

Seafront Regeneration Strategy

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Seafront Regeneration Strategy

The Seafront Regeneration Strategy is an overarching document to guide the regeneration of Roker and Seaburn seafronts and deliver the objective set out in the Sunderland Strategy (2008-2025), the overarching strategy for the city which states that: 'by 2025 Roker and Seaburn will have a key role in providing cultural tourism attractions.'

In order to deliver the aims and objectives of the Seafront Regeneration Strategy it is intended that a number of detailed documents are produced. The first of these documents is the Marine Walk Masterplan which has been prepared in conjunction with this strategy. This masterplan has been prepared as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and when approved will be a material consideration when determining planning applications and provide specific guidance on the regeneration of the seafront at Roker. A detailed masterplan for Seaburn will also be prepared.

The Unitary Development Plan 1998 (UDP) is the adopted Development Plan that guides new development and decisions on planning applications in the city under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) brought major changes to the planning system including the replacement of UDPs with a series of documents collectively called a Local Development Framework (LDF). Supplementary Planning Documents for the seafront will form part of Sunderland City Council's Local Development Framework.

In addition to the Marine Walk masterplan a Promenade Public Realm Strategy and a Seafront Management Plan will be produced in order to help coordinate the delivery of the Seafront Regeneration Strategy.

The council recognises that the seafront at Roker and Seaburn (the seafront) is an area with unfulfilled potential. To inform the future direction of the seafront a city wide public consultation was undertaken between 16 February and 3 April 2009 to find out what the people who live in, work in and visit Sunderland feel should be the vision for the future of the seafront. The results of this consultation – contained in the Seafront Consultation Findings Report (May 2009) available at www.sunderland.gov.uk/seafront – have informed the development of this Regeneration Strategy (the strategy).

The strategy has a number of purposes:

- To establish an agreed vision and regeneration objectives for the seafront
- To act as a supporting document for future funding bids
- To ensure development at the seafront is cohesive and joined up
- To pull together and supplement the various policies relating to the seafront in emerging Development Plan Documents as part of the Local Development Framework process

In this section the strategy highlights the rich history of the seafront and its importance to both the city and the region.

Subsequent sections set out the policy context for the regeneration of the seafront, the results of public consultation, significant issues faced at the seafront, a vision and regeneration objectives for the seafront and, finally, how this can be delivered.



Roker Beach

1.2 The study area

This strategy focuses on the twin resorts of Roker and Seaburn, which stretch along 2.5km of coastline from Whitburn Bents in the north to the mouth of the River Wear in the south. The seafront occupies a relatively narrow strip astride Whitburn Road and Roker Terrace (the A183) which separate commercial and residential areas from the largely undeveloped cliff-top open spaces, the promenades and sweeping beaches. Figure 2 indicates the extent of this area.

1.3 Location of the seafront

Roker is located in St Peter's Ward and Seaburn in Fulwell Ward on the north east edge of the city, in Sunderland's North Area. The seafront has strong linkages to Sunderland city centre by road, pedestrian and cycle routes via Wearmouth Bridge. To the north, the seafront is well connected to South Tyneside's coast via the A183. The River Wear separates the area from Sunderland's port and coast to the south.



Old South Pier Lighthouse



Figure 1. Regional location of seafront strategy area



Figure 2. Seafront strategy area boundary

1.4 History of the seafront

The seafront has a rich and interesting history. The geology of Roker and Seaburn is hugely significant, dating back some 238 million years to when the famous 'cannonball' rocks first started forming in the coastal magnesian limestone cliffs. Archaeologists believe that Roker seafront may have been settled in prehistoric times, when the caves at Roker offered an attractive habitat for hunter-gatherer groups. This theory is supported by the prehistoric and Roman finds which have been recovered from Roker beach, including an antler harpoon and Roman coins.

The earliest recorded built development took place at Roker in the 1840s when Roker Terrace was built on the cliff tops. The suburb only began to develop after the opening of Roker Park in 1880 when Sir Hedworth Williamson and the Church Commissioners donated land for the development of a park on the condition the council build the road bridge to span

Roker Ravine. In 1885 the construction of Roker Pier – along the line of a natural rocky outcrop – and the lower promenade (now known as Marine Walk) commenced.

By 1907 Roker had become a thriving seaside resort. The promenade and sands were an obvious attraction and were often crowded with visitors. Roker Spa Hotel, designed by John Dobson in 1842, also drew many visitors to the seafront.

Seaburn's reputation was not established until the 1930s with the construction of seafront promenades, Seaburn Hotel, Queens Parade shops and Seaburn Hall. Seaburn quickly became a popular resort for North Eastern holidaymakers and local day-trippers, as well as visitors from further afield, including Scotland and the North West. One of its most famous visitors was the artist L.S. Lowry, who regularly stayed in the Seaburn Hotel and painted local scenes, including the beach.

The popularity of Roker and Seaburn has declined since the 1960s as growing prosperity and mobility has given holidaymakers wider choice. The 1980s and early 1990s saw major changes at Seaburn with the construction of a supermarket, the Pullman Lodge restaurant, bar and motel and the council's Seaburn Leisure Centre, as well as the relocation of the fairground. It was at this time the council reintroduced the seafront illuminations and launched the annual Sunderland International Airshow, still the largest free airshow in Europe. More recently the area has hosted sporting events and Sunderland Live Music Festival. These events attract many visitors, often with considerable success – the Airshow recently won an Enjoy England Award for Excellence. However, other popular events such as the seafront illuminations no longer take place.

Parson's Rock



Roker Hotel (c1920)



Sunderland International Airshow



1.5 The importance of the seafront today

Quality of life

Sunderland's seafront is highly valued by the city and region as a whole. In 2007 Seaburn Beach came third in an online Pride of Place Poll for top beauty spots in the North East, just behind Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site and Penshaw Monument. Ninety four per cent of respondents to the Sunderland Community Spirit Summer Survey 2007 considered the seafront to be the most important green space in the city, being very or fairly important to their quality of life. It is noteworthy that Sunderland's coast is one of the green spaces identified to be most in need of improvement in addition to being the most used and most important green space.

Attracting investment to the city

Having an attractive seafront with a variety of leisure opportunities in close proximity to the city centre is a unique selling point, which will aid Sunderland arc (the city's Urban Regeneration Company) in delivering its key projects by attracting new residents and businesses to the city. The river corridor is seen by Sunderland arc as a key asset to the city and riverside sites are at the centre of the arc's regeneration strategy. The arc is developing regeneration plans for several key sites including Stadium Village on the north of the river, Vaux, Farringdon Row and Holmeside to the south.

These former industrial sites, once among the economic drivers of the city until the decline of heavy industry in the 1980s, will now be developed to create new employment opportunities – including office, leisure (hotel and sports facilities) and high-quality retail – as well as city centre housing that will be attractive to those working in these new jobs. This will be complemented by regeneration to key city centre sites, including Holmeside Triangle and the historic heart of the city centre in and around Sunnyside. As these projects develop, links along the river corridor to the seafront will be enhanced further if the development of proposed pedestrian bridges connecting Vaux to Stadium Village and St Peter's to Panns Bank, are realised.



Attracting visitors to the region

The value of coastal tourism to the North East is estimated to be £400-£450 million, which is equivalent to over one fifth of the value of tourism to the region as a whole. The Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Cultural Strategy all acknowledge the seafront's role in promoting a positive image of the North East to attract visitors and investors to the region. Sunderland's seafront has many unique attractions which bring visitors and investment to the region.

Roker seafront is unique as the only place where three national cycle routes converge, making it a major gateway to the region. The Walney to Wear route, National Route 1 and the popular Sea to Sea (c2c) route draw both out-of-region and near-to-home visitors to the North East. In addition the North Sea cycle route, stretching 6,500km through seven countries, draws cyclists from around the world to Sunderland's seafront. In 2006 241,000 trips were made on the c2c alone, generating over £10million in spending and safeguarding 173 full-time equivalent jobs. In 2006 the c2c, Coast

and Castles, Hadrian's Wall cycleway and Pennine cycleway generated £4.2million in tourism income for the region. (The Economic Impact of Cycle Tourism in North East England, 2007, One Northeast and Sustrans).

The watersports hub located at Roker, comprising the marina, Adventure Sunderland, yacht club and North East Diving Academy also plays an important role in attracting watersports enthusiasts to the region.

The seafront has strong physical and historical linkages to two of Sunderland's main cultural attractions – St Peter's Church and former monastic site (dating from 673AD) and the National Glass Centre, a centre of national excellence supporting the production, exploration and enjoyment of contemporary glass. St Peter's and St Paul's in Jarrow form the twin Anglo-Saxon monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow, the UK's nomination for UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2011. The seafront is integral to the vision for the development of the candidate World Heritage Site. Sunderland and South Tyneside Councils are working

jointly to deliver the Landscape Vision for Wearmouth-Jarrow (2008) which emphasises the importance of enhancing the link between St Peter's and the sea.

Physically, the candidate World Heritage Site is linked to the seafront via a 1km riverside footpath and the St Peter's Sculpture Trail which is a popular environment for pedestrians and cyclists. From the route it is possible to follow Bede's Way, which runs along Roker and Seaburn seafront into South Tyneside and then on to St Paul's in Jarrow.

Sunderland's seafront impacts most notably on the region's tourism economy during the annual Sunderland International Airshow. The Airshow takes place on the last weekend of July and over two days attracts around a million spectators, leading to a significant increase in spending in local restaurants and cafés and a considerable rise in demand for accommodation.

c2c cyclist



St Peter's Riverside Sculpture Trail



National Glass Centre



2.0 Policy context

The regeneration of Sunderland's seafront sits within the context of national, regional and local policy. This section provides a brief outline of policies that have informed the preparation of the Seafront Regeneration Strategy.

2.1 National planning policy

Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) provide Government guidance on planning policy.

- PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development sets the Government's overall objectives for planning. This identifies 'sustainable development' as the core principle underpinning the planning system, whereby planning should ensure a better quality of life for everyone, both now and for future generations
- PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation sets out the Government's vision for conserving and enhancing biological diversity in England. To ensure planning decisions on biodiversity and geological conservation are fully considered local planning authorities must consider the environmental characteristics of their area and ensure appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance and protected species
- PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment requires local authorities to designate areas of "special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"
- PPG 20: Coastal Planning emphasises the importance of reconciling development requirements with the need to protect and conserve the natural environment
- PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation urges local authorities to recognise the actual and potential recreational value of natural features whilst minimising the impact of activity on those features. Where possible, access to natural features for sport and recreation purposes should be enhanced
- PPS 25: Planning and Flood Risk guides development in areas of flood risk
- The Good Practice Guide to Tourism encourages planners to engage with the tourism industry and public to ensure development maximises the many benefits of tourism
- The Marine and Coastal Access Bill seeks to improve access to the coast of England and to introduce a new framework for the seas based

on marine spatial planning which balances conservation, energy and resource needs

CABE and English Heritage have published a number of documents including Shifting Sands (2003) and Regeneration in Historic Towns (2007), demonstrating that high quality design, open spaces and enhancing the historic environment can radically regenerate seaside resorts.

2.2 Regional policy context

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) sets out a long-term strategy for the spatial development of the North East. It provides a spatial context for the delivery of other regional strategies including the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Image Strategy and Regional Cultural Strategy. In relation to the seafront, RSS Policy 16 proposes that investment is directed at improving existing facilities, attractions and accommodation.

A range of regeneration and cultural strategies have been produced relating to the seafront including the Regional Cultural Strategy (2005) by Culture North East; North East Tourism Strategy (2005-2010) and a Framework for the North East's Coastal Economy (2006) both commissioned by One North East. These strategies see the potential to build on the North East's distinctive character and attractive coastline to improve quality of life in the region and benefit the local

The Red Arrows flying over the Old South Pier Lighthouse



Sunderland International Airshow



Artwork 'Taking Flight'



economy. It is proposed that Sunderland improves its tourism offer by developing its existing events calendar, improving linkages to the hinterland, and investing in art and heritage.

Environmental guidance includes the Wear Estuary Management Plan and the Shoreline Management Plan 2, which states that beach control should be improved and defences maintained at Seaburn and Marine Walk, Roker.

2.3 Partnership policies

In 2004 the Tyne and Wear Coastal Partnership, comprising representatives from Sunderland City Council, North Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Council, commissioned consultants to produce the Tyne and Wear Coastal Regeneration Strategy (TWCRS).

