

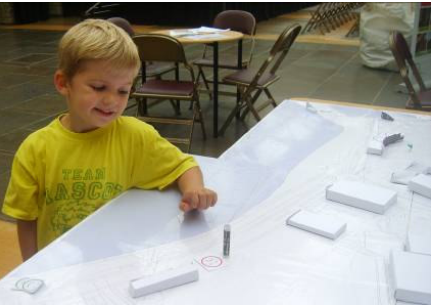
Morecambe Area Action Plan

Lancaster District Local Plan

Advanced First Draft Plan (Preferred Option) June 2012

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside



Morecambe
Area Action Plan



**Morecambe Area Action Plan
Advanced First Draft Plan (Preferred Option) June 2012**

This advanced draft is a text based version made available for consideration by Lancaster City Council's Cabinet and Council in June / July 2012.

Subject to Council's decision, a Full Consultation Version will be prepared for August 2012.

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V0.01/Regeneration and Planning Service/June 2012

SUMMARY

The Lancaster District Core Strategy 2008 prepared by Lancaster City Council identifies central Morecambe as the main regeneration priority area within the district – a Regeneration Priority Area of sub regional importance. Consequently, the city council resolved to prepare an area action plan for central Morecambe in late 2008. Officers have led community engagement and consultation work since early 2010 to identify concerns, issues and outline options.

This is a plan about shaping the future of Morecambe as whole. The geographic focus of the plan is central Morecambe, as it is this area that largely defines the town as a place in people's perceptions. Critically, it is this central area that is massively underperforming in economic terms and this impacts badly on its wider social function and its attraction to potential investors and visitors. The fundamental issue is one of under investment and lack of demand. There are no easy solutions but with the right decisions central Morecambe and therefore the wider town can move forward.

The collapse of the town's role as a traditional English seaside resort is well known. This left the town with a central area that in many ways is not fit for purpose. The city council has done much to transform the seafront and promenade and more needs to be done here but little has been done to rework what is landward. Here much of the environment is of poor quality and the town centre or rather what passes for this is fragmented and weak with a limited offer of very uneven quality. The consequence is that away from the seafront the experience fails to meet the expectations of many residents or visitors.

The problems are many. Some are deep seated and structural concerning the way central Morecambe functions as a place. If these can be put right though there is real hope. Central Morecambe has the makings of a huge competitive advantage simply unavailable to very many other towns. This is because its town centre is contiguous with a seafront that in many aspects is unrivalled. This seafront attracts huge numbers of day visitors at very many times all year round – from the wider district, county and beyond. Harnessing these much better as customers for the town centre, coupled with more support by local people for their town centre, can make for a positive investment cycle within central Morecambe. This will drive business growth and job growth and grow what the town offers to all including visitors – all to the benefit of the town and its people.

There is much to do to reap this advantage. Regenerating central Morecambe will take concerted actions by the local councils, organisations with a stake in the town, local businesses and local people. This does mean renewed effort on the part of many who have worked hard in the past and have experienced some false dawns and disappointments. It will be hard and it will take some time. But there is no easier way, no magic wand.

The plan must be about getting the conditions for investment right. Most importantly this means tackling the structural problems. Actions should primarily be about facilitating the private sector, especially in this era of restrained public finances. To do this though there are many interventions that the public sector will need to make and that are critical to regeneration. So there must be a key role for the local councils, particularly the city council but also Lancashire County Council and Morecambe Town Council.

Key elements of the plan are to -

- Protect and enhance the main seafront and promenade and make more for people to enjoy.
- Restructure landward with new development fitting to a key network that makes it easy for pedestrians to find their way around the town
- Integrate the seafront with the town much better with improved connections for pedestrians between the seafront and the town.
- These and other actions, including a range of changes to transportation and parking, to direct footfall into the town centre and create much more of a “buzz”, encouraging people to “stay longer and spend more”.
- Further incentivise business investment through supply side measures including exempting from certain planning requirements and relaxing certain controls.
- Make and direct opportunities for the investment and development needed to grow what the town has to offer to residents and visitors alike.
- Support initiatives within the community and by local businesses to enhance and add to this offer.
- Actively market the town to investors and visitors in new and imaginative ways that look to the future

An improving town centre is integral to the visitor offer. A growing economy and investment should bring improvements in the look and feel of the town and what there is to do.

Key specific proposals are to -

- Designate the promenade and wider seafront from the Battery through to the Town Hall - open space predominantly for informal recreation and seek opportunities to enhance this space.
- Identify a number of Development Opportunity sites to direct and shape opportunities for investment within the central part of the town:
 - the seafront headland at the central promenade including the former Bubbles site as a strategic leisure opportunity. Within this area: the key promenade space to be kept open and enhanced; the development opportunity to preclude for main town centre retail uses,

- the Festival Market area for main town centre uses including the complex of buildings with the Platform and Festival Market itself and land to the south and west through to Northumberland Street. Development here to be properly structured and provide appropriate car parking
- the former Frontierland site predominantly for housing with opportunity for an elements of commercial uses fronting to Marine Road West, with development to provide good connectivity for pedestrians with the seafront and through to the West End and into the Central Drive Retail Park
- the Arndale and area for main town centre uses, requiring that any development provide as a minimum for direct replacement of any car parking capacity lost.
- The city and county councils to prepare a joint car parking plan for on and off street car parking, with the location, management and pricing of public car parking to better support activity and trading within central Morecambe
- The city council in partnership with other organisations to prepare and implement new visitor and investor marketing strategies for central Morecambe.
- And much more...

DRAFT

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DRAFT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Morecambe Area Action Plan will be a spatial plan for central Morecambe. The action plan area extends the length of the main promenade from the Battery in the west almost to the Town Hall in the east and landward takes in the main central parts of the town.

Within the Lancaster District central Morecambe is the priority area for regeneration. This is because it is massively underperforming in economic terms and this impacts badly in wider ways including on social functioning and the attraction of the town to visitors. The fundamental issue is one of under investment and lack of demand. There are no easy solutions but with the right decisions central Morecambe can move forward and act as the driver for the wider improvement of Morecambe as a whole.

The core strategy says that central Morecambe will be reinvented as a visitor destination and as a town centre¹ - but it doesn't say how. The area action plan is about "how". It is to support and help facilitate improvement and beneficial change.

The council decided to prepare the plan in the autumn of 2008. In Spring 2010 it consulted on and confirmed the scope of the plan². Since, officers have engaged extensively with people and organisations on what the content might be. Issues the plan should address have been carefully considered and the council has consulted on outline options.

This document presents the first advanced draft Morecambe Area Action Plan "Draft Action Plan".

The Draft Action Plan and its purpose

The Draft Action Plan sets out the council's preferred option for the final plan and henceforth this documents is written as such. It focuses on proposed actions and certain of these are for new development plan policies. These latter are required to support and help facilitate plan implementation. Extensive evidence gathering, community engagement and stakeholder consultation over some two years informs the Draft. It is further informed by aspects of delivery testing that evaluates how viable and feasible certain proposals are and sustainability testing that includes appraisal of the likely economic, social and environmental effects and impacts. A draft Sustainability Report is a companion document to the Draft Plan.

¹ Lancaster District Local Development Framework, Core Strategy (2008) Policy ER 2. Regeneration Priority Areas. Available to view at www.lancaster.gov.uk/ldf - Core Strategy page.

² MAAP Scoping Document, July 2010 – available at www.lancaster.gov.uk/morecambeaap

Comments are invited on any aspect of the Draft Action Plan, the companion Sustainability Report and the supporting topic papers and as appropriate any alternative proposals or options are invited.

This is the final element in consultation before the council decides on what plan to publish and consult upon formally and then submit for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate (see next steps – below).

Invitation to comment and to suggest alternative options

Comments are invited on the content of the Draft Action Plan and the actions proposed and on the sustainability reporting. There may be alternatives to the approach and any actions proposed and these are invited. Any alternative proposal(s) will preferably be supported by information and where possible evidencing that the proposal will prove beneficial and is reasonably deliverable.

Documents for consultation

The following supporting documents are available as part of this consultation –

- Outcome of the last “Outline Options” consultation
- Further draft Sustainability Report
- Draft topic papers as available at this stage

The different documents should enable people to access information at different levels. To gain as full an understanding as possible it will be necessary to read all of these but the different documents make possible a more selective or partial reading.

Draft topic papers and availability at this stage

Work to prepare the plan is continuing and part of this involves preparing a series of topic papers. Work on these is informing plan drafting. The papers consider various topics in much more depth than it is possible to present in any draft plan.

Certain are available now. Further will be available as full drafts at the next plan publication stage. The full listing is -

TOPIC PAPER 1	Vision to Approach (published for consultation June 2010). Available.
TOPIC PAPER 2	Developing Options (published for consultation February 2011). Available.
TOPIC PAPER 3	Outline Options Narrative Report (published for consultation November 2011). Available.
TOPIC PAPER 4	Ease of (pedestrian) movement. Available.
TOPIC PAPER 5	The town centre economy. Available.
TOPIC PAPER 6	Access, transport and parking. Not available.
TOPIC PAPER 7	Draft positioning paper for the visitor economy. Not available.
TOPIC PAPER 8	Sites and Subjects Options Directory – initial draft published for consultation November 2011). Available.

Status of the proposed Morecambe Area Action Plan and relationship to other planning policy documents.

The Morecambe Area Action Plan will be a Development Plan Document (DPD) and as such upon adoption will form part of the new local plan for Lancaster District (“Local Plan”)³. Accordingly the area action plan must fit to the Core Strategy, the lead element of the Local Plan and adopted in 2008.

The Local Plan as adopted will replace for the Lancaster District Local Plan adopted in 2004 (specifically the “Strike-through edition of September 2008 that identifies the policies still in place or extant) and all associated Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Reference the action plan area the SPG replaced for shall include –

SPG 11: Morecambe Town Centre Strategy (adopted September 2004)

SPG 15: Poulton Spatial Strategy (adopted January 2005)

³ Together with the action plan the documents comprising this Local Plan will be: The Lancaster District Core Strategy 2008; Development Management Document; Land Allocations Document; Proposals Map.

SPG 17: Morecambe Central Promenade Development Brief (adopted January 2005)

The focus of the Morecambe Area Action Plan is regeneration. As part of the Local Plan the area action plan will become the starting point for planning decisions concerning central Morecambe and help guide investment decisions.

The Draft Action Plan proposes what land should be allocated for development and identifies the main development opportunities within the plan area. It includes specific policy proposals for these. These proposals are identified on the draft Local Plan Proposals Map. The Land Allocations DPD will not apply to the action plan area.

Further, the Draft Action Plan proposes development management policy for the plan area on aspects where it is considered that in the interests of regeneration some differential is required to policy across the wider district. Accordingly, the Draft Action Plan relates closely to the Development Management DPD that otherwise will set detailed development management planning policy for the district. The policies in the Development Management DPD will apply to the action plan area unless it is stated otherwise in the action plan. Where the Draft Action Plan proposes policy specific to the action plan area it is stated how this is either additional to or replaces for (in whole or part) policies in the Development Management DPD.

Further background

Preliminary work from early 2010 included an informal "capture consultation" to understand current perceptions of the town. Work on the plan started properly in Spring 2010 with a consultation to establish the scope of the plan. The Scoping Document, July 2010, sets the plan scope and objectives and is available at www.lancaster.gov.uk/morecambeaap.

During the remainder of 2010, Council officers deliberately took time to engage with as many people and organisations as possible, to listen and to learn. They collected lots of evidence about problems and opportunities and learnt about the issues that concern people and that the plan must try to address.

These elicited a strong consensus for the aspirations set out in the Core Strategy but a very wide range of sometimes quite divergent views on how these might be achieved.

It is the job of council officers to evaluate all considerations and identify reasonable options and proposals for the content of the plan, informed by suggestions received and wider analysis.

Officers set out first thoughts on key issues in Topic Paper 2: Developing Options (Spring 2011) and this provides some direction for the content of the Draft Plan. Subsequent engagement has further informed this, in particular the “Outline Options” consultation (autumn 2011) that included consideration of the regeneration strategy to take.

The full rounds of engagement undertaken to date are listed in Appendix X.

