



North Tyneside Council

**Retail Centres
Regeneration Study**

Whitley Bay
Town Centre
Regeneration Strategy

**FINAL REPORT
APRIL 2010**

ARUP

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GENECON
ECONOMIC AND SPATIAL REGENERATION

DTZ

North Tyneside Council

**Retail Centres
Regeneration Study**

Whitley Bay Town Centre
Regeneration Strategy

APRIL 2010

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Contents

	Page
1 Foreword	1
1.1 Relationship with Wider Plans and Strategies	1
1.2 Overview of Centres	1
2 Introduction	3
2.1 Purpose of this Report	3
2.2 Relationship with North Tyneside's Local Development Framework	3
2.3 Suite of Reports	3
2.4 Report Structure	3
3 The Evidence Base	5
3.1 Planning Policies and Studies	5
3.2 Socio Economic Performance	6
3.3 Physical Area Appraisal	6
3.4 Movement and Access	7
3.5 Stakeholder Engagement	7
3.6 Retail Market Assessment	8
4 Options Development	10
4.1 Overview	10
4.2 The Current Role of Whitley Bay Town Centre	10
4.3 The Future Role of Whitley Bay Town Centre	11
4.4 Design Rationale	12
4.5 Key interventions	15
4.6 Options Workshop	16
5 The Options	17
5.1 Introduction	17
5.2 Option A - Minimum Intervention	17
5.3 Option B - Medium Intervention	19
5.4 Option C – Maximum Intervention	21
5.5 Sustainability Appraisal of Emerging Options	23
6 Consultation	25
6.1 Activities	25
6.2 Importance of Engagement	25
6.3 General Themes from Consultation	26
7 The Preferred Strategy	27
7.1 Overview	27
7.2 Process	27
7.3 Overview of the Regeneration Strategy	27

	7.4	Development Projects (DP)	28
	7.5	Public Realm (PR) Projects	29
8		Implementation	31
	8.1	Overview	31
	8.2	Priorities	31
	8.3	Detailed Implementation	32

Appendices

Appendix A

Project Sheets and Implementation Plans

Appendix B

Accommodation Schedule for Whitley Bay

Appendix C

Sustainability Appraisal

1 Foreword

Arup in association with Matrix, DTZ, and GENECON were commissioned by North Tyneside Council to undertake the North Tyneside Retail Centres Regeneration Study in March 2009. The commission involved the delivery of the North Shields and Whitley Bay Town Centre Regeneration strategies.

1.1 Relationship with Wider Plans and Strategies

The Regeneration Strategies for both North Shields and Whitley Bay will add to the evidence base and help inform the Council's emerging Local Development Framework, specifically the Core Strategy, Coastal Area Action Plan, and North Shields Area Action Plan.

As part of the Local Development Framework, Area Action Plans (AAP) will be developed for the town centres of Wallsend, North Shields and Whitley Bay (Coastal AAP). There has been consultation on Issues and Options for each of the AAP's.

In summary, the fit with the other main centres within the borough-

- **North Shields:** this study is intended to form the evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework – in particular the Core Strategy and the North Shields Area Action Plan.
- **Whitley Bay:** this study is intended to form the evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework – in particular the Core Strategy and the Coastal Area Action Plan.
- **Wallsend:** the town centre is identified as a key development site within the River Tyne North Bank Study. This is a strategy in place to guide regeneration activity in the area over the next 15-20 years. This plan, in line with the emerging Wallsend AAP, advocates the delivery of a revitalised centre through the development of new and improved retail provision - potential redevelopment of the Forum Shopping Centre and Co-op which would create a retail development of significant scale and impact within the town centre and borough.

1.2 Overview of Centres

A high level analysis of each of the main centres within the Borough reveals the following issues and roles which have been considered in the of the regeneration strategy for Whitley Bay Town Centre.

- **North Shields** – A centre serving a local population, with lower end shops and areas of low environmental quality/ public realm within the town centre;
- **Whitley Bay** – A centre serving the local community and tourists and depends on business from hen and stag economy. The hen and stag night culture undermining family image. Poor way finding to Metro Station and seafront needs to be addressed;
- **Wallsend** – This centre is being reviewed as part of the River Tyne North Bank Strategic Framework Plan, we understand this is currently seeking funding from One North East.
- **Killingworth:** as set out in the Core Strategy, Killingworth town centre is a relatively recent, modern shopping centre where no substantial improvement or investment is required.
- **Whitley Lodge** – A centre serving local walk-in catchment. It has a poor quality public realm, with traffic and parking dominating the centre. Its link with Whitley Bay requires a greater understanding; and

- **Forest Hall** – A centre serving local walk-in catchment. Traffic and parking dominates the centre, which also has poor streetscape

2 Introduction

The reports for each town centre are set within the context of the retail issues facing the Borough as a whole. The overall commission involves the delivery of two key elements:

- North Shields: Regeneration Strategy; and
- Whitley Bay: Regeneration Strategy.

The reports for each town centre are set within the context of the retail issues facing the Borough as a whole. This report looks specifically at Whitley Bay Town Centre.

2.1 Purpose of this Report

This document sets out the Regeneration Strategy for North Shields town centre encompassing the preferred option and implementation plan.

This document has been prepared to:

- Set out the context and rationale for the Regeneration Strategy;
- Describe the 'preferred option' for North Shields town centre. This has been worked up in consultation with the local community and stakeholders to reflect the specific needs of North Shields; and
- Set out an Implementation Plan for the town centre.

2.2 Relationship with North Tyneside's Local Development Framework

North Tyneside Council are currently preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF) to replace the Unitary Development Plan and its associated documents. As part of the Local Development Framework, Area Action Plans (AAP) will be developed for Wallsend, North Shields and Whitley Bay (part of the Coastal AAP).

This Regeneration Strategy and its findings will help to inform the production of the North Shields Area Action Plan.

2.3 Suite of Reports

This Regeneration Strategy represents the final report within a suite of documents for North Shields town centre. The following documents have been produced and signed off by the council as part of the overall commission, and should be read in conjunction with this report:

- Baseline Report (July 2009)
- Borough wide Retail Centres Overview (March 2010)
- Options Report – North Shields (November 2009)
- North Shields Regeneration Strategy (this document) (March 2010)
- Consultation Statement – North Shields (March 2010)
- In addition, at the start of the commission we were asked to produce a Position Statement for the neighbourhood centres of Whitley Lodge and Forest Hall.

2.4 Report Structure

This Regeneration Strategy is structured as follows:

- Section 2: The Evidence Base
This section will highlight the key findings from the Baseline Stage of the commission for Whitley Bay;
- Section 3: Options Development
This chapter will outline and appraise the key principles and the design rationale for the options.

