

# Southport Development Framework

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# 1. The Framework Vision for Southport

1.1 The Southport Development Framework provides an ambitious starting point that encourages discussion and buy-in from the local community, businesses and potential investors. The Framework will act as a roadmap for developing a more detailed set of proposals to enable change in Southport Town Centre, building on its current key strengths and attractions.

1.2 In the last decade Southport adopted the position of England's Classic Resort. The definition of classic is - *'judged over time to be of the highest quality contemporary visitor offer and outstanding of its kind'* - always meeting the needs and expectations of discerning visitors. The vision made it clear that 'Classic' was identified with a **quality contemporary offer, to set it apart from other coastal destinations**. The quality of the town's unique heritage; valued built and natural environment; retail; accommodation; food and drink and cultural offer, are some of the essential elements for further strengthening.

1.3 As the needs and expectations of today's residents, workforce and visitors continue to evolve, so too will the experience which they will expect to receive in the town. In order to live up to the Classic Resort values, present day expectations are reflected in a vision that can be considered – **A classic seaside town that is more contemporary and dynamic, merging the old and the new; diverse in its offer, embracing creative industries, digital technology and youthful**

**endeavour, in a high quality leisure, retail, historic and public space offer for those who live in, work in and visit the town.**

1.4 Southport is fortunate to have many organisations and businesses across a range of sectors who have demonstrated their commitment to the town for many years. It is important that all stakeholders support a shared vision for the town and together continue in helping shape its future.

1.5 There are a number of specific interventions suggested which will support the vision. These include:

- Developing a Southport offer to meet the needs of today's family leisure market. The needs of families continue to change as their expectations are shaped by the high quality, thrilling experiences which they have enjoyed around the world. Leisure experiences also need to address the implications of today's multi-generational families which see value for money as synonymous with the highest quality. The redevelopment of the beachfront as a 21st Century family leisure destination is key to this.
- Nurturing a hub environment and a focal point for students of Southport College, businesses and others in the areas of creativity, design, digital and social media, possibly around Lord Street. This combined with an on going cultural programme would help build a local reputation for creative industries and encourage adults of working age with these interests to establish themselves and want to remain in the locality.
- Long recognised as Southport's 'jewel in the crown', Lord Street is at the heart of

the town's heritage as well as its future. Despite the economic challenges of recent years, this document reconfirms the importance of the town's principal street and makes suggestions for how it can continue to be improved.

1.5 There are a number of recurring and complementary themes in the Framework associated with how Southport works physically and spatially:

- **Quality** – echoing the Classic Resort Vision, it's important to ensure that quality is central to future investments and interventions – for example gateways into the town, car parking, public realm, connections, shopping and leisure. Lord Street should be the benchmark for quality.
- **Clarity** – it should be clear how the town works, how it ties together, how visitors access key assets and how they move around. It should be clear where you are in the town in relation to other parts. It should be clear where you park to access different parts of the seafront, promenade, and town centre. It should be clear that there are arcades, markets, open space, and a beachfront that are there to be enjoyed – explaining where they are and how to get there.
- **Linkages** – the heart of the town is a sizeable area and key assets are set some distance apart – links are important and should be populated with new uses and points of interest as far as possible to join the parts of the town together, so that activity in one area can be of benefit to others. Regular shoppers should be encouraged to make the walk to Lord Street for a more diverse cultural experience around a relaxed leisure offer supported by food and drink, the Atkinson, events and animated public space. Visitors

should be encouraged to explore Chapel Street, as well as more independent offerings on Wesley Street and Union Street. Visitors should be aware that it is only a 10 minute walk from the Railway Station to the Pier. Everyone should know where the market is. Lord Street should form the backbone and focal point to a series of interconnected places and spaces.

- **Diversity** - taking opportunities to add new uses and to better showcase existing ones to complement and strengthen the core destination offer will enable the town to respond more fully to contemporary interests. Examples include creative arts, the digital economy and social media, café culture, independent food and drink, food markets, music, events and street art. Again Lord Street is the central location from which to showcase and signpost this new vibrancy.
- **Spaces and Places** – leisure, culture and enterprise take place in our buildings, street and squares. The Framework proposes to develop on the strong urban form and built assets of the town to create or rediscover spaces to showcase new activities, a quality streetscape to encourage interaction, movement and commerce and new and re-imagined buildings to create defined places and new activity.



## 2. Introduction

Southport is a key economic driver in the region as a tourist, leisure and shopping destination, attracting a large number of visitors from all over the country. In recent years and like many other seaside towns, Southport has faced new challenges on a number of fronts

- 2.1 The town has had to adapt and is still adapting to the increasing regional, national and international mobility of shoppers, visitors and tourists; there has been growth in online shopping and an increasing concentration of retail and leisure facilities into a fewer number of larger town and city locations.
- 2.2 This Framework is a re-commitment to Southport as a regionally significant visitor destination and desirable place to live. Community is critical to the town's success, and residents should be able to benefit, through employment opportunities and improved education facilities as investment comes forward. Existing assets and new investment opportunities should be linked in a coherent, accessible way. Initiatives around improved access, events, and the creative sector will help foster a new dynamism in the town.
- 2.3 Southport has a number of key success enablers in the form of existing assets and its offer, capable of attracting external investment:
  - It's visitor attractions including Southport Pier, Kings Gardens and Marine Lake, Southport Pleasureland, Splashworld, The Atkinson and The Southport Theatre & Convention Centre
  - Business Conferencing
  - Lord Street
  - Host to major leisure events such as the Southport Air Show, British Musical Fireworks Championships and the Southport Flowershow
  - Sefton's wider natural coast offer
  - The Golf Coast offer
- 2.4 Southport is a significant destination for conferences in the North West following the multi million pound investment programme in the Southport Theatre & Convention Centre.
- 2.5 The Centre has hosted a number of national and regional party conferences and major conventions.
- 2.6 Alongside tourism the town also performs as a 'day to day' town centre retail destination for the residential population as well as a wider Sefton and West Lancashire catchment area. Lord Street has traditionally been one of the most renowned shopping streets in North West England.
- 2.7 Southport has long been associated with major events such as the Air Show, the Flower Show and the British Musical Fireworks Championship, which generate large numbers of visitors and are an important boost to the visitor economy in the area.
- 2.8 Sefton's wider natural coast offer has an international reputation for its habitat and conservation status and is a recognised attraction for both passive and active leisure pursuits. Nearby Ainsdale-on-Sea provides a bathing beach and to the north is the RSPB reserve at Marshside.
- 2.9 Southport benefits from some of the finest golf courses in the UK. Beyond Royal Birkdale (which regularly plays host to The Open Championship) there are a number of other championship standard courses including Hillside, Formby, Hesketh, Southport and Ainsdale, Formby Hall and West Lancashire. These courses will continue to attract golfers and will continue to encourage people to take short golf breaks in the area.
- 2.10 Capitalising on Southport's keys assets which include tourist and leisure attractions on the Beachfront, its unique heritage and architecture particularly on Lord Street, retail facilities including the market, and aligning these with new high quality developments can help raise



the profile of Southport and achieve an attractive, thriving and unique town centre experience.

- 2.10 The Business Improvement District (BID) has played an active role in the preparation of the Southport Development Framework which has been crucial in ensuring the Framework is robust and fit for purpose.
- 2.11 This Framework will be used to inform future development opportunities in Southport by Sefton Council and encourage the public and private sectors to take proposals forward. The Framework supports sustained stakeholder involvement, in particular with the BID Company and Southport Tourism Business Network (STBN) in order for Southport to secure its future as a regionally significant destination. The document outlines some parameters for development options, including the type, scale, use and form.
- 2.12 This Development Framework focuses on:
- How England's Classic Resort offer is visualised in the future to embed a contemporary, dynamic offer
  - Developing a high level plan for Lord Street
  - Sites with future development potential
  - Improving the contribution of the historic environment
- 2.13 In achieving the above, the Framework considers how the recommended actions will

help:

- Increase visitor footfall and spend
  - Shape the operational plans of Sefton Council and Southport BID
  - Support jobs and economic growth
  - Enable the Council and Southport BID Company to develop an outward facing investment prospectus
  - Enable the Council to refresh its visitor economy strategy or destination management plan
- 2.14 The report identifies high level growth and investment opportunities and provides a road map designed to inform and facilitate next steps and decision making to unlock Southport's potential.





# 3. Southport in Context

## Brief History

- 3.1 Modern Southport's origins are firmly based on the seaside, recreation and tourism.
- 3.2 Southport began to grow significantly from the end of the 18th Century, as holidaying by the sea and seaside bathing became increasingly fashionable and accessible. The first bathing house in the area known then as South Hawes was opened in 1792 followed by a hotel named South Port from which the growing town subsequently took its name. The generous width of Lord Street is due to its development in the early years being influenced by natural dune habitat. Houses were built on the higher ground (sand dunes) landward and seaward of a wide natural slack, with the properties gardens joining in the middle of what is now Lord Street.
- 3.3 The opening of the railway line; to Liverpool first, then Manchester in the 1840s, substantially improved access to the town for the growing urban population whilst the incremental introduction of annual holidays for factory workers created new markets for Lancashire's seaside towns.
- 3.4 Southport grew rapidly during the Victorian era. Today the town contains many examples of Victorian architecture, historic canopies, and the tree lined boulevard of Lord Street. The construction of the Pier was completed in 1860 and theme park opened in 1912.

## The Classic Resort

- 3.5 Southport's origins therefore lie and its role as a seaside town, having originally served the local Liverpool and Lancashire populations before developing into a resort of national renown. The town has adapted since the first hotel was established, not least through the creation of an extended seafront beyond the original Promenade, incorporating the Marine Park area and Pleasureland. The image and character of Southport has always been one of a more genteel resort than some other seaside towns and this is exemplified in the history and character of Lord Street.
- 3.6 As a popular seaside town Southport is one of the region's major destinations attracting visitors for days out, short breaks and seaside holidays from around the country. Southport is home to Britain's oldest intact iron pleasure pier, and the second longest, as well as boasting long, sandy beaches close to the town centre.

## Demographics

- 3.7 Southport is home to around a third of the Sefton population and whilst the local authority has seen a fall in its population since 2001, Southport has seen a small increase in its own population (90,381 at 2011).
- 3.8 Key demographic facts for Southport include:
  - The Southport Central Area falls mainly within the Duke's ward boundary which has a population of approximately

13,333 people. Of this total population, just 9.2% are aged between 16 and 24 years old compared to 19.5% of 60 – 74 year olds. This compared to the rest of Sefton; 10.6% (aged 16 – 24 year olds) and 17.2% (60 – 74 year olds) shows that the central Southport area has a lower proportion of younger people and a higher number of older people compared to the rest of Sefton.

- The proportion of people in privately rented accommodation is higher than the rest of Sefton.
- Levels of deprivation have generally been falling in Southport. The proportion of people living in deprivation is also much lower than the average for the rest of Sefton. However the two central wards Dukes and Cambridge which cover the town centre have 5 Lower Super Output Area (LSOA's) in the top 20% most deprived in the UK. Unemployment is relatively low in Southport at 3.6 % (April 2015-Mar 2016 Annual Population survey).
- Educational attainment is higher in Southport than the national average with Primary school outcomes above Sefton and national averages for achieving Level 4+ in reading, writing and mathematics. Southport Secondary schools achieve outcomes higher than the national averages for percentage of pupils achieving 5A\*- Cs at GCSE including English and Mathematics.