Next steps

The consultation and responses will inform the council in determining on a final Draft Plan to formally publish as part of the wider Local Plan.

There will then be a period for formal consultation giving opportunity to make representations. Subsequent to this Council should submit the plan for examination by an independent Planning Inspector.

In so doing the Inspector will consider many aspects including the representations made on the content, the extent and nature of consultation and engagement involved in preparing the plan and how sustainable and deliverable it would be.

The examination should conclude in early 2013 and the council should then adopt the Local Plan early in 2014. Once in place the plan will be operative to 2021 in line with the period of the adopted Core Strategy.

2. CONTEXTS

For a town of its size the economy of central Morecambe is very constrained. In general it performs poorly. With only a few exceptions levels of private investment are very low and have been for decades, even during periods of boom. There is very little demand to invest in central Morecambe either from within Morecambe or from outside.

This impacts in very many ways, on: the jobs available within central Morecambe; the incomes and social conditions of many households both within the central parts and areas close by; the look and feel of places; what is on offer and the experiences of people.

This all means that central Morecambe is on the whole failing to meet the expectations of very many people – whether residents, people who work in the town or visitors

Through the engagement and consultations to prepare the plan people and organisations have input much, particularly concerning how the place looks and feels and including about what there is to do. There is sadness and some anger at years of decline. But many people have a strong affinity for the town and hope, ambition and a passion for it into the future.

Many people enjoy living and working in Morecambe and visiting. This is to the good. But most people want the town to get better and it's fairly clear most people want –

- A continuing role for the town as a visitor destination
- A better town centre...what might be described as a more cosmopolitan centre, livelier with more variety and a better offer – particularly retail
- More for residents and visitors to do, especially in wet weather
- A stronger local economy with more and better jobs
- Cleaner, nicer, safer streets and places
- Better opportunities to use and enjoy the natural setting

This squares well with the objectives for the plan that, following consultation, the council set out at the outset.⁴

⁴ MAAP Scoping Document, July 2010 – available at www.lancaster.gov.uk/morecambeaap.

Community aspirations are therefore set high and the plan must respond. There are dangers in this though. The plan cannot be little more than a wish list. This will not take the town forward. Change and improvement must be planned and worked for. To be meaningful the plan must be reasonably deliverable and for this it must be grounded in a proper understanding of the context, of the problems and the opportunities.

Council officers have gone to considerable lengths to gain a sufficient understanding. Much evidence has been assembled and the topic papers describe much of the thinking to date. The next section summarises key aspects.

Overview

Morecambe's seafront is quite splendid with, thanks to public actions over the last twenty years, a much improved central promenade and stone jetty, a restored Midland Hotel and a main beach nourished with sand. These and the wider promenade extending over several miles make for a massive asset and leisure and recreation resource, that in good weather is attractive to often large numbers of local people and day visitors.

Unfortunately, though, back from the seafront things are not so good and levels of activity landward of the seafront reflect the deficiencies in what is on offer. Here levels of investment are in the main chronically low and by and large have been for years. Also, that development change that has occurred over the last twenty years has not always stood the test of time too well.

Under or poor quality investment can eat away at the character and identity of any place. In central Morecambe it shows today in the many tired buildings and streets, underused areas and a very deficient town centre offer. Many parts lack activity at many times and at times some don't feel comfortable to be in.

Conditions just outside of central Morecambe in the West End are in many ways worse. Here problems of economic and social deprivation make for real hardship and stress for many people and support and public services are very stretched in addressing this.

Unfortunately all the problems within central Morecambe and the neighbouring West End for too long have made for negative perceptions in the minds of those people who make business and investment decisions. It lacks a positive identity.

The consequence is that central Morecambe is largely starved of private investment, whether it be in business start ups or invest in existing businesses in the town. Central Morecambe simply is not on the radar of most people who consider and make decisions concerning investments in the commercial and leisure sectors.

In particular the town centre economy is palpably weak. This is to the great detriment of the town as a whole and does not meet the community's ambitions for what the town should offer including to visitors. The quality of streets and spaces, the range and quality of the retail and food and drink offers, all is deficient. Consequently there is much less than there should be to hold and serve people and few good places to spend time in.

Levels of activity landward of the seafront reflect the deficiencies in what is on offer. In 2010 staying visitors accounted for less than 10% of all visitors with 91% day visitors. These latter are rising in number – increasing by 12% since 2005 – but it is evident most confine themselves to the seafront.

Very low levels of private investment, underperformance and lack of demand are the main challenges. There is no ready solution as the problems are systemic and long standing and a function of market conditions.

The mass market for staying visitors has long moved on. The demise of Morecambe as a seaside resort is well documented. In précis, the latter third of the 20th Century saw changed visitor trends following the introduction of package holidays abroad. Decline afflicted most English seaside resorts and for Morecambe closure and dilapidation of visitor facilities and loss of accommodations in response to the fall off in demand. Very many people rightly value the town's seaside past but this itself offers little as a template to the future.

Central Morecambe, what is on offer and how it looks and feels will only improve if it is a place people want to invest in, trade in, live in and visit. In the present era of very constrained public finances and limited expenditures the public sector must facilitate change and improvement but it is the private sector that must be the motor. This means getting the conditions for investment right, creating demand and so changing investor, business and visitor perceptions.

To do this requires that the town meets peoples' expectations now and into the future. For residents and visitors alike this means assuring the qualities that make for an interesting, lively, sought after environment – a mix of uses, activities and good connectivity between these – in a contemporary context.

On one level this requires actions to tackle those aspects of how central Morecambe looks and feels that are manifestly not right, that let the town down and put off investment. Many of these aspects though are themselves largely symptoms of underperformance and underinvestment and tackling them while important is not enough. There is a deep seated structural problem or malaise that demands a level of more fundamental actions to change aspects of how central Morecambe works. This is because central Morecambe is laid out and built to serve

historic patterns of activity that have long since moved on. In consequence central Morecambe does not function well in transportation terms and in particular it does not work well for pedestrians.

The key structural problems, (discussed more fully in Topic Paper 3) are:

- A central area that is very fragmented and quite dysfunctional with something of a void at its heart.
- Disconnect between the seafront and the town
- A historic division between Poulton on which today the town is centred and the West End.
- A disjointed town centre with some quite central places bizarrely quite isolated
- A legacy of buildings not well fit for contemporary purposes
- A lack of public and community functions commonly found in town centres and that should drive activity and give identity⁵

These all serve variously to constrain footfall. The pedestrian Movement Survey 2011 suggests that most people on foot within central Morecambe do not walk far, do one or two things at most and stay for no longer one or two hours. In turn this constrains the turnover much business can achieve and in turn this deters investment. Further evidencing is that despite there being a some 12% increase in the number of visitors since 2005 there has been no commensurate increase in the economic impact or benefit derived. This suggests that central Morecambe is failing to effectively harness its visitors to best economic advantage.

Remedying the problems that restrain and arrest footfall are key to improving central Morecambe as a place to do business in and thereby to invest in.

This can work because at many times plenty of people do come to central Morecambe. Evidence for this is -

- the volume of traffic in circulation
- the numbers of people who shop
- the numbers of people who on almost any good day enjoy the seafront and promenade including day visitors in considerable numbers.

If those who already come to central Morecambe, residents and visitors are encouraged to move about more and by this stay longer and spend more this, coupled with increased support by local people this can drive increased footfall. This should unleash new demand.

⁵ As example museums, community buildings, council offices, doctors surgeries, churches, a public park.

A positive investment cycle is a marketable narrative. It makes it possible to drive increasing investment and growth in visitors. Improved investment conditions should sustain more and better businesses and make for a growing and more resilient local economy. This should bring multiple benefits including more to offer visitors and new opportunities for people living within central Morecambe and close by - including better job opportunities.

Plan aim

The challenges are daunting, there are uncertainties, there are risks but there are many opportunities. The plan must fit to this context and be robust.

The plan must set a framework for investment that is enabling, set regeneration actions and guide how these can be implemented. It must be deliverable with actions that taken together should make for real beneficial progress with development and change that is as sustainable as possible.

In the first instance the aim is to prevent any further worsening of business conditions and then, over time, get the conditions right to make for the private investment needed. To do this the plan must encourage and give some direction but, subject to this, give as much discretion as possible to the private sector to invest and deliver.

Opportunities further into the plan period

The plan must anticipate and better position central Morecambe for the opportunities likely to come forward later into the plan period. Large investments in infrastructure are in prospect. The opening of the new link road to the M6 should make central Morecambe and the town as a whole a more attractive location to live and work in. It will make central Morecambe more accessible and also should reduce traffic flows along Marine Road. It should assist business in locations across the town including industrial sites and should advantage Heysham Port and assist its expansion.

Also on the horizon is development of additional infrastructure for the National Grid and a new power station at Heysham that should further drive demand for goods and services within the local economy and for places to live.

These will make for significant opportunities but what should be many consequential benefits will not simply come. Central Morecambe will still need to win investments and compete for trade and visitors with other destinations and centres. If actions are not taken to get the conditions for investment right and to position Morecambe as an attractive destination the town and particularly its central areas will not reap the benefits it should.

Risks

The stakes are high. As said the situation is grave. If plan implementation fails it is likely the result will be a central Morecambe still suffering from acute underinvestment and indeed prospectively wholesale market failure. The likely result will be a central Morecambe very much hollowed out.

There are downside risks to the plan. It might not work because wider market factors, national and international, may prove too adverse and too strong and so stymie what investment can be won. Similarly, success will be very much conditional on the body of planning policy for the district as a whole directing investment and development towards urban areas and central Morecambe where possible.

It may not work because of failures in local implementation. The plan is robust enough to withstand failures in certain actions but if these are too many it will fail because it is very much a whole plan with actions that interlock. For many actions to be successfully implemented demands that many others are too. If a pick and mix approach is taken the plan will fail. Similarly if those who must deliver the plan are half hearted in commitment it will fail.

Success with the plan also demands effective work in monitoring and reviewing all aspects of its implementation over time and using this work to inform and help drive implementation.

If by 2021 (the end of the plan period) it is apparent the plan has not worked it will in no way preclude then taking alternative approaches although, at this point in time, it is difficult to envisage what these might be.

With much to do and given the urgencies implementation of many actions should start now as there is nothing to be gained and much might be lost by holding off until the plan is adopted.

3. THE ACTION PLAN

The plan is set out by the following headings:

Plan Vision and Approach	p.19
Managing the environment	p.22
Managing development	p.24
Further encouraging business investment and development	p.26
Morecambe's main seafront and promenade	p.28
The town centre	p.36
South of the town centre	p.45
Travel and transport	p.47
Marketing to investors and visitors	p.51

The plan proposes very many actions. Certain actions proposed are in the form of proposed planning policy specific to the plan area and elements within. Most actions interrelate closely. Presenting the actions in a way that captures for this is challenging. The most pertinent links are identified in the text. Encouraging pedestrian movement, facilitating business investment and increasing the attraction of the town to visitors are consistent themes. Deliberately, visitor aspects are not accorded a separate chapter. The plan is about bettering Morecambe for everyone, including visitors and proposals to strengthen the town's attraction to visitors are therefore embed through the plan.

In this Draft Plan many actions are just presented as bullet points. These will be detailed at the next stage of plan making if carried forward. At this stage the plan will also include a full implementation schedule.

Plan Vision and Approach

The Core Strategy sets the regeneration vision. This might be summarised as making central Morecambe a thriving place, good to do business in that residents want to spend time in and visitors want to come to because of the quality and range of both leisure experiences and town centre services on offer.

The way forward rests on the fact that Morecambe's seafront is contiguous with its town centre. This can make for a real competitive advantage into the future. It gives real prospect that trade from local people and visitors, in combination, can sustain a healthy town centre for Morecambe even in times otherwise very challenging for many town centres. Visitor trade can nourish the town centre and help it grow. In turn a stronger town centre can do much to make good the visitor offer by being the engine for further investment and for an improving the leisure offer.

Morecambe can have a continuing visitor role, but as the core strategy says one reinvented. The reinvention required is one across the board to make central Morecambe a good place for everyone to spend time in and by this offer more to and make more from day visitors and over time win more staying visitors.

