Executive Summary

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South Tyneside Retail, Health and Capacity Study

South Tyneside Borough Council

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 GVA was appointed by South Tyneside Council in April 2012 to prepare a borough-wide retail study. The study seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of current local shopping and leisure patterns and identify the potential requirements for new floorspace within the borough. The study is to inform a review of existing development plan documents and the preparation of a new Local Plan. The main terms of reference are:

- To understand the existing shopping and leisure behaviour of local residents living within the borough and the wider sub-region and to identify convenience, comparison and bulky expenditure patterns through a detailed household survey.
- To undertake a healthcheck assessment of the main centres in the borough, qualitatively appraising it against previous healthcheck exercises.
- To assess the future quantitative capacity and qualitative need for additional retail and leisure floorspace within the borough, having regard to new and planned developments / commitments.
- To provide strategic advice on the overall future retail need and confirm an appropriate forward development strategy for the borough and its main centres.

1.2 The study is informed by detailed independent survey exercises, including a full shopper survey of visitors to the three main town centres and six district centres[1] in the borough and a household telephone survey to identify current market share performance of the main centres and individual stores.

HEALTHCHECK

1.3 A detailed healthcheck assessment has therefore been completed for the main town centres in the Borough. Floorspace (fascia) surveys have been undertaken for the six district centres in the borough[2] in addition to existing defined neighbourhood centres.

[1] Town Centres (South Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn); District Centres (Harton Nook, Frederick Street, Boldon Colliery, Westoe Bridges, Dean Road and Boldon Lane)

[2] Adopted Core Strategy defines the main district centres as Harton Nook, Frederick Street, Boldon Colliery, Westoe Bridges, Dean Road and Boldon Lane

SOUTH SHIELDS

1.4 The Experian GOAD report[3] identifies the following floorspace composition:

Retail Sector	No. Outlets	% Outlets		Floorspace (sqm)	% Floorspace	
		South Shields	UK GOAD		South Shields	UK GOAD
Convenience	21	5.02	7.02	12,625	10.90	11.49
Comparison	116	27.75	29.38	30,620	26.43	29.65
Retail Service	34	8.13	11.77	7,228	6.24	5.76
Leisure Service	112	26.79	19.18	22,519	19.43	18.19
Financial Service	36	8.61	9.58	5,370	4.63	6.72
Vacant	49	11.72	10.65	9,439	8.15	8.07
TOTAL	368	100	100	87,801	100	100

1.5 Overall, the GOAD survey indicates that the composition of the town centre has remained relatively stable since 2001. The main changes have been the significant uplift in floorspace arising from realisation of the Asda and Waterloo Square developments. Whilst the significant increase in vacancies is a major concern, South Shields, like many other comparable towns, has faced substantial changes arising from the current economic climate (closures etc.), the increasing polarisation of retailers towards larger regional centres and the increasing impact of non-store shopping.

JARROW

1.6 The Experian GOAD report[4] identifies the following floorspace composition:

Retail Sector	No. Outlets	% Outlets		Floorspace (sqm)	% Floorspace	
		Jarrow	UK GOAD		Jarrow	UK GOAD
Convenience	10	8.33	7.02	7,125	20.63	11.49
Comparison	40	33.33	29.38	10,043	29.08	29.65
Retail Service	10	8.33	11.77	715	2.07	5.76
Leisure Service	19	15.83	19.18	3,586	10.38	18.19
Financial Service	10	8.33	9.58	1,551	4.49	6.72
Vacant	9	7.50	10.65	1,672	4.84	8.07
TOTAL	98			24,692		

[3] September 2011
[4] September 2011

1.7 In headline terms, the convenience retail provision in the town centre is above the national GOAD average for both outlet numbers and overall floorspace. The floorspace figure is however 'skewed' by the large in-centre Morrison's foodstore. Comparison retail provision is slightly above the GOAD average in terms of the number of outlets but below in terms of floorspace quantum; this reflects the number of small (albeit purpose-built) retail units associated with the Viking Centre. The number of comparison retail units has however increased since the 2007 Study due to the re-occupation of convenience outlets by comparison retailers such as Home Bargains and New Look. The number of units and overall quantum of vacant floorspace within the town centre is significantly below the GOAD average.

HEBBURN

1.8 The Experian GOAD report[5] identifies the following floorspace composition[6]:

Retail Sector	No. Outlets	% Outlets		Floorspace (sqm)	% Floorspace	
		Hebburn	UK GOAD		Hebburn	UK GOAD
Convenience	9	12.86	7.02	2,211	21.31	11.49
Comparison	14	20.00	29.38	1,367	13.16	29.65
Retail Service	13	18.57	11.77	1,198	11.55	5.76
Leisure Service	9	12.86	19.18	2,183	21.04	18.19
Financial Service	7	10.00	9.58	864	8.33	6.72
Vacant	13	18.57	10.65	1,300	12.53	8.07
TOTAL	65			9,123		

1.9 In headline terms, convenience provision in the town centre is above the national GOAD average for both outlet numbers and overall floorspace; this reflects the localised convenience function of the town centre. Conversely, comparison retail provision is substantially below the GOAD average in terms of the number of outlets and quantum of floorspace; this reflects the relatively limited convenience top-up orientated role of the town centre. Whilst the number of vacant units has remained relatively constant since 2001 (13 units), the overall quantum of vacant floorspace has significantly increased (c. 386 m^2 in 2007 to 1,300 m^2 at present).

