

A NEW VISION FOR DEVELOPING CENTRAL WAKEFIELD

Central Wakefield Area
Action Plan

Issues & Options Report



Central Wakefield Area Action Plan

Central Wakefield Area
Action Plan
Issues & Options Report

Contents

Page 5	Explanation
7	Questions
9	Introduction
9	9 The Local Development Framework
9	9 The Local Development Scheme
9	9 The Central Wakefield Area Action Plan
9	9 Engagement
10	10 Purpose of the Issues and Options Report
10	10 How to Get Involved
11	11 What Happens Next?
11	11 Information
12	12 National, Regional and Local Policy Context
14	14 Central Wakefield Area Action Plan Development Plan Document
14	14 The Vision for Central Wakefield
15	15 Transport
15	15 Pedestrianisation and Provision for Cycling
16	16 Public Transport
17	17 Parking in Wakefield
18	18 Taxis
18	18 Use of Local Waterways
19	19 Urban Design/Built Environment
19	19 Wakefield's Historic Built Environment
20	20 Urban Design
20	20 Urban Spaces
21	21 Advertising within Central Wakefield
22	22 Housing
22	22 City Centre Living
23	23 The Number and Type of New Houses to be Provided
23	23 Residential Environments
24	24 Economy & Employment
24	24 New Office Development
25	25 Industrial Uses within Central Wakefield
26	26 Retail Development within Central Wakefield
27	27 Culture, Leisure, Tourism & the Evening Economy
27	27 The Provision of Cultural and Leisure Facilities within Central Wakefield
27	27 Overnight Tourist Facilities
28	28 The Evening Economy
29	29 Miscellaneous
29	29 Areas Likely to be Subject to change
29	29 The Plan Area
29	29 Other Issues and Options
31	31 Proposed boundary of the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan

Explanation

The Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (AAP) is being produced by the Council as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Wakefield District. The LDF will be a portfolio of documents which will replace the Council's current development plan, the Unitary Development Plan First Alteration, from 2007.

The LDF will include policies necessary to guide land use and development, identify specific sites to provide for new development and contain policies to protect and enhance the built and natural environment, all aimed at making Wakefield District a more attractive and prosperous place to live.

The Central Wakefield AAP will suggest how development and change within central Wakefield can be delivered, providing policies and proposals to drive this process.

It is important that everyone has an opportunity to be involved in preparing the AAP. This Issues and Options Report represents the first formal stage of engaging with organisations that have an interest in the AAP, local communities and individual citizens. It is intended to generate discussion and debate about the issues which the initial AAP will need to address, and the opportunities for dealing with them.

An Issues and Options Report has already been produced by the Council for the initial district-wide documents in the LDF. This Issues and Options Report can be read in conjunction with and refers back to that report.

This report starts with an introduction which describes the background to the preparation of the Central Wakefield AAP and explains in more detail how you can be involved. After this, comes a section which summarises the national, regional and local context which will need to be taken into account when the LDF, and thereby the AAP, is prepared. The final section sets out the suggested issues to be covered by the AAP alongside some potential options to address these issues. It also contains a number of questions to be considered.

We recognise that not everyone will want to read all of what is quite a lengthy document. Therefore, all the questions are gathered together on the next few pages, for convenience. These are the issues and questions which we think are important, but we are keen to hear your views. You may think that other issues are more important and need to be addressed, if so, let us know.

We have also produced an Issues and Options Summary Report which is available as a separate document. It concentrates on what we feel are the most important issues and presents them in a straight forward way.

If you have comments on any of the questions and issues raised or you wish to suggest other issues which need to be looked at, either:

- fill in the enclosed form and return it to the address shown;
- e-mail your comments to wakecityregen@wakefield.gov.uk;
- use the comments form on the Council's web-site at www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf

All comments should reach us by 22nd July 2005.

Thank you for taking the time to be involved in the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan.

Questions

Central Wakefield Area Action Plan Development Plan Document

The Vision for Central Wakefield

Question 1:
Should the city develop in the way set out in this vision? If not, how should the city develop?

Transport

Question 2:
How can the city centre become more pedestrian friendly and traffic-free?

Question 3:
Should key pedestrian and cycle routes into the city centre be identified and established?

Question 4:
Should the increased use of public transport be encouraged by a programme of improvement measures such as bus lanes, shuttle buses and park and ride schemes?

Question 5:
How can we best organise the management and distribution of parking to serve the city centre?

Question 6:
Does the location of taxi ranks need to be reviewed?

Question 7:
How should the use of local waterways for leisure be encouraged?

Urban Design/Built Environment

Question 8:
How can Wakefield's heritage of historic buildings and urban form be defined, preserved and enhanced?

Question 9:
Are there any additional existing buildings within central Wakefield which should be considered worthy of designation as a Listed Building or as a Building of Local Interest?

Question 10:
How can the Plan provide guidance on the main factors contributing to good and appropriate design in the Plan area?

Question 11:
Should the Plan identify potential sites for landmark buildings? If so, are there any priority sites?

Question 12:
Should the Plan identify and evaluate key public and private spaces and provide guidance for their retention and enhancement? If so, are there any priority areas?

Question 13:
Are there areas within the city where you regard the amount and style of advertising to be intrusive?

Housing

Question 14:
How and where should the plan make provision for more people to live in central Wakefield including the city centre?

Question 15:
How many new dwellings are appropriate and what type?

Question 16:
What should be done to protect and enhance residential environments?

Economy & Employment

Question 17:
Should we seek to adopt floor space targets for office development?

Question 18:
Which area(s) of the city, in addition to the Westgate Key Development Area, can best accommodate a re-invigorated new office quarter?

Question 19:
Should the Plan seek to encourage the removal of heavy/polluting industrial use on the southern fringes of the Plan area?

Question 20:
How should the Plan treat the marginal areas around the centre allocated for business and industry, including the yard areas south of Westgate?

Question 21:
Which area(s) of the city centre should be the next focus for retail improvement and regeneration after the Marsh Way scheme?

Question 22:
How can the specialist small-scale retail sector best be encouraged?

Culture, Leisure, Tourism & the Evening Economy

Question 23:

Is there an adequate range of leisure and cultural facilities available within central Wakefield? If not, which additional facilities are needed and where?

Question 24:

Is there an adequate range in quality and quantity of overnight tourist accommodation in the city?

Question 25:

Is there an appropriate mix in evening leisure facilities within central Wakefield?

Question 26:

Are these facilities located correctly within central Wakefield?

Question 27:

Are there any factors that discourage you from visiting central Wakefield at night?

Miscellaneous

Question 28:

Should any areas be identified as 'areas likely to be subject to change', and if so, which?

Question 29:

Is the geographical area to be covered by the Action Area Plan appropriate?

Question 30:

Should other issues and options be included in this report?

Introduction

The Local Development Framework

The Government is introducing changes to the way in which development plans are prepared and under these new arrangements Wakefield's current Development Plan, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council Unitary Development Plan First Alteration (UDP) will gradually be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will consist of a portfolio of separate Local Development Documents which will be introduced from 2007, until which time the UDP will remain in force. Some Local Development Documents will be part of the statutory development plan (known as Development Plan Documents) whilst others will be non-statutory Supplementary Planning Documents. These include site development briefs and guidance on topics such as affordable housing.

The LDF will set out the strategy for the way in which land is used and will guide new development in the District for the period up to 2021. It will be closely linked to Wakefield's Community Strategy '*Fast Forward*', and will be aimed at making Wakefield District a more attractive and prosperous place to live. It will also provide the policy framework for determining planning applications.

The Local Development Scheme

To help people understand how the Council intends to produce the LDF, it has published a Local Development Scheme showing which Local Development Documents will be prepared between 2004 and 2008. It sets out the timetable for each Local Development Document, shows the key stages in the process and highlights when consultation will take place.

