

# People and Planning Northumberland Local Development Framework

## Ashington Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted February 2010



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**Adopted February 2010**

### FOREWORD

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the north east part of Ashington town centre has been developed by Northumberland County Council with the support of the Regional Development Agency - One North East, and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to implement policies in the adopted Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007).

This SPD has been prepared having regard to evidence collected prior to producing the Consultation Document on Draft Options (September 2009) and the Draft Supplementary Planning Document (November 2009).

It is a planning document which has been prepared as part of a statutory process. Preparation of the document has been subject to extensive consultation initially on a range of options and later on the Draft SPD which set out the Council's preferred development strategy for the area. All written representations made in response to consultation have been considered and, where appropriate, have been used to inform the strategy and detailed advice contained in the final version of the SPD.

Consultation has been undertaken to meet statutory requirements set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended; and to comply with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (September 2009).

The intention of the SPD is to ensure that any change in the north eastern part of the town centre has the optimum regeneration impact for that area and for the rest of the town centre. The strategy identified in the SPD has been developed having regard to anticipated public resources available to assist in delivering the extent of change required within the town centre to begin the process of improving perceptions about the quality of the town centre.

The SPD sets out a strategy for integrating a comprehensive retail-led redevelopment scheme in the north eastern part of the town centre with other areas of the town whilst tackling issues concerning pedestrian and vehicle conflict on the current main arterial route through the town. The Council is seeking to influence the delivery of this strategy at a realistic cost and within a reasonable timescale for the wider benefit of Ashington and its catchment area.

The SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications submitted for the comprehensive redevelopment of the north eastern part of the town centre and will provide a framework to guide and influence public sector investment.



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# 1 Introduction

### **Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document**

- 1.1 Northumberland County Council, as Local Planning Authority, has prepared a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to set a framework and guidance to support the implementation of policies for the north eastern part of Ashington town centre contained in the adopted Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007).
- 1.2 It is important that the SPD produces a framework that is deliverable; helps to create a successful and sustainable future for Ashington town centre and remains reasonably flexible within the constraints of current planning policy and guidance to accommodate changes over time.
- 1.3 Opportunities currently exist to secure public funding to help improve the town centre for the wider benefit of all who live and work in the town and for visitors. These opportunities include making provision for site acquisition which would allow comprehensive development to take place in a planned manner in accordance with adopted development plan policies.
- 1.4 To proceed with such an approach it is essential that the Council adopts a clear, affordable and deliverable planning framework to guide development in this part of the town centre both in the short term and for the next 5 to 15 years. This approach should help to provide the best possible case to secure public funding, in the short and medium term, and should give greater certainty to potential development partners about the Council's intentions for the future of Ashington.
- 1.5 The SPD provides:
  - A framework for developing a detailed masterplan for the north eastern part of the town centre should the Council and delivery partners decide that this is necessary;
  - A clear framework which will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the town centre and elsewhere where they could impact on the implementation of the strategy for the area;
  - Greater certainty and focus for the future regeneration of the area by avoiding a piecemeal approach to its development; and
  - A framework to allow the Council and partner organisations to progress with land acquisition should this be needed as part of the regeneration process up to and including the use of formal compulsory purchase powers if necessary to ensure, as far as practicable, beneficial comprehensive redevelopment.

### **The Supplementary Planning Document Area**

- 1.6 The SPD area is defined by the red-line boundary shown on the aerial photograph at Figure 1 and the plan at Figure 2. The area is bounded by the A197 to the north; by Reiverdale Road to the east; Woodhorn Road to the south; and Lintonville Road / Lintonville Terrace to the west. The SPD area includes the highway that forms the pedestrianised section of Station Road as far as its junction with John Street to the west. This is to allow consideration of opportunities to enhance the public realm and to consider how the future use of that area can assist in delivering greater integration with opportunity sites in the



north eastern part of the town centre. In addition, properties along the western side of Lintonville Terrace and those on the north western edge of the Grand Corner junction are included to ensure that opportunities for improved connectivity between Station Road and development off Lintonville Road can be fully explored.

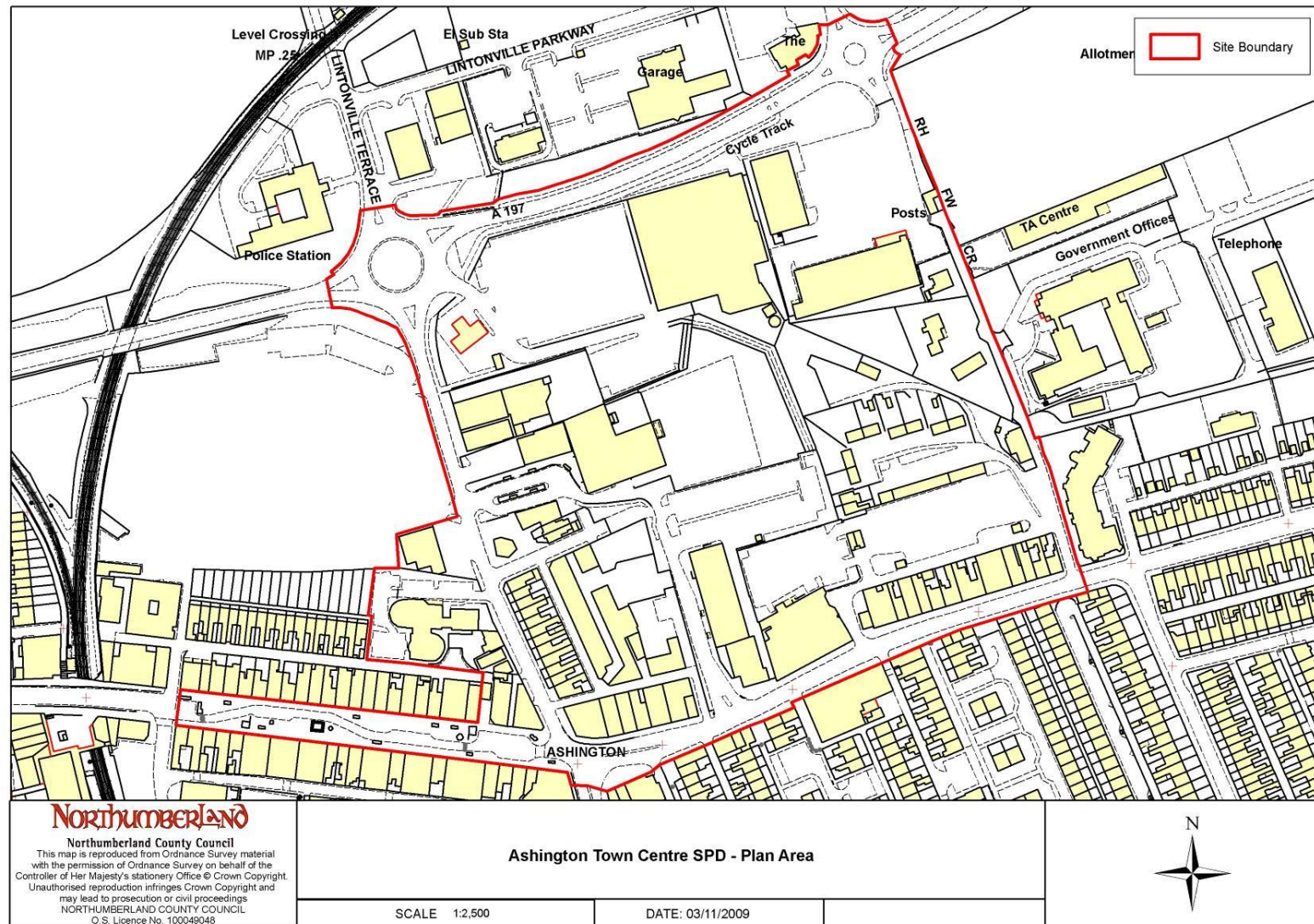
**FIGURE 1 – ASHINGTON TOWN CENTRE SPD AREA**



- 1.7 The pedestrianised section of Station Road provides the traditional retail core of the town centre. The remainder of the area comprises what is essentially a north eastern extension of the town centre. Lintonville Road, Lintonville Terrace, Woodhorn Road and the A197 form clear edges to the north east area of Ashington town centre. This area is primarily occupied by large unit retail space, car parking, employment uses and small pockets of residential development.
- 1.8 Outside the SPD area, town centre uses also extend west along Station Road and south along North Seaton Road into Laburnum Terrace. A new Asda store on Lintonville Road opened in October 2009 which has created a northward expansion of the retail offer. The A197 corridor offers employment uses, particularly at Wansbeck Business Park and at Lintonville Enterprise Park, and links Ashington town centre with the strategic road network. Residential uses predominantly bound the site to the east and the south.



FIGURE 2 – ASHINGTON TOWN CENTRE SPD PLAN AREA





### The Objectives

- 1.9 The Council believes there are a number of key objectives for the successful regeneration of Ashington town centre. This Supplementary Planning Document sets a framework and strategy for delivering those objectives. These are to:

- 1. Create a positive and sustainable future for Ashington town centre.**
- 2. Reinforce Station Road as the 'high street' for Ashington.**
- 3. Create strong physical connections, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, between Station Road and the north eastern part of the town centre and thereby encourage walking and cycling within and to the town centre from surrounding residential and employment areas.**
- 4. Ensure high quality design and sustainable construction in all future development and investment proposals.**
- 5. Provide additional retail floorspace in the town centre of an appropriate scale and format to meet the identified demand and complement the existing retail offer.**
- 6. Improve town centre car parking in terms of quality, layout, appearance and design to contribute towards the creation of an inclusive accessible town centre destination.**
- 7. Create opportunities for the provision of leisure and cultural activities and other town centre facilities where demand has been identified and provision is economically viable.**
- 8. Consider the provision of new residential development of an appropriate scale, housing type and tenure to meet any identified needs within the town centre.**
- 9. Enhance the A197 as a gateway into Ashington town centre.**
- 10. Improve the public realm and pedestrian environment in the SPD area with specific attention to the existing highway network at Lintonville Road, Lintonville Terrace and Station Road.**
- 11. Relocate the bus depot and provide a new bus station as a positive arrival point to Ashington town centre.**
- 12. Improve vehicular access into and through the town centre by completing the Reiverdale Road link for vehicular traffic between Woodhorn Road and the A197 Rotary Parkway.**
- 13. Ensure that all plans and proposals are realistic and deliverable.**

### The Historic Context

- 1.10 The SPD area was primarily open fields until 1895, with High Hirst (assumed to be a farm) located close to the southern boundary of the area. From 1897 land to the south of the area began to be developed with residential properties. Newbiggin Branch railway line is shown approximately 150 metres to the north and west of the area. This serviced Ashington Colliery which was located approximately 500 metres north west of the area.
- 1.11 From 1923 extensive industrial and commercial development took place in the area. In 1923 a wagonway is shown to cross the site from north west to south east on an embankment, and connected Ashington Colliery to High Hirst (immediately south of the area). The wagonway continues as a tramway into the terraced houses of High Hirst for the purposes of delivering coal and collecting refuse. From 1959 the wagonway is shown as dismantled but the embankment remains.
- 1.12 From 1959 a number of industrial and commercial developments are shown in the area, including, bus depots and bus stations with associated tanks, builders yards, a garage, several unnamed depots and works, a scrap yard, areas of earthworks, vehicle repair works and an abattoir. The majority of the development has been in the south and west of the site, with some housing being built in the 1960's within the eastern part of the SPD area.
- 1.13 There have been a series of developments through the 1990's to the present day within the SPD area. These developments have been principally retail outlets (old Asda store, Netto, Lidl and the Factory Outlet store) with areas of car parking associated with each of them and some limited additional residential development.
- 1.14 There have been two recent major development proposals both within and in close proximity to the SPD area:

1. A full planning application (Ref:07/00391/FUL) dated 31 August 2007, was submitted to Wansbeck District Council by Asda Stores Ltd on land at the former football ground, Portland Park at Lintonville Terrace. The application proposed the construction of an Asda store with car park, service area and associated works having a gross floorspace of 8,361sq.m and 4,924sq.m net retail sales area.

This application was reported to the Wansbeck District Council Planning Committee in November 2008 and planning permission was granted on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008. This store has now been built and opened in October 2009.

2. An outline planning application (Ref: 07/00409/OUT) dated 31 August 2007 was submitted to Wansbeck District Council by Terrace Hill Ltd for redevelopment of land to the eastern side of Lintonville Road to provide retail Use Classes A1-A5 and residential development with ancillary and associated facilities.