### Visitor Economy and the Town Centre

3.9 Whilst there is no doubt that consumers have tightened their belts over the last six or seven years, there are elements of the tourism and leisure industry that have remained resilient, with certain sectors and organisations even thriving. In terms of the Southport visitor economy:

- Steam research undertaken on behalf of Sefton Council suggests that around 690,000 tourists stayed in Southport in 2015 (for at least one night) which is 11,000 more than the 2014 figure. In the years between 2009 and 2015, the number of tourists staying in Southport has been relatively stable. Tourists stay in Southport for an average of 3.8 nights, although this varies depending on the type of accommodation used (shorter stays in hotels and guest houses and longer stays in self-catering accommodation such as apartments, caravans and lodges). These staying tourists spend an average of £195.89 per visit (2015) which varies depending on the type of accommodation used (higher spend per night in hotels compared to those staying in self-catering accommodation or with friends and relatives). Day visitors spend on average £30.57 per visit.
- Tourists staying in Southport in 2015 generated £336m of expenditure in the economy. This represents an increase of almost 6% from 2014. So despite a small increase in the number of staying visitors to Southport, the expenditure of those visitors has increased, partly through inflation but also through an improvement to the quality of the offer (particularly hotels).

3.10 This reflects a broader societal shift that has taken place over the last 20 - 30 years. Leisure, recreation, tourism and culture were once seen as 'discretionary spend items'. Today, however, they are viewed by many consumers as essential. Taking short breaks, eating out and visiting attractions have become a normal part of life for many people in a way that wasn't seen 30 years ago.

3.11 The visitor economy (including business tourism) is a significant element of the economic future of Southport. However, notwithstanding its seaside location continued success in the visitor economy is and will continue to be inextricably linked to the vitality of the town centre, which itself is strongly linked to meeting more day to day needs of the resident population. Understanding and developing this dual and complementary role of the town centre is key.





## Location and Accessibility

### Southport in the regional context

- 3.12 Southport is well connected to other towns within the Sefton local authority area which includes Bootle, Formby and Crosby to the south connected via the A565.
- 3.13 Southport lies on the A565 which is the main access route from both the north (A59 and Preston) and the south (to Liverpool) and is approximately 20 minutes' drive-time, along the A570 (Ormskirk and St Helens) from the M58 and M57 motorway and approximately 30 minutes from the M6 motorway using the same route. On days which attract higher numbers of visitors such as special events, these arterial approaches, which act as key gateways into Southport, experience queuing and delays.
- 3.14 The population living within an hour's drive time of Southport is around 2.24 million (930,000 households). This includes the population urban centres of Liverpool and Merseyside, Wigan, Preston and Warrington.
- 3.15 The population living within a two hour drive time catchment is around 7.6 million (3.18m households). This incorporates all of Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire as well as parts of Staffordshire, North Wales, West Yorkshire and Cumbria.
- 3.16 Sefton Council has undertaken some traffic modelling with a view to progressing further studies relating to options for improving access by road to Southport from the east.
- 3.17 Merseyrail run fast and frequent services between Liverpool South Parkway (for Liverpool John Lennon Airport), Liverpool City Centre and Southport. Arriva operates the Manchester to Southport service. The railway station operated by Merseyrail acts as an important anchor in drawing footfall through the primary shopping areas of Chapel Street, Lord Street and the market area. Southport Pleasureland Theme Park and the rest of the facilities in the Marine Park area are a reasonable walking distance (approximately 10 minutes walk) from the railway station.
- 3.18 Aspirations to improve the Manchester to Southport service form part of a 30 year Long Term Rail Strategy. This represents a firm commitment by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Sefton Council and Merseytravel, to fashion improvements to the sub-regional and regional rail networks including Southport where a business case can be made. The framework supports improvements to the rail service in the form of shortened journey times, frequency of services, improvements to rolling stock, and station improvements.
- 3.19 Improvements to the station environment are supported. This may be achieved by bringing key stakeholders with operational responsibilities together in pursuing an improved visitor and commuter experience at Southport Station.



Regional Context Plan

### Pedestrians

- 3.20 The Chapel Street area has been pedestrianised; it links London Street to the north and Eastbank Street to the south. Pedestrian linkage between the train station, Chapel Street, Eastbank Street, London Street and Lord Street is of good standard with wide footways and signal crossings on Lord Street.
- 3.21 The historic high street of Lord Street also accommodates significant traffic flows which limits pedestrian movement to two main crossing points, detracting from the free flow of people from Chapel Street (the 'day to day' shopping town centre) and Lord Street (the 'leisure shopping destination'). Lord Street does have broad footpaths which enhances pedestrian movement along each side of the street.

### Cycling

- 3.22 Opportunities to improve routes for cyclists in and around Southport town centre are identified through the Framework. These are mainly along east-west routes through the town from the Tulketh Street area right the way through Lord Street, into the Marine Park area and on to the sea wall.
- 3.23 There is a good level of provision in the Marina and Promenade areas where off-street, traffic free routes are provided. New routes around Marine Lake would give further reasons for cyclists to visit the area.
- 3.24 Cycle hire is available at both the railway station and the Eco Visitor Centre.

### Bus Network

- 3.25 Southport has an excellent bus network that presently provides very good links to almost all parts of Southport, as well as good inter-urban links to Preston, Chorley, Wigan, Liverpool and Leyland. A bus interchange operates on Lord Street.

### Car Parking

- 3.26 Parking and accessibility improvements are suggested later in this Framework document. On a day to day basis Southport is reasonably well provided for in terms of the amount of parking. However on street parking in the prime shopping areas is limited. Some larger car parks are either not ideally located or are not of the best quality. Approach signage for car parking is based on steering the visitor towards the Park and Ride, but does not bring any clarity to the occasional visitor who may wish to access parking nearer the town centre.
- 3.27 Parking does come under pressure on sunny days in the summer particularly at weekends. Park and ride areas, the beach, and open areas at Marine Park are used to accommodate parking for key events, notably the Air Show.

### Natural Environment

- 3.28 Southport's town centre located on the Ribble estuary is within easy reach of a natural coastal habitat of European and international significance, which affords an important part of the broader Southport offer. The beach is a significant asset and promotion of the natural coast is crucial to maintaining Southport's varied 'offer'.

- 3.29 Southport's development through the years has been closely linked to the changing coastline. The 'boulevard' design of Lord Street evolved because the early landscape influenced development of the town with the first houses being built on the higher, drier land each side of a seasonally flooded dune slack. The expansion of the town's seaward edge is due to both man's intervention and the natural process of accretion. Engineering interventions continued at various stages until as recently as 1976 (section south to Weld Road) and all the 'resort zone' coast defences were consolidated by the construction of the new seawall along this line in the late 1990's.
- 3.30 Southport beach is going through natural change and the beach height is increasing, causing vegetation to colonise. This is due largely to the town's location on the Ribble Estuary at the historical overlap between saltmarsh and sand dunes. Whether this very significant challenge and change to perception and image of Southport is acceptable needs to be positively and proactively addressed. This natural change could be embraced and capitalised on to create a natural coast, with opportunities to create natural wildlife habitat and related visitor attractions. However this would change the role and character of the beachfront permanently and risk losing the seaside image of the town and damaging the value of the visitor economy. The commercial impact of the changing coastline if no options are available to manage the loss of a sandy beachfront should therefore be carefully considered.

### Planning Policy Context

- 3.31 The Framework aligns with the emerging Local Plan policies, specifically the Central Area and Seafront Area policies. These policies support regeneration and economic growth in respect to the future of retail and leisure sectors and in recognising that more residential accommodation can help sustain the centre.
- 3.32 The Local Plan promotes Southport as both the main retail and tourist centre in the Borough and as England's 'Classic Resort'. Strengthening the retail offer of Lord Street and introducing new residential development to the area would help to reinvigorate the area by providing an increased, diverse demographic and footfall to the area.
- 3.33 The Southport Seafront area of the town (beachfront and promenade for the purpose of this Framework document) is very much about an improved visitor economy and by achieving this, proposals for leisure, hotels, conference and events facilities, and new and improved visitor attractions are supported by local planning policy. Given the historic assets in Southport, the whole of Lord Street and the Promenade which includes Southport's pier are designated as Conservation Areas.



### Southport Business Improvement District (BID)

- 3.34 A 'Yes' vote was given to the BID in 2014. The BID represents over 900 businesses within Southport. A manifesto has been prepared by the BID with the aim of bringing in more events, shoppers, visitors and investment into the town.
- 3.35 The BID board has been fully engaged throughout the process of preparing this document. This Framework acts to inform and support the aspirations and objectives of the Southport BID that are set out in the BID Action Plan and manifesto covering the next 5 years.

### Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Local Economic Partnership

- 3.36 The Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy 2016 sets a out a number of growth sectors. Key for Southport is the visitor economy where the objective is to create a 'thriving and vibrant destination for business and leisure visitors' but also in terms of Low Carbon Energy, Digital and Creative and Financial & Professional Services. The Growth Strategy confirms that Liverpool City Region's Cultural and Tourism offer is the strongest outside of London. Whilst Liverpool is the 'main attack brand' this is supported by Southport – England's classic resort and England's Golf Coast.

- 3.37 The Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Board highlights Southport as both a nationally and internationally recognised destination. The LEP Strategy and Destination Management Plan (November 2014) sets out an Action Plan for jobs and growth in the region based around the visitor economy. Southport is very much integral to this action plan and, as part of the vision the seaside town will build on its reputation as England's Classic Resort and as a successful national conference destination. Southport's golfing offer is also significant in attracting high spending staying visitors to Southport.

- 3.38 One of the specific aims of this Framework is to attract investment to improve the quality and range of hotels, restaurants, attractions, conference facilities, exhibition and cultural venues and major events. This includes strengthening Southport's position as a national conference centre able to host major corporate, public and association events through the on-going implementation of the Southport conference plan.

- 3.39 The LEP wants to develop Southport as a major destination brand in the region and identifies areas in Southport where planned capital investments are aimed. The particular areas which very much fit in with the proposals in this document include:

- Restoration of Lord Street as a prime location for retail and leisure.
- Southport Golf Links and Fairways Park and Ride.
- Comprehensive development of the Marine Park site to provide a regional visitor attraction.

- 3.40 In raising the profile of Southport the action plan of the Major Event Group Partners will continue to develop fresh events and bid to host national and international events that could take place in the coming years.



