

**Gateshead Town Centre
Planning Strategy**

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Gateshead Town Centre: A Vision for the Future

Gateshead Town Centre will form an integral part of a regionally significant NewcastleGateshead urban core whilst retaining its own distinctive identity and character. To help achieve this the Council and its partners will create a successful, attractive and sustainable mixed-use town centre that complements the other regeneration initiatives in the area. The centre will deliver a major improvement in the quality of design, facilities and services it offers for the benefit of all of those visiting, living and working in Gateshead.

1. Purpose of Planning Strategy for the Town Centre

- To clarify and amplify policies relating to the town centre within the Gateshead Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
- To provide a co-ordinated framework for regeneration
- To provide a basis for development briefs or masterplanning of specific areas

2. Background

This strategy replaces one which was adopted by the Council in 2005. Following on from previously commissioned work on regeneration of Gateshead's Central Area, Gateshead Council commissioned a masterplan for the town centre in early 2006. This comprised input from design and property consultants, providing a physical framework for the town centre combined with an assessment of demand for different types of use of land and property. The area covered by the masterplan is the town centre north and south areas in this document. A number of the recommendations in the masterplan have been incorporated into this revised Strategy.

This strategy should be read in conjunction with the Gateshead Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as revised and adopted by the Council in July 2007. The Central Gateshead Area is incorporated as an Area Action Plan within the UDP, where it is expected that significant change will take place during and beyond the next 10 years. The area covered by this strategy falls within the Town Centre Boundary in the UDP. It provides further guidance regarding policies in the UDP and sets out the Council's vision, principles and priorities for regeneration of the town centre.

3. Context

- Surrounding area (see plan A)

The Strategy area lies in a central position in relation to areas in Central Gateshead where significant regeneration has taken place or is ongoing.

To the north, Gateshead Quays is developing with leisure and cultural facilities of national profile and new residential developments at Baltic Quays and Curzon Place (adjacent to the Hilton). The developer has now been selected for the "GQ2" site, between the Sage Gateshead and Baltic, where a high-quality mixed-use development is envisaged. The Village Heights housing development at Windmill Hills and Ochre Yards provide a variety of housing types and tenures within walking distance of the town centre. The Bridges Townscape Heritage Initiative is regenerating the Bridges Conservation Area through high quality public realm improvements and grants to repair and re-use historic buildings. Baltic Business Quarter, being developed on cleared land to the east of the town centre core, will establish a significant area of office employment and is also the location for the new Gateshead College. Additional office and hotel development is under construction at 'The Point', at the eastern end of the former Greensfield site. Further residential

development is planned in the St James' housing area to the southeast of the town centre.

The Riverside, Windmill Hills, Gateshead Quays, Baltic Business Quarter and the Tyne Central Freight Depot sites around the periphery of the town centre are covered by specific development briefs or masterplans. They are not included within this strategy, although the links to these surrounding areas will be crucial in achieving successful regeneration of the town centre.

- The area covered by the Planning Strategy (see plan B)

The area subject of this document is bound by the Newcastle-Sunderland railway to the east, Arthur Street and the Tynegate site to the south, Prince Consort Road (A692) to the West and Askew Road to the north. It comprises two distinct zones:

1) The area to the west of Gateshead Highway which contains the town centre primary shopping area as defined in the Gateshead UDP, and adjoining sites. (See plan C).

This is the primary area for change and its regeneration is a key priority of the Council. This area will continue in its role of providing for the retail needs of local people and for providing an important convenience shopping service to a wider area. There is potential for providing more effectively for retail requirements within the existing catchment area as well as for an enlarged catchment area, especially with regard to comparison-shopping. A broad mix of town centre uses will be encouraged within this area, to create a vibrant town centre which maintains its life and vitality beyond normal shopping hours.

2) The "area of transition" between Gateshead Highway and the Newcastle-Sunderland railway line.

The inclusion of this area recognises the importance it will have in the future in contributing towards a true 'mixed use' town centre. It also highlights the issue of the physical and psychological barrier of Gateshead Highway, and why this must be addressed in order that the area to the east is fully integrated with a regenerated town centre. A broad range of 'town centre' uses will be encouraged in this area, but retail uses will be resisted in order to protect the role of the Primary Shopping Area.

- Topography

One of the most distinguishing features of Gateshead is the topography. From the Quayside the land rises some 70 metres to the Town Centre and it continues to rise from the northeast to the southwest. This dramatic change in level has influenced the form and character of Gateshead and is a major hindrance to safe and easy pedestrian connections from Town Centre to the Quayside. It also creates some challenging issues in relation to comprehensive redevelopment in the town centre. The slope does however present opportunities to create interest and exploit views to the north and also to create greater variety in built form.

- Existing land uses

Primary land uses within the Town Centre comprise a retail core centred on Trinity Square with an extension of retail uses south along the High Street, and clusters of residential use beyond in the form of large apartment blocks. Within this central area there are pockets of employment and civic/municipal uses towards the edges. The civic centre is close to the Primary Shopping Area, with the Council being the major town centre employer. The bus/Metro Transport Interchange is in the heart of the town centre, adjacent to West Street. The Davy Roll premises occupy a large site in the 'area of transition' and the company is a significant employer within the area. There are also numerous premises occupied by voluntary sector organisations throughout the town centre.

- Transport network

Gateshead Town Centre lies on the Tyne and Wear Metro system and at the heart of the local bus network, making it one of the most accessible locations within Tyne and Wear by public transport. It is bounded by major roads and railways leading into Central Tyneside, which sever the centre from its immediate surroundings. Although pedestrian routes to adjoining residential areas have recently been improved, with the replacement of a number of subways by light-controlled crossings, significant difficulties remain in linking the town centre effectively to its surroundings on foot, by cycle, and by public transport. In addition to this, the road network, especially in the Oakwellgate area which has a fragmented character with sites isolated by highway infrastructure, restricts opportunities for development. This makes it difficult to bring about the necessary development to create a contiguous, enlarged town centre area linking the existing town centre and the Quays.

4. The case for change

This guidance arises from the precept that the town centre is seriously deficient in a number of respects and significant change is required to create a town centre, which plays an appropriate role within the region and serves its potential catchment area. The most acute problems in the town centre are:

- Poor quality physical environment - This relates both to the form and quality of open space and to the negative impact of buildings and structures. The lack of enclosure at the northern and southern end of High Street and West Street means the town centre 'leaks' into the surrounding area, space is poorly defined and traffic dominates in these areas. Additionally, areas of 'lost space' in the town centre need addressing to create development opportunities or better quality public space.
- Vacant property - The town centre has an ageing building stock, which, in most cases, has had low levels of investment in recent years. A number of properties are either vacant or under-used and are unattractive for modern town centre uses.

- Poor quality retail and commercial offer - The predominantly secondary or tertiary retail and commercial offer primarily serves a low-income local population. This makes it difficult to attract high value tenants and the low rental levels provide little incentive for investment. The retail area is too strung out from north to south, and needs to be made more compact.
- Limited range of 'town centre' facilities - Gateshead is deficient in a number of facilities which contribute to a vibrant, mixed use town centre and encourage 'linked' visits, in particular leisure, health and community facilities. This limits the range of people who wish to visit the town centre and the number of hours per day when activity is taking place, as there is little to attract people during evening hours.
- Poor connectivity for pedestrians - Despite recent improvements, the town centre core is poorly connected with surrounding areas, especially to the north and east, with a major barrier created by the volume of traffic bypassing the town centre. This means that the town centre in its current form is unlikely to achieve maximum benefit from the range of commercial, arts and leisure, and residential developments taking place around its periphery.
- Through-traffic – The main roads both around the edge, and through the town centre carry a high volume of traffic, to the detriment of pedestrians and cyclists. Traffic heading for other destinations passes through the heart of the town centre along Regent Street and Charles Street as well as around the edges. There is an aspiration to separate through-traffic from access traffic in the town centre, though recent traffic modelling work may establish that significant change would need to occur to the surrounding distributor road network prior to removal of through-traffic from the town centre.

