

Peterlee Regeneration Masterplan

Regeneration and Economic Development
October 2013 Draft 4 Vs7

(Cabinet)



Durham County Council will:

Support the **development of new homes**

Encourage **new business activity, support for advanced manufacturing** and the **improvement of the industrial estates**

Tackle the decline of North East Industrial Estate by encouraging business relocation and reuse for housing

Work with the private sector to increase **choice in supermarket provision** and to encourage the **town centre** to cope with its changing role.

Capitalise on the advantages of the rail link through the area by creating a **new station in Horden**

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Introduction

- 1.0 This development masterplan provides a summary of the programme of regeneration and investment activity that is taking place or is planned in Peterlee and includes Horden for major proposals. It is intended that the masterplan will cover a 3 to 5 year window over a period of continuing economic volatility. It provides the strategic context which underlies delivery and seeks to establish key principles to co-ordinate and focus investment in the town for housing, retail, leisure and tourism. The work underlying the masterplan recognises Peterlee's relationship with surrounding settlements (including, for example, Horden, Shotton Colliery, Easington and Castle Eden) and seeks to maximise the benefits across the settlements through a "hub and spoke" approach.
- 1.1 The employment and housing context for Peterlee continues to change. This major town can develop further to increase its population, overcoming constraints to finding new housing sites. It can build on its excellent transport location to attract further industry and deal with declining industrial estates. Its role can be found as a good place to live with access to employment and to act as a centre for the settlements surrounding it. The town centre needs to improve and adjust to changing patterns of retail provision to function in a declining and challenging market.
- 1.2 Through the emerging County Durham Plan and its actions the Council will:
- Encourage **new business investment and activity** and the **improvement of the industrial estates**
 - **To increase quality and choice of new homes**
 - **Tackle the decline of North East Industrial Estate** by encouraging business relocation and reuse for housing
 - Work with the private sector to increase **choice in supermarket provision** and to encourage the **town centre** to cope with its changing role.
 - Capitalise on the advantages of the rail link through the area by creating a **new station in Horden** and reviewing public transport provision in Peterlee.

Including the longer term County Durham Plan proposals and current and recent projects, the anticipated public investment in the town is £95 million (including over £72 million on schools and college buildings) with the potential to generate up to £167 million in private investment over the next 30 years.

- 1.3 Tackling these will help Peterlee fully develop its original purpose for employment and housing acting as a service hub, adapted to meet its current context. It will be a major employment centre through retention of employment and attracting new industry onto the key estates. By successfully building on the qualities of the original new town, new development can continue to create a distinctive and sustainable place to live and work.



New Town Housing



Shotton Hall, Peterlee Town Council

The Town and Its Location

Map 1 the Town and Surrounding Parishes



Town Profile, Challenges and Proposals

2. The Town

2.0 The New Town of Peterlee was founded in the late 1940's in an attractive location on a plateau north of Castle Eden Dene. The town was developed to provide improved housing and environmental conditions for the miners who were living in poor industrial housing in the surrounding mining villages. It is in very close proximity to Horden that is a separate local centre (classed as a small town/large village) and administrative parish. The settlements relate closely to each other. The principal industrial estates lie in the adjacent Shotton Parish.

2.1 The town was planned around the concept of a tightly-defined retail / commercial centre with five outlying residential neighbourhoods and industrial estates to the north of the town itself. Later this included the industrial area immediately west of the A19 trunk road at Shotton Colliery.

2.2 Following its designation in 1948, the New Town grew through phased migration from neighbouring colliery and former colliery villages. The decline of the coal industry has stimulated a major and lasting campaign for new employment including the development of enterprise zones. The Peterlee Development Corporation (closed 1988) was extremely successful in attracting jobs to the town. Peterlee remains a significant employment centre in East Durham. It currently has a resident population of 30,000¹ including Horden, which is the population that was originally planned when the town was conceived.

2.3 The new town approach has created an open appearance with housing set in a maturing landscape. There is a range of public and community services provided by the town. Geography and its planned origins have given it benefits as a place to live and a location for business but left it with poorer connections with adjacent villages and Horden. There are significant major environmental advantages in its relation to Castle Eden Dene and the Durham Coast which, following environmental improvement, is growing an importance as a destination for visitors. Whilst access to the surrounding settlements is an issue, the town acts as the service centre it was planned to be.



3. Employment

3.0 For several decades, Peterlee has benefitted from very significant investment in the infrastructure which serves and supports its capability to attract and sustain business and industry and to provide employment opportunities for the town, the surrounding area of East Durham and the wider region.

