

A NEW VISION FOR DEVELOPING CENTRAL WAKEFIELD

Central Wakefield Area
Action Plan

Issues & Options
Summary Report



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CENTRAL WAKEFIELD AREA ACTION PLAN

ISSUES AND OPTIONS - SUMMARY REPORT

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Introduction

The Council is preparing a new plan to guide the use of land and development in the District. This plan will replace the present plan the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and needs to be ready by 2007. The new plan will be called the Local Development Framework (LDF).

As part of the LDF the Council is preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) 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.

We want everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of the AAP and to begin with we would like to hear your views on what you think are the important issues for central Wakefield and what some of the potential options are for tackling them. We do not however have an entirely free hand. The AAP has to take account of national and regional policies, build on the existing UDP and comply with quite specific regulations as to how it is prepared and presented. It must also conform to the policies set out within the District wide LDF Core Strategy. This however still leaves a lot of areas where the distinctive hopes and concerns of local people can be included.

We have prepared a detailed report on the issues and options that we feel are most important. Please look through that especially if you have strong concerns about a specific issue. This summary report however provides a more straightforward representation of these issues and is organised into the following sections:

- The Vision for Central Wakefield
- Transport
- Urban Design/Built Environment
- Housing
- Economy & Employment
- Culture, Leisure, Tourism & the Evening Economy
- Miscellaneous

In this report we ask a number of questions which we would like you to think about and comment upon. These are not the only issues facing the central Wakefield area and we would be pleased to receive any comments you want to make on subjects not covered by our questions.

When commenting on this document or the more detailed Issues and Options Report you will need to bear the following point in mind. The Central Wakefield AAP will be part of the District wide LDF and as such will conform to the policies and proposals set out in the LDF Core Strategy. An Issues and Options Report for the Core Strategy and other LDF Development Plan Documents was published by the Council in December 2004 and can be read in conjunction with this document.

How Do I Get Involved?

If you have comments on any of the questions and issues raised in this document or the full Issues and Options Report 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.

Send your comments to:

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 and be notified of future consultation stages 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 Central Wakefield 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 preparing the Central Wakefield AAP, the Preferred Options Report. This will set out the range of policies and proposals which the Council is proposing 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 public consultation.

Details of the timetable for preparing the Central Wakefield AAP and the other documents making up the LDF are shown in the Local Development Scheme, which can be viewed and downloaded from the Council's web-site. Arrangements for engagement and consultation at each stage will be set out in the Statement of Community Involvement, which is currently in preparation and will be subject of a separate consultation.

Information

This Issues and Options Summary Report and the full Issues and Options Report are also available to view 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 لفٹ 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

Context - The Community Strategy

One of the most important documents that we must take into account is the Community Strategy '*Fast Forward*', which says what Wakefield should be like in the future and is supported by all the key organisations in the District.

In 25 years time Wakefield District will be a place:

- Moving forward motivated by pride and its heritage
- Where people look after themselves and each other so that they are safe and healthy, having skills and confidence to take more control over their lives
- With places that are attractive to live, learn, work and invest in and where our diverse towns and villages work together to promote the well being of the whole district
- Where together with the younger people of the district we will ensure that the work we do now will stand the test of time

To deliver the '*Fast Forward*' vision we need to make sure that we:

- are safe and feel safer
- are healthy and look after ourselves
- are part of a dynamic local economy
- are skilful and confident by investing in our people and
- live in attractive environments by improving our places

The principles we need to guide us relate to how we do things so that whatever we do, we do so in a way that:

- Engages with and reflects the needs of the local communities
- Develops cohesive communities
- Leads to sustainable improvements

'*Fast Forward*' also states which parts of the District are priorities for regeneration, one of which is Wakefield City.

The 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*', to 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.

Issues for the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan

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?

Transport

Transport Policy for the District is set by the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan, which is guided by national and regional policy. The LDF Core Strategy will contain a number of transport policies aimed at creating sustainable settlements and reducing the need to travel. The policies in the Central Wakefield AAP will conform to the guidance set out in these documents.

Pedestrianisation and Provision for Cycling

One of the key objectives for the transport policies contained within the Area Action Plan will be to promote sustainable transport choices through a reduction in car use and an increase in other modes of transport such as walking and cycling. Heavy car use 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. 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. 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.

