

Bishop Auckland

Stronger Towns Investment Plan

Part 1 | 2021





Contents

Foreword	04	
Support Statements	05	
1 Introduction	14	
2 Context Analysis	16	
		Strategic Context 16
		Visitor Economy Context 19
		Bishop Auckland's Spatial Context 22
		Town Achievements to Date 24
		Bishop Auckland SWOT Analysis 26
		Challenges to Overcome 27
		Bishop Auckland's Opportunities 31
		Alignments with relevant local, regional and national policy 33
3 Bishop Auckland Town Investment Plan Strategy	34	
		The Future for Bishop Auckland - A Vision to 2035 34
		Stronger Town Propositions 35
		Bishop Auckland TIP Spatial Strategy 35
4 Stronger Town Projects	38	
		Project Development process 38
		Project Prioritisation and short-listing 40
		The proposed Town Deal Projects 41
		Alignment to Challenges, Opportunities and Objectives 42
		Town Investment Plan Theory of Change 43
		Clean growth principles at the heart of all projects 45
		The Proposed Town Deal Projects 46
5 Consultation and Engagement	46	
		Earlier rounds of consultation and engagement 47
		Engagement of key private sector business leaders 48
		Vision and TIP development consultation 48
		Future Engagement 49
6 Delivery	50	
		Governance 50
		Business Case Development 51
		Delivery Strategy 51
		Timescales and Profile of Towns Fund Investment 53

Foreword

David Land

Chair of Bishop Auckland
Stronger Towns Board

Our direction is clear we are a ‘town on the move’.

I have lived most of my life in or around Bishop Auckland, and it has saddened me greatly to see a once proud North East town slowly lose its place. Through the 1970’s and early 1980’s, Bishop Auckland was a town that had prominence and status, it had a clear role and it was the place that drew you to it. It was a town of engineering and manufacturing excellence and the service centre for South Durham. It was the place of education with sixth form and further education colleges and, for most families, it is where they met up, socialised and spent their leisure time.

People still reminisce about the cinema, the football club, Doggarts and Beales department stores which together sold everything you could ever want and the bustling market. Friday and Saturday nights, Bishop Auckland was the place to be seen and the focus of South Durham’s night life. The only place that was off limits was Auckland Castle, home over the years to the Bishops of Durham with its high walls, grand parkland setting and fantastic surrounding countryside. Although always a source of great pride and heritage for the town, how ironic it is today that the Castle is now the focal point and catalyst for the most significant and deliverable regeneration opportunity anywhere across the North of England.

The Auckland Project, the investment it can bring, and the aspirations it creates for our young people can be the catalyst for change. With Stronger Towns Fund support, it can be a great visitor attraction, putting in place the infrastructure we need to transform Bishop Auckland to a top 5 UK destination, creating an exciting new future for the people and businesses, not only of Bishop Auckland but also wider County Durham. The partnership we have built is strong; we have engaged with stakeholders and residents at every step, and we are clear that our Town Investment Plan will elevate Durham’s visitor economy to a scale not only of national, but international status, and with it the boost it will have on the wider regional economy. We have set a strong vision of Bishop Auckland as “A Visitor Destination of Choice with International Importance” revitalising the town to become a thriving 21st century market town and service centre for the whole of South West Durham and the gateway to the undiscovered Durham Dales. You will see and hear about skills, culture and heritage, regeneration, innovation and how everyone in the town are playing their part.

Bishop Auckland is too often used by national TV to show a town in decline. With the help of Stronger Towns Fund we will change this. We will bring back hope and pride in our town and with it the opportunities and aspirations that will transform lives.

Councillor Carl Marshall

Durham County Council
Portfolio Holder Economic Regeneration

County Durham is a great place to live, work, visit and invest, and Bishop Auckland epitomises this.

Despite the economic challenges we see nationally and regionally, at a local level we remain committed to matching our residents’ and businesses’ aspirations for change, improvement, sustainability and opportunity by aligning our investment plans. We will focus our recovery from COVID-19 on long-term economic and environmental development that will help overcome poverty and disadvantage, contribute to our plan to combat climate change, and deliver our pipeline of new opportunities.

County Durham has a strong and recognisable brand. In recent years the county has seen a consistent growth in visitor numbers, which supports employment and boosts our economy. We need to continue to maximise this by creating new jobs and supporting retail and leisure facilities that bring year-round benefits to residents.

To deliver these benefits we need to ensure we have effective infrastructure, high quality property, digital connectivity, an improved high street and skilled residents. If these are maintained we can ensure that the benefits filter directly into the local economy, delivering inclusive growth.

The work of the Stronger Town Board in galvanising public, private and community representatives to help develop this submission reflects the collaboration and single-minded determination that exists to improve Bishop Auckland, a determination that will help drive further benefits to local residents and the wider economy of the county.

We have a proud heritage and we are looking towards a brighter future.

Support Statements



Dehenna Davison MP

As a member of the Town Fund Board, I fully and enthusiastically support the submission of the Bishop Auckland Town Investment Plan to Government. The town is on the move and our proposals have been built on an ambitious vision that has the backing of local people and businesses. The impact of Covid 19 is being felt by us all and this investment opportunity for the town could not come at a better time. The story of Bishop Auckland is truly exceptional, and I firmly believe the case we are making for funding is exceptional too. Not only is our story of huge importance locally, it is also of regional and national significance. Success in this bid will mean that we can build upon the excellent work to date and transform the town's ambitious vision into a reality for local people, businesses and visitors.