3.1 Over the years, the town has developed an ability to offer a co-ordinated approach to business which has resulted in numerous successes in attracting inward investments and building up business resilience. This approach has its foundations in:

- A pipeline of supply of serviced business sites and premises to accommodate manufacturing industry, logistics, office users and call centre operations
- Ready access to the A19 trunk road

¹ Based on County Durham Plan Settlement Study statistics 2012

- Competitive salary costs against both regional and national rates
- A working population of 450,000 within a 45-minute peak hour drive time and
- A specialised training and business support network and access to 5 universities and 24 colleges in the region

3.2 Peterlee continues to play a vital role in terms of attracting and retaining international business interests and fostering local entrepreneurial growth. Its offer is based upon key sites for employment-generating businesses at North West and South West Industrial Estates (to the west of the A19) and the town centre itself. Bracken Hill and Whitehouse business parks are adjacent estates that offer new accommodation. The industrial estates together provide a broad range of serviced sites and buildings for industry and warehousing, together with office space and call centre accommodation, much of which was developed in the period 1995-2005 when parts of the industrial estates held Enterprise Zone status. The estates accommodate branches of global corporations such as Caterpillar, Mecaplast, Knauf AMF and NSK as well as successful indigenous businesses such as Seaward Electronics and the GT Group which provide a significant number of jobs. Peterlee is a well-established and prominent location for manufacturing and engineering businesses and is a prominent location in the North East property market for employment land and business premises. This offers a foothold in the market to capture new investment in the emerging renewables, advanced manufacturing and ultra low carbon industries.



3.3 More recently, the town's employment sites have become an important component in a wider offer within the A19 corridor as a home for automotive supply industries (serving the Nissan UK plant at Sunderland and others), high value-added engineering businesses and operators in the emerging low carbon vehicle sector. Peterlee has become a very substantial employment centre, important in the county and regionally.

3.4 Manufacturing and call centres are the dominant sectors in the area and a high proportion of residents also work in transport and storage.

3.5 SME businesses are catered for at a number of locations, including the Novus Business Centre on Judson Road.

3.6 There is a vibrant and pro-active business forum (run by Business Durham), operating on the Peterlee Industrial Estates

Employment Opportunities

3.7 The North West and South West Industrial Estates (in combination with Bracken Hill and Whitehouse Business Parks) form a very substantial and successful focus for employment. There are some units for let, including on the newer business parks and a few older premises. There is an issue with a number of vacant properties which were built with the benefit of Enterprise Zone capital allowances against tax and which have failed to secure occupiers. Some undeveloped land remains. The challenge is to retain business, allow for future expansion and assist take up of existing accommodation.

Key Issue – North/South West Industrial Estates – retaining businesses and encouraging business take up.

Action - The undeveloped plots will remain part of Durham's general employment land portfolio and allocated for office, light/general industrial and logistics purposes in the County Durham Plan.

Action -The council will work with Business Durham, East Durham Business Service and the private sector to retain and capture investment and secure the creation of additional employment, with a particular focus on catering for the needs of young people (especially those not already in employment, education or training).

3.8 As the North East LEP develops, it is a key challenge for Peterlee to establish how the town can best play its part in complementing the aims and objectives of the LEP in delivering economic growth in a regional context and how the town can secure support from the LEP in return. The LEP has recognised the importance of the A19 corridor as a potential home for ultra low carbon vehicles, automotive industries and green energy companies.

3.9 There is a potential opportunity for Peterlee to benefit from the establishment of Enterprise Zones by the LEP. The Government has designated the North East as a specialist in ultra low carbon vehicle technology and the NELEP is supporting businesses, supply chains, and local workforces to develop strengths in this sector. Tees Valley is also developing specialisms in renewable energy and processing industries and Peterlee is well placed to accommodate additional businesses that are involved in these sectors by working in partnership.

Key Opportunity – capitalising on LEP recognition of the A19 employment corridor

Action – The council will seek to raise the profile of the A19 corridor as the LEP establishes

3.10 The rationalisation of office space within the town centre and the attraction of new occupiers to strengthen Peterlee's role as a service centre are key aspirations.

Key Issue – retaining and encouraging new office occupation in the town centre

Action - The council will work with Business Durham, East Durham Business Service and the private sector to try to capture investments in the office market.

Action – The council will work with the private sector to increase the attractiveness of the town centre to users and investors with an emphasis on providing a clean, safe and welcoming environment

3.11 The North East Industrial Estate is generally older in construction and the east of the estate in particular has substantial numbers of vacant premises for let and others that have been demolished. Within the estate there are successful businesses and Walkers Snack Foods on the edge of the estate is a prominent local employer. The challenge is to retain the successful businesses and find ways to redevelop the estate removing its poor building stock. It also sits close to housing and raises issues of use compatibility. Alternative use for a significant part of the site is for residential development requiring premises/residential compatibility to be resolved.