The application proposes development in three main blocks:

- a single storey sub-divisible retail unit of 2,768m<sup>2</sup> gross internal area (GIA) with 182 car parking spaces;
- a single storey sub-divisible retail unit of 3,250m<sup>2</sup> GIA with 221 car parking spaces; and
- a number of ground floor sub-divisible non-food retail units with residential use in the upper two or three storeys. The development would also involve remodelling the existing bus station in approximately the same location as at present and the creation of public space.

The application was reported to Wansbeck District Council's Planning Committee in March 2009 with a recommendation for refusal. The application was not determined at the request of the applicant and has subsequently been withdrawn.

### **The Role of Ashington Town Centre**

- 1.15 Ashington town centre provides a range of shops and important facilities for local residents. Due to its ease of accessibility by a choice of means of transport and opportunities for combined trips, Ashington has an important role to play in terms of maintaining a sustainable pattern of development in South East Northumberland.
- 1.16 Ashington is one of the main town centres in south east Northumberland (alongside Blyth, Cramlington and Morpeth) providing a wide range of shops and services. All centres in south east Northumberland, including Ashington, compete for local household expenditure with centres outside of the area – these include the regional centres of Newcastle city centre and the Gateshead Metro Centre and the large retail parks and stores to the south of the County in the Tyneside area.
- 1.17 Maintaining the vitality and viability of Ashington in the face of increasing competition is crucial. The general strategy to achieve this objective, as set out in the Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007), is to “encourage investment and improvement and to ensure that the centres are the focus for significant retail and other community development”.

### **Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report**

- 1.18 As part of the process of developing the SPD a review has been carried out to ensure that the document complies with Local Plan policies. This required consideration of the need to undertake a formal Sustainability Appraisal (SA). Having regard to current requirements set out in planning regulations and because the Local Plan was subject to a SA the Council, in consultation with Government Office for the North East, has concluded that this SPD which seeks to supplement specific policies in the Local Plan will not require a separate SA.
- 1.19 The SPD sits within a hierarchy of plans and adds further detail without introducing uses or guidance that would conflict with the saved policies in the Local Plan. The Local Plan has also been subject to Strategic Environmental

Assessment (SEA) as required by statute. The Council has screened the options document and the draft SPD to consider whether statutory SEA is required. It has concluded that the SPD does not require an SEA because the sustainability issues were assessed sufficiently during the development of the Local Plan.

- 1.20 Whilst a statutory Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Appraisal are not required, Northumberland County Council has decided that it would be beneficial for the SPD to be subjected to a non-statutory sustainability assessment to ensure a robust appraisal of the options can be demonstrated. The outcome of that assessment is published separately as a supporting document: Sustainability Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report (November 2009).

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment**

- 1.21 The SPD has also been subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment. The purpose of Habitats Regulations Assessment is to demonstrate that a land-use plan (or other plan or project) will not have any adverse effects on the integrity of any areas of European importance for wildlife, in the form of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under the Birds Directive.
- 1.22 The assessment determines whether the plan would adversely affect the integrity of any European site in terms of its conservation objectives. Where adverse effects are identified alternative solutions should be identified and the plan modified to avoid any adverse effects. The Planning Authority can give effect to the plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site. This assessment is set out in the supporting document – Habitats Regulations Assessment (January 2010) which concludes that the SPD is unlikely to have a significant effect on any European site.

### **Structure of this Supplementary Planning Document**

- 1.23 This Supplementary Planning Document consists of the following sections:
- Section 2: explains the planning policy context, including a summary of relevant local policy, regional guidance and national policy.
  - Section 3: provides an overview of the key issues identified for Ashington town centre by reference to the evidence base.
  - Section 4: provides an overview of the consultation undertaken during the preparation of this SPD.
  - Section 5: outlines the strategy for the development of this area of Ashington town centre.
  - Section 6: outlines the key development principles to guide future proposals.
  - Section 7: sets out important considerations relating to the delivery and implementation of the SPD with reference to land assembly, indicative phasing and the role of the development partners.
  - Appendix 1: provides a full report reference list for the SPD.
  - Appendix 2: lists all the relevant policies from the Wansbeck Local Plan.



### Associated Documents

1.24 This Supplementary Planning Document is accompanied by a number of background documents which have informed the preparation of the document. These include:

- Consultation Statement
- Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report
- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Ashington Town Centre Accessibility Audit
- Baseline Report
- Site Consideration and Options Report
- Options Report
- Draft Supplementary Planning Document
- Ashington Retail Analysis

1.25 The SPD and all the associated documents are available from Northumberland County Council on the Council's website and at the following address:

#### **Northumberland County Council**

Planning Strategy  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
NE61 2EF

**Telephone:** 0845 600 6400  
**Email:** [PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk)  
**Website:** [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

## 2 The Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 This section summarises the local, regional and national planning policies that are relevant to development in the SPD area and identifies those policies that the SPD specifically looks to supplement. The statutory development plan for the area covered by this SPD comprises the Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (July 2008). A full list of the relevant Local Plan policies is contained within Appendix 2.

### Local Policy

- 2.2 This SPD provides detailed guidance for the town centre based on adopted development plan policies. It has been prepared having regard to relevant work undertaken and evidence collected in preparing the emerging Northumberland Local Development Framework (LDF). The adopted Local Plan accords with regional and national policy current at the time of preparation and the LDF is being prepared in accordance with relevant regional and national policies.

### Wansbeck District Local Plan 2007

- 2.3 The Wansbeck District Local Plan was formally adopted in July 2007. In light of local government re-organisation and pending the preparation and adoption of a Core Strategy and other supporting policies for Northumberland, a number of Local Plan policies have been saved. A summary of the key saved policies which the SPD looks to supplement is set out below.

#### *General Policies and Environment*

- 2.4 Policy GP1 seeks to ensure proposals are in accordance with other policies identified in the Plan. It also permits development on previously developed land and buildings within the settlement limits defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map.
- 2.5 Policy GP31 requires all proposed developments to have high standards of urban design. Linked to this is Policy GP32 which requires developers to incorporate a high standard of landscape treatment to contribute to an attractive environment and to improve the appearance of a development.
- 2.6 Policy GP36 seeks to ensure comprehensive development. It states that: 'Planning permission will not be granted for development which would prejudice the future comprehensive development of other land which is allocated for development in the plan or which has reasonable prospects in terms of plan policies of coming forward for development'.

#### *Town Centre Uses*

- 2.7 Policy RTC1 allows major retail, leisure, entertainment, indoor sports, offices, arts, culture and tourism development to be permitted in town centres, including Ashington, provided that they are appropriate in scale to the role of the town and its catchment.

#### *Primary shopping area*

- 2.8 Policy RTC5 seeks to control the change of use of shops within the primary shopping area of Ashington. This area is defined on the Local Plan Proposals

Map. It covers the Grand Corner junction area; Station Road pedestrianised section and Wansbeck Square. Change of use from shops (Use Class A1) will be permitted in those areas provided the development will not affect the character or attractiveness of the town centre. The following will be taken into account:

- a) the effect of the proposal on the balance of retail and non-retail frontage in the area;
- b) the number of visitors likely to be attracted to the proposed business;
- c) the appearance of the development; and
- d) general trends in the pattern of shopping in the town at the time.

### *Town Centre Development Opportunities*

- 2.9 Policy RTC10 (b) identifies land to the east of Lintonville Road as a Town Centre Opportunity Site which has potential to accommodate new retail development. Development on this site should seek to enhance and regenerate the town centre and should be undertaken in a comprehensive manner.

### *Road schemes*

- 2.10 Policy T9 (a) supports and promotes a number of defined road schemes. These schemes are expected to meet the objectives of the Northumberland Local Transport Plan in that they should assist economic and community regeneration; improve road safety; reduce environmental impacts on local communities; and enable new development. The policy supports the upgrading of Reiverdale Road to create a link road between the A197 Rotary Parkway and Woodhorn Road. This would serve the policy intention of contributing towards economic regeneration. The supporting text to Policy T9 indicates that it is envisaged Reiverdale Road will be widened to the west side to provide an all purpose route for traffic between Woodhorn Road and the A197 Rotary Parkway. The new route would enable traffic volume to be reduced and conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles to be removed on Lintonville Road. Improvement of the pedestrian environment is identified in the Local Plan as being very important in terms of enhancement of Ashington town centre.

### **Northumberland County Council Local Development Scheme (2009)**

- 2.11 The revised Northumberland Local Development Scheme (LDS) was adopted in November 2009 and outlines the process and timescale for the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Northumberland. The LDF will outline planning policy and objectives for Northumberland County Council as Local Planning Authority and will in time replace all planning policy at the former district level. Work on the Northumberland Core Strategy has commenced and it is scheduled for adoption in December 2011. The revised LDS includes a work programme for the preparation of the Ashington Town Centre SPD.

### **Northumberland Core Strategy (in preparation)**

- 2.12 The Northumberland Core Strategy is in the process of being prepared. This will set out the vision, objectives and strategy for the spatial development of Northumberland. It will eventually replace the current statutory development plan which comprises a range of saved policies adopted by the former District and Borough councils. It will contain the following:
- A vision for the County;
  - Strategic objectives;
  - Spatial strategy;
  - Strategic policies;
  - Strategic allocations;
  - High level development management policies;
  - Delivery and investment plan;
  - Key diagram/proposals map; and
  - Monitoring indicators.
- 2.13 The Core Strategy will contain policies which:
- Meet the needs of local development – sustainably;
  - Develop a balanced housing market;
  - Support regeneration and economic growth;
  - Create a healthy, socially inclusive, accessible and vibrant community;
  - Protect and enhance a high quality environment; and
  - Meet the needs for the supply of minerals and the management of waste sustainably, whilst protecting communities and the environment from adverse impacts.
- 2.14 Of particular relevance to the preparation of this SPD is the emerging evidence being produced to establish the need for retail development and other town centre uses within all the town centres across the county and the capacity for the centres to accommodate growth. Within this work programme priority has been given to determining the current estimated need and capacity for additional retail floor space in Ashington. The results are provided as an interim report to support and inform the preparation of this SPD. These results are set out in greater detail in Chapter 3 of the SPD.

### **Regional Policy**

- 2.15 A brief review of the context set by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is set out below.

### **North East of England Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy (2008)**

#### *Ashington*

- 2.16 Ashington is located in the 'Tyne and Wear Sub-Region'. It is defined as a regeneration town (paragraph 2.5.3): 'an area that has been specifically identified for its regeneration needs ...'. The South East Northumberland North Tyneside Regeneration Initiative area, which includes Ashington, is defined as a regeneration area. The Strategy notes an integrated approach to housing renewal should be adopted to meet local housing needs in the town.



- 2.17 The Strategy notes the 'corridor of opportunity' between Woodhorn and Doxford Park will provide jobs in Ashington, and seeks to reduce commuting to Tyne and Wear. The Strategy notes the possible use of the Ashington rail line for passenger facilities, and supports the safeguarding of existing rail freight lines. As an interim measure the Regional Rail Study (2004) recommended the introduction of an express bus service to improve accessibility in South East Northumberland.

### *South East Northumberland Sub Region*

- 2.18 The RSS defines South East Northumberland as a regeneration area, in which strategies, plans, programmes and planning proposals should support those areas affected by social, economic and environmental problems. High levels of socio-economic deprivation in former coalfield and heavy industrial areas in South East Northumberland are viewed as a key issue in the region. The social, economic, and environmental regeneration of these areas is essential to growth and quality of life in the region.
- 2.19 Strong links with the conurbation and core areas provide a broad range of job opportunities and facilities for the residents of South East Northumberland. This results in high commuting levels from South East Northumberland to North Tyneside and Newcastle. The RSS expects a higher number and wider range of employment opportunities should be delivered in the sub-region to assist in reversing the trend of commuting to Tyneside for employment and other services including leisure facilities and shops.

### *Retail and Town Centre Development*

- 2.20 Retail and leisure development is identified as a key component of economic prosperity and regeneration. The strategy notes that retail led regeneration is important in regeneration areas in terms of physical regeneration and employment opportunities. The following policies relate to retail and town centre development in the region:
- Policy 9.3 (b) states development in town centres should be consistent with their scale and function to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability.
  - Policy 25 (a) seeks to focus retail, commerce, entertainment, leisure, community, cultural and religious, recreation, education, health, business, public, and any other high trip generating uses within urban and rural centres which are served by a variety of transport modes.
  - Policy 25 (e) states that in regeneration areas the development of services, retail and leisure may be allowed above the scale required for a centre to maintain its role, provided it would support sustainable regeneration without compromising the vitality and viability of neighbouring centres.
  - Policy 25 (f) seeks to ensure the design of development contributes to the creation of sustainable communities and enhances the built environment.