The Local Development Scheme shows that the following Local Development Documents will be prepared in the next three years:

- Core Strategy Development Plan Document
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Proposals Maps
- Site Specific Policies and Proposals Development Plan Document
- Development Control Policies Development Plan Document
- Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (Development Plan Document)
- Waste Development Plan Document

- Designing for Community Safety Guide (Supplementary Planning Document)

This Issues and Options Report focuses specifically on the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan. Further information on the wider LDF process, including the Local Development Scheme and the Issues and Options Report for the other elements of the LDF, can be viewed on the Council's web-site at www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf

The Central Wakefield Area Action Plan

National Planning Guidance recommends that Area Action Plans are developed as part of the LDF process for areas, such as urban centres, where there is a need to drive development. Wakefield City has been identified as the main driver of the district's economy and as such there is significant pressure for development and change within the city. Consequently, the Council has decided to prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) specifically for Central Wakefield with the purpose of developing the strategy set out in the LDF into more detailed policies and proposals relating directly to the area.

The Central Wakefield AAP is being produced alongside the other Local Development Documents which make up the LDF but is subject to its own separate development and consultation process. The strategies and policies set out in the AAP will conform to those set out by the LDF Core Strategy but will address more detailed issues that are specific to the central Wakefield area.

Engagement

One of the aims of the new planning system is to strengthen community involvement in the preparation of development plans, giving everyone the opportunity to be involved in decisions and changes which affect them. As part of the LDF process the Council is preparing a Statement of Community Involvement, setting out its proposals for engaging communities and stakeholders in the preparation of all Local Development Documents. The Statement of Community Involvement in itself is a Local Development Document and will be the subject of consultation and public examination before being adopted by the Council.

Purpose of the Issues and Options Report

This document represents the first formal stage of preparing the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan. It is intended to generate discussion and debate about the issues which the Area Action Plan will need to address, and the opportunities for dealing with them. Once the consultation period on the report has ended the suggestions offered will be taken into account and where appropriate incorporated into the next stage of the process, the Preferred Options Report.

The report has been structured so that each issue is presented and considered in a similar way. There are three sections to each:

- Background setting out a brief summary of current planning policy.
- Issues to be addressed and options for dealing with them.
- Questions for you to consider.

These are the issues and questions which we think are key, but we are keen to hear your views. You may think that other issues are more important and need to be addressed, if so, let us know.

It should be recognised that the Central Wakefield AAP will not have a completely free hand in the policies and proposals it contains. Firstly, as part of the LDF, it should conform directly to the policies and proposals set out in the Core Strategy. As well as reflecting the vision and priorities of 'Fast Forward', the LDF is required to be in line with national planning policy guidance and statements published by the Government and to conform to the strategy and policies set out in Regional Spatial Strategy prepared by the Yorkshire & Humber Assembly. By conforming with the policies and proposals of the LDF Core Strategy the AAP will also meet these requirements.

How to Get Involved

Copies of this report are being sent out to all national, regional and local groups who may have an interest in the Central Wakefield AAP and anyone who has asked to be kept informed about progress in its preparation. If you are aware of anyone else who may be interested to receive a copy let us know and we will send them one.

If you have comments on any of the questions and issues raised in this document or you wish to suggest other issues which need to be looked at either:

- fill in the enclosed form and return it to the address below;
- e-mail your comments to wakecityregen@wakefield.gov.uk;
- use the comments form on the Council's web-site at www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf

All comments should reach us by 22nd July 2005.

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Wakefield City Regeneration Team
Regeneration & Housing Services
PO Box 92
Newton Bar
Wakefield
WF1 1XS

Fax: (01924) 306411

If you want to be kept informed of progress in preparing the Central Wakefield AAP or the district-wide LDF tick the relevant box on the form or e-mail us with your details and we will add your name and address to our mailing list.

If you would like to talk to a planning officer working on the AAP about any aspect of this document please contact the Wakefield City Regeneration Team on (01924) 306630.

What Happens Next?

All comments received during this consultation will be considered carefully by the Council and will be taken into account in the next stage of the Central Wakefield AAP, the Preferred Options Report. This report will set out the range of policies and proposals which the Council is recommending should form the basis of the final version of the AAP. The Preferred Options Report is due to be published in January 2006 for a six week period of public consultation. Following this the Council will prepare the final version of the Central Wakefield AAP, taking into account any further comments received, for submission to the Secretary of State in late 2006.

To demonstrate how the views of consultees have been taken into account the Council will issue a report showing how it has responded to each comment received. If, when the final Area Action plan is submitted to the Secretary of State, you think that your views have not been reflected adequately there will be an opportunity to make a formal representation which will be considered by an independent inspector at a Public Examination. Further details on this will be given at a later stage in the process.

Information

The Issues and Options Reports for the Central Wakefield AAP and the initial district-wide LDF documents can also be viewed on the Council's web-site at:
www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf.

Further copies are available free of charge from the above address or by ringing (01924) 306630.

If you would like an extract or summary of this document on cassette in large type, in Braille or any other format, please call the Access to Services Implementation Group on (01924) 306764.

دیکھو سنو

اگر آپ کو اس لیفلٹ کی کاپی آڈیو کیسٹ، بڑی

لکھائی، بریل یا کسی اور زبان میں اس کا ترجمہ

چاہیے تو ہمیں اس نمبر پر فون کریں:

(01924) 306764

National, Regional and Local Policy Context

National Planning Policy Context

The Government sets out its national planning policy aims in a series of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) which are being gradually replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPGs and PPSs provide the high level policy guidance for the preparation of Local Development Documents. A more detailed examination of this policy can be found in the district-wide LDF Issues and Options Report.

One of the Government's main objectives is to encourage sustainable development, at the heart of which is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. The Government has set four aims for sustainable development in its strategy, '*A Better Quality of Life, a Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK*'. These are:

- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone.
- Effective protection of the environment.
- The prudent use of natural resources.

The AAP will be a means of ensuring that new development in Central Wakefield is sustainable by, for example:

- ensuring a better balance between job opportunities and where people live
- improving accessibility to jobs and services
- protecting the built and natural environment.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

To ensure that the AAP itself is sustainable it is subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and must meet the requirements of the new EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The Government has set out the requirements¹ for SEA in regulations and has issued draft guidance on how SEA should be expanded into a full SA².

SA must be an integral part of preparing the AAP from the outset. This means testing the policies and proposals at each stage of the process of drawing up AAP to assess their potential impact on environmental, economic and social objectives and, where necessary, making changes to make sure they are sustainable. An SA Scoping Report has been prepared and an Initial Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out of this Issues and Options Report. Comments are invited on the Initial Sustainability Appraisal which is available separately.

Regional Planning Policy Context

Following recent legislative changes³, the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has become part of Wakefield's statutory development plan. The Yorkshire & Humber Assembly is preparing new RSS⁴ which is due to be issued by mid 2007. It will give spatial expression to the regional vision set out in '*Advancing Together*', the overarching regional document. New RSS will also establish the requirement for additional housing in the District and set regional transport priorities.

For a more in depth review of Regional Planning Policy please refer to the District-wide LDF Issues and Options Report.

Local Policy Context

Wakefield's Community Strategy, '*Fast Forward*', represents a shared commitment by key organisations to work together to achieve a long-term vision of Wakefield District, to secure the future well being of people who live and work in the area. The framework of 'vision', 'key challenges' and 'principles' set out in '*Fast Forward*' will be used to direct actions throughout the District. The Local Development Framework, and thereby the Area Action Plan, will be the means by which the spatial elements of '*Fast Forward*' are expanded and implemented.

¹ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

² Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks Consultation Paper, September 2004.

³ The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

⁴ Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber to 2016, based on a selective review of RPG12, ODPM, December 2004.

Urban Renaissance of Wakefield City

The aim of the urban renaissance project is to transform the city into a more attractive and accessible centre, which embraces more than just new building, encompassing urban design, neighbourhood renewal and economic development. To facilitate this initiative a framework for urban renaissance in the city has been developed. Following on from the Wakefield Renaissance Charter '*Getting Connected*' two documents, covering the district and city, were prepared by Boston USA based architects Koetter Kim. Prepared in 2004 both documents provide the framework to guide urban renaissance in the city. The district-wide document provides a vision for urban renaissance and the city document, '*Wakefield Developing the Vision*', which will be published shortly, takes that vision a step further and suggests ways in which its principles could be applied to current major regeneration projects in the city centre - Wakefield Waterfront, Marsh Way and Westgate.