[5] January 2011
[6] The Table excludes Public Services, Health & Medical Services, Religious Services, Transport Services, General Offices, Industrial Activities, Unclassified Buildings and Wholesale Trade categories detailed on the Experian GOAD Category Report.

IN-CENTRE SHOPPER SURVEY

1.10 In order to inform a wider qualitative review, 700 in-centre shopper surveys were completed across the main town and district centres in April 2012. The headline conclusions in relation to the suggested town centre improvements are set out below.

SOUTH SHIELDS

1.11 The main suggested improvements for the town are as follows:

- **RETAIL PROVISION IMPROVEMENTS**; just under half of respondents **(45.6%)** suggested more ladies clothes shops, followed by gents clothes shops **(27.9%)** and **19.9%** for children's clothes shops would persuade them to shop in the town centre more often.
- **LEISURE/ENTERTAINMENT IMPROVEMENTS;** most respondents **32.1%** stated an improved range of pubs and night clubs. A further **13.6%** suggesting improved eating places.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS**; the main suggestions relate to street furniture **(22.7%)**, cleaner shopping streets **(15.3%)** and improved policing **(14.5%)**
- **TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS**; reduced parking costs **(10.6%)** was the most popular answer. This is typical of many town centres at present.
- **GREATEST IMPROVEMENTS**; the main suggestion to improve South Shields town centre is to provide a better range of shops **(24.3%)**.

JARROW

1.12 The main suggested improvements for the town centre are as follows:

- **RETAIL PROVISION IMPROVEMENTS**; the main suggestions are for a ladies clothing shops (29.8%), DIY shop (23.4%), a new foodstore (22.3%) and gents clothing shops (24.5%). The responses reflect the existing deficiencies in the town centre provision.
- **LEISURE/ENTERTAINMENT IMPROVEMENTS**; the main responses are to improve the range of health & fitness facilities in the town centre and improve security (8.1%).
- **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS**; cleanliness (6.8%) is the main suggestion.
- **TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS**; there were no particular suggested improvements.
- **GREATEST IMPROVEMENTS**; the main suggestions are to provide more shops (20.3%), provide a better range of shops (5.4%) and improve car parking provision (5.4%)

HEBBURN

- **RETAIL PROVISION IMPROVEMENTS**; most respondents (c. 35%) want ladies clothing shops introduced to the town centre. This is followed by18% for a new foodstore.
- **LEISURE/ENTERTAINMENT IMPROVEMENTS**; the main suggestions (25%) were to improve the range of evening economy uses including pubs and restaurants.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS**; increasing the soft / hard landscaping of the town centre was seen as the main improvement (32.3%) followed by street furniture and cleaning the centre (16.1% respectively).
- **TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS**; there were relatively few suggestions for enhancements.
- **GREATEST IMPROVEMENTS**; the greatest improvements to the town centre would be to provide a better range of shops (32.3%), followed by environmental improvements (22.6%) and more shops (19.4%).

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

1.13 The quantitative assessment adopts a conventional step-by-step methodology, drawing upon the results of the household telephone survey (1,200 surveys). The individual catchment zones (1 to 10) are consistent with the 2007 Study although two new catchments in North Tyneside are included to establish cross river shopping patterns.

1.14 All catchment zones are defined on the basis of individual postcode sectors, so as to generate population and expenditure data from the *Experian Micromarketer* system (derived from ONS 2010 mid-year estimates)[7].

CONVENIENCE

1.15 The main foodstore anchors in South Shields (Asda), Jarrow (Morrison's) and Boldon Colliery (Asda) are all performing strongly to the degree that they are significantly overtrading relative to expected benchmarks. Whilst ordinarily this overtrading would generate a quantitative and qualitative need for new provision to generate choice and competition for local residents, there are a number of foodstore commitments outside of the borough[8] which will substantively reduce the overtrading.

[7] Experian Retail Planner Note 9 (September 2011)
[8] Sainsbury's and Tesco Extra in North Sunderland; Tesco Extra and Asda in Gateshead

1.16 On a baseline (constant market) scenario, the capacity assessment identifies a limited need for the Council to plan for new convenience provision over the emerging plan period. However, this position ignores the current deficiencies in **Hebburn** town centre in particular which presently lacks a mainstream foodstore anchor of sufficient scale and quality to effectively compete with full-range foodstores in surrounding centres.

1.17 The assessment has therefore, on the basis of appropriate improvements to the town's main food market share, identified a formal quantitative and qualitative need for the Council to maintain its existing AAP allocation for a new foodstore anchor in the town centre as part of a comprehensive regeneration scheme. Given that the long-standing AAP allocation has yet to be realised, Hebburn should remain one of the top policy and regeneration priorities for the borough.