There are, however, several positive factors, which create opportunities for the town centre:

- Gateshead's central position within the conurbation provides the potential for a larger catchment area, and for attracting facilities, which complement those in the nearby Newcastle City Centre and Gateshead Quays.
- The town centre has good public transport connections and a recently improved bus/Metro Interchange which is one of the most heavily-used in Tyne and Wear. There is also a sizeable local population in densely developed areas to the south and west. A redeveloped town centre needs to retain the existing customer base as well as attracting customers from a wider catchment area.
- The new leisure and cultural developments at the Quays are attracting new people to the area - the town centre can share in this success if safe and attractive connections are created and there is sufficient reason e.g. visitor attraction, high quality public space and public art, good shopping facilities for people to visit.
- Elsewhere, within walking distance of the town centre, new residential developments and the Baltic Business Quarter will bring more people into the

area to live and work - again it is imperative that connections are improved and the right type and balance of facilities is created to attract people in significant numbers.

- The town centre contains significant listed buildings, conservation areas and other historic buildings. When these areas are preserved and/or enhanced, buildings improved and occupied with suitable long-term users, and public spaces improved, they can make a positive contribution to the town centre, providing variation in building and townscape form, connection with the past and a sense of place.

5. Core Objectives (see plan C – Town Centre Strategy)

The following core objectives serve as a basis for development in the town centre as a whole: -

(1) Create a vibrant town centre through the introduction of mixed-use developments.

Gateshead town centre is complementary to Newcastle City Centre, forming part of an expanded city centre straddling the River Tyne. It should also be complementary to the MetroCentre, which provides a significant comparison goods offer to a catchment well beyond the borough of Gateshead. The town centre should provide a wide range of facilities for local people and a larger catchment area, and introduce distinctive uses that give the centre a niche role within the conurbation. Retail, residential, employment, leisure and community uses need to be introduced and expanded in order to create a vibrant, lively town centre.

The Council's aims in relation to specific uses are:

Retail

- Comprehensive improvement of the retail offer to meet modern requirements
- Make the retail area of the town centre more compact, centred on Jackson Street and a redeveloped Trinity Square. This may provide for a similar level of floor space as exists at present, but with a revised street layout and a choice of retail units which are attractive to retailers and shoppers.
- Provide more effectively for the needs of the existing catchment and expand the catchment area of the town centre.
- Continue to provide a significant convenience retail function
- Attract a specialist retail function to develop a distinct identity for the town centre.

Employment

- Provide for additional employment opportunities in the town centre
- Provide follow-on accommodation for small businesses currently occupying the Gateshead International Business Centre which is running at 100% capacity
- Introduce small businesses and other contemporary uses into old buildings and railway arches

- Provide for employment uses within mixed use developments
- Actively encourage the use of office space and buildings, and land development by creative industries and seek ways of developing and supporting businesses from this sector that choose to relocate in the area. The Council's aspiration is for Gateshead to be seen as a central location for creatively supporting a critical mass of vibrant, dynamic, creative businesses
- To create opportunities for targeted recruitment and training related to construction within the development of sites within the town centre and subsequently provide for additional employment opportunities in end user jobs in these developments, where identified.

Residential

- Ensure the sustainability and viability of existing housing stock
- Introduce a range of housing types, to meet identified needs
- Broaden the tenure range in residential provision within the town centre, with provision of affordable housing
- Introduce student accommodation as a key driver of change and extended opening hours within the town centre.
- Renew or replace existing residential stock, where appropriate, with well-managed contemporary development.
- Provide new housing on a phased basis within mixed-use schemes

Social and Cultural

- Provide for the leisure and cultural needs of the current and future users of the town centre, including black, minority and ethnic communities.
- Provide opportunities for sport and active recreation.
- Provide access to Council services within the central area and easily accessible from the transportation hub.
- Develop health facilities for the catchment area in accessible locations
- Provide for an increased presence of the community and voluntary sector within the town centre
- Attract facilities which will draw tourists, plus the increasing numbers of people visiting Gateshead for the conference trade, into the town centre
- Incorporate public art into new development and public realm projects in the town centre, where appropriate, in accordance with Gateshead Council's Public Art Strategy.
- Develop the evening economy, complementing Gateshead Quays and Newcastle City Centre.
- Provide high quality active and passive open space
- Improve connectivity between the town centre and leisure and arts facilities at Prince Consort Road and ensure links are not compromised by potential future changes in the road hierarchy
- The town centre needs to be redeveloped in a manner which supports health and healthier lifestyles. This could include the Council working with developers to carry out Health Impact Assessments in appropriate circumstances and where necessary devise mitigation plans.

(2) Improve accessibility, achieving a balance between all transport modes

The centre is already served by a high-capacity road system but most of the traffic is heading for alternative destinations. If Gateshead is to succeed as a unique destination in the future it is important that greater priority is given in future to the needs of local access. The barriers that separate the distinct character areas of Gateshead today must be overcome if the town is to benefit from the major developments around it.

A range of alternative transport solutions to the motor car will be investigated, whilst still providing for reasonable levels of town centre parking and road capacity. Higher densities of development, bringing more people into the town centre, will necessitate improvement of other transport modes.

The primary aims in relation to movement within the strategy area are: -

- Reduce the negative impact of through traffic both within and around the edges of the town centre.
- Give priority to access requirements of the town centre.
- Improve pedestrian/cycle links between the town centre core and surrounding areas
- Improve public transport access to the town centre
- Develop appropriate levels of attractive, secure public parking, at convenient locations serving all the town centre;
- Ensure that all public parking within the town centre is charged, and at rates which promote short stay parking whilst acknowledging the need for some long stay commuter parking.

Public Transport

Gateshead Town centre has good public transport links with the central conurbation and has a major transport hub at the Interchange. Capacity and reliability problems exist, however, particularly for buses. Further significant improvements to both the quality and level of service and infrastructure will be required if aspirations for increased activity in both Gateshead Town Centre and central Tyneside as a whole are to be achieved sustainably.

Any regeneration of the town centre should:

- Consider provision for increased capacity in the Interchange
- Ensure that the reliability of bus services is sustained and, wherever possible, enhanced;
- Ensure that public transport is highly accessible from all parts of the town centre whilst acknowledging the aim to create pedestrian - friendly environment within a reconfigured retail core area
- Provide for high quality stops and shelters including real time information at both stops and within developments.
- Improve links with Gateshead Quays, Newcastle and other parts of central Tyneside by sustaining and improving QuayLink and other public transport services.

- Provide for the efficient operation of taxis

Pedestrian and cycle links

The renewal of the Town Centre must take advantage of the major investment in regeneration projects associated with the Quayside and elsewhere. To achieve this, a number of positive links must be created. New public spaces should be linked by a series of safe movement corridors that are not constrained by motor traffic. Where appropriate, additional pedestrian crossings will be introduced.

Provision for pedestrians and cyclists should be made in accordance with the Council's Town Centre Pedestrian/Cycle Strategy. This seeks to create a network of safe and convenient routes linking the various elements of the town centre, and establishing links to surrounding areas. Links should as far as possible be open at all hours of the day; routes which close at night e.g. through single development schemes should be avoided.