Key Issue – Tackling the decline of the estate and retaining successful businesses

Action - the council will work with the private sector to relocate local businesses, with Walkers Snack Foods remaining on its current site

Action – the council will work to facilitate allocate housing redevelopment on the site in accordance with the emerging allocations in the County Durham Plan (See also housing sections)

3.12 Seaview Estate nearby in Horden and on the edge of Peterlee is a smaller area housing a range of local businesses on former colliery land but also has a larger area of vacant land (approximately 12ha). A new access has been created to the estate and the area remains useful in its potential to offer space for new businesses.

Key Issue – Ensuring retention of land for business expansion

Action – Promote employment land, as identified in the County Durham Plan, with a particular emphasis on attracting high value engineering, advanced manufacturing, automotive and ultra low carbon industries.

3.13 Within the town centre there is office space which is either not utilised or under-utilised at relatively low rents. This is most evident in landmark buildings such as Lee House and Ridgemoor House. The availability of older office space in the town centre, coupled with low rental values is a challenge for planning for eventual replacement and will involve joint working with property owners and developers over an extended period.

Key Issue – Ensuring utilisation of town centre office accommodation

Action – the council will work with property and owners within the context of town centre improvement to increase the attractiveness of office provision and improvements to the streetscape generally

4. Housing

4.0 Housing Strategy

The council agreed a new housing strategy for the county last year. The “Building Altogether Better Lives Housing Strategy” sets out how the council and its partners will deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy’s ambition of “creating sustainable places where people want to live, work, visit and invest”. There are three key objectives for the Housing Strategy:

- **Altogether Better Housing Markets:** This objective is intended to secure the building of more new housing, with a range of housing types and tenures to meet the economic and social needs of the county

- ***Altogether Better Housing Standards:*** This objective is geared towards providing more Decent Homes, fewer empty homes, improved management standards in the private rented sector with enforcement taken against problem landlords, warmer homes and safer homes
- ***Altogether Better at Housing People:*** This objective is aimed at securing more and better homes for vulnerable groups, more and better support services for vulnerable groups and higher quality housing services in the public and private sector.

4.1 The council will assist projects that will help Peterlee to stabilise its population and to expand it, in a sustainable fashion over time, in order to cement and strengthen the town's role as a service centre for East Durham. This aligns closely with the spatial allocations emerging within the County Durham Plan for housing and business space provision.

4.2 The new town was planned around existing plantations and denes linking to Castle Eden Dene and residential access roads have been created incorporating wide verges. This combination has given the town a distinctive and attractive layout offering opportunities as the ownership pattern has developed beyond its original social housing roots. There are now extensive private estates and good pedestrian access to leisure and town centre facilities. This is backed up by bus transport around the town linking to the town centre bus station.



Housing opportunities

4.3 As with many parts of the UK, the profile of residents in the town is such that there is an ageing and changing population structure particularly in terms of smaller family units (e.g. single parent families). While household size has declined, the number of new households has increased markedly in the last 20 years, making it critical to find additional residential development sites to complement Peterlee's role as a major centre.

4.4 It is evident² that insufficient land is available in the town as currently defined to accommodate housing development requirements over the County Durham Plan period. This problem has been tackled by a careful consideration of development possibilities. Central to the desire to strengthen Peterlee's role is a continuing need to increase the town's population in order to improve the vitality of the town's retail and local service economy. This is coupled with projected increases in population across County Durham and a necessity to plan for new homes. The County Durham Plan indicates that around 1,830 additional homes need to be built in Peterlee up to 2030. Significant new housing developments can be delivered to the north of the town at Mickle Hill, north of Lowhills Road and on part of the North East Industrial Estate. This will contribute to providing for the necessary population and household growth during the Plan period. Mickle Hill has

² Based on findings of the County Durham Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the subsequent development of the County Durham Plan

been subject to a recently approved outline application (as “Land North of Lowhills”) for up to 900 units. The Pre-Submission Draft of the County Durham Plan proposes new housing allocations at:

- Land adjacent Shotton School - 70 houses on 3.4hectares (ha)
- Dene House School - 70 houses on 2.8ha
- North Blunts - 85 houses on 2.4ha
- South of Edenhill Community Centre - 90 houses on 2.7ha
- South of Passfield Way - 35 houses on 1ha
- North East Industrial Estate - 390 houses on 17ha.

4.5 The opportunity created by the recent planning permission and the allocation at North East Industrial Estate through the County Durham plan offer substantial opportunities for private investment

Key Opportunities – the requirement for increased housing and identifying locations for expansion and to ensure retention and continuation of the town’s distinctive character and that the housing profile that meets emerging population requirements.