Along with the proposed measures to reduce the amount of traffic within central Wakefield key pedestrian and cycle routes in and around the city could be identified and established as part of the plan, allowing people to travel within the city a lot more safely and securely on foot. The establishment of specific cycle routes, especially along major arterial routes into the city centre, would encourage the use of cycling as a viable alternative mode of travel.

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

The provision of public transport has a major role in developing a sustainable transport infrastructure and provides an attractive alternative to private car use. 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 would minimise the delays faced by people using buses to travel in and out of the city centre, particularly at peak congestion times when traffic delays are most likely.

Shuttle buses could be introduced 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. 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

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

National, regional and local guidance states that the amount of long-stay parking within city centres should be reduced and replaced in part with short-stay parking. In order to conform to national and regional requirements the Council has adopted the approach of reducing 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.

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?

Taxis

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 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 if there are any problems with the current provision.

Question 6:

Does the location of taxi ranks need to be reviewed?

Use of Local Waterways

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. 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

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.

Wakefield's Historic Built Environment

Wakefield has an important historic built environment and there are many historic buildings within the city, such as the Cathedral and Chantry Chapel and the civic buildings on Wood Street, which are of exceptional architectural value. 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 could be an important tool in the differentiating it from other urban and retail centres and attracting additional visitors into the city. 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 doesn't have a detrimental effect on them.

The AAP could be used to draw up a list of buildings which, whilst not currently listed, are potentially worth submitting to English Heritage as a listed building. 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

Good quality urban design is a vitally important factor in ensuring that Wakefield achieves the goal of becoming a distinctive and vibrant city. 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

The quality of urban spaces in Wakefield is crucially important in making the city an attractive place in which to live, work and visit. 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. It is suggested that the work carried out for central Wakefield should 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 the City

Advertisements affect the appearance of the building, structure or place where they are displayed and 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 AAP could locate areas within central Wakefield in which advertising is perceived to be obtrusive and as having a detrimental effect on the urban environment. A policy could then be produced 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.

Question 13:

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

Housing

City Centre Living

Although the trend over recent decades has been for people to move out of city centres 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 AAP could include policies aimed at encouraging city centre living through the development of existing buildings into residential units and by pushing for new build developments to include an element of residential development.

Question 14:

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

The Number and Type of New Houses to be Provided

One of the key issues to be addressed in the LDF Core Strategy is the scale of new housing in the District. It will allocate the level of new housing provision, which is set at regional level, across the District. It is likely that a large amount of this provision will be apportioned to central Wakefield and the AAP will have to decide how to allocate this housing within the Plan area.

The Council has undertaken an Urban Potential Study to assess the capacity of individual urban areas in the District to accommodate new housing and 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 to meet differing needs. 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.

Question 15:

How many new dwellings are appropriate and what type?

Residential Environments

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.

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?

Economy & Employment

New Office Development

National and regional guidance suggest that when allocating sites for new office development preference should be given to urban areas to counter the recent growth of out of town office parks. The presence of a healthy office population within central Wakefield 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. It is proposed therefore 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.

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 the City

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. The AAP could therefore 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 the City

The retail sector within the city faces stiff competition from other competing centres such as Leeds, Huddersfield, Doncaster and Barnsley, and out of town retail parks and major shopping centres such as the White Rose Centre and Meadowhall. In order to compete with and attract back those shoppers lost to these 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 also 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

The Provision of Cultural and Leisure Facilities within Central Wakefield

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, a fact highlighted in the Wakefield Community Strategy, *'Fast Forward'*. Wakefield has a variety of cultural facilities located within the central area including the Wakefield Theatre Royal and Opera House, Wakefield Museum, Wakefield Art Gallery, the Cathedral and the Elizabethan Gallery. Additionally, the Wakefield Waterfront Regeneration Scheme will include a major new gallery, named after the international acclaimed local sculptor Dame Barbara Hepworth, and the Marsh Way scheme will include a new central library.

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.

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

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 of 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

In order to have a successful evening economy it is important that a variety of facilities, appealing to a wide range of age and social groups, are offered, and that these facilities are located in the right areas of the city centre. Over recent years there has been 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.

If required the AAP could identify if there is 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?

