

## Appendix O – Stakeholder Workshop Summary

- 1.1 On 25<sup>th</sup> February, a stakeholder workshop was held at Allerdale Council's Offices in Workington to obtain views of key Stakeholders from across West Cumbria and to inform the wider healthcheck of the town centres. Stakeholders invited included those from the relevant teams at both authorities along with Cumbria County Council, key stakeholders in centres such as landowners, tourist boards, business representation and town Councils.
  - 1.2 The stakeholder workshop comprised of a presentation of some initial findings and interactive mapping activity, where Stakeholders had the opportunity to annotate, draw on, sketch and flag key ideas or knowledge about the town centre. The Stakeholders in attendance, and those who could not attend on the day but still wished to provide feedback, were asked to fill in a Town Centre Stakeholder Questionnaire. Copies of the annotated plans are included at Appendix C.
  - 1.3 The questionnaire asked Stakeholders to provide insight regarding the following:
    - i. The principal strengths of the town centre;
    - ii. The principal weaknesses of the town centre;
    - iii. How the performance of the town centre has altered over the past 5 years;
    - iv. Their opinions regarding the mix of uses in the centre;
    - v. Their views regarding the accessibility of the town centre;
    - vi. The Opportunities in the town centre; and
    - vii. The biggest challenges/threats to the town centre.
  - 1.4 This document provides a summary of the findings and insight gained from this stakeholder workshop.
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## Summary of Findings

### Allerdale Principal Town Centre and Key Service Centres

2.1 This section presents the findings with regard to key knowledge, weaknesses and strengths of Allerdale's centres with regard to the Principal Town Centre of Workington, and the key service centres of Cockermouth, Silloth, Aspatira, Wigton and Maryport.

#### Workington

2.2 The Stakeholders considered Workington's principal weaknesses to be the connectivity of the town, citing Washington Street as a barrier between restaurants and the retail centre at Washington Square. Furthermore, pedestrian connectivity is considered a key weakness to the west of the town also due to a lack of signage from the train station. Further issues raised include:

- Perception of safety due to crime, vacant units and lighting;
- Lack of evening orientated activities e.g. restaurants;
- Quality of public realm;
- Parking encourages short stay;
- Lack of activities for teenagers to do; and
- Lack of leisure offer around Carnegie Theatre to encourage stay after show.

2.3 With regard to Workington, the stakeholders identified many opportunities including:

- a. Pedestrianisation of the primary shopping areas at Murray Road and Finkle Street;
  - b. Opportunities to create activities for young people and support skills for jobs;
  - c. Create linkages between leisure centre/sports area and main town centre;
  - d. Redevelopment of the bus station;
  - e. Improve wayfinding and signage to the train station; and
  - f. Create new centralised parking and public realm.
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### Cockermouth

- 2.4 Stakeholders considered the principal strengths of Cockermouth to be the Georgian architecture, mix of quality independent retailers, cafes and restaurants, evening economy, and range of services, whilst the key weaknesses of Cockermouth are considered to be the lack of financial services, parking, lack of cheaper offer, and the dominance of charity shops.
- 2.5 With regard to changes to trade over the last 5 years, Stakeholders consider that footfall has failed to recover since the 2015 storm and flooding in the town. Furthermore, stakeholders note the new garage development on the outskirts of the town has altered lunch-time trading. There is a perception of a somewhat seasonal trade/ increase in footfall.
- 2.6 Stakeholders consider that there is an appropriate mix of uses in Cockermouth, however with regard to accessibility, it is considered that buses services to and from Cockermouth do not sufficiently link up, in terms of timing, with many train services provided from other centres such as Workington and Aspatria to enable linked journeys. Due to the historic architecture, it is considered that accessibility for wheelchair users may be poor.
- 2.7 Stakeholders identify threats such as lack of parking, accessible public transport and lack of financial services however also identified a number of opportunities and ideas to improve Cockermouth, which include:
- Maximising benefits of tourism;
  - Electric vehicle charging points;
  - Shop frontage design guidance;
  - Public water fountain;
  - New signage for attractions; and
  - Improving the presence of the arts centre.
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### Silloth