### **North East Regional Economic Strategy (2007)**

- 2.21 There are four broad aims that the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is based upon and seeks to deliver:

### *Leadership*

- Improve leadership around sustainable development

### *Business*

- Business support for encouraging resource efficiency
- Delivery of the Energy White Paper (2003)

### *People*

- Economic inclusion
- Improve access to employment
- Raise economic participation in deprived communities
- Development and deployment of low carbon technology and renewable energy
- Promote equality and diversity

### *Place*

- Delivering sustainable development best practice in regeneration and planning
- Concentrate on demand management and energy usage in transport schemes
- Promote, enhance and protect natural, heritage and cultural assets

### *South East Northumberland*

2.22 The RES identifies South East Northumberland as a priority for housing renewal. The strategy also supports sustainable development in the semi-rural and former coalfield areas of the sub-region to provide housing and local employment.

2.23 The strategy also outlines the development of world class research and clinical excellence including stem cells, aging, bioinformatics, systems biology, diagnostics, medical devices, and sensors will be concentrated in South East Northumberland and Newcastle.

### *Retail*

2.24 The RES notes the retail sector is important for the region's quality of place offer, as vibrant, distinctive retail centres make places attractive and contribute to a better quality of life.

### **National Policy**

2.25 This SPD has had regard to national planning guidance issued by government in the form of a number of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs), Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and Circulars, as well as other documents of relevance.

2.26 Guidance documents of particular relevance to this SPD include the following:

- Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1: Delivering Sustainable Development and companion documents

PPS 1 sets out the Government's commitment to sustainable development, including the following principles:

- Ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, which should seek to address the connections between people and places, be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environments, create an environment where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities available to members of society, and consider the direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment; and
  - Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.
- Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3: Housing
  - Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

PPS 4 'Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth' was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 29th December 2009. It sets out the Government's policies for economic development, and replaces PPG4, PPG5, PPS6 and parts of PPS7 and PPG13. Guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach for retail and town centre uses is provided in the accompanying Town Centre Practice Guidance.

PPS 4 places retail and town centre development in its wider context, as 'economic development' which provides employment opportunities, generates wealth or produces an economic output or product. The objective of this is to contribute to the Government's overarching objective of 'sustainable economic growth'.

PPS 4 removes the 'need' test for determining planning applications, although it is retained for plan making functions. Future applications will be determined on the basis of compliance with the sequential approach and a revised 'impact' assessment.

- Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12: Local Spatial Planning
- Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 13: Transport

PPG 13 seeks to integrate planning and transport at all geographical levels.

The main objectives of the guidance are to:

- Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight.
- Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling.
- Reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

- Encourage the location of housing, shopping, employment, leisure and businesses at locations which are accessible by public transport including walking and cycling.

Local authorities are required to promote cycling through measures such as:

- reducing traffic volumes on particular routes, including where relevant, restricting or diverting heavy goods vehicles;
  - traffic calming - reducing speeds, particularly in residential areas and close to schools;
  - giving priority at junctions and improving links, through the introduction of advanced stop lines, cycle bypasses, cycle gaps and contraflow cycle lanes;
  - reallocation of carriageway, to provide more space for cyclists, such as cycle lanes or bus lanes where cyclists are permitted;
  - improvement of facilities off the carriageway, such as cycle tracks or paths;
  - encouraging health and education providers and employers to promote cycling to and from schools, hospitals and places of work, ideally in the context of site-specific travel plans;
  - encouraging more use of public rights of way for local journeys and helping to promote links in rights of way networks; and
  - carefully considering the shared use of space with pedestrians when alternative options are impractical. Unsegregated shared use should be avoided where possible, particularly in well-used urban contexts.
- Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
  - Manual for Streets, by Department for Transport
  - Design guidance prepared by The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)
  - Transforming Places; changing lives: a framework for regeneration by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (Consultation Draft)



### 3 Evidence Base

- 3.1 This section sets out an overview of the key issues facing Ashington town centre in terms of perception about the town centre, the quality of the environment and the factors that need to be addressed to deliver significant beneficial regeneration to the town and the wider area. It is based on a review of evidence collected through earlier and ongoing studies which have informed the preparation of planning policies and regeneration strategies for the town. The Council is now looking to assist in the implementation of these policies through this SPD. This section sets out the background to and the rationale for intervention to secure a comprehensive approach to redevelopment in the north eastern part of Ashington town centre.
- 3.2 The evidence base supporting the SPD comprises a number of studies and documents. The list is set out in full in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The core documents informing this SPD are:
- Ashington Town Centre SPD Baseline Report (September 2009)
  - Ashington Town Centre SPD Site Consideration and Options Report (September 2009)
  - Ashington Town Centre SPD Options Report (September 2009)
  - Ashington Town Centre Draft SPD (November 2009)
  - Northumberland Town Centres Retail Study – Interim Report on Ashington Town Centre (November 2009)
  - Ashington Town Centre Development Framework (2009)
  - Town Centre Appraisal, Advice on the Future Development of Key Sites and Attraction of Business Investment and New Enterprise (2006)
  - Ashington Town Centre Health Check Report (October 2008)
- 3.4 The key issues identified in the above documents and relevant to this SPD for Ashington town centre are outlined below. These are set out under the following key headings:
- Development Strategy;
  - Retail Capacity and Need;
  - Proposed Housing Growth for Ashington;
  - Urban Design;
  - Transport and Accessibility;
  - Socio Economics; and
  - Ground Conditions.

### Development Strategy

#### **Ashington Town Centre Development Framework (2009)**

- 3.5 The framework was commissioned by Wansbeck District Council and SENNTRI in 2007. It recommended that the North East Quadrant of Ashington should be subject to a development brief and Supplementary Planning Document to prevent ad-hoc and piecemeal development. This should set out the most appropriate use of land in the area, provide access solutions, and provide

greater certainty as well as support to any potential Compulsory Purchase Orders.

3.6 The report concluded:

- There is still demand from retailers to locate in Ashington;
- There is enough demand to justify development;
- Demand is primarily from low value / discounted retailers for larger sized units;
- Demand for units cannot be accommodated by current retail premises;
- New development is essential to attracting new occupiers and retaining catchment spend; and
- Development in neighbouring towns may accelerate Ashington's retail leakage, and lower its position on the retail hierarchy.

**Town Centre Appraisal, Advice on the Future Development of Key Sites and Attraction of Business Investment and New Enterprise (2006)**

3.7 This report was commissioned by Wansbeck District Council to examine the economic health of town centres across the former District area. It recommends that Ashington needs to strengthen and market its distinctive qualities to increase its attractiveness to developers, investors, residents and visitors. The town should seek to accommodate the requirements from retailers by developing larger floor plates and relocating charity shops from prominent positions in the town centre to improve the image and allow new retailers to locate in the town.

3.8 It recommends that the land to the eastern side of Lintonville Road presents an opportunity to achieve investment in retail development for the town and that a development brief for the site (the subject of this SPD) be prepared to formalise aspirations. The report suggests that a developer competition may be an appropriate method for delivery. Units of 1,500- 6,000 sq ft and 6,000-12,000 sq ft were suggested as being the most appropriate sized units to address gaps in the current provision.

### **Retail Capacity and Need**

**Northumberland Town Centres Retail Study (2010)**

3.9 This emerging study has been commissioned by Northumberland County Council to provide a sound evidence base to support the town centre and retail policies of the new Northumberland Core Strategy. Findings from this study provide evidence to support investment in retail development in Ashington. The study considers the need for additional retail floorspace to serve the identified catchment area for Ashington and look at requirements for both convenience (food) and comparison goods floorspace.

### **Convenience Goods**

3.10 The interim report identifies that in the short-term (to 2014) there is significant additional convenience goods floor space potential in Ashington. The study was undertaken using evidence collected prior to the opening of the new Asda store in October 2009. Whilst much of the capacity identified in the report will be met

by the replacement Asda store in Ashington, in the longer-term there is scope for a further main food shopping destination in Ashington. Evidence provided through this study suggests that a new supermarket in Ashington would improve consumer choice and provide competition to the existing Asda store, which dominates shopping patterns in the local area.

3.11 Based on Ashington's current market share of expenditure, the report identifies a potential convenience floorspace requirement of:

- 375 – 875 sq m (gross) by 2014
- 790 – 1,825 sq m (gross) by 2019
- 1,225 – 2,815 sq m (gross) by 2024

3.12 The report has examined the extent to which local shopping patterns could realistically change in the future, mainly as a result of the impact new development could have in retaining expenditure within the town's catchment area, and concludes that a greater proportion of expenditure (the market share) could be retained locally. It is calculated that currently 51% of convenience expenditure is retained in the town. The interim report advises that it is feasible to increase this market share to 65%. Based on this increased market share the potential convenience floorspace requirement is calculated as being within the following ranges:

- 2,375 – 5,460 sq m (gross) by 2014
- 2,845 – 6,555 sq m (gross) by 2019
- 3,345 – 7,700 sq m (gross) by 2024

### ***Comparison Goods***

3.13 The existing comparison goods facilities within Ashington are identified to be trading marginally above expected levels (by £3.22m or 6%). Given this overtrading together with the forecast growth in available comparison goods expenditure, there is identified to be capacity (on the basis of existing market shares) of more than £10m by 2014, increasing significantly to almost £61m by 2027.

3.14 Based on Ashington's current and projected market share of expenditure, the potential comparison floorspace requirement is calculated as:

- 3,835 sq m (gross) by 2014
- 8,725 sq m (gross) by 2019
- 14,305 sq m (gross) by 2024

3.15 Dependent upon the quality of any new retail development, there appears to be scope to improve the current market share through 'clawing back' expenditure from facilities elsewhere. Currently, within the primary catchment of Ashington existing comparison goods facilities retain 28% of comparison goods expenditure. It is considered that there will be scope to improve this market share.

- 3.16 The interim report advises that it is reasonable to assume that the town's market share could increase from 28% to 35%. Based on this increased market share the potential comparison floorspace requirement is calculated as:

- 9,720 sq m (gross) by 2014
- 19,745 sq m (gross) by 2019
- 22,355 sq m (gross) by 2024

However, it must always be noted that growth in the long-term should be treated with caution given the uncertainties of a number of variables that may have implications on future capacity.

- 3.17 It is inevitable that retail expenditure will continue to be directed to Newcastle City Centre and the Metro Centre given their strength as major regional retail destinations. Therefore, any clawback from those locations is likely to be limited. The report also suggests that attempts to improve the market share of Ashington through major retail investment may divert expenditure from other local centres, in particular Blyth and Cramlington. Although this may be desirable in meeting sustainability objectives, it will need to be acknowledged that clawing back expenditure from Cramlington and Blyth may have implications on future capacity within these competing centres. However, the interim report concludes that this would not have a material effect on the wider strategy for the south east Northumberland area.

### **Northumberland Retail Survey Information**

- 3.18 The Northumberland InfoNet is the central research and information unit for Northumberland County Council. A Shopper Survey was undertaken in Ashington town centre in May 2008 by InfoNet. The survey involved interviewing a total of 258 shoppers in the town centre.
- 3.19 The key findings of the survey were:
- Non-food shopping is the primary reason for shopping trips;
  - Individuals are less likely to visit Ashington on an evening;
  - The main methods of transport to the town centre are car (38%) and foot (27%);
  - Portland Park and Wansbeck Square car parks are the most popular parking destinations;
  - Public transport and car parking in Ashington are perceived as good/very good;
  - Quality and choice of shops are perceived to be an issue;
  - Shoppers use Ashington rather than neighbouring centres for food shopping and domestic items;
  - Newcastle is primarily used by shoppers for clothing and shoes;
  - For electrical goods and furniture/carpets, respondents tended to choose Ashington or Newcastle fairly evenly;
  - The main improvements cited were a desire for more chain stores, fewer charity shops, and events such as farmers markets; and
  - Shop frontages and the general state of buildings were rated as poor.

