

# DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION STRATEGY PART 1 - DEVELOPING THE VISION - CHERISHING THE ASSETS



## 1. Background and Introduction

Darlington continues to be a thriving and successful market town. With the benefits of a key strategic location at the gateway to the North-East, a distinctive character and a great quality of life, Darlington Town Centre has retained its vibrancy and vitality, despite challenging economic conditions. The Pedestrian Heart, completed in 2006 has helped to support the economy of the Town Centre and define Darlington as an ambitious and progressive place.

The recent successful procurement of the Feethams Cinema development, due to be opened in late 2014 is indicative of a confidence in Darlington. The town continues to be attractive to the development industry and there is a latent demand for retail, employment and leisure uses that need to be accommodated. The Council is a key landowner in Darlington and on account of this needs to consider the regeneration benefits that could be realised by using these assets.

Darlington Council is working hard to make the most of the town's distinctive offer. The high quality built and natural environment and the passionate connection people have to the town are the starting point for future development. Both in terms of new buildings and the refurbishment and care of exiting ones the importance of achieving quality is a key objective to ensure that Darlington remains competitive and a great place to live, work and play.

### Existing Strategy and Policy

The adopted Local Plan identifies the Town Centre as a key priority for growth and development. This accords well with the 'town centre first' approach of the National Planning Policy Framework. In particular Policy CS7\* (The Town Centre) seeks to safeguard and enhance the Town Centre by protecting and promoting its role as the sub-regional centre for the western part of the Tees Valley City Region and neighbouring parts of North Yorkshire and South West Durham, including its role as a market town.

'Adding to Quality - A Strategy for Darlington Town Centre 2001' formed the basis for the regeneration of the Town Centre in the first decade of the millennium. Identifying the Commercial Street area as the location for larger footprint retail shops, and the Feethams area for office and leisure development the strategy also identified the need and set the agenda for the Pedestrian Heart. The Oval development has been stalled due to the economic uncertainties of recent years, but the concept still has validity as there is still demand in Darlington for this type of shopping offer.

The Feethams Planning and Development Brief 2008 was developed with the Feethams and Markets Working Group and the wider community. Focussing on the area around the Town Hall this Brief sets out the Council's aspirations for redevelopment and delivery of public goods. The Brief identifies the Feethams area as being suitable for a wide variety of uses complementary to the Town Centre and the importance of the River Skerne as an asset to the town.



Beaumont House © Niven Architects



Proposed Cinema

# 1. Background and Introduction

## The Need for an Updated Strategy

There is a significant demand for food retail in Darlington. This has been identified through development pressure and direct enquiries to use Council land for this use. In response to this the Town Centre Strategy seeks to identify the most favourable site for this use that would maximise the opportunity for linked trips and to help to deliver the maximum regeneration benefit.

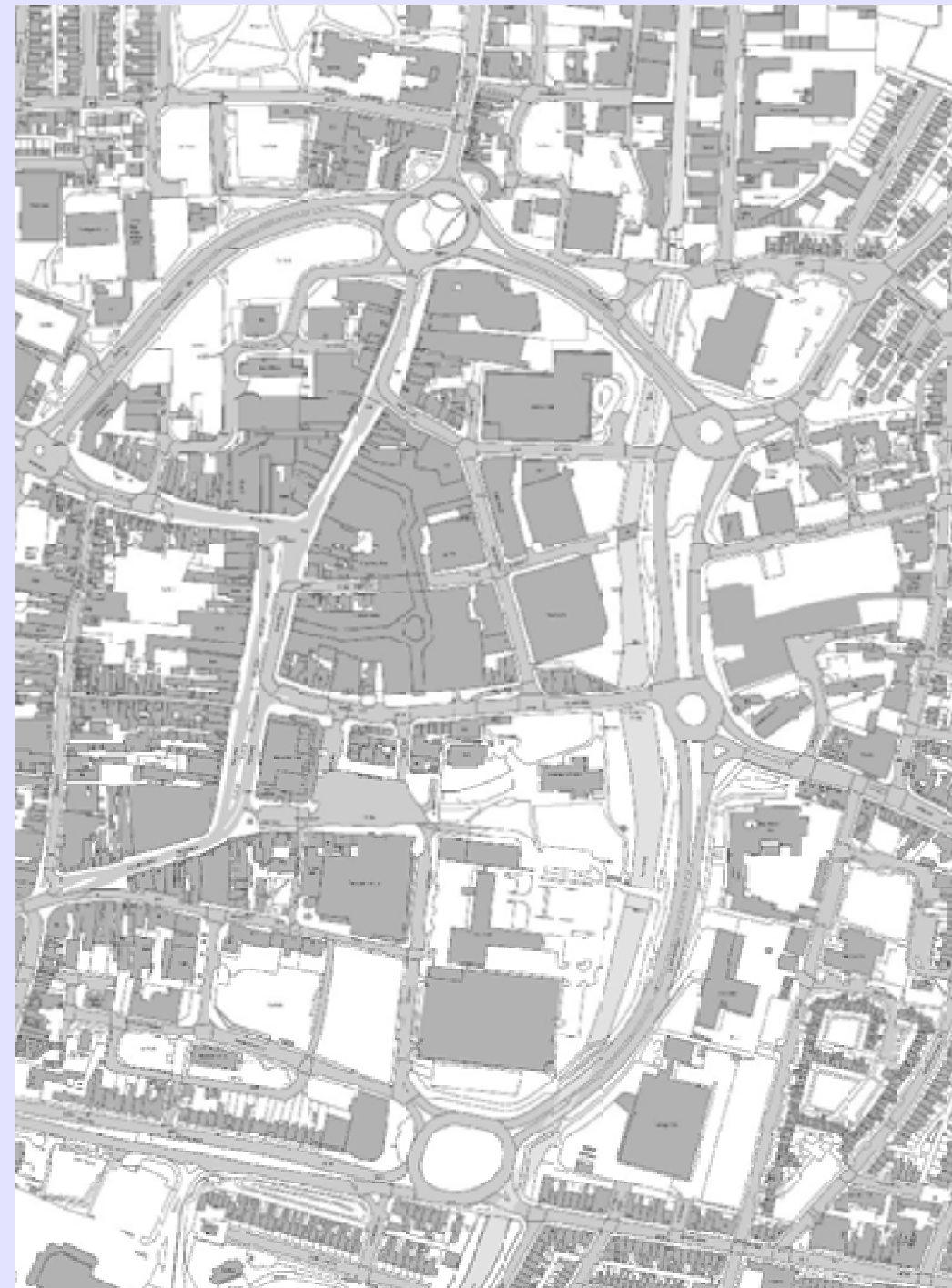
The Town Hall, built in the late 1960's is in need of significant investment in the medium to long term. This building occupies an important and strategic site close to the market square and could generate sufficient value if the site were sold to help to fund a replacement office for the Council, with the associated reduced running costs and energy efficiency this could bring.

The current strategy, 'Adding to Quality' is over ten years old and since then the Local Plan has been adopted, the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan has been developed and there have been changes in shopping patterns and the population of the town. These changes have stimulated the Council to re-visit this strategy in the light of the economic climate, the successful delivery of some projects and the need to look to the future.

## Council Owned Assets

The Council has significant land holdings in and around the Town Centre. A number of sites are being considered for development as they are in strategic locations and could unlock further development, increase footfall and help to deliver public goods. The sites in question are shown on plan opposite. The sites in question are;

- Feethams and Beaumont Street - the area around the Town Hall was the subject of the Feethams Planning and Development Brief adopted in 2008 following extensive consultation. This has helped to stimulate the development of the proposed cinema and leisure development that is due to open in 2014. The remaining sites remain undeveloped and are currently surface car parks but have key advantages including their proximity to the Town Centre and a riverside location.
- Commercial Street - the location of the Oval development that has stalled due to the recent economic downturn this site is close to the larger floorspace comparison retail of the Cornmill Centre and Northgate. Currently surface car parking this site and the Kendrew Street sites opposite straddle the inner ring road and have good access and proximity to the Town Centre
- Abbots Yard - this area lies between High Row and Skinnergate and is currently a surface car park. This site was included in the consideration of the options as it featured in a number of public consultation responses.



## 1. Background and Introduction

- Garden Street Area - the Council owns the surface car park and the land that is currently beneath the substantial roundabout, subways and ramps. If the junction was to be signalised this would reduce the amount of land needed for the highway and taking in the land interests of the immediate neighbours there may be scope to develop this area and deliver some public goods in the form of improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity and a better public realm.

- Central House - the Listed former Central School building on Northgate may become surplus to needs as office accommodation and as such may be suitable for redevelopment.

The Government is changing the rules regarding local taxation. This is designed to stimulate economic growth through a number mechanisms including:

- Enabling local authorities to retain a proportion of the business rates growth generated in their area, providing them with strong financial incentive for them to promote local economic growth.

- Enable local authorities to carry out Tax Increment Finance, giving them the ability to undertake borrowing against future business rates growth, supported by the forecast tax increment that accrues from additional development.

- New Homes Bonus - a top slice from Rate Support Grant repayed in accordance with the number of new dwellings built.

These changes have provided an opportunity for the Council to consider how best it can use its own assets in and around the Town Centre for maximum regeneration benefit.



Central House



Northgate Subway

## 2. The Participation and Consultation Process

A series of workshops were held in the Town Centre and with specific 'hard to reach' groups. In addition further work with younger people was undertaken in schools. The workshops took the form of a 'Planning for Real' event and a consultation tool "The Regeneration Game" was developed to drive discussions and stimulate debate.

The 'Game' consists of a number of components that are to scale, to symbolise various proposals or scenarios. Those attending the workshop were invited to place on the basemap of the Town Centre their proposed solutions, ideas, suggestions and responses to the opportunities presented. A 4000m<sup>2</sup> gross food store was used as an example as this has been the subject of a development enquiry, but over and above this blank cards were made available for the public to write on their own suggested uses and types of development. In addition cards were provided to allow attendees to write down and place on the map the public goods they would hope to see delivered through any future development. To stimulate debate over the future built form of the town, cards were provided to scale to allow this to be discussed.

For each opportunity site or position that could be taken a summary of the pros and cons of these was provided for the group to provide challenge to assumptions and initial reactions. The only rule set was that the table must reach consensus. Each scenario took in the region of a half to three quarters of an hour to complete. Many attendees enjoyed the debate and process of discussing the options that were generated

Overall eight events took place in the Town Centre, with further opportunities to engage at the Annual Tea Dance in the Market Square and at sessions with specific groups. The events were publicised widely in the press, Darlington Together and a total of 2000 leaflets were distributed across the town, targeted on locations where the public were signing petitions against further supermarket development

In all 70 plans were developed with the public through the events and these were photographed and any supporting comments collated. These plans and comments were used to develop a series of Core Values to guide the development of the Town Centre and any emerging Strategy or Policy.

