



South Tyneside Council



South Shields New Central Library and Digital Media Centre and Market Place Planning Statement

June 2014

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Muse Developments Ltd and South Tyneside Council

Planning Portal references

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Executive Summary

1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Muse Developments Ltd and South Tyneside Council for the proposed first phase of the South Shields 365 Regeneration Strategy of South Shields Town Centre.
2. The proposals are contained within two planning applications. Application A proposes the erection of a new central library and digital media centre, along with the creation of a 40 space car park and pedestrian link. Application B proposes the remodelling of the Market Place and erection of a market stall canopy structure.
3. The application proposals are supported by national planning policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, bringing economic, social and environmental benefits to South Shields. They are also supported by local planning policy contained within South Tyneside Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront Area Action Plan, as well as the South Shields 365 document and the LDF Supplementary Planning Documents. In particular, the applications represent the first phase of implementation of the South Shields 365 document.
4. Based on the above, it is demonstrated within this Planning Statement and the suite of submission documents that the two planning applications accord with national and local planning policy. In addition, other material planning considerations of relevance are supportive of the proposals.
5. Therefore, it can be concluded that planning permission should be granted, allowing this important first phase of South Shields regeneration to begin.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies and supports the two full planning applications submitted on behalf of our joint client, Muse Developments Ltd and South Tyneside Council, for the proposed first phase of the South Shields 365 Regeneration Strategy of South Shields Town Centre.
- 1.2 The two planning applications seek planning permission for two separate but related elements of the scheme:
- Application A: Erection of New Central Library & Digital Media Centre, creation of a 40 space car park and pedestrian link
 - Application B: Remodelling of Market Place and erection of market stall canopy structure
- 1.3 The site where the new central library will stand was formerly occupied by Wouldhave House, which was demolished in early 2013. The demolition has allowed the site of the proposed new library to be cleared, ready for redevelopment. The Market Place will remain in the same location, but will be remodelled and enlarged as a consequence of this proposal. It is also proposed to split the use of the Market Place into a market square and civic square.
- 1.4 Although separate planning applications have been submitted, both should be considered alongside one another.
- 1.5 This Planning Statement forms part of a suite of documents and drawings submitted in support of the planning applications, which also comprise:
- Air Quality Assessment
 - Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
 - Design and Access Statement (for each application site)
 - Ecological Assessment
 - Environmental Noise Assessment
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Heritage Statement
 - Lighting Strategy
 - Phase 2 Ground Investigation
 - Statement of Community Involvement
 - Sustainability Statement
 - Transport Assessment
 - Travel Plan
 - Tree Survey
- 1.6 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the documents listed above.
- 1.7 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to provide an assessment of the application proposals in the context of current relevant planning policy and guidance.

- 1.8 It is important to note that this Planning Statement does not explore the matters of design, heritage or highways in detail. Design matters are dealt with in the two Design & Access Statements prepared by FaulknerBrowns Architects and The Harris Partnership, with the heritage implications of both proposals dealt with in the single Heritage Statement prepared by Turley's Heritage Team. The highway and transport implications of the scheme are dealt with in the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan prepared by JMP Consultants Ltd.
- 1.9 A request for a Screening Opinion in accordance with Regulation 5(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 was submitted to South Tyneside Council in May 2014. The Council's response (LPA reference ST/0500/14/EIA) was issued on 17th June 2014 and confirms that the submission of an ES is not required for this proposal. The Screening Opinion is included in Appendix 2 of this Statement.
- 1.10 A number of discussions and four pre-application meetings have taken place with the Planning Officer at South Tyneside Council. The Council have been kept up-to-date of the project's evolution throughout the past ten months. In turn, the Council have helpfully provided comments and assistance throughout this period.
- 1.11 A public exhibition was held on Thursday 5th June and again on Saturday 7th June at South Shields Library to introduce the proposals to members of the public and other interested parties, with the development team on hand to answer questions. A summary of the exhibition is provided in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement document.
- 1.12 The remainder of this document is structured as follows:
- Section 2 describes the application sites and their surroundings;
 - Section 3 describes the development proposals;
 - Section 4 sets out the relevant planning history of the application sites;
 - Section 5 sets out the planning policy context of relevance to the two applications;
 - Section 6 identifies the key issues and provides a planning appraisal of the two applications;
 - Section 7 provides a conclusion.

2. Sites and Surroundings

2.1 As shown on the accompanying drawings, the proposals relate to two separate planning application sites, comprising:

- Application A: The site of the former Wouldhave House government building (which has now been demolished) to the west of the Market Place and an area of land to the west of Ferry Road, adjacent to the recently-constructed BT building and Harton Quays Park; and
- Application B: The existing Market Place in South Shields town centre.

2.2 The two separate application sites and their surroundings are outlined in red on the accompanying drawings and are discussed separately below.

Application A: Erection of New Central Library & Digital Media Centre, creation of a 40 space car park and pedestrian link

2.3 This element relates to 0.62 ha (1.5 acres) of the former Wouldhave House government building, land to the west of Ferry Street and a small section of Ferry Street itself to provide a pedestrian link between the car park and the town centre.