### Proposed Housing Growth

#### **South East Northumberland New Growth Point Programme of Development (2008)**

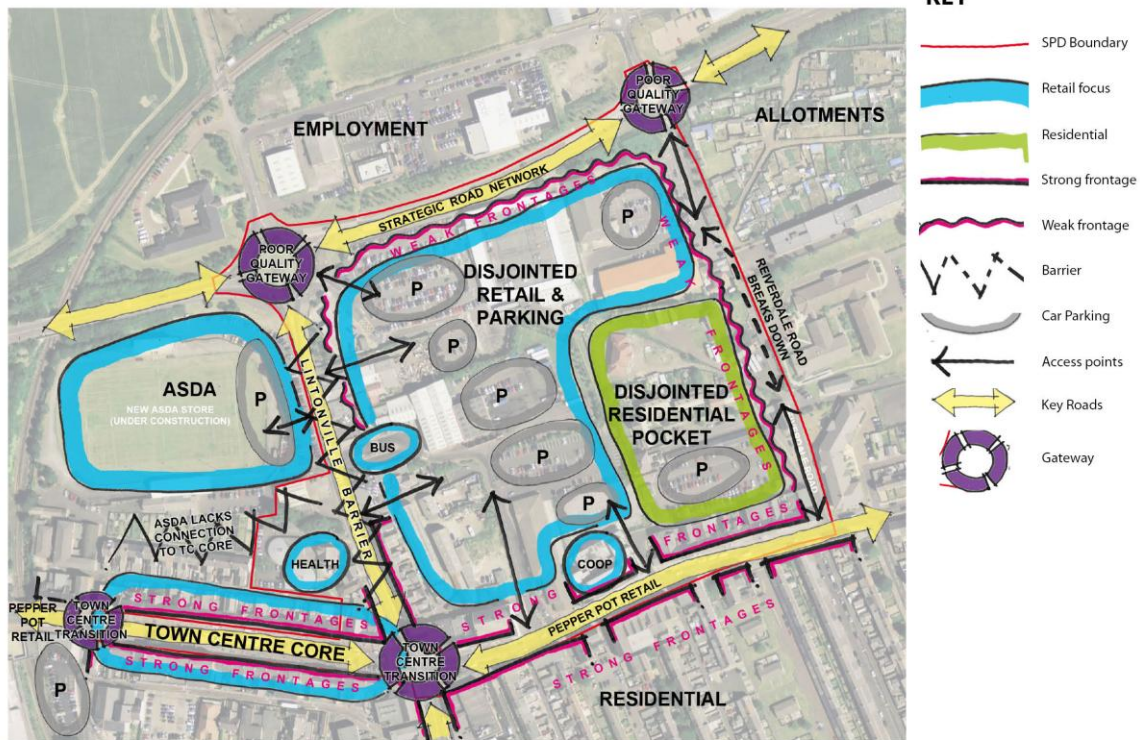
- 3.20 In July 2008 Communities and Local Government announced South East Northumberland as a Second Round Growth Point. The aims of the Growth Point are to:
- Improve the quality of the housing and the design of developments;
  - Widen housing choice;
  - Provide greener housing; and
  - Improve the quality of life of local people.
- 3.21 The programme seeks to construct a total of 6,300 net additions from 2006 to 2017. This represents a 20% uplift from the housing allocations outlined in the North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The Growth Point proposal includes an urban extension in east Ashington, which has potential to accommodate 900 dwellings.
- 3.22 Ashington is identified in the RSS as a regeneration town (paragraph 2.5.3), and is defined as 'an area that has been specifically identified for its regeneration needs concentrated particularly on its main settlements'. Ashington is also a regeneration and investment priority in the Wansbeck Local Plan. It is recognised that the provision of further housing in east Ashington would be consistent with the objectives of the Local Plan and will support and benefit from major town centre development proposals. Consideration will be given to the identification of potential locations within east Ashington where the uplift in housing development could be delivered. Assessment of opportunities will continue as part of their Growth Point programme and in the preparation of the Northumberland LDF. The town centre could, in theory, present some opportunities to accommodate an appropriate level of additional housing to meet Growth Point objectives.

### Urban Design

- 3.23 The current disjointed nature of this part of Ashington town centre requires established good practice urban design principles to guide future plans. The north east part of the town centre has been developed in a piecemeal fashion and therefore a consistency in layout, in particular with regards to access and movement, has not been achieved. There is also a need to better integrate the existing retail and surface car parking into the town centre environment.



FIGURE 3 - ANALYSIS



- 3.24 A detailed assessment of the characteristics of the town centre in terms of its urban form is presented in the Site Considerations and Options Report which supports the SPD. Figure 3 provides a snapshot of the SPD area today in diagrammatic form to illustrate the key physical features present in the area. In summary, this seeks to demonstrate that the area is fragmented and it is currently divided into a number of relatively isolated compartments. However, the scale of the site, its existing assets and potential for change provide a number of opportunities. The tables below set out a detailed description of the key issues and opportunities.

## Issues

No.	Issue	Commentary
1	Fragmented ownership within the north east part of the town centre makes delivery of comprehensive redevelopment difficult to achieve.	The council and partner organisations need to pursue a programme of site acquisitions to reduce risk to potential developers.
2	Low quality townscape within large areas of the town.	Townscape, landscaping and public realm improvement should be a key part of any proposals.
3	Risk that new development will negatively impact on trade in Station Road.	The treatment of Lintonville Terrace is critical to connecting Station Road with the north east part of the town centre including linking in the new ASDA store. Townscape improvements should contribute towards creating an integrated quality town centre.
4	Off street car parking is dispersed and is organised to serve separate pockets of retail as opposed to the town centre as a whole.	Car parking could be reorganised to better serve the whole of the town centre. Good quality, safe pedestrian links are required to link parking with destinations.
5	Existing residential areas appear isolated from the rest of the town centre.	Explore opportunities to integrate residential area into the town centre.
6	New Asda store lacks strong pedestrian link to Station Road. Level changes, safety of potential pedestrian links and the extent of private ownership create a potential barrier to achieving this.	Focus on creating a pedestrian friendly, permeable Lintonville Terrace. Explore opportunities to create a safe pedestrian access to Station Road in longer term.
7	Risk of stretching the town centre retail area too far. Shops are currently 'pepper potted' along main roads (both east and west of the pedestrianised section of Station Road) with large footprint retail organised in an ad-hoc manner within north east part of the town centre.	Approach needs to organise and focus new retail to create a strong relationship between old and new creating a clear retail circuit for visitors.
8	Access from A197 along Lintonville Road into the town centre has been identified by the council as currently insufficient to serve any further large scale new development.	Explore options to upgrade existing highway infrastructure and/or to create alternative access points.
9	Lintonville Terrace has high levels of traffic, severing the rest of the town centre through the Grand Corner junction.	Opportunities to reduce traffic flow along Lintonville Road and Terrace should be explored. The potential of upgrading Reiverdale Road as an alternative vehicular link between the A197 and Woodhorn Road should be pursued.
10	Town centre appears to be focused on retail and lacks leisure and other recreational uses.	Opportunity to support retail use alongside leisure and recreational uses.

## Opportunities

No.	Opportunities	Commentary
1	Redevelopment and regeneration of Ashington, including the town centre, is identified as a priority for the council and One North East.	SPD will provide a tool to help secure funding thereby aiding delivery of a comprehensive development in partnership with private sector interests.
2	New larger Asda store is an asset being located in the town centre with good road links which allows access from a wide catchment area attracting a larger number of visitors to the town.	Town centre and particularly Station Road need to capitalise on this by creating better pedestrian links.
3	Station Road has a busy, vibrant town centre feel and the pedestrianised area creates a clear heart to the town centre.	New retail development must complement Station Road and be well connected.
4	High density of existing housing in walkable distance from town centre.	Links with residential streets should be improved to create attractive routes to secure maximum local support for the town centre from resident population.
5	Existing bus station is located centrally near key destinations (Asda, Station Road, Health Centre).	Enhancements to bus station in same location or the development of an improved new bus station gives an opportunity to create a well designed central public transport arrival point to the town centre with associated facilities.
6	The north east of the town centre provides a large area of land with development potential.	A coordinated approach will be required to ensure maximum benefit to the rest of the town centre through the comprehensive redevelopment of this land with the opportunity for retail led mixed use development.
7	Co Op building provides a landmark to the eastern side of town centre.	Opportunity to create a focus along Woodhorn Road.
8	Strong frontages/edges face onto Station Road, Woodhorn Road and the southern end of Lintonville Terrace.	Need to improve other edges which are currently weak. In particular parts of Lintonville Terrace and the A197.
9	Large areas of car parking.	Whilst they are disjointed, they appear to be well used and improved parking will help support both existing and new retail in the town centre.

### Transport and Accessibility

- 3.25 Traffic modelling has been carried out for the north of Ashington town centre to test the vehicular impacts of different development schemes. The VISSIM model was created to simulate the average weekday AM, Friday PM peak and Saturday peak periods traffic flows.
- 3.26 As a result of the development of the new Asda store, the access point from the A196/A197 roundabout to the old Asda store has now been closed other than for access to the petrol filling station. The closure of access to the old Asda store is a result of two planning conditions attached to the planning permission for the new store (Ref: 07/00391/FUL):

*“7. The existing Asda store to the east of Lintonville Road in Ashington shall close as soon as the new store hereby approved opens for trading. A scheme for the management of all the land within the blue line boundary of plan no PL-09 (Red Line Boundary Plan) shall be submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority and this shall be implemented upon the closure of the existing store or as otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority.*

*Reason: To ensure the safe and efficient operation of the external road network and that the area to the east of Lintonville Terrace is redeveloped in a comprehensive manner in accordance with Local Plan Policy GP36.*

*8. Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, the development hereby permitted shall not come into operation until the access road serving the Petrol Filling Station (PFS) and existing Asda store has been closed and severed to all vehicular traffic (other than approved occasional maintenance vehicles) beyond the entrances to the PFS. Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, the vehicular access to the residual part of the site shall remain closed until a comprehensive development scheme for that site, including new means of access, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and implemented in accordance with such approved details or until a scheme of highway improvements and/or signalisation of the roundabout at the junction of Lintonville Road and the A197 Rotary Parkway has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and has been constructed in accordance with the approved details.*

*Reason: To achieve a satisfactory form of development in the interest of highway safety.”*

- 3.27 In this light, to facilitate the additional traffic movements associated with development of this site and to bring forward comprehensive redevelopment within the SPD areas, in accordance with policy established in the Local Plan, a number of access options have been considered including:
- Highway improvements / enlarged A196/A197 roundabout; or
  - A new access road connecting to a completed Reiverdale Road link; or
  - A combination of improvements or enlargement of the roundabout at the A196/A197 junction along with completion of the Reiverdale Road link; or

- Retention of the existing A196/A197 roundabout junction with ingress only to land east of Lintonville Road and completion of the Reiverdale Road link giving ingress and egress to the SPD area via Reiverdale Road.
- 3.28 An enlarged roundabout at the A196/A197 junction, if designed to meet County Highway Authority requirements, would see the existing road network largely operate as it does today, with an increased capacity on the roundabout and a reduction in delays on key road links. If this option were to be pursued it would need to be accompanied by evidence that such an arrangement can satisfactorily serve new development without adversely affecting the safe and effective operation of the highway network.
- 3.29 Opening up Reiverdale Road to all traffic would see the implementation of Policy T9 (a) of the Local Plan which promotes and supports the upgrading of Reiverdale Road to create a link road between the A197 Rotary Parkway and Woodhorn Road as a scheme which contributes towards economic regeneration. Policy T9 seeks to protect a generally defined route for this road scheme from other development that may prejudice its implementation. This new link road will provide an opportunity to create a new access road into the development area from the east.
- 3.30 The implementation of this access proposal would enable traffic to be re-routed away from Lintonville Terrace thereby reducing the impact of vehicles queuing at the signalised junction accessing the new ASDA development and at Grand Corner. The introduction of this new road link would enable vehicular traffic to be removed from Lintonville Terrace to create an attractive pedestrian focused link between Station Road, the development opportunity sites to the east of Lintonville Road and the new ASDA store. This access solution has the benefit of contributing significantly towards the objectives set out in the Local Plan which support Policy T9. In particular it would enable traffic volume to be reduced and conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles to be removed from Lintonville Road. In conjunction with delivering revised access arrangements for the bus station, this solution would also enable delivery of the Local Plan objective of improving the pedestrian environment in the Lintonville area which has been identified as being very important in terms of the enhancement of Ashington town centre.
- 3.31 Regard should therefore be had to the impact of the implementation of any development proposal in the north east part of Ashington town centre, specifically on routes to and through the SPD area and on the surrounding highway network and junctions, having particular regard to the pedestrian environment.
- 3.32 For clarity, the SPD does not preclude access to the main development site from the A196/A197 roundabout. Access arrangements will be considered on their own merits. Any planning submission will need to be accompanied by evidence that demonstrates access arrangements can satisfactorily serve the development proposed without adversely affecting the safe and effective operation of the highway network. The SPD seeks to present the Council's preferred strategy which looks to establish a comprehensive solution to deliver



access, environmental and safety improvements alongside the redevelopment of land within the SPD to accord with Local Plan policies. An access solution is required in order to either discharge or overcome constraints imposed upon the use of the roundabout at the A196/A197 junction by planning conditions attached to the planning permission for the new Asda store.