# 4. Southport: Existing Character

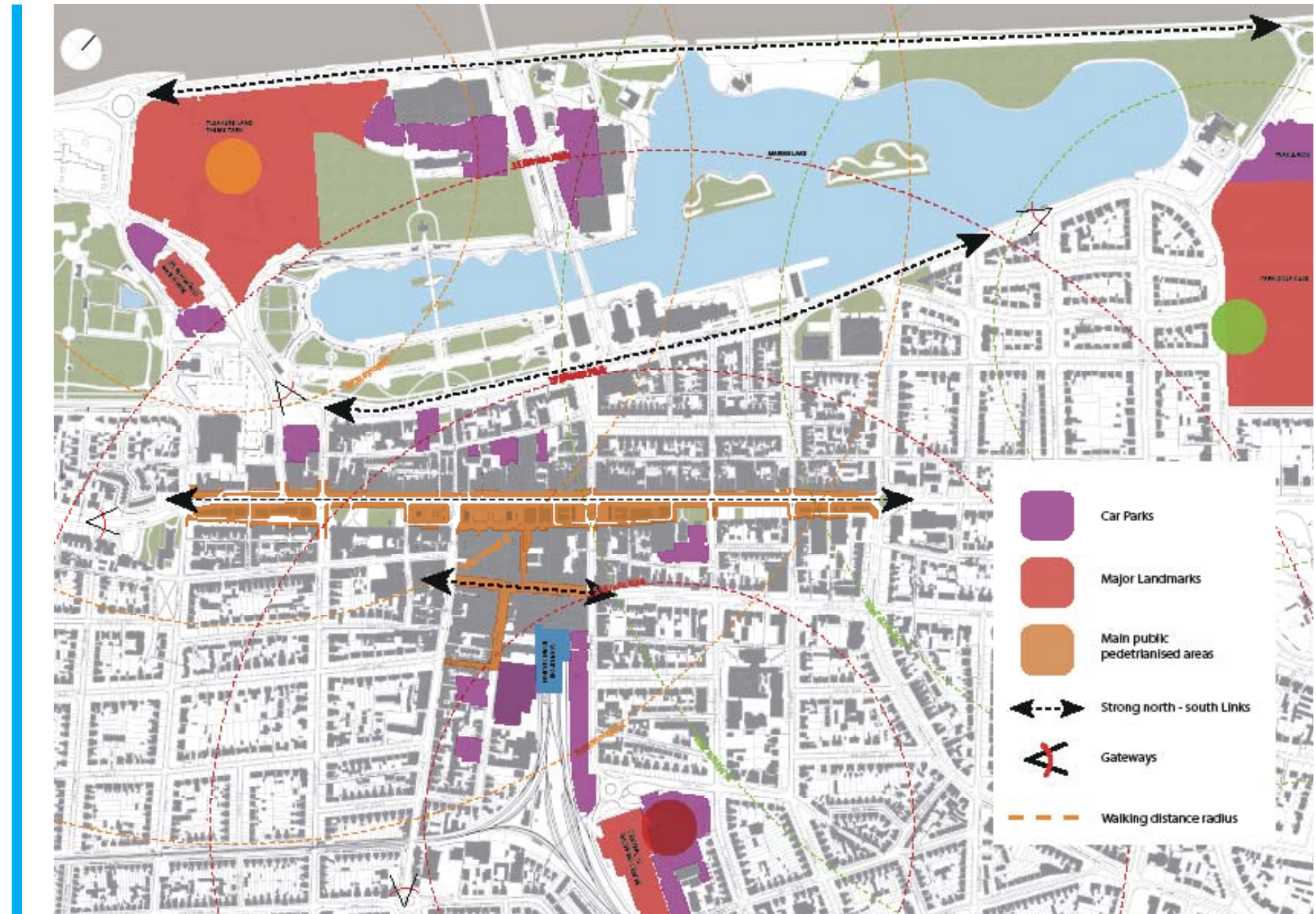
4.1 This section of the Framework document considers the key elements of the townscape and spatial character of Southport as a basis for establishing the principal opportunities for developing a coherent spatial framework for the town.

## Overview

4.2 Southport is characterised by its role as a major seaside town in the north west of England and in the context of Lord Street, its historic high street. This unique iconic feature is accompanied by a network of distinctive shopping arcades and the more modern retail areas of Chapel Street which accommodates a number of national multiples occupying larger format stores (including Boots and Marks & Spencer). These assets make Southport a prime shopping destination for the north of Sefton and the wider area.

4.3 North-south links characterise the predominant vehicular and pedestrian movements along the linear routes of Lord Street and the Promenade across the central area of Southport.

4.4 North-south routes are clearly defined showing vehicular and pedestrian movement is mainly along Lord Street, Chapel Street, the Promenade and Marine Drive.



North-south routes



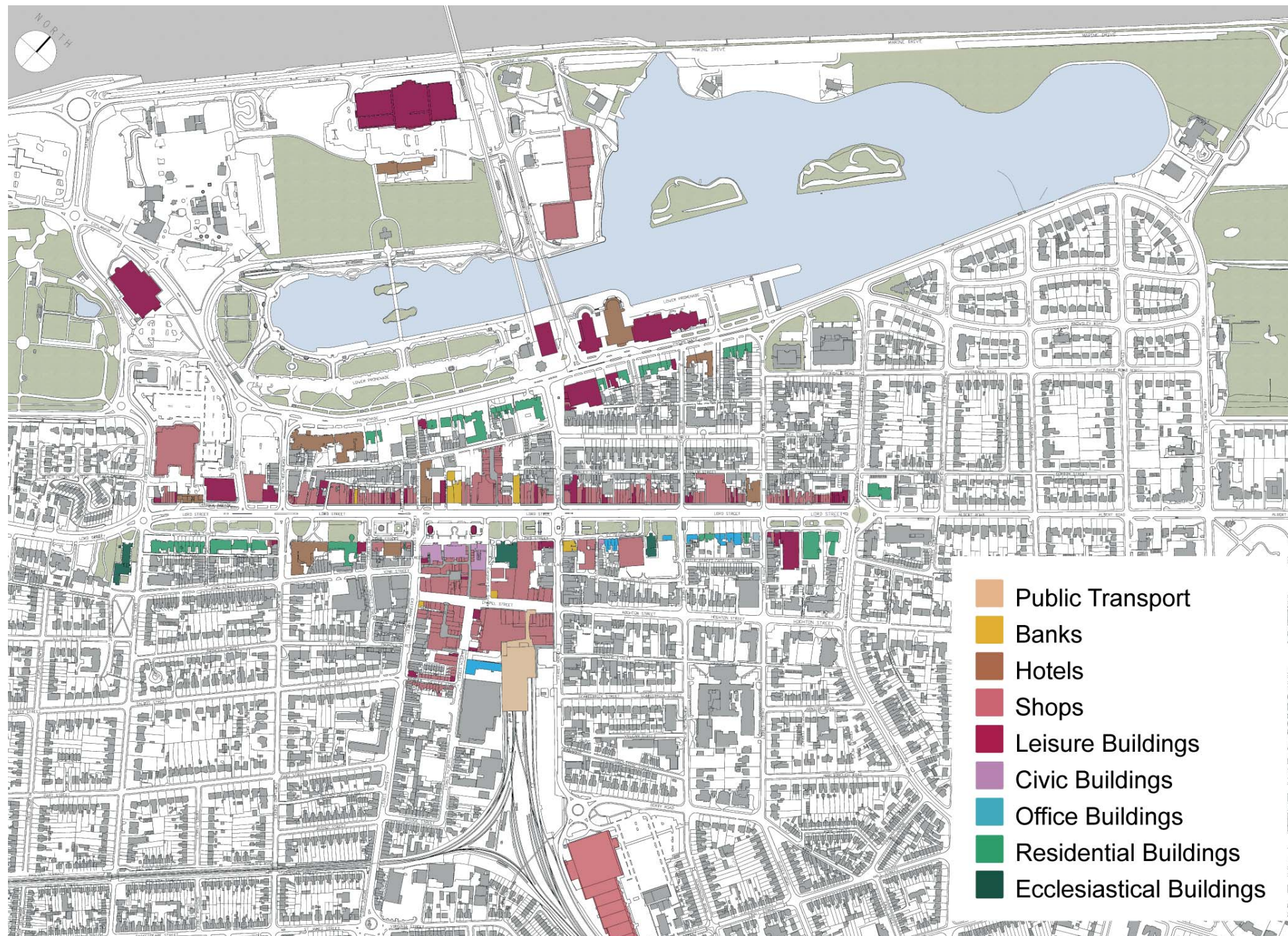
- 4.5 East-west routes are not as clearly defined. Better connectivity on these routes through public realm improvements is considered as part of this framework.
- 4.6 Distinct areas have been identified with their own unique character and qualities. These are:
  - The Beachfront and Promenade;
  - Historic High Street of Lord Street;
  - Modern High Street of Chapel Street and out of centre retail; and
  - Residential areas predominantly between Lord Street and the Promenade.
- 4.7 The Beachfront and Promenade provide a premier visitor destination, comprising a number of attractions (Southport Pleasureland, Splashworld, the Marine Lake and Kings Gardens, the open spaces of Princes Park, Victoria Park, the Ramada Plaza and Southport Theatre and Convention Centre). The arterial routes of the Promenade and Marine Drive form a ring road around this area and the adjacent Ocean Plaza.
- 4.8 The retail core of the town comprises the historic Lord Street. The seaward side is characterised by its tree-lined, broad paved, canopied boulevard of independent shops, hotels, coffee shops and restaurants occupying buildings of varying architectural appearance. The opposite landward side of Lord Street, in contrast is occupied by large civic-type historical buildings edged with scenic gardens and public space. This includes the Town Hall and the extensively refurbished Atkinson. This side of Lord Street is mainly in commercial use with a few retail units

- and a number of residential sections interspersed throughout.
- 4.9 Chapel Street is a section of Southport's primary retail core. It is more modern in appearance and contains a number of high street brands and national retailers with Southport Market on the adjacent King Street. Chapel Street is fully pedestrianised and is the gateway into the town for many rail users. A number of indoor shopping arcades including Marble Place, Wayfarers Arcade and Cambridge Arcade are intertwined between the two retail areas of Chapel Street and Lord Street providing key east-west linkages through the retail core.
- 4.10 Central 12 Shopping Park, located to the south east of the traditional shopping core, is anchored by an Asda store alongside a number of other national stores, which although 'out of centre' in nature, is within the existing town centre boundary.
- 4.11 The largest food store in the town centre is Morrisons on Duke Street. Sainsburys on Lord Street, Lidl on Virginia Street and Iceland on King Street make up the majority of remaining convenience offer in Southport. The town centre Market Hall opens six days a week and accommodates a variety of independent retailers.



East-west routes





Land use plan

- 4.12 The Beachfront and Promenade comprise the majority of Southport's key visitor and largely outdoor leisure attractions.
- 4.13 Although Southport has a strong professional and financial presence, there is no identifiable office zone perhaps with the exception of Houghton Street. There are some office buildings on the southern side of Lord Street and in the streets off Lord Street such as Gordon House on Leicester Street.
- 4.14 Residential properties are interspersed with commercial uses in the centre area with particular concentrations between Lord Street and Promenade. Many of these have been converted from guest houses and B&Bs.

#### Land Ownership

- 4.15 The Council owns land and property in Southport and two significant development opportunities are Marine Park and Southport Golf Links and Fairways Park and Ride site. The Council owns the surface level car park which forms part of the Tulketh Street development opportunity and Victoria Baths. The remaining development opportunities are in private ownership. Lord Street buildings are in multiple ownerships.