In particular, major improvements in pedestrian and cycle links will be sought towards the Quays from West Street and High Street, to the Baltic Business Quarter across Gateshead Highway to Coulthards Lane, and to areas to the south via Sunderland Road.

In addition to the improvement of links, developments should contain facilities that will encourage walking and cycling such as safe cycle storage, showers and changing facilities.

Primary aims will be:

- Provide an improved pedestrian environment with new and upgraded links within a regenerated town centre and major improvements in links between the town centre, Quays and Baltic Business Quarter.
- Provide improved cycle routes in and around the town centre within the context of the Council's Cycling Strategy and the proposal for a revised hierarchy of routes within the town centre.
- Ensure that the needs of people with mobility or visual impairment are fully considered.

Cableway

The potential of a cableway link between the town centre and Gateshead Quays has been subject of a feasibility study. This is a potential solution to the issue of improved links between these two areas. However, there is uncertainty and risk associated with such a proposal and the Council will need to give careful consideration as to how this can be incorporated within a regenerated town centre.

Parking

The provision of adequate levels of secure, conveniently located parking should be a central element of any redevelopment proposals. In making provision for parking the following general principles should be adhered to:

- As far as possible car parking should be provided for the town centre as a whole. Car parking exclusively dedicated to individual retail outlets should be avoided, while dedicated car parking for other uses (residential, offices etc.) should be minimised;
- The provision and location of car parking within the town centre should be such that it serves the entire centre. This may require the provision of car parks in two or more locations, rather than concentrated at a single location.
- Provision should be made for appropriate levels of car, motor cycle and cycle parking;
- Guidance on levels and design of cycle parking are set out in the Council's cycle strategy;
- Guidance on maximum levels of car parking are provided as Interim Policy Advice (IPA 11) to the Council's UDP. However given the location of the town centre, and the very high levels of access expected by alternative modes, levels of car parking provision substantially less than the maxima indicated in approved guidance will be expected;
- All public car parking provided should be charged in line with Council policies, and favour short stay visitor parking at the expense of long stay commuter parking.

(3) Creation of a high quality environment

The creation of a high quality environment will be essential in the redevelopment of Gateshead Town Centre. This is vital if we are to attract people from the wider region by adding to the improved range of goods and services, that will be on offer in the regenerated town centre, through the provision of high-quality streets and spaces. This will be achieved through a range of measures related to public realm, connectivity, public art, and built development.

In particular, reference should be made to the 'Gateshead Streetscape Design Guide', (2007), which provides detailed design guidance for the public realm of Gateshead Town Centre. The guide advocates three 'Big Ideas':

- 1) A Distinctive Public Realm – defining character areas in the town centre
- 2) Town Square and Courtyard Spaces – creation of a hierarchy of public spaces within the town centre.
- 3) Views and Shelter – distinguish between 'Vista Routes' (North - South) and 'Sheltered Routes' (East - West)

Public Realm and Connectivity

A high-quality public realm will be created in the town centre through public investment in both existing and new public areas, spaces and routes, together with the requirement for private sector investment through the inclusion of public realm improvements as part of their own development schemes.

Primary aims are: -

- Strengthen the simple grid structure of the town centre to create a series of well-defined routes between different nodes (urban spaces or buildings which generate activity and movement). The primary nodes will be the new superstore

in the northern part of the town centre retail area, smaller superstore(s) immediately south of Charles Street, Gateshead Interchange and a new civic space (town square).

- Create a civic space in the core area, which will be recognised as the 'town centre heart'. This space will be surrounded by uses which generate pedestrian movement throughout daytime and evening hours to create vitality. It should be linked to the cycle and public transport networks and provide flexible space for a variety of uses to take place depending on time of day or season, in particular creating an attractive environment for civic and cultural events. The scale and orientation of surrounding buildings will be critical in creating a favourable microclimate to encourage people to stay in the area.
- Improve existing and create new 'secondary public spaces' throughout the town centre. In particular there is potential to radically change the nature of the public realm in the area of the Old Town Hall area by enclosing Town Hall Square by new built development and re-routing buses around the West Central Route in order to create a pedestrian prioritised area (however this will be subject to a detailed transport study).
- Provide a major beacon or landmark in the town centre, which may be in the form of art in the public realm, or a building, which provides a major 'draw' to the town centre. It is likely that this will be in, or adjacent to, the 'town centre heart, although other suitable sites will be considered.
- Provide quality, attractive and useable public green spaces in the town centre, introducing, where appropriate, more soft landscaping and trees into public streets and spaces.
- Acknowledge the importance of high quality public art within the town centre, especially where development or highway proposals have implications for existing pieces.
- Ensure that provision meets the expectations of a diverse community
- Provide opportunities for 'play' in the town centre, to encourage children, young people and parents to enjoy being in town centre spaces, and foster a feeling of ownership and participation. The design and form of areas for play, and possible combination with art in the public realm, will be subject of further consideration.
- Links in the town centre area should be designed primarily as 'streets' that provide a suitable environment to meet the needs of pedestrians, not 'roads' that give priority to motor vehicles at the expense of the pedestrian. Streets should provide a sense of enclosure appropriate to their function and context, and wherever possible, fronted by active uses in building frontages.
- Public spaces and streets should be primarily 'outdoors'. Whilst roofing over of certain areas may create shelter, extensive enclosed shopping malls run counter to the aim of creating a true mixed-use town centre with life and vitality beyond normal retail hours; enclosed shopping malls can also restrict permeability through the town centre at such times.
- 'Access for all' will be a primary requirement in adapting existing and creating new public spaces and routes.
- The public realm (including routes, spaces and buildings) should be designed to allow for regular and effective cleansing and maintenance. When considering materials, colours and finishes, their durability and weathering capabilities should be taken into account.
- Good quality public conveniences should be provided within the town centre.

- Public safety and security should be major considerations in designing public spaces and routes. People should not feel excluded from parts of the town centre or routes into it because of fear of crime. Crime should, as far as possible, be designed out by; introducing a mix of uses that create long time spans of activity; creating high levels of natural surveillance to spaces and routes; providing good levels of lighting to spaces and routes, and; creating a strong distinction between public and private space. Buildings define the edges of spaces and streets, and care in their design can have a substantial effect in minimising opportunities for crime. Northumbria Police will be consulted regarding all significant development proposals in the town centre.

Development Guidelines

Building Height:

- As a general guide building heights within the town centre will need to vary between 2 and 6 storeys in order to provide the density of development expected for a town centre environment, and to provide enough flexibility within the height range to exploit the landform and topography of the area. In addition to this there is the opportunity to substantially increase height within the central core area of the town centre to create a focus that will visually landmark Central Gateshead within the context of Central Tyneside and the Tyne Gorge. This could be either a single iconic structure or a cluster of structures.
- As well as assessing the physical impact of any proposed tall buildings in the town centre, particularly it's interface at street level, consideration must also be given to the visual impact of such a building with regard to strategic views and vistas, and the skyline of Central Gateshead. This impact should be measured from within the site looking beyond to the surrounding areas, and from the surrounding areas towards Gateshead Town Centre (particularly main approaches and vantage points).
- Gateshead's Streetscape Design Guide will contain recommendations for building heights in relation to routes and spaces in the town centre, recognising the impact that existing and new development has on the character and quality of public space. In particular the aim is to maximise sun penetration into streets and spaces whilst accepting that this is one of several factors influencing the massing and design of buildings.