### **Ashington Town Centre – Accessibility Audit (2009)**

- 3.33 This audit identified a number of key issues in terms of accessibility across Ashington town centre and makes several recommendations. These are as follows:

#### *Key Issues*

- Directional signage of accessible parking within the town centre is very limited.
- The design and layout of bus stops and bus shelters is not to current standards for access by low floor buses.
- At Station Road, there is potential for conflict between pedestrians and vehicles and this can be a barrier to vision impaired and blind people.
- On Station Road the selection of materials, finishes and colours is not consistently applied along the street to assist users to orientate themselves.
- Pedestrian routes are not well signed and where signage is provided it does not conform to current standards.
- The marking of shared cycle tracks along the A197 to the north of the SPD area and the treatment at junctions with pedestrian routes and crossing points is not to current guidance.
- There is currently limited signage and use of materials and finishes does little to provide visual and tactile cues for vision-impaired people.

#### *Recommendations for the SPD*

- Improve directional signage to designated accessible car parking spaces, upgrade those existing spaces within car parks and increase the numbers and signage of accessible bays.
- Visual and tactile contrast and lighting should be considered to assist wayfinding and orientation by vision impaired people.
- Consideration needs to be given to the creation of drop off points at key locations in the SPD area, e.g. near the bus station and within car parks – as close to retail units as possible.
- The design of any proposed pedestrianised areas should meet current best practice on use by the visually impaired and those with other access difficulties.

### **Socio Economics**

- 3.34 In June 2009, unemployment for the former Wansbeck District was 6.1%. This is an increase of 1.32% since the census data was produced in 2001. In a wider context - unemployment has increased regionally (0.77%) and nationally (0.65%) since 2001.
- 3.35 The SPD area falls within the bottom 30% of deprived areas nationally. The indicators of deprivation that are particularly acute in Ashington are: 'Crime', 'Health, Deprivation and Disability' and 'Employment' sectors.

- 3.36 To set a wider context in terms of deprivation, the SPD area is located near a former Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) area. The NRF initiative was targeted at the 88 most deprived areas in the country. The objective of the fund was to improve the basic level of services available to individuals in these areas focusing on the areas of education, crime, employment, health and housing.

### Ground Conditions

- 3.37 A geotechnical and geoenvironmental desk study report was produced for the north east part of Ashington town centre in March 2009.
- 3.38 A review of ground conditions was carried out during the baseline stage of the SPD to ascertain whether there are any constraints in the SPD area that would constrain the future development of the site.
- 3.39 In terms of developing within the SPD site boundary the following engineering considerations will have to be taken into account:
- Variations in level are present across the site, including the former railway embankment which is present in the centre of the site.
  - Based on the site history it is considered that made ground is likely to be present across the site in areas that have been previously developed.
  - This review has identified several, past and present possibly contaminative site uses. As a result there is a risk that localised contamination may be present associated with these uses, which may require remediation. It is recommended that ground investigation and chemical testing is carried out to determine the extent of any possible contamination on the site.
  - Soil Gas may be present beneath the site associated with the made ground and underlying coal seams.
- 3.40 The Coal Authority has provided advice to assist in the consideration of options for development in the SPD area. It is confirmed that there are no records of any mine entries on or within 20m of the SPD area. The site is not in the likely zone of influence of any present underground coal workings nor is the site in an area for which the Coal Authority is determining whether to grant a licence to remove coal using underground methods. The geological memoir for the area states that there are no records of workings in the coal seams in the vicinity of the site.
- 3.41 The memoir does state there are workings in the Ashington and High Main seams and deeper seams in the vicinity of the site. An area to the north of the site may have been subject to local workings as seams are known to have been worked elsewhere in the district. However, it is considered that workings are probably absent within 30m of the surface.
- 3.42 It is considered the risk of shallow mineworkings being present beneath the site and affecting development in the SPD area is low. Deeper seams in the area of the site are known to have been mined by total extraction and pillar and stall methods. Although there are no recorded workings in the shallower seams beneath the site, given their thickness and close proximity to the surface it is

possible that these seams have been historically worked and it is recommended that a ground investigation is carried out to investigate the possible presence of workings.

## 4 Consultation

- 4.1 Stakeholder and community involvement in the preparation of the Supplementary Planning Document has followed the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 12 and Northumberland County Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 4.2 As part of the process for preparing the SPD a number of public consultation events have been held in addition to ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders and landowners.
- 4.3 In order to produce the SPD, two periods of consultation and public engagement took place:

### **1. Informal Consultation on a Draft Options Document:**

This took place for a four week period between Monday 28 September 2009 and Monday 26 October 2009.

### **2. Formal Consultation on Draft SPD:**

This six week period of statutory consultation required by planning regulations took place between Wednesday 11 November 2009 and Wednesday 23 December 2009.

- 4.4 Comments and written representations received during the consultation exercises have been reviewed and have informed the preparation of the final version of the SPD. A summary of the main points of feedback received and the Council's response to those representations are set out in the Consultation Statement. This also sets out in detail the extent of the consultation and engagement programme undertaken to publicise both stages in the preparation of the SPD.

### 5 The Strategy

- 5.1 The Council, in conjunction with its partner organisations One North East and the Homes and Communities Agency, has developed a preferred strategy for Ashington town centre. This Strategy has been devised having regard to the statutory planning policy framework covering development in Ashington town centre; the evidence presented in various studies into the economic, social and environmental conditions in the town; and representations made following the informal and formal consultation stages in the preparation of the SPD.
- 5.2 This section describes the overall strategy for future comprehensive redevelopment of the SPD area. A framework diagram (Figure 4) shows the key elements proposed for implementation to assist in delivering this comprehensive approach to development.

#### Key Strategic Principles

- 5.3 Proposals within the SPD boundary will be required to support the following key strategic principles:
- Reinforcing Station Road as the town centre heart
  - Delivering a complementary retail offer to support Station Road
  - Positive transformation of Lintonville Road and Lintonville Terrace
  - Improving access and movement

Details of the strategic principles are outlined in this chapter.

#### Reinforcing Station Road as the town centre heart

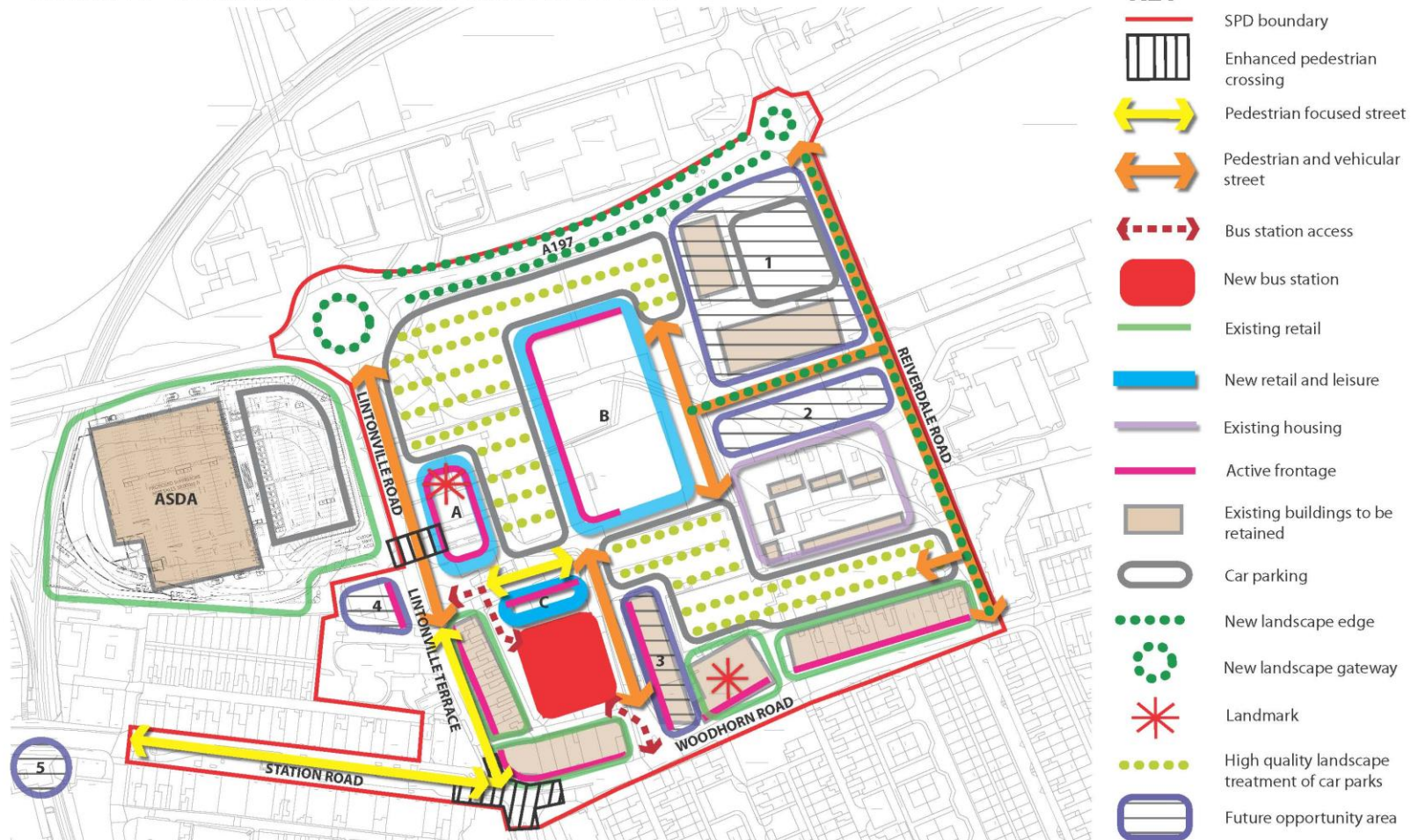
- 5.4 Station Road must be strengthened to maintain its current role as the town's 'High Street'. Improvements are currently being considered for the public realm and in particular the pedestrian environment. The purpose of these improvements will be to achieve:
- A decluttered streetscape;
  - A refresh and update to the public realm;
  - New opportunities for events and café spill out reinforcing its role as the town centre's main public space;
  - An opportunity to consider relocating the weekly market onto Station Road; and
  - Improved gateways and associated short stay parking.
- 5.5 An anchor use or mix of uses at either end of the primary retail area in the town centre is considered important in promoting the longer term economic wellbeing of the town centre. Improvement is required at Wansbeck Square and a new beneficial use is required for the former Co Op store on Woodhorn Road. Securing appropriate uses in these locations would help to define key destinations in the town centre and should promote pedestrian movement between those destinations thereby maintaining pedestrian activity across the town centre and along Station Road. Greater pedestrian mobility through the



area will help to create and sustain regular passing trade for businesses within the primary shopping area of the town centre. Significant to the success of this element of the strategy will be the treatment of the key barrier to east-west pedestrian movement currently created by the design and extensive vehicular use of the Grand Corner junction.

- 5.6 To the western edge of the SPD area the Wansbeck Square site is identified as a key future development opportunity area. This area adjoins the former Ashington Railway Station located on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne rail line which is currently used for rail freight services only. Policy T1 of the Local Plan supports the reintroduction of passenger rail services. This would have the effect of strengthening the attractiveness of Wansbeck Square as an anchor location for retail and other town centre uses. The County Council is actively pursuing the re-introduction of passenger rail services along this route to assist in creating improved accessibility to the town and as a means of securing further physical and economic regeneration at the western end of the town centre.
- 5.7 To the eastern end of the SPD area a reinvigorated Co-op building and the wider north east area creates an anchor. The links between Wansbeck Square, the Co-op building and the north eastern part of the town centre should be of the highest quality to integrate the wider town centre with Station Road. This must be pedestrian orientated in character with the principles of inclusive access designed into any improvements to the highway network and general public realm to encourage greater ease of pedestrian movement throughout the town.

**FIGURE 4 - ASHINGTON TOWN CENTRE SPD PLAN**



### Delivering a complementary retail offer to support Station Road

- 5.8 The north eastern part of the SPD area is intended to expand the town centre's retail offer and create a quality retail focused destination that can compete with retail centres outside of Ashington. The type of retailer should complement rather than compete with the Station Road and wider town centre offer to ensure mutual benefit. The evidence base analysis suggests the type of units/site layout provided should aim to bring larger scale retailers into Ashington town centre. A food/leisure component is recommended to support and complement the retail offer.

### Key Development Areas

- 5.9 A significant area of land will be made available through closure of the old Asda store and by the relocation of the bus depot and bus station. It is intended that this space will provide new retail, leisure and town centre uses and town centre wide car parking.