To reap the benefit of its advantages central Morecambe must be welcoming to people at points of arrival, with streets and places that are easy and pleasant to walk around and be in, feel safe and are active and vibrant during the day and into the evening. Integral to this is better connecting the seafront and the town and with a town centre that affords a clear, positive draw landward of the central seafront - for the town centre to be successful people need to know where it is.

Key strengths will help with this. These include the strong character and identity at the seafront and, if weaker, parts landward and the pleasing local scale and the sociable feel to the established town centre around the Arndale. There are some distinctive streets and the legacy of landmark buildings including art deco.

The plan approach therefore is to stitch the present quite disparate parts or quarters of central Morecambe together into a stronger heart for the town and, as part of this, tie the seafront and the town centre together much better. The various quarters to be connected by a network of attractive streets and spaces and of course via the seafront promenade.

This spatial approach to get the conditions for investment right is central to the plan and informs many actions. The essential (and interconnected) elements of this spatial approach are -

- A focus on quality and good care of all aspects of the environment
- The environment at the central seafront protected and further enhanced and animated, with the potentials to use and enjoy the seafront environment along its length clearly explained
- The town centre integrating well with the seafront with as seamless a join between town and seafront as possible to ensure the provision for pedestrians to move between the two areas is made much easier, more pleasant and inviting. As a priority improving connections between the Eric

Morecambe statue and Euston Road, between the Midland and the Winter Gardens and by the former Frontierland site.

- Better places at the seafront for Morecambe to host and stage festivals and events and making that these bring much more to the town.
- The bay between the Midland and the Battery improved through new sea defences and with new opportunities for enjoyment of the coastal setting including for active recreation.
- Footfall of visitors on the seafront feeding into the town centre and the town centre becoming an integral element in and asset to the visitor experience.
- A well defined town centre, comprising the established centre of the Arndale and traditional streets around improved and enhanced, augmented by land to the east of Northumberland Street redeveloped to a clear urban structure.
- The Arndale and area around one anchor to the town centre, the other the Festival Market / Platform / Apollo complex as rejuvenated to make for an indoor entertainment hub.
- Victoria Street improved and effectively extended west to link through to the Festival Market and so making for a clear axis to the town centre landward of Marine Road.
- The seafront headland at the central promenade made Morecambe's lead leisure destination, with a high quality of public realm and relating well to the town centre landward. Uses to include significant leisure / recreation elements complementary to that of the mixed town centre but not competitive with its retail elements.
- The edge of centre retail park existing south of Central Drive at Morrison's and around relating well to the tighter centre and feeding footfall into it.
- Development of the former Frontierland site predominantly for housing to help activate central Morecambe with an increased residential population and to improve connectivity for pedestrians to / from the West End.
- Functionality further supported by improved connections for pedestrians to and from adjacent residential areas (including the West End) so these feed footfall and activity into the centre. Increased pedestrian activity spinning west along an improved seafront and along Marine Road West through to the West End.
- A welcoming arrival (and pleasant departure) experience including at the railway station and bus halts, for people walking and cycling and for people travelling by motor vehicle with ready, pleasant onward connections for pedestrian routes serving the town centre and helping concentrate footfall and activity in the tighter town centre.
- Changes to highways and parking arrangements to make traffic circulation more efficient and reduce excess traffic

circulation and with parking located and managed in such a way as to feed footfall into the town centre

- Good signage for pedestrians throughout central Morecambe with information / interpretation points
- Visitor accommodation and including that just outside central Morecambe that is readily found by vehicle and on foot
- Well considered, clear signage of vehicle routes to and from Morecambe on all route approaches including via Lancaster and Carnforth and well located long and short stay parking options in central Morecambe

The plan captures this spatial approach in four **Spatial Policies** that are central to the plan and as planning policy key elements for its delivery.

The spatial approach outlined can make central Morecambe a better place for everyone and help overcome the structural problems that so restrain footfall. In some parts of central Morecambe this means an emphasis on protecting and enhancing existing character. In others it is more about encouraging much change, directing and facilitating investment to remedy weaknesses.

Policies for **Development Opportunity Sites** offer some considered approaches for how such conservation and change can bring about beneficial changes for Morecambe.

The current investment situation though is dire. Therefore, hand in hand with spatial proposals that inevitably will take some time to implement must be early actions to incentivise investment.

Integral to the plan must be proposals for how it is delivered and consideration of what it will take to implement actions. Also are proposals for the approaches to take in marketing to investors and visitors.

There is need for a strong signal that Morecambe welcomes positive investment and concerted actions to promote and market the town to investors and visitors.

A series of **Action Sets** present thematic or spatial opportunities to help deliver the plan and signal that the plan is as much about positive management changes as it is about creating the conditions for development.

This should all make for a plan that is about beneficial change over time, nurturing what is good, putting right what is not, creating opportunities for investment and improvement in what the town offers and for marketing these.

Managing the environment

A continuing focus on assuring the quality and appearance of buildings, streets and spaces across the plan area is essential. This vital element is the starting point for the plan - and almost a pre-condition for success.

This is very much about nuts and bolts; about getting right the often quite small things that can matter just as much as the bigger things. It is all too easy for often relatively small problems to convey a poor impression to the detriment of peoples' experiences and perceptions. This impacts variously on investment decisions, lengths of visits to central Morecambe and to the likelihood of repeat visits.

To meet residents and visitors expectations streets and spaces must be pleasant, attractive and rewarding and feel safe to spend time in. Good experiences for people help drive increased footfall to the benefit of business trading and activate places to the benefit of society.

This involves maintaining streets and spaces in good order with active management to improve the many aspects that manifestly are not right and that today do let things down. It requires full appreciation of the role of streets and spaces, of how activity can help animate these and some imagination in initiating improvements and taking opportunities to fund these.

A closely related issue is public toilet facilities - a matter of significant related public concern. The availability of toilets, that people are informed as to what is available and the quality of provision are key to peoples' experiences. Within central

Morecambe the city council has invested in these but further improvements can be made in the service available.

Action Set AS1. Managing and maintaining streets and spaces.

The city council will continue to focus on the quality of streets and spaces. As part of this with the other local councils to review needs and opportunities to further improve its delivery of street and related services including to -

- improve traffic management,
- make better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists,
- remedy the appearance of parts in poor condition or appearance
- green and enliven the street environment
- refresh green space areas
- make continuing improvements in the maintenance of highways and including street cleanliness.
- improve the provision of toilet facilities available for public use, including where possible via partnership working with private businesses
- direct people better to the toilet provision available through improved information and signage including via new interpretation points.

And to bring forward improvements as appropriate.

Area-specific actions including for the seafront and shoreline within the plan area is identified in Action Set 5.

Property landlords and managers of building premises have an important role to play both in helping make for a supportive business environment.

That property is in good condition and upkeep is important. This affects the character of streets and places, their look and feel and is integral to assuring a good experience for pedestrians and the environment for business. Regular investment in basic maintenance can reap dividends, preventing deterioration in the fabric of a building to a point where a much greater capital outlay is required. How landlords manage is one aspect in this and it is important that property landlords manage property in such a way as to encourage occupancy. This means keeping on top of building maintenance and not unduly constraining occupancy by restrictive lease terms.

Conserving the historic character of buildings assumes a special importance within the designated conservation areas (part the Morecambe Conservation Area and part the West End Conservation Area).

Economic conditions are difficult but the city council is running two initiatives concerning the condition and appearance of property and will consider additional interventions if opportunities for these arise later in the plan period.

The council is using its planning powers in a pro-active way, working with landlords, property owners and managers to improve the condition and appearance of property, as well as educating and advising property owners of the individual and wider benefits of good maintenance practice. The council is targeting this ongoing initiative at properties within the centres of Morecambe (and Lancaster) and including over time for the whole plan area.

For further information visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/s215.

The (second) Morecambe Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI): A View for Eric is a five year initiative for part of the Morecambe Conservation Area in the heart of the town. The main element is the availability of grant assistance to eligible projects to put into sound repair the structure and external envelope of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Other elements include direct investment in improved streets and spaces and to increase understanding and awareness of Morecambe's built heritage through various means, including guidance and training opportunities.

For further information visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/viewforeric.

Action Set AS2. *Improving the condition of buildings and encouraging beneficial occupancy*

Public and private organisations to work together to ensure good practise in the repair and maintenance of property in good condition and including good conservation practise regarding buildings within the designated conservation areas and heritage buildings. The city council to:

- continue to use its planning powers in support of this across the whole plan area
- advise property owners in good maintenance practise and
- run "A View for Eric 2012-2017 including a finite grant distribution programme, a programme of improvements to streets and spaces within the THI area and bespoke advice, training and capacity building initiatives

Managing development

The spatial approach is much about restructuring the heart of the town so that it draws people in and making it function better for people as pedestrians.

Most successful seaside towns have a thriving seafront with a main town centre draw one block back from the front. Morecambe can emulate this recipe, but to be successful it must do it in its own way, working with its existing character and pedestrian networks.

A core pedestrian network should take in the seafront between the Midland and Euston Road and landward the Arndale area and via Victoria Street as extended further west through to the Festival Market. This can make for a strong heart if conveniently served by bus and rail arrival points and car parking.

The plan sets planning policies to manage new development and change to fit to the spatial approach and includes a raft of actions. The planning policies -

- structure the heart of the town by a network of key streets and spaces
- protect and enhance the seafront as predominantly an area for informal recreation
- define the town centre
- identify investment and development opportunities

The Local Plan Proposals Map identifies these.

Accordingly, it is proposed that proposals for development should conform to Spatial Policy 1. In this way new development should

both strengthen the character and identity already in place and best advantage and improve the functionality and attraction of the heart of the town.

As discussed, the focus is on assisting and encouraging much more movement by pedestrians. At the same time much provision can be made for cyclists but it is recognised that regarding cycling the priority within central Morecambe should be leisure provision.

Complementary to Spatial Policy 1 is policy for the seafront and required to direct investment and development to the town centre and within key opportunity sites. Proposals for this are made in the Draft Plan as follows.

MAAP SPATIAL POLICY 1 (SP1). KEY PEDESTRIAN ROUTES AND SPACES

The Local Plan Proposals Map identifies a network of key routes and spaces for pedestrians within central Morecambe. The council considers this to be key to the circulation of pedestrians within central Morecambe and to its economic functioning into the future with a strengthening town centre with higher footfall and more activity.

The council requires that development proposals fronting onto or including for any element of this network should relate well to it and the space around -

- in how buildings are: sited; in the scale and massing of

- buildings and through other aspects of good urban design with active frontages at ground floor level with good opportunities for passive surveillance from upper levels

Where required proposals should either provide or make an appropriate financial contribution towards the construction of a new element in the network or towards improving an element existing. The benchmark to be that any element of the network be permanently available for pedestrian use and constructed to a satisfactory highway standard.

Further, within any area identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map as a Development Opportunity Site the council will consider proposals in accordance with the specific policy for the Development Opportunity Site as contained in the plan. The development opportunity sites are as below and detailed further in this plan -

MAAP DO1. THE BATTERY
 MAAP DO2. STRATEGIC LEISURE – SEAFRONT HEADLAND, CENTRAL PROMENADE
 MAAP DO3. THE ARNDALE AND AREA
 MAAP DO4. WEST VIEW
 MAAP DO5. FESTIVAL MARKET AND AREA
 MAAP DO6. FORMER FRONTIERLAND SITE

Further, the council will consider proposals for development in accordance with Policy EC1.3 of the Development Management DPD and all other relevant policies within the Development Management DPD.

Action Set AS3. Improving key routes for pedestrians and cyclists

Key actions to help address this are –

- to improve key routes within and into central Morecambe from neighbouring residential areas
- Investment in high quality public realm – streets and spaces - including addressing existing routes and establishing new connections and spaces supporting the plan’s spatial framework. Public realm improvements to follow the principles of good urban design and to incorporate where appropriate for example; reductions in clutter, traffic calming, greater natural surveillance and enhanced place identity
- to make good connectivity for pedestrians seaward and landward and vice versa, including across the former Frontierland site an essential requirement of any redevelopment of this site – see DO6 and all other Development Opportunity Sites with boundaries adjacent to Marine Road
- further improvements to the Greenway and connections with the town centre and the facilities therein for cyclists
- improved connections for pedestrians, including through the Central Drive Retail Park.
- The city council to complete improvements to the cycle path route from the retail park to West End Road via Kilnbank Avenue

Further encouraging business investment and development.