- 2.8 Silloth's principal strength is considered to be The Green which Stakeholders believe to be both well maintained and well used as it provides a focal point for activities and fosters community cohesion. Additionally, stakeholders consider Silloth to have an active community.
- 2.9 The principal weakness of Silloth is the dominance of the tourist market in the town, with stakeholders noting that some shops and most cafes close in the middle of the afternoon, meaning locals cannot use the services after work.
- 2.10 With regard to the mixture of retail uses, Stakeholders consider that a broader range of food retail would provide diversity and choice for the local residents.
- 2.11 With regard to accessibility, Stakeholders consider Silloth to be isolated with regard to infrequent public transport, particularly due to the fact that services are reduced outside of the summer tourist season. Positively, the nature of the town as a flat town with wide pavements is considered to be a positive. The cobbles of the sea fronting road is noted as both an asset and a challenge. Parking is considered to create issues by blocking dropped kerbs and making The Green inaccessible.
- 2.12 Stakeholders identify that whilst there are threats such as a decline in tourism impacting upon an overreliance on tourist trade in Silloth, there are opportunities to tidy up shop fronts and provide a better mix of independent convenience retail, subject to local demand.

### Aspatria

- 2.13 The principal strengths of Aspatria are considered to be the library, Park Lodge Home, the local school, the Co-op foodstore, the community centre and the bus service. Stakeholders consider the principal weaknesses of the centre to be the lack of banking facilities and the lack of a market day. Over the last five years, stakeholders note that the volume of traffic through the town has increased, to the detriment of health and safety.
- 2.14 When considering the present mix of uses in Aspatria, Stakeholders note a sufficient amount of takeaways and a lack of independent convenience retailers such as butchers, fishmongers and hardware stores.
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- 2.15 With regard to accessibility, whilst stakeholders note that train services are available at the train station, which is located somewhat out of the centre, the trains do not all stop. At present bus service is considered to be good by stakeholders, however it is noted that there is a lack of storage for bikes and parking is considered to be complex.
- 2.16 Whilst Aspatria faces challenges such as through-flowing traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, the stakeholders identified a number of opportunities including:
- Improvements to parking facilities at the Queen Street car park;
  - Reinstatement of the shop front improvement town centre grant scheme; and
  - Measures to encourage new independent retailers.

#### Wigton

- 2.17 Stakeholders consider Wigton's principal strength to be the benefits associated with the footfall from the Co-op foodstore. However, the offer is weakened by vacancies and the lack of a natural asset to focus events around.
- 2.18 The Stakeholders identify a range of opportunities including:
- The Borderlands funding deal has the potential to improve the town in a number of ways;
  - Investment into public realm; and
  - Maximising on lunchtime trade from factory without reliance.

#### Maryport

- 2.19 Whilst there was a lack of attendance by representatives from Maryport at the Stakeholder Workshop, Maryport has been shortlisted for the next stage of the Governments Future High Streets Fund and as such, there has been a wealth of stakeholder engagement occurring with regard to the town's Future High Streets Fund Bid.
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2.20 The objectives of the Maryport Future High Streets Fund Bid are to increase footfall along the high street and make Maryport more attractive to businesses, residents and visitors whilst maintaining longevity of the high street. To achieve this, public realm is a key focus for the proposals, with the aim of connecting the route from the train station through the high street from the harbour to the promenade along with addressing parking requirements for the town centre and key pedestrian junctions along Curzon Street.

2.21 The bid identifies a number of opportunities, including:

- Widening footpaths and reducing carriageway width to enhance the pedestrian environment;
- Creation of two gateway features entering the town from the north and south on Curzon Street;
- Introduction of ornamental and tree planting where possible to soften the hard urban grain;
- The creation of slight kinks and raised tables along Senhouse Street;
- Installation of benches and seating opportunities;
- Raised pedestrian crossing at key road junctions; and
- Retain on street parking for existing residents.

2.22 The vision also looks to address weaknesses such as vacant units through a repurpose grant fund, working to assist local building owners to upgrade their first floor accommodation into high quality office or residential units. The aim is to draw new users to Maryport, to increase footfall and demand along the high street. The proposal also aims to offer grant support for units that front Senhouse Street to visually improve the overall impression of Maryport for business owners, residents and visitors.

### **Copeland's Principal Town Centre and Key Service Centres**

2.23 This section presents the findings with regard to key knowledge, weaknesses and strengths of Copeland's centres with regard to the Principal Town Centre of Whitehaven, and the key service centres of Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom.