Action – Support new development in accordance with the areas being allocated within the County Durham Plan; retain an appropriate housing profile through the development management process

Actions - DCC will work towards analysing housing needs in the area based on updated population information and based on its strategic overviews. As further housing proposals emerge DCC will work with developers to understand the scope of meeting these needs within proposals.

4.6 The way in which Peterlee was planned and developed as a New Town means that it has a number of features that are different to those of towns that have grown more organically over time. It is important that the open spaces across the town help to retain the open landscape character. The scale of the landscape areas relative to the size of the town and demands on local authority resources will create pressure on care of the green infrastructure. Some of the open space plays an integral part in original design intentions.

Key Issue – ensuring local distinctiveness in development, establishing role and care of green infrastructure

Action – Retain local distinctiveness and an appropriate housing profile through the council development management process and maximising the potential of Peterlee’s green infrastructure through prioritising streetscape and open space maintenance and enhancement.

4.7 Within the town, the high quality open space should continue to be preserved and maintained as the new housing is developed. A review of green infrastructure is to be carried out by DCC that will assist in this process of understanding the benefits of the landscape areas and ways in which their upkeep can be linked into development of the town.

4.8 **North East Industrial Estate (NEIE).** The condition of the estate and viability for employment use is identified in section 3. Whilst Walkers Snack Foods are substantial

and valued employers with extensive premises, the remainder is to be reviewed for relocation of businesses and reuse for residential development. A supplementary planning document has been produced and will form the basis of consultation with local communities and business representatives.

Key Opportunity – the requirement for increased housing and identifying locations for expansion and to ensure retention and continuation of the towns distinctive character and open spaces and that the housing profile that meets emerging population requirements.

Action – Foster and support appropriate development on the areas which are being allocated within the County Durham Plan and the NEIE SPD. Retain local distinctiveness and an appropriate housing profile through the development management process and ensure understanding the role and potential of Peterlee's green infrastructure.

4.9 Area vitality assessment of data suggests that there is a clear divide in the housing market across Peterlee and adjacent Horden. The west of the area has higher owner occupier levels with less properties being Council Tax Band A and on average higher house prices. The east areas have a much higher level of social rented properties and the majority of stock, nearly all in some areas, is banded A for Council Tax. It can also be seen in these areas there is a high level of unemployment and benefit claimants but low levels of qualifications. There are areas of Horden that suffer with higher levels of empty properties, nearly twice the county average of private rented properties compounded by a lower house price. Projects specific to these areas may be required. The area as a whole would benefit from work to improve the quality and variety of the stock on offer as well as efforts to bring a better balance to the tenure.

4.10 DCC is currently undertaking a stock options appraisal to establish a business plan for managing its social housing stock including properties within East Durham. Currently DCC is the landlord for homes in this area managed by East Durham Homes. In December 2012 it was decided that, in line with the business plan, the best option would be to transfer housing stock to the managing organisations and for them to work together as one group. There would be a number of benefits, including the ability of the providers to borrow money to bridge the funding shortfall identified in the business plan. This arrangement will impact on the medium-to-long-term plans of East Durham Homes, but in the interim they will deliver improvements in line with their current plans. Much work has been done in recent years to improve the existing housing stock and the stock will meet Decent Standards by March 2015.

Key Issue – ensuring older housing stock, particularly in Horden, does not deteriorate

Action – The council will follow through its stock transfer to registered providers and work its own programmes and with others on initiatives to improve housing stock (see below)

4.11 **East Durham Homes** - Whilst having important roles in providing local economic and social improvements, the physical projects that East Durham Homes has brought forward have primarily focused on refurbishing stock in line with its Decent Homes programme. Future development will be determined following the changes in social housing stock ownership. However, if there is potential to shift to construction programmes alongside outstanding refurbishments it could focus primarily on small-scale developments on in-fill sites in the larger towns of Seaham and Peterlee. It is currently delivering a £27 million Decent Homes initiative across the area.

4.12 **Accent Foundation** – Accent is a major social housing provider in the East Durham area and has started a major investment programme to improve homes across East Durham. This has commenced with the refurbishment of a number of properties in the “C” streets of Easington Colliery and the refurbishment (and, in some cases the demolition and replacement) of bungalows in Horden. Future priorities are currently being identified and refined.

5. Town Centre and Retail

5.0 Peterlee is recognised as a district centre; of a similar size and function to Bishop Auckland, and serves a catchment that extends south towards Hartlepool, west towards Durham City and includes substantial rural areas and Houghton to the north. The major activity is centred upon the Castle Dene shopping centre which provides 28,430 sq m of retail and office space.