2.4 The land to north of the proposed library building is comprised of an open area of land (ie where an arm of Wouldhave House stood) and a modern apartment block that overlooks Ferry Street. To the west lies Ferry Street and the landscaped Harton Quays Park, including the recently-constructed BT building. A footpath runs westwards from Ferry Street to the cross-Tyne Ferry link.

Application B: Remodelling of Market Place and erection of market stall canopy structure

2.5 This element relates to 0.73 ha (1.8 acres) of the existing Market Place and its circulation roads, along with short sections of the pedestrianised King Street, Union Alley and the pedestrian alleyway through the existing buildings to the north of Market Place.

2.6 The grounds of the Church of St Hilda are south of the proposed library building, with the church itself to the south of the existing Market Place. To the north and east of the Market Place are a mixture of three- and four-storey retail and commercial premises, with King Street, the main retail street, running eastwards from the Market Place.

2.7 As part of the overall South Shields 365 Masterplan, highway changes are proposed to Church Way and Chapter Row, removing vehicles from this road. Removing the vehicles will allow the southward extension of the proposed civic square to take place as part of the next phase of the South Shields 365 Regeneration Strategy.

2.8 The two adjoining application sites are in a sustainable location within South Shields Town Centre, with bus stops adjoining the site, the South Shields Metro Station 250 metres away to the east and the cross-Tyne Ferry link to the west. The Sustainability

Statement that accompanies the two applications sets out the sustainability of the two application sites in greater detail.

- 2.9 Neither site lies within an area at risk of flooding, as identified on the Environment Agency's online flood risk maps.

3. Proposed Development

- 3.1 The proposals represent a first phase of the wider South Shields 365 Regeneration Strategy. This first phase proposes a new library, educational and community building, redevelopment of the Market Place and associated car parking, as shown on the accompanying drawings.

- 3.2 The proposed scheme is submitted as two separate (but linked) planning applications as follows:

Application A: Erection of New Central Library & Digital Media Centre, creation of a 40 space car park and pedestrian link

- 3.3 This element relates to 0.62 ha (1.5 acres) of the former Wouldhave House government building, land to the west of Ferry Street and a small section of Ferry Street itself to provide a pedestrian link between the car park and the town centre.
- 3.4 As shown on the accompanying drawings, the proposals are for the erection of a new community centre/library building, which will be circular in plan with a flat entrance frontage to the east (facing the square). The building will have an internal diameter of 44.0 metres and a height of approximately 16.0 metres over four levels, and will house a new central library and digital media centre, providing a new public community facility for the town.
- 3.5 The ground floor of the proposed building is also shown to include a retail unit, which will be ancillary to the overall function of the facility. Should the retail element not be filled prior to the opening of the building, this area is expected to be used for exhibition space relating to the building itself.
- 3.6 The gross internal floorspace of the building is 4,060 sq m over the four levels. It should be noted, however, that the plans show external seating areas and a circular perimeter walkway at roof level. This adds an additional 366 sq m floorspace at roof level, although this additional floorspace is not included in the application forms, as it is external – rather than internal – floorspace to be provided.
- 3.7 Outside the building, a performance amphitheatre and hard landscaping elements are proposed to make the space around the building useable, add visual interest to the scheme and be in keeping with the surrounding architectural styles; in particular, the architecture of the Grade I listed Old Town Hall in the centre of the existing Market Place.
- 3.8 This application will also include the formation of a new car park to the west of Ferry Street, providing parking provision for 40 vehicles, including 8 disabled parking bays and cycle parking for 40 cycles. A new pedestrian crossing will be created across Ferry Street to link the car park with the new community building and the redeveloped Market Place, via Dean Street, which will be a new pedestrianised access leading to the town centre. Amendments are also proposed to the highway and servicing arrangements to facilitate better circulation, as set out in greater detail in the accompanying Transport Assessment.

Application B: Remodelling of Market Place and erection of market stall canopy structure

- 3.9 This element relates to 0.73 ha (1.8 acres) of the existing Market Place and its circulation roads, along with short sections of the pedestrianised King Street, Union Alley and the pedestrian alleyway through the existing buildings to the north of Market Place.
- 3.10 Application B proposes the remodelling of the Market Place. The new market square will include a permanent covered market stall area in the north, in contrast to the current arrangement of semi-permanent scaffolding structures that exist throughout the Market Place currently. As shown on the accompanying drawings, the canopy structures will span the width of the north of the square and will have a height varying between 4.0 metres and 4.7 metres across the three canopies. They will be constructed of stainless steel with a bronze mirror finish.
- 3.11 The Grade I listed Old Town Hall will form the focal point of the redevelopment proposals, with a linear pedestrian route from the town centre via King Street through to the reopened Dean Street and to the car park at Harton Quays. The adjacent Grade II listed Church of St Hilda has also helped formulate the proposals, as discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this Planning Statement.
- 3.12 The whole market and civic area will be landscaped with high-quality materials, which will extend through to link with King Street, Union Alley and the pedestrian alleyway to the north.