## Conservation and Listed Buildings

- 4.16 There are two Conservation Areas that recognise the historic and architectural interest of buildings and the environment in the Southport Central Area; these are Promenade (which includes the pier) and Lord Street Conservation Areas. Lord Street was one of the earliest to be designated as a Conservation Area in 1973. Lord Street is one of Sefton's key assets and many of the buildings within it are listed as being of national importance.
- 4.17 The historic Victorian canopies of Lord Street are an important iconic heritage asset in Southport but some are in a poor state of repair. Improvements to these canopies would contribute to a visually vibrant streetscape for visitors to the area and more generally support investor confidence.
- 4.18 The Seafront area also contains important heritage and environmental assets. Much of the Seafront is within the Promenade Conservation Area and contains a number of listed buildings and registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.
- 4.19 Lord Street and the Promenade Conservation Area Appraisals have previously been carried out by Sefton Council in 2005 and 2008 respectively, but updated versions are currently being prepared including a boundary review. These are expected to be adopted in 2016. Following this Management Plans will be prepared.
- 4.20 Both Conservation Areas were identified as being at risk by the Council and were published on Historic England's national register in 2014. This is largely due to vacancies within buildings, lack of

maintenance, (particularly with the canopies) condition of the public realm and a loss of historic detail. It is recognised through this Framework that Southport's built heritage is important to the economic wellbeing, tourism function and branding of the town.

## Public Realm and Key views

- 4.21 Central Southport around Lord Street and the Promenade Conservation Areas has previously undergone a number of major regeneration projects. A Townscape Heritage Initiative provided a grants programme for business premises in 2008, Kings Gardens restoration was completed in 2014 and refurbishment of the Atkinson and Southport Market is complete. Previous public realm schemes have included Chapel Street, Nevill Street (partial), and improvements to the south side of Lord Street.
- 4.22 Consideration of key views and vistas in the Southport Central Area is important in ensuring the quality and attractiveness of the area is enhanced. Identifying key views is also a useful exercise in assessing the context within which proposals for key development sites are identified, particularly in terms of scale, height massing and design.
- 4.23 Key views that need to be protected include:
- Lord Street (north-south)
  - Promenade (north-south)
  - Scarisbrick Avenue (east-west)
  - Chapel Street (north-south)
  - London Street – Lord Street (Junction) - Nevill Street - Promenade (east-west)

- 4.24 Any proposals that are developed should seek to protect and reinforce these views.

## Summary

- The spatial element of this Framework is aimed at linking together assets more effectively by improving the legibility and accessibility through public realm schemes and other town centre initiatives such as a car parking, signage and strengthening gateways into Southport.
- The theme of adding to Southport's depth and diversity has been outlined in this document. For example; improving the profile for food and drink, providing additional quality hotel accommodation, discovering opportunities for creative industries in association with Southport College, enhancing visitor attractions and encouragement to the housing market will all contribute to Southport becoming somewhere people want to live, work, visit and spend time.



# 5. Spatial Framework

- 5.1 The Framework continues the theme of Southport as England's Classic Resort, with an emphasis on achieving a 'quality' experience in terms of the retail, cultural, leisure and a diverse events offer.
- 5.2 The approach taken is one of building on the undoubted assets that the town has and the objective to 'fill in the gaps' both in the offer and spatially, taking account of the scale of the beachfront and legibility issues. This will include enhancing Southport's profile and connectivity between assets and growing a more diverse offer in order to attract a broader demographic of visitors, including young adults and families, alongside the regular visits by the resident population.
- 5.3 The Spatial Framework outlines complementary initiatives that can help strengthen existing assets and the visitor offer.

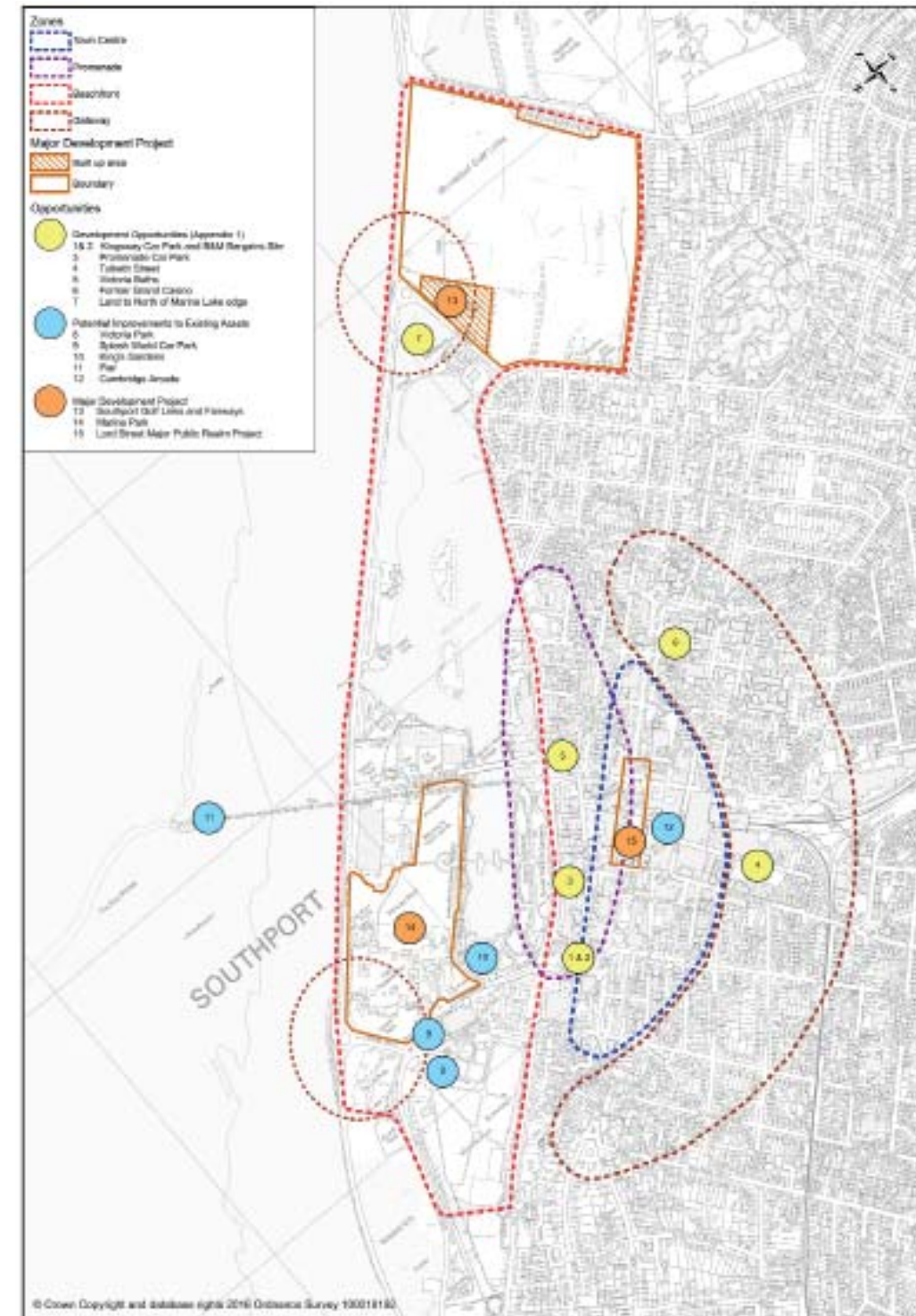
## Spatial Framework

- 5.4 This works on three levels:
  - **Zones:** This helps to provide a basis for describing function and linkages within the town and reference future priorities to help with decision making as well as the approach to the public realm, signage and car parking management. The four Zones are 'Gateways', 'Town Centre Core', 'Promenade' and 'Beachfront'.
  - **Development Opportunities:** A number of development opportunities are set out in Appendix 1. In addition three major projects Marine Park, Southport Golf Links/Fairways site and Lord Street Public Realm are described in the main body of this document. Collectively they contribute

to the role of the development zones (see Spatial Framework diagram).

- **Town Centre Management:** This is a broad heading which is intended to encompass other initiatives outside of development projects such as events, signage, car parking management and so on. Further examples of expanding the leisure 'offer' can be found in Appendix 2.

- 5.5 The remainder of the Development Framework considers each of these elements in turn.



Spatial Framework



5.6 The Spatial Framework diagram includes the following Zones:

- **Gateways** – defined by Eastbank Street, Tulketh Street, Southport Railway Station to the east, with principal gateways also north and south of Lord Street and the Coastal Road. Improvements to the overall ‘welcome’ such as quality of the environment, signage and car parking is an important focus for attention, as the gateways offer the first impression of Southport to visitors.
- **Town Centre Core** – centred on Chapel Street, Central 12 and Lord Street provide for the day to day retail and service needs of Southport. Improved links into Lord Street offer a strong leisure, retail and visitor experience. The retail circuit between Chapel Street and Lord Street should be strengthened.
- **Promenade** – The Promenade area is quintessentially Southport – capable of providing the more genteel element of the classic resort experience: restaurants and cafés, hotels, retail, points of interest, places to dwell and to undertake more gentle pursuits. Again Lord Street is the front door to this zone, and the Promenade links the retail core with the Beachfront, whilst Nevill Street and of course the Pier provide key east-west linking elements. The emphasis here again is the rejuvenation of Lord Street; linkages and movement, repairs to the urban form through the redevelopment of key frontage sites and the rediscovery of key assets, including Kings Gardens. Critically there will be a strong relationship between the retail core and Promenade focussed around Lord Street and the interconnecting streets such as Scarisbrick Avenue and Nevill Street.

- **Beachfront** – Beachfront offers the more active part of the Classic Resort experience and is the gateway for many new visitors entering the town from the coastal road. This large, expansive area is presented as a single, coherent beachfront leisure environment with a wealth of leisure and recreation facilities including Pleasureland, Marine Park, Marine Lake, Southport Pier, Victoria Park, Kings Gardens, Fairways (and golf course), and of course the beach.

5.7 Within this Spatial Framework (identified on the Spatial Framework Diagram) a number of development opportunities and town centre initiatives have been considered in respect to future investment.

### Development Opportunities

5.8 Several development opportunities in Southport exist which could make a contribution to the economic growth of the centre. They represent a mix of development uses and would, if brought forward, support footfall generation in the heart of the town and could incorporate improvements to off street parking. These have been considered in consultation with Sefton Council and private land and property owners. Deliverability, viability and their contribution towards the overall vision and objectives of the Framework have been considered. These are detailed in Appendix 1 and included in the Spatial Framework Diagram. The sites include:

- Tulketh Street surface car parks
- Kingsway Car Park and B & M Bargains Site, Lord Street
- Promenade Car Park
- Former Grand Casino, Lord Street

- Victoria Baths, Promenade
- Land north of the Marine Lake edge

### Southport Beachfront and Promenade

5.9 The Beachfront and Promenade together comprise key visitor and largely outdoor leisure assets. There is the beach itself, Southport Pleasureland, Kings Gardens and Marine Lake, Victoria Park, Splashworld, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Southport Theatre and Convention Centre and the Pier. The scope for further improvement to a number of these existing assets is suggested (see Spatial Framework diagram).

5.10 Importantly the Beachfront zone includes two Council owned sites; Marine Park and the Southport Golf Links/Fairways site, representing major development opportunities.