Castle Dene Shopping Centre



Market Stalls, Shopping Centre

5.1 Peterlee's retail catchment is both discrete and well contained. This is reflected in high expenditure retention levels with existing convenience provision within the town centre retaining 71.5% (£59.3m) of the overall £82.9m available in its catchment area. The ASDA store dominates the catchment securing 78.9% (£44 million) in 2009 of the overall main food spend. The ASDA store continues to trade significantly above the company's own benchmark.

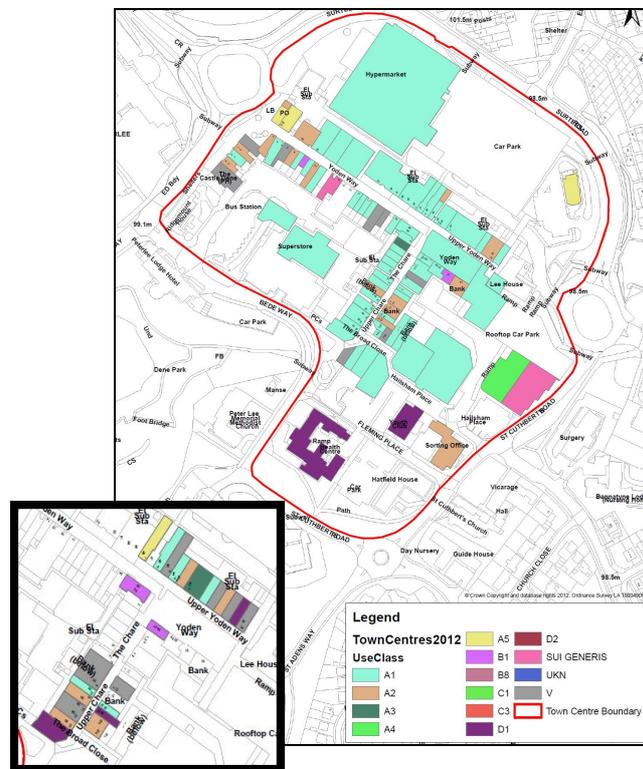
5.2 The large ASDA foodstore is next to the main town centre car parking area and has an additional mezzanine constructed within the store in the late 2000s to increase the amount of non-food floorspace. The Aldi and Farmfoods stores are on Bede Way in the town centre and Lidl store, located out-of-centre to the north at Essington Way.

5.3 There are large areas of car-parking offering a total of 900 spaces (a 2-storey ASDA car park, rooftop parking adjacent to Lee House and surface level parking adj. to Lidl). The main national retailers in the town centre include Wilkinsons, Argos and New Look. There are also a number of independent retailers and high street services. Peterlee has a busy Leisure Centre, offering a broad range of activities including swimming, gymnastics, new gym facilities, 5-a-side football and racquet sports.

5.4 Salford Estates own and manage Castle Dene Shopping Centre, and has a management and security team within the shopping centre. As shown in the map below, Peterlee town centre is dominated by units that are shops (A1; *light green*) and financial and professional services (A2; *light brown*). Vacant retail premises (*grey*) tend to be clustered on the edges of the town centre and on upper levels of the shopping streets (Upper

Chare and Upper Yoden Way) and there are office units vacancies on the periphery of the town centre.

Map 2: Occupancy in Peterlee town centre (inset shows Upper Yoden Way)



Retail Opportunities

- 5.5 The town offers potential from within its catchment area for comparison and bulky goods. Peterlee has few mainstream high street fashion multiples (such as Top Shop, Next, River Island etc) and most of the available comparison expenditure is made in Hartlepool and Sunderland. Modern units are available for this type of retailer in the town and opportunities to improve the town's service delivery will be supported by growth in population and catchment spending capacity. In terms of bulky goods retailing, there is leakage of expenditure to Hartlepool, Sunderland and Durham. Although ASDA's mezzanine level offers household goods, there is a substantial opportunity for increased provision.
- 5.6 The town centre has opportunities for good quality hotel accommodation and uses compatible with a sustainable evening economy. The town centre currently has a nighttime leisure offer with a Club 3000 Bingo and Wetherspoon's. Peterlee Leisure Centre is a valuable local provision and is located just to the south of the town centre.
- 5.7 A Costa café has recently opened but the shopping centre needs improvement in presentation – particularly on the upper floors where vacancies are concentrated and access is more restricted. The most vibrant part of the centre is Yoden Way, where retail units have been improved relatively recently and some units sub-divided and others joined to maximise occupancy. National retailers and banks tend to occupy the main

parts of the shopping centre and independent retailers cluster in the peripheral units, particularly on the upper levels.