Councillor Joy Allen Mayor

Bishop Auckland Town Council

This ambitious proposal strongly reflects the priorities and aspirations set out in the consultation and engagement work undertaken across the town since 2017 which have been informed and endorsed by the people of the Bishop Auckland. The diverse range of projects offer the best transformative catalyst for change that will unlock the potential of the town and its people. Alongside major capital investments there are projects to make sure local people and businesses have access to necessary support, development and opportunities to provide long term benefits to the town, its residents and businesses. There's no doubting our town has the potential to do great things and drive economic prosperity. However I believe the Stronger Town Fund is a critical to this success to enable us to awaken the sleeping giant so we can fully realise our latent talent and once again become a thriving market town of distinction and put Bishop Auckland well and truly on the national and international tourism map.

Right Reverend Paul Butler

Bishop of Durham

Bishop Auckland is a town with an historic and fascinating past, a challenging present and an exciting future. My own predecessors as Bishop of Durham made this an important centre. Successive bishops from the 12th century onwards have contributed to its growth, national and international significance. It is a privilege to be here at a time of such revitalisation and regeneration that can see it be on the move again. The local people are wonderful. The opportunities for renewal through the many projects which could be delivered by The Auckland Project, local businesses and local education institutions supported by Durham County Council are terrific. The combination of Heritage, Arts, Culture and entrepreneurial business can lead to the creation of many new jobs, learning and volunteering opportunities for all age groups across the town and the wider region. Bishop Auckland is a true gateway to the region, and to fresh opportunity. It is a privilege to support this bid.

Ivor Stolliday

Visit County Durham Chair

The potential programme of investment presents a rare opportunity to deliver a step-change in what we offer visitors. It would strengthen the local and regional economy; attract day and overnight visitors; improve the daily life of communities; extend the tourism season and contribute to job creation. This would benefit not only Bishop Auckland but also the wider County. We have ambitious targets for the further growth of the visitor economy in County Durham. This programme would help us achieve this, at pace and with confidence. Doing so would stimulate local supply chains and improve local productivity and competitiveness. It could be transformational for local businesses and the whole destination. Our continuing goal is long term, and sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefit across the County, making a real and evident improvement to the quality of life of all our residents. The programme could help us make this happen.

Jonathan Ruiter

Founder of The Auckland Project

When I started the Auckland Project some ten years ago, I wondered what success might feel like. The answer? A consensus that a regeneration project was almost bound to succeed, given the abundance of opportunities for the town.

Its light may have been dim, but that ‘natural advantage’ has never gone away. Why should a town of some 25,000 people have all five of the major food retailers within its boundaries? The answer: its catchment area is six times the size of its population. People have been coming to Bishop Auckland for at least a thousand years, first the Romans, including Constantine the Great, then the Vikings, then the Prince-Bishops. Then came the coal, and the railways, Bishop Auckland became the marshalling yard for the (freight only part) of the Darlington & Stockton Railway. If you go to Japan, every schoolchild knows the story, unlike the students of University Challenge in January, who had a shot at putting it in Northumberland.

Bishop Auckland has always been a hub, the food retailers draw people in. Our aim is to do the opposite, to use the hub as a point of dispersion, visitors radiating out from it to the Vale of Durham, presently, a ‘hidden gem’ in the lingo of defeated publicists. Hidden because, individually, there is not enough allure to tempt the visitor, but, in its entirety, representing a wide variety of attractions appealing to the whole family. In the realpolitik of ‘where shall we go for our holiday?’ there’s something for everyone to dance to, all that is missing is the maypole.

We will spend £200 million creating that maypole going forward. We have created optionality, a Tripadvisor UK top 5 nightshow spectacle, using 1,000 volunteers, and also a Bishop’s Palace which, in the year before Covid struck, had 200 volunteers. We have plans to invest in the heritage railway, 19 miles long, serviced by 500 volunteers. Also to deliver a Spanish Gallery which is twinned with the Prado and the Hispanic Society of America, the two treasures of Golden Age Spain. Five gardens designed by someone famous. A Bishop’s Palace, and Park. However, infrastructure is needed to enable these plans.

We have thus created a great opportunity, but we have also created a mid-size headache. The old town has no tradition of receiving large numbers of visitors. Infrastructure is the biggest need, to facilitate additional visitors, and without this provision, it will stifle the initiative. The £20 million from the Future High Street fund has addressed the lesser of the two problems – those who come to see the historic town centre. But many more will go to the activities North of the town – the Roman fort, the Kynren Large Day Park, the Eco-farm, and an annual calendar of special events, which are simply unvisitable without reception and amenity area to house cars and direct people.

Ten years on, Bishop Auckland is at a golden moment. The great risks have already been taken. The great weight of money has already been spent. We need only an STF grant, capable of pollenating that work, and we’ll find our level.