### Town Centre Core and Management Initiatives

5.11 This broad term comprises a major public realm proposal in the central area of Lord Street and ‘town centre management’ activities including:

- Gateways, signage and car parking
- A public realm strategy
- An events strategy
- Southport Market
- Creative Industries
- Visitor Accommodation



Exemplar images

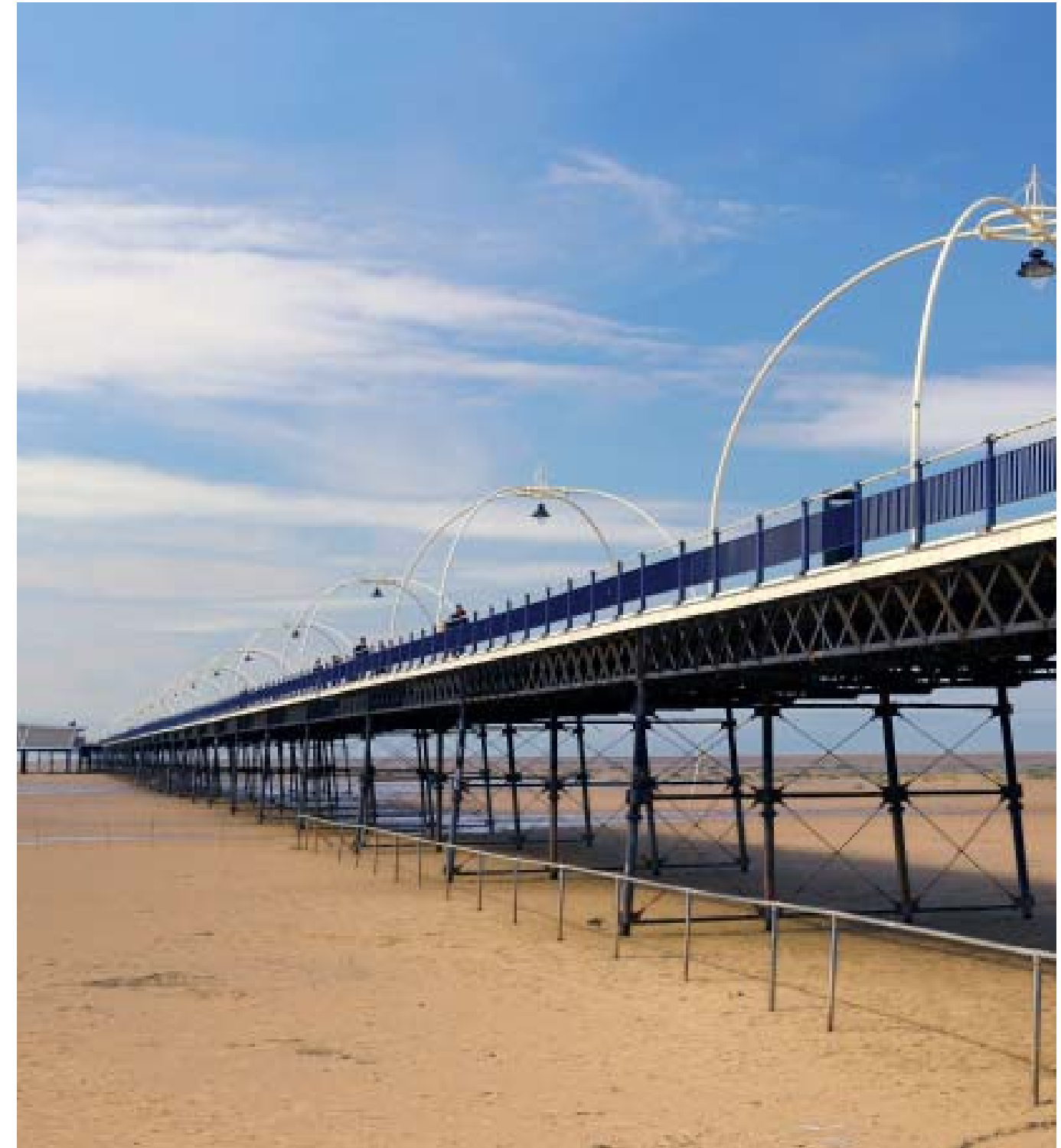
# 6. Southport's Beachfront and Promenade

- 6.1 Across the Beachfront and Promenade zones improvements to key visitor infrastructure such as family focused accommodation, events management plan, consistent signage, access linkages and parking will create a coherent and appealing seafront for visitors and residents to enjoy.
- 6.2 Although not strictly part of the Marine Park development site, the adjacent Kings Gardens, Marine Lake and the Pier are also considered to be part of an extended Marine Park offer within the Beachfront and Promenade zones. Marine Lake provides powerboat, pedalo and rowing boat hire plus a paddle steamer during the summer season and is used by sailing clubs.
- 6.3 The Pier in its current form delivers a limited seasonal visitor experience. An enhanced retail and leisure offer and improved overall visitor experience, such as green tourism during winter months and remodelling the end pavilion, would extend the seasonality of this asset and footfall generally within the beachfront.
- 6.4 Should the southerly edge of Kings Gardens including the old pumping station and bowling greens become available there is the potential for an enhanced or new leisure offer to take full advantage of the lakeside setting.
- 6.5 To the rear of Splashworld the car park site has potential if it becomes surplus to requirements for alternative future development.
- 6.6 Victoria Park is used primarily for events which include the Southport Flower Show, British Musical Fireworks Championships,

the Southport Food Festival and the RAF Woodvale Rally. The Trust which operates the site has indicated that there is the possibility to develop the corner of the park directly adjacent to Marine Park for suitable uses. The development of family accommodation such as holiday chalets would tie into other developments in this area.

## Marine Park

- 6.7 The Marine Park site currently comprises:
  - The Pleasureland theme park which is the 'anchor' leisure operator on the site;
  - Miniature lakeside railway;
  - Princes Park public gardens with a small pitch and putt facility;
  - A number of small seasonal attractions and facilities such as a go-kart track and ice cream stalls;
  - The lifeboat house (which is not normally open to the public).
- 6.8 The vision for the future of the Marine Park site is to pursue an anchor leisure attraction of regional significance that will attract families and add to the critical mass of Southport's Visitor offer. The likely way of achieving this is to retain a theme park attraction. It's anticipated that the business case for significant theme park (amusement/fairground) investment will need to be tested. Additionally there is an expectation for multifunctional all year round entertainment.







Marine Park illustrative proposals

### Southport Golf Links and Fairways Park and Ride (Major Development Project)

- 6.9 Southport Golf Links is a high quality and popular 18-hole municipal golf course to the north of the town centre. Adjoining the Council owned golf course to the south is the 2.5 ha Council-owned former Fairways Park and Ride site. Given its close proximity to the adjoining golf course, adding to the existing golfing offer through high quality visitor accommodation (including hotel and self-catering accommodation), associated parking and other complementary leisure facilities to support the existing golf course is an obvious opportunity. Land in private ownership around the Marine Lake edge may also provide scope for alternative visitor accommodation in the form of glamping or other similar uses.



Fairways illustrative proposals



### Attractions and adding to the leisure offer

- 6.10 The visitor attractions sector in the UK is large and fragmented. There are all manner of attractions encompassing museums, art galleries, heritage attractions, historic properties, theme parks, zoos, wildlife attractions, science centres, gardens, steam railways, cathedrals and more. Some attractions receive millions of visitors annually whilst some receive hundreds. Some attractions have free admission whilst some charge for admission. Some attractions receive public subsidy whilst others rely entirely on earned income. Some attractions are run for profit whilst some are not. This disparity of scale, ownership, operation and finance means that there is no single picture for the future potential of the sector.
- 6.11 Unsurprisingly in the current economic climate there is very little investment in new attractions which require public funding, such as museums, science centres and galleries. Most development in these areas is being funded by the Heritage Lottery fund and is supporting existing facilities.

### Amusement Park and Leisure Offer

- 6.12 Similarly, there is little new development in the UK in major commercial attractions such as theme parks and aquaria, although existing sites, particularly the bigger ones with over 500,000 visitors annually will have an investment plan which includes regular small scale investment and periodic major investment. However the current Pleasureland operator, has communicated an ambition to provide significant investment

in the development of the theme park (fairground) offer.

- 6.13 There are many examples of theme parks which utilise water and several case studies are outlined along with other commercially based attractions in Appendix 2 of this document.
- 6.14 The greatest area of growth is in smaller scale commercial activity based attractions such as adventure golf, permanent or temporary zip wires, freestanding high ropes courses and freestyle trampolining. Skate parks are also worth considering. New development is expected to be clustered around the Marine Park to create a critical mass of family entertainment.

### Visitor Accommodation

- 6.15 There is a good mix of hotel accommodation in Southport with a number of 4-star hotels which collectively have around 240 rooms (Ramada Plaza, Formby Hall and The Vincent). These relatively recent additions complement the more traditional 3-star and 2-star hotels such as the Royal Clifton, the Prince of Wales, the Scarisbrick, the Talbot and the Bold (which collectively have around 400 rooms). In addition, there is a Premier Inn and now a Travelodge within Southport which provide around 200 budget accommodation rooms. There is a further provision in guest houses and bed and breakfasts (B&B's). The B&B offer within the town is declining, as properties are converted to residential use, particularly in the Bath Street area. Driving up quality and adding to the boutique accommodation offer will improve the guest accommodation mix and will complement the independent

restaurant offer within the town. Bed occupancy is already well above the city region average for Southport's four-star hotel accommodation and further four-star accommodation is required in order to grow the visitor economy and attract the business conferencing sector.

- 6.16 A key trend in recent years has been the rapid growth of glamping (a term used and associated with what many consider as luxurious camping) ready-erected, fully-equipped tents, yurts, tipis and other unusual forms of camping and caravanning accommodation. As a new form of accommodation they have attracted significant media coverage and wherever they have opened such accommodation operations have quickly attracted strong demand.



Exemplar images

## Activities

- 6.17 At present a range of watersports are offered to visitors including the hire of pedalos, motor boats and power boats. The Lake is also used by some watersports clubs for activities including sailing and water-skiing. Opportunities to increase the range of water based activities on the Lake should also form part a longer term plan. It is unlikely that Sefton Council would be able to secure interest from major new commercial operators at the current time since there are very few looking to develop this type of activity in the UK at present. (With a few notable exceptions, most water sports activities are run on a small scale by independent operators). The business case opportunity could become more attractive however as part of the wider cluster of activity which is being proposed for Marine Park which should be explored at this time.
- 6.18 Water based rides could form the scope of future theme park investment and the use of the lake as a feature can be considered in the redevelopment of the Marine Park site. A suggestion has been made to animate the lake with lighting and lasers.

## Tidal Lagoon

- 6.19 The potential for major investment in tidal lagoons around the British Isle's is ambitious. The Liverpool City Region identified Low Carbon Energy as a growth sector, with tidal energy a noted ambition.
- 6.20 A tidal lagoon could be both a form of sustainable energy and a catalyst for regeneration within Southport, providing:
- Clean, renewable and predictable power

connected to the National Grid

- An important contribution towards national carbon emission reduction targets
- Significant employment and value creation
- Community and tourism opportunities in sports, recreation, education, arts and culture
- Conservation, restocking and biodiversity programmes
- Coastal flood protection

- 6.21 This Framework document proposes that Sefton Council explores all opportunities and engages in dialogue with the city region and BEIS in order for it to be part of the development of a future programme of schemes. The potential for and nature of a tidal lagoon will be dependent on a range of factors including marine engineering and conservation issues

## Southport Beach

- 6.22 The coast is accreting and Southport beach is going through natural change, whereby, as the beach height increases vegetation also colonises. At Southport this is predominately salt marsh and this is largely due to the town's location on the Ribble Estuary.
- 6.23 Decisions will need to be taken regarding the future of Southport beach and whether it should be part of a revised beach management plan which takes into account the beach at Ainsdale, with Ainsdale promoted to visitors for sea bathing (and coastal gateway hub) and Southport promoted as a recreational beach. At Southport there is no managed 'patrolled bathing area' in place unlike Formby and Ainsdale and bathing water is currently below the 'Excellent'

standard in respect of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013.

