

Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document

January 2009

Produced as part of Newcastle-under Lyme
Local Development Framework





***Supplementary Planning Document
for
Newcastle under Lyme
Town Centre***

This SPD was adopted by Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council on 14th January 2009.

It forms part of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Borough. For further details of the LDF, look on the Council's website: www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk and search under "Planning Policy".

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Also available:

SPD Companion document

- 1 Consultation and community involvement
- 2 Supporting strategies, plans and evidence base

INTRODUCTION

Supplementary Planning Documents

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are one of the type of "Local Development Documents" that can be prepared within the Council's "Local Development Framework" (LDF). They are an important material consideration in the determining of planning applications.

An SPD does not set new policy, but provides more detail on policies already in the Development Plan. This SPD amplifies the relevant strategy and policies of the Core Spatial Strategy for Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke on Trent (submitted to the DCLG in December 2008) and saved policies from the Structure Plan for Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire. It is also consistent with policies of the RSS (both current and review versions) and national policy set out in PPS1, PPS4, PPS6 and PPS12. (See Glossary.)

This SPD sets out guidance across the whole range of planning and land-use issues for the Town Centre, which is needed in response to development pressure. Importantly, it presents clear guidance on design, a key issue for regeneration in North Staffordshire, and of particular importance for the Town Centre. The boundary for the SPD takes in areas outside the Town Centre core that are areas for natural expansion and which form localities within the walk-in catchment

The Strategic Context

Figure 1 shows the location of Newcastle Town Centre and its relationship with other key centres of activity in the sub-region. These include the City Centre, Keele University and the University Hospital.

Newcastle Town Centre is one of the two "strategic centres" in North Staffordshire. It has a vibrant retail sector which complements, rather than competes with, that offered by the city centre, and a thriving entertainment, and evening economy. Its professional services sector performs well, particularly in comparison to those of other centres within the sub-region. Overall, it is the strongest performing urban centre in North Staffordshire. It was identified by RENEW North Staffordshire as having the potential to "accommodate a vibrant housing market which caters for a mixed income community".

The role of the Town Centre as one of the strategic centres of North Staffordshire is key to the importance of this SPD in setting high standards for design quality in new development. North Staffordshire has for too long accepted low design standards and it is one of the aims of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership (NSRP - see Glossary) to raise expectations in this area. It is crucial that Newcastle Town Centre, which is in a good position to attract investment, is seen as an exemplar of this approach

A separate companion document to this SPD has been prepared, which gives details of the strategic context including regional and national policy. Figure 2 shows the relationship between this SPD and other plans and policies referred to in the Companion Document.

Background to this document

At the end of 2004 work begun on the preparation of an AAP for the Town Centre. This was later withdrawn, but work done, including crucially extensive community consultation, has formed the background to this SPD.

Community consultation began in September 2004 with a stakeholder event to identify key issues, and continued in a variety of ways through to 2006. This included a detailed consultation exercise focussing on the

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crucial issue of design, which had come out clearly as something in which residents and businesses alike were very interested.

Three valuable pieces of work on urban design were commissioned during 2005 and 2006 from Lathams Architects and Taylor Young. Other background activities include the North Staffs Retail and Leisure Study carried out by Savills in 2005 for RENEW; the North Staffs Integrated Economic Development Strategy produced in 2006 and reviewed in 2008 and the NSRP Business Plan, covering RENEW and the Zone Implementation Plan. Most recently, a “visioning” event jointly commissioned by the Council and the North Staffs Regeneration Partnership was held in March 2008, and a forum of local agents and developers took place to explore issues around the market viability of the vision for the Town Centre.

A draft SPD was published in June 2008 for public consultation. All the comments received were analysed and a detailed report submitted to the Planning Committee, with recommendations for changes to the draft document. The final version of the SPD was approved by Planning Committee on 2nd December 2008, and adopted by Cabinet on 14th January 2009.

The Companion Document referred to above includes further details of all the consultation and community involvement carried out since 2004.

Future work

The SPD will not be a blueprint fixed for 20 or even 10 years. It presents long term goals, but these may undergo change, and will not be met in the life time of the SPD. For the short and medium term, at least five years, the SPD sets a framework against which proposals can be assessed and creative ideas can be developed.

There is an urgent need for guidance for development, but the strategic context does not stand still. The SPD refers, particularly in section 4, to work currently going on to improve the public realm of the Town Centre. In addition, investment is being sought from the Regional development Agency (AWM) for some key projects. The “visioning” event referred to above highlighted a number of possibilities that require detailed assessment. Section 6 of this SPD addresses those longer term aspirations which could in time result in the need for a review of this SPD.



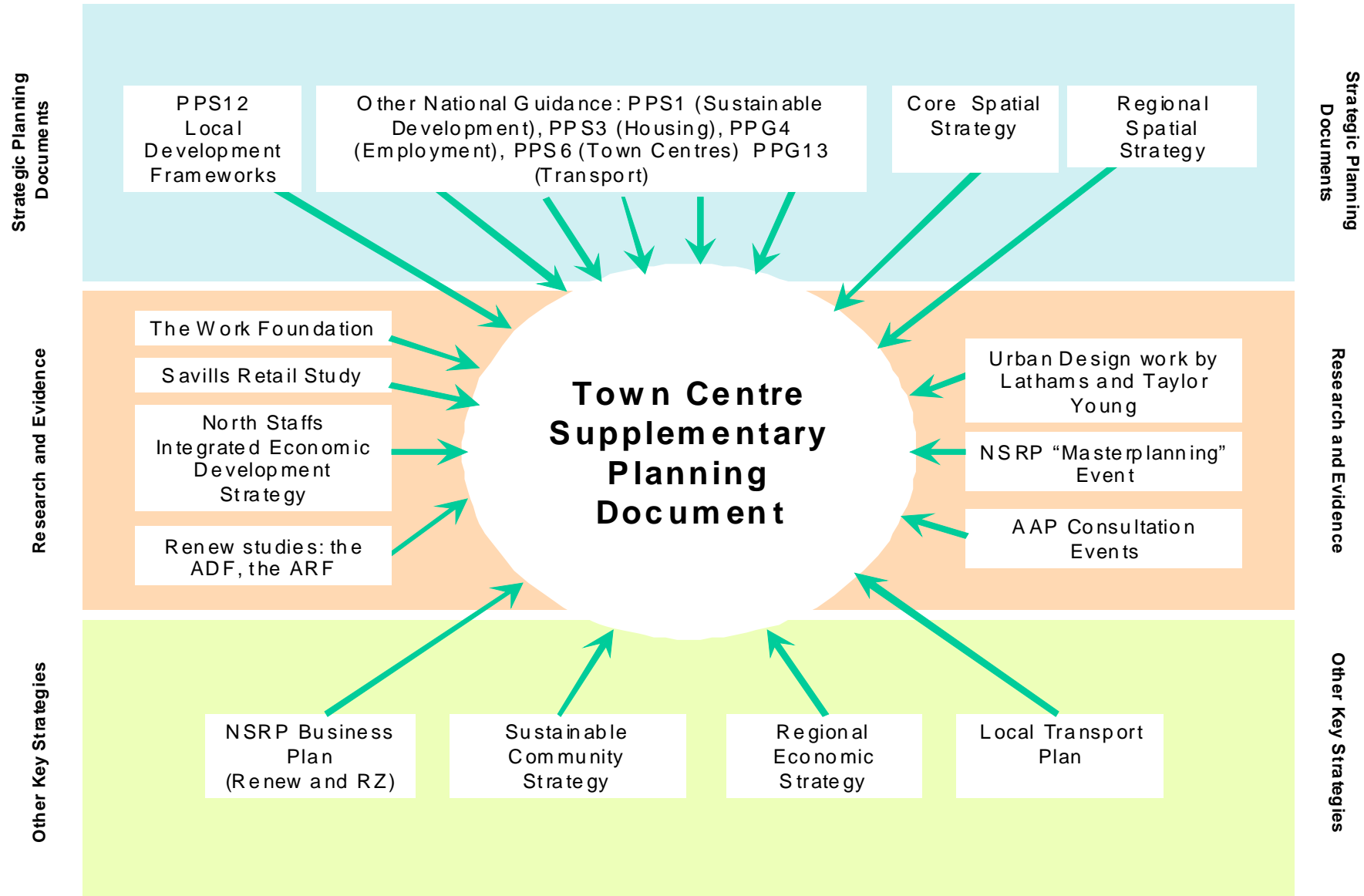
No. 1 London Road: one of the newer, more controversial buildings in the Town Centre

Figure 1: Context Map

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FIGURE 2 Strategic Context



Section 1: AN ATTRACTIVE AND VIBRANT CENTRE

Newcastle is rightly proud of its market town heritage. It is evident in the character of its street pattern and buildings and in the presence of the daily open market, which occupies a large part of the area of the centre's core. It is also a green Town Centre, with mature trees throughout the pedestrianised area and well laid out gardens and parks both within the inner ring road, and beyond.

The history of the town is central to its character. At the far end of Queen Elizabeth Park is the former Castle Motte, and nearby, the remaining foundations. These features, along with the name of Pool Dam, the medieval causeway, are testimony to the origins of the town's development. The names of Priory Road and Blackfriars Road similarly give evidence of the former Religious House.

Newcastle grew around a twelfth century castle, which gave protection for a small settlement which grew through the middle ages, a medieval street pattern evolving as it expanded. It grew further to support a church, a Friary and the Guild Hall, as well as thriving markets and fairs. Important buildings were generally of stone but smaller domestic buildings were largely timber framed with lath and plaster fill. Hardly any of the latter remain today. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the pace of change escalated as Newcastle grew into a thriving coaching town. Trade flourished and timber frame buildings were replaced (or in some cases refaced) with brick and stone. Many new buildings of that time reflected the current trends of the day through the Georgian and Regency periods. It is the buildings from this period which, to many people, characterise the dominant style of the Town Centre, though in fact development and change continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



The Guildhall with more typical Georgian frontage behind. The Guildhall is probably the building that symbolises both the Borough and the Town of Newcastle. It was built in 1713, replacing an earlier timber structure that sheltered the town market.

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The "Extensive Urban Survey" of the Town prepared in 2007 by Dr John Hunt, for the County Council provides a comprehensive and informative historical background to the area's character. It defines Historic Urban Character Areas, the "building blocks from which the modern town has grown". In some of these, the historical relevance is less apparent, but the area identified as the "upper town" (from Merrial Street to Grosvenor roundabout) remains largely what is perceived as the historic core of the Town Centre. The examination of the history of the way the Town Centre has developed is central to understanding its character and thus how best to complement that character in new development. Such analysis has formed part of three key urban design studies that have made a major contribution to the SPD, as referred to later in section 3.

Within the area covered by the SPD, there are 54 listed buildings, including three parish churches. There are also two Conservation Areas (Town Centre and Stubbs Walks) and a small part of another (The Brampton). The largest concentration of listed buildings is in the historic core, "upper town", particularly in High Street, Ironmarket and Lad Lane. These include the oldest buildings known to have survived in the Town Centre.

The formal and semi-formal open spaces that now make such a major impact in the Town Centre are largely a product of the Victorian era. The most central, the Queen's Gardens, features in most people's perception of the major strengths of the Town Centre. Opposite the gardens, the trees around St George's Church dominate the busy junction. To the east, Stubbs Walks, linking Marsh Parade with the Church of St Paul, occupies higher land and affords views across the central area to the countryside beyond.

The parks and open spaces just outside the Town Centre are an essential part of its setting and character, as are the glimpses of the rural hinterland to the west. Brampton Park stretches for nearly 2 ha to the north and from Queen Elizabeth Park there is access to a large swathe of open countryside. Two major walkways run along the boundaries of the

SPD area - Station Walks on the northern edge, giving access to Apedale, and the Lyme Brook path in the south, linking to the Lyme Valley Park.

In consultation events, one theme predominates: that the essence of the character of Newcastle Town Centre, particular when compared to other local alternatives, is the attractiveness of its environment. It is a place that is pleasant to be in. From the more traditional high quality small shops to the new pavement cafés, and the range of buskers, it is evident that this is a traditional town that is still very much in business, adapting to modern needs and serving a very heterogeneous population.



The Queen's Gardens: "features in most people's perception of the major strengths of the Town Centre". Seen here against a background of Georgian style offices on Ironmarket.

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There is a healthy mix of retail, commercial and entertainment development in the area, employing around 10,000 people. Within the inner ring road, retail is dominant, though restaurants, bars and cafés and the financial and professional sector enjoy a substantial presence. This is important in terms of developing Town Centre vitality and viability. Significant leisure attractions are the multi-screen cinema in the central core and the Jubilee Baths at Nelson Place, and outside the SPD boundary the museum and art gallery about 400 m to the north. Finally, the nationally renown New Victoria Theatre lies about 700 m to the east.

RENEW North Staffordshire has identified Newcastle Town Centre as having the potential to “accommodate a vibrant housing market which caters for a mixed income community”. Currently, the Town Centre has above average proportion of “affordable housing”, with a third of all households renting from Registered Social Landlords, compared to 19% across the Borough. Town Ward also has one of the lowest average house prices in the Borough. However, there are also small pockets of high quality housing very close to the centre. At the last census there was a comparatively high percentage of residents in professional, managerial or technical occupations, and possessing Level 3 or higher qualifications.

In the historical context, the presence of the University of Keele is a recent development, which now makes a major contribution to the Town Centre’s developing role. Newcastle is a University Town, even though its campus lies 2 – 3 km to the west. The recent development of the expanding science park brings high-tech employment close to the centre and a population that looks to Newcastle for its needs. The relationship has now been further enhanced by the development of the University Medical School.

The new hospital, though within the administrative boundary of the City, is on the doorstep. This puts Newcastle Town Centre in a strong position to develop its role as a University Town. The University and the Medical centre both contribute to the Town Centre’s character and give opportunities for further measures to appeal to a new “customer base”.



*The Medical School - on London Road and at Keele University.
Not in the Town Centre but having a strong impact on its character
and its image.*



Section 2: THE VISION

"Newcastle-under-Lyme is a University town and its Town Centre will be a place recognised not only for this, but in its own right for its attractive heritage townscape, its high quality new developments, its vibrant public realm, its public open air market and its high quality shops, services and businesses. It will be a focal point for the economy of the Borough, and a place where people want to spend their time and money. Employment opportunities will be sustained and improved and the emerging residential market will be strengthened.

The environment will be pedestrian-friendly and welcoming for all those who live, work and visit the Town Centre. Action will have been taken to address any damage done to the town's historic character in the twentieth century, to create a more appealing historic Town Centre where the quality of the environment and its heritage is a key selling point. New development will be sensitive to the best traditions of historic development in the town.