- Section 4: The Options

This chapter provides an overview of the options which the subject of stakeholder and public consultation.

- Section 5: Consultation

This section will outline the consultation undertaken to produce the Regeneration Strategy. It will also outline a summary of the main findings from the public consultation on the options presented for the regeneration of Whitley Bay town centre.

- Section 6: The Preferred Strategy

This section will outline the preferred strategy for the regeneration of Whitley Bay town centre.

- Section 7: Implementation

This final chapter will outline the key steps to take this study forward.

- Appendix A: Project Sheets and Implementation Plans

This appendix identifies the main development projects and public realm works for Whitley Bay town centre. It contains a series of Implementation Plans which outline how to take forward the projects and the key issues associated with them.

- Appendix B: Accommodation Schedule

This appendix contains the Accommodation Schedule which accompanies the Regeneration Strategy Plan and Implementation Plans.

- Appendix C: Sustainability Appraisal

This appendix contains the Sustainability Appraisal of the options tested through this study.

3 The Evidence Base

The first stage of this commission was to review the existing evidence base for Whitley Bay town centre. This involved:

- A review of planning policies and studies;
- An assessment of the Whitley Bay's socio economic performance;
- An urban design audit of the town centre;
- Assessment of movement and access to and through the town centre;
- Stakeholder engagement with North Tyneside Council, Nexus and the Whitley Bay Chamber of Trade; and
- A review of the retail issues in the Borough and the town.

This section will set out the key messages from the different strands of the baseline review for Whitley Bay. For more detail on the Evidence Base for this study please see supporting report –Baseline Report (July 2009).

3.1 Planning Policies and Studies

A review of the planning policy and other studies has identified the following issues and challenges for the regeneration of Whitley Bay town centre:

Local Planning Policy:

Issues:

- Requirement for pedestrian and public realm improvements
- Damaging reputation of stag and hen evening economy

Opportunities:

- Potential to diversify evening economy
- Potential to improve public realm and pedestrian facilities

Tourism:

Issue:

- Whitley Bay should focus on place management initiatives and cater for local market

Opportunity:

- Proposals to host events as a major tourism opportunity

Growth Point Status:

Provides the opportunity to:

- Increase the size and diversity of the population;
- Increase the range of housing to meet the population's needs;
- Attract a range of new businesses;
- Increase the number of jobs in the Borough; and
- Revitalise town centres.

North Tyneside Council Plan (2009):

The Council Plan supports:

- Regeneration opportunities in the Borough;
- Redevelopment of Whitley Bay leisure pool; and
- The progress of Spanish City Dome and Playhouse remodelling.

Two key objectives:

- To revitalise Whitley Bay town centre; and
- To regenerate the sea front at Whitley Bay.

North Tyneside Town Centre Research (2008):

This research identified the following:

- Requirement to improve the quality and attractiveness of town centre for visitors;
- Requirement to improve the range of goods provision in the town centre; and
- Opportunity to introduce events into the town centre or sea front.

3.2 Socio Economic Performance

The socio economic profile of Whitley Bay was reviewed using census information (2001) and more up to date North Tyneside Council statistics where available.

The following represents a socio economic snapshot of Whitley Bay town centre, based on the lower super output areas which best match the study area boundary (North Tyneside 006A, 006B, 006D, 006E and North Tyneside 009E).

- Population: 6,065
- Unemployment: 3.77%
- Main Industrial Sectors: Health and Social Work; Wholesale and Retail; Repair of Motor Vehicles; and Real Estate.
- Deprivation: within the 40% most deprived areas

The socio economic profile above illustrates relatively low unemployment for those living within the town centre. Deprivation is not as acute as other areas of the North Tyneside Borough. The workforce of the town is based primarily around the retail, care, mechanical and real estate sectors.

3.3 Physical Area Appraisal

An urban design audit was undertaken to assess the physical environment in Whitley Bay town centre. This analysis involved: looking at spatial patterns and relationships between distinct sub-areas; a character area appraisal; townscape appraisal in terms of key landmarks, gateways, views, topography and nodes; public realm quality, and accessibility and movement. The following key issues were noted.

- **Poor quality of public realm**, particularly in key character areas of the town centre retail core and the promenade;
- **Improvements to shop frontage are** necessary – suggested that a shop front design guide is prepared to enable a consistent language and treatment across Whitley Bay;
- Possible consolidation or relocation of uses to provide **greater vibrancy and connection to the seafront** vis-à-vis retail and leisure;

- Layout and **quality of street furniture is generally poor** including implementation of surface materials;
- Enhance gateway points into Whitley Bay, particularly along the Promenade. Scope out the opportunity to enhance current plans for redevelopment of the Spanish City site area;
- **Enhance corridors of movement**, through improvements to public realm and building frontage, and reinforce connections between retail uses and the seafront; and
- Devise a strategy to **tackle poorly maintained properties**, particularly with regard to derelict buildings, so as to minimise their negative impact on their surrounding environments.

3.4 Movement and Access

Movement and access in Whitley Bay town centre was assessed based on site visits appraisals and discussions with Nexus. The main findings of this analysis were:

- Traffic congestion during busy times reduces the attractiveness of the town centre as a shopping destination.
- There is a perception that road safety problems are created by mixing shoppers and traffic during busy periods.
- Whitley Road could be improved by rerouting traffic away from the area.
- There is little incentive for shoppers to park off-street (utilise Park View Shopping Centre Multi Story Car Park and other car parks).
- The limited waiting parking provided on Park View is a suitable solution for shops along this route.
- Signage indicating routes from the town centre and Metro station to the sea front could be improved.
- Strong arrival points for cyclists' inc. Coast & Castles cycle route.

3.5 Stakeholder Engagement

As part of the review of key issues for Whitley Bay, meetings were held with key individuals from North Tyneside Council, Nexus and the Chamber of Trade. The main points that were raised through these discussions are set out below:

- Retail offer not strong enough despite the presence of independent / niche shops;
- Town lacks a 'centre' / 'focus';
- Prominent retail units vacant;
- On-street parking an issue in town centre;
- Anti-social behaviour resulting from the presence of bars and clubs;
- Station isolated and destinations not well sign posted, e.g. Seaside;
- Small scale measures need to be part of the strategy: signage, shop fronts, displays, exhibitions, events;
- Living above shop initiative, improved tourism and marketing campaign, internal/external market should be explored;
- Former Coliseum site identified as an 'opportunity'; and
- Public realm at the heart of the town centre needs to be improved.

3.6 Retail Market Assessment

A brief assessment of the retail facilities and vitality of the subject retail centres within the eastern sector of North Tyneside was reported within the Baseline Report and has informed subsequent stages of study towards this Regeneration Strategy.

