

Accrington
at the heart of Pennine Lancashire

Accrington Town Centre

Final Masterplan Report

July 2008



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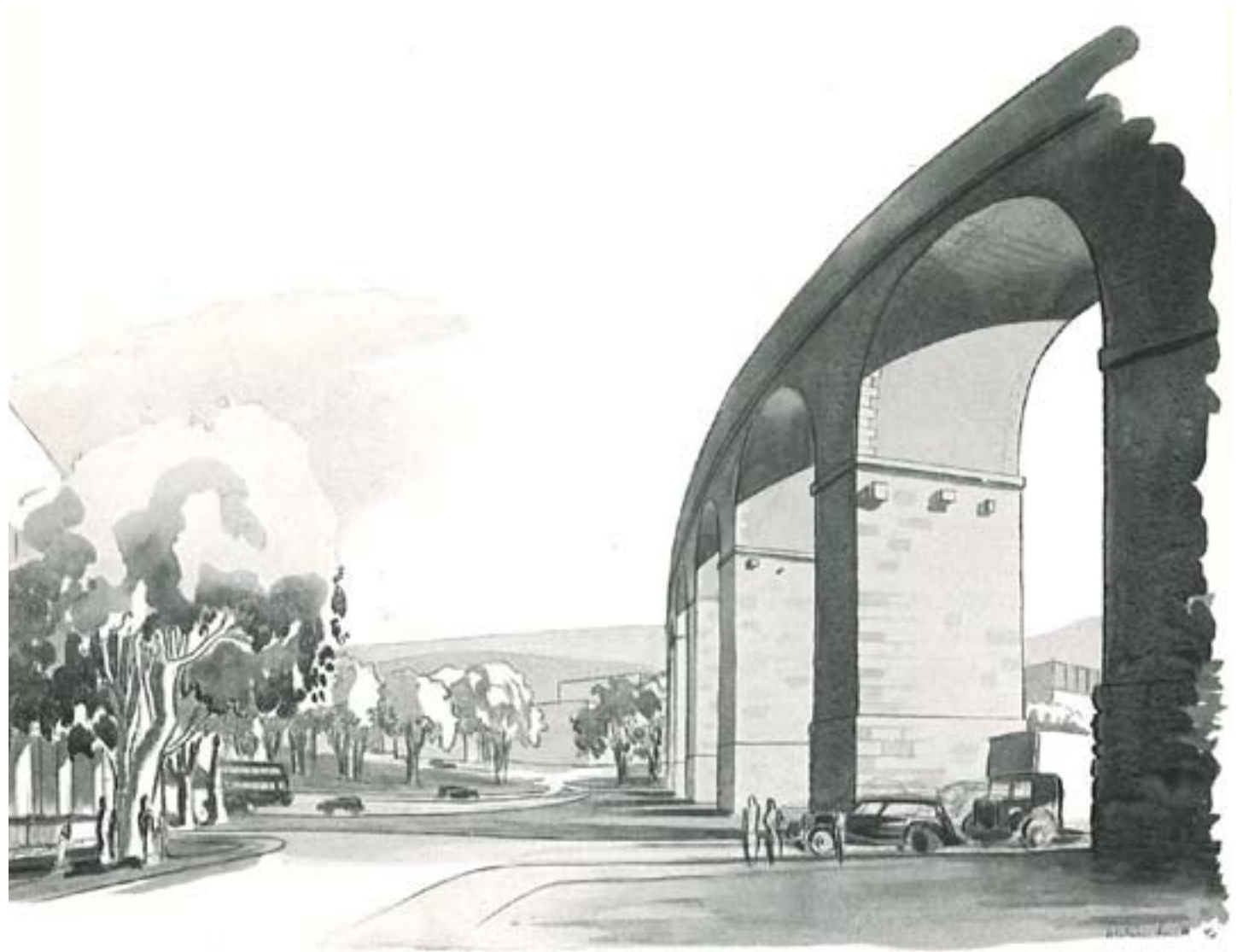
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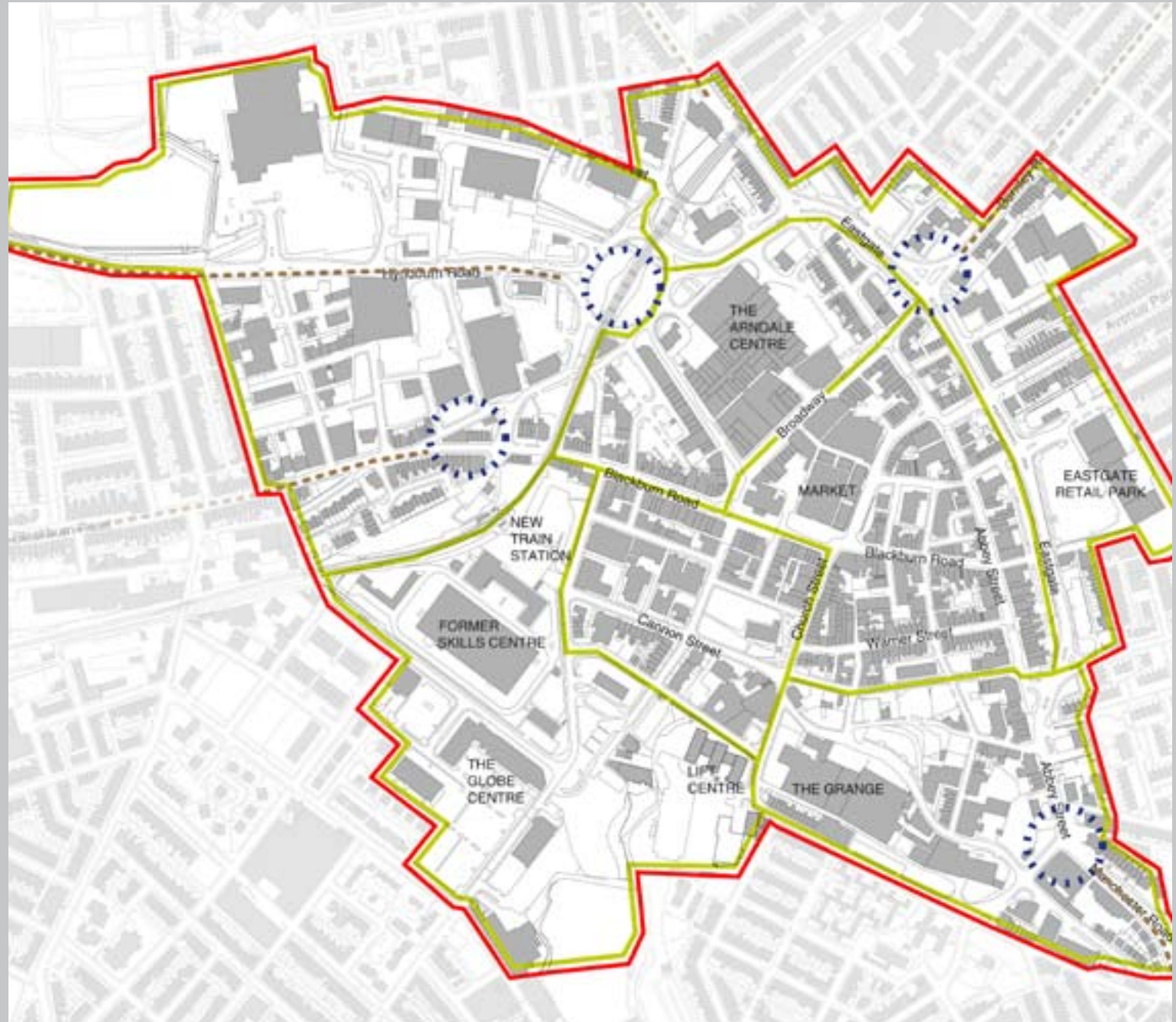
Nineteenth Century Monument. In spite of the careless encroachment of sheds and other buildings and workyards, the grandeur of this railway viaduct can still be appreciated by those with eyes to see. Note in the above photograph the fine sweep of the parapet and mouldings against the sky, the rich play of light and shade in the series of soaring arches, and the rich yet economical use of stone and brick combination. Accrington shares with other English towns an architectural feature in its railway viaduct which is comparable with the famous aqueducts of Segovia and other Roman cities. The least we can do is to make the most of these dominant features in the townscape.