5.8 The encircling road system, although offering good car based and cross town access into the town centre can also act as a barrier to immediate pedestrian access from surrounding housing. Improving links will be a factor in any town centre initiatives

5.9 The 2010 Residents' Survey for County Durham reflects these issues, particularly the need for a number of environmental improvements including improvements to the attractiveness of the town centre and the range of shops. There is an opportunity for more restaurants and cultural attractions in order to extend the range of services for local residents and visitors. Residents also suggested that improvements need to be linked to better pedestrian facilities, improving the perception of safety, and reducing anti-social behaviour.

5.10 The countywide retail and town centre study (Appendix 2 contains a SWOT analysis for Peterlee) on which the map is based reflects many of the issues of the Residents' Survey and emphasised the following strengths:

- A large anchor foodstore (Asda) complemented with discount retailers
- Good mix of national multiple comparison retailers (Argos, Wilkinsons)
- Good independent retailers and high street services
- Pedestrianised shopping centre
- Castledene shopping centre (covered mall facility)
- Regular town centre market
- Public transport accessibility
- Free car parking
- Serves a hinterland in rural parts of East Durham

5.11 The study also recognised other weaknesses specifically:

- A lack of bulky goods provision and pressure for edge- and out-of-centre retail
- Current low expenditure per head
- Competition from Dalton Park (Murton)

Key Opportunities – Supporting the attractiveness of the town centre and encouraging private investment

Action – the council will work with the private sector and the town centre owners and managers. Quality, service sector and evening economy have previously been identified as areas for improvement.

Action - increasing the town's population through the County Durham Plan will increase the retail catchment and attractiveness of the town centre to investors.

Action – continuing to address anti-social behaviour.

Action – consider pedestrian links in any town centre or infrastructure proposals – council highways and development management.



5.12 Retail Proposals

The future scale and shape of retailing within Peterlee town centre would be influenced to a significant extent by the implementation of planning consents for two major potential developments on alternative sites which have recently been the subject of lengthy consultation and deliberation. There is also a third permission at Dalton Park that could impact on Peterlee's town centre.

5.13 In terms of date of submission, the first proposal involves the demolition of the former East Durham and Houghall Community College (and a DCC library) at Burnhope Way on the north west edge of the town centre and the construction of a new retail store (10,246 sq m gross area / 5,600 sq m net), a new library (524 sq m) and 600 parking spaces. The development would provide for parking at surface level with the store over and allow for various access improvements including an upgrade of the pedestrian underpass which links the site.

5.14 The second proposal by Salford Estates is for a new 3 storey supermarket (7,990 sq.m net internal) to the southern end of the existing town centre area, served by 460 parking spaces. The store would readily link to existing town centre facilities, bus station and pedestrian routes.

5.15 The two town centre options offer a substantial opportunity for investment in the town and to capture the potential for growing trade as the new housing is delivered.

Key Opportunity – Providing that additional choice in retail provision is introduced into Peterlee through the current permissions

Action – the council will seek to work with landowners and retail operators in securing implementation through the recent permissions to reinforce local choice.

6. Transport

6.0 Seaham lies 5 miles to the north of Peterlee; Hartlepool is 7 miles south and Durham City is approximately 10 miles to the west. The town is well-connected to the regional trunk road network, being adjacent to the A19 linking the town to Tyneside and Wearside to

the north and to Teesside in the south. In 2008, the A688 road was extended to complete a new trunk road linking Peterlee to the A1(M).

- 6.1 Peterlee is served by both regional and local bus companies with regular services to most of the North East's major centres, including Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham, Hartlepool, Stockton, and Middlesbrough. Local bus services provide the residential areas of the town with links to the town centre and interconnectivity. Peterlee bus station is located within the town centre, immediately to the south of the retail heart.
- 6.2 Peterlee was served by Horden Railway Station on the Durham Coast Line until the station closed in 1964. The line, which is owned by Network Rail, provides regular services between Middlesbrough and Newcastle, via Hartlepool, Sunderland and the coast. At present, Seaham is the only County Durham station on this line. Grand Central also operates a service, using this line, between Sunderland and London Kings Cross. The nearest, operational stations to Peterlee are at Seaham and Hartlepool and it is proposed that a new railway station is established at Horden to serve Peterlee. It is an excellent opportunity strongly supported locally to connect settlements in East Durham as well as improving access to larger towns and cities to the North and South.