Bishop Auckland Businesses

Rob Yorke MD Teescraft

I have been pleased to be part of the Stronger Towns Fund Board working in Partnership with DCC, TAP, Bishop Auckland College and other Private Sector representatives. TAP and DCC have made significant investments within the Town in recent years. The Stronger Town Fund application allows us to continue our transformational change and ensure Bishop Auckland is a Town well positioned as a leading retail and tourist hub both regionally and nationally.

Claire Gibbons owner of Park Head Hotel

As a hotelier in Bishop Auckland, we welcome and support the opportunities that will be created by the Town Investment Plan. We are a business engaged in the visitor economy, we look forward to helping drive forward the investment potential of the town as we move to Covid recovery and we welcome the opportunity to work with the Skills and Training Hub to create the right conditions for new employment opportunities in Bishop Auckland.

Fiona and Gary Ewing

owners, Inspiral Cycles

As business owners on Bishop Auckland high street, we’re very excited by the Town Investment Plan, especially since with the scope to improve the walking and cycling network around the town. It’ll be great to have a greener and cleaner environment which can help improve peoples’ health and wellbeing.

Executive Summary

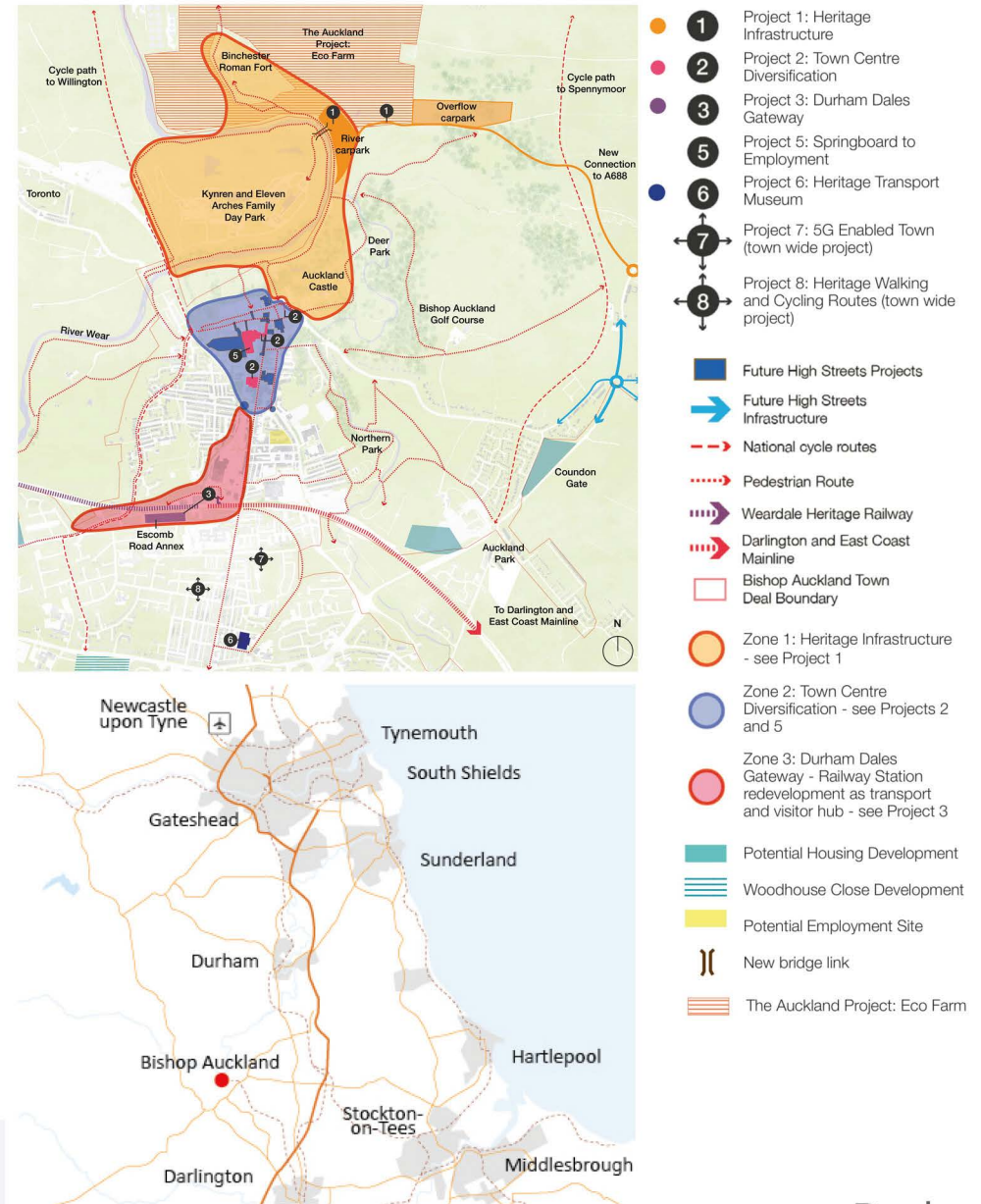
Our Town Investment Plan Summary

Our Town Investment Plan sets out our ask for £46.8m of Stronger Towns Funding to help Bishop Auckland build on its unique heritage and assets to develop into a visitor destination of international appeal and make the town an exciting place to visit, live, learn, work and invest for generations to come. Our bid offers an exceptional 11:1 economic return, with the potential to leverage c.£200m-£300m of private sector investment. This will enable the town to achieve sustainable economic growth, becoming a stronger economic contributor to the North East region. The interventions will enable a skilled and healthy population, with all residents contributing to and benefiting from the continued growth.