Both documents provide valuable statements about regeneration in Wakefield and will contribute to the drive and direction of the many initiatives and opportunities that present themselves now and over the coming years. They should also raise standards for the type and quality of development that takes place. Whilst it is not proposed that these documents will be adopted as Council policy, it is anticipated that they will inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework and in particular the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan.

Wakefield Strategy Plan

In parallel with the Urban Renaissance programme, Gehl Architects of Copenhagen have been engaged by Wakefield Council to develop a strategy to improve and connect public spaces within the city centre. Their strategy examines the three major development projects in the city, Westgate, Marsh Way and the Waterfront and seeks to incorporate them into a linked network of public spaces. The strategy operates both at the overall city scale and at the more detailed level with a series of programmes for selected areas which set out principles for changes in design and use of the spaces.

Regeneration

The strategic framework for regeneration in Wakefield district, and therefore also the city, is set out in a report prepared in 2003 for *first* (The Development Agency for Wakefield) and the Council by Leeds Metropolitan University. The recommendations of the report, '*Regenerating the Wakefield District: Strategy Report 2003-2006*', were accepted by the Council and are reflected in the priorities of '*Fast Forward*'. The Central Wakefield Area Action Plan will need to take account of and help to achieve the different strategies, priorities and programmes.

Central Wakefield Area Action Plan Development Plan Document

The Vision for Central Wakefield

Much work has been carried out recently aimed at defining the direction in which Wakefield City should be moving and the type and form of city centre that should evolve. The Council has taken this work into consideration and set out a vision for Wakefield City, which includes all of the area covered by the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan:

In 10 years time, Wakefield will be a distinctive, vibrant city, the heart of the District's economy, making a real contribution to the prosperity and diversity of the Yorkshire and Humber Region.

The city, within the 'Emerald Ring' will be a place for people with a strong emphasis on pedestrian priority and high quality public space. The public transport system will allow quick and convenient access to and around the city.

Traffic passing through and around the centre will do so within an attractive street environment, which provides strong links between the centre and the surrounding communities.

The city will be a thriving commercial centre presenting a distinctive retail offer, modern office accommodation, a range of quality residential opportunities and a mix of excellent leisure facilities.

Commercially, Wakefield will have fully exploited the benefits of its proximity and accessibility to Leeds City Centre and the national transport network making it attractive to investors seeking excellent development opportunities in a great location.

Question 1:

Should the city develop in the way set out in this vision? If not, how should the city develop?

⁵ Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 - Transport, March 2001 (PPG13).

Transport

This section is concerned with the transport policies which will be included in the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (AAP). It will address issues relating to: pedestrianisation and the provision for cycling, public transport, parking within Wakefield City, taxis, and the use of local waterways.

The context for the transportation issues to be considered in the AAP is contained in:

- National planning policy guidance;
- Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS);
- the Local Transport Plan (LTP); and
- the LDF Core Strategy.

RSS, published in December 2004, includes the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) which, following on from national guidance, promotes the idea of sustainable transport choices through the reduced need to travel by car and improving accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling.

The RTS provides the regional context for the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan (LTP), which contains detailed transport strategies, policies and programmes for investment. The current version will be replaced by a new, second LTP for the period 2006 to 2011 following its submission to the Government Office in July 2005.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy will contain district-wide strategic transport policies and transport investment priorities for the district. Building on the regional guidance one of the major roles set out for the transport policies and proposals in the LDF is to help bring about sustainable development by improving accessibility for all sections of the community, especially by public transport, walking and cycling. The transport policies set out in the Area Action Plan will conform with the guidance contained in these documents.

Wakefield occupies a strategic position on the national motorway network (M1/M62/A1) and on the inter-city passenger rail network and thereby benefits from excellent accessibility to the rest of the country.

At a local level the large increases in traffic volumes over the last 30 years have led to Wakefield, like most other large urban areas, suffering from traffic congestion throughout the day and particularly at peak times. The motorway network of the M1 and M62 provides an outer bypass to the city and good links to other centres in the region and beyond, but is not viable for local journeys due to heavy congestion at peak times. Wakefield therefore suffers from traffic caused not only from people travelling into the city to work or visit but also from people making local journeys through the city centre who have no viable alternative route.

At present local traffic has no inner ring road to cope with the many diverse local journeys, and consequently experiences severe delays and congestion at peak times. Through the Wakefield Urban Renaissance programme the idea of an 'Emerald Ring' has been proposed in an attempt to provide an alternative route for traffic to move around rather than through the city centre. The proposal would see the existing partial ring-road (Marsh Way, Kirkgate, Ings Road) being extended and changed to a more pedestrian-friendly route to form a green urban street around the city centre.

Pedestrianisation and Provision for Cycling

Background

National, regional and local planning guidance all highlight the importance of reducing the use of cars and encouraging travel by foot or cycling. Heavy use of cars within urban areas can result in a number of negative impacts for non-car users, including safety and accessibility and the damaging effect on the urban environment. High levels of congestion have not only reduced the attractiveness of the city for non-car users, but also had a negative influence on air quality and the environment. Indeed, national planning policy guidance⁶ states that, 'local air quality is a key consideration in the integration between planning and transport'. These national and regional pressures were previously reflected in the UDP First Alteration where one of the key transport objectives identified was to require development to be accessible particularly on foot and by cycle, thus reducing the need to travel by car.

Although pedestrian facilities are largely of a good standard in and around the city centre there are issues relating to the crossing facilities of both Marsh Way and the Ings Road developments and access to the Waterfront site. Additionally, roads such as Marygate and the Bullring currently act as a divide to pedestrians between different areas of the city centre.

Despite the fact that the local topography in Wakefield is suitable for cycling there are insufficient safe cycling routes in and around the city centre. Cycling represents less than one per cent of trips within the city despite the fact that there are a significant number of residents who live less than two kilometres from the city centre.

⁶ Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 - Transport, March 2001 (PPG13).

Issues and Options

The current high level of vehicle use within central Wakefield, over 40,000 daily car trips, discourages pedestrians and cyclists from travelling around the area and perpetuates more people to use their cars. National and regional guidance both highlight the importance of reducing car use and encouraging walking and cycling as alternative modes of travel. To conform to this guidance the AAP will need to include policies aimed at reversing the current trend for car use and making Wakefield a more attractive place for pedestrians and cyclists. There is also the requirement to meet government targets relating to air quality levels and the effect of traffic on the environment. Reducing the amount of traffic within the city centre and making it more pedestrian and cycle friendly would improve the level of safety for these modes of travel within the area.

To achieve a reduction in car use and promote the rights of non-car users certain streets within the city centre could be identified for pedestrianisation and through traffic could be redirected around the centre. One example of a street that could be designated for pedestrianisation is Wood Street. The proposed 'Emerald Ring' would facilitate traffic movement around the city centre and additional measures could be used to reduce traffic inside of the ring. The 'Emerald Ring' proposal was put forward as part of the Wakefield Urban Renaissance Programme being carried out by the Council and its partners. A more detailed appraisal of the proposal can be found in the Wakefield Urban Renaissance Phase Two Report, '*Wakefield: Developing the Vision*'.

Along with the proposed measures to reduce the amount of traffic within central Wakefield key pedestrian routes in and around the city could be identified and established as part of the plan. This would involve placing a greater emphasis on pedestrian movement and allowing people to travel within the city more safely and securely on foot. One potential area where this could be implemented is the route between the Cathedral and the Waterfront site, providing a link between two important parts of the city centre.