- 5.10 Three key development areas are proposed:

- **Block A** – An opportunity to complement the proposed anchor retail (Block B) with smaller scale food/leisure uses. The building should provide a new frontage onto Lintonville Road in keeping with the tight knit scale on Lintonville Terrace. Its northern corner shall be designed to create a quality landmark at the town centre gateway. This is likely to follow Block B as a subsequent phase.
- **Block B** – Large floor plate anchor retail development with flexibility to grow as required. Vehicle and service access is taken from Reiverdale Road. The architectural style of prominent frontages should be articulated to reduce the potential mass. Block B is the main priority in delivery terms in order to create a destination and setting for future phases. This should be delivered first or concurrently with the other key development areas and associated infrastructure.
- **Block C** – Opportunity for small scale retail/leisure uses to create enclosure and active frontages onto pedestrian routes and enliven the new bus station area. This should be delivered in tandem with the bus station to enliven the space and create positive pedestrian links.

### Future Opportunity Areas

- 5.11 A number of potential redevelopment opportunities are identified for long term consideration in the context of the appropriate planning policy framework as this currently exists and as it emerges through preparation of the Northumberland LDF Core Strategy. These provide possibilities for future growth of the town centre core to maintain competitiveness; refresh older retail units; and improve the overall townscape. There are no current plans for these sites and any future proposals will need to demonstrate compliance with relevant planning policies; good quality design principles; integration with their surroundings; and must address key routes with active frontages.

5.12 The sites that the SPD considers to be 'Future Development Areas' that present long term opportunities for appropriate town centre uses are shown on the framework plan (Figure 4) and are described below:

- **1 Retail Park off Rotary Parkway:** currently occupied by Lidl and the Factory Outlet Store.
- **2 Land to the north of Viewlands:** this site would be adjacent to a new access route to Block B and the associated car parking areas taken from the upgraded Reiverdale Road.
- **3 Existing Retail/Leisure off Woodhorn Road:** this site is currently occupied by Netto and Wetherspoons.
- **4 Land adjacent to the Health Centre:** currently occupied by National Tyres.
- **5 Wansbeck Square:** currently occupied by County Council offices, Ashington Library, Wilkinsons, a parade of small shop units and a public car park.

### Positive transformation of Lintonville Road and Lintonville Terrace

5.13 Improving Lintonville Road and Lintonville Terrace have been identified as the key to delivering a quality extension to the town centre. This is acknowledged as an important element in the strategy for regeneration of the town as set out in the Local Plan. The Local Plan identifies specific links between these improvements and the completion of Reiverdale Road which is described as an alternative all purpose route around the town centre which will enable a reduction in traffic volume on Lintonville Road thereby reducing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. The SPD strategy supports the delivery of Local Plan policy by promoting a pedestrian dominant link between Station Road and the north eastern part of the SPD area and the new Asda.

5.14 Improvements should achieve the following:

- New buildings and townscape improvements to create better urban enclosure and provide active frontages onto the street. These must allow space for generous pedestrian footways.
- Retain vehicular access to the new Asda store, the bus station and to serve existing facilities such as the Lintonville Medical Group health centre.
- A centrally located wide pedestrian crossing to provide a strong link between the new Asda store and the proposed retail development areas thereby breaking the Lintonville barrier. This should receive a shared surface treatment to highlight the crossing point and inform drivers of the change in character/use southwards.
- A downgraded Lintonville Terrace to create a pedestrianised area with time limited service and delivery access. This can only be achieved by diverting/reducing existing traffic, which is planned to be achieved by constructing Reiverdale Road as a through route.
- A shared surface treatment for the junction at Grand Corner between Lintonville Terrace, Station Road and Woodhorn Road to significantly improve pedestrian movement at this key junction. Wider highways

proposals will help reduce pressure on this junction, but it will remain as a key vehicular route through the town.

- A cohesive public realm treatment for the full extent of Lintonville Road and Lintonville Terrace which delivers a quality pedestrian environment throughout for both segregated and pedestrianised sections of the street. In addition proposals should help improve private boundaries to tie together the streetscape.

### Improving access and movement

- 5.15 A number of key infrastructure and access projects are required to deliver the Strategy:

#### **A fully connected through route along Reiverdale Road:**

- Divert through traffic away from Lintonville Road/Terrace.
- Create suitable customer, visitor and service access point to serve the new retail site.
- Provide increased activity along Reiverdale Road and create an attractive landscaped street.

#### **A centrally located and improved bus station:**

- Unlock the existing bus station and depot site for development.
- Significantly reduce traffic pressure on Lintonville Terrace and its terminal junctions.
- Provide an improved high quality bus station, well integrated into the town centre creating an excellent first impression of the town.

#### **Quality gateways and thresholds:**

- Improve the A197 (Rotary Parkway) through bold landscape interventions and focusing architectural features on key corners.
- Following the successful recent improvements to pedestrian/cycle/vehicle thresholds along the south side of Woodhorn Road this approach should be continued to improve existing and new routes into the north eastern part of the SPD area.
- In the short term the new vehicular link between Reiverdale Road and the town centre car park will require an attractive landscape treatment. In the long term new development should front onto this creating an active street with the possibility of retail, residential or other town centre uses being introduced.

#### **Town centre wide car parking:**

- A series of strategic town centre wide car parking areas are proposed. These are achieved by combining and consolidating small areas of existing parking and providing additional spaces in a new car park in the north of the site.
- Car parking areas should be attractively landscaped and well lit.

#### **Improved pedestrian network:**

- The development should install a safe, permeable network of pedestrian and cycling routes to break down existing barriers. The network of existing



and proposed streets is complemented by the 'missing pedestrian links' identified in the plan at Figure 5.

- Figure 5 identifies a series of key pedestrian links. This seeks to reinforce existing routes and sets out future desired links to better connect the existing and proposed facilities and services in the SPD area by promoting additional convenient options for walking and cycling to, within and through the SPD area.

FIGURE 5 - PEDESTRIAN LINKS



### 6 Development Principles

- 6.1 Building on the Strategy outlined above, in order to deliver the objectives that have been set for the SPD, this section will identify key principles that will guide the future development of Ashington town centre.
- 6.2 These principles have been developed following a review of the evidence base, the local planning context and the outcome of the programme of consultation and engagement that has taken place. These principles include:
- Land Use;
  - Site Capacity and Density;
  - Access and Movement;
  - Urban Design;
  - Public Realm, Open Space and Landscaping;
  - Safety and Security; and
  - Sustainable Design.
- 6.3 Applied together with the Strategy outlined above these principles will facilitate the creation of sustainable, retail-led regeneration of this part of Ashington town centre.

#### Land Use

- 6.4 Comprehensive redevelopment of the north eastern part of Ashington town centre must complement and be well integrated with the existing retail core on Station Road. The Council consider a mixed use environment as key to creating a vibrant town centre, which will spread activity throughout the day and evening to help increase the vitality and viability of Ashington town centre. Principal uses appropriate within the SPD area will include:
- Retail
  - Leisure
  - Residential
  - Education
  - Other appropriate 'Town Centre' uses (primarily employment uses)
  - Bus Station
  - Vehicle/Cycle Parking

SPD Area	Proposed Land Use
<b>Key Development Areas</b>	
Block A (Lintonville Road Frontage)	Retail / Leisure
Block B (Large Floorplate Retail)	Retail / Leisure
Block C (Bus Station)	Retail / Leisure
<b>Future Development Areas</b>	
Area 1 (Retail Park off Rotary Park Way)	Retail / Leisure
Area 2 (Land to the north of Viewlands)	Town Centre Uses
Area 3 (Existing Retail/Leisure off Woodhorn Road)	Retail / Leisure
Area 4 (Land adjacent to the Health Centre)	Retail / Leisure
Area 5 (Wansbeck Square)	Town Centre Uses

### Retail

- 6.5 Local Plan Policy RTC10 (b) identifies land to the east of Lintonville Road as a Town Centre Opportunity Site which has potential to accommodate new retail development. Development on this site should seek to enhance and regenerate the town centre and must be undertaken in a comprehensive manner.
- 6.6 Not only is there a quantitative need for more retail floorspace, but there is also a qualitative need to improve the range of comparison retail shops. Retail floor space is therefore proposed to form a significant element of future development in the SPD area. Development will need to comply with recently published national planning policy guidance given in PPS4 and will have regard to the guidance provided in the Northumberland Retail Study which suggests the combined capacity for convenience and comparison goods floorspace available in Ashington (based on existing market share) is:
- 4,210– 4,710 sq m (gross) by 2014
  - 9,515 – 10,550 sq m (gross) by 2019
  - 15,530 – 17,120 sq m (gross) by 2024
- 6.7 Using reasonable assumptions regarding opportunities to increase the amount of expenditure retained in the town in the future, the interim report on retail capacity for Ashington suggests that additional floorspace could be supported in the following range:
- 12,095 – 15,180 sq m (gross) by 2014
  - 22,590 – 26,300 sq m (gross) by 2019
  - 25,700 – 30,055 sq m (gross) by 2024
- 6.8 The scale, distribution, format and layout of the increased retail floorspace identified in the SPD and supported by the evidence presented in the emerging Northumberland Retail Study will better serve the existing population and meet the shopping needs of future residents of Ashington and its catchment.

### **Community and Leisure Facilities**

- 6.9 Northumberland County Council is keen to see an increased quantity and quality of community and leisure facilities within the town centre. These should be located in spaces that are accessible and visible in order to attract visitors and contribute to the offer of the town centre.
- 6.10 Land within the SPD area could accommodate community and social facilities where a need is identified and opportunities exist to deliver these facilities. Where possible and appropriate facilities for young people should be integrated into the new development.
- 6.11 In order to encourage greater use of the town centre during the day and into the evening the SPD would allow the development of a range of cafes and restaurants subject to normal environmental and amenity considerations. In addition accommodation for leisure uses will be encouraged, particularly where this can be promoted as part of a mixed-use comprehensive development scheme.

### **Residential**

- 6.12 The town centre offers a valuable opportunity to increase the amount of town centre housing. This would bring an increased presence to the area during evenings and support associated uses such as restaurants, cafes and leisure facilities. This may also present greater opportunities for natural surveillance which will help to improve public safety.
- 6.13 Policy H3 of the Local Plan allows windfall housing on town centre sites such as the SPD area where previously developed land becomes available for new uses.
- 6.14 The Wansbeck Local Plan envisaged that approximately 456 new dwellings can be provided across the former district area on such windfall sites during the plan period. These windfall sites were described as *“sites too small to include in the Plan and other sites, not known about at the present time and possibly in use, which become available for development during the plan period”*. Subject to appropriate design and amenity considerations for future occupiers, new housing would be an acceptable land use in the SPD area.

### **Bus Station**

- 6.15 The Council and the development partners will seek to accommodate the needs of passengers and public transport operators to deliver a new and improved bus station. This will involve the removal of the bus depot which is not considered to be an appropriate town centre use.
- 6.16 The provision of a new bus station will provide a better arrival point into the town centre. The bus station is likely to include up to 10 bus stands, a ticket office with ancillary uses (e.g. toilets, offices, etc) and some ancillary retail.

### Vehicle / Cycle Parking

- 6.17 Future development must balance the need for safe and secure car parking to attract people into Ashington against the need to avoid the over dominance of the car. The SPD Plan seeks to consolidate and rationalise the car parking within the north east area of Ashington town centre. All car parking should meet current best practice and approved standards in terms of design, quality, landscaping, passive safety, and lighting.
- 6.18 The amount of vehicle parking should be in accordance with current standards as set out in the Local Plan or any successor policy document. The current Local Plan standards for town centre uses are:

Parking Standards	
Key Development Areas	
Shops (up to 1000 sq m)	1 space per 30 sq m gross
Supermarkets (over 1000 sq m)	8 spaces per 100 sq m gross
Non-food retail (over 1000 sq m)	4 spaces per 100 sq m gross
Restaurant	1 space per 10 sq m
Bar	1 space per 5 sq m
Leisure facilities	1 space per 20 sq m

- 6.19 The amount of cycle parking should be in accordance with current adopted standards as set out in the Local Plan or any successor policy document. The current Local Plan standards for town centre uses are:

Cycle Parking Standards	
Key Development Areas	
Shops (up to 1000 sq m)	1 space per 200 sq m gross
Supermarkets (over 1000 sq m)	1 space per 200 sq m gross
Non-food retail (over 1000 sq m)	1 space per 200 sq m gross
Restaurant	1 space per 50 sq m
Bar	1 space per 50 sq m
Leisure facilities	1 space per 100 sq m (min 4 spaces)

- 6.20 Provision should be made for disabled people in accordance with parking standards in the Local Plan and to meet current best practice.