The centres within North Tyneside vary in terms of their function, physical appearance and quality of offer. Their catchments overlap offering choice to the residents within the shared catchment and Silverlink draws from beyond North Tyneside. All are influenced by the quality of retail offer in Newcastle city centre and the Metro Centre, both of which are of regional significance.

Silverlink's influence within the regional retail hierarchy is restricted to the car reliant shopper who places a higher value on convenience. Its strategic location on the A19 / A1058 junction with a large volume of free parking makes the retail park attractive primarily for the car borne shopper.

Whitley Bay is a key town centre in the Borough, with the main retail focus being the Park View Shopping Centre, Park View and Whitley Road. The town provides visiting shoppers with a broad choice of retailers and is dominated by local independents. There are a handful of national retail multiples present including Peacocks, Clinton Cards, Costa Coffee, Superdrug, Boots, Claire's, Select and Poundstretcher. They are all located in close proximity to each other either within the Park View Shopping Centre or close to it on Whitley Road. This area therefore represents the "prime" retail location for Whitley Bay.

The Centre's main function is as a location for convenience, leisure and service retailing with some comparison shopping provided by a small number of national multiples and specialist local retailers. The centre's location on the coast also draws tourists who support a number of cafes, bars, restaurants and weekend nightlife. The centre provides a dual function to a local resident and a tourists/leisure based spend.

Over the course of the preparation of this Strategy a number of significant and former vacant units have been re-occupied including the Woolworths (now occupied by B&M) and the Marks & Spencer Simply Food (now Sainsbury's) thus showing some sign of recovery and interest in the town. Vacancies do remain with notable examples including the former Co-op supermarket and T&G Allan store both on Whitley Road.

The threat to Whitley Bay town centre is one where the primary convenience retail function is already provided in out of centre locations favouring the more independent and mobile shopper. In Whitley Bay existing town centre food outlets have relocated or downsized a sign of weakness and a declining trend towards providing services for the less mobile and well off shopper. This trend will continue as the main operators compete for market share and increase the number of product lines they offer in their out of centre stores.

There are a handful of published requirements for Whitley Bay but there is evidence of market activity. This is tempered by the poor general economic climate and being in a period of local market adjustment as values change to reflect fewer occupiers, greater vacancy rates and whether retail units are fit for purpose or require adapting.

The market feedback suggests Whitley Bay is in decline. The town centre suffers from a ribbon style layout, a large number of small shops with inadequate internal layouts and a car parking problem. The absorption of Marks & Spencer Simply Food to their larger Silverlink shop and closure of Woolworths has adversely affected the market perception of the centre within its local shopping catchment. The wealthier local shoppers can and do choose to shop elsewhere for comparison goods, Silverlink and Newcastle city centre being the main beneficiaries for car borne shoppers.

Car parking is often cited as an issue. This is due to the close proximity of higher density housing on narrow streets surrounding the centre with resident on-street parking. Existing shopper car parking is provided by the Park View Shopping Centre where there is a small

charge. This is infrequently at full capacity and the car parking issue may be perceived rather than being an actual issue.

In summary, Whitley Bay's elongated centre stretches the attractiveness of its retail offer. It also has a dual function providing convenience retail to local residents and has an appeal to tourists due to its coastal location. The wealthier sectors of Whitley Bay's shopping catchment are not very loyal and those who value convenience and choice more highly, when making decisions about where to shop, have a propensity to go elsewhere. The independent retailers provide uniqueness to Whitley Bay and maintain its special appeal however, the high number of vacancies and recent loss of some high profile names exposes Whitley Bay's vulnerability due to the length of time units remain vacant.

4 Options Development

4.1 Overview

The preparation of the Regeneration Strategy included an 'Options Development' stage. In preparing the options the following key issues were reported back to the client group and are briefly summarised below.

- Current role of the town centre;
- Potential future role of the town centre; and
- Design rationale for interventions.

An Options Workshop was held in July 2009 with the project team and the key regeneration, transport, and planning officers from North Tyneside Council. Key messages and issues from this stage are also included below.

4.2 The Current Role of Whitley Bay Town Centre

The Issues and Options Report for the Coastal Area Action Plan notes the role of Whitley Bay as: *"... a location for convenience and comparison shopping, it also caters for the tourism sector attracted to the area due to its coastal location and character, resulting in a dual function town centre."*

The town centre has a number of service facilities such as cafes, restaurants and independent stores. The overall appearance and small independent retailers all add to the character of the settlement as well as catering for the shopping needs of the local population.

Whitley Bay is defined as a main town centre in the North Tyneside Borough in both the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the borough-wide Retail Capacity Study. The retail capacity study recommended that the Local Development Framework should define a more restricted town centre boundary for Whitley Bay.

The Town Centre Survey (2008) that formed part of the evidence base for the Coastal Area Action Plan Issues Paper found that whilst people in Whitley Bay were satisfied with the variety of shops, although there were concerns in the escalation of vacancies, charity shops and a loss of the character in the town centre and in need of 'modernisation'.

The number of vacancies is an increasing concern with the recent closure of recognised high street stores (Woolworths, T&G Allan and Marks & Spencer Simply Food) in the economic downturn that is being felt nationally.

What is important for the future of Whitley Bay as a retail centre is the quality of retail on offer. The quantity of retail is currently too thinly spread and there is a perceived lack of parking.

Whilst providing a focus to Whitley Bay retail centre is important, the challenge for the town is if it can add to or break away from the 'Stag and Hen' evening economy and broaden the town's offer as a leisure destination encompassing the coastal location and potentially accommodating local outdoor events that take place in the region.

4.3 The Future Role of Whitley Bay Town Centre

A lot of what towns do is the same, for a specific catchment - Whitley Bay needs to do it better. More needs to be made of its assets – the independent retail offer, the seaside and tapping into its affluent hinterland. The town offers a unique character, a mix of independent traders operating alongside national stores.

The future role of the town centre should be to broaden its offer in terms of retail, leisure and community provision. It is vital to get a better quality of retail offer, consolidated around the town centre core at the junction of Whitley Road and Park View.

In terms of encouraging more people in the local community to use the town centre it is important to consider their needs. An improved convenience goods offer would provide for those people who live in Whitley Bay and currently opt to drive to a supermarket store in an out of town location elsewhere in North Tyneside e.g. Sainsbury's / Morrison's.

With regards to the heart of the town centre there may be some merit in locating a community facility within the town centre, with associated retail and/or A3 (restaurant and café) uses. This would increase the footfall to and through the town centre and increase the importance of the public space at the junction of Whitley Road and Park View.

In order to attract visitors, and provide for families, it is imperative to increase the current leisure offer afforded by Whitley Bay town centre. In terms of catering for the family friendly activities this would involve a key enhancement project at the Promenade and South Parade to allow the town centre activities to reach and benefit the seaside.