The low number of people cycling to work is probably a result of the lack of safe cycle routes into the city centre. The establishment of specific routes, especially along major arterial routes into the city centre, would encourage the use of cycling as a viable alternative mode of travel. The development of such cycle routes would also likely incorporate a review of the cycle-parking provision currently available within the city centre to ensure that it is located effectively.

Question 2:
How can the city centre become more pedestrian friendly and traffic-free?

Question 3:
Should key pedestrian and cycle routes into the city centre be identified and established?

Public Transport

Background

The provision of public transport has a major role in developing a sustainable transport infrastructure. A high quality level of public transport provision provides an attractive alternative to private car use. National planning policy guidance⁷ states that local authorities should provide more road space to public transport in town centres and both national and regional transport policy promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport.

Public transport in Wakefield currently comprises primarily of a bus-based system, with in-bound bus lanes only provided on some routes into the city centre. The city is also served by two railway stations, Wakefield Westgate and Wakefield Kirkgate, both of which are located in close proximity to the city centre and provide regional and national transport links. Central to the Westgate Key Development Area is the proposed construction of a modern new railway station with increased capacity to replace the existing Westgate Station.

A high quality public transport network would also play a major role in reducing congestion within both central Wakefield and along the major routes into the city, providing a viable alternative to those who travel into the city centre for work, leisure or retail.

Issues and Options

The major issue for public transport within central Wakefield is how the existing infrastructure should be improved to encourage its use by both residents and visitors to the city. Improving the provision of public transport within Wakefield would provide a viable alternative for people travelling within the city and would thereby assist in attempts to reduce car usage.

One proposed policy for the AAP is the introduction of additional bus priority measures, such as bus lanes along the major routes into the city centre. This approach, supported by national and regional guidance, is one of the strategies put forward in the LTP. It would minimise the delays faced by people using buses to travel in and out of the city centre and would give them priority over private vehicle users, particularly at peak congestion times when traffic delays are most likely.

⁷ Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 - Transport, March 2001 (PPG13).

Other measures to encourage the use of public transport could include the introduction of shuttle bus services and park and ride schemes. Shuttle buses could be used for trips between distinct locations that are not already directly served, such as the two train stations and Pinderfields hospital. They would offer a quick and easy form of transport for people wanting to travel between such locations and provide a link between existing public transport services. Better co-ordination, information and signing at interchange points could also be used to improve the current infrastructure.

Park and ride schemes have been successful in other locations around the country and could be used to allow people to park their cars at a location outside the city centre and then travel the rest of their journey in on a bus service. These buses would be able to take advantage of any bus priority measures introduced as part of the plan. The identification of specific sites for park and ride schemes is one of the issues currently being considered in the LDF Core Strategy.

Question 4:

Should the increased use of public transport be encouraged by a programme of improvement measures such as bus lanes, shuttle buses and park and ride schemes?

Parking in Wakefield

Background

The availability of car parking space has a major influence on people's choice of means of transport and re-organising the management and distribution of parking within the central Wakefield area is essential in promoting sustainable travel choices and tackling congestion.

RSS notes that parking is one of the key elements in managing the demand for car use and states that parking policies should include:

- the use of maximum parking standards through planning controls for new developments in step with location and land use type;
- progressive reduction in long stay parking (other than at railway stations to serve rail users) and transfer of some spaces to short stay, subject to consideration of possible implications for traffic congestion
- reduction of on-street parking to maximise pedestrianisation with high quality walking and cycling networks and environmental improvements; and
- park and ride facilities where appropriate - coupled with increased use of public transport through service level improvements.

The current West Yorkshire LTP provides a consistent approach for the management of parking demand across different authorities which includes:

- raising the cost of parking, particularly long-stay parking, in real terms in a co-ordinated way;
- giving preference to short stay parking over long stay parking in centres, converting spaces where possible;
- applying maximum standards for parking spaces through development control; and
- working towards an overall reduction in parking provision in city and main town centres converting any spaces released to more productive uses or environmental improvements.

The Council has recently adopted maximum car parking standards which are set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance⁸, although consideration will need to be given to whether these standards need to be revised in light of any changes to regional standards in new RSS and whether a new Supplementary Planning Document needs to be prepared.

Policy T14 in the UDP First Alteration states that where feasible provision will be made for long stay commuter park and ride sites along public transport corridors although no potential sites were identified. However, the possible identification of specific sites on the LDF Proposals Map is one of the issues being considered in the LDF Issues and Options Report.

Issues and Options

National, regional and local planning guidance states that the amount of long-stay parking within city centres should be reduced and replaced with short-stay parking. At present there is a high provision of long-stay parking within Wakefield when compared to other urban centres. The approach adopted by the Council in order to conform to national and regional requirements is to reduce the amount of long-stay parking within the city centre on an incremental basis. Some of it could be replaced with short-stay parking, which would meet the requirements of people travelling into the city to visit or for shopping, and other sites could be allocated for new development.

The demand for long-stay parking could be met outside of the city centre, possibly along public transport corridors. Such provision could take advantage of any proposed sites for park and ride schemes, providing a quick and easy way of travelling into the city centre.

Question 5:

How can we best organise the management and distribution of parking to serve the city centre?

⁸ Supplementary Planning Guidance - District-Wide Parking Standards (SPG7)

Taxis

Background

The flexibility of taxis means that they provide a very useful local service to areas not well served by public transport, for people with mobility issues and during the hours outside of public transport provision. The LTP recognises the important role that taxis play within the public transport infrastructure and suggests that taxi ranks should be provided at all important interchanges and at key locations within city centres.

Issues and Options

The major issue for central Wakefield is whether the existing taxi rank facilities provide a sufficient service for the city centre or whether the number and location of ranks needs to be reviewed. One option would be to create a greater number of taxi ranks and disperse them at key locations around the city centre. Taxi ranks could also be placed on all major routes in and out of the city centre as well as important travel interchanges. One consideration for the placement of taxi ranks is whether there are currently any problems arising from conflicting uses such as people leaving pubs and clubs and people leaving the theatre.

Question 6:

Does the location of taxi ranks need to be reviewed?

Use of Local Waterways

Background

The River Calder runs through the Southern part of central Wakefield and provides a potential transport route for both freight and leisure uses. Wakefield also has a direct link via the Aire and Calder Navigation with the Humber Ports and other commercial waterways of eastern England.

Issues and Options

Although relatively unused at present, the utilisation of local waterways for leisure activities could be promoted within the city. This could take advantage of the development of the Waterfront site and provide an additional tourist attraction to the area.

Question 7:

How should the use of local waterways for leisure be encouraged?

Urban Design/Built Environment

This section focuses on the urban design and built environment issues that will be addressed by the policies contained within the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (AAP). It will begin by examining Wakefield's built environment heritage and explore ways in which the AAP might positively influence it. The issue of how to foster high quality urban design within the city will then be addressed, followed by the quality of buildings and open spaces and the scale and suitability of advertising within the city.

The national planning policy context for urban design issues is contained in a number of planning policy guidance notes and the regional guidance is contained in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The following government policy objectives relate to the issue of urban design and the built environment:

- the promotion of high quality urban design;
- the improvement of the quality of the public realm and open spaces;
- the protection and enhancement of the architectural and historic heritage of centres;
- the provision of a sense of place and a focus for the community and civic activity; and
- ensuring that town centres provide an attractive, accessible and safe environment for businesses, shoppers and residents.

Improving the quality of urban design is a key aspect of improving our places one of the priorities identified in Wakefield's Community Strategy, *Fast Forward*, and is central to urban renaissance initiatives. The Urban Renaissance programme in Wakefield City is focusing on a number of issues, including the quality and design of the built environment and public spaces. 'Getting Connected: Wakefield Renaissance Charter', was published in November 2002 and a second document, 'Wakefield: Developing the Vision', will be published shortly.

It is recognised that design policies in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) are inadequate and that the need to raise the quality of urban design in new development is not given sufficient emphasis. The policies included in the AAP will therefore aim to improve upon those in the UDP, and thereby maintain and improve the quality of the built environment within central Wakefield.