Based on this engagement a number of core principles were developed to guide the future regeneration of the Town Centre. The key principle is;

*"A thriving Town Centre is a key priority, maintaining a balance between different geographical areas is an important part of this."*

In addition a further eight core principles have been developed from the technical work and consultation;



Consultation Event



Consultation Event

## 2. The Participation and Consultation Process

- It is important to focus development in and around the Town Centre
- Any development proposal will have to have a range of uses
- It is important to maintain and provide office accommodation in the Town Centre
- Darlington's distinctive character must be protected and enhanced
- The balance between different parts of the town centre needs to be considered when development takes place
- It is important to support the Markets as a key asset in terms of Darlington's heritage and future vitality
- Transport policy and strategy must help Darlington thrive
- The River Skerne is an important feature and is an opportunity for new public realm improvements

The above core principles form part of the recommendations in Section 5

The development industry were invited to a workshop to consider the draft outcomes of the consultation and the opportunities presented. The event was well attended by a number of different industry sectors including developers, agents, construction companies, designers and specialist service providers such as low carbon technology installers. The key feedback points from this event and subsequent questionnaires were;

- There may be potential for further leisure development in the Town Centre depending upon the strength of any covenant.
- The residential sector remains a depressed market although emerging uses such as student accommodation and elderly residential housing may be viable due to relative high densities and reduced car parking requirements.
- Should a supermarket or foodstore be deemed as having a positive impact on the Town Centre this could help to realise the value required to deliver regeneration aspirations.
- Multi-storey car parking may be something that could be funded commercially.
- There may be incentives for the low carbon refurbishment of the Town Hall and potential links with the Dolphin Centre.
- There could be potential benefits in delivering some key infrastructure to release more Council land and widening the scope of any development package.
- Land values other than for retail remain depressed and as such may not generate enough direct receipts to fund the relocation of the Town Hall.



Consultation Event



Consultation Event

## 2. The Participation and Consultation Process

Through consultation a number of issues have emerged that have either become clarified through the process or need to be considered further through the emerging Town Centre Strategy or through the Planning Application process;

### Other uses in the Town Centre

Leisure uses such as bowling alleys and ice rinks were seen as desirable, primarily in the Feethams area. Housing either above shops or as a feature of new developments was also a common suggestion. Arts and cultural activities are seen as an important part of the offer of the Town Centre and family based activities appear to be a popular aspiration. Uses alongside the river for example more cafes and bars were often suggested. Office uses, particularly in the Feethams area were regularly suggested and the importance of events space in the Town Centre was highlighted.

Evidence and intelligence from business engagement suggests a latent demand for more office use in the Town Centre of around 3000m<sup>2</sup> but not large enough to fully occupy or be a pre-let for a larger facility. The possibility of Public Sector collaboration is still live although this will require further work. Northgate House is seen as too isolated from the Town Centre restricting its contribution to the life and vitality of the town and the Beaumont Street area is the most favourable location for further office development following the successful redevelopment of Beaumont House.

### Further Retail Development

There were significant concerns over the development of a large supermarket close to or within the Town Centre. In particular a supermarket that sold fashion and non-food goods in addition to food was seen as particularly problematic; a smaller foodstore of no more than 4000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) was considered more acceptable. However where this could be located was an important consideration and in general if integrated with the Oval or on the Garden Street site was seen as more acceptable than the Town Hall site. Further work has been commissioned to inform the emerging Town Centre Strategy to consider the impact of further food retail in the Town Centre.

### The Future of the Town Hall

The majority of responses proposed that the Town Hall should stay in its current location. Some scenarios included the Town Hall forming part of a new retail or leisure development on the same site, others showed the Town Hall in its existing form but refurbished. A small number of views were that any refurbishment could be sustainability led. There was little distinction made between the office and the democratic function of the Town Hall and the importance of this in terms of location. There were however a number of scenarios that showed offices in the Feethams area and comments at the events showed that the office function of the town hall could be in the Feethams area if not in the current building.



Consultation Event Northwood School



Consultation Event Northwood School



Consultation Event Northwood School

## 2. The Participation and Consultation Process

### Open Space and Public Realm

The need for more open space, green areas and sports and play facilities has been identified as important. The River Skerne offers more opportunities for an enhanced public realm alongside further provision that could be delivered through development.

### Improved Coach and Bus Facilities

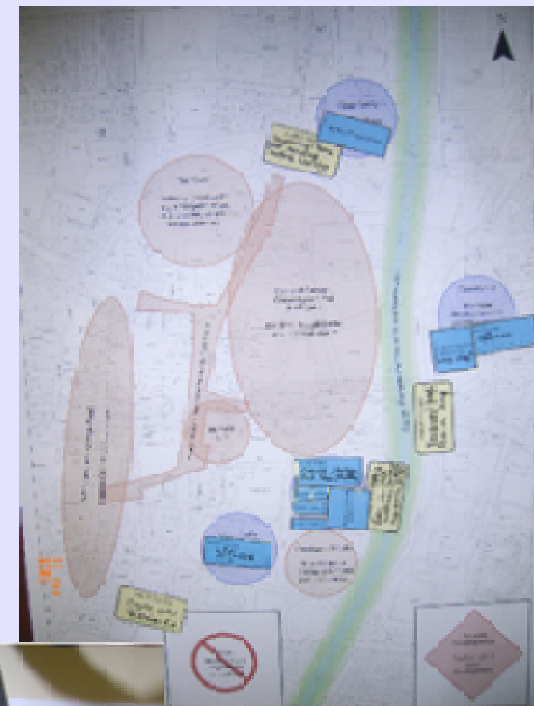
Through discussion this was important to many people. Some people asked for a bus station and the removal of the current bus loop through the Pedestrian Heart. This was largely driven by safety and congestion concerns for pedestrians in Prebend Row. It is acknowledged that these issues need addressing to improve both walking facilities and resolve the pinch point outside Waterstones. In terms of location there were some suggestions that this should be in Feethams although others identified the Oval as a possible site amongst others in and around the Town Centre. There needs to be further work undertaken to fully understand the needs of bus and coach users and whether these two uses lend themselves to integration within the wider bus provision within the Town Centre. Bus operators have confirmed their position that they do not wish for a bus station and they report that bus users prefer to alight close to the shops.

A recurring theme was the poor quality experience of coach users due to the lack of shelter and facilities both for those waiting and arriving. Some people felt that there was a case to locate coach-waiting facilities close to Bank Top Station; others felt the Town Centre was the best location. In either case the provision of accessible and convenient parking was seen as a key issue for those who would drop off or meet coach travellers.

### The Markets

Improvements to both the Market Hall and the offer of both the indoor and outdoor markets were seen as important. Some suggested that the outdoor market should return to the market square, with improvements made to the square itself. Suggested improvements to the market hall included opening up the frontage. Some saw the need for public toilets, possibly re-opened in the market area as important. References to Sunday markets and specialist markets, close to the market hall were made, some made reference to local produce being a key element of the market offer.

There was general high regard for the Market Hall as a building but a consensus that the offer within the building could be so much more adding to the offer of the Town.



Regeneration Game Maps



Regeneration Game Maps



## 2. The Participation and Consultation Process

### **Car Parking**

The need for accessible and affordable car parking was a recurring theme. The need for car parking in the Feethams area has been identified as important, with the area behind the Town Hall being seen as a favourable location for a multi-storey car park. Screened behind other buildings multi-storey car parking and undercroft parking are all solutions that found favour over and above surface car parking. The emerging Town Centre Strategy will inform any Car Parking Strategy, the conclusions of which are to be agreed once the mix of uses and subsequent demand is clearer through this work. As part of the wider consideration of the wider public realm and the footfall and vibrancy of Skinnergate there was a request for further consideration of short stay car parking on-street. This follows a specific representation made by traders in this area.

Some local businesses expressed concern about the reducing footfall, offer and environment of Skinnergate, some wanted to see limited on street parking introduced. It is recommended that all issues to do with Skinnergate and Duke Street area be reviewed collectively as a specific project.

The public participation and consultation work was used to shape the conclusions of this report and the recommendations to Cabinet.

### 3. The Technical Analysis

A series of technical studies and reports were commissioned and undertaken to inform the recommendations. A series of uses were considered for each of the opportunity sites in the Council's ownership. The analysis of the potential of each site is tabulated in the following pages.

#### Retail Impact Assessment

An independent Retail Impact Assessment was commissioned from England and Lyle to understand the capacity for and potential impact of additional food retail within or adjacent to the Town Centre. The report concludes in summary;

- There would be capacity for a supermarket of circa. 4,000m2 between 2016 and 2021, or by 2023 there will be sufficient capacity for a supermarket of circa 6,000m2 (this includes an allowance for comparison goods);
- The trading impacts of such a proposal, given the current level of vitality and viability of the town Centre would ensure that there are no significant adverse impacts on the Town Centre or any other Centres within Darlington;
- It could be argued that a qualitative need exists for a further edge of Centre supermarket within Darlington;
- It is considered that the development of a supermarket to the edge of the Town Centre would enhance the retail attraction of the town centre for shoppers, and so help improve its vitality and viability, and increase consumer choice and competition in the town as a whole;
- The development of an edge of centre supermarket would provide opportunities for shoppers to carry out linked trips by combining a visit to a future supermarket and the wider Town Centre (particularly following the replacement of the Northgate roundabout with a signalised junction, which will improve pedestrian connectivity between the Garden Street site and the Town Centre);
- The development of a supermarket would lead to the creation of a number of jobs, thereby contributing to economic development and social inclusion.
- The redevelopment of either of the identified sites would provide significant town-scape benefits and would improve perceptions of the respective areas in which they are located.