New opportunities will have been grasped to enhance the historic heart of the town and to regenerate areas where sites and land are underused or otherwise detract from the image and identity of the town. Major gateways and the town's public face will be improved, with environmental assets such as the Lyme Brook adding to local distinctiveness."

This vision was developed originally for the AAP, based on the work of Taylor Young, and refined through consultation and discussion by the Council's planning committee. This final version has been incorporated in the Core Spatial Strategy. It is the Council's vision, but the consultation processes that have taken place mean that it can fairly be identified as a shared vision.

The vision is framed around an understanding of the Town Centre's character, its appeal and its potential, as outlined in the previous section. Everything that follows, in this SPD, is intended to help to make that vision a reality.



An exciting mix of styles around the historic market cross

Key issues arising from the vision

Implementing this vision means attracting investment and increasing the Town Centre's vitality, while conserving and enhancing its character and key attributes.

Seven themes from the vision stand out as requiring attention:

1. Newcastle-under-Lyme as a University Town

The identification of the town as a "University Town" is significant and must mean more than just a name. It is important that we are able to attract the sort of development and activities that would appeal to a university community, enhancing the social and economic infrastructure to support professionals and return graduates. The proximity of the University Hospital also provides opportunities - both in relation to the professional people working there and the visitors to the complex. A physical presence of University activity is also needed.

2. Newcastle-under-Lyme as a Market Town

The public open market, operating in different ways six days every week, is one of the attractions of the Town Centre and one which helps to forge its identity. It must be maintained, supported and enhanced. Section 4 contains details of the proposals from the Public Realm Strategy to upgrade the market stalls.

3. The attractive heritage townscape

It is the heritage of the Town that gives it its local distinctiveness. The quality of the public realm, both in the historic core of the centre and elsewhere, must be maintained and enhanced, both through direct action and by ensuring that new development adds to the appeal. The Council's Public Realm Strategy proposals are detailed in section 4.

4. High quality new developments sensitive to the best traditions of historic development of the Town Centre

The key buildings that we recognise as representing the character of the Town Centre were all new in their time. If the town is to remain vibrant and forward looking, we must welcome contemporary development, but of a high standard of design, and complementary to the existing character. Raising the quality of design is a key feature of all the major sub-regional strategies and an aim of the North Staffs Regeneration Partnership, Newcastle Town Centre starts from a strong position. The gateways into the Town Centre provide opportunities to make statements about the nature of the Town's aspirations. New development can also be used to "address damage done" by replacing poor buildings that detracted from the character by new structures and designs. Most of the key sites around the edge of the inner ring road fall into this category.

5. High quality shops, services and businesses, serving as a focal point for the economy

The main focus for investment has to remain as retail, which is the Centre's primary function. Proposals for additional retail that are "edge of centre" (as described in the next section) will need to be judged on whether they increase the attractiveness of the centre or detract from it. The quality of the retail "offer" is also of key importance, and though the Council's power in this regard is limited, raising the overall quality of the environment has to be seen as making a positive contribution.

The Centre is also the Borough's largest employment area. Attracting new businesses, particularly offices, is vital to maintaining the vitality of the Centre, bringing in potential customers for the retail and leisure offer, both during the day and on return visits. The night time economy must also be seen as an attraction, which means not only encouraging investment but

ensuring that potential negative aspects are addressed. The amount of new commercial development to be expected is set out principally in the Core Spatial Strategy (see glossary), which in turn is informed by the Regional Spatial Strategy, supplemented by sub-regional and more local information such as retail capacity studies.

6. Encouraging appropriate residential development

Renew North Staffordshire recognised Newcastle as having the potential to show how town centre living can be marketed and made to be successful. Subject to the temporary downturn in the housing market, a number of opportunities have already been taken. We need to ensure a balanced offer, both in terms of tenure and of house types. We have a large “walk-in” catchment, suitable particularly for families, and the potential to increase possibilities for sustainable lifestyles.. The amount of housing development to be expected is guided by the Core Spatial Strategy, prepared in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy. (See Glossary)

7. The environment will be pedestrian-friendly and welcoming for all

All the improvements to the public realm are considered in the light of pedestrian activity, enhancing open public squares, encouraging “permeability” (the ability to traverse the centre through alternative interesting paths and streets). But the whole experience of getting in to the Town Centre must be given attention – the location and condition of the car parks, the quality of the bus station, and how easy and pleasant it is to access the main shopping areas from them.



Pedestrian friendly and welcoming for all

Section 3: THE SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

The Town Centre is by no means a homogeneous environment. Its character changes according to the architecture, the history and the activities currently taking place. This adds to its vibrancy. It also increases pedestrian activity if varied "destinations" are offered throughout the centre, particularly at its extremities. An active environment is one where there are opportunities for pedestrians to meander, through loops around the town centre, increasing a sense of accessibility and legibility. The Spatial Framework is intended to clarify the changes in character and role of different parts of the SPD area.

Six zones have been defined, where different general character will help to steer future developments and encourage a wide variety of activities and facilities to be provided. Classification was driven by three aspects: historical analysis; consideration of the way each had developed and is now used; and appreciation of current potential. The six zones cover the whole of the area within the inner ring road, and adjacent parts of the area beyond where commercial and other activities are also found that contribute to the Town Centre's "offer".

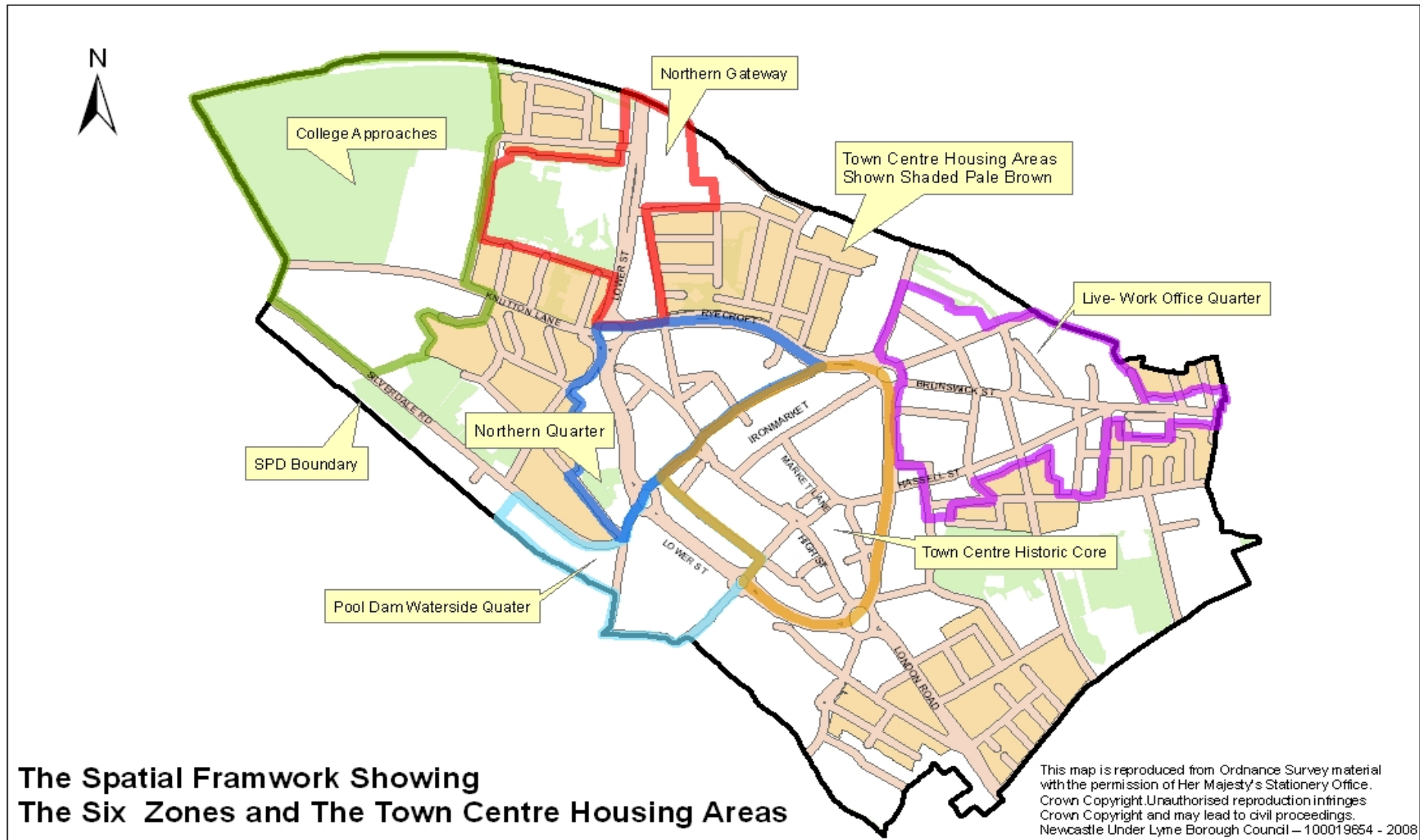
In addition to these zones are "Town Centre Housing Areas" around the outside of the inner ring road. These are areas where housing still predominates, and the purpose of the classification is intended to prevent further penetration of business uses. Although the extension of commercial activities into these areas has been a valuable outlet for the Town Centre, the maintenance of these relatively tranquil, traditionally designed residential areas, so close to town centre activities, is considered to make an important contribution to the overall residential offer. These also form part of the Spatial Framework.

The final part of the Spatial Framework is the clarification of the role of different parts of the Town Centre in terms of retail, leisure or office activities. In the central area, retail should predominate, but other uses are also essential to the area's vitality. Government guidance issued in PPS6 (see Glossary) recommends three distinct categories: Primary Shopping Area, Prime Frontage and Secondary Frontage. It also uses the term "Edge of Centre" in a very specific way, to help Planning Authorities to prioritise the most appropriate areas within their town centres for retail and other uses. (Further details can be found in the Glossary, which also makes reference to the Companion Document).

The Primary Shopping Area is the area within the inner ring road. This is the area where retail is the primary activity, and which should be protected by ensuring that any retail activity outside it does not harm its viability and vitality. Within that, on the basis of observed activities, the Prime Frontage is where we would expect pure retail to predominate rather than other high street uses (bars, restaurants, banks etc) which are nevertheless an important ingredient in the overall mix. This has been defined as the frontage of the square created by Ironmarket, High Street, Castle Walks and Hassel Street.

"Edge of Centre", in the terms used in PPS6, is defined as those areas beyond and immediately adjoining the inner ring road. These are intended to be areas where retail or leisure uses can be permissible if it can be shown that they would add to the attractiveness of the Primary Shopping Area rather than damage it. It is not just the proximity to the Primary Shopping Area that is important (though PPS6 suggests around 300m), it is the ease of accessing it, on foot. For this reason, the "edge of centre" definition extends along the A34 for about 250m, but individual proposals would still need to demonstrate good "connectivity". It is important to allow the retail and other economic activity to grow, to the degree appropriate to its status as one of the strategic centres of North Staffordshire, and it is not inconceivable that in time to come, the Primary Shopping Area could extend beyond the inner ring road. But at present,

FIGURE 3 SPATIAL FRAMEWORK



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the road is a significant barrier, and to bring any area beyond it into part of the centre as such would require a substantial improvement to the access across it.

“Edge of Centre” does not have the same connotation for offices uses, which are considered to be suitable for location anywhere within the Town Centre – ie most of the area covered by the SPD.

The locations of these zones and classifications are shown on figure 3 and the large map at the back of the document. The purpose is to help to guide both investment and development control decision making. The Spatial Framework explains the role each part of the Town Centre is expected to play. Any development that would detract from the picture that is painted of each of these zones should be seen as not assisting the Council in implementing its vision.

There are areas within the SPD that do not lie within any of the zones or the Housing Areas. Mostly this is because they are not sufficiently homogenous in terms of land use or character, or form too small an area for any such classification to be meaningful. There are also areas predominantly of housing where there is no specific potential for encroachment of business uses from the centre to warrant any special protection. However, these are not in any way “free-for-all” areas. Any development proposals would be assessed against the overall vision for the Town Centre as well as in relation to effects on neighbouring uses. Their future and the quality of design in any redevelopment within them is just as important to the Town Centre as within the zones described below.



Ironmarket: in “the heart of the Town Centre and rich with its heritage.”

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The Town Centre Historic Core

This is the heart of the Town Centre and is rich with its heritage. It is similar to the "Upper Town" character area described in the Extensive Urban Survey. Any development opportunities in the Historic Core would be likely to be infilling and intensification, with special attention to conservation. The zone lies entirely within the Town Centre Conservation Area. There must be attention not only to physical development but the effect any proposed activities will have on the character of the area. Any change must be of a positive benefit and create an asset for this core area of the Town Centre.

The whole of this zone also lies within the Primary Shopping Area, and thus retail activities must continue to predominate. It is home to the open market, a key part of the Town's character and heritage. It also houses the Council's principal public face, in the Guildhall, and the adjoining area is to be enhanced as a public square, as part of the Public Realm Strategy. (See Section 5.)

The Northern Quarter

This is a very mixed zone, but has been defined in recognition of its shared potential for significant redevelopment. Much of its historical character has been lost to the development of the inner ring road. The Extensive Urban Survey shows it containing elements of the earliest market, a settlement associated with the church and significant areas of nineteenth century expansion (terraced housing long since gone and replaced by the Civic Offices and Sainsbury.)

Opportunities here could involve extensive parcels of land, though there are also remains of the older street pattern, which gives potential for small, sensitive regeneration. The presence of the Bridge Street area near the centre of the zone is a reminder of the importance of complementing

the existing character. Opportunities should be taken to reproduce similar patterns of "permeability" even in large redevelopment sites.

Redevelopment opportunities could lead to a greater mix and intensity of uses. Additional residential development could be appropriate here, as well as leisure, offices and hotel development, so long as the main function of the Primary Shopping Area is maintained and enhanced. The extension of this "quarter" across the inner ring road to one of the key development sites helps to emphasise the importance of "breaking through" this barrier wherever possible. However, any development on that site would need to take account of its connectivity to the Primary Shopping Area, which is currently limited.



St Giles Church in its dominant position in the Northern Quarter

The Northern Gateway

Like the Northern Quarter, this zone has developed with little recognition of its history. The Extensive Urban Survey notes that part of it has "little of distinction in so far as the historic environment is concerned". However, it is one of the major gateways into the Town Centre and should be seen along with the Northern Quarter as providing a major opportunity to "*address any damage done to the town's historic character*".