The Spanish City area is a key site in terms of raising the profile of Whitley Bay and the coast. This has the potential to become a leisure attraction that will draw visitors from outside of the town and the borough, whilst accommodating residents and families that live within the Whitley Bay area.

It is important to consider the 'links' between the arrival points into the town centre for pedestrians (footpaths), motorists (car park) and public transport (Metro and bus stops). Movement between the arrival point and the town centre is an essential component of a successful town centre and it is here that we feel that Whitley Bay could do better.

Important routes, e.g. Station Road, and public spaces, e.g. the Promenade, will require public realm improvements to denote the hierarchy between the different town centre routes. This allied with improved signage, would help visitors understand where the main attractions of the town are e.g. Seaside, Town Centre and in the future the Spanish City development.

The impact of an improved environment along the seaside and Promenade with an enhanced and consolidated retail offer within the heart of the town centre would help Whitley Bay realise its future role as a prosperous location for business and investment, as well as acting as a focal point for the local community.

4.4 Design Rationale

The following section presents the strategic design rationale supporting the development of site specific Whitley Bay town centre options.

The rationale reflects discussion derived from the options workshop held in July 2009. As mentioned above, this workshop identified overarching strategic goals for the town as well as discussion around site specific opportunities; public realm enhancement priorities; vehicular movement/bus access; and potential pedestrianisation.

As a result of this dual approach, the following section will:

- Present a town-wide design rationale for Whitley Bay; and
- Identify specific 'on-the-ground' site based design options that focus on opportunity areas.

4.4.1 Land use principles

The drawing overleaf describes the proposed distribution of land uses across the town centre area. The approach is based upon the intention to define different roles (quarters) for key areas and principal routes. The definition of quarters/themes is widely recognised as an important mechanism to enable town centre regeneration and for Whitley Bay includes:

- Aligning a series of clear predominant land use categories to key links across the town centre (and supporting future character area definition);
- Reinforcing a core retail area within the town centre;
- Activating links to the promenade and Metro station with broader retail uses;
- Introducing enhanced community uses and green links to Spanish City;
- Recognising Whitley Bay's distinct patterns of town centre residential; and,
- Animating the coast/promenade to provide a broader leisure offer.

Applying these principles to Whitley Bay town centre results in five core land use categories as follows:

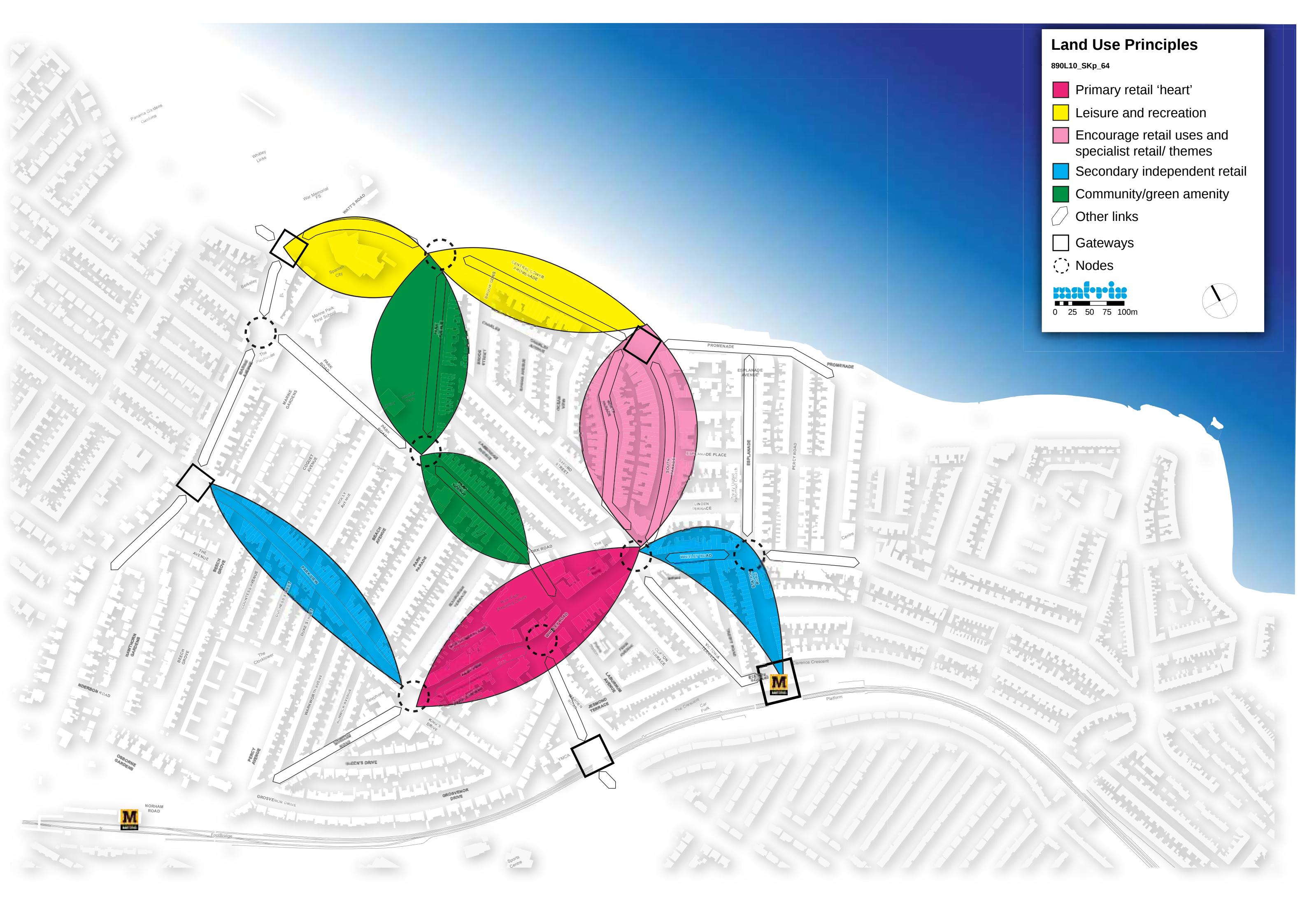
- **Primary Retail Heart:** Mostly A1 and A3 use class (shops, restaurants & café's) and includes the larger national multiples;
- **Leisure and recreation area:** Bringing a greater concentration of entertainment facilities with functions that support coastal recreational activities.
- **Encourage retail uses and specialist retail themes:** - Station and promenade linking activity: New retail market uses to Station Road and broader retail provision along South Parade (A1 and A5);
- **Secondary retail area:** Mostly A1, A3, A4 and A5 use classes. Does not contain the larger national multiple retailers; and
- **Community/green amenity:** A focus on community services and enhanced open green space amenity areas that connect to Spanish City and the coast.