Our aim is to make Bishop Auckland's future even more vibrant than its past. Our plans have secured very broad support from across the town and all those who care about its future. Public, private and charity sectors will collaborate to bring about sustainable and lasting change to a town facing many challenges. Exceptional impacts on both a regional and national level will be realised.

The Auckland Project have restored Auckland Castle and opened the award-winning Kynren, our live action production which has been hugely successful, performed by a cast of 1,000 local volunteers to audiences of 8,000 people. However public sector investment is now required for supporting infrastructure to facilitate further change, and to lever in a unique private sector funding opportunity. Towns Funding will accelerate required projects, which otherwise either wouldn't happen, decelerate or reduce in scope. The interventions and impacts will also mitigate long standing socio-economic issues exacerbated by COVID-19. The Government announcement of £19.9m of Future High Street regeneration funding directly recognises this need and potential. Our Town Investment Plan is entirely complementary and additional to the FHSF investments. We have a bold but deliverable vision to tackle historic under- investment especially in infrastructure, to enable the town to flourish.

A visitor destination of choice with international importance; a 21st Century market town and service centre for the whole of South West Durham and the Gateway to the undiscovered Durham Dales



Town centre context-spatial framework and location map

Supercharging County Durham's Visitor Economy

The Towns Fund interventions will deliver an additional 1.5m visitors to Bishop Auckland p.a. which will supercharge County Durham's visitor economy, encouraging longer stays and higher levels of spend driving 3,000 jobs and £240m per annum of economic value. A further 750 will be delivered directly related to other projects in the plan.

Our Vision

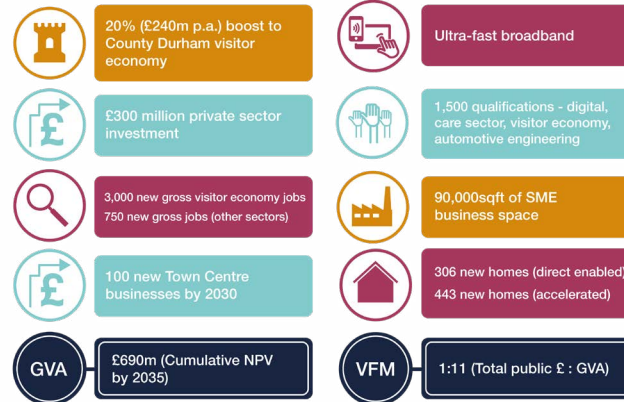
Three ideas embody our Vision for this future.

1. Development of Bishop Auckland into a Visitor Destination of Choice with international prominence.
2. Strengthening its established position as a 21st Century market town and service centre for the whole of South West Durham.
3. Opening up the town's potential as the gateway to County Durham's hidden gem that is the Durham Dales.

Our Propositions and Priority Projects have been firmly grounded in an extensive series of consultation events engaging with new and established organisations that have been in place over the last 3 to 4 years. All this has culminated in our online survey held over Christmas and early New Year 2021. All projects are based on the ideas and suggestions from those events and discussion and analysis by the Stronger Town Board analysing priorities under the themes of the Towns Fund intervention framework. The STF Board is a mix of private and public sectors bodies, covering a wide range of experiences and local communities, chaired by a private sector member.

From our survey we have received close to 1000 responses from across our local community. The fact that prior to the Covid lockdowns, Auckland Castle had enlisted volunteers from more than 200 local people, Kynren more than 1,000, and Weardale Railway more than 500 demonstrates that support is very deep-rooted in our local community.

Transport / car parking infrastructure for 1.5million annual visitors (gross), net additional 1.1million annual visitors.
 Enabling a new annual programme of 225 special events (473,700 additional visitors), and peak season trips (635,700 visitors).
 Facilitating c. £200m of private sector investment, including the Kynren/Eleven Arches Large Day Park, Eco-farm, Binchester Roman Fort, Spanish Gallery, Faith Gallery, Walled Garden and Weardale Railway.
 Peak season visitors also safeguard previous attractions delivered (£58million), including Kynren (£34million); Auckland Castle, Auckland Tower, Mining Gallery, Zurbarán Centre (£22million).



Our Headline Outputs

Our Town Investment Plan offers an exceptional series of outputs and outcomes, value for money and impact on Bishop Auckland and the wider County Durham and North East economy.