1.18 A new suitable foodstore anchor in Hebburn town centre allied to the new Tesco Extra store in Gateshead would substantially reverse current flows of main food spend to the Morrison's Jarrow store. The assessment does not therefore identify any formal requirement for the Council to plan for new provision in **Jarrow** town centre over the early phases of the emerging plan period. A new study should be completed once the Gateshead and Hebburn stores are operating in order to identify future needs.

1.19 In terms of **South Shields**, existing foodstore commitments are unlikely to reduce the dominant trading position of the existing full-range Asda store in the town centre; there is presently a lack of effective choice for local residents. Therefore, through appropriate main food market share improvements allied to re-assignment of the Asda overtrading surplus, the assessment identifies a need for the Council to plan to accommodate a foodstore of comparable scale to the existing Asda. Any new development will however need to be centrally located within the town centre so as not to lose the existing benefits that Asda delivers in terms of its anchor function (generating footfall, linked trips, shared car park etc.). Any new provision which comes forward outside of the town centre would negatively impact on town centre vitality and viability going forward.

1.20 With respect to the strategy for the **wider borough**, the existing network of district and local centres should also be maintained given the important top-up based function they perform. It is considered that significant quantitative enhancement of convenience provision within the district centres should not be supported through the emerging plan process; the overriding planning and regeneration priority should be to deliver enhancements to foodstore provision in Hebburn and South Shields.

COMPARISON

1.21 The assessment identifies a varied performance between the three town centres in the borough. Whilst Jarrow and Hebburn perform relatively limited roles due to existing deficiencies in terms of offer and geographic constraints on the likely catchment both would serve, South Shields performs a borough-wide comparison shopping function. The existing needs and forward prospects of significantly improving the existing performance of the three town centres is therefore markedly different.

1.22 With respect to **Jarrow** and **Hebburn**, the towns are not of sufficient scale so as to attract new comparison retailers of the quality required to significantly improve performance; the centres will primarily serve local daily top-up comparison shopping needs. Therefore, whilst the capacity assessment identifies some minor floorspace requirement, particularly towards the later phases of the emerging plan period, the priority should be to maintain existing provision and ensure effective re-use of vacant units within the respective centres rather than planning for quantitative (physical) expansion of the centres. Any developer-led proposals which emerge outside of plan process can be supported subject to the Council being satisfied that proposals will deliver appropriate enhancement.

1.23 In relation to **South Shields**, the assessment identifies the need for the Council to plan for new retail development of a scale (c. 5,500 m^2 net) broadly comparable to the Waterloo Square development over the emerging plan period. Whilst the prospect of significant market share enhancement is constrained by proximity to larger regional destinations, there is an existing critical mass of multiple retail provision which can be enhanced subject to appropriate operator demand being secured. The Council should therefore identify a suitable and deliverable site within the town centre to meet the need identified. The priority should be on further improving the clothing and fashion offer in particular.

1.24 It is recommended that the Council seek to resist any out-of-centre development comprising high street comparison retail (clothes and fashion in particular). There is a real prospect of out-of-centre retail development generating adverse impacts on the town centre in terms of loss of trade, loss of key retail anchors and ultimately planned investment, should appropriate sites not be identified.

LEISURE

1.25 The leisure offer within the three main town centres primarily traditional pubs and clubs. The main destination for leisure trips in the borough is the edge-of-centre Cineworld at

Boldon. Whilst there is an independent cinema facility at Customs House in South Shields, the regeneration aspiration to provide a new cinema multiplex in South Shields town centre should be maintained. Any new cinema provision should be complemented by an appropriate restaurant offer to increase dwell time and general activity in the centre.

1.26 In terms of health and fitness provision, the survey results indicate that most local residents visit public facilities around the borough. A new edge-of-centre leisure centre is presently under construction on the foreshore in South Shields which will deliver appropriate enhancements in terms of a full range modern facility in a more accessible location.

1.27 The main outstanding deficiency in existing provision in the borough is therefore at Jarrow. Whilst there is community access to the new Jarrow school swimming pool, the nearest gym provision is at Monkton stadium. It is therefore recommended that the existing adopted Jarrow AAP policy aspiration for a new gym-based leisure facility is maintained.

1.28 With respect to private sector leisure facilities, if any developer-led proposals emerge outside of the plan process, the benefits of a new private facility, particularly a budget orientated operator, need to be balanced against the potential impacts on the existing and particularly the new public facility in South Shields.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

1.29 Overall, on the basis of updated survey fieldwork, it is considered that the existing town centre and primary shopping area boundaries defined in the existing adopted Core Strategy, Site-Specific Allocations DPD and Town Centre AAPs remain appropriate. Boundaries for defined district and local centres should be formalised as either separate inset plans or on the wider proposals map in order to ensure certainty should any applications come forward.

1.30 In terms of impact threshold, whilst the current Tyne and Wear planning application validation checklist sets a threshold of 280 m^2 net floorspace, on the basis of our on-site surveys of the town, district and local centres in the borough, we recommend that the Council should consider adopt a threshold of 150 m^2 (net) for both convenience and comparison retail given that existing provision within the defined district and local centres are relatively small-scale and primarily orientated towards top-up shopping.