The TWCRS outlined the main areas for action as: image, transport, jobs and skills, partnership working and complementary product development. The main recommendation of the report is to concentrate on the development of key tourism products, based on:

- Maritime and coastal activities
- History and heritage
- Events and sport
- Business tourism
- Developing a range of niche tourism products

This informed the development of the Tourism Management Plan 2008-2011 for the Tyne and Wear sub-region by the Area Tourism Partnership. This serves as an action plan for organisations and businesses involved in the management, development and promotion of Tyne and Wear's visitor experience. The renaissance of Sunderland is seen as having huge potential in building Tyne and Wear's visitor economy. The vision is that Tyne and Wear's visitor destinations will be

renowned for the cultural experience, the city experience and the coastal experience they offer, attracting leisure and business visitors from all over the UK and from overseas.

The Sunderland Strategy 2008–2025 is the overarching strategy for the city, produced by the Sunderland Partnership. The strategy states that by 2025, Roker and Seaburn seafront will have a key role in providing cultural and tourism attractions, creating an attractive, accessible and desirable destination.

The Sunderland Image Strategy 2008-2025 sets out Sunderland's brand values as: "life enhancing", "smart" and "balanced." It recognises the seafront as an underused resource and states that Sunderland is to be promoted as a city by the sea with a high quality of life to offer.

The Sunderland arc business plan 2009 outlines Sunderland's Urban Regeneration Company's overarching strategies to regenerate the city, attracting new residents, investors and visitors to create a sustainable Sunderland.

The Durham Biodiversity Action Plan (DBAP) was produced in June 2007 by the Durham Biodiversity Partnership and includes Sunderland. The DBAP contains a series of work-plans to help species and habitats in the Durham Area that are considered to be under threat locally, nationally or internationally.

2.4 Local policies

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the spatial planning mechanism to help deliver the Sunderland Strategy. Once adopted the Core Strategy will lie at the heart of the LDF, setting out the overarching strategic planning framework for the city up to 2021. The currently adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) continues to apply to the seafront until its

relevant policies are superseded by those in the LDF. In summary, UDP policies seek to pursue recreational opportunities at the seafront to serve local, city-wide and regional needs; conserve the environment; preserve and enhance the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas; and maintain and improve accessibility to the seafront.

Other local policy documents considered in this report include the Legible City Framework which sets out a range of projects to improve the legibility of Sunderland; the Play and Urban Games Strategy setting out a strategic approach to play; CultureFirst - the cultural masterplan for the city; Coastline as a Cultural Resource which sets out recommendations on how to improve the seafront; and the Roker Park Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan which guides development within the conservation area.

The council is preparing a Greenspace Strategy which will include a quantitative and qualitative assessment of existing open space, sport and recreational needs. Local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility will be adopted.

2.5 Summary

The policy context emphasises the role the seafront has to play in enhancing the city and its image through tourism and culture-led regeneration, which builds on the seafront's heritage, cultural events calendar and attractive environment. A sustainable approach should be taken to providing opportunities for passive and active recreation.

3.0 Research and analysis

3.1 Land use

Figure 4 on page 16 sets out the land uses at Roker and Seaburn seafront. Commercial activity is concentrated at Seaburn, the focus of which is the Pullman Lodge hotel, amusement arcades and Morrison's supermarket. Restaurants, bars and the Marriott (formerly Seaburn) Hotel extend further south along Whitburn Road. There are also a number of council leisure facilities at Seaburn including the Seaburn Leisure Centre, children's play facilities and the recently completed skate park. Open space at Recreation Park and Seaburn Camp, and the vast area of car parking behind the Seaburn Centre, are used during event days on an occasional basis, but remain relatively under-used during the remainder of the year.

Roker, in contrast, primarily serves as a passive recreational space for the local community. The area is popular with walkers, cyclists starting and completing the C2C cycle route, surfers and other watersports enthusiasts. A hub for watersports has developed, comprising a popular Marina and Marine Activities Centre, Sport England's Adventure Sunderland and a commercial diving centre. Roker has a rich heritage, containing areas of historical interest such as the lifeguard museum and Roker Conservation Area, which includes Roker Park and the Grade II Listed pier and lighthouse. A cluster of hotels and guesthouses can be found along Roker Terrace. Although several large houses have been converted into residential care homes, the majority of the built-up area behind the seafront is in private residential use. Marine Walk contains a number of commercial buildings and council facilities including the resort office, The Smugglers pub and Roker Amusements.

Marriott Hotel



Adventure Sunderland



North East Diving Academy





Figure 4. Land use plan for the seafront strategy area

3.2 Movement, arrivals and connections

Figure 5 on page 18 illustrates movement along Sunderland seafront is broadly separated into two areas – movement along the upper promenade (A183) and the lower promenade. The upper promenade is a popular coastal route for both vehicles and cyclists, and runs along Sunderland seafront to South Shields in South Tyneside. In contrast the lower promenade is more of a pedestrian oriented environment which is divided by Roker Cliff into two district area known as Marine Walk (Roker lower promenade) and Seaburn lower promenade.

In Roker the upper and lower promenades are linked via steep and uneven pathways which make the two areas seem remote from each other. At Seaburn the lower promenade is more accessible due to the lower gradient.

Within the study area there are areas where pedestrian and vehicular movement overlap, which is generally a source of conflict. Vehicles can access the lower promenade at Roker via Pier View, a small road linking the upper promenade to Marine Walk Road. Once on Marine Walk Road vehicles can travel south to car parking or north to a roundabout, after which it is access only. This can result in an environment that is difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate.

Similar conflict exists at Seaburn. The busy A183 serves as a barrier to movement between Ocean Park and the amenities to the west of the study area, and the lower promenade and beaches to the east.

St Peter's, Stadium of Light and Seaburn metro stations are all located within walking distance of the seafront. Poor signage directing people to and from these stations and the seafront is proving a missed opportunity to promote this sustainable mode of transport and the service it offers in terms of access to the seafront and direct services into Newcastle and the airport as discussed in more detail in Section 6.7.

This strategy presents an opportunity to improve the accessibility of the seafront by promoting access to Roker and Seaburn by sustainable modes of transport. This will be supported by and complement the delivery of the Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2), which establishes how transport patterns and routes will be developed across Tyne and Wear over the period 2006 to 2011.

The seafront is a popular environment for cyclists. The Walney to Wear route, National Route 1, c2c route and Bede's Way route draw many cyclists to the area. Although the cycle route along the upper promenade is well established, there are points of conflict elsewhere between pedestrians and cyclists.

As discussed in more detail in section 6.0 there are six main gateways into and within Sunderland seafront - Seaburn metro station, Whitburn, North Haven, Harbour View, Ocean Park, Recreation Park and Cliff Park. These gateways currently do little to create a strong sense of arrival and do little to maximise views of the seafront.

Illegal parking on Marine Walk



A183 a barrier to pedestrian movement



Steep pathways linking Roker lower and upper promenades





Figure 5. Movement analysis plan of the seafront strategy area

3.3 Public consultation

To inform this Strategy Sunderland City Council undertook a city wide consultation between 16 February and 3 April 2009. The purpose of the consultation was to find out what the people who live in, work in and visit Sunderland feel should be the vision for the future of the seafront. People were asked whether the vision should be a seafront for a quiet walk, for family fun, for watersports, for great events or any other suggestions they may have.

Data was collected using two methods - a survey (seafront consultation form) and workshops. The survey formed part of the Community Spirit Spring Survey 2009 and was also made available at:

- All libraries across the city
- The Resort Office on Marine Walk
- Exhibitions in the Sunderland Aquatic Centre, Civic Centre main reception and Central Library
- Drop in sessions held in the Mobile Customer Service Centre at Marine Walk and Market Square (in the city centre) during the consultation period

The survey could be completed online at www.sunderland.gov.uk/seafront. A copy of the survey was posted to all businesses and residents within the study area and it was printed in the Sunderland Echo on Wednesday 25 March 2009.

Workshops were undertaken by the council with the Disability Alliance of Sunderland (DAS) and the Older People Independent Advisory Group (IAG). City wide and Youth Parliament workshops were undertaken by Planning Aid, an independent organisation which offers free planning support, advice and training to communities. The results of these workshops are available in a separate report produced by Planning Aid. A summary of the consultation findings are set out in the Seafront Consultation Findings Report available at www.sunderland.gov.uk/seafront.

The consultation received a high response rate, emphasising the importance of the seafront to the people of Sunderland. 2,455 people completed the survey and over 200 people participated in workshops. In summary the consultation found that respondents favoured separate visions for Roker and Seaburn seafronts. Whilst it was felt that the three most important aspects in a vision for Roker should be to make the most of the area for relaxation, protect the natural environment and improve what's on offer for families, it was felt that the three most important aspects in a vision for Seaburn should be the provision of more wet weather facilities, more high quality restaurants and cafes and improved outdoor facilities for families. Therefore whereas it was felt Seaburn should be more of a resort offering activities for families, Roker seafront should be somewhere to go and relax and enjoy the natural environment. Images produced by Planning Aid to illustrate the results of the public consultation are shown on pages 20 and 21.

Seafront workshop - outcomes



Consultation drop-in session, Marine Walk



Site visit with Disability Alliance of Sunderland



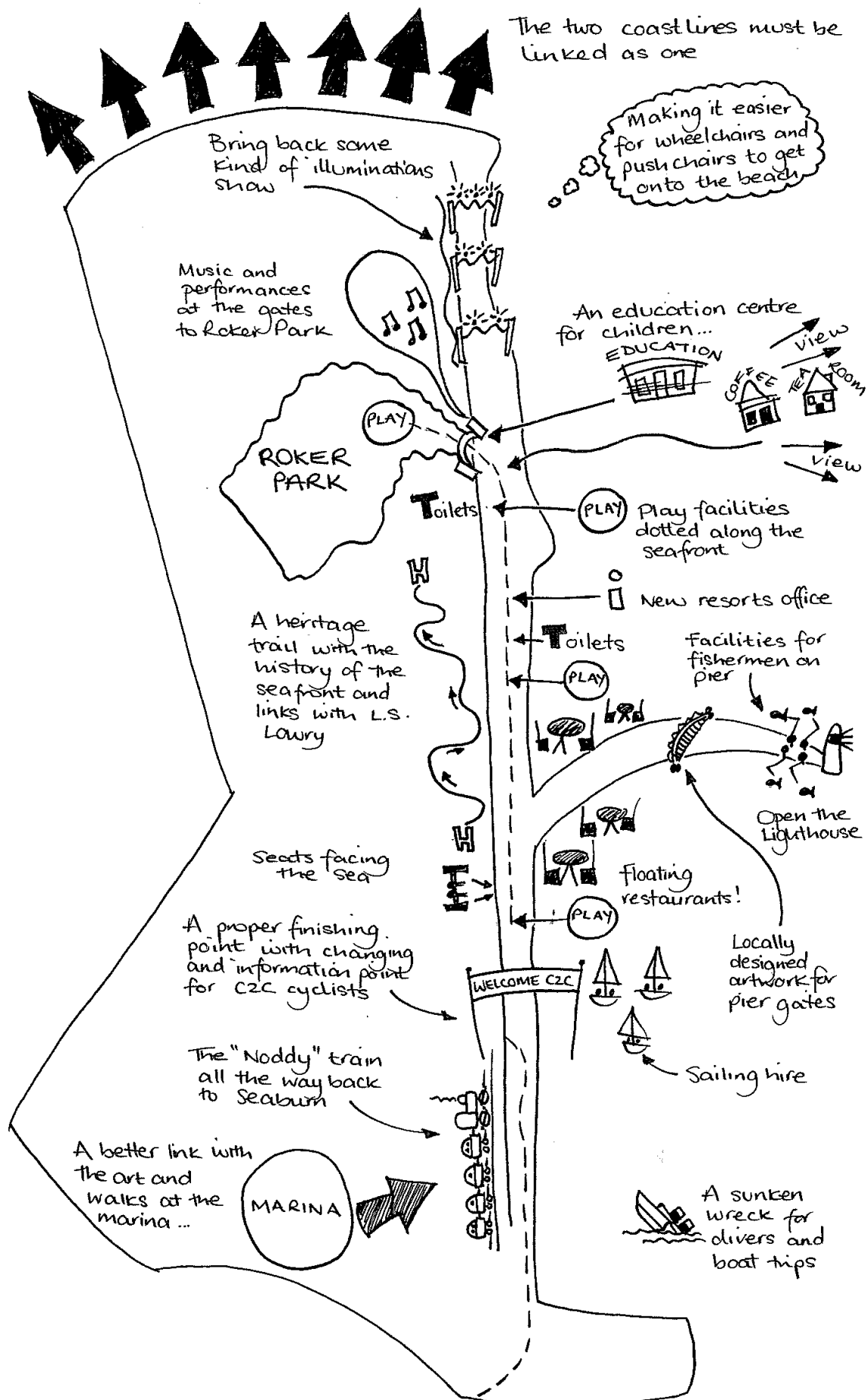


Figure 6. Public Consultation findings plan - Roker (Produced by Planning Aid)

