion of rail services, however, we will continue to raise the importance Chester-le-Street as stop on the East Coast Mainline.</p> <p>Chester-le-Street has a range of public transport options available to residents, workers and visitors, including various bus services throughout the county and to neighbouring areas.</p> <p>Comments noted regarding the covered bus waiting area, currently the council has no plans to undertake such a project. It is noted that there are covered bus shelters along Front Street.</p> <p>The potential benefits of free car parking are acknowledged. However, there are also negative impacts of free car parking which can include staff and individuals parking all day which would in term reduce the number of available spaces for visitors and shoppers. In addition, not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council.</p>

<p>2. Free limited time car parking for shoppers / will encourage people to visit the town centre shops, market and restaurants. - helping the viability of these businesses is essential if the attrition of the shops in the town centre is to be reversed.</p> <p>3. Wifi - perhaps if inexpensive .. its less important than encouraging small independent traders to gain a web presence - and allow on line sales to supplement their walk in sales - enhancing the viability of their offices. Perhaps create a virtual high street and advise on the operation of on line sales.</p> <p>4. Riverside park. Is a very well used facility in the summer Can marketing be used to encourage people to combine their visit to town for lunch ? Sine-age - extra crossing places for A167 and advice to town centre restaurants on how to advertise (discount vouchers on pay and display, Park Wifi - with advertising on landing page) - Also consider street food stalls allowing town centre restaurants to bring their offerings to park visitors.</p> <p>5. Night time economy - Encourage this with special events - art exhibitions, live music, open air events in the market place</p>	<p>The council is currently exploring the potential of free Wifi and it is hoped that a project could be implemented in the future. The masterplan notes this as an opportunity for the town centre</p> <p>The masterplan, through the sustainable transport corridor proposals seeks to link up the Emirates Cricket Ground and Riverside Park to the town centre. A signage audit will be undertaken to see if improvements can be made to signposting and wayfinding between the areas of the town.</p> <p>Future initiatives - The Area Action Partnership has a history of delivering early evening events such as the annual Christmas tree lights switch-on and BRASS events such as Theatre Titanick (Firebirds) potential events, developed by the likes of the AAP may indeed look at opportunities associated with the evening economy and how this might link to the de-culvert project around the marketplace area.</p>
<p>As currently drafted, I'd summarise the 'master plan' for Chester le Street as build flood defences, stick up some new signs, create some sort of market offer and provide Wi-Fi in the town centre. Not exactly radical or ground breaking stuff. These objectives are insufficiently challenging or measurably as currently drafted. Where is the detail re how you will drive real economic growth in North Durham? this plan is really disappointing for me as a resident.</p>	<p>Comments noted, the masterplan seeks to bring together all the potential investment and development taking place within the town and to make the most of opportunities such as the de culvert project and associated public realm improvements. A significant proportion of the initiatives are anticipated to be delivered by the private sector with the support of the council. As such some of the detailed information is not available for sharing at this stage whilst negotiations are taking place.</p>
<p>Chester Le Street Market Town is a good commuting town with a wide variety of housing choice for good living. What I feel the Town needs to attain or achieve (The Visiting Town with nostalgia.) Better signage , and improved road links into the Town. More improved links from the riverside to the Town which includes our international cricket ground (this would be signage and spruced up walk ways) Hotel in the Town for footfall to encourage and help business. And accommodate cricket ground visitors ,also outlying attractions Beamish, Durham city. The History of the Town needs promoting with boards for visitors With the opening of the cong burn and new market area a great spring board to regenerate Chester Le Street. Who would want to bypass a Market Town with so much to offer. It is all there it is working with all we have and a few extras</p>	<p>Comments noted</p> <p>The masterplan seeks to bring together all the potential investment and development taking place within the town and to make the most of opportunities such as the de culvert project and associated public realm improvements.</p> <p>The council is proposing to undertake a signage audit with the aim of improving signage and wayfinding across the town for all types of transport. In particular, this will seek to improve connections between the Riverside Park area and the town centre.</p>
<p>The Masterplan contains some intersting and commendable ideas, but much of it's very vague, with very little detail and a lot of questions about sources of funding. Also I hope that the quality of any changes to the town is better than the quality of the Masterplan - there are a number of typos and mistakes in addition to the errata already shown on the website. I think there needs to be much more on how the retail offer in the town could be refreshed and invigorated. On the same point, I think the Civic Centre site should be used for residential buidlings, to avoid drawing shoppers away from the town centre. One final suggestion. The Rail Information point right in the centre of town, next to the Library, was incredibly helpful, but has been abandoned and defunct for several years now (and is an eyesore). Surely it wouldn't cost too much to bring it back into use ? It allowed vistiors and residents to check if their train was on time without having to trail up the hill to the station.</p>	<p>Comments noted, the masterplan seeks to bring together all the potential investment and development taking place within the town. A significant proportion of the initiatives are anticipated to be delivered by the private sector with the support of the council. As such some of the detailed information is not available for sharing at this stage whilst negotiations are taking place. Potential future funding opportunities will be pursued as they arise, and budgets will be determined at a project level.</p> <p>The council is proposing to undertake a signage audit with the aim of improving signage and wayfinding across the town for all types of transport. As part of this the investigation of an information point for all types of public transport will be considered.</p> <p>The Civic Centre is highlighted as a development opportunity site, at present. The future use of the site is being considered and at the current time it is anticipated that this could be for residential uses.</p>
<p>I recommend that everyone involved in this consultation pays a fact finding visit to Morpeth in Northumberland. Morpeth</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>