Land Use Principles

890L10_SKp_64

- Primary retail 'heart'
- Leisure and recreation
- Encourage retail uses and specialist retail/ themes
- Secondary independent retail
- Community/green amenity
- Other links
- Gateways
- Nodes

0 25 50 75 100m



4.4.2 Organisational principles

It is proposed that the organisation of Whitley Bay's town centre reflects a hierarchy of routes and spaces, the drawing overleaf sets out this approach.

The organisational principles seek to achieve:

- A hierarchy of town centre routes and spaces allowing a prioritisation of investment;
- A focus on the key routes that comprise the retail core and connect the town centre's principal activity areas – these routes will receive a focus on design quality and predominant level of intervention/enhancement;
- A focus on four key public spaces that act as destinations, foci of activity and points of orientation within the centre;
- Clearly identified secondary routes that are of a lower order than the principal routes and which support and connect to the higher order routes;
- A series of five principal gateways that define access/arrival to the town centre area; and,
- Lower order routes/links including enhanced pedestrian routes that serve to connect the town centre into its adjacent context (e.g. links to the promenade).

The principal town centre routes include:

- Whitley Road (between Station Road and Park View);
- Station Road;
- South Parade; and,
- Central Lower Promenade.

The four key town centre public spaces include:

- Station Road and Station forecourt;
- Whitley Road central civic and retail space;
- Whitley Park (Park Road/Park Avenue triangle); and,
- Central Lower Promenade including beach front.

Each of these four key spaces fulfil different functions – Station Road and forecourt the key arrival point to the town and should set positive first impressions. Whitley Road central space is the premium, pedestrian priority retail location; Park Avenue triangle provides valuable green amenity in the town centre; and, the promenade establishes the town's unique coastal recreation and leisure position.

The five key town centre gateways include:

- Whitley Bay Metro Station;
- Marden Road railway crossing;
- South Parade / Promenade intersection;
- Spanish City – The Links/Marine Ave intersection; and,
- Park View / Marine Ave intersection.

Organisational Principles

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-  Principal Town Centre network
-  Secondary network
-  Enhanced pedestrian routes
-  Other links
-  Vehicular/ Bus links
-  Principal Town Centre spaces
-  Gateways
-  Nodes


0 25 50 75 100m



4.4.3 Character area principles

The town centre is proposed to comprise a series of character areas. These are informed by: the initial character area analysis (see Baseline Report); an intention towards clarifying character; and enhancing areas of weak/void character across the town centre.

The baseline analysis indicates that the town centre includes some 14 character areas. These frequently undermine a consistent 'street' character experience by virtue of varying on a plot/block basis. Clear opportunities exist to rationalise the range of character areas and provide a stronger and more coherent experience for the resident and visitor.

The drawing overleaf outlines the following proposed character area principles:

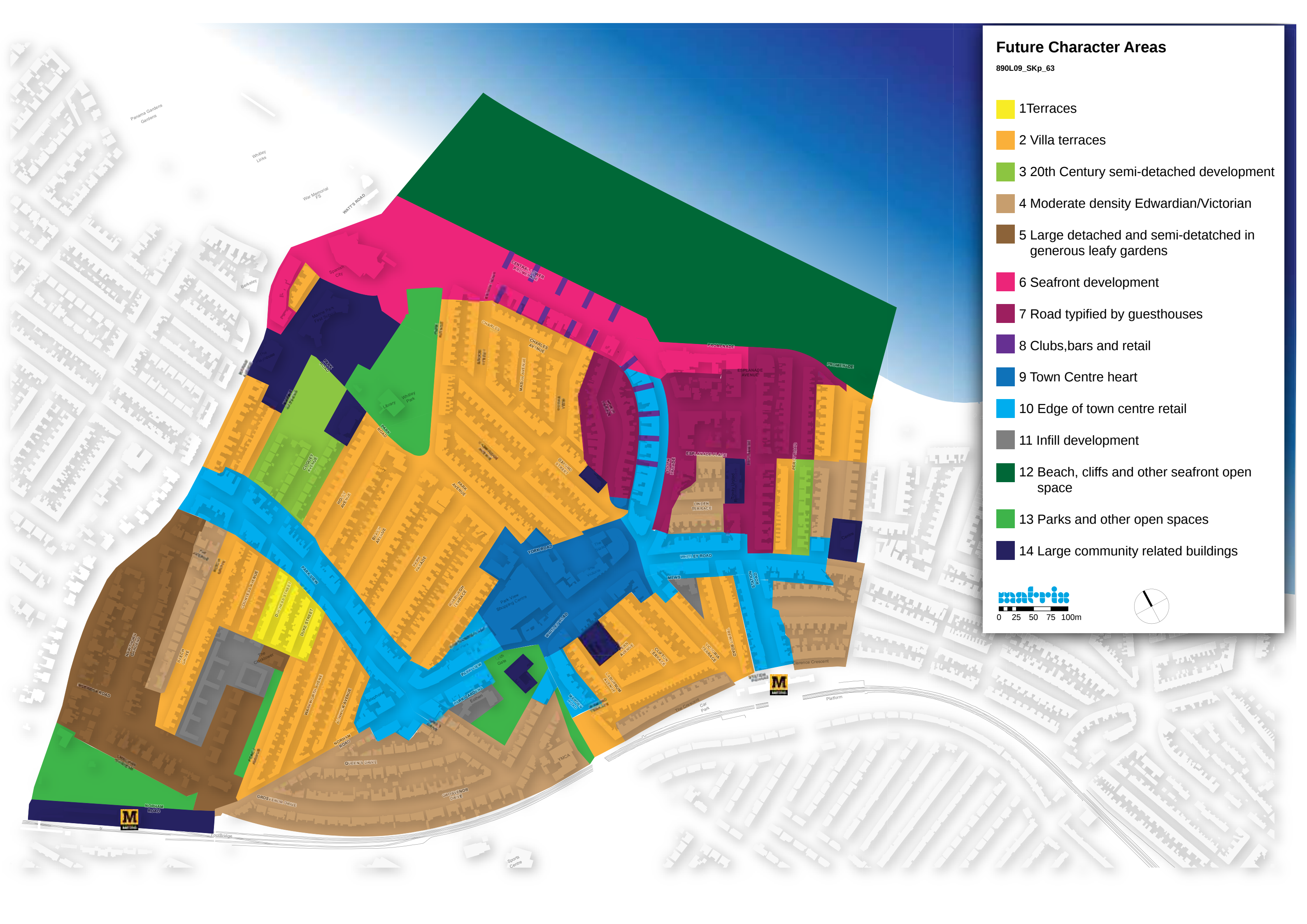
- An expanded and enhanced promenade and Spanish City 'coastal interface' area;
- A consolidated town centre retail core area to align with future pedestrianisation and higher quality public realm treatment;
- A diversified South Parade retail environment ensuring a broader offer than the current A4 predominant activity;
- Enhanced and expanded community facilities and green amenity area at Whitley Park Avenue / Park Road;
- An area of retained secondary retail activity along Park View to;
- Small pockets of residential use to the periphery of the town centre area; and
- Areas of traditional block/street residential terraced patterns in close proximity to the town centre.