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 The planning history of the application sites is limited, with no relevant planning applications listed on the Council's online planning application database.
- 4.2 However, an application for prior approval for the demolition of Wouldhave House, including numbers 33 to 46 Market Place, 1 Ferry Street and the Brigantine (former Public House) at Ferry Approach, South Shields, was granted in February 2012 under application reference ST/0130/12/DEM. Demolition of these buildings took place in 2013 and the site is now clear, with hoardings surrounding the site of the demolished building.
- 4.3 A request for a Screening Opinion in accordance with Regulation 5(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 was submitted to South Tyneside Council in May 2014. The Council's response (LPA reference ST/0500/14/EIA) was issued on 17th June 2014 and confirms that the submission of an ES is not required for this proposal. The Screening Opinion is included in Appendix 2 of this Statement.

Pre-Application Liaison with South Tyneside Council

- 4.4 As Muse Developments' town planning consultant, Turley have had an active role to play in progressing the, planning application process pre-submission. John Brooks, Office Director of Turley's Leeds Office, first spoke to Chris Matten, Planning Officer at South Tyneside Council, on 27th September 2013. A number of conversations and email exchanges followed over the following three months.
- 4.5 The first meeting between Turley and South Tyneside Council's Planning Department took place on 20th January 2014. This was the first of four meetings that have taken place; the subsequent meetings took place on 4th March 2014, 15th April 2014 and 19th May 2014. Chris Matten and John Brooks attended all four meetings. Other attendees at the meeting included Paul Archibald and Helen Kelly of South Tyneside Council, David Wells of Muse Developments and Michael Powell of Turley.
- 4.6 The Council have been kept up-to-date of the project's evolution throughout the past ten months. In turn, the Council have helpfully provided comments and assistance throughout this period.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 This section sets out current relevant national and local planning policy. Specific policies relating to design and heritage are reviewed in more detail in the relevant Design and Access Statements and Heritage Statement respectively.

5.2 The policies outlined below are assessed in detail in chapter 6 of this Statement. As such, the two chapters should be read in conjunction with each other.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out the Government's planning policies for England, with the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14).

5.4 Paragraph 7 of the Framework sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The social role includes supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its cultural well-being.

5.5 Paragraph 56 of the Framework states the importance the Government attaches to the design of the built environment, stating that *"good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people."*

5.6 Paragraph 60 of the Framework states that *"planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness."* Paragraph 61 goes on to say that *"planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment."*

5.7 In order to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, paragraph 70 of the Framework states that planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities (such as cultural buildings) to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

5.8 Paragraphs 126 to 141 of the Framework deal with heritage. In respect of planning applications, paragraph 128 requires the description of the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting, and states that the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

5.9 Given that heritage is a key issue in the determination of the applications, this is addressed separately in greater detail in the Heritage Statement, which accompanies the submission.

- 5.10 Paragraphs 186 and 187 of the Framework encourage local authorities to approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development and to look for solutions rather than problems, to seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible, and to work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

The Development Plan

- 5.11 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.12 The South Tyneside Local Development Framework (LDF) is the current Local Plan. It comprises a portfolio of statutory Development Plan Documents¹ and Supplementary Planning Documents. The relevant policies are summarised below. All documents have been adopted.
- 5.13 The emerging South Tyneside Local Plan is currently in the early stages of preparation, and will bring together the Council's LDF Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPDs. However, as this document is not at an advanced stage, it is not considered that significant weight can be attached to it in the determination of the applications.

LDF Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

Core Strategy (2007)

- 5.14 The Core Strategy sets out the overarching vision of achieving “a better future for South Tyneside’s people”. It is a blueprint for the economic, social and environmental transformation of the Borough, taking forward the vision of South Tyneside’s Regeneration Strategy and providing the framework for proactively implementing the aims and objectives of the Council’s Community Strategy that affect the use of land and buildings.
- 5.15 The Core Strategy describes how the Borough’s population is “falling slowly following an earlier period of more rapid decline”. This has had an impact on the quality of life for the Borough’s residents (because previous policies have sought to manage decline rather than reverse it). One of the key challenges is to make the Borough a place which maximises the opportunity for people to meet their aspirations, including learning and visiting.
- 5.16 To bring this change about, the **Spatial Vision** of the Core Strategy seeks to concentrate development in key regeneration/ development areas, which includes the centre of South Shields. The vision stipulates that proposals should be of sufficient scale to deliver a major change in the perception of the Borough and to have the greatest impact on quality of life and cultural facilities.