The plan proposals taken together are very much about making for more investment, and by this helping create more and better jobs. Spatial proposals, about how to re-structure the town and how to direct development are at the centre of this.

But, as discussed, prevailing demand and investment conditions are very poor and could well deteriorate further. This means there is real risk that some more businesses take flight meaning more business closures, job losses and a central part of town that offers even less.

Spatial proposals inevitably take time to kick in. In the meantime there is an urgent need to try to arrest any further worsening of business activity and to do what is possible to support new. Side by side with this must be plan implementation to put in place the better conditions needed for business investment and growth.

Publication of the plan itself should signal intent and help give confidence to business and investors that there is real local and civic commitment to regeneration and improvement and a deliverable framework for this. Parallel must be actions to signal and promote that central Morecambe is welcoming of investment and to market the business opportunities that plan implementation should help create - see AS14 and 15 Investor Marketing and Visitor Marketing.

The private sector must be the main engine of growth and regeneration. The public sector can help and where possible should

actively facilitate investment and put in place real incentives. But in times of highly constrained public finances this is challenging.

MAAP SPATIAL POLICY 2 (SP2) INVESTMENT EXEMPTIONS

For as long as the poor investment conditions prevail - and certainly until a review after completion of the new M6 Link – applicants for development within the plan area are to be given exemption from certain regulatory and charging requirements otherwise applying These exemptions to include -

- exemption from the Local Plan requirement otherwise set out in DM Policy CS4.2 and any supplementary planning guidance for certain development proposals to either deliver a proportion of affordable housing or make a financial contribution towards meeting identified needs for affordable housing. The specific justifications are that the affordability of housing is not at issue in central Morecambe itself and that prevailing investment conditions patently do not warrant this. In such circumstances it is inappropriate and would be unduly burdensome to apply the Policy in this identified area.
- exemption from any Local Plan requirement otherwise set to levy certain developments for contributions via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) towards infrastructure provision.

Complementary to the spatial proposals (and further come next in the plan) a range of what might be termed more supply side measures are needed to support and encourage business in these difficult times and to incentivise investment and development. These should focus on avoiding placing undue impediments in the way of business investment and giving business increased flexibility to innovate.

Local development orders (LDO) are an existing legislative tool. They can be used to identify an area within which changes of use can occur without a planning permission that otherwise would be needed. Increased flexibility via a LDO can boost regeneration by –

- Creating opportunities for relocation or development either on a temporary or long term basis
- Permitting the evolution of businesses within current premises
- Increasing opportunities for community based organisations to occupy premises and maintain them in beneficial use
- Speeding up change – no procedural delays associated with making a planning application
- Certainty of outcome for a prospective tenant and justification for investment in premises by landlords

A LDO therefore is about making good development happen. The scope and potentials of making an order should be considered with urgency. An order might have particular application within the defined town centre where as much discretion as possible might reasonably be given to the market to determine what uses to make

of land and buildings. This should lift a little of the burden on business and confer more flexibility and thereby should help encourage investment. Also, it would be an important market signal.

Any order need have no direct bearing on the need to obtain any other regulatory consents e.g. licensing.

Action Set AS4. Further encourage business investment and development.

- the city council not to charge for pre-application planning advice within the plan area should it determine to do so for the wider district
- consider the scope for discretionary business rate relief
- The city council not to establish specific policies for the defined primary and secondary frontages within the town centre (see the town centre section)
- the city council will consult on the scope for and potential applications of a draft Local Development Order (LDO) for the town centre as defined in the plan. Any LDO should specify desirable changes and exclude those still not desired. Subject to this consultation a draft would be submitted to the city council's Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee.

Morecambe's main seafront and promenade

Introduction

The plan area spans almost one and a half miles of seafront from the Battery in the West End through to the Yacht Station. The promenade unites this and extends onward in both directions through to Heysham in the south west and almost to Hest Bank in the north east, all part of the Lancashire Way coastal path.

This unique seafront space is Morecambe's foremost asset and critical to its identity and future. Integral to what it offers are –

- Expansive views
- A sense of space, the elements and nature
- Opportunities for enjoyment of the shoreline and the Bay
- A range of recreation choices – from quite passive through to much more active – and particularly for walking and cycling
- Festivals and events

The importance of the seafront for leisure and recreation and for residents and visitors alike cannot be understated. It is a unique multi-faceted resource for all people and so assuring a good balance of opportunities is really important.

Festivals and events

Morecambe has a strong record in staging and hosting festivals and events. The city and town councils and local organisations and businesses contribute to programmes and the town's reputation in

this is good and giving much to work with in marketing into the future.

Festivals and events serve anyone whether residents or visitors. These animate and enliven the town, add to and widen the range of leisure, recreation, education and entertainment experiences available. However, the town and trading within should harness much more in the way of economic benefits from events at the seafront. The Platform, Library, Festival Market and Arndale buildings all could support activities.

Proposals

The plan must -

- have proper regard to the continuing need to safeguard and raise awareness of the precious natural environment of the Bay including the shoreline and intertidal areas
- protect the main seafront and promenade for people to enjoy
- identify potential improvements in the leisure and recreation experiences on offer and where possible programme these
- help remedy the disconnect between the seafront and the town landward, integrating the two where possible and generally making it easier and more legible for pedestrians to move between these.
- chart a future for the central promenade headland incorporating the former Bubbles site.
- create new and improved opportunities for the holding and staging of events. Specifically, a new performance space

beside Eric and it proposes that the potential to use the seafront headland as a concert venue be investigated.

For the purpose of planning improvement and change the main seafront and promenade can be split into three areas –

- Central seafront and main beach
- Western seafront and beach
- Seafront headland – central promenade

MAAP SPATIAL POLICY 3 (SP3). MORECAMBE MAIN SEAFRONT AND PROMENADE

The main seafront and promenade is identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map as open space for peoples' informal recreation and enjoyment.

The Council will protect this main seafront and promenade from development other than that which will demonstrably enhance the open character or is reasonably required to provide or improve opportunities for appropriate informal recreation and enjoyment and will not otherwise harm the open character. The council will require that any development is to a high quality of design.

Proposals for essential works of coastal defence must be complementary with the open character, and contribute to people's use and enjoyment of the seafront and shore.

The council will not permit any proposals that result in a

significant adverse impact on the environment of the Bay in its integrity as a Natura 2000 site or as an European Marine Site

This policy relates closely to the Development Opportunity Policy DO1 and to which it takes precedence.

Central seafront and main beach

The curving bay between the Lifeboat Station opposite Green Street and the headland with the former Bubbles site is attractive; its character a combination of the sweep of buildings that front it, the seafront and promenade and the sand nourished beach. In good weather this is the liveliest place in central Morecambe and very much its heart. The sandy beach provided as part of the last phase of coastal protection works is a huge asset to the town.

Further improving the environment of this bay and what it offers is essential and very much requires managing this environment and what it offers as a whole.

Action Set AS5. Central seafront and main beach

The city council to prepare a Management Plan for the further improvement and ongoing management of the central seafront and main beach between the Midland and the Morecambe Yacht Station. This to further enhance the seafront and what it offers and

to better integrate it with the town –

- Decommission the existing Marine Road Car Park No. 2 between the Eric Morecambe statue and the Clock Tower toilets and create a high quality pedestrian place and a focus at the seafront to reveal and signal the main pedestrian route landward into Euston Road and the established town centre. Also to include a high quality performance space and a dedicated pick up and drop off point for buses and coaches. For further information see AS12 and 13.
- Improve the setting to the Clock Tower including further interventions to lift the appearance of the toilet block.
- Signal and announce the main beach through specific enhancements, perhaps including changing sequences of banners and flags and including to advertise festivals and events
- New directional information and interpretation points
- New and improved openings for pedestrians through the wave reflection wall
- Further investment in public art and to better maintain that public art existing
- Improve seating along the length of the central promenade as appropriate by reworking, upgrading, or adding to that existing with better provision for disabled people and those with limited mobility availability
- Permit more beach trading concessions / complementary facilities provided that these are of appropriate quality and the continuing quality is assured through management arrangements
- Provide an additional pedestrian access to the eastern end of the beach (towards the Lifeboat Station situated opposite

Green Street)

- Make small scale improvements to the seafront to the east of the station including with more efficient parking and better interpretation of the bay environment.
- Make more of the TERN projects' "See Wall" via improved signage and pedestrian connections
- Management to sustain the sand nourished beach

Western seafront, beach and the Battery

The long bay through to the Battery is a distinct seafront environment with much local identity coming from how the tightly packed buildings extend round. The seafront itself provides an important link for both vehicle and pedestrian movements but as a place in its own right it underperforms except at the West End Gardens. This is largely because Marine Road West and the seafront promenade, completed as the first phase in the coastal defence works, are utilitarian in nature and the road itself is heavily trafficked and very much severs the seafront from the town landward. This does little to encourage activity and is unhelpful to business trading fronting to Marine Road West and within the local centre further behind. There is much potential for improvement and that can also help towards regeneration of the West End. What has been achieved at West End Gardens and with the Breeze Café shows what can be done. The potentials include for -

- A much more pleasing seafront environment with improved connections and facilities for pedestrians from the seafront landward across Marine Road and onto the shore

- The bay and particularly the area around the Battery a focus for more active recreation, adventure activity and water sports involving use of the shoreline and the intertidal areas as appropriate, provided that there are no significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the bay environment.
- More efficient use of the Battery car park, potentially eliminating or reducing the underutilised coach parking facilities here
- Business trading along Marine Road West that includes businesses that exploit market niches concerning use of the seafront, shoreline and wider bay for appropriate leisure and recreation activity, and
- Potentially linked to the above, opportunities to further enhance the profile of the starting point of the Way of the Roses coast to coast cycling route and complementary to this, improved facilities for cyclists.

Opportunities to deliver will be via –

- A programme of new coastal defence works over the plan period and to include a replacement sea wall and new wave reflection wall that provides improved access to the shore and town alike This to replace the existing (sea wall) defences that date from 1945 and the wave reflection wall and promenade surfacing as undertaken in the mid 1980s
- Complementary development at the Battery. See Development Opportunity Policy DO1 below.
- Complementary development of the former Frontierland site, ensuring that this presents well to the seafront and helps deliver improvements to Marine Road West, for pedestrian

crossing over this road and to the seafront itself. See Development Opportunity Policy DO6.

MAAP POLICY DO1. THE BATTERY

The council identifies opportunities for leisure uses and recreation activities including adventure activity and water sports within the area defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map as Development Opportunity Policy DO1.

Within those parts of the site not otherwise also identified in MAAP Spatial Policy 2 as part of the Main Seafront and Promenade the council will support development proposals for leisure uses and also retail and food and drink uses where these latter are ancillary to a leisure use or help service and support appropriate recreation activity. Public car parking facilities should remain.

The council will consider proposals for development within this Site in accordance with MAAP Spatial Policies 1 and 4, Policy EC1.1 of the Development Management DPD and all other relevant policies.

The council will not permit any proposals that result in a negative impact on the environment of the Bay in its integrity as a Natura 2000 site or as a European Marine Site.

Action Set AS6. *Western seafront and beach*

Actions to further enhance this stretch of seafront and what it offers and to better integrate it with the town will include –

- A programme of coastal defence works to include a new sea wall and wave reflection wall with more and improved opportunities for people to connect between the promenade and Marine Road landward, new seating and other associated facilities and improved public access down to the shore
- New directional information and interpretation points
- New public art and specifically at the bastion, to mark the start and finish for the Way of the Roses coast to coast cycle route

Seafront headland, central promenade

The headland between the two main bays – the main beach to the east and that through to the West End - is just across Marine Road from the town centre. It includes and is the setting for key listed buildings, including the Midland Hotel, War Memorial and the Winter Gardens, and also the new Lifeboat station. It also includes the Stone Jetty, now a high quality public space affording a real marine experience.

The future of this area in terms of what uses are made of it and the quality of these is integral to what central Morecambe offers and thereby its identity and its future. It should be a magnet for residents and visitors alike.