Building Mass:

- Large mass development should be concentrated within the core area to form a city scale focal point and step down to meet its neighbours. This will help to reinforce the town centre as an urban core and at the same time allow it to sit comfortably alongside existing surrounding built form. However, in certain circumstances careful and considered juxtaposing of scale, height and mass may intensify the 'sense of drama' within Gateshead's townscape, especially if it were to respond positively (and work with) the existing dramatic topography of the area.
- Any proposed 'big box' development, where unavoidable, should either be of sufficiently high quality and appropriately located within the town centre context to

warrant the status of 'landmark' or be absorbed into the existing scale of the urban grain by building under street level or by wrapping its perimeter with smaller scale units that will enhance the sense of continuity and enclosure and relate to the scale of the streetscape.

Orientation:

- When designing the layout and form of the built environment (including the public realm areas such as streets, open spaces and landscaping) consideration should be given to its potential impact on the microclimate, in particular temperature, sunlight (overshadowing) and wind movement.
- Development should always be outward looking in order to provide active and positive frontages to the streetscape; this will also enhance the level of natural surveillance over public areas. Where 'inactive' frontages are unavoidable, greater attention must be paid to the detail design and to the quality/type of materials and finishes chosen in order to avoid large expanses of bland walling, plant and unsightly service and emergency access points etc.

Historic buildings and spaces:

- Redevelopment in the town centre needs to acknowledge listed buildings, locally listed buildings and two conservation areas. These are a major asset and provide richness to the urban fabric and continuity with the past. There are great opportunities for the creative re-use of historic buildings and imaginative new design within their townscape context. There are historic buildings throughout the town centre area but concentrated in, although not exclusive to, the Old Town Hall and associated buildings within the Bridges Conservation Area and, on the western side of the town centre, Regent and Walker Terrace Conservation Area. Uses which are compatible with old buildings and guarantee their long-term care and maintenance will be encouraged.
- The spaces around these buildings are equally important as they contribute considerably to the existing and proposed town centre public realm. These spaces should be enhanced through public realm improvement schemes or as part of sensitive new developments on adjacent sites. The priority in the Regent Terrace area is to work with existing owners and occupiers to enhance the setting of the listed terraces
- Where there are existing locally listed buildings within development 'blocks', consideration should be given as to whether it is both feasible and beneficial to incorporate these buildings into new developments.

(4) Creation of a Sustainable Town Centre

The implementation of this strategy must contribute to mitigating climate change and assisting adaptation to the impacts of climate change. The Council is committed to making the best use of energy (including renewable energy) as well as reducing and recycling waste we create. This is a key element in the Council's aim to develop and maintain sustainable communities and the quality of the local environment, including housing which needs to be attractive and meet the needs and aspirations of local people and businesses.

The Council is also committed to adapting to the effects of climate change in its infrastructure and its activities and operations. This includes flood protection, sustainable construction and design sensitive to likely medium and long-term changes in the climate. Development in the Town Centre also has a key role in meeting the Government's environmental targets to reduce CO² emissions.

In line with national and international priorities, the Council has several policies in place which reflect the move towards sustainability for all developments e.g.: Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local Agenda 21 Strategy, and Unitary Development Plan. Furthermore the council recognises the contribution that established standards such as BREEAM, Code for Sustainable Homes, and Building for Life will have in ensuring the highest standards in design in the Town Centre.

The Council's primary aims in relation to environmental sustainability in the Town Centre are: -

- To mitigate and adapt against the effects of climate change and adverse weather on property
- To improve air quality by reducing or controlling levels of air pollutants
- To protect people from unnecessary exposure to noise
- To reduce energy consumption, ensure energy is used efficiently, encourage low carbon initiatives, encourage the increased use of renewable energy and encourage and adopt renewable energy generation projects.
- To encourage developers and builders to follow sustainable construction techniques.
- To create a pattern of development that is sustainable in the widest sense,
- To reduce travel by motorised means (especially car usage), through provision of genuine alternatives which are less damaging to the environment, particularly by increasing the quality, attractiveness and patronage of public transport,
- To improve public access to amenities and services through their convenient location within the central area reducing the need to travel and encouraging linked visits,
- To minimise waste by reuse, recovery or recycling (in construction and the subsequent use of developments)
- To reduce water consumption and ensure water is used efficiently (including encouraging rainwater harvesting, sustainable urban drainage initiatives and grey water recycling).
- To make the most of the built and natural environment
- To promote wildlife friendly/ecological design where possible increasing and enhancing habitats

Specific issues to be addressed in achieving this aim of a sustainable town centre in Gateshead are:

Air Quality

The air quality in parts of the town centre is predicted to exceed statutory limits and as a result an Air Quality Management Area has been declared in the Town Centre and an Air Quality Action Plan adopted. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) also addresses air quality issues. Emissions from traffic need to be reduced.

Noise

Increased traffic will result in increase noise affecting existing or new developments. A noise free or low noise environment is very important in creating an attractive and pleasant town centre, especially in relation to public streets and spaces, for visitors and residents alike. The impact of noise from motorised traffic will need to be addressed.

Energy

Gateshead may have particular potential for the production of low carbon energy using meso and micro hydropower, wind power and ground source heat pumps. It is understood that there is great potential to take advantage of geothermal energy in light of the location of the Town Centre in relationship to the Tyne gorge. This area has been identified as one which potentially has the appropriate geology to support viable geothermal energy initiatives. The Council is particularly keen to see how this resource could be harnessed to the benefit of developments within the town centre.

Policy MWR36 of the UDP requires all significant new developments to provide for a minimum of 10% of energy requirements from renewable sources. The Council has an aspiration to move towards a zero carbon town centre and that within the next twenty years it becomes one of the first cities with 30% of energy provided by low carbon or renewable energy generated locally. The council is keen to ensure that during the course of implementation of this Strategy, development should move towards these aspirational targets. The emphasis should be on delivery of development which achieves real carbon savings rather than token demonstration projects.

6. Unique Selling Point

The aspiration is for Gateshead Town Centre to be a vibrant and distinctive part of an enlarged NewcastleGateshead City Centre serving the region. There needs to be good reason to visit Gateshead, with the established centres of Newcastle and the MetroCentre nearby. The key factors in attracting people to a regenerated town centre will be provision of a range of facilities for which there is demand, based on sound market testing, a high quality environment, and a high level of accessibility for all transport modes. In addition, however, if Gateshead is able to find a unique selling point (USP), this could provide additional reason for people to visit the town centre.

The nature of the attraction will determine the source of custom i.e. whether it comes primarily from visitors to the Quays, from within the existing catchment area south of

the river or from a wide area throughout the North-East Region. This USP could be one or a number of the following:

- Niche retailing – a distinctive ‘quarter’ offering specialist products not found elsewhere in the region
- Leisure and arts facilities – may be distinctive to those at the Quays and serving a local population, or complementary, attracting visitors as part of the arts and cultural circuit of the city
- A building or structure which may be an attractor due to its unique and distinctive design or because it is a landmark structure.

Further work will be carried to reach a consensus on what Gateshead’s USP should be, to test the market and to establish how this should sit alongside the mainstream town centre facilities.

7. Routes and Connections

This strategy contains proposals which will significantly change not only specific urban blocks within the town centre, but also the balance and layout of uses throughout. In particular, the retail area will be concentrated and reconfigured, significant changes in the uses and layout of development are proposed in the High Street South area, and new development will be sought in areas around the Old Town Hall.

The highway network around and within the town centre needs to be re-considered so it best serves the needs of a regenerated town centre. This strategy therefore proposes development of a revised street hierarchy which will define the primary role of streets in and around the town centre, whilst maintaining economic viability. The hierarchy relates not only to existing streets but also to any new links that will be created.