¹ The Site-Specific Allocations DPD covers the remaining “non-AAP” parts of the Borough and is not, therefore, of relevance to this proposal

- 5.17 Strategic **Policy ST1** sets the Spatial Strategy for South Tyneside. The policy seeks to maximise both the re-use of previously developed land and the community benefits of regeneration, whilst avoiding or minimising environmental impacts and congestion and safeguarding natural and cultural assets.
- 5.18 Strategic **Policy ST2** relates to sustainable urban living. This will be promoted by ensuring that:
- Highest standards of urban design are promoted so that buildings and their settings make a positive contribution to the local area;
 - The use of environmentally sound and energy efficient construction materials and operational techniques are achieved and that developers work towards low carbon and zero carbon standards;
 - On-site generation of renewable energy is maximised, with a target of 10% of each scheme's energy requirements;
 - Use is made of 'sustainable urban drainage systems' and water conservation features including 'grey water recycling' and other technologies wherever possible;
 - Priority is given to alternative modes of transport to the private car, and access by:
 - requiring travel plans for developments which would have significant transport implications;
 - enhancing electronic communication infrastructure;
 - The need to design out crime and eliminate the fear of crime has been addressed;
 - Buildings and their settings are designed to be flexible, enabling them to adapt to future needs and to take into account the needs of all users; and
 - All new development is encouraged to incorporate biodiversity and geological features at the design stage.
- 5.19 **Policy A1** aims to improve accessibility, including focusing development in regeneration areas such as South Shields.
- 5.20 **Policy SC1** seeks to create sustainable urban areas. Again, development proposals should be focused and promoted within built-up areas, where they can create a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities including townscape, promoting high quality design, revitalising the Town Centre and improving the provision of accessible basic local services and community facilities, whilst focusing high trip-generating uses within Town Centres.
- Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2011)***
- 5.21 **Policy DM1** relates to the management of development. Relevant considerations to the proposed regeneration scheme can be summarised as:

- The development is designed to convey sensitive consideration of its surroundings, and, where possible, enhance its local setting and reinforce local identity, having particular regard to scale and proportions, alignment, form, use of materials and architectural detailing;
- New development provides well-designed external spaces to provide a high quality setting for buildings, improve visual amenity and enhance community activity;
- The design of buildings and external spaces incorporates focal points and landmarks to aid recognition and legibility of the townscape and streetscape, including public art, where possible;
- The impact of the development is acceptable in relation to highway capacity and safety or includes proposals to mitigate any adverse impacts;
- New development provides site layouts that facilitate convenient and safe routes between facilities, and prioritises movement by pedestrians and cyclists;
- The needs of all users for access around sites and into buildings for public use are considered as an integral part of the development;
- The development is designed to achieve lower carbon emissions, and to be energy efficient and maximise the use of renewable and low carbon energy sources;
- The development is designed to minimise and mitigate localised flood risk, both on site or elsewhere;
- Any risks of contamination have been fully assessed and, where necessary, remediation measures are included as part of the development proposals.

5.22 **Policy DM6** relates to heritage assets and archaeology, which are discussed in greater detail in the separate Heritage Statement and Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment that accompany the submission. However, it is important to note that the policy is supportive of development proposals that protect, preserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character and heritage, visual appearance and contextual importance of the Borough's heritage assets and their settings.

South Shields Town Centre & Waterfront Area Action Plan (2008)

5.23 The Area Action Plan (AAP) is the detailed development plan document for South Shields. It sets out the more detailed strategy and vision, policies and site-specific land allocations for South Shields Town Centre, riverside and foreshore.

5.24 **Policy SS1** sets out the strategic vision which includes strengthening, reviving and promoting the growth of the Town Centre as the Borough's principal centre for shopping, entertainment and leisure, culture and administration, making it a popular and attractive market town.

5.25 **Policy SS2** identifies the application site (Wouldhave House in the Market Place) as a key site for redevelopment which could include Class D1 uses. Developments should conform to the highest standards of urban and sustainable design and regard should

also be given to the provision of integral areas of public open space in accordance with Policy SS10.

- 5.26 **Policy SS3** deals with improving the physical accessibility of South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront. Of particular relevance, sub-point b) seeks to improve the accessibility of existing and proposed development sites by improving pedestrian connections between the King Street and Waterloo Square/Coronation Street primary shopping areas, and with the Metro/bus station interchange, and between the Market Place and the Shields Ferry landing and Customs House on the riverside.
- 5.27 **Policy SS5** relates to promoting and encouraging tourism and culture in South Shields. This includes developing a new, high quality public library for the Town Centre, where appropriate as part of a mixed-use development scheme, by 2016. The justifying text to the policy explains that there is a need to provide a new modern public library in the town to enable the enhancement and expansion of its facilities. A new multi-use building could have the potential to house the library together with a new tourist information centre (relocated from South Shields Museum) and customer service areas, ancillary café/ retail and learning spaces.
- 5.28 **Policy SS7** deals with retailing opportunities in South Shields, encouraging proposals that improve the vitality and viability of the town centre, maintain a sustainable retail environment, and improve its image as a high quality location to invest in.
- 5.29 Of relevance to the application proposals, sub-point d) encourages the upgrading of the secondary frontages of the primary shopping area, such as the Market Place, along with associated environmental improvements, and providing opportunities for a greater diversity of retail and non-retail uses, where they would not adversely impact on the existing character, function and vitality of the street or surrounding environment.
- 5.30 **Policy SS12** relates to the protection of the built environment assets and settings of South Shields. Of direct relevance to the application proposals, the policy seeks to promote and encourage schemes and proposals that protect, preserve and enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character and heritage, visual appearance and contextual importance of the designated sites and settings of the riverside between the Tyne Dock entrance and the South Pier, including the area around the Old Town Hall in the Market Place.

LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- 5.31 The following SPDs are considered to be relevant to the application proposals.

SPD 1: Sustainable Construction and Development (2007)

- 5.32 SPD 1 supplements Core Strategy Policy ST2 'Sustainable Urban Living,' which is summarised above. The SPD seeks to raise awareness of the range of environmentally-friendly methods and techniques available through a Sustainability Checklist. It requires applicants for larger scale schemes to demonstrate their sustainability credentials within a Sustainability Statement.

SPD 5: Planning Obligations & Agreements (2008)

- 5.33 The Council considers it reasonable to ask developers to contribute towards the cost of infrastructure, facilities and services that will be needed as a result of their development. The SPD sets out what will be required from developers in the form of planning obligations, having regard to the specific details of the development proposal and the viability of the scheme. In particular, the Council will seek to secure a fair and reasonable developer contribution, without removing the incentive for new development to take place in the Borough.

SPD 6: Parking Standards (2010)

- 5.34 SPD6 sets out the parking standards that the Council will have regard to in assessing proposals for new development. These standards cover the maximum levels of provision for car parking, and minimum levels of provision for parking for people with disabilities, cycles and motorcycles.
- 5.35 The generic maximum level of parking for libraries is one space per two members of staff, plus one space per 30 sq m for visitors. Two cycle spaces are required per 200 sq m GFA.
- 5.36 In South Shields Town Centre, because of its enhanced accessibility, the Council will expect 10% of the car parking standard to be applied.

SPD 7: Travel Plans (2010)

- 5.37 SPD7 supplements Core Strategy Policy ST2 'Sustainable Urban Living' and provides developers with guidance on when Travel Plans should be produced and what they should contain. Travel Plans may be secured through Section 106 agreements.

Other Relevant Documents

South Shields 365

- 5.38 The South Shields Town Centre Vision document sets out a sustainable economic vision for South Shields and seeks to create new opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors.
- 5.39 As with the AAP, the document defines three character areas. The Master Plan demonstrates how improved links between the Town Centre, Riverside and Foreshore will result in a positive visitor experience, and an altogether more cohesive and functional Town. The application sites sit within the Town Centre, a key objective for which is a new central library and cultural centre on the site of Wouldhave House.
- 5.40 The document explains that the demolition of Wouldhave House in early 2013 removed a poor quality 1960s building adjacent to the Market Square. This has provided the opportunity for a more attractive development which will "breathe new life" into Market Square and provide a direct line of sight to the attractions of the Riverside.
- 5.41 The South Shields 365 Master Plan proposes two new buildings to replace Wouldhave House (the other being where an arm of Wouldhave House stood, immediately to the north of the proposed library building). The larger of the two faces the Riverside and St. Hilda's Church grounds and is proposed as an Arts and Cultural Hub with a new Central Library and Community Centre at its heart. This would include ground floor commercial

food/ leisure/ retail opportunities and provides the opportunity for a building of significant architectural merit which takes full advantage of a prominent location.

- 5.42 Central to these new developments will be improvements to the public realm which will see the Market Place remodelled to provide a space which retains its historic function but creates new opportunities for civic life. Enhancing the existing places and spaces will improve pedestrian movements and help knit the new development with the existing fabric of the town.

Planning Policy Summary

- 5.43 It is clear from the relevant documents identified above that the proposals are supported by current national and local planning policy. The subsequent chapter provides a detailed assessment of the proposals in light of the identified policies and supplementary planning documents.

6. Planning Appraisal

- 6.1 This chapter appraises the planning applications against national and local planning policy documents: principally, the NPPF and the adopted South Tyneside Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2007), as identified in the previous chapter.

Key Issues

- 6.2 The proposed library and community building, with associated car parking, along with the modernisation of the Market Place, represent a significant investment in South Shields. When taken together, they have the potential to significantly improve the Town, bringing in associated economic, social and environmental benefits.
- 6.3 The proposed library and community building will provide a significantly enhanced community facility for the Town. The proposed car park will be able to be used by those visiting the library, as well as those visiting the Town itself. The modernised market place will improve the Town's public realm and encourage greater use of the existing space. The changes to the Market Place will enhance the setting of the Grade 1 listed Old Town Hall and the Church of St Hilda.
- 6.4 The demolition of the unsightly Wouldhave House left a large previously-developed site in the Town Centre. The proposed library and community building will see a large part of this site redeveloped. The carefully considered, high quality design of the library and community building could not be starker than that of Wouldhave House.
- 6.5 The redevelopment of the Wouldhave House site and creation of the new car park is harmonious with the recently created Harton Quay Park, encouraging people to use the Tyne Riverside area more, including Customs House and the cross-Tyne ferry link.
- 6.6 The application proposals are supported by national planning policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. They are also supported by local planning policy contained within South Tyneside Local Development Framework Core Strategy and South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront Area Action Plan, as well as the South Shields 365 document.
- 6.7 In respect of the foregoing, it is considered that the key issues in the determination of this application are the benefits of the proposals from a regeneration perspective, heritage issues (which are addressed in greater detail in the accompanying Heritage Statement), townscape/visual impacts (addressed in the Design and Access Statements that accompany the two planning applications) and highway/transport matters (addressed in the accompanying Transport Assessment and Travel Plan prepared by JMP Consultants Ltd).
- 6.8 These issues, along with the principle of development and other material considerations, are discussed in detail below.