Over time leisure uses have retreated from this area – including latterly with closure of the Dome - and today much is underused and vacant. The Stone Jetty apart public spaces and gardens are

tired and dated in appearance. The main pedestrian thoroughfare and the setting of the key buildings are poor.

There is much scope for improvement but also new potentials. There is capacity to accommodate new development and the location gives much scope for this. In particular the restored Midland Hotel is a major success with English Lakes Hotels presently running a strong hotel operation and ambitious for increased accommodation capacity.

The city council has long sought to secure beneficial development of the headland through its planning policy. In addition, as owner of much of the area it is in a good position to shape its future to the benefit of the town. In this role it has in recent years sought to facilitate a substantial development of a large part of the site via Urban Splash as its developer partner.⁶ The joint ambition of both the council and Urban Splash has been for a high quality mixed development that should deliver a much improved public realm including of the main green spaces and the main pedestrian route from the central seafront through to the Stone Jetty.

It is increasingly apparent though that in the economic conditions that now prevail such a development may not prove deliverable. This is the context for preparing the Draft Plan. The area action plan must map out a future for this area and set clear planning policy.

Consultations to prepare the action plan have elicited a substantial consensus on the future of the central seafront. To summarise –

- there must be open space areas including green spaces

⁶ SPG 17: Morecambe Central Promenade Development Brief (2005)

- public spaces and routes should be to a high quality, well serve pedestrian movement and make a good setting for the key buildings
- the location and the wider town will benefit from leisure development at this location but this must relate well to the key buildings, respect patterns of pedestrian flow and the need for there to be good views out to sea
- As part of this additional accommodation for the Midland Hotel and a new interpretive visitor centre are reasonable development propositions

Conversely, it is apparent that there is a strong divergence of views as to how the central seafront might be improved and in particular as to whether some residential development is appropriate.

To consider this further - residential uses would add to the resident population within central Morecambe to the benefit of activity and trading and at all times give passive surveillance and some animation to the location. Further it might complement any additional development for the Midland Hotel and also certain leisure elements. However, it is questionable at best whether within the plan period residential development would be deliverable here and unlikely that this could finance significant improvements to the wider public places. There is also real risk that any residential uses might constrain what leisure uses are attainable as the latter very often impact upon residents' amenity.

Leisure uses would certainly make the best use of the central seafront location. As to what these might be it is important to look at what Morecambe already offers in the round and consider gaps in the market. At least in good weather the central seafront and beach caters quite well for families with young children but less well for

many others. Happy Mount Park has an offer for all ages but is well outside of central Morecambe. The commercial leisure offer is limited but does include the Superbowl and Apollo Cinema.

A deliverable proposal is required that –

- recognises the strategic importance of the area to Morecambe's future
- strikes a balance between protecting and enhancing the open character and public realm and facilitating uses and development appropriate to the location and likely of most benefit to the town into the future.
- reserves opportunities for that development most particularly sought
- factors for the fact that securing beneficial uses will take time and that there is a need to make best use of presently vacant and underused land in the short and medium terms as well as the long
- assures quality in building and any uses made of the site
- ensures that development contributes to improvement of the wider public realm within the site

Accordingly, it is proposed to -

- Protect and enhance the main public routes and spaces within the central seafront site as part of the Main Seafront and Promenade (see MAAP Spatial Policy SP3).
- Work to rejuvenate this public realm, including rejuvenated public space that enhances the War Memorial as a key landmark
- Facilitate development of those parts of the headland outside the Main Seafront and Promenade for predominantly

leisure / visitor uses, with other uses as appropriate but ancillary.

- Make it clear that additional visitor accommodation for the Midland and some form of bay discovery centre are very desired uses
- Work with the Midland Hotel operator and site owner as necessary to strengthen the hotel offer
- Work with the RSPB and other interested organisations on the feasibility of a bay discovery centre type facility
- Set clear but enabling parameters for any development, these to include that development proposals assist in delivering improvements to the main seafront and promenade public realm within the Development Opportunity Site.
- Accept that beneficial development may only be secured over some time and prepare a delivery plan to make better use of the site in a phased way whilst anticipating for future development
- This delivery plan to be informed by a feasibility study into creating a venue to stage outdoor concerts within the sunken former Bubbles site area - see section xx.
- The delivery plan to cover the improvement and management of the whole site area including for the letting of space and licensing of uses and marketing the commercial opportunities.
- Implement the delivery plan

MAAP POLICY DO2. STRATEGIC LEISURE - SEAFRONT HEADLAND, CENTRAL PROMENADE

The council identifies a strategic opportunity for leisure investment

and development within the area defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map as Development Opportunity Site DO2.

Within those parts of the site not otherwise also identified in MAAP Spatial Policy 3 as part of the Main Seafront and Promenade the council will support development proposals for the following -

- Leisure uses both outdoor and indoor and including for events and as events and performance space
- Visitor accommodation additional and integral to the Midland Hotel business operation
- Other hotel accommodation
- Other visitor focused residential accommodation that is demonstrably ancillary to otherwise predominantly leisure uses

The council will not permit any proposals that result in any significant adverse impact on the environment of the Bay in its integrity as a Natura 2000 site or as an European Marine Site

The council will further require that any development -

- includes retail (including food and drink uses) only where the proposal is for predominantly leisure uses
- relates well to heritage assets including the Midland and the Winter Gardens
- does not preclude the development of more visitor accommodation for the Midland Hotel and is as enabling of this as reasonable
- relates well to the Main Seafront and Promenade with active frontages to this at the ground floor and good

opportunities for passive surveillance from any upper floors of buildings

- Assists in the improvement of public realm within the Main Seafront and Promenade and the reworking of Marine Road Central to improve amenity and safety for pedestrian crossings.
- Provides for vehicle access, servicing and parking in ways not adverse to public amenity and pedestrian circulation on and enjoyment of the Main Seafront and Promenade.

Uses and activities that might prove appropriate at least in the short and medium terms include: multi games space, crazy golf, multi-wheel sports, outdoor gym, fairground, bowls and other active games and activities including boule, petankue, skittles, giant chess... These would need to be complemented by quality ancillary facilities including food and drink kiosks and toilets.

To inform preparation of the delivery plan the city council to commission a feasibility study into using part of the sunken site for the creation of a venue to stage outdoor concerts and performances, considering its viability as a reasonable commercial proposition and if so how this might be advanced.

Action Set AS7. Seafront headland, central promenade

The city council to prepare and implement a delivery plan for the beneficial use of the site to –

- Identify the activities and uses appropriate and that should be actively sought in the short, medium and longer terms including commercial or non commercial leisure and whether private or public operated.
- Determine arrangements for managing uses
- Direct and programme work to market investment opportunities
- Plan advance engineering works and improvements to the sunken parts of the site (the former Bubbles site) to afford an appropriate setting for beneficial uses including an expanded Midland hotel operation
- Plan improvements to the public realm for pedestrians and including to Marine Road Central and how these might be secured through developments

The town centre

Introduction

Strengthening Morecambe's struggling, underperforming town centre is critical to achieving the regeneration vision and an essential element in the plan approach.

It is now widely recognised that to compete into the future any town centre must have a good shopping offer and much more. Successful, competitive ones will serve as a destination for a range of activities, including shopping and feel sociable and safe.

This section looks at the spatial approach needed and then considers what is required to achieve this at:

- Marine Road Central – the town centre's 'shop window'
- The Arndale and area
- The Festival Market and area

Spatial approach

The spatial approach proposed is towards a town centre well integrated with the seafront that is consolidated and without the weaknesses that come from being over extended. This requires a balanced range of actions to give direction and certainty to investment yet also leaving much flexibility so that the private sector has optimal discretion.

Such a town centre should be well served by transport and fed with footfall from points of arrival, variously from the seafront

promenade, the seafront headland and areas to the south of Central Drive including the existing edge of centre retail development ,

Central Drive is the main road artery to the town centre and must be maintained as such. Car parking provision must be readily accessed off this – see transport section.

Marine Road Central and Victoria Street respectively can be the axes that bind the town centre together in terms of how pedestrians move around, Marine Road Central affording the seafront experience and Victoria Street one block back offering an alternative more sheltered route and, over time, a quality experience more akin to that of a traditional high street. A beneficial use for St Laurence's Church and an improved setting to this are important in this regard.

To realise this vision though demands much investment and development to address the challenges facing the town centre as it is today. This means -

- facilitating and managing development in accordance with Spatial Policy 1 and other development management policy as necessary
- additional spatial policy consistent with the vision for the town centre to both focus and facilitate investment and development, comprising spatial policy specifically for the Town Centre and for particular sites that afford opportunities for investment and development
- subject to this as far as possible leaving investment decisions to the market
- specific actions to facilitate investment

- continuing investment to improve the condition fabric and appearance of housing to assure occupancy to the benefit of activity within the town centre.

Opportunity sites are identified that offer particular opportunities for investment and development. These are –

- The Arndale and area, the established town centre including for the immediate car parks here – Library and Pedder Street – but any redevelopment here to be with no loss of parking provision
- West View Car Park, a very constrained back land site just back from the seafront that underperforms as a car park. It has the potential with better access and signage to serve the promenade and town centre well and opportunities to enhance its existing use will be explored pending any alternative town centre uses that may emerge.
- For an “entertainment hub” with an indoor element comprising the Platform / Festival Market / Cinema complex of buildings plus the Superbowl (that, albeit just across Central Drive relates closely) together with the extensive open areas to the west and north of Central Drive

An option to develop the Telephone Exchange car park for housing is not advanced as on balance it is considered this is a very preferable location for town centre car parking. The adjacent Telephone Exchange building is in full operational use but its appearance could be improved.

The many closely related actions required across the town centre include -

- Improvements to transportation and arrival and the feel of welcome
- Plan for car parking within central Morecambe that aligns to location, management and pricing of parking to encouraging people to stay longer
- Actions to improve connections for pedestrians between the promenade and the town - and in particular between Eric and the Clock Tower in order to signal the town centre and direct people landward
- Actions to make it easier for people to find their way, walk around and spend time in the town centre landward of the seafront
- Actions to actively market the town centre, seafront premises and other accommodation as places to do business in and to encourage increased custom and trade; including town centre management proposals
- improvements to existing streets and spaces landward of the seafront and by this should make places that encourage people to linger within them – including for opportunities for café culture, street theatre and impromptu performance.

Over time, with this approach, new investment and development should concentrate footfall and activity and thereby make for better town centre trading conditions. There can be no illusions though. Appetite for investment within central Morecambe is weak and it will take time to turn things round. There are no ready ‘fix-all’ solutions for some challenges including places such as the Winter Gardens. Not everything will be achievable within the plan period.

A Primary Shopping Area (PSA) and a defined Town Centre with the Town Centre Boundary are the planning policy tools required to

help guide investment and direct development into town centre locations. DM Policy EC1.1 describes how these should inform planning decisions including by directing sequentially tested development accordingly.

The action plan must identify a PSA and Town Centre for central Morecambe.

The methodology used for identifying the PSA and the Town Centre is described in Topic Paper 5. These are based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages as described in the Topic Paper and as follows:

Primary frontages

- Euston Road (pedestrianised part west Central Drive)
- Royalty Mall (Arndale Centre)
- Market Street (part south to Royalty Mall)

Secondary frontages

- Development fronting Marine Road Central (from Rita's Café east to Clarence Street)
- Euston Road (that part east of Central Drive)
- Victoria Street (part west to Skipton Street and Chapel Street)
- Queen Street
- Pedder Street.
- Frontages to the building complex including the Apollo Cinema and Festival Market

The proposed PSA and Town Centre Boundary are identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map.

It is not proposed to set specific policy for the primary and secondary frontages as identified and therefore, these are not identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map. This is because it is considered to do so would be unduly restrictive given the poor investment conditions that prevail and aspirations for an attractive sociable town centre with a mix of uses (see AS4 Business Investment and Development).

Marine Road Central – the town centre's 'shop window'.

The seafront and visitor trade is key to giving a competitive advantage to the town centre. Marine Road Central at the interface between the seafront and the town centre landward is both a shop window for the town centre and an essential element in its offer.