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PREFACE





This masterplan is the first step in paving the way for the regeneration of Accrington town centre. It will take the meeting of hearts and minds, strong leadership and community involvement to secure the right change for the town that is sustainable, distinctive to Accrington and ensures its future prosperity.

This is a masterplan which aims to positively transform the town keeping, enhancing and renewing the best, removing the worst and rebuilding a sustainable future. The last plan for the town was published in a book called 'Industry and Prudence' in the 1950s. This title was based on the town's motto 'Industry and Prudence Conquer' adopted in the nineteenth century, applicable in the 1950s and still carrying resonance today in 2008. Some of the issues and proposals for the town in the 1950s plan are still relevant today.

Accrington was one of the first industrial towns for which a plan was prepared and published where it was recognised at the time that towns whose problems are most difficult are those in which the majority of inhabitants are employed in one industry, which is not the only industry of the town but also the region, in the case of the North East Lancashire Cotton Group.

The need to diversify and modernise the economic base of the town is still a priority today like in the neighbouring towns of Blackburn and Burnley. Creating a distinctive town with a good quality of life will underpin this economic growth and competitiveness. A quality residential offer, thriving, interesting town centre, good community, educational facilities and public transport will all contribute to economic prospects. Get these things right and Accrington will retain people in the town and attract new people in. For a 21st century

'market town' such as Accrington, these are quite likely to be family households, as such the educational offer of the town is a critical element to get in place.

The problems and approaches to regeneration in these former industrial towns are similar but the nature of the solutions, ideas and individuality of the change should represent the heart and soul of the town if it is to be meaningful and sustainable. The 1950s plan called Accrington a 'workshop town', "such towns cannot claim to be models of urban town design. Nevertheless they have an individuality and interest often lacking in twentieth century development". It is this unique character and strong sense of local pride that the masterplan seeks to strengthen.

An aerial photograph of Accrington, showing a dense residential area with many houses, interspersed with green fields and some industrial buildings. A road or railway line runs along the right side of the town. The image is framed by white vertical bars on the left and bottom edges.

INTRODUCING ACCRINGTON



This section sets out the context and brief for the masterplan and the key strategic drivers and regeneration activity within the town which has informed the masterplan process.



STUDY CONTEXT

The Accrington Town Centre Regeneration Board produced the Accrington Town Centre Strategy in 2005. This set out a programme for improvement and investment to 2008. The vision within this report is to “achieve a town centre with a broad and sustainable economic base which is a desirable place to visit and which can be the focus of community activity and pride”. Underpinning this vision were six Strategic Objectives set out below, these have also informed the masterplan study.

- Strengthen Retail Position
- Become a Visitor Destination
- Enhance Quality of Environment
- Improve Access, Movement and Transport
- Promote Investment and Business Development
- Improve Educational and Training Opportunities

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.

The masterplan for Accrington town centre was commissioned by Hyndburn Borough Council in April 2007. The study brief highlighted the need for the Borough to reposition itself within the wider Northern Way and Central Lancashire City Region Vision, completing the tapestry of towns that constitute East Lancashire and to breathe life into the unique vision for Pennine Lancashire.

The aims as set out in the brief were to provide:

- A vision and image for the town centre to deliver future prosperity and make a statement of expectations
- A detailed masterplan for the town centre and immediate surroundings based on an assessment of options
- Solutions to the long standing issues including road system improvements and a site for the new bus station
- An action plan of key projects and site development opportunities which will act as drivers with immediate action priorities
- Early wins to stimulate investment and provide a platform for long term sustainability

- Proposals for enhancing the quality of the environment/design
- A schedule of costings for each proposal within the masterplan and recommendations for funding
- Proposals for effective delivery of the masterplan with timescales.

The purpose of the masterplan is to set out a sustainable and deliverable vision for the town centre to guide planning policy and set the context for individual projects and developments to come forward. This will also provide a framework for potential funding bids and Lancashire County Council and Hyndburn Borough Council capital programmes as well as informing the spend from Section 106 planning funds. Hyndburn Council intend to take the masterplan forward as an Area Action Plan which will form a Development Plan Document in the Local Development Framework.

MASTERPLAN PROCESS.

URBED have led the masterplan process supported by a range of sub consultants. Throughout the commission analysis, ideas and proposals have been tested and explored with the Accrington Town Centre Regeneration Board and other stakeholders. This group has acted as the stakeholder group and sounding board for the study. This group has included local traders, council officers, elected members and community representatives. The key stages of the study are set out opposite starting in April 2007:

KEY STAGES OF THE STUDY

April-June 2007	Baseline Analysis
7th June	Town Centre Walkabout with Stakeholder Group Members
14th June	Stakeholder Group Issues & Opportunities Workshop
9th August	Presentation to the Stakeholder Group on the Baseline Findings
July-September	Option Development
20th September	Option Appraisal Workshop with Stakeholder Group
October-November	Preferred Option Development
November	Preferred Option Presentation and Discussion with Stakeholder Group
December-January	Preparation for Public Consultation
January 25th and 26th	Public Consultation on Options and Preferred Option/Draft Masterplan
February-April	Preparation of Final Masterplan
May-June	Approval of Final Masterplan by Hyndburn Borough Council
July 2008	Endorsement of Masterplan by Council

There are a number of supporting reports to this Masterplan Report based on the above stages. These are set out below and available online at www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk and www.urbed.coop.

SUPPORTING REPORTS

Stakeholder Workshop Report	July 2007.
Baseline Report	January 2008.
Issues and Options Report	January 2008.
Draft Masterplan Consultation	January 2008.
Public Consultation Feedback Report	March 2008.