The zone area will be dominated by the redevelopment of the current College site. There is an opportunity here to enhance one of the primary approaches into the Town Centre. Though the scale of existing residential buildings must be respected, there is a potential for striking, contemporary design on the frontages. New development should be seen to create a sense of destination as well as a sense of place.

The Pooldam Waterside Quarter

This would represent a new growth area for the Town Centre, and contains one of the largest single potential redevelopment sites, which needs special care. Although a comprehensive approach is required, development should create active frontages and additional public realm rather than a mass of impenetrable development.

The potential of the Lyme Brook is limited but it should be "rediscovered" through sensitive development. Any development must exploit the recreational, access and design potential of the Lyme Brook. (The area lies within the functional flood plain, and therefore potential flooding issues will need to be addressed, and investigation would be required at the outset in association with the Environment Agency.) Measures should also be sought to improve its ecological quality.

Mixed development is the key with potential for both leisure and residential uses adjoining the waterside. Office and hotel development are

also appropriate as part of the mix. The "quarter" is defined to take in the Midway area to encourage the improved linkage across the inner ring road. (As with the Northern Quarter, its connectivity is currently limited, and this would need to be addressed if it is to form part of any natural extension to the central core.) It also extends along the Lyme Brook to include Queen Elizabeth Park and the former Castle Motte. This latter area has no potential for further built development but provides a valuable context for realising the potential of the brook. It is also evidence of the historical origins of the town's development.



Development in the Pooldam Waterside Quarter must "rediscover" the Lyme Brook, and provide an opportunity to improve its ecological quality. © Suec

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College Approaches

This zone has been identified to capitalise on the new development by the College. That development is seen as part of, and an asset for, the Town Centre. The design of the new building will help to create a gateway into the Town Centre and effectively extend its influence. Within the zone is the current Council depot, which has potential for a range of redevelopment opportunities.

It forms a transitional zone between the residential areas to the west and north and Town Centre activities. It has good access to open land, bridging the gap between the Wammy to the north and Poolfields to the south, which links to the Lyme Valley via the Lyme Brook path. Although technically part of the Town Centre, it is the furthest from the Primary Shopping Area of any of the zones in the Spatial Framework. It would be considered unsuitable for retail development.

The Live Work Office Quarter

Historical analysis shows how this area was once integral with the historic core, being a largely nineteenth century planned expansion of the town. and its character, including a number of its buildings, is witness to this. At its north west extremity is Nelson Place, created at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, where three important boulevards converge to meet the Ironmarket. Parts of the zone lie within the Town Centre and Stubbs Walks Conservation Areas. Running centrally through the zone is Brunswick Street, which since the adoption of the one-way system is now the major access into the Town Centre from the east.

The designation of the Live Work Office Quarter is complementary to the presence of the Town Centre Housing Area which lies around it. Whilst the latter will be expected to remain little changed, as relatively tranquil areas, albeit within an urban context, the live-work quarter is expected to

continue to develop as a mixed use area, where the main focus is offices, with any housing development likely to be marketed for those who wish to live within a bustling business community. Residential opportunities could be created by "living over the shop" and in new developments. The area is likely to contain a number of key redevelopment sites, and proposals will need to reflect the intentions of the designation. Design needs to reflect the importance of this area as an important gateway.



Office uses on Marsh Parade, on the outer edge of the Live Work Office Quarter

Section 4: MAKING IT HAPPEN

4.1 Introduction

This SPD has been produced in order to safeguard and improve the future of the Town Centre. Much of the comment received during the consultation process was focussed on the extent to which the SPD will make a difference. The consultation process also showed, even at the level of the vision, that there will always be minority voices. However, there is clearly a strong support for the vision and for the spatial framework and design principles that are intended to help to deliver it. This gives strength to the aspirations in the SPD and should give a clear impression to developers and investors of the Council's determination to ensure that high standards are achieved.

To implement the vision for the Town Centre, two broad objectives must be followed, without conflict between them:

- To ensure that the Town Centre grows both physically and in terms of what it offers by way of the quality of its shops, leisure facilities, employment, housing and hotel accommodation.
- To maintain and improve all the assets that make it attractive, both to its "customers" and to developers and investors.

The purpose of this SPD is to guide and coordinate activities of the Council and other players – developers, public bodies and investors, so that everything that takes place in the Town Centre helps the Council achieve its shared vision. New development must always contribute positively both to the attraction and the attractiveness of the Town Centre.



View from the Midway car park showing the site of the former Georgia Pacific – one of the key development sites in the Town Centre - and in the background, the new College under construction on Knutton lane.
© SueC

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It is not a blueprint with a detailed action plan, because many of the things that will take place over the next few years may not yet have even been considered. There will be developments that take place by agencies that have not yet come forward. Most importantly, there will be developments or other innovations for which funding has not yet been identified.

One of the main purposes of the SPD is to harness the activity, energy and creativity of the private sector so that the vision for the Town Centre can become a reality. Although in most instances development is initiated by the private sector, there is still a great deal of scope for public sector partnership.

Ideally, development in a key location such as the Town Centre would rarely be a simple speculative activity, where the Council is merely required to react, but will be progressed with the Council's active cooperation. This is dealt with below under "Development Management".

The Borough Council can also take the lead in a number of important areas:

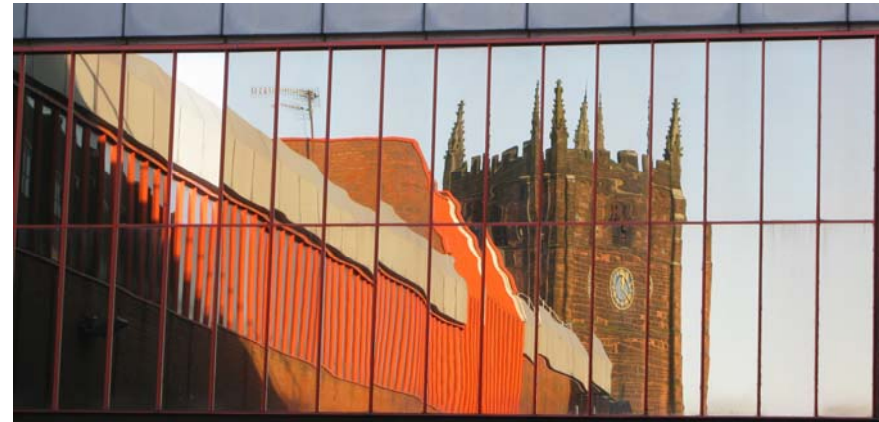
- Direct intervention in land ownership, development or enhancement - either on its own or in partnership with others. This might include funding from the Council or from a third party, such as government or government agency. The Council already owns 38 retail properties within the inner ring road, two office buildings and the site of the bus station. The most significant contribution is in maintaining the quality of the environment; a major area of work on the Public Realm is described below.
- Commissioning further studies and research. (See section 6.) These will help to add to our knowledge on such matters as financial viability, market demand, social needs, car parking and transport implications.

- Marketing. There has already been one effective marketing exercise carried out by Instaffs targeted at encouraging development opportunities. Promoting the Council's vision, and giving publicity to its successes will help to deliver improvements and innovations in all areas. The Town Centre's regular successes in the Britain in Bloom competition ensures its continued high profile and good public response.

The co-ordination and management of such activities is a key concern. Although there is an effective steering group for the Public Realm Strategy (see below) there is no Council "town centre manager". This is referred to in Section 6

This section sets out three broad areas of activity through which efforts will be made to implement the vision:

- the improvement of the public realm, including conservation work and improvements to greenspace
- development management
- other developments being initiated by the Borough Council .



St Giles' Church reflected in the bridge over the Midway.

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4.2 The Public Realm

The quality of the environment of the Town Centre is central to the Council's vision, and an essential element in attracting and encouraging investment. This relates both to the experience of being in the Town Centre and that of gaining access to it, both from public transport and from car parks. Through comprehensive action to maintain and enhance the character of the area, the Council can show investors, developers and other stakeholders that the Town Centre is one of its key priorities.

A major programme is currently being co-ordinated to improve the public realm. This is complemented by projects on the Council's public spaces and a programme of Conservation Area enhancement. In terms of process, the conservation area enhancement is a separate stream of work. This is justifiable given the specialist nature of some of the issues and the specific statutory context provided for Conservation Areas. However, there is no effective separation between this and the general public realm work. The essential character of the Town Centre is bound up with its heritage. Enhancing the public realm, in the context of the Town Centre, has to mean ensuring that new developments and initiatives complement that character.

The Town Centre Public Realm Strategy originated from the Town Centre Market Positioning Study published in 2003 which examined ways of improving Newcastle Town Centre's market position as a place for retail and business. Two of the seven strategic objectives suggested by this study were to improve the townscape and environment, and to improve accessibility and movement including pedestrian movements. Areas of opportunity included:

- Improvement to the pedestrian experience where the main pedestrian-vehicular conflicts occur at the Hassell Street, Friars Street and High Street junction; the Castle Walk and Hassell Street area adjacent to the

bus station; the Church Street, Merrial Street and Bridge Street Junction; and the east end of the Ironmarket near Queens Gardens.

- Attractive permanent market stalls with a common theme for the street market and the introduction of occasional themed markets.
- Environmental improvements, with potential for themed areas such as a 'café quarter' within the ring road.

Following these recommendations the Borough Council commissioned a Town Centre Public Realm Strategy which was widely consulted on and published in 2004. This set out an ambitious vision for improvements to the Town Centre and considered:

- Key development opportunities
- Sites in need of improvement
- Gateways and approaches
- Townscape character and the public realm
- Movement & linkages
- Activities and functions

The Strategy was approved by the Council in August 2004 and although not formally adopted as a detailed plan of action (due to lack of finance), the following schemes were agreed in principle, and a number of them have been encompassed in the Newcastle town centre element of the North Staffordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP):

- **Closure of Hassell Street/Friars Street** - The strategy identified the junction of Hassell Street/Friars Street/High Street as a vehicular/pedestrian conflict point which divided market and retail activity in the High Street. The LTP includes the proposal which will require a diversion of bus routes, relocation of the taxi rank in Hassell Street and amendment to traffic regulation orders. After investigation of the options available a design scheme has been developed which is currently undergoing a technical review to

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produce cost estimates from the scheme. It will go out for public consultation early in 2009.

- **New market stalls** - £250k of Council funding has been allocated to renew the market stalls. The aspiration is to create permanent structures that will provide good trading facilities for the market traders whilst addressing concerns about appearance, safety and maintenance costs. Work has been completed with a design company to design a bespoke market stall for Newcastle, which is following prototype trials could be used throughout and become a marketable product for the Borough Council.
- **New surface level crossings on the ring road** – The strategy identified the desirability of providing additional surface level crossings to provide further links into the centre, particularly in the evening when the alternative presented by the subways becomes less attractive. The severance that is caused by the inner ring road is noted in the LTP and support is given for additional surface level crossings subject to assessment of their impact on traffic flow. New crossings would be enabled through development opportunities around the outer edge of the inner ring road and assessment of the impact that this would have on footfall and accessibility to central area.
- **Enhancement of 4 subways** – The strategy recognised that the condition of the subways makes them less attractive to use. Improvement of the subways was supported in the LTP to be funded by non-LTP sources such as Local Transport Initiative funding and Section 106 agreements (see Glossary). Three artwork schemes have already been completed and one subway has received a major refurbishment with the artwork to be completed in February 2009. A section 106 contribution from the combined Newcastle College and Sainsburys re-development scheme has been negotiated for three subways adjacent to this development. Payment of this is to be phased as the development progresses.



Two examples of how the public realm could be improved with high quality paving and upgraded market stalls. Thanks to Christopher Taylor Design Ltd for the use of the images.



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- **Midway car park upgrade** - This scheme has now been implemented. The car park has been redecorated and now benefits from CCTV, responding to one of the main concerns expressed by users.
- **Other public realm improvements:** Building on the closure of Hassell Street, the Public Realm Strategy envisages a new pedestrian priority area centred on the Guildhall where kerb lines are removed and service traffic would be limited to early morning and late afternoon (as currently in Ironmarket). A new town square would be created to the South of the Guildhall with an opportunity to include high quality paving and bespoke street furniture to create a setting for the Guildhall and market functions. The Borough Council has committed £1 million of funding to the initial phase of this scheme which includes new paving and street furniture and the new market stalls. Preparatory work is being completed to enable elements of this scheme to take place. A new bus drop-off point has been created in the Stubbs Street area to enable buses travelling from the south to access passenger drop-off facilities and the bus station directly without having to complete the Barracks Road, Hassell Street, Stubbs Street circuit. Additionally, plans are underway to introduce an additional taxi rank close to the central shopping area at the eastern end of Ironmarket.

Further aspirations for the public realm include creative lighting on some of the key landmark buildings. Also proposed is an avenue of Lime Trees, possibly with decorative fencing, around the inner ring road and new public art on the roundabouts. Creating additional public squares would add to the character of the town centre for example re-claiming Red Lion Square for pedestrian dominated uses. Additionally, re-thinking bus arrangements in the town also has the potential to release the current bus station site for development, with its key frontage onto Barracks Road. Much of this however remains an aspiration where funding is still being sought and as the vision for the Town Centre develops, aspirations for the

treatment of the inner ring road will change and develop over time. The important message is that the Council is committed to radical improvement in the public realm and opportunities will be taken to develop this further through a variety of means including Section 106 agreements (see Glossary). The approach of addressing Public Realm issues in this way is included specifically in the SPD on Developer Contributions. (See Glossary.)

Although the basic public realm strategy was approved by the Council in 2004, it was not a fixed blueprint, and discussion on details has continued. Some of the work has already been carried out, as referred to above, such as subway improvement, and details on others - notably the market stalls and the redesign of High Street, following the closure of Hassell Street - are now emerging. This latter element is now influenced by the presence of the Council's main customer focus in the Guildhall. On many aspects of the Public Realm programme, individual consultation exercises will take place, which may result in changes to the emerging strategy. This is of positive benefit in terms of raising the profile of the issues, eliciting public support and helping to maintain interest in the shared vision for the Town Centre.

Further ideas for public squares arose in the "visioning" event referred to in the Introduction, which will influence future developments in the public realm strategy. This is explored further in Section 6.

A Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for the Town Centre Conservation Area was approved by the Council in July 2008. The Appraisal outlines the special character and appearance of the Town Centre Conservation Area, defines its important architectural or historic elements or features and highlights the key positive, negative or neutral aspects within the area. Amongst the issues to be addressed, that of "street clutter" is also the subject of discussion by the Public Realm Strategy Group. A pilot study has been agreed with the County Highway Authority, in association with Staffordshire Conservation Urban Design Forum, to review the need for, and design, of the highway and other advisory signs in the Town Centre.