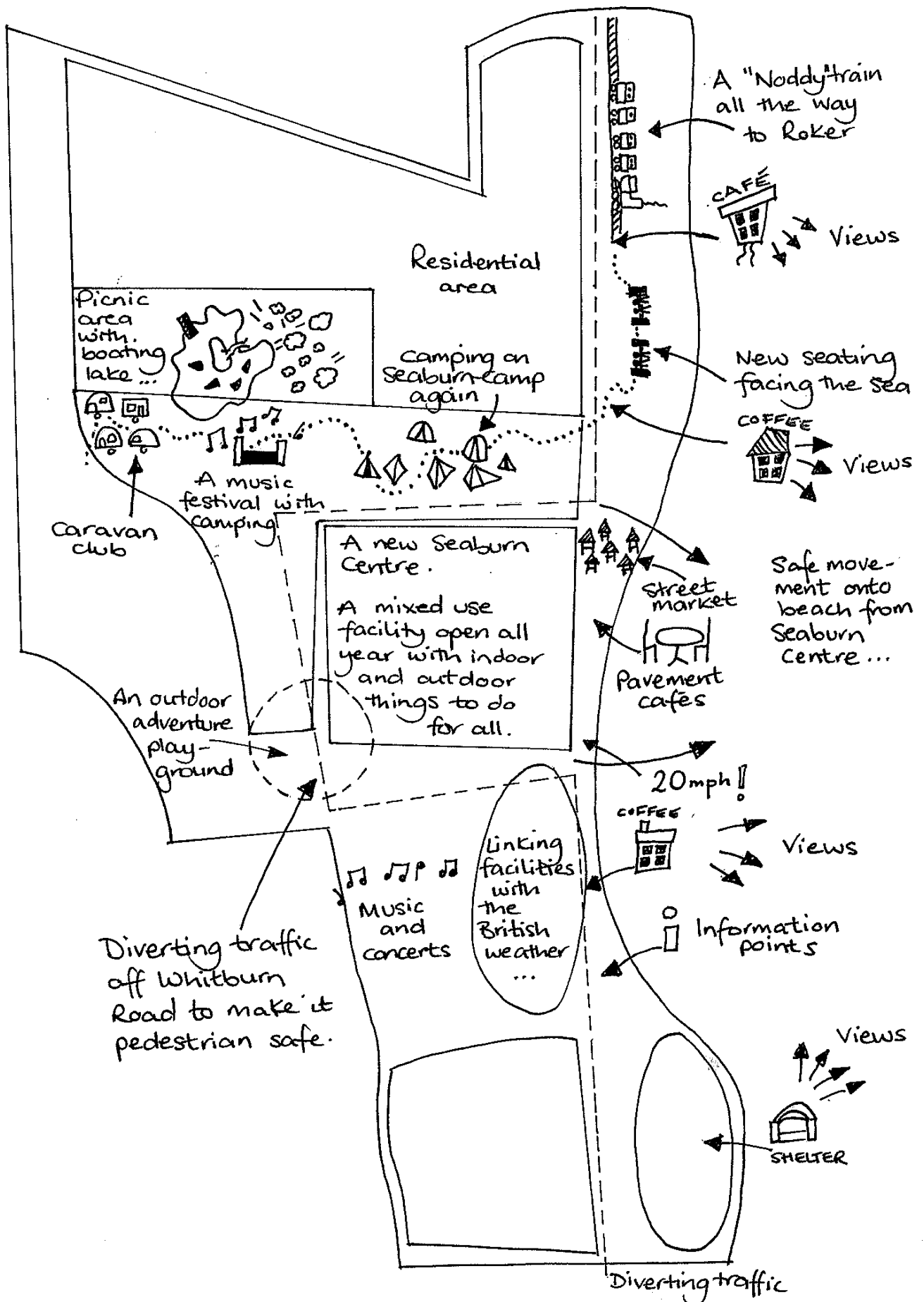


Figure 7. Public Consultation findings plan - Seaburn (Produced by Planning Aid)

4.0 Issues and opportunities

4.1 Challenges

Environmental

Flood risk and coastal erosion are important issues which need increasing consideration as our climate changes and sea levels rise. The 2006 Tyne and Wear Strategic Floodrisk Assessment highlighted areas which would be at risk of flooding over the next 50 years, including within Roker, the Marina and land adjacent to Holey Rock, and within Seaburn, the lower promenade and Cut Throat Dene. Linked to this the public realm at the seafront degrades at a faster rate in the marine environment meaning the area requires considerable maintenance. The existing maintenance budget for the seafront is not sufficient to meet the maintenance requirements of this area.

Roker lighthouse in stormy seas



Social

The seafront at Roker and Seaburn attracts a large number of visitors during the summer months and on events days. This increased footfall can place strain on existing facilities. The seafront public consultation highlighted that a major issue at the seafront is the lack of adequate toilet facilities. Existing toilet facilities do not meet demand as they are insufficient in number, do not open frequently enough and do not provide modern facilities such as changing areas. The attraction of a large number of people also leads to increased generation of litter. On particularly busy days there are an insufficient number of bins adjacent to takeaways to hold the amount of litter generated, meaning bins overflow.

Certain areas of the seafront attract anti-social behaviour and vandalism. This is a particular issue on areas of the lower promenade which receive little footfall and are relatively concealed. The seating shelters at Roker and Seaburn were highlighted in the seafront public consultation as being the focus of anti-social behaviour. Both shelters are empty and seating has now been removed due to vandalism. The knock-on effect of this is that people are deterred from visiting these areas at certain times of the day and evening, which reinforces the perception that these areas are unsafe.

Crowds on Airshow day, Seaburn



Physical

Despite the seafront's proximity to the city centre and transport routes, connections to the remainder of the city are poor. The majority of visitors wishing to travel to the area by bus must first travel to the city centre before changing bus service.

Although there are two metro stations within walking distance of the seafront (St Peter's and Seaburn metro stations), this is not promoted. There is a lack of any signing, artwork or reference to the seafront at either station meaning visitors may be unaware that the city boasts fine beaches.

There are a number of barriers to movement within the study area. Uneven surface materials, steep pathways and a lack of drop kerbs create difficulties for wheelchair users and pushchairs. Illegal parking on areas of paving both at Marine Walk and Ocean Park at peak times can also make the area difficult for pedestrians to navigate.

Steep and uneven pathways, Roker



A major point of conflict for cyclists is the Marina to the south of the study area where the C2C route passes an area which is popular for fishing. At this point fishing poles block much of the cycle route.

Another barrier to movement is the area adjacent Ocean Park at Seaburn. Car parking and the majority of amenities are located to the west of the A183, meaning pedestrians must cross this busy road to access the lower promenade and beach. Although a light-controlled crossing is located adjacent to the Seaburn Leisure Centre there is little to direct people to this crossing point and the crossing itself has a very short crossing time, which causes difficulty for the less mobile.

The quality of the built environment varies greatly throughout the seafront. Although there are many buildings of architectural merit, particularly within Roker and Whitburn Bents Conservation Areas, the majority of modern development lacks character and does little to integrate with the surrounding area. The result is an area lacking in a sense of identity. This lack of identity is exacerbated by poor gateways into the area at Harbour View and Ocean Park .

Economic

As with many British coastal resorts the popularity of Roker and Seaburn as a holiday destination declined in the 1960s as growing prosperity and mobility gave holiday makers wider choice. This has led to a decline in many of the seafront's attractions. Previous attempts to create new attractions, such as a golf driving range and zoo, have not been long lived leaving a number of redundant spaces which create a poor image for visitors to the area. With the exception of the small number of hotels and guesthouses the majority of the seafront comprises uses aimed primarily at the community, such as the supermarket, restaurants and housing. The seafront is not fulfilling its potential to attract visitors to the city and bring investment to Sunderland's economy.

Poor quality buildings at Marine Walk



Restaurants at Seaburn



4.2 Assets

Heritage

The seafront is steeped in local culture and history dating back to prehistoric times. Many prehistoric objects have been recovered from the beach, suggesting that the caves in this area at one time hosted hunter-gatherer groups. Many local legends have developed around the caves at Roker. It is reputed that Spottee's Cave at the mouth of Roker Park extends hundreds of metres along a system of underground tunnels all the way to St Peter's Church – the candidate World Heritage Site that is of outstanding universal cultural and heritage value – and possibly even to Hylton Castle. It is rumoured that the tunnels were used by fishermen, keelmen and bargemen to smuggle illegal goods ashore in the 17th and 18th Centuries; indeed, Roker ravine was also known as 'smugglers haunt'.

Throughout their history Roker and Seaburn have been linked with many individuals of note and considerable talent. Isambard Kingdom Brunel famously designed the North Dock at Roker and John Dobson was the architect behind Roker Spa Hotel. Both structures can still be seen today. More recently, Lowry famously stayed in Seaburn Hotel and painted many pictures of this stretch of coastline. These are just some examples of the points of interest which makes Roker and Seaburn seafront so unique.

Roker Hotel



Built environment

The coastal zone at Roker and Seaburn contains many noteworthy structures and buildings, the majority of which are located in the two Conservation Areas. Roker Park Conservation Area, in 1995, is located to the south of the study area, and displays many fine examples of Victorian and Edwardian architecture, Grade II Listed Roker Pier and Lighthouse, St Andrew's Church - known as the 'Cathedral of the Arts and Craft Movement' and Roker Bridge - one of Roker's earliest man-made structures. Whitburn Bents Conservation Area is located to the north of the study area at the gateway to Sunderland seafront. The Conservation Area was designated in 1970 and features a concave terrace of early 20th century cottages built on the site of earlier fisherman's cottages, and a former eighteenth century farmstead, all of which add to the appeal and character of the seafront.

Roker pier at Marine Walk



Natural environment

The seafront has an attractive natural environment of considerable ecological and geological value. The geology of the seafront dates back some 238 million years, and contains some rare examples of geological formations including the 'cannonball' rocks which are found only in Sunderland and New Zealand. This rock formation is concentrated at Parson's Rock, which is part of the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area, and has been designated as a Ramsar site under the European Convention of Wetlands of International Importance, reflecting its importance as a bird habitat for wintering Turnstone, wintering Purple Sandpiper and breeding Little Tern part of the Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation is located to the north of Parson's Rock at Whitburn Bents. The area is valued as the only example of vegetated sea cliffs off the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts on magnesian limestone in the UK. The seafront environment creates drama and interest, giving Sunderland seafront a diverse and unique character.

Parson's Rock



Existing events calendar

The seafront has a reputation for successfully hosting events which began in the 1800s when performances and tea dances regularly took place around Holey Rock Corner. Since this time the seafront has hosted a wide range of events including the Sunderland Illuminations, Great North Women's Run, Sunderland Live and the festivals of Rivers and the Sea, as well as regular summer programmes of family activities and live music. Sunderland International Airshow, the seafront's most well known event, remains the largest free airshow in Europe. In 2008 the Airshow was voted the best tourism experience in the Enjoy England Awards. The seafront events calendar continues to develop; in 2009 it hosted the first Great North 10k run.

Dancers at the Festival of the Rivers and the Sea



Cycle links

The seafront is unique as being the only place where three national cycle routes meet; the Sea to Sea Cycle Route (c2c), Route 1 of the National Cycle Network (The East Coast Cycle Route), the Bede's Way Cycle Route and the St Peter's Sculpture Trail. In 2006 241,000 trips were made on the c2c alone, generating over £10 million in spend and safeguarding 173 full-time equivalent jobs.