Our Priority Projects

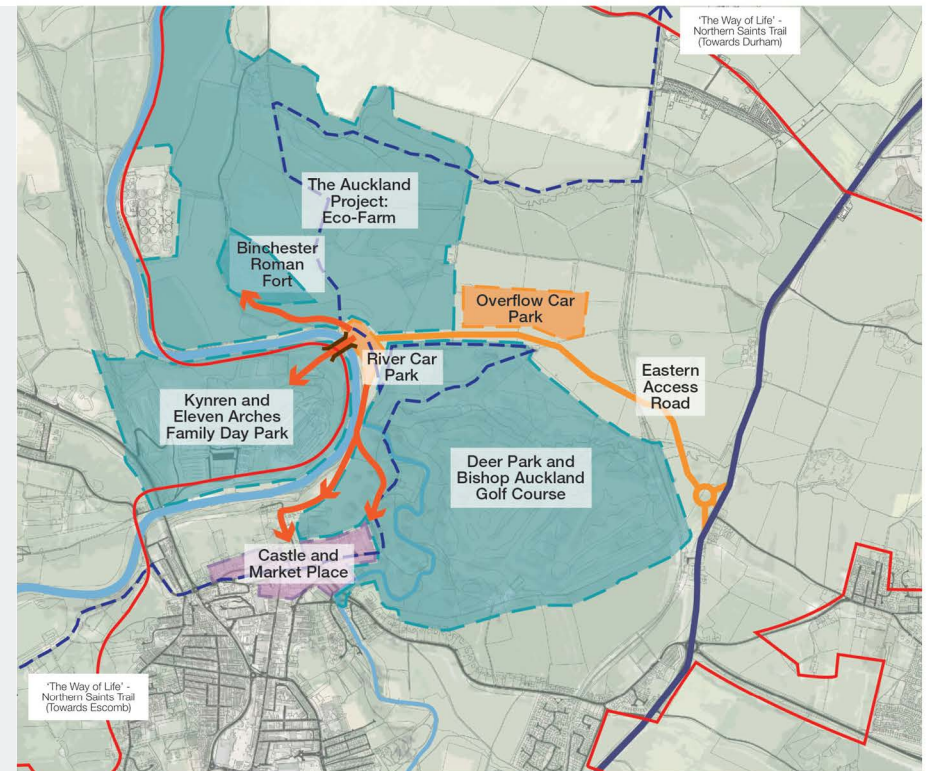
Our ask for £46.8m of Stronger Towns Funding, to deliver our Vision and programme over the next 10 years, is framed around the delivery of nine priority projects set out here. The projects are consistent with sustainable and clean growth policies, such as Durham County Council declaring a climate emergency in 2019, and a commitment to reduce carbon emissions significantly. They also support skills development for the local population, with a need to diversify from the town's industrial past. All of the projects have relevance locally, but also significance at regional, national and international levels. The programme will support Bishop Auckland to become a place where people will want to visit, live and work.

1 Infrastructure capacity, international visitor destination £15.7m Stronger Town's Fund (STF)

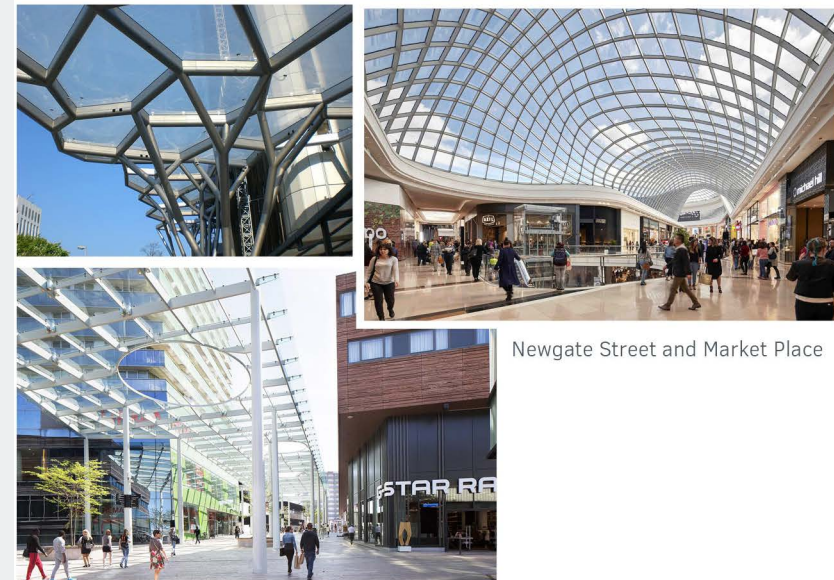
The delivery of the Eastern Sustainable Access Corridor will provide the infrastructure needed to manage and direct visitors to The Auckland Project's annual programme of 225 special events, and also peak season traffic to its year-round visitor attractions. The increased parking provision, which will be above the existing and planned town centre parking capacity that will be delivered with the help of the Future High Streets Fund, will allow for an extra 1.1m visitors. The Corridor will provide direct access from the A1(M), avoiding traffic congestion in the town centre. The car parks will be sited right at the heart of the visitor destination's key attractions. Events will hold up to 8,000 people at a time and, and direct car parking will be needed to provide safe and easy visitor access from the main event sites. Other options, for example, an A688 out of town park and ride, have been discounted given it would require a fleet of over 100 buses to discharge people within a 15-20 minute period. This infrastructure is the key to unlocking the development of the visitor attractions that will draw in the projected 1.1m additional visitors (1.5m total). It will enable the site to expand from 17 summer nights for Kynren to the annual programme of 225 special events (77 on the Kynren site); the creation of a Disney-style family day park; the development of the Eco-farm and the expansion of the Roman fort site. The sustainability of the whole Bishop Auckland visitor economy and the associated transformation of the performance of the County Durham visitor economy will be made possible by this project. Visitors distributing from the car parks will be actively encouraged to visit the town centre attractions via an electric bus fleet, supplementing walking routes through the grounds of Auckland Castle. Self-generating electric vehicle charging provision will be made available at sites in the town centre. The corridor will provide dedicated provision for pedestrians and cyclists, and connect to and promote existing routes such as the Auckland Way railway path.