Wakefield has been identified as the main centre in the District in which social and economic activities take place and as such it has to provide a quality environment which is attractive, safe, easily accessible and also serve the needs of those who use it. Although buildings are the most significant feature of any urban area it is also important to recognise the role that other aspects, such as the urban spaces that surround them, play in contributing to a quality built environment.

Wakefield's Historic Built Environment

Background

Wakefield has an important historic built environment and there are many historic buildings within the city, such as the Cathedral, Chantry Chapel and the civic buildings on Wood Street, which are of exceptional architectural value. Historic buildings offer a valuable resource to the area and can contribute to the prosperity of the local economy. As long as they are properly maintained they can be put to a number of uses such as commercial or residential occupation.

It is not just the buildings in Wakefield that benefit from their historical nature however as the layout of central Wakefield still owes much to its original historic street pattern. This is particularly prevalent in the area around the top of Westgate.

National planning policy guidance⁹ highlights the importance of the historical environment in sustaining a sense of local distinctiveness and character in an area. Such a distinctive character is an important factor in attracting visitors into Wakefield as opposed to other urban centres around the region.

Issues and Options

The layout of parts of Wakefield City centre is still influenced by its historic street pattern and this could be maintained and promoted as a distinctive feature for the city. The image of Wakefield as a city with strong visual links to its original historic layout could be an important tool in differentiating it from other urban and retail centres and attracting additional visitors into the city. Along with the street pattern, the historic buildings within the city also contribute greatly to its urban form and this could be defined and measures put in place so that future development does not have a detrimental effect on this aspect of the city's urban form. These will aim to ensure that the quality of existing building is maintained or enhanced and that any new development meets the standards already set.

⁹ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment, October 2002 (PPG15)

RSS suggests that local planning authorities should seek to involve the local community in identifying buildings of historic or local interest. The AAP could be used to draw up a list of buildings which, whilst not currently listed, are potentially worth submitting to English Heritage for consideration as a listed building.

There are also a number of buildings within the city that, whilst not deemed worthy of being listed, contribute significantly to the quality of the built environment. The Council also has a Buildings of Local Interest List which aims to protect those buildings which, whilst not being worth listing, nevertheless make an important contribution to the area.

Question 8:
How can Wakefield's heritage of historic buildings and urban form be defined, preserved and enhanced?

Question 9:
Are there any additional existing buildings within central Wakefield which should be considered worthy of designation as a listed building or as a Building of Local Interest?

Urban Design

Background

National planning policy guidance states that policies for the development of town centres should promote high quality and inclusive design, in order to improve the character and quality of the area.

Good quality urban design is a vitally important factor in ensuring that Wakefield achieves the goal of becoming a distinctive and vibrant city. Urban design not only relates to the buildings within the city but also to their layout and the general floor and streetscape, including street furniture and signage.

Issues and Options

It has been recognised that the design policies contained in the UDP need to be strengthened and that the need to raise the quality of urban design in new development is not given sufficient emphasis. The quality of urban design in central Wakefield needs to be developed and improved. That is not to say that the design of every building and space should be specified in the plan. It could be more a case of identifying the factors that need to be taken into consideration in development and re-development schemes. Such an approach could provide guidance for developers and encourage the raising of design quality within central Wakefield.

It is also suggested that the AAP identify potential sites for the designation of landmark buildings within central Wakefield. These for example could include buildings or structures which offer important views to those entering in along major routes into the city. Attempts could then be made to ensure that the quality of these landmark buildings is highlighted and protected.

Question 10:
How can the Plan provide guidance on the main factors contributing to good and appropriate design within the Plan area?

Question 11:
Should the Plan identify potential sites for landmark buildings? If so are there any priority sites?

Urban Spaces

Background

The quality of urban spaces in Wakefield is crucially important in making the city an attractive place in which to live, work and visit. Maintaining and enhancing these spaces would play a major role in making central Wakefield a more attractive and vibrant place for people to spend time. The Council recently commissioned the internationally renowned urban quality consultants Gehl Architects to undertake a programme of work on the quality of urban space within the Wakefield District.

Issues and Options

There are a variety of key public and private spaces in and around the city centre and the Council could issue guidance on their protection and enhancement. The work carried out by Gehl in Wakefield City has focussed on pedestrian access issues within the city centre, the key development areas of Marsh Way, Wakefield Waterfront and Westgate, pedestrian circulation within the city centre and the quality of the urban environment in the city centre. They have produced a draft strategy for the Council and it is suggested that this could be used as the basis for guidance which could be issued to define the main factors contributing to good and appropriate design for urban spaces within the Plan area.

Question 12:
Should the Plan identify and evaluate key public and private spaces and provide guidance for their retention and enhancement? If so, are there any priority areas?

Advertising within Central Wakefield

Background

Advertisements affect the appearance of the building, structure or place where they are displayed. If a level of control is not maintained then there is the possibility that this effect will have a negative impact on the urban environment. Despite this however, advertisements can play an important role in promoting the local, regional and national economy and this should be taken into account when assessing their impact. The amount of advertising within the urban arena has increased dramatically over the last two decades. The major types of advertising used within city centres include billboards, fascia signs, projecting signs on shops and fly-posters.

National planning policy guidance¹⁰ suggests that local planning authorities should consider what impact the advertisement, including its cumulative effect, will have on its surroundings. The relevant considerations suggested for this purpose are, the local characteristics of the neighbourhood, including scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, which contribute to the distinctive character of the locality.

Issues and Options

In the Policies to Protect, Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Built Environment section of the LDF Issues and Options Report it is recognised that improved control over advertisements and shopfront design affecting both conservation areas and listed buildings appears to be required to ensure their character is not adversely affected. One option would be to define areas within the city in which advertising is perceived to be obtrusive and as having a detrimental effect on the urban environment. A policy could then be produced as part of the AAP to control the levels and type of advertising in these areas. Such a policy would recognise the importance of advertising to the local economy but aim to limit its negative effect on the urban environment. It would do this by providing clear guidance for prospective advertisers on the likely acceptability of their proposals and provide a basis for rational and consistent decisions on advertisement applications.

Question 13:

Are there areas within the city where you regard the amount and style of advertising to be intrusive?

¹⁰ Planning Policy Guidance Note 19 - Outdoor Advertisement Control, March 1992 (PPG19)

Housing

This section deals with the housing policies which will be contained in the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (AAP); including the approaches to city centre living, the amount and location of new housing, and the quality of residential environments. The focus will begin on looking at the number and type of new houses to be provided within the plan area before moving on to the issue of the location of this new housing. The final part of the section will examine the issues around maintaining and improving the quality of residential environments in central Wakefield.

The policy context for considering housing issues in the AAP is provided by national planning policy guidance¹¹, RSS and by the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS). Both national and regional guidance highlight the importance of concentrating the majority of additional housing development within urban areas and creating mixed communities which offer a choice of housing and lifestyle.

The RHS is a relatively new type of strategy introduced by the Communities Plan to guide local strategy development and investment priorities across the region. It has four main objectives:

- regeneration and neighbourhood renewal in areas of greatest housing need;
- planning for sufficient new homes and providing affordable housing for local people;
- improving homes to meet decent standards and aspirations; and
- fair access to quality housing for all groups.

The local context is provided by the Community Strategy, 'Fast Forward', which includes the aim of improving built-up areas by improving and maintaining safe, affordable, quality housing environments. This is carried through into the Council's Housing Strategy, one of whose aims is to make sure that all residents have a chance to live in decent, safe and well maintained homes.

The area covered by the AAP includes the city centre, with its primarily business and public sector use. Even so, the amount of housing falling within the plan area is significant. The trend over recent decades has seen people moving out of town and city centres as a result of slum clearance, road building and other re-development. Compared to many other towns and cities however, Wakefield has not seen the same level of migration of residential use out of the city centre largely due to the location of local authority housing and the fact that there has not been that much clearance. There are also some areas of housing around Primrose Hill, St. Johns and College Grove, all of which fall within the plan area.