- 6.24 In the late 1990's, the Council made the decision to cease treatment of beach vegetation which had been taking place for a number of decades north of the pier. Although the top of the beach is changing, an area of sandy foreshore is still available for beach recreation and at the time of writing, the main beach is largely unaffected. However, under certain weather and tidal conditions the top of the beach can be affected by deposition of mud as was experienced prior to the 2014 and 2015 Airshows and in 2016 the level of mud was significant. The top of the beach is used for parking and during airshows customer viewing, catering and attractions. Light aircraft also uses a section of the beach to land and this is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. Vegetation growth has also severely reduced beach parking options for the Airshow and continues to reduce the flying display line that in turn is having a detrimental impact on the event. The increased colonisation of vegetation and mud deposition is expected to increase, which will bring with it economic consequences for this major event in the future.
- 6.25 From this perspective, maintenance of the beach is essential in order to maintain a section of it as a sandy beach. Potential solutions to actively manage or retain a proportion of sandy beach, may lead to a mixture of habitats, including sand dunes. It is important to note that the beach vegetation is afforded protection as an important habitat and any proposals would have to be considered under the Habitat Regulations 2010 (as amended). Despite the challenges associated with holding events, there is an

opportunity to introduce something different to the beach that will attract visitors and give something unique to Southport that people will go home and tell their friends, family and colleagues about. Appendix 2 illustrates several case studies; a giant deckchair on Bournemouth beach, sculpture trails in Barcelona and even closer to Southport, the Anthony Gormley statues at Crosby.

## The Wider Natural Coast

- 6.26 Sefton's natural coast should be seen as an important part of the broader Southport offer and complement the traditional family seaside provision as well as having the potential to attract visitors in the low season. There is scope to promote the natural coast ecology offer within Southport itself and along the Sefton coast. Opportunities to increase destination potential at Marshside through an RSPB visitor centre on or near the former sandwinning plant may be an option. Alternatively, a green visitor offer could be considered closer to the town, either on or near the pier.



## Events

6.27 The objective should be to protect and develop Southport's successful events programme and to develop a number of sustainable new events which appeal to new markets. Appendix 2 includes a number of case studies relevant to both the Beachfront and Town Centre environment.

### Summary

- Develop a Beach Management Plan that supports Southport's aspirations and complements the wider coastline.
- Develop the natural and green tourism offer within the town including the low season offer.
- Expansion of the successful events programme to attract a new and different market segment to the town.
- Explore opportunities and produce a roadmap for the development of the Marine Park and Fairways sites, including provision of a theme/amusement park.
- Explore opportunities to increase the provision of high quality family and business tourism accommodation. Encouraging a wide range of provision including four-star hotels, boutique B&B's and 'glamping'.



# 7. Southport Town Centre Core

## Lord Street – Public Realm, Heritage and Movement

- 7.1 Lord Street has traditionally been one of the most renowned shopping streets of North West England but like many other town centres has experienced lower levels of footfall, increasing numbers of vacant units, competition from large out of centre retail destinations and the growth in online shopping.
- 7.2 Along with the beachfront area, Lord Street is one of Southport's unique selling points - something that sets Southport apart from other town centres and seaside towns. Lord Street must therefore exploit this uniqueness in any proposals for the street.
- 7.3 The Framework sets out a high level plan for Lord Street and the town centre. The focus is on a key section of Lord Street that is likely to include Eastbank Street and Scarisbrick Avenue as well as Market Street to integrate Southport Market into the retail core more effectively, and then up to London Square and Nevill Street. The objective is to draw people into the town centre, through a quality environment with public spaces for events, where people can spend time for leisure, businesses are encouraged to embrace digital technologies for the high street, opportunities for a diverse range of uses exist and where entrepreneurs are encouraged in new start-ups, potentially linked to Southport College.

## Heritage

- 7.4 Proposals for Lord Street should be sensitive to its conservation area designation and to the rich heritage that this popular visitor destination is recognised for. Following the Council's decision to put Lord Street and Promenade conservation areas on Heritage England's (HE) At Risk Register (HAR), partnership working between the Council and HE could prove fundamental in supporting key projects identified for Lord Street; retaining the historic fabric of the area and with the aim of improving the condition of the two conservation areas of Lord Street and Promenade, which removes them from the HAR register.
- 7.5 As part of the events strategy, a separate heritage-based programme could include a town centre trail to promote the architecture and history of the town centre and Lord Street in particular which could possibly tie in with the Open golf tournament at Birkdale in 2017.
- 7.6 It is recommended that the Council, with the backing of Heritage England, propose and support a Heritage Partnership Agreement, perhaps in conjunction with a Local Development Order, to remove obstacles in order to facilitate the change of use of upper floors along Lord Street for example to residential.
- 7.7 This intervention should also be applied to the ground floor units themselves where rationalising the floor plates of units would help ensure that vacant premises appeal to a wider range of retailers by offering flexibility in these units. This will need to be aligned with a retail review looking at gaps in provision, void management and how

retail complements the overall offer of the town. Enforcement action on listed building owners in Lord Street may be necessary in order for improvements to be made to frontages.

- 7.8 The listed canopies which adorn the majority of buildings on Lord Street are in a variable condition. Therefore a management agreement is necessary and the appointment of a contractor to manage the cleaning and maintenance of these canopies jointly so that they are brought up to a standard which reflects the quality of this historic area.

## Public Realm Strategy

- 7.19 Lord Street has always been, and must continue to be, Southport's jewel in its crown. Efforts must be made to improve the public realm on Lord Street to underline its role as a focal point for events and other activities.
- 7.10 Between London Street/Nevill Street and Eastbank Street/Scarisbrick Avenue a concentrated plan is proposed to establish a 'cultural heart' for Lord Street. The emphasis is on creating a shared civic space that will draw footfall to the area, grow events and link with Southport Market in expanding the 'food and drink' offer of the town centre. This space will showcase Lord Street to its full potential, raising its profile as a destination by enhancing the tourism potential and local economy of Southport. Importantly traffic movement will be maintained.

- 7.11 As part of these improvements, scheme concepts could include:

- Providing a balance between pedestrian priority and vehicular traffic to improve the pedestrian experience, and to access both sides of Lord Street.
- Delivering a place of character using high quality materials which would include substantial vegetation and ecology in order to create a unique identity.
- Using water as a key feature, responding to context and providing a culturally focussed dynamic attraction.

- 7.12 Lord Street is an important economic driver and external funding opportunities for heritage and the public realm should be investigated. This may include Heritage Lottery and LCR Growth Fund. Schemes developed should include a phased approach to revitalising Lord Street and exploring a range of ideas linked to remodelling, diversification and business support initiatives.





Lord Street illustrative proposals

## Movement

- 7.13 The town centre, in particular Lord Street, should achieve a more cohesive pedestrian layout in order to ensure optimum access and movement, whilst retaining vehicular movement through the town. Opportunities for cyclists, building on Southport's status as a 'cycle town', should be explored. The priority should be to enhance east-west movement between the retail core of Chapel Street and Lord Street and then on to the leisure area of the Promenade and Marine Park. The focus for this is the central stretch of Lord Street between Eastbank Street and London Street by way of improving movement and accessibility. Enhancing these linkages and improving movement helps to create a sense of place while still respecting and enhancing the context and character of the town's built heritage, particularly Lord Street.
- 7.14 This significant public realm proposal for Lord Street would include unifying paving material between building frontages along with associated upgrades to traffic control on pedestrian crossings between Eastbank Street and Scarisbrick Avenue and London Street and Nevill Street. These crossings aim to improve the experience of pedestrian movement across the town. Proposals should ensure that the town centre is accessible and vibrant with a balance between pedestrian priority, traffic capacity and safety. Transport stakeholders will need to be closely involved in proposals to highlight any impact on all road users.

## Streetscape

- 7.15 A strong Council commitment to street clutter reduction is necessary. Lord Street, London Street and Nevill Street (East-West through Lord Street) in particular are very cluttered which impacts on the quality of these important links through the town centre and reduces legibility and the quality of the views and vistas from one area of the town centre to the other.
- 7.16 Removing clutter will help reduce the perception of barriers and impeded vision. Examples for Lord Street include fixing street lights to buildings, reducing the size of signage and a review of the need for guardrails. Such steps will also improve the physical character and context of the streets, buildings, spaces and local landmarks such as the Monument on Lord Street.
- 7.17 Within the central area of Lord Street a redesign could be applied transforming how this space is arranged and used realising the aspirations and potential of this site into an enduring landscape that is a positive addition to the urban fabric. The objectives for the central zone should be to create a place which is:
- **Connected** – to both its physical and social context
  - **Accessible** – easy to reach, pedestrian focused and inclusive to all
  - **Legible** – intuitive and easy to understand
  - **Coherent** – with a strong, simple design aesthetic and palette of materials which unifies the space

- **Appropriate** – to the civic context and to use
- **Flexible** – non-prescriptive, allowing people the freedom to use the space in different ways
- **Robust** – physically and in terms of the design concept
- **Comfortable** – a pleasant microclimate, safe from traffic, noise or fear
- **Vibrant** – a public space with active edges which attracts visitors and is safer
- **Delightful** – with sensory interest from texture, colour and features

- 7.18 Proposals could consider different types of contemporary lighting and a high quality palette of street furniture that creates inviting pockets of intimate social space. Simple paving emphasises the direction of movement. Clear movement routes are defined with street furniture grouped to maximise movement.

## Improving dwell time

- 7.19 Improving dwell time through the centre of Southport could be achieved through the inclusion of community focussed spaces. These would include the opportunity for playable streets, outdoor markets, cafes, performance and places for visitors to simply be.
- 7.20 The public realm improvements will regenerate the town's retail core, creating a contemporary space that is a destination in its own right. The success of a place is influenced by the quality and range of seating, providing a place people want to stay therefore, supporting the surrounding retail and town centre events.

- 7.21 Contemporary signage for clear way-finding could incorporate digital technologies into the fabric of proposals. Public transport information totems could provide up to the minute, live information on bus services in the town centre.

## Lord Street Bus Issues

- 7.22 In terms of bus routing in the Central Lord Street Area, services may be split into two main types:
- **Lord Street Services:** Those travelling on Lord Street in the Central Area with an origin and destination south of Eastbank Street and north of London Street / Neville Street:
  - **Eastern Services:** Those that only travel in the Central Area of Lord Street emerging and departing Lord Street on Eastbank Street and London Street.
- 7.23 The ambitious proposals for Lord Street will need careful consideration and detailed discussions with the major transport and other key stakeholders as part of any pre-development work, including Merseytravel and the bus operators.