Transport studies (including traffic modelling) have been carried out in relation to a number of proposals for the town centre highway network and the distributor route network in Central Gateshead. Further transport analysis will be carried out as part of the work on Gateshead Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Strategy. On current information it appears that some proposals of this strategy are feasible and others would only be feasible subject to longer-term, costly and radical changes to the surrounding road network. This applies in particular to the aim of reducing and eventually removing through-traffic from the town centre. The strategy is, however, aspirational and such proposals remain even if they are not immediately implementable.

The principles underlying development of the revised hierarchy will be:

- To accommodate through traffic on existing or revised distributor routes around the town centre, thereby freeing the town centre of all but local access traffic.
- In doing the above, to improve pedestrian and cycle routes through and between the town centre and surrounding areas so routes are safe, direct and attractive.

- To create a pedestrian and cycle-friendly area in the retail core of a new town centre which has a safe, high-quality public realm and where people can move freely and have easy access to public transport.
- To sustain and improve public transport access to the revitalised town centre, including provision of increased capacity at Gateshead Interchange and good bus access to all parts of the town centre.
- To provide good access for necessary traffic associated with town centre developments (including service vehicles, residents and visitors) without compromising the aim of making the town centre core more pedestrian-friendly.

It is envisaged that the hierarchy will include three broad types of route in terms of their main function:

- Distributor routes – these will comprise the main traffic routes providing access for traffic to the town centre from the surrounding areas and through traffic;
- Local access routes – for local traffic accessing developments in the town centre as well as buses, taxis, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Pedestrian-priority routes – where the focus will be on providing a high quality pedestrian environment close to the main town centre attractions. These will include wholly pedestrianised streets as well as routes also open to other kinds of traffic.

A number of possible options for changes to the existing town centre road network are set out below:

Town Centre North

Two principal areas are to be considered:

- Revised road layout in Oakwellgate /Askew Road area. The road layout in this area currently poses a major barrier to pedestrian and cycle movement between the town centre and Quays area. Initial feasibility work was carried out in early 2007 looking at options for reducing barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement, whilst recognising the high traffic volumes and complexity of movements in this area. Further work is required.
- Review motor traffic movements in the Old Town Hall area. The feasibility of the removal of the bus route and access traffic, enabling the creation of an enclosure at this northern end of the town centre and enhancing the environment with pedestrian-friendly streets and spaces will be subject of a detailed study.

Downgrading Regent St/Charles Street

It is envisaged that significant retail development will take place south of Charles Street, possibly in the form of one or two 'anchor' stores in this area, which will connect with the retail area to the north by means of existing or new pedestrian-friendly routes. An improved north-south route connecting with High Street North and South across Charles Street would help support this.

Modelling carried out in 2007 confirmed that the effect of downgrading Regent Street/Charles Street on journey times along alternative routes around the town centre would be unacceptable (especially in relation to public transport). This remains as a longer-term objective, however, to be re-considered should a realistic alternative distributor route network be provided in the future.

Core pedestrian area

The proposed redevelopment of the Trinity Square and Tesco site and potentially adjacent sites to provide a new retail 'core' has significant implications for routes in this part of the town centre. The function of Nelson Street/Lambton Street will need to be reviewed in line with development proposals and the possible major car park location. As part of this Ellison Street would cease to exist as an east-west route. The impact of proposals for access and new car park provision in this location will need to be the subject of a detailed Transport Assessment.

The redevelopment of this area provides the opportunity to create new streets and spaces. A new link between West Street and High Street, via a newly created town centre square would form part of the first redevelopment phase. The aspiration is for a new south-north link from Charles Street to the new town centre square to be secured as part of further development phases on either side of Jackson Street. It is proposed that the area bounded by Charles Street, High Street (North), Askew Road and the Interchange will be a pedestrian-priority environment, accessed by cycles, service vehicles, public transport and cars where required.

Bus routes/Interchange

Good access by public transport will continue to be an important contributory factor in the success of a regenerated town centre. It is important that the Bus/ Metro Interchange will provide for the anticipated level of demand and that good bus penetration is maintained in accordance with the aims as in 5(2) above.

Jackson Street

The planned redevelopment of the core retail site of Trinity Square and Tesco will give impetus to the redevelopment of adjacent sites in the Jackson Street and Charles Street area. Jackson Street in particular has potential to be a prime retail street in a reconfigured town centre, with significantly higher footfall than exists at present. If Charles Street could be freed of through-traffic, then the opportunity may arise to re-route buses avoiding Jackson Street. Alternatively a more limited scheme which would see Jackson Street as a public transport only route could potentially provide for a much improved pedestrian environment without the disruption to bus penetration.

Gateshead Interchange

Redevelopment of the town centre will bring in more people by all modes of transport to access an improved range of goods and services. In line with the Council's aim to create a sustainable town centre, the issue of providing extra capacity for public

transport must be addressed. The Interchange is already experiencing capacity problems at peak times and it is intended to undertake further assessment of the need for any future expansion, possibly in conjunction with proposals for redevelopment in the area.

In the short term measures will continue to be progressed to improve bus access and egress to the Interchange, particularly for services seeking to travel north along Prince Consort Road.

Sunderland Road

Feasibility work has already been carried out on a proposal to re-create the old connection between High Street South and Sunderland Road as a route for buses, cycles and pedestrians. Establishing this new route will further enhance public transport provision in this part of the town centre and improve connectivity, particularly for pedestrians, to development sites in the Chandless/Tynewgate area and residential areas to the south and east.

8. Areas for change (see Plan B)

The primary areas where change is envisaged within the next 10 -15 years are discussed below. The strategy incorporates broad principles for development within these areas and shows where change is required. It provides the basis for development briefs or masterplanning of specific sites and small areas.

It also shows the overall balance of uses as envisaged throughout the town centre and adjacent areas and provides a basis for improving the links between areas and the development of appropriate transport infrastructure.

(1) Town centre north (see also Plan C)

This comprises the area bound by the Gateshead Highway, Regent Street/Charles Street, West Street and Askew Road. The main components of the area are a) the central shopping core comprising the Trinity Square Shopping Centre and multi-storey car park, the town centre's main supermarket, and the surrounding streets which provide the town centre's main retail frontage, b) the areas of historic interest in the north and west of the area, centred on the old Town Hall and Regent/Walker Terrace and c) the bus/Metro Interchange and shopping precinct.

This area no longer provides for the retail objectives as in section 5 of this document. There is considerable scope for remodelling of the retail core to create a modern town centre which complements Newcastle City Centre to the north.

Within this area, it is proposed that retail provision should be concentrated into a more compact area than at present which will correspond roughly with the area designated as Primary Retail Frontage in the UDP (2007).

The area has the potential to provide for a much-improved pedestrian environment and the aspiration to create pedestrian-priority streets is illustrated on Plan C and explained in section 7 'Routes and Connections'. This shows newly created pedestrian routes and spaces within a redeveloped retail area plus an aspiration to create a pedestrian-friendly environment around the Old Town Hall.