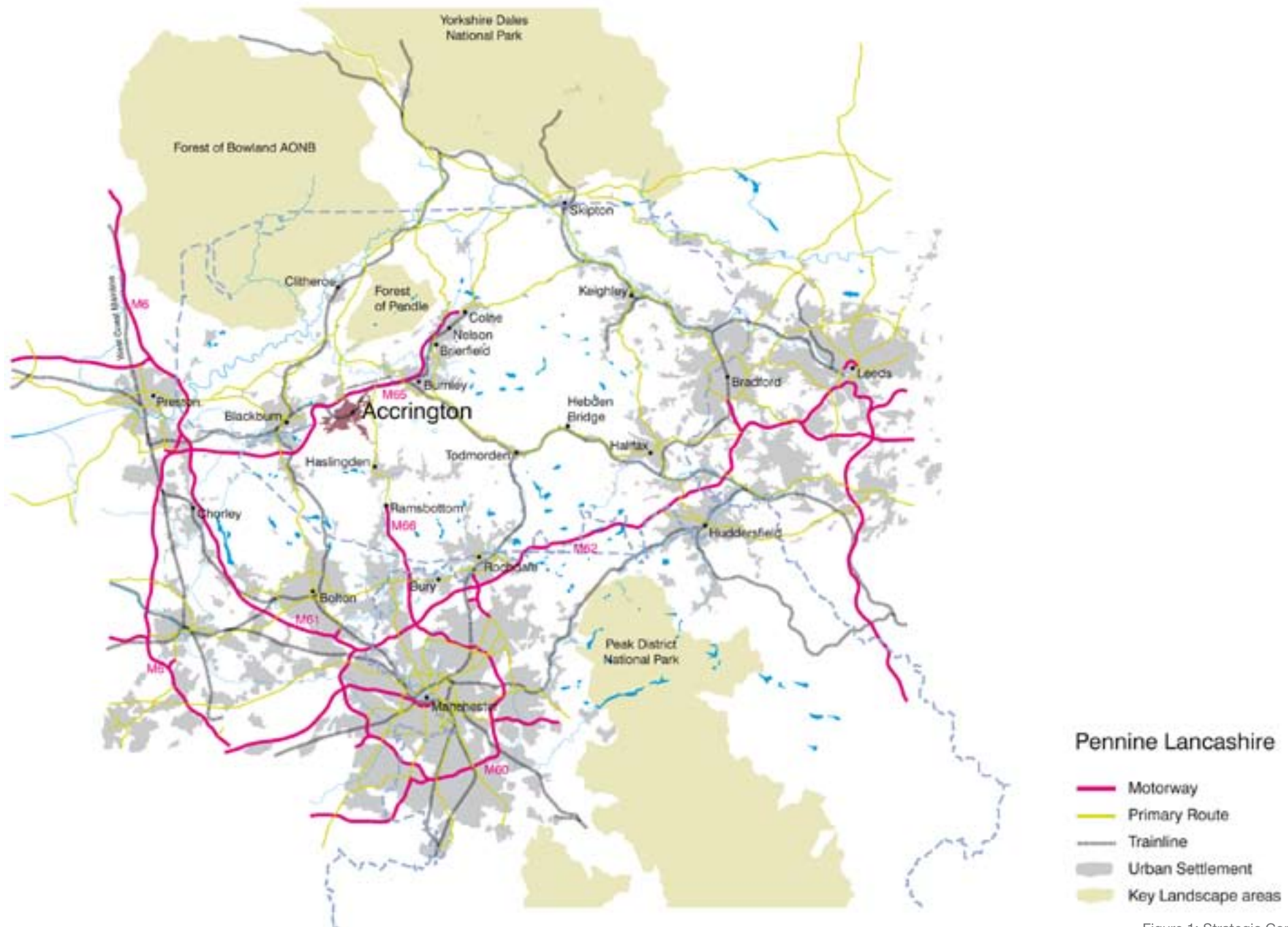


Figure 1: Strategic Context

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Where is Accrington?

Accrington is on the western edge of the Pennine Hills and one of a number of former industrial towns which contribute much to the local character of the Lancashire Valleys countryside. The town sits in a bowl formed by the surrounding hills.

The early town straddled a small watercourse known as the Hyndburn or Accrington Brook, the course of which has long been lost through canalisation and culverting. As the town grew it spread across a relatively flat bottom to the foot of the hills. The highest local point is Great Hameldon to the east of Accrington.

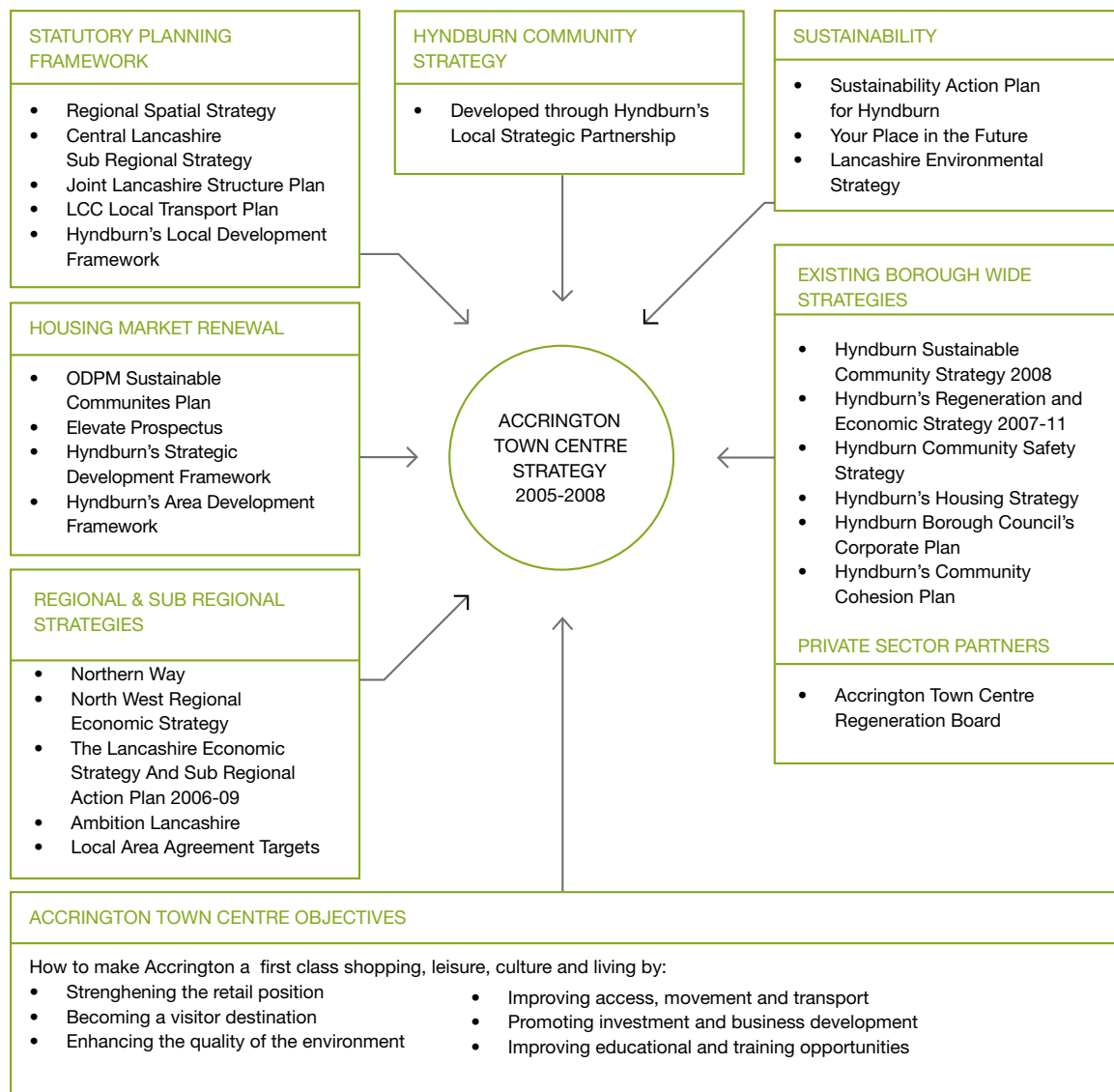
Accrington is well located to both the cities of Preston and Manchester, to the west and south respectively, and to the Yorkshire Dales and Forest of Bowland/ Ribble Valley. Skipton is 25 miles to the north east, a 45 minute drive and Clitheroe, 9 miles to the north is a 25 minute drive. Preston is around 30 minutes on the train, where access to the west coast mainline is available.