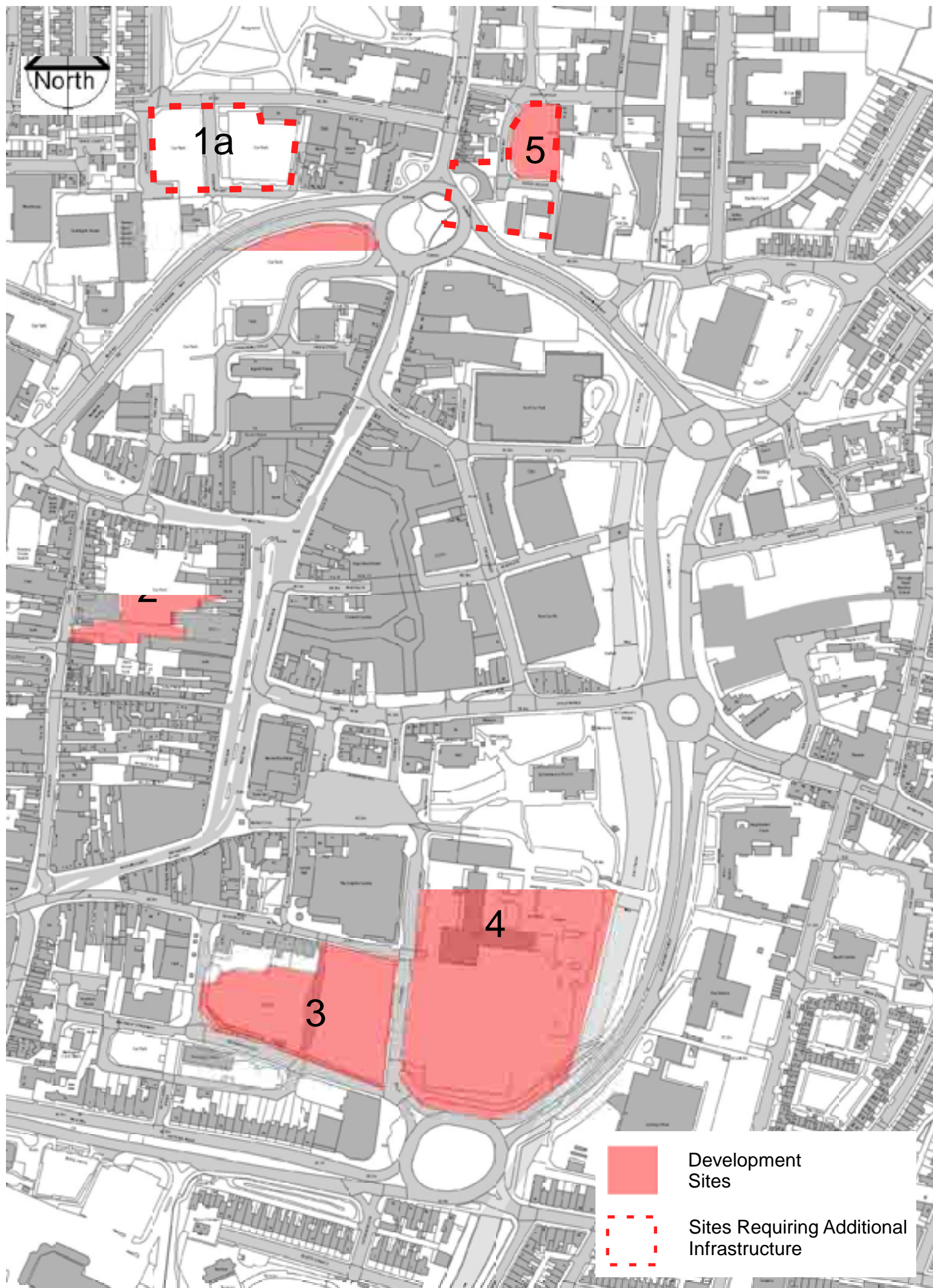
### 3. The Technical Analysis

#### Site Assessment and Infrastructure Plans

Officers have undertaken an analysis of the Council owned sites in and around the Town Centre to further understand the regeneration benefits and implications. This has been used to develop the vision for the Town Centre and in addition the role and implications for non-Council owned sites has been undertaken. In the context of the emerging Town Centre Fringe Masterplan and the desire for better connectivity to and from the Town Centre for pedestrians and cyclists the impact and opportunities presented by infrastructure improvements has also been studied. The following pages contain this analysis.

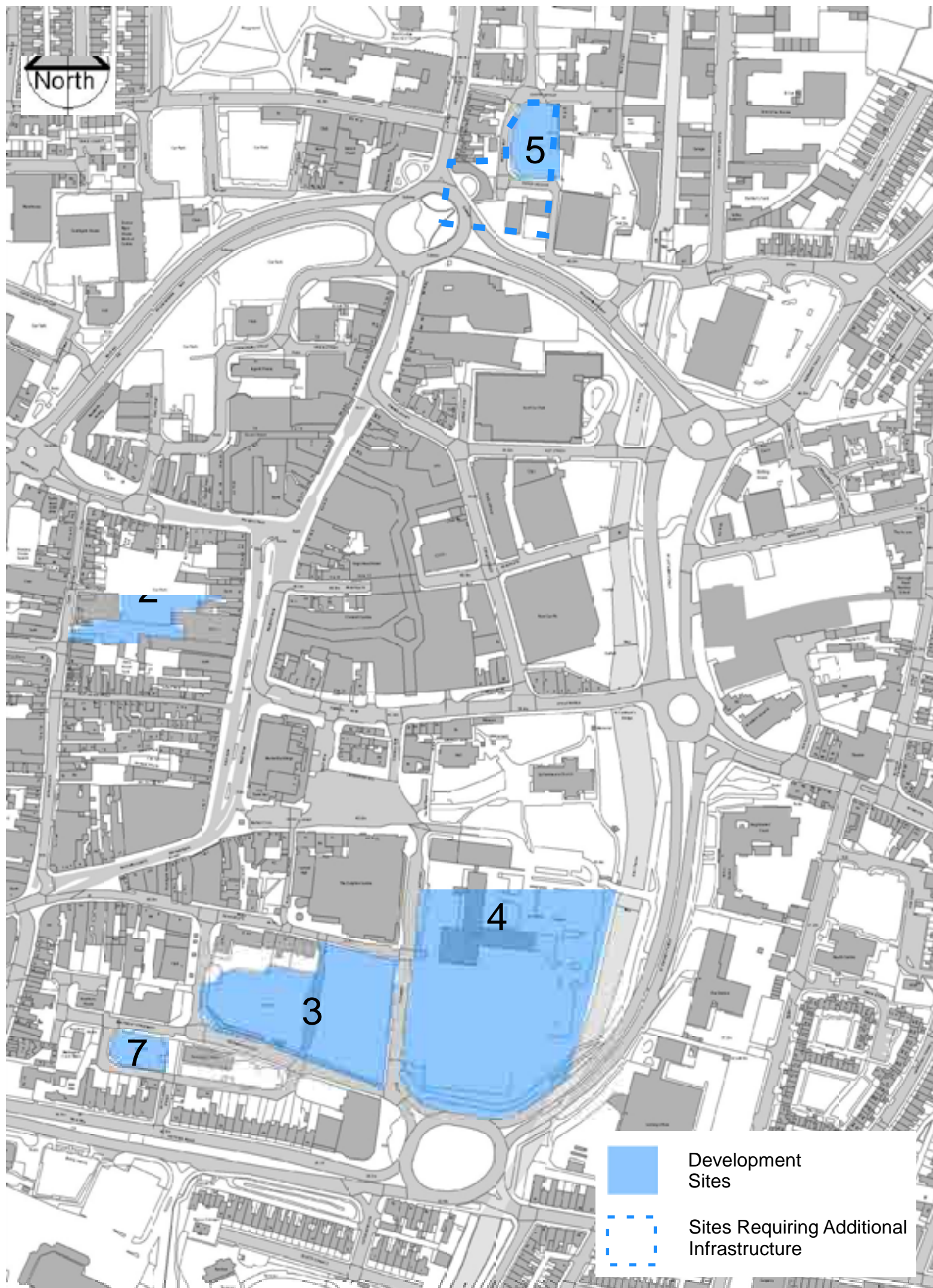


# RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES



	REGENERATION	ASSETS
1 1a	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - Preferred location for comparison retail. Existing commitment within Local Plan. Currently under a Development Agreement with Discovery Properties, the development has stalled due to the financial downturn. Good connections with existing shopping offer. Site 1a might provide a suitable additional location subject to infrastructure improvements and connection with site 1. Site capacity suitable for larger footprint stores whilst retaining street pattern.</p>	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - Significant Council landholding and land assembly in place. Additional food retail might improve the viability and restructure of car parking model might also be a possibility. Existing scheme does not yield a significant land receipt for the Council although increased business rates may provide additional revenue in the medium term. Food retail may yield £ x x M to increase viability and deliver infrastructure. Road remodelling might provide easier to develop regularised sites with additional council land received.</p>
2	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Identified through public consultation as an opportunity for further individual, small scale retailing as well as a public realm opportunity. Could be the basis for a mixed use scheme with a strong ground floor retail component. In the Town Centre Conservation Area and in the setting of key listed buildings. Access is restricted via Bells Place and under yard entrance. The redevelopment of this site would tidy up the exposed rears of Skinnergate and High Row and connect these two areas.</p>	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Existing car park with revenue stream of circa £200K. Council's land holding could be offered up for regeneration benefit or in lieu of additional business rates in the medium term. Little current developer interest or demand for this type of unit although models exist elsewhere e.g. Elephant Yard Kendal.</p>
3	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Covered by the Feethams Planning and Development Brief. Some allowance made for retail in the Brief although limited on these sites due to topography and setting of listed buildings. Could be accommodated as the ground floor component of mixed use schemes to provide active frontages and encourage connectivity with Grange Road area. Public goods to be delivered include improved bus and coach facilities, riverside public realm and a multi-storey car park (which may be fundable).</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - DCSF development would have yielded circa £700K for around half of the Council's ownership, this is potentially higher than the current market value. Private sector development would require adjacent or on site car parking. Cabinet agreement to recycle proceeds into the area (Oct 2011). Car parking yield currently circa £354K.</p>
4	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Covered in part by Feethams Planning and Development Brief, Town Hall not included. Part of the area committed for cinema and leisure development with associated riverside improvements. Scope for retail up to 4000m2 (gross) subject to impact assessment. Public goods to be delivered include riverside improvements and possibly improved bus and coach waiting provision. If Town Hall site was to be used provision would have to be made in the area for replacement offices and frontline contact.</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Car parking provision has to be retained which is currently around 450 spaces. This will have an associated land take and will require a financing model. Land receipt for retail circa £3-3.5M with associated cost of new Town Hall between £6-8M. Currently depressed land values due to economic downturn that may improve once cinema scheme is delivered and operating. Car park yield for Town Hall car parks excluding cinema site circa £65K.</p>
5	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Currently disconnected from the Town Centre by poor quality public realm and the subway. The site has a distinctive character based upon the historic street pattern and use. In the setting of important listed buildings and part of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. The area does not have the capacity for large footprint development and servicing and access will be problematic. It may be possible to accommodate a 4000m2 gross store if the road network was modified releasing further land for development.</p>	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Required modification of road network may absorb most of any land receipt. Fragmented land holdings in the area isolate the Council's car park as a development site. Current value of car park for food retail circa £1M. Comprehensive redevelopment may release more council land as part of a reduced highway land take. Current car parking income of circa £30K per annum.</p>