The main principles for this area are:

- Redevelopment of the Trinity Square Shopping Centre and Tesco site, with consideration of extending, in further phases, south to Charles Street. There is also potential for extending north onto land adjacent to Lambton/Nelson Street with uses which would provide an attractive street frontage to the northern end of the core retail area.
- Provision of a new supermarket and significantly improved comparison goods offer, in a mixed-use development also including floor space for commercial, leisure and residential uses. Dead street frontage should be avoided by accommodating larger units on a lower level or 'wrapping around' with smaller units which face onto the street.
- Provision within the area of a civic space which will serve as the main town centre 'heart' of Gateshead
- Ensure that a redeveloped core area is permeable and establishes good pedestrian and cycle connections with surrounding streets, in particular West Street (link to Interchange and High Level Bridge), High Street (provision for future link to Coulthards Lane) and Jackson Street (via new N-S link to extend to potential future development south of Charles Street).
- Consider potential for future cableway link to the Quays from a central accessible terminus in the town centre
- Redevelopment should ensure that active frontage is retained on West Street, Jackson Street and High Street, and is not unduly compromised by servicing and access requirements.
- Ensure that buildings create a memorable and legible townscape by virtue of their height, massing and orientation, and that they contribute towards a high quality public realm with a microclimate which favours pedestrian activity and enjoyment of external spaces.
- Retention of the Old Town Hall and adjacent listed buildings, securing their viable future use and ongoing maintenance.
- Consideration of development of sites surrounding the Old Town Hall Quarter in order to create a sense of enclosure and well-defined streets and public spaces in the northern part of the town centre. This would create an improved pedestrian environment on West Street and Swinburne Street, maximise the potential of Town Hall Square, and provide an improved setting for the listed buildings.
- Investigate possibility of extending the Interchange to the north, with associated new retail and other development.

Uses within the following categories will be permitted in this area (subject to specific site considerations and restrictions relating to Primary Retail Frontage Streets):

Shops (A1), Financial and Professional Services (A2), Restaurants and Cafes (A3), Drinking Establishments (A4), Hot Food Take-aways (A5), Business (B1), Hotels (C1), Residential Institutions (C2), Dwelling Houses (C3), Non-Residential Institutions (D1), Assembly and Leisure (D2)

(2) Town centre south (see also Plan C)

The area is bound by the Gateshead Highway, the southern end of High Street South, High West Street and Charles Street/Park Lane. It contains a broad mix of uses and variation in property condition. Retail provision is concentrated along both sides of High Street South in property of poor to fair condition. This is a marginal retail area with many occupiers on short-term leases and little incentive for investment in property. A significant amount of social housing is found within this area, primarily in the tower blocks of St. Mary's Court (Chandless West), Regent Court and Warwick Court, all of which have relatively low void rates and have had building improvements in recent years. These properties will be included within the decent homes investment programme. The Civic Centre is the major employment use in the town centre. A number of public/community uses are concentrated in the southern part of the area, generally in property of good condition.

This area should play a much more important role in the town centre than it does at present. Whilst the primary retail area will remain to the north, this area should provide a range of facilities which complement and support the town centre core.

The main principles for this area are:

- Redevelopment and/or selective improvement of both sides of the High Street, and Charles Street car park. There may be cases where a block of existing property may remain with significant investment and there are a few buildings of local architectural and historic interest, which it would be desirable to retain. In most cases, however, existing properties, even if improved, would not provide the sort of accommodation required by most modern town centre users. The units do not provide the floor space or depth in development plot for modern requirements. Options for redevelopment for suitable town centre uses will be considered, which may require acquisition and clearance of existing properties in order to assemble suitable sites for a range of town centre uses.
- Concentrate new retail development into the northern part of this area, with introduction of one or two significant sized stores to act as anchors and link with the primary retail frontages of the Town Centre North area, to create a more compact and vibrant retail area within the town centre
- A mixed-use approach is again the aim for this area with less emphasis on retail than in the core area to the north. Residential and office uses in this area could combine with 'active' uses at ground floor level, and may create activity in the area after working hours. This area is suitable for accommodating numerous voluntary, health, educational and community sector users who require a town centre presence. It could also be a focus for leisure facilities.
- Increase urban density through development of plots to 3-4 storeys in height, with the possibility of higher buildings away from site frontages, to provide an urban feel on the approach to the town centre core, and accommodate a broad range of town centre uses.
- Provide for residential need to complement the Council's plans regarding its own housing stock.
- Aim for an improved level of enclosure in any redevelopment of the southern end of the High Street.

- Creation of public realm which links strongly with the Town Centre North area and ensures that both areas are mutually supportive. Ensure good permeability between High Street and High West Street.
- Improve the quality of public space and landscaping around the public and community buildings in this area.
- Creation of a link through to Sunderland Road to allow access for buses, cyclists and pedestrians. This will strengthen the route into the town centre, which is currently severed by the Gateshead Highway, and create more footfall along the southern part of High Street.
- Carry out a comprehensive range of public realm improvements along the southern part of the High Street and adjacent public spaces.
- Provide public car parking space, bus stops, taxi and cycle facilities to attract people to the southern part of the town centre'. This may be attached to major retail development as in Town Centre North.

Uses within the following categories will be permitted within this area (subject to specific site considerations):

Shops (A1), Financial and Professional Services (A2), Restaurants and Cafes (A3), Drinking Establishments (A4), Hot Food Take-aways (A5), Business (B1), Hotels (C1), Residential Institutions (C2), Dwelling Houses (C3), Non-Residential Institutions (D1), Assembly and Leisure (D2).

(3) Oakwellgate

The area is close to the town centre and also the new developments at Gateshead Quays and the proposed Baltic Business Quarter. It includes the major site of the Davy Roll Co., a successful manufacturing business, and numerous scattered premises around the major road junction of Oakwellgate. The current highway layout should in this area is unsatisfactory. The primary issue to be resolved in this area is one of accommodating high levels of vehicular traffic with a complex combination of traffic movement, whilst at the same time achieving a major improvement in pedestrian connections between the town centre and Quays and Baltic Business Quarter, including Gateshead College. Until this is resolved, piecemeal development of individual sites should be avoided. The longer-term aspiration is to introduce development into the area which forms an appropriate part of an enlarged town centre extending to the Baltic Business Quarter and the Quays.

The main objectives for this area are:

- Find a long term solution to provision for through-traffic which allows other objectives for the area to be achieved
- Creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment at Oakwellgate, which facilitates a safe and attractive connection between the town centre and the Quays.
- Following the above, development of sites at Oakwellgate with uses which bring activity into the area and provide interest in an area of transition.
- Improvement of the area as a 'Gateway' to the Quays and Baltic Business Quarter
- Consider potential of a cable car link between the town centre and the Quays

- Allow for views between the Quays and the town centre, to create legibility and encourage a strong link between the two areas
- Improve Coulthards Lane and pedestrian crossing of Gateshead Highway to create a safe, convenient and attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists between the Baltic Business Quarter and the town centre

Uses within the following categories will be permitted within this area (subject to specific site considerations):

Financial and Professional Services (A2), Restaurants and Cafes (A3), Drinking Establishments (A4), Hot Food Take-aways (A5), Business (B1), Hotels (C1), Dwelling Houses (C3), Non-Residential Institutions (D1), Assembly and Leisure (D2)

(4) Chandless/Tynegate

The area comprises a) the major part of the Chandless Council housing estate which consists of three high-rise blocks and a number of maisonettes. The estate has an established community and low void rate, however, requires significant investment to bring the properties up to a decent homes standard. b) The bus depot and a number of vacant industrial buildings on Sunderland Road and c) the Tynegate office development and adjacent vacant land.