Accrington is 25 miles to the north of Manchester city centre, about a 40 minute drive. Public transport to Manchester is not so swift, with the bus taking around an hour and the train 1 hour 30 minutes with a change in Blackburn.

Blackburn and Burnley are around 30 minutes on the bus and 10-15 minutes by rail. Public transport improvements are being targeted into improved bus linkages through the East Lancashire Rapid Transit (ELRT) project.

This aims to develop an integrated public transport system with improved bus infrastructure and better links to and between rail services across East Lancashire. The ELRT is anticipated to provide a high quality bus based system.





REGENERATION CONTEXT

The regeneration of the town centre has and will be informed by other policies, initiatives and strategies at a range of spatial scales including the North West Region Lancashire Sub Region and East Lancashire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder. The diagram opposite highlights relevant strategies.

Regional Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy 2006 sets the vision for the North West of a “dynamic, sustainable, international economy which competes on the basis of knowledge, advanced technology and excellent quality of life”. This recognises that a priority will be that the economy of East Lancashire shall be regenerated. The RES sets out three key drivers to achieve this vision, based on the 5 themes around Business, Skills, Education, People and Jobs, Infrastructure and Quality of Life.

The Northern Way Growth Strategy 2004 highlighted the significant contribution of provincial city regions to growth in their regions. The Strategy focused on the principal of eight city regions as harbouring the majority of assets and economic growth potential for the North. These are Manchester, Liverpool, Central Lancashire, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, Tyneside and Teeside).

Lancashire Economic Strategy

Accrington is within the Central Lancashire City Region. The Lancashire Economy Strategy and Sub Regional Action Plan 2006-2009 has been published by the Lancashire Economic Partnership in order to shape the future of Lancashire based on a comprehensive evidence base.

Preston, England's newest city having being awarded city status in 2002, is now recognised alongside Manchester and Liverpool as a key driver of city-regional growth. Preston is now the focus for higher value knowledge based employment but there are emerging clusters elsewhere in the city region. Analysis of higher value services and manufacturing demonstrates that the market towns are hubs for higher value activity in their own right. Key drivers for the economy are centred on expanding the service economy and aerospace. Key Sectors include Advanced Manufacturing and Tourism.

The region is unique amongst contemporary city regions in the UK. The economy is a mix of advanced manufacturing firms (the largest concentration outside the south east), an emerging high value office economy and a firm tourist offer. The region is truly 'polycentric' with a strong network of urban centres, its setting is one of outstanding natural beauty encompassing areas of attractive coastline, estuary and open countryside. One of the distinctive benefits of this is the compact nature of many towns which allows a high level of interaction between the

countryside and urban settlements strengthening quality of life. As such the vision for Central Lancashire is the 'City with Room to Breathe'.

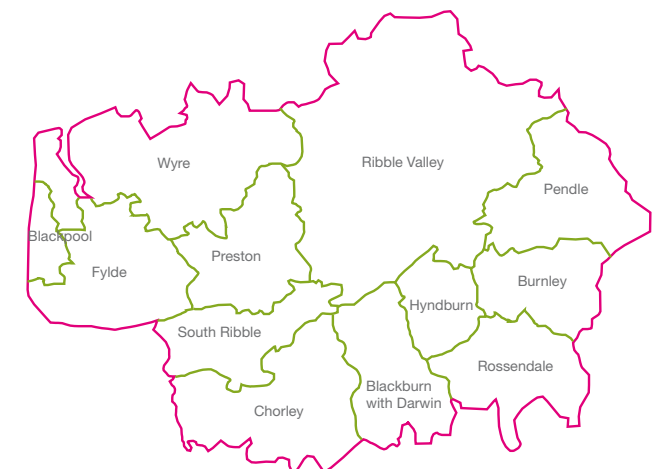
This towns-in-countryside, nature is particularly pronounced in East Lancashire, where the hilly backdrop of moorland to the south and real upland in Bowland to the north is the setting for all the settlements. Unlike most of the Northern city-regions, but more like Tees Valley, Central Lancashire is therefore not dominated by a single or principal core city, and does not have the attributes of a major city - despite its weight of population. Each has its own distinct character: the West Pennine towns of East Lancashire with their heritage of textile mills and terraced streets often climbing the hillsides above the town centre.

In large part these towns look to Manchester for that role, and the relationship with Manchester and its city region is an important one for many of the settlements, especially Accrington which is relatively close. Preston over time may increasingly emerge as a more important centre.

Elevate Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

One of the key projects within the city region framework for economic growth revolves around the transformational agenda of Pennine Lancashire, transforming the economy and housing market in East Lancashire. Substantial investment is planned through the Elevate East Lancashire Housing Market Renewal Programme. Other initiatives are aimed at skills and employment, town centres, land reclamation, entrepreneurship and business growth, science park developments and East Lancashire Rapid Transit.

Lancashire Boroughs





East Lancashire's status as an HMR Pathfinder reflects its concentration of actual or incipient housing problems. Its economic history has left it with a very unbalanced stock: terraced housing forms over 50% of the stock in the three eastern most districts. In 2004 25% of Hyndburn's housing stock was declared unfit. There are weak housing markets, with relatively low prices, lower demand and underinvestment.

The City Region Development Plan makes an explicit link from housing issues to economic growth, arguing that 'Remodelling these areas, focusing on creating attractive environments and a greater variety of housing stock, will better equip East Lancashire to support higher rates of economic growth; a supply of homes attractive to upper-medium and higher earners is vital for success in the modern economy'.