Future Character Areas

890L09_SKp_63

- 1 Terraces
- 2 Villa terraces
- 3 20th Century semi-detached development
- 4 Moderate density Edwardian/Victorian
- 5 Large detached and semi-detached in generous leafy gardens
- 6 Seafront development
- 7 Road typified by guesthouses
- 8 Clubs, bars and retail
- 9 Town Centre heart
- 10 Edge of town centre retail
- 11 Infill development
- 12 Beach, cliffs and other seafront open space
- 13 Parks and other open spaces
- 14 Large community related buildings

matrix
0 25 50 75 100m



4.5 Key interventions

The design rationale is to be achieved through a range of design-led interventions across the town centre. These comprise both public realm (street and space) projects as well as site specific development and building refurbishment opportunities (e.g. shop frontages).

The drawing overleaf sets out the broad range of intervention types and their respective locations. Included in these interventions are:

- Key space enhancements such as to the core retail area along Whitley Road;
- Five Gateway enhancement projects;
- Focused opportunity site developments;
- Building frontage enhancements;
- Priority routes upgrades to routes;
- Secondary routes upgrades to routes identified; and
- Other link enhancements (e.g. to the Promenade/beach front).

The design alternatives for the possible interventions set out above are explored in more detail within the design options in the following sections.

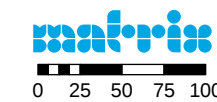
Key Intervention Areas

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-  Town Centre 'heart' improvements
 -  Development site
 -  Key enhancement project
 -  Building frontage to be improved
 -  Priority route public realm upgrade
 -  Key route public realm upgrade
 -  Gateway enhancement
 -  Green Space
- 1 Promenade

2 South Parade

3 Station Road



4.6 Options Workshop

The Options Workshop provided the forum for discussion around:

- What type of town centre?
- Where is the town centre going in retail terms?
- What is the future growth potential of the centre?

Through the discussion with Council Officer's on these main points, it was possible to establish the parameters for:

- Improving the retail within the heart of the town centre;
- Improving transport and movement around the town centre; and
- Identifying the key areas for intervention within the town centre that the options will be proposing for new development.

As a result the workshop identified the following key areas for intervention:

- Core Town Centre Area (Whitley Road / Park View);
- South Parade;
- The Metro Station link (Station Road);
- The Promenade; and
- The area around Spanish City.

The main points raised by stakeholders were:

- The town centre lacks a focal point;
- Hotel bed spaces aimed at lower market and does not attract higher spenders;
- Current night time activity is causing tension between family friendly activities and evening economy uses;
- Perception of Whitley Bay as a town for nightlife and drinking;
- General support for proposals to pedestrianise Whitley Road;
- Identified areas for intervention: core town centre area (Whitley Road / Park View), South Parade, Metro Station link (Station Road), the Promenade, area around Spanish City; and
- The quality of the promenade could be improved.

5 The Options

5.1 Introduction

On the basis of the Baseline Report and the Option Report the following three interventions were presented for public consultation in January 2010.

- **Option A – Minimum Intervention**
Projects that will be able to come forward in the short term (0 - 5 years)
- **Option B – Medium Intervention**
Projects that will be able to come forward in the medium term (5 - 10 years)
- **Option C – Maximum Intervention**
Projects that will be able to come forward in the long term (10 – 15 years)

“Do Nothing” was not considered to be an option that would be supported by the community, local stakeholders or indeed the Council – Whitley Bay may not have widespread problems, but it is not as good or as popular as it could be, nor does it contribute as well as it should to the Borough. The Options highlight the opportunities to make a change for the better and is primarily based on this, rather than acute or widespread need.

5.2 Option A - Minimum Intervention

The design option shown overleaf indicates the range of interventions that would comprise a ‘minimum’ level of intervention. As such these are projects that would be able to come forward in the shorter term (0-5 years) and that would act as catalysts to kick-start the regeneration of the town centre.

The key interventions for Option A include:

- Public realm improvements to key public spaces:
 - The main retail ‘heart’ of the Town centre;
 - Station Road;
 - Park Road adjacent to the Playhouse Theatre; and
 - The area to the north of Esplanade Avenue on the Promenade.

Upgrades to the main ‘Retail Heart’ and Station Road would be the first stages of a more detailed scheme for these areas. Principally, the upgrade at this stage would consist of de-cluttering existing streetscape and repairing paving, but no shift towards pedestrianisation would take place until later phases.

- Improvements to the public realm along key routes. This would include new paving, planting and improvements to streetscape furniture;
- Shop fronts along the newly improved upgraded routes would also be improved in terms of their appearance, signage and maintenance. A consistent high quality frontage is to be achieved;

5.2.1 Outline Options Appraisal (Pros & Cons)

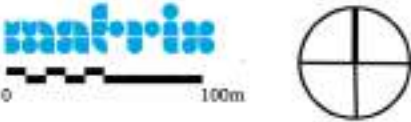
PROS	CONS
Reinforces the core town centre retail area through investment in priority routes.	Doesn't extend the public realm enhancement to all key gateways – limits regeneration impact.
Brings forward vacant/underused sites along Park Road.	Does not maximise key opportunities along York Road, Whitley Park, The Promenade and the Spanish City.
Enhances the two key town centre spaces at Whitley Road (adjacent to the Bedroom public house) and Station Road.	Does not provide pedestrianisation or reduce vehicular movement within the retail heart or other key spaces.
Addresses frontages in relation to priority routes and the key spaces.	Only provides limited improved access to the Promenade and beach areas.

Whitley Bay Option A - Minimum Intervention

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Key

- Public realm upgrade
- Key public space project
- Improved frontage



5.3 Option B - Medium Intervention

The design option shown overleaf indicates the range of interventions that would comprise a 'medium' level of intervention. As such these are projects that would be able to come forward in the short and medium term (0-10 years).