The Management Plan sets out a programme of immediate, medium and long term tasks which it is hoped could be worked up into a more detailed action plan that will need to be informed by this SPD. Details can be found on the Council's website.



Two striking images showing the importance of detail in a Conservation Area. Ironmarket: the George and Dragon and the former Emporium. © Paul Pickard



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The High Quality Open Spaces in and around the Town Centre are maintained to a high standard, with both Queens Gardens and Brampton Park currently holding Green Flag status. Queen Elizabeth Park, with the Castle Motte, lies within the "Pooldam Waterside Quarter" identified in the Spatial Framework. It is defined as "District Level Parks" in the Green Space Strategy. The intention is to transform the locally valued park, and the Motte, which is recognised as a nationally important Scheduled Ancient Monument, into an asset that will raise the quality of the environment in that part of the Town Centre. The project is included in phase I (2007-12) of the Green Space Strategy Action Plan, subject to funding.

There are also plans to upgrade the Lyme Valley walkway, which connects this area to the Lyme Valley Park.

In accordance with the SPD on Developer Contributions (see Glossary), the Council seeks to ensure that additional open space, or improvement in open space and/or recreational facilities accompanies any new development. Also of critical concern is the effect development may have on existing open spaces. For example, the Council's proposals for the former School of St George and St Giles (see below) are being considered in the context of Queens Gardens. Any development close to areas of open space will be expected to make a positive contribution to it, in accordance with the spatial framework.



In the Stubbs Walks Conservation Area: the path linking the open space around St Paul's Church to the Live-Work Office Quarter at Marsh Parade

4.3 Development Management

This SPD is not a statutory Development Plan Document and cannot carry formal policies, but it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Current thinking on the nature of planning documents indicates that they should not be used simply to regulate development. There is a significant body of national policy, which is binding, and even over-rides local planning policy, in the PPSs (See glossary). These carry a range of requirements relating to general development principles which therefore do not need to be repeated here.

In addition, with the new emphasis on "spatial planning", Local Planning Authorities are being urged to adopt the "Development Management" approach, rather than that of traditional development regulation. This new approach is "derived from national policy and the vision and wider objectives of a two-tier (local and regional) spatial development plan and not driven solely by policies in the Local Development Framework". It is "vital to *'place shaping'* through its ability to harness opportunities created by development proposals and seek outcomes that achieve well planned developments which contribute positively to the area and provide community benefits". (Quotations from POS publication Development Management: Initial Guidance November 2007).

The key to assessing proposals under Development Management is to look beyond the development plan to answer two basic questions:

- "What are we trying to achieve, how do our policies reflect this, and how does this proposal measure up?"
- "Can this proposal help to achieve our spatial vision and objectives?"

This SPD sets out clearly our vision and guidance for development, which have the support of both national and local statutory policy. It is sufficiently flexible to allow the sort of enquiry that the Development Management approach needs. Because it is not a blueprint, with a rigid delivery plan, it will allow and encourage creativity and radical thinking. But through its spatial framework, it sets out clearly how developers' proposals should be assessed. All development, to be able to be supported, must help the Council to achieve its vision and be compatible with the Spatial Framework.

One of the key issues arising from the vision, referred to in Section 2, is the need to capitalise on the proximity of the University and the hospital. At best, the market will spot these opportunities, but the Council has a role in shaping the proposals that come forward from the private sector by showing clearly how we expect the Town Centre to evolve. This is the purpose of setting out the vision. Achieving the vision requires encouraging the right sort of activity to take place in the Town Centre and ensuring that development takes place in a way that enhances the character and environment of the Town Centre.

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We need:

- The right level and quality of retail provision to meet the needs of shoppers and help to ensure a vibrant local economy, conveniently located to maximise "footfall" and avoid unnecessary dispersion.
- The right level and quality of employment opportunity in keeping with the role of the Town Centre, in particular office based activities.
- An increase in Town Centre living, with a variety of types of housing to meet all needs, but not at the expense of retail and employment vitality
- A high quality and variety of cultural, leisure, recreational and hotel provision, appropriate to the role of the Town Centre, capable of meeting the requirements of Town Centre users and which does not create or exacerbate any problems of crime, disorder or unsocial behaviour
- A high quality and variety of public open space and green space that adds to the enjoyment of being in the centre for whatever purpose.

And development must:

- Uphold the principles of good urban design and thus significantly raise the standard and quality of the environment
- Respect the existing character of the Town Centre, and collectively seek to enhance it
- Include mixed-use development and high-density development wherever it is appropriate
- Improve accessibility to the Town Centre for all modes of transport with an emphasis on pedestrian movement within it.
- Be designed and located to be as sustainable as is reasonably practicable and such that it encourages sustainable use and activity.

The RSS (see Glossary), sets out measurable allocations for housing, retail, office and other employment for the Borough, and in some cases with direct application to the Town Centre. These allocations are carried forward and given local interpretation in the Core Spatial Strategy (see Glossary) All these matters are described in detail in the Companion Document.

In terms of housing development, it is envisaged that there is likely to be sufficient land within or close to the SPD area to accommodate the indicative target. Unless the current poor conditions in the housing market prevail for a long time, it is unlikely that any special effort will be required to reach the allocation. For retail development, the allocation in the RSS, and carried through into the Core Spatial Strategy, has been set in line with the strategic role of the Town Centre. However, growth in retailing will always need to be subject to impact analysis, though in principle would always be welcomed, so long as it complements, and does not detract from, what is already there.

In terms of office development, the situation is different. The growth in office activity in the Town Centre is an aspiration, albeit based on evidence of practicability. It is an essential part of the regeneration strategy for North Staffordshire that higher quality employment is encouraged in the Town Centre (and equally the City Centre), both in terms of employment base, and in relation to the character and economy of the Town Centre. To achieve this, we need to do more than simply follow market pressure. To this end, it is essential that opportunities for providing offices are taken as part of other developments. The analysis of individual sites presented in Section 7 makes reference to this.

Finally, the activity of development management itself can indicate the need for public sector intervention, to respond to and complement market pressures.

Section 7 includes detailed guidance for four sites that are currently attracting interest from developers. This site specific guidance is derived from the Spatial Framework and the development and design principles in Section 5. A similar exercise could be carried out for any other site. When this SPD is adopted, the Council will be in a position to produce similar brief guidance in response to specific development interest in any site within the SPD area.

4.4 Other Current Borough Council Action

The Jubilee Baths

The Council has resolved to consider re-provision of the swimming pool as part of an upgraded, comprehensive leisure and fitness facility. This is most likely to be on a different site.

One possible site is the current Council depot on Knutton Lane. This is close to the new College, with its enhanced sports facilities, which, under the terms of the planning permission must enable community use. Other sites may also be considered.

St Giles' and St George's School

The Borough Council has acquired this prominent town centre building and is undertaking a feasibility study to establish the viability of refurbishing the building and converting it into the new site for the Borough's Art Gallery and Museum. It is also intended to extend the building and provide small business space for creative businesses, a café and an education room / accommodation for meetings. The intention is to create within the core of the town a centre for cultural and creative activity, which would be a real asset for the town, increase footfall, provide somewhere to visit and enhance an attractive feature of the townscape - the Queen's Gardens together with the old school building.

At this stage, the work is exploratory and external funding will need to be secured to make this happen. (Should the existing Museum and Art Gallery move from its present location in Brampton Park, this will then have implications for the use of that building, which, again could be used as a significant asset for the town, but one that does not necessarily require such a central location.)

The Guildhall

This iconic building is being brought back into public use. It has been transformed into a Customer Service Centre where all the Council's face-to-face enquiries with customers will be dealt with.

It is a Grade II landmark building, dating back to 1713 and is frequently used as a recognisable symbol for the town. It has been empty since 2006 and the new use will generate additional pedestrian movement and increase activity in this area of the Town Centre.

Lancaster Buildings

The Council owns this attractive Art Deco grade II listed building that stands at the junction of High Street and Ironmarket. A major refurbishment is now programmed, commencing with the exterior, and then upgrading the interior to create modern, fit-for-purpose office accommodation. Council funding is being supplemented through a bid to Advantage West Midlands. The work will commence in 2009 and should be ready for new tenants by the end of 2010.

Hassell Street Offices

A follow-on project will see the refurbishment of these first and second floor offices on the same basis as Lancaster Buildings.

Section 5: DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

The importance of raising design standards throughout the sub region is one of the main tenets of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership. It was central to the aims of RENEW North Staffordshire from its very first prospectus submitted in 2003, and it is enshrined firmly in the Core Spatial Strategy. The quality of the built environment (the buildings themselves and the spaces between them) is vital to the long-term success of the town.

Experience on consultation and community engagement on plans for the Town Centre showed that design is a key issue in the public consciousness. It is one that attracts most criticism when there is a perception that the decision makers have got it wrong. Yet there is often little consensus about what is good, or successful design. Raising the design quality of new development is vital to the creation of a Town Centre that is attractive and enjoyable to live in, work in and visit, but it will never be a simple matter.

It must be emphasised that design is not simply a matter of the physical appearance of buildings. The sustainability of construction methods and the lifestyle that is encouraged by the building and its design are also key issues. The arrangement of land-uses is also a crucial design issue, and the spatial framework set out in Section 3 was derived from an urban design analysis of the Town Centre.

5.2 National policy and guidance

PPS1– “Delivering Sustainable development” (See Glossary) sets the national context for the drive to achieve good design. “Good design ensures attractive usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning.”. According to PPS1, one of the objectives in setting design policies and standards is to ensure that new developments “respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness”;

5.3 Sub-regional policy and guidance

The joint **Core Spatial Strategy** submitted to the government in December 2008 includes the following policy (Policy CSP1 – Design Quality):

New development should be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent’s unique townscape and landscape and in particular, the built heritage, its historic environment, its rural setting and the settlement pattern created by the hierarchy of centres.

New development should also:

- 1. Promote the image and distinctive identity of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent through the enhancement of strategic and local gateway locations and key transport corridors.***
- 2. Be based on an understanding and respect for Newcastle’s and Stoke-on-Trent’s built, natural and social heritage.***
- 3. Protect important and longer distance views of historic landmarks and rural vistas.***

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- 4. Contribute positively to an area's identity and heritage (both natural and built) in terms of scale, density, layout, use of appropriate vernacular materials for buildings and surfaces and access.*
- 5. Be easy to get to and to move through and around, providing recognisable routes and interchanges and landmarks that are well connected to public transport, community facilities, the services of individual communities and neighbourhoods across the whole plan area.*
- 6. Have public and private spaces that are safe, attractive, easily distinguished, accessible, complement the built form and foster civic pride.*
- 7. Ensure a balanced mix of uses that work together and encourage sustainable living in the use of water, energy and re-use of materials and minimises the impact on climatic change.*
- 8. Provide active ground floor frontages where located in the City Centre, Newcastle Town centre, local or district centres.*
- 10. Be accessible to all users.*
- 11. Be safe, uncluttered, varied and attractive.*
- 12. Contribute positively to healthy lifestyles.*
- 13. Support and foster innovative management and service delivery.*

A **North Staffordshire Design SPD** is due to be adopted in 2009. It is being prepared by Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design and has been commissioned by the Borough and City Councils and the NSRP through Urban Vision (see Glossary). As part of the preparatory work, Urban Vision has presented a programme of consultation and training aimed at setting new standards of design quality for development proposals in the Borough and the City. When adopted, the Design SPD will serve as the main source for design guidance in North Staffordshire elaborating the policy quoted above from the Core Spatial Strategy.



Here at the corner of Castle Walks, something close to imitation was the best solution. (The building on the right hand side is about 200 years younger than its neighbour.)
© SueC

5.4 Embedding good design

There are many valuable sources of general advice on urban design. A notable one is the Urban Design Compendium prepared by Llewelly Davies and published by English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation in September 2007. It aims to provide an analysis of core design through the different stages of the project process. Such guidance, which should be studied by all those who submit proposals for development, gives context for the proper consideration of design principles in any situation. The guidance set out below in the SPD, though it does contain a number of generic elements, common to any design challenge, is not intended to repeat or replace general guidance such as that in the Compendium. It is intended to set out specific issues that are of particular relevance to Newcastle Town Centre.

Urban Vision (see Glossary) run a Design Review Panel, to which applicants, and prospective applicants, for planning permission can submit their proposals for critical analysis. The assessments of these panels form a major part of the evidence placed before the Planning Committee in determining planning applications. The contribution of Urban Vision is central to the task of raising awareness and understanding of good design.

The guidance set out below is derived from work carried out by both Taylor Young and Lathams (see details the Companion Document) and has been revised through various consultation exercises. It may be supplemented by specific design briefs in appropriate cases.

5.5 General Principles

The description of the character of the Town Centre in Section 1 highlighted not only the importance of the architecture from the Georgian and Regency periods, but also the varied and eclectic mix of buildings.

This is not a one-style town. There are many varied buildings that are accepted as helping to make up the rich tapestry of the Town Centre, examples both of individuality and of other current styles: the blue-engineering brick gothic Holy Trinity Church on London Road, the yellow and blue brick Congregational Church, the Art Deco Lancaster Buildings. It is only when we look more recently to the latter half of the twentieth century that we meet with controversy, and where consensus is more difficult to achieve in recognising styles that contribute to, and complement, the existing mix rather than detract from it.

The variety in development over many years has created a town that can today accommodate new development of the highest standards to no detriment to the overall composition, provided that the design recognises the basic requirements of scale, proportion and good neighbourliness that is exemplified by the attractive buildings of the Georgian and Regency periods.

Every development proposal has the opportunity to contribute to the Council's vision by attracting investment and activity that will add to the Town Centre's vitality. The context for this is the Spatial Framework in Section 3 which identifies the key opportunities that development is expected to take in different locations across the Town Centre. Some developments will have a greater opportunity than others to affect wider areas than their own footprint. The six general principles listed below are specific to the Town Centre. They come direct from the vision and the key themes arising from it set out in Section 2. Not all will be applicable in any individual case, but all must be considered.

- Create a unique sense of place to attract and retain residents, businesses, students, customers, employers and employees, by building on the special character described in Section 1.

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- Promote, utilise and enhance existing assets, both built and natural, including topography, views, development patterns and materials. (Local examples of these issues are brought out in the guidance below.)
- Create high-quality, safe and pedestrian-friendly streets and spaces that encourage walking (and cycling where appropriate). Undertake high-quality streetscape improvements, especially in key spaces and squares. (Note particularly the Public Realm Strategy referred to in Section 4 and further aspirations discussed in Section 6.)
- Improve legibility and movement patterns for all users. Reconnect spaces within the centre and reconnect it to adjacent neighbourhoods, taking into account the remains of the medieval street pattern. Break through the perceived barrier of the inner ring road wherever possible.
- Ensure that development adds active frontages wherever possible to maintain interesting streetscapes and increase vitality.
- Enhance and define key gateways into the Town Centre.