Pennine Lancashire

To assist in renewing the housing stock in East Lancashire Elevate commissioned Livesey/Wilson to come up with some "Imagineering" to help articulate the distinctiveness and identity of East Lancashire. A clear objective here was to convey clearly the message to the wider world of where East Lancashire

is and what it is. This is captured in the report "Dreaming of Pennine Lancashire" 2005. The most well known outcome of this work is the branding of East Lancashire as Pennine Lancashire which has since been accepted across the authorities of East Lancashire as a meaningful and helpful brand. Latterly Peter Saville has designed a logo to capture this name, subtly using the hilly topography of the region. As Livesey/Wilson says it "does what it says on the tin".

Another idea has been the Pennine Lancs Squared concept. As the report states the most significant thing you can do for a town is to create a public space at the centre which animates the town, we envisage the creation of new radical hard/soft spaces in each of the great towns along the valley. A concept as applied to Accrington explored later in this report.

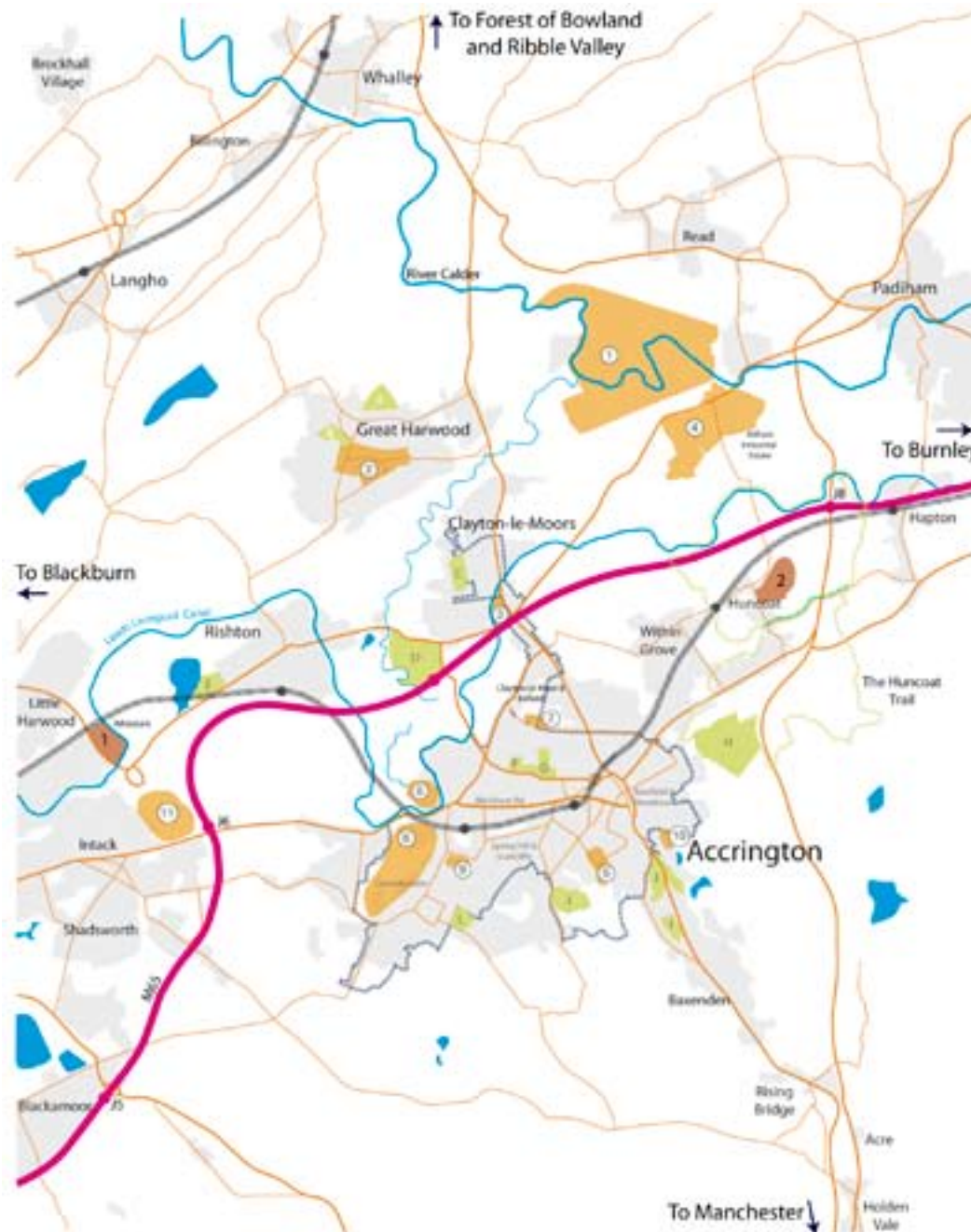
The Chic Sheds idea intends to promote the gardening revolution and cultivation of home grown produce. The report was very clear that the potential of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal had not been realised in East Lancashire and quite rightly points out that in Skipton the canal is a major and thriving attraction, does this only work in Yorkshire?

Hyndburn Sustainable Community Strategy

To meet the duty set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Borough's former local strategic partnership, prepared a Community Strategy running from 2003-2008. An external review of the LSP carried out in 2006 recommended that a new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) be developed to supersede this in line with the government consultation documents Local Strategic Partnership, Shaping their Future. This establishes the SCS as the pinnacle of all current and future Council strategies.

The Local Development Framework and emerging Regeneration Strategy underpin the SCS. The LDF being the spatial expression of the SCS. The Regeneration and Economic Strategy 2007-2011 for the Borough sets out a clear programme for delivering the key economic and physical regeneration projects being led by the Council and act as a catalyst for private investment in the area.





Spatial and Regeneration Context

- Regeneration Initiatives / Investment Areas
 1. East Lancs Proposed Racecourse Development
 2. Great Harwood Town Regeneration
 3. Clayton Triangle
 4. Altham Business Improvement District
 5. Platts Lodge
 6. Foxhill Bank Nature Reserve
 7. Moorhead Sports College
 8. Church Oswaldtwistle Gateway
 9. Oswaldtwistle Mills
 10. Accrington & Rossendale College
 11. Whitebirk Strategic employment site
- Housing Market Renewal Boundary
- Development Proposals
 1. Whitebirk Proposed Shopping Centre Extension
 2. Waste Transfer Station (Huncoat Power Station)
- Parks
 - A. Memorial Park
 - B. Lowerfold Park
 - C. Mercer Park
 - D. Dunkerhaigh Park
 - E. Cut Wood Park
 - F. Gurdy Park
 - G. Milshaw Park
 - H. Peel Park
 - I. Haworth Park
 - J. Oakhill Park
 - K. Ryddings Park
 - L. Bullough Park
- The Huncoat Trail

Figure 2: Borough Context

REGENERATION ACTIVITY

Over recent years there has been much public sector activity and investment in Hyndburn. Lancashire County Council and Lancashire County Developments Ltd are key partners in delivering economic, social and physical regeneration in the area and are involved in much partnership activity in the area.