# OFFICE AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES



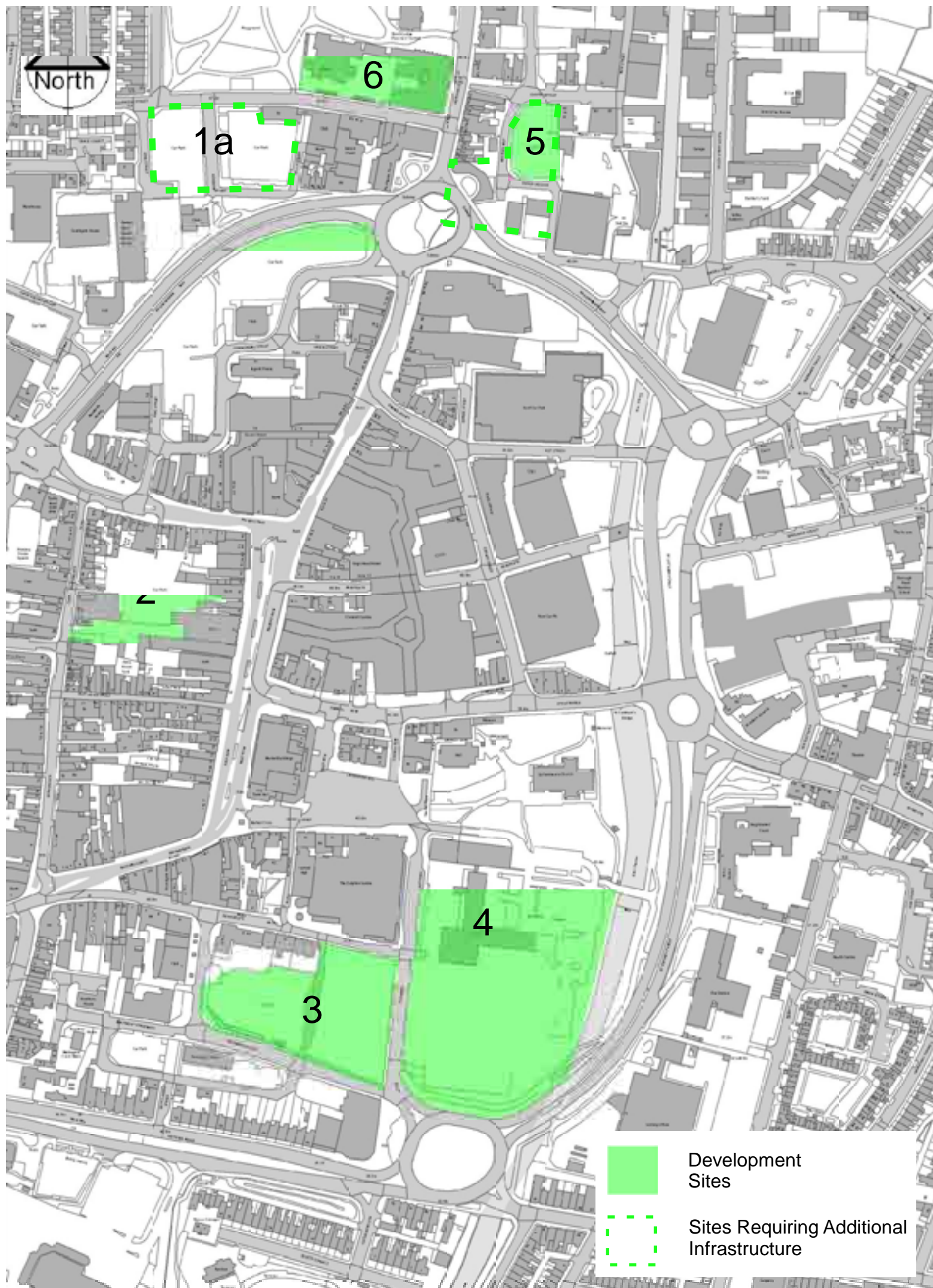
	REGENERATION	ASSETS
2	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Identified through public consultation as an opportunity for further individual, small scale retailing as well as a public realm opportunity Offices could form part of a mixed use scheme that might have small scale offices, atelier and artists studios, incubator and live work units. In the Town Centre Conservation Area and in the setting of key listed buildings. Access is restricted via Bells Place and under yard entrance. The redevelopment of this site would tidy up the exposed rears of Skinnergate and High Row and connect these two areas.</p>	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Existing car park with revenue stream of circa £200K. Council's land holding could be offered up for regeneration benefit or in lieu of additional business rates in the medium term. Little current developer interest or demand at present and this would need to be developed if regeneration benefits are to be secured.</p>
3	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Covered by the Feethams Planning and Development Brief. Office development a strong component of the Brief with an extant permission for 6000m2 for the DfE (currently not implemented). Site could accommodate up to 12000m2 of office accommodation, potentially reduced if public realm and ground floor uses accommodated, which would be desirable. Public goods to be delivered include improved bus and coach facilities, riverside public realm and a multi-storey car park (which may be fundable).</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - DCSF development would have yielded circa £700K for the around half of the Council's ownership, this is potentially higher than the current market value. Private sector development would require adjacent or on site car parking. Cabinet agreement to recycle proceeds into the area (Oct 2011). Car parking yield currently circa £354K. Potential location for a public sector campus and relocated Town Hall if current site developed for other uses. Subject to car parking provision elsewhere could be developed immediately.</p>
4	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Covered in part by Feethams Planning and Development Brief, Town Hall not included. Part of the area committed for cinema and leisure development with associated riverside improvements. Rear of site possible location for car parking in the area in line with the Brief, wrapped in screening development. Single use development of offices only would potentially sterilise the area outside office hours and may isolate cinema and leisure development.</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Car parking provision has to be retained which is currently around 450 spaces. This will have an associated land take and will require a financing model. Office uses on site would not generate sufficient land receipt to fund a Council relocation, this might become feasible if the Council accepted a leasing arrangement to secure efficient office accommodation. Shared plant and energy with Dolphin Centre might reduce refurbishment costs from £6M Car park yield for Town Hall car parks excluding cinema site circa £65K.</p>
5	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Currently disconnected from the Town Centre by poor quality public realm and the subway. The site has a distinctive character based upon the historic street pattern and use. In the setting of important listed buildings and part of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. The area does not have the capacity for large footprint development but may support smaller offices or grow-on space for businesses if designed correctly, might also support live work units.</p>	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Required modification of road network may absorb most of any land receipt. Fragmented land holdings in the area isolate the Council's car park as a development site. Comprehensive redevelopment may release more council land as part of a reduced highway land take. Current car parking income of circa £30K per annum. A live enquiry exists in Darlington for some of the uses described.</p>
7	<p>BEAUMONT STREET WEST - Small site with capacity for 2000-3000m2. Good position in terms of pedestrian linkages to Sainsbury's and might support an active ground floor frontage. Good relationship with the successfully renovated Beaumont House. Might help to promote pedestrian movement to the west in the direction of Grange Road.</p>	<p>BEAUMONT STREET WEST - Currently contract parking with a yield of circa £25K. Small land receipt possible. No immediate demand or enquires for the site but may come forward if there was more development in the area,</p>

# LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES



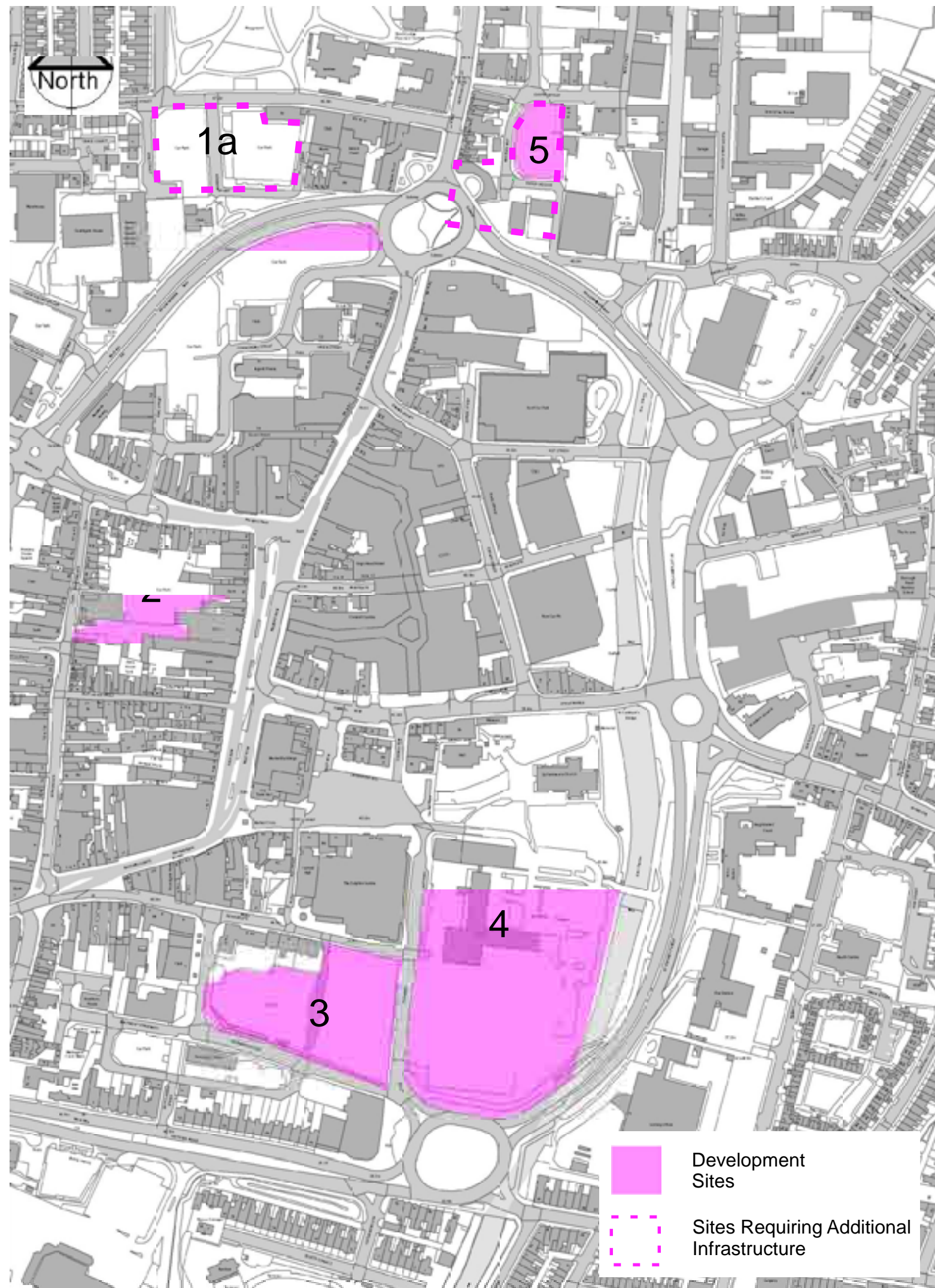
	REGENERATION	ASSETS
1 1a	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - Preferred location for comparison retail. Existing commitment within Local Plan. Currently under a Development Agreement with Discovery Properties, the development has stalled due to the financial downturn. Oval scheme featured a leisure component. Site 1a might provide a suitable additional location subject to infrastructure improvements and connection with site 1. Site capacity suitable for larger footprint units whilst retaining street pattern. Could have integrated car parking or bus facilities.</p>	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - Significant Council landholding and land assembly in place. Leisure uses might improve the viability and restructure of car parking model might also be a possibility. Existing scheme does not yield a significant land receipt for the Council although increased business rates may provide additional revenue in the medium term. May not be sufficient value in leisure development to improve viability or deliver infrastructure. Road remodelling might provide easier to develop regularised sites with additional council land received.</p>
2	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Identified through public consultation as an opportunity for further individual, small scale retailing as well as a public realm opportunity Leisure could form part of a mixed-use scheme, although this would be limited to smaller footprint uses. In the Town Centre Conservation Area and in the setting of key listed buildings. Access is restricted via Bells Place and under yard entrance. The redevelopment of this site would tidy up the exposed rears of Skinnergate and High Row and connect these two areas.</p>	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Existing car park with revenue stream of circa £200K. Council's land holding could be offered up for regeneration benefit or in lieu of additional business rates in the medium term. Little current developer interest or demand for this type of unit although models exist elsewhere e.g. Elephant Yard Kendal.</p>
3	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Covered by the Feethams Planning and Development Brief. Leisure a strong component of the Brief. Could be accommodated as the ground floor component of mixed use schemes or as stand alone provision with ancilliary facilities. Public goods to be delivered include improved bus and coach facilities, riverside public realm and a multi-storey car park (which may be fundable).</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Leisure uses will provide a lower land receipt than retail. The cinema development may increase values in the area over time and stimulate further leisure development and competition for sites. Leisure development would require adjacent or on site car parking. Cabinet agreement to recycle proceeds into the area (Oct 2011). Car parking yield currently circa £354K.</p>
4	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Covered in part by Feethams Planning and Development Brief, Town Hall not included. Part of the area committed for cinema and leisure development with associated riverside improvements. Leisure uses appropriate in this area complementary to cinema development Public goods to be delivered include riverside improvements and possibly improved bus and coach waiting provision. If Town Hall site was to be used provision would have to be made in the area for replacement offices and frontline contact.</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Car parking provision has to be retained which is currently around 450 spaces. This will have an associated land take and will require a financing model. Land receipt for leisure will be lower than retail, some leisure uses for example night clubs or casinos may not be desirable. Cost of new Town Hall between £6-8M. Currently depressed land values due to economic downturn that may improve once cinema scheme is delivered and operating. Car park yield for Town Hall car parks excluding cinema site circa £65K.</p>
5	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Currently disconnected from the Town Centre by poor quality public realm and the subway. The site has a distinctive character based upon the historic street pattern and use. In the setting of important listed buildings and part of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. The area does not have the capacity for large footprint development and servicing and access will be problematic.</p>	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Required modification of road road network may absorb most of any land receipt. Fragmented land holdings in the area isolate the Council's car park as a development site. Current car parking income of circa £30K per annum.</p>

# HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES



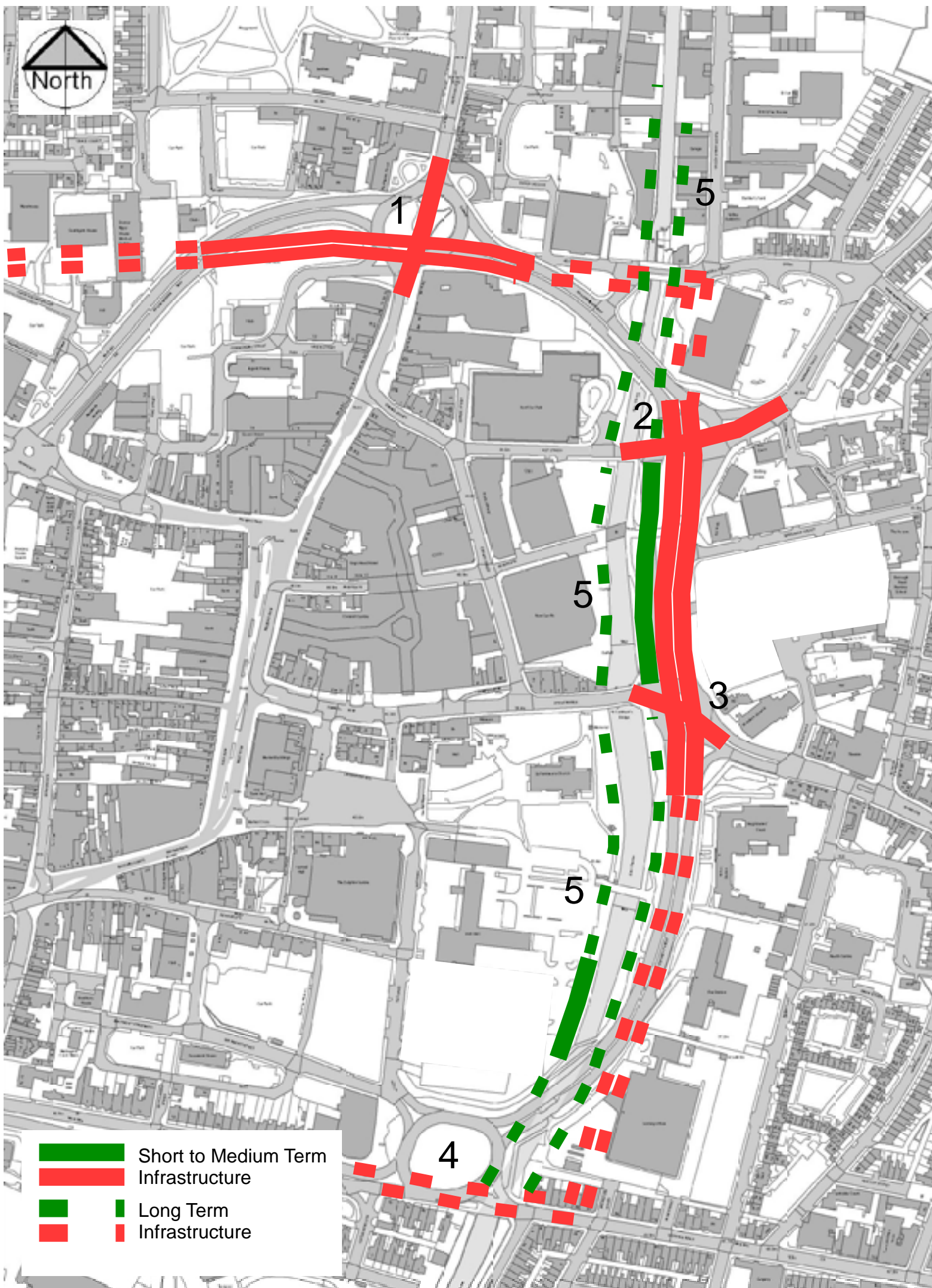
	REGENERATION	ASSETS
1 1a	COMMERCIAL STREET - Residential uses could be accommodated in any redesigned scheme and the multi-storey car park that was proposed with the Oval featured residential development wrapped around the car park on site 1a. Residential development would be desirable in the town centre and be in line with public consultation.	COMMERCIAL STREET - In addition to the elderly residential requirement there is also a demand for single persons housing reflected in recent development enquiries. A Registered Provider might be a development partner for delivering 1a or might form part of a revised deal for site 1.
2	ABBOTS YARD - Identified through public consultation as an opportunity for further individual, small scale retailing. Housing could form part of a mixed-use scheme. In the Town Centre Conservation Area and in the setting of key listed buildings. Access is restricted via Bells Place and under yard entrance. The redevelopment of this site would tidy up the exposed rears of Skinnergate and High Row and connect these two areas.	ABBOTS YARD - Existing car park with revenue stream of circa £200K. Council's land holding could be offered up for regeneration benefit.
3	FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Covered by the Feethams Planning and Development Brief. Some allowance made for residential development in the Brief. May be a good fit in the right form with the adjoining Conservation Area and Listed Buildings. Could be accommodated in mixed use schemes. Public goods to be delivered include improved bus and coach facilities, riverside public realm and a multi-storey car park (which may be fundable).	FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Residential uses may not yield a high land receipt and apartment and townhouse market currently depressed. Residential development would require adjacent or on site car parking. Cabinet agreement to recycle proceeds into the area (Oct 2011). Car parking yield currently circa £354K.
4	FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Covered in part by Feethams Planning and Development Brief, Town Hall not included. Part of the area committed for cinema and leisure development with associated riverside improvements. Residential development indicated in Brief and could be wrapped around the car park to screen this. Public goods to be delivered include riverside improvements and possibly improved bus and coach waiting provision.	FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Car parking provision has to be retained which is currently around 450 spaces. This will have an associated land take and will require a financing model. Currently depressed land values due to economic downturn that may improve once cinema scheme is delivered and operating. Car park yield for Town Hall car parks excluding cinema site circa £65K.
5	GARDEN STREET AREA - Currently disconnected from the Town Centre by poor quality public realm and the subway. The site has a distinctive character based upon the historic street pattern and use. In the setting of important listed buildings and part of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. Residential development would complement pioneering development in the area and help to set the tone for the future of the Skerne Valley.	GARDEN STREET AREA - Required modification of road network may absorb most of any land receipt. Fragmented land holdings in the area isolate the Council's car park as a development site. Comprehensive redevelopment may release more council land as part of a reduced highway land take. Current car parking income of circa £30K per annum.
6	CENTRAL HOUSE - potentially surplus office accommodation in Grade II listed building with non-listed annex. In Northgate Conservation Area. Building may lend itself to elderly care and residential accommodation with good access to adjoining parks. Some concerns over the amenity of the area and the impact of Northgate House as an adjoining built form.	CENTRAL HOUSE - Existing staff could be accommodated in the Town Hall and Depot post refurbishment. Possible land receipt of circa £0.5M for elderly residential use could be used for refurbishment of Town Hall or contribute to new build.