<p>(population 14,000) town centre is booming and it's not difficult to see why:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Free parking (using a disc system). 2. Good parking near the shops. 3. Despite a town bypass, the front street is open to traffic and people can see what shops are available. Shops are also located around the car parking areas. 4. There are no boarded up, unused shops. 5. There are thriving Markets and well used, well managed Arcade. <p>Chester-le Street (population 24,000) town centre is dying and it's not difficult to see why:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parking is expensive for shoppers and adds to the cost of shopping. If you move from one car park to another, you have to pay again. 2. Poor parking is not convenient for front street shops. 3. The front street is closed to traffic and people from the main North catchment areas have to travel round back streets and past a church and school to access the main car park for grocery shopping. 4. There are many boarded up, unused shops. 5. There is a dead Market and underused, poorly managed Arcade. <p>Go to Morpeth, speak to Northumberland CC officers & councillors to see how they did it.</p>	<p>The potential benefits of free car parking are acknowledged. However, there are also negative impacts of free car parking which can include staff and individuals parking all day which would in term reduce the number of available spaces for visitors and shoppers. In addition, not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council. The masterplan has been updated to note that a review of the parking provision will be undertaken to optimise the balance between long stay and short stay opportunities linked to key locations.</p> <p>The councils Economic Development and Regeneration Team work with landlords and prospective tenants to bring new retail, leisure and services to town centres. However, most investment decisions are market driven and as such the council tries to ensure that a range of support packages are available. Through the masterplan the council is seeking to improve the town centre environment and linkages to surrounding areas with the intention of attracting private sector investment. Indeed, the masterplan identifies a number of opportunities in this context.</p> <p>The future offer of the market will be considered when the current market contract is re-tendered.</p>
<p>Thank you for inviting me to comment on the Chester-le-Street Masterplan. I commend the County Council for its work on developing a strategy for the development of the Town Centre. In common with many other towns across the UK, Chester-le-Street faces significant challenges, and I am regularly contacted by constituents who are concerned by the condition of Front Street and a decline in the retail activity of the town. I am aware that the Area Action Partnership and the Business Association are working hard to develop a sustainable, attractive offering for residents and would encourage the community to get involved and support their efforts. I also believe that more can be done to encourage visitors to the Riverside and to Beamish to visit the centre of Chester-le-Street. The de-culverting project is a major investment and could make the town more attractive as businesses develop along the waterfront, as well as addressing long-standing concerns about flooding risks. In my opinion, there is significant potential to expand the housing stock within the Town Centre. Attracting more people to live in the middle of Chester-le-Street would bring significant benefits to local traders, and encourage walking and cycling to schools and shops. The Authority should favourably consider applications for change of use from business to residential. The report rightly highlights the town's transport links as a positive feature, but many constituents are concerned about proposed changes to reduce the rail service to Chester-le-Street Station, and I believe that the County Council should exercise its influence to protect these valued links.</p>	<p>The support and agreement of the masterplan is noted.</p> <p>The councils Economic Development and Regeneration Team work with landlords and prospective tenants to bring new retail, leisure and services to town centres. However, most investment decisions are market driven and as such the council tries to ensure that a range of support packages are available. Through the masterplan the council is seeking to improve the town centre environment and linkages to surrounding areas with the intention of attracting private sector investment. Indeed, the masterplan identifies a number of opportunities in this context.</p> <p>The masterplan, through the sustainable transport corridor proposals seeks to link up the Emirates Cricket Ground and Riverside Park to the town centre. A signage audit will be undertaken to see if improvements can be made to signposting and wayfinding between the areas of the town.</p> <p>The council acknowledges that town centres are changing, this is not unique to Chester-le-Street, as such any applications made for residential developments in current retail properties are decided on a case by case basis within the scope of relevant planning policies. The council consulted on the Pre-Submission Draft Stage County Durham Plan in January and March 2019, upon adoption, this document will set out the planning framework for County Durham. This proposed policy approach is supportive of residential uses in town centres, where they accord with other policies in the plan.</p> <p>The councils transport team are engaged in actively lobbying government, Local Enterprise Partnerships and service operators regarding all types of public transport, especially rail services in Chester-le-Street. The council is aware of capacity issues on the East Coast Mainline that are often given as reasons preventing the expansion of rail services, however, we will continue to raise the importance Chester-le-Street as stop on the East Coast Mainline.</p>
<p>I've been attending the Chester-le-Street AAP Town Centre meetings over the past few months and whilst there are action plans for all sorts of issues within Chester-le-Street it appears</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>

clear to me that one of the most fundamental concerns is not included, perhaps because of the group's remit, viz, traffic congestion at the north end of Chester-le-Street, which as a consequence adds to the traffic congestion on Ropery Lane to the south end of the Front Street.

All it takes is 3 or more vehicles leaving the A167 and travelling along Picktree Tce, with the intention of turning right at the Front Street junction onto Newcastle Road, to cause tailbacks back to the A167. Such problems will inevitably dissuade visitors from entering Chester-le-Street. The traffic problems are then exacerbated when irresponsible drivers queuing behind straddle the mini-roundabout just to the east of the junction. That causes cars travelling down the road from the Salvation Army and wanting to turn right at the roundabout onto Picktree Tce heading to the A167 to back-up.

These problems used to occur only at rush hour, however they are clearly now occurring throughout the day.

I understand that resolving such an issue could be expensive, however I believe that consideration should be given to investigating any possible solutions. I have attached a "drawing" showing what I believe to be one possible solution, that should not cost too much. The solution I propose effectively turns the north end of the front street into a very large roundabout. Clearly further work would be required to determine crossing points for pedestrians and any traffic light configurations, as well as determining taxi rank locations.

A fundamental change is required to resolve the traffic problem and I'm sure DCC Highways would be up to the challenge. I hope that this e-mail will at least start a debate.