Key Opportunity – maximising connectivity for the town and coastal attractions

Action – Implement new halt under the council's infrastructure plans. A new station at Horden Sea View is a Council priority and work is underway to deliver this. The new station seeks to connect deprived communities in the County with areas of opportunity as well as maximising inward investment opportunities by facilitating access to a wider labour market. Development and construction costs will largely be covered by the Council's capital budget. Train operators are being approached to see if they are interested in stopping at the new station, which would increase the service frequency.

7. Education and Training

- 7.0 Peterlee is well served in terms of education provision with 6 primary schools, 3 secondary schools, 2 Sixth Form facilities, and East Durham College. The college was the outcome of a merger of Durham College of Agriculture and Horticulture / Houghall College and East Durham Community College. A new building costing £36 million was opened in September 2008. The college's former building, close to the town centre, has received planning permission for a new supermarket.
- 7.1 St Bedes Catholic School/Byron Sixth Form, Shotton Hall Primary and Academy and Dene Community School have all been rebuilt under the building schools for the future programme and offer high quality accommodation. This represents a very significant investment in education provision in Peterlee totalling over £72 million.
- 7.2 Adult Learning is provided by East Durham College, Durham County Council (DCC) and other organisations. There is a range of training providers locally; including on site training facilities run by East Durham College on the SW Industrial Estate. Some providers offer links to local companies and apprenticeship opportunities.



7.3 Educational attainment is improving in the Peterlee area, a higher proportion of people in Peterlee have 'degree-level qualifications and higher' in 2011 than in 2001. The proportion of the population with degree-level qualifications and higher has increased from 5%-6% of the population to around 11%.

7.4 Increasing the population of the town has implications for education provision. Strategic understanding is needed of the impact of increasing numbers of young people in the town and impacts from proposals as they emerge through the County Durham Plan and subsequent private sector involvement. This is in relation to the anticipated increase in both secondary and primary age children and will involve local authority provision.

7.5 In relation to major Mickle Hill (N. of Lowhills Rd.) planning application approval, the officer's report included conclusions following consultation with the council's education department. The requirements that would result from the additional housing growth were calculated by the education authority as equating to 6 additional class rooms across local schools. The applicant was agreeable to entering into a section 106 legal agreement regarding the provision of a commuted sum of up to £900,000 to fund this provision.

Key Issues – ensuring adequate educational provision in relation to increased housing provision

Action – the council will review impact of private development and determine appropriate action/contributions to local education provision

7.6 Principally, for historic reasons, the county has limited numbers of skilled employees. The recent announcement that the Hitachi Rail development in Newton Aycliffe creating jobs in the engineering sector and stimulating further supply chain employment has a potential for an impact on the county's existing engineering businesses in terms of

retaining key staff and skilled employees. There is a challenge to ensure that there is a pipeline of suitably skilled staff to ensure that the county's residents can take advantage of new employment opportunities, and that both new and existing companies (such as GT Group, NSK and Caterpillar) have a sufficient pool of labour from which to draw. Local businesses³ report a shortage of people with appropriate managerial qualifications and experience. They also recognised a skills mismatch in the area, noting the need for more people with qualifications and experience in science and engineering.

7.7 The town has relatively high levels of deprivation, reflected by the high proportion of people with no qualifications, high levels of unemployment and worklessness, and poor levels of health (see appendix 1 for a statistical profile of Peterlee).

Key Issues – ensuring adequate training provision in relation to population and employment needs

Action – the council will continue to work with local employers, providers and organisations to improve the level of training within the local workforce.

8. Leisure

Harpers Fitness operates the town centre leisure centre in partnership with the county council; this provides good swimming and indoor fitness facilities and a new gym. In addition the town council runs leisure and sports facilities for residents at its three sites at Lowhills Road, Eden Lane and Helford Road and provides bowls, cricket, tennis, football, cricket and rugby and has a dedicated full time Sports Development Officer.

9. Environment

9.0 The initial design for the Sunny Blunts estates was supported by the prominent post war British artist Victor Pasmore employed as consulting director of urban design. This was an involvement that also produced the landscape infrastructure of the new area of housing and the listed Apollo Pavilion spanning a water feature on a tributary of the Castle Eden Burn. Through topography and intention the original landscape features of the town's area have been incorporated into the early estates. The planned structure of Peterlee has created a core of landscape corridors and avenues beside principal access roads. Castle Eden Dene forms an important natural resource close to the town and links through woodlands that penetrate as far as the town centre. This is a theme broadly carried through into later layouts.

9.1 The Durham Coast (principally in the adjacent settlement of Horden) is particularly important for biodiversity and is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) has also been designated at Castle Eden south of Peterlee.