Watersports facilities and accommodation

Roker and Seaburn seafront is increasingly used for watersports such as surfing and sea kayaking. A hub of watersports facilities has developed at Roker, centred around Adventure Sunderland, the Marine Activities Centre, the Marina and the North East Diving Academy. These facilities receive considerable use. The availability of these activities in close proximity to the city centre is a key asset which can be used to promote Sunderland as a place to live which offers a high quality of life where a balance between work and leisure time can be achieved.

The majority of Sunderland's visitor accommodation is located at the seafront. Hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs are an important tourism asset.

The Marina



Links to Sunderland's cultural assets

Sunderland seafront is well connected to Sunderland's main cultural attractions - the National Glass Centre, a national centre of excellence for the development of contemporary glass and St Peter's Church which, with St Paul's in South Tyneside, forms the twin Anglo-Saxon monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow: the UK's nomination for World Heritage Site inscription in 2010. Both of these attractions are within walking distance of the seafront via the St Peter's Artwork Trail, an attractive environment popular with both cyclists and pedestrians.

Links to the region's heritage and cultural assets

The region's main heritage and cultural attractions are also well connected to Sunderland's seafront, including Arbeia Roman fort. Sunderland seafront is well connected to South Shields seafront in South Tyneside – the road and cycle route connecting the two destinations offers impressive views of the North East coast making it a popular route for both drivers and cyclists. This route receives the most use by runners during the Pier to Pier run, a 7 mile run between South Shields Pier and Roker Pier. Both Sunderland and South Tyneside Councils are working to deliver the Legibility Project to further enhance links between the two resorts and provide a complementary tourism offer.

St Peter's Church



4.3 Opportunities

Environmental

The natural environment is the seafront's main asset to be protected and promoted. The Seafront Regeneration Strategy presents an opportunity to ensure that future development at the seafront works with nature rather than against it. This can be achieved by making people more aware of the area's natural assets, for example through interpretation, and by focussing development away from areas which are environmentally sensitive, or at risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

There is an opportunity to replace elements of the existing public realm with durable materials and robust street furniture that is better suited to the marine environment. Materials on the lower promenade must be carefully selected to ensure they are able to withstand flooding from winter storms and will weather naturally. In addition, attention must be paid to how materials are laid in this area; appropriate sub-bases must be designed and laid to ensure materials don't fail due to heavy use or sea water damage during storm conditions.

Promenade improvements Cleveleys 'New Wave,' Lancashire



Social

This strategy presents an opportunity to consider the provision of amenities at the seafront comprehensively and to consider where new and upgraded amenities will be required as regeneration proposals progress.

Crime and the fear of crime can be reduced by good design. Implementing the Seafront Regeneration Strategy has the potential to increase feelings of safety by improving lighting, bringing vacant buildings back into use and increasing footfall.

Midland Hotel, Morecambe

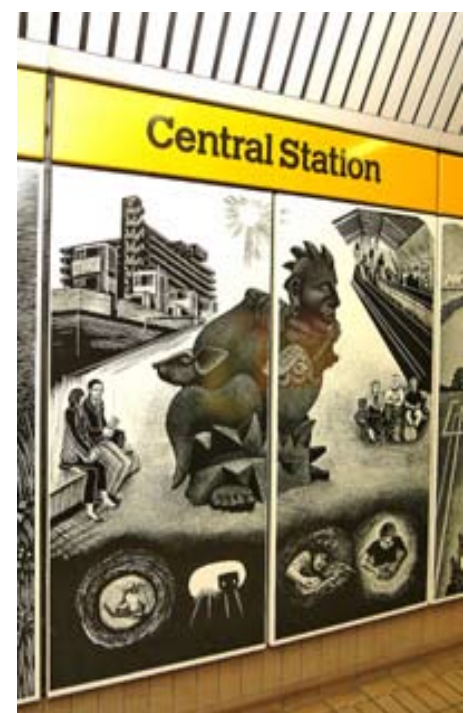


Physical

Delivering the regeneration of the seafront has the potential to attract a greater number of visitors to the area and create demand for public transport links which may not currently seem viable. There is an opportunity for the council to work with bus operators to explore demand for improved bus links to the seafront, in particular a bus route which will link Sunderland's main cultural attractions - St Peter's, the National Glass Centre and the seafront.

There is also the opportunity to work with NEXUS to explore ways in which links from St Peter's and Seaburn metro stations can be promoted to encourage more people to use sustainable modes of transport to travel to the seafront. Promoting metro links will have the added benefit of reducing traffic congestion and the need for additional car parking.

Art on the Metro



A high level of vacant land within the seafront is under the ownership of the council. This gives the council control over the quality of development coming forward, both in the nature of the development and the design quality. The council will ensure that future development proposals are of a high quality, reflective of the importance of this key location. New development must take influence from the best aspects of the existing built environment and must complement the surrounding landscape.

Prior to any new developments taking place consideration of the principles of PPS25 must be fully considered in order to ensure that flood risk is mitigated as far as possible.

Economic

There is a growing trend for domestic holidays due to the current UK recession and, to a lesser extent, increased environmental awareness which is encouraging holiday makers to consider more sustainable holidays options. In the present climate there is an opportunity for the seafront at Roker and Seaburn to adapt and promote itself once again as a destination with a rich heritage and attractive natural environment, with links to some of the region's main attractions. The seafront's reputation as an events location, growing watersports hub, with a popular marina and gateway to the region's main cycle routes will be key to promoting this area in the future.

Promenade improvements at Bridlington



Promenade improvements at Cleveleys, Lancashire



5.0 The vision and objectives

5.1 The Vision

Building on its unique natural environment and rich heritage, the seafront will be an attractive, safe, clean and accessible destination for all residents and visitors that the people of Sunderland can be proud of. Roker and Seaburn will once again be 'a playground for the people.' Whilst Roker seafront will be an area to relax and enjoy the attractive natural environment, Seaburn will be a family focused resort offering high quality indoor and outdoor facilities. It will be a welcoming place to enjoy all year round, which offers activities and events for everyone, supporting Sunderland's aspiration to be the UK's most livable city.



5.2 The objectives

1. To create an attractive environment where both residents and visitors can relax
2. To develop a sense of place and pride by building on the area's rich heritage and attractive natural environment
3. To create a family friendly area which is safe and clean
4. To provide high quality public amenities
5. To offer high quality and affordable activities and cultural events throughout the year
6. To create an area which is physically and intellectually accessible
7. To maximise the impact and improve the economic vibrancy of the area



6.0 The framework

6.1 Strategic principles

Planting

Salt air and wind in coastal locations create difficult conditions for even the hardiest plants to establish themselves. It is therefore unsustainable and uneconomic to introduce large areas of new soft landscaping along the seafront. However, it is proposed that a greater variety of coastal planting be considered for the grassed banks on Roker's lower promenade to give the area a more natural feel. Additional planting should be considered where appropriate as part of wider improvement schemes and any new developments to add to the character of the area.

Existing soft landscaping should be well maintained and not left to detract from the character of the area. Where landscaping is no longer adding to the character of an area it should be removed and more appropriate planting or hard landscaping introduced.

Hybrid sage



Street furniture

The age, design and materials of existing street furniture are inconsistent along the length of the seafront. There are multiple styles, types and ages of seats, litterbins, planters and railings, all in varying condition.

In order to create an attractive location for visitors to enjoy, the ad hoc nature of street furniture must be replaced with a more consistent approach.

Innovative, multifunctional, items of street furniture should be considered at key locations and public spaces, for example information boards that are linked to public art, while incorporating lighting and seating.

All street furniture and fittings must be robust, resistant to vandalism and capable of coping with the coastal environment.

The recent public realm works undertaken to provide a setting for the c2c art feature have included new timber and corten steel seats and cycle stands. These materials have been chosen to fit within the coastal environment providing a robust and attractive solution. These products are a good example of street furniture that is suitable in a coastal location.

Cycle racks at Marine Walk



Surface materials

Footpath and promenade surface materials along the length of the seafront have deteriorated in a number of locations and are not coordinated. Concrete surfaces are used in some areas, whilst exposed aggregate, paving and tarmac surfaces are used elsewhere.

New surface materials must be durable and in certain locations be able to withstand flooding from the sea. Attention must also be paid to how materials are laid to ensure they don't fail due to heavy use or sea water damage.

In key spaces it may be appropriate to introduce higher quality materials such as granite sets, which have recently been used as a setting for the c2c art feature. In other areas the use of exposed aggregate or resin bonded gravel would provide an appropriate surface for the coastal location.

It may also be appropriate to introduce timber board walks in key areas to provide interest to otherwise bland hard surfaces, to create accent areas and informal seating spaces. The use of board walks must be carefully considered and used only where they can be protected from direct wave impact.

Resin bonded gravel



Where appropriate all surfaces must be designed to highway standards and, where appropriate vehicular and emergency access loadings must be taken into account.

Masterplans for Roker and Seaburn should consider how street furniture and surface materials can be rationalised. As part of any future improvements consideration should be given to preparing a more detailed public realm strategy for the seafront, providing design codes for each character area to inform the design process.

Legibility and wayfinding

The existing provision of wayfinding and other information along the seafront is haphazard and in need of improvement.

As part of wider efforts to improve legibility and wayfinding in the city the form, design and content of the information should be addressed in an integrated fashion for the seafront as part of this wider strategy. Clear, well located and accurate signs should be provided to guide visitors.

The range of new signs selected should be considered within the context of existing and proposed street furniture, maintenance considerations of the coastal location and the overall image and identity of Sunderland.

A bespoke range of signs could be commissioned within the context of the wider Sunderland legibility project, which could strongly reinforce the identity of the seafront and become a marketing tool. A more cost effective solution would be to procure existing commercially available signs and add some limited customisation for the seafront. This option is widely available from many suppliers and can be a good compromise solution.

Any new signs must be selected as part of a family with consistent materials, sizes and shapes. Designs must be clear and engaging (with provision for blind and partially sighted users).

Consideration should be given to introducing a range of new interpretation boards and trails covering a range of topics including heritage, wildlife and local history.

High quality seating solutions



Simon Ringe, Wildspace Network - sign



Example of an illuminated bridge



Lighting

The seafront has a history of hosting lighting events, most notably the Sunderland Illuminations which stretched along the length of the seafront, until the 1980s. Street lighting and feature lighting are an important part of the identity of the seafront and careful consideration shall be given to their use to maximise impact.

Street lighting: The existing street lighting along the seafront (with the exception of the lower promenade at Roker) was installed in the 1980s. The columns were designed to bear the weight of the illuminations and although the Sunderland Illuminations no longer take place the columns remain. The public consultation feedback suggests that many people associate the columns with the identity of the seafront and careful consideration should be given to any proposals to replace them. Any new columns should also add to the identity of the seafront and be sympathetic to the existing character of the area. Whilst it may be appropriate to introduce one style of column along the whole of the seafront it may be appropriate to introduce a different style of column along the lower promenade at Roker, which has a very different character to the upper promenade and Seaburn. The existing columns along the lower promenade are a mix of styles and of varying quality. Priority should be given to their replacement as part of any wider improvements to the area.

Feature lighting: Feature lighting can enhance structures, buildings, and landscapes. Lighting can also help to define routes and emphasise views and vistas. Modern lighting techniques offer almost unlimited opportunities to introduce additional lighting along the seafront. These opportunities include the lighting of natural features such as the cliff face at Holey Rock Corner, Seaburn and Roker beaches and built features such as Roker Pier and Lighthouse, Old South Pier, Roker Bridge and the old South Pier Lighthouse in Cliff Park.

The impact the lighting effects will have on roosting birds and other protected species will be considered when deciding on its positioning.

Safety: It is important to recognise that the introduction of lighting in an area can also improve the feeling of safety in an area, reducing opportunities for crime and reducing the fear of crime. The need to improve safety along the lower promenade at Roker was highlighted in the public consultation.

Sustainability: The introduction of new lighting can have an environmental impact in terms of energy consumption and sky glow. Careful consideration must be given to this potential impact and the following should be considered:

- The use of high efficiency luminaires with high performance optical systems with reduced light spill and light trespass
- The use of high efficiency lamps and LEDs
- The use of energy efficient electronic control gear
- The use of flexible control systems

Public art

There are a number of existing pieces of public art along the seafront, although many of them are not celebrated and can often be overlooked.

