

# The Wigan Pier Quarter Planning and Regeneration Strategy



January 2006



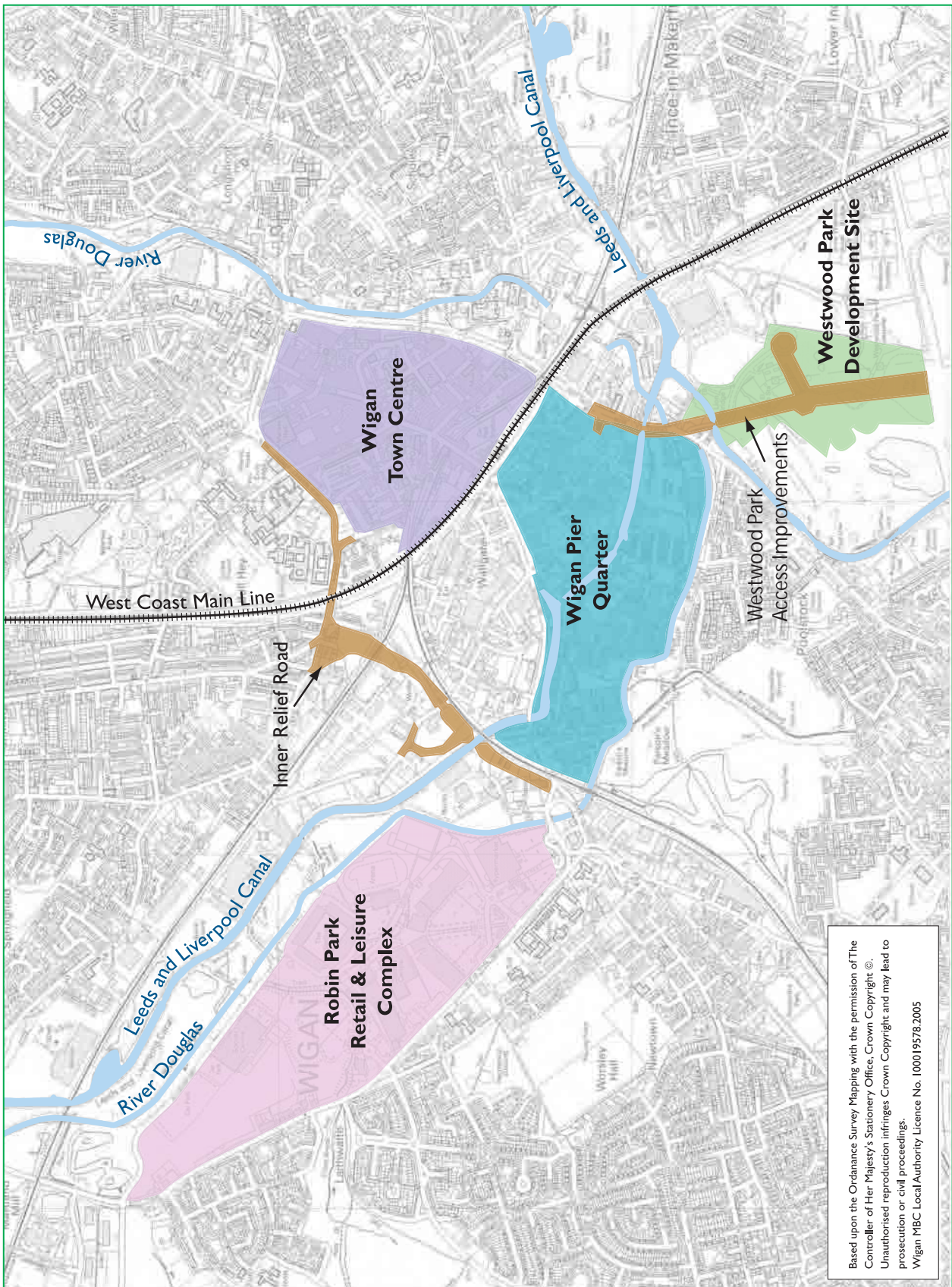
## Introduction

This Strategy sets out the planning and regeneration framework for the sustainable development of the Wigan Pier Quarter over the next 10 years. The strategy will form the basis of a co-ordinated programme of public and private investment, which will bring about a major transformation within the area.

The 'core' of the area, based around the canal, has a unique and special character, which provides the opportunity for conservation-led regeneration, building upon existing assets to create a new community that meets the needs and aspirations of the 21st century. The Queen Street/Caroline Street area has the potential in the medium – long term to become a higher quality mixed use area which takes advantage of its strategic location between the town centre, railway stations and the Wigan Pier historic core.



# Location Context



## The Vision

The Vision for the area has been developed over recent years following extensive background work and discussions with all the main stakeholders.

It can be described as “A lively mixed use quarter, providing a home for cultural activities, businesses, housing, leisure and tourism”.