2 Town Centre Diversification Newgate Street & Market Place (£10.8m STF)

A number of town centre projects complementary to the Town Centre Future High Street Fund projects. These include the construction of a modern canopy (with power generating photovoltaic panels) enclosing the north end of Newgate Street linking the Market Place to the Newgate Centre and high street businesses on a key pedestrian route. A new glass atrium linking the Town Hall and Mining Art Gallery; space for a local Artists' Hub and conversion of the former Beales Store to new retail units and new visitor accommodation on upper floors. Works will also include external improvement works to the Newgate Centre supporting the private sector owner's investment to convert former retail space to a new 3-screen Roxy cinema with accompanying food and beverage units.



EAR and car park and location plan



Newgate Street and Market Place



3 Durham Dales Gateway Railway Station visitor hub (Weardale Railway) (£5.9m STF)

Platform extension connecting Bishop Auckland station platform (connecting from the East Coast Main Line) and the Weardale Railway, providing sustainable access to the Dales; a Durham Dales Gateway heritage and visitor centre; bridge repairs, and improved facilities for sustainable transport access. These include a bus interchange, cycle parking, taxi bays and safer pedestrian access. Complementing Project 1, this will enable significant new visitor numbers to the railway. Other tourism investment opportunities along the length of the line (up to £200m) are being reviewed by TAP which would complement Projects 1 and 3 plans. Project 3 will also fit well with a forthcoming Restoring your Railways Round 3 bid to the Department for Transport, which would enable regular passenger services on the line, connecting Weardale to Darlington (East Coast Main Line) and Teesside.



4 South Church Enterprise Park (£1.7m STF) and 5 Springboard to Employment (£1.8m STF)

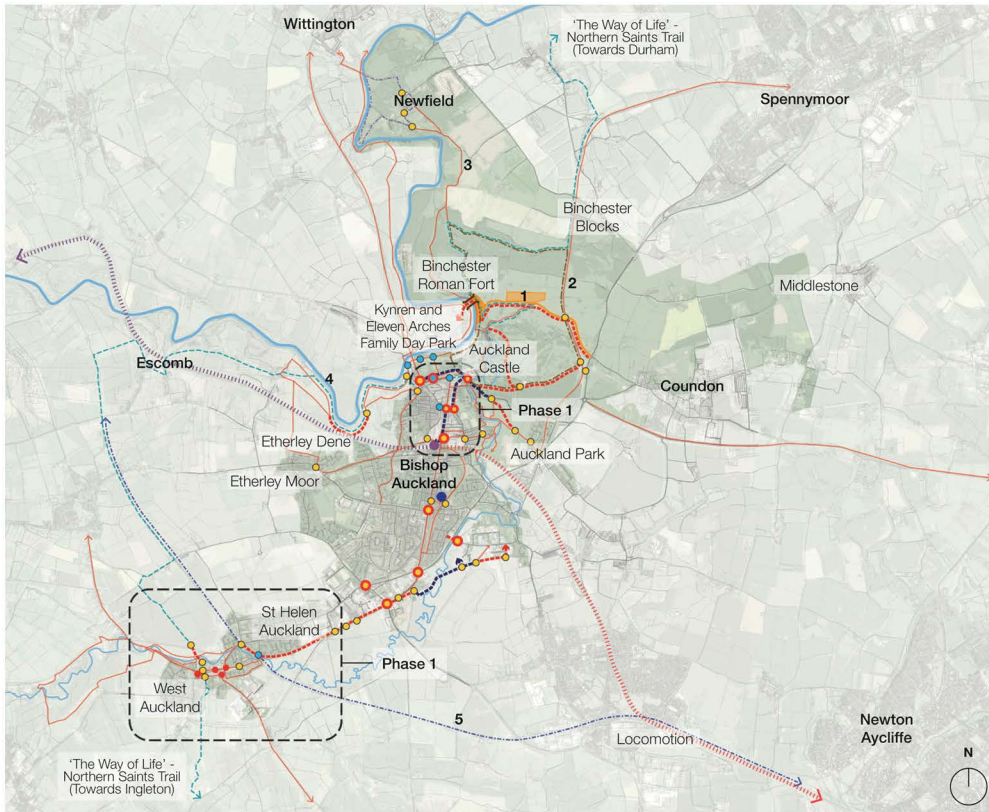
Two enterprise and skills projects to deliver 90,000 sqft of modern space for small businesses on the established South Church Enterprise Park and at further sites including a new town centre hub, the College campus and the new community leisure centre development. Bishop Auckland College's Springboard to Employment project integrates five skills and employment activities, all aimed at addressing local skills deficits, with capital investment to develop leading-edge facilities in key employment sectors (SME digital and public access digital, health and social care, visitor economy and establishment of a social enterprise recruitment agency). A total of 1,500 additional qualifications will be delivered over the Towns Fund period along with substantial employment outcomes.