Consultation has started on the Chester-le-Street Masterplan and it's worth copying The Vision from that plan:-

By 2025 Chester-le-Street town centre will offer residents and visitors a unique town centre experience, through independent retailers and traders being at the heart of the retail offer and a complimentary leisure offer. The town centre will be recognised as a vibrant and well designed market town. It will have distinctive open spaces, excellent access routes and will be a vibrant location for people to visit and attract investment. Pay particular heed to the "excellent access routes". Try accessing Chester-le-Street from the A167 and see for yourselves these excellent routes clogged with traffic on Picktree Tce to the north and Ropery Lane to the south. The plan makes great play of the need to have partnership working and particularly private sector investment. Nowhere in the plan does it address the transport infrastructure, other than a small reference trying to "attract a management organisation to upgrade and improve the rail station offer." Roads are never mentioned. Is that because the main responsibility lies with DCC? In my previous e-mail I sketched a possible one-way system at the north end of the Front Street. As Cllr Bell said in his response other alternatives need investigation. One further alternative I will suggest appropriate for investigation:- The Bridge public house is for sale. It has been reduced to £195,000 + VAT by the agent. DCC could buy and demolish that building which would then enable improvements to traffic flow at the north end of the town. If DCC can provide finance to the tune of £8.35m to Chapter Homes to build 125 private houses at Newton Aycliffe with only 12 being affordable housing (less than the 10% required), then £234k is a drop in the DCC finances ocean. I accept that all towns are struggling at the current time, but DCC have a golden opportunity to improve the prospects for Chester-le-Street, if attention is paid to improving traffic flow. That surely

It is recognised that there is congestion to the north of the town centre at Picktree Lane. This has been created by a combination of demand flows through the traffic signals at Front Street and interaction with the adjacent mini roundabout which provides a junction onto an unnamed link road adjacent to River Terrace. This unnamed link road, along with Low Chare, Church Chare and Mains Park Road run along the eastern periphery of the town centre. The council's Highway Authority have considered demand and constraints in this location and have assessed various options using microsimulation traffic modelling. A scheme has been developed which includes the signalisation of the Picktree Lane / unnamed link road adjacent to River Terrace junction and the coordination of these signals with those on Front Street. This will allow better traffic management control in that part of the town to reduce queues and delay on Picktree Lane. The expectation is that this scheme will be funded by developer funding based on a section 278 agreement. This allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the council to make alterations or improvements to a public highway, as part of a planning application. In the context of such an agreement, a date for the implementation of the scheme cannot be confirmed.

The proposed one way system is noted. Whilst one way systems can have benefits in some town centres, they can result in negative impacts elsewhere within the network. The suggested option would create a road safety issue on Mains Park Road, Cone Terrace and Front Street as flows would need to weave, crossing paths to achieve the correct exit lane. With the potential volumes of traffic making such movements, congestion, delay and road safety issues would be created. Rather than removing flow, congestion and associated air quality issues, the suggested one way system would in fact exasperate such issues.

Furthermore bringing west bound traffic onto Front street would impact on the Front Street leg of the traffic signals junction and create queuing and delay with limited storage capacity for all vehicles particularly including public transport.

The creation of a one way two lane flow system creates a significant barriers to pedestrians and other vulnerable road users and would place development within the system on an island separated from the surrounding area. As such the suggestion would be contrary to the Masterplan objective to improve sustainable transport options.

It is agreed that removal of The Bridge Hotel would allow an additional lane west bound into the junction. However, as demand for a left turn at that location is very light, the benefit would be extremely limited. The proposed traffic signals scheme would provide a greater benefit than such an option. In addition, it is believed that site is within the conservation appraisal area and such demolition would not be looked at favourably at this time.

<p>must be included in the Masterplan. Better still if something is done quickly now, not planning to do it by 2025.</p>	
<p>Opening up front street to normal traffic again i would support, also traffic congestion around Picktree leading into bottom of front street needs looking into, at peak times this can back up to A167 .</p>	<p>At the current time opening the Front Street to full vehicular traffic access is considered to be detrimental to road safety. It is also considered that opening up Front Street to all vehicles may be detrimental to the retail environment and the vitality and viability of the town centre.</p>
<p>Zone 1 - Prime development - preferred Social or affordable housing with relevant road infrastructure to ensure flow of traffic. Not business or trade as we have several units in town for trade to utilise</p> <p>Zone 2 - opening of the culvert - In principal I think this is beneficial to the town - a catalyst that we all need to work together effectively for the benefit of not only the business and homes affected by flood events but to revitalise the town in general</p> <p>Zone 3 and all of the shopping facilities in the town - DCC needs to help small business and get the landlords to be more flexible with rents while DCC might be restrained with National legislation on RV more help is necessary for new small business to have access to better and long term Rate relief.</p> <p>Installation of Wi-fi should be expedited especially with the Cricket event next year</p> <p>Transport links and roads need to be improved - cycle paths need to be safer cleaner and connected more effectively - shared footpaths to make safer for cyclists as well as motorists in and around the town</p> <p>Train links need to be improved and as in the Master Plan it can be if funding is attained - trains in the London area are using smaller platforms with the longer trains and this should be looked into more effectively for Chester le Street and other smaller stations in the county where links can be made.</p> <p>Connecting the Riverside Park to the town and vice versa more effectively - As Secretary of Friends of Riverside Park we have a sub group who has looked at signage and this type of resource which the town has not only for signage but promoting our History should be used more effectively. AAP is the best link at this time to ensure we utilise these groups like ours.</p> <p>Traffic around the town centre can be slow and at a standstill and that needs to be resolved more efficiently in the whole of the area - especially with new housing to be built in the villages around the town.</p> <p>This is not a substantive plan but is a good starting point if we all work together</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The Civic Centre is highlighted as a development opportunity site, at present. The future use of the site is being considered and at the current time it is anticipated that this could be for residential uses.</p> <p>The masterplan seeks to bring together all the potential investment and development taking place within the town and to make the most of opportunities such as the de culvert project and associated public realm improvements.</p>