## TOWN CENTRE USES - PREFERRED OPTION



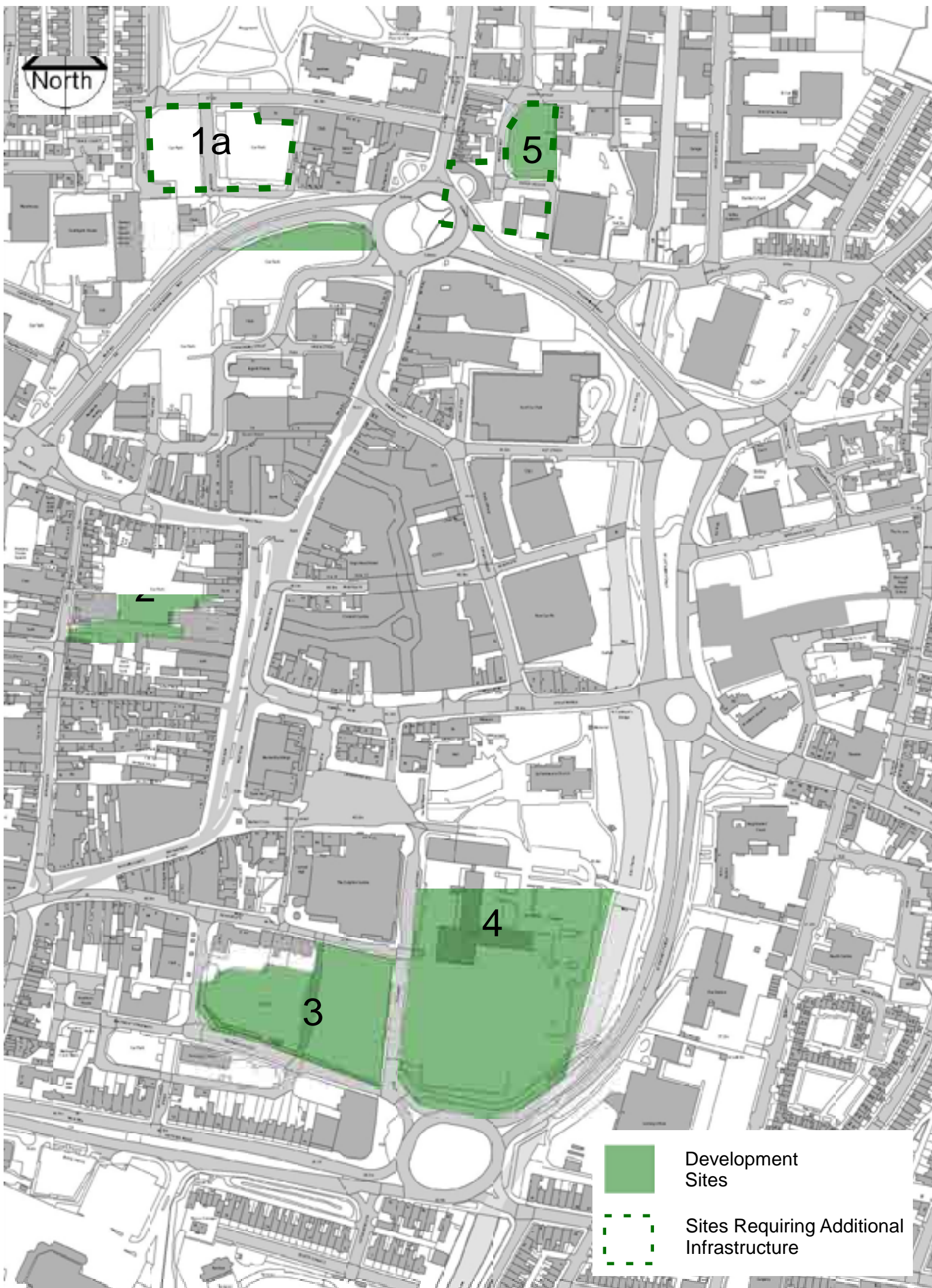
	REGENERATION	ASSETS
1 1a	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - Preferred location for comparison retail. May be able to support a revised shopping centre scheme based on the proposed revised road network. May lend itself to a phased approach around the historic street pattern. The revised road layout may facilitate the complementary development of site 1a.</p>	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - The current car parking revenue from these sites is circa £540K per annum. The car parking facilities would need to be replaced in the area between the two sites.</p>
2	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Could support a number of uses going forward but is currently a popular car park for disabled drivers and serves the both the Skinnergate and High Row areas. Development is not being promoted pending further work on car parking in the area.</p>	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Existing car park with revenue stream of circa £200K. Council's land holding could be offered up for regeneration benefit or in lieu of additional business rates in the medium term. Little current developer interest or demand for this type of unit although models exist elsewhere e.g. Elephant Yard Kendal.</p>
3	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Covered by the Feethams Planning and Development Brief. Plot sizes and building scale that could be accommodated would allow office leisure development. As a hub for work and leisure there are key advantages in clustering these uses together to stimulate the evening economy. Office development close to the Town Centre will help to boost the economy. Leisure uses may cluster around the cinema development, adding to the potential for linked trips into the Town Centre.</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - DCSF development would have yielded circa £700K for the around half of the Council's ownership, this is potentially higher than the current market value. Private sector development would require adjacent or on site car parking. Cabinet agreement to recycle proceeds into the area (Oct 2011). Car parking yield currently circa £354K.</p>
4	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Covered in part by Feethams Planning and Development Brief, Planning and Development Brief. Plot sizes and building scale that could be accommodated would allow office leisure development. As a hub for work and leisure there are key advantages in clustering these uses together to stimulate the evening economy. Office development close to the Town Centre will help to boost the economy. Leisure uses may cluster around the cinema development, adding to the potential for linked trips into the Town Centre.</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Car parking provision has to be retained which is currently around 450 spaces. This will have an associated land take and will require a financing model. Land receipt for retail circa £3-3.5M with associated cost of new Town Hall between £6-8M. Currently depressed land values due to economic downturn that may improve once cinema scheme is delivered and operating. Car park yield for Town Hall car parks excluding cinema site circa £65K.</p>
5	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Currently disconnected from the Town Centre by poor quality public realm and the subway. The site has a distinctive character based upon the historic street pattern and use. In the setting of important listed buildings and part of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. The area does not have the capacity for large footprint development and servicing and access will be problematic. It may be possible to accommodate a 4000m2 gross store if the road network was modified releasing further land for development.</p>	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Required modification of road network may absorb most of any land receipt. Fragmented land holdings in the area isolate the Council's car park as a development site. Current value of car park for food retail circa £1M. Comprehensive redevelopment may release more council land as part of a reduced highway land take. Current car parking income of circa £30K per annum.</p>





## PROPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE

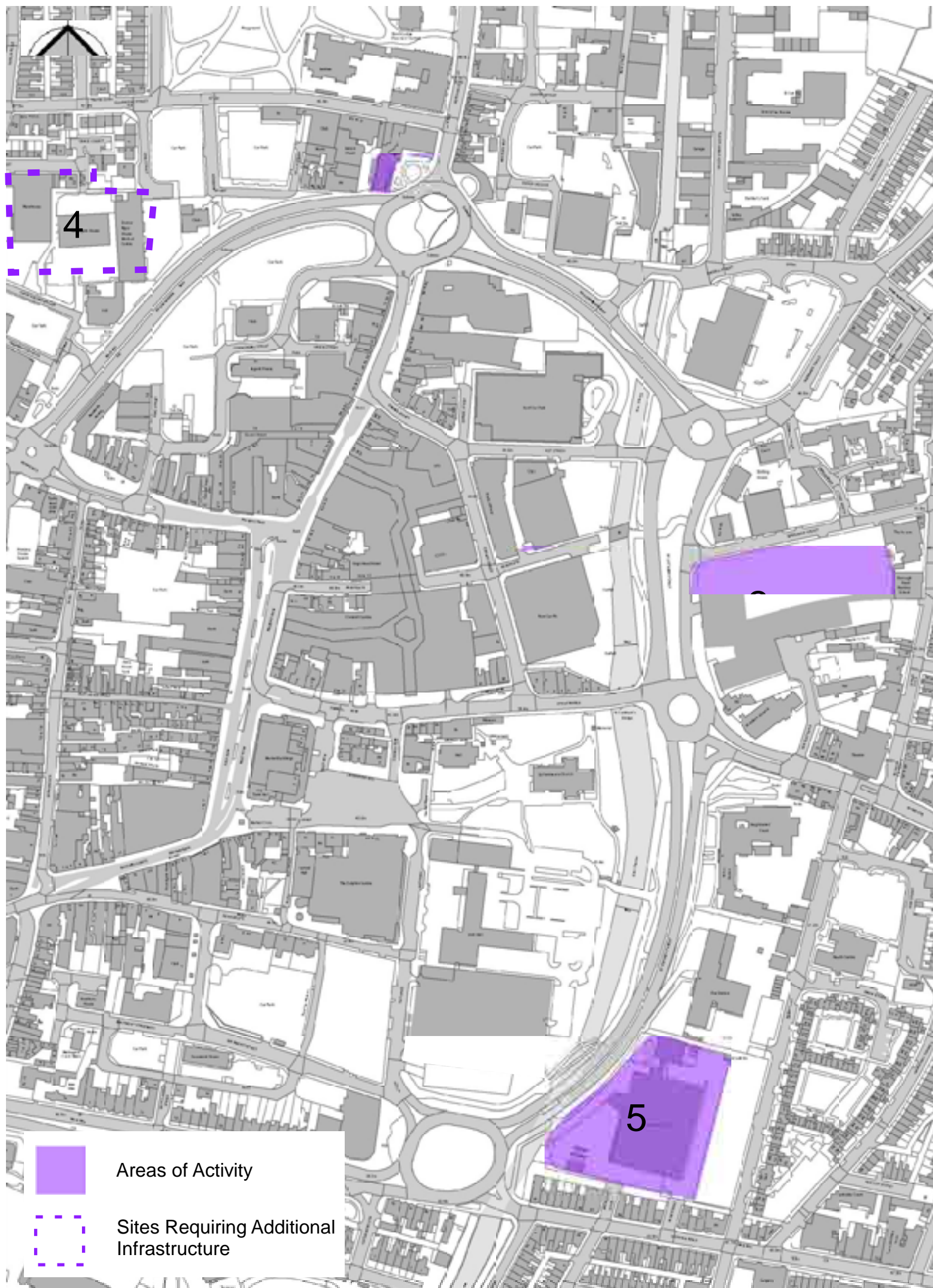
	REGENERATION	ASSETS AND RESOURCES
1	<b>NORTHGATE ROUNDABOUT JUNCTION SIGNALISATION</b> - The reinstatement of at grade pedestrian and cycle movements at this roundabout will improve the economic prospects of the wider area and allow the expansion of some Town Centre uses to the north over time. In terms of linked trips any development immediately to the north that incorporates public car parking will add footfall to the north of the Town Centre. Forms part of the ambitions of the emerging Town Centre Fringe Masterplan.	<b>NORTHGATE ROUNDABOUT JUNCTION SIGNALISATION</b> - The junction works will release significant land in the Council's ownership that can be used for development. Wider site assembly would facilitate the improvements to the River Skerne. Subject to this junction work being undertaken a variety of Town Centre uses including retail could be accommodated, extending the shopping offer of Northgate and anchoring north of the Town Centre. Land receipt may fund the junction improvements.
2	<b>FREEMANS PLACE - EAST STREET ROUNDABOUT</b> - Enhancing connectivity between the Town Centre, Haughton Road the College and the University and providing improved bus movements this junction also helps to manage congestion on the inner ring road. The improved connectivity will allow better access and footfall in the Town Centre as well as re-connecting Haughton Road to the economic benefits of the Town Centre. The realignment of the carriageways will allow the early stages of the riverside linear park to be developed, mitigating flood risk.	<b>FREEMANS PLACE - EAST STREET ROUNDABOUT</b> - Council land will be released by the reduction in land take for the highway. This may provide limited receipts in the future as development progresses. The long term connection with Valley Street will release further Town Centre land in a prime location. The creation of the green corridor beside the river is a cost effective flood risk mitigation method. Could be part or wholly funded by the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement funding stream.
3	<b>PARKGATE - STONEBRIDGE SIGNALISED JUNCTION</b> - Replacing the roundabout at Stonebridge will improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to an from the Town Centre whilst also helping to manage congestion and improve bus access. The Town Centre will benefit from better access from surrounding car parks and neighbourhoods and Parkgate will be reconnected to the Town Centre, enhancing the role of the Civic Theatre as a cultural asset.	<b>PARKGATE - STONEBRIDGE SIGNALISED JUNCTION</b> - The junction works will release very little development land but will be accommodated within the existing highway. Could be part or wholly funded by the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement funding stream.
4	<b>VICTORIA ROAD ROUNDABOUT - SKERNE DECULVERTING AND SOUTHERN BOULEVARD</b> - The re-alignment of the ring road, the deculverting of the River Skerne and the removal of Victoria Road roundabout will improve connectivity between the Town Centre and the railway station and create a positive riverside frontage on the left and right banks. This will create additional amenity space and public realm improvements that will enhance future and committed developments and may stimulate further regeneration.	<b>VICTORIA ROAD ROUNDABOUT - SKERNE DECULVERTING AND SOUTHERN BOULEVARD</b> - The realignments of the road and the removal of the roundabout will release further Council owned land for development. Acquisitions and increases in land value could contribute to the funding of these works. Further investment may be available from the Homes and Communities Agency.
5	<b>RIVER SKERNE RESTORATION</b> - This will transform the relationship between the Town Centre and River Skerne. Adding value to proposed Town Centre Developments such as the cinema the restoration of the river will provide amenity space, creative play and sustainable and healthy transport choices. Connecting the Town Centre with communities to the north and south this river restoration is a celebration of the built and natural heritage of the town.	<b>RIVER SKERNE RESTORATION</b> - as a cost effective flood mitigation strategy the restoration of the river will add value to Council owned assets whilst also attracting funding from the Environment Agency.