Premises extending from Central Drive through to Queen Street do support quite a mix of uses including retail, food and drink, office commercial and leisure. This mix reflects for the location. The weather and seasonality are major factors in shaping the pattern of trading here. It is evident that trading conditions along the length of Marine Road Central are variously challenging and the attraction of premises to retail businesses is quite limited.

Collectively the appearance of frontages is not without some quality when viewed from the promenade but aspects in the quality and presentation of some business trading are less appealing when viewed closer. These issues make for a mixed and confused identity with no clear target markets.

The premises west of Northumberland Road although highly central are strangely quite out on a limb and do not readily relate to other parts of the town centre. Footfall here is only variably sufficient to support business trading in premises large and small. Failure over the years to secure a redevelopment of the Winter Gardens Arcade is some evidence of the investment situation. The parlous condition of this is unacceptable.

The buildings here include two notable Art Deco properties and the Winter Gardens (Victoria Pavilion) itself. This latter is Grade II* listed and as the largest building in central Morecambe is dominant in many views across the town. Although out of substantive use since the 1970s as an entertainment venue the building is structurally sound and watertight thanks to city council works in the late 1990s and the present owners are making increasing uses of the building in an incremental way and progressively making improvements internally.

Marine Road has much potential into the future as a location for town centre businesses and living. Business uses appropriate to any seafront can be well located here and there is much scope to grow and improve the town's food and drink offer. The upper floors to premises offer fantastic views across the Bay and therefore can make for unique visitor, office or residential accommodation. Larger premises towards Central Drive have the greater potential for bespoke leisure uses.

A range of actions can improve the trading along Marine Road Central and what businesses here might contribute to the town centre. These are –

- connections from the promenade for pedestrians much improved
- connectivity improved from elsewhere in the town centre.
- improvements in the look and feel including via investments in the condition and appearance of premises including forecourts and in the presentation of trading
- bespoke marketing of premises

The Arndale and area

The town centre is anchored at its eastern end by the established centre around the Arndale but this will require significant improvement. Planning approaches are required that are enabling of investment coupled with many direct interventions.

This area derives character from the traditional shopping streets including Pedder Street and Queen Street. Many of the independent traders within this area are an asset and help give some distinction to the offer here.

The Arndale, although implanted quite badly into the then street fabric via a 1970s development and lacking distinction does offer an indoor, sociable experience otherwise lacking in the town centre. Unfortunately much of the offer is for every-day convenience shopping without a strong comparison shopping offer that better lends to the creation of a leisure experience. A greater mix of retail is desirable, coupled with an improved food and drink offer that encourages people to stay longer. The presentation of the centre outward though is very poor, in terms of its legibility and advertising for example, and demands improvement in order to better direct and encourage footfall to the centre in the first instance. The quality

of surrounding streets and spaces is also poor and needs improvement to attract and encourage pedestrian movement. New Town Square is a key example to be addressed.

The Morecambe Library just adjacent to the Arndale is a key asset. It is relatively well used and appreciated by many people but – like many libraries - is struggling to an extent. Libraries all over are trying to diversify, widen the customer base and take on a greater community role. The location of the Morecambe Library and the pleasant feel of the building give it a particular potential in this but one that will be best realised if management actions are supported by works to the environment around. The building and access to it is very hidden and not well signed.

Festival Market and area

The town centre can be anchored at its western end by an “entertainment hub”. This can be grown from the existing complex of buildings around the old railway station (‘The Platform’) and the Festival Market and focus on this latter rejuvenated as a true indoor destination. This complex of buildings though very centrally located is paradoxically quite isolated and for pedestrians the various buildings relate very poorly to each other. The buildings and public entrances present to the main roads adjoining and so face away from each other. In addition, in form and design the complex appears somewhat incongruous in the context of the Midland Hotel across the seafront opposite. For various reasons pedestrian footfall here is constrained.

Following consultation with traders at the time, the Festival Market was designed as a covered outdoor facility capable of hosting festivals and events. In practice neither of these aspects has

assisted trading particularly well. The market is a facility that is well liked by many local people and has a visitor function but trading is constrained and the ambience is deficient. In particular, the structure not being wind tight provides little protection from the cold and this makes trading quite challenging and impairs the experience it is possible to offer customers. Whilst the stalls were envisaged as being semi-transient and capable of moving out for a fortnight each year, in practice the stalls are well established units operated by a mixture of loyal and long-standing stall holders together with newer tenants helping to diversify the market’s offer.

Despite this, the centralised location offers an easily accessible location and the potential for a much higher profile and role in the town centre.

Development of the extensive areas of land west of Northumberland Street and to the rear of the Winter Gardens (and other properties fronting to Marine Road Central) is vital to knit the town centre together as one. This development must be properly structured to routes for pedestrian movement. Over time, development here and a town centre that is strengthening should support trading in premises fronting to Marine Road and thereby make investment in these and including the Winter Gardens more attractive to investors.

MAAP SPATIAL POLICY SP4. TOWN CENTRE

The Council has identified a Primary Shopping Area (PSA) and Town Centre Boundary for Morecambe on the Local Plan Proposals Map.

The Council will consider proposals for development within and around the town centre in accordance with MAAP Spatial Policy SP1, Policy EC1.1 of the Development Management DPD and all other relevant policies in this excepting for Policy EC 1.2 which will not apply. Subject to these the council will support development proposals for -

- retail uses within the PSA
- retail uses outside of the PSA only if a sequential approach is taken that evidences no reasonable alternative site exists within the PSA.
- town centre uses within the defined town centre
- town centre uses outside of the defined town centre only if a sequential assessment demonstrates that no reasonable alternative site exists within the town centre.
- residential uses and residential development within the PSA provided these are above ground floor level and access arrangements are not averse to maintaining an active street frontage.
- residential uses and residential development outside of the PSA but within the defined town centre.

MAAP POLICY DO3. THE ARNDALE AND AREA

The council identifies particular opportunities for investment and development of main town centre uses within the PSA within the area defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map as Development Opportunity Site DO3.

The council will consider proposals for development within this site

in accordance with MAAP Spatial Policies 1 and 4, Policy EC1.1 of the Development Management DPD and all other relevant policies in this excepting for Policy EC 1.2 which will not apply.

In addition development should -

- improve routes and spaces for the benefit of pedestrians in accordance with MAAP Spatial Policy 1
- make for improved arrangements for servicing the Arndale by goods vehicles
- make the most of the existing stock of trees and supplement these as appropriate to maximise the benefit to public amenity
- enhance the setting of the Morecambe Library building and improve peoples' access to this from around
- help sustain and grow what the Library service offers to the community
- result in no net loss of total car parking provision within the Development Opportunity Site.

MAAP POLICY DO4. WEST VIEW

The council identifies a particular opportunity for development of main town centre uses within the area defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map as Development Opportunity Site DO4.

The council will consider proposals for development within this Site in accordance with MAAP Spatial Policies 1 and 4, Policy EC1.1 of the Development Management DPD and all other relevant policies. in this excepting for Policy EC 1.2 which will not apply.

MAAP POLICY DO5. FESTIVAL MARKET AND AREA

The council identifies particular opportunities for investment and development of main town centre uses within the area defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map as Development Opportunity Site DO5.

The council will consider proposals for development within this Site in accordance with MAAP Spatial Policies 1 and 4, Policy EC1.1 of the Development Management DPD and all other relevant policies in this excepting for Policy EC 1.2 which will not apply.

In addition development should -

- relate well in urban design terms to the rear elevations of the Winter Gardens, those of the other premises fronting to Marine Road Central and those residential and other properties fronting to Northumberland Street
- enable satisfactory access and servicing arrangements to the rears of all premises fronting to Marine Road Central
- improve passive surveillance and overlooking of the train station
- improve the legibility of pedestrian routes to and from the train station and onward

In addition, any proposals involving changes to or the removal of existing facilities including any public realm, the existing skatepark and / or the bus station should either make satisfactory alternative provision or include a financial contribution to cover the full costs of this.

Action Set AS8. The town centre.

General

- Public service organisations to consider and take opportunities to deliver services into the future via a presence within the town centre.
- Local councils to work with local community and third sector organisations to try to strengthen what is on offer.

Marine Road Central

- Rejuvenate stretches of Marine Road Central with shared surfaces to optimise crossing for pedestrians and to better reveal Euston Road as the main pedestrian connection from the seafront into the town
- Invest in the condition and fabric of buildings including forecourts and improvements in the quality of forecourt trading

Arndale and area

- Transform the street space between Barclays and the Post Office as a public place of real quality with a shared surface treatment to make it much more pedestrian friendly and a fitting focus for the entrance to the Arndale from here. As part of this revise traffic arrangements at the junction of Market Street with Victoria Street and Euston Road these to include some changes to turning and parking arrangements including for taxis.
- Improve the existing pedestrianised stretch of Euston Road

with new surfacing, lighting, seating and signage

- Make New Town Square a quality public place with new surfacing, lighting, seating and signage and with a new central seating feature that incorporates the mosaic
- Continuing investment in the Arndale, including for internal remodelling and development to upgrade and increase the lettable accommodation to better meet current retailing needs.
- Enhance how the Arndale presents at its entrances via fascias and signage and in condition of building elevations
- Upgrade Pedder Street car park via a new pedestrian connection across it and environmental improvements to the periphery including replacements for the concrete bollards
- Sign pedestrian linkages to Queen Street and Pedder Street
- Sign the Library from elsewhere in the established centre and from within the Arndale
- Improve the pedestrian environment immediately around the Library and make a good route for pedestrians across the Library car park to Market Street
- Continue to invest in the Library building and operation as a key building and community asset and further diversify the services on offer.

Victoria Street and environs

- Improve Victoria Street via reconfiguring the carriageway as appropriate including to better provide for cyclists and improved pavements, new lighting, seating and signage and other interventions.
- Pursue the feasibility of re-working the area to the front of St Laurence's Church including the small private off street car park as a public space

- Work to bring St Laurence's Church into a beneficial use and secure improvements to its setting as an integral element in the street scene
- Pending any future re-development better sign and upgrade the much underused West View car park prospectively including investment in security and surveillance

Land west of Northumberland Street

The Platform / Festival Market / Superbowl complex of buildings is an important area on and close to the central seafront. It is the interface between several quarters yet footfall is much lighter than the location would suggest and trading here is consequently challenging.

The location affords much potential as a leisure and entertainment hub and as an anchor to the town centre. There is scope for investment and development to improve and extend what is on offer in this area and to increase vitality and activity. But there are difficult issues. There are issues with property and premises and how fit for purpose these are and how well the various elements relate to each other and the wider surroundings.

As example, the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) offers a high quality and award winning service but is not readily found from main points of arrival or easily accessed direct from the seafront. The Festival Market has a loyal custom base but the building relates poorly to its surroundings and the offer needs to be invigorated.

The council working in partnership with private organisations with a stake in this complex of buildings to study investment and development potentials and options including to -

- provide for a stronger offer complementary to the main draws of the Cinema and Festival Market e.g. the food and drink offer in the vicinity and new retail
- refurbish and redevelop buildings and premises as appropriate to improve these as premises for trading
- improve the setting of the complex, pedestrian connections to and from and arrangements for coach drop off and pick up.
- rejuvenate the Festival Market, potentially in a reconfigured and upgraded building, possibly focused on a marketplace and festival area at its centre and, via introducing new management approaches
- support the cinema offer and improve its presentation, quality and ambience
- make more of the currently council led entertainment offer and the visitor services as presently at the Platform

Subject to the outcome of the study the council and its partners to consider the options.

Complementary with the above actions the city council to work with those others with interests in land west of Northumberland Street to help facilitate beneficial investment and development and including for the Winter Gardens and the Winter Gardens arcade.⁷

⁷ Work to prepare the plan has not elicited any prospect of securing the full permanent re-use of the building within the plan period

South of the town centre

Central Drive Retail Park

Land to the south of the now Central Drive as far as the West End progressively fell out of use towards the end of the last century. The vacant land cast an unfortunate image for the town and very much separated the West End from central Morecambe. From the 1990s progressively much was redeveloped as the Central Drive Retail Park.

The retail park is edge of centre in its location, functionality, look and feel. The layout and form of development while entirely typical of its era is not distinctive and is characterised by extensive parking adjacent Central Drive. Most buildings front away from the seafront and in appearance from the seafront now present very poorly.