## Summary

- Develop a management solution for Lord Street's historic canopies.
- Develop a grand public realm project for Lord Street that is capable of delivering a quality open retail and leisure environment for visitors and residents.
- Investigate a Local Development Order that will reduce the number of constraints on the upper floors of buildings to encourage residential and office uses above. In conjunction with exploring opportunities to increase the number of people living within the town.
- This Local Development Order will reduce the constraints on flexibility of ground floor units that could potentially attract a wider range of occupants.
- Complete the review of Southport's Conservation Area Appraisals



Exemplar images

# 8. Town Centre Management and Initiatives

8.1 In addition to physical development opportunities, the Framework suggests a holistic approach to the integration and management of the town centre and in particular Lord Street, by introducing a number of complementary initiatives aimed at raising the profile of Southport and providing a quality experience that encourages visitors, communities, business and key stakeholders to keep coming back.

## Car Parking and a Signage

8.2 On a day to day basis Southport is reasonably well provided for in terms of the quantity of parking. However on-street parking in the prime shopping areas is limited and the quality of car parking provision throughout the town and the associated signage for visitors could be improved.

## Car Parking

8.3 The team has consulted the BID on parking issues in Southport and there is concern from some BID members on a lack of parking availability in Southport. Lord Street has been identified by the BID as an area particularly sensitive to this issue. There is a view that parking restrictions on length of stay in the Lord Street area deter shoppers.

8.4 New parking meters have recently been installed in the Lord Street area by Sefton Council and once the meters have been established for a period of time more information will be available on parking patterns in the town centre. Sefton Council has agreed to analyse the data captured in relation to stay duration and number of vehicles once it is available with a view to

informing and reviewing parking restrictions that will potentially extend short stay times for on-street parking Lord Street area.

## Signage

8.5 The question of whether Southport has enough car parking spaces to meet demand in the town centre is not the issue. Rather the challenge is the variable quality of the existing provision and how residents and specifically visitors to Southport are informed about where to access provision.

8.6 The current parking signage strategy directs visitors towards the Esplanade Park & Ride. Individual signage to other car parking facilities in the town centre exist thereafter, indicating spaces available.

8.7 The car park names displayed on some car parks do not indicate to people visiting Southport infrequently in what area car parks are located and what they should be used for e.g Long stay/short stay. For example visitors would not know that London Street, Tulketh Street and Central 12 are the main town centre car parks.

8.8 The Framework suggests a review of car park signage and the potential to group Southport town centre and out of town centre car parking facilities into three zones. It is recommended that operators and owners of private car parks in Southport are consulted on this should Sefton Council decide to proceed with the development of this initiative.

8.9 The car park zones will be given generic names that visitors to the area can clearly understand;

- **Coastal Parking** – Coastal Road Area (including Esplanade P&R)
- **Promenade Parking** – Marine Area
- **Town Centre Parking** – Lord Street and Chapel Street Area

8.10 Once visitors have been directed to the general zone, more localised car park signs would direct people to specific car parks within the zone.

8.11 The table below details the car park zone identified for the main car parks located in Southport.

Car Park Zone		Car Parks
1	Coastal Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Esplanade P&amp;R</li> <li>■ Dunes Leisure</li> <li>■ Marine Park</li> <li>■ Splash World</li> <li>■ Old Pleasure Land Site</li> <li>■ Ocean Plaza Retail</li> </ul>
2	Promenade Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Morrison's</li> <li>■ Kingsway</li> <li>■ B&amp;M</li> <li>■ Kings Gardens</li> <li>■ Floral Hall</li> </ul>
3	Town Centre Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Tulketh Street surface car park</li> <li>■ Tulketh Street Multi-storey</li> <li>■ Central 12</li> <li>■ London Street Southport Train Station</li> </ul>

8.12 The Framework suggests the remodelling and refurbishment of existing car parks to create more attractive, efficient and user friendly parking facilities. There is a requirement for a comprehensive parking review.

8.13 The approach in respect to signage can be summarised as follows:

- There is potential to categorise Southport town centre and Southport out of town centre car parks into three zones, with legible zone names.
- Provision of smaller localised car park signs within each car park zone will direct vehicles to individual car parks.



- Rationalisation of car park signs along arterial routes and in the town centre will result in clear and direct information for visitors and a reduction of street clutter.

### Events Strategy

- 8.14 Southport has an extensive and successful events programme which is key driver for day and staying visitors to the town. Sefton Council's event team organise the annual Southport Airshow, the British Musical Fireworks, a major food and drink festival and a new Southport Festival that builds on the Jazz Festival offer to include literature, poetry, and visual arts in partnership with the Atkinson and other venues. The BID organise 'Spookport' for a week over Halloween and Christmas markets and the Christmas lights switch on.
- 8.15 A number of independently organised events take place, including a Comedy Festival, and on Victoria Park, the Southport Flower Show and RAF Woodvale Rally. Unlike in many local authority areas, the Southport events programme is based on a robust and sustainable business model which is largely independent of Council funding requirements.
- 8.16 The town should protect its current events programme and the public spaces which are used to house them.
- 8.17 The town should look to build on its strength and reputation as an events destination by developing one or two major new events while looking to expand current events which will bring new visitors to the town.
- 8.18 These events will need to be financially viable through sponsorship or commercial income but may require pump prime funding initially.
- 8.19 The new events should focus on:
- Increasing the appeal of the destination to the family market.
  - Exploiting the recent major investment in the Atkinson and the proposed development of the creative and design industries sector through cultural programming.
  - Uniting the town's heritage with its contemporary offer through events which use the heritage in a contemporary way.
- 8.20 Appendix 3 outlines a number of relevant case studies. New events could include:
- A Lord Street centred 'Street Games' event combining urban activities, street performance and street art.
  - An enchanted town event which unites the town's heritage and contemporary offer through illuminations, projections, performances and music.
  - A balloon festival over Southport's beach aimed at the family market would add to the 'Air Show' theme that the town is well known for.
  - An annual beach sculpture event.

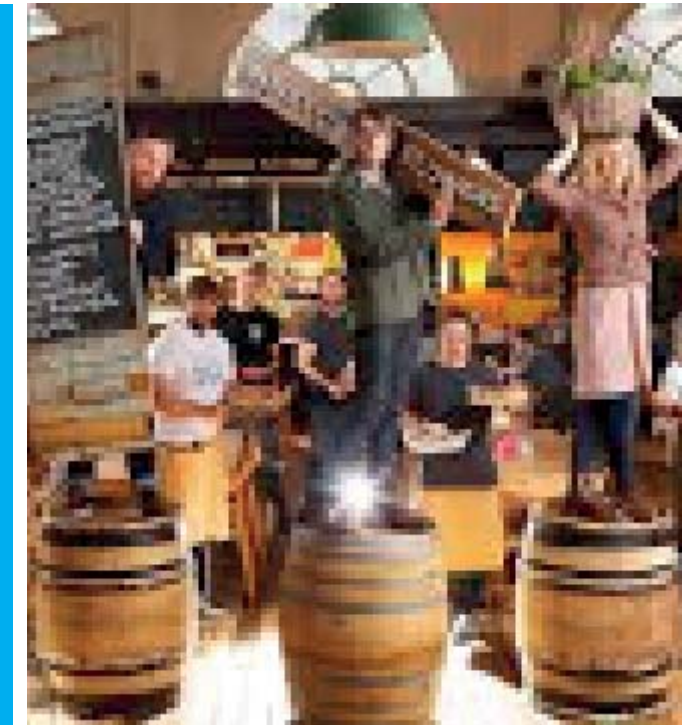


Exemplar images

## A Modern Market Hall/ Food and Drinks offer

### Food and drink

- 8.21 Locally sourced, high quality food and drink is now expected by visitors to any destination. Unlike many towns and cities (particularly those with major retail developments), Southport's restaurant scene is characterized by a largely independent offer. Whilst there are a handful of chain/branded restaurants such as Pizza Express or Frankie and Benny's, there are many more independent restaurants. Tripadvisor lists 239 restaurants in Southport.
- 8.22 Promotion of locally sourced produce is now seen by many destinations as an important part of creating local distinctiveness. Within Southport's restaurants and cafes there appears to be limited promotion of local food and drink.
- 8.23 Southport's Food and Drink Festival, which takes place over three days in May at Victoria Park, attracts around 40,000 visitors. The free event showcases the best of local produce with demonstrations, tasting sessions, food and drink stall and a children's area.
- 8.24 The town should build on the popularity of the event by encouraging restaurants and hospitality outlets to source locally and be explicit about the food which is produced in Southport. The town should consider nurturing a network of local Southport producers who develop and promote a local food brand. This could be linked to the development of the Market Hall.
- A Modern Market Hall**
- 8.25 Markets can be a major motivating factor for people to come to a town centre. The presence of a regular traditional market can add diversity to the retail offer of a town centre and can act as a catalyst for other more specialist markets to come to the area including farmers markets, artisan markets, continental markets, Christmas markets and night markets. Appendix 3 of this document includes Altrincham Market Hall as a Case Study.
- 8.26 Southport Market Hall has potential to significantly develop and diversify its offer.
- 8.27 Opportunities to host events in the market would also add to Southport's portfolio of 'event ready' facilities and should be considered within an events strategy. This could be varied and relevant to the whole community, old and young including a teenage market, student market stalls and local music festivals. Themed weekend markets covering regional food producers, vintage fashion and furniture, house & garden and contemporary craft would add to the versatility of the market.
- 8.28 Public realm improvements to King Street and Market Street will enable activities associated with the Market Hall to utilise this outdoor space for large scale outdoor markets, events and other uses associated with a revitalised market hall.



Exemplar images



## Creative and Design Industries

- 8.30 Creative and Design industries refer to a range of economic activities which are concerned with the generation or exploitation of knowledge and information; activities which are becoming an increasingly important contribution to the economic well-being and diversification of our town centres.
- 8.31 Such activities include advertising, architecture, crafts, design, film, media production, music technology, television, photography, games design and animation, publishing, museums and galleries, digital design and creation in manufacturing, and business management/enterprise. These are important sources of job creation for the UK and are key government and LEP priorities (Visitor economy, Advanced Manufacturing, Creative and Digital, Financial and Professional).
- 8.32 Many educational establishments have begun to seek opportunities for their students to build on their ideas and concepts and begin to think commercially about their products/services with the aim of improving entrepreneurial skills in a realistic work environment whilst also strengthening the range of local employment opportunities and links for progressing learners.
- 8.33 Southport Colleges proposed “Centre for Innovation in Technology, Engineering and Design (CITED)” would be built around these concepts both in terms of the colleges main site facilities, extension into the town, and the links developed with businesses and the community as laid out in this framework. A number of potential locations have been discussed. This is in addition to facilities for

which there are existing strong links with the college such as the Atkinson.

- 8.34 Discussions with the college also explored Enterprise Hubs and Fab Labs (Fabrication Laboratory).
- 8.35 It is recommended that Sefton Council, working in partnership with the Southport BID, needs to ensure that vacant and underused units within the town centre where appropriate are proactively marketed with the potential to be utilised as pop-up shops for Southport College, new and existing businesses in Southport and elsewhere, the third sector and to encourage outside investment from businesses potentially looking at relocating in Southport. For more information about this and case studies relating to Fab Lab and Enterprise hubs please see Appendix 3.

## A hive of innovation and creative start-ups to rival anything happening in Shoreditch

Southport in standard Town has traditionally had a touch of the hip and is quite about it. Head north out of the town into the river of modernity, one-off buildings, retail heritage and unique cafes. Or take off to the south and the first impression is of the predictably Asiatown Chinatown streets, Argos flatpacks and Maccy Ds coffee.