Additionally, all three of the major regeneration projects currently taking place within the centre of Wakefield; Marsh Way, The Waterfront and the Westgate Key Development Area include a substantial element of residential provision.

City Centre Living

Background

National and regional guidance highlights the importance of situating new development in principal urban areas. One of the major benefits of new housing being located within city centres is the close proximity to the employment, retail and leisure opportunities. This reduces the need to travel for long distances, particularly by car and thereby reduces the amount of congestion on the roads and the negative effects associated with this.

The positive effect of city centre living on the use of cars can be seen in the fact that in the central Wakefield area car ownership is significantly lower than district and national averages. Also, over 23% of people cycle or walk to work compared to a 12.2% average from across the district.

The LDF Issues and Options Report put forward a suggested settlement hierarchy which would be used to allocate new housing around the district. This hierarchy, taking its lead from national and regional guidance, places Wakefield City at the top of the list of potential sites and suggests that new housing should be concentrated in the city centre and generally within the urban area.

Issues and Options

Although there are relatively few new sites that could be allocated for housing within central Wakefield there are a number of existing buildings which could be redeveloped as residential units in and around the city centre. People could therefore be encouraged to live in the city centre through the provision of housing in this manner.

Another way of encouraging city centre living would be to encourage new build developments in the city to include an element of residential development. This has so far been reflected by the significant amount of residential units included in each of the three major regeneration projects within central Wakefield.

Question 14:

How and where should the plan make provision for more people to live in central Wakefield including the city centre?

¹¹ Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 - Housing, March 2000 (PPG3)

The Number and Type of New Houses to be Provided

Background

One of the key issues to be addressed in the LDF Core Strategy is the scale of new housing in the District. Government guidance¹² states that LDFs should make provision for new housing for a period of ten years from the date of adoption. The LDF Core Strategy is programmed to be adopted in 2007 so it should seek to accommodate new housing up to March 2017, a period of 13 years from the base date of April 2004.

The development of new housing can play a major role in encouraging regeneration within an area. On the other hand, it can lead to pressure on existing educational and medical facilities and can lead to more traffic on local roads. It is therefore important that new housing is accompanied by the necessary investment in infrastructure for it to be effective in bringing about regeneration.

The requirements for housing provision within the District is set at regional level and the figure set out in the UDP comes from Regional Planning Guidance, published in 2001, and retained in RSS issued in December 2004. The UDP (policy H1) sets the number of additional houses to be provided in Wakefield District for the period mid-1996 to mid-2006 at 9,500 (equivalent to 950 per annum).

Annual requirement figures for new housing in each local authority area for the period to 2021 will be included in the new RSS being prepared by the Yorkshire & Humber Assembly, in consultation with local authorities. These will supersede the figures included in current RSS. Once a figure has been agreed the LDF Core Strategy will need to make provision for the housing requirement until 2017. Wakefield, as the prime location on the suggested settlement hierarchy, will be required to meet a substantial amount of this new housing provision.

Government projections suggest that the number of new households will increase over the longer term and that the majority of these will be one-person households. This trend is often more pronounced in urban centres and this is reflected within the plan area where 45% of households are occupied by a single person. At present 40% of housing within the plan area are flats, maisonettes or apartments, compared to a district average of 10.2%.

National planning guidance states that Local Planning Authorities should encourage the development of mixed and balanced communities, which offer a choice of housing and lifestyle. This means that new housing developments should offer an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and affordability.

Issues and Options

One of the main objectives of the AAP with regard to housing policy will be to determine how many new dwelling will be appropriate within central Wakefield over the lifetime of the plan.

The Council has undertaken an Urban Potential Study to assess the capacity of individual urban areas in the District to accommodate new housing. The study gives an indication of the scale of new housing which might be appropriate in each settlement based on the findings of the Urban Potential Study. The findings of the study indicate that Wakefield City has the potential for 2,845 additional dwellings.

It is also important to consider what kind of housing should be provided within the central Wakefield area to ensure that there is a sufficient choice of different types of housing. As such it would be useful to highlight whether there is a deficiency in the provision of any particular type of housing within the plan area. For example, there may be demand for an additional stock of smaller scale apartments in and around the city centre or the need for additional provision of affordable housing in a particular area. By highlighting this the plan could then attempt to guide new development to meet this demand.

Question 15:

How many new dwellings are appropriate and what type?

Residential Environments

Background

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to living in and around the city centre and these can vary according to location. Some of the problems associated with city centre living include the negative effects of heavy traffic such as pollution and noise, severance, litter, parking problems and lack of open space.

Issues and Options

In order to encourage people to live within central Wakefield it is necessary to protect and enhance its existing residential environments. If specific measures to do this are highlighted then the Plan could make provision to target them at the residential environments within its remit.

Question 16:

What should be done to protect and enhance residential environments?

¹² Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks, September 2004 (PPS12)

Economy & Employment

This section focuses on the issues facing central Wakefield with regard to the economy and employment and sets out some potential options for addressing them in the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (AAP). The three main areas focused on are; the development of new office facilities within the city, the treatment of existing and potential industrial-use sites, and the development of the city's retail sector.

Wakefield has undergone a series of economic changes following the decline of the coal mining and manufacturing industries. The economy has diversified and the growing service sector benefits from the city and district's excellent communication links. Regeneration Initiatives have led to successful inward investment and created new jobs and available expenditure in the district. The population within Wakefield is increasing, although below the national rate. Unemployment rates are dropping; reflecting national trends and the proportion of economically active people is increasing. The major employers within the district are in the manufacturing and distribution sectors.

The four economic objectives of the UDP First Alteration are to:

- Facilitate the diversification of the local economy and to provide a balanced range of employment opportunities;
- Improve the relatively high unemployment rates in priority areas of the District;
- Facilitate the further development of Wakefield and other towns as service centres; and
- Encourage existing industry and businesses within the District to flourish and grow, where appropriate.

The national policy context for considering economy and employment issues in the AAP is provided by planning policy guidance¹³. Additional advice is offered in a recent ODPM publication¹⁴. The regional context is provided by RSS, emerging RSS and strategies issued by the regional development agency, Yorkshire Forward¹⁵, and the West Yorkshire Economic Partnership¹⁶.

The local context is the Community Strategy, '*Fast Forward*', and its accompanying Action Plans and a report prepared for the Council and the Wakefield Development Agency, *first*¹⁷. The LDF Core Strategy will also contain a section addressing economic and employment issues within the Wakefield District, an outline of which can be found in the LDF Issues and Options Report.

New Office Development

Background

Wakefield City centre's office market has historically been dominated by large public sector uses and local professional occupiers although the public sector presence has reduced somewhat in recent years.

Over recent years the District has seen the development of a number of out of town office parks positioned close to the M1. These include the Wakefield 41 Office Park, Paragon Business Village, Calder Park, Calder Island and Silkwood Park. Although such sites are attractive due to the fact that they are easy to develop and accessible by car they are less sustainable than sites within urban areas that are closer to where people live and can be accessed by public transport.

National Planning Policy¹⁸ and RSS states that when identifying sites preference should be given to land within urban areas (particularly previously-developed land), subject to being able to deliver a continuing supply of sufficient quantity and quality.

The proposals relating to the Westgate Key Development Area (KDA), which aim to create a new and prosperous quarter of the city, include the provision of offices within its range of uses. Such office space will be particularly attractive due to its close proximity to the Westgate station.

Issues and Options

Central Wakefield offers a cost advantage when compared to Leeds, where there is currently a significant shortage of floor space, and out of town business parks. It is important that Wakefield takes advantage of this fact and attracts employers looking for office space into the city. There is however a shortage of good quality modern office accommodation within the city centre and as a result the out of town office market has grown rapidly, especially over recent years.

The presence of a healthy office population within the city would have a positive effect on the regeneration of the area through the added business it would bring to nearby retailers. The attraction of large regional, national and multi-national companies into central Wakefield would also bring a major boost in terms of jobs and investment.