Public art can play an important role in improving the appearance and character of the seafront as part of an integrated approach with enhancement of the public realm and new lighting.

Existing artworks should be better celebrated by installing new interpretation material.

Spirit of the Staithes, Blyth



Public artwork, Cleveley Promenade



c2c sculpture, Whitehaven



Any new works should be a celebration of the distinctiveness of the seafront and add to its character and identity, providing constant year-long interest through temporary as well as permanent works that set international standards of quality and showcase local talent. Public art can also be a medium through which local people can be engaged, such as through local schools, higher and further education institutions and voluntary organisations.

Public art does not have to be sculptures or installations; it can also be part of the urban fabric, for example street furniture, signs, lighting or even buildings. Where opportunities exist to integrate artworks into wider improvements and new development, consideration should be given to working with artists as part of the wider project design team.

Reference should be made to the council's emerging Public Arts Strategy when considering any proposals for public art.

Cycling

Cycling at the seafront is an important activity with a number of national cycle routes passing along and ending/starting at the seafront (including National Route 1, the c2c and Walney to Wear routes). Whilst generally the quality of the routes along the seafront is good there are a number of areas where routes are poorly designed and laid out, bringing cyclists into conflict with street furniture, pedestrians and other users.

Covered depot building, Hornsea



When designing improvement schemes and new developments the opportunity to introduce new cycle routes and facilities, and improve existing routes and facilities must be considered.

All improvements must be in keeping with the objectives of the Sunderland Cycling Strategy (available at www.sunderland.gov.uk/cycling). Specifically proposals must help to achieve the following policies as set out in the Sunderland Cycling Strategy (2002):

C2: Route networks will achieve high standards of coherence, directness, safety, attractiveness and comfort. Design and layout of routes and associated cycling facilities will take account of guidelines published in Supplementary Guidance to the UDP. The City Council will aim to ensure that development does not sever or prejudice accessibility to cycle routes.

C5: The City Council will endeavour to secure the provision of cycle routes and other facilities within or adjacent to new developments through planning permissions and agreements.

C6: The City Council will aim to ensure that cycling is fully integrated with public transport to facilitate cycle use as part of longer journeys.

C7: The City Council will integrate measures to facilitate cycling with measures to aid pedestrians and people with mobility difficulties.

Example of improved cycling routes



C8: The City Council will ensure adequate cycle parking is provided in new development. Opportunities will also be taken to encourage provision in existing development, particularly for employees and customers.

The design of cycling infrastructure must be in keeping with the principles set out in Note 2/08 Cycling Infrastructure Design, which is available on the Department for Transport website.

Public conveniences

The recent public consultation highlighted the public's concerns regarding the provision and condition of public conveniences at the seafront. The council intends to undertake a more detailed analysis of this issue before making recommendations for improvements. As part of any wider improvements at the seafront, detailed consideration should be given to opportunities to improve existing facilities and explore alternative options for provision.

It was identified during the public consultation that showers and foot showers are needed at the seafront. The council will seek to deliver these facilities and will look favourably on development proposals incorporating amenities which support the recreational use of the seafront, for example changing, showering and footwashing facilities.

Solar panels, Barcelona



Car parking

There is currently a good provision of public car parking at the seafront with surface car parks available at Roker and Seaburn in addition to on-street parking along Whitburn Road at Seaburn.

The provision of parking at the seafront should balance the needs of residents, visitors and businesses alongside the need to minimise any impact on the character of the seafront.

Any new car parking should be carefully integrated into the street scene to ensure that it does not adversely impact on the appearance of the area or reduce the quality of the pedestrian environment.

Whilst there is good provision of free car parking, there is a particular problem at Roker of drivers choosing not to use public car parks and instead parking on grass verges and footways. This not only creates problems for other visitors but also detracts from the overall appearance of the area. These problems must be tackled as part of any improvements and also be addressed through the preparation of a management plan for the seafront to ensure that adequate numbers of enforcement officers are available in the area to control illegal parking.

Development quality

The city council is committed to achieving high standards of design quality for any new developments in the city. At the seafront this should both reinforce the distinctive character of the area and positively contribute to its wider regeneration, helping to deliver the vision.

By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice (prepared by the DETR/CABE) sets out seven key design objectives for the planning system in fostering a sense of place:

Character - A place with its own identity

Continuity and enclosure - A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished

Quality of the public realm - A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas

Ease of movement - A place that is easy to get to and move through

Legibility - A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand

Adaptability - A place that can change easily

Diversity - A place with variety and choice

Any new development must carefully consider the existing character of the area and ensure that appropriate materials are chosen which allow new buildings to integrate with and add to the overall character of the seafront and wider area.

Sustainable design

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East places the delivery of sustainable communities at the heart of strategic policy. Sustainability should be promoted through design, construction and location in order to deliver a range of environmental, social and economic objectives. Sustainability and sustainable construction should underpin any development proposals at the seafront.

A key tool for the assessment of the sustainable credentials of new non-residential developments is provided by the use of the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). This assesses the performance of buildings against a wide range of environmental criteria covering issues such as energy use, materials, water, ecology and pollution. Performance is rated within bands, with buildings being awarded a pass, good, very good or excellent rating.

The council will seek to ensure that any new development achieves a BREEAM rating of 'very good' or higher.

Example of landscaped car-parking



East Beach Café, Littlehampton



Solar-heated showers, Bridlington



6.2 Character areas

Roker and Seaburn seafront were historically known as the 'twin resorts' due to their complementary nature. Whilst Roker over the years has been a place for relaxation, Seaburn has always been the more commercial resort and the main focus of leisure activity. The complementary nature of the two seafronts will be built upon to develop resorts that are tailored to meet the needs of different visitors, widening the seafront's appeal. Four main character areas have been identified:

Marine Walk

Cliff Park and Recreation Park

Ocean Park

Seaburn promenade

The extent of these areas can be viewed on Figure 8.

Marine Walk character area



Cliff Park and Recreation Park character area



Ocean Park character area



Seaburn Promenade character area



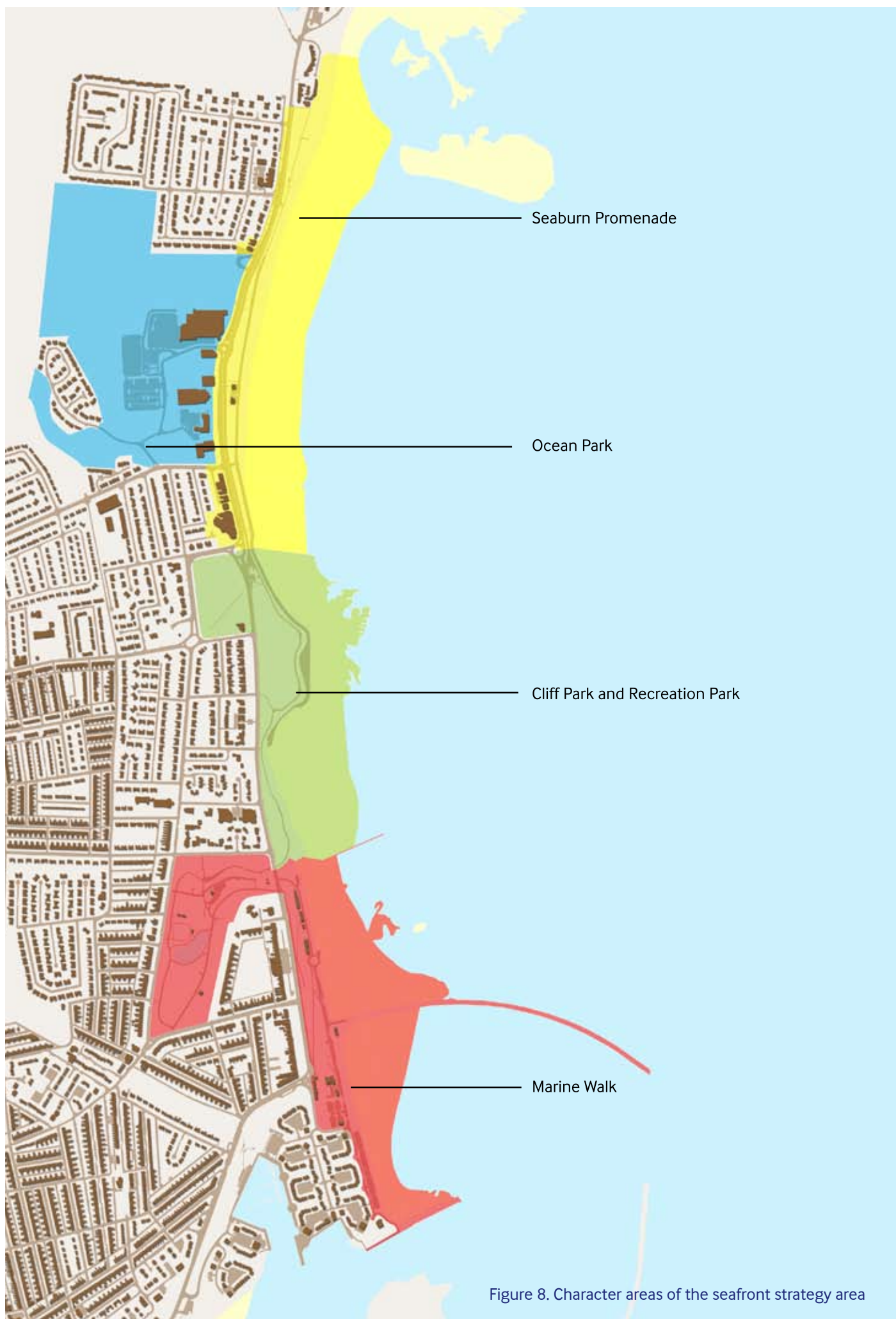


Figure 8. Character areas of the seafront strategy area

6.3 Marine Walk

Roker's heritage, culture and geology are inextricably linked to the way in which Marine Walk has been historically used. Marine Walk will provide people with an environment and experience that builds upon and interprets Roker's cultural history and natural features. A coordinated palette of high quality street furniture, materials and lighting will restore Marine Walk's sense of place.

General use

Marine Walk is valued by residents and visitors as an area to relax, whether this is by sitting enjoying views of the attractive natural environment, walking, cycling or taking part in watersports. The area's recreational value will be built upon by creating opportunities to learn about the rich history and unique environment through interpretation and educational facilities.

The existing watersports hub and leisure facilities will be supported and complemented by improved basic facilities. In particular provision will be improved for cyclists who come to the area having completed the c2c cycle route.

There is the potential for some additional development north of Adventure Sunderland. Any proposals coming forward must be well designed to integrate with the surrounding area and take influence from the best aspects of the existing built environment. Height and overall form should fit into the surrounding landscape, as should the choice of materials. Developments must provide complementary uses to the existing leisure offer.

Landscape design

Public space will be enhanced in a way which complements Marine Walk's attractive natural environment and unique built heritage. A co-ordinated palette of materials, street furniture and planting will be established to give Marine Walk a distinct identity. Street furniture will be made of durable materials which will weather naturally. Surface materials will be equally hard wearing as they must withstand potential flooding. High quality materials such as granite will be used in key locations.

Works will be integrated with the refurbishment/replacement of the sea wall and will accommodate access for the future maintenance of it.

Planting of native grasses and perennials will give Marine Walk a softer coastal feel. Planting of trees and shrubs which are native to the Durham coast will help to enliven the grass banks.

Key spaces

The dramatic setting of Roker Ravine and Holey Rock Corner will be enhanced with lighting and public realm improvements to make the area more of a feature.

The installation of the sculpture 'C' marking the end of the c2c cycle route will be a focal point and point of celebration to the south of the promenade. The sculpture will be complemented with public realm improvements and the installation of modern play equipment.

Access and linkages

Key gateways will be enhanced. Narrowing and realignment of the promenade road will provide a more attractive traffic calming solution which will reduce conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. Marine Walk will become more of a pedestrian-orientated environment.

Linkages between the upper and lower promenades will be enhanced with improved footpaths and an additional direct access between the two.

Linkages will also be enhanced between Roker Park to the north of Marine Walk and St Peter's Artwork Trail to the south. This will be achieved by improving signs throughout the area and removing barriers to access.