Potential major development site

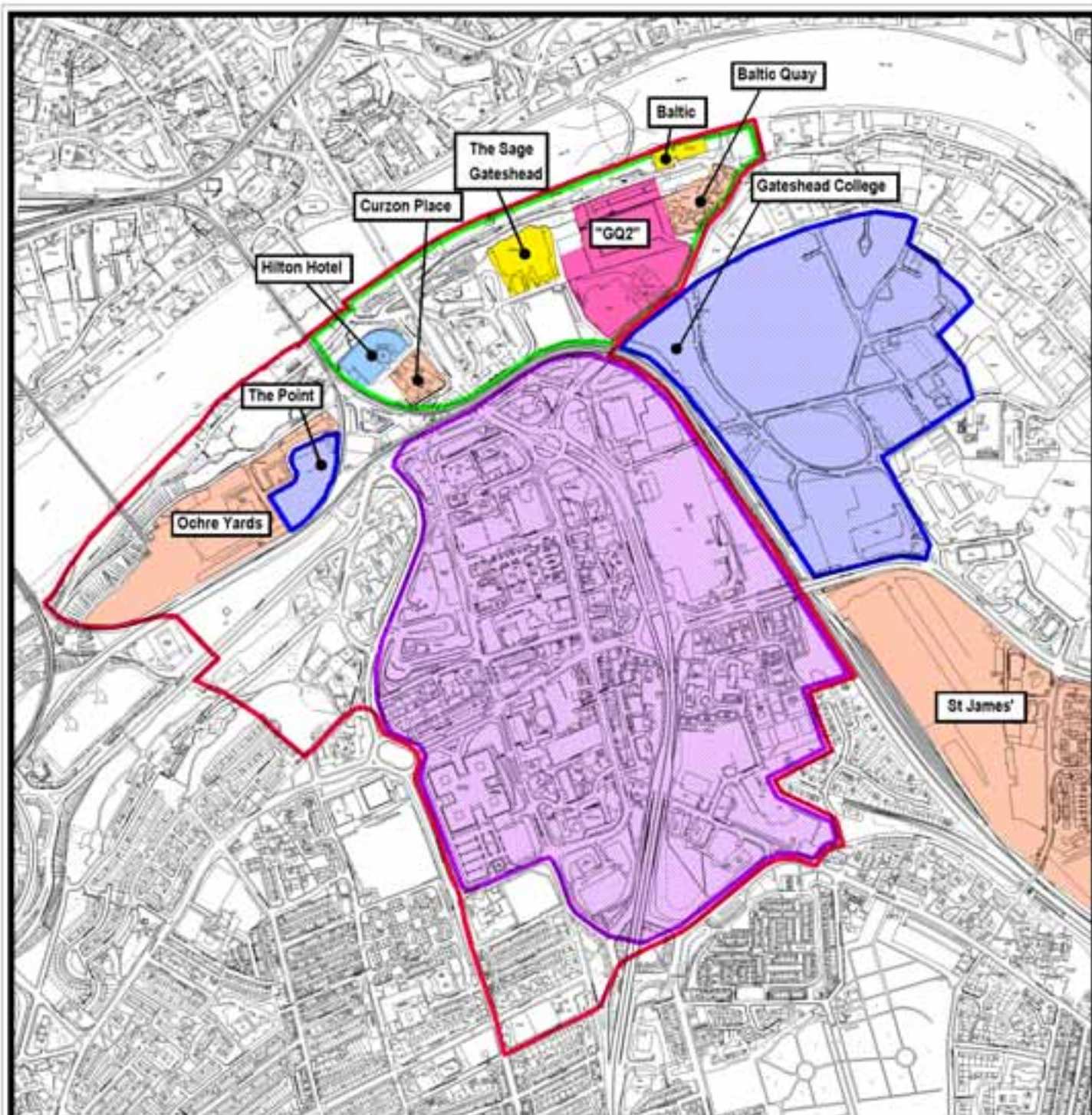
Sites to the north and south of Sunderland Road are under-used and are close to the town centre. They provide the opportunity to accommodate a number of uses that would support the town centre and the adjacent housing area and are included as mixed use sites in the UDP. The closure of Lindisfarne Primary School and potential relocation of the bus depot to another site create an opportunity to consider redevelopment of the area in a comprehensive manner. The future of the Chandless Housing Estate is currently under consideration and redevelopment of these combined sites should take into account the opportunity to improve residential amenity, access, leisure facilities and open space in this area. The Gateshead Highway which forms the western boundary of the site places a restriction on suitable uses in close proximity. The aspiration to open up a bus, pedestrian and cyclist link through to High Street South may well be achieved through the development of this area.

The main principles for Chandless/Tynegate are:




- Comprehensive development of sites to the north of Sunderland Road.
- Development of Tynegate Precinct, with consideration of development of a children's centre.
- Creation of a high-quality bus, cycle and pedestrian link from Sunderland Road through to High Street South.
- Incorporating Chandless Estate into the regeneration plans for the Town Centre to ensure that future investment into the estate is complementary to the investment and plans for the town centre and maintains sustainability of this social housing provision.

Uses within the following categories will be permitted in this area (subject to specific site considerations):

Restaurants and Cafes (A3), Drinking Establishments (A4), Hot Food Take-aways (A5), Business (B1), Hotels (C1), Residential Institutions (C2), Dwelling Houses (C3), Non-Residential Institutions (D1), Assembly and Leisure (D2).



Key

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|-------------|
|  | Town Centre (revised UDP) |  | Residential |
|  | Strategy area |  | Mixed use |
|  | Gateshead Quays |  | Culture |
|  | Commercial |  | Hotel |

Title
GATESHEAD TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SURROUNDING AREA
PLAN A

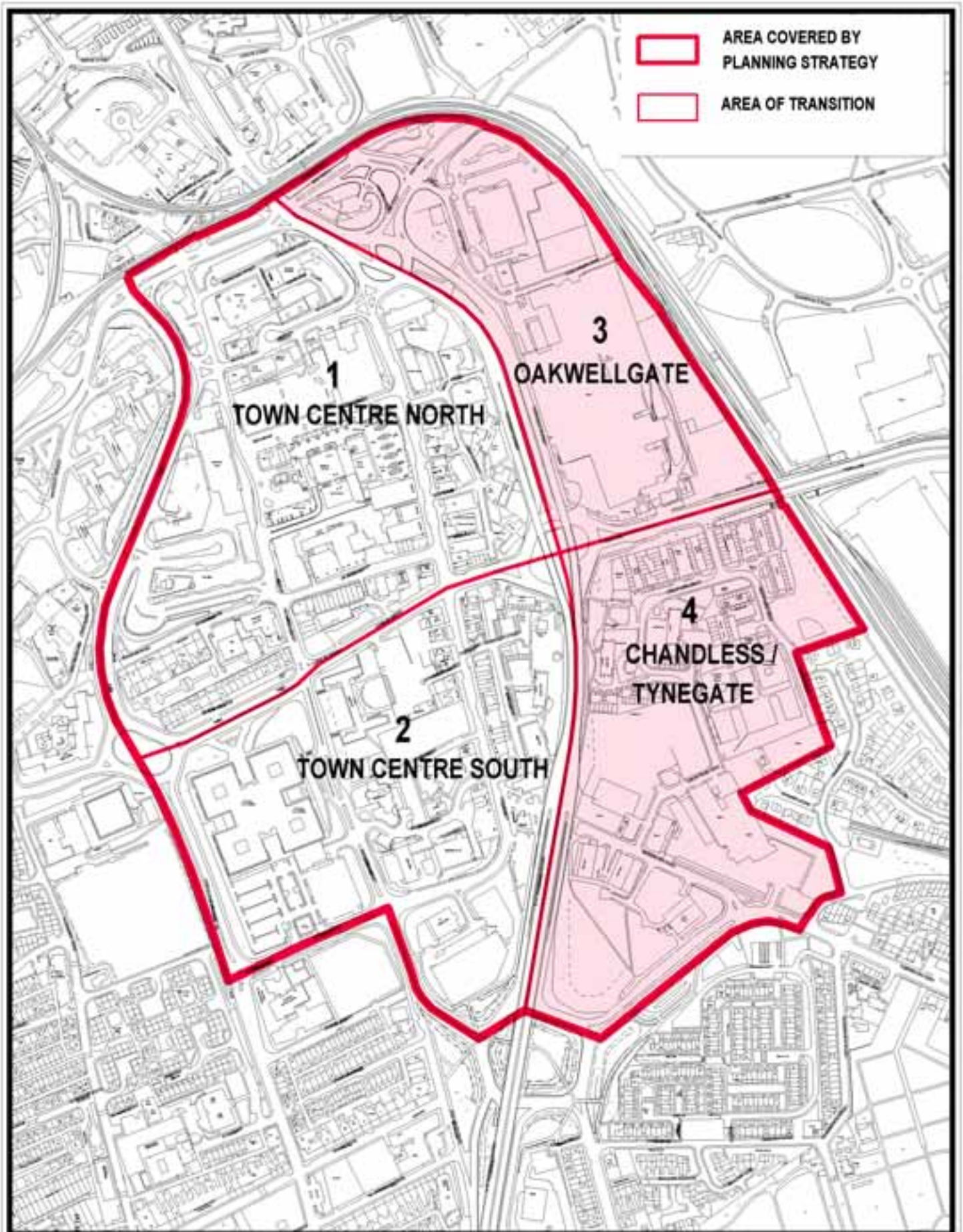
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Scale
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Date
 15th November 2006