¹³ Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 - Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms, November 1992 (PPG4); Planning Policy Statement 6 - Planning for Town Centres, March 2005 (PPS6)

¹⁴ Planning for Economic Development, ODPM, May 2004

¹⁵ Regional Economic Strategy 2003-2012

¹⁶ Draft West Yorkshire Investment Plan 2004

¹⁷ Regenerating the Wakefield District Strategy Report 2003-2006

¹⁸ Planning Policy Statement 6 - Planning for Town Centres, March 2005 (PPS6)

In order to encourage the provision of large-scale office facilities and attract regional, national and multi-national companies into the city it is proposed that the Council seeks to adopt floor space targets for new office development. These targets could identify the amount of office space required within the city and specify the desired floor space to be met by individual sites.

Although the Westgate KDA proposals include the provision of office space it is uncertain that this on its own will be sufficient to establish a 'market' for office space within the city that can develop beyond that area. In order to facilitate this it will be necessary to pursue office development in other areas of the city. The AAP could contain policies which highlight areas within central Wakefield where the development of new office space should be encouraged.

Some suggested potential areas which may be suitable for new office developments are:

- Kirkgate/George Street;
- the Chantry/Crown House area;
- Caldervale Road;
- Thornes Wharf; and
- the north-western area of the city centre.

Question 17:

Should we seek to adopt floor space targets for office development?

Question 18:

Which area(s) of the city, in addition to the Westgate Key Development Area, can best accommodate a re-invigorated new office quarter?

Industrial Uses within Central Wakefield

Background

National planning policy guidance suggests that the planning system plays an important role in integrating environmental and economic objectives.

There are a number of sites where industrial uses are currently situated along the southern fringes of the city. There are also the marginal areas around the city centre, including the yard areas south of Westgate, which have been designated as areas for business and industry in the UDP.

Issues and Options

One option would be for the AAP to include policies to promote cleaner uses for the industrial sites on the southern fringes of the city. The existing industrial use may have a detrimental effect on the environment and air quality and therefore reduce the Council's ability to meet government targets in this area.

There is also the question of how the AAP should treat the marginal areas around the city that have previously been allocated for business and industrial use. If these uses are no longer appropriate then the AAP could seek to reassess and possibly reallocate them.

Question 19:

Should the Plan seek to encourage the removal of heavy/polluting industrial use on the southern fringes of the Plan area?

Question 20:

How should the Plan treat the marginal areas around the centre allocated for business and industry, including the yard areas south of Westgate?

Retail Development within Central Wakefield

Background

When comparing the floor space of Wakefield with its closest competing centres (Leeds, Huddersfield, Doncaster and Barnsley) it has the smallest level. The other centres have all experienced an increase in floor space and investment over the past decade. The Marsh Way Scheme will help to 'push' Wakefield up the retail hierarchy in terms of available retail floor space. The implementation of Marsh Way will also increase the retail provision in Wakefield and improve its ranking when compared with other centres within the region. The attraction of department stores to Wakefield will enhance Wakefield's standing as a retail destination and provide greater choice for shoppers.

The prime rents in Wakefield are low (£90 per sq ft) when compared with Leeds (£260 per sq ft). This shows the relative strength of Leeds and its attraction to investors. There is a considerable pipeline of investment planned in Leeds, further confirming its position at the top of the retail hierarchy. Other retail developments are planned in Barnsley and Doncaster, which could impact on Wakefield and future investment in the centre.

The retail sector within the city also faces stiff competition from out of town retail parks and major shopping centres such as the White Rose Centre and Meadowhall. At present the city centre lacks the presence of a number of national retailers which would help in attracting shoppers into the city from throughout the region.

The Marsh Way scheme will provide a new quarter for the city which will fully integrate with the existing centre and surrounding areas. It will incorporate a new market hall and outdoor markets, a supermarket and major department store and is due for completion in September 2008.

Issues and Options

In order to compete with and attract back those shoppers lost to other retail centres there is a need to develop a retail sector within the city which provides choice, quality and diversity. The Marsh Way scheme will provide a significant boost for the city but it is important that the regeneration of the retail sector does not end there and that other areas of the city centre undergo similar improvement. To encourage the continued growth of the retail sector within the central Wakefield area the AAP could identify the next area or areas of the city in which retail improvement and regeneration should be focused.

It is essential that Wakefield differentiates itself from other retail centres and offers its own unique quality experience for shoppers. A major part of achieving this is through the presence of a healthy amount of specialist small-scale retailers and it is therefore vitally important that such businesses are attracted to the city centre.

Question 21:

Which area(s) of the city centre should be the next focus for retail improvement and regeneration after the Marsh Way scheme?

Question 22:

How can the specialist small-scale retail sector best be encouraged?

Culture, Leisure, Tourism & the Evening Economy

This section is concerned with the issues relating to culture, leisure, tourism and the evening economy within central Wakefield and how they will be represented by policies in the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (AAP). It will address issues relating to the provision of leisure and cultural facilities within Wakefield as well as overnight tourist facilities. It will also address the quality of Wakefield's evening economy.

Due to its diverse nature the context for this section is contained in a variety of different national planning policy guidance notes. The regional context is set out in the RSS.

At a local level the Council has produced a cultural strategy, '*The Freedom to Be 2003-2015*'. The strategy looks at how cultural services and activities need to be delivered in the future to respond to changing lifestyles and demands.

The Provision of Cultural and Leisure Facilities within Central Wakefield

Background

The provision of both cultural and leisure facilities in or around urban areas is a vital component in ensuring the well-being of the residents of these areas. National planning guidance¹⁹ highlights the importance of well maintained open spaces and leisure facilities in supporting urban renaissance.

The RSS details the negative impacts of out of town facilities and states that local planning authorities should plan positively for the provision of leisure facilities in or on the edge of urban centres.

The Wakefield Community Strategy, *Fast Forward*, highlights improving the range and quality of cultural and leisure opportunities across the district as one of its priorities in improving the quality of life for people in the area. It sets out the need to promote and develop quality and diverse cultural opportunities for all sections of the community.

Issues and Options

Wakefield has a variety of cultural facilities located within the central area including:

- Wakefield Theatre Royal and Opera House;
- Wakefield Museum;
- Wakefield Cathedral;
- the Elizabethan Gallery;
- Wakefield Art Gallery; and
- Drury Lane Library.

In addition the Wakefield Waterfront Regeneration Scheme will include a major new gallery, named after the internationally acclaimed local sculptor Dame Barbara Hepworth, and designed by leading architect David Chipperfield. A new central library will also be included as part of the Marsh Way scheme.

The main leisure facilities that are located within the plan area include the Lightwaves Leisure Centre, Sun Lane Pool and the floodlit all-weather pitches at College Grove. Additionally many of the city's schools also contribute to the provision of leisure facilities and Thornes Park is located just outside of the plan area. The private sector also provides a variety of leisure facilities available within the central Wakefield area.

The availability of a wide range of leisure and cultural facilities is a key part of developing the vibrancy of the central Wakefield area and raising the quality of life of those who use it.

Question 23:

Is there an adequate range of leisure and cultural facilities available within central Wakefield? If not, which additional facilities are needed and where?

Overnight Tourist Facilities

Background

Due to the variety of tourist activities available within the urban area it is necessary to provide a range of overnight facilities to meet the needs of tourists. The two major types of overnight tourist facilities are hotels and bed and breakfast establishments.

¹⁹ Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 - Planning for Open Space and Recreation, July 2002 (PPG17)

²⁰ Planning Policy Guidance Note 21 - Tourism, November 1992 (PPG21)

National planning policy guidance²⁰ suggests that hotels can bring economic and employment benefits to an area and support a range of amenities such as transport and cultural activities. It also highlights the fact that such amenities not only benefit tourists but also have a positive impact on local residents.

Issues and Options

Attracting visitors into the city is an effective way of boosting Wakefield's economy. For example, visitors often contribute significantly to the local retail sector through their expenditure on shopping. The tourist industry also offers a wide variety of jobs at all skill levels for people within the area.