9.2 Castle Eden Dene represents the most extensive northerly native occurrence of yew woods in the UK and it is the only site selected for yew woodland on magnesian limestone in north-east England⁴. There are also a number of Local Nature Reserves in the Peterlee area including Horden Grasslands (in Horden Parish), Limekiln Gill, Blackhall Grasslands, Bracken Hill Wood, Hart to Haswell Walkway, and Hart Warren. These contain a diverse mix of grasses and plants within habitats that support butterflies, birds, and a range of other wildlife that are accessible to the general public. Natural

³ Feedback obtained at a business meeting on the County Durham Plan and Business Durham services on 20th November 2012

⁴ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?eucode=uk0012768>

England describes the Dene as a “mysterious tangled landscape of trees, rocky outcrops and steep cliffs is a sensational survivor of ‘the wildwood’ that once covered much of Britain”. It covers an area of around 200 hectares and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserve by Natural England.



9.3 The nearby Durham Coast is classed as a Special Area of Conservation by the European Commission and a National Nature Reserve (NNR) by Natural England due to its important geology, grasslands, and wildlife. The Durham Coast is designated as a Heritage Coast and contains conservation areas with listed buildings. The NNR includes 5 parcels of land stretching from Horden to Hartlepool covering 62 hectares and has the only example of vegetated sea cliffs on magnesian limestone exposures in the UK. Their vegetation is unique in the British Isles and consists of a complex mosaic of rare grasslands, tall-herb fen, seepage flushes, and wind-pruned scrub. Within these habitats rare species grow together forming unusual and species-rich communities of high scientific interest⁵.

9.4 Despite its industrial and mining heritage, there are many areas of high environmental quality and cultural importance. There are also nationally and locally important sites and areas of ancient woodland. The East Durham Limestone Plateau is designated as a major aquifer and contains large areas which are identified as groundwater protection zones. Consideration needs to be given to the potential impact of more housing and a higher population in Peterlee on biodiversity in coastal Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, particularly at Blackhall Colliery and Blackhall Rocks.

Key opportunities and actions, see transport (section 6.2. - new railway station) and housing (section 4.6 green infrastructure). The Council will look to support facilities which improve the environment, to the benefit of visitors and residents, as the visitor economy along the Durham Coast grows.

10. Visitors

10.0 Visit County Durham through its ‘this is Durham’ website and other activity promotes attractions around Peterlee including Castle Eden Dene and the ‘Durham Coast’ area. The main visitor attraction for Peterlee is the Dene that DCC and Natural England promote as offering a range of seasonal and thematic guided walks, similar to those in surrounding areas of high natural and environmental quality such as the Heritage Coast, Crimdon Dene, and Blackhall Rocks. There is a range of other visitor destinations in close proximity to Peterlee including Tweddle Farm, a holiday park in Crimdon, Castle Eden and High Hesleden gastro-pubs and Hardwicke Hall Manor Hotel near Blackhall

⁵ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/habitat.asp?FeatureIntCode=H1230>

Colliery. The Apollo pavilion and Castle Eden Dene are the unique attractions in Peterlee and nearby Seaham is being developed as the Durham Coast visitor hub by DCC. Maintaining and developing further, good access to the Durham Coast, Castle Eden and the Dene and Crimdon are important goals.

10.1 Visitor Attractions Consideration is needed of how people who are visiting Seaham and the Durham Coast can also be drawn to specific attractions in Peterlee and other settlements in the area. There is a potential need to manage access to the local, environmentally protected areas as tourism increases related to management to both Castle Eden Dene and of the Heritage Coast. Potential is offered by the proposed rail station at Horden to build on links to the coast and provide for visitor access. Cycle and walking access offers potential to work alongside the review of equestrian provision including bridleway linkage. Successful establishment of this would potentially support consideration of the wider visitor and attraction offer locally. This could be reinforced with better links to Seaham as it becomes a more significant visitor destination on the Durham Heritage Coast. Much of this would benefit Horden. The Little Tern bus service linking sites along the coast was run across the summer of 2013 and with the potential for being repeated and offers an example of visitor support. There is scope for improvement to signage and information about the links between Peterlee, the settlements and the surrounding countryside and coastal attractions.

10.2 Visitor Economy There is potential to improve the evening economy within the town centre. There is a lack of cafes, restaurants, and other attractions that would draw residents and visitors to the town centre on an evening and also potential for the development of a hotel.

Key issues and actions, see transport (section 6.2. - new railway station) and town centre (5.12 action, evening economy)

Key opportunities – ensuring and publicising access for local people to the Durham Heritage Coast including coastal access and nature reserve at Horden, Castle Eden Dene and attracting visitors to the Dene and Apollo Pavilion

Action -Work with partner organisations to improve access and awareness of Peterlee's attractions – Castle Eden Dene, the Apollo Pavilion and the coast together with cycle networks