The **housing market renewal programme** is based on 5 Area Development Framework Areas across Hyndburn. Three of these areas lie directly adjacent to the town centre, West Accrington and Church, Peel and Barnfield and Springhill and Scaitcliffe. The synergies and linkages between these neighbourhoods and the town centre should be maximised to assist in comprehensive renewal of these areas.

The priority area for investment has been the West Accrington Area where Project Phoenix schemes 1 and 2 will remove 300 terraced houses and develop 29 homes to rent and others for sale.

The Princess Street area will be revitalised through a combination of refurbishment, selective clearance and the introduction of sustainable, managed open spaces. The introduction of Neighbourhood Management to over 9000 properties in West Accrington, Clayton-le-Moors, Peel and Barnfield ensures that the quality of life is considered alongside the need to reshape the housing stock.



An important part of Elevate's Creative Community Engagement programme has been the work of the School of Architecture students from the University of Sheffield who spent 2 years working in Accrington developing architectural and public realm proposals with the involvement of the communities and businesses.

A book which illustrated this work called **This Would Never Happen in Accrington... Or Could it? Visions of Accrington 2007**, was launched by the Housing Minister Yvette Cooper in July 2007. The ideas within the students work has been fed into the town centre masterplan work.

The construction of two **LIFT healthcare facilities** on Blackburn Road and Paradise Street will improve access to GP surgeries and other health promotion initiatives costing £15 million.



A new dental facility adjacent to the Paradise Street LIFT centre will bring into the town students from Liverpool and Central Lancashire Universities to develop their skills.



New Dental Facility, Paradise Street



New Health Centre, Blackburn Road



New Health Centre, Paradise Street

Accrington & Rossendale College's new £16 million Broad Oak Campus opened in September 2007, giving students the opportunity to study in some of the area's most modern surroundings and using state-of-the-art facilities. The £16m refurbishment project signifies the biggest change in the College's 50 year history and also one of the biggest investments in the history of Hyndburn.

The new building at the Broad Oak Campus houses the Hair & Beauty, Performing Arts, Media and Music Departments with state-of-the-art facilities for each area. A large portion of the original 1953 building was demolished in summer 2006 and replaced by the Coppice Centre which houses:

- 3 Hair Salons • 3 Beauty Salons • Dance Studio
- 160 Seat Coppice Theatre • TV Studio • Radio Studio • Recording Studio • Desk Top Publishing Suite • Classrooms • Refectory

All rooms are purpose built and stocked with the latest equipment, giving learners and local residents some of the most advanced facilities in the UK. The £16 million investment is a massive commitment by the College to ensure that Hyndburn & Rossendale students have a campus fit for the 21st Century.

There is also unprecedented private sector investment and interest in the borough.



Accrington and Rossendale College



To right and above, Oswaldtwistle Mills



Oswaldtwistle Mills, is one of Lancashire's most popular tourist attractions (the third most visited attraction in the North West) with one million visitors per annum, 225 people employed full time and 70 other businesses involved in the Shopping Village. The Moscow Mills site has evolved over time from a major manufacturing operation to an 85, 000 sq ft retail and visitor attraction within the original buildings and setting. The NWDA commissioned Locum Destination Report Northwest Tourism Clusters (2005), found that

"Oswaldtwistle Mills ..is a private sector operation that is acting as a very effective destination marketing partnership. It is probably doing a lot more to attract tourists to the area and service their needs than any other public sector led initiatives".

The Mills are preparing a new vision and masterplan for its further development. This will address improving access and visibility, improving the overall environment and buildings, improving the mix of the shopping village and new attractions such as a craft village and village green. Improving access and facilities at Church Wharf to allow visitors to access the Leeds-Liverpool Canal is also a key aspiration. How this all fits in and links to the town centre is vitally important. But the pulling power of the Mills is a positive feature that should benefit Accrington town centre alike by building it into a circuit of retail/ tourism attractions around the Borough.



Leeds-Liverpool Canal, Church

All this investment and activity around the town presents real opportunities for the town centre regeneration. It is essential that meaningful functional and physical linkages are made between these areas and the town centre to increase people living, working and using the centre and increase spending in the town.

The Old Tannery, a suite of offices based in the former Karrimor factory in Accrington on Eastgate was redeveloped with private finance and was mostly let after completion for competitive rents.



Above, The Old Tannery, Eastgate



To left and above Waterside Apartments, Scaitcliffe Lodge



Baptist Church, Cannon Street

A new town centre residential scheme of 55 waterside apartments is nearly complete with associated retail and office units at Scaitcliffe Lodge.

The former Liberal Club is being converted to apartments and the Baptist church on Cannon Street now has planning permission for a residential conversion. The Scaitcliffe part of the town centre

is thus becoming a focus for both public and private sector investment.

Further away from the town centre a consortium is spending £4 million into a feasibility study for a £200 million racecourse at Altham which would be only the second in the UK for over 80 years and one of only four built since the 19th century.



Former Liberal Club, Eagle Street



REGENERATION INITIATIVES

Hyndburn will benefit from a share of £22.3 million of **“Great Goals” LEGL (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative)** money from April 2007. This provides an opportunity to address issues around enterprise and economic activity in the areas most deprived parts and complement the housing market renewal programme around the town. This joint bid with Blackburn with Darwen BC and other partners is a sports-led bid involving the 3 professional football clubs of Accrington Stanley FC, Burnley FC and Blackburn Rovers FC and other private sector agencies.

This initiative will help unlock the known latent entrepreneurial culture inherent within deprived areas of East Lancashire, stimulating and capturing this entrepreneurial potential. In Accrington the Enterprise Haven premises are currently planned to be based on the upper floor of the Market Hall in the town centre.

At **Great Harwood ‘A Plan for the Future’** has been prepared by Hyndburn Borough Council at the request of Great Harwood Area Council. The plan recognises that Great Harwood is already a vibrant local centre and there is tremendous opportunity to promote the town as clean, safe and friendly historic market town which is recognised as such across the whole of Lancashire. Interventions include improvements to the area surrounding Towngate, Town Hall Square Improvements, supporting Farmers Markets, environmental improvements to Holgate Street Car Park, the revival of the Barnmeadow Lane area.

A major economic initiative in the area is the **Whitebirk Strategic Employment Site** a 35 hectare site which straddles the boundary of Hyndburn and Blackburn with Darwen. The creation of a knowledge park will attract new employment sectors around the knowledge economy and potentially provide 2000 high value jobs. Also in the Whitebirk area lies the Peel Centre Retail Park, an application to extend the floorspace of this out-of-town centre has been refused by the Council because of the negative impact it will have on the town centre. This has been appealed and the Inspectors decision from the public inquiry awaited.

The development of a waste management facility, offices and an access road has been submitted on the **Former Huncoat Power Site** and approved by Lancashire County Council in July 2006. Other employment sites are planned for this area.