Miscellaneous

Areas Likely to be Subject to Change

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) has used a combination of policies and zonings/allocations to control and promote development. These 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

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 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?

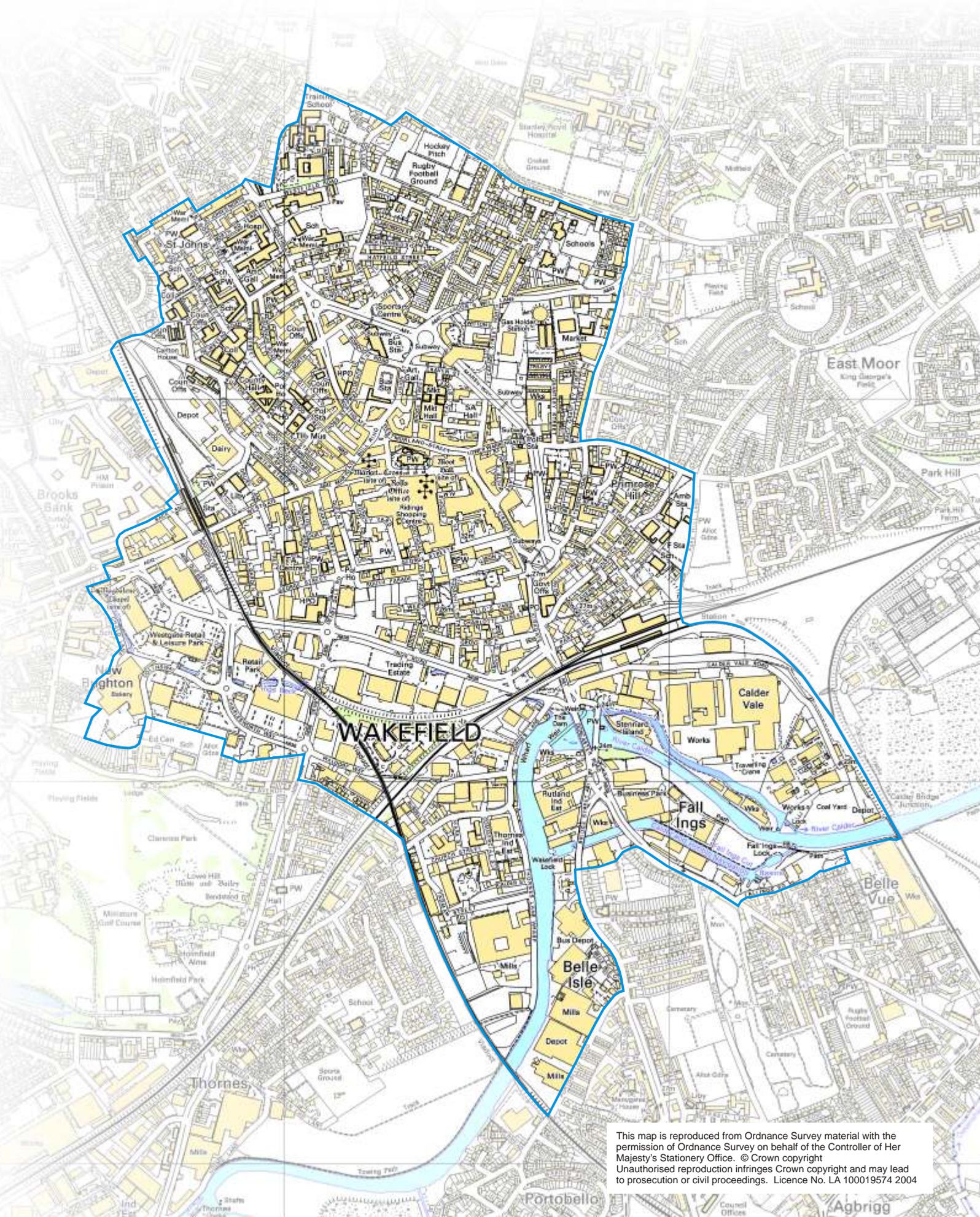
Other Issues and Options

We would like to know if there any issues, or potential options for addressing these issues, that you believe should be considered but that haven't been covered within this document.

Question 30:

Should other issues and options be included in this report?

Proposed boundary of the Central Wakefield Area Action Plan



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