New 'C' sculpture, Marine Walk



Cleleys New Wave, Lancashire





Figure 9. Marine Walk character area

6.4 Cliff Park and Recreation Park

General use

Cliff Park and Recreation Park are open landscaped areas which provide attractive views over the North Sea. Parson's Rocks which lie below Cliff Park are of considerable ecological value, containing part of the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, designated due to populations of breeding Little Tern, wintering Turnstone and wintering Purple Sandpiper. Both areas are used throughout the year for passive recreation and during summer months for hosting events. In addition this area forms part of the designated Durham Coast SSSI.

Both Cliff Park and Recreation Park are allocated as open space in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) for Sunderland. Policy L7 of the UDP states that development will only be allowed in this area if it can be demonstrated there will be no significant effect on the amenity, recreational and wildlife value of the site. Policy NA30.1 of the UDP states that sea views along Roker seafront will be protected and where possible enhanced. In keeping with these policies Cliff Park and Recreation Park will be enhanced but the nature of these areas as open space will not be significantly altered.

There is an opportunity to improve existing facilities and amenities which are already located on Seaburn lower promenade adjacent the 'Cat and Dog' Steps.

Landscape design

The nature of this site would support landscaping in key areas based on the local ecology, using plants native to the Durham coast. A coherent landscaping strategy will be developed for the upgrading of existing planting, paving, lighting and signs. The boundary treatment of Recreation Park will be enhanced.

Key spaces

There are two focal points located on Cliff Park: the Grade II* Listed lighthouse and Grade II listed Bede's Cross. The lighthouse was constructed in 1856 for the Old South Pier and transferred to Cliff Park in 1983. The lighthouse is constructed of wrought-iron plates painted white, creating an impressive landmark. Bede's Cross was erected on Cliff Park in 1904 in memory of the Venerable Bede. The cross is located on the route of the Bede's Way cycle and pedestrian routes which link the twin-monasteries of Wearmouth-Jarrow. More sympathetic landscaping treatments to their immediate setting will enhance and highlight these two landmarks which are of key importance to the seafront's heritage.

Access and linkages

A footpath runs diagonally through Recreation Park, marking a desire line from Sea Road in the direction of Ocean Park. Enhancements will be made to the footpath to improve and formalise this route.

Existing pathways which run along the edge of Cliff Park and provide attractive views of the North East coast will be improved and maintained.

The cycle route which runs along the A183 will be realigned to ensure that cyclists can travel along the route of the A183 without having to dismount. Opportunities to enhance linkages between Marine Walk and Seaburn lower promenade will be explored. An assessment will be made of the potential effect this could have on the SPA and Ramsar site.

Interpretation route, Hornsea



Knapweed



Red Hot Poker





Figure 10: Cliff Park and Recreation Park character area

6.5 Ocean Park

Ocean Park will continue to be central to the resort of Seaburn, providing visitors with a range of leisure and complementary uses that build upon the area's existing leisure facilities and natural assets.

Linkages between any new development will be enhanced and the Seaburn promenade area and set within a coordinated palette of high quality street furniture, materials and lighting giving Ocean Park a strong sense of place.

General use

Ocean Park currently provides visitors with a range of leisure facilities and open space. The existing range of facilities will be improved by creating opportunities to develop additional cafés, restaurants, wet weather facilities and outdoor facilities for families which complement the existing offer. Areas of open space will be redesigned and enhanced, providing an improved quality of public realm for local residents and visitors.

Any mixed use development must contain similar levels of open space laid out to increase the accessibility and attractiveness of the area.

The UDP allocates a large area of Ocean Park as open space. However, as a result of wider statutory work into the preparation of the Local Development Framework and more specifically, the identification of new housing sites for the city, consideration is being given to the site's potential to accommodate areas of new housing development. It is not the purpose of this Strategy to change the land use allocations for the area, however, the Strategy does acknowledge that land uses in this area are being reconsidered as part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework and may be amended in the future.

Any proposals coming forward must be well designed to integrate with the surrounding area, and take influence from the best aspects of the existing built environment, adding to the character of the immediate and wider area.

Landscape design

Public space will be enhanced in a way which complements the wider Seaburn area. Hard landscaping will be of a high quality in key spaces complementing the soft and hard landscaping in adjoining areas. High quality materials such as granite will be used in key locations. A range of soft landscaping solutions will be introduced that integrate with and add to the coastal location and existing green spaces.

Key spaces

At present Ocean Park lacks any real focal points and the sense of arrival is particularly weak. Whitburn Road currently creates a barrier between Ocean Park and Seaburn promenade. The seafront public consultation highlighted the difficulties pedestrians experience in crossing the road. The opportunity to narrow the carriageway, reduce traffic speeds and increase crossing times should be considered to give greater priority to pedestrians and provide better integration between Ocean Park and Seaburn promenade. As part of these works an opportunity exists to introduce a key space at the front of Ocean Park stretching across Whitburn Road to unite this area with Seaburn promenade to provide a focal point for Seaburn and create a new flexible public space.

Opportunities to introduce additional public spaces that are both hard and soft landscaped should be considered as part of any wider development/ improvement proposals.

Access and linkages

Policy NA40 in the UDP states that traffic management measures will be introduced on the A183 at the seafront between its junction with Seaburn Terrace and Lowry Road to reduce potential conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.

Opportunities to improve access and linkages should be considered as part of any wider improvement proposals.

Da La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea



Marine Mosaic, Bournemouth





6.6 Seaburn promenade

General use

Seaburn promenade will continue to give visitors the opportunity to walk and cycle along the seafront, enjoy the natural environment and provide a link to the wider coastline to the north and south. The area will also continue to be an important venue for events such as the annual International Air Show.

Improvements will be made to create a promenade area that has a coordinated palette of high quality street furniture, materials and lighting giving a strong sense of place and increasing visitor satisfaction and enjoyment. In addition opportunities exist for the addition of sculpture or artwork along the sea wall at Seaburn.

Key spaces

The main focal point for the Seaburn promenade area is the former seating shelter. Whilst the shelter continues to provide toilet facilities, an opportunity exists to consider additional commercial or resort uses that would bring the shelter back to life and provide further activity along the promenade.

The roof of the shelter also provides a focal point on the upper promenade footpath and cycleway. This could, however, be much improved as part of the creation of a larger public space. As set out in the Ocean Park character area, the opportunity exists to provide a multi-functional space that can be used flexibly for events. The creation of an enlarged focal space would add to the character of the area and generate a much stronger sense of place. In addition the opportunity to narrow the carriageway, reduce traffic speeds and increase crossing times should be considered to give greater priority to pedestrians and provide better integration between Ocean Park and Seaburn

promenade.

Other buildings along the promenade will be maintained and, where viable, opportunities explored to bring vacant buildings back into use to create new business opportunities such as additional cafés or restaurants and other facilities for visitors.

Access and linkages

Opportunities to enhance pedestrian and cycle linkages between Seaburn promenade and the wider area will be explored to maximise the overall visitor experience.

The recent public consultation highlighted that there is insufficient pushchair and wheelchair access from the upper promenade to the lower promenade and from the lower promenade onto the beach at Seaburn. Opportunities will be explored to improve the existing ramps from the upper to the lower promenade and incorporate ramped access into an existing set of steps from the lower promenade to the beach.

Southern Gateway, Blackpool



Headland Café, Bridlington



Tern Project, Morecambe



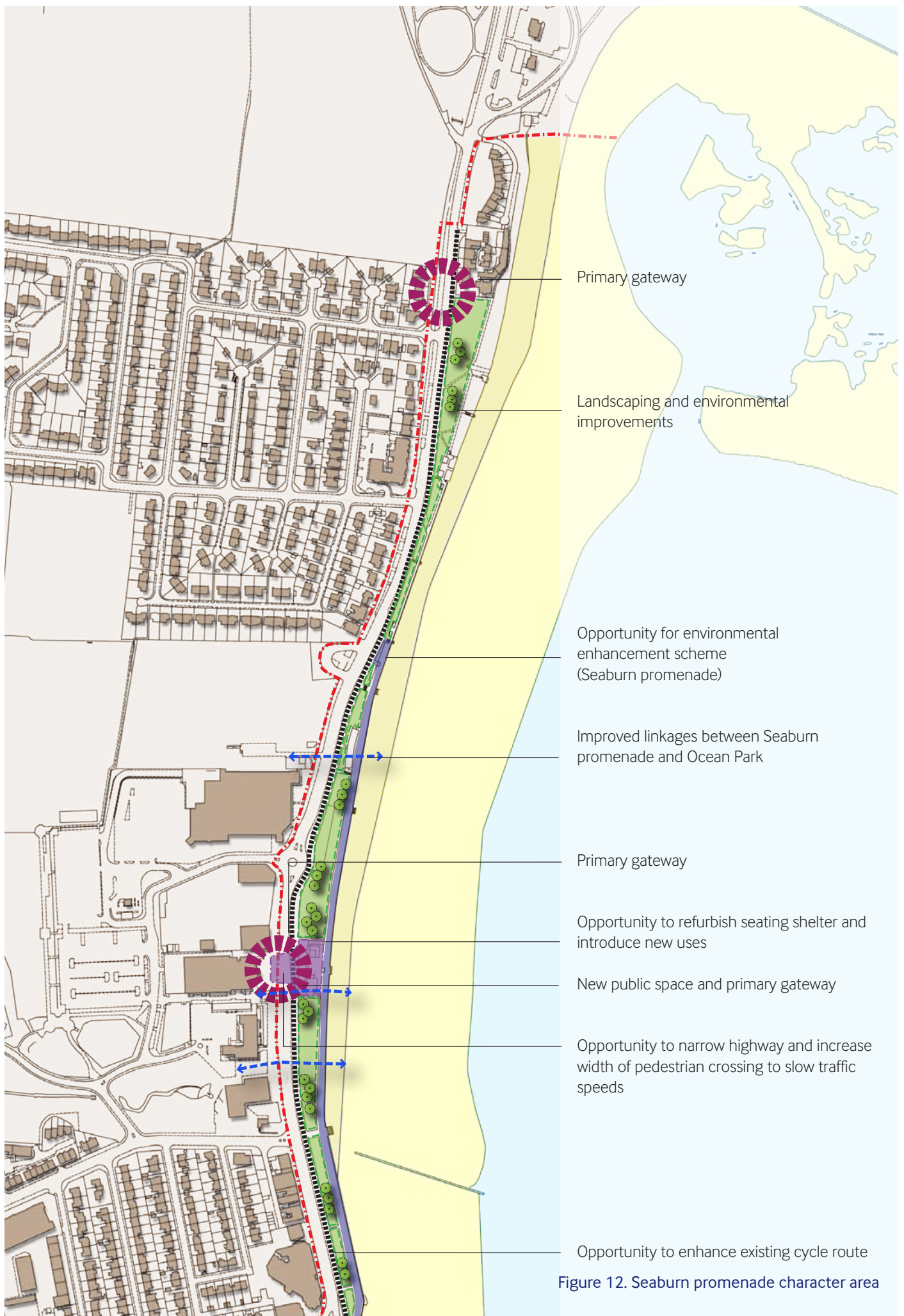


Figure 12. Seaburn promenade character area

6.7 Gateways

Gateways to the seafront should create a distinctive, high quality arrival experience for local people and visitors. They can help aid legibility to those moving into and across the site as well as creating a positive first impression to those visiting the area for the first time. A number of primary gateways have been identified as part of the Seafront Strategy with a view of ensuring gateways complement their setting and location. The location of these gateways can be seen on Figure 5.

Gateway One - Whitburn

Whitburn Road is the primary Northern gateway into the Strategy Area and the main arrival point for those entering the seafront from Whitburn and South Shields. Prior to entering the Strategy Area, Whitburn Bents Road travels along the coast offering glimpses of the coast and sea at varying points along the way. Upon reaching this gateway, the road dips down and joins the coastline, offering the first panoramic views of the entire Seaburn seafront.

The gateway currently lacks definition with large areas of open agricultural land to the northwest and bland public amenity space to the south-east. The views offered at this location are blocked by street furniture such as a bus stop and the space lacks any sense of arrival to Sunderland's seafront.