The stores within the retail park do make for an important element in central Morecambe's retail offer for both comparison and convenience goods. These sustain high levels of pedestrian activity. The Festival Market just across Central Drive draws some important footfall from here. It is important that into the future the retail park feeds much more footfall into the town centre.

Action Set AS9. Edge of centre retail park

The city and county councils to work with organisations with land interests to

- Improve the condition and appearance of buildings fronting

to Marine Road West

- Make better connections and improve conditions for pedestrians (and cyclists) including: to and from the seafront; across to the Festival Market; through to the Lancaster – Morecambe cycle path “Greenway”; through to West End Road; to / from the train station; and through the former Frontierland site as may be redeveloped

Former Frontierland site

Unfortunately, one large part towards the West End and comprising the greater part of the former Frontierland amusement park site remains vacant and very much an eyesore. Some 2.4 ha in extent, the condition and prospective future of this site arouses much public concern. Out of any beneficial use since the park closed in 2000 the site contributes nothing to central Morecambe and what it offers and is a barrier to the movement of pedestrians to and from the West End. The adjacent site of the former Bus Depot on Grove Street is integral to the future redevelopment of this area.

To bring this former Frontierland site into a beneficial use is challenging. The site is constrained. Development for retail uses is not considered appropriate given the location remote from the town centre. There is no reasonable prospect of a new substantial leisure development nor of any predominantly public use. In this context development predominantly for housing affords the best prospect of making a beneficial use of the site and there has been market interest in this in recent years. Housing would help activate central Morecambe by increasing its resident population. Further, it gives the opportunity to provide new quality linkages for pedestrians and

cyclists through to the West End via West End Road and into the edge of centre retail park adjacent to the east.

Any development should provide a direct route for pedestrians and cyclists via Grove Street through to West End Road.

Development at this site should include an element of commercial uses fronting to Marine Road to help activate the seafront and sustain some footfall here to support business trading further along Marine Road to the west. Too large such an element though risks pulling footfall and activity from the town centre and to its detriment.

will be acceptable provided these are ancillary to the predominant use of the whole site for housing

- Include clear, quality, legible routes for pedestrians through the site variously connecting the seafront with West End Road and also with the adjacent retail park
- Contribute to appropriate improvements to the adjacent seafront and promenade to help meet needs for recreation
- make good use of the variable landforms and the elevated part of the site
- consider the potential to provide an element of public car parking within the site

MAAP POLICY DO6. FORMER FRONTIERLAND SITE

The council identifies a significant opportunity for predominantly housing development within the area defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map as Development Opportunity Site DO6.

The council will consider proposals for development in accordance with MAAP Spatial Policies 1 and 4, Policy EC1.1 of the Development Management DPD and all other relevant policies within the Development Management DPD.

Development proposals should address the whole site and -

- Integrate well with the seafront with treatment of Marine Road West to improve amenity and safety for pedestrians moving through to the seafront and with good provision for pedestrian crossings
- present active frontages to Marine Road West where leisure uses and related elements of retail and food and drink uses

Travel and transport

Introduction

This section may be towards the end of the plan but analysis of how central Morecambe works in transportation terms and in particular how it works as a place for pedestrians is very much the starting point in any analysis.

For central Morecambe to prosper everyone's' travel and arrival experiences to and from central Morecambe should be good. Parking arrangements, highway and pedestrian routes should all combine to give a positive welcome experience, serve to draw people in to the heart of the town and feed it with footfall.

Today, transportation and parking arrangements do not do this. Many travel experiences are not as good as they should be and the provision made for travel in many respects actually works against the central parts of town being a good place to spend time in and walk around.

Accordingly a key element of the plan is a set of actions to re-cast how central Morecambe works in terms of transportation, arrival and parking. This should reduce excess traffic circulation and encourage much more pedestrian movement and help drive increased footfall.

A focus of the plan framework is on making for easy pedestrian movement around the heart of the town. A functional hierarchy of streets that provides good access for pedestrians and cyclists and is as safe and pleasing as possible will encourage people to walk

further, to linger and interact to the benefit of social vitality and trading.

All the actions proposed are considered key to making central Morecambe work in such a way that it has a strong heart. The changes will ensure that transportation arrangements within the central areas are fit for purpose and Morecambe is positioned to reap the full benefits of the new M6 Link when this is completed hopefully in 2014/15.

Road travel to and from central Morecambe

Information as to route choice and signage is often poor and confused. A comprehensive set of actions is proposed as detailed in Topic paper 6 to rationalise and improve signage for drivers to and from Morecambe (from the M6). This is to direct traffic along the most appropriate routes for the purpose of journeys, and to clarify and reassure as to routes being used and to the parking available.

Action Set AS10. Traffic route signage to and from central Morecambe.

- Improve traffic signage external to the town and re-direct traffic where appropriate
- Use journey to help better shape the town's identity and create a positive impression to those arriving.

Vehicle parking

Good provision is essential to the vitality and viability of any town centre. Within central Morecambe car parking availability readily meets demands at most times. Indeed at very many times total capacity is way in excess of demand. At peak visitor times though, commonly Sundays and coincident with good weather the capacity is fully taken up, or at least the most 'visible' central car parks are.

There is much variation in the use of vehicle parking by locations. Certain are well used at many times. One or two are very underused and even some of the most central car parks are by no means full for much of most days. The existing provision therefore gives much choice but is inefficient.

The availability of car parking is such that it could appear to be so convenient as to actually limit footfall, reducing opportunities for trade and a flourishing town centre.

There is something of a dilemma. Vehicle parking is just one of the many uses of land essential within any town. It is an asset to have such an accessible town centre. Yet at present parking is the predominant use of land within central Morecambe and the extent of land this takes up is to the detriment of the character and identity of the town and what it has to offer.

It is proposed that a better balance can be struck. Over time with less land given over to parking but parking provision as a whole made more efficient with more clear choices as to what is available and this choice better serving the economic needs of central Morecambe than it does now without. This means changes in the location of vehicle parking and also its management and pricing and

improvements to arrangements for coach drop off and taxi waiting. Topic Paper 6 details thinking on this to date.

Action Set AS11. Parking provision and management

The city council in conjunction with the county council and other relevant organisations to prepare a joint plan for changes to vehicle parking within the plan area covering for both on and off street parking, public and private and loading / unloading, coach drop off (see AS13) and pick up and provision for taxis.

The joint plan to be consistent with the plan framework and be informed by MAAP Topic Paper 6 and cover the location, management and pricing of parking both on and off street. The plan both to inform and be informed by the City Council's Parking Strategy and to be encouraging of longer duration visits.

The spatial parameters for this plan are that -

- The main routes into the town afford a hierarchy of parking choices with longer stay provision the first choice available with shorter stay choices the closer into the town centre where possible.
- Highway and parking signage is well considered and clear as to the choices of parking available.
- Much vehicle parking should be provided towards and at the edges of the town centre with less of the very heart of the town itself given over to parking.
- The location, pricing and management of on street parking complement that provided off street and not attract people away from off street provision.

Parameters for management of parking into the future should include –

- To make parking facilities work as first-stop information points, helping to direct footfall to the town centre and other areas / destinations of interest
- To provide for legitimate needs for short duration parking close to key service providers including the Post Office, banks and building societies
- Consideration of the needs of appropriate residential parking.
- To bring the provision of dedicated disabled bays within and around the town centre up to the national guideline standard (6% of capacity where appropriate).
- To re-work dedicated parking provision for taxi services but assure that this continues to give good service into the town centre
- Provide for coach drop off and pick up within or very close by to the town centre,
- Where appropriate to increase parking provision in certain locations either by increasing efficiencies in the use of space and bringing other underused areas into use for car parking, including potentials
- Target that change to net public parking provision within the plan area over the plan period to not make for more than a 10% loss in spaces
- Given the importance of parking revenues to the city council's income and thereby the direct correlation to council tax levels net consequential changes to parking income to be close to revenue neutral or better profiled by year.

Specifically, it is proposed that over time certain existing off street parking areas may be developed. These being –

- Bus station car park (Lancaster City Council)
- Goods Yard car park (between the Platform and Rita's Café – Lancaster City Council)
- Marine Road car park no.2 (Lancaster City Council)
- Pedder Street car park (Lancaster City Council)
- Winter Gardens car park (private)

Development proposals for these and the justifications are described in Topic Paper 6. Development would mean the decommissioning of the parking as and when proposals are implemented. It is envisaged that this would happen over time and not all at once. Development of any car parks / parking areas would be subject to this either providing or contributing towards alternative provision as required by specific development management policies and as detailed in this Draft Plan.

Public transport

Developing public transport services and facilities is important in creating pleasant and accessible means of accessing and exiting the centre. Morecambe already has something of a 'transport hub' off either side of Central Drive in the rail and bus 'stations' but much can be done to help improve travel experiences.

Specifically, one key aspect is to agree on the future of the bus station, which is essentially a covered kiosk style shelter. The options for this are -

To remove the building structure and make more legible and pleasant access to the Poem Path to better connect the railway station and bus halts with the promenade and town centre
To bring the building into operational use – providing shelter and information.

Action Set AS12. Bus services.

Bus operators and the local councils to work together to extend and improve services including for bus and coach stops to better serve the centre and to improve access to information.

Action Set AS13. Rail services.

The rail operator and the local councils to work together to bring forward a range of improvements to the station to improve the welcome experience and that at departure including real time service information, improved shelter, seating and directional signage into the centre.

Marketing to investors and visitors

Introduction

This section of the plan looks at marketing to both investors and visitors.

It has to be recognised that many people perceive Morecambe – if they perceive it at all - as having something of a twin identity and that such perceptions are justifiable. On the one hand there is the inadequate town centre and dilapidations, on the other the seafront and its famed views of the Lakeland fells. This makes the context for any marketing, whether to investors or visitors, very difficult.

The hard realities are that marketing Morecambe to investors is not tenable without a credible plan for regeneration that can engender confidence in prospects of making sufficient returns. Similarly, marketing for staying visitor markets risks trading in disappointment as and until certain things are put right.

Consequently, marketing, whether to investors or staying visitors is unlikely to be productive to any significant extent at least in the short term - pending plan implementation. In the medium to longer terms however marketing to these will be increasingly important to promote and exploit what is achieved in getting the conditions for investment right and forging a new visitor future.

Marketing to investors

It has to be recognised that much investment will not just come to central Morecambe; it will have to be actively sought. This demands a partnership effort between key public and private organisations

including all the local councils and the local chamber of commerce to agree a marketing initiative and its delivery to a clear programme. It will necessarily involve going to investors and developers and pitching for Morecambe and the opportunities it offers to business.

Effective town centre marketing is crucial to facilitate effect and sustain improvements in the town centre economy. It is especially important for central Morecambe given the generally poor profile of the town externally and poor perceptions. The profile can be raised and perceptions changed.

The marketing should have a particular focus to market those premises and accommodations that have a unique selling point either in the views to be had out across the Bay e.g. premises at all floors fronting to Marine Road or in the heritage interest e.g. the Winter Gardens, St Laurence's Church and the Alhambra.

The marketing should focus on the opportunities that might positively differentiate central Morecambe as a place to do business in. These should be agreed as part of preparing the marketing initiative but real and obvious opportunities are -

- Quality of life available in this part of the north west on the shores of Morecambe Bay
- Availability of housing at prices much more competitive than in many parts of the country
- Availability of potential premises including premises fronting out across the Bay
- For footloose businesses relatively low rents and land values
- In its proximity to Lancaster and the Lakes
- in the leisure sector and in visitor accommodation

Action Set AS14. Investor marketing strategy.

The city council to lead a collaborative marketing initiative to actively seek new investment for central Morecambe and provide support to investors where appropriate.

Marketing to visitors

Topic Paper 7 looks in depth at Morecambe's functionality in the market for visitors and how it might be better positioned into the future. It explores what type of place the town could or should be in the eye of the contemporary visitor to make them want to visit. The content of this section of the Draft Plan picks up on certain aspects only.

A starting point is to build on the town's substantial attraction to day visitors – at least in good weather. To compete and achieve good share of visitor markets into the future Morecambe must have a clear position, identity or brand. Determining on the branding is key as the message this conveys to potential visitor markets must have resonance in competition with the myriad of competing options available to people in decisions on where to visit and what to do.