5.6 The Elements of Good Design in the Town Centre

In terms of the Council's priorities for design in the Town Centre, two requirements stand out above any others. One is concerned with uses and activities, the other with the physical presence and form of the development. They are the principle of mixed development and the overriding need for respect for setting. These are considered first, followed by seven other aspects which are set out in no particular order. All must be addressed.

Element 1: Include mixed use development throughout, other than in the "Town Centre Housing Areas"

Encouraging mixed-use development increases the diversity of uses within a locality. As a result, such development would enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre by encouraging its use by a greater range of people for different purposes, possibly at different times of the day and night. This helps to strengthen the social fabric and economic viability of the Town Centre. It also has positive implications in terms of sustainable development as it encourages proximity of uses, reducing the need to travel.



Mixed use: Fenton House on Hickman Street. Living over and behind the shop. A Beth Johnson development enabled with Local Authority Social Housing Grant.

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Therefore, any proposals for major development (residential proposals of at least 10 dwelling units or commercial or retail proposals of at least 1000 sq m of floorspace) will be expected to include a measure of mixed-use within the development. In particular, consideration should always be given to office development. The only exception in the SPD area will be the defined "Town Centre Housing Areas", (referred to in section 3) which have been created specifically to prevent further incursion of business activities.

Element 2: Respect the setting

The Town Centre's historic character and identity, with its special distinctiveness as a market town, is an asset that needs to be conserved and enhanced. Development must be designed to respect, and where possible enhance, its surroundings and contribute positively to the character of the Town Centre, helping to improve its image and identity, having particular regard to the prevailing layout, urban grain, landscape, density and mix of uses, scale and height, massing, appearance and materials.

New development in the Town Centre should follow one of three design approaches: reflecting the best of the historical; contrasting with the traditional; or interpreting the traditional in terms of a contemporary design. Whichever approach is selected, the key factor is the creation of well-mannered buildings that enhance their setting and that are well resolved in terms of their own architecture. Scale, proportion, massing, height, materials and detail are all integral in terms of achieving well-mannered buildings. These aspects need to be considered together as part of an integrated design.

Innovation and creativity may generate new buildings that look very different to those that have been developed within the Town Centre over its history but can still be supported, particularly where the design is driven by improved environmental performance and where such

development will act as an exemplar of good architecture and design. But it is essential that the development respects its setting.

The description of the zones in the Spatial Framework, described in Section 3 identified certain areas where little remained of earlier heritage. There is also reference to important gateways into the Town Centre. In such areas, new development if appropriately designed, can contribute positively to the setting, by adding to the sense of place and destination. The plan at Figure 6 indicates the location of these gateways.

Element 3: Use relevant and durable materials

Traditional methods of construction and local materials have helped buildings to develop a common design language. Modern construction methods and architecture provide new challenges in terms of the way buildings are put together and how they look. In some cases, the construction process will not be visible in the completed building, where external materials overlay steel or timber frames. In other cases, the design, engineering and architecture may work in a more integrated and visible manner, or traditional building processes may be employed. Whatever the approach, materials need to be carefully considered.

Development must incorporate materials that are relevant and/or complementary to the surrounding area, are durable and appropriate for their purpose. Analysis of the area shows that red brick, painted render, clay and slate tiles form the historic building palette, with a limited use of natural stone. More recent development has introduced coloured and profiled sheet cladding, which have not weathered so well, or mellowed. A more limited palette of materials should be used, to help to establish a more coherent appearance. Traditionally based brick, render and stone are recommended, with the addition of terracotta, timber and glazing, used sensitively and in context. The Council supports the use of locally sourced materials wherever possible.

Element 4: Provide active frontages

The sight of long uninterrupted blank walls adds nothing to the experience of being in a place. This is particularly relevant in streets that are expected to be walked as much as driven, and thus experienced at a slower pace. In such streets it is important to create or maintain “active frontages” containing doors and entrances. Even windows, particularly shop windows, add to the interest of the streetscape. Truly active frontages sustain and encourage pedestrian activity, bringing potential economic opportunities and providing natural surveillance, which improves safety and the perception of safety. Opportunities should always be taken to contribute to the interest of the locality by adding active frontages. This is assisted by the inclusion of mixed development, because retail, restaurants and even offices can provide activity at ground level. This can be useful, for instance, where there is resistance in residential development to providing ground floor doorways.

Element 5: Contribute to the public realm and improve “permeability”

“Permeability” is the term used for capacity offered by an urban environment or a development for people to walk through it, or access it. The public realm should be rich in opportunities for access, with clear and well-designed routes that are open to the public at all times. New development should contribute positively to the urban grain and help to make the area more easy to understand and navigate through its form, layout and external appearance. There is a link here with “active frontages”. Ideally, there is potential for private spaces to be open (even if only at certain times) for public access. This would be especially possible in developments on large sites, and is more likely to occur in mixed development. Functional landscaping (hard and soft) should be included as part of the design, and this can form part of the public realm.

Historic street patterns should be respected and enhanced wherever possible. Development should wherever possible contribute to the availability of a choice of safe and convenient access points and routes through the site.



Narrow streets and passages such as Pepper Street add interest to the main frontage and provide useful pedestrian links into the centre, as well as serving other shops and services.

© SueC

Element 6: Address building height sensitively

While conserving the scale and character of the historic core of the Town Centre, there are opportunities outside this area for taller buildings on suitably located sites. The historic core is very sensitive, and runs the risk of being undermined by buildings that are too high or too low. Elsewhere, particularly at principal gateway locations on key approaches to the town, there may be opportunities for taller buildings than exist at present. Figure 5 contains guidelines as to potentially acceptable building heights across the key areas of the SPD.

The guidelines on the plan must not be taken as simple thresholds, and certainly not as targets to be aimed at. There are many other issues that need to be taken into account, in particular surroundings and the effect of recent or contemporaneous development. In many cases, the maximum height will only be acceptable, if at all, in a relatively narrow built form, rather than in a continuous mass. On the inner ring road it is important to prevent the creation of a "canyon" effect by developing at maximum heights on both sides over any significant length. The need to safeguard important views will also be a key issue on determining acceptable heights.

Element 7: Safeguard important views

Existing landmark buildings and features provide orientation within the town and are important at both a strategic and local level. They should be protected and enhanced and so new development should not detract, nor compete with them. Important views should not be obscured.

The plan at figure 6 shows key landmarks, represented by tall buildings and some of the significant views of them. Views of local landmarks help to give a sense of place and should be respected and protected. The plan does not aim to give a comprehensive guide to all important landmarks or views. In many areas of the Town Centre, other buildings of quite modest

height can be equally as important (examples are the archway entrance to the Barracks, the Police Station and the dome at the end of Castle Walks.) An individual assessment should be carried out in each particular case.



Recognisable landmarks on the skyline – the view from Stubbs Walks

Element 8: Encourage sustainability

New development has a role to play in sustainability, both through choice of materials and working practices, and in encouraging sustainable life styles on the part of those who will use it.

The Supplement to PPS1 (see Glossary) on Climate Change (2007) notes that Planning Authorities should "engage constructively and imaginatively to encourage the delivery of sustainable buildings." However, it also states that authorities should "not require local approaches for a building's environmental performance on matters relating to construction techniques, building fabrics, products, fittings or finishings, or for measuring a building's performance unless for reasons of landscape or townscape". There are no specific requirements established locally in this regard, but, clearly, performance on energy is one of the aspects of design that it is intended to raise within North Staffordshire. Development within the Town Centre will be no exception. This relates to both energy

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usage and the potential for on-site renewable energy creation, both of which should be encouraged.

Sustainable practices in the construction of development are also important. Any development involving demolition should address the recycling of construction and demolition waste locally, unless this is not technically, environmentally or economically feasible.

Ensuring that a building is safe and protects its users is an essential element of the design. Development should be designed in such a way as to provide safe and secure environments, where possible meeting 'Secured by Design' standards. Specific security measures need to be considered carefully to ensure that they do not involve the introduction of obtrusive features and thereby add to the fear of crime. (This could include solid metal shutters and external shutters present a bleak and blank appearance to an area when closed, whereas laminated glass and alarm systems would be more acceptable.)

The Town Centre is well served by public transport and has the potential to benefit from the presence of walking and cycling routes nearby. Developers will therefore be encouraged to make whatever provision is relevant to the development in terms of contributing towards the increased use of public transport and assisting with cycling and pedestrian activity.

Element 9: Address all issues of external appearance

In addressing the issue of respect for the setting of any new development, its impact on the townscape and the streetscape will include many practical details arising from the use of the buildings. These include car parking, air conditioning, telecommunications and advertising.

The Town Centre already has a supply of 'conventional', above ground car parking. Whilst this is necessary in order to enable people to use the Town Centre for work, shopping and leisure, it does not serve as an

attractive, dynamic use of space in its own right, and can therefore have a detrimental effect in terms of a place's economic viability. Therefore, opportunities (such as provided by topography) should always be sought to accommodate parking underground. Where high density or major development is proposed (over 50 dwellings per ha or over 1,000 sq m of floorspace) the majority of car parking provision must be located underground.

The backs and roofs of properties, notably commercial premises, need to be given special attention, particularly when they are seen from the street. Care is required in terms of the siting of ventilation grilles, air conditioning units and other plant and equipment, including telecommunications equipment, in order that there is no detrimental effect on the character of the Town Centre.

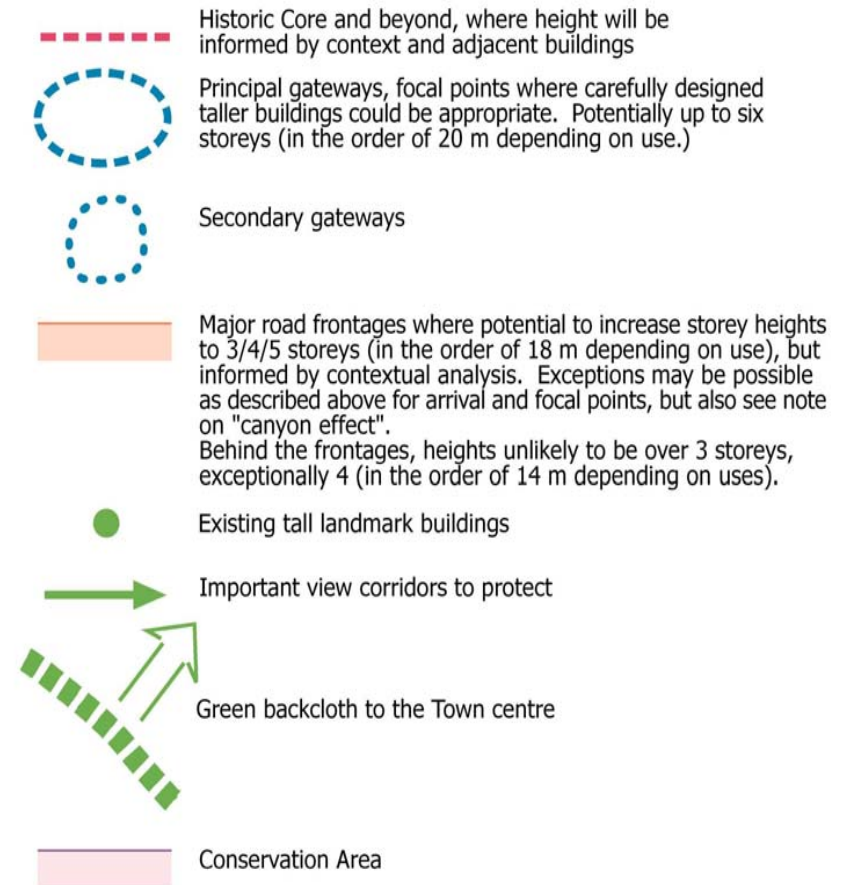
In the Primary Shopping Area, proposals for new shop fronts, or alterations to existing shop fronts, will be supported providing that they are of a high standard of design, are consonant with and enhance the visual appearance of the Town Centre, create attractive street scenes and do not lead to the loss of heritage façades of special architectural or historic character

Good quality lighting schemes can add value to development and the Town Centre as a whole and encouraging it is part of the Council's Public Realm Strategy. Buildings can be lost after dark and lighting schemes can ensure that landmarks and new buildings are as distinctive at night as they are in the daytime. Lighting designs need to consider how best to illuminate the building façade considering issues of colour, coverage and accent, as well as the location of the units themselves. Lighting of the public realm is also important and high quality white light is encouraged throughout the Town Centre. Clearly, additional lighting can raise concerns about the use of natural non-replaceable resources. Environmentally considerate forms of lighting, such as LED should always be preferred.