6 Heritage Transport Museum (£1.5m STF)

Working with the North East Bus Preservation Trust, conversion of the former bus depot at Cockton Hill into a new transport museum hosting a collection of 100 vintage vehicles offering tours of the local area, and contributing to events mirroring previous successful rallies in the Market Square. It will complement the heritage story told by Weardale Railway and the objectives of The Auckland Project, broadening the visitor offer and appeal to families.

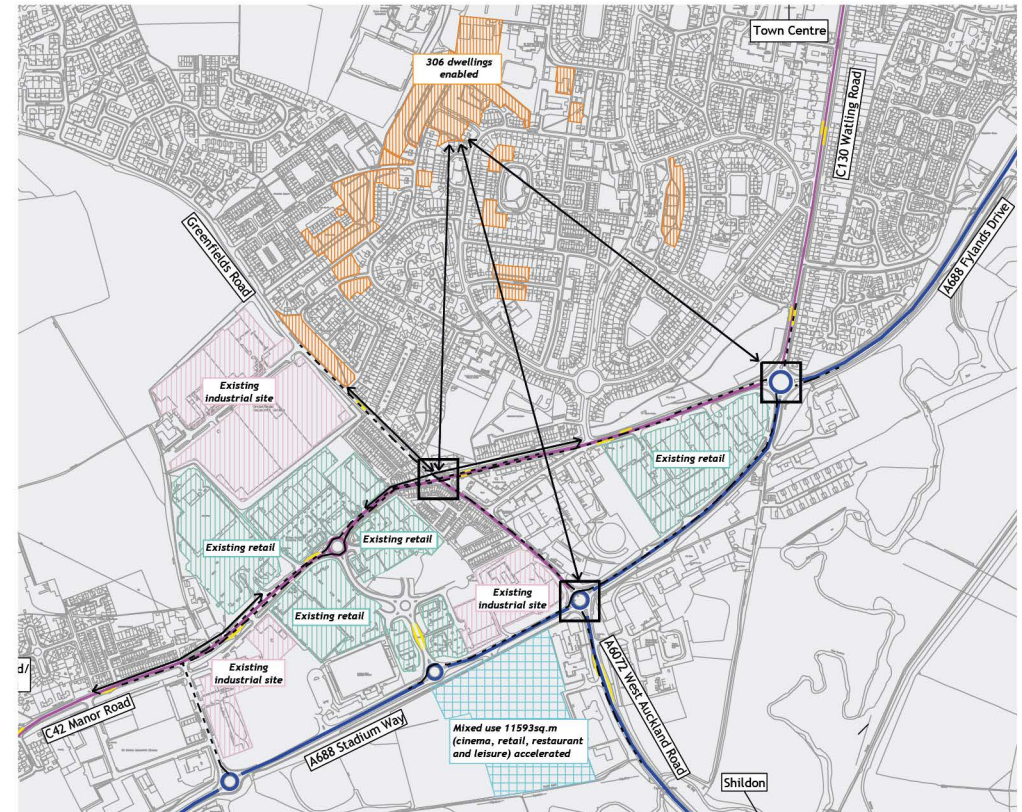
7 Ultrafast Broadband for Bishop Auckland (£2.5m STF)

To be used to accelerate the roll-out of ultrafast broadband to reach 3,000 premises around Bishop Auckland. The network would be developed from existing DCC infrastructure assets to create a fibre network across the town, which will be made available to the community and all local, national and international organisations of any size.



8 Heritage Walking and Cycling Routes (£2.5m STF)

Analysis has identified breakpoints in the walking and cycling network, resulting in local communities, particularly to the south west of the town centre, being disconnected from the town, employment, and attractions. Improved walking and cycling routes will better connect predominantly residential areas such as St Helen Auckland and West Auckland with the town centre and other employment areas. Improvements will also be delivered to upgrade the Camino Inglés (English Way) which routes through Bishop Auckland, which will help forge greater connections between County Durham and the Camino routes in continental Europe. Visit County Durham is actively promoting partnering of the Northern Saints Trails with the Spanish Pilgrimage routes will drive international profile and visits.



9 Tindale Triangle Infrastructure (£5m STF)

Key highway infrastructure investment, including improvements for pedestrians and cyclists on the south western gateway into the town around the Tindale Crescent retail and leisure scheme. Improvements will unlock £100m of housing, which otherwise would not happen, and also help accelerate the delivery of a leisure park development including multiplex cinema, bowling alley and restaurants. The improvements would unlock a potential site nearby for a new £16m DCC leisure centre for the local community.