The vision also includes the following:

- An area which is busy during the daytime and evenings and where people feel comfortable and safe
- A place where the community are involved in shaping its future
- An area which provides job opportunities for local people
- A distinct place where the true heritage value is clearly recognised and understood



- A high quality public realm that includes public art as a key component
- An area that is connected with the town centre and adjacent areas
- A place where the potential of the canal and river is fully realised

The aim is to create a new and vibrant community and cultural quarter, where people can live, work and play. The area also aims to be an attractive destination for visitors, which has a range of activities appealing to all types of people.



## The Current Position

The Pier Quarter occupies an important strategic location between Wigan town centre and the Robin Park leisure and retail complex, containing the JJB Stadium.

The Pier Quarter acts as a gateway to the town with major radial routes, Pottery Road, Wallgate (A49) and Chapel Lane/Poolstock, passing through the area and along its eastern boundary.

The area has a diverse character and range of uses, including a number of dominant multi-storey mills set alongside the canal and river, a range of older industrial buildings, more recent commercial buildings and small pockets of housing.

The Pier Quarter includes the area of the Wigan Pier Conservation Area which contains a number of listed buildings and structures. These buildings together with the presence of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and the River Douglas help to form the special character of the area.

Whilst the area has benefited from investment as part of the Wigan Pier project in the 1980's, the benefits of this investment have not been felt across the wider area and several problems remain. In addition, whilst the heritage based tourism had been successful in its earlier years, the tourism offer was clearly in need of updating to meet the requirements of the present day.

The main environmental, economic and social problems are:

- The dominance of traffic which causes severance of different parts of the quarter

- Unattractive and poorly maintained buildings which damage the area's image
- Vacant or underused buildings which are an underused resource
- Lack of evening activity and community 'presence'
- A shortage of local facilities
- Links to the town centre and surrounding areas are poor

The first stages in the regeneration of the area are now under way, and these will start to address some of the above problems. A detailed proposal for the Trencherfield Mill area has now been approved by the council, whilst a number of individual funding approvals have now been obtained.

The strategy highlights the next stages in the regeneration of the area, the priorities for investment, and the key principles which will guide development within the Pier Quarter.



## Existing Policies and Strategies

The policies within the plan are consistent with national, regional and local planning policies which seek to promote the sustainable regeneration and re-use of accessible urban sites such as the Pier Quarter.

### National planning policies

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 emphasises the need for sustainable development in accessible locations such as the Pier Quarter. It also promotes high quality design in all new developments.

Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 3 promotes the use of 'brownfield' or previously used sites and buildings for housing use. Suitable sites for housing redevelopment should also be readily accessible by public transport.

PPS 6 emphasises that town centres should continue to be the main location for retail development, in order to ensure that they remain viable centres serving the wider community. Outside these town centres larger new retail developments, in areas like the Pier Quarter, will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where a series of strict criteria can be met.

PPG 15 provides guidance on the conservation of the nation's Listed Buildings and on preserving and enhancing the character of designated Conservation Areas. National Planning Policy promotes conservation-led regeneration, which provides a long-term future for listed buildings.

### Regional Policies

At the regional level, the Pier Quarter

strategy is consistent with the main themes and principles of the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North-West. The general strategy for the Pier Quarter promotes high quality sustainable development built around a major transport hub, with improved links to the wider region via major transport routes.

Objectives 8 and 9 of the Regional Economic Strategy seek to develop the strategic transport, communication and economic infrastructure and ensure the availability of a range of employment sites across the region. The Pier Quarter Strategy shows how the development of this area can contribute to these objectives.

The major urban renaissance initiative, The Northern Way, which is being led by the 3 northern development agencies, aims to create sustainable and prosperous communities across the North and to create the right conditions for communities to thrive. The Northern Way recognises that there is untapped potential for jobs and growth in the region and that there is a need to increase prosperity and to close the 'productivity gap' with other parts of the country.

The Northern Way initiative also aims to strengthen the North's knowledge base and to develop a greater share of the country's knowledge based industries. The Pier Quarter Strategy recognises that parts of this area (and adjacent areas such as Westwood Park) could play a key role in forming a home for 'clusters' of knowledge based industries set within a high quality, accessible urban site.

# Existing Policies and Strategies

## Council Planning Policies

The council's planning policies for the area are set out in the Revised Deposit Draft Wigan Unitary Development Plan - February 2004. The Unitary Development Plan will be incorporated within the council's new Local Development Framework, introduced under the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The plan includes a specific policy covering the Pier Quarter area.

- Policy EM1H states that "The Wigan Pier Quarter is identified for comprehensive, mixed use conservation-led regeneration comprising employment, housing, tourism, leisure and other major visitor attractors." The Policy then sets out key features against which 'development' proposals will be judged, and the circumstances under which retail development may be acceptable.
- Policies EV4 and EV4A set out the Council's policies for preserving and enhancing the character of its conservation areas (including the Wigan Pier Conservation Area).
- Policy EV4B sets out how the council will ensure the protection of and encourage the enhancement of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and their settings.

A number of other plan policies will be relevant to the area, and these include:

- EM1A, EM1B, EM1C, EM1D – Employment and employment area policies
- EM2A – Tourism development

- S1E, S1F – Retail policies
- R1B, R1D, R1D, R1G – Housing policies
- EV3F – Impact of development on the canal and river
- EV3H – Public Art
- EV4E – Archaeology
- A1, A1S – Accessibility and Car Parking
- G1C – Flood Risk
- A1K – Integration of rail stations

## Other Strategies and Policies

The Strategy for the Pier Quarter has also taken into account a range of adopted local policies and strategies and the findings of other studies.