### Site Capacity and Density

- 6.21 The SPD area will be promoted to accommodate larger retail formats to complement the current retail offer in the town centre which is dominated by the smaller units that are in the traditional terrace style along Station Road and elsewhere in the town centre. The SPD Plan indicates that the site could accommodate the following indicative quantities of development.



SPD Capacity	Indicative Development Areas (Gross)
<b>Key Development Area</b>	
Block A (Lintonville Road Frontage)	2, 530 sq m
Block B (Large Floorplate Retail)	6, 290 sq m
Block C (Bus Station)	580 sq m
<b>Future Development Area</b>	
Area 1 (Retail Park off Rotary Park Way)	8, 980 sq m
Area 2 (Land to the north of Viewlands)	2, 390 sq m
Area 3 (Existing Retail/Leisure off Woodhorn Road)	1, 740 sq m
Area 4 (Land adjacent to the Health Centre)	875 sq m
Area 5 (Wansbeck Square)	2,250 sq m
<b>Bus Station</b>	<b>2, 190 sq m</b>
<b>Car Parking</b>	<b>18, 100 sq m (approx 723 spaces)</b>
Car Parking Area 1	11, 420 sq m (approx 456 spaces)
Car Parking Area 2	6, 680 sq m (approx 267 spaces)

- 6.22 In order to achieve this density and general distribution of development it is proposed in the SPD that there is a rationalisation of the current car parking provision to provide an obvious arrival point to Ashington town centre. With continuing encouragement for changes in travel behaviour over time leading to less reliance on the private car and greater use of public transport, opportunities may arise to extend the proposed units into these areas of car parking as a future phase of development subject to market demands.

### Access and Movement

- 6.23 The Council will require careful consideration of the accessibility of the town centre for both residents and visitors by different means of transport including: walking; cycling; public transport; and private car. Proposals should enable safe and efficient movement in order to overcome the current disjointed nature of routes within the SPD area.
- 6.24 High quality pedestrian routes need to be created to connect the town centre with the surrounding residential areas.
- 6.25 The construction of the Reiverdale Road link is a key element of the Strategy and will provide the ability to pedestrianise Lintonville Terrace. This meets objectives established in the Local Plan which encourage a reduction in traffic volume along Lintonville Road and the removal of conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles along that route. The SPD promotes the pedestrianisation of Lintonville Terrace which is anticipated will help to establish

stronger links between the north eastern part of the town centre and Station Road through the creation of a high quality pedestrian environment.

- 6.26 The enhancement of Station Road to form part of the pedestrian and cycle network provision is a key priority.
- 6.27 Developers should work with Northumberland County Council and the public transport operators to enhance the public transport network. This should include improved bus services and connections.
- 6.28 The existing Grand Corner junction currently forms a barrier to the integration of the existing retail area of Station Road with the SPD area. Proposals to be delivered as part of the comprehensive development of the area will need to demonstrate an effective pedestrianised link between the two areas. This may involve some changes to bus routes and access arrangements which would require further consideration.

### Urban Design and Architecture

- 6.29 Any proposals must provide, through a combination of good urban design and architecture, together with public realm and landscaping improvements, a form of development which is distinctive. Proposals should include:
  - Buildings positioned to overlook the key routes and spaces;
  - Buildings aligned to accommodate views in and out of the new development to surrounding streets and spaces;
  - Development that takes topography of the site into account; and
  - A building scale which closely relates to the public realm.
- 6.30 It is critical that any development proposal for large floorplate retail is appropriate within a town centre setting and is sensitively designed in terms of its mass, scale and frontages. Buildings should improve the existing townscape and demonstrate high quality design and use of materials. Enhanced features and architectural detail should be focused at gateways and along key frontages to achieve greatest impact and maximise the benefit arising from limited resources. Care will be required in achieving design solutions for the transition from smaller scale to larger scale units and to reduce the impact of potential building mass.
- 6.31 Whilst it is important to maintain scale and character, architectural diversity will be encouraged. Most towns in Northumberland have a significant legacy of historic and sometimes architecturally important buildings. However, Ashington has much less to constrain the design of new buildings. Opportunities for innovation and boldness are therefore greater, making it easier for the town centre to accommodate contemporary design and place making solutions.
- 6.32 Design quality is essential to creating an attractive built environment with lasting effect. Good urban design and place making principles as set out in the Wansbeck Design Guide and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) guidance - By Design: Urban Design in the Planning

System (2000). This underlines the need for better urban design by providing sound, practical advice to help implement the Government's commitment to good design. This should be followed to achieve a high standard and variety of urban design and architecture, and assist in promoting a healthy lifestyle.

- 6.33 Future development should be comprehensive and address its surroundings in a positive manner, responding to the scale and character of existing development. The amount of active frontage onto the street should be maximised. This will help create a safe and secure environment in line with the national guidance described in PPS1.
- 6.34 The buildings should be designed to be flexible in terms of the space created so that they may be adapted to meet changing land use requirements over time.

### **Public Realm, Open Space and Landscaping**

- 6.35 The Council will require landscaping that defines the spaces between and around buildings and boundaries. Planting will be particularly important in softening and enhancing the streetscape, encouraging biodiversity, and providing shade. The green character of the A197 along the northern boundary should be reflected in future proposals. Proposals should also give consideration to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.
- 6.36 Public open spaces such as Station Road should be free of street clutter, with the correct level of signage which is in-keeping with the local character. Street furniture should draw on contemporary designs and finishes whilst maintaining ease of access. Consideration should also be given to covered pedestrian areas in order to provide protection from the elements.

### **Safety and Security**

- 6.37 The Council will require safety and security to be considered at the early stage of scheme design. The layout of the scheme has an important role in reducing opportunities for crime and to reduce the fear of crime. A mixed-use development will spread activities throughout the day and evening and ensure natural surveillance. In addition an active public realm will increase 'eyes on the street'.
- 6.38 Lighting schemes must be well considered to enhance public safety, in particular in the car parking areas. The Council will encourage measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and at the same time create surroundings that reduce the fear of crime and the potential for antisocial behaviour, through the provision of a well designed, mixed-use environment where people of all ages can mix and take part in community life, the perception of cohesion and safety will increase.
- 6.39 Any development proposals should have regard to the Wansbeck Design Guide and comply with Secured by Design principles.

- 6.40 Servicing areas must be well integrated into the urban form and be designed with recognition of safety and security, particularly for pedestrians. Servicing should take place off-road and preferably within the curtilage of new buildings.
- 6.41 Consideration will need to be given to safe and efficient access for service and waste vehicles. A Delivery and Service Management Plan will be required to accompany development proposals which will show how the impact of service vehicles will be minimised.

### Sustainable Design

- 6.42 New development proposals must be developed having regard to Local Plan Policy GP34 which requires resource conservation and the integration of renewable energy into major development schemes. It will be necessary to demonstrate how resources would be used in an accountable and responsible manner. Sustainable design techniques should be employed to maximise efficiency in the use of energy, water and building materials.
- 6.43 New developments should be designed to take account of climate changes expected over the life of the development. Developments should provide comfortable internal and external environments with least use of energy, include drainage systems with the capacity to cope with intense rainfall events, and take account of emerging best practice in this field.
- 6.44 Any new development should have the following key sustainability objectives:
- Maximising solar gain;
  - Flexibility of building design to take account of changing needs;
  - Minimising water consumption (e.g. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), permeable surfaces or green and brown roofs); and
  - Maximising use of reclaimed construction materials and recycling of construction waste.
- 6.45 Proposals for renewable energy will be encouraged, provided they do not have a significant adverse impact on the local and wider environment. In particular, Ashington town centre presents the opportunity for community heating infrastructure with the establishment of a local network or grid. These opportunities should be explored during the design stages of an integrated and comprehensive redevelopment scheme for the SPD area.

# 7 Delivery and Implementation

## Overview

- 7.1 The Council is determined to bring about the regeneration of Ashington town centre in accordance with the objectives and strategy set out in this SPD. The Council will therefore work closely with all interested parties, acting as local authority, landowner and champion of the regeneration of south east Northumberland. It will use its influence and resources to deliver an attractive, well designed, expanded town centre that will meet the needs of the town and the wider area in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.
- 7.2 This SPD provides a framework for investment in, and for the regeneration of, the town centre. It provides guidance on what is required to deliver the Council's preferred strategy for the redevelopment of the north eastern part of Ashington town centre. This section deals with the delivery and implementation of the preferred strategy in order to achieve the objectives.
- 7.3 Delivering the proposals outlined in this SPD is a long-term process. The development process can take a number of years from inception to completion. The successful implementation and delivery of the SPD requires a change in the role and perception of Ashington town centre itself and it will be necessary to move towards sustained investor confidence and stimulation of the market through:
- active commitment to the implementation of the SPD by all stakeholders;
  - effective strategies to promote Ashington town centre to potential investors, developers and occupiers; and
  - partnership working between the key stakeholders (the Council, other public sector bodies, landowners, investors and developers).
- 7.4 The development will take place over several years, during which time economic and market conditions are likely to change significantly. This needs to be taken into account when considering the design and development issues addressed here.

## Land Assembly

- 7.5 The development will be undertaken by the private sector, but the Council will be pro-active in assisting to realise the vision in this SPD as quickly as practicable without compromising its objectives. This will, if necessary, involve the Council using its compulsory purchase powers to secure control of the land needed. If it does prove necessary for the Council to use these powers to purchase land or premises, the Council will, where appropriate, assist with the relocation of those businesses to suitable land or premises elsewhere in the Ashington area.

## Phasing

- 7.6 It is expected that the comprehensive development of the SPD area will need to be phased. Planning applications seeking permission to implement

development in accordance with principles set out in the SPD must include details of proposed phasing. The Council is keen for the development to take place as soon as possible, but the pace at which it does proceed will depend upon the resolution of land ownership issues and market conditions.

- 7.7 The state of the economy generally, and the retailing sector in particular, have recently been so dynamic and uncertain as to make it difficult to establish a timeline with confidence. The Council will monitor the development in relation to changing market conditions.
- 7.8 The table below sets out the indicative phasing of proposals set out in this SPD. A number of projects are contingent on others being brought forward first. It is important to emphasise that the Council's role in this process will primarily be as an enabler, bringing together the key stakeholders (including landowners and potential developers) and facilitating discussion between all the parties.
- 7.9 In terms of timescales, the definition of terms that have been used in the table are as follows:
- Short term: 0 - 5 years
  - Medium term: 5 - 10 years
  - Long term: 10+ years

SPD Area	Phase
<b>Key Development Areas</b>	
Block A (Lintonville Road Frontage)	Short
Block B (Large Floorplate Retail)	Short
Block C (Bus Station)	Short
<b>Future Development Areas</b>	
Area 1 (Retail Park off Rotary Park Way)	Medium
Area 2 (Land to the north of Viewlands)	Medium
Area 3 (Existing Retail/Leisure off Woodhorn Road)	Long
Area 4 (Land adjacent to the Health Centre)	Medium
Area 5 (Wansbeck Square)	Long

### Infrastructure

- 7.10 The Council will need to be satisfied that all necessary infrastructure will be in place when needed at each phase of the development. The Council and developers will need to liaise with the providers of sewers, drainage, water and energy supplies and other forms of physical infrastructure. Each element of the development will be expected to provide the infrastructure needed.

### Future Planning Applications

- 7.11 Planning applications will need to show how the development proposed would make an effective and positive contribution to meeting the Council's objectives for the town. All applicants must show that, although they might be



implemented in phases, their proposals accord with the guidance in this SPD and that they will comprise comprehensive proposals for the achievement of the town centre objectives, or would not frustrate their achievement.

- 7.12 Proposals for comprehensive schemes should include an indication of phasing, and this is likely to be controlled by a condition attached to any planning permission.
- 7.13 The Council is aiming to achieve a successful, vibrant, attractive and sustainable town centre for Ashington and is therefore seeking an appropriate mixture of uses and activities in accordance with this SPD. If specific proposals do not match the Council's aspirations, the applicant must make the case for them by reference to as much relevant supporting evidence as possible. The presumption will be that proposals that do not conform with adopted planning policy will be refused. The SPD will be a material consideration in reaching a decision on planning applications in the area covered by the document.
- 7.14 Having regard to the above principles, good practice generally, and the Council's planning application validation checklist, all planning applications must be supported by the following:
- A statement showing how the proposals comply with this SPD;
  - A phasing scheme;
  - A Design and Access Statement;
  - A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan; and
  - Heads of terms for any planning obligation required under Section 106.
- 7.15 Applications for large scale proposals might need to be supported by an environmental statement in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations [1999]. Further advice can be provided prior to the submission of any planning application in the form of a screening opinion.