The ability to offer a variety of high quality overnight facilities for tourists is an important factor in Wakefield's capacity to attract visitors, especially those from outside the region. Without these facilities visitors, especially those from outside of the region, are unlikely to visit Wakefield and even if they do are liable to seek overnight accommodation in other locations.

Question 24:

Is there an adequate range in quality and quantity of overnight tourist accommodation in the city?

The Evening Economy

Background

National Planning guidance²¹ suggests that local authorities should encourage a range of complementary evening and night-time economy uses which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups. This provision, where appropriate, should include a range of leisure, cultural and tourism activities such as cinemas, theatres, restaurants, public houses, bars, nightclubs and cafes.

Traditionally Wakefield has been well-known for its vibrant evening economy, attracting visitors from throughout the region, a tradition that can be traced back to medieval times when it was known as the 'Merrie City'.

Issues and Options

There is a trend of premises, particularly on Westgate, becoming 'fun pubs' and clubs and this may have a detrimental effect on other uses such as wine bars, restaurants and the theatre. In order to have a successful evening economy it is important that a variety of facilities are offered and that these facilities are located in the right areas of the city centre. It is also important that the facilities on offer cater for a wide range of age and social groups. An over dominance by one use, such as pubs and bars, is likely to have a detrimental effect on the area and could result in it being avoided by those seeking a different experience.

If required the AAP could identify if there is a dominance within the plan area by any one type of activity and set out policies to encourage that a more varied level of provision is maintained in future.

Question 25:

Is there an appropriate mix in evening leisure facilities within central Wakefield?

Question 26:

Are these facilities located correctly within central Wakefield?

Question 27:

Are there any factors that discourage you from visiting central Wakefield at night?

²¹ Planning Policy Statement 6 - Planning for Town Centres, March 2005 (PPS6)

Miscellaneous

Areas Likely to be Subject to Change

Background

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) has used a combination of policies and zonings/allocations to control and promote development. The zonings/allocations used on the Wakefield City Centre Inset Map include:

- Key Development Sites, such as the site now occupied by the new bus station;
- Key Development Areas, such as the area known as the Marsh Way area, which is to be developed for retail and other uses;
- Special Policy Areas, such as the Waterfront area around Chantry Bridge; and
- Areas subject to policy statements and supplementary planning, such as the area in the vicinity of Smyth Street, Westgate and Drury Lane.

One of these sites (the new bus station) has been developed and three (Marsh Way, the Waterfront and Westgate) are progressing through the planning system.

Issues and Options

Area zonings/allocations have clearly had much success in guiding and promoting development but for some of the areas the zonings have been less effective. It is worth reviewing this approach as there are various factors that may affect whether development takes place. It could be that the boundaries of the area have been wrongly determined, the area may have been inappropriately zoned or alternatively there has as yet been no demand for development.

Perhaps what is needed is a simplification of the zonings to flag up the initial need or opportunity for change and an accompanying mechanism to provide guidance regarding the direction that change should take.

Question 28:

Should any areas be identified as 'areas likely to be subject to change', and if so, which?

The Plan Area

Background

The rationale for preparing the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan (AAP) is that Wakefield City centre has been identified as the main driver of the district's economy and as such there is significant pressure for change. The UDP Wakefield City Centre Inset Map covers the city centre and the commercial and residential areas immediately adjoining. This is because those areas receive the impact of the city centre uses and users such as traffic, noise and pollution.

Issues and Options

The AAP should cover an area adequate to make provision for the change set out in the vision statement. The attached plan at the back of this document shows the suggested boundary for the AAP.

Question 29:

Is the geographical area to be covered by the Action Area Plan appropriate?

Other Issues and Options

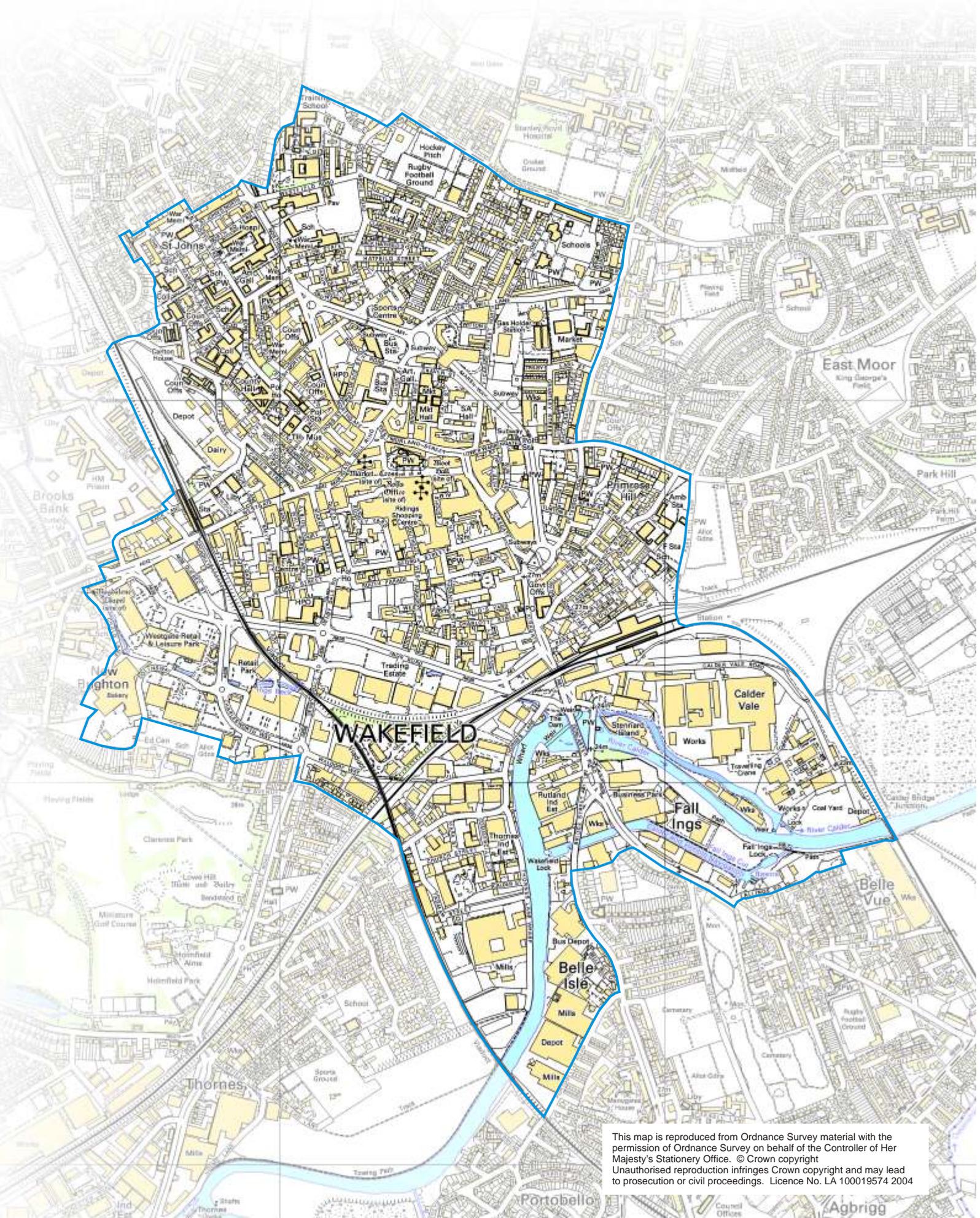
Although this document has highlighted a number of potential issues within each of the policy areas to be addressed by the Central Wakefield AAP there may be some additional issues that you feel are not covered but that should be included. Additionally, you may feel that some of the issues covered are not done so in sufficient detail and if this is the case we would like to know.

There also may be some potential options for addressing the issues highlighted within this document which you think should be included but aren't. Again, if this is the case please take this opportunity to let us know.

Question 30:

Should other issues and options be included in this report?

Proposed boundary of the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence No. LA 100019574 2004