The principle of the proposed development

- 6.9 The overall scheme in the two simultaneous applications represent the first phase of a larger vision to transform South Shields, as set out in detail in the South Shields Town Centre Vision and Master Plan documents.
- 6.10 Under the Use Classes Order, the proposed library and community centre is a Class D1 'non-residential institution' Use. Such uses are encouraged by the NPPF and the adopted Core Strategy in accessible locations, such as South Shields Town Centre. Policy SS2 of the AAP identifies the application site (Wouldhave House in the Market Place) as a key site for redevelopment which could include Class D1 uses, and policy SS5 seeks to promote and encourage tourism and culture in South Shields through developing a new, high quality public library for the Town Centre.
- 6.11 The proposals to the Market Place will see an important area of public realm improved. Without the Market Place's southwards extension and the proposed erection of the canopy structure, it is questionable whether or not planning permission would have been needed for the proposed works. However, such works are supported by policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document which will see an important area of public realm improved.
- 6.12 The proposed applications will see South Tyneside's Spatial Vision for South Shields begin to be implemented. The proposed developments will benefit the people of South Shields, improve the urban fabric of the Town and attract more people to the Town's retail and commercial core.
- 6.13 The principle of development of the proposed library and community building, and improvements to the market square, are supported by the NPPF, the South Tyneside LDF Core Strategy and South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront Area Action Plan, as well as the South Shields 365 document. As such, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable in this location.

Other material policy considerations

- 6.14 Before assessing other material considerations, it is worth noting that design, heritage and highway matters are being considered in detail in other reports and assessments that are submitted as part of the two application packages. It is not intended to repeat these assessments as part of this Planning Statement, although the key findings in relation to planning policy are summarised below.

Design/townscape matters

- 6.15 The impact on the overall townscape of this part of South Shields town centre is addressed in full detail within the two separate Design and Access Statements that accompany the application submissions, prepared by FaulknerBrowns Architects and The Harris Partnership.
- 6.16 Due to the urban location of the proposed development within the context of a range of modern and older commercial town centre buildings, longer-range views will not be significantly affected. The proposals will re-establish the former urban grain of the site, enclosing public space whilst opening new views to the river and Harton Quays Park.

- 6.17 The proposed design of the remodelled Market Place and community centre seeks to provide new boundary treatment to ensure the site reflects and enhances the surrounding streetscape and improves wayfinding through the site; particularly with the creation of Dean Street to the north of the new community centre.
- 6.18 The other key material consideration in respect of the design of the scheme and its impact upon townscape is the change in perception that will occur as a consequence of the development proposals. The proposed library and community building will represent an outstanding piece of architecture that should draw nationwide acclaim. Nationally, this will make people more aware of South Shields and its ambitions. In turn, this should assist in taking forward the next phases of development, building the momentum with each phase of development.
- 6.19 In light of the above, and taking account of the separate Design and Access Statements that accompany the submissions, it is considered that the design of the proposals, along with their impact upon the wider townscape, is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, policies ST2 and SC1 of the Core Strategy, policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and policy SS2 of the AAP.

Heritage matters

- 6.20 A full assessment of the impacts upon heritage assets is made within the accompanying Heritage Statement.
- 6.21 In summary, there is one listed building on the site, which is the Grade I listed Old Town Hall in the centre of the Market Place. The Grade II listed Church of St Hilda is situated to the south of the site, on the southern side of Church Way, and is thus visible from the application sites.
- 6.22 The proposed development has been designed to retain the Old Town Hall building as the focal point of the scheme. There will be no physical alterations to the Old Town Hall and it will therefore be retained in its current form.
- 6.23 The current proposals for the modern community centre with space around it, opening the area to the west of the Market Place and enabling Dean Street to lead to the Old Town Hall, are considered to represent an enhancement in quality of the public realm. It is also considered that they represent an enhancement in the setting of the listed buildings, with the two heritage assets being a strong influence on the final masterplan. The prominent position of the Old Town Hall at the centre of the Market Place will not be interrupted or challenged.
- 6.24 The proposals will redefine the space within which the listed buildings are situated. They will reinstate a building on the site of the former Wouldhave House to provide a sense of enclosure, whilst opening up views of the Old Town Hall and re-opening a street pattern to facilitate clear and uninterrupted views of the Old Town Hall from King Street and Dean Street, which are considered to be positive effects.
- 6.25 In addition, the formalisation of the market stalls by way of a permanent canopy structure as opposed to the current arrangement of scaffolding structures is also considered to enhance the overall appearance of the Market Square and the setting of the listed buildings.