To have resonance the branding or message must be quite simple and cut through to people. There must be something differential about the message so that wrapped up within it is an answer to the immediate question – why Morecambe? To do this it must say something about Morecambe in a way that is defining about what is

on offer. It must also be realistic, grounded in what is reasonably on offer and targeted at growth sectors in the visitor market. There is little point in direction marketing at weakening or inappropriate market sectors.

Morecambe Bay and its unique natural environment gives Morecambe a differential selling point. In two words alone the words "Morecambe Bay" say something about place and town. The unique geography and natural assets of the Bay do set the town apart and gives much material for marketing a range of experiences to visitors including for those associated with quite passive enjoyment of the Bay environment through to more active and direct experiences. It represents a clear point of differentiation from not only other seaside resorts, but so too the Lakes and Dales. As such it is a unique selling point that other regenerating seaside resorts could only dream of.

For many visitors, engaging with the natural environment and celebrating Morecambe's natural assets is limited to passive engagement, namely a walk along the promenade, perhaps observing some of the coastal recreational activities such as kite-surfing fishing and sailing which serve to animate the landscape. For many this offers a pleasant day out and gives much to work with but more is needed to make for a robust, marketable visitor product.

It is difficult from a marketing perspective to convey what exactly is meant, by the 'promenade' and 'Tern Project' as visitor attractions or 'things to do' in Morecambe, and this risks setting a position for Morecambe as a destination with relatively limited things to do in the eye of the visitor. There is a need to offer more in the way of first-hand experiences of the natural environment and it is key that

marketing activities can offer a means of actively engaging target visitor markets in a range of direct experiences. Furthermore, if a position for Morecambe as a destination is to encompass its natural assets, it is imperative that all other products are consistent with this position.

Because the weather can throw a veil over the seafront, marketing to visitors has to factor for what is landward too but to avoid this diluting the message it is important that what is conveyed about this is complementary. In this it is important to appreciate that, however worthy, much of the town's existing leisure offer, at least within the central areas is not differential in nature i.e. what is available is really no better and indeed in many respects is lesser than what people can otherwise find in their home environments. Patently also it is crucial that there is a clear quality benchmark to what is marketed variously in the quality of the environment, in the experiences available to people within public areas and in the services given to and received by customers in stores and at food and drink outlets.

Ingredients essential to marketing central Morecambe into the future Morecambe will be -

- the promenade and shoreline and opportunities to experience in a range of ways - from passive through to more direct and active - the Bay and its environment, particularly at the shoreline
- the character and quality of parts of the town, including the pleasing local scale to the fabric of the older more settled areas and particularly the setting of the central seafront with the main sandy beach contiguous

- a healthy, sociable town centre offering a range of quality services in a quality environment
- integration to the range of leisure opportunities available on the periphery of the town e.g. at Heysham and Happy Mount Park in the quite contrasting city of Lancaster close by and further afield including in the Lakes and Dales

Action Set AS15. Visitor marketing strategy

It is proposed that as informed by the Topic Paper and other sources and appropriate consultations the city council should lead in preparing a visitor marketing strategy to grow the visitor market in a considered and achievable way

The overall approach should be to –

- Seek to increase day visitor numbers over a wider spread of times i.e. in term times and during the week when the town otherwise experiences lowered levels of demand and there is much capacity.
- Via plan implementation encourage day visitors to stay longer and do more i.e. for people to stay long enough to eat and into the evenings
- Entice new staying visitors and as part of this convert more day visitors to staying visitors.

4. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Plan Implementation

Introduction

The change and improvement required and as set out in the plan must be driven locally. The local councils rightly have a particular role but there is a responsibility also on other, public, private and voluntary organisations to play their part and a crucial role too for local people. Regenerating central Morecambe will take concerted, collective effort by all who care about the town.

In this part of the plan key responsibilities are highlighted but the implementation schedule in Appendix X describes implementation in more detail.

Programming

Many actions involve preparing and then delivering detailed strategies concerning particular topic areas. The topic papers presented with the plan describe analysis on these to date and should inform implementation.

The investment and economic and social conditions that prevail demand that much action is taken early and work on many actions should start prior to plan adoption. Other actions can come later or are consequential on early ones. Certain actions can be programmed quite closely, for others the programming is more

uncertain as various factors including availability of finance and the commitment of organisations will determine the actual timing.

Actions are programmed over -

1-2 years

3-5 years

6-10 years

This covers for the proposed plan period to end 2021.

Public sector responsibilities

The city council has a lead implementation responsibility. There is a key role also for the other local councils – the Morecambe Town Council and the Lancashire County Council, the latter particularly as Highway Authority but in other functions also. These will need to work together closely to implement the very many actions in the plan.

Plan implementation will be a significant task for the city council. It has many relevant functions. These include planning and regeneration in particular but others also including leisure. The city council should lead in managing development. This will require close partnership working with the highway authority and other public and private organisations to coordinate and facilitate development and change in accordance with the plan.

The city council is also the largest landowner within the plan area. It owns and manages most of the seafront and promenade and large areas off Central Drive in particular. This gives the city council a real capacity to lead by example and help drive plan implementation by deploying its land assets accordingly. To do this the city council

should align the financial management of its land assets within the plan area so that receipts, for example from the disposal of land, are held over or ring fenced for reinvestment in plan implementation.

In addition, to underpin plan implementation it is essential that in taking executive and any regulatory decisions the local councils take regeneration needs and the core strategy regeneration priority for central Morecambe into proper account.

Also, it is incumbent on the city council to publicise and disseminate information on the opportunities available for local communities through the new Localism Act 2012 and other legislation to take initiative in making places better in which to live and work.

Local capacity and initiative

A key message of the plan is that much is down to local people who individually, by their actions, can play a large part in making things better.

As an example for Morecambe to have a strong town centre into the future and to support trading and investment within the plan area it needs people and local residents in particular to support the town centre with their custom. As discussed increased footfall, busier streets and increased expenditures can make for demand led improvements into what is on offer by stimulating investment in businesses and services. It really is a case of “use it or lose it”.

There is much scope for local action and particularly collaborative initiatives to support business performance⁸. There are several examples of this latter, all recent, which are welcome and show what can be done. These include work led by the Morecambe Town Council for a “Portas Pilot” - the “MoreCanBe Done campaign” and work ongoing to try to establish a Business Improvement District (BID). All these initiatives suggest growing local capacities and commitment and this is very promising for the future. Again the local councils have an important role to nurture and support such collaborative action.

The role of local businesses

Local businesses have an important part to play in supporting and participating in collaborative initiatives. Also, it is not for any plan to try to tell local businesses how to run but it is appropriate to make the point that businesses that just tick over, that do not invest and do not strive to best serve customers cannot expect to be competitive and successful. For central Morecambe to grow and prosper into the future it needs business to innovate and drive demand and assure that what is on offer across the board meets contemporary expectations for quality and service. Notwithstanding market conditions there must therefore be some onus on local businesses to initiate and drive improvements in business and trading.

One aspect that demands particular attention is that what central Morecambe offers to people would be greatly enhanced if business trading hours fit well to peoples’ needs and expectations. As much of the town as possible town needs to be open for business on bank

⁸ The new Localism Act identifies many opportunities

holidays, at weekends, in the late afternoons and into the evenings for its offer to visitors and increasingly residents to meet expectations. This is particularly pertinent on long summer days. Day visitors are footloose. If the town closes down at 4.30pm most will go home.

Training and support into jobs

An improving economy should bring improved local employment and other opportunities. The work of local employment and training organisations is crucial to help people into jobs and the local councils and others should support this work where needed.

Monitoring and Review

To be completed in line with the Implementation Schedule.

DRAFT

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Draft Plan is about making real changes and changing perceptions, increasing demand so improved conditions for business and trading make for a growing economy. This is the key to

- more and better jobs
- increased incomes
- improved experiences for residents and visitors alike.

It is about exploiting potentials. The enviable seaside location, the extent of the seafront promenade, the high quality leisure experience this offers and unrivalled views out already can draw very large numbers of day visitors. More can be made of this asset and it is the attraction of the seafront that gives prospect of sustaining and growing Morecambe's town centre.

The Draft Plan responds to the dire investment situation in central Morecambe. Much business is precarious and radical change is required first to help ward off any further business losses and then to bring about the investment needed for change, improvement and recovery.

The approach is focused on conditions for investment. It is about making for more footfall and thereby the activity needed to generate increased demand and thereby make for better conditions for business. In turn increased business investment can drive more improvements. This should forge the positive investment cycle that is needed.

In this way investment is the key to a virtuous circle - but it is investment that must be won in competition with places elsewhere. There has been a dearth of investment into the town over recent decades. This will only change and investment will only come if there is business confidence in the future.

There is something of a chicken and egg situation here. Improvement is needed to give confidence yet confidence can only come after improvement. This is where the plan itself has a critical role to vision and change, set out how it can be achieved and to underpin confidence.

The plan must necessarily concern places and processes but ultimately the approach is all about people. The plan must have regards to the needs of all people who come for whatever purpose, whether work, for services and shopping, leisure or recreation. In doing so though it must be recognised that young people have particular needs for outlets for their energy and people with limited mobility must be well catered for.

The plan proposals do not differentiate between residents and visitors except for the purpose of visitor marketing. This is because further informing the strategy is an understanding that it is wrong to view the visitor economy as somehow separate to the local. Rather, each is integral to the other.

To grow the town as a visitor destination central Morecambe has to offer more than is available at the seafront. This means, among other things, making the town centre stronger so it meets reasonable expectations. The converse is that for the town centre to be strong demands that it gain much more trade from visitors and better serve - and be better supported by local residents.

It is recognised that this must be done at a time when town centres across the country are otherwise very fragile. A consensus is emerging that the town centres that win out will be those that offer a pleasant, sociable experience and are places that that people want to spend time in.

The Draft Plan is ambitious, about effecting real change and changing perceptions. It demands very many actions, asks much of the private sector but with the public sector in support. It is challenging but realistic. Underlying it must be acceptance that the days of mass market long stay tourism will not come back, that the changes and improvements people seek will not just happen and that there is no magic wand to secure new attractions. It is about tackling causes and not symptoms and with no reliance on outside interventions or substantial public funding. It is achievable largely through local resources and via local actions. But we should be under no illusions. Making the heart of Morecambe strong will take some time.

APPENDICES

LIST OF POLICIES

SPATIAL POLICIES

- MAAP SP1. KEY PEDESTRIAN ROUTES AND SPACES
- MAAP SP2. INVESTMENT EXEMPTIONS
- MAAP SP3. MORECAMBE MAIN SEAFRONT AND PROMENADE
- MAAP SP4. TOWN CENTRE

MAAP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY SITES

- MAAP DO1. THE BATTERY
- MAAP DO2. STRATEGIC LEISURE – SEAFRONT HEADLAND,
CENTRAL PROMENADE
- MAAP DO3. THE ARNDALE AND AREA
- MAAP DO4. WEST VIEW
- MAAP DO5. FESTIVAL MARKET AND AREA
- MAAP DO6. FORMER FRONTIERLAND SITE

ACTION SETS

- AS1. MANAGING AND MAINTAINING STREETS AND SPACES
- AS2. IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF BUILDINGS AND
ENCOURAGING BENEFICIAL OCCUPANCY
- AS3. IMPROVING KEY ROUTES FOR PEDESTRIANS AND
CYCLISTS
- AS4. FURTHER ENCOURAGE BUSINESS INVESTMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT
- AS5. CENTRAL SEAFRONT AND MAIN BEACH
- AS6. WESTERN SEAFRONT AND BEACH
- AS7. SEAFRONT HEADLAND, CENTRAL PROMENADE
- AS8. THE TOWN CENTRE
- AS9. EDGE OF CENTRE RETAIL PARK

- AS10. TRAFFIC ROUTE SIGNAGE TO AND FROM CENTRAL
MORECAMBE
- AS11. PARKING PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT
- AS12. BUS AND COACH SERVICES
- AS13. RAIL SERVICES
- AS14. INVESTOR MARKETING STRATEGY
- AS15. VISITOR MARKETING STRATEGY