Probably the most prominent feature in the skyline, the Guildhall cupola stands at about 20 metres

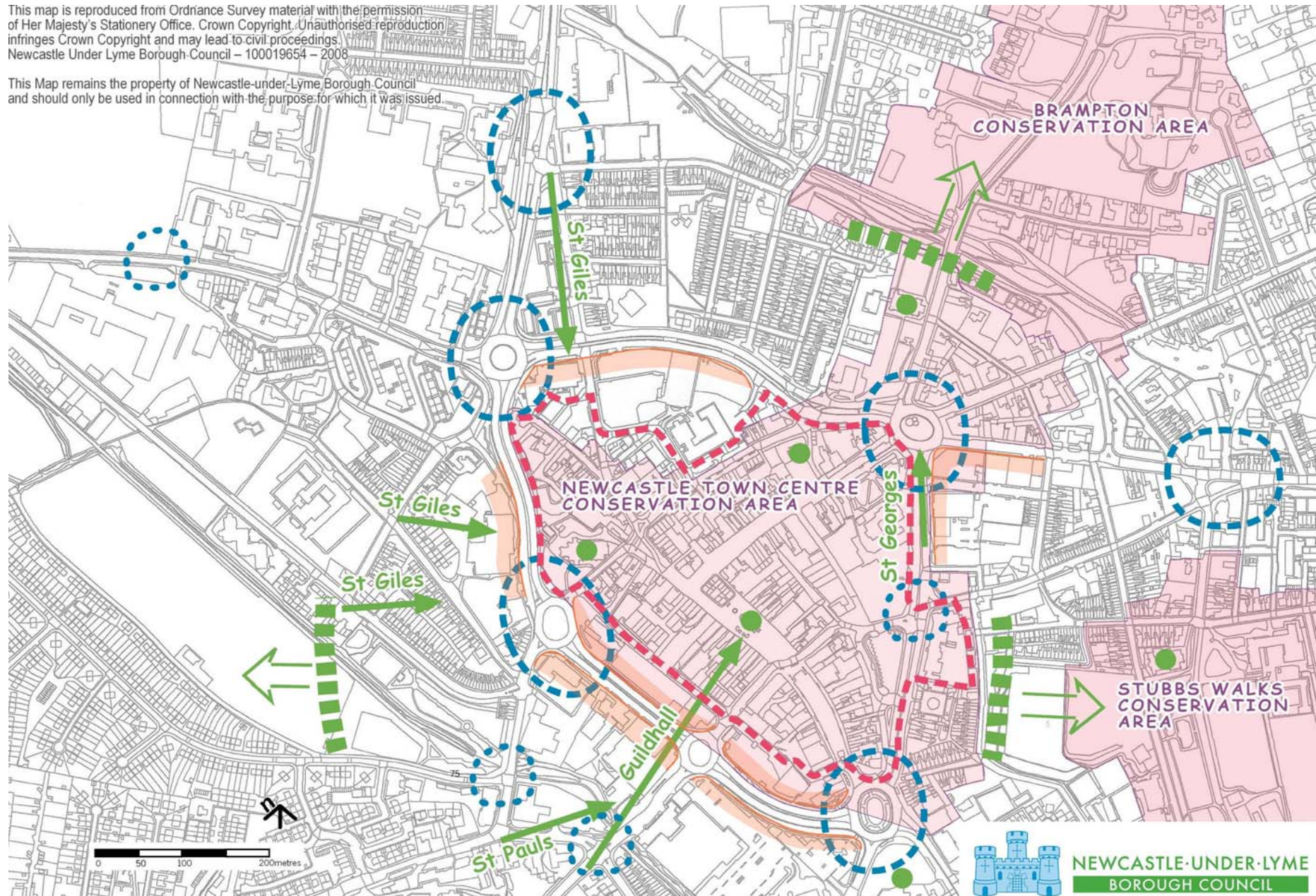
Building heights and key views



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Section 6: LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS

6.1 The N.S.R.P. Business Plan

As explained in the introduction, the SPD does not set out a fixed blueprint, but gives a clear direction to help harness the pressure for change. It is essential that other opportunities for change and improvement are encouraged, but some more radical ideas need careful assessment before any investment could be expected. There is a long lead time involved in development where significant infrastructure is needed.

There is reference in the introduction to a “visioning” event held in March 2008 by the North Staffs Regeneration Partnership in partnership with the Council. This brought together nationally known architects and urban designers for a brainstorming session with policy makers. Some of the ideas discussed there have been taken forward by the North Staffs Regeneration Partnership in its Business Plan published in September 2008. The Business Plan recognises the vision presented in this SPD and sets out the background to a series of projects to boost the economy of the Town Centre as follows:

“Newcastle town centre is a positive and highly recognisable symbol of the Borough, its strengths are as a historic town and as an important centre of employment. The NSRP seeks to build the town centre’s future identity as a vibrant and thriving place to live, work and spend leisure time by encouraging the growth of high quality and distinctive retail which reinforces Newcastle’s identity as a market town, enhancing its existing live-work office quarter, investing in the appearance of the own centre and developing further its links with Keele University and the North Staffordshire University Hospital. This will allow Newcastle to create a distinctive

identity that complements the City Centre offer and makes more of the town’s strategic position and potential within North Staffordshire.”

It goes on to propose that, in retail terms, development should be designed to reflect the Market Town appeal of the town and ensure that it maintains its distinctive qualities”. It also proposes that Newcastle should offer “modern business accommodation through new office space designed for the needs of the twenty-first century business.”

A number of specific projects are described as part of the business plan. Two (upgrading of Lancaster Buildings and acquisition of St Giles’ and St George’s School) are already underway and are described elsewhere in this document. The others, arising largely from the “visioning event” referred to in the introduction, are to be addressed over the period to 2011.



The Former school will be an asset to the Town Centre when it can be brought into community use and opened out onto Queens Gardens.

6.2 A Strategic Investment Framework

The NSRP Business Plan needs to be seen as an investment strategy, and in some senses a bidding document, as a case remains to be made for all these projects where AWM funding is involved. (See Glossary) As a first step, the NSRP has commissioned a consultant to formulate a Strategic Framework for reviewing, and where appropriate, progressing these schemes. This SPD will represent the primary source for the context of further developments.

The initiatives listed below derive mainly from the Business Plan and the visioning event. They will all be addressed through the Strategic Investment Framework, which will develop the vision set out in the SPD, establish clear, overarching principles and define priorities for delivery. It will establish a delivery programme for the period to 2011.

The preparation of a Transport Study for the Town Centre

A transport plan for the Town Centre already exists, prepared by the County Council as part of the development of the North Staffs LTP (see Glossary). This takes the form of NTADS (see Glossary) which has developed a number of detailed projects set out to clarify future plans and the use of Section 106 developer contributions (see Glossary). However, the "visioning" event gave rise to suggestions that there should be a radical approach to the use of the inner ring road. This is in response to the perception of its negative effect as a barrier to the Town Centre's growth and natural development, a theme which was reiterated many times in consultations. The main focus of attention is likely to be Barracks Road, but a more comprehensive review is possible. Options include the use of signalised junctions in place of roundabouts, downgrading the carriageways, creation of pedestrian friendly boulevards, provision of long lengths of bus lane and the use of one-way systems.

There are no specific proposals in this regard, only a desire to test options through rigorous modelling. A transport study would be able to allow fresh thinking on what is a popular concern amongst both residents and potential investors. The County Council, as Highway Authority, will need to be closely involved in this work.

The bus station was built in 2002, in association with the Castle Walks development, and was a distinct improvement from its previous design, but it attracts some criticism for its insubstantial appearance and its difficulties of operation. Suggested solutions include relocation and doing away with it altogether, channelling the bus routes through two or three key streets and thus dispersing access to the services through the central area. Consultation responses showed mixed views on the future of the Bus Station. The transport study could be widened to address this issue.

Development options for Ryecroft

The relocation of the Sainsbury store could release the potential for a major redevelopment. Whether redeveloped on its own or as part of a much larger site, the character of its setting and adjoining sites must be respected. Reference was made in the Spatial Framework (page X) to the remains of the older street pattern close to the site, which gives potential for small, sensitive regeneration. Opportunities should be taken to reproduce similar patterns of "permeability" even in large redevelopment sites.

The NSRP believes that there is potential here for "a more consolidated business district, as part of a more ambitious mixed use / high density redevelopment". The Business Plan proposes to commission a development options appraisal, to include the Civic Offices and the Magistrates Court sites.

University Town

As mentioned in Section 2, some form of presence of the University of Keele would be a very positive step towards recognition of the Town Centre's role. The proposal in the Business Plan is to support the building of new business accommodation and new postgraduate residential accommodation on the Blackfriars site.

The Five Square Strategy

The description of the Public Realm Strategy on pages XXX included reference to longer term ideas for which funding had not yet been agreed. The "visioning" event supported this approach, which is developed further in the Business Plan. It proposes a five square strategy, involving the creation of four new public squares in the central area: Grosvenor Square, Market Place, Red Lion Square, Merrial Street (in front of the Civic Offices); and one at the Castle Motte. The Business Plan proposes to commission urban design consultancy to develop designs that will reinforce the first phase of the Public Realm work.

Linked to the creation of more public squares is the more fundamental aspect of the treatment of the pedestrianised areas. The pedestrianisation of the central area, which proceeded in phases through the last three decades of the century, has been a major asset, but it is clear that there remains a great deal of unfinished business. There is a perceived lack of a clear strategy for dealing with the pedestrianised public realm. Negative aspects include the presence of service vehicles over too long a period, rogue parking, and the plethora of small vehicular access routes that have been required to remain. This is to the detriment of streets such as Ironmarket and prevents areas such as Red Lion Square from functioning as pedestrian friendly public squares. Action to deal with these may involve changes to road layouts and traffic orders. The development of pedestrian friendly "squares" in the Town Centre is a key element of an

attractive public realm and this cannot be addressed without considering vehicular requirements, including servicing.

Strategic Acquisitions

This purpose of this would be to allow the Council to have a stronger hand in influencing the form of development on some key sites. Priorities will be developed through the Strategic Investment Framework.

Further studies

There are four key areas where further studies are needed to help the Council pursue its vision, but with a proper understanding of the market, or other practical concerns.

- **Office development**

Market testing of the viability of the Council's aspiration to attract new office development would be helpful. In an ever changing market, we need to know when direct intervention (for example through acquisition) should be pursued.

- **Housing**

RENEW North Staffordshire is commissioning further research into the ability of the Town Centre to contribute to a particular sector of the housing market. For example, the specific needs and demands arising from the nearby medical developments.

- **Retail**

Reference has already been made to the Retail Study for North Staffordshire carried out in 2005 by Savills; a further more detailed study purely of the Town Centre has been proposed by the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy Group in an effort to find ways of attracting new, higher quality retail investment into the centre – not just more development but concentrating on the type of businesses that would be accommodated.

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- **Car Parking**

Car parking in the Town Centre is a key issue and is currently being addressed through a comprehensive car parking study commissioned at the beginning of 2008. The results of the work are intended to help the Council to plan strategically and manage Town Centre car parking. It will guide both the determination of planning applications (in relation to car parking requirements) and the Council's long term plans.

A Town Centre Manager

The desirability of identifying a dedicated Town Centre Manager has been raised by a number of consultees during the production of this SPD. It is an operational matter, and would not be addressed directly in a planning document, but it is clear that many see the role a crucial to the delivery of the Council's vision for the Town Centre. The issue may become clearer through work to be carried out on a possible "Business Improvement District". This would require an active partnership of local businesses, which in turn will be more likely to arise if the Council's vision for the Town Centre, and this SPD, is seen to be an effective vehicle for improvement and innovation. Advantages of formal coordination would be to bring together other strands of activity of key importance to the Town Centre, such as Street Scene, parks & gardens, crime reduction work, Town Centre events and managing the open market.



Lancaster Buildings, 1936, iconic art-deco form, the first of its kind in the Town Centre. It replaced a row of 18th century buildings, whose demolition is said to have been controversial. It is now to be the subject of a major refurbishment scheme. (See page 27) Photo to left shows detail above the doorway.

Section 7: Key Sites

This section gives detailed guidance for four sites that are currently attracting interest from developers. The guidance is derived directly from the Spatial Framework in Section 3 and the development and design principles in Section 5. A similar exercise could be carried out for any other site within the SPD area in response to specific development interest.

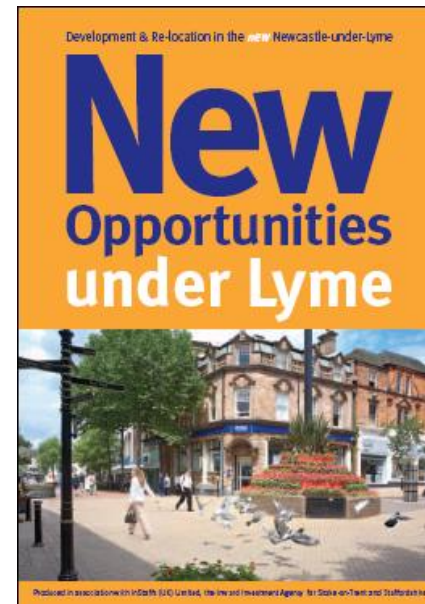
The SPD is not a blueprint, and none of these sites is “earmarked” for a particular type of use, other than a presumption in favour of retail development for the site within the Primary Shopping Area. Instead, a range of uses is suggested in each case, with an expectation that market forces can be sufficiently “steered” to provide the amounts of different types of development across the whole of the Town Centre.

The strength of this approach is that working with the market, the Council is more likely to attract investment. The danger is that sites can be used less than optimally due to short term market pressures. It is also possible that some uses (such as offices, or even housing in down turn of the market) will rarely be privileged and need some assistance. Sometimes such issues can only be addressed through direct intervention – most likely public acquisition.

This SPD concentrates on the opportunities offered by redevelopment sites to contribute positively to the characters of the zones of the Spatial Framework. Every site should be seen as an opportunity – not just to accommodate development, as a better alternative to an empty site, but to make a positive contribution. Each of the sites exemplified in this section presents a way of adding to the quality and attractiveness of the Town Centre. Blackfriars, Georgia Pacific and Ryecroft have frontages onto the inner ring road, where well designed development can repair past damage (see the Vision) and give us buildings and uses that will add to the

attractiveness of the Town. Blackfriars also has the waterside, and no development should be proposed that ignores this potential. The Brunswick site has an opportunity to create a magnificent view from Queens Gardens that will enhance the enjoyment of the park, and to create a frontage on Brunswick Street that will create a new and busy streetscape to enhance the experience of entering the town.

Each of these sites is precious. They dominate the Town Centre, and the effect of their development will be felt by the community of the Town Centre long after the developers have gone away.



Most of these sites were promoted as part of the marketing exercise undertaken in 2007 (see page 19).

A Blackfriars

The site of the former Blackfriars Bakery, Sutherland Arms, KwikFit and the BMW garage has been assembled and cleared by a Norfolk based development company, who have had pre-application discussions with the Council in relation to the redevelopment of this site together with the Midway car park. The main principles to be followed on this site are to be found within the description of the Pooldam Waterside Quarter, within which it lies.

The Pooldam Waterside Quarter would represent a new growth area for the Town Centre. It has been defined to extend to both sides of the inner ring road, to emphasise the importance of breaking through this "barrier" wherever possible, though connectivity is at present severely limited. It also extends along the Lyme Brook to include Queen Elizabeth Park and the former Castle Motte. This latter area has no potential for further built development but provides a valuable context for exploiting the potential of the brook. It is also evidence of the historical origins of the town's development.

It is essential that the opportunity is taken to "rediscover" the potential of the Lyme Brook as well as taking full account of the importance of the area and its surroundings in terms of the heritage of the town. However, although this exploitation of the brook is an essential part of the potential for development, the area lies within the functional flood plain, and therefore potential flooding issues will need to be addressed, and investigation will be required at the outset in association with the Environment Agency. Opportunities should also be taken to enhance the ecological quality of the Brook.

Mixed use is the key, with opportunities particularly for housing, leisure, hotel and offices uses. The rediscovery of the waterside must involve bringing it into the public realm, through development that increases activity close to it.

Design will be crucial, with impact from a number of directions being of great importance. There are also two listed buildings close by and the Town Centre Conservation Areas extends to the edge of the inner ring road. Currently the view of the Town Centre from the inner ring road is unattractive and does not give any clue as to the interest beyond it. There is a potential here to create attractive, active frontages on to the inner ring road. Permeability and access into the site should be encouraged by avoiding a solid bulk of development across any boundary. Equally, a single, large covered development across the whole site would not be appropriate.