Indicative proposals for the gateway

site centre around emphasising the role of the space as a primary gateway and ensuring that a sense of arrival is apparent to people passing through. Both vehicular and pedestrian surface materials should be upgraded at the gateway. Views should be framed through the use of strategic tree planting and landscaping along the northwestern edge of Whitburn Bents Road. Both factors should then draw attention to the newly established views of Seaburn seafront, which should be assisted by relocating any street furniture that currently impedes views and creating a newly landscaped recreational space to the southeast. Further emphasis could be added by placing artwork or another form of landmark feature which could help to provide the gateway with an identifiable character.

By relocating the bus stop, a substation positioned behind the existing bus shelter would be exposed and would become visible from the road, particularly when approaching Seaburn from the north along Whitburn Bents Road. In order to disguise this it is possible for the substation to be masked and incorporated into a landmark or art feature in this position.

View from Whitburn gateway, facing north



View from Whitburn gateway, facing south



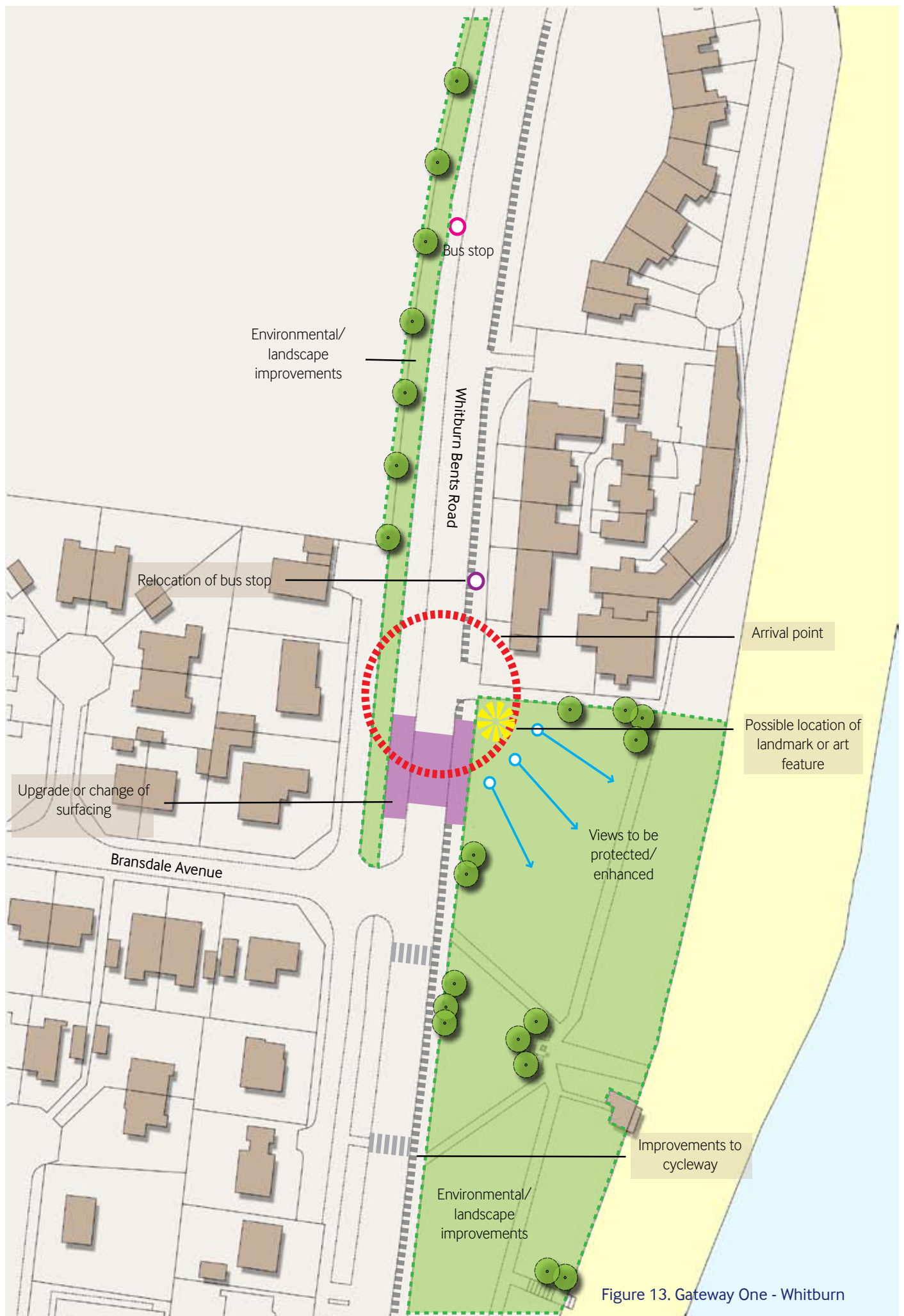


Figure 13. Gateway One - Whitburn

Gateway Two – Harbour View

Harbour View (A183) is the main vehicular corridor linking the Seafront Strategy Area to Sunderland city centre and the south, and as such is likely to be one of the most heavily used of the primary gateways. It is also a primary gateway for those using public transport to get to the seafront, with the area hosting a number of direct bus routes into Sunderland. The gateway's location at the top of the Roker Embankment, which separates the upper and lower promenades, also offers large panoramic views of Roker seafront, the piers and the lighthouse.

Public footpaths connecting Roker Terrace to Marine Walk are in a poor state of repair and a large area of open land running along the southern edge of Harbour View does little to complement the area. Cars and vans are frequently parked along Harbour View, blocking what would be impressive views of the seafront and marina.

It is proposed to create a sense of arrival at the gateway to enhance the views on offer. Improvements to, or upgrading of the road and pavement surface should be implemented in the area of the roundabout to help reduce traffic speeds. This can be undertaken in conjunction with the siting of either art or other landmark features on the roundabout itself or on the adjacent area of open land. These factors combined should help give a greater sense of arrival into the strategy area as well as giving the gateway an identity which should help complement the wider Marine Walk Character Area.

View from Harbour View gateway, facing east



View from Harbour View gateway, facing west



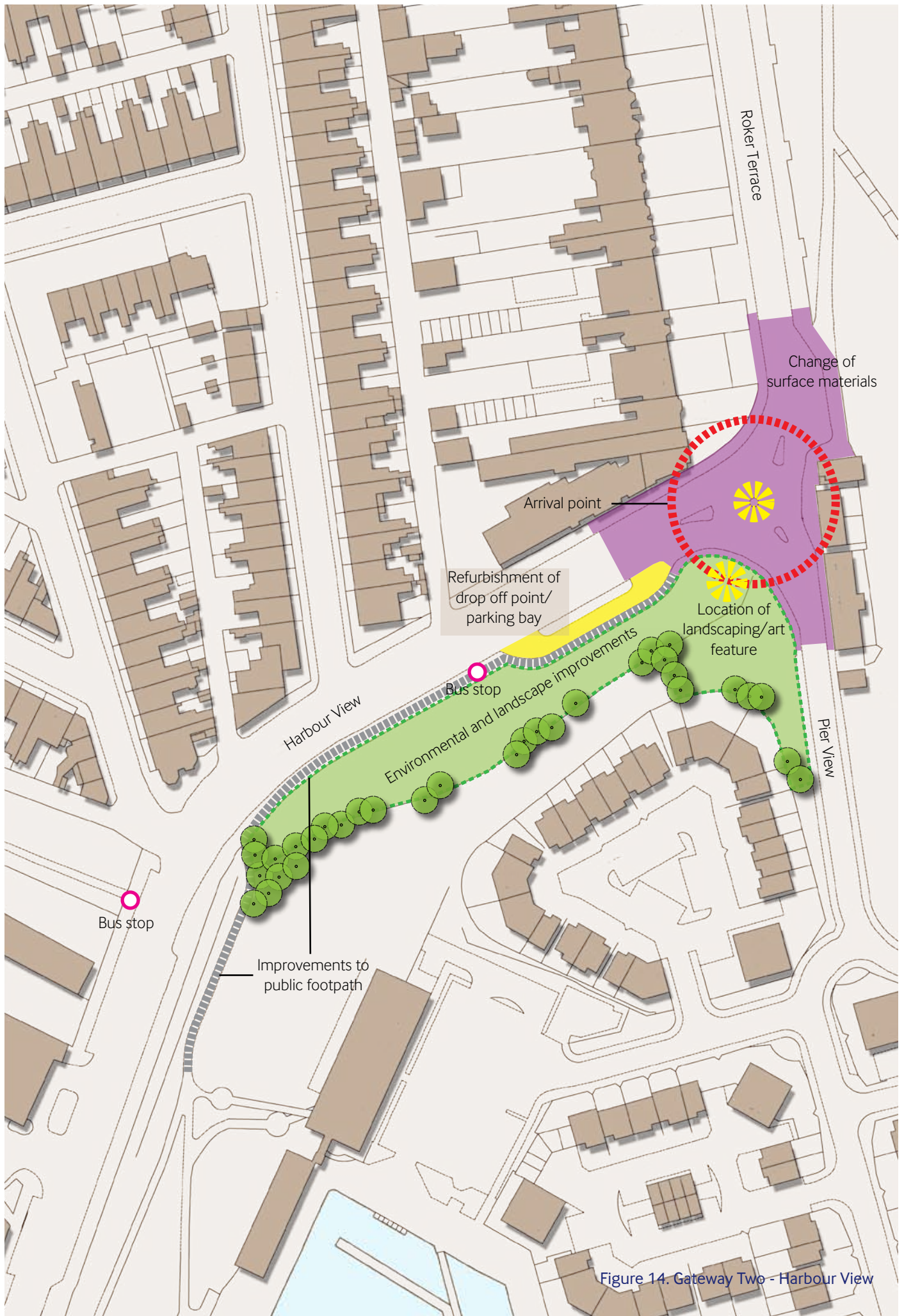


Figure 14. Gateway Two - Harbour View

Gateway Three – Recreation Park and Cliff Park

Although it is not located on a major thoroughfare, the Seaburn Park Gateway - on Sea Road/Chichester Road - acts as a primary gateway for those entering the strategy area from local areas such as Fulwell and Seaburn. It also offers the most direct vehicular route for visitors travelling in from the Newcastle Gateshead area and those using the Tyne Tunnel. It is also the point at which Sea Road opens out, offering strategically important views of the seafront which are protected in local planning policy.

Given its suburban location, the Seaburn Park gateway is currently in the best condition of the six primary gateway sites identified in the strategy. Nonetheless, opportunities exist to further enhance the quality of the gateway to help aid legibility and provide a sense of arrival.

Proposed improvements include the upgrading of both road and footpath materials surrounding the roundabout to help reduce traffic speeds and provide a feature to make the user aware of the gateway. There is also a small memorial park to the northwest of the gateway which could benefit from environmental/landscape improvements to channel views towards the sea. The placing of public art or other landmark features on the roundabout could help to complement this objective and give the gateway its own individual identity.

View from Recreation Park, facing east



View from Recreation Park, facing west





Figure 15. Gateway Three – Recreation Park and Cliff Park

Gateway Four – Ocean Park

Ocean Park is in close proximity to a large area of car parking, the majority of which currently serves Morrisons supermarket. The crossing adjacent the Seaburn Leisure Centre is a primary gateway for those parking in this area and crossing Whitburn Road to access Seaburn beach.

This crossing point is currently dominated by high levels of on-street parking. Areas of soft landscaping are bland. There is a large viewing area located on the top of Seaburn Shelter to the east of Whitburn Road. This seating area is also in a poor state of repair and in need of an improved maintenance regime.

There is the potential to improve this area by providing a shared surface crossing area, which would involve changing both road and footpath surface materials. This should reduce the traffic speeds, help to break up large areas currently dominated by on-street parking and provide a safer and more pleasant setting for pedestrians crossing Whitburn Road. This will be complemented with artwork and planting to create an attractive and welcoming environment.