<p>We do like the idea of opening up the Cong Burn at Chester-le-Street, hopefully it will make the area more attractive and alleviate the flooding we have had recently.</p> <p>We do feel strongly that the parking charges in Chester-le-Street should be waived. People can park for free at The Galleries and the Metrocentre where there is a much wider range of shops.</p>	<p>Support for the de-culverting project is noted. Funding has been approved for this project, which has now commenced.</p> <p>The potential benefits of free car parking are acknowledged. However, there are also negative impacts of free car parking which can include staff and individuals parking all day which would in term reduce the number of available spaces for visitors and shoppers. In addition, not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council. However, as set out in the consultation masterplan, the council are in the process of upgrading pay and display machines to accommodate for card payments.</p>
<p>My company have worked alongside the County Council for several years operating markets at Chester-le Street, Stanley, Crook and eaham.</p> <p>Having read the proposal for the Market Place in Chester-le Street I must stress my opposition to the plans.</p> <p>When the market was last refurbished many traders left to attend other markets and have not returned. The attendance at the Tuesday market has continually fallen with the result being that most weeks there are only 6 to 10 traders, Friday has also declined but is busier than a Tuesday. The busiest day is Saturday when the market is bustling with 60 to 70 traders at the market.</p> <p>Your plan to move the traders to the Red Area of the market place means that it will only hold up to 20 stalls. What happens to the other traders who currently use 2,3 or 4 of the permanently erected stalls? My thoughts are that they will either move to other markets or give up all together. Can you really justify the closure of many, often long term family run businesses.</p> <p>Many traders have told us that they do not have stalls of their own and rely on those provided, there have also been concerns raised about the cost of buying a stall, erecting it, storage and transportation. The matter of weight bearing of a portable stall has also been raised.</p> <p>The plan clearly states that you will support current market traders and attract new ones. How can you do that if you are removing the available space for them to operate?</p> <p>You state that you will increase market activity and improve the quality of the market. How can that happen when the available space will be minimal?</p> <p>The intention detailed in the plan states that there will be the delivery of dedicated events. Would they be planned to take place on days other than markets days or could they be held at the same time? In which case how would we be able to operate to the standard that is expected of us? The answer is that we could not - there would not be enough space.</p>	<p>Comments noted, however, some of the issues raised are outside of the scope of the Masterplan and reflect the operational arrangements for the market place. The council is working to improve the marketplace through the implementation of the de-culvert project. The future offer of the market will be considered when the current market contract is re-tendered.</p> <p>The Council is currently reassessing the use of its community spaces looking to support a variety of events and activities.</p> <p>The councils Economic Development and Regeneration Team work with landlords and prospective tenants to bring new retail, leisure and services to town centres. The team also provides support to individuals considering business opportunities as market traders. However, most investment decisions are market driven and as such the council tries to ensure that a range of support packages are available. Through the masterplan the council is seeking to improve the town centre environment and linkages to surrounding areas with the intention of attracting private sector investment. Indeed, the masterplan identifies a number of opportunities in this context.</p> <p>Future initiatives developed by the likes of the AAP may indeed look at specialist one off events that could be hosted across the town, including the market place area, in addition to building on current events such as the armistice day and the annual Christmas tree lights switch-on.</p>

I firmly believe that the market traders will find other markets to attend during the time that the refurbishment is taking place and they will not come back. My company has spent a lot of money over the years with wages, rubbish removal, advertising, offering reduced rents during winter months and rent payments to yourselves. We have worked with the local authorities for the Activity Week and helped charities fund raise and raise awareness. All of this will have to change if we are to maintain any sort of profit.

There are vacant shops all around the town and this would mean that there is even less for people to come in for. The footfall the length of the main shopping area will fall if members of the public are not walking down to the market. We know for a fact that people come from outside of Chester-le-Street to attend the market. This can be proven by the petition that we launched earlier this year when we were made aware of the proposals, the signatories added their postcodes which shows that attendance is from both locals and visitors.

This consultation document has been produced after works have been carried out to prevent flooding and the works appear to have been successful as no flooding has taken place since the work was carried out. The main area where there has been flooding recently is in Front Street near B&M. During the severe weather last winter the Market Place area handled the water without any problem. When there was a fast thaw of snow following the heavy snow we had no issue with flooding.

There is also a beautiful park in Chester-le-Street, why would people choose to sit in the proposed area which is on a busy main road and surrounded by bus stops? People will go to the already successful and busy park so their children can run around and play in a safe environment and without the fear of being run over.

The other issue that is of great concern is a health and safety issue. We have had several incidents on Friday and Saturdays where there is evidence that people (who we think are from the YMCA) are drinking and taking drugs in the Market Place. We have found empty cans and bottles and even syringes which my staff have removed before the market opens. Anti-social behaviour is an issue in most towns over weekends and if there is an open culvert with a bank leading down to it it is only a matter of time before someone ends up in the water with who knows what result.

My firm belief is that this plan will toll the death knell for Chester-le-Street market and I find that a sorry state of affairs.

Chester-le-Street Market Place (Which is not mentioned in your Booklet)

I strongly object to any reduction in the size of the Market Place in Chester-le-Street. How can you expect new Traders to come if there won't be enough space for existing stall holders? Chester-le-Street has always been known for its

The council is working to improve the marketplace through the implementation of the de-culvert project. The future offer of the market will be considered when the current market contract is re-tendered.

The council is currently reassessing the use of its community spaces looking to support a variety of events and activities.