- The Wigan Borough Partnership's Community Plan is intended to guide and influence all activities within the borough. The main principles of the Community Plan have been included within this Strategy. These are creating strong communities, promoting social inclusion, working in partnership, ensuring sustainable development and learning from experience.
- The Economic Development Plan created by the Wigan Economic Partnership recognises the economic development potential of the area as part of the South Wigan and Ince Economic Development Zone. Development of the Pier Quarter will complement proposed developments at Westwood Park and Pemberton Colliery.
- The Pier Quarter area falls within the area covered by the Wigan South Central Implementation Strategy

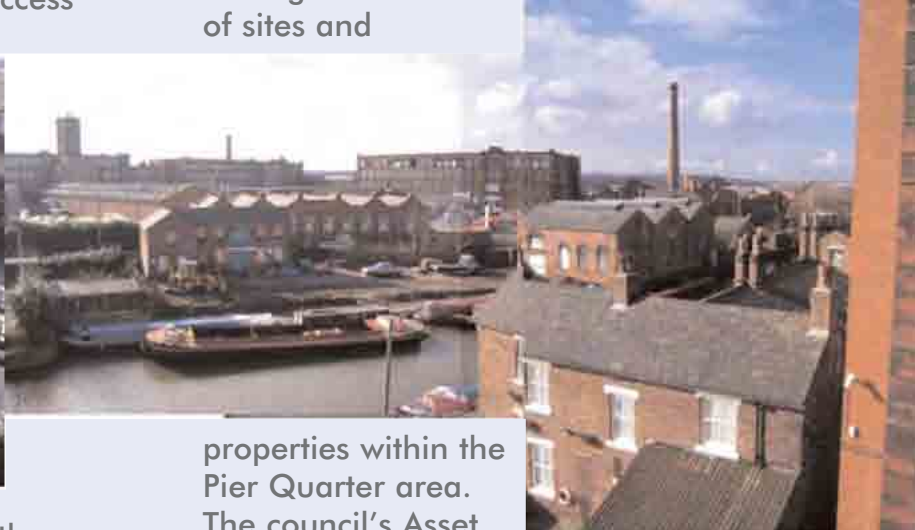
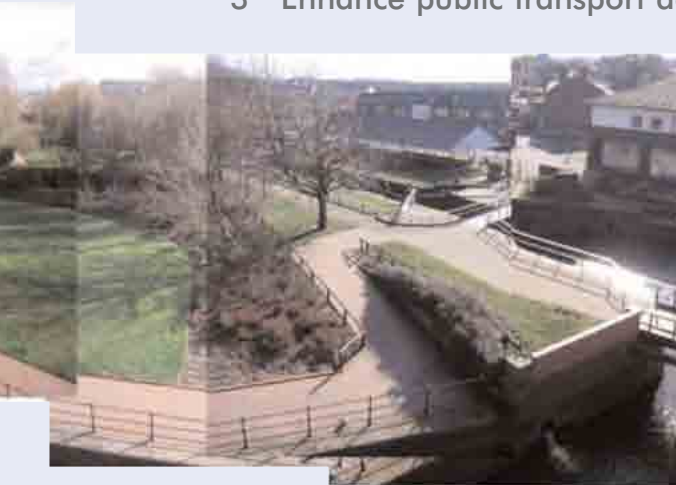


endorsed by the Northwest Regional Development Agency and Wigan Council, following the publishing of the Mersey Belt Study Policy Statement in 2003. A number of the Strategic Objectives from the Implementation Strategy are particularly relevant to the Pier Quarter. These are:

- 1 Realise the full economic potential for knowledge based industries of key employment sites, including the Pier Quarter area.
- 2 Develop a high quality physical environment to attract knowledge based industries.
- 3 Enhance public transport access

towards other modes of transport. Within the Pier Quarter, the provision of new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes and bus priority measures continues to implement this strategy.

- The Cultural Strategy for the area, 'Northern Soul', recognises the potential to develop the area as a home for a wide range of cultural activities. The Trencherfield Mill scheme will include space for performance and other cultural activities, which will help to meet an identified need.
- The local authority owns and manages a number of sites and



to employment sites through the implementation of the Wigan Integrated Transport Scheme, including the Transport Hub based around the 2 railway stations.

- 4 Expand and grow the creative industries and tourism sectors.
- The Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan 'Investing in Excellence' aims to shift the balance of priority from the private car

properties within the Pier Quarter area. The council's Asset Management Strategy explains how the local authority will properly manage its assets and how these assets can be used to their full potential.