## BUS STATION OPPORTUNITIES

	REGENERATION	ASSETS
1 1a	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - Preferred location for comparison retail. Currently under a Development Agreement with Discovery Properties, the development has stalled due to the financial downturn. Good connections with existing shopping offer. Site 1a might provide a suitable additional location subject to infrastructure improvements and connection with site 1. Bus station to serve the needs of the town would impact upon the street pattern and built form. Only option would be in a basement which would not be desirable. 1a adjoins Conservation Area.</p>	<p>COMMERCIAL STREET - Significant Council landholding and land assembly in place. Additional food retail might improve the viability and restructure of car parking model might also be a possibility. Existing scheme does not yield a significant land receipt and the addition of a bus station would render development proposals unviable either due to land take or in additional construction costs.</p>
2	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Site has constrained access and would not be large enough for a bus station, despite being in a screened and accessible location.</p>	<p>ABBOTS YARD - Existing car park with revenue stream of circa £200K, popular with blue badge holders.</p>
3	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - Covered by the Feethams Planning and Development Brief. Some allowance made for retail in the Brief. Specific reference is made in the Brief for the improvement of the existing coach facilities in the area. The Beaumont street sites are sloping and would not lend themselves to the development of a bus station.</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - BEAUMONT STREET - DCSF development would have yielded circa £700K for the around half of the Council's ownership, this is potentially higher than the current market value. Development would require adjacent or on site car parking. Car parking yield currently circa £354K.</p>
4	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Covered in part by Feethams Planning and Development Brief, Town Hall not included. Specific references in the brief to improved coach facilities in the area, probably accommodated on-road. Hatched area committed for cinema and leisure development with associated riverside improvements. No immediate plans to redevelop the Town Hall site.</p>	<p>FEETHAMS - TOWN HALL NORTH AND SOUTH - Car parking provision has to be retained which is currently around 450 spaces. This will have an associated land take and will require a financing model. Land receipt for retail circa £3-3.5M with associated cost of new Town Hall between £6-8M. Currently depressed land values due to economic downturn that may improve once cinema scheme is delivered and operating. Car park yield for Town Hall car parks excluding cinema site circa £65K.</p>
5	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Currently disconnected from the Town Centre by poor quality public realm and the subway. The site has a distinctive character based upon the historic street pattern and use. In the setting of important listed buildings and part of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. The area does not have the capacity for a bus station.</p>	<p>GARDEN STREET AREA - Required modification of road network may absorb most of any land receipt. Fragmented land holdings in the area isolate the Council's car park as a development site. Would require land assembly to create a site large enough which would be uneconomic on top of the costs of replacing the roundabout.</p>

## PRIVATE SECTOR SITES



	REGENERATION	ASSETS
1	JJB SITE - Recent announcement of closure. Site owned by Zurich and may be coming up for sale. Company in the hands of the receiver. Key riverside frontage. May be strategically important for transport infrastructure.	JJB SITE - Acquisition may be advantageous to the Council as the proposed Debenhams development in Northern Echo building may shift the centre of gravity of the town and an increase in value over time. Riverside restoration and regeneration may also increase potential value. Key risk to Council's land receipt if a foodstore operator takes over the redundant building as no planning permission required.
2	ST CUTHBERTS WAY - Pendragon Limited - Key strategic edge of centre site with the opportunity to make the link into the Town Centre Fringe. Would require a high level of design quality and in the setting of the Grade I Listed St.Cuthbert's and Grade II St Hilda's churches.	ST CUTHBERTS WAY - too expensive for the Council or public sector to acquire due to valuations and lack of funding. May come forward for retail use in the future and food cannot be ruled out although retail has currently been restricted to bulky goods and some residential and hotel use. Recent enquiry for a six screen cinema.
3	NORTHGATE HOUSE - Unsympathetic 1970's office building with limited upper and ground floor occupancy. Currently being actively marketed. This building lacks commercial levels of car parking to attract high quality tenants and would require work to bring up to the best modern standards. Ideally would be put into a comprehensive redevelopment of the Northgate Roundabout area. The demolition of this building would improve Darlington's character and appearance.	NORTHGATE HOUSE - Purchase price circa £2M, not considered to be good value. Running costs and ongoing rates outstrip income for owners. May be a useful acquisition should the Council land surrounding be released through the improvements to the road network and public realm.
4	FOUR RIGGS AREA - Covered by the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. Currently being promoted for office use alongside existing. Would be an ideal location if the road infrastructure was provided and could contribute to wider masterplan ambitions.	FOUR RIGGS AREA - Owner and agent currently promoting the site for offices and talking to DBC and DfE about a further building to accommodate. Partnership with DfE could be jeopardised if they went it alone. Possible partnership to deliver infrastructure.
5	ROYAL MAIL - key site to deliver ambitions of Town Centre Fringe Masterplan. Large footprint building that is a detractive feature and could support a number of uses including a multi-storey car park subject to planning. May be becoming redundant due to sorting function going elsewhere, delivery office could relocate within the Borough.	ROYAL MAIL - Currently not for sale but could be acquired with HCA funding. Potential raise in land values post cinema development and riverside regeneration.

## 4. The Vision for the Town Centre

Based upon the Local Plan, the existing Town Centre Strategy (Adding to Quality 2001) and the Feethams Planning and Development Brief, in addition to the recent public consultation and technical work, a vision for the Town Centre has been developed. The vision comprises:

- A focus on leisure and office development in the Feethams area, building on the successful procurement of the cinema and hotel development and the already established office uses of the Town Hall, Beaumont House, etc.
- The further promotion of the non-food and larger floorspace retail offer to the north of the Town Centre, with a possible expansion subject to the delivery of improvements to the road network.
- Improvements and investment in the Covered Market and the further development of the offer of the markets in general.
- The continued support of the independent retail sector to the south and west of the Town Centre.
- The rationalisation / improvement of bus and coach facilities to improve access and further enhance the public realm in the Pedestrian Heart.
- Improvements to the accessibility, convenience and quality of car parking facilities.
- The development of the evening economy and the cultural life of the town, focussed on the Town Centre.

This forms part of the recommendations made in Section 5

### The Medium Term Ambitions for the Town Centre

To deliver this vision a number of public goods have been identified;

- Improvements and investment in the Covered Market
- The enhancement of the riverside environment at Feethams
- Influencing the future of the former JJB sports site
- Junction improvements at Northgate roundabout to release land, enhance connectivity and assist in the regeneration of the wider area
- Car parking in the Feethams area to support the cinema and assist in the release of the remaining sites.
- Improved coach facilities
- A rationalisation of the bus stops and potential further pedestrianisation



## 4. The Vision for the Town Centre

- Attracting another department store to the Town Centre
- Achieving development on Commercial Street for larger unit shops which attracts retailers not already in Darlington, who would in turn attract more shoppers to the Town Centre
- Achieving office development in the Beaumont Street area
- Proposals to help improve business on Skinnergate and Duke Street

This vision forms part of the recommendations in Section 5

### The Future of the Town Hall

There is no overriding case in the short to medium term to release the Town Hall site for development. This is based on the following factors;

- There is a desire to retain the Civic and office function of the Council in the Town Centre as this is an accessible location and office workers in town support the economy.
- Increased land values that could be a consequence of the Feethams Cinema development have yet to be understood and realised, the current land value remains depressed.
- The energy and resources that were used to construct the Town Hall would be wasted if the building were to be demolished.
- Whilst the cinema is being constructed the redevelopment of the Town Hall would cause added disruption.
- Significant opportunities and incentives are available to realise a low carbon solution to the refurbishment of the building and the sharing of plant and energy with the Dolphin Centre.
- Any required multi-storey car parking, to unlock the rest of the Feethams sites, could be accommodated to the rear of the Town Hall without compromising the long-term development of the site.

This strategy accords with the core principles developed from the public consultation work to provide and retain office accommodation within the Town Centre and to consider the balance between the uses and major developments in and around the Town Centre. In addition the potential inclusion of car parking to the rear of the Town Hall, screened with attractive riverside development could help to improve the public realm beside the River Skerne and accommodate car parking in such a way as to protect Darlington's distinctive character. This forms part of the recommendations made in Section 5



Independent Shopping in Darlington



Food Shopping at Darlington Market

## 4. The Vision for the Town Centre

### **Making Land Available for a Foodstore**

In line with the technical work undertaken by England and Lyle considering the impact of further food retail in or around the Town Centre the Council is seeking to deliver significant public goods in the form of junction improvements at Northgate roundabout. To help to make this happen a proposal to accommodate a foodstore of around 4000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) is being explored in the Garden Street area. The developers who have adjoining land interests have been briefed as to the Council's ambitions for the site and any development will be predicated on;

- The replacement of Northgate roundabout with a signalised junction facilitating improved pedestrian connectivity at street level.
- A street frontage that allows pedestrian access as a continuation of the shopping offer of Northgate to the north to promote linked trips into the Town Centre.
- The design of the building being of at least two storeys and of a quality that is suitable for a prominent gateway site such as this.

A key consideration in this decision was the lack of support for a large supermarket that would sell fashion and non-food goods in addition to food that came out of the consultation and participation process.