The role of the **Blackburn Road corridor** in the surrounding housing market renewal area and adjacent to the town centre has been explored in a recent study for the Council, Elevate and Keepmoat (the preferred developer partner for West Accrington). The study recommends concentrating the retail offer through shop front improvements, reusing vacant units and upper floors, protecting and enhancing assets through environmental corridor improvements and marketing and diversifying the economic base through the key project of a business hub. This would

provide new managed workspace to serve the whole of the Hyndburn area.

A very significant asset for the borough is the **new Academy** which would replace Moorhead Sports college. The academy would be an inclusive 11-18 school with 1150 places including 250 Sixth Form places offering academic and vocational courses.

Other regeneration initiatives in the borough focus on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal which meanders along fairly unnoticed to the west of the borough. The **Clayton Triangle** initiative aims to bring forward a mixed use development and improve access to the area. A masterplan is currently being prepared.

Closer to the town centre and Oswaldtwistle Mills is the **Church Canal Gateway** adjacent to the canal and marking the western arrival point or gateway into the town. The gateway is within a conservation area and contains many historic buildings associated with the canal. Proposals aim to unlock the leisure and tourism potential of the site which provides a strategic link to all the former mill towns of East Lancashire and beyond to Yorkshire and Merseyside. The area benefits from Supplementary Planning Guidance and a development brief. A preferred developer has been appointed and a masterplan is being prepared.



Church Canal Gateway and the Leeds Liverpool Canal running through Church



Top Left, Woodnook Mill a distinctive heritage building, part of the Platts Lodge area



A **Green Business Park** initiative is also underway at the Church Canal Gateway on a 15 hectare site led by Prospects (Hyndburn's community-owned environmental charity) and Lancashire County Council. The park will represent exemplar practice in energy efficiency and carbon neutral technologies). Nearby is the **Foxhill Bank Local Nature Reserve**, the only statutory nature reserve in Hyndburn. Although future candidates for local nature reserves include Peel Park and Woodnook Vale.

Another focus for physical regeneration, directly adjacent to the south east of the town centre, is the **Platts Lodge** (or Scaitcliffe Lodge) area. The area comprises c. 16 hectares and includes the major open space of Scaitcliffe Lodge and surrounding former textile mills of Woodnook Mill, Victoria Mill and Royal Mill. The area is thus deeply historically and culturally significant offering a wonderful opportunity for heritage-led waterfront regeneration

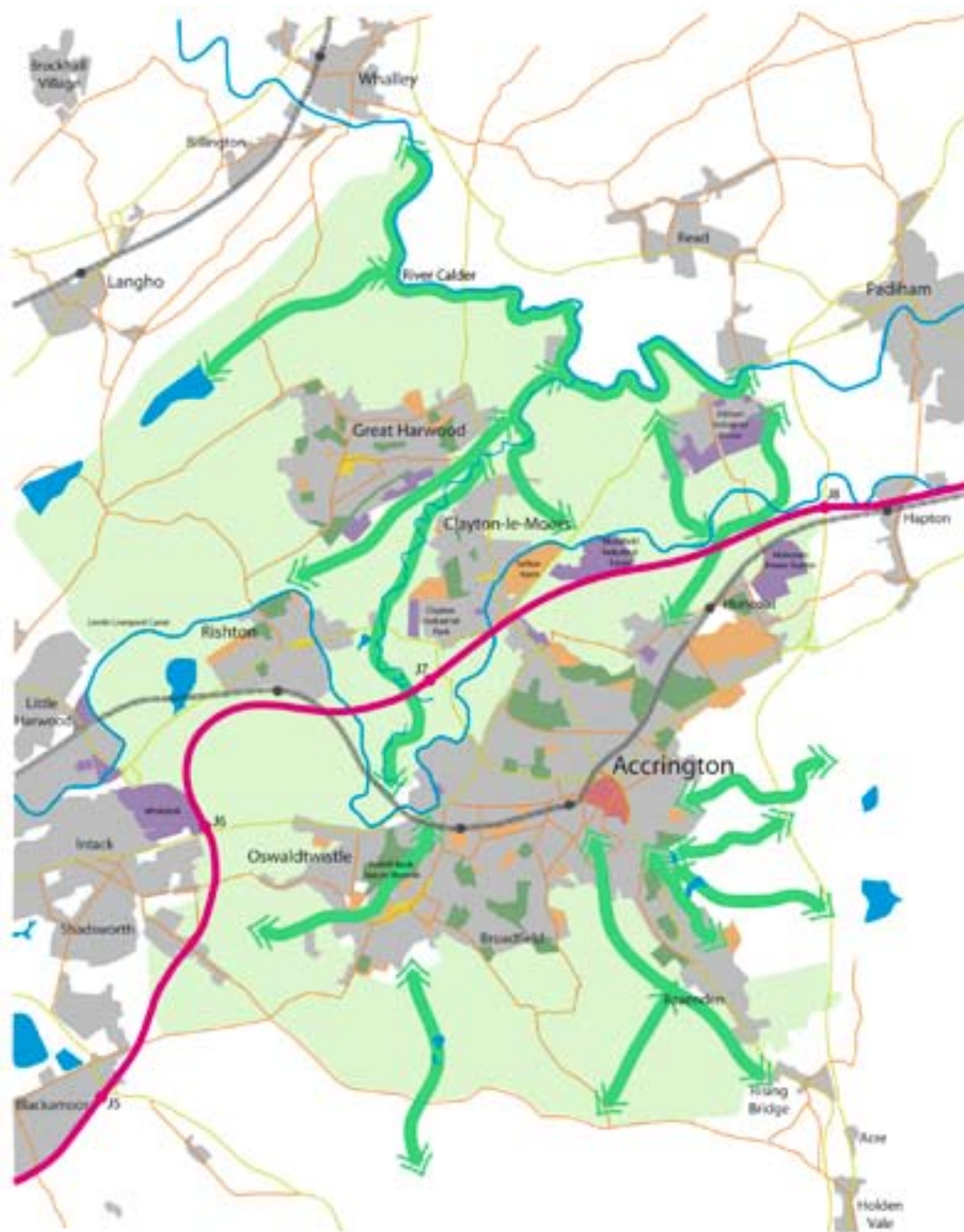
in a distinctive environment. The area is the largest last remaining example of the town's industrial past and as such should be kept and imaginatively renewed. It provides a great opportunity to provide a green wildlife corridor from the town centre out to the surrounding countryside, a quality of life benefit that the town should maximise especially given the lack of opportunity to do this elsewhere in the town due to intrusive highways and impenetrable development.

This area links the town centre with Woodnook Vale Country Park and has recently been invested in through the Hyndburn Greenway a recreational cycling and walking route. To respond to developer interest in the area a Supplementary Planning Document has been produced to guide the regeneration of the area.

The council has supported a **floral market towns** initiative to create a sense of civic pride and more attractive public spaces through hanging baskets and flower towers. Further plans involve town

centre landscaping schemes. A major investment in Hyndburns Parks supports this initiative.