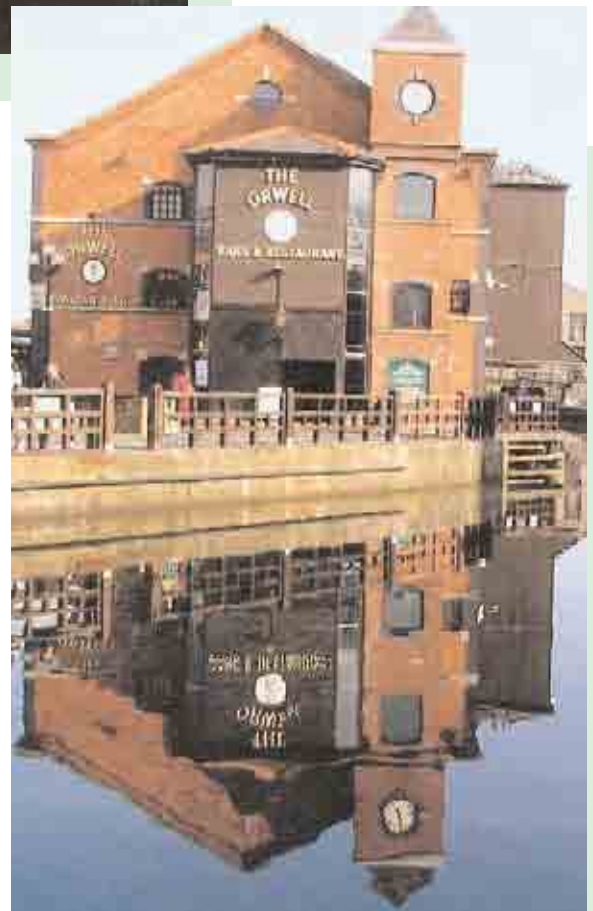
- An 'Economic Appraisal of Development Opportunities' study was carried out by consultants, BDP Planning (June 2001). This identified some of the major problems and issues within the area and suggested



## Existing Policies and Strategies

a number of key projects to tackle these issues.

- Consultants RKL have prepared a Public Art Strategy for the Pier Quarter (October 2004). The strategy shows how an integrated public art strategy could help to create a new image for the area and help to enhance the distinctive qualities of the site.
- Architects, Austin-Smith:Lord and arts consultants, da capo carried out a Feasibility Study looking at the potential for a new performance venue within the area (November 2003). The study looked at a number of options for providing this facility within the Trencherfield Mill area.
- In 2005 Locum Destinations have been working with all stakeholders to identify the user requirements and options for a culture and heritage centre, which will incorporate the new performance venue. These requirements will now be taken forward with a full feasibility study.



## Guiding Principles

There are a number of guiding principles which will be applied and which will underpin the strategy for the area:

- All development proposals should contribute towards an acceptable balance of uses. Whilst this cannot be prescriptive, the area should include:
  - A significant residential element which will help to create a sustainable and viable community
  - A critical mass of cultural activities and creative businesses
  - A range of employment uses which provide job opportunities for local people. This includes the need to support existing businesses wherever possible, where these uses are compatible with the new uses within the area.
  - Community, leisure or tourism uses which provide a different offer to the town centre and Robin Park and do not harm the amenity of existing residents

Making sure these components are included will help to create both a destination for visitors and a unique mixed-use community.

- The Pier Quarter should incorporate the highest quality design in new developments and improvement schemes. Many parts of the area have suffered from mundane designs in the post war years. The aim must now be to raise the standards of design and development as part of the area's regeneration and in line with the council's Design Quality initiative. This includes the potential

for innovative and contemporary designs within the historic setting.