This accords with the core development principles by focussing development in and around the Town Centre, the certainty this provides reducing the possibility of such a development being proposed for outside the Town Centre. Also, as the proposed site is currently largely highway land that would be released by the creation of a signalised junction it will be possible to create further street frontage to Northgate complementary to Darlington's distinctive character, without impinging on the historic buildings nearby. This forms part of the recommendations made in Section 5

### **The Future of the Council's Town Centre Office Accommodation**

In the medium to long term the Council needs certainty in terms of the location and facilities of its office function. As there is no overriding need to bring the Town Hall site forward for development it is proposed to instigate a prudent and appropriate investment plan.

On-going dialogue with public sector agencies, government departments and related private companies will help to determine whether there is scope to create a campus of offices, helping the retention or creation of jobs in Darlington in the Town Centre, and there may be scope to share facilities, energy generation and facilities management.

#### 4. The Vision for the Town Centre

Over the last few years the Council pursued a strategy of consolidating staff accommodation into its freehold buildings, namely the Town Hall, Central House Complex and the depot in Vicarage Road. This has involved remodelling the Town Hall and bringing into use spaces not previously used as offices such as the former print room and former Kids and Co nursery. Currently, the north end of the second floor is being remodelled and refurbished to accommodate Xentrall ICT from the Studios at Lingfield Point. In addition, consideration is being given to extending and improving the customer contact centre to provide improved customer facilities and to accommodate more services such as welfare reforms.

Although these buildings are in some need of upgrading they are structurally sound and relatively cheap to run. The Town Hall in particular has suffered due to uncertainty regarding its future and various options have been looked at over the last few years. There has been varying degrees of developer interest and also discussions with public sector partners all of which have not materialised into firm plans. With the continuing uncertainty over Council funding and the future shape of the organisation coupled with the cinema development it is recommended that we continue with incremental remodelling as required and modest investment until such time as a stay or move decision is made.

This strategy accords with the core development principles in terms of retaining and attracting office development to the Town Centre. This forms part of the recommendations made in Section 5.

## 5. Recommendations

This report forms the first part of the emerging Town Centre Strategy. To be adopted in late spring or early summer 2013 a number of interim recommendations are made to provide certainty to developers, clarity about the Council's ambitions for the Town Centre and to set the scene for the further work that needs to be undertaken to fully respond to the opportunities and challenges.

In the above report each of the recommendations is referenced in the appropriate place and these are collated below. It is recommended that :-

- The core development principles for the Regeneration of the Town Centre are agreed
- The vision for the Town Centre is agreed
- The medium term ambitions for the Town Centre are agreed
- The proposals for the future development of the Town Hall
- The decision whether to make land available for a food store, and if so how big and where is agreed
- Members agree the medium and long-term future strategy for the Council's Town Centre office accommodation

### Further Work Required

Through the public consultation and participation process a number of areas of work have been identified. These require further engagement and technical work and are described below, with action plans for their delivery as appropriate.

#### (a) Coach facilities

Work needs to be undertaken to understand the needs of coach users, particularly in terms of waiting facilities, toilets and the location and spatial requirements. The action plan for delivering improved facilities is:

- Discussions with operators (Dec 2012 to Feb 2013)
- Development of overall strategy for coach facilities (March 2013)
- Consultation as part of the emerging Making Places and Accomodating Growth document (May 2013)
- Delivery in line with priorities for public goods (Post April / May 2013)

#### (b) Bus Stops

There needs to be a better understanding of the needs of bus users, the routes that buses take in the Town Centre and the facilities that could be required. The action plan for delivering the required improvements is:





- Extensive public participation and consultation (Dec 2012 - Jan 2013)
- Discussions with operators (Dec 2012)
- Development of the overall strategy (February 2013)
- Development of an investment plan (February 2013)
- Consultation (March 2013)
- Delivery in line with priorities for public goods (Post April / May 2013)

#### (c) Indoor Market

To look to bring forward a refurbishment project for the Indoor Market that builds on the work previously carried out and refreshes the vision and aspirations for this key Town Centre building which subject to a funded business plan will be delivered by end of 2014. The key actions are:

- To refresh the vision for the markets
- Develop a new lettings policy based on the vision
- Work closely with a reference group set up under Darlington Partnership
- Progress to stage 1 HLF application
- Produce Business Plan
- Refurbishment
- New Business Model Implemented (end 2014)

#### (d) Skinnergate and Duke Street

There have been significant representations made by traders around Skinnergate to ask the Council to consider re-opening this street to vehicular traffic and the possibility of integrating short stay on street car parking. A significant opportunity exists to look at this in conjunction with Duke Street, as there is the potential to change the traffic management and accommodate more parking on this street. An action plan to develop the strategy is:

- Task and Finish Group to consider options (Feb 2013 start)
- Develop preferred option (March / April 2013)
- Preferred option reported to May Cabinet with links to LTP and Car Parking Strategy

#### (e) Detailed Parking Strategy

The emerging Car Parking Strategy for the Borough is in development. A detailed action plan for the Town Centre is:

- Development of Town Centre car parking strategy options including Residents Parking Zones (Dec - Jan 2013)
- Consultation on options (March 2013)
- Preferred options for Car Parking Strategy and action plan including Town Centre specific proposals



#### (f) Privately Owned Sites

A number of privately owned sites in and around the Town Centre are currently empty or potentially could come forward for development in the short to medium term. It is important that these sites make a positive contribution to the Town Centre Strategy and as such briefs need to be prepared. An action plan for delivering these is:

- Discussions with landowners (June / July 2013)
- Draft briefs commissioned and prepared for consultation (July onwards)
- Consultation on each brief as required

#### (g) Links to the Town Centre Fringe and Infrastructure Projects

The Town Centre Fringe Masterplan is nearing completion. This has attracted significant public sector investment and there are potential positive impacts for the Town Centre where these areas meet, both beside the River Skerne and around the inner ring road. These impacts and potential for shared investment needs to be better understood. An action plan for delivery is:

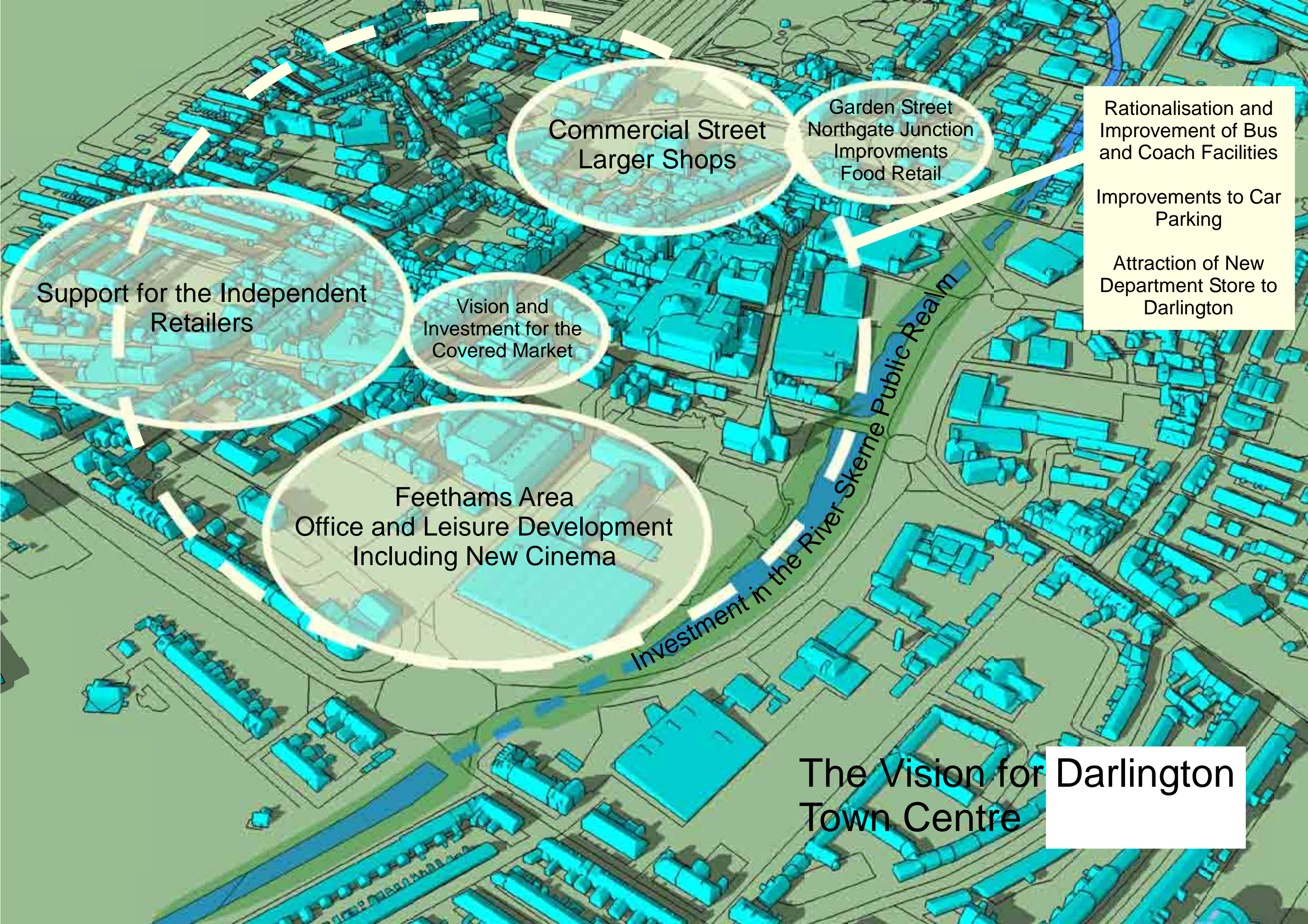
- Identification of shared projects (Dec 2012)
- Adoption of Masterplan (Jan 2013)
- Feasibility design stage of projects (Jan - Feb 2013)
- Consultation (March 2013)
- Delivery in line with priorities for public goods

(h) The feasibility of delivering a department store in the Town Centre

#### **Putting the Proposals on Statutory Footing**

The locational elements of the proposed strategy and specific proposals set out in this report will form the core of site specific proposals for the Town Centre / edge of Town Centre that will be included in the Local Plan. This will be done through the Making and Growing Places Development Plan Document, the Preferred Options draft of which is due to be considered by Cabinet in May 2013, and to be subject to public and other consultations from late May. The plan making process would be the route by which the public and others could challenge the proposals, including through an independent examination.





Commercial Street  
Larger Shops

Garden Street  
Northgate Junction  
Improvements  
Food Retail

Support for the Independent  
Retailers

Vision and  
Investment for the  
Covered Market

Feethams Area  
Office and Leisure Development  
Including New Cinema

Investment in the River Skerne Public Realm

Rationalisation and  
Improvement of Bus  
and Coach Facilities

Improvements to Car  
Parking

Attraction of New  
Department Store to  
Darlington

The Vision for Darlington  
Town Centre