Drawing number

Development and Enterprise, Civic Centre,
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Title
GATESHEAD TOWN CENTRE
PLANNING STRATEGY AREAS OF ACTION
PLAN B

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Scale 1:5500	Date 11th December 2006	Drawing number
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Development and Enterprise, Civic Centre,
 Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH

PLAN C:

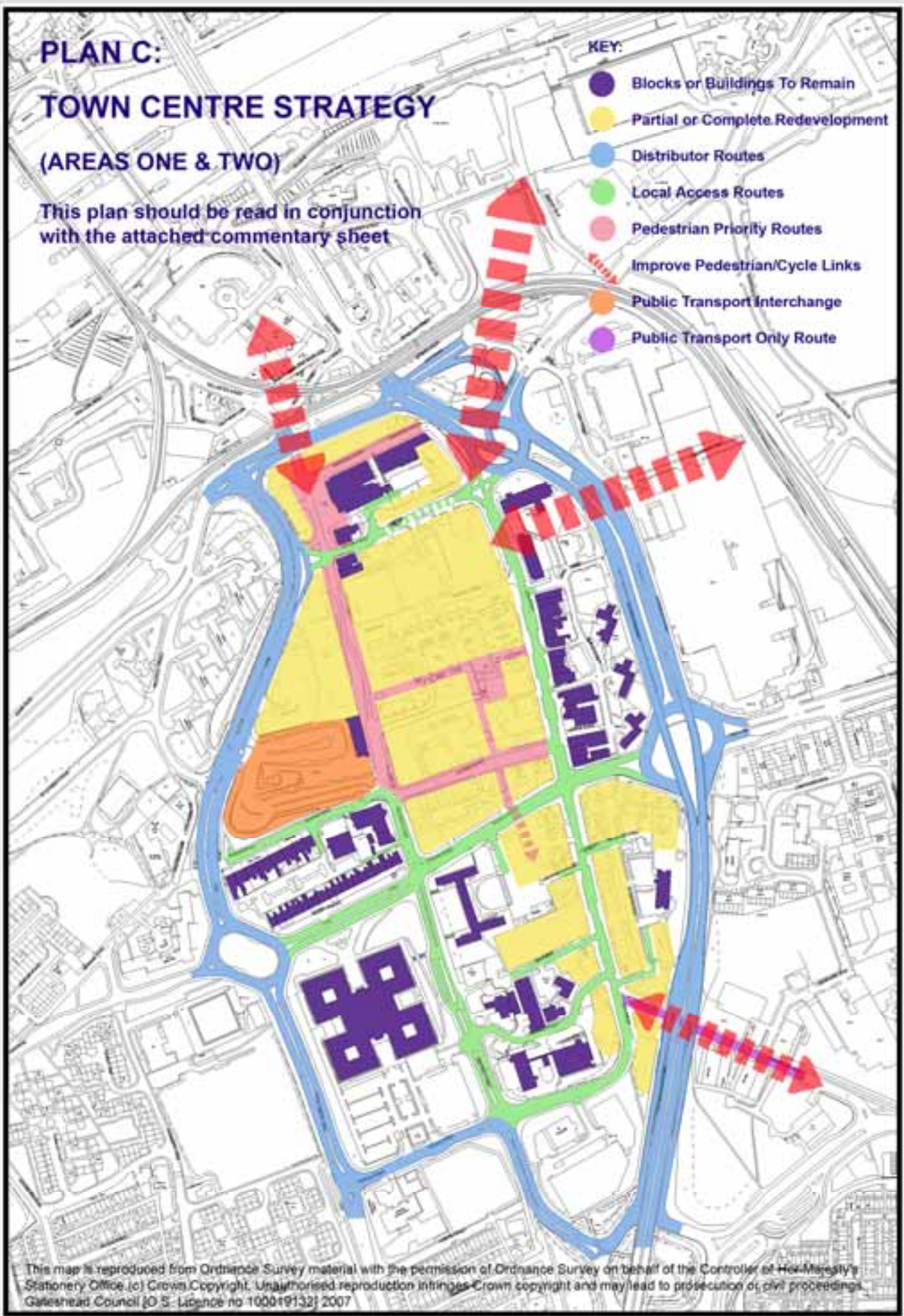
TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

(AREAS ONE & TWO)

This plan should be read in conjunction with the attached commentary sheet

KEY:

- Blocks or Buildings To Remain
- Partial or Complete Redevelopment
- Distributor Routes
- Local Access Routes
- Pedestrian Priority Routes
- Improve Pedestrian/Cycle Links
- Public Transport Interchange
- Public Transport Only Route



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Plan C - Town Centre Strategy Commentary

The plan shows the aspiration for the regeneration of the heart of Gateshead Town Centre over the next 5 – 10 years. It shows a revised urban form with either existing or newly -created development blocks, new or existing streets and public spaces, and an indication of the important connections with surrounding areas, which need to be improved.

Town Centre Urban Blocks

- **Buildings likely to remain** – These form blocks of development which have this designation either because buildings are listed and an important part of Gateshead’s heritage or they are in good condition and well used for a variety of purposes and therefore there would appear to be no immediate need for change. Within these blocks, then, the primary aim will be to conserve and/or improve, although isolated buildings may be demolished and make way for new development.
- **New Urban Blocks** – These are the main areas proposed for development activity. This could mean new development where it does not exist at present, redevelopment of existing built-up areas, or partial redevelopment with retention of some existing buildings. This designation does not mean that all buildings are earmarked for demolition. The merits of retaining existing buildings will be considered as and when specific development proposals come forward.

New Highway Hierarchy

- **Distributor routes** – these will comprise the main traffic routes providing access for traffic to the town centre from the surrounding areas and through traffic;
- **Local access routes** – for local traffic accessing developments in the town centre as well as buses, taxis, pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Pedestrian-priority routes** – where the focus will be on providing a high quality pedestrian environment close to the main town centre attractions. These will include wholly pedestrianised streets as well as routes also open to other kinds of traffic.
- **Public Transport only route** – the aim is to create a direct a direct bus connection through from Sunderland Road, which will also improve the link for pedestrians and cyclists.

Improved pedestrian/cycle links

The plan shows the aspiration to create attractive and safe connections between the town centre and surrounding areas by various means for pedestrians and cyclists, in particular to the Quays, Baltic Business Park and areas to the south.