The key interventions for Option B include:

- Public realm improvements to key public spaces:
 - The main retail 'heart' of the Town centre;
 - Station Road;
 - Park Road adjacent to the Playhouse Theatre; and
 - The area to the north of Esplanade Avenue on the Promenade.
- Town Centre 'Retail Heart' to be pedestrianised, with significant public realm upgrade and Coliseum site recognised as a key development opportunity to contain a new anchor unit and bus stop provision. The unit could front Whitley Road at the ground level of the current Bedroom public house and provide a stronger frontage. The upper level of this block would include mixed uses that are appropriate in terms of the town centre.
- Gateway enhancements at Station Road, Marden Road, the north of South Parade and Park View/Marine Garden junction are envisaged;
- Redevelopment of the former YMCA site to provide residential uses;
- Station Road enhancements to include a new Saturday market, shared surface public space, planting, upgrades to shop frontage and a broadening of the independent retail offer;
- Public realm upgrade to key routes to include Park View and North Parade and the creation of a strong walkable circuit of retail and recreational activity;
- Shop fronts along the newly improved upgraded routes would also be improved in terms of their appearance, signage and maintenance. A consistent high quality frontage is to be achieved; and
- Encouraging a shift in use and character to South Parade with interspersed non A4 retail uses in this vicinity and entertainment uses re-located along the Promenade.

5.3.1 Outline Options Appraisal (Pros & Cons)

PROS	CONS
Reinvigorates the core town centre retail area through a new pedestrianised public space and new supermarket on Whitley Road.	Doesn't extend the public realm enhancement to the Promenade
Brings forward vacant/underused sites along Park Road and York Road	Does not maximise key opportunities along the Promenade and the Spanish City site.
Enhancements to the key town centre spaces at Whitley Road, Station Road and Whitley Park	Does not fully extend pedestrianisation along the primary retail area of Bedford Street.
Enhanced gateways provide a more distinctive entrance combined with improved walkable circuit.	Does not address the need for improved connections between beach and Promenade.
Addresses frontages in relation to priority routes and key spaces.	

Whitley Bay Option B - Medium Intervention

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Key

- Residential
- Development site
- Bus Stops
- Mixed use Residential/
Entertainment
- Mixed use Entertainment/
Retail/Hotel
- Mixed use Residential over Retail
- Public Realm upgrade
- Key public space project
- Enhanced gateway
- Improved frontage
- Improved public
open space



5.4 Option C – Maximum Intervention

The design option shown overleaf indicates the range of interventions that would comprise a 'maximum' level of intervention. As such these are projects that would be able to come forward in the long term (10+ years). These build on the options for both minimum and medium levels of intervention.

The key interventions for Option C include:

- Public realm improvements to key public spaces:
 - The main 'Retail Heart' of the Town centre;
 - Station Road;
 - The Promenade;
 - Park Road adjacent to the Playhouse Theatre; and
 - The area to the north of Esplanade Avenue on the Promenade.
- Town Centre heart to be pedestrianised as per Option B;
- The Spanish City is to be refurbished as part of a major mixed use development scheme providing strong seaward frontage and public car parking;
- The Promenade is given an extensive landscape treatment, which prioritises pedestrian movement through use of shared surface; better connections to the sea are provided and existing vacant units on the lower promenade are revamped to provide a mix of entertainment and retail/business uses ancillary to beach activities;
- Existing restrictions on coastal sports activities to be reviewed to increase the 'recreational offer' and maintain safety for all users;
- Gateway enhancements at Station Road, Marden Road, the north of South Parade, Park View/Marine Garden junction and Spanish City are envisaged;
- Coliseum site - redevelop opportunity site within the retail heart for appropriate town centre uses;
- Potential Enhancement of Whitley Park;
- Potential Redevelopment of the former YMCA to provide residential uses;
- Station Road enhancements with potential to hold markets, shared surface public space, planting, upgrades to shop frontage and enhancement of retail offer;
- Public Realm upgrade to key routes to include Park View and North Parade and the creation of a strong walkable circuit of activity; and
- Encouraging a shift in use and character to South Parade with interspersed retail uses with entertainment uses focused along the promenade.

5.4.1 Outline Options Appraisal (Pros & Cons)

PROS	CONS
Reinvigorates the core town centre retail area.	Scale of change and funding is required to deliver.
The creation of a new vibrant seafront destination, with improved connectivity and activities.	Scale of change may compete with other town centres in North Tyneside.
Enhancements of all identified key town centre spaces across Whitley Bay.	
The creation of strong pedestrian circuit of activity.	
Enhancements of all gateways into Whitley Bay.	
A broadening of entertainment uses to regional coastal activities as well as family orientated shopping.	
Addresses frontages in relation to priority routes and key spaces.	

Whitley Bay Option C - Maximum Intervention

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Key

- Residential
- Culture/Leisure
- Development site
- Bus Stops
- Mixed use Residential/
Entertainment
- Mixed use Entertainment/
Retail/Hotel
- Mixed use Residential over Retail
- Public Realm upgrade
- Key public space project
- Enhanced gateway
- Improved frontage
- Improved public
open space



5.5 Sustainability Appraisal of Emerging Options

As part of the continuing option development work for Whitley Bay Town Centre, there is a requirement to ensure that appropriate sustainability objectives were engrained in the process from the very start. This section describes how the emerging options have been appraised against core sustainability objectives to enable the preferred regeneration strategy for Whitley Bay town centre to be progressed.

In applying the principles of sustainable development to the UK, the Government identifies four core aims that should be met concurrently:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources; and
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

5.5.1 What is the Purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal?

This initial Sustainability Appraisal lays the foundations in terms of incorporating best practice sustainability principals into future regeneration in Whitley Bay Town Centre. The council, consider that there is a need for integration of the sustainability process within the emerging LDF preparation for the Coastal AAP. This initial sustainability appraisal is an informal process that can inform a future evidence base for both centres. This sustainability appraisal will enable the Council to integrate the principles of sustainable development throughout the conceptualisation, development, design and implementation of the Retail Centres Regeneration Study.

5.5.2 The Sustainability Process

The process for conducting this initial sustainability appraisal was as follows:

- Identification and presentation of sustainability issues and themes as informed by the baseline;
- Identification and presentation of sustainability objectives as informed by appropriate LDF/AAP information;
- Sustainability Appraisal of emerging options against SA objectives; and
- Summary of Results.

The full sustainability appraisal, including key Baseline issues and themes, appropriate sustainability objectives and the actual appraisal of merging objectives against SA objectives are included in Appendix C.

5.5.3 Key Conclusions

In summary Option A scored '+2' overall across economic, social and environmental related SA objectives. As this option does not propose any significant intervention other than public realm improvements it scored poorly on the majority of the objectives. This option would therefore not provide any significant impact to the objectives of the Town Centre and wider Coastal area. The economic and social impacts and effects were negligible and this option does not support the priorities for the town centre to become a thriving coastal destination to live, work and visit.

Option B scored '+5' overall across economic, social and environmental related SA objectives, scoring well on social related objectives. This option begins to look at the regeneration of the core primary retail area and the potential to diversify and create new uses on key strategic gateways and routes within the town centre. The option performs better than option A in terms of economic related objectives.