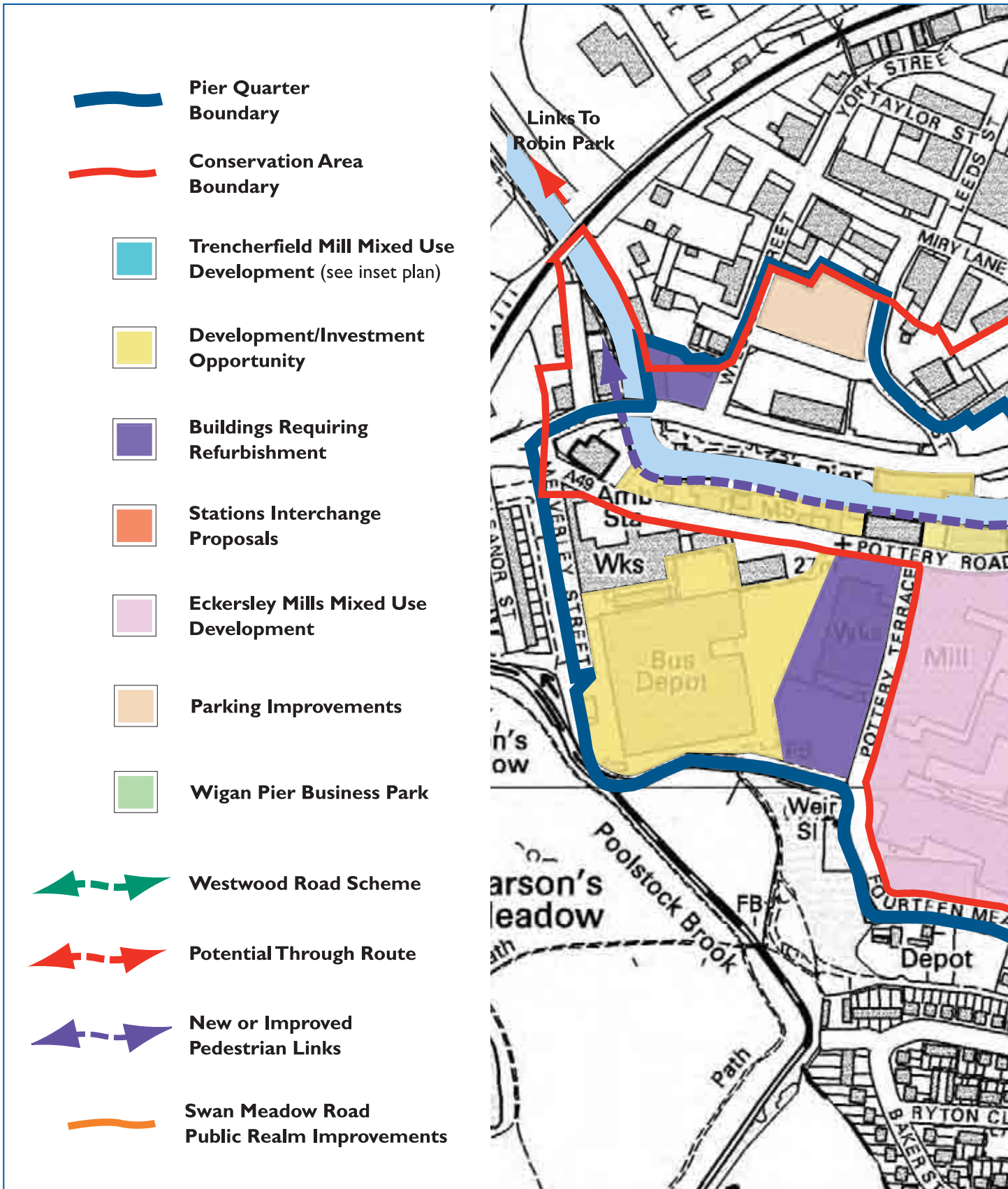
- Linked to the above, the creation of a high quality environment is crucial to the future success of the area. This principle applies not only to buildings, but also to the spaces in between buildings, which should be carefully designed. In all public spaces, particular consideration should be given to the function of the area and the choice of paving materials, landscaping, lighting etc. Public art should be included wherever possible. A detailed Public Realm Strategy has been prepared to offer further guidance.
- Conservation-led regeneration should form the basis of the improvements within the historic conservation area. This should include both the refurbishment and reuse of important buildings and the promotion of good contemporary design, which complements and enhances the area's historic assets.