- 6.26 Although the heritage matters and relevant heritage policy are discussed in greater detail in the standalone Heritage Statement, it is considered that the proposals are in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy DM6 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and policy SS12 of the AAP.

Highways/transport

- 6.27 A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan have been prepared by JMP Consultants Ltd and accompany the planning submissions. The Transport Assessment includes details of existing transport conditions, collision analysis, a Servicing and Access Strategy, trip generation calculations and an impact assessment. The Travel Plan has been prepared to reduce the number of single occupancy car trips to and from the site, increase the number of staff and visitors using sustainable forms of transport to and from the site, and increase staff and visitor awareness of the Travel Plan and the use of sustainable modes.
- 6.28 The proposed development is considered to sit within the policy framework and particularly build on the key elements of promoting economic development and prosperity within a safe, sustainable and efficient environment. The assessment is considered to show that the road network will continue to work well within its theoretical capacity and no remedial works to provide additional capacity are necessary as a direct result of the development of the site.
- 6.29 In respect of transport and highway implications, therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy ST2 of the Core Strategy, policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, policy SS3 of the AAP and the guidance contained within the Council's SPD 6: Parking Standards and SPD 7: Travel Plans documents.

Sustainability

- 6.30 The proposed new community centre will deliver high levels of energy efficiency through the use of modern building methods and materials and the use of energy efficient equipment, and it is expected that the building will achieve an 'excellent' BREEAM rating. Waste disposal/removal provisions associated with the site excavations are incorporated into the scheme, and will be covered by a site waste management plan and can be conditioned on any planning permission.
- 6.31 The accompanying Sustainability Statement outlines the development's approach to sustainability, energy efficiency and environmental strategies in order to meet the targets set out in the guidance from South Tyneside Council.
- 6.32 It is therefore considered that the proposed development will have a high standard of sustainability and will be in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy ST2 of the Core Strategy, policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and the guidance contained within the Council's SPD 1: Sustainable Construction and Development document.

Flood Risk

- 6.33 The site lies within Flood Risk Zone 1 (area at lowest risk of flooding from rivers and the sea) and the impact of flood risk and drainage on the environment is therefore not

considered to be significant. However, as the overall site exceeds 1ha, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been prepared to accompany the planning applications.

- 6.34 The FRA concludes that the site has a low probability of suffering from any form of flooding and is proved as not increasing the probability of flood risk to other properties within the local catchment area. This includes an allowance for climate change over the anticipated lifespan of the development.
- 6.35 The FRA makes a number of recommendations to ensure that the site is properly managed in terms of drainage, including that the proposed surface water drainage network will outfall into the existing public sewer networks within and surrounding the sites, the design of the proposed development should ensure that surface water does not fall towards the proposed built development and that SUDS should be incorporated into the scheme wherever possible.
- 6.36 It is therefore considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

Ecology and trees

- 6.37 An Ecological Assessment and Tree Survey have been prepared and accompany the planning submissions. The Ecological Assessment identifies that the developments will affect habitats of negligible ecological value and will not involve works on the Old Town Hall, and therefore no significant ecological impacts are predicted and no further survey or assessment work is recommended.
- 6.38 Given the low probability of any ecological impacts as a result of the proposals, it is therefore considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy ST2 of the Core Strategy.

Landscaping

- 6.39 The accompanying drawings and Design and Access Statements provide full details of the proposed hard and soft landscaping details and street furniture. These documents show that a mixture of high-quality surfaces will be provided in three areas: the Market Place and Civic Square, the shared street and circulation/activity areas. Indicative tree planting specifications within the remodelled Market Place are also provided.
- 6.40 It is considered that the quality of the landscaping of the public realm will be significantly improved through the application proposals, in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy SC1 of the Core Strategy, policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and policy SS2 of the AAP.

Archaeology

- 6.41 In respect of archaeology, a desk-based assessment has been prepared by Prospect Archaeology and accompanies the planning submissions. It is concluded that the site has relatively low potential for archaeological investigation. Although the assessment recommends further investigation work for the Market Place, no archaeological work is considered necessary to the west of Ferry Street or on the site of the proposed library building.