There is scope for striking design, including building heights greater than current or recent, though care needs to be taken to avoid a "canyon effect". On the western side of the site, the proximity of Queen Elizabeth Park must be taken into account. Bringing Town Centre development close to the park will add to its value, so long as the design of the frontage responds to it appropriately.

As new public spaces must be created around the waterside, visual impact will also be important. At this gateway location there are significant views into the centre. Development should also exploit the asset of the striking views over the countryside to the west, particularly from elevated positions.

As well as improving crossing facilities on the inner ring road, development of the site gives the opportunity to improve the current pedestrian route into the Primary Shopping Area along Blackfriars Road and Hassell Street. In addition, more radical solutions to the junctions should be considered, as referred to in Section 6 (long term aspirations.) This could involve some different treatment of the road between the junctions.

Any retail development on the site beyond the inner ring road would be regarded as "edge of centre". It would therefore be subject to

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considerations of demand (while the current PPS6 remains in operation) and, crucially, of the effect on the Primary Shopping Area. To be acceptable, it would have to add to the retail offer, both in terms of quantity and of quality, while ensuring that there was no danger of providing a counter-attraction that would reduce interest in the current Primary Shopping Area. This would be assessed both in terms of types of retail (ie comparison or convenience) and whether users would be attracted towards the centre by the design and layout of the development and the activities it accommodates. Any significant amount of retail, that would effectively extend the Primary Shopping Area onto the other side of the inner ring road, could only be considered if there were a physical above ground crossing facility of a design that encouraged movement in both directions.

There is a potential for the redevelopment of the Midway car park for retail and other uses, and its replacement on the opposite side of the inner ring road

The plan opposite shows a larger site than currently assembled. Any development proposals need to take account of possible extension.



The site enjoys an abundant tree-lined backcloth



These images are clearly aspirational, but the waterways pictured were ignored for many years before their potential was recognised.

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B Georgia-Pacific

The site of the former paper goods factory on the inner ring road has attracted the attention of a number of developers over the past two years. It is much smaller than the Blackfriars site, and adjoins a valuable listed building. Its western boundary adjoins traditional two storey housing and this would need to be taken into account in any development proposals. It is likely to mean that residential uses will form the major part of any development. Proximity to existing housing may make leisure uses problematic, though hotel development would be acceptable in principle.

The site lies within the "Northern Quarter", which has been defined to cross both sides of the inner ring road. This is intended to encourage any attempt to break through the barrier, but the potential to embed this site within the central core through a physical link is more limited than that of the Blackfriars site. There are already two crossing points (surface and subway). Attention should also be given to the pedestrian route into the Primary Shopping Area – Church Street, Pepper Street, Bridge Street and any opportunity to provide other links.

Although mixed use is to be encouraged on all redevelopment sites, in principle, care needs to be taken in relation to vehicular access to this site, particularly given the adjoining residential uses.

In terms of design, visual impact needs to be considered both from the inner ring road (directly across and from both travel directions) and from the residential area to the west.

Views across the inner ring road into the centre from this site are better than those from Blackfriars. The frontage is varied, including the St Giles Church and the Meeting House (both listed buildings) the modern offices and the bar/club on Bridge Street. There is a high degree of interest in

the view, inviting further attention. The favourable outlook renders it particularly suitable for residential development.

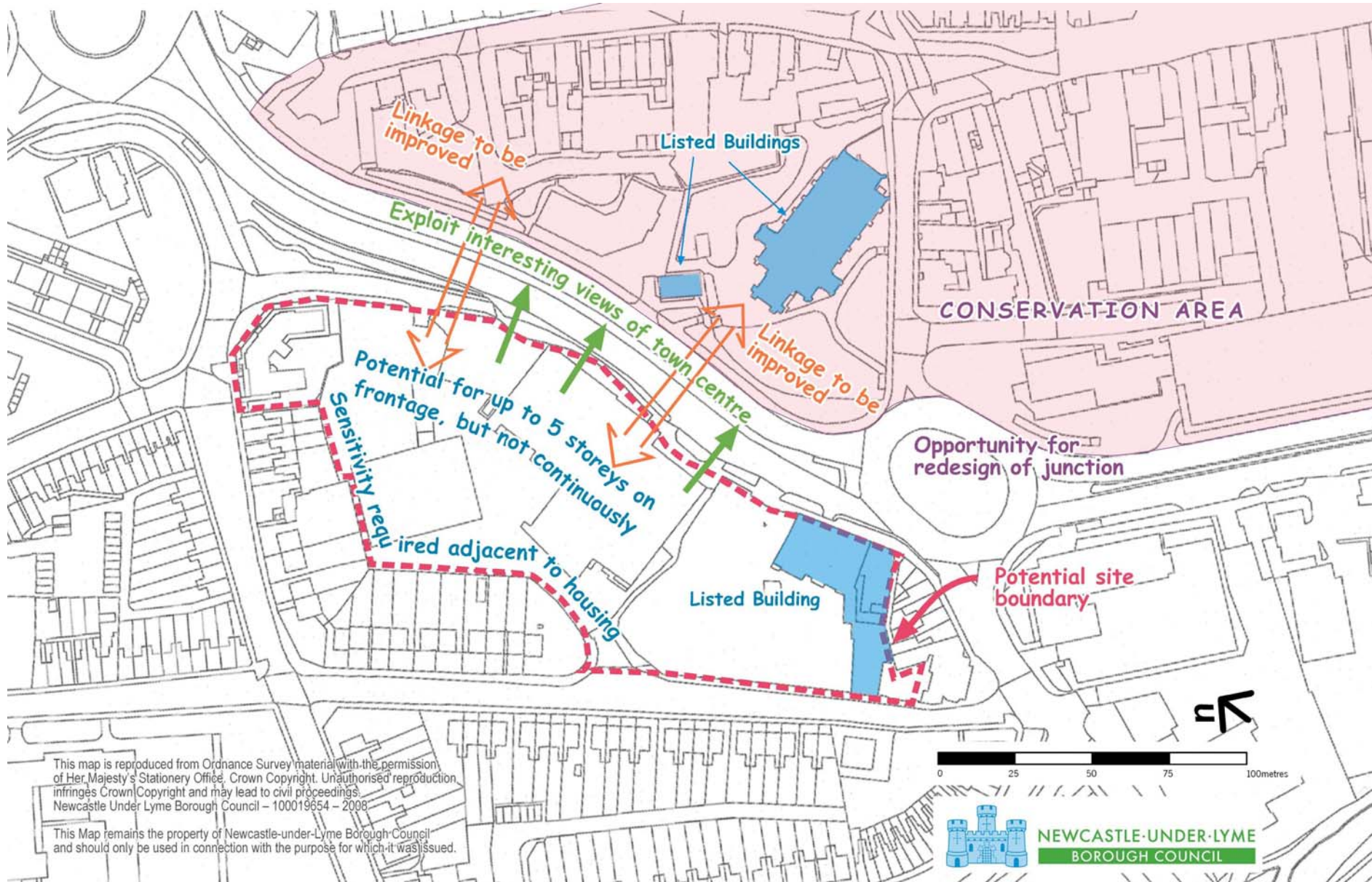
There is a potential here to create a frontage that does not turn its back to the road. There is scope for striking design, including building heights greater than recent, (though probably only up to three storeys other than in a narrow built form). Account must be taken of the surroundings, which include the listed building on the site, as well as the adjoining development fronting onto the roundabout and Pool Dam. There are also two listed buildings opposite and the Town Centre Conservation Area, stretches to the edge of the inner ring road. A sea of car parking would not be perceived to be an attractive design, or to make any positive contribution to the Town Centre.

Any retail proposals will need to be assessed as "edge of centre", though the degree of connectivity to the centre would be taken into account. As noted above, the potential for this, given the nature of the uses on the opposite side, are limited.



Georgia Pacific: the former use provided valuable employment, but the building was of little architectural merit for such a prominent site.

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C Brunswick Street and Barracks Road

There are a number of potential redevelopment sites within this area, though at present only two have the subject of planning applications. There is potential for assembling a site encompassing the whole area shown on the plan opposite, but that would not preclude individual redevelopment proposals.

If the site is considered as a whole, there could be the opportunity to include School Street, though this would require road closure and the Highway Authority being satisfied that other arrangements can be made for the long distance coaches. There is also currently valuable Town Centre car parking which would need to be provided in some other way either on or off site. If the site is redeveloped as one, the opportunity should be taken to create enhanced permeability within it, providing new pedestrian routes through the site with attractive public spaces.

The current Subaru unit has been proposed in the recent past for residential development with a small amount of retail and office use. The Cannon building, constructed to house a pool and gym but never completed, now has permission for change of use to retail, with the minimum of physical change. The Jubilee Baths is well used, but it is the Council's intention to replace it on a different site as part of an up-to-date leisure centre. It is the possibility of combining these three sites which could be sufficient to release others within the area defined on the plan.

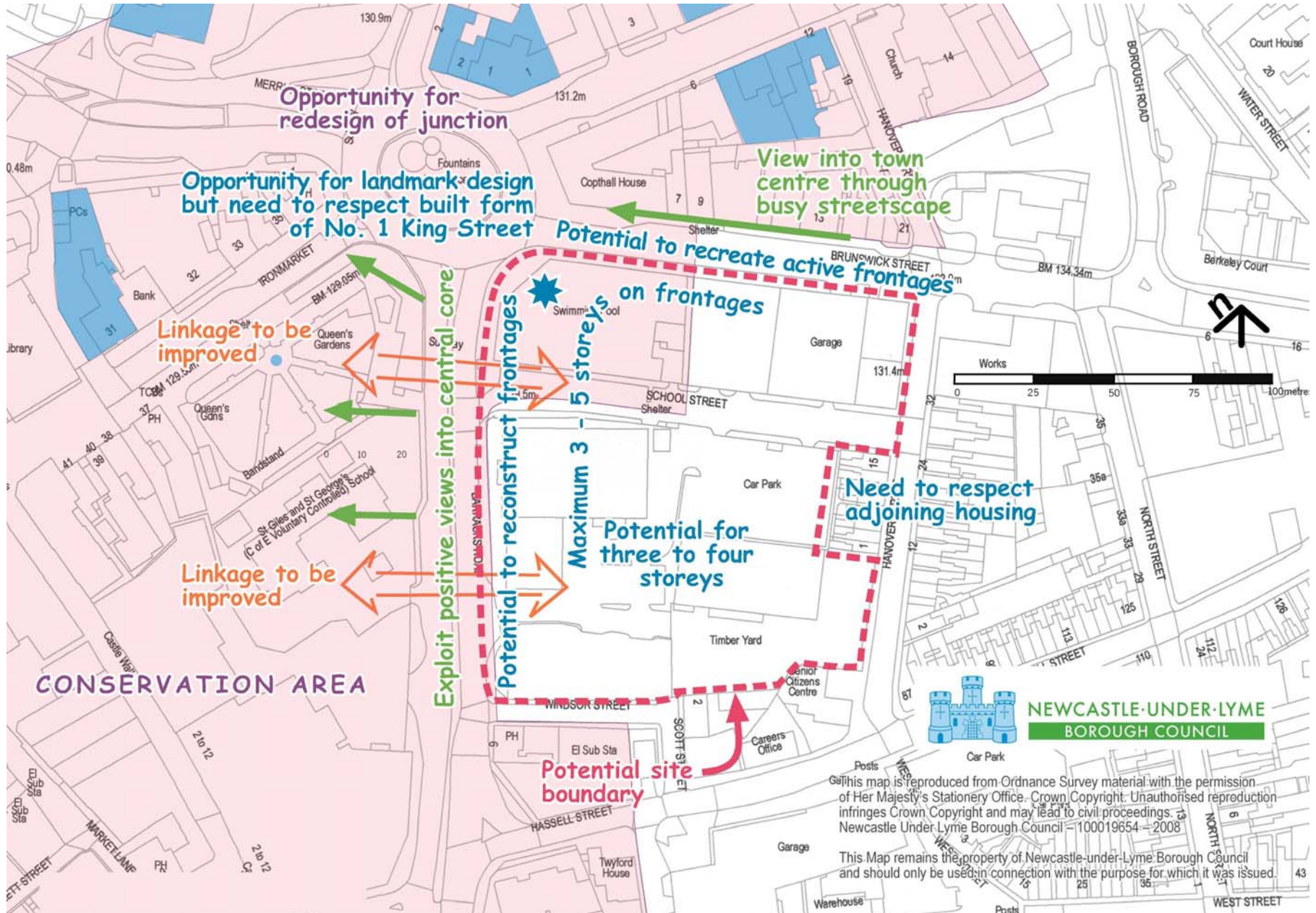
Mixed use is the key, with offices forming a major part, in accordance with its location within the Live Work Office Quarter. There is an opportunity, using good design, to make real improvements to damage done to the street scene over past years. This concerns two frontages. The first is that to the inner ring road, where striking design could be appropriate, with a bold and active frontage taking advantage of the views across to the Town Centre Core, especially towards the northern end (ie overlooking

Queens Gardens and Nelson Place. It is on this side that the creation of additional pedestrian access into the site (close to the current School Street, or further south) would add to the busyness of the frontage and help to draw interest into the redevelopment. The other key frontage is Brunswick Street. where the former role of the street can be recreated, as a tree lined boulevard headed towards the core of the Town Centre. (Analysis of past plans and photos shows how this area was once very much part of the centre, with Nelson Place playing a role in popular municipal events.) The frontage must be active, like that opposite, with continual interest being offered to the passer by.

Building heights are to be guided by Section 5. There is an opportunity for a landmark built form overlooking Nelson Place, but respect must be had for the proportions and design of no. 1 King Street on Nelson Place. A building of up to 5 storeys could be possible, but only if the design and material used are sympathetic, and these considerations are more likely to lead to a lower built form. The Town Centre Conservation Area includes the Jubilee Baths and otherwise runs along the north and west boundaries of the site, and this will also drive the assessment of good design.

Adjoining on the east of the site is one of the Town Centre Housing Areas. This must be respected, both in terms of adjoining uses and building height and design. It is unlikely that anything higher than three storeys could be appropriate on that edge.

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D Ryecroft

The immediate development opportunity here is the current Sainsbury's store, which is moving to Liverpool Road. There is also a great deal of future potential: the existing Magistrates Court has been proposed for closure, though its future is uncertain; the former Kwiksave is for sale, and there are clearly other buildings and uses in the vicinity that have a limited life. Even the Civic Offices could in the longer term form part of a major remodelling of this area.