Bishop Auckland Investment Plan Logic Chain

Our Challenges

- Need to strengthen the day and night-time economy
- Opportunities for young people
- Underperforming visitor market potential
- Urban renaissance and infrastructure capacity
- Digital connectivity / poverty

Our Opportunities

- Investments and heritage to become an internationally important visitor destination
- Regional connections and the Gateway to the Durham Dales
- Development as a modern service centre

Our Vision for Bishop Auckland will be

A visitor destination of choice with international importance; a thriving 21st Century market town and service centre for the whole of South West Durham, and the Gateway to the undiscovered Durham Dales

- Inclusive growth
- Sustainability and resilience
- Digital capabilities
- World Class visitor infrastructure and offer
- A diversified town centre and visitor offer

Our Propositions

P1: A visitor destination of international importance

P1: World Class Tourism infrastructure

P6: Heritage Transport Museum

P8: Heritage Walking and Cycling Routes

P2: 21st Century thriving market town and service centre for the whole of South West Durham

P2: Town Centre Core diversification

P4: South Church SME Space

P5: Springboard to Employment

P7: Ultrafast Broadband roll-out

P9: Tindale Growth infrastructure

P3: Gateway to the Durham Dales

P3: Weardale Railway Station Gateway

Outputs / Outcomes

1.5 million visitors (gross), 1.1m additional annual visitors

Peak Season visitors enabled (635,700)

225 new special events enabled (473,700 visitors)

>20% boost to the County Durham visitor economy

£193 million of private sector investment into Bishop Auckland, including **7 new significant** all year-round visitor attractions and 225 special events

Up to £100m other investment

3,750 jobs

£240m economic activity per annum to the visitor economy

Ultrafast broadband connectivity

1,500 qualifications

90,000 ft² of SME business space

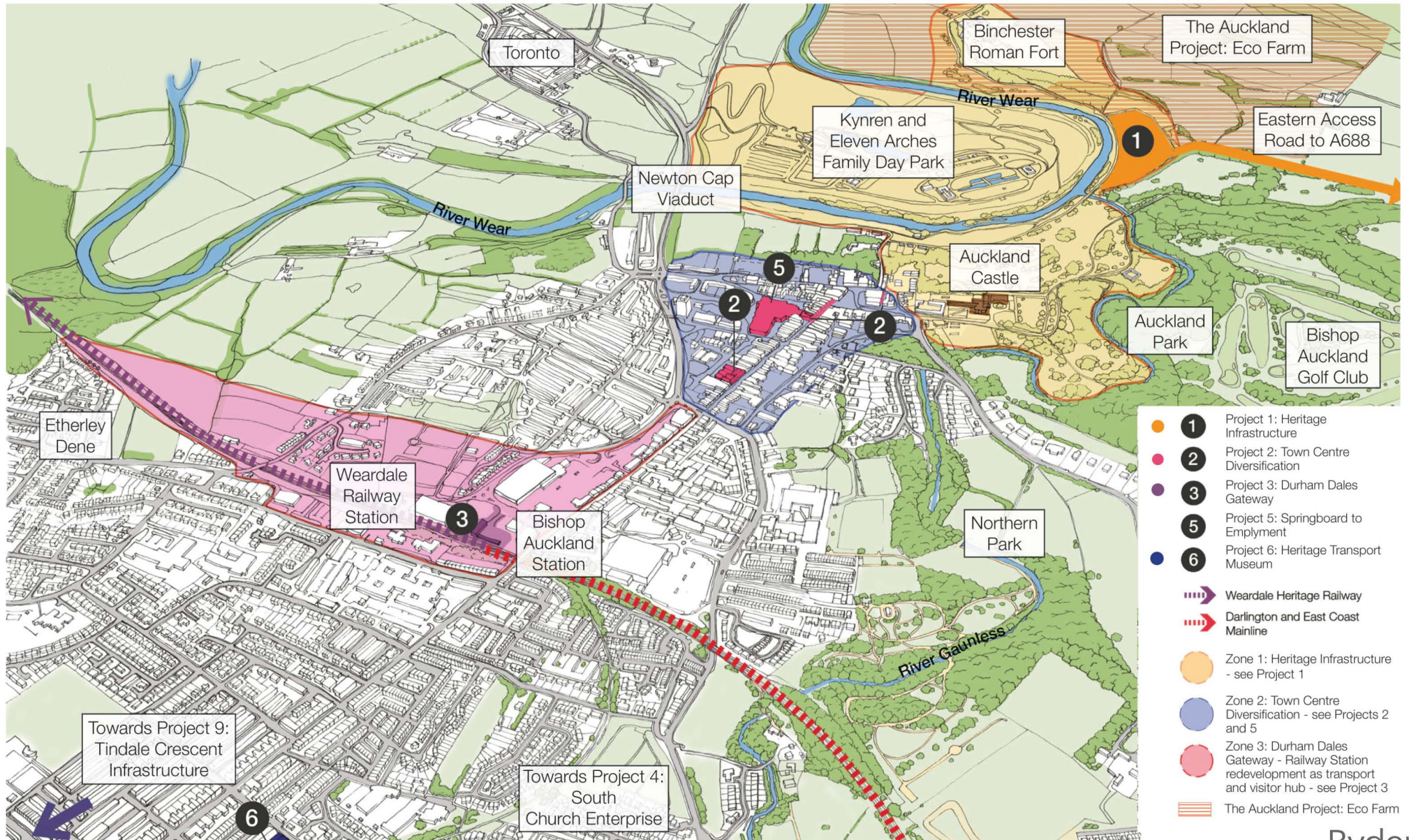
306 new homes (direct enabled)

443 new homes accelerated

£690m GVA (cumulative NPV) by 2035

Alignment with national clean growth, visitor, industrial, housing and skills policies

Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Projects



Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns 3D Overview