- 6.42 Provided that the requisite work is undertaken as part of the development, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy DM6 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

Air Quality

- 6.43 In terms of any potential environmental effects of the associated traffic arising from the proposed development, the main effect would be air emissions from additional vehicles visiting the site. Importantly, the site does not lie within an Air Quality Management Area where the effect of transport emissions is likely to be significant. The effect of traffic arising from the development on the environment is not considered to be significant.
- 6.44 In this regard, an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) has been prepared and accompanies the planning submissions. It concludes that there are no objective concentration exceedances as a result of the development, and, as such, specific mitigation measures are not required.
- 6.45 In this regard, therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

Lighting

- 6.46 The proposed development will include low-level external lighting to the Market Place and car park areas. The wider site already includes lighting to buildings and highways and is not considered to be sensitive, being in the urban area of South Shields town centre. As such, it is not considered that there will be any significant effects arising from lighting on the surrounding environment.
- 6.47 A lighting strategy forms part of the planning application submissions and it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

Ground Contamination

- 6.48 Two separate Phase II Ground Investigation Reports have been prepared and accompany the planning submissions. For Application A, the site investigation fieldwork comprised the creation of three boreholes within the proposed building footprint and six trial pits and trial trenches to expose existing foundations. The study concluded that the risk presented by the made-ground and natural soils to human health is considered to be low and, consequently, no remedial action is recommended.
- 6.49 It is also concluded that the risk to the underlying aquifer and the nearest surface water feature is considered to be low, and the risk from ground gases is considered to be very low and consequently no gas protection measures are recommended. The study recommends a piled foundation solution and a reduced level excavation to remove any below-ground obstructions encountered during the ground investigation.
- 6.50 For Application B, the site investigation work comprised 9 probe holes and soil sampling. The study concluded that groundwater will not pose any significant

construction constraints to the proposed development and no specific remediation measures are required.

- 6.51 In light of the extensive ground investigations undertaken, therefore, it is not considered that the issue of contaminated land is significant in the application proposals and it is thus considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

Noise

- 6.52 An Environmental Noise Assessment has been prepared and accompanies the planning submissions. It makes an assessment of the background noise level at a nearby noise sensitive location and measures the ambient noise levels at locations representative of the worst affected proposed New Central Library and Digital Media Centre façades.
- 6.53 The assessment considers that noise from the proposed development and noise from existing sources upon the library building can be mitigated through design, and suggests certain remedial measures could be included, such as attenuator specifications, acoustic enclosures or barriers, and attenuated louvre specifications.
- 6.54 Noise from the construction of the proposed development will be temporary and best practice procedures will be employed, including limiting the hours of working, maintaining plant and construction materials and the inclusion of noise attenuation measures if required.
- 6.55 In light of the suggestions and recommendations contained within the assessment, the effect of noise in respect of the proposed development is not considered to be significant and it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with relevant NPPF policy, as well as policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

Other material (non-policy) considerations

- 6.56 It has been noted in the previous chapter of this Planning Statement that the proposed development represents a significant investment in South Shields, with the potential to bring in associated economic, social and environmental benefits.
- 6.57 This potential economic impact cannot be underestimated. The proposed library and community building will provide a significantly enhanced community facility for the Town, with the proposed car park providing a facility for those visiting the Town itself, in turn assisting in taking forward the next phases of development, building the momentum with each phase of development.

Community involvement

- 6.58 A public exhibition was held on Thursday 5th June and again on Saturday 7th June at South Shields Library to introduce the proposals to members of the public and other interested parties, with the development team on hand to answer questions. A summary of the exhibition is provided in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement document.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Muse Developments Ltd and South Tyneside Council for the proposed first phase of the South Shields 365 Regeneration Strategy of South Shields Town Centre.
- 7.2 The proposals are contained within two planning applications: Application A proposes the erection of a new central library and digital media centre, along with the creation of a 40 space car park and pedestrian link. Application B proposes the remodelling of the Market Place and erection of a market stall canopy structure.
- 7.3 The site where the new library and community building will stand was formerly occupied by Wouldhave House. The demolition of this office building has allowed the site of the proposed new library and community building to be cleared, ready for redevelopment. The Market Place will remain in the same location, but will be rejuvenated and enlarged as a consequence of this proposal.
- 7.4 Although two separate planning applications are submitted, one is integral to the success of the other.
- 7.5 The proposals to the Market Place will see an important area of public realm improved. The proposed library and community building will represent an outstanding piece of architecture that should draw nationwide acclaim. Nationally, this will make people more aware of South Shields and its ambitions. In turn, this should assist in taking forward the next phases of development, building the momentum with each phase of development.
- 7.6 The proposed applications will see South Tyneside's Spatial Vision for South Shields begin to be implemented. The proposed developments will benefit the people of South Shields, improve the urban fabric of the Town and attract more people to the Town's retail and commercial core.
- 7.7 The application proposals are supported by national planning policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, bringing economic, social and environmental benefits to South Shields. They are also supported by local planning policy contained within South Tyneside LDF Core Strategy, Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront Area Action Plan, as well as the South Shields 365 document and the LDF Supplementary Planning Documents. In particular, the applications represent the first phase of implementation of the South Shields 365 document.
- 7.8 Based on the above, it has been demonstrated that the two applications accord with national and local planning policy. In addition, other material planning considerations of relevance are supportive of the proposals. Therefore, it can be concluded that planning permission should be granted, allowing this important phase of South Shields regeneration to begin.

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