### Planning Obligations

- 7.16 The Council will negotiate with developers on any planning obligations associated with development in Ashington town centre which may be required to make development acceptable in planning terms in accordance with planning policy and national guidance. It is anticipated that each development should support its own site-specific infrastructure costs. Current requirements are set out in Policy CF7 of the Local Plan.
- 7.17 However, the Council acknowledges that any planning obligations will need to be informed by detailed financial viability testing based on the development of more detailed designs and applications for specific sites and their associated costs and values.
- 7.18 In order to ensure that any undesirable impacts are mitigated satisfactorily, and where such issues cannot be addressed through the use of planning conditions attached to a planning permission, each applicant will need to enter into a

planning obligation specifying the measures required and their timing. Town centre specific measures may include (but are not limited to):

- Delivery of an agreed plan for the relocation of existing service trades and other businesses;
- Transport contributions;
- Public art;
- Affordable housing;
- Local training initiatives; and
- Management and maintenance of the public realm.

7.19 Other agreements relating specifically to highway matters may be required prior to commencement of individual developments.

### **Ongoing Monitoring**

7.20 The Council will monitor how this Supplementary Planning Document is being implemented through the regulation of planning applications and will publish the results of this in the Annual Monitoring Report.

## Appendix 1 Full Report Reference List

The evidence base supporting the SPD comprises a number of studies and documents.

The core documents informing this SPD are:

- **Ashington Town Centre SPD Baseline Report**,  
Arup (September 2009) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Ashington Town Centre SPD Site Consideration and Options Report**,  
Arup (September 2009) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Ashington Town Centre SPD Options Report**,  
Arup (September 2009) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Ashington Town Centre Draft SPD**  
Arup (November 2009) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report**,  
Arup (November 2009) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Consultation Statement**,  
Arup in conjunction with Northumberland County Council (January 2010);  
and
- **Habitats Regulations Assessment**,  
Northumberland County Council (January 2010).

A number of reports were utilised to form the evidence base. They are set out below:

- **Public Realm Study for Station Road, Lintonville Terrace and John Street**,  
Ian White Associates (ongoing) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Northumberland Retail Centres Study**,  
White Young Green (ongoing) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Ashington Town Centre Development Framework**,  
Tribal (2009) commissioned by SENNTRi, Wansbeck District Council and One NorthEast;
- **Ground Conditions / Utility Infrastructure Report**,  
Faber Maunsell (2009) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **Ashington Town Centre – VISSIM Model**,  
Faber Maunsell (2008) commissioned by Northumberland County Council;
- **South East Northumberland New Growth Point – Programme of Development and Technical Appendices**,  
Northumberland County Council (2008); and
- **Town Centre Appraisal – Advice on the Future Development of Key Sites and Attraction of Business Investment and New Enterprise**,  
GVA Grimley (2006) commissioned by Northumberland County Council.

## Appendix 2 Relevant Local Plan Policies

### General Policies and Environment

#### Policy GP 1

##### *Part A*

Provided that the proposals are in accordance with other policies of the Plan, development on previously-developed sites and buildings within settlement limits, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be permitted.

##### *Part B*

Development on greenfield sites within settlement limits will only be permitted if:

- a) the site is allocated for development; or
- b) it can be demonstrated that the development will meet an identified and justified need and no suitable alternative previously-developed site is available

##### *Part C*

Development in the countryside on sites beyond settlement limits will only be permitted if:

- a) the nature of the use requires a countryside location; or
- b) the development involves the re-use of an existing building; or
- c) the development involves an extension to a property within an existing curtilage
- d) in the case of greenfield development, it can be demonstrated that no suitable alternative previously-developed site is available

##### *Part D*

The re-use of an existing building on a site beyond a settlement limit will only be permitted if:

- a) the building is of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without significant reconstruction or extension; and
- b) the development can be achieved without detriment to the character of the area and, if the building is of historic or architectural interest and contributes to local character, the development can be achieved without harm to the architectural or historic integrity of the building; and
- c) in the case of residential development, it can be demonstrated that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable business or community re-use.

### Accessibility

#### Policy GP4

New development should be located to reduce the need to travel and to minimise journey length. It should be accessible to all users by a choice of means of transport including buses, walking and cycling.

### Biodiversity and wildlife networks

#### Policy GP13

The value to biodiversity of all sites proposed for development will be considered when planning applications are determined whether or not they are

designated sites. Particular importance will be attached to the protection of priority habitats and species in Wansbeck.

Where proposals affect a habitat which contributes, or could potentially contribute, to a network of natural habitats the developer will be required to protect and enhance the network.

### **Listed Buildings**

#### **Policy GP14**

Consent to demolish a Listed Building will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances if there is clear and convincing evidence that:

- a) all reasonable efforts have been made, without success, to find a use for the building and preservation in some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible; and
- b) the fabric of the building is beyond reasonable economic repair; and
- c) there would be substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from the demolition.

Consent to partially demolish a Listed Building will only be permitted if the proposal does not materially and adversely affect the special character of the building.

#### **Policy GP15**

Consent to alter, extend or change the use of a listed building will not be permitted unless:

- a) sufficient information has been presented to enable the full and proper consideration of the effects of the proposals; and
- b) the proposals will not harm the special architectural or historic interest of the building, its character or appearance.

### **Flood risk and erosion**

#### **Policy GP22**

Developers are required to consider the risk to their development from flooding and erosion and to consider any possible effect of their development on flood risk or erosion elsewhere. Development in areas of flood risk will not be permitted unless a flood risk assessment has been carried out and it can be demonstrated that:

- a) there is no reasonable alternative development option available which would involve no risk or a lower risk of flooding.

#### **Policy GP25**

When determining planning applications, the authority will consider the levels and characteristics of any noise which may be generated as a result of permitting the development. The likely impact will be assessed in terms of the following:

- a) any disturbance to people living in the area; and
- b) any disturbance to other noise-sensitive uses such as hospitals, schools, colleges, offices and community buildings; and
- c) any effect on people's enjoyment of the outdoor environment including gardens, parks, the coast and the countryside; and



- d) any disturbance to wildlife or livestock
- e) whether any potential conflict can be resolved by the use of planning conditions or obligations.

### **Policy GP26**

When determining planning applications for development which could be exposed to an existing or potential source of noise, the authority will consider the following:

- a) the level and characteristics of the noise from existing activity; and
- b) whether the proposed use is particularly sensitive to noise.

If after considering the above factors the authority concludes that the proposed development would not be compatible with the existing activity, the proposals will not be permitted.

### **Land contamination**

#### **Policy GP29**

Where there is reason to suspect that land is affected by contamination, applicants for planning permission will be required to submit a report of a desk study of previous uses of the site and their potential for contamination. Unless the study clearly demonstrates that the risk to the proposed uses from contamination is acceptable, further more detailed investigations will be required before the application is determined to assess the risks and identify and appraise the options for remediation.

Development will only be permitted if sustainable and feasible remediation solutions are adopted to secure the removal of unacceptable risk and make the site suitable for its new use.

Contaminated materials should be decontaminated and re-used on site if this can be achieved economically and without unacceptable adverse impacts upon the environment or the health and safety of the community.

### **Urban design**

#### **Policy GP31**

When considering any proposed development the authority will require high standards of urban design to:

- a) promote character in townscape and landscape and establish local identity; and
- b) clearly define public and private spaces; and
- c) encourage accessibility; and
- d) make places with a clear image that is easy to understand, by providing recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks; and
- e) encourage adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions; and
- f) promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.

### **Landscaping and the Public Realm**

#### **Policy GP32**

Developers are required to incorporate a high standard of landscape treatment in their developments. When submitting their planning applications, developers will be required to demonstrate that:

- a) any existing landscape features of value including trees, shrubs, hedgerows and ponds, will be retained, protected and used to advantage as part of the development; and
- b) new landscape features will be introduced which enhance the visual quality of the development, reduce its impact and provide habitat for the district's wildlife; and
- c) new landscape features to be introduced will be appropriate to the use and character of the development and its location; and
- d) opportunities to create new public spaces and improve existing ones have been considered; and
- e) arrangements will be made for the future management and maintenance of all landscaped areas, whether public or private.

### **Resource Conservation and Integrated Renewable Energy**

#### **Policy GP34**

##### **Part A**

Developers are required to demonstrate that their developments have been designed to conserve energy and water resources.

##### **Part B**

For all major developments, including residential development comprising 10 or more units, and non-residential development exceeding 1000m<sup>2</sup> gross floorspace, the Council will require 10% of predicted energy requirements to be provided, on site, from renewable sources.

### **Crime Prevention**

#### **Policy GP35**

Development proposals will be expected to have regard to the objectives of 'planning out crime' through the incorporation of measures such as:

- promotion of mixed use development and other schemes that increase the range of activities that maximize the opportunities for surveillance;
- maximising the amount of defensible space which is controlled, or perceived to be controlled, by occupiers;
- a high standard of street lighting.

### **Comprehensive development**

#### **Policy GP36**

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would prejudice the future comprehensive development of other land which is either allocated for development in the plan or which has reasonable prospects in terms of plan policies of coming forward for development.

### Housing

#### Windfall housing sites

##### Policy H3

The construction of new housing on sites not allocated for development in this plan will be permitted provided that:

- a) the site has been previously developed or the development involves the re-use or conversion of an existing building; and
- b) to grant permission will not lead to an over-supply of housing; and
- c) development will not exacerbate problems of, or lead to, problems of low demand; and
- d) the site is within a defined settlement limit; and
- e) the site is well located in relation to local facilities and to public transport; and
- f) residents would enjoy a satisfactory living environment.

### Retailing and Town Centres

#### Town centre uses

##### Policy RTC1

Proposals for major new retail, leisure, entertainment, indoor sports, offices, arts, culture and tourism development will be permitted in the District's town centres provided that the development is appropriate in scale to the role of the town and its catchment.

Proposals for such development outside town centres will only be permitted if the site is within a settlement limit and it can be demonstrated that:

- a) there is a need for the development; and
- b) it is appropriate in scale to the size and role of the settlement and its catchment; and
- c) it will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of an existing town centre; and
- d) there are no suitable alternative sites available within a town centre; and
- e) in the case of an out of centre site, there are no suitable alternative sites available on the edge of a town centre; and
- f) the development will be well served by public transport and can be accessed easily on foot and by cycle.

Proposals for small scale facilities to provide for the needs of a local neighbourhood will be permitted if they are well located in relation to the community they will serve.

#### Primary shopping area

##### Policy RTC5

Within the primary shopping area of Ashington, as shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will be granted for the change of use from shops (Use Class A1) to other uses provided that the development is not judged likely to adversely affect the character or attractiveness of the town centre. In making a judgement, the following factors will be taken into account:

- a) the effect of the proposal on the balance of retail and non retail frontage in the area; and
- b) the number of visitors likely to be attracted to the proposed business; and

- c) the appearance of the development; and
- d) general trends in the pattern of shopping in the town at the time.

### **Town Centre development opportunities**

#### **Policy RTC10**

Within the District's town centres, the following Town Centre Opportunity Sites are designated and shown on the Proposals Map:

RTC10(a) Portland Park, Ashington

RTC10(b) Lintonville Road, Ashington

Development of the designated opportunity sites will be permitted if the following requirements are met:

- a) the character and attractiveness of the town centre will be enhanced by the development; and
- b) development will take place in a comprehensive rather than piecemeal manner; and
- c) the development is designed to integrate well with the rest of the town centre.

## **Transport**

### **Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Rail Line**

#### **Policy T1**

The re-introduction of passenger services on the rail line between Newcastle and Ashington will be supported and promoted. Land which may be required for associated facilities such as stations, bus stops and car parks will be safeguarded. Such sites will include Woodhorn Colliery; Ashington Town Centre; North Seaton Road, Ashington; and Bedlington Station.

### **Road schemes**

#### **Policy T9**

Road schemes which ameliorate serious environmental and/or safety problems or which contribute towards economic regeneration will be promoted and supported.

Development which would prejudice implementation of the following road schemes, as illustrated on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted:

T9(a) upgrading of Reiverdale Road, Ashington to create a new link road between the A197 Rotary Parkway in Ashington and Woodhorn Road.

## **Community Facilities and Infrastructure**

### **Planning Conditions and obligations**

#### **Policy CF7**

Where necessary to the grant of planning permission and in order to meet a planning need arising from a proposed development, the authority will apply planning conditions or seek to enter into a planning obligation with the developer. Circumstances where planning obligations to be negotiated will include where additional social, physical or environmental infrastructure is required to be provided in order for the development to go ahead.



**Planning Strategy**

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