View from Ocean Park gateway, facing east



View from Ocean Park gateway, facing west



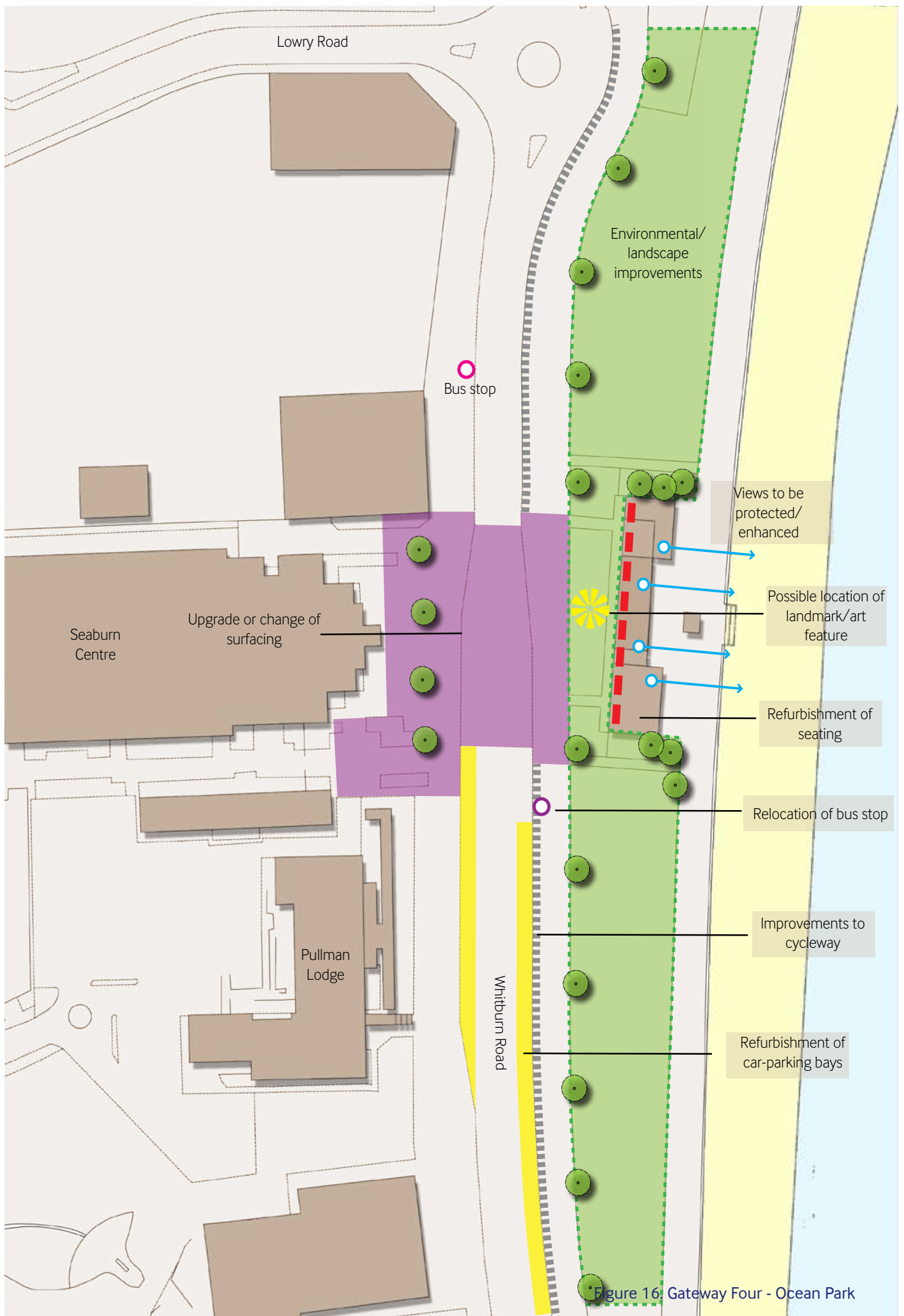


Figure 16: Gateway Four - Ocean Park

Gateway Five – North Haven

Although it is one of the smallest of the primary gateways into the Seafront Strategy Area, the North Haven gateway has the potential to have the biggest influence on how people perceive the area, given its role and how it is used. As well as being a busy pedestrian gateway into the site for people using the St. Peter's Riverside Artwork Trail, the gateway also hosts the popular c2c cycle route which attracts visitors from all around the country. As a consequence, this gateway plays a fundamental role on not only how the Seafront Strategy Area is perceived locally, but also nationally as a tourist attraction.

Currently the gateway is in a poor state of repair and requires significant improvements. There are conflicts between both local people using the site for recreational fishing and cyclists using the c2c. Surface materials do not emphasise the area's role as a gateway and cycle ramps are in need of refurbishment to make them more user-friendly to the numerous tourists that use them on a regular basis. The presence of a number of poorly maintained art features and the lack of any significant landscaping gives the area a poor aesthetic appearance not always welcoming to the user.

Indicative proposals focus on improving the quality of the environment to reduce conflicts between people using the area for varying uses. Initially improvements will include refurbishment of existing art features and soft landscaping to improve the aesthetic appearance of the area. Provision should be made for pedestrians and cyclists, including widening ramps and improving surface quality and materials. Redundant street furniture should also be removed to allow greater flexibility of the space and reduce the potential for conflicts. The long term strategic vision for the area also includes the restoration of the former North Pier, so that it may be opened for public access and to improve first impressions of the area, emphasising its role as a primary gateway.

View from North Haven gateway, facing east



View from North Haven, facing north





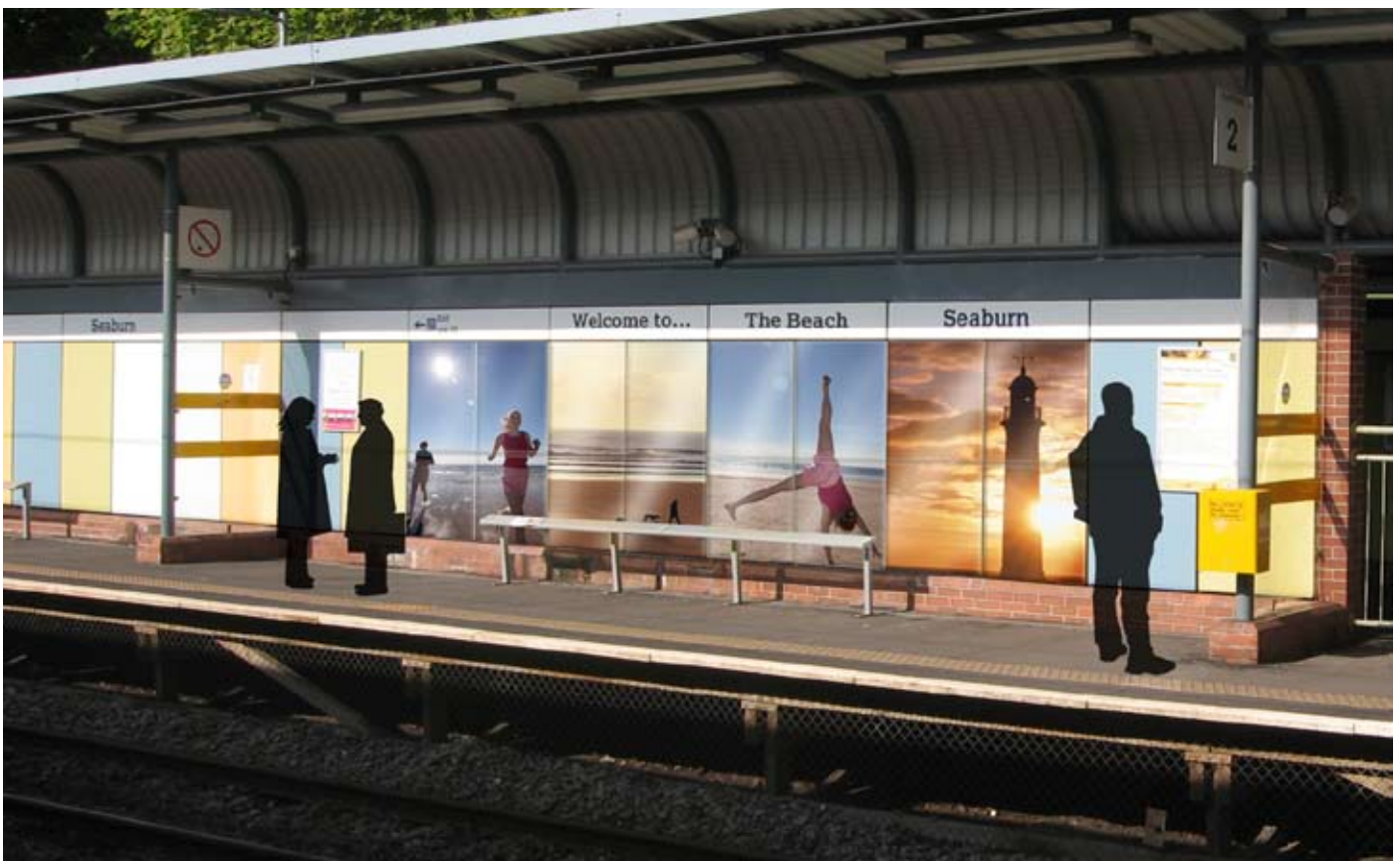
Gateway Six – Seaburn Metro Station

Seaburn metro station is the closest metro station to the seafront; located only 1km away. The metro offers regular services to Sunderland and South Hylton to the south and Newcastle, North Tyneside and Newcastle Airport to the north. The station therefore plays a fundamental role not only as a gateway for those travelling to the seafront but also as a point of promotion emphasising the close proximity of the station to the seafront.

There is currently no acknowledgement of the proximity of the station to the seafront, demonstrating a missed opportunity in promoting the seafront as an accessible tourist attraction.

As illustrated below, the strategy aims to remedy this issue by rebranding the metro station as a means to promote the seafront. Although this area is different to other gateways in that no physical changes are proposed, it is the intention that through relatively minor re-branding exercises the role of a major gateway into the seafront can be established.

Illustrative proposals for re-branding Seaburn Metro Station



7.0 Management issues

7.1 Management issues

The public consultation highlighted various issues relating to the management of the seafront. A comprehensive management plan will be developed for the seafront addressing the following issues:

Issue	Description	Required Outcome
Toilets	The consultation highlighted that toilet provision at the seafront is not sufficient.	Since the end of the public consultation arrangements have been made to keep all of the toilets, at the seafront open throughout the winter season, with the exception of the underground block adjacent to the Seaburn tram shelter. Funding will be sought to provide higher quality toilets including a Changing Places facility.
Litter	Litter was highlighted as a problem - particularly around takeaways.	Increased cleansing at seafront during peak times. Bins which are better designed for the environment i.e. to keep out seagulls.
Dogs	Dog fouling particularly on the beach was highlighted as an issue.	Greater staff resources to allow the enforcement of dog bylaws. Increased signage to increase the awareness of the existing coastal code 'dog ban' zones at the seafront.
Maintenance	Surface materials and street furniture show signs of wear and tear giving the seafront a rundown appearance.	Maintenance plan and greater budget to maintain public space, coastal defences and street furniture. Longer term replacement of existing public realm with higher quality durable materials which reduce need for maintenance.

A number of additional issues were highlighted in the consultation which the council must work with its partners to resolve:

Issue	Description	Required Outcome
Bus links	It was felt that more direct buses are needed linking the seafront to the remainder of the city. Many people commented that a bus link which connects Sunderland's main attractions (i.e. St Peter's Church, the National Glass Centre) and the seafront would be well used.	Work with bus operators to encourage the development of viable bus routes which will increase the accessibility of the seafront.
Safety	Specific areas of the seafront were highlighted as being or feeling unsafe at certain times of the day. In particular the seating shelters at Seaburn and Roker were highlighted as being centres for anti-social behaviour.	Work with local police to design out crime as far as is possible, and increase police presence where necessary.

8.0 Next steps

8.1 Next steps

Following a second round of public consultation on the draft Seafront Regeneration Strategy in summer 2009 the document has been amended as necessary before being taken forward for adoption. Once adopted this document will set out the council's ambitions for the seafront at Seaburn and Roker. The council will be active in working with the private sector and pursuing funding opportunities to allow the delivery of this Strategy.

To deliver the Strategy a suite of detailed documents will be produced, these are:

- Marine Walk Masterplan (Supplementary Planning Document);
- Seaburn Masterplan (Supplementary Planning Document);
- Promenade Public Realm Strategy and;
- Seafront Management Plan

The Marine Walk Masterplan has been prepared and consulted on in conjunction with this Strategy. Following this consultation the Masterplan has been amended as necessary. This Masterplan is to be taken forward as a Supplementary Planning Document which will guide the development of Marine Walk, a detailed masterplan for Seaburn is to follow.

Dog walking along the beach



Yachts at Marine Walk



Beach frisbee