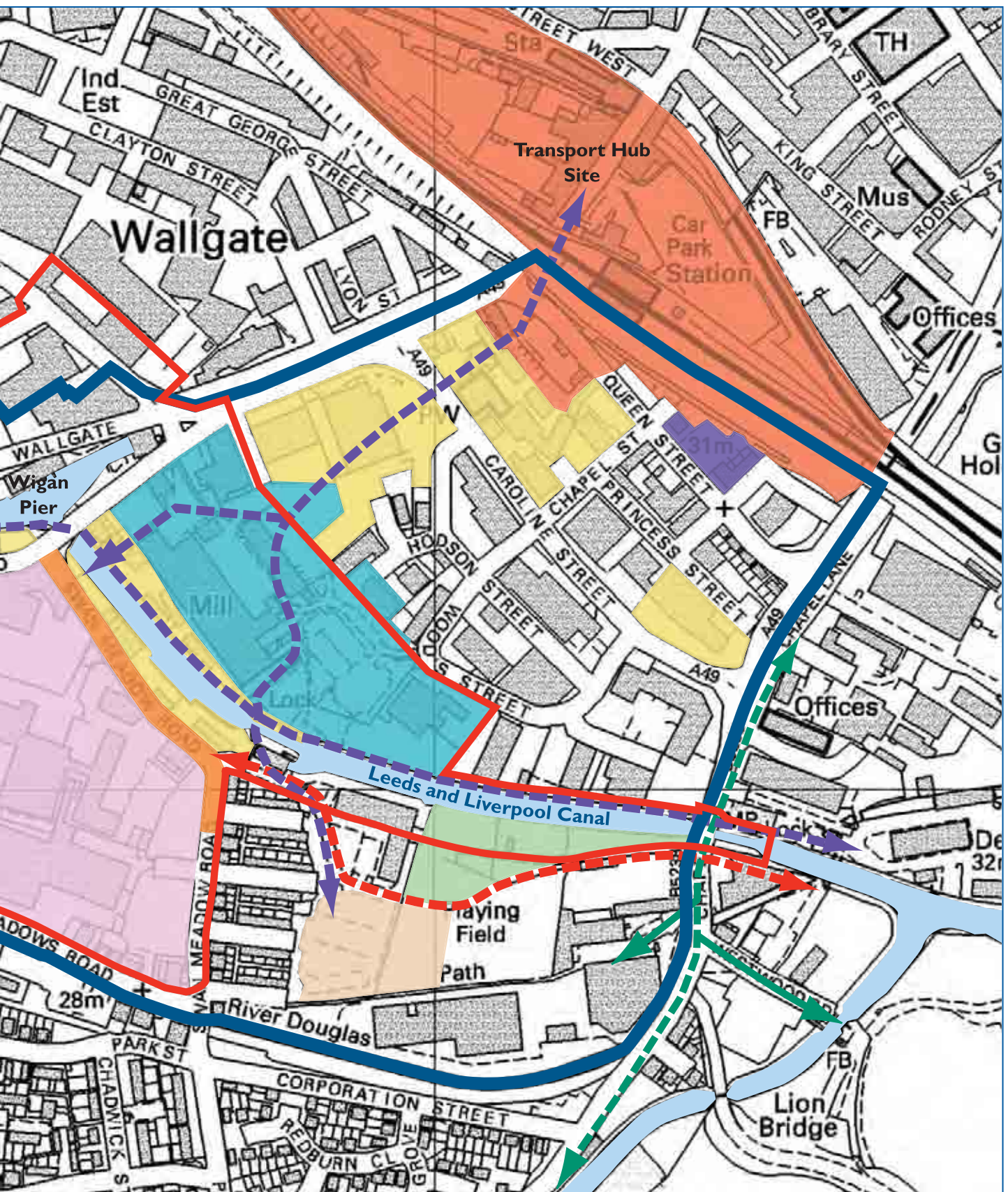


- Development proposals should assist in connecting the Pier Quarter to the town centre and other adjacent areas. The aim is to reduce the impacts of traffic and create a network of safe and attractive pedestrian routes around the area. The canal towpath will play an important role within this network.
- Community involvement within the area should be positively encouraged. This includes local stakeholders having a role in both the development and the management of the area. The established Pier Quarter Partnership and the local Township Forum will play a key role in ensuring community involvement.
- Opportunities for enhancing local biodiversity should be considered and incorporated into new schemes, wherever possible. This is particularly relevant on sites close to the canal and the River Douglas.



# Proposals Map





## Key Projects

There are a number of key projects or actions proposed within the area. These projects will all help in achieving the overall aims and objectives for the Pier Quarter.