<p>Market, the town will be much less attractive if it is reduced. The new "Seating Area" will not draw people to the town like the market does. I feel that the public have already been overruled in this matter!</p>	
<p>I will start my comments on the plan by quoting The Vision:-</p> <p>“By 2025 Chester-le-Street town centre will offer residents and visitors a unique town centre experience, through independent retailers and traders being at the heart of the retail offer and a complimentary leisure offer. The town centre will be recognised as a vibrant and well designed market town. It will have distinctive open spaces, excellent access routes and will be a vibrant location for people to visit and attract investment.”</p> <p>Pay particular heed to the "excellent access routes". Try accessing Chester-le-Street from the A167 and see for yourselves these excellent routes clogged with traffic on Picktree Tce to the north and Ropery Lane to the south.</p> <p>The plan makes great play of the need to have partnership working and particularly private sector investment. Nowhere in the plan does it address the transport infrastructure in any sort of detail, other than a small reference trying to "attract a management organisation to upgrade and improve the rail station offer." Roads are never mentioned in any sort of detail, other than a at para 5.5 with a very brief "consideration needs to be given to transport routes throughout the town". Is that because the total responsibility lies with DCC? If the road infrastructure is not addressed as a matter of urgency then visitors to the town will not be attracted because of the horrendous traffic problems.</p> <p>I have previously raised the issue of traffic problems at the AAP Town Centre Group meeting and also by writing to all councillors on the Highways Committee. I've even gone so far as to provide a sketch of a possible one-way system at the north end of the Front Street, which I've attached to these comments. I will reiterate that solving the traffic problems in Chester-le-Street will ensure that visitors are attracted to the town. Everything else in the plan, in my opinion is secondary in terms of attracting visitors.</p> <p>Currently The Bridge public house is for sale. It has been reduced to £195,000 + VAT by the agent. DCC could buy and demolish that building which would then enable improvements to traffic flow at the north end of the town. If DCC can provide finance to the tune of £8.35m to Chapter Homes to build 125 private houses at Newton Aycliffe with only 12 being affordable housing (less than the 10% required), then £234k is a drop in the DCC finances ocean. Alternatively money gained from the additional land recently leased to DCCC, without consultation of any kind with the residents of Chester-le-Street, could be used to improve Chester-le-Street and may just incentive visitors to DCCC to come into Chester-le-Street town centre, rather than just bypassing it.</p> <p>I accept that all towns are struggling at the current time, but DCC have a golden opportunity to improve the prospects for</p>	<p>Comments noted and suggestions noted.</p> <p>Highways engineers are currently reviewing the proposal put forward and will be undertaking modelling exercises based on current traffic flows and predicted future traffic flows.</p> <p>The comments regarding the Bridge Hotel are noted, however, it is believed that site is within the conservation appraisal area and such demolition would not be looked at favourably at this time.</p> <p>The masterplan seeks to bring together all the potential investment and development taking place within the town. A significant proportion of the initiatives are anticipated to be delivered by the private sector with the support of the council. As such some of the detailed information is not available for sharing at this stage whilst negotiations are taking place. Through the masterplan the council is seeking to improve the town centre environment and linkages to surrounding areas with the intention of attracting private sector investment. Indeed, the masterplan identifies a number of opportunities in this context. Chester le Street has received investment in the transport network in recent years including two National Pinch Point Fund projects at Junction 63 on the A1(M) and A167. Further improvements were brought forward under the County Durham Local Transport Plan at A693 Drum Industrial Estate roundabout, and A167 / A693 Northlands Roundabout. All schemes were designed to improve the flows of traffic at these junctions and reduce congestion – with the added benefit of reducing air pollution from static vehicles.</p> <p>Please note, that as well as travel by vehicular car, Chester le Street is well served by public transport, with the Chester le Street Bus interchange comprising of 11 on street stands spread between Front Street and South Burns with 52 departures per weekday daytime hour. There are shelters at each stand with real time and printed information displays.</p> <p>In addition, there has been recent investment in the Great North Cycleway, which will link Blyth in Northumberland with Darlington in the Tees Valley, this will continue to be delivered in conjunction with Newcastle City and Gateshead Borough Council. The section between the Hermitage roundabout and the Chester le Street Riverside roundabout has been delivered using existing Local Transport Plan funding.</p> <p>The consultation masterplan noted the importance of Riverside Park as a destination which attracts significant numbers of visitors to the town. The Masterplan identifies two Sustainable Development Zones, where it has been identified there is an opportunity to improve pedestrian and cycling accessibility; improve the appearance and quality of arrival into the town centre from the riverside park area; increase footfall from leisure related activities to the town centre; and improve environmental quality. Project activities are proposed in these identified zones including a signage audit and improving guidance information between the park and the town centre.</p> <p>The Civic Centre is highlighted as a development opportunity site, at present. The future use of the site is being considered and at</p>