But the road to Manchester is changing fast. Thousands of small units have been commandeered by Creative Collective the dynamic local organisation who's opened a widely successful programme offering pop-up shop and office space to the area's young creative community.

The latest project, just two minutes from the tube at 159 High St, Queen's Quay, is properly ambitious. A couple of months ago the large three-story building had rain pouring through the roof, a depressing sight. Today, the ground floor is a hive of activity. The art is for sale, displayed on beautifully exposed brickwork. Fashion hangs from repurposed pallets, accessories spill from wooden crates, the aroma of espresso coffee pervades. Upstairs, desks are filled with entrepreneurs, some working on start-up projects. It's quiet, as everyone seems completely absorbed in their tasks. But there's not a moment's pause. A side room is packed with people deep in a computer coding lesson, while in a meeting room the talk is of start-ups.

The Collective have worked with sustainable design experts Build It Everything to transform the whole underused space into a hub of optimism and genuine opportunity. Their clean, open-plan layout across several floors encourages

collaboration between budding business owners, who are getting the first leg up through a mix of the old and new, affordable high street shop space. It's making this strip of rubble prove wrong and prove it's finally more interesting too. Everybody seems to be winning in fact.

But despite all the structural improvements, Collective don't have the space for long. So all eyes watch it here until October when, like all the best creative projects that begin so quietly but brightly, this ambitious pop-up will vanish from the

scene.

Art is displayed on beautifully exposed brickwork, fashion hangs from repurposed pallets, accessories spill from crates, the aroma of coffee pervades.



## Meet the stallholders...

**CLUBBING BROTHERS** is a Camden-based social enterprise that has empowered workers in climate change, and who's looking to create a creative hub. The 25-year-old owner, Mubarek, jumped at the chance.

"I've lived in Camden all my life and it's always felt so vibrant, with a healthy mix of rich and poor too," he says. "But I've seen a lot of problems here with opportunities for young people. This space doesn't have the direct link between our skills and meaningful employment."

Christina, who often turned to her own designs of clothing and salvaged furniture is strongly enthusiastic. While coming from a very different perspective,

"Along the busy mix of customers from the creative companies and from the MTV and ASOS, who always make for an interesting chat, so many high streets feel monopolised by huge big brand stores, but this is a unique and dining experience where you can buy fresh street art."

Sara, Kaku, owner of fashion accessories Parlour, also says she's thrilled to be part of the budding of new Camden High Street.

"Feedback has been really great as people are happy to have something different from the usual market going on here," she says. "Camden is really changing. We have a stall in Camden too, but people in my London are a bit too used to getting all sorts of new things. People here are genuine excited."

Newspaper article

## Digital Technologies

8.36 As well as the growth of online shopping, the application of digital technology to retailing is continuing to grow and expand. It is vital that Southport begins to take steps through the Framework and the BID Action Plan to incorporate digital technologies in the town centre experience.

8.37 There are a variety of ways of embracing digital technologies in Southport and ensuring that the town centre has the necessary infrastructure in place so that businesses can offer Wi Fi to their customers if they wish to do so. The Southport BID sets this out as a priority in its Manifesto.

8.38 In addition to WiFi, the BID manifesto considers a number of digital technologies that would ensure Southport is at the forefront of this revolution on our high streets and the businesses and retailers in the town centre are able to gain an in-depth understanding of shoppers and create a picture of who their customers are, of their existing shopping patterns and likely future needs. Lord Street also has a large number of independents who should also be encouraged to embrace such technologies. Some examples that businesses may wish to consider include:

- **Social Media** - It is almost a given that one of the first points of any digital technology strategy for a business is the use of social media. Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, Pinterest, Vine and Periscope are just a small list of social media platforms that businesses are utilising as a tool in reaching new customers.
- **'Beacons Technology'** – using Bluetooth

technology to transmit messages to customers through their smartphone informing them of offers, vouchers and information on products sold within their businesses.

- **'Cloud Tagging'** allows a customer to potentially create an online shopping list in-store. Customers are able to scan products and email themselves a shopping list which they can then make purchases from the online store. In effect, the store acts as a 'showroom' and allows shoppers the option of shopping across multiple channels. Only recently, Sainsburys has launched a 'shop-and-go' service that will allow customers to complete their entire in-store shopping trip using their mobile phone.
- **Virtual Platforms** – stores such as B&Q have introduced technology which allows customers to virtually plan their renovation project in-store and online. Items can then be transferred in-store so customers are able to buy the products needed.
- **Store Apps** - The use of the smartphone is becoming more popular than laptop and desktop uses in the home. Retailer apps allow customers to shop on the go or from wherever they are so purchase can be made 24/7.
- **Click and Collect hubs** - for both food and non-food. Research has suggested that click and collect services are likely to generate more footfall and linked purchases by shoppers using such a service.

8.39 Digital opportunities extend well beyond retail, particularly the digital and creative sectors. Southport has good Superfast broadband provision but to ensure that

businesses (not just retail) are in a position to take full advantage of digital opportunities going forward, the town should aim for Ultrafast broadband provision. A strong digital infrastructure will enable Southport to explore a range of opportunities, such as Bournemouth's digital beach.

## Summary

- Consider how both car parking and signage will improve the clarity of the area and ensure visitors are directed to the areas of Southport they wish to access without difficulty. Protect the existing events programme and build on Southport's strength and reputation as an events destination by developing one or two major new events which will bring new visitors to the town.
- Improve on Southport's 'Food and Drink' offer by encouraging businesses to introduce more locally sourced food into their businesses and promote the unique bar and restaurant offer in the town.
- Revitalise Southport Market as a place that has the flexibility to introduce opportunities for a number of uses relating to food, drink, entertainment and shopping that are attractive and thriving to a wide demographic in Southport. Improvements to the outdoor space of the market will ensure that the market and activities associated with the market can expand into this space.
- Southport must embrace 'omni-channel' shopping and digital technologies becoming more popular with town centres and the high street. This will ensure Southport is at the forefront of the digital high street and that the evolving needs of shoppers are catered for.
- Develop and promote the creative sector in partnership with Southport College and local businesses which may be in the form of an Enterprise Hub, Fab Lab and/or pop-up shops underpinned by an excellent digital infrastructure– that can support diversity in the town centre.



# 9. Making it Happen

9.1 This section of the document summarises the potential delivery path for implementation of this Framework and in particular, the key development sites and complementary town centre initiatives. It sets out the development context, broad principles and process of delivery.

9.2 It is important that all stakeholders understand how the 'Classic Resort' vision is being developed through this Strategy. The position must not be seen as old or 'retro'. Stakeholders need to be reminded of the basis for the position and its contemporary relevance.

## Town Centre Initiatives

9.3 Southport Town Centre is fortunate to have an established Business Improvement District and Southport Tourism Business Network. This gives the local business community the opportunity to have their say on where money raised from the BID levy will be spent over the coming years. Other funding opportunities to be explored include Heritage Lottery and the Liverpool City Region Growth Fund.

## Visitor Economy Section

9.4 Tourism remains a key pillar of Southport's economy. In 2015 staying visitors generated £336m into the economy, continuing the year on year increase over the last 6 years. An increased spend per visitor is due in part to inflation, but also to the increase in the number of higher quality accommodation providers which have opened in the resort. Occupancy levels in these 4\* and 4\*+ hotels in Southport is consistently above the national average, suggesting that there is potential for growth at the higher quality end of the market including boutique provision.

Nationally increasing demand for non-serviced accommodation also indicates that there is further potential for a range of high quality self-catering accommodation. This strategy has identified a number of potential development sites for additional visitor accommodation.

9.5 Whilst the number of staying visitors has remained static the number of day visitors has declined by around 10% over the same period. It is likely that the opening of the Liverpool One shopping centre has been a large factor in this, reducing the number of people who travel to the town for 'special shopping trips'. Whilst it is not realistic for Southport to compete with Liverpool in terms of scale of its retail offer, Lord Street does continue to provide a more distinctive retail experience which will appeal to a different target market. Retaining a focus on Lord Street through the delivery of this strategy will remain key to addressing the decline in day trips.

9.6 Alongside Lord Street, Pleasureland remains a key visitor draw to Southport. Proposals for both the Marine Park and the Southport Golf Links and Fairways Park and Ride, set out in detail in the Spatial Framework, will be essential to the medium and longer term future of the resort.

9.7 Southport needs to commission a Destination Management Plan which includes a review of the branding strategy. The future tourism delivery structure also needs to be addressed in light of the changing national requirements. The potential for the creation of a sustainable Destination Organisation which delivers the Destination Management Plan and works alongside partners within the Liverpool City Region should be considered.





## Market Context

9.8 A review of the property market was completed as part of the baseline analysis. It was a high level overview of the commercial and residential property market context for the Framework and development sites. The conclusions of the property market review were:

- That further understanding was required in terms of the capacity to deliver additional convenience retail in Southport. Consolidation of the primary retail core would improve the vitality and viability of the existing retail facilities in the primary shopping area.
- A review of existing provision of leisure/ gym within Southport has identified the potential demand for a new gym facility in the area.
- That opportunities for new hotel facilities to support business conferencing and family stacations was important.
- Providing a range of restaurants could help improve the night time economy. Gaps in provision should be identified and Southport should then aim to differentiate its offer compared to local neighbouring towns and nationally as a resort.
- Consideration of future potential for the Marine Park and Pleasureland area was strategically important.
- Existing demand for larger offices spaces is fairly limited in Southport therefore smaller Grade A offices to support new start-up and local businesses may be more deliverable within the town centre.
- Opportunities for new residential development that would be suitable for a diverse age profile including young people and families as well as improving

accommodation for the elderly is important.

## Land Ownership

- 9.9 In addition to Marine Park and Southport Golf Links and Fairways Park and Ride, a number of other sites within Southport are in various ownerships including the Council. Consultation with private landowners (or their agents) through this process has confirmed the commitment of landowners to the Development Framework and the potential for development. Opportunities exist for investors, developers and potential occupiers. It is reasonable to expect that the market is strong enough to drive the delivery of a number of these sites, although several are constrained by availability, and challenges around habitat conservation designations and listing status for example.
- 9.10 Appendix 1 Development Options of the Framework sets out some brief suggestions for a number of sites, listed in paragraph 5.8 of this Framework.





# 10. Conclusions & Recommendations

- 10.1 This Framework provides a high level and ambitious concept for future investment in Southport Town Centre emphasising its role as a major tourist seaside town. The Beachfront and Promenade will be the focus for new and improved leisure attractions.
- 10.2 People have come to expect more from their town centre than just a shopping destination; expectations are of a much more diverse offer than that previously associated with the traditional town centre.
- 10.3 This town centre evolution has already begun in Southport and is being supported by the Business Improvement District. As part of this evolution, food and drink, creative industries, events, culture, leisure, and creating places to meet and socialise with friends, family and colleagues are all part of this complementary town centre offer which are identified in the Framework.
- 10.4 Development opportunities are identified which, along with improved connectivity between key assets through public realm improvements focussed on Lord Street – will contribute to the Southport ‘Classic’ Resort aim.
- 10.5 The Council, in partnership with the Southport BID, will sometimes lead and sometimes facilitate implementation of proposals. Other partners in the business, public and voluntary sectors will also have a role in supporting initiatives.
- 10.6 The Council should develop an Action Plan around initiatives identified through this Framework on a short, medium and longer term basis.