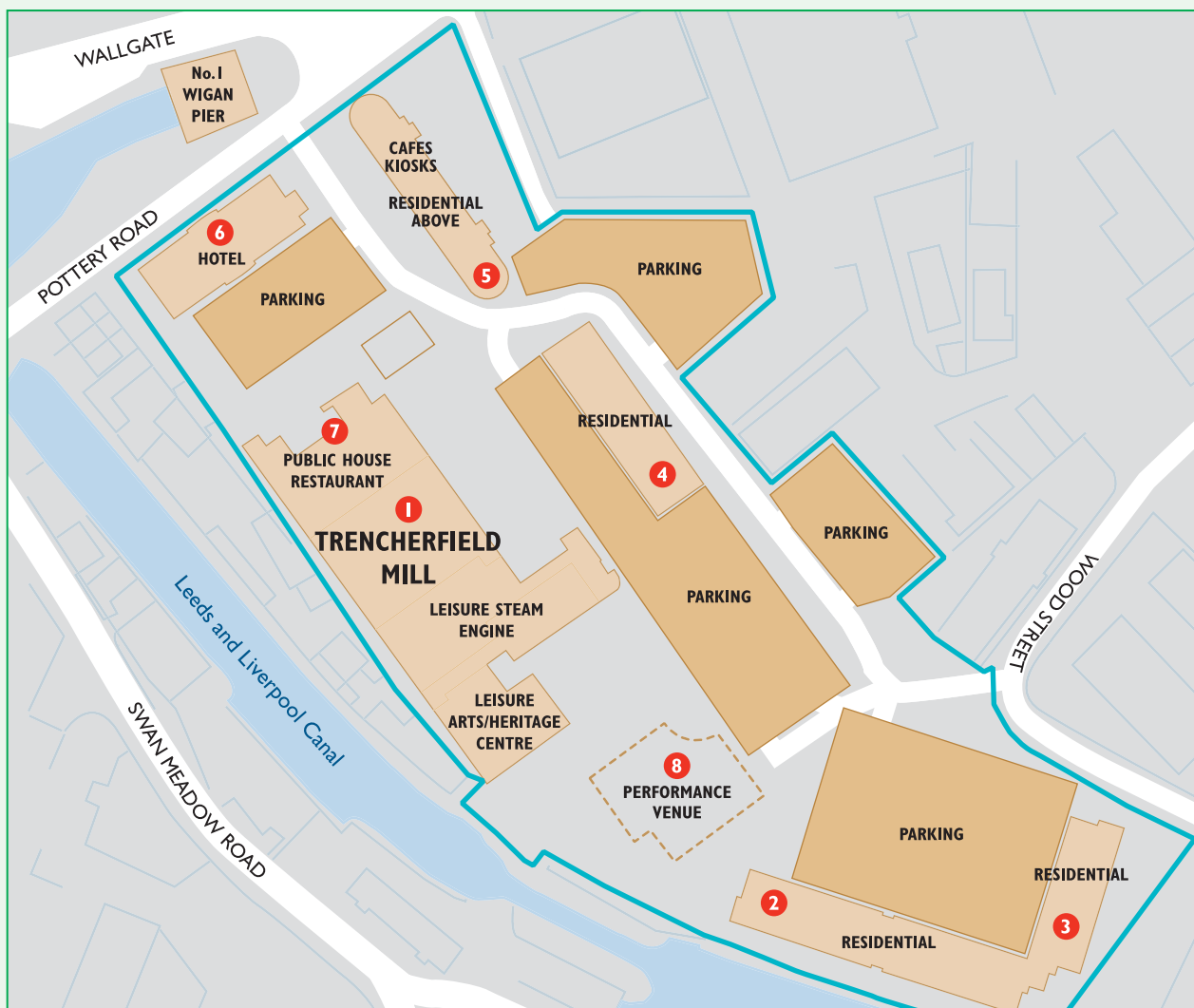
### Trencherfield Mill

A mixed-use development and refurbishment scheme is proposed for this area. The scheme includes:

- Refurbishment of the Grade 2 listed mill for leisure, commercial and residential apartment uses.
- New apartments

- Hotel
- Small scale retail and leisure uses
- Improved access, new car parking and landscaping
- Public art
- A new performance venue as part of a second phase of development

This major investment, by Nuttall Construction, will act as the catalyst for the wider regeneration of the area and will raise the profile and image of the area.



## **Eckersley Mills Complex**

This large listed mill complex which is owned by Maryland Securities, will be refurbished and partly redeveloped as part of a phased programme of works over a number of years. Details of the scheme are still to be finalised and agreed with the owners, but the major elements will include:

- internal works and provision of lifts to allow a range of uses within these refurbished buildings
- Phased clearance of newer unattractive commercial buildings to allow car parking, landscaping and some higher value new development
- A new access road into the site from Swan Meadow Road, together with internal access routes through the site
- Pedestrian links between this site and the canal/Trencherfield Mill, which may include water features.

The aim of the scheme is to create a complex, which retains its unique and interesting character and forms a home for a wide range of creative, cultural and other businesses. Residential development is expected to form a significant, but not the major, element of the scheme.

## **Mayors Boatyard, Swan Meadow Road**

This vacant site owned by British Waterways has potential for a number of uses, including art gallery, craft workshop, café, pub/restaurant or offices. A suitable scheme will need to complement other uses within the area and act as a destination encouraging visitors to cross the canal from Trencherfield Mill. The scheme will need

to include the following elements:

- Upgrading of the existing buildings (not including the adjacent Swan House Building, which is considered suitable for demolition and redevelopment)
- High quality landscaping
- Provision of adequate car parking

The provision of pedestrian access to the canal via a boardwalk or canalside path should also be considered.

## **Caroline Street/Wallgate/Queen Street**

This site, which includes the former B & Q premises, the Office World complex and other commercial properties is identified as a medium-long term development opportunity. The construction of the Trencherfield Mill scheme is expected to increase the commercial attractiveness of this site which will be located between the new activities in the Pier Quarter and the town centre. The area is suitable for a mixed-use or commercial redevelopment scheme, which would create an attractive link between the 2 areas. As the area is close to the town centre and transport links, redevelopment could include some small-scale, high quality housing provision.

Development of this site should include the following:

- Uses which complement the Pier Quarter 'offer' and which do not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- A new 'off highway' pedestrian route or boulevard, including suitable



## Key Projects

planting and public art.

- New buildings providing 'active' frontages to Wallgate, Caroline Street and the new pedestrian route.
- New buildings with high levels of architectural detailing to replace existing 'shed' structures.
- Parking to the rear of the site

### British Waterways Depot

The site, owned by British Waterways, may be developed separately or in conjunction with the Trencherfield Mill scheme. The site has potential for a number of uses, including creative businesses or sympathetic leisure uses. Development will need to:

- Retain the buildings that make a positive contribution to the area's character, or provide suitable replacement buildings, which enhance the character of the area and the setting of the listed mill.
- Provide pedestrian access through to the canal from Trencherfield Mill
- Provide safe, well-lit public spaces with seating and landscaping
- Not significantly harm the amenity of nearby residents

### The 'Way We Were'

The current museum operation is scheduled to close in 2007. Following its closure, the building has potential for re-use, including as a design centre housing creative micro-businesses.

Development should include the following:

- Retention of the car parking and

courtyard area

- Preservation of the 'warehouse' character of the building

### Integration of Rail Stations

The 2 town centre railway stations, Wigan Wallgate and Wigan North Western, are poorly integrated, being separated by a busy road with poor pedestrian links between them. The long-term strategy is to combine the 2 stations into a single entity providing improved facilities for travellers. The scheme aims to create an integrated transport 'hub' for the town centre.

The scheme will include car parking, bus interchange facilities and public spaces which will need to connect with new pedestrian routes into the Pier Quarter. In addition the project will include retail and commercial developments which will increase pedestrian activity within the area.

This major project will enable the full potential of the Pier Quarter area to be fully realised and will raise the profile and image of the Caroline street/Queen street areas.