<p>Chester-le-Street, if attention is paid to improving traffic flow. That surely must be included in the Masterplan. Better still if something is done quickly now, such as the purchase of The Bridge public house, not planning to do it by 2025.</p>	<p>the current time it is anticipated that this could be for residential uses.</p> <p>Thank you for highlighting the reference to North Banks Road is incorrect. This has been amended.</p>
<p>Now for some comments about the detail, or lack of detail in the plan:-</p>	<p>The images of the flood prevention scheme included in the consultation version of the Masterplan were caveated to note that the design of the scheme had evolved since those images were developed. The images have been updated to reflect the final design of the scheme.</p>
<p>Para 1.3 – “specifically upon private sector investment”. Whilst I accept that private sector investment must be sought the responsibility for Chester-le-Street resides with DCC; you can’t pass the buck.</p>	<p>The terminology 'increased permeability' in this context means to increase the ease of movement for those using sustainable modes of transport in the town centre.</p>
<p>Para 2.3 – Whilst DCCC is an important asset it attracts visitors for a minimal number of days throughout the year, most of whom do not visit the town centre. The Riverside Park is a magnet on an almost daily basis for visitors, so please don’t just think of links to the cricket ground but also to the park.</p>	<p>The potential benefits of free car parking are acknowledged. However, there are also negative impacts of free car parking which can include staff and individuals parking all day which would in term reduce the number of available spaces for visitors and shoppers. In addition, not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council.</p>
<p>Para 2.4 – The former Civic Centre site has remained vacant for years. When DCC set up Chapter Homes the announcement published on 27.8.15 listed the site as one of 4 possible development sites for housing. That now appears to be dead in the water, especially now that DCC land adjacent to Aldi has had a planning application granted and a Public Path Stopping Up Order issued which suggests the imminent sale of the land, without any public advertisement on the DCC website. That devalues the Civic Centre site, as with the land to be sold to Aldi it would have allowed for the possibility of 2 access roads, one from Newcastle Road and one from Picktree Tce. So what is the proposal for a valuable site left empty for years? This paragraph suggests “the future use of the site is being considered.” Clearly some decisions have already been made. When will the residents of Chester-le-Street be told what the plans are? Or, as it says in OUTCOMES – “details of scheme to be confirmed.” When?</p>	<p>Please note, the council’s Planning Enforcement team would respond to complaints made regarding adverts that do not have the required consent.</p>
<p>Para 2.5 – Wonderful a Masterplan which talks of North Banks Road. Can’t even get the street names right. Shows excellent knowledge and even worse proof reading.</p>	
<p>Para 2.7 – Amazed that it has taken evolution of the design to determine that more walls are required around the de-culverted area to retain flood water. Water finds its level. If that is above ground then the water pours onto the marketplace. A simple prediction made fun of by those giving the flood roadshow. So how much confidence have I in proposals for the flood scheme? (Answers on a post card.)</p>	
<p>Para 2.7 Role Transport hub. Crucial to the plan as suggested above. Maybe if traffic improved then National and other bus companies would start calling here again, and if so appropriate stopping places could be provided.</p>	

Para 2.7 Theme “Sustainable Transport” “Outcomes” Increased permeability across the town centre. What is that in English?

Para 2.8 Theme “Improving the Visitor Experience”. Surely this has been talked about long enough. Let’s hope that something is done before the crowds flock for the International Cricket at the Riverside. Who needs to submit the Funding Bid? It needs doing now.

Para 2.9 Theme “Creating development and inward investment opportunities”, Project Activity “Support the developer to deliver the approved outline planning permission for a class 4 (drinking establishment) at Ashfield Terrace. Why? Local residents are continually complaining that the south end of the Front Street is being turned into pub heaven, with precious little retail outlets. Is it DCC’s intention to remove retail from the south end and saturate it with pubs and take-aways. Residents in the Wear Street area are sick to death of anti-social behaviour in their streets.

Finally I will end with my vision for the town I’ve lived in for over 60 years:-

A clean Front Street unencumbered by all the unnecessary and illegal advertising which DCC appear happy to endorse and unwilling to carry out their enforcement duties.

Free parking, like many other towns in County Durham, even a trial to see what impact it would have.

A road system fit for purpose to enable locals and visitors alike to move around and through the town quickly, and to encourage visitors to come in rather than bye-pass, and maybe also encourage bus companies to pick-up from and maybe even visit.

A riverside park that has a rich choice of equipment, rather than the minimal range and number of play equipment currently installed. The park, with its expanse of open areas is a magnet for visitors and locals alike, but the play facilities are abysmal.

A market place crowded every day it is on and other activities in the public space to attract visitors.

A Front Street that has retail shops at the south end of the town rather than a haven for pubs and take-aways. Older people at the south end have a long walk for their food shopping.

Please see below some thoughts I have on the consultation of the Chester-le-Street Master Plan. Just for context I am registered blind and a a guide dog owner.

North of Front Street where there is a plan to build either housing or retail space on the area where the council offices

Comments noted.

The Civic Centre is highlighted as a development opportunity site, at present. The future use of the site is being considered and at the current time it is anticipated that this could be for residential uses. However, as part of any future development proposals pedestrian access will be considered.

<p>used to be. I really feel there should be a controlled crossing somewhere along Newcastle Road. There is only 1 crossing point at the Northlands end which is a small island in the centre of the road, with no standout visual markings and only minimal use of tactile paving. There really should be a safe crossing area along Newcastle Road to link the housing on both sides, for example to get to the Community Centre (which is a polling station) safely, you have to walk all the way into town to the controlled crossings and then head back the way you came on the other side and turn up Pelaw Bank to the crossing there to get to the destination. It is a real safety issue not only for someone visually impaired like myself but for all as it is a very busy road.</p> <p>Also another point about Newcastle Road, there is tactile paving leading to the curb to lead you to where the bus stops are on the opposite side, but again there is no safe crossing point. Strange.</p> <p>In the master plan there is a mention of a shared cycle and pedestrian path linking the front street with the park, please can you consider advice the guide dog association give on these, as visually impaired pedestrians are very vulnerable on these shared paths, They advise that these shared paths should have tactile paving at the start to denote which side is for cyclists and which is for pedestrians and there should be a raised central tactile line separating them.</p> <p>At the south end of Front Street, the Ashfield Terrace development there is a mention that there will be accommodation for people with disabilities. Will there be any changes made to the surrounding area to allow access to shops and buses, as there are very narrow footpaths, roads without crossing points or dropped curbs, and even the nearest convenience shop is not wheelchair accessible.</p> <p>A general point to consider is to have road crossings laid out a bit better, with correctly placed tactile paving of a contrasting colour to the surrounding surface. And to have the pedestrian areas clear of obstacles.</p>	<p>Any proposed shared access, will consider the needs of all users when they are developed. In addition, any proposed developments on Front Street and Ashfield Terrace will be required to consider all types of access as part of any planning applications. At a project development stage, the needs of all users are taken into consideration in line with the relevant guidance.</p> <p>Your specific queries have been passed to the relevant team who will investigate the opportunities to address issues raised.</p>
<p>Joint submission for Chester-le-Street Masterplan consultation by Cestrian Estates and CannyInsights.com</p> <p>Introduction</p> <p>Cestrian Estates and CannyInsights.com are pleased to jointly submit our comments regarding the current Chester-le-Street Masterplan consultation.</p> <p>Established in Chester-le-Street, and based in Front Street for many years, Cestrian Estates (http://www.cestrian-estates.com/) is a commercial property management company that owns a significant number of properties within and beyond the town centre.</p>	<p>Comments and support to masterplan noted.</p> <p>The Civic Centre is highlighted as a development opportunity site, at present. The future use of the site is being considered and at the current time it is anticipated that this could be for residential uses.</p> <p>The potential benefits of free car parking are acknowledged. However, there are also negative impacts of free car parking which can include staff and individuals parking all day which would in term reduce the number of available spaces for visitors and shoppers. In addition, not all car parks in the town are under the control of the council. However, as set out in the consultation masterplan, the council are in the process of upgrading pay and display machines to accommodate for card payments.</p> <p>The masterplan, through the sustainable transport corridor proposals seeks to link up the Emirates Cricket Ground and Riverside Park to the town centre. A signage audit will be</p>