As part of the REMADE (REclamation and MANagement of DErelict land) programme, supported by LCC and the NWDA, a masterplan is being prepared at Peel Park to improve access and recreational facilities as well as enhance its heritage and ecological value. Again as with Woodnook Vale and Hyndburn Greenway this green linkage from the town centre out to the countryside should be strengthened. All this investment and activity around the town presents **real opportunities** for town centre regeneration. It is essential that meaningful functional and physical linkages are made between these areas and the town centre to increase people living, working and using the centre and its prosperity



Planning Context - Key Designations

- Industry/ Employment Sites
- Housing Sites
- Accrington Shopping Centre
- Local Shopping Centres
- Open Space
- Green Belt
- Wildlife Corridors
- Motorway
- A- Roads
- B- Roads
- Rail
- Water

Figure 3 Planning Context

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The planning context for the town centre is provided in planning guidance at the national regional and local level.

National Planning Policy

Whilst a number of planning policy statements are of relevance to the masterplan the most directly relevant is **PPS 6 Planning for Town Centres**, published in 2005. The Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres; and
- encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

There are other Government objectives which need to be taken account of in the context of the key objective above:

- enhancing consumer choice by making provision for a range of shopping, leisure and local services, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community, and particularly socially-excluded groups;
- supporting efficient, competitive and innovative retail, leisure, tourism and other sectors, with improving productivity; and

- improving accessibility, ensuring that existing or new development is, or will be, accessible and well-served by a choice of means of transport.

This complements the Government's wider planning objectives set out in other planning policy statements such as PPS 1 and PPG 13:

- to promote social inclusion, ensuring that communities have access to a range of main town centre uses, and that deficiencies in provision in areas with poor access to facilities are remedied;
- to encourage investment to regenerate deprived areas, creating additional employment opportunities and an improved physical environment;
- to promote economic growth of regional, sub-regional and local economies;
- to deliver more sustainable patterns of development, ensuring that locations are fully exploited through high-density, mixed-use development and promoting sustainable transport choices, including reducing the need to travel and providing alternatives to car use;

- and to promote high quality and inclusive design, improve the quality of the public realm
- and open spaces, protect and enhance the architectural and historic heritage of centres,
- provide a sense of place and a focus for the community and for civic activity and ensure that town centres provide an attractive, accessible and safe environment for businesses, shoppers and residents.

The main town centre uses to which the planning policy statement applies are

- retail (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres);
- leisure, entertainment facilities, and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls);
- offices, both commercial and those of public bodies;
- and arts, culture and tourism (theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels, and conference facilities).

In addition, housing will be an important element in most mixed-use, multi-storey developments.



Regional Spatial Strategy

The Draft North West Plan was published for public consultation on 20 March 2006. It is now at an advanced stage of preparation. Proposed changes were published for consultation in March 2008 until the 23rd May 2008. The final adopted plan is expected in Summer 2008.

Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016.

Once the RSS is adopted it will replace the Structure Plan. Of the eight key objectives for the area, one is to protect and enhance the vitality of town centres. The Lancashire 2003 Shopping Study assisted in refining the Replacement Structure Plan's retail hierarchy and presents a broad framework against which future proposals for major non-food retail development can be assessed.

The structure plan categorises centres into a 3-tiered hierarchy. Tier 1 towns such as Preston, Blackburn and Burnley are top in terms of population and town centre ranking.

Accrington is a Tier 2 town in this retail hierarchy (along with other centres such as Chorley, Colne, Morecambe and Rawtenstall). The tier 2 towns have populations generally between 20,000 and 30, 000. They lie within the main transport corridors and offer retail and non-retail functions. They serve or have the "potential" to serve a wide urban area.

This point regarding potential is important. The implication being that the local catchments to sustain such centres exist, however the threat being the past and future development of out-of-town retail parks which siphon trade away from such centres and increase car borne traffic in doing so. In this respect competition exists from such centres as Whitebirk on the Blackburn/Hyndburn border and Middlebrook Retail Park in Bolton. Town centres need to increasingly "up their offer" to compete with such places, support for the town centre first approach being a key government objective enshrined in both PPG 6 and the replacement PPS6

The structure plan goes on to say that it is essential that Lancashire's existing towns are sustained and enhanced and must be able to accommodate a variety of retail and non-retail uses to be attractive and interesting places to visit. It is essential to diversify the economy and enhance vitality and viability. This can be achieved through promoting mixed uses and improvements to the range of retail, social, cultural and residential uses in towns.

Planning and Development Issues

Over time development in the borough has proceeded in largely peripheral locations to the town centre with both employment and housing sites being clustered towards the M65 corridor. These are largely bolted on to the existing urban area, do not include mixed

use development and are lacking in good public transport links.

In addition the towns green spaces are also largely on the edge of the urban area. Retail parks have grown on the edge of centre at both Hyndburn and Eastgate Retail Parks. Further pressure for out of town retail is evident at the Whitebirk Retail Park. All this has done little to regenerate the town centre and its neighbourhoods.

The opportunity exists in the new local development framework to create more sustainable patterns of development, based on mixed uses, higher densities, excellent design and good public transport accessibility located in and around the town centre and neighbourhoods needing regeneration. This should enhance and unlock existing assets such as the canal, parks and green corridors out to the countryside. There is also a clear need for council intervention and urgent action to save many of the towns heritage buildings such as the Conservative Club.

A key issue in the future development of the borough is the adjacency of the Blackburn urban area, as over time this is becoming closer to the Hyndburn area through new development.



Hyndburn Local Development Framework

Hyndburn's Local Plan was adopted in 1996 and sets out land use policies for the area to 2006. Local Plan policies have been saved until progress has been made with the local development framework.

This will be made up of a series of documents covering different aspects of development in the borough.

Completed documents include the Statement of Community Involvement (adopted September 2006), Church and Oswaldtwistle Canal Gateway SPD (adopted December 2006), Project Phoenix Phase 1 and 2 SPD (adopted April 2007) and Platts Lodge SPD (adopted October 2007).

Work is currently underway on the Core Strategy (Development Plan Document) which sets out a range of options including a preferred option for how the Borough will develop over the next 15 years. Consultation on this document is planned for Summer 2008. This is based on the issues and options consultation held in Summer 2006.

It is proposed to start work on preparing the Site Allocations DPD and Development Control (Development Management) Policies DPD in March 2008. Work is also underway on a Developer Contributions SPD based on a comprehensive survey carried out by Lancashire County Council. The Evidence Base to support policies in DPDs is being undertaken through the following studies

An Employment Land Study has been completed, this has yet to be approved.

A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will be undertaken to identify a 5, 10 and 15 housing land supply in line with figures contained in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (to be adopted Spring 2008).

A Housing Market Assessment commissioned jointly with Blackburn with Darwen has been completed. This will inform the location for new housing sites in the Site Allocations DPD.

A Green Spaces Audit was completed in September 2006 a strategy has now been commissioned which will advise on green space policies in the appropriate DPD.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out and will be submitted to the Environment Agency prior to approval.

The Council intend to take the town centre masterplan forward as an Area Action Plan which will form a Development Plan Document (DPD) in the Local Development Framework. More detail is provided in the final chapter.