Finally, Option C scored the highest '+10' across all three of the sustainability themes. This option scored very highly on economic sustainability objectives and social related objectives

where the intervention was considered to have a strong positive effect in terms of linking the town centre with the coast, bringing benefits to the existing community, local traders and encouraging people to visit and invest in the area. This option also offers the greatest opportunity to increase the diversity and quality of new jobs for the area encouraging a greater mix of commercial opportunities around the primary retail core area.

It should be noted that proposal for Spanish City will be progressed independently by the council and as such could not be appraised comprehensively as part of this assessment

5.5.4 Informing the Preferred Regeneration Strategy

The key outcomes of the appraisal have been used to inform the preferred Regeneration Strategy for Whitley Bay Town Centre. Based on the analysis provided above it is concluded that the maximum intervention (Option C) presents the greatest opportunity to positively impact on the core sustainability objectives for the town centre.

6 Consultation

This section of the report sets out consultation activities undertaken as part of the Regeneration Strategy. A full review of consultation activities is included in the Consultation Statement – Whitley Bay (February 2010).

6.1 Activities

The consultation process has involved the following engagement techniques and events:

Baseline

- Several meetings were held with stakeholders including Whitley Bay Town Centre Manager, Whitley Bay Chamber of Trade and Nexus throughout the preparation of the Strategy;
- The consultants attended a business networking event held in May 2009 at the Quadrant, North Tyneside Council to identify key issues from businesses, local traders across North Tyneside;
- A Baseline Workshop was held in June 2009 with Council Officers to identify to review the baseline findings;
- Meeting with North Tyneside Council Highways Department held in June 2009;

Options

- An options workshop was held in July 2009 with project members and officers to review initial option development;
- Council Members were briefed on the Options in November 2009; and
- A public drop in exhibition of the options was displayed in the Park View Shopping Centre – Whitley Bay on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th January 2010 10am – 3pm, where Council staff and the consultants were available to explain the options and the consultation process.

6.2 Importance of Engagement

The 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act brought in a new planning system (at least in relation to forward planning) which was intended to be more effective, more responsive and which would put sustainable development at the heart of the system.

The 2004 version of PPS12 sets out the stages of preparation of a Development Plan Document (DPD), including an evidence stage, issues and options, preferred options, submission, and so on. This has been removed and according to clarification from CLG, “there is no longer a staged process for plan preparation”. However, in practice, plans will still be prepared in stages, but Local Planning Authorities now have the freedom to create their own stages and allowing greater flexibility.

There is now a single statutorily prescribed consultation stage, known as “Regulation 25”, which places greater emphasis on the process of “front loading” a term introduced in the previous version of PPS12. As a result, the preparation of the plan may not necessarily be an isolated stage of consultation that takes place in a set time but rather a variety of activities which happen more than once at different stages.

Front loading essentially offers people and organisations the opportunity to influence plan content by sharing their knowledge. With regards to this study, engagement with stakeholders (continuous) and the community (within the options stage) has been recorded to feed into the Coastal Area Action Plan process. This has been achieved through regular dialogue and discussion with the Local Development Framework team at North Tyneside Council.

It is therefore intended that the consultation undertaken as a part of this Strategy will feed into the Coastal AAP preparation process and demonstrate how the council has undertaken a process of continuous engagement. Future engagement with the public around the preferred strategy for Whitley Bay town centre will be continued as North Tyneside progress with the preparation of the Area Action Plan.

6.3 General Themes from Consultation

Set out below is a summary of several recurring key themes that have emerged from consultation undertaken to date.

- Spanish City - there has been much interest around the proposals and progress with regards to this site. Viewed as a major opportunity to improve the image and perception of Whitley Bay.
- Feeling that the Council has historically neglected to invest in Whitley Bay therefore where will the funding come from for the options proposed?
- Retail offer not strong enough despite the presence of independent / niche shops. Agreement that the town requires a focus in the centre.
- Prominent retail units vacant: former Co op, M&S, and T&G Allan stores. Encourage the Council to do what they can to ensure these properties return to use, as this is perceived to be affecting the image and vitality of the town centre.
- The Metro station is isolated and destinations not well sign posted.
- A number of small scale measures need to support the Regeneration Strategy, through the improvement of signage, shop fronts, front window displays, exhibitions, events in the town centre and on the coast.
- Encourage a living above the shop initiative.
- Whitley Bay requires an improved tourism and marketing campaign for both the internal and external tourism market.
- Former Coliseum site identified as an 'opportunity' to stimulate redevelopment in the heart of the town centre.
- It is widely acknowledged that there is a requirement for public realm improvements at the heart of the town centre, to the Metro station and along the Promenade.
- Issues with on-street parking provision in the town centre.
- Anti-social behaviour was linked to the presence of pubs and clubs.

7 The Preferred Strategy

7.1 Overview

This section explains how the options have been taken forward into a preferred strategy and outlines:

- Development projects, where opportunity sites have been identified; and
- Public realm improvements were key town centre links and public spaces have been identified for improvement.

7.2 Process

The Regeneration Strategy for Whitley Bay town centre calls for a stronger focus on public realm and coastal improvements (including Spanish City) than site specific development projects. The linear nature of the town centre dictates that opportunities for large scale site specific development sites are limited.

The Strategy has emerged through the following process:

- Baseline identification of opportunities and issues (desk top and site review);
- Establishing broad development objectives and principles to respond to the identified issues;
- Consultation with the Council to test acceptability of principles;
- Development of three options to demonstrate how the principles are applied to the town centre sites and public realm;
- Technical testing of options (viability, transport, policy alignment);
- Testing of options through a two day consultation event with local businesses, residents and visitors; and
- Development of an overarching preferred plan with individual development projects and public realm packages identified.

The proposed Strategy is robust. It is grounded in a sound 'evidence base' that correctly targets the key issues facing the regeneration of the town. The comprehensive approach to the design of this preferred plan ensures that each of the individual projects (see Appendix 1 – Project Sheets) makes a positive contribution to the whole.

7.3 Overview of the Regeneration Strategy

The Regeneration Strategy Plan overleaf should be read in conjunction with this section.

The Strategy for Whitley Bay seeks to reinvigorate the role of the town as an attractive seaside destination. To this end the objectives behind the plan have been to:

- To address the range of physical environmental problems that currently undermine the attractiveness of the centre as a visitor destination;
- To stimulate growth and positive change especially to vacant/problematic sites by clearly establishing the Council's intentions;
- To address the reputation the town has acquired for anti-social behaviour; and
- To bolster its local retail offer.

To respond to these objectives, the Strategy addresses physical site-based development opportunities alongside a structured package of public realm enhancement projects.