Since April 2017, we have commissioned Gateshead-based retail consultancy CannyInsights.com (<http://www.cannyinsights.com/>), led by retail expert and Institute of Place Management (IPM) Fellow Graham Soult, to support and promote our independent retail tenants – based in our Market Hall Shops arcade, and in other premises along Front Street – and to more generally champion Chester-le-Street town centre as a place to shop and visit.

This activity is bearing fruit in terms of local businesses improving their digital skills, better promoting what they offer, and encouraging more positive perceptions of the town. We have also seen the number of vacant units within the Market Hall substantially reduce¹, and retailers that have been able to establish themselves in the Market Hall are starting to go on to take their own premises.

¹ For a summary of this work and its impacts to date, see <http://www.cannyinsights.com/2017/11/02/promotion-of-chester-le-street-town-centre/>.

² <https://twitter.com/PlaceManagement/status/1019594070132477954>.

Graham is also making sure that lessons and outcomes from his work in Chester-le-Street are being shared with a national audience of retail observers and place managers, including at an upcoming IPM seminar in Manchester.²

Separately, our work with Graham has led to him being commissioned by property company Bradley Hall to provide similar marketing and mentoring support to businesses in the St Cuthbert's Walk shopping centre. This means that Graham is spending a total of three days per month on Chester-le-Street marketing and retail support activity, all entirely funded by the private sector (1.5 days from us, and 1.5 days from Bradley Hall).

Hence, both Cestrian Estates and CannyInsights.com are already playing important roles in supporting and championing Chester-le-Street town centre, and welcome anything that Durham County Council can do to recognise and further those improvements.

Vision and objectives

We endorse the vision statement set out on page 3 of the consultation document, particularly the recognition that Chester-le-Street must offer a “unique town centre experience” with “independent retailers and traders... at the heart”.

As high streets evolve, and the focus shifts from retail to a potentially more diverse range of uses and experiences,

undertaken to see if improvements can be made to signposting and wayfinding between the areas of the town.

The councils Economic Development and Regeneration Team work with landlords and prospective tenants to bring new retail, leisure and services to town centres. The team also provides support to individuals considering business opportunities as market traders. However, most investment decisions are market driven and as such the council tries to ensure that a range of support packages are available.

The councils transport team are engaged in actively lobbying government, Local Enterprise Partnerships and service operators regarding all types of public transport, especially rail services in Chester-le-Street. The council is aware of capacity issues on the East Coast Mainline that are often given as reasons preventing the expansion of rail services, however, we will continue to raise the importance Chester-le-Street as stop on the East Coast Mainline.

received wisdom in place management thinking is that towns need to be differentiated and distinctive.

Our joint work in Chester-le-Street already recognises that independent businesses are key to building this distinctive offer for the town, especially as some existing multiple retailers withdraw and the pool of potential new chain store occupiers within the town dwindles. Chester-le-Street cannot and should not compete with, say, Durham, Newcastle or the Arncliffe Centre (echoing the point made on p.29 of the consultation document), but its attractive and innovative independent businesses provide the basis for offering a series of experiences that visitors cannot get anywhere else.

Zone 1: Former Civic Centre Site (p.5)

While we welcome a productive use being found for the former Civic Centre site, we have major reservations about it potentially being turned over to retail.

Though the site may be included within the town centre masterplan, we do not agree that it realistically feels like, or functions as, part of the town centre.

Consequently, we feel that retail development at this site would not contribute to the vibrancy or success of the town centre, but would more likely undermine the independent-led “unique town centre experience” that the masterplan’s vision statement desires.

There is also a danger that, as has happened elsewhere, an initially small retail development on this site would subsequently expand to encompass adjacent sites, such as the current police station, thereby increasing the retail pull away from the town centre.

We would prefer the site to be turned over to residential use, given the positive, footfall-driving impact of growing residential populations in and around town centres.

Alternatively, the site could be suitable for hotel use (such as Premier Inn), given the current poor provision of hotel accommodation for visitors to the town.

Zone 2: De-culvert Project and Market Place Area

We are very supportive of the proposal to de-culvert the Chester Burn and regenerate the Market Place, having observed and admired a similar project to uncover the river in Rochdale.³

³ <https://twitter.com/soult/status/818441064516354049>.

Cestrian Estates has several property interests in and around the Market Place, and we believe that our tenants there will benefit not only from the reduced flood risk but also from the more appealing public realm, and the Market Place's likely increased use as a multi-purpose events space. We are aware of some comments on Twitter expressing concern about the reopened burn becoming a magnet for litter. Though we firmly believe that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the negatives, such concerns do highlight the importance of the Council allocating sufficient resources to ongoing maintenance of the scheme. Experience in Stockton town centre, where the quality of upkeep is consistently excellent, suggests that proper maintenance does help engender a culture of respect for the built environment, just as poor upkeep encourages further anti-social behaviour.