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Whitehaven

- 2.24 Stakeholders consider the harbour in Whitehaven to be underutilised. The Stakeholders flagged a number of issues in Whitehaven including:
- The unattractive nature of King Street;
  - Land ownership issues;
  - Lack of larger units;
  - Lack of demand
  - Parking;
  - Barriers to pedestrian linkages;
  - Lack of link between town centre and harbour; and
  - Lack of focus.
- 2.25 The principal strengths in Whitehaven were considered by the Stakeholders to be the harbour, the pedestrianised zone of King Street, the walking proximity to amenities, small local shops, the Georgian architecture, and the market place which is considered to provide a focal point for markets. The Stakeholders considered that empty shops, car parking, vehicle dominated areas, the quality of retail offer and lack of leisure activities to be the principal weaknesses of Whitehaven.
- 2.26 When considering the mixture of uses in Whitehaven, Stakeholders considered there to be a dominance of takeaways, and stated that a greater mix was needed, perhaps through the introduction of more restaurants and cafes.
- 2.27 With regard to accessibility, Stakeholders considered that the town is dominated by cars or buses, particularly on Lowther Street and noted a lack of bike storage.
- 2.28 Stakeholders considered the main challenge/threat in Whitehaven to be the closure of further retail due to competition with online, out-of-centre retail and other better shopping centres such as Workington and Carlisle, however considered the following to be key opportunities in Whitehaven:
- Increase apartments/flats above shops through the support of conversions to access from primary frontages rather than from the rear;
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- Encourage activity through the evenings along King Street due perceptions of safety on the street at night;
- Improve the linkages between the harbour and the main retail street;
- Improved signage and wayfinding;
- Reduction of restrictions on uses along north King Street;
- Improvements to townscape/pedestrian surfacing; and
- Focus on tourism.

### **Cleator Moor**

2.29 Stakeholders note that whilst Cleator Moor benefits from good transport links, has its own chamber of trade, offers free parking and a good sized market space, the principal weakness is the retail environment which is resulting in a high turnover of start-up businesses despite the potential footfall from the Leconfield Business Estate. It is considered that the market is not attended well by local retailers/independents and the out-of-centre co-op reduces footfall in the town. The stakeholders identify key opportunities including:

- Community spirit and services provided by the church and civic buildings;
- Potential to link the buildings in the square; and
- Encouraging vendors/retailers to attend the market.

### **Egremont**

2.30 Stakeholders consider Egremont to be a busy centre which benefits from a school, a successful farmers market on the third Friday of every month and an active community with regard to fundraising and use of the high street. However, Stakeholders also note that the car park in the centre is underutilised and there are several vacant buildings due to be demolished.

2.31 The town benefits from being in close proximity to Sellafield, a key employer in Cumbria, and the town is compact with a good range of retailers and services. With regard to accessibility, stakeholders consider the town centre to be accessible by all modes of transport.

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2.32 Whilst it is recognised that a key threat to Egremont is the end of reprocessing of Sellafield and the reduction of staffing at the plant, Stakeholders note a number of key opportunities in the town including:

- Maximising on the through flow of workers from Sellafield to the south;
- Maximising on visitors to the Castle;
- Regeneration of the space presently occupied by vacant buildings to south of highstreet; and
- Potential investment from the Borderlands deal.

### **Millom**

2.33 Stakeholders consider that the town benefits from match funding for immediate improvements and a public realm project which is important to the centre.

2.34 However, stakeholders consider that Millom is weakened by the Tesco as it detracts from the centre and pulls footfall away from the smaller retailers. The vacant cluster of units is noted as the former Co-op store and has been closed for 25 years. Stakeholders are concerned by access for older and disabled persons if the library is moved to a new 'Hub' near the leisure centre, however identify a number of opportunities for:

- Improvements to public realm;
  - Improvements to leisure facilities;
  - Pedestrianisation/one way streets to keep Wellington Street as the 'Key Street';
  - Potential new footfall of 100 Sellafield staff; and
  - Refurbishment of historic former banks.
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**Conclusion**

- 3.1 To inform the wider healthcheck of the town centres, a stakeholder workshop was held at Allerdale Council's Offices in Workington on 25<sup>th</sup> February to obtain views of key Stakeholders from across West Cumbria.
  - 3.2 Stakeholders invited included those from the relevant teams at both authorities along with Cumbria County Council, key stakeholders in centres such as landowners, tourist boards, business representation and town Councils.
  - 3.3 The stakeholder workshop activities, discussions and Town Centre Stakeholder Questionnaire revealed key knowledge about the respective town centres which will inform the wider West Cumbria Retail, Town Centre and Leisure Study.
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