### Caroline Street/Queen Street Commercial Areas

There are a number of relatively modern commercial and retail properties, together with a small number of houses within the Caroline Queen Street areas. No proposals are shown for these areas on the proposals map. It is intended that these areas will remain largely unchanged, providing a home for the same types of commercial uses in the short term.

However, in the longer term, as the Pier Quarter develops, a wider mix of uses may be introduced. In particular the development of the integrated transport hub will create an opportunity for higher density uses and higher quality developments within this area.

### **St. Joseph's Church, Caroline Street**

The Grade 2 listed church is currently vacant and appropriate re-use could provide positive benefits to the area. The building refurbished could be included within a more comprehensive scheme and could be used for a range of leisure or commercial uses appropriate to this edge of centre location. Development will need to have a minimal impact on the structure, layout and character of the building and bring about its external decoration and refurbishment.

### **Public Realm Improvements**

A programme of public realm improvements is proposed within the Conservation Area to help raise its profile and environmental quality. Subject to resources this will be extended across the wider area. New development proposals will be expected to include high quality paving, landscaping and public art where appropriate.

Individual schemes include:

- Resurfacing and lighting of the canal towpath to encourage greater use by pedestrians and cyclists
- 'Downgrading' of a section of Swan Meadow Road as a traffic route. This will create a more pedestrian friendly environment and will connect the

Eckersley Mill complex to other areas.

- Creation of well defined pedestrian routes through the improved Eckersley Mill complex.

### **Car Parking**

Regeneration of the Pier Quarter will inevitably lead to increased traffic and demand for parking at certain times. The scope for additional parking on the Wigan Investment Centre site is currently being investigated, whilst additional and improved parking is being provided as part of the Trencherfield Mill scheme and at Pennyhurst Street. The Strategy for the area is to provide sufficient parking in line with adopted parking standards, whilst promoting the use of alternative methods of transport.

### **Pottery Road/Wallgate Corridor**

The road corridor does not provide an attractive welcome to visitors to the Pier Quarter and forms a barrier to pedestrians. It is dominated by traffic and has a number of poor quality buildings. The aim is to promote the redevelopment or upgrading of prominent buildings along the corridor through grant aid, subject to available resources.

Ways of reducing the impacts of traffic along this route will be considered in detail following completion of the Wigan Inner Relief Route, which is expected to reduce the levels of through traffic along the roads.

### **Pier Quarter Business Park**

The project involves the construction of the final phase of the Pier Quarter

## Key Projects

Business Park and the construction of a new access road from Chapel Lane. The scheme will provide good quality office accommodation adjacent to the canal with its own parking areas and landscaping.

The potential for a future 'through route' from Chapel Lane to Waterside Drive/Swan Meadow Road is to be considered.

### **Bus Depot, Meverley Street**

This site provides a long-term development opportunity, if the current occupier vacates the site. Potentially, the site could be developed for residential use, taking advantage of its riverside location. Development proposals would need to include a suitable buffer zone between adjacent commercial properties and flood mitigation measures along the flood plain.

## Delivery Mechanisms



A detailed Action Plan will be prepared to set out a phased programme of works within the area.

Dedicated project managers for the Pier Quarter area are now in post. These staff will help to secure resources, co-ordinate activities on site and promote the changes within the area.

Funding for the project will come from a number of sources. These include the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the North West Development Agency. This funding will attract considerable amounts of private sector investment from developers and property owners. The council is actively pursuing additional funding from various sources to promote the regeneration of the area.

Private sector partners have been involved in developing individual projects and will play a vital role in the delivery of the strategy.

The council is committed to using its own resources and the powers available to it to ensure that the vision for the area is realised.

## Partners

The council cannot bring about regeneration on its own, particularly as many properties and sites are in private ownership. Effective regeneration should be brought about by a working partnership between all parties. The main partners include:

- Maryland Securities
- British Waterways
- Nuttall Construction
- Wigan Council
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- English Heritage
- Local Residents and Community Groups
- Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust
- Local Businesses
- The Local Creative Industries Sector



## Consultation

Local residents, affected businesses and other stakeholders have been consulted on the emerging strategy for the Pier Quarter area.

A formal Pier Quarter Consultation Group has recently been established. This includes local residents, businesses, property owners, council representatives, local artists and professional architects and conservation professionals. This group will continue to influence the development of the area through its regular meetings.

Further consultation will be carried out on specific projects such as the provision of public art within the public realm and as part of major developments.

Activities within the area will be promoted by a marketing group, in conjunction with the Foundation marketing strategy for the Economic Development Zone, through a series of press releases and other communications.



## Contact Names

For further information please contact:

**Ian Rowan** - Senior Project Officer  
Wigan Council Planning & Regeneration  
Department. Phone: 01942 404285  
Email: [i.rowan@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:i.rowan@wigan.gov.uk)

**Simon Kensdale** - Senior Regeneration  
Officer - Wigan Council Planning &  
Regeneration Department.  
Phone: 01942 828987  
Email: [s.kensdale@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:s.kensdale@wigan.gov.uk)

**Simon Kensdale**  
01942 828987

**Ian Rowan**  
01942 404285