Opportunity should be taken on the Sainsbury site both to add to the retail offer and to create a vibrant, interesting place through mixed development and added "permeability" - busy pedestrian access routes of visual and practical interest. It could accommodate mixes of housing, hotel and office use along with the necessary retail.

Additional vehicular access on to the inner ring road is unlikely but there should be more pedestrian access, particularly where this can be linked to crossing points. A key to any design is the creation of visual interest from the inner ring road rather than allowing a development that turns its back to the road or merely presents a sea of car parking. However, it is also essential that activities within the site are linked to the rest of the Primary Shopping Area. Development here must not be a separate destination divorced from the rest of the town. Connectivity with the rest of the centre must also be enhanced, both in terms of routes and by the creation of vistas of interest.

To the south and west of the site there is the remains of an older street pattern, incorporating Bridge Street, High Street, Hickman Street and Froghall. This should be retained and enhanced. There is an opportunity to repair fragmented road frontage, create added interest on the routes to the subway, which is one of the few that draws directly from an established route.

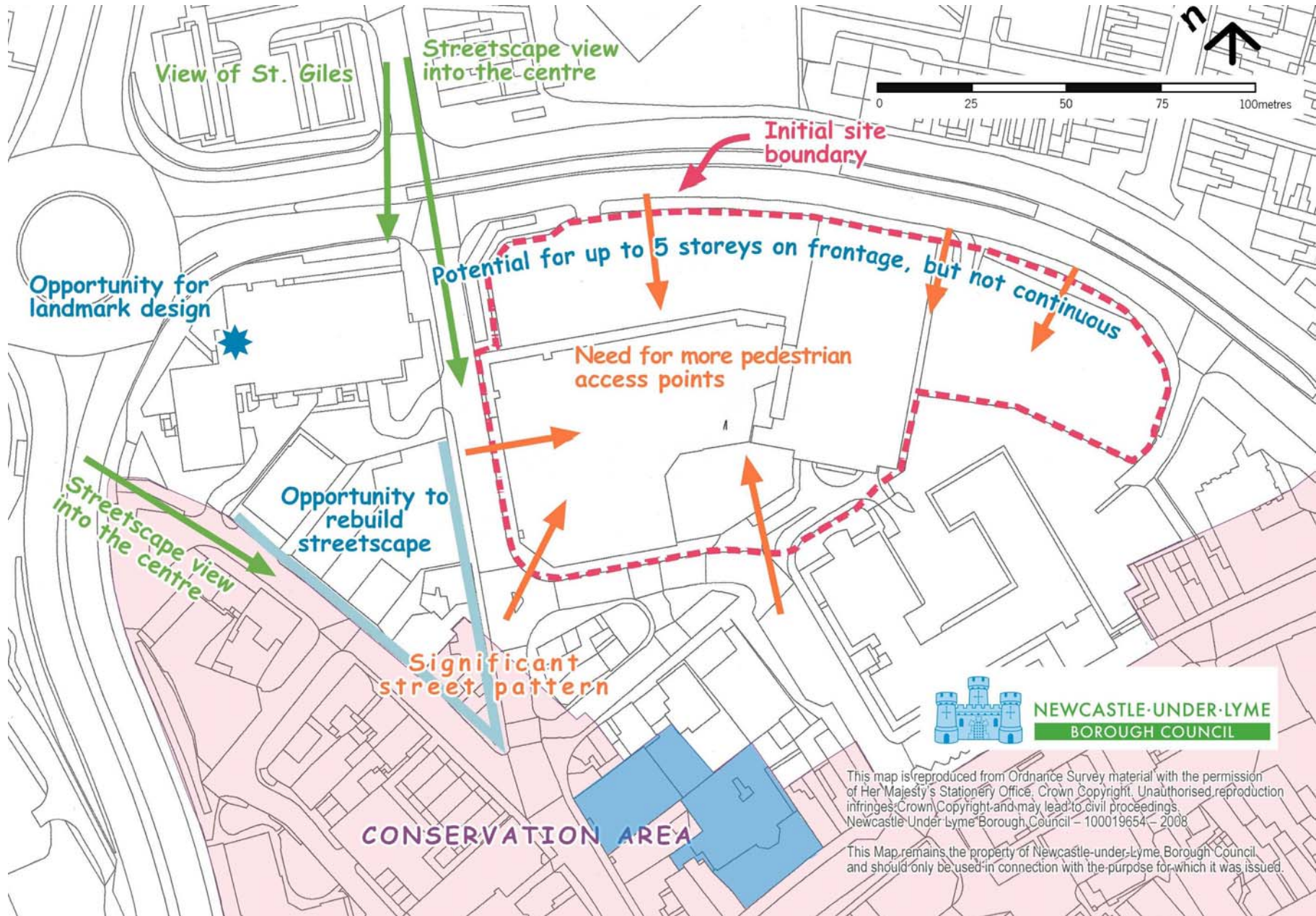
Bridge Street presents an attractive vista from the north west on the inner ring road, as does Liverpool Road from its continuation on the north side of the inner ring road. Both provide a visual and practical link into the centre, and this asset should be exploited. St Giles Church is more visible from the old Liverpool Road than from the dual carriageway, this needs to be taken into account if any tall building is contemplated on the site of the Magistrates Court to create a landmark feature. The Town Centre Conservation Area extends along the west side of Bridge Street and the south of Merrial Street and this must be taken into account in design.

In the NSRP Business Plan (see Glossary and Section 6) there is reference to the possibility of a development options appraisal for this site. This, and redevelopment of the area, should provide an opportunity to consider the expansion of specialist shopping in Newcastle, noting the attractions of Bridge Street and the older street pattern.



Striking variety in façades on Bridge Street. This is part of the setting for any redevelopment around Ryecroft.
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GLOSSARY

AWM = Advantage West Midlands.

This is the name of the Regional Development Agency, which is based in Birmingham and has a brief for the whole of West Midlands Region. They describe their role as “to lead the economic development of the West Midlands, working alongside a wide range of public, private and voluntary sectors partners to help our region to prosper - building upon our many strengths and addressing our unique challenges”. Under the government’s proposals for sub-national governance, it is proposed that they will take on the current role of the West Midlands Regional Assembly*.

Core Spatial Strategy

This is the most strategic of the locally produced documents in the “Local Development Framework”*. That for the Borough is being prepared jointly with the City of Stoke on Trent and will cover both local authority areas. It is to be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government in December 2008.

DCLG = the Department for Communities and Local Government

This is the government department that has the responsibility, amongst other things, for planning issues.

Edge of Centre

This is a phrase used in PPS6* and denotes a location that is within the “Town Centre” but outside the “Primary Shopping Area”. Details of these terms, and the background to their use, is set out in the Companion Document.

LDF = Local development Framework

This term covers all the local development documents prepared by the Council. This Supplementary Planning Document will form part of the Council’s LDF.

LTP = Local Transport Plan

The LTP relevant to Newcastle Town Centre is prepared jointly by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council. It sets out transport related projects, policies and priorities across North Staffordshire for a rolling five year period.

NSRP = North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership

Established in March 2007, NSRP brings together all regeneration activity in North Staffordshire. It has been developed in partnership with the four local authorities and major regeneration partners. It is intended to “bring about a transformation of the region’s fortunes for this generation and those to come”. It has a remit for the whole of the area encompassed by the three northern districts of Staffordshire. Its paid service is embedded within Stoke on Trent City Council. It is responsible for managing the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (Renew North Staffs) and the Regeneration Zone, both of which have precise boundaries within the conurbation.

NTADS = Newcastle Transport and Development Strategy

A strategy prepared by the County Council, as Highway Authority, relating to the urban area of Newcastle Borough, is aimed at delivering a range of transport schemes that will result in a better managed, more accessible and safer road network and funded by a combination of Local Transport Plan monies and developer contributions.

PPS = Planning Policy Statements

These are published statement of national planning policy on a range of topics. They are produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government from time to time, and carry a great deal of weight both in determining planning applications and in setting the context for LDF documents. The most important ones in relation to this SPD are

- PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

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- PPS 3: Housing
- PPS 4: Planning for sustainable economic development. (draft stage, to replace the previous PPG 4)
- PPS 6: Planning for Town Centres
- PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks
- PPG 13: Transport
- PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment
- PPG 16: Archaeology and Planning

Section 106 agreements

Legal agreements with the Council entered into voluntarily by an applicant to secure certain benefits associated with a development that are beyond the conditions of the planning permission. Usually, the agreement is a pre-requisite of the permission.

SPD on developer contributions

The Council adopted an SPD early in 2008 setting out how section 106 agreements will be used.

RSS = Regional Spatial Strategy

The RSS is the "highest level" (ie largest area, most strategic) document in the "Development Plan" for the Borough. It covers the whole of the West Midlands Region and sets the strategic, spatial framework for Local Development Frameworks produced by all constituent Counties, Districts and Metropolitan Districts. It also forms part of the guidance on which development control decisions are made. It is prepared currently, by the West Midlands Regional Assembly*.

Urban Vision

Urban Vision is a not-for-profit company and registered charity and a member of the UK's Architectural Centre Network, based at the Burslem School of Art, funded mainly by CABE, and Advantage West Midlands (through the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership). It is an

architecture and urban design centre working with partners to promote high quality architecture and urban design in and around the North Staffordshire conurbation. Since October 2004, they have run a Design Review Panel, to which applicants, and prospective applicants, for planning permission can submit their proposals for critical analysis. The contribution of Urban Vision is central to the task of raising awareness and understanding.

WMRA = West Midlands Regional Assembly

Currently the West Midlands Regional Assembly is responsible for developing and co-ordinating a strategic vision for improving the quality of life in the region. The Assembly is responsible for delivering a variety of regional strategies, and ensuring they are tailored to meet the needs of the West Midlands. The strategies are developed by their strategic partnerships. The Assembly is also the Strategic Review of Advantage West Midlands*, co-ordinating the views of the Region to inform its policies and work programme.

The roof of the Roebuck Centre. St Giles' Church is just visible through the glass.

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**APPENDIX:
LISTED BUILDINGS IN THE S.P.D. AREA**

Listing Ref	Name	Street	Postcode	Grade	Date Listed
644-1/10/20	85	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PS	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/70	NEWCASTLE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH	KING STREET	ST5 1EL	II	23-Dec-91
644-1/8/24	9-13C	IRONMARKET	ST5 1RF	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/11/37	ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE HOLY	LONDON ROAD	ST5 1LQ	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/10/18	56A	HIGH STREET	ST5 1QL	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/10/17	51	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PN	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/55	VICTORIA STATUE	QUEENS GARDEN		II	27-Sep-72
644-1/10/23	MARKET CROSS	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PN	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/9/49	6 AND 8	QUEEN STREET	ST5 1EE	II	21-Nov-57
644-1/8/15	28	HIGH STREET	ST5 1RA	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/39	OLD UNITARIAN MEETING HOUSE	LOWER STREET		II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/29	1	KING STREET	ST5 1EN	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/10	14 AND 16	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PN	II	21-Nov-57
644-1/9/51	CHURCH OF ST GEORGE	QUEEN STREET	ST5 1EE	II STAR	21-Oct-49
644-1/11/56	STONE ENTRANCE PIERS & WALLS TO STUBBS	STUBB'S WALKS		II	27-Sep-72
644-1/10/19	75 AND 77	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PN	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/69	3	KING STREET	ST5 1EN	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/42	21	MARSH PARADE	ST5 1BT	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/53	EBENEZER HOUSE	RYECROFT	ST5 2BE	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/28	BOOZY DOG PUBLIC HOUSE	IRONMARKET	ST5 1PB	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/11	17	HIGH STREET	ST5 1RB	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/11/57	CHURCH OF ST PAUL	VICTORIA ROAD	ST5 1BG	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/6	CHURCH OF ST GILES	CHURCH STREET	ST5 1QS	II STAR	21-Oct-49
644-1/10/21	93	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PS	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/8/36	OLD BULL'S HEAD INN	LAD LANE	ST5 1RE	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/5	3 AND 5	CHURCH STREET	ST5 1QS	II	27-Sep-72

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644-1/10/38	MAXIMS WINE BAR	LOWER STREET	ST5 2RS	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/50	BRAMPTON HOUSE (10 AND 12)	QUEEN STREET	ST5 1EE	II	21-Nov-57
644-1/10/47	OLD ORME BOYS' PRIMARY SCHOOL	POOL DAM	ST5 2RP	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/35	BRADWELL HOUSE (16 AND 18)	KING STREET	ST5 1EL	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/30	7,9 AND 11	KING STREET	ST5 1EL	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/9/2	1	BRAMPTON ROAD	ST5 0PA	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/33	12	KING STREET	ST5 1EL	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/26	25	IRONMARKET	ST5 1RH	II	23-Dec-91
644-1/10/22	GUILDHALL	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PN	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/9/52	FORMER VETERINARY SURGERY ADJOINING NUMBERS 6 AND 8	QUEEN STREET	ST5 1EE	II	24-Aug-84
644-1/8/13	22 AND 24	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PN	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/11/1	THE BARRACKS WORKSHOPS	BARRACKS ROAD		II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/14	26	HIGH STREET	ST5 1RA	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/44	27	MARSH PARADE	ST5 1BT	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/16	THE WINE VAULTS PUBLIC HOUSE No. 36	HIGH STREET	ST5 1QL	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/9/43	23 AND 25	MARSH PARADE	ST5 1BT	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/7	CHEST TOMB IN CHURCH YARD CIRCA 10 METRES NORTH OF CHURCH	CHURCH STREET		II	23-Dec-91
644-1/8/9	FENTON HOUSE (5, 7 AND 9)	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PN	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/46	1 AND 2	NELSON PLACE	ST5 1EA	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/45	CARLTON HOUSE (48 AND 50)	MERRIAL STREET	ST5 2AW	II	21-Nov-57
644-1/0/10006	LANCASTER BUILDINGS	HIGH STREET	ST5 1PQ	II	27-Oct-05
644-1/9/48	QUEEN'S CHAMBERS (2 QUEEN STREET)	QUEEN STREET	ST5 1EE	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/12	18A	HIGH STREET	ST5 1RA	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/8/27	31	IRONMARKET	ST5 1RP	II	21-Oct-49
644-1/9/32	10	KING STREET	ST5 1EL	II	23-Dec-91
644-1/8/25	14,15 AND 16	IRONMARKET	ST5 1RF	II	27-Sep-72
644-1/3/54	CASTLE FOUNDATIONS	SILVERDALE ROAD		II	27-Sep-72
644-1/9/31	8	KING STREET	ST5 1EL	II	23-Dec-91