We would also particularly encourage the Council to review experiences in Ashington, and again Stockton, where recent improvements to those high streets have not only created more attractive spaces for pedestrians, but have also increased the provision of short-stay, on-street parking – something that the shoppers and traders who we talk to tell us Chester-le-Street would benefit from.

A major frustration in Chester-le-Street is also the lack of obvious connection between the town centre and the riverside, with many visitors to the popular Riverside Park never

venturing into the town centre, partly because of the unintuitive pedestrian links. The planned Market Place redevelopment provides an opportunity to look at how a green pedestrian corridor might connect the two (linking to the discussions later in the document about "Sustainable Transport Zone 1").

Zone 3: Area Around the St Cuthbert's Walk Shopping Centre

Though Cestrian Estates does not have a specific interest in St Cuthbert's Walk, we recognise the scheme's importance to the town.

On the positive side, retailers like Morrisons and Iceland are major draws, and the recent introduction of three hours' free parking benefits the rest of the town, including our tenants, by encouraging visitors to prolong their stay and explore beyond the shopping centre. At the initiation of CannyInsights.com, marketing from St Cuthbert's Walk is now pushing this message.⁴

⁴ See for example
<https://twitter.com/stcuthbertswalk/status/993815071989157890>.

On the negative side, the large number of empty units in St Cuthbert' Walk are a major factor behind Chester-le-Street's overall shop vacancy rate, and in fostering negative perceptions of the town centre. However, we are pleased that the work by CannyInsights.com for Bradley Hall is starting to reduce the number of voids and raise the centre's profile through digital marketing and PR activity.

CannyInsights.com understands that there have not always been strong communication links between the Council and the shopping centre, so, on behalf of the centre, is already working with the Council to "strengthen [the] relationship with management agents and facilitate the opportunities for business", as set out on page 12.

For example, a joint meeting between Graham Sout, a Council representative, and a new eyebrow-threading tenant at the mall (which CannyInsights.com helped to secure) is to take place shortly, focused on working together to provide support for that tenant to grow and market their new business.

Zone 4: Southern End of Front Street

As the owner of Market Hall Shops, Cestrian Estates has a particular interest in this section of the consultation document.

Since taking ownership of the Market Hall a couple of years ago, we have invested a significant amount of time and money in improving the interior and exterior of the building, as well as the quality and variety of the retail offer inside. After many years of underinvestment, these actions have helped to turn the property around in the short term, and, with help from Graham Sout, we are delighted to have grown the number of occupied units, providing a potential flow of new occupants for our units elsewhere in the town centre.

Our tenants now benefit from free wi-fi – which has had a major positive impact on their operations – and we would welcome the Council's plans, as proposed in the consultation document, to introduce free public wi-fi across the town centre, both as a service to visitors and as a means of tracking footfall.

Recently, we acquired the adjacent row of shops (the ex-Blockbuster block), and have successfully combined both properties' private car parks to create a single, more usable, customer car park.

We note the consultation document's reference to a possible "development opportunity" at this end of Front Street, and will continue to maintain productive communications with the Council regarding how best to maximise the potential of the Market Hall site and the southern section of Front Street more generally. It is clear that the Market Hall building, which was originally constructed as a supermarket, would require very significant levels of additional investment in order to have a

sustainable longer-term future. However, as major property owners within the town – and passionate investors in our independent retail tenants – we are fortunate in having sufficient flexibility within our portfolio to ensure that all our tenants will continue to have access to affordable, suitable space for as long as they require it.

Alongside, we would welcome any support the Council can offer to maintain and enhance retail “hatchery” facilities within Chester-le-Street, building on Graham’s existing work, and drawing from successful initiatives elsewhere such as the Stockton Enterprise Arcade

(Fountain Shopping Mall), to help promote the “unique town centre experience” that we all agree is necessary.⁵

⁵ <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/news/2017/december/welcome-to-fountain-shopping-mall-home-of-the-enterprise-arcade/>.

Zone 5: North of the Market Place (including Lucy Street Car Park)

Cestrian Estates also has property interests in this part of the town centre, and we are hopeful that the proposed Market Place improvements will make the North Burns area a more attractive location for potential occupiers.

CannyInsights.com has regularly highlighted the lack of a strong night-time offer in Chester-le-Street, so we are both supportive of moves to encourage new quality leisure provision – such as micropubs and restaurants – similar to the higher-end developments already facilitated in towns such as Stockton, Darlington and Whitley Bay, which all now have a growing reputation among foodies and ale drinkers.

Zone 6: Area Around the Train Station

We are supportive of any campaigning efforts by Durham County Council to increase the number of train services stopping at Chester-le-Street station, given the obvious value of making the town a more attractive place to invest and as easy as possible to visit.

The Challenges

We believe section 5 of the masterplan document provides a succinct and appropriate analysis of the key challenges that Chester-le-Street town centre faces, and the opportunities for improvement.

In particular, we know from our own experience that it can be a challenge to draw shoppers and visitors from the bottom end of

<p>Front Street up towards the Market Hall and our other tenants at that end of town (such as Argos, ReFuse Café, and The Distillery). With this in mind, we welcome ideas to create a more “welcoming environment” along the full extent of Front Street, perhaps through wider pavements, increased traffic calming, and more seating and planting along the route.</p> <p>CannyInsights.com is happy to provide further input on this topic, if desired, drawing from Graham’s place management knowledge and experiences of seeing what works (or doesn’t work) in hundreds of other town centres around the country.</p>	
<p>Zone 1 – Former Civic Centre</p> <p>Potential traffic chaos if the site is developed – any studies done or likely to be done?</p>	<p>The Civic Centre is highlighted as a development opportunity site, at present. The future use of the site is being considered and at the current time it is anticipated that this could be for residential uses.</p> <p>Any relevant and required studies would need to be undertaken by